



NOISE POLLUTION DECLINE SIGNALS TRAFFIC CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

Decibels drop on Kuwait roads

Only 19 citations recorded in one day

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The country has witnessed a noticeable decline in noise pollution on its streets, particularly the excessive sounds that previously disrupted several areas during the winter and rainy seasons.

Many roads are now quieter, providing residents with a welcome sense of relief from the disturbances that were once commonplace.

Rules relaxed

Local products get front-row shelves

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: In a significant move to bolster the national economy and promote local industries, the Ministry of Social Affairs issued an administrative circular aimed at easing the access and enhancing the visibility of national products within cooperative markets.

Dr. Sayed Issa, acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs and Cooperative Affairs, and Director General of the Department of Planning and Administrative Development, issued the circular under the direct instructions of Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah.

The new directive exempts national products from all requirements and restrictions that cooperatives typically impose on similar imported goods. It mandates the removal of all obstacles to their distribution and promotion, requiring cooperatives to allocate suitable display spaces and provide clear advertising for local goods. It introduces stricter payment terms for cooperative societies.

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Trade surpasses \$10 billion

One million Indians cement Kuwait-India ties: Tripathi

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and acting Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem affirmed the depth and strength of the historical ties between Kuwait and India, stressing that these ties are considered a solid base for continuous bilateral cooperation.

In a statement to the press during the celebration of the 77th Republic Day of India at the Indian Embassy recently, Al-Mukhaizeem described India as a long-standing partner of Kuwait, indicating that the relationship has consistently served the interests of both countries.

He pointed out that the participation of Kuwait in the celebration is a manifestation of its commitment to strengthen and maintain cooperation in various fields, expressing hope for more development and prosperity in Kuwaiti-Indian relations in the coming years.

On the other hand, Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Paramita Tripathi stated that the Republic Day celebration embodies the deeply rooted constitutional values of her country, which are based on justice, freedom, equality and fraternity.



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Kuwait's Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and acting Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem and Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Paramita Tripathi during the ceremonial cutting of cake.

nity. She said these principles formed the foundation of the modern Indian State since the Constitution took effect in 1950.

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Newswatch

BRUSSELS: The European Union has listed Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization over Tehran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests, the bloc's top diplomat said in a post on X on Thursday.

Kaja Kallas, the EU's foreign policy chief, said that foreign ministers unanimously agreed on the designation. "Any regime that kills thousands of its own people is working toward its own demise," she said.

"This will put them on the same footing with Al-Qaida, Hamas, Daesh," Kallas said earlier Thursday, using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group. "If you act as a terrorist, you should also be treated as a terrorist." (AP)

TEHRAN: Iran's army said Thursday it has inducted 1,000 strategic drones into the combat formations of its four military branches, according to the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

The drones were developed by army specialists in cooperation with the defense ministry to address evolving threats and incorporate lessons learned from the "12-day war," Tasnim said.

The announcement followed a U.S. deployment earlier this week of a carrier-led strike group to the Middle East. (Xinhua)

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This photo taken on Jan. 28, 2026 shows lightning over the skyline of Kuwait City. (Xinhua)

Weekend weather brings calm days as chill lingers

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department said the country will experience moderate weather conditions during the daytime and cool to cold weather at night throughout the weekend.

Acting Director of the department Dhirar Al-Ali told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the country is currently under the influence of an extension of a surface high-pressure system. This system is accompanied by a moderate, humid air mass and light to moderate northwesterly winds, which are expected to cause light fog in some areas during the evening, in addition to scattered clouds.

Al-Ali affirmed the moderate weather Thursday with light to moderate northwesterly winds blowing at speeds between six and 28 kilometers per hour. Scattered clouds are anticipated, along with a possibility of light fog in the evening. Maximum temperatures could range from 20 to 22 degrees Celsius, while sea conditions are slight to moderate, with wave heights between one and three feet.

He disclosed that the weather Thursday night is cool to cold, with northwesterly to variable winds that are light to moderate in strength, ranging from six to 24 kilometers per hour. Certain areas could experience light fog, along with scattered clouds. Minimum temperatures could fall between eight and 10 degrees Celsius, while sea conditions are slight, with waves between one and two feet.

He added that Friday will be mild and partly cloudy, with light to moderate northwesterly to variable winds at speed of six to 26 kilometers per hour. There is a chance of light fog in the evening, and maximum temperatures are expected to range between 19 and 21 degrees Celsius. The sea will remain slight to moderate, with waves measuring between one and three feet.

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'UAE-Kuwait: Brothers Forever' week kicks off in Dubai

Media Forum showcases depth of UAE-Kuwait ties

DUBAI, Jan 29, (KUNA): The UAE-Kuwait week commenced Thursday with the Emirati-Kuwaiti Media Forum at the Museum of the Future in Dubai, attended by Kuwaiti Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah and UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister, Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

The forum gathered prominent media, diplomatic, cultural, military, sports, youth, and artistic leaders from both brotherly nations.

Its program featured seven sessions highlighting political, cultural, educational, media, sports, and artistic dimensions of UAE-Kuwait relations.

The opening session, "Bridge to the Future: Emiratis in Kuwait and Academic Excellence," showcased successful educational cooperation, stressing human investment as essential to bilateral relations.

Dr. Habib Al-Attar, Jamal Matar, and moderator Hamad Al-Ali led discussions on academic integration and development of skilled cadres.

The "Strategic Partnership: Brothers Forever" session focused on political and diplomatic coordination, with Dr. Anwar Gargash emphasizing trust, aligned visions, and shared positions on regional and international issues, moderated by Khalifa Al-Mazein.

Cultural heritage and historical ties were examined in "Kuwait's Cultural Scene in the UAE: Roots and Epics," highlighting artistic collaboration and community engagement, led by Bilal Al-Badoor and moderator Hind Al-Naqbi.

The "Liberation of Kuwait and Emirati-Kuwaiti Solidarity" session recalled mutual support during Iraq's invasion, moderated by Jamal Al-



KUNA photo

The 'UAE-Kuwait: Brothers Forever' week begins its activities with the launch of Emirati-Kuwaiti Media Forum at the Museum of the Future in Dubai.

Mulla with retired officers Rashad Al-Saadi and Saber Al-Suwaidan sharing their experiences.

Digital media and youth engagement were discussed in "Youth Voice and Digital Media," emphasizing responsible content creation to strengthen people-to-people bonds, featuring Ali Najm, Mona Al-Raisi, and Hajar Al-Khoury.

Sports and music sessions explored popular cohesion through athletic and artistic collaboration, highlighting soft

power tools and shared cultural identity.

The forum aims to unify media discourse, exchange professional expertise, and build sustainable partnerships adapting to digital transformations, reinforcing the longstanding ties between UAE and Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti ministerial delegation included Public Works Minister Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan, Al-Asima Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Sabah, Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Ja-

ber Al-Sabah, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim, Consul Khaled Al-Zaabi, and senior officials.

On Wednesday, UAE President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan received Kuwaiti Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who is in the UAE on a working visit to attend the "UAE-Kuwait: Brothers Forever" week.

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Economic potential linked to environmental efforts

Kuwait stands with Middle East Green Initiative

JEDDAH, Jan 29, (KUNA): Acting Director General of Kuwait's Environment Public Authority (EPA) Nouf Behbehani Thursday reaffirmed Kuwait's absolute support for the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI).

Behbehani made the remarks while addressing the second session of the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) Ministerial Meeting, held in Jeddah.

She added that Kuwait is ready to work side by side with member states to promote coordination, conserve natural resources and ensure a more sustainable environmental future for generations to come.

She also voiced Kuwait's deep appreciation to Saudi Arabia for its leading role in launching and spearheading the MGI, which has contributed to consolidating joint environment action at both regional and international lev-



KUNA photo

Acting Director General of Kuwait's Environment Public Authority (EPA) Nouf Behbehani at the MGI Ministerial Meeting held in Jeddah.

els and to deepening sustainability and environment protection concepts.

The Kuwaiti official, further, welcomed Ghana, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Syria as new members of the ini-

tiative, underlying that this expansion reflects growing confidence in the MGI's goals and vision.

She added that the State of Kuwait stresses the significance of strengthening regional cooperation in the areas of combating land degradation, reducing desertification, scaling up efforts to restore vegetation cover, and enhancing drought resilience.

The Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) is a regional effort led by Saudi Arabia to mitigate the impact of climate change on the region and to collaborate to meet global climate targets.

By increasing regional cooperation and creating the infrastructure needed to reduce emissions and protect the environment, MGI can amplify impact in the global fight against climate change, whilst creating far-reaching economic opportunities for the region.



2 Why governments are rethinking their biggest projects

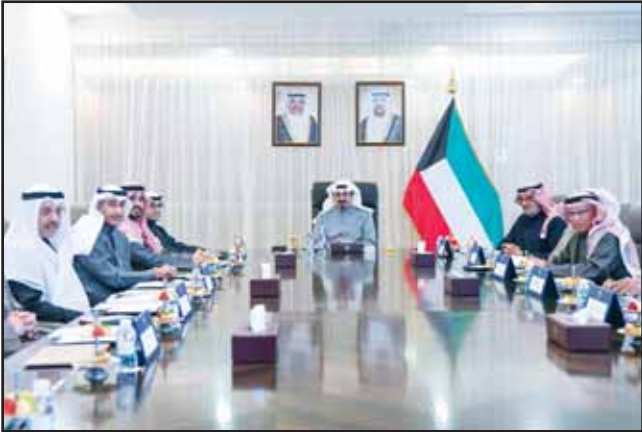
Kuwait Airways hosts Emirates Airlines as part of the celebrations marking the UAE-Kuwait Relations Week

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:17	Asr	15:02
Sunrise ..	06:39	Maghrib ..	17:23
Zohr	12:01	Isha	18:43

Local

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Mild and partly cloudy with light to moderate northwest-erly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h with a chance for light fog forming at night.			
By Night: Rather cold to cold with light variable wind to light			
to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-24 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas and some scattered clouds will appear.	Abdaly	21	10
Station	Bubyan	15	10
Max Exp	Jahra	22	12
Min Rec	Failaka Island	17	11
	Salmiyah	17	14
	Ahmadi	15	08
	Jal Aliyah	21	11
	Nuwaisib	20	14

PM, ministers review report on major development projects progress



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the meeting.



Members of the ministerial committee.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Thursday the 45th ministerial committee meeting at Bayan Palace to follow up on the implementation of major development projects.

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

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah reaffirmed the keenness of Kuwait's leadership on providing continuous guidance toward achieving comprehensive and sustainable development vision, and speeding up all active projects.

His Highness also underlined that such cooperation amongst state bodies reflects Kuwait's vigorous and serious commitment towards buttressing its strategic relations within the country, and subsequently economic ties with other countries.

Attending the meeting were Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdulatif Al-Mashari, Acting Minister of Finance, Minister of Electricity, water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Dr. Subeesh Al-Mukhaizeem, Acting Director of Premier's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Al-Majed, Head of Central Agency for Public Tenders Issam Al-Marzouq, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel, and Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and committee rapporteur Ambassador Sameeh Hayat.



Minister of Information, Culture and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi in discussions with panel of Kuwaiti and Emirati youths.

Modern-day youth smart, energetic: Al-Sheikh

Kuwait in total support of empowering youth

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Minister of Information, Culture and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said on Thursday that youth support and empowerment in Kuwait represents a comprehensive institutional approach based on partnership and sustainable planning.

Al-Mutairi made the remarks during the panel discussion "Prospects for Kuwaiti-Emirati Cooperation: A Shared Youth-Led Vision," on the sidelines of Kuwaiti-Emirati Week, in the presence of UAE Minister of State for Youth Affairs Dr. Sultan Al-Neyadi and UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Matar Al-Neyadi.

He added that young people are key partners in designing and implementing policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at fostering leadership, innovation, and skills aligned with future labor market needs and societal development priorities.

He expressed pleasure at the occasion, emphasizing the deep historical ties between Kuwait and the UAE under the leadership of His Highness Kuwait's Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and UAE President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

Al-Mutairi noted that Kuwaiti-Emirati relations are based on continuous coordination, and a shared vision for a prosperous future, with youth issues forming a key pillar of bilateral cooperation and policy



Nasser Al-Sheikh

alignment.

He explained that Kuwait adopted a national model integrating government entities, independent institutions, the private sector, and civil society to develop youth leaders capable of responsibility through leadership programs and future-skills training.

Al-Mutairi emphasized that volunteerism is prioritized as a pathway to leadership, community service, national identity engagement, and fostering social cohesion, while youth health and holistic well-being remain central to empowerment strategies.

He added that the Public Authority for Youth develops initiatives, fosters creativity, and partners with knowledge and talent institutions to transform youth ideas into innovative

success models in collaboration with private sector and civil society.

