HH Amir, HH Crown Prince receive Sheikha Intisar Page 2

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Three-vehicle limit enforced for expats

Int'l driving license valid for visit visa holders

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: In a bid to improve institutional performance and align with new regulations, Assistant Director of the Traffic Awareness Department at the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Bu Hassan announced the updated vehicle registration rules for expatriates.

Bu Hassan confirmed the main points of the updated regulations during the "Good Morning" program on Kuwait Television.

Foreigners are now restricted to registering a maximum of three vehicles for personal use.

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Amir, Crown Prince offer condolences to families of martyred officers

Amiri Diwan photo

HH Amir with the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, along with the families of officers who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Crown Prince Diwan photo

HH the Crown Prince with the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, along with the families of officers who lost their lives in the line of duty.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, along with the families of the officers who lost their lives in the line of duty — Colonel Saud Al-Khamsan and Sergeant Mohammad Al-Hajeri.

The two officers died in a fire that broke out at the General Administration building of Correctional Institutions. His Highness the Amir offered his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families, recalling the fallen officers' heroic actions and distinguished professional service.

Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and the families of the deceased officers at Bayan Palace on Tuesday. His Highness extended his sincere condolences, paying tribute to their heroism and dedication in the line of duty.

Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Mr. Minister of Justice, please amend the law regarding dud checks

WITH the arrival of Ramadan, the recurring annual debtors issue comes to the fore once again.

We have consistently advocated for a fair approach to the treatment of debtors, one that respects the law but also incorporates social customs and traditions, moving away from overly harsh penalties.

It is our view, stated numerous times, that debtors are typically pushed into this situation by unavoidable, compelling circumstances. Unfortunately, some creditors exploit this vulnerability to increase their personal wealth.

They impose stringent conditions that often result in imprisonment if debtors fail to meet their obligations, especially when instruments like dud checks, promissory notes or other financial documents are involved.

As previously highlighted, the nation faces a crisis involving about 120,000 individuals with financial claims against them. Arrest warrants were issued against the majority, leading to a hot pursuit by authorities.

Many have already served long prison sentences, resulting in the breakdown of families, severe social and economic difficulties, and a surge in demand for social assistance.

A fundamental legal principle dictates that "the liability falls on the one who misappropriates money." This implies culpability on the part of the lender who extends credit to someone known to be unable to repay, yet still accepts a promissory note or check. This suggests that the money was advanced in bad faith -- an act that is punishable by law.

The law clearly states: "Whoever gives a check in bad faith, knowing it is not backed by sufficient and available funds shall be punished by imprisonment and a fine not exceeding KD300, or any of these two penalties."

The failure to apply essential legal and religious principles in Kuwait resulted in government agencies functioning merely as debt collectors for creditors, rather than as impartial bodies tasked to prevent public harm.

Consequently, those who profit from the misfortune of others now hold a position of advantage, because the law currently empowers them, whereas the fundamental principle should dictate the opposite -- the burden of responsibility should rest with the party that misappropriated funds.

While the importance of preserving rights is universally accepted and not disputed, the current system is flawed. Although commercial transactions usually adhere to the rules – such as secured lending where collateral may exceed the loan value, which is standard practice for banks and financial institutions – the issue arises from lending activities undertaken in bad faith, which have proven to be catastrophic.

For decades, Kuwait has maintained the practice of lending money against bounced checks, a system that, as introduced, led to numerous societal problems.

In contrast to global trends where financial transactions are typically not grounds for imprisonment and the issuance of a dud check is not criminalized, Kuwait continues to grapple with this issue.

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Private school relocation decision remains in force

Shaddadiyah sites okayed for expat worker housing

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: The Municipal Council, chaired by Abdullah Al-Muhairi, held an extraordinary session Monday, during which it approved the following:

■ Request of the Ministry of Public Works to expand the Kabad wastewater treatment plant. This expansion involves allocating a new area for the plant in Block 12 in Sulaibiya Agricultural Area, which is part of a Memorandum of Understanding between the ministry and China's National Development and Reform Commission for cooperation on wastewater treatment infrastructure.

■ Letter of Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mashari for the Ministry of Education to submit a traffic study for sites designated for private schools relocating from

Continued on Page 5

Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Municipal Council holds extraordinary session on Monday chaired by Abdullah Al-Muhairi.

Day by Day

A FRIEND indeed is one who cheers you up when you are troubled, supports you when you are wronged, tolerates you when you are angry, and defends you even in your absence. That is how friends should be.

The person you tell that you need his help, and he responds by ignoring your request, turning a deaf ear, and not answering your calls, is either an enemy or a complete fool. He is not a friend if he avoids meeting you when you seek his help while he is capable of helping you or pretending to be capable of doing so.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

'Valid arrest does not justify search'

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: The Court of Appeals upheld the Criminal Court's ruling which was issued based on the principle that a valid arrest does not automatically authorize a search.

The appellate court upheld the lower court's acquittal of the defendants in a drug case, after it was established that the procedures for stopping, arresting, and searching were invalid and had no legal connection to the items seized.

Lawyer Abdullah Al-Alanda highlighted that the arrest procedures violated the provisions of the Criminal Procedures and Trials Law and exceeded the constitutional guarantees designed to protect personal freedom.

The court emphasized that a legally valid arrest does not automatically justify a search.

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2 Al-Jarallah, Egyptian envoy discuss ways to enhance media cooperation

9 Al Marzouq: KD 632.1 million net profit attributable to KFH shareholders for the year 2025, an increase of 5%

8 NBK posts strong net profits of KD 575.6 million in FY2025

11 National Investments Company Recognized for Most Innovative Digital Transformation Initiatives Award - Kuwait 2025 from Global Business Outlook

Newswatch

DUBAI: Three French tourists drowned in **Oman** after the boat they were in capsized in waters off the sultanate's capital city of Muscat, police said Tuesday.

The Royal Oman Police said the ship carried 25 French tourists, as well as a tour guide and a boat captain, when it capsized in the Gulf of Oman. (AP)

❑ ❑ ❑

DUBAI: **Iran**'s bloody crackdown on nationwide protests has killed at least 6,126 people while many others still are feared dead, activists said Tuesday, as a **U.S.** aircraft carrier group arrived in the **Middle East** to lead any American military response to the crisis. Iran's currency, the rial, meanwhile fell to a record low of 1.5 million to $1. (AP)

Unlicensed hotel apartments shut

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Faisal Al-Ansari, Director of the Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, stated that the emergency team of the ministry immediately closed hotel apartments in a building in Ahmadi Governorate, in coordination with the General Department of Criminal Investigation.

The closure is due to the establishment operating with an expired commercial license. The necessary legal measures were taken against the violator.

In a press statement Monday, Al-Ansari revealed that the closed establishment had been operating without a valid license since 2023 -- violation of the relevant regulations.

Continued on Page 5

Ministry of Higher Education confirms 'no obstacles' to obtaining student visas

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Dr. Bader Al-Basiri, affirmed that there are currently no obstacles to obtaining student visas, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During an informational meeting organized by the ministry as part of the "Guide Me" campaign, which was attended by senior ministry officials, Dr. Al-Basiri revealed that cancellations are very limited and occur only under specific circumstances determined by host countries, adding that embassies are open and cooperation with them continues.

During the meeting, the importance of involving families in students' academic decision-making was emphasized.

Dr. Al-Basiri explained that the ministry is actively following up with students whose visas were canceled, in line with scholarship regulations, to ensure they have access to educational opportunities both inside and outside Kuwait.

Parents must be involved in supporting their children during the academic path selection process.

Sound decision-making must be based on knowledge, awareness, and an understanding of the requirements for studying abroad.

The informational meeting was part of the closing program of the annual national scholarship campaign, "Guide Me," which included field visits to secondary schools to raise awareness among students and their parents about available academic options and different educational pathways.

Dr. Al-Basiri conveyed the greetings of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, explaining that the minister's directives emphasized the importance of strengthening the partnership with parents, viewing them as a fundamental element in supporting students psychologically and academically, and preparing them for the next stage of their studies.

He indicated that the meeting provided an open forum for direct dialogue, during which parents' inquiries were addressed and the conditions and criteria for scholarships abroad were clarified.

Dr. Al-Basiri confirmed that the "Guide Me" campaign will continue through the official accounts of the Ministry of Higher Education from April to continue providing academic guidance and answering questions from students and parents.

In this regard, Mishari Al-Shammari, Supervisor of the Guidance and Counseling Department at the Ministry of Higher Education, explained that the ministry's annual scholarship plan includes two main programs. The first is the original scholarship program, which covers announced study places available for competitive selection in specific countries and fields of study, based on admission criteria, student preferences, and the number of available places in each specialization.

The second program is the Distinguished Scholarship Program, which focuses on sending students to study at elite educational institutions and programs.

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:18	Asr	15:01
Sunrise	06:40	Maghrib	17:22
Zohr	12:01	Isha	18:41

Local

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather cold to mild and partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-50 km/h causing rising dust over open areas.

By Night: Rather cold and partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to wind, with speeds of 08-40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	20	06
Abdaly	20	06
Bubyan	16	02
Jahra	21	11
Failaka Island	16	07
Salmiyah	18	12
Ahmadi	19	07
Jal Aliyah	18	07
Nuwaisib	20	08
Salmy	18	04

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is presented a book titled 'Kuwait in 400 years.'

Amiri Diwan/Crown Prince Diwan photos

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah is presented a book titled 'Kuwait in 400 years'.

HH Amir, HH Crown Prince receive Sheikha Intisar

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and President of the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghunaim and Ruqaya Ali Hussain. During the reception, they presented His Highness the Amir with a book titled "Kuwait in 400 years."

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, President of the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghunaim and Ruqaya Ali Hussain.

During the reception, they presented His Highness with a book titled "Kuwait in 400 years."

'Media plays pivotal role in bridging gaps in relations'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): KUNA Acting Director General, Mohammad Al-Mannai, held talks with Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Abu Al-Wafa on enhancing bilateral media cooperation. During the meeting on Tuesday, both sides emphasized the pivotal role played by media institutions in Kuwait and Egypt in building bridges of cooperation and cultural rapprochement between the two countries and peoples.

They also touched on frameworks for media cooperation, particularly in training programs and the exchange of expertise.

Al-Mannai said that KUNA's relationship with Egypt's Middle East News Agency (MENA) is based on close cooperation in the exchange of news and photographs, stressing keenness to enhance communication and continuous coordination to benefit from shared expertise and support joint media efforts in addressing various challenges.

He also affirmed the depth of the fraternal and historical relations between Kuwait and Egypt, and the commitment to strengthening cooperation and advancing relations between the two countries at all levels.

Al-Mannai

In turn, Ambassador Abu Al-Wafa praised KUNA's national and professional role as a reliable source of news, expressing his pleasure at visiting the prestigious media institution, which enjoys high credibility in delivering accurate information.

The meeting was attended by KUNA Deputy Director General for Editorial Affairs Issam AlGhanem, Acting Editor-in-Chief Mohammad Al-Bahar, and Director of the Director General's Office Lamyaa Al-Farisi.

Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah receives the Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohamed Abou Al-Wafa in his office.

Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Financial Director Mohammad Wasfi, Legal Affairs Director Counselor Hamada Al-Amir, and colleagues Mohammad Al-Farhan, Hussein Ibrahim and Bassam Al-Qassas.

Photos by Rizk Taufiq

Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah, company staff during the meeting with Egyptian ambassador.

Al-Jarallah, Egyptian envoy discuss ways to enhance media cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Dean of Kuwaiti journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah met Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Kuwait Mohamed Abou Al-Wafa at his office on Tuesday, along with Political Advisor at the Embassy Mohamed Alawi, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

At the beginning of the visit, the Egyptian ambassador inquired about the health of Al-Jarallah, following his return from medical treatment. He wished the latter good health and well-being, as well as his continuous contribution to the media.

He also praised the journalistic standing of Al-Jarallah, and his vital role in the Kuwaiti and Arab media landscape.

During the meeting, they discussed several issues of mutual interest and ways to strengthen media cooperation between the two sides.

Al-Wafa expressed his appreciation for the role played by the Kuwaiti media, particularly the Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers, in supporting Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations, and highlighting aspects of cooperation and rapprochement between the two brotherly countries.

He affirmed the commitment of the Embassy to solidify communication with Kuwaiti media institutions in order to consolidate the historical ties that bind Egypt and Kuwait.

On the other hand, Al-Jarallah warmly welcomed Al-Wafa, affirming his pride in the fraternal relations between Kuwait and Egypt.

He stated that "the media serves as a vital bridge for communication between peoples, conveying the real image and fostering mutual understanding." He confirmed the continuation of cooperation with the Egyptian Embassy, covering activities that reflect the depth of relations between the two countries -- a distinguished model of Arab cooperation.

Financial Director Mohammad Wasfi, Legal Affairs Director Counselor Hamada Al-Amir, and colleagues Mohammed Al-Farhan, Hussein Ibrahim and Bassam Al-Qassas were also present at the meeting.

More congratulatory messages keep pouring in for Al-Jarallah

Sheikh Khaled Al Abdullah

Sheikh Duaij Khalifa Al-Malik

Emad Boukhamseen

Hussein Al Fadhli

Fahad Al Jarba

Sarah Al Qanaei

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Dean of Kuwaiti journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah received more telephone calls and messages on Tuesday, congratulating him on his return from medical treatment, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah sent him a bouquet of flowers with a congratulatory message, while Sheikh Duaij Khalifa Al-Malik called to congratulate him on his safe return.

Editor-in-Chief of Al-Nahar newspaper Emad Boukhamseen and Managing Editor Hussein Al-Fadhli sent congratulatory cards, wishing Al-Jarallah good health and well-being.

Fahad Al-Jarba, a researcher, sent a cake with messages of congratulations on his recovery.

Sarah Al-Qenaei, a lawyer, also called to congratulate the Editor-in-Chief on his safe return and wish him good health and well-being.

Over 1,600 heart surgeries conducted in '25: Al-Fadhli

MoH gains expertise to tackle complex ops

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: In an achievement reflecting the high level of the competence of its medical staff and its advanced operational readiness, the Chest Hospital performed more than 1,600 open-heart surgeries and cardiac interventions for adults and children in 2025.

This figure is a clear indicator of the ability of the hospital to handle a large number of complex cases according to the highest standards of quality and medical safety -- a manifestation of the development of the healthcare system in the country.

Medical Director of the hospital and a member of Kuwait Heart Association Dr. Jamal Al-Fadhli stressed that this achievement reflects the rapid development the hospital is witnessing in terms of its medical infrastructure and the unwavering support of the Health Ministry to modernize equipment and attract renowned medical professionals.

He pointed out that the increase in the number of surgeries is matched by a strong commitment to follow quality standards and patient safety, adding that the hospital is keen on promoting the culture of quality and institutional work.

Dr Jamal Al-Fadhli

He also expressed his appreciation for the continuous support provided by the ministry to improve treatment and diagnostic services in various government hospitals.

He affirmed that the next phase will witness an expansion in the use of modern technologies, improvement of training programs, and strengthening scientific partnerships, in line with official directives to develop the health sector and achieve the highest level of medical care.

Meanwhile, Dr. Mohammad Al-Ayyar, consultant cardiac surgeon and member of Kuwait Heart Association, confirmed that the surgeries performed last year included a wide range of complex cases, including coronary artery bypass surgery, heart valve replacement and repair, and complex open-heart surgeries, as well as interventional and catheterization procedures and emergency cases requiring urgent intervention to save lives.

He affirmed that the hospital adopted the latest surgical technologies, advanced imaging systems and international safety protocols, which contributed to raising success rates, reducing complications and accelerating patient recovery.

Dr. Dharar Al-Shehab, head of the Thoracic Surgery Department, stated that the integrated work between the cardiac and thoracic surgery teams led to the success of many combined and complex cases.

Dr. Faisal Al-Saeedi added that the hospital performed delicate surgeries for children with congenital heart defects, according to the highest international medical standards and using the latest equipment and technologies.

Kuwait, UN seek to strengthen rights system and institutions

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): The National Diwan for Human Rights (NDHR) held recently a coordination meeting with the United Nations' office in Kuwait in order to boost joint cooperation and enhance international standards.

This came in a press release by NDHR, saying that the meeting was chaired by representative of the UN Secretary-General and Resident Coordinator to Kuwait Ghada Al-Taher, with the participation of several UN offices and agencies.

It added that the meeting was also attended by the Chairman of the Tripartite Committee for the Management of NDHR Minister Plenipotentiary Anas Al-Shaheen, members of the committee, and a number of concerned parties.

It noted that the meeting discussed prospects for technical and legal cooperation between the two sides and ways to develop existing partnerships in a manner that contributes to strengthening the human rights system in the Kuwait and supporting efforts to build institutional capacities and develop monitoring, follow-up and documentation mechanisms.

'We're committed to rights of shareholders'

Co-ops maintain strategic reserve for six months

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Chairman of the Board of Directors of Shamiya and Shuwaikh Cooperative Society Adel Al-Doukhi confirmed that the cooperative provides full support to its shareholders.

During his meeting with a delegation from Isa Town Consumer Cooperative Society in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Al-Doukhi stressed that the cooperative remains committed to achieve the highest legal return for the shareholders.

He disclosed that last year, the cooperative distributed a purchase credit of KD120 to each shareholder during Ramadan, KD60 for back-to-school expenses, KD30 for Eid Al-Adha, free vegetables, traditional Ramadan treats, seasonal gifts and exclusive discounts.

He clarified this was accomplished through the 12 percent purchase return, two percent interest rate on capital, and the allocation of five percent of net profits to the general reserve, which exceeded KD8 million. He pointed out this is a reflection of the strong financial position of the cooperative and its ability to continue providing services.

He said the cooperative maintained a strategic reserve of essential goods -- sufficient for six months, thereby, ensuring food security and stability of commodity availability.

He also confirmed the implementation of development and investment projects, including the modernization of the central market and upgrading of several operational departments, to improve the services provided to shareholders.

He emphasized that these achievements stemmed from a balanced vision that combines financial sustainability with the social and service-oriented role of the cooperative, while keeping the shareholder at the heart of all decisions.

On the other hand, Mariam Al-Awad, Chairperson of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies, expressed her appreciation for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to the delegation from Isa Town Consumer Cooperative Society during their visit to the headquarters of Shamiya and Shuwaikh Cooperative Society. She commended Kuwait's pioneering experience in cooperative work.

Al-Awadh stated that the cooperative experience in Kuwait is a successful and exemplary model at the Gulf and international levels. She asserted that Kuwait is a pioneer in cooperative work, a fact the Bahraini delegation witnessed during their visit and meetings. She said the union does not represent a single entity, as it rather reflects the image of all consumer cooperative societies in the country.

She added that the international interest in learning about the Kuwaiti experience, demonstrated by previous visits from Turkiye and anticipated visits from Jordan, reflects Kuwait's standing and influence on diplomatic and economic levels.

She praised the Shamiya and Shuwaikh Cooperative Society, affirming that it is one of the oldest cooperatives in Kuwait.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

All 'must chip in' to keep climbing progress ladder

"THE well-known proverb "Better late than never" captures the spirit of Kuwait's new era. With 134 projects currently scheduled for implementation, it reflects the nation's race against time to achieve long-awaited development," columnist Sheikh Eng. **Fahad Dawood Al-Sabah** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

Al-Sabah

"Much can be said about this, particularly regarding increased productivity. The projects underway demand significant effort from all parties, inspiring optimism that Kuwait is on the right track. What was lost in the past can be recovered, and every aspect of development can be revitalized. However, this will require determination, overcoming challenges, and a clear awareness of this pivotal moment, as the region passes through a decisive period.

"As the saying goes, "When you hear the sound of cannons, you must begin building and planning for the future." Living in a country with great potential, under leadership committed to restoring Kuwait's former prominence, calls for the collective effort of everyone. While the government works tirelessly day and night, citizens must also actively participate in this vital endeavor. The world today is vastly different from the 1990s, and even from the start of this century, due to the rapid pace of technological advancement and the widespread integration of artificial intelligence into every aspect of life. Time waits for no one, and the energies of Kuwaiti youth must be harnessed in all sectors, especially as challenges have become more pressing than ever.

"A collective effort is essential, bringing together experienced professionals and young people to integrate their expertise. Volunteer teams should also be formed to teach youth, including teenagers, the skills needed to adapt to various fields of work. Civilized societies judge individuals based on their ability to work and their effort rather than status. Not everyone holds advanced degrees or rare specializations, yet everyone is called upon to contribute to this significant national endeavor.

"Based on this principle, His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, stated during his recent meeting with the Ministerial Committee for Project Implementation Follow-up that, "We are committed to executing projects on schedule, without exception or delay, in line with the national vision led by His Highness the Amir." Participation in these efforts benefits all of Kuwait, serves future generations, and ensures a dignified life for the people today."

Also:

"One of the difficult paradoxes we witness is the uncertainty of whether we, as a people, are part of the government's vision and plans, or whether we are an unknown crowd to the government because we are a minority without influence, voice, or role," columnist **Khalid Ahmed Al-Tarrah** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Certainly, political, economic, and developmental strategies cannot be based on an unknown partner or a marginalized minority, because the people in any country are supposed to be a fundamental partner in achieving the desired goals and transformations. Since the dissolution of the National Assembly in May 2024, the government has been exercising the roles of both the executive and legislative branches. There were reservations about the role of the National Assembly, its deviations in legislation and oversight, and its interference in the government's jurisdictions and powers.

"The Amiri speech dissolving the 2020 parliament was frank, direct, and precise in its diagnosis of that parliamentary period, spanning from 2013 to 2020. The mistakes committed by some MPs in escalating tensions against the government were repeated during the elections, in the 2023 parliament, and again in the 2024 elections. We are not here to discuss the phenomenon of parliamentary deviation, governmental inaction, and distorted Cabinet formations, as these were based on social, tribal, factional, and sectarian quotas.

"Any governmental justification for these quotas as a reflection of the components of Kuwaiti society is unconvincing. Certainly, there is no disagreement between the government and the people regarding the developmental goal. The unconstitutional solutions implemented in the past, before the Iraqi invasion, demonstrated the absence of a developmental project or a governmental vision that fosters partnership with the people.

"What does His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah have to say about the state's developmental project? We do not know, because we have not heard from him since he assumed the premiership. We also do not know His Highness the Prime Minister's position on the advocates of renaissance, political reform, and economic change. If we had a government program, we, as the people and the undeniable partners in development and prosperity, would be able to understand the government's vision and its prospects for progress. However, we have no idea what the government's vision is or what reforms it intends to implement.

"Therefore, the image seems vague, as if we are not the intended audience for the renaissance and the hoped-for transformations. We have not seen any tangible political development since the dissolution of the 2024 parliament and the suspension of certain articles of the Constitution, except for the national identity issue, about which we have reservations on some aspects while agreeing with many of its objectives. There are many social, political, and legal aspects that deserve discussion and review. The national identity issue can continue to generate legitimate debate, not demagoguery. We hope for greater government transparency and for an analysis of behavioral patterns both inside and outside Kuwait to understand the shortcomings of official media.