UAE Minister Dr. Sultan Al-Neyadi said the UAE prioritizes youth in national development, emphasizing participation in decision-making and leadership through over 180 youth councils across sectors, enabling young people to contribute to policy making and strategic planning.

Al-Neyadi added that cooperation with Kuwait reflects shared commitment to youth-led development, providing platforms for innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable initiatives, while encouraging young leaders to create positive societal impact, and to bridge regional opportunities and challenges collaboratively.

Youth leaders from both countries highlighted the pivotal role of young people in innovation, policy formulation, and sustainable development, stressing the importance of expanding partnerships and empowering youth to lead initiatives that ensure long-term prosperity and progress.

Meanwhile, Acting Director-General of the Public Authority for Youth, Nasser Al-Sheikh, affirmed Thursday that Kuwaiti and Emirati youth possess advanced awareness and energy, believing the future is built through dialogue, experience, and joint action.

He made the remarks following the session "Prospects of Emirati-Kuwaiti Cooperation: A Shared

Youth-Led Vision," held as part of the "UAE and Kuwait ... Brothers Forever" week, attended by Kuwaiti Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, UAE Minister Sultan Al-Niyadi, and UAE Ambassador Matar Al-Niyadi.

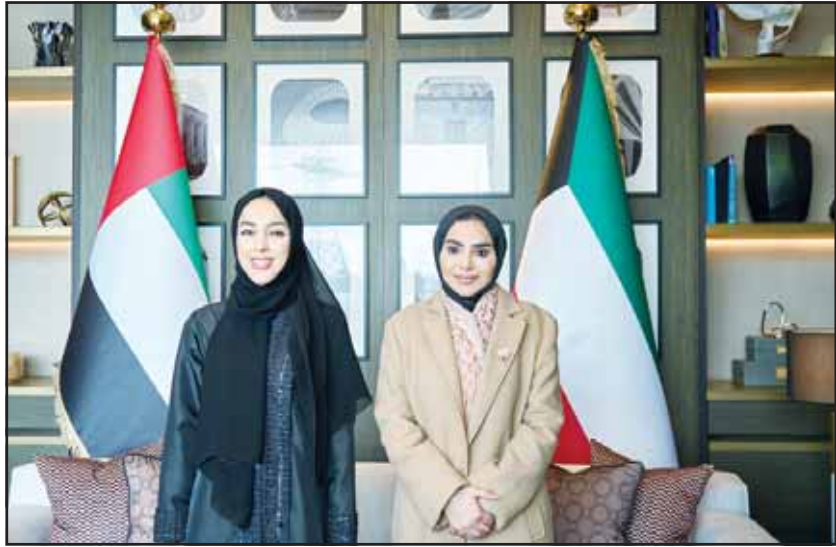
Al-Sheikh described the session as a practical model of Gulf integration, investing in human capital and showing a shared vision led by youth who view the future as a product of collaboration and innovation.

He added that discussions reflected youth awareness in creating opportunities, exploring new development paths, and using modern tools to turn ideas into impactful initiatives, emphasizing that aspirations now extend beyond geographic boundaries.

He noted the Public Authority for Youth views such gatherings as part of its national strategy to empower youth, expand cooperation with peer Gulf institutions, and build platforms for exchanging experiences and designing solutions in work, entrepreneurship, technology, and community development.

Al-Sheikh expressed hope that upcoming initiatives will strengthen Kuwaiti and Emirati youth as active partners in shaping the future, reinforcing a Gulf vision based on mutual trust, integration, and youth leadership in change and development.

Kuwait, UAE Ministers stress youth empowerment, regional cooperation



Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah meets UAE Minister of Community Empowerment Shamma Al-Mazrui.

Kuwait, UAE discuss boost in social and family affairs ties

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Minister Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah on Thursday met with UAE Minister of Community Empowerment Shamma Al-Mazrui to discuss enhancing cooperation and exchanging expertise in social and family affairs. The talks took place as Al-Huwailah received Al-Mazrui and her accompanying delegation on the occasion of an official visit to Kuwait, during which the two sides exchanged views on issues of mutual interest and mechanisms to develop services provided to beneficiaries.

Al-Huwailah reviewed key areas of the Ministry's work and coordination and integration mechanisms with civil society and

charitable associations in Kuwait, as well as the role of the Public Authority for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities within a comprehensive support and care strategy.

For her part, Al-Mazrui presented an overview of the UAE Ministry of Community Empowerment's experience, highlighting key initiatives and programs aimed at strengthening community participation and empowering different segments of society in line with development goals.

The two sides stressed the importance of continuing coordination and bolstering bilateral cooperation frameworks to advance social and family work systems and support sustainable development in both countries.

Kuwait prowess in digital realm draws world notice

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Minister of State for Communication Affairs, Omar Al-Omar, said Kuwait's hosting of the fifth general assembly of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) next Wednesday represents a prominent international milestone reflecting global confidence in Kuwait's advanced digital role.

He said the event underscores the international community's trust in Kuwait's continued support for digital economy pathways and its effective contribution to shaping digital policies and directions at regional and international levels.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday, Al-Omar added that the General Assembly's proceedings reflect Kuwait's approach during its current presidency of the organization toward supporting international cooperation in digital fields.

He explained that this includes enhancing coordination on issues related to artificial intelligence governance, digital trade, and building more inclusive and sustainable digital economies.

Al-Omar noted that the two-day assembly will witness the participation of 16 ministers of communications, information technology, and digital economy from member states, alongside senior government and international officials.

He said the assembly also serves as a key platform for reviewing the organization's progress, highlighting its achievements, and discussing strategic directions for the upcoming phase, including the launch of qualitative initiatives.

These initiatives aim to strengthen cooperation and partnerships within the rapidly evolving digital sector at regional and international levels.

Kuwait will concurrently be hosting the second International Digital Cooperation Forum under the theme "Inclusive Prosperity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence," bringing together policymakers, innovators, and international experts.

Al-Omar stated that the forum will expand partnership horizons and explore opportunities to enhance global digital cooperation amid rapid technological developments.

He welcomed all participating delegations, expressing hope that the meetings will strengthen joint action, exchange expertise, and produce practical visions.

The Digital Cooperation Organization, established in 2020, enables digital prosperity worldwide, focusing on accelerating the development of an inclusive and sustainable digital economy.

Trade basis of Kuwait bonds

Promotion event on Feb 3-4

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Kuwait City will host the inaugural 'Swiss-Kuwaiti Business Days 2026' on Feb 3-4, coinciding with the celebration of 60 years of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Switzerland.

A high-level delegation of Swiss companies is expected to participate.

Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait Tiziano Balmelli said the event is a reflection of the "dynamism" in the economic partnership between the two nations. He emphasized that bilateral relations, formally established in 1966, are built on mutual trust and shared values. He added that commercial, social and cultural ties pre-date the formal diplomatic establishment, thanks to the pioneering Kuwaitis.

Balmelli stressed that the business sector has always been the "cornerstone" of this partnership. Swiss companies in Kuwait are known for their reputation of quality, reliability and long-term commitment, while Kuwait's openness to innovation and financial stability encourages foreign investment. The Swiss companies

attending the event are eager to broaden cooperation and explore new opportunities in both markets.

Patrick Tran, Chairman of the Swiss-Kuwaiti Business Platform affirmed that the goal of organizing the Business Days is to "build bridges, not barriers." He pointed out that Kuwait and Switzerland

share a culture of excellence, a long-term vision and trust.

Tran pointed out that the platform's primary aim is not immediate deal closure but rather to align visions and build sustainable partnerships. The event aims to unite economic leaders focused on sustainable growth and purposeful innovation, placing human relations at the heart of economic cooperation to turn dialogue into practical opportunities.

Faisal Al-Mutawa, head of the platform's Kuwait branch, stated that hosting the event underscores the "strength and maturity" of relations, particularly on the economic level. He reiterated that the partnership is built on decades of trust, common values and human relations.



Balmelli

Minister stresses preserving cultural heritage, Failaka isle

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdul-Rahman

Badah Al-Mutairi highlighted the importance of conserving the cultural heritage and historical value of Failaka Island.

Speaking to reporters after his meeting a delegation from World Monuments Fund (WMF), the minister lauded the leading role of the organization in safeguarding the world's most treasured places.

He appreciated "the professional partnership" with WMF in a project to designate

Failaka as World Heritage Site on UNESCO's list.

"Failaka Island represents one of Kuwait's historical and cultural landmarks that mirrors the country's rich heritage and cultural identity," Al-Mutairi pointed out.

"The designation of the Island for the World Heritage List is in keeping with Kuwait's national tendency to preserve our national identity and enhance our civilizational presence.

"It is part of the strategy of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) to safeguard the heritage sites and enrich our cultural content according to the international standards," he went on.

Al-Mutairi added that NCCAL works to turn the heritage sites into vivid cultural platforms to back up education, tourism and development in a balanced way.



Al-Mutairi

Other Voices

Why governments are rethinking their biggest projects

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

Around the world, governments are revisiting ambitions set during years of cheap capital and optimistic growth.

Large infrastructure programs, futuristic cities, and long-horizon energy projects are being reassessed as financial and geopolitical conditions tighten.

This shift should not be mistaken for retreat.

In public policy, strength is not measured by how long a decision endures, but by its ability to adapt to changing realities. Review reflects institutional maturity and recognition that major choices are shaped by conditions that rarely remain static.

Recent discussion surrounding Saudi Arabia's reassessment of some

mega-projects fits within this global recalibration, even as some initiatives may, in hindsight, have carried overly ambitious assumptions from the outset. Such projects depend on expectations about stable capital flows, sustained demand, affordable financing, and manageable risk. When these assumptions change, adjustment becomes a strategic necessity.

The deeper obstacle in many systems lies in a culture of stubbornness, where decisions become symbols of prestige that cannot be revisited even when costs outweigh benefits or feasibility erodes. This mindset drains resources, weakens public trust, and widens the gap between rhetoric and reality.

Today's environment differs fundamentally from a decade ago. Financial conditions have tightened, risk is being repriced, and investor appetite for long-term uncertainty is declining. Strong states reassess early, protect credibility, and keep strategy responsive in a volatile world.



Al-Anjeri

diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Might is right ... and those who lack power pay price

“CANADIAN Prime Minister Mark Carney’s speech in Davos was not a refined diplomatic address, but rather a blunt political warning: ‘The old international order is over... and we will not mourn it,’” **Bassam Fahd Thunayyan Al-Ghanim** wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

“This single sentence is enough to capture the state of the world today. What we are witnessing is not a temporary crisis, but a complete collapse of the concept of a ‘rules-based world’. International law is no longer a protective umbrella, global institutions no longer offer guarantees, and alliances are no longer a reliable fortress. Everything has become negotiable, and even principles have been reduced to mere ‘clauses’ in a contract of interests.



Bassam Al-Ghanim

“In the era of Trump – or more precisely, the era of the ‘Trump mentality’ – the world is returning to the simplest rule known to history: might makes right, and those who lack power pay the price. Carney does not soften this reality, he delivers it in a devastatingly clear statement: ‘When the rules stop protecting you, you have to protect yourself.’

“Here, the greatest illusion collapses – the belief that there is a global system that will automatically stand with the weak. No. The weak are not protected, the weak are exploited. Then came his most striking phrase, fired like a bullet across the room: ‘If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.’

“He explained the new world order with remarkable precision: international relations are no longer an arena for ‘mutual understanding’, but a table for distributing influence. Those who sit at the table take their share, while those who stand aside are devoured. Even more dangerous is Carney’s exposure of the affliction facing middle powers: when each country negotiates alone with a dominant power, it does so from a position of weakness, accepting whatever is imposed. The relationship then shifts into subservience, and sovereignty becomes little more than a façade. This is why Carney stated so plainly: ‘This is not sovereignty; it’s the pretense of sovereignty.’

“Here lies the tragedy of our era: some countries are not only threatened by weapons, but are also subjected to economic blackmail, financial siege, and commercial sanctions, then forced into concessions – not by choice, but by the absence of alternatives. What, then, will President Trump’s next move be? And what will the new international order, now being reshaped, look like in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Americas?

“We are not dealing with a president who merely reshuffles faces within an administration, but with an entire political mindset that disrupts traditional calculations and cannot be confronted with yesterday’s logic. The answer is clear: Trump is not just changing people, he is changing the rules of the game itself. He is resetting the world according to the logic of ‘deals’ rather than ‘law’, of ‘pressure’ rather than ‘alliances’, and of ‘immediate interests’ instead of ‘long-term stability’.

“But Carney does not stop at diagnosis, he places his finger firmly on the cure, presenting a stark and unembellished choice. First, the path of appeasement: for middle powers to compete over who can please the superpower the most, who can offer concessions the fastest, and who can accept the harshest terms in exchange for ‘temporary protection’ – a protection that can be withdrawn at the first crisis or traded away in the first deal.

“Second, the path of the third option – the true remedy: for middle powers to build a cohesive and rational bloc, one that does not rely on idealistic slogans or hollow rhetoric, but instead creates real weight and leverage that prevents them from being swallowed up, country by country, issue by issue, and deal by deal.

“If we are to translate this ‘Third Way’ into a coherent historical concept, it most closely resembles non-alignment, but in a renewed form – a pragmatic, not emotional, non-alignment grounded in interests and negotiating power, not in applause from conference halls.”

Also:

“In ancient times, people lived a simple and primitive way of life, raising goats, cows and chickens to meet their basic needs,” columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

“Money did not yet exist, so people relied on barter, exchanging goods and commodities, such as trading eggs for wheat and vice versa.

“The barter system had many flaws. If someone owned a chicken and wanted to trade it for meat, he would ask the cow owner to slaughter the cow so he could receive a share. Naturally, the cow owner would not slaughter an entire cow merely to give the chicken owner a small portion. This made barter extremely impractical.

“With time, people agreed to adopt a medium of exchange that was easy to carry and could be stored at home. Salt, for example, was chosen because of its importance. A person would take a handful of salt and use it to pay a seller in exchange for eggs or bread.

“However, salt dissolves in water and can spoil, which made it unsuitable as a stable means of exchange or purchase. As a result, human societies turned to shellfish and other similar items as substitutes for currency.

“This situation persisted until people discovered that gold and silver were not affected by climate changes and were easy to transport. For thousands of years, they were used as a medium of exchange and a store of value, and their worth remained stable over long periods.

“About a century ago, around the time of World War I, Europe faced a shortage of gold and silver reserves. European countries were engaged in armed conflict. To fund their armies, they considered issuing paper money (banknotes), instead of gold. Central banks pledged that the holder of a banknote could exchange it for a specific amount of gold if they wished.

“Gradually, people got accustomed to this new form of currency and no longer felt the need to go to banks to obtain gold, as they trusted the value of the paper money issued by their governments.

“Later, people got used to gold or the US dollar being universally accepted as a global currency.

“Then Trump came to power in the United States and disrupted the international order through his erratic policies.

“The British Independent wrote on Jan 20: ‘During the first year of his second term, Trump began dismantling the existing security and economic rules system. He offended allies and mocked nations. He betrayed Ukraine and undermined the Constitution, which he twice pledged to uphold, protect, and defend. Trust was already fragile during Trump’s first term. Now, with trade wars, that trust has almost completely disappeared among America’s allies. Trump is often quick to anger, and in recent days he has shown an unusual level of aggression. He is prepared to annex new territories in other countries, such as Greenland in Denmark. He is threatening Europe with tariffs. His anger continues to escalate.’ (End of quote)

“As a result of this global turmoil and the uncertainty surrounding the value of the dollar, gold prices have surged sharply in recent days.

“Some people have said: America is heading toward collapse. Everyone is abandoning the dollar and turning to gold. The entire West is falling apart. The rush toward gold and silver is a warning sign of an approaching economic crisis. Something terrible is looming on the horizon.”

– Compiled by Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Couple gets bail in drug use, cash fraud cases

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Criminal Court issued several rulings this week in a number of high-profile cases that have drawn public attention.

In the case involving X platform user Ahmed Al-Shulaimi, Judge Dr. Khaled Al-Omeira postponed the issuance of the verdict until Feb 11. Al-Shulaimi is accused of spreading false news and misusing his mobile phone, charges which he denied when he appeared in the court.

In another case, the court ordered the release of Dr. Fahad Al-Shulaimi on bail set at KD1,000. He is facing charges of insulting Yemen through social media platforms, an accusation he denied. The court scheduled the pronouncement of the verdict in his case for March 4.

Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti woman and her expatriate husband, both social media influencers, were released on bail of KD5,000 each. Their trial, in which they are suspected of drug use and money laundering, was adjourned until Feb 11.

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Penalty withheld: The Misdemeanor Court refrained from punishing a citizen on charges of slander and defamation, reports Al-Anba daily. Case files indicate that an expatriate doctor filed a complaint against the citizen, accusing the latter of verbally abusing him in public and misusing his telephone.

The court took the decision based on the plea presented by Attorney Bader Al-Dalak, who argued that the accusation is baseless and malicious, and that the elements of the alleged crimes are not present.

Al-Dalak added that the element of publicity required for punishment was not met, that the plaintiff delayed filing the case, that there was no criminal intent, and that the complainant’s statements contradicted those of the witness.



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets the NATO Deputy Secretary General Radmila.

Kuwait long-term strategic partner of NATO – official

BRUSSELS, Jan 29, (KUNA): NATO Deputy Secretary General Radmila Chikrinska said on Wednesday that the State of Kuwait is a long-term strategic partner of NATO.

Chikrinska made the remarks on her account on X following a meeting with Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Am-

bassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the NATO headquarters in Brussels.

She added that she had discussed with the Kuwaiti official means to promote cooperation between NATO and the State of Kuwait and exchanged views on key global security challenges.

Thousands of fake goods seized in MoCI crackdown

Outdated medicines, various expired items in market

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, through its Commercial Control Department, has announced several enforcement measures, targeting commercial fraud, public health risks, and illegal business operations throughout the country.

Faisal Al-Ansari, Director of the Commercial Control Department, reported the confiscation of 1,828 counterfeit items bearing internationally recognized trademarks during a routine inspection tour in Salmiya.

The counterfeit products were confiscated from two shops: 496 items from the first location and 1,332 from the second. Both shops were immediately closed as per the directive of the department, and legal reports were filed.

Al-Ansari reaffirmed the department’s commitment to conduct intensive inspections to ensure market compliance, monitor product safety, and protect consumer rights. He stressed that legal action will be taken against violators without leniency to maintain a regulated and safe commercial environment.

In a separate operation, the ministry’s inspection teams, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, uncovered a huge case of commercial fraud involving damaged and expired medical supplies.

The raid, carried out by the Jabriya Center inspection team with support from the Criminal Investigation Department, targeted an unlicensed office and warehouse belonging to a violating establishment. Inspectors discovered huge quan-

tities of expired first aid supplies and medical equipment, including gloves, masks, gauze, surgical blades and various medical meters.

The teams also found devices and labels being used to alter and renew expiration dates on the products -- a blatant commercial fraud and a threat to patient safety. Investigations revealed that these compromised materials were being distributed to private clinics and hospitals.

The total quantity of seized items reached thousands of cartons. The two locations were closed, a violation notice was issued, and strict legal and administrative measures were taken against the facility.

Al-Ansari emphasized that the ministry will not tolerate any practices that compromise public health. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is also intensifying inspection campaigns targeting unlicensed workshops and garages, particularly those repairing vehicles damaged in traffic accidents without the necessary official approvals.

Municipality gears up to demolish 10 buildings

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Around 10 properties in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh were found to be in violation of building codes as per the lists received from the Ministry of Public Works, reports Al-Rai daily quoting sources from Kuwait Municipality.

Sources said the Municipality will start the

demolition procedures next week, adding that reports from the ministry indicate that these properties are structurally unsafe and at risk of collapse. Based on this assessment, the relevant departments at the Municipality will take the necessary measures.

Sources disclosed that the properties on the

Syrian mugged, robbed of cash in Hawally scam

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: A Syrian fell victim to a scam and robbery when an unidentified individual, who impersonated a security officer, stopped him in Hawally and stole KD340 from him, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, the expatriate, born in 1987, filed a report stating that a man claiming to be a detective asked to see his identification. The man then searched the vehicle under the pretext of suspecting drug use before stealing the money and speeding away.

The source added that the victim provided the authorities with the details of the vehicle that the perpetrator was driving -- a pickup truck. It is believed the vehicle was either reported stolen or bore stolen license plates.

A case was registered at Shaab Police Station under the charge of ‘theft and impersonating a security officer’.

The case file was referred to the Criminal Investigation Department for legal action and to apprehend the perpetrator, in coordination with the General Traffic Department, which maintains a comprehensive database of vehicles, their owners and reported thefts.

The source emphasized the importance of verifying the identity of anyone in civilian clothing claiming to be a security officer. He explained that instructions issued to all Criminal Investigation Department personnel require them to present their official identification and to give anyone they stop enough time to review it.

The source urged anyone who suspects the identity of someone stopping them to immediately contact the Ministry of Interior’s Operations Center (112), where reports are handled promptly and the necessary measures are taken.

No. 30 closed for 15 days

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The General Traffic Department (GTD) announced the closure of the fast lane, middle fast lane and half middle lane on King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud Road (Fahaheel), from the Egaila and Fintas intersection exit to the entrance of the Riqqa and Mahboul bridges, for traffic coming from Kuwait City toward Fahaheel.

The closure started Wednesday, at 12:00 am, and will continue for 15 days to complete maintenance works.

MoSA, National Guard join hands in country’s benefit

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Ministry of Social Affairs Undersecretary Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi stated that implementing the executive work program for the cooperation protocol signed with the General Presidency of the National Guard is a vital step toward improving inter-governmental integration, supporting the emergency preparedness and crisis management system, and solidifying the concepts of social responsibility and knowledge exchange.

In a statement to the press on the sidelines of the protocol activation meeting at the ministry headquarters recently, Al-Ajmi clarified that this collaboration is an extension of a long-standing partnership and a new and advanced approach, which translates into high-quality programs serving the country and in the interest of both the beneficiaries and employees.

He revealed that the joint work program includes discussing and implementing a comprehensive timeline for conducting

awareness lectures for the beneficiaries of social welfare services, focusing on strengthening the values of national belonging, patriotism and loyalty to the leadership, as well as the participation of the National Guard in events and exhibitions organized by the ministry, particularly those promoting products made by families.

He added that the cooperation protocol consists of the development and implementation of emergency plans for social welfare sector departments, and specialized training programs aimed at increasing preparedness in certain areas such as security and safety, capacity building, and national identity among residents of social welfare institutions.

He stated that the protocol focuses on activating community support programs by developing beneficiaries’ skills in vocational, professional and technical fields, broadening the scope of practical training and expertise exchange, and organizing specialized courses in first aid and emergency response, all of which contribute to promoting prevention and safety.

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Kuwait’s dev’t plan charts path for skilled workforce

KD 84.6m pledged to boost institutions

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The latest report on the nation’s current development plan revealed an estimated investment of KD 84.608 million aimed at bolstering the capabilities of citizens and institutions.

This initiative is the cornerstone of the nine-program development strategy, encompassing 17 projects, two legislative amendments and seven key policy initiatives.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the report, indicating that the program’s core mission is to equip individuals with

essential knowledge, skills, creativity and innovation. The ultimate goal is the creation of a productive and competitive workforce that delivers positive economic, social and cultural returns, while strengthening social capital.

However, the program faces hurdles, including an unproductive labor market, poor educational outcomes, and a fragmented, unsustainable model for social integration. To overcome these challenges, the plan sets ambitious objectives: cultivating a highly skilled and efficient workforce, establishing a world-class education system, and developing a comprehensive, sustainable social welfare system.

Vital legislative changes outlined in the plan include amending the July 1, 2005 salary increase to incorporate the

salary subject to supplementary insurance in the private sector and an amendment to the existing Foreigners Law.

Among the 17 most vital projects are the launching of employment centers, empowerment of young entrepreneurs, establishment of a technology business city, and a series of local and international studies designed to measure and rigorously evaluate the educational system.

The policies supporting this program are focused on increasing the attractiveness of private sector employment, establishing a smart system for accepting foreign workers that prioritizes highly skilled individuals, and aligning the educational outputs with labor market needs to ensure students are equipped with the required skills.

Driving sustainability and transparency

KFEOCH set to host ENCON5 forum on housing and mortgage financing

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Engineer Bader Al-Salman, President of KFEOCH, announced in a press statement that the “Second Kuwait Forum for State Development Projects” will convene under the theme “Investment Opportunities in Housing and Mortgage Projects – Transparency, Achievement, and Sustainability: Principles of the New Era.” ENCON5 will be held from 4 to 5 May at Al Baraka Ballroom, Crowne Plaza Hotel, in cooperation with Kuwait Municipality and the Public Authority for Housing Welfare.

A Major Step Forward in Housing Policies and Services

On this occasion, Al-Salman stated: “The forum aligns with the State’s housing plans aimed at accelerating the provision of housing for citizens and reducing waiting periods.

In addition, a range of alternatives, including apartments and villas with diverse designs, will be available in modern smart cities developed by international and local real estate developers. Allowing commercial banks to provide long-term mortgage services also offers citizens greater repayment flexibility without placing undue strain on household budgets, while at the same time representing a genuine growth opportunity for Kuwaiti banks over the long term.”