"Kuwait has become a target of biased and influential media. Media integrity cannot take root in Western and Arab media discourse without transparency and without a Kuwaiti-led media and political initiative. Recent actions regarding road repairs, infrastructure, power outages, and the presentation of ill-conceived plans and regulatory financial decisions do not reflect the spirit of a comprehensive development project or a political, social, and economic reform vision. The crucial question is - Are we, as a people, targeted by the government, or are we merely an unidentified or marginalized crowd?"

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"A school principal married the sister of the school janitor who worked for him. Because of this family connection, he began to favor his brother-in-law over the school's best interests," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Whenever a teacher was absent, the principal would tell his brother-in-law, the janitor, "Go to the students and give them a lesson in his place."

"Gradually, with no oversight or accountability, the principal appointed his brother-in-law as a teacher at the school. Time passed, and the principal was promoted to Director of Education, so he promoted his brother-in-law to school principal. Later, the principal became Minister of Education, and he again promoted his brother-in-law, this time to Director of Education Affairs.

"He got a luxurious office, cars, servants, inspectors, and teachers fawning over him, coffee constantly served, and newspapers on his desk, which he read daily. One day, while browsing a newspaper, his eye fell on a headline that read, "Minister of Education decides to form committees to evaluate employees' qualifications and assess their academic levels."

"The janitor panicked and was terrified, fearing he would be exposed. He was just a janitor, with no qualifications for his current position of Director. So he called his relative, the Minister of Education, and said, "My dear relative, you know I don't have a degree, and the decision to re-evaluate qualifications will expose me!" The minister laughed and said, "Don't worry, Mr. Director, I have appointed you head of the evaluation committees."

"I don't know if this story is true or not. The source we got the story from says, "And this is how things are run, gentlemen, and this is how corruption cases are investigated."

"The Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Shahed published an article on March 15, 2022, stating that "In our country, nepotistic appointments have contributed to the destruction of job performance in government departments. A study indicated that some political factions, economic groups, and influential figures have been protecting hundreds of leaders in ministries and government institutions, even appointing them to sensitive positions to extend their influence and implement certain agendas at the expense of the nation's and citizens' interests. These practices have led to a decline in job performance in many ministries and government departments.

Al-Dawas

"What is truly heartbreaking is the injustice in the workplace. In many cases, competent and hardworking employees are not rewarded; instead, the manager's friend is promoted through favoritism.

"In Syria, the Kurds controlled about half of eastern Syria, and the country nearly disintegrated. However, the Syrian Kurds did not demand an autonomous region, nor did the Druze in the south. This is what we understood from the developments, and it is undoubtedly a positive thing.

"As for Yemen, it needs wise leadership. The Houthis would have been better off laying down their arms. They are a group in northern Yemen who believed the Yemeni government in Sana'a did not care about their situation, so they took up arms against it during the so-called "Arab Spring" in 2011 and overthrew the government, which moved to Aden.

"The Houthis, with the help of Iranian weapons, occupied about a third of Yemen's territory and threatened ships in the Red Sea, causing Egypt to lose $800 million a month. They harmed Egypt and also harmed Saudi Arabia, as tribal leaders in Hadhramaut nearly separated the south from the north, which could have turned the southern Arabian Peninsula into an arena for terrorism and unrest.

"The issue is complex. When will the Yemenis realize what is in their best interest? If they had laid down their arms and entered into negotiations with the government, Yemen could have progressed on all fronts."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets the Lebanese Ambassador Ghady Al-Khoury.

KUNA photos

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets the Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez .

Defense Minister eyes boost in military ties

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Monday met with Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez and Lebanese Ambassador Ghady Al-Khoury.

During the meetings, the parties discussed several topics of common concern, particularly regarding military matters and ways to enhance cooperation between Kuwait and the friendly and brotherly countries.

Kuwait reiterates int'l support pledge in anti-terrorism battle

Sizable contribution to forum: Al-Mashaan

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International

Cooperation and Chairman of the Committee for Implementing UN Security Council Resolutions Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan affirmed Tuesday Kuwait's commitment to supporting international efforts to combat terrorism, particularly in the digital space.

Al-Mashaan made the remarks in a speech at the opening of the Global Counterterrorism Forum experts' meeting titled "Protecting Virtual Spaces through Strategic Communications," hosted by Kuwait for two days.

The meeting is held within the action plan of the East Africa Capacity-Building Working Group for 2024-2026, which is co-chaired by Kuwait in partnership with the friendly Republic of Kenya.

He said Kuwait, since joining the forum and assuming the joint chairmanship with Kenya over the past two years, has sought to contribute effectively to supporting and implementing the

forum's strategic vision.

Hamad Al-Mashaan

Al-Mashaan added that these efforts aim to enhance countries' capabilities to confront terrorist threats through long-term strategic partnerships and sustained international cooperation.

He explained that the meeting aims to exchange expertise and experiences among specialists involved in countering terrorism in the digital space, whose negative impacts often extend into the real world.

Al-Mashaan said the meeting brings together representatives from various regions to strengthen coordination and develop effective approaches to addressing emerging digital threats.

He pointed out that this is the third such meeting hosted by Kuwait, following an experts' meeting in October on enhancing international judicial cooperation in terrorism cases.

Al-Mashaan stressed the importance of collective action and integrated expertise to confront evolving challenges, expressing hope that the meeting's outcomes would strengthen cooperation and enhance security in both digital and real-world spaces.

Kuwaiti jailed in embezzling cash from duo

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: The Misdemeanor Court sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to two-year imprisonment with hard labor and imposed a fine after convicting him of fraud.

The court confirmed that the defendant had defrauded two victims by convincing them to participate in auctions for cars and electronic devices allegedly belonging to the General Administration of Customs at unusually low prices.

The court ordered the defendant to return the embezzled funds, totaling approximately KD 19,000, in addition to paying financial compensation for the moral damages suffered by the victims. He was also required to cover court costs and attorney's fees.

According to the case file, the defendant exploited his relationship with the first victim, falsely claiming to hold a high-ranking position in the General Administration of Customs and promoting auctions that promised quick profits.

The investigations revealed that the victims gave the defendant sums of money in the hope of participating in the auctions. It was later discovered that these auctions were fictitious and served solely as a means to defraud them.

Lawyer Inam Haider filed the complaint on behalf of the victims, detailing through the report and investigations the nature of the fictitious project and the deceptive methods used by the accused to convince the victims of unreal profits.

New hearing on Feb 9 as court okays appeal

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: The Court of Cassation, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Jassem, accepted the appeal against the ruling in the case concerning the expenditures of the Ministries of Defense and Interior, filed against former Minister of Defense and Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

The court scheduled a hearing for February 9 for the defendant to appear and present his defense. The session will deliver the final and conclusive ruling on the appeal against the "Ministers' Court" verdict.

In January 2025, the Ministers' Court sentenced Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled to 14 years in prison, seven years for each charge, along with dismissal from public office and an order to repay sums of money and fines exceeding KD 30 million.

MoCI on price & product check tour of 'Shuwaikh'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: As the holy month of Ramadan is fast approaching, inspectors from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, led by Director of the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Department Faisal Al-Ansari, conducted a field tour in the relevant establishments in Shuwaikh to monitor prices and products before the start of Ramadan and ensure consumers are protected from any violation, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources told the daily that during the tour of the meat markets, inspectors found several violations like weight shortage of up to 120 grams in some products, discrepancies between invoices and advertised prices, and absence of the country of origin on the packaging of some meat products.

Beware fake text messages

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: The Ministry of Interior issued a stern warning about the spread of fake text messages about traffic fines.

These messages, falsely attributed to the ministry, contain suspicious links and claim that recipients – citizens and – have outstanding traffic fines. These fraudulent notices are usually about urgent traffic fine payments and may threaten recipients with additional fines if not paid within a specified time-frame.

Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, along with senior officials, honors winners of the Kuwait Appreciation and Creativity Awards during the 31st Qurain Cultural Festival.

PM representative opens 31st Qurain Cultural Festival

Kuwait remains a beacon of culture and creativity: Al-Mutairi

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): Representative of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Information, Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi inaugurated on Monday the 31st edition of the Qurain Cultural Festival.

In his address at the opening ceremony, held at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre, Minister Al-Mutairi said this annual cultural festival embodies Kuwait's pioneering role in embracing creativity and preserving cultural identity.

With decades of success, the Qurain Cultural Festival has served as a broad space for art and knowledge-an annual meeting point where thought converges with creativity.

Minister Al-Mutairi noted that the event reaffirms Kuwait's belief that culture is a fundamental pillar in human development."

He noted that this edition coincides with the celebration of the Kuwait's Appreciation Award and Creativity Award, both of which enjoy the gracious patronage of His Highness Kuwait's Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He added that the significance of the festival, which concludes on 11 February, is particularly pronounced this year as Kuwait celebrates its selection as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media 2025.

This reflects a long history of cultural contributions and affirms Kuwait's commitment to its enlightening role and its belief that culture constitutes a cornerstone of human development and future-building, the minister clarified.

Photos by Samer Shaqir

Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi poses with officials during the 31st Qurain Cultural Festival at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre.

He expressed his honor that the personality of the festival is embodied in the Kuwaiti writer and thinker Professor Dr. Sulaiman Al-Askari, in appreciation of his rich intellectual and literary career and his distinguished contributions that have enriched the Kuwaiti and Arab cultural landscape.

Minister Al-Mutairi, along with the Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Dr. Mohammed Al-Jassar, and the Assistant Secretary-General for the Culture Sector at the Council Aisha Al-Mahmoud, honored the Kuwaiti writer and thinker Professor Dr. Sulaiman Al-Askari in recognition of his career.

Furthermore, he congratulated the winners of Kuwait Appreciation Award and the Creativity Award this year, commending the creative contributions they have presented.

He also extended his sincere appreciation to all those who contributed to organizing the festival and to everyone who worked with dedication to ensure the success of this cultural event, wishing it continued success and excellence. He emphasized the Kuwait would remain a beacon of culture, thought, and creativity.

This year's edition of the festival, organized by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), is held under the theme "A Renewed Legacy and Everlasting Creativity".

After the honoring ceremony, an artistic musical performance "Saffar" was introduced, narrating the story of the Kuwaiti dhow (boom), which sailed in search of livelihood and adventure and returned with stories and melodies. The performance was presented through a renewed vision that preserves authenticity while employing a contemporary artistic language.

The production was based on an idea and screenplay by artist Bader Nouri, conducted by Maestro Dr. Khaled Nouri, featuring actor Abdullah Al-Turkmani, and directed by Bader Al-Baloushi.

Processing time cut to 20 days

Sahel launches digital home ownership document service

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: The unified government e-services application, Sahel, launched a new service on Sunday for issuing home ownership documents, in cooperation with the Kuwait Credit Bank, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), Kuwait Municipality, and the Ministry of Justice.

Kazem

This step is part of providing a comprehensive digital government experience that streamlines paperwork and initiates procedures automatically, meaning citizens will no longer need to submit applications or visit multiple authorities, except for the final contract signing.

According to Yousef Kazem, the official spokesperson for the Government Communication Center, the platform is strictly limited to residential properties allocated by PAHW and does not cover other property types.

He explained that the "home ownership document issuance" journey allows citizens to complete all procedures through smart notifications, with no need to visit government agencies except for signing contracts. This journey reflects the Cabinet's directives to launch more digital journeys that reduce paperwork and enhance government integration. The application will introduce additional smart digital journeys aimed at simplifying procedures and making life easier for users.

He highlighted the significant time and effort saved for citizens, stating that the processing time is now reduced from the previous two to three months to about 20 days. "This efficiency is achieved through a fully electronic link connecting the relevant government bodies," he explained.

He said the process begins automatically once electricity is connected to the new home, stating that citizens will receive an optional notification through 'Sahel', asking if they wish to register their home ownership document. He then emphasized that participation in this procedure is voluntary.

He clarified that linking the document issuance to the electricity connection serves to protect the legal rights of the family, particularly the wife's ownership rights. He explained that if divorce occurs during the construction phase before electricity connection, the wife's property rights could be jeopardized. "However, once electricity is connected, the house is deemed habitable, establishing her legal ownership rights," he added.

He affirmed that the government is actively exploring the expansion of digital services and initiatives in various sectors, aligning with a broader vision to enhance the government services system and improve the overall user experience.

On the other hand, Director General of Kuwait Municipality Manal Al-Asfour affirmed that the Municipality's contribution to this initiative is part of its efforts to streamline procedures for citizens by providing proactive services, starting with coordinating the automatic issuance of property description certificates.

She noted that this process has eliminated several administrative steps that previously required visits to multiple government agencies.

Meanwhile, acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice Awatif Al-Sanad stated that the ministry is proud to be an important partner in developing this digital platform, as its primary goal is to reduce paperwork and the need for in-person visits to obtain property ownership documents.

She clarified that the ministry's role involves documenting and authenticating contracts through notaries public in cooperation with the Kuwait Credit Bank, and subsequently issuing property ownership documents, thereby achieving a balance between legal requirements, speed of completion, and enhanced transparency.

Also, acting Director General of Kuwait Credit Bank Sultan Al-Dabbous said "we are proud to be part of the journey of issuing the home ownership document, which begins as soon as electricity is connected and smoothly guides citizens through completing the procedures until the home ownership document is issued through the government entities participating in this journey."

He stressed that this experience confirms that digital transformation is not only dependent on technology, but also requires effective cooperation among government entities to reduce paperwork and provide smart and convenient services to citizens.

He confirmed the commitment of the bank to digitize its services and collaborate with various government agencies to launch more streamlined processes that facilitate procedures and simplify government services.

In addition, PAHW's Deputy Director General for Control and Information Systems Amina Al-Awadhi affirmed that this journey represents a true model of digital integration among government entities and the direct exchange of data, indicating that the service is automatically accessible for citizens once the technical requirements are met. She considers this a qualitative leap that reflects a fundamental shift in the culture of government service delivery.

talabat enabled €20m in rider tips, €6.45m in charitable contributions across MENA in 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: talabat announced the results of its 2025 Giving Back Impact, highlighting Kuwait as one of the platform's most active and generous markets across the Middle East and North Africa.

During 2025, talabat's platform enabled over €20 million in rider tips across the region, with Kuwait ranking among the top contributing countries, recording €1,562,000 throughout the year. This strong participation reflects the everyday generosity of customers in Kuwait and their continued support for rider livelihoods.

In parallel, talabat's in-app Giving Back features generated more than €6.45 million in charitable contributions across MENA, through partnerships with over 50 licensed regional and international charities and NGOs, reinforcing talabat's role as one of the region's largest digital platforms for everyday giving.

By embedding donations and tipping directly into the ordering experience, talabat enables customers in Kuwait to support communities and riders seamlessly as part of their daily transactions. "Our platform has turned small, everyday gestures into a powerful support system for the fleet," stated Bader Al-Ghanim, VP and Managing Director of talabat Kuwait. "Through the rider tipping feature, we have created a transparent and accessible way for customers to give back. This initiative ensures that riders feel the direct impact of the community's generosity, reinforcing our commitment to their well-being and success."

Impact Across the Region

In 2025, talabat users across MENA contributed:

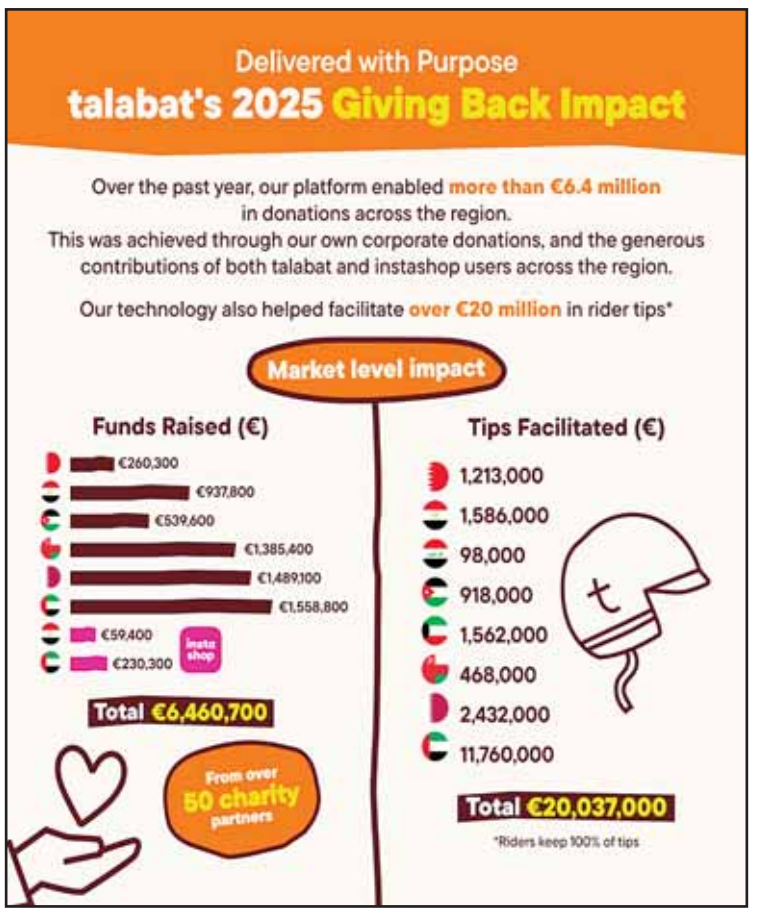
- €6.45 million through accredited charity partners
- €20,037,000 in rider tips, paid 100% directly to riders

In Kuwait specifically, tipping activity reached €1,562,000, underscoring the market's strong engagement and commitment to supporting riders.

All charitable contributions were routed exclusively through licensed and verified partners, supporting food security, humanitarian relief initiatives, and rider livelihoods, while ensuring full transparency and accountability.

Giving Back and rider tipping are permanent features within talabat's platform, designed to make giving simple, traceable, and scalable. Funds flow directly to riders and partner organizations, with no platform retention.

By integrating social impact into its core technology, talabat continues to demonstrate how digital platforms across the region can support communities and workers, while delivering everyday convenience.



talabat's 2025 Giving Back Impact

Kuwait engages in Doha Legal Forum

Experts explore future justice trends

DOHA, Jan 27, (KUNA): The Doha Legal Forum opened on Monday in the Qatari capital under the theme "Emerging Trends and Future Visions," running for two days with the participation of Kuwait's Acting Undersecretary at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Awatef Al-Sanad.

KUNA photo

Awatef Al-Sanad, Kuwait's Acting Undersecretary at the Ministry of Justice

In his opening remarks, Qatar's Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim Al-Mohannadi said Qatar recognized early on that sustainable investment begins with clear legislation, an independent judiciary and efficient justice institutions.

Qatar launched its National Initiative to develop justice systems in 2016 as an integrated approach to modernize the legal framework by protecting rights, ensuring stable transactions, speeding up dispute resolution and strengthening transparency and governance, he said.

Qatar is now reaping the results of this initiative, offering not only an enticing business environment but also a comprehensive legal system that protects capital, safeguards rights and ensures sustainable partnerships, Al-Mohannadi explained.

This direction has driven improvements in investment legislation, company regulation, dispute settlement and the digital transformation of justice services, reducing procedures, improving performance and enhancing legal certainty for local and foreign investors, he noted.

The forum held amid major global economic and legislative shifts, he said, urging countries to strengthen legal systems to ensure justice and build a stable, growth ready investment environment, noting that investment seeks trust first and trust is built by law.

He underlined that modern legislation is developed through dialogue and partnership and measured by its real impact on society, development and investment, pointing out that the forum brings together decision-makers, experts, legal professionals and academics from around the world.

Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Centre (QICDRC) Faisal Al-Sahouti said Qatar has seen significant legislative progress in recent years, including new laws and amendments aligned with the country's economic, social and knowledge-based growth.

Qatar has continued to strengthen its legal and judicial systems by updating procedural legislation, including amendments to the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law, as well as issuing an Enforcement Law, which has helped speed up litigation, improve enforcement mechanisms, reduce case backlogs and enhance the investment climate, he said.

Qatar is advancing toward a modern institutional framework that uses advanced technology to manage and deliver services, Al-Sahouti added, underscoring that digital transformation is now a necessity.

The forum offers a unique platform to exchange expertise and develop legal and regulatory frameworks that keep pace with digital change, balance innovation with justice safeguards and uphold the rule of law, he mentioned.

The forum, organized by Qatar's Ministry of Justice in cooperation with QICDRC, features around 40 speakers, and includes three roundtables with about 13 participants from 13 countries.

Gulf States move to strengthen laws

Kuwait joins GCC consumer rights meeting

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: The State of Kuwait, represented by the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, participated in the 14th meeting of the Consumer Protection Committee of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Representatives of consumer protection agencies in the GCC attended the meeting, which was held Monday through video conference.

Faisal Al-Ansari, Director of the Commercial Control Department, stated in an exclusive interview with the newspaper that the agenda included the following:

- Ways to strengthen consumer protection in the Gulf region and develop relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks, thereby, contributing to more coordination and integration among GCC countries,

Al-Ansari

- GCC's legislative policies,
- Review of the decisions made at the 69th meeting of the Trade Cooperation Committee,
- Update on the objectives and action plan of the Consumer Protection Committee,
- Mechanisms for exchanging regulatory expertise and experience among member states.

Al-Ansari said the meeting resulted in the nomination of the Kingdom of Bahrain to chair the upcoming Gulf Consumer Protection Week, scheduled for March-19.

He pointed out that these events are considered an important platform for raising awareness on consumer rights and consolidating the principles of transparency and fairness in Gulf markets.

He added that the attendees recommended holding a series of meetings to deliberate on legislation and policies regulating consumer protection in the GCC countries and exchanging best regulatory practices, which will positively impact market stability and the protection of consumer rights.

Broad money rises to KD 42.1bln: CBK

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced on Wednesday that the broad money (M2) rose by 0.1 percent to reach KD 42.1 billion (around USD 138.8 billion) in December 2025.

Local banks' private sector deposits remained steady at KD 38.5 billion (around USD 126 billion) last December, said CBK's economic research department and statistical tables.

Private sector deposits in foreign currency went up by 2.2 percent last December to reach KD 1.9 billion (around USD 6.2 billion) and the total local banks claims on the CBK represented by CBK bonds rose by 0.2 percent to reach KD 201 billion (around USD 663 billion).

Continued from Page 1

Mr. Minister

The impact is evident annually during Ramadan, when campaigns are launched to settle the debts of those in financial distress.

Last year alone, about 9,000 individuals incarcerated for financial offenses applied for debt settlement. With the total prison population exceeding 40,000 across all crimes, this staggering figure means financial difficulties account for about a quarter of all inmates.

This untenable situation necessitates action. We strongly urge the active advisor, Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait, who is currently working on legal amendments and modernization, to revise the law. Such an amendment is crucial to ease the burdens of the courts, the Central Prison and Kuwaiti families.

Following the example of most other nations, the issuance of a dud check should no longer be treated as a felony punishable by imprisonment.

Finally, we commend the banks that operate responsibly by granting loans solely to those with collateral, rather than relying on checks that could lead to imprisonment.

Three-vehicle

This limit applies to all vehicle types, including pickup trucks, which were previously off-limits to expatriate ownership.

Those who currently exceed the three-vehicle limit may renew their existing registrations, but are prohibited from registering any new vehicles under their name.

A valid driving license is mandatory for vehicle registration.

Furthermore, while foreigners on a visit visa may drive using an international driving license, this is not permitted for those on a work permit, for whom the issuance of a driving license is subject to certain terms and conditions.

Ministry of

These institutions and programs are listed among those approved by the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education. These two programs form the cornerstone of the Ministry of Higher Education's annual scholarship plan.

The scholarship plan is subject to competitive criteria, including GPA, student preferences, and the number of available places, in addition to the required national standardized tests for medical and engineering specializations, with the IELTS accepted as an alternative to the language test.

The meeting was attended by the Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Hamad Al-Hamad, and the Media Advisor to the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and Head of the "Guide Me" Campaign Team Wissal Al-Zamil.

'Valid arrest

There must be specific grounds for a search based on the circumstances of the case. The absence of any items constituting a crime negates the justification for the search and renders it illegitimate.

Regarding the second defendant, the court clarified that the stopping procedures were not directed at him, and he did not exhibit any unusual behavior that would justify taking action against him.

The court noted that the alleged attempt to conceal a box did not constitute a flagrant offense and therefore did not justify a search, especially since it was proven that the box was handed over under duress.

It is worth noting that Lawyer Abdullah Al-Alanda had argued during the proceedings that the stop, arrest, and search procedures were invalid due to the absence of a flagrant offense and the lack of a warrant from the Public Prosecution.

Unlicensed hotel

"This necessitated immediate intervention and closure to maintain public order and protect the rights of consumers and guests," he stressed.

He confirmed that this action is part of the tasks of the committee responsible for inspecting tourist establishments and hotel apartments. He said this committee plays a crucial role in monitoring the conditions of these establishments, ensuring the validity of licenses, and verifying compliance with legal and regulatory requirements to guarantee the protection of guests' rights and maintain the standard of tourism services in the country.

He pointed out that the committee operates according to a comprehensive oversight plan that includes field visits and continuous coordination with relevant government agencies, primarily security authorities, to address any violations that affect public order or compromise the safety of tourism activities.

He asserted that engaging in any commercial activity without a valid license is a serious violation that warrants immediate legal action.

He warned that the ministry will not hesitate to enforce the law against any violating establishment, pointing out that the aim of these measures is not punishment, but rather to rectify the situation, regulate the tourism market, and improve services.

Shaddadiyah sites

private residential areas. This relocation is scheduled for the end of the 2027/2028 academic year. The traffic study requirement was deemed necessary after the Ministry of Interior rejected some initial sites due to concerns about potential traffic congestion from establishing schools there.

The Municipal Council, in conjunction with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, has reaffirmed the decision to relocate private schools currently situated in residential areas. Engineer Manal Al-Asfour, Director General of the Municipality, confirmed that this long-standing decision remains in effect. A key condition for private schools to move to the 12 sites designated by the Municipality for the Ministry of Education is the successful completion of a comprehensive traffic study before any construction can commence. In light of the Ministry of Interior's objections to some of the proposed locations, the Municipality has pledged to secure and provide alternative sites to the Ministry of Education. The entire relocation process is slated for completion before the conclusion of the 2027/2028 academic year.

In addition to the school relocation mandate, the Council gave the green light to several other significant requests. The Ministry of Finance received approval to amend a previous Council decision concerning expatriate worker housing. This amendment allows for the allocation of three sites in Shaddadiyah in Ahmadi Governorate for the construction of residential complexes for expatriate workers, in compliance with Cabinet Resolution No. 878.

The Council also approved three important infrastructure requests from the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy. These approvals include the allocation of a water service route essential for supplying the Google Cloud data center in Mutlaa City, allocation of a second water service route in Sulaibiya Industrial Area (Block One), and allocation of an underground cable route to supply Substation No. One in South Mutlaa.

The Council announced the approval of several requests from various government entities, alongside a final decision on urban planning reorganization, including the Ministry of Defense receiving the allocation of Ras Al-Qaid site on Bubiyan Island.

Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) was granted an amendment to a Municipal Affairs Committee decision concerning the petroleum product tanker depot in Subhan, specifically to allow the addition of an administrative building.

Furthermore, the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) obtained approval for the expansion of the public surface parking area in Sabah Al-Salem, Block Two, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received approval for the reorganization of a section of Block One in the Diplomatic Quarter.

The Council also granted final approval for the reorganization of plots One, Two, Three and Four of Plan No. 39544 in Qibla, Kuwait City.

Democrats vow to oppose homeland security funds

Trump's about-face in Minnesota after Pretti's death latest in pattern of sudden shifts

WASHINGTON, Jan 27, (AP): US President Donald Trump shifted toward a more conciliatory approach with Democratic leaders in Minnesota on Monday, a sudden change in tack following an outcry over the second fatal shooting by federal agents in the state this month during the administration's nationwide crackdown on undocumented immigrants.

The about-face comes after Saturday's shooting death of Alex Pretti by federal agents raised doubts - including from some Republicans - over how the Trump administration has gone about aggressively deporting migrants and confronting protesters opposed to the policy.

But it's just the latest in a string of moments where Trump has first taken a maximalist position only to appear to later retreat.

Earlier this month, Trump repeatedly threatened Iran with military action if his administration found the Islamic Republic was using deadly force to squelch recent antigovernment protests. Human rights groups said thousands were killed, but Trump says he's holding off on acting after he received assurances Tehran was suspending hundreds of planned executions.

Last week, Trump first announced plans to impose new tariffs on European allies that refused to go along with his calls for the US to take control of the Arctic territory of Greenland - only to abruptly cancel the tariffs after saying he'd come to terms of the "framework" of an agreement. The White House offered scant details about the deal, which Trump announced the day after the stock market saw one of its worst days in months in response to his tariff threat.

Then on Monday, Trump's administration changed up oversight of his immigration operation in Minnesota, and the typically bombastic Trump offered a warmer tone toward Gov. Tim Walz after speaking with the Democrat, saying he and Walz were now on a "similar wavelength."

It was a particularly jarring turnabout for Trump, who had promised to be uncompromising on carrying out mass deportations of undocumented migrants during his 2024 campaign - and because Trump has repeatedly scorched Walz and other Minnesota Democrats in personal terms for resisting his policies.

A person holds a sign of Alex Pretti during a protest outside the office of Sen. Amy Klobuchar, on Jan 26, in Minneapolis. (AP)

Trump said he had dispatched border czar Tom Homan to take charge. Meanwhile, senior Border Patrol commander Greg Bovino and some agents were expected to leave Minneapolis as early as Tuesday, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Trump declared on social media that Walz "was happy that Tom Homan was going to Minnesota, and so am I!" Later, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey confirmed that some agents would be leaving the city after he spoke with Trump - and suggested that the president seemed to be coming to the conclusion that the current state of federal operations was unsustainable. Homan and Frey were expected to meet Tuesday.

Trump's change-up in Minnesota came after some Republicans questioned federal agents' tactics in Saturday's shooting as well as the White House's response. Some high-ranking administration officials had branded Pretti a domestic terrorist even as videos of the encounter contradicted their narrative.

Minnesota gubernatorial candidate Chris Madel, a Minneapolis attorney, ended his GOP campaign in a surprise video announcement Monday, calling the recent immigration enforcement operation in the Twin Cities an "unmitigated disaster" and saying he no longer wanted to be a member of the party because of it.

Meanwhile, Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who has been a strong supporter of Trump's crackdown on immigration, offered measured criticism in an interview with conservative radio host Mark Davis, saying the White House needs to "recalibrate" what it was doing in Minnesota. Vermont's Republican Gov. Phil Scott called on Trump to reset and de-escalate.

The president's approach toward Walz, who served as Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris' running mate in 2024, amounted to a sharp U-turn.

Just a day earlier, Trump's deputy chief of staff, Stephen Miller, had derided Walz on social media as trying to "incite attacks on" US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. The White House social media team in a series of posts called the governor "a truly disturbed, unstable individual" and an "unhinged lunatic" who "rants and raves and lies."

Mississippi shivers under ice as long recovery looms

VICKSBURG, Miss., Jan 27, (AP): Residents in a iced-over swath of Mississippi began to confront the ugly truth Monday as they shivered in ever-colder and darkened houses: Recovery from the state's worst ice storm in more than 30 years could take a week or more.

McGrath

While the weekend's winter storm impacted tens of millions of Americans, the most lingering effects are concentrated in a band from far eastern Texas across north Louisiana, Mississippi and into Nashville, Tennessee.

Parents were worrying about the 20,000-plus college students at the University of Mississippi, which canceled classes and closed campus for the rest of the week. Officials were fretting not only about restoring electricity and opening warming stations, but keeping fuel flowing to backup generators that run water pumps and supply medical facilities and opening darkened gas stations and grocery stores.

"I mean, it looks like a war zone out here," said Adrian Ronca-Hohn, who estimated that the storm toppled around 40 trees surrounding his property in Iuka, in the state's hilly northeast corner. He and relatives plan to chain saw their way out Tuesday.

Like others, Ronca-Hohn couldn't see the destruction when ice began toppling trees before dawn Sunday. But the 23-year-old football coach and storm chaser said he could hear it.

"We couldn't go 10 seconds without hearing what sounded like a gunshot," he said of trees falling. "You'd hear a pop, a hard pop, and you'd hear the whistle of it falling, and then it would crash to the ground and just kind of explode. And every now and again, you'd hear one real close, like, right outside. It was a sleepless night."

Marshall Ramsey, an editorial cartoonist who teaches journalism at Ole Miss, said trees breaking, electric transformers exploding and thunder made for a "demonic symphony" in Oxford.

Power outages dropped below 150,000 Monday afternoon, but Mississippi still had the largest share of outages of any state. At Alcorn County Electric Power Association in Corinth, all 19,000 customers were dark at midday Monday.

Tennessee Valley Authority high voltage lines were down, and General Manager and CEO **Sean McGrath** said the cooperative couldn't fully evaluate damage until TVA restores power to substations.

Madel drops out of gubernatorial race

Johnson joins crowded Republican field running for Michigan gov

LANSING, Mich., Jan 27, (AP): A former GOP gubernatorial candidate who once tried to unseat Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is seeking the office again, joining a crowded field of Republicans running in the battleground state.

Oakland County businessman Perry Johnson announced his second bid for governor Monday. His entrance to the race comes as the Republican candidates compete for President Donald Trump's endorsement ahead of the Aug. 4 primary.

In a video advertisement released Monday, Johnson described Michigan's government as inefficient.

"We need to shake up the system," he said.

Johnson, a management consultant, was part of a slate of Republicans to run against Whitmer in 2022. His nearly $8 million bid ended when the state's election bureau ruled he did not submit enough valid signatures required for nominating petitions. He also made a long shot bid for president ahead of 2024.

In announcing his campaign, Johnson told the Detroit News he plans to spend $9 million of his own money in the next two months.

Whitmer is term-limited and cannot run again. Candidates from both parties and one campaigning as an independent have lined up to replace her.

On the Republican side, Johnson joins the field that includes US Rep John James, former Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox, state Senate Leader Aric Nesbitt and former Michigan House speaker Tom Leonard.

Perry Johnson speaks during the second day of the Republican National Convention on July 16, 2024, in Milwaukee. (AP)

On the Democratic side, Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson are competing for the nomination.

The longtime Democratic mayor of Detroit, Mike Duggan, is running for governor but as an independent.

Meanwhile, a lawyer for the immigration officer who shot and killed Renee Good dropped out of the Minnesota governor race Monday, breaking with many fellow Republicans and calling President Donald Trump's immigration operation in the state an "unmitigated disaster."

Chris Madel's surprise move comes amid growing calls from Republicans to investigate federal immigration tactics in Minnesota after a US Border Patrol agent fatally shot Alex Pretti in Minneapolis on Saturday.

Madel went a step further than most Republicans in his video, saying that while he supports the goal of deporting "the worst of the worst" from Minnesota, he thinks the Trump administration's immigration enforcement operation in the Twin Cities has gone too far.

"I cannot support the national Republicans' stated retribution on the citizens of our state," Madel said. "Nor can I count myself a member of a party that would do so."

Madel said that US citizens, "particularly those of color, live in fear."

"United States citizens are carrying papers to prove their citizenship," Madel said. "That's wrong."

Madel said he personally had heard from local Asian and Hispanic law enforcement officers who had been pulled over by ICE.

"I have read about and I have spoken to help countless United States citizens who have been detained in Minnesota due to the color of their skin," Madel said.

He also said it was unconstitutional and wrong for federal officers to "raid homes" using a civil warrant, rather than one issued by a judge.

Madel was among a large group of candidates seeking to replace Democratic Gov. Tim Walz, who dropped his reelection bid earlier this month. Other Republican candidates include MyPillow founder and chief executive Mike Lindell, an election denier who is close to Trump; Minnesota House Speaker Lisa Demuth; Dr. Scott Jensen, a former state senator who was the party's 2022 gubernatorial candidate; and state Rep. Kristin Robbins.

Democratic US Sen Amy Klobuchar has filed paperwork to run, but has yet to publicly launch a campaign to succeed Walz.

Madel, in his Monday video posted on the social platform X, described himself as a "pragmatist," and said national Republicans "have made it nearly impossible for a Republican to win a statewide election in Minnesota."

Madel did not immediately return a text message seeking comment.

NATO Chief Rutte says Europe cannot defend itself without United States

BRUSSELS, Jan 27, (Agencies): NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said on Monday that Europe cannot defend itself without the United States.

In a speech delivered before the European Parliament, Rutte stressed that "anyone who thinks that the European Union or Europe as a whole can defend itself without the United States is living in a delusion," adding, "You cannot. Keep on dreaming".

He explained that European countries, if they wish to build a defence force independent from the United States, would have to double defence spending from the 5 percent of GDP target approved by NATO last year to around 10 percent.

Rutte added, "You would lose the ultimate guarantor of our freedom, which is the US nuclear umbrella. So, good luck," noting that such a scenario would serve the interests of Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying, "Putin would love it. So think again".

The NATO chief confirmed that the United States' commitment to Article Five of the Alliance's Charter, on collective defence, remains "total," noting that Washington expects European countries to continue increasing their military spending.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte arrives to address the Security and Defence Committee at the European Parliament in Brussels on Jan 26. (AP)

He said, "The United States needs a secure Euro-Atlantic space, and it also needs a secure Europe, therefore it has every interest in NATO's continuation".

Rutte renewed his praise for US President Donald Trump for pressuring European allies to raise defence spending levels, considering that this has contributed to strengthening the Alliance's capabilities.

He also ruled out the idea of establishing a European defense force to replace US troops on the continent, an idea recently floated by EU Commissioner for Defence Andrius Kubilius, saying that "this would make things more complicated".

Regarding Greenland, Rutte said that he had agreed with US President Donald Trump that NATO should "take more responsibility for the defense of the Arctic region," pointing out that any negotiations over the US presence on the island remain the responsibility of the Greenlandic and Danish authorities.

Rutte stressed that he has no mandate to negotiate on behalf of Denmark, adding, "I did not do that, and I will not".

Rescue workers clear the rubble of a residential building which was damaged after a Russian strike in Odesa, Ukraine on Jan 27. (AP)

Zelenskyy urges swifter diplomacy

Russia drones kill 1, injure 23 in Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 27, (AP): A heavy Russian drone bombardment of Ukraine's southern city of Odesa killed at least one person and injured 23, including two children and a pregnant woman, officials said Tuesday as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for faster US efforts to end Russia's almost 4-year-old invasion of his country.

The Odesa attack involved more than 50 drones, some of them models recently upgraded by Russia to improve their range and strike power, according to Ukrainian authorities.

The drones targeted the power grid, which Russia has repeatedly bombarded during the coldest winter in years, and also hit five apartment blocks, officials said. Emergency crews retrieved the body of a man from the rubble, according to Oleh Kiper, head of the regional military administration.

"The rescue operation will continue until the fate of all people who may be under the rubble is clarified," Zelenskyy said on the Telegram messaging app, adding that an informal Protestant place of worship was also damaged.

"Each such Russian strike undermines diplomacy, which is still ongoing, and hits, in particular, the efforts of partners who are helping to end this war," he said.

A diplomatic push by the Trump administration to end the war has made progress, according to officials, but has delivered no breakthrough on the key issue of what happens to Russian-occupied Ukrainian land and other territory that Moscow is demanding.

Analysts says that Russian President Vladimir Putin is in no rush to find a settlement, despite his army's difficulties on the roughly 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line. He believes that time is on his side, that Western support for Kyiv will fade and that Ukraine's resistance will eventually break under pressure, according to analysts.

Britain's Conservative Party loses another high-profile lawmaker to hard-right Reform

LONDON, Jan 27, (AP): Former British Home Secretary Suella Braverman, an anti-immigration Conservative lawmaker, on Monday became the latest politician from the party to defect to hard-right rival party Reform UK.

Braverman, who was fired from her job as interior minister in 2023 after repeatedly diverging from government policy, said she had quit the Conservatives after 30 years and would represent her southern England constituency in Parliament as a Reform lawmaker.

"We can either continue down this route of managed decline to weakness and surrender," Braverman said. "Or we can fix our country, reclaim our power, rediscover our strength. I believe that a better Britain is possible."

Braverman is the latest high-profile Conservative to embrace Reform leader Nigel Farage's message that Britain is broken and overrun by migrants. Her move on the heels of Robert Jenrick's recent defection gives Farage's party eight of the 650 seats in the House of Commons.

The Conservatives have 116 seats and remain the official opposition to Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government.

Former British home secretary Suella Braverman speaks during a Reform UK press conference in Westminster, central London on Jan 26. (AP)

Although Reform has a tiny number of seats in Parliament, it leads the governing Labour Party and the Conservatives in opinion polls ahead of important local elections in May, including for the parliaments in Scotland and Wales.

Braverman was sacked by then-Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in November 2023 after she called migration a "hurricane" heading for Britain, said homelessness was a "lifestyle choice" and accused police of being too lenient with pro-Palestinian protesters that she called "hate marchers."

Europe

Icy conditions halt Berlin trams: Freezing rain and heavy snowfall disrupted transport across Germany on Monday, forcing Berlin to suspend tram services and causing an increase in road accidents in several states.

Berlin's public transport operator BVG said tram services had been halted since 4 a.m. (0300 GMT) on Monday after persistent overnight freezing rain quickly iced up overhead power lines, forcing trams to stop mid-route.

"This is an unprecedented situation; we have never experienced anything like this before," a BVG spokesperson said, adding that the suspension will remain in place indefinitely. (Xinhua)

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France detains captain of tanker: The captain of a tanker intercepted in the Mediterranean Sea by the French navy on suspicion of shipping oil in violation of sanctions against Russia was being held in custody on Sunday for questioning.

The ship's Indian captain, 58, was handed to judicial authorities following the diversion of the oil tanker, Grinch, and its arrival at anchorage in the Gulf of Fos-sur-Mer, the Marseille prosecutor's office said in a statement. (AP)

Asia

Philippines grounds ferry operator's fleet: Philippine officials on Tuesday grounded the entire fleet of passenger ships belonging to a company that owned a ferry that sank in the south and left at least 18 people dead, with more than 300 others rescued.

Gavan

Ten people, mostly crew members and the captain of the M/V Trisha Kerstin 3, which sank early Monday off an island in Basilan province, are still missing. A search led by the coast guard and the navy continued in waters where an oil sheen was spotted, coast guard Admiral **Ronnie Gavan** said.

Coast guard divers and a remotely operated unmanned vehicle will be deployed to locate and check the wreckage, which is estimated to be 76 meters (249 feet) below the sea surface, as part of the search, he said.

The steel-hulled cargo and passenger ferry, which had three decks, sank off the island village of Baluk-baluk in Basilan province while en route to Jolo island from the southern port city of Zamboanga with 317 passengers and 27 crew members on board.

The coast guard initially reported that it was carrying 332 passengers but later said 15 of them decided not to board at the last minute, Transport Secretary Giovanni Lopez said.

At least 316 people were rescued and 18 bodies, including that of an infant, have been recovered, he said.

Lopez said the indefinite grounding of all passenger ships of the ferry owner, Aleson Shipping Lines, Inc, would allow an inspection to determine their seaworthiness. Other companies would be allowed to deploy their ferries and the coast guard may provide free rides to prevent a major transport disruption in a region where ferries are the main mode of travel.

"We'll make sure that this will never happen again," Lopez said in a news conference, adding that Aleson's ferries had figured in 32 safety-related incidents since 2019. (AP)

❑ ❑ ❑

2 killed in Australia light plane crash: Two men -- the pilot and the only other occupant -- were killed when a single-engine light plane crashed in the Australian state of Queensland shortly after takeoff around 6 am local time on Tuesday, local police said.

The plane came down and hit the ground in scrubland outside Heck Field, a small airfield on the northern outskirts of Gold Coast.

The crash sparked a large grassfire in the area that remained out of control as of 10:30 a.m. local time, with around 50 firefighters deployed to contain it. (Xinhua)

❑ ❑ ❑

Several injured in Japan train-truck collision: Several people were injured after a train collided with a truck on Monday in the city of Nemuro in Japan's northern prefecture of Hokkaido, local media reported.

Hokkaido Shimbun reported that the accident occurred at a railway crossing in the city. The truck driver was seriously injured, and multiple passengers on the train suffered minor injuries.

The train was a single-car train bound for Nemuro from Kushiro, with 18 passengers and crew on board at the time, the report said. (Xinhua)

Chinese Vice President Han Zheng meets with Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Brahim Taha in Beijing, capital of China on Jan 26. (Xinhua)

Chinese VP meets OIC secretary-general

Chinese Vice President Han Zheng met with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretary-General Hissein Brahim Taha in Beijing on Monday.

Han said the OIC serves as an important bridge for developing ties between China and Islamic countries. In 2024, President Xi Jinping sent a special representative to attend the 15th session of the OIC summit and also a congratulatory message to the conference, which further boosted the development of the China-OIC relations.

China appreciates the OIC's emphasis on its relationship with China, and hopes Islamic countries will continue to staunchly support China on the Taiwan question, Xinjiang-related issues, and other issues concerning China's core interests, Han said.

For his part, Taha said the OIC sincerely appreciates that President Xi has attached great importance to and provided guidance on the ever-deepening friendly ties between China and Islamic countries. (Xinhua)

Pyongyang ordered to pay damages to survivors of deceptive repatriation program

North Korea launches ballistic missiles into sea between Korean Peninsula, Japan

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 27, (AP): North Korea launched short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters on Tuesday, according to its neighbors, as the North heightens animosities with rival South Korea ahead of a major political meeting.

South Korea's military said it detected liftoffs of several ballistic missiles from an area northeast of the North Korean capital Pyongyang before the missiles each flew about 350 kilometers (217 miles).

Japan's Defense Ministry said two ballistic missiles launched from North Korea and landed off the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula. The ministry condemned the launches as a threat to the peace of Japan, the region and the international community.

South Korea's military said it maintains a firm readiness to repel any provocations by North Korea.