Decree No. (195) of 2025 on Engaging the Private Sector in Housing Delivery

Al-Salman added that over the



Engineer Bader Al-Salman, President of KFEOCH

past two years, the Government of Kuwait has worked on two parallel fronts. The first focuses on accelerating housing delivery beyond previous rates by engaging the private sector through experienced, capable real estate developers to implement upcoming strategic housing plans at an accelerated pace, in line with all requirements that characterize smart cities and with modern environmental and sustainability standards. This orientation toward the private sector also enhances transparency in project implementation while reducing the time and financial burden on citizens in obtaining their future homes. This direction was supported by the issuance of Decree No. (195) of 2025, which aims to strike a balance between

attracting foreign investment and preserving the exclusivity of private housing for Kuwaiti citizens.

Invitation to Real Estate Developers and the Financial Sector in Kuwait and Sister and Friendly Countries

In conclusion, the President of KFEOCH stated that invitations will be extended to real estate developers in Kuwait and in sister and friendly countries with successful experience in real estate development and mortgage financing. Similar invitations will be extended to commercial banks and major investment companies to participate in the forum. Legal institutions and regulatory authorities, led by the Central Bank of Kuwait, will also be invited due to their important role in regulating mortgage procedures in a manner that safeguards the rights of citizens, financial institutions, and the State alike.

It is worth noting that the Kuwaiti Federation for Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses, together with Razen Events, will provide organizational and logistical services for ENCON5. Companies and institutions wishing to participate are invited to contact Engineer Aqeel Murad, Director General of KFEOCH at info@kfeoch.org.kw, Tel: +965 97543701; Mr. Taher Abdel Aal, Managing Partner at Razen, at taher@razenevents.com, Tel: +965 65102705; or Engineer Magdy Sabry, Managing Partner at Razen, at magdy@razenevents.com, Tel: +965 60002095.

Namaa continues support in Gaza

RAMALLAH, Jan 29, (KUNA): Kuwait-based Namaa Charity, affiliated with the Social Reform Society, said on Thursday it continues its humanitarian relief efforts in the Gaza Strip through the distribution of clothing and food baskets to affected families.

Namaa CEO Saad Al-Otaibi told KUNA that the dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza require coordinated and accelerated assistance, noting that the clothing and food projects provide a lifeline to thousands of families who have lost basic means of living.

Al-Otaibi highlighted that the need in Gaza is urgent amid food shortages, rising living costs, and disrupted supply chains, adding that clothing and food baskets have become daily necessities rather than luxuries for displaced and vulnerable families.

He explained that distributions are carefully coordinated with trusted local partners and the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with priority given to those most in need whether families,



KUNA photo

Namaa Charity continues its humanitarian relief efforts in the Gaza Strip.

orphans, widows, and people with disabilities, while adhering to transparency and fairness standards.

Al-Otaibi expressed gratitude to

Kuwaiti donors, praising their continued support as a reflection of Kuwait’s leading humanitarian role and commitment to global relief efforts.

Qatar Cabinet OKs QNA-KUNA news pact

DOHA, Jan 29, (KUNA): Qatar’s Cabinet on Wednesday approved a draft agreement for cooperation and joint news exchange between Qatar News Agency (QNA) and Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

QNA reported that the decision was made during the Cabinet’s regular meeting at the Amiri Diwan, chaired by Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin

Abdurrahman Al-Thani.

In a separate item, the Cabinet congratulated Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al-Thani on his election as President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), reflecting the status of the State of Qatar and the regional and international trust and appreciation it enjoys for its effective role, positive contribution and impressive achievements in the sports field, QNA stated.

Other Voices

Wedgwood legacy, Darwin lineage

By Ahmed alsarraf

People have used pottery for food since ancient times, but it was not until the 17th century that its use became widespread. This was due to the difficulty of producing large quantities of pottery that were both high in quality and uniform in shape and color.

The colors of high-quality single-piece dinnerware ranged from off-white to brilliant white. The pottery industry remained largely stagnant until 1730, when Josiah Wedgwood entered the field of pottery production in Staffordshire, England.

Wedgwood’s determination and intelligence transformed the industry forever.

The youngest of his siblings, Wedgwood was forced to abandon his formal education at the age of nine and work in the family workshop following his father’s death.

From a young age, Wedgwood was captivated by the idea of coloring porcelain, beginning with trial and error, and later advancing to rigorous and meticulous chemical processes. He was intrigued by the challenge of confronting the established standards of the industry — standards that were upheld by his own family.

His brothers were angered by his pursuits, and in 1756 he decided to establish his own workshop. He carefully documented the results of his research and succeeded in developing a method to color all known porcelain at the time using a single color.

The outcomes of his experiments spread throughout Europe and were regarded as a major achievement and a significant turning point. The pieces he produced were noted for their sim-

licity and perfection. Smooth, inlaid or decorated with harmonious designs painted on a light background, his products appealed to the aristocracy, who were beginning to move away from extravagant and costly ornamentation.

The high-quality Wedgwood sets, whose pieces were for the first time uniform in both color and shape, emerged during the Industrial Revolution, which contributed to the widespread popularity of his products. This prompted the royal palace in 1765 to commission a set of 86 tea services, specifically for Queen Charlotte.

Driven by innovation and skilled at recognizing opportunities, Wedgwood persuaded the palace to allow him to name his collection, ‘The Queen’s Tableware’, and his request was granted. This, in turn, encouraged wealthy families to seek similar sets.

Russian Empress Catherine commissioned Wedgwood to produce complete sets capable of hosting 200 guests, totaling 962 pieces of ‘The Queen’s Tableware’.

Despite his immense wealth and reputation, Wedgwood remained a man with strong liberal and democratic convictions, even while maintaining his status and close connections to the European elite.

We will later see how this influenced his daughter’s approach to raising her grandson. The tableware produced by Wedgwood remains popular to this day, renowned for its heritage, high quality and distinctive designs.

Josiah Wedgwood died in 1795, leaving behind a legacy to his daughter Susanna, who married Sir Robert Darwin. In 1809, they had a son, Charles Darwin, who became many times more famous than his grandfather after emerging as one of the greatest scientists in human history.

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Kuwait PM meets Boeing’s Senior VP, ME pres



Prime Minister Diwan photo
His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, received at Bayan Palace today Dr. Brendan Nelson, Senior Vice President of Boeing and President of Boeing Worldwide, and Fahad Al-Muhairi, President of Boeing Middle East and North Africa, and their accompanying delegation, on the occasion of their visit to the country.



KUNA photo
Kuwait’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (right), discusses bilateral cooperation and regional developments with Belgian Foreign Ministry Secretary General Theodora Gentzis (left).

Kuwait, UAE sign exec program for standardization cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Public Authority for Industry signed on Thursday an executive program between the governments of Kuwait and the UAE regarding cooperation in the field of standardization for 2026, 2027 and 2028. The program was signed during the sixth session of the Kuwaiti-UAE Joint Higher Committee meetings.

Speaking to KUNA, the authority’s Acting Director-General Shamlan Gehadely said the move, which took place at the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry’s headquarters, comes in the context of promoting bilateral cooperative relations in vital fields.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed bilateral cooperation across various sectors and means to develop them in a way that serves the interests of both countries and their peoples.

He added that several agreements, MoUs and executive programs were signed during the committee meetings, reflecting both sisterly countries’ commitment to cementing brotherly relations in various areas.



KUNA photo
Acting Director General of the Kuwaiti Public Authority for Industry, Shamlan Al-Gehadely, during the signing of the agreement with the Emirati side in the presence of the foreign ministers of the two countries.

Continued from Page 1

Local products

They are now required to pay suppliers for fast-moving consumer goods and national products within 15 days of delivery. Payment for other goods is set at a maximum of 45 days.

To ensure efficient inventory management, any slow-moving goods – those with a turnover exceeding 90 days – must be returned to the suppliers.

The circular emphasizes fair practice, priority for local products in procurement, display, marketing and shelf placement. It prohibits practices harmful to national companies, such as imposing irregular conditions, unjustified product returns, demanding mandatory free goods or forcing dealings with specific financial entities.

It demands oversight and auditing of cooperative employees whose actions may hinder the marketing of national products or involve mistreatment of national companies.

To ensure proper accountability, all free goods received by cooperatives must be thoroughly recorded and documented, with a warning that any undocumented free goods will lead to legal action against those responsible.

The circular also strictly prohibits the use of cooperative societies as warehouses for any products.

Gold tops

He stressed that the ongoing geopolitical risks, uncertainty surrounding US monetary policy, and ambiguity in global bond markets are keeping gold at the forefront of safe-haven assets in the coming period.

These record gold levels come at a time the global markets are undergoing rapid monetary and financial shifts, accompanied by declining confidence in the performance of the US economy and the continuous weakness of the dollar -- its lowest level in nearly four years, alongside escalating geopolitical tensions in several sensitive regions. This environment has reinforced investors’ tendency to seek safe

havens, foremost among them is gold.

Gold delivered outstanding performance in recent years, supported by increased purchases by central banks worldwide, and rising investment demand from institutions and ETFs, amid inflation concerns, uncertainty in bond markets, and anticipated changes in the US monetary policy leadership as the term of the current US Federal Reserve chairman approaches its end.

Media Forum

The week kicks off on Thursday and will run for a full week across all seven emirates.

During the meeting at Qasr Al Shati in Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Abdullah conveyed to the UAE president the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with his wishes for continued progress and prosperity for the UAE, as reported by the UAE’s official news agency (WAM).

In return, the UAE president extended his congratulations to His Highness the Amir on the occasion of Kuwait’s national celebrations and conveyed his best wishes for His Highness’ continued health and happiness, as well as further progress and prosperity for Kuwait and its people under his leadership.

The Kuwaiti minister thanked the UAE President for the warm welcome and the UAE’s heartfelt participation in Kuwait’s National Day celebrations, praising the strong and longstanding ties that bind the two nations.

The two sides discussed the longstanding fraternal relations between the UAE and Kuwait, as well as opportunities to strengthen cooperation across various fields in a manner that serves their mutual interests and supports their shared aspirations for development and prosperity.

They also discussed a number of regional and international developments of shared interest.

The Kuwaiti delegation includes Minister of Public Works Dr Nora Al-Mashaan, Capital Governor Sheikh

Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Homoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

One million

Tripathi expressed her sincere appreciation for the leadership of Kuwait—His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah—for their tremendous efforts to strengthen and advance the partnership between India and Kuwait.

She highlighted India’s leading position in several key global sectors, indicating that the country is the world’s largest producer of vaccines and dairy products, the second-largest producer of steel and rice, and home to the largest digital payment system worldwide.

She also cited the growing global stature of her country, with the third-largest startup ecosystem, the third-largest aviation market, and extensive railway and metro networks.

On bilateral relations, she confirmed the deep historical ties between India and Kuwait, which date back to long before the discovery of oil, when Kuwait ships regularly sailed to Indian ports for trade. She asserted that these relations were elevated to a strategic partnership during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Kuwait in December 2024.

Indicating that the two countries are natural partners in trade and economic cooperation, she revealed that bilateral trade exceeded \$10 billion during the 2024/2025 fiscal year.

She added that Kuwait plays a vital role in the energy security of India, ranking as India’s sixth-largest supplier of crude oil and fifth-largest supplier of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), covering around 3.5 percent of the energy needs of her country.

She affirmed as well the strong presence of Indian public and private companies in the Kuwaiti market,

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, received at Bayan Palace today Dr. Brendan Nelson, Senior Vice President and President of Boeing International, and Fahad Al-Muhairi, President of Boeing Middle East and North Africa, along with their accompanying delegation, on the occasion of their visit to the country.

During the meeting, they discussed ways to enhance cooperation between the State of Kuwait and Boeing, and to explore opportunities in aircraft manufacturing and imports, space research, and the training of local personnel to strengthen national capabilities and support the country’s development vision.

The meeting was attended by Sheikh Khalid Mohammed Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, Acting Head of the Prime Minister’s Office, and Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority.

Kuwait’s Deputy FM discusses ties with Belgian Foreign Ministry chief

BRUSSELS, Jan 29, (KUNA): Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Thursday with Secretary General of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Theodora Gentzis.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a press release, said the meeting reviewed the two countries’ longstanding ties spanning more than six decades, and underscored their keenness to further strengthen relations by expanding and exploring new areas of cooperation.

Both sides also discussed the latest regional and international developments.

Kuwait culture center launches ‘Week of Kuwait-UAE relations’

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre hosted the week of UAE-Kuwait relations on Thursday evening under the title: “UAE-Kuwait: Brothers Forever”, in the presence of UAE Ambassador in Kuwait Dr. Matar Hamid Al-Neyadi. This initiative reflects brotherly and historical relations between the State of Kuwait and the UAE.

Abu Dhabi Media Network’s news center will host key figures from both countries, along with several Kuwaiti historians and artists to speak about firm relations and brotherly bonds between both sisterly countries. Relevant activities are to be broadcast live on Kuwait TV and Abu Dhabi Media Network from 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm from January 29 to February 4, within a framework that reflects the role of culture and media in bringing both peoples together.