The launches were the first time North Korea fired weapons since testing what it called hypersonic missiles in early January. In December, the country test fired what it called long-range, strategic cruise missiles and new anti-air missiles and released photos showing the apparent construction of its first nuclear-powered submarine.

North Korea has engaged in a run of weapons launches to enlarge its nuclear and missile arsenals since talks with the US and South Korea stalled in 2019. Experts say the North's leader Kim Jong Un believes a bigger weapons arsenal would give him greater leverage to win concessions from the US.

North Korea's recent displays were likely meant to demonstrate or review its weapons development achievements ahead of the upcoming ruling Workers' Party congress, analysts said.

The congress, expected to start in February, would be the first of its kind in five years and is one of North Korea's biggest propaganda spectacles used to set up new political and economic priorities.

North Korea recently threatened retaliation over what it called South Korean surveillance drone flights across the border, one earlier in January and another in September. The South Korean government denied operating any drones during the times specified by North Korea and began probing if civilians sent them.

The accusations likely were driven by the North's efforts to dial up anti-South Korea sentiments ahead of the congress, when Kim's previous declaration of a hostile "two-state" system on the Korean Peninsula could be added to the party constitution, analysts said.

Also:

TOKYO: A Japanese court on Monday held **North Korea** responsible for the human rights violations of four plaintiffs lured to the North by **Pyongyang**'s postwar false promise of living in "paradise on Earth," ordering its government to pay them 22 million yen ($143,000) each, a decision welcomed by the survivors and their supporters as groundbreaking.

A TV screen shows a file image of North Korea's missile launch during a news program at Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea on Jan 27. (AP)

Kenji Fukuda, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, said it was significant to win a court decision acknowledging North Korea's human rights violations. However, "the ruling is just a piece of paper and getting the compensation money is a challenge," he said.

The Tokyo District Court ruled that the plaintiffs, both ethnic Koreans and Japanese, were forced into decades of harsh conditions without freedom to return home after moving to North Korea with tens of thousands of others under a 1959-1984 repatriation program, in which the North gave them false promises of free health care, education, jobs and other benefits.

Judge **Taiichi Kamino** said the plaintiffs lived under harsh conditions and without freedom of choosing a residence, school or jobs, for decades, often without food and in severe cold.

"It's not an overstatement to say most of their lives were ruined by North Korea," he said, ordering the North's government to pay damages totaling 88 million yen ($572,000) to the plaintiffs.

Originally, five plaintiffs filed a lawsuit in 2018 with the Tokyo District Court seeking 100 million yen ($650,000) each in compensation for "illegal solicitation and detainment." Two of those have since died, but one's case was taken up by his son, so there are now four plaintiffs.

In a 2022 ruling, the court acknowledged that the plaintiffs moved to North Korea because of false information given by the North and a pro-North organization in **Japan** called Chongryon, but rejected their compensation claims on grounds of a lack of Japanese jurisdiction and expiration of the statute of limitations.

On appeal, the Tokyo High Court ruled in 2023 that the North Korean government violated the plaintiffs' fundamental rights and acknowledged Japan's jurisdiction over the case, sending it back to the lower court and ordering it to review damages.

Japan and North Korea have no diplomatic relations and the North has not responded to the lawsuit or sent representatives to court.

One of the four plaintiffs, Eiko Kawasaki, 83, a second-generation Korean born in **Kyoto**, boarded a ship to North Korea in 1960 after **Chongryon**'s repeated promotion of the "paradise on Earth."

In a 2021 interview with The Associated Press, **Kawasaki** said she realized she was deceived when she arrived in a North Korean port, where she was met by hundreds of cadaverous people covered with soot and she saw shabby buildings.

She was stuck in that country for 43 years until 2003, when she defected to Japan via **China**, leaving behind her grown children, becoming a rare survivor. One of Kawasaki's daughters and her two children have since successfully fled, but she has lost contact with the others since the North shut its borders over the Coronavirus pandemic. "I don't even know if they are alive," she said.

Kawasaki said the "ruling is just a start."

"I think North Korea will ignore the ruling ... I don't think **Kim Jong Un** would react or comment," Kawasaki said.

Fukuda, the lawyer, said the seizure of possible North Korean assets in Japan could be a way to get damages, though he did not elaborate.

Kawasaki said she hoped to also seek the responsibility of Chongryon and get an apology from the Japanese government over the repatriation deal signed between the Japanese and North Korean Red Cross societies, even though Japan was not actively promoting the program.

In this satellite photo provided by Planet Labs PBC, the area around the headquarters of the Sudanese military's 6th Division in el-Fasher, Sudan, is seen on Oct 26, 2025. (AP)

Sudan's military breaks paramilitary RSF's siege of key town

Sudan's military said Monday it has broken a siege imposed by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces on a key town in the central Kordofan region during the country's civil war.

In a statement, the military said it had opened a route leading to Dilling town in South Kordofan province, which the RSF for months has attempted to control. Holding the town means control over major supply lines.

"Our forces inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, both personal and equipment," the statement said.

There was no immediate comment from the RSF, which has been at war with the military for nearly three years.

Sudan plunged into chaos in April 2023 when a power struggle between the military and the RSF exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere. The war has killed more than 40,000 people, according to U.N. figures, but aid groups say the true number could be many times higher.

The fighting has created the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with over 14 million people forced to flee their homes. Parts of the country have been pushed into famine. (AP)

Lawyers accuse Mexico of breaking law in sending cartel members to US

MEXICO CITY, Jan 27, (AP): A group of lawyers and family members of important cartel figures accused Mexico's government on Monday of breaking the law by sending nearly a hundred Mexican citizens to the United States without an extradition order.

It comes less than a week after the administration of Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum sent 37 detained cartel members to the U.S. in what observers have described as an offering by Mexican authorities to offset mounting threats by US President Donald Trump to take military action against cartels.

Since last February, Mexico has sent a total of 92 cartel members in three separate transfers to the U.S. requested by the Trump administration. It's part of a larger strategy by Sheinbaum to crack down on cartels and maintain a positive relationship with the Trump.

The transfers have been at the center of a legal debate that has only gained more traction after last week's hand over. Mexico's government has maintained the transfers were legal, carried out in the name of national security. The Trump administration said the capos were wanted for crimes in the U.S. and many of them had outstanding extradition requests by the US.

In a press conference on Monday, lawyers for the cartel members asserted they were denied due process because they were sent to the US without an extradition order, which requires a lengthy legal process in Mexico.

National Guards patrol near a soccer field the day after gunmen opened fire, killing and wounding people, in Salamanca, Mexico on Jan 26. (AP)

Also:

MEXICO CITY: Cans, candles and blood-stained clothing littered a soccer field in central Mexico on Monday, a day after gunmen killed 11 people and injured 12 others during a gathering after an amateur match.

While authorities investigate the killings, **Guanajuato** state Gov. **Libia Dennise García** said Monday that "security in the region has been reinforced" with state and federal forces. She said on social media that the state "will act decisively to protect families, restore peace to the community and bring those responsible to justice."

The massacre took place in the municipality of **Salamanca**, in the state with the highest number of homicides in the country. The region has been wracked by intense violence linked to the territorial dispute between the local Santa Rosa de Lima cartel - a violent group primarily dedicated to fuel theft and trafficking - and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, CJNG.

Death toll from US strikes on alleged drug boats reaches 126, says military

WASHINGTON, Jan 27, (AP): The death toll from the Trump administration's strikes on alleged drug boats is up to 126 people, with the inclusion of those presumed dead after being lost at sea, the US military confirmed Monday.

The figure includes 116 people who were killed immediately in at least 36 attacks carried out since early September in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean, US Southern Command said. Ten others are believed dead because searchers did not locate them following a strike.

Eight of the presumed dead had jumped off boats when American forces attacked a trio of vessels accused of trafficking drugs on Dec. 30, the military said. The number was not released previously, though the military said when announcing those strikes that the US Coast Guard had searched for survivors. The two other people presumed dead were on boats that were attacked on Oct. 27 and last Friday.

President Donald Trump has said the US is in "armed conflict" with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs. But his administration has offered little evidence to support its claims of killing "narcoterrorists."

This image from video provided by US South Command, shows a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean shortly before it was destroyed by the US military, killing two and injuring one, on Jan 23. (AP)

Critics have questioned the overall legality of the strikes as well as their effectiveness, in part because the fentanyl behind many fatal overdoses is typically trafficked to the U.S. overland from Mexico, where it is produced with chemicals imported from China and India.

Bangladesh interim government declares 3-day holiday for election and referendum

DHAKA, Jan 27, (Xinhua): The Bangladeshi interim government has announced public holidays on Feb 11 and 12 nationwide to facilitate voting in the country's much-anticipated 13th general election and referendum.

Additionally, Feb. 10 has been designated a special holiday for workers and employees in industrial zones.

Bangladesh's Ministry of Public Administration said that the holidays aimed to ensure broad participation in the election and referendum process.

The country's election authorities had earlier said that more than 127 million voters had been registered for the election for the first time since former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and left the country in August 2024.

With nearly 2,000 candidates in the race, including 1,732 from 51 registered political parties, the election campaign has already moved into a phase of direct voter contact: door-to-door canvassing, neighborhood walks, street rallies, and mass public meetings.

Tarique Rahman, the son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia and chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), raises his arm to greet supporters at a campaign rally ahead of next month's national elections, in Sylhet, Bangladesh on Jan 22. (AP)

The candidates competing for the South Asian country's 300 parliamentary seats include 288 from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, 224 from the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, 32 from the National Citizen Party, 192 from the Jatiya Party and 249 independent candidates, according to the Election Commission.

Board of Directors recommended distribution of a cash dividend of 35 fils per share, in addition to 5% bonus shares

NBK posts strong net profits of KD 575.6 million in FY2025

Profit before tax increased by 5.4% year-on-year to KD 734.6 million

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced its financial results for the financial year ended 31 December 2025. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 575.6 million (USD 1.9billion), compared to KD 600.1 million (USD 2.0billion) for the financial year 2024. Earnings per share (EPS) stood at 64 fils for 2025, compared to 66fils for 2024.

Profit before tax increased by 5.4% on a year-on-year basis, reaching KD 734.6 million (USD 2.4billion) at the end of 2025, compared to KD 696.8million (USD 2.3billion) in 2024.

Total assets as of December 2025 grew by 13.1% year-on-year, reaching KD 45.6billion (USD 149.4 billion), while customer deposits grew by 14.0%, totaling KD 26.1billion (USD 85.3billion) by the end of 2025.

Meanwhile, Group loans and advances reached KD26.8 billion (USD 87.8 billion) by December 2025, reflecting a growth of 13.1% year-on-year.In the meantime, shareholders' equity also saw an increase, standing at KD 4.3 billion (USD 14.0 billion), up by 9.2% year-on-year.

In terms of distributions, the Board of Directors has proposed a cash dividend of 35 fils per share for the financial year 2025, equivalent to 53% of net profits. In addition, the Board has recommended the distribution of bonus shares at a ratio of 5%. These proposed distributions are subject to the approval of the Annual General Assembly (AGM).

A Prudent Approach

Commenting on the Bank's annual financial results, Mr. Hamad Al-Bahar, NBK Group Chairman, affirmed that, despite the challenges posed by the global economic environment in 2025, including the repercussions of geopolitical tensions, tariff pressures, and the accommodative trajectory of interest rates, the Bank succeeded in further consolidating its position as a leading financial institution. This performance was underpinned by a prudent operating approach and a flexible strategy anchored in diversification and financial discipline.

Al-Bahar noted that the Bank's financial results for the year ended 31 December 2025 reflect NBK's ability to adapt and navigate a wide range of economic conditions, supported by a diversified business model, a strong capital base, high-quality assets, comfortable liquidity position, and a robust governance and risk management framework.

He added that the Bank continues to successfully execute its strategy of balancing the delivery of superior returns to shareholders with meeting the evolving needs of its customers. He further emphasized that sustainability has become a central pillar of NBK's long-term growth agenda. The Bank recorded a significant year-on-year increase of approximately 23% in the value of its sustainable assets, reaching USD 6.10 billion by the end of 2025. This represents 61% of its strategic 2030 target of USD 10 billion. Al-Bahar added that 2025 marked a year of significant achievements that further reinforced NBK's position as the largest contributor to corporate social responsibility initiatives in Kuwait. Among the most notable milestones were the inauguration of the Shuwaikh Beach Development and Beautification Project, funded by the Bank at a cost of KWD 3 million, as well as the laying of the foundation stone for the expansion of the NBK Children's Hospital for Hematology, Oncology, and Stem Cell Transplant. The expansion includes the construction of a new building at an estimated cost of nearly KWD 19 million.

Solid Operating Performance

Meanwhile, Mr. Isam J. Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO, said: "The Group's 2025 results reflect the solid operating performance delivered across its various business segments, led by its core banking activities, despite the volatile global operating environment and its spillover effects on regional and local markets. During the year, the Group recorded a year-on-year growth of 3.6% in net operating income, reaching KWD 1.3billion (USD 4.2billion)."

He noted that the Group's profit before tax recorded a year-on-year increase of 5.4% in 2025, while net profits were impacted by the application of the domestic top-up minimum tax on multinational entities operating in Kuwait. He emphasized that this impact on profit growth is transitional in nature, reflecting the base-year effect of 2025 as the first year of the tax's implementation.

Al-Sager emphasized that NBK Group's diversified business mix, carefully calibrated strategic investments, and disciplined risk management have mitigated the impact of adverse global economic conditions. He added that NBK continues to invest in technology and innovation as fundamental pillars of inclusive and sustainable growth, while also expanding its customer base and capitalizing on opportunities across promising markets and key sectors.

He further noted that, throughout 2025, the Bank continued to roll out innovative banking services and products specifically designed to meet the evolving needs of its customers. In addition, the Group's Consumer and Digital Banking arm launched its new five-year strategy through 2030, marking a strategic shift from mere digitization of services to a fully customer-centric, underpinned by data collection and advanced analytics.This transformation further reinforces NBK's leadership position locally and regionally, offering an exceptional banking experience.

Furthermore, Al-Sager pointed to the key contribution of both NBK Group's corporate banking and international operations, as well asBoubyan Bank—the Group's Islamic banking arm— in strengthening the Group's profits. He further highlightedthat NBK Wealth has continued to consolidate its position as the largest wealth management entity in Kuwait and among the largest in the region, by offering an integrated suite of private banking, investment management, and advisory services through a globally connected network of operations.

On major financing transactions, Al-Sager stated: "During 2025, NBK led a KWD 1.5 billion syndicated term facility with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC). This transaction represents the largest financing of its kind denominated in Kuwaiti Dinars. The Bank served as the mandated lead arranger and bookrunner for the facility, as well as the agent for the conventional tranche. NBK's share amounted to KD 495 million of the total financing, making it the largest contributor among all participating conventional and Islamic banks, accounting for approximately 60% of the KD 825 million conventional tranche."

Al-Sager noted that this transaction reinforces NBK's position as the largest financier of Kuwait's oil sector and the primary banking partner for energy companies in supporting their expansion and growth plans.

He further noted that Kuwait Clearing Company's selection of NBK as the country's main settlement bank represents a testament to the Bank's substantial investments in digital infrastructure and its high level of operational readiness. This milestone further strengthens NBK's role in advancing the development of Kuwait's capital market infrastructure.

On the sustainability front, Al-Sager affirmed that NBK continues to deepen its leading role in shaping a more sustainable future through its green financing initiatives and the development of products and solutions that reflect global best practices in sustainable finance. In this context, he pointed to the Bank's signing in 2025 of Kuwait's first-ever green loan agreement. He also highlighted NBK's ongoing efforts to strengthen its environmental, social, and governance (ESG) framework through measurable initiatives that support emissions reduction and the achievement of carbon neutrality by 2060.

The Operating Environment

Al-Sager expressed his optimism regarding an improvement in the domestic operating environment in 2026, supported by a number of key factors.

He explained that the Financing and Liquidity Law enacted in 2025 has established an advanced framework for long-term sovereign debt issuances, thereby enhancing banking system liquidity through high-quality sovereign assets and supporting the financing of large-scale projects. He added that the Real Estate Financing Law—once approved—would enable banks to provide long-term financing for the residential sector, helping address the housing challenge and stimulating activity across construction and real estate–related sectors.

Moreover, Al-Sager noted that the value of government-awarded projects in 2025 exceeded KWD 4 billion, surpassing 2024 levels by well over 60%. Meanwhile, bank credit recorded solid performance, with credit to residents growing by approximately 7.63% year-on-year as of the end of December 2025, the fastest pace since 2023.

He indicated that project awards are expected to gain further momentum in 2026, supported by the broad pipeline of initiatives under the government's capital projects program across multiple sectors, alongside a gradual pace of interest rate cuts. This combination bodes well for the outlook and is set to create a favorable environment for credit growth for both corporates and individuals during the year.

He emphasized, however, that while the domestic outlook remains positive, it is accompanied by certain regional and global challenges, including persistent geopolitical tensions, tariffs, and their associated negative economic repercussions.

Prestigious Awards

During 2025, NBK further consolidated its leadership position by receiving a series of prestigious awards from leading global institutions and publications.

Among these accolades, MEED named NBK Best Retail Bank and Best SME Bank in Kuwait, in addition to awarding the Bank several regional honors across the Middle East and North Africa, including Best Loan Offering, Best Contactless Payment Experience, and Best Payment Solutions for SMEs. NBK's digital subsidiary, Weyay Bank, was also recognized with the Most Innovative Product Award for its children's card, "Jeel."

NBK also received three prestigious awards from Global Finance, including Best Digital Payment Solutionsand Best Online Product Offerings in Kuwait, while Weyay Bank was named Best Digital Bank in Kuwait. Furthermore, the Bank won four awards from Euromoney, including Kuwait's Best Bank for ESG, Kuwait's Best Bank for Large Corporates, Kuwait's Best Bank for Diversity and Inclusion, as well as Kuwait's Best Digital Bank for Weyay Bank.

Key financial indicators for the financial year ended December 31, 2025

- Net operating income stood at KD 1.3 billion (USD 4.2billion), up 3.6% year-on-year
- Total assets grew by 13.1% year-on-year, at KD 45.6billion (USD 149.4billion)
- Total loans and advances increased by 13.1% year-on-year to KD 26.8billion (USD 87.8billion)
- Customer deposits grew by 14.0% year-on-year to KD 26.1billion (USD 85.3billion)
- Total shareholders' equity amounted to KD4.3 billion(USD 14.0 billion), registering an annual growth of 9.2%.
- Strong asset quality metrics, with NPL/gross loans ratio at 1.36% and an NPL coverage ratio of 240%
- Robust Capital Adequacy Ratio of 17.0%, comfortably exceeding regulatory requirements.

Hamad Al-Bahar

Isam J. Al-Sager

Al-Bahar:

Our financial results for 2025 reflect NBK's ability to adapt to evolving conditions and navigate an increasingly complex economic landscape.

We continue to successfully execute our strategy by balancing the delivery of superior shareholder returns with meeting the growing and evolving needs of our customers.

Sustainability remains a core pillar of our long-term growth agenda, and we are accelerating our efforts in sustainable finance.

Al Sager:

We delivered a solid operating performance despite global volatility and its spillover effects on regional and local markets.

The impact of the Domestic Minimum Top-Up Tax (DMTT) on multinational entities remains transitional, reflecting its effect on profit growth arising from the base-year adjustment in 2025.

Our diversified business mix, carefully calibrated investments, and disciplined risk management mitigated the effects of heightened volatility in the global economy.

We continue to invest in technology and innovation as fundamental enablers of inclusive and sustainable growth.

The international operations of NBK Group and Boubyan Bank remain key contributors to the Group's profit performance.

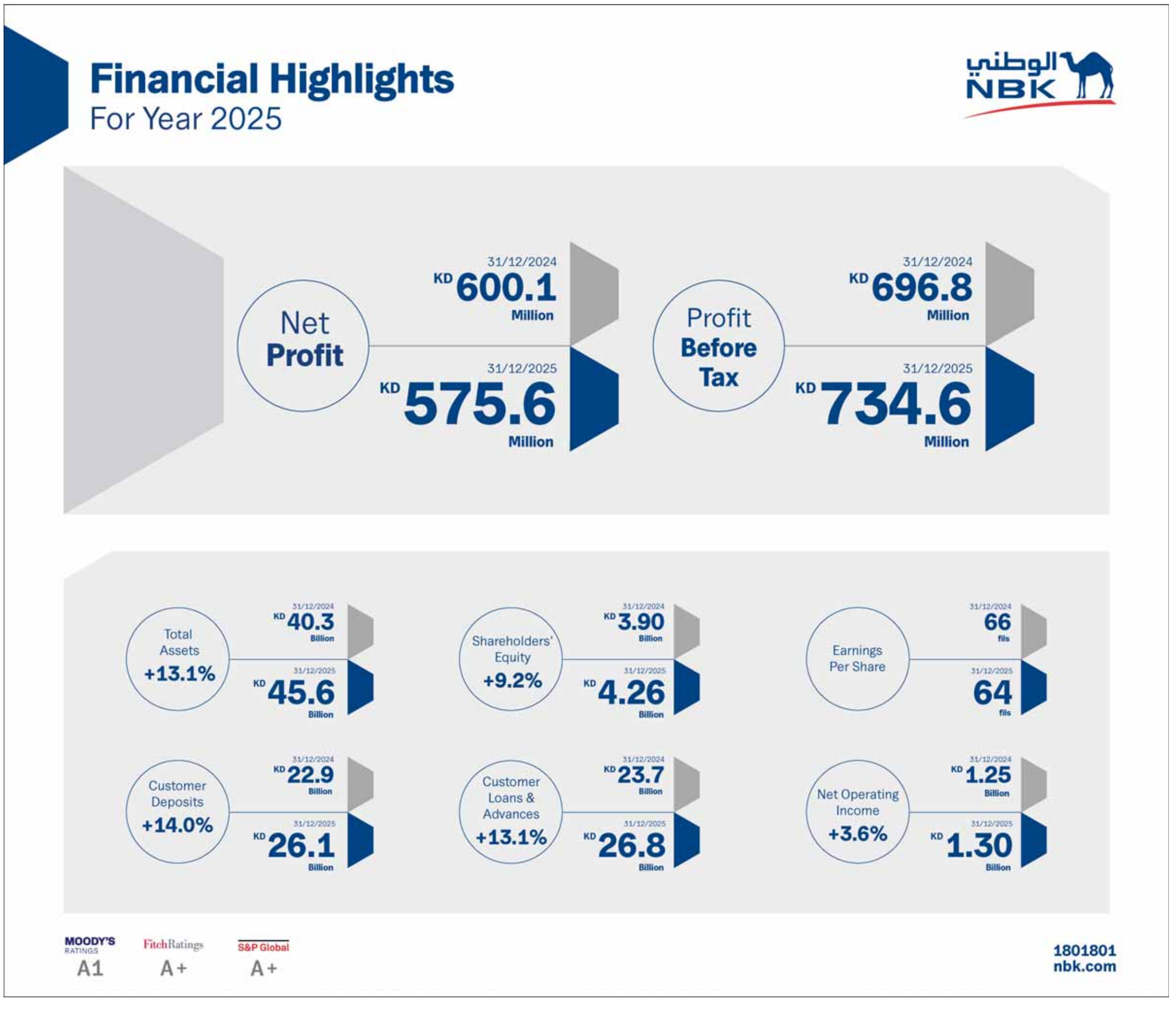
NBK Wealth continues to cement its leading position as the largest wealth management entity in Kuwait and among the largest in the region.

NBK deepens its role in shaping a more sustainable future through its green financing initiatives.

We remain optimistic about an improvement in the local operating environment in 2026, supported by several key factors.

Rising momentum in project awards, alongside the gradual pace of interest rate cuts, is creating a favorable environment for credit growth in 2026.

NBK headquarters



Earnings per share reached 35.64 fils for the year 2025, an increase of 5.8%

Al Marzouq: KD 632.1 million net profit attributable to KFH shareholders for the year 2025, an increase of 5%

Proposed distribution of cash dividends of 24% (including 10% in H1 2025) and Proposed bonus shares of 7%

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq said that, by the grace of Allah, KFH has reported net profit of KD 632.1 million attributable to the shareholders of the bank for the year 2025; an increase of 5.0% compared to last year. These historic profits are the highest in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Earnings per share reached 35.64 fils for the year 2025, an increase of 5.8%, compared to last year.

Net Financing income for the year 2025 reached KD 1.3 billion; an increase of 11.5% compared to last year.

Net operating income reached KD 1.2 billion, an increase of 10.7% compared to last year.

Financing receivables reached KD 21.8 billion, an increase of KD 2.7 billion, or 14.4%, compared to last year.

Total assets reached KD 42.8 billion for the year 2025, an increase of KD 6.1 billion, or 16.5%, compared to last year.

Total shareholders' equity reached KD 5.7 billion for the year 2025, an increase of KD 228 million, or 4.1%, compared to last year.

Depositors' accounts reached KD 21.0 billion for the year 2025, an increase of KD 1.8 billion, or 9.4%, compared to last year.

The capital adequacy ratio reached 19.81%, exceeding the minimum requirement of regulatory authorities. This demonstrates KFH`s strong capital base.

The Board of Directors considered the distribution of cash dividends to shareholders of 24% (including 10% in H1 2025 and a proposed 14% cash dividend for year-end). The Board of Directors also considered the distribution of bonus shares of 7% after the approval of the General Assembly and the competent authorities.

Record results

Al Marzouq stated that KFH's robust performance at year-end 2025 underscores a steadfast commitment to its long-term strategy. This roadmap focuses on driving sustainable growth, fortifying liquidity, capital, and risk management, and securing a position among the world's top 100 banks. He further noted that the record-breaking profits, unprecedented in the Kuwaiti banking sector, reflect KFH's market leadership and its resilience in navigating economic shifts across global markets.

He pointed out that KFH is a leading global economic entity with a presence across half of the world`s continents, supported by an international network of over 650 branches. He further explained that the Group's extensive geographic footprint and diversified revenue streams have significantly bolstered operational performance, delivering solid results for both shareholders and customers.

Leading the competition

Al Marzouq stated: "KFH's vision centers on the continuous development of leaders capable of driving transformation and achieving success. We place a high priority on Kuwaiti talent, ensuring they receive the best opportunities for recruitment and professional training. Furthermore, he highlighted KFH's successful efforts in expanding Private Banking and Wealth Management, as well as its investment in modern banking technology. By accelerating digitalization and developing innovative products, KFH provides outstanding customer experience and solidifies the Group's competitive leadership and sustainable growth amidst rapid changes in the global and regional banking sectors."

Economic growth support

Al Marzouq highlighted that KFH continues its leading role in supporting economic growth through an integrated program. This approach is not limited to providing outstanding banking services and promoting financial inclusion; it also extends to supporting the State's ambitious economic vision for a more stable and prosperous financial future.

By diversifying the national economy and achieving sustainable development in line with Kuwait Vision 2035, KFH participates in financing mega-projects in infrastructure, energy, oil and gas, and urban development. Furthermore, the bank provides credit facilities to Kuwaiti corporates and SMEs, recognizing their vital societal and economic roles.

Hamad Al Marzouq

Khaled AlShamlan

- Net Financing Income reached KD 1.3 billion an increase of 11.5%
- Net Operating Income reached KD 1.2 billion an increase of 10.7%
- A 16.5% increase in total assets, reaching KD 42.8 billion
- Growth in the financing portfolio by 14.4%
- Highest net profit in the Kuwaiti banking sector
- Solid capital base, strong operational performance, and high liquidity ratios
- A prominent role in supporting the local economy and financing major corporations
- Proactive sustainability and social responsibility initiatives

AlShamlan:

- A resilient business model and outstanding performance driving growth opportunities
- Efficient operational performance to enhance sustainable profitability and customer experience
- Successful third issuance of a $1 billion Sukuk to diversify funding sources
- Over 600 million digital banking transactions completed by customers in 2025
- Investing in human capital and fostering a work environment of creativity and innovation
- Exceptional 2025 performance recognized with 58 prestigious international awards

Largest facilities agreement

Al Marzouq highlighted the signing of a KD 1.5 billion credit facilities agreement for the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, the largest KD-denominated deal of its kind. The Islamic finance tranche accounted for KD 675 million of the total, with KFH, the lead strategic partner for the oil sector, contributing KD 405 million.

Positive assessment

He noted that KFH's strategy focuses on operational excellence and maintaining positive assessments and stable outlooks from global rating agencies. Notably, KFH ranked 1st for Best Performing Bank in Kuwait, for The Banker's Top 1000 Global Banks Rankings 2025. Additionally, the bank remains a constituent of the FTSE4Good Index Series and holds an 'A' rating on the MSCI ESG Index.

Sustainability and societal leadership

Al Marzouq stated that KFH has added several new initiatives to its distinguished record of community contributions. Key highlights include a KD 15 million donation to build and equip a specialized heart disease center, the opening of a tenth ward at the Addiction Treatment Center, and support for the development of Al Wataniya area in Kuwait City. Furthermore, KFH released its fifth Sustainability Report, highlighting its proactive social responsibility efforts, alongside its third Carbon Footprint Report, which provides a comprehensive assessment of the environmental impact of its operations.

Solid operational performance

Meanwhile, KFH Group CEO, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan said that the financial results confirm the Group's robust operational efficiency. He added that the agility of KFH's executive policies and procedures has enabled the bank to enhance operations, maintain its leadership in highly competitive markets, and capitalize on available opportunities by leveraging its experienced workforce and creative young talent.

Dynamic business model

He added: "We remain committed to fostering innovation and delivering value for our shareholders and customers, while ensuring sustainable growth and profits. This commitment enables us to lead the evolution of banking solutions by leveraging our flexible business model and core strengths, including a clear strategic vision, robust corporate governance, and diversified income streams. Supported by a broad customer base and efficient financial management, we aim to consistently enhance both profitability and customer experience."

Billion-Dollar Sukuk

AlShamlan highlighted the successful issuance of USD 1 billion in Senior Unsecured Sukuk with a five-year tenor. This marks the third issuance under KFH`s USD 4 billion Sukuk Program. He indicated that the objective of the issuance is to strengthen long-term funding sources and support the bank's operations.

600 million digital banking transactions

He affirmed that KFH accelerated its digital transformation and innovation journey in 2025, making tangible progress in its value proposition and the expansion of its partnerships. Key milestones included global remittance initiatives through collaborations with Western Union and Afaq system. KFH has further diversified its financing solutions by launching "Zafafi", a product tailored for marriage expenses, introducing virtual cards, and developing digital services on e-Corp mobile app. Furthermore, the bank expanded its digital offerings to include online financing, gold investment, and financing against gold account collateral. It also enhanced its smart branch services, bringing the total number of digital services on the KFHonline app to over 200.

He pointed out that KFH customers performed over 600 million digital banking transactions in 2025, a milestone that underscores their confidence and reinforces the bank's leadership in delivering future-proof financial solutions.

Investment in human capital

AlShamlan underscored KFH's commitment to investing in human capital and fostering a work environment that sparks creativity and innovation. He highlighted that KFH earned 9 prestigious awards from the Brandon Hall Group and achieved significant milestones in the recruitment of national talent. Furthermore, the bank has dedicated thousands of training hours to its staff, whom it regards as its most valuable asset and the cornerstone of its success.

58 awards

He explained that, as a testament to the Group's successes across all sectors, KFH garnered 58 awards in 2025. Key highlights include being named "World`s Best Islamic Bank" by Global Finance and "Bank of the Year – Kuwait" by The Banker. KFH also secured titles for Most Innovative Islamic Bank in Kuwait, World's Best Islamic SME Bank, and Best Islamic Private Bank- Digital Innovation 2025, alongside numerous other accolades from prestigious international bodies.

Thanks and appreciation

AlShamlan expressed his appreciation for the trust of shareholders and customers, as well as the unwavering support of the Board of Directors. He praised the Executive Management and all employees for their dedication and tireless efforts, which serve as the cornerstone in strengthening the bank's position and its future as a leading global Islamic financial institution.

Highest in Kuwait Banking Sector

Praise be to Allah

632.1 KD Million

بيت التمويل الكويتي KFH

Net Profit for Shareholders - 2025

		2025	2024	%
Net Profit for Shareholders	"KD Million"	632.1	601.8	5.0
Earnings per Share	"Fils"	35.64	33.68	5.8
Net Financing Income	"KD Million"	1,279.2	1,147.0	11.5
Total Operating Income	"KD Million"	1,833.3	1,692.2	8.3
Net Operating Income	"KD Million"	1,209.0	1,092.2	10.7
Total Assets	"KD Million"	42,760	36,703	16.5
Financing Receivables	"KD Million"	21,817	19,070	14.4
Depositors' Accounts	"KD Million"	21,029	19,220	9.4
Shareholders' Equity	"KD Million"	5,747	5,519	4.1

Dividends to Shareholders and Investors

	2025	2024
Cash Dividends (including the interim cash dividend by 10%)	24%	22%
Proposed Bonus Shares	7%	8%

The proposed dividends for 2025 are subject to the approval of General Assembly and other regulatory entities.

	2025 %
Investment Deposit "Al-Khumasiya"	4.600
Investment Deposit "Continuous"	4.150
Investment Deposit "Al-Dimah" 12 Months	3.750
Investment Deposit "Al-Dimah" 6 Months	3.575
Long Term Investments Plans	3.450
Investment Deposit "Al-Sedra"	3.150
Investment Saving Account	0.250

Profits will be credited to their bank accounts

In-depth perspectives on global & regional developments shaping capital markets & investment decision-making

Burgan Bank & Kamco Invest ready to host the 3rd edition of 'The Investment Conference'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Burgan Bank and Kamco Invest confirmed their readiness to host the third edition of their annual Investment Conference, scheduled to take place on Monday 2 February 2026 at The St. Regis Kuwait under the theme "Insights & Strategies Shaping Opportunities". Building on the previous editions' success, which firmly established the event as a leading investment forum in Kuwait and the region, the conference is set to convene thought leaders, global asset managers, and regional industry professionals for in-depth discussions on the forces shaping today's investment environment.

Attended by the investment community from Kuwait, the region and internationally, the discussions of The Investment Conference2026 will offer a comprehensive perspective on the most pressing topics driving the markets

The conference will address key global and regional themes emerging from a rapidly evolving economic and geopolitical landscape, including shifts in global power dynamics, changing macroeconomic

conditions, and the growing influence of technology on investment and capital allocation. Particular focus will be placed on the Middle East and GCC, examining how the region continues to position itself within an increasingly multi-polar global economy.

Discussions will also explore developments across capital markets and asset classes, alongside approaches to portfolio construction and diversification in a high-volatility environment. In addition, the conference will examine innovation-led investment trends, including private markets and technology-driven opportunities, as investors navigate valuation dynamics and long-term growth prospects.

With preparations well underway, The Investment Conference 2026 underscores Burgan Bank and Kamco Invest's commitment to providing a platform for informed dialogue, knowledge exchange, and high-level engagement. The conference continues to support Kuwait's ambition to strengthen its role as a regional financial and investment hub.

It serves to note that the Investment Conference is among many joint efforts led by Burgan Bankand Kamco Invest as part of their strategic partnership, which combines Burgan Bank's comprehensive banking capabilities with Kamco Invest's deep investment and advisory expertise to deliver integrated and sophisticated wealth management offerings to their clients.

China Lingzi hosts Global Forum on water, energy & resource recycling

BEIJING, Jan 27: To enhance international cooperation among Chinese enterprises, academia, research institutions, and applied industries, and to tackle critical issues in resource recycling, water conservation, and clean energy technologies, China Lingzi Group hosted the "2025 High-Level Forum on the Development and Application of Advanced Technologies for Resource Recycling, Water Conservation, and Energy Efficiency – China Lingzi Group International Cooperation Session."

China Lingzi Group, which is a leading engineering and manufacturing enterprise specializing in water treatment, resource recycling, water conservation, and energy-efficient systems and facilities, held the forum in Beijing, China, on December 28, 2025, in collaboration with Tianjin University's School of Environmental Science and Engineering.

The event brought together a distinguished group of experts, policymakers, and industry leaders from China and abroad.

Notable attendees included the following:

- Counselor Guo Zhengjian, Party Secretary and Chairman of the China Industry and Environmental Protection Association
- Wang Jie, Director-General of Natural Environment Protection at the Ministry of Ecology and Environment
- Ouyang Hua, Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress
- Hu Xiang, Secretary-General of the China Entrepreneurs Club
- representatives from the People's Association for the Promotion of Science and Technology and the International Green Economy Association
- researchers from the National Research Center.

Experts and officials specializing in urban pollution control technologies, including Professor Deng Yingyingalong with representatives from universities, industrial and environmental associations, and chairpersons and board members of leading Chinese companies in the water and energy sectors, actively participated in the forum.

International participation included Engineer Abdulrahman Al-Enezi from Kuwait's Ministry of Public Work who is responsible for wastewater engineering, and Engineer Mohammed Al-Qenaei, Board Member of the Kuwait Water Association who is specialized in water treatment for industrial and urban sectors.

The forum included keynote speeches, panel discussions, and technical exchanges, followed by field visits to the advanced facilities of Lingzi Industrial Group. During these visits, the company's modern technologies, highly efficient systems, and precise engineering capabilities were highlighted, which left a strong impression on all participants.

During the forum, Eng. Al-Enezi presented an overview of Kuwait's past and current wastewater treatment projects, and emphasized the country's strategies and challenges in this critical sector.

Eng. Al-Qenaei praised the organizers for convening such an important forum and commended the high-level participation of Chinese officials and experts for sharing valuable insights and practical experience in water and energy systems. Outlining Kuwait's national focus on water security, Eng. Al-Qenaei highlighted the country's heavy reliance on energy-intensive desalination processes to meet its freshwater needs.

He explained that the Ministry of Public Works in Kuwait has prioritized wastewater treatment to address these challenges by developing a national wastewater pipeline network and constructing advanced treatment facilities that meet the highest international standards, enabling the safe reuse of treated wastewater.

Group photo during the event.

Supporting businesses through integrated digital solutions

Gulf Bank launches new corporate banking mobile application

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Gulf Bank announced the launch of its new application dedicated to SME & corporate enterprise banking, designed to meet the evolving needs of businesses across various sectors. The launch reflects the Bank's continued commitment to deliver innovative digital solutions that support its digital transformation journey and align with customer expectations.

The new application offers a fully integrated digital experience that combines ease of use, speed, and the highest security standards, reinforcing Gulf Bank's role as a trusted financial partner for the business community.

During the press conference held yesterday, Mr. Faisal AlAdsani, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Gulf Bank, mentioned "This application reflects Gulf Bank's strategic vision, which is built on innovation, responsible digital transformation, and strengthening our partnership with clients across different sectors."

He added: "We ensured that the application is part of an integrated digital ecosystem that delivers flexibility, simplicity, and strong security. Our goal is to support the business community in making timely decisions with confidence."

Mr. AlAdsani emphasized that Gulf Bank continues to invest in technology, develop national talent, and build long term partnerships, based on the belief that client success is an extension of the Bank's own success. He noted that Gulf Bank's role goes beyond providing banking services to actively supporting the national economy and contributing to Kuwait Vision 2035.

He also pointed out that the launch coincides with Gulf Bank's celebration of 65 years since its establishment, during which the Bank has built strong relationships with Kuwait's business community and played an active role in supporting economic development.

Digital Transformation Mr. Faisal AlGharabally, General Manager of International Banking, said that a successful banking experience is not only about speed and convenience, but also about trust and security, which remain the foundation of Gulf Bank's relationship with its clients.

He explained that digital transformation at Gulf Bank is focused on enhancing customer experience rather than replacing existing channels. From this perspective, the Corporate Banking Mobile App was developed to complement the Bank's online banking services and create a more seamless experience.

Digital Transformation

The application enables faster decision making, particularly for critical approvals such as payroll transfers and other transactions carried out by corporate teams. It gives business owners greater flexibility, clearer control, and the ability to manage their banking activities anytime and anywhere.

Mr. AlGharabally noted that Corporate Clients were closely involved throughout the design and

A group photo of several executives management officials, with Acting Deputy CEO Faisal AlAdsani in the center.

development process through field visits and interactive sessions. Their feedback directly influenced the simplicity of the interface, ease of use, and focus on essential features.

He added that the app's design and user experience were aligned with Gulf Bank's retail banking application to enhance familiarity and ease of adoption, especially for clients who use both personal and business banking services.

He reiterated that information security and data privacy remain top priorities. The application was developed according to the highest governance and security standards and includes advanced protection systems and multiple verification measures. Gulf Bank also supports the Central Bank of Kuwait's Let's Be Aware campaign to promote financial awareness and cybersecurity.

"Our ambition goes beyond offering a local solution," he said. "We aim for this application to become a regional and global benchmark in ease of use and customer experience. Client feedback remains central to our continuous improvement, and we encourage our customers to share their views with us."

Competitive Advantages

Eng. Shamayel AlMarzouq, Assistant General Manager of Corporate Banking, highlighted the competitive advantages of the new Corporate Banking Application, noting that it responds to the growing demand for instant access through smart devices as businesses adopt faster and more flexible operating models.

She explained that the application is a comprehensive platform that enables companies to review accounts, approve payments, monitor transactions, and manage authorizations with ease, efficiency, and high level of security.

She added that Gulf Bank's strategy is anchored in leading digital transformation across the Banking Sector. By proactively anticipating technological shifts and market demands, Gulf Bank ensures that its solutions remain ahead of evolving business requirements and industry standards.

Key Milestone

Mr. Hasan Fayyad, Head of Digital Channels at Gulf Bank, said that the new application represents a qualitative leap in the corporate client experience and is among the most advanced and user friendly solutions in the banking sector.

He explained that the app consolidates all essential banking services and transactions on a single platform, regardless of company size or sector. This supports Gulf Bank's strategic objectives of speeding up processes, enhancing visibility and control, reducing risk, and simplifying complex banking operations through digitization.

Mr. Fayyad added that the application was developed based on extensive research and benchmarking against leading regional and global practices, as well as a deep understanding of the needs of business owners and financial decision makers. The result is a modern, scalable, and easy to adopt experience that supports all sized institutions.

First integrated maintenance operation … completed in record time without disrupting daily operations

Al Hamra Tower, Ministry complete major electrical maintenance project

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Al Hamra Real Estate Company announced the successful completion of a comprehensive and integrated maintenance project for the electrical systems at Al Hamra Business Tower, one of Kuwait's most prominent architectural and commercial landmarks. This was carried out in close collaboration and direct coordination with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy. This project represents an exceptional engineering achievement, marking the first in-depth and comprehensive maintenance operation for the systems in partnership with the Ministry. It reflects the management's commitment to the highest standards of safety, efficiency and operational sustainability.

Despite the significant engineering complexity arising from the distribution of electrical substations and major equipment across multiple and widely separated floors within the tower, rather than in a single centralized location as

Al Hamra Business Tower

is common in most global towers, the project was executed according to a meticulously planned strategy in three main phases. These included a thorough site assessment, precise technical inspections, and the preparation of a detailed execution plan. The first phase began on January 3, 2025, and covered all major systems in the substations of Al Hamra Mall, the parking building, and the low-rise groundlevel substations of Al Hamra Business Tower, focusing on air conditioning and cooling systems. The second phase commenced on January 1, 2026, during which essential maintenance and upgrades were performed on the critical electrical systems in the mid-level floors, ensuring improved operational efficiency and sustainability. The third and final phase was completed on January 2, 2026, concentrating on the upper floors of Al Hamra Business Tower. At the same time, comprehensive operational testing was conducted to verify the full integration of all systems before handing over the project in full compliance with the highest quality and safety standards.

Senior Manager Facility Management Unit, Eng. Wael Daoud, at Al Hamra Real Estate Company, emphasized that this accomplishment stems from the company's strategy of proactive planning, operational excellence and adherence to the highest global engineering standards, alongside strengthening effective partnerships with relevant government entities. He highlighted that continuous coordination with the Ministry of Electricity teams enabled the works to be carried out with exceptional efficiency and with no significant impact on the continuity of commercial and office activities within the project. This reflects »Al Hamra's« approach to managing complex technical projects in vital buildings, ensuring operational sustainability and protecting tenants' investments.He further stressed that the top priority was enhancing safety standards, minimizing operational risks to the lowest possible level, and guaranteeing system readiness under all conditions. Backup generators already in place were leveraged to fully power critical areas of the tower, such as central air conditioning, elevators, emergency lighting, and safety systems throughout the maintenance period, ensuring uninterrupted business continuity.

The management of Al Hamra Real Estate Company expressed pride in completing this project in a record time that did not exceed half the typical duration for similar works in comparable global projects. They view it as clear evidence of the high level of professionalism and coordination between the private sector and relevant government entities, as well as confirmation of State of Kuwait capability to execute complex technical projects with worldclass efficiency.This achievement reinforces the status of Al Hamra Business Tower and Al Hamra Mall as a leading, sustainable destination for business and investment in the State of Kuwait. It also reaffirms the company's ongoing commitment to providing a safe, reliable, and environmentally friendly operational environment that meets future aspirations.

Al Hamra Real Estate Strengthens Financial Performance, Achieving Highest Returns Since Inception

Al Hamra Real Estate Company announced the continuation of its strong financial momentum, achieving its highest growth rates for the third consecutive year. This performance highlights the resilience of the Company's operating model and the effectiveness of its long-term strategic vision, focused on diversification, operational excellence, and sustainable value creation.

The Company noted that the past three years marked a pivotal phase in its strategic repositioning. During this period, executive leadership focused on enhancing operational efficiency, optimizing assets, and building a more diversified and resilient business platform capable of responding to evolving economic conditions and market demands.

Commenting on the Company's performance, **SHK. Faisal Ahmad Al Abdullah Al Khalifa Al Sabah, Chairman of Al Hamra Real Estate Company**, stated that Al Hamra Real Estate Company is progressing steadily into a new phase of value-driven growth, supported by disciplined expansion into sectors that contribute to the national economy and the establishment of specialized entities aligned with market needs and Kuwait's future vision.