KUNA photo
Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre hosts the UAE-Kuwait Week under the theme ‘UAE-Kuwait: Brothers Forever’.

Kuwait aims for 15% renewable power by 2035, net zero by 2050

GCC chief praises Bahrain’s role in sustainability forum



KUNA photo
GCC Secretary General Jasem Al-Budaiwi addresses the Sustainability Forum Middle East, highlighting Kuwait’s renewable energy targets and the region’s commitment to clean energy transition.

mix, enhancing energy efficiency, and investing in clean energy and hydrogen technologies, alongside the implementation of Circular Carbon Econ-

omy (CCE) principles,” Al-Budaiwi stressed.

Furthermore, Al-Budaiwi extended his profound gratitude to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain and current President of the GCC Supreme Council, for hosting the forum.

He further commended the backing and facilities provided to ensure the success of the Council’s initiatives, while lauding the immense dedication and attention directed toward joint Gulf action across all fields, by Bahraini King and his brothers, the leaders of the GCC member states.

“While the world faces unprecedented challenges due to climate change and increasing pressures on water and energy resources, the GCC is working under the leadership of its heads of state to transform these challenges into strategic opportunities,” Al-Budaiwi explained.

He emphasized that the GCC remains at the vanguard of global efforts to achieve a sustainable transition, recognizing these sectors as the funda-

mental pillars of sustainable development and human security.

Al-Budaiwi said “The United Arab Emirates (UAE) aims for 44 percent clean energy and Net Zero by 2050, while Bahrain plans to transition 20 percent of its energy to renewables by 2035 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.”

Simultaneously, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia targets a 50 percent share of renewable energy by 2030 and Net Zero by 2060, whereas the Sultanate of Oman aims for 30 percent renewable electricity by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050, he added.

He also clarified that the State of Qatar seeks to fulfill 20 percent of its energy requirements through renewables by 2030, and the State of Kuwait targets 15 percent renewable electricity by 2035 with a goal of Net Zero by 2050.

He pointed out that these efforts represent a fundamental cornerstone in achieving the global goal of tripling renewable energy capacity, in alignment with the outcomes of COP28.



KUNA photo
Namaa Charity distributes food baskets and a number of cows and sacrificial animals in Chad.

Kuwait Namaa Charity enhances food security, livelihoods in Chad

KHARTOUM, Jan 29, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Namaa Charity, affiliated with the Social Reform Society, implemented a comprehensive relief and development project in Hadjer Lamis, Chad, distributing 150 food baskets, 10 dairy cows, and fresh meat to vulnerable families.

Namaa’s Deputy CEO Abdulaziz Al-Kandari told KUNA that the initiative responds to urgent humanitarian needs in Al-Badia village, where many families face food insecurity and limited income sources, making combined relief and sustainable development interventions essential.

He explained that the project integrates immediate relief through food

baskets with livelihood support by providing dairy cows, ensuring families a sustainable income source that improves living standards.

The projects were implemented in coordination with officially approved local partners recognized by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ensuring compliance with legal and humanitarian frameworks, accountability, and effective delivery to beneficiaries.

He added that Namaa conducts comprehensive field assessments to identify the households most in need, to maximize sustainable humanitarian impact beyond temporary aid.

CSC automates child allowance

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) confirmed the completion of the automation of procedures for disbursing the social allowance to the children of Kuwaiti mothers employed through its integrated system, as part of efforts to achieve the its ‘paperless’ goal, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the CSC explained that this step falls within ongoing efforts to simplify procedures and accelerate the completion of transactions.

The disbursement of social allowance to the children of Kuwaiti mothers, who are employees, is now carried out automatically, without the need to submit paper documents, due to the electronic linkage between the employee’s workplace and the relevant departments in the CSC.

‘End roving patrols in cities’

Dems poised to trigger govt shutdown if WH won’t meet demands for ICE reform

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP): US Senate Democrats are threatening to block legislation that would fund the Department of Homeland Security and several other agencies Thursday, potentially bringing the government a step closer to a partial shutdown if Republicans and the White House do not agree to new restrictions on President Donald Trump’s surge of immigration enforcement.

As the country reels from the deaths of two protesters at the hands of federal agents in Minneapolis, irate Senate Democrats laid out a list of demands ahead of a Thursday morning test vote, including that officers take off their masks and identify themselves and obtain warrants for arrest. If those are not met, Democrats say they are prepared to block the wide-ranging spending bill, denying Republicans the votes they need to pass it and triggering a shutdown at midnight on Friday.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Wednesday that Democrats won’t provide needed votes until US Immigration and Customs Enforcement is “reined in and overhauled.”

“The American people support law enforcement, they support border security, they do not support ICE terrorizing our streets and killing American citizens,” Schumer said.

There were some signs of possible progress as the White House has appeared open to trying to strike a deal with Democrats to avert a shutdown. The two sides were talking as of Wednesday evening, according to a person familiar with the negotiations who requested anonymity to speak about the private talks. One possible option discussed would be to strip the funding for the Homeland Security Department from the larger bill, as Schumer has requested, and extend it for a short period to allow time for negotiations, the person said. The rest of the bill would fund government agencies until September.

Still, with no agreement yet and an uncertain path ahead, the standoff threatened to plunge the country into another shutdown just two months after Democrats blocked a spending bill over expiring federal health care subsidies, a dispute that closed the government for 43 days as Republicans refused to negotiate.

That shutdown ended when a small



US Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, waits to speak to reporters following a closed-door meeting with fellow Democrats at the Capitol in Washington on Jan 28. (AP)

group of moderate Democrats broke away to strike a deal with Republicans, but Democrats are more unified this time after the fatal shootings of Alex Pretti and Renee Good by federal agents.

There’s a lot of “unanimity and shared purpose” within the Democratic caucus, Minnesota Sen. Tina Smith said after a lunch meeting Wednesday.

“Boil it all down, what we are talking about is that these lawless ICE agents should be following the same rules that your local police department does,” Smith said. “There has to be accountability.”

Amid the administration’s immigration crackdown, Schumer said Democrats are asking the White House to “end roving patrols” in cities and coordinate with local law enforcement on immigration arrests, including requiring tighter rules for warrants.

Democrats also want an enforceable code of conduct so agents are held accountable when they violate rules. Schumer said agents should be required to have “masks off, body

cameras on” and carry proper identification, as is common practice in most law enforcement agencies.

The Democratic caucus is united in those “common sense reforms” and the burden is on Republicans to accept them, Schumer said, as he has pushed for the Homeland spending to be separated out to avoid a broader shutdown.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., has indicated that he might be open to considering some of the Democrats’ demands, but he encouraged Democrats and the White House to talk and find agreement.

As the two sides negotiated, it was still unclear whether they could agree on anything that would satisfy Democrats who want Trump’s aggressive crackdown to end.

The White House had invited some Democrats for a discussion to better understand their positions and avoid a partial government shutdown, a senior White House official said, but the meeting did not happen. The official requested anonymity to discuss the private invitation.

UAE-Russia strategic partnership strengthens in Moscow talks

MOSCOW, Jan 29, (KUNA): Russian President Vladimir Putin and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Thursday lauded the continued growth of the strategic partnership between their countries, affirming their shared commitment to expanding cooperation across various sectors, particularly energy, economy, and investment.

A Kremlin statement said the two leaders, during official talks in Moscow, noted the positive momentum in bilateral ties, emphasizing that relations are grounded in mutual benefit and fruitful collaboration in multiple spheres.

Putin described relations with the UAE as developing “dynamically and comprehensively,” commending Sheikh Mohamed’s personal contribution to strengthening bilateral ties and accelerating their progress. He highlighted the UAE’s role as a key trade partner of Russia in the Arab world, pointing to the steady growth in trade and investment, as well as significant joint initiatives in the energy sector.

The Russian leader also underlined the rising number of Russian tourists visiting the UAE as a reflection of strong people-to-people ties, announcing plans to establish a Russian university in the Emirates. He further praised the UAE’s efforts to mediate in the Ukraine conflict, expressing appreciation for Abu Dhabi’s role in facilitating



KUNA photo
Russian President Vladimir Putin with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

trilateral negotiations between Russia, the United States, and Ukraine, as well as its contribution to prisoner exchange efforts.

Addressing regional developments, Putin underscored the importance of continued Russian-Emirati dialogue, stressing that the creation of a Palestinian state in accordance with UN resolutions remains vital for ensuring lasting stability in the Middle East.

For his part, Sheikh Mohamed said UAE-Russia relations are built on more than five decades of partnership and mutual respect, voicing hope that 2026

will mark a year of prosperity for Russia and further advancement in bilateral relations. He reaffirmed the UAE’s commitment to deepening strategic cooperation with Russia in key sectors such as energy, economy, and investment, in a manner that serves the interests of both nations and their peoples.

The UAE president also thanked Putin for supporting Abu Dhabi’s mediation efforts in the Russia-Ukraine prisoner exchange, reiterating his country’s backing for diplomatic solutions that promote stability and peace at the international level.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, emergency services personnel work to extinguish a fire following a Russian attack in Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine on Jan 29. (AP)

Russian drone attack kills 3 in Ukraine as further US-led peace talks approach

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 29, (AP): A Russian drone attack killed three people in Ukraine’s southern Zaporizhzhia region overnight, authorities said Thursday, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned that Moscow is planning another large-scale barrage despite plans for further US-brokered peace talks at the weekend.

The Zaporizhzhia strike caused a major blaze in an apartment building, according to emergency services.

Firefighters also worked through the night to put out fires in the central Dnipropetrovsk region, where two people were injured, officials said.

Zelenskyy said Ukrainian intelligence reports indicate Russia is assembling forces for a major aerial attack. Previous large attacks, sometimes involving more than 800 drones as well as cruise and ballistic missiles, have targeted the Ukrainian power grid.

The ongoing attacks discredit the peace talks, Zelenskyy said. “Every single Russian strike does,” he said late Wednesday.

Russia’s daily bombardment of civilian areas behind the roughly 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line has continued despite international condemnation and attempts to end the fighting almost four years after Russia launched its devastating all-out invasion of Ukraine.

Negotiations between the two sides

are poised to resume on Sunday amid doubts about Moscow’s commitment to a settlement.

The European Union’s top diplomat accused Russia of not taking the talks seriously, calling Thursday in Brussels for more pressure to be exerted on Moscow to press it into making concessions.

“We see them increasing their attacks on Ukraine because they can’t make moves on the battlefield. So, they are attacking civilians,” Kaja Kallas said of Russia at a meeting of EU foreign ministers.

She stressed that Europe, which sees its own future security at stake in Ukraine, must be fully involved in talks to end the war. The push for a settlement has been led over the past year by the Trump administration, and European leaders fear their concerns may not be taken into account.

The number of soldiers killed, injured or missing on both sides of Russia’s war on Ukraine could be 2 million by spring, with Russia sustaining the largest number of troop deaths for any major power in any conflict since World War II, a report warned Tuesday.

The report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies came less than a month before the fourth anniversary of Moscow’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

As the war grinds through another

bitterly cold winter, Russian strikes damaged an apartment block Wednesday on the outskirts of Kyiv, killing two people. Nine others were injured in attacks in the Ukrainian cities of Odesa and Kryvyi Rih and in the front-line Zaporizhzhia region.

The CSIS report said Russia suffered 1.2 million casualties, including up to 325,000 troop deaths, between February 2022 and December 2025.

“Despite claims of battlefield momentum in Ukraine, the data shows that Russia is paying an extraordinary price for minimal gains and is in decline as a major power,” the report said. “No major power has suffered anywhere near these numbers of casualties or fatalities in any war since World War II.”

It estimated that Ukraine, with its smaller army and population, had suffered between 500,000 to 600,000 military casualties, including up to 140,000 deaths.

Neither Moscow nor Kyiv gives timely data on military losses, and each side seeks to amplify the other side’s casualties.

Commenting on the report, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday that the research could not be considered “reliable information” and that only Russia’s Ministry of Defense was authorized to provide information on military losses.

America

Omar criticizes Trump after attack: Democratic US Rep Ilhan Omar blamed President Donald Trump for threats to her safety on Wednesday, one day after she was accosted and squirted with liquid at an event in Minneapolis.

The man arrested for Tuesday’s attack has posted online in support of the Republican president.

“Every time the president of the United States has chosen to use hateful rhetoric to talk about me and the community that I represent, my death threats skyrocket,” Omar said during a press conference. Asked if she was nervous about appearing in public, she said, “Fear and intimidation doesn’t work on me.”

The attack came during a perilous political moment in Minneapolis, where two people have been fatally shot by federal agents during the White House’s aggressive immigration crackdown. (AP)

■ ■ ■

FBI executes search warrants: The FBI on Wednesday searched the election office of a Georgia county that has been central to right-wing conspiracy theories over President Donald Trump’s 2020 election loss, acting just one week after the Republican leader predicted prosecutions over a contest he has baselessly insisted was tainted by widespread fraud.