He added that the Company has launched and developed a number of subsidiaries and specialized companies, which serve as a natural extension of its core operations and reflect its strategic focus on diversifying income streams and strengthening institutional integration.

Key subsidiaries include:

- Technovia: Al Hamra Technical and Computing Services Co. serves as Al Hamra Real Estate's technology and innovation arm and key enabler of digital transformation.
- Al Hamra Holding Co: operates as an investment platform to diversify income sources and pursue promising opportunities inside and outside Kuwait.
- Ofuq Al Hamra Real Estate Co: reinforces Al Hamra Real Estate›s capabilities in the development and management of mid-scale and specialized real estate projects.
- Al Hamra Building Maintenance (HBM): acts as a core operational component that improves operational service quality and strengthens reliance on in-house capabilities.

The Chairman emphasized that this expansion strategy was not driven by scale alone, but by the objective of building an integrated business ecosystem that enhances operational efficiency, supports sustainable performance, and aligns with the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035, while maintaining governance and transparency as fundamental pillars across all operations.

Al Hamra Real Estate Company also confirmed that its financial policy over the past three years has resulted in the highest dividend distributions to shareholders since its establishment, reflecting the strength of its financial position, the efficiency of its operational management, and its balanced approach to delivering sustainable returns. This performance reinforces shareholder confidence and demonstrates the Company's continued ability to generate long-term value.

Looking ahead, Al Hamra Real Estate Company remains well-positioned for the next phase of growth, supported by a strong operational foundation, a diversified asset portfolio, and specialized subsidiaries capable of supporting future expansion within Kuwait, strengthening its position as a leading platform in the business and investment sector.

شركـــــة الاستثمـــارات الوطنيـــة
National Investments Company

National Investments Company Recognized for Most Innovative Digital Transformation Initiatives Award - Kuwait 2025 from Global Business Outlook

Mr. Faleh Sultan

In a new achievement underscoring its institutional leadership and ability to adapt to the rapid transformations shaping today's business environment, National Investments Company announced that it has been awarded the **"Most Innovative Digital Transformation Initiatives Award - Kuwait 2025"** by Global Business Outlook. The award recognizes the outstanding efforts of the Company's Information Technology Sector and its pivotal role in reshaping the digital operating ecosystem and enhancing operational efficiency in line with the highest international standards.

This recognition represents the culmination of the Company's ambitious digital transformation strategy, which focused on developing advanced technological infrastructure, adopting smart digital solutions, and leveraging the latest innovations to support both investment and administrative functions. These efforts align with evolving market expectations and further strengthen the Company's readiness to meet future business requirements.

Digital Leadership and a Forward - Looking Vision

On this occasion, Mr. Faleh Sultan, Managing Director of the Information Technology Sector at National Investments Company, stated that this achievement reflects the Company's commitment to positioning digital transformation as a core strategic pillar for sustainable business growth. He emphasized that the Information Technology Sector has played a vital role in advancing operational systems, enhancing user experience, and strengthening governance and cyber security frameworks, thereby supporting institutional performance sustainability and improving the efficiency of decision-making processes.

Sultan explained that National Investments Company has adopted a systematic approach to upgrading its digital infrastructure and deploying solutions powered by advanced analytics, automation, and smart platforms. These initiatives have accelerated processes, enhanced service quality, and enabled seamless integration across the Company's various sectors within a secure and flexible digital environment.

A Digital Transformation Supporting Investment Activities

Sultan added that this digital excellence was not pursued as a purely technical objective, but rather as a strategic enabler to support investment activities and enhance the Company's competitive positioning. The digital solutions implemented have strengthened data management capabilities, supported investment decision-making, and improved operational efficiency, thereby enhancing the value delivered to both clients and shareholders.

He further noted that this international recognition serves as a catalyst for continued investment in digital innovation, the development of national technical capabilities, and the adoption of global best practices in digital transformation. These efforts reinforce the Company's position as a forward-looking investment institution capable of adapting to the rapidly evolving financial landscape.

Global Business Outlook: A Global Platform for Monitoring Institutional Excellence

Global Business Outlook is an international organization specializing in monitoring and evaluating the performance of companies and institutions worldwide, with a particular focus on innovation, governance, digital transformation, and sustainability. The organization publishes periodic reports based on in-depth research and qualitative analysis and awards its annual honors to institutions that demonstrate measurable excellence in institutional development and strategic transformation.

The Global Business Outlook awards are based on rigorous criteria, including operational performance, level of innovation, and the ability of institutions to generate a positive and sustainable impact within their respective sectors. As such, this recognition represents an internationally accredited endorsement of the success of National Investments Company's digital transformation journey.

A Continued Journey of Achievements

This award adds to National Investments Company's distinguished record of accomplishments and reaffirms its position as one of the leading investment companies in Kuwait and the region. The Company has successfully balanced deep-rooted investment expertise with advanced technologies to deliver an integrated institutional model founded on innovation, sustainability, and sound governance.

Sultan concluded by reaffirming the Company's commitment to advancing its digital transformation journey, enhancing technological readiness, and leveraging digital capabilities as a strategic enabler to support long-term growth, strengthen client confidence, and deliver sustainable added value to all stakeholders.

It is worth noting that National Investments Company is among the largest and most established investment institutions locally and regionally, supported by a long track record of success and decades of accumulated expertise. The Company takes pride in its broad and diversified shareholder base, which includes a distinguished group of leading companies and individuals with strong financial standing. It also maintains a significant presence across multiple vital sectors, underpinned by a steadfast commitment to the highest standards of governance and professional best practices, reinforcing its pivotal role in supporting sustainable economic development and enhancing market confidence.

شركـــــة الاستثمـــارات الوطنيـــة
National Investments Company

Most Innovative Digital Transformation Initiatives Kuwait 2025

www.nic.com.kw

Features

ARAB TIMES

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026

France passes bill banning social media for under-15s

Meta, TikTok and YouTube face trial over youth addiction claims

NEW YORK, Jan 27, (Agencies): Three of the world's biggest tech companies face a landmark trial in Los Angeles starting this week over claims that their platforms - Meta's Instagram, ByteDance's TikTok and Google's YouTube - deliberately addict and harm children.

Jury selection starts this week in the Los Angeles County Superior Court. It's the first time the companies will argue their case before a jury, and the outcome could have profound effects on their businesses and how they will handle children using their platforms.

The selection process is expected to take at least a few days, with 75 potential jurors questioned each day through at least Thursday. A fourth company named in the lawsuit, Snapchat parent company Snap Inc., settled the case last week for an undisclosed sum.

At the core of the case is a 19-year-old identified only by the initials "KGM," whose case could determine how thousands of other, similar lawsuits against social media companies will play out. She and two other plaintiffs have been selected for bellwether trials - essentially test cases for both sides to see how their arguments play out before a jury and what damages, if any, may be awarded, said Clay Calvert, a nonresident senior fellow of technology policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

KGM claims that her use of social media from an early age addicted her to the technology and exacerbated depression and suicidal thoughts. Importantly, the lawsuit claims that this was done through deliberate design choices made by companies that sought to make their platforms more addictive to children to boost profits. This argument, if successful, could sidestep the companies' First Amendment shield and Section 230, which protects tech companies from liability for material posted on their platforms. "Borrowing heavily from the behavioral and neurobiological techniques used by slot machines and exploited by the cigarette industry, Defendants deliberately embedded in their products an array of design features aimed at maximizing youth engagement to drive advertising revenue," the lawsuit says.

Executives, including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, are expected to testify at the trial, which will last six to eight weeks. Experts have drawn similarities to the Big Tobacco trials that led to a 1998 settlement requiring cigarette companies to pay billions in healthcare costs and restrict marketing targeting minors.

"Plaintiffs are not merely the collateral damage of Defendants' products," the lawsuit says. "They are the direct victims of the intentional product design choices made by each Defendant. They are the intended targets of the harmful features that pushed them into self-destructive feedback loops."

The tech companies dispute the claims that their products deliberately harm children, citing a bevy of safeguards they have added over the years and arguing that they are not liable for content posted on their sites by third parties.

Meta, YouTube and TikTok did not immediately respond to requests for comment Monday.

The case will be the first in a slew of cases beginning this year that seek to hold social media companies responsible for harming children's mental well-being. A federal bellwether trial beginning in June in Oakland, California, will be the first to represent school districts that have sued social media platforms over harms to children.

In addition, more than 40 state attorneys general have filed lawsuits against Meta, claiming it is harming young people and contributing to the youth mental health crisis by deliberately designing features on Instagram and Facebook that addict children to its platforms. The majority of cases filed their lawsuits in federal court, but some sued in their respective states.

Also:

PARIS: French lawmakers approved a bill banning social media for children under 15, paving the way for the measure to enter into force at the start of the next school year in September, as the idea of setting a minimum age for use of the platforms gains momentum across Europe.

The bill, which also bans the use of mobile phones in high schools, was adopted by a 130-21 vote late Monday. French President **Emmanuel Macron** has requested that the legislation be fast-tracked and it will now be discussed by the Senate in the coming weeks.

The issue is one of the very few in a divided National Assembly to attract such broad support, despite critics from the hard left denouncing provisions of the bill as infringement on civil liberties. Weakened domestically since his decision to dissolve parliament plunged **France** into a prolonged political crisis, Macron has strongly supported the ban, which could become one of the final major measures adopted under his leadership before he leaves office next year.

The French government had previously passed a law banning phone use in all primary and middle schools.

The vote in the assembly 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.

The French bill has been devised to be compliant with the European Union's Digital Services Act, which imposes a set of strict requirements designed to keep internet users safe online. In November, European lawmakers called for action at EU level to protect minors online, including a bloc-wide minimum age of 16 and bans on the most harmful practices.

Fashion

Couture, Lauren Sánchez are everywhere

Dior and Schiaparelli mix wonder and wit in Paris

Bruna Marquezine at Chanel's Spring/Summer 2026 Haute Couture show in Paris. (AP)

Monica Barbaro poses at Christian Dior's Spring/Summer 2026 show in Paris. (AP)

Jennifer Lawrence attends Christian Dior's Spring/Summer 2026 Haute Couture show in Paris. (AP)

Livia Marques Nunes poses at Christian Dior's Spring/Summer 2026 show in Paris. (AP)

PARIS, Jan 27, (AP): Dior turned the Musée Rodin into a celebrity waiting room - then into a garden - on the first day of Paris Couture Week.

Guests packed into the museum as the start time for the show drifted.

French first lady Brigitte Macron arrived. Lauren Sánchez Bezos swept in. Parker Posey twirled in her trench-dress.

And then the whole room, celebrities and editors alike, sat and waited for Rihanna.

When the pop-star finally took her seat, the lights dropped on a suspended ceiling hung with a garden of flowers.

Gravity did its quiet work: a bloom loosened and fell to the floor.

It was a fitting opening image for Jonathan Anderson's first Dior haute couture show: beauty under pressure.

Anderson, the Northern Irish designer who revived Loewe with craft and wit, is now doing something Dior has never asked of one person in the modern era: he commands menswear, womenswear and couture at once.

That scale matters.

Dior is one of the main engines of the luxury conglomerate LVMH, and couture is where a house shows its power.

The collection was pitched as "nature in motion," with technique treated as living knowledge, not museum display. Anderson followed that logic, reworking fragments of the past into something meant to feel new.

From the start, the palette was disciplined - blacks, whites and ecru - then punctured by flashes of color and texture. Lines were clean. Draping softened, then snapped back into structure: archetypal couture.

At its best, Anderson's couture had the crispness he has already shown in menswear, and previously at Loewe.

A sublime silken Asian-style coat, strict and elegant, was cut through with black lapels that felt archive-meets-modern.

The house's history appeared not as costume but as distortion.

Gowns

The show's oddest and most telling jokes were the pannier gowns: 18th-century volume reimagined as a take on a fanny pack silhouette.

It was classic Anderson: take something precious, tilt it, and make the result feel both witty and exact. Micro became macro - flowers cut from light silks, dense embroideries, chiffon and organza layered like feathers.

He also nodded to a broader Dior lineage without leaning on nostalgia.

Dior cited bunches of cyclamen given to Anderson by its former creative director John Galliano, and the show carried a faint echo of Galliano-style spectacle - filtered through Anderson's cooler, more controlled hand.

Hydrangea-like blooms appeared as oversized earrings throughout, a decorative flourish, but one that felt like Dior's house codes pushing him toward embellishment.

For all the ambition, the accomplished show occasionally felt like a set of strong parts still settling into a single, defining line.

Couture raises the stakes. When it works, it doesn't just impress; it convinces. Anderson's debut did both - but not always at the same time. The ceiling garden promised one complete world. At times, the clothes felt like a designer still deciding where that garden begins and ends.

If Dior said it with flowers, Schiaparelli said it with plumes. The painted ceilings of the Petit Palais were made to evoke the Sistine Chapel in a typical imaginative and envelope-pushing couture display - graced by the likes of Sánchez Bezos and her husband Jeff, as well as Demi Moore. It was plumes, horns and lots of celebrity.

Designer Daniel Roseberry framed the collection as a push from "thinking" to "feeling," and the clothes followed suit: sharp-shouldered "Elsa" jackets with gravity-defying hips, bustiers that seemed molded like armor, and skirts that bloomed in smoky sfumato tulle from nude to black.

There were creatures everywhere - bird heads, scorpion tails, snake teeth and she-scorpion looks that turned lingerie into couture theater.

Technique did the heavy lifting: bas-relief lace bouquets mounted on tulle, trompe l'oeil animal tails, and showpieces that reportedly took thousands of hours - including one with 65,000 handset feathers.

The keyhole motif - a Schiaparelli signature - returned as jewelry and hardware, a wink at mystery amid the meticulousness.

At its best, the collection balanced menace with beauty, making couture feel like fantasy built on discipline.

At other moments, the exuberance nearly tipped into costume, a victim of its own enthusiasm, as if every idea had to arrive at full volume. Still, as an opening salvo for couture week, Schiaparelli made the message clear: this season, subtlety can wait.

A model wears a creation as part of the Christian Dior Spring/Summer 2026 Haute Couture collection presented in Paris, Monday, Jan. 26. (AP)

A model wears a creation as part of the Chanel Spring/Summer 2026 Haute Couture collection presented in Paris, Tuesday, Jan. 27. (AP)

Inclusive fashion

African talent still 'struggles'

MILAN, Jan 27, (AP): A day before an emerging Ghanaian designer made his Milan runway debut, **Michelle Francine Ngonmo** was troubleshooting how to squeeze more people into the venue to meet demand. Hours before the show, she was up before dawn with her team setting up backstage and the showroom.

Ngonmo, a 38-year-old Cameroonian-Italian, has dedicated her professional life to helping raise the profile of Africans and other people of color in Italian fashion and other creative fields "because there was, let's say, a lack of representation of people like me."

Ngonmo

Ngonmo, who founded the Afrofashion Association a decade ago, produces runway shows, mentors talent and recognizes trailblazing achievements through the Black Carpet Awards, launched in 2023. Ngonmo also teaches fashion students and travels regularly to Africa to work with designers there.

In its first decade, the Afrofashion Association has worked with 3,000 people of color, including 92 who are working in creative jobs and "on a sustainable professional path," Ngonmo said.

That number is both a sign of the Afrofashion Association's success, and a measure of how much more work there is to be done.

"Italy is no longer a white Italy, as imagined, but an Italy where there are many colors," Ngonmo said.

The Black Lives Matters movement launched a discussion in Italy about the absence of people of color in Italian fashion's influential design studios, and designers Stella Jean and Edward Buchanan teamed up with Ngonmo to demand fashion houses replace expressions of solidarity with action. The fashion industry won't disclose diversity numbers, but the lack seemed evident as several prominent fashion houses were emerging from scandals over racially insensitive designs or campaigns.

For several seasons, the trio mentored creatives of color under the catchphrase: We Are Made in Italy (WAMI). But slowly the spotlight faded, as diversity and inclusion money dried up and the fashion industry was plunged into an economic crisis.

"At the time there was a reaction, indeed a very strong request to have to deal with creatives, especially Blacks in Italy," Ngonmo said. "And then slowly the curtain closed because the attention was no longer on that."

Ngonmo said she now focuses her attention "on those companies, those institutions that have remained with us during these years, and look at the result we have brought."

That includes the Italian National Fashion Chamber, which backed WAMI and is giving platforms to up and coming Black talents on the Milan Fashion Week calendar. One of them is Ghanaian designer Victor Reginald Bob Abbey-Hart, who heads the brand Victor-Hart and debuted his collection of mostly denim looks earlier this month.

Abbey-Hart, who recently designed a denim collection for Max & Co., has worked with Ngonmo to raise his profile. He has graduated from showing his looks at a Black Carpet Awards ceremony to a presentation during fashion week in September before the runway show.

The designer said his love affair with fashion started when he saw his first Gucci bag back in Ghana.

'Self-awareness helps you catch changes sooner'

What to know about breast self-awareness and cancer prevention

NEW YORK, Jan 27, (AP): What does it mean to have breast self-awareness?

It's a more general, flexible approach to breast cancer prevention that involves staying familiar with how your breasts look and feel. It goes along with other early detection measures like getting regular mammograms.

Doctors suggest breast self-awareness as an alternative to self-exams - those monthly, methodical checks for any changes while applying pressure or lying down.

Two decades ago, the American Cancer Society stopped recommending self-exams for people with average breast cancer risk because there wasn't strong evidence they helped if people were taking other preventative measures like regular mammograms. And the monthly checks made some patients anxious about every change, especially those with dense or naturally bumpy breast tissue.

"Let's say you bring 100 women into an auditorium and you teach them how to do it, and then they go home and do it. We don't find any more cancers than if all of those women had mammograms according to our guidance," said Dr. Arif Kamal, chief patient officer for the American Cancer Society.

Over 300,000 U.S. women and about 2,600 men will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer in 2026, according to the cancer society.

The AREA Services building in Shamokin, Pa., is decorated in pink ribbons and bras for Breast Cancer Awareness month, Oct. 4, 2012. (AP)

While mammograms are critical, especially for finding early, otherwise undetectable cancers, it's important to notice breast changes between screenings or before you are old enough to qualify - and get those checked by a doctor, just in case.

So what does that awareness look like in daily life? Here's what to know.

The point of breast self-awareness is to "know what your breasts normally look and feel like. And if something changes and you have a new lump or a new thickening, you could bring it to a doctor's attention," said Dr. Shari Goldfarb with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

Unlike monthly self-exams, there's no set routine for breast self-awareness. Instead, it's a general practice that integrates into daily life. That could mean noticing a change in shape while putting on a sports bra to exercise, or feeling pain when lying down for bed.

Dr. Megan Schneiderman's patients have brought up shifts they saw when looking in the mirror. Sometimes, their partner was the one who noticed.

The point of this general awareness "is to try to make things a little less scary for patients," said Schneiderman, who works at Mount Nittany Health in Pennsylvania.

Other important changes to look out for besides lumps are an inverted nipple, nipple discharge, skin dimpling, changes in breast size, skin redness or constant pain from a single area. If something feels off, call a doctor to get it checked out.

Checking for changes can lead to anxiety over whether every new development could be cancerous. But experts say it's important to remember that it's better not to be caught off guard.

Most lumps aren't cancer - they could be normal fluctuations in breast tissue or a benign cyst - but it's always a good idea to check just to be safe, especially if it persists or worsens, said Dr. Pouneh Razavi, a breast radiologist with Johns Hopkins Medicine.

"You definitely want to have it assessed, but do not worry unless there's a reason to worry," she said.

It's also important to maintain a normal screening routine since being breast self-aware isn't protective enough on its own. That means getting mammograms yearly or every other year starting at age 40 or 45, as recommended by the US Preventive Services Task Force and the American Cancer Society.

People who are at higher risk due to family history or genetic mutations or people with dense breasts may have earlier or different screening schedules or require additional imaging.

"It's just about really knowing yourself and recognizing if something changes," Razavi said.

This NASA image shows two massive galaxy clusters previously captured by NASA's James Webb Space Telescope and Chandra X-ray Observatory, with areas of possible dark matter in blue. (AP)

Webb Telescope sharpens view of the universe

New galaxy map may unlock dark matter secrets

NEW YORK, Jan 27, (AP): A new high-resolution map of distant galaxies may help scientists understand a mysterious invisible substance that helps hold the universe together.

The ordinary matter all around us - stars, planets and people - makes up just 5% of the universe. For decades, researchers have hoped to demystify what's known as dark matter, a material that comprises just over a quarter of our universe. Another equally mysterious force called dark energy makes up the rest.

Dark matter doesn't absorb or give off light so scientists can't study it directly. But they can observe how its gravity warps and bends the star stuff around it - for example, the light from distant galaxies. By studying these distortions across large swathes of the universe, scientists can get closer to unmasking dark matter and its various hiding places.

The latest map, created with images from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, is the most detailed yet over such a large patch of sky. It has twice the resolution of previous attempts using the Hubble Space Telescope and captures hundreds of thousands of galaxies over the past 10 billion years.

"Now, we can see everything more clearly," said study author Diana Scognamiglio with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The latest map, published Monday in the journal Nature Astronomy, includes information on new galaxy clusters and the strands of dark matter that connect them. Piece by piece, these structures help form the skeleton of the universe. Scientists can study this map to see how dark matter has clumped up over billions of years.

Dark matter doesn't have much of an impact on your midday lunch order or your nightly bedtime ritual. But it silently passes through your body all the time and has shaped the universe.

As humans, we're naturally curious to know more about where we come from and that story can't be told without dark matter, said astrophysicist Rutuparna Das with the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

"Our home is the universe and we want to understand what the nature of it is," said Das, who was not involved with the new study.

China deploys AI model in orbit

Riyadh hosts int'l forum to tackle space debris, ensure sustainability

RIYADH, Jan 27, (Agencies): The second edition of the "Space Debris Conference 2026" opened on Monday in Riyadh, organized by the Saudi Space Commission with participation from 75 countries, alongside leading international space experts, decision-makers, and industry leaders.

Speaking at the opening, Acting CEO of the Saudi Space Commission Dr. Mohammad Al-Tamimi said the two-day conference reflects the Kingdom's firm commitment to addressing the challenges of space debris management.

Al-Tamimi noted that the rapid increase in objects and debris in Earth orbits poses a growing challenge to the safety and sustainability of space activities, calling for enhanced international cooperation and the adoption of innovative and effective solutions.

He stressed the importance of unifying global efforts to support international initiatives and implement best practices and advanced technologies in space debris management.

In a similar address, Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) Aarti Holla Maini emphasized that addressing space debris challenges requires comprehensive global cooperation, urging the development of practical strategies to deal with accumulated debris from previous space activities.

Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Thomas Lamanauskas highlighted the importance of responsible and comprehensive management of space resources, calling for leveraging the rapid growth of the space economy while preserving resources for future generations.

The conference is held under the support of UNOOSA and in cooperation with the ITU, as part of ongoing international efforts to enhance cooperation in addressing space debris challenges and ensuring the sustainability of outer space.

KUNA photo

Acting CEO of the Saudi Space Commission, Dr. Mohammad Al-Tamimi.