The search at Fulton County’s main election facility in Union City sought records related to the 2020 election. It appeared to be the most public step by law enforcement to pursue Trump’s claims of a stolen election, grievances rejected time and again by courts and state and federal officials, who found no evidence of fraud that would have altered the outcome.

It also unfolds against the backdrop of FBI and Justice Department efforts to investigate perceived political enemies of Trump, including former FBI Director James

REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS

An FBI press office person approaches the Fulton County Election Hub and Operation Center on Jan 28, in Union City, Ga. (AP)

Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James. (AP)

■ ■ ■

‘Situation in US South grows more dire’: Mississippi dispatchers are fielding desperate calls for medication or oxygen from people stuck in their homes. Troopers in Tennessee are fanning out for welfare checks on those who haven’t been heard from in days. And in at least one rural area, officials have resorted to using trucks typically used for battling wildfires to transport patients to hospitals.

It could be days before power is restored across the South, where more subfreezing temperatures are expected by Friday in areas unaccustomed to and ill-equipped for such cold. The situation is reaching a breaking point for the elderly and those with medical conditions who lack electricity, some of whom are trapped by roads made impassable by ice and fallen trees. (AP)

Merz hails Europe as ‘alternative to imperialism and autocracy’

BERLIN, Jan 29, (AP): German Chancellor Friedrich Merz hailed the European Union on Thursday as an “alternative to imperialism and autocracy” that can forge deals with like-minded partners in a world of increasing great power rivalry.

Merz underlined the continuing value of a NATO in which Europe will intensify its defense efforts, and said it will always seek cooperation with the United States - but not as a “subordinate.” He also joined other European leaders in pushing back against US President Donald Trump’s assertion that troops from non-US NATO countries avoided the front line during the war in Afghanistan.

Merz spoke to the German parliament about foreign policy a week after Trump withdrew a threat of new tariffs against Germany and seven other European countries to press for US control over Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally and EU member Denmark.

Merz is a strong backer of the EU making more trade deals, including one with South America’s Mercosur bloc and another struck this week with India.

While seeking new alliances, “it is also clear for us and for me that we should not carelessly jeopardize existing alliances,” Merz said, adding that “trans-Atlantic trust is a value in itself even today.”

He said that Europeans want to preserve NATO and make it stronger, and “we will always reach out the hand of cooperation to the United States of America.”

“At the same time, the basis of this guiding principle remains ... as democracies, we are partners and allies and not subordinates,” he added.

Merz noted that 59 German troops died in Afghanistan during the country’s nearly 20-year deployment in Afghanistan, and well over 100 were wounded.

He did not directly reference an interview by Trump last week when the president said he wasn’t sure the other 31 nations in NATO would be there to support the United States if and when requested and that troops from those countries stayed “a little off the front lines” in Afghanistan.

Merz said that “we will not allow this deployment, which we also performed in the interest of our ally, the United States of America, to be disparaged and demeaned today.”



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz makes a government statement on the current foreign policy situation in the 56th plenary session of the 21st legislative period in the German Bundestag, in Berlin on Jan 29. (AP)

Europe

Thousands rally in Belgrade: Thousands gathered in Serbia’s capital on Tuesday accusing the government of a crackdown on universities which have been a main force behind a campaign that has shaken autocratic President Aleksandar Vucic’s rule.

Protesters rallied outside the headquarters of the University of Belgrade on what was a national day of education. The peaceful gathering, dubbed “Knowledge is power,” was in support of scores of professors and teachers who have lost their jobs or positions for taking part in the anti-government demonstrations.

“No government in our history has treated members of the academic community with such arrogance, vengeance and malice and only because the academic community refused to be silent,” Vladan Djokic, the head dean of the university, told the crowd. (AP)

■ ■ ■

Azerbaijan foils terror plot: Azerbaijan authorities have thwarted a terrorist plot targeting a foreign

embassy and arrested three suspects with alleged ties to the Islamic State, the State Security Service announced Tuesday.

The three Azerbaijan nationals were detained while approaching the diplomatic mission with items intended to be used as weapons, according to the statement.

A court has ruled to place all three individuals in pretrial detention as the investigation continues.

The State Security Service did not disclose which country’s embassy was targeted. Operational and investigative measures in the case remain ongoing, authorities said. (Xinhua)

■ ■ ■

5 die in Portugal severe weather: At least five people have died in Portugal following severe weather brought by Storm Kristin, which caused extensive damage across several regions, authorities said on Wednesday.

Four of the fatalities occurred in the municipality of Leiria, north of the capital Lisbon, Mayor Goncalo Lopes said. Two of the deaths were directly linked to the storm, while the other two resulted from cardiac arrests associated with the deterioration of weather conditions.

A fifth person died in Vila Franca de Xira, a town north of Lisbon, also because of the storm.

Civil protection authorities reported widespread destruction, including damaged sports facilities, destroyed aircraft, and major disruptions to rail and power services. Several areas of the country remained without electricity on Wednesday. (Xinhua)

Vucic

INTERNATIONAL

ASEAN does not recognize Myanmar polls, says Lazaro

CEBU, Philippines, Jan 29, (AP): The Association of Southeast Asian Nations does not recognize the recently held elections in Myanmar, the first since the army seized power in 2021, the Philippine foreign secretary said Thursday.

ASEAN's non-recognition of the elections in Myanmar, which a military-backed party claimed to have won, is a major blow to efforts by the country's military rulers to gain international recognition.

The regional bloc, whose 11 members include Myanmar, has refused to recognize the military-ruled government since the army forcibly wrested power from Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government in 2021. The powergrab has plunged the impoverished country in a deadly civil war.

Asked in a news conference if the bloc did not recognize the elections in Myanmar, Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro said, "yes, as of now" and added that ASEAN "has not endorsed the three phases of the elections that were held."

Lazaro did not elaborate how the regional bloc's stance could possibly change. She was speaking after hosting the ASEAN's first major ministerial meetings this year in the central

city of Cebu. The Myanmar crisis was high on the agenda.

Myanmar's military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party claimed Monday that it had won the elections. The victory of the party led by a former general was widely expected after the vote excluded major opposition parties and dissent was tightly restricted.

Also, a quarter of parliamentary seats were automatically reserved for the military - effectively guaranteeing control by the armed forces and its favored parties. Critics say the elections were neither free nor fair, but an effort to legitimize its rule after its forcible seizure of power.

The Philippines holds ASEAN's rotating chair this year, taking what would have been Myanmar's turn after the country was suspended from chairing the meeting after the military's seizure of power.

Founded in 1967 in the Cold War era, ASEAN has an unwieldy membership of diverse countries that range from vibrant democracies like the Philippines, a longtime treaty ally of Washington, to authoritarian states like Laos and Cambodia, which are close to Beijing.



From left: Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan, Myanmar's Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hau Khan Sum, Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow, East Timor's Foreign Minister Bendito dos Santos Freitas, Vietnam's Foreign Minister Le Hoai Trung, Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro, Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, Brunei's Second Minister of Foreign Affairs Erywan Yusof, Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Sugiono, Laos' Foreign Minister Thongsavanh Phomvihane, and ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn pose for a group photo during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' Retreat in Cebu, Philippines on Jan 29. (AP)

Relationship is in a good place, a strong place: British leader

Starmer and Xi call for deeper UK-China ties as Trump shakes up global relations

BEIJING, Jan 29, (AP): The leaders of Britain and China called Thursday for a "strategic partnership" to deepen ties between their nations at a time of growing global turbulence as they sought to thaw relations after years of chill.

Neither Prime Minister Keir Starmer nor President Xi Jinping publicly mentioned Donald Trump, but the US president's challenge to the post-Cold War order was clearly on their minds.

"I think that working together on issues like climate change, global stability during challenging times for the world is precisely what we should be doing as we build this relationship in the way that I've described," Starmer told Xi at the start of their meeting in Beijing.

The two met for 80 minutes - double the scheduled time - in the Great Hall of the People as their nations try to improve relations after several years of acrimony. Relations have deteriorated over allegations of Chinese spying in Britain, China's support for Russia in the Ukraine war and the crackdown on freedoms in Hong Kong, the former British colony that was returned to China in 1997. Starmer is the first British prime minister to visit in eight years.

Xi said that "China-UK relations experienced twists and turns in previous years, which was not in the interests of either country."

"In the current turbulent and ever-changing international situation ... China and the UK need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation to maintain world peace and stability," he said.

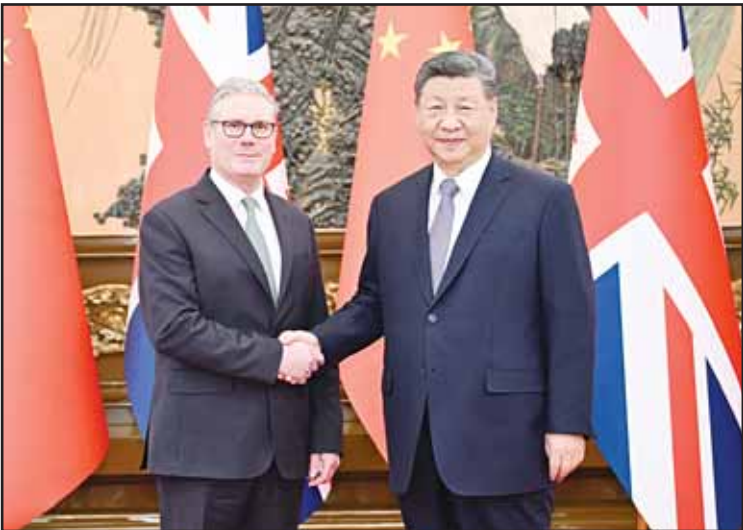
Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said Xi had stressed, without mentioning the US directly, that "major powers" must adhere to international law or the world would regress into a "jungle."

Starmer's Downing Street office said Britain wanted "a consistent, long-term, and strategic partnership that will benefit both countries."

After the meeting, Starmer said the leaders had made "really good progress" on issues including slashing Chinese tariffs on liquor and introducing visa-free travel for British visitors.

"The relationship is in a good place, a strong place," the British leader said.

Xi appeared to acknowledge the criticism that Starmer has faced for reaching out to China despite national security and human rights concerns. The UK recently approved controversial plans for a huge Chinese Embassy in London, removing a sticking point in relations but also overriding fears that the "mega-embassy" would make it easier for China to conduct espionage and



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who is on an official visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on Jan 29. (Xinhua)

intimidate dissidents.

"Good things often come with difficulties," Xi said. "As long as it is the right thing to do in accordance with the fundamental interests of the country and its people, leaders will not shy away from difficulties and will forge ahead bravely."

Starmer's visit comes less than two months after a Hong Kong court convicted Jimmy Lai, a former newspaper publisher and British citizen, under a national security law that Beijing imposed on the territory after massive pro-democracy protests in 2019.

Starmer said he raised human rights issues with Xi and the two men had a "re-

spectful discussion."

Starmer, who was elected in July 2024, has said he will protect national security while keeping up diplomatic dialogue and economic cooperation with China. He told Xi that it has "been far too long" since a U.K. prime minister visited.

"I made a promise 18 months ago when we were elected into government, that I would make Britain face outward again," the leader of the center-left Labour Party said. "Because as we all know, events abroad affect everything that happens back in our home countries, from prices on the supermarket shelves to how secure we feel."

Starmer's government has struggled to deliver the economic growth it promised and ease a cost-of-living crisis for millions of households and he sees China as a potential source of growth.

More than 50 U.K. business executives have joined him on the trip, along with the leaders of major cultural organizations, as he seeks to expand opportunities for British companies in China and secure Chinese investment in the U.K.

The disruption to global trade under Trump has made expanding trade and investment more imperative for many governments. Vietnam and the European Union upgraded ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership Thursday, two days after the EU and India announced a free trade accord.

"At a moment when the international rules-based order is under threat from multiple sides, we need to stand side by side as reliable and predictable partners," European Council President Antonio Costa said in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Starmer is the fourth leader of a US ally to visit Beijing this month, following those of South Korea, Canada and Finland. The German chancellor is expected to visit next month.

The UK leader also met Thursday with Zhao Leji, the chairman of China's legislature, the National People's Congress, and Premier Li Qiang, who told Starmer his efforts to improve relations had been "widely welcomed" in both countries.

The two countries were expected to sign a number of agreements. One will try to disrupt the trade in Chinese boat engines used by smugglers to bring people across the English Channel to Britain. More than half the engines come from China, the British government said. Under the agreement, U.K law enforcement agencies will work with Chinese authorities and manufacturers to prevent engines from ending up in the hands of criminal gangs.