The conference aims to raise global awareness of space debris risks and support international efforts to protect the future of the space economy by discussing relevant policies and regulations, promoting research and innovation, and developing effective international governance frameworks to mitigate the impacts of space debris.

The program includes specialized panel discussions on space sustainability and the technical and regulatory challenges of space debris, as well as the presentation of innovative operational solutions to enhance space safety and long-term sustainability.

The conference coincides with an exhibition showcasing 20 projects shortlisted in the "DebrisSolver" competition, offering innovative solutions and practical applications to address space debris challenges.

In a related development, a Chinese commercial aerospace firm has successfully deployed a general-purpose AI model aboard its orbiting satellites, marking a major milestone for space-based computing.

The GuoXing Aerospace Technology announced at a seminar on Monday that it has uplinked the Alibaba's Qwen3 large language model to its inaugural space-based computing center, enabling end-to-end reasoning tasks entirely in orbit.

"This marks the world's first deployment of a general-purpose large-scale AI model from ground control to an operational satellite constellation in orbit," said Wang Yabo, executive vice president of the Chengdu-based startup.

India cases

Sri Lanka on Nipah alert

COLOMBO, Jan 27, (Xinhua): Sri Lanka has stepped up monitoring measures following reports of a Nipah virus cluster in India's eastern state of West Bengal, as health authorities across parts of Asia heighten vigilance over the emerging situation, the Daily Mirror reported.

Health officials said Sri Lanka is tracking developments at the regional level and remains in contact with international health monitoring systems. While no cases have been reported locally, authorities have indicated that preparedness measures are in place should the situation evolve.

The alert follows confirmation by Indian authorities of at least five Nipah virus infections in West Bengal, including cases among healthcare workers. The development has prompted several countries in the region to strengthen preventive measures, particularly at international airports.

Nipah virus is a zoonotic disease transmitted between animals and humans and, in some instances, through human-to-human contact. It is classified as a priority pathogen by the World Health Organization due to its epidemic potential and the severity of illness it can cause. Past outbreaks of the Nipah virus have been associated with high fatality rates, ranging from 40 percent to 75 percent.

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Measles: Mongolia has registered 22 new cases of measles infection over the past 24 hours, bringing the national caseload to 13,989, according to the country's National Center for Communicable Diseases (NCCD) on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, 56 people remained in the hospital, including five critically ill children, the NCCD said in a statement.

On Dec. 30, the NCCD said Mongolia's measles death toll had reached 12 after one more related death was registered.

Therefore, the NCCD advised parents to protect their children from a potentially severe disease by getting them two doses of the measles vaccine.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease transmitted by respiratory droplets and direct contact.

Common complications include fever, dry cough, runny nose, sore throat and inflamed eyes. The disease can be prevented by immunization.

Ethiopia contains Marburg

Chinese experts identify key Ebola virus mutation

GUANGZHOU, Jan 27, (Agencies): Chinese researchers have unveiled a crucial mutation in the Ebola virus that significantly enhanced its infectivity during a major outbreak, providing new insights for epidemic surveillance and drug development.

The research effort, published in the journal Cell, was conducted by a team led by Professor Qian Jun from Sun Yat-sen University, in collaboration with researchers from Guangzhou Eighth People's Hospital of Guangzhou Medical University, both located in south China, the First Hospital of Jilin University in northeast China, and other Sun Yat-sen University teams, the research team told Xinhua on Monday.

"The research tells us that during major emerging infectious disease outbreaks, real-time genomic surveillance and evolutionary analysis of the pathogen are crucial," said Qian.

"This is not only able to warn of changes in transmission risk but also to prospectively assess the effectiveness of existing drugs and vaccines, guiding us to preemptively adjust control strategies."

The study focused on the Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 2018 to 2020, the second-largest in history, which caused over 3,000 infections and more than 2,000 deaths. A key question drove the research, namely beyond the impact of local healthcare challenges, did viral evolution itself contribute to this outbreak's prolonged duration?

"We have long been aware that key viral mutations often act as invisible drivers accelerating transmission during major outbreaks. Having worked on Ebola for over a decade, we had to investigate whether similar patterns of mutation existed for this virus," said Qian, explaining the team's motivation.

In 2022, the team analyzed 480 complete Ebola virus genomes and discovered that a variant carrying a specific mutation in the viral glycoprotein, named GP-V75A, had emerged early in the DRC epidemic. This variant rapidly replaced the original strain, and its rising prevalence closely mirrored the surge in case numbers, suggesting it might confer a transmission advantage, according to the research team.

Subsequent experiments using various models confirmed the mutation's biological impact. It showed that GP-V75A had significantly enhanced the virus's ability to infect multiple types of host cells and mice.

Furthermore, this study revealed a potential clinical concern, notably that the GP-V75A mutation had diminished the antiviral effectiveness of some existing therapeutic antibodies and small-molecule entry inhibitors, indicating a possible risk of drug resistance.

These findings underscore the importance of continuous viral genome monitoring during outbreaks to anticipate evolutionary threats and inform the development of broad-spectrum countermeasures, the research team said.

The paper titled "Molecular characterization of Ebola virus glycoprotein V75A substitution in the 2018-2020 epidemic," is available online.

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Marburg: Ethiopia on Monday declared the end of its first outbreak of Marburg virus after completing the mandatory 42 days with no new confirmed cases.

A total of 14 cases, including nine deaths and five who recovered, were confirmed in the southern region bordering South Sudan since Nov. 14, 2025. An additional five deaths were classified as possible cases, the World Health Organization said.

Three health workers were infected, two of whom had died and one recovered, the WHO said.

The WHO said it provided Ethiopia's Ministry of Health with technical support in surveillance, laboratory diagnostics, case management, infection prevention and control, coordination and logistics.

A woman dies from cancer every two minutes

Health and soccer unite for cervical cancer vaccination for African girls

NORTON, Zimbabwe, Jan 27, (AP): Lesotho's Lishoeshoe soccer club was losing by four goals at halftime against South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns in the final of a regional Under-17 girls' tournament in Zimbabwe aimed at promoting cervical cancer vaccination. By fulltime, the gap had stretched to 5-0.

Yet for Lishoeshoe winger Nteboheleng Leticia Sooane, the result felt beside the point.

For the 16-year-old, the tournament's most important outcome had little to do with goalmouth scrambles or final-whistle disappointment. Instead, it was about building confidence among girls to trust the HPV vaccine and prevent a disease that kills a woman every two minutes globally - with the burden most acute in Africa, according to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, one of the tournament's organizers.

"Participating in the tournament was very good because we had to learn and spread (the message) even though we did not win the finals. So it was a good experience," Sooane said as she waited to collect her finalist's medal in a rain-soaked stadium in Norton, on the outskirts of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare.

Sooane was among about 200 girls from six countries taking part in the CAF Under-17 girls' tournament in December, organized by Africa's soccer governing body CAF together with the European soccer body, GAVI and health ministries from several African countries.

Dubbed the Goal Getters campaign, the initiative was first showcased in Tanzania and Eswatini earlier last year before moving to Zimbabwe in December, using soccer to build awareness and trust in the HPV vaccine.

Offered for free, the HPV vaccine being administered to girls aged between 9 and 14 years can prevent up to 90% of cervical cancer cases, saving families thousands of dollars in treatment costs later in life if girls are not vaccinated, according to GAVI.

After setbacks caused by COVID-19 lockdowns and uneven national immunization programs, Africa has intensified HPV vaccination drives in recent years. Coverage for at least one dose of the HPV vaccine rose to 40% in 2023 from 28% the previous year, behind only behind North, Central and South America, driven by expanded campaigns backed by governments and GAVI, according to the World Health Organization.

The girls' soccer tournament is a key part of that effort, said GAVI spokesman Olly Cann.

"One of the great aspects of the Goal Getters campaign is that it enables us to blend two things that teenage girls are passionate about, one is sport and the other is health," said Cann. "It creates a really safe space where the girls can feel trusted, they can feel secure, they also feel empowered."

A 10-year-old girl reacts after receiving a free dose of the HPV vaccine at Budiriro Polyclinic in Harare, Zimbabwe, Saturday, Jan. 17. (AP)

The campaign's launch mixed dance and song before the eight-team tournament kicked off. On the sidelines, mothers streamed to a nearby clinic, some drawn by the chance to see well-known women's soccer figures, while also getting their children vaccinated against HPV.

HPV, or human papillomavirus, is a common sexually transmitted virus and the primary cause of cervical cancer. While most infections clear naturally, some persist and can lead to cancer years later.

Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women worldwide, killing about 350,000 women each year, according to the WHO. Africa accounts for nearly a quarter of global deaths, and 19 of the 20 most affected countries are in sub-Saharan Africa, Cann said.

Zimbabwe is among the five countries with the highest burden on the continent. Cervical cancer is the most common cancer among women in the country of 15 million people and kills about 2,000 women annually, according to the national cancer registry.

Ahead of the girls' tournament, Zimbabwe introduced a single-dose HPV vaccine, a shift authorities hope will boost uptake following the two-dose regime rolled out nationally in 2018.

Misinformation and stigma around reproductive health remain major obstacles. On a recent weekend in January, just two 10-year-old girls turned up for vaccination at Budiriro Polyclinic in one of Harare's densely populated townships - a pattern health officials say is common, forcing most HPV vaccinations to be delivered through schools instead.

"Many families are not bringing their children to the clinic to be vaccinated," said Barbara Mashonga, the nurse in charge of community mobilization at the clinic. "Even when we follow up at schools, some refuse. The biggest challenge is religious beliefs."

Hawks ride 17-0 run to charge past Pacers

Lakers improve to 3-1 on eight-game trip

ATLANTA, Jan 27, (AP): Led by CJ McCollum's 23 points, the Atlanta Hawks used a 17-0 run in the second half to take the lead and beat the Indiana Pacers 132-116.

Dyson Daniels scored 22 points with nine assists, Nickeil Alexander-Walker added 21 points and Atlanta earned its third straight win.

The Pacers led by 15 points midway through the third quarter and were up 92-85 late in the period before the Hawks scored 17 unanswered points in a run that carried into the fourth quarter. Luke Kennard's 3-pointer from the corner capped the run and gave Atlanta a 102-92 lead.

Pascal Siakam led Indiana with 26 points. Aaron Nesmith scored 18 and Bennedict Mathurin returned from a thumb injury to add 16. T.J. McConnell also had 16 points.

Tipoff had been scheduled for Monday night but was moved to early afternoon because of the possibility of icing on the roads as the result of a winter storm gripping the South and Northeast.

Atlanta's Kristaps Porzingis (left Achilles tendinitis) and Zaccharie Risacher (left knee bone contusion) each missed his ninth straight game. The Hawks said Porzingis will be evaluated in about a week and Risacher could return for the team's next game.

Lakers 129, Bulls 118

In Chicago, Luka Doncic had 46 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds, and Los Angeles cooled off Chicago with a victory.

LeBron James scored 20 of his 24 points in the first half as Los Angeles improved to 3-1 on an eight-game trip. Rui Hachimura added 23 points on 9-for-11 shooting.

The Lakers were swept by Chicago in their two-game series last season, including a wild 119-117 loss at the United Center on Josh Giddey's half-court shot at the buzzer.

Coby White scored 23 points for Chicago on Monday night, and Ayo Dosunmu had 20. The Bulls had won four in a row and five of six overall.

Rockets 108, Grizzlies 99

In Houston, Alperen Sengun and Kevin Durant each scored 33 points as Houston Rockets broke open a close game in the fourth quarter and beat Memphis.

Houston Rockets forward Dorian Finney-Smith, left, drives around Memphis Grizzlies forward Jaren Jackson Jr., right, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Houston. (AP)

The Rockets trailed by a point at the start of the fourth before going on a 21-9 run in the first seven minutes of the period to seize control and win for the fifth time in six games.

Tari Eason scored 11 of his 17 points in the first half and Amen Thompson finished with 14 assists and eight points. Reed Sheppard, who earlier Monday was named to the Rising Stars game for the NBA's All-Star weekend, finished with four points on 2-for-11 shooting, including 0 for 7 from 3-point distance.

Sengun had an impressing shooting night for the Rockets, going 7 for 7 from the field in the first half and 15 for 17 overall. He also contributed nine rebounds and six assists.

Jaren Jackson Jr. and Santi Aldama scored 17 points apiece for the Grizzlies, who lost their third straight, for the fourth time in five games and for the 10 time in 13 games. GG Jackson added 14 points, Jaylen Wells had 12 and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope 11. Cam Spencer, who along with Wells and Cedric Coward, was named to the Rising Stars game, finished with 14 assists and five points.

Timberwolves 108, Warriors 83

In Minneapolis, Rudy Gobert had 15 points and 17 rebounds as Minnesota defeated Golden State in a game missing much of its usual star power.

The Warriors were playing without starters Stephen Curry (knee) and Draymond Green (back), while Minnesota's Anthony Edwards was a late scratch to rest an recurring right foot injury.

Julius Randle led Minnesota with 18 points and Bones Hyland chipped in 17. Naz Reid and Donte DiVincenzo each scored 15 for the Timberwolves, who snapped a five-game losing streak, their longest skid since they lost five straight in December 2022.

Quinten Post led Golden State with 13 points. Brandin Podziemski scored 12 points and grabbed seven rebounds, while Gui Santos had 11 points and 10 rebounds for the Warriors, who shot a season-low 23.1% (9 for 39) on 3-pointers.

Cavaliers 114, Magic 98

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 45 points and Cleveland beat Orlando for their fourth straight win.

Mitchell was 15 of 25 from the field, including five 3-pointers, in 35 minutes. He had a season-high 26 first-half points, a great start for a player that came into the game leading the NBA in second-half scoring average at 17.6 points per game.

It was Mitchell's 25th 30-point game this season, fourth-most in the league, and fifth with at least 40 points. He had 36 points in Saturday's 119-105 win in Orlando.

Evan Mobley had 20 points and nine rebounds as the Cavaliers equaled their longest winning streak of the season. They also had four straight victories in early November.

The run puts Cleveland a season-best eight games over .500 at 28-20. The Cavs are also 11-4 since Dec. 29.

Paolo Banchero scored a season-high 37 points for Orlando, which has dropped three straight.

The fourth-year forward also grabbed 10 rebounds. Desmond Bane added 19 points, including 15 in the first half.

Celtics 102, Trail Blazers 94

In Boston, Payton Pritchard scored 23 points, hitting buzzer-beaters to end each of the first two quarters, and Jaylen Brown added 20t to lead Boston to a victory over Portland.

Derrick White scored 18 points, making a 3-pointer after Portland cut what had been a 23-point deficit to five in the final minute. White also stole the ball on the Blazers' next possession.

Jerami Grant scored 19 and former UConn star Donovan Clingan had 15 rebounds for the Blazers, who had won four of their previous five games to briefly climb above .500 for the first time since November.

Hornets 130, 76ers 93

In Charlotte, Brandon Miller scored 30 points, and Charlotte took a 50-point lead for the second time this month on the way to rolling past Philadelphia.

All five Hornets starters finished in double figures. Kon Knueppel and Moussa Diabate scored 12, LaMelo Ball added 11 and Miles Bridges finished with 10 for Charlotte, which has won three straight games for the first time this season.

It was 28-22 after one quarter - and then Charlotte outscored Philadelphia 81-37 over the next two quarters, taking a 109-59 lead into the fourth.

Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 17 for Philadelphia. Jared McCain added 16 and Quentin Grimes had 14 for the 76ers, while Tyrese Maxey was held to a season-low six points on 3-for-12 shooting in 25 minutes. Maxey's scoring average dropped a full half-point to 29.4 per game.

Charlotte became the first team since Phoenix in February 2009 to lead by 50 or more points in two separate games within the same calendar month. The Hornets led Utah by 57 on their way to a 150-95 win on Jan. 10.

Culture plays a big role

Europe's rising diversity is not reflected at Winter Olympics

VASTERAS, Sweden, Jan 27, (AP): Maryan Hashi remembers the thoughts running through her mind when she began hitting the ski slopes in northern Sweden. As a Black woman from Somalia, she felt like an "alien."

"Am I wearing the correct clothing for this? Does it fit? Do I look weird? Am I snowboarding correctly? Do they think it's weird I'm on the slope?" she said. "But I carried on - I felt if I didn't, I was never going to commit to anything in my life."

A few years later, snowboarding is the 30-year-old student's big passion and it is helping her integrate into her adopted country's society better than she could ever have imagined.

What she'd love now is to see other migrants experiencing the same joy. Immigration from Africa and the Middle East has transformed the demographics of Europe in recent decades. And while the growing diversity is reflected in many sports such as soccer - Sweden's men's national team has several Black players including Liverpool striker Alexander Isak - it hasn't made a dent in winter sports.

At the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics, Sweden is sending a team made up almost exclusively of ethnically Swedish athletes, with NHL player Mika Zibanejad, whose father is from Iran, a rare exception. That hardly reflects the diversity of the Nordic country: About 2 million of its 10 million residents were born abroad, about half of them in Asia or Africa, according to national statistics agency SCB.

The lack of athletes of color at the Winter Olympics - and in winter sports in general - has been a recurring theme in the U.S., which is sending one of its most diverse teams to the Games. It hasn't gotten the same attention in Europe.

The Olympic rosters of France, Germany, Switzerland and other European winter sports nations look a lot like Sweden's: overwhelmingly white and lacking the immigrant representation seen in their soccer or basketball teams.

Maryan Hashi poses with her snowboard at Vedbobacken in Vasteras, Sweden. (AP)

Researchers point to social, financial and geographical barriers, and believe a big cultural shift is needed for anything to change.

"It takes not years but decades," said Josef Fahlen, professor of sport pedagogy at Umea University in Sweden.

Hashi was 14 when she came to Sweden with her family in 2009. They settled in Skelleftea, a mining city around 770 kilometers (480 miles) north of the Swedish capital, Stockholm, where winters are long and temperatures can be extremely cold. She found it a culture shock and said it was "scary" to integrate with native Swedes because of language difficulties, so her friendship group consisted of fellow migrants from Somalia and other African countries.

Only in 2018 did she discover there was a ski slope five minutes from her home, after a co-worker suggested she try snowboarding as part of a pilot integration project run by the municipality.

"When you don't have information or access or nobody around you does it - snowboarding is basically a white sport - and when you're not correctly integrated into the community, you don't know much about it," Hashi said.

She initially felt out of place but grew to love her daily trips to the slope, even when numbers dwindled in the group. She even started to teach kids and her immigrant friends - those who'd been skeptical about Hashi doing an activity that's "not our thing" - how to snowboard.

"I've made my mind up," Hashi said, "that snowboarding is going to be a part of my family."

The single biggest influence on children getting into - and maintaining an interest in - a particular sport is their parents, according to Fahlen. That, he said, is the "simple" explanation for the lack of diversity in the ski slopes in Sweden and across Europe.

Pointing to Isak, whose parents are from Eritrea, or tennis players Mikael and Elias Ymer, whose parents migrated to Sweden from Ethiopia, he said the children of non-European immigrants are unlikely to be introduced to sports that their parents are not familiar with.

"Take the example of Isak finding his way into football - it makes total sense because football exists in Eritrea. Skiing doesn't," Fahlen said.

Fahlen regards the lack of diversity as not a "winter sports problem but a cultural issue" and said it's important for kids to see winter sports athletes with a different skin tone.

"It's a matter of horizon," Fahlen said. "We need to show it's possible to be a skier even if you might be from Tunisia or the West Bank."

There are also financial and geographical factors at play. Immigrants in Sweden typically live in major urban areas, away from skiing hubs in the mountains, and are often in less-privileged economic positions. Participating in winter sports can be expensive because of the need to buy or rent equipment and clothing, and paying for travel and a ski pass.

Academics believe more needs to be done by winter sports to improve accessibility for immigrants and underserved communities.

"It's a fact that the best integrative force in society is team sports and sports clubs, where kids can go to do useful things together with others," said Stefan Jonsson, a professor in Ethnicity and Migration Studies at Linköping University. "There is so much research saying if we want social and ethnic integration, this would be the primary thing."

Asked about its attempts to get more people from diverse backgrounds into skiing, Sweden's ski federation said "we want to be better" and added that "inclusion is something we strive for."

The federation is proud of its "Alla På Snö" ("Everyone On Snow") program, which since 2008 has reached an estimated 30,000 children every year and offers students free equipment and access to slopes. Also boosting general accessibility is the growth of Sweden's Leisure Bank project, where people can borrow sports equipment including skis and ski boots for free for 14 days. The founders equate the banks to public libraries.

Neither specifically targets immigrants, however. For Hashi, it's a missed opportunity to widen the talent pool.

"Open the door for us," Hashi said. "We're going to take care of the next generation for you."

Su Super League to begin in April

China's amateur soccer league enjoys sponsorship 'boom' ahead of season

NANJING, Jan 27, (Xinhua): China's grassroots football phenomenon, the Su Super League, has attracted a major wave of commercial support ahead of its new season, with sponsors ranging from Adidas to Coca-Cola.

The new season will kick off in April and will be backed by 24 commercial partners, including 15 new sponsors, league officials said Tuesday at a launch event in Nanjing.

Title sponsorship has expanded from a single backer, Bank of Jiangsu, to a joint naming partnership with Bank of Jiangsu and international trade conglomerate Soho Holding Group. Other sponsors span sectors including apparel electric vehicles, beverages and smart technology.

Liu Tong, deputy director of the Jiangsu Provincial Sports Bureau, said the league will undergo a comprehensive upgrade in 2026.

"We will raise standards, improve services and implement more concrete measures to elevate the league in every aspect, from event organization to participant experience," Liu said.

Liu added that Soho Holding Group will use its overseas business network to help bring the league's brand to a broader international stage.

The league also announced a program to support small and micro businesses by opening a number of official sponsorship slots to Jiangsu-based smaller firms. Through an open application and qualification review process, 32 companies will be selected to receive branding and marketing rights alongside major official sponsors, organizers said.

Adidas was reportedly to have secured sponsorship rights in a deal valued at 21 million yuan (about 3 million U.S. dollars), including equipment sponsorship worth 1 million yuan for each participating team. Market estimates have put total sponsorship revenue for the new season above 210 million yuan, though organizers have not officially confirmed the figure.

Gu, Su spearhead China's 126-athlete squad for Milan-Cortina Winter Games

BEIJING, Jan 27, (Xinhua): China announced its delegation for the upcoming Milan-Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games, comprising 286 members, including 126 athletes.

With an average age of 25, the squad will be led by defending Olympic champions Gu Ailing in freestyle skiing and Su Yiming in snowboarding.

They will be joined by veterans such as short track speed skater Fan Kexin, freestyle skier Xu Mengtao and figure skating pair Sui Wenjing and Han Cong, all gold medalists on home ice and snow at Beijing 2022, where China won 15 medals, including nine golds.

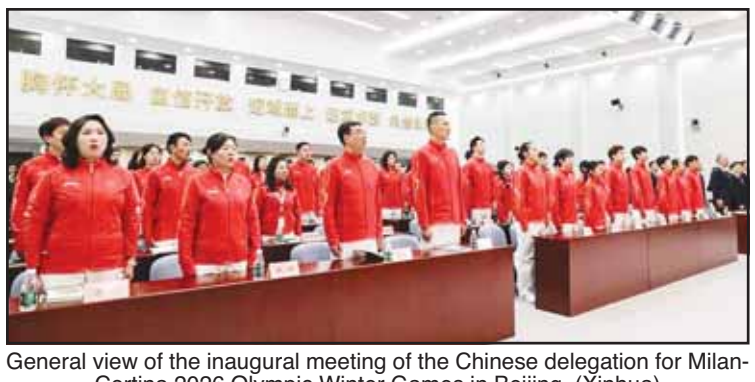
A total of 67 athletes will make their Olympic debut in Milan-Cortina, and the youngest team member is 17-year-old snowboard halfpipe athlete Ren Chongshuo. "After more than 1,400 days of hard training, we are finally about to reach the highest competitive stage," said Yin Zheng, a skeleton athlete and representative of the delegation.

He also paid tribute to the support teams at the founding conference of the delegation: "We are not fighting alone. Behind us stands a strong and warm homeland, as well as an efficient and comprehensive support system."

"The Milan-Cortina 2026 will be the first Winter Olympic Games that China participates in following the successful hosting of Beijing 2022," said Gao Zhidan, director of China's General Administration of Sport. "It is a significant window to showcase the achievements of China's winter sports development and the positive image of our athletes," Gao added, stating that the delegation's fundamental goal is to achieve excellence in both athletic performance and sportsmanship.

The Chinese delegation will compete in 91 events across 15 disciplines, marking the country's largest-ever team and widest event participation at an overseas Winter Olympics.

The 2026 Winter Games will take place from Feb. 6 to 22, featuring 116 events across 16 disciplines.



General view of the inaugural meeting of the Chinese delegation for Milan-Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games in Beijing. (Xinhua)

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Unbeaten Arizona withstands late rally by BYU

PROVO, Utah, Jan 27, (AP): Brayden Burries scored 29 points and made a game-saving block in the final seconds as top-ranked Arizona remained unbeaten by holding off a furious rally from No. 13 BYU for an 86-83 victory.

Jaden Bradley added 26 points for the Wildcats (21-0, 8-0 Big 12), who matched the best start in school history.

BYU trailed by 19 midway through the second half before trimming the deficit to one with a 12-2 run that began with just more than a minute left. Keba Keita's putback dunk pulled the Cougars to 84-83 with 16 seconds to go, and they forced a turnover on the ensuing inbounds play.

Robert Wright III drove toward the rim and wriggled free for a good look near the basket, but Burries came flying over from the weak side to block the shot from behind.

The freshman guard grabbed the loose ball and converted two free throws before BYU missed a long heave at the buzzer.

Burries finished 13 of 14 at the foul line. He added five rebounds, four assists and three steals.

Zain Kuwait sponsors the Kuwait Super Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Zain Kuwait is sponsoring the Kuwait Super Cup, adding an exciting event to the local football calendar and keeping pace with the continued development of the sports scene in Kuwait, as well as growing public interest in high-value, highly competitive tournaments.

The announcement was made at a press conference held at the Kuwait Football Association's headquarters, attended by KFA President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, as well as representatives of the Association and sponsors.

Zain reaffirmed that its support for sports is part of a long-term strategic approach focused on empowering youth, strengthening national belonging, and elevating the overall sports experience through stronger organization, fan engagement, and sustainable partnerships.

This step comes as an extension of Zain's strategic partnership with the Kuwait Football Association, reflecting its commitment to supporting the football ecosystem across its key pillars, like the

Khashti speaking

Zain Premier League (Dawri Zain), the First Division League, H.H. the Amir Cup, and H.H. the Crown Prince Cup.

This is in addition to Zain's ongoing initiatives to stand behind the Kuwait national team "Al-Azraq" and its fans during overseas fixtures, its presence in major regional events such as Khaleeji Zain 26, and its role in supporting global football events hosted in Kuwait, such as the French Super Cup.

This approach is consistent with Zain's corporate sustainability vision, which views sports events as platforms that showcase Kuwait's image and organizational capabilities, while opening broader horizons for sports tourism and community engagement.

The Kuwait Super Cup is set to deliver strong matchups from the outset, with the first semi-final bringing together Al Arabi and Al Qadsia in a historic, high-profile derby, while the second semi-final features Kuwait SC and Al Salmiya.

Matches will be hosted at two of Kuwait's leading stadiums, Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium and Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, reflecting the readiness of the nation's sports infrastructure to stage events that match the passion of Kuwaiti fans.

This support represents a qualitative addition to Zain's partnership journey with the Kuwait Football Association and a reaffirmation of its ongoing commitment to developing the Kuwaiti football experience and supporting national sports through renewed platforms that enhance the sustainability of competitions, enrich fan attendance, and serve the aspirations of clubs, national teams, and the wider sports community.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, Waleed Al-Khashti, and partners during the press conference.

Bank's participation in line with its commitment to elevating the banking experience for customers

KIB concludes participation in 2026 Auto World Show, presenting exclusive financing offers

Officials pose for a photo during the 2026 Auto World Show.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) wrapped up its participation in the Auto World Show 2026, held at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref from January 19 to 24, amid notable interest from visitors and automotive industry stakeholders.

The Bank's participation reflects its keenness to engage in specialized economic events and reinforce its position in the local vehicle financing market.

During the exhibition, KIB presented a comprehensive range of financing solutions designed to meet the needs of various customer segments. These included zero profit (0%) financing offers on selected car models, along with competitive profit rates and flexible credit facilities, such as grace periods allowing installment payments to be deferred for up to six months, in addition to preferential benefits and exclusive discounts on comprehensive Takaful insurance packages.

In this context, Abdulaziz Al-Shammari, Assistant General Manager of Retail Banking at KIB, said that the Bank's participation in the show reflects its commitment to providing practical financing solutions that combine flexibility and transparency, while keeping pace with customers' evolving needs.

He noted that the high level of interest witnessed at the Bank's booth demonstrates customers' trust in KIB's financing solutions and its capability to provide real added value in the vehicle financing market.

Al-Shammari added that this participation was an extension of long-standing strategic partnerships between the Bank and a number of leading car dealerships in Kuwait.

KIB's Abdulaziz Al-Shammari

This enabled the Bank to offer integrated deals in cooperation with its partners, contributing to an enhanced customer experience and supporting sales activity during the show period.

He also pointed out that KIB ensured the presence of a dedicated team of financing consultants to offer on-the-spot guidance to visitors and outline financing options tailored to their needs and budgets. He stressed that fast transaction turnaround and transparent credit terms played a central role in attracting a broad customer base.

It is worth noting that KIB affirms its continued support of economic events that contribute to stimulating the local market. The Bank's support is part of its strategy to develop the auto financing sector through effective partnerships with major car dealerships, ensuring the consistent provision of competitive financing solutions and well-designed benefits throughout the year.

Bakhita Al-Ghanayem wins Al-Diwan Cup

Sheikh Sabah Fahd Al-Nasser presents a Commemorative Shield to Khaled Mohammed Al-Asfour.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: The mare Bakhita Al-Ghanayem, owned by Yousef Al-Khalifi and trained by Yousef Al-Khalifi, with jockey Mohammed Al-Faraj aboard, claimed the Al-Diwan Stud Cup after winning the seventh race for Egyptian-bred Arabian horses (C4) over 1,000 meters in a time of 1:13.54. The race was held as part of the 13th meeting of the Kuwait Hunting and Equestrian Club's horse racing season.

The trophy was presented by Khaled Mohammed Al-Asfour, owner of Al-Diwan Stud, while Sheikh Sabah Fahd Al-Nasser, Chairman of the Supreme Authority for Horse Racing and Secretary General of the Kuwait Hunting and Equestrian Club, honored Al-Asfour in recognition of his role in supporting the event.

Al-Asfour said equestrian sport represents the noble qualities of the horse and reflects the rider's skill and ability to achieve the best possible results on the track.

He added that, in line with Al-Diwan Stud's focus on Arabian horses of Egyptian bloodlines, the stud was keen to expand their participation in competitive racing alongside beauty contests, prompting the initiative to sponsor a dedicated race once the opportunity arose.

Al-Asfour also extended his gratitude to Alaa Hamad Al-Roumi, owner of Al-Raya Stud, for his valued initiative and continuous efforts to develop the concept and ensure its success, and thanked the Kuwait Hunting and Equestrian Club for its excellent organization.

Mirziyoyev awards 'Order of Friendship' to FINA president Hussein Al-Musallam

Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Uzbekistan, presents the 'Order of Friendship' to Captain Husain Al-Musallam.

TASHKENT, Jan 27: Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Uzbekistan, presented the "Order of Friendship" to Captain Husain Al-Musallam, President of the International Swimming Federation (FINA) and Director General of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), during the 46th OCA General Assembly in Tashkent. The event was attended by presidents of Asian National Olympic Committees and other senior sports officials. The assembly also saw Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, elected as OCA President.

President Mirziyoyev said the award recognizes Al-Musallam's longstanding efforts since 1993 to strengthen cooperation between Uzbekistan and the OCA, promote sports development across the country, implement joint programs effectively, and help train highly skilled athletes.

Al-Musallam expressed his gratitude to President Mirziyoyev and the Uzbek sports community, praising their support in ensuring the success of the 46th OCA General Assembly and achieving its objectives.

Girona denies Getafe win

French striker Barry rescues 1-1 draw for Everton against Leeds

LIVERPOOL, England, Jan 27, (AP): French striker Thierno Barry scored his fourth goal in five games to give Everton a 1-1 draw at home to Leeds.

Leeds was dominant in the first half and took the lead in the 28th minute when Anton Stach's low cross from the right ran across the 18-yard box to James Justin, who stormed in at the far post to score with a low shot.

Dominic Calvert-Lewin almost doubled Leeds lead three minutes later but hit the post from about four meters out. Leeds' early superiority was highlighted by the visitors having more shots in the first half - 10 - than in any league game since September 2021.

However, Everton coach David Moyes changed to a back three for the second half and the switch brought his side right back into the game.

Leeds goalkeeper Karl Darlow denied Barry an earlier equalizer and Iliman Ndiaye, back in the side after winning the Africa Cup of Nations with Senegal, also came close for Everton.

But it was Barry who finally got the goal 14 minutes from time when the big forward got in front of a Leeds defender to stab home a low cross from Idrissa Gueye, another of Everton's returning Senegal contingent.

"His workrate is always really honest and he works hard but we need goals and he got one for us tonight," Moyes said of the former Basel and Villarreal striker.

"The first half we weren't at it and in the second half we were much better," Moyes added. "Thankfully, we got a goal back. We were fortunate to only be 1-0 down at halftime, but I could say the same as the second half - we could have maybe got a second goal."

The draw was a blow to Everton's European hopes. A win would have taken it into seventh, but it remained in 10th, one of four teams on 33 points.

Leeds moved to 26 points, six above the Premier League relegation zone and two points behind the clubs above it, Tottenham and Crystal Palace.

"Overall, it is a good result for us," Leeds coach Daniel Farke said. "It is another sign we are on a very good path. We edge another point closer to what we want to achieve. To come here with such a brave performance and come away with one point is encouraging but the job is not done yet. We still need to win a few more points."

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Victor Reis scored with a diving header in injury time to give Girona a 1-1 home draw against Getafe and extend its unbeaten run to four matches in the Spanish league.

Girona was one of La Liga's form sides coming into the game at the Estadio Municipal de Montilivi but it went behind after 59 minutes when Luis Vazquez got on the end of a nice delivery from Juan Antonio Iglesias Sanchez.

However, Reis threw himself at a last-gasp cross from Alex Moreno to lift the home side into 10th place on 25 points.

The late goal meant Getafe's winless run extended to seven games in the league, but the point lifted it out of the relegation zone into 16th place, one point above Mallorca.

Only four points separate Mallorca and ninth-place Osasuna.

Al-Nassr earns third consecutive win

Cristiano Ronaldo takes a free kick during Al-Nassr match against Al-Taawoun.

RIYADH, Jan 27: Al-Nassr claimed a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Al-Taawoun in Round 18 of the Saudi Roshn League. The only goal came from an own goal by Al-Taawoun defender Mohammed Al-Dosari in the 45th minute, who inadvertently headed a cross from Senegalese forward Sadio Mane past his own goalkeeper, Mailson.

The win marked Al-Nassr's third consecutive victory, moving it to 40 points and securing second place, ahead of Al-Ahli on goal difference. Al-Taawoun remains in fifth place with 35 points.

In another match, Al-Ittihad returned to winning form by defeating Al-Akhdoud 2-1. Algerian midfielder Houssam Aouar opened the scoring in the 12th minute, followed by a goal from French midfielder N'Golo Kanté in the 43rd minute. Turkish forward Burak İnce scored Al-Akhdoud's lone goal in the 59th minute.

The win lifts Al-Ittihad to sixth place with 30 points, while Al-Akhdoud stays second-last in 17th place with 9 points.

Best of the Rest

'Contract talks with Kane have begun': Harry Kane could be set for a longer stay in Germany after Bayern Munich confirmed it's in talks to extend the England captain's contract.

Kane joined Bayern from Tottenham in 2023 on a contract running to the end of next season. The move to Germany saw him win a long-awaited first major trophy of his career as Bayern won the Bundesliga last season. (AP)

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Malaysian players cleared to play: Seven foreign-born players for Malaysia's national soccer team have been cleared to keep competing after the Court of Arbitration for Sport temporarily halted FIFA-imposed bans while their appeal is reviewed, Malaysia's soccer federation said Tuesday.

Last September, FIFA fined the Football Association of Malaysia 350,000 Swiss francs ($450,000) for fake documents filed to naturalize the seven players, who were also fined and suspended for a year. (AP)

Players battling for the ball during Kuwait and Vietnam match. Kuwait suffered a narrow 5-4 defeat to Vietnam in its opening Group B match at the AFC Futsal Asian Cup finals in Jakarta, Indonesia. In the same group, Thailand secured a 2-0 win over Lebanon.

Sports

Sheikh Al-Badr congratulates Sheikh Joaan and Sheikh Al-Nasser on OCA appointments

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr, President of the Kuwait and Asian Swimming Federations, congratulated Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, on his appointment as President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) for a new term lasting until 2028. The announcement followed the presidential election held during the 46th OCA General Assembly in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, attended by more than 350 senior sports officials representing 45 Asian National Olympic Committees and several international organizations.

Sheikh Al-Badr also extended his congratulations to Sheikh Fahd Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, President of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, on his appointment as OCA Vice President.

Highlighting Sheikh Joaan's contributions, Sheikh Al-Badr noted his initiatives and achievements have greatly advanced Asian sports, strengthened its presence on the global Olympic stage, and enhanced Qatar's international reputation through the successful hosting of regional and international events.

Sheikh Al-Badr praised the close fraternal ties between him and Sheikh Joaan, as well as the ongoing collaboration between the Kuwaiti and Asian Swimming Federations and the OCA. He also commended Sheikh Fahd Nasser for his commitment to supporting the OCA's mission and actively contributing to its future goals, as emphasized during the General Assembly.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr, President of the Kuwait and Asian Swimming Federations.

Heartbreak for Kuwait as Qatar seals final berth

Bahrain beats Japan to reach final

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: Kuwait narrowly fell 27–26 to Qatar on Monday in the semifinals of the 22nd Asian Handball Championship, ending Al-Azraq's bid for the title. Defending champions Qatar, known as Al-Annabi, advanced to the final where they will face Bahrain, who defeated Japan 35–25 in the other semifinal.

Kuwait will now play Japan in the third-place playoff. Despite the loss, Al-Azraq had already secured qualification for the 2027 Handball World Championship in Germany by reaching the semifinals.

In the classification matches, South Korea finished fifth, followed by Saudi Arabia in sixth, Iraq seventh, and the UAE eighth.

After the match, Sheikh Fahd Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad, President of the Kuwait Olympic Committee and Vice President of the Olympic Council of Asia for West Asia, praised the championship's organization, describing it as exceptional and a clear reflection of Kuwait's organizational capabilities.

He noted that Kuwait has accumulated extensive experience in hosting major international sporting events, emphasizing that the Kuwaiti Handball Federation has demonstrated its ability to successfully manage not only domestic competitions but continental tournaments as well – an achievement widely recognized.

Sheikh Fahd added that handball is Kuwait's second most popular sport after football and enjoys strong public support, pointing to the impressive fan turnout that provided vital encouragement to the players.

He concluded by highlighting the national team's significant potential, combining promising young talents with experienced players, and expressed optimism for continued development while wishing the organizers success in sustaining this approach to further enhance Kuwait's standing on the international sports stage.

Kuwait player goes for a shot during the semifinal match between Kuwait and Qatar.

Al-Arabi aims to extend edge over Al-Qadsia in Super Cup

Kuwait Club looks to repeat quadruple feat

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: The semifinals of the Super Cup will be played today; with Kuwait Club facing Al-Salmiya at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium at 4:30 p.m. Fans will later witness a highly anticipated derby between Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium at 7:30 p.m.

Defending champion Kuwait Club heads into the match aiming to extend its strong run of form and maintain winning momentum. The team currently sits atop the Zain Premier League standings with 32 points, eight clear of nearest challenger, Al-Arabi, and has also secured a place in the Crown Prince Cup final.

Kuwait Club is chasing another potential "quadruple" after sweeping all domestic titles last season.

Al-Salmiya, meanwhile, will be looking to build on a morale-boosting 3–1 victory over Al-Tadamon in the previous round, which ended a difficult spell in league competition.

Today's clash marks the second meeting between the two sides this season, following a 1–1 draw in the league. Kuwait Club had previously eliminated Al-Salmiya from last season's Super Cup semifinals with a convincing 4–1 win.

Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi enter the match amid inconsistent form, although Al-Arabi has enjoyed the upper hand in recent encounters without converting that advantage into silverware.

Al-Arabi has continued its dominance over Al-Qadsia in recent seasons, defeating it earlier in the league campaign and knocking it out of the Crown Prince Cup quarterfinals. The Greens will also be seeking revenge after Al-Qadsia denied them the Super Cup title last season with a narrow 1–0 victory.

Al-Qadsia, for its part, is determined to halt Al-Arabi's winning run and claim a morale-boosting victory. It is hoping to lift the Super Cup to make amends with its supporters following exit from the Crown Prince Cup and a significant drop in the league title race, while also facing a near-impossible task to reach the semifinals of the Gulf Champions League.

A file photo of Al-Arabi and Al-Qadsia players in action.

Alcaraz sails through

Sabalenka, Svitolina to meet in semis after Gauff's racket-shattering exit

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 27, (AP): A searing hot day turned into a sweltering night at the Australian Open and eventually Coco Gauff let off steam, shattering her racket after a lopsided loss to Elina Svitolina that cost her a place in the semifinals.

Day 10 of the season-opening major began with top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka beating 18-year-old Iva Jovic 6-3, 6-0 on Tuesday before the Extreme Heat Policy was activated and the roof was closed on Rod Laver Arena.

The center court was still under cover when No. 12 Svitolina stunned the third-seeded Gauff 6-1, 6-2 in 59 minutes to earn a semifinal against Sabalenka.

The men's quarterfinals also were split into day and night sessions, with one played under a roof and the other under the stars.

Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz moved within two wins of completing a career Grand Slam after a 7-5, 6-2, 6-1 victory over Australia's Alex de Minaur to close play.

In his first semifinal in Australia, Alcaraz will take on 2025 runner-up Alexander Zverev, who beat 20-year-old Learner Tien 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-1, 7-6 (3) under cover in an afternoon match.

They're 6-6 in head-to-heads, with Zverev winning the quarterfinal here in 2024, their only meeting in Australia.

"It's going to be a great battle," Alcaraz said. "I'm looking forward to playing him here, taking revenge."

Carlos Alcaraz of Spain serves to Alex de Minaur of Australia during their quarterfinal match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Weeks into a return from a mental health break, Svitolina is in the semifinals here for the first time, and is on a 10-match winning streak after starting the season with a title in Auckland, New Zealand.

The series of wins will put her back into the Top 10 next week.

"Very pleased with the tournament so far and, of course, always been my dream to come back after maternity leave in the Top 10," said Svitolina, a 31-year-old Ukrainian who is playing her 12th major tournament since taking a break in 2022.

She and Gael Monfils, the French player who is retiring this year, are parents to Skai.

Svitolina lost quarterfinals here in 2018, 2019 and last year, but she dominated Gauff from the outset. The 21-year-old American struggled with her serve and recorded five double-faults in the first set, when she was broken four times.

She finally held in the fourth game of the second set, but by then it was too late. After leaving the court, the two-time major winner smashed her racket into the floor of a concrete ramp seven times on her way back to the player area.

Gauff said she tried to find a place where there was no cameras to let out her frustrations, and went to the quietest area she could find.

Svitolina, meanwhile, wanted to win for millions of people watching from afar.

"It's very close to my heart to see a lot of support from Ukrainians," she said. "Right now it's very - it was one of the toughest winters for Ukrainian people and without electricity and everything.

"So I feel like (I) bring this light, a little light, you know, even just positive news to Ukrainian people."

Ex-FIFA president Blatter joins those calling for boycott of World Cup in US

ZURICH, Jan 27, (AP): Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter on Monday backed a proposed fan boycott of World Cup matches in the United States because of the conduct of President Donald Trump and his administration at home and abroad.

Blatter was the latest international soccer figure to call into question the suitability of the United States as a host country. He called for the boycott in a post on X that supported Mark Pieth's comments in an interview last week with the Swiss newspaper Der Bund.

Pieth, a Swiss attorney specializing in white-collar crime and an anti-corruption expert, chaired the Independent Governance Committee's oversight of FIFA reform a decade ago. Blatter was president of the world's governing body for soccer from 1998-2015; he resigned amid an investigation into corruption.

In his interview with Der Bund, Pieth said, "If we consider everything we've discussed, there's only one piece of advice for fans: Stay away from the USA! You'll see it better on TV anyway. And upon arrival, fans should expect that if they don't please the officials, they'll be put straight on the next flight home. If they're lucky."

In his X post, Blatter quoted Pieth and added, "I think Mark Pieth is right to question this World Cup."

The United States is co-hosting the World Cup with Canada and Mexico from June 11-July 19.

The international soccer community's concerns about the United States stem from Trump's expansionist posture on Greenland, and travel bans and aggressive tactics in dealing with migrants and immigration enforcement protestors in American cities, particularly Minneapolis.

Oke Göttlich, one of the vice presidents of the German soccer federation, told the Hamburger Morgenpost newspaper in an interview on Friday that the time had come to seriously consider boycotting the World Cup.

Travel plans for fans from two of the top soccer countries in Africa were thrown into disarray in December, when the Trump administration announced an expanded ban that would effectively bar people from Senegal and Ivory Coast following their teams unless they already have visas. Trump cited "screening and vetting deficiencies" as the main reason for the suspensions.

Fans from Iran and Haiti, two other countries that have qualified for the World Cup, will be barred from entering the United States as well; they were included in the first iteration of the travel ban announced by the Trump administration.

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