Rubio defends Trump on Venezuela while trying to allay fears about Greenland, NATO

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio gave a full-throated defense Wednesday of US President Donald Trump's military operation to capture then-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, while explaining to US lawmakers the administration's approach to Greenland, NATO, Iran and China.

As Republican and Democratic members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee offered starkly different readings of the administration's foreign policy, Rubio addressed Trump's intentions and his often bellicose rhetoric that has alarmed US allies in Europe and elsewhere, including demands to take over Greenland.

In the first public hearing since the Jan 3 raid to depose Maduro, Rubio said Trump had acted to take out a major US national security threat in the Western Hemisphere. Trump's top diplomat said America was safer and more secure as a result and that the administration would work with interim authorities to stabilize the South American country.

"We're not going to have this thing turn around overnight, but I think we're making good and decent progress," Rubio said. "We are certainly better off today in Venezuela than we were four weeks ago, and I think and hope and expect that we'll be better off in three months and six months and nine months than we would have been had Maduro still been there."

The former Florida senator said Venezuela's current leaders are cooperating and would soon begin to see benefits. But he backed away from remarks prepared for the hearing that Washington would not hesitate to take further military action should those leaders not fully accept Trump's demands. "I can tell you right now with full certainty, we are not



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio appears before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on Capitol Hill on Jan 28, in Washington. (AP)

postured to nor do we intend or expect to have to take any military action in Venezuela at any time," Rubio said. "I think it would require the emergence of an imminent threat of the kind that we do not anticipate at this time."

He said Venezuela soon will be allowed to sell oil that is now subject to US sanctions, and the revenue would be set aside to pay for basic government services such as policing and health care. Oil proceeds will be deposited in a US Treasury-controlled account and released after the US approves monthly budgets to be submitted by Venezuela, he said.

'Khan in good health after eye procedure'

ISLAMABAD, Jan 29, (AP): Pakistan's imprisoned former prime minister Imran Khan is in good health after undergoing a medical procedure for an eye ailment at a government hospital, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Thursday.

Khan was examined by a team of doctors at Rawalpindi's Adiala prison, where he is serving multiple prison sentences, before being taken to a government hospital on Saturday, where he underwent a 20-minute medical procedure with his consent.

"He is in good health," Tarar told the private Geo News television channel.

The comments came after Khan's opposition party spokesman Zulfikar Bukhari said earlier this week that the former premier was suffering from an eye condition and required "immediate medical attention."

Bukhari had called for Khan's personal physician to be granted access, warning on X that any further delay could result in "irreversible harm."

Tarar's remarks followed days of speculation on social media that Khan had been taken to a hospital under heavy security over the weekend and returned to jail the same night. Khan has not been seen in public since his arrest in 2023 in a corruption case.

In a statement on Thursday, Bukhari said Tarar's remarks were "very worrying" and described the handling of the health issue as "opaque and alarming."



Khan

Lat/Am

Lat-Am leaders call for unity: Latin American leaders, who gathered for a development forum Wednesday, called for regional unity in the face of increasing political polarization and the recent US intervention in Venezuela.

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva did not name the United States, but alluded to the country's recent actions and the resulting political divisions that have caused paralysis in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) - the only organization that includes all the region's governments.

"It has not been capable of producing even a single declaration against illegal military interventions that affect our region," Lula said during the economic forum in Panama City hosted by the CAF-Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean. (AP)

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Colombia plane crash kills 15: A small plane crashed Wednesday in a rural area of Norte de Santander province in northeast Colombia, killing all 15 people on board including a member of congress, authorities said.

Satena, the state-owned airline that operated the flight, said local officials in the community of Curasica notified authorities about where the plane had gone down and a rescue team was deployed to "assess the condition of the passengers."

Colombia's Transportation Ministry later released a statement saying that "once the aircraft was located on site, authorities regrettably confirmed that there were no survivors." (AP)



In this photo provided by ALS Paramedics on Jan 29, rescue personnel inspect the site of a collision involving a minibus taxi and a truck, near Durban, South Africa. (AP)

South Africa road accident kills 11

A collision involving a minibus taxi and a truck killed at least 11 people in South Africa on Thursday, a local government official and emergency services said, just over a week after a similar road crash left 14 schoolchildren dead.

Thursday's crash happened near the city of Durban in the eastern KwaZulu-Natal province. Provincial transport department official Siboniso Duma said in a statement that 11 people, including a schoolchild, died at the scene, although that was according to preliminary information. (AP)

Rwanda sues UK over migrant deal

KIGALI, Rwanda, Jan 29, (AP): Rwanda has said it is suing the United Kingdom to seek payments over an aborted, controversial migrant deal under which the East African nation was to host deported asylum seekers from the European country.

Rwanda announced on Tuesday that it had filed proceedings with the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration.

The migrant deal entered into force on April 25, 2024. In July 2024, shortly after taking office, the UK's new Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced that the deal was "dead and buried."

"He did so without prior notice to Rwanda, contrary to the spirit of the partnership that had always characterized the agreement," the Rwandan government said in a statement.

Under the deal, signed with former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Britain agreed to pay Rwanda to take in asylum seekers who had arrived in the UK illegally.

Only four people came to Rwanda voluntarily. Sunak's successor, Starmer, rejected the controversial plan as soon as his Labour government came to power later that month.



Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks during a press conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Jan. 6, 2014. (AP)

Yunus returned to Bangladesh and took over three days after Hasina fled to India on Aug. 5, 2024, following weeks of violent unrest. He has promised a free and fair election, but critics question whether the process will meet democratic standards and whether it will be genuinely inclusive after the ban on Hasina's Awami League.

There are also concerns over security and uncertainty surrounding the referendum, which could bring about major changes to the constitution.

Bangladesh's ousted prime minister Hasina denounces upcoming election

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Jan 29, (AP): From her exile in India, Bangladesh's ousted leader Sheikh Hasina has slammed the country's upcoming election after her party was barred from the polls, remarks that could deepen tensions ahead of the pivotal vote next month.

Hasina, who was sentenced to death for her crackdown on a student uprising in 2024 that killed hundreds of people and led to the toppling of her 15-year rule, warned in an email to The Associated Press last week that without inclusive and free and fair elections, Bangladesh will face prolonged instability.

She also claimed that Bangladesh's interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus deliberately disenfranchised millions of her supporters by excluding her party - the former ruling Awami League - from the election.

"Each time political participation is denied to a significant portion of the population, it deepens resentment, delegitimizes institutions and creates the conditions for future instability," she wrote.

"A government born of exclusion cannot unite a divided nation," Hasina added.

More than 127 million people in Bangladesh are eligible to vote in the Feb. 12 election, widely seen as the country's most consequential in decades and the first since Hasina's removal from power after the mass uprising.

Yunus' interim administration is overseeing the process, with voters also weighing a proposed constitutional referendum on sweeping political reforms. Campaigning started last week, with rallies in the capital, Dhaka, and elsewhere.

Kuwaiti oil price surges to \$63.24

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil rose by USD 1.77 to USD 63.24 per barrel in Wednesday’s trading, compared to USD 61.47 pb the previous day, according to Kuwait Petroleum

Corporation (KPC) on Thursday. Globally, price of Brent crude rose by 83 cents to USD 68.40 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude increased 82 cents to USD 63.21 pb.

Business

KOC announces new appointments in major directorates

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) CEO Ahmed Al-Eidan recently approved organizational changes affecting four directorates. The newspaper obtained a copy of the circular stating that in the Administrative and Financial Affairs Directorate, Fatima Majeed was appointed Senior Specialist, reporting to the Director of the Human Resources Group.

In the same directorate, Ahmed Mohammad Al-Behbehani was appointed Head of the Project Management Team for North and West Kuwait, reporting to the Director of the Operations Support Group. In the Planning and Innovation Directorate, Luay Mahmoud Al-Yahya was appointed Senior Specialist, reporting to the Director of the Public Relations and Media Group. In the Gas and Environment Directorate, Ali Ahmed Al-Mirza was appointed Senior Specialist, reporting to the Director of the Health, Safety and Environment Group.

Deep-rooted Kuwait-UAE brotherhood spans the skies

Kuwait Airways hosts Emirates Airlines as part of the celebrations marking the UAE-Kuwait Relations Week

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Within the framework of the deep-rooted fraternal and historical relations that unite the State of Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait Airways hosted officials from Emirates Airline on the occasion of the UAE-Kuwait Relations Week, which is held from 29 January to 4 February 2026, under the slogan “UAE and Kuwait: Brothers Forever.” Kuwait Airways celebrated the occasion at the company’s headquarters in the presence of Kuwait Airways Chairman, Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Al-Fagaan, the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Kuwait, H.E. Dr. Matar Al Neyadialong with Khalfan Al-Salami-Emirates Airline Manager in Kuwait and Iraq, and several officials from both carriers. The ceremony reflected the true spirit of friendship, brotherhood, and strong relations that unite the two sides. During the event, the Emirates Airline delegation was briefed on the history of Kuwait Airways since its establishment in 1954, as well as its latest achievements and developments in the air transport sector.

On this occasion, Kuwait Airways Chairman, Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Al-Fagaan, expressed the national carrier of the State of Kuwait’s great pride in participating in this important fraternal occasion. He emphasized that Kuwaiti-Emirati relations represent a strong model of cooperation and integration between the sister countries, founded on solid principles of mutual respect.

Al-Fagaan pointed out that hosting Emirates Airlines comes in appreciation of this commendable initiative, which embodies the deep bonds of brotherhood between the two countries and reflects the keenness of both sides to strengthen channels of communication across various fields, particularly in the aviation and air transport sector, in a manner that serves the interests of the two sides.

Al-Fagaan added that Kuwait Airways highly values the role played by Emirates Airlines in supporting the joint cooperation process through such community initiatives.

Al-Fagaan concluded his statement by emphasizing that such events contribute to strengthening the bonds of cooperation between the two brotherly countries and reflect their shared commitment to working together for a brighter future.

For his part, Mr. Adel Al Ghaith, Senior Vice President of Commercial Operations for the Central Region at Emirates Airlines, affirmed that the occasion reflects the deep fraternal and historical ties between the United Arab Emirates and the sisterly State of Kuwait, and embodies the vision of the wise leadership in both countries



Fraternal Kuwait-UAE relations soar across shared skies.

Al-Fagaan:

- Kuwaiti-Emirati relations represent a firmly established model of cooperation and integration between sisterly nations

Adel Al-Ghaith:

- The occasion reflects the deep fraternal and historical ties that unite the two sisterly countries

to strengthen cooperation and integration.

He highlighted the pivotal role of the aviation sector as a bridge for communication between people and a facilitator of bilateral relations, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange, emphasizing Emirates Airlines’ commitment to continue collaborating with its partners in the State of Kuwait to serve the interests of the two brotherly nations and support joint development.

Al-Ghaith also commended Kuwait Airways’ initiative, emphasizing that such initiatives contribute to

strengthening the values of cooperation and foster sustainable, long-term partnerships.

It is worth noting that Kuwait Airways and Emirates Airlines recently announced the expansion of their commercial cooperation by signing a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a bilateral partnership agreement. This agreement allows customers of both companies to benefit from a wider network of destinations and more diverse and flexible travel options. Under the agreement, Kuwait Airways will have access to 19 international destinations

within Emirates Airlines’ global network, which covers numerous countries and regions around the world, including Australia, China, Cyprus, Japan, the United States, South Africa, and others. This enables Kuwait Airways passengers to benefit from a wide variety of destinations with ease and convenience. Similarly, Emirates will have access to 8 destinations within Kuwait Airways’ network, including key hubs in Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, and Azerbaijan, thus, providing its passengers with broader options to reach these important markets.

Continued support for Diraya campaign

KFH: Pioneering efforts to promote financial literacy

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Reinforcing its leadership in financial literacy and social responsibility, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to spearhead the national “Diraya” awareness campaign. Launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, the initiative sees KFH deploying innovative tools and strategic outreach to strengthen financial and banking awareness across the community.

Awareness pillars

KFH geared its awareness plan towards several pillars to support Diraya campaign in response to the growing digital challenges, particularly cybersecurity and data security.

Promoting financial literacy

KFH increased its awareness messages which urged customers to refrain from responding to messages with suspicious links or sharing OTP or passwords with third parties. KFH also emphasized that banks never request personal customer information through links or phone calls.

KFH’s efforts played a prominent role in promoting financial literacy and increasing awareness as well as advising customers to remain vigilant of the cyber fraud modern methods to avoid falling victim to such practices. Furthermore, KFH advised customers to disregard any requests for banking details made through phone calls or social media, identifying such solicitations as fraudulent efforts to steal personal data and account information.

Additionally, KFH continued its awareness initiatives encouraging customers to verify the authenticity of websites prior to entering any personal information.

AI-powered fraud attempts

KFH intensified its efforts to warn the public against new fraud attempts that involve the use of advanced AI tools to replicate the voices of real individuals with a high degree of accuracy. These voice imitations are used to contact friends or family members through phone calls or social media, often accompanied by urgent requests to transfer money. The lifelike nature of these interactions may give the impression of authenticity and credibility.

KFH called for the highest levels of caution and urged customers to verify the identity of the person requesting a financial transaction.



Internal awareness

KFH’s endeavors to warn against fraud attempts encompassed sharing awareness emails to its employees. These emails present concise and engaging content aiming to raise awareness of cyber fraud risks and warn against suspicious calls that seek to deceive employees and obtain their information.

Initiatives and forums

KFH also continued its active participation in initiatives that promote banking awareness, including its support for Kuwait’s largest cybersecurity hackathon for the third consecutive year. During the event, KFH highlighted the concept of fraud in general and cyber fraud in particular, addressing its various forms that pose risks to individuals and society.

Moreover, KFH participated in the 12th eGovernment Forum titled “AI-Powered Information Security Services”, demonstrating its role in reinforcing cybersecurity.

Digital channels

KFH recorded a significant milestone in its awareness efforts for Diraya campaign, leveraging its digital channels and official social media accounts as

educational and awareness platforms for the public. Through these channels, KFH delivered distinctive awareness content. With the introduction of its new digital services, KFH published a series of successful awareness messages on these newly launched services such as instant issuance of prepaid and credit cards, WAMD service, and instant transfers through the gulf payment system, AFAQ.

The Bank also released several educational videos on how to use and benefit from digital financial solutions available on KFHOnline, which can be viewed through its official social media accounts @kfhgroup.

Financial awareness for kids

As part of its support for the Diraya campaign, KFH partnered with Hzaya Bookstore, which specializes in children’s books, to launch content dedicated to children. The initiative aims to raise awareness and teach children the basics of early savings and financial planning.

In cooperation with Hzaya, KFH also organized an innovative, practical, and interactive program for Baiti account customers.

Social engagement and measurable impact

Reaffirming its leadership in supporting Diraya campaign, KFH continued its initiatives to measure banking awareness among the public through several programs and activities. These included awareness initiatives for its PR Academy participants, Kuwait University students, students participating in Ma’a Attalaba competition, as well as participants in the Derasti Exhibition, held at Kuwait International Fair in Mishref. KFH also organized awareness programs for CODED Academy students during the Bank’s participation in the Kuwait Codes initiative.

Record engagement levels

KFH’s efforts in supporting Diraya campaign resulted in achieving record engagement levels, with awareness messages reaching millions of followers. This contributed effectively to changing financial behavior toward greater caution and awareness.

It is also worth noting that KFH, through its leading role in Diraya campaign, reiterates its pivotal role in prioritizing customers and public safety. Additionally, the success in spreading digital and banking awareness reflects KFH’s pioneering vision of transforming its platforms into educational channels that contribute to creating a safe and sustainable financial environment.

Trading volume hits 292 mln shares

Boursa Kuwait closes in red amid broad sell-off

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29 (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Thursday’s trading session in the red, with all major indices recording losses. The general market index dropped 158.92 points, or 1.82 percent, to settle at 8,565.58 points.

Total trading volume reached 292.14 million shares across 23,494 transactions, valued at KD 99 million (approximately USD 301 million).

The main market index slipped 88.21 points, or 1.09 percent, to 8,023.11 points, with 105.3 million shares changing hands in 9,213

transactions worth KD 16.2 million (USD 49.2 million).

The premier market index led the decline, falling 184.07 points, or 1.98 percent, to 9,123.94 points. It saw trading of 186.7 million shares through 14,281 transactions valued at KD 82.7 million (USD 251.4 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index dropped 64.97 points, or 0.76 percent, to close at 8,523.34 points, as nearly 79.8 million shares were traded in 6,281 transactions totaling KD 12.8 million (USD 38.9 million).

Loans to non-residents jump 36%

Kuwait consumer spending drops 3.8% to KD 45.96 bln

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Official data released by the Central Bank of Kuwait revealed that consumer spending by citizens and residents in Kuwait reached KD45.96 billion in 2025 -- 3.8 percent decrease or KD1.85 billion, compared to spending of around KD47.81 billion in 2024, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to the data, total consumer spending last year is distributed as follows: KD42.63 billion spent within the country by the end of last year -- 4.7 percent decrease or KD2.12 billion, compared to the domestic spending of KD44.74 billion in 2024. Spending abroad increased by 8.6 percent or KD264 million, reaching KD3.33 billion, compared to KD3.07 billion in 2024.

The total value of point-of-sale (POS) transactions in and outside the country reached KD19.37 billion, compared to KD18.92 billion in 2024 -- an increase of KD447 million or 2.36 percent. The figures indicate that citizens and residents spent around KD17.7 billion through POS terminals in the country, compared to KD17.59 billion in 2024. They spent KD1.67 billion through POS terminals abroad, compared to about KD1.34 billion in the previous year.

Regarding cash withdrawals at ATMs in and outside the country, the data showed KD9.09 billion, compared to KD10.08 billion in 2024 -- a decrease of about KD989 million or 9.8 percent. This decline in cash withdrawals indicates a growing trend among citizens and residents to use electronic and digital payment channels, and a reduction in the use of cash in their daily transactions. It is driven by local banks’ development of their services in this area and their efforts to facilitate digital banking transactions for users.

Withdrawals

Domestic ATM withdrawals reached around KD8.84 billion, lower than KD9.83 billion in 2024 -- a drop of KD995 million. Cash withdrawals abroad totaled KD256 million, up from KD251 million in 2024.

With reference to online transactions, the total value reached around KD17.49 billion by the end of 2025, compared to KD18.8 billion at the end of 2024 -- a decrease of KD1.31 billion. Domestic online spending amounted to KD16.08 billion, compared to KD17.32 billion in 2024.

Online payments outside Kuwait reached KD1.41 billion in 2025, compared to approximately KD1.48 billion in the previous year.

On the outstanding balance of credit facilities granted to residents and non-residents at the end of 2025, the data revealed a rise in total loans granted last year by KD6.57 billion, bringing the cumulative balance of credit facilities to record highs, reaching KD63.74 billion, compared to KD57.17 billion at the end of 2024 -- a growth of 11.5 percent.

Loans granted to residents reached KD53.18 billion by the end of last year, an increase of KD3.77 billion or 7.6 percent, compared to KD49.41 billion in 2024. Loans granted to non-residents reached KD10.55 billion -- an increase of KD2.8 billion or 36.1 percent, compared to KD7.75 billion in 2024.

The term ‘non-residents’ refers to non-Kuwaitis who do not hold work permits or residency permits, foreign companies and commercial establishments not established in Kuwait and licensed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry or other relevant authorities, including foreign companies executing work under special contracts with the government, as well as foreign diplomatic missions and their affiliated bodies.

The data showed that the significant increase in loans granted last year was driven by a rise in securities purchase loans by KD1.03 billion, bringing the total to around KD4.81 billion by the end of last year, compared to KD3.78 billion in 2024.

Housing loans, which are long-term personal loans with a maximum term of 15 years and are provided to clients for the purpose of purchasing, building or renovating private residences, reached KD17.27 billion -- an increase of KD731 million or 4.4 percent, compared to KD16.54 billion in 2024.

Consumer facilities granted last year increased slightly by KD4.6 million-- a growth rate of 0.24 percent, bringing their cumulative balance to KD2.08 billion, compared to KD2.07 billion in 2024.

Personal assets were projected to reach KD20.3 billion -- an increase of KD712 million or 3.68 percent, compared to KD19.31 billion in 2024, while bank loans were expected to rise in 2025, reaching KD5.4 billion.

GCC central banks move to strengthen cyber defenses

MANAMA, Jan 29, (KUNA): Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) central bank preparatory committee talks on Wednesday underlined the need to ratchet up cybersecurity cooperation within the six-member bloc, which also looked into efforts to fight money laundering and the financing of terrorism. The talks, presided over by Bahraini central bank executive director of banking operations

Hessa Al-Sada, come ahead of a higher level gathering of GCC central bank chiefs to discuss measures aiming to ensure financial “solidity and flexibility” against potential cyber threats.

The talks covered a wide array of issues running the gamut from inspection and payment services to the latest financial technology practices to push forward the fight against cybercrime.

Job security fades as employers tighten payrolls

From tech to manufacturing, layoffs accelerate amid economic uncertainty

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): As layoffs pile up, workers are feeling increasingly anxious about the job market.

In the U.S., economists have said that businesses are largely at a “no-hire, no fire” standstill, leading many to limit new work, if not pause openings entirely amid economic uncertainty. Hiring has stagnated overall - with the country adding a meager 50,000 jobs last month, down from a revised figure of 56,000 in November.

But a growing list of companies are also cutting jobs. Employers have initiated layoffs across sectors - with many pointing to rising operational costs that span from President Donald Trump’s barrage of new tariffs, stubborn inflation and shifts in spending from consumers, whose outlook on the U.S. economy recently plummeted to its lowest level since 2014. Others are still working to downsize their workforces after a pandemic-era hiring boom, particularly in e-commerce. At the same time, more and more businesses are reducing their workforces as they redirect money to artificial intelligence, often baked into wider corporate restructuring.

Beyond the private sector, thousands of federal government employees lost their jobs in cuts taken by the Trump administration last year - forcing many to look for new work. That’s further strained workers’ overall sentiment about finding stable employment today.

Here are a few companies that have announced some of the largest job cuts recently.

Chemicals maker Dow, Inc. announced plans to cut about 4,500 jobs on Thursday - as part of broader push to “streamline” operations, which includes putting more emphasis on AI and automation. The cuts come on top of previous reductions taken by the company over the last year. Dow moved to axe 1,500 roles in January 2025, and another 800 over the summer.

E-commerce giant Amazon slashed about 16,000 corporate roles on Wednesday - just three months after laying off another 14,000 workers. In its latest round of layoffs, Amazon cited restructuring aimed at “removing bureaucracy” in its operations, but the cuts also arrive as the company continues to ramp up spending on AI. CEO Andy Jassy previously said that he anticipated generative AI to reduce Amazon’s corporate workforce.

On Tuesday, United Parcel Service said it plans to cut up to 30,000 opera-



This undated combination of photos shows clockwise from top left the company logos for Amazon, Target, Lufthansa Group, UPS, ConocoPhillips, Intel, Microsoft, Procter & Gamble and Nestle. (AP)

tional jobs this year - notably as the package company continues to reduce the number of Amazon shipments it handles amid wider turnaround efforts. UPS said these cuts will be made through a voluntary buyout offer for full-time drivers and attrition. The reductions come on top of a combined 48,000 job cuts that the company disclosed in 2025.

Late last year, Tyson Foods said it would be closing a plant that employed 3,200 people in Lexington, Nebraska - bringing job losses for nearly a third of the small town’s population of 11,000. The layoffs began on Jan. 20, but the company notified state officials that it was temporarily retaining under 300

workers to help complete the closure. Tyson in November also announced plans to cut one of two shifts at an Amarillo, Texas plant, eliminating an additional 1,700 jobs.

Also in November, HP said it expected to lay off between 4,000 and 6,000 employees. The cuts are part of a wider initiative from the computer maker to streamline operations, which includes adopting AI to increase productivity. The company aims to complete these actions by the end of the 2028 fiscal year.

Verizon began laying off more than 13,000 employees in November. In a staff memo announcing the cuts, CEO Dan Schulman said that the telecommunications giant needed to simplify operations and “reorient” the entire company.

In mid-October, Nestlé said it would be cutting 16,000 jobs globally - as part of wider cost cutting aimed at reviving its financial performance amid headwinds like rising commodity costs and U.S. imposed tariffs. The Swiss food giant said the layoffs would take place over the next two years.

In September, Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk said it would cut 9,000 jobs, about 11% of its workforce. The company - which makes drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy - said the layoffs were part of wider restructuring, as it works to sell more obesity and diabetes medications amid rising competition.

Intel has moved to shed thousands of jobs as the struggling chipmaker works to revive its business. Last year, CEO Lip-Bu Tan said Intel expected to end 2025 with 75,000 “core” workers, excluding subsidiaries, through layoffs and attrition. That’s down from 99,500 core employees reported the end of 2024. The company previously announced a 15% workforce reduction.

Last summer, Procter & Gamble said it would cut up to 7,000 jobs over the next two years, 6% of the company’s global workforce. The maker of Tide detergent and Pampers diapers said the cuts were part of a wider restructuring - also arriving amid tariff pressures.

Microsoft initiated two rounds of mass layoffs last year - first impacting 6,000 and then another 9,000 positions. The tech giant cited “organizational changes,” but the cuts also arrived as the company spends heavily on AI.

Economic crisis worsens

Rial plunges as Iran faces protests & rising tensions

DUBAI, Jan 29, (AP): Iran’s currency, the rial, fell to a record low of 1.6 million to \$1 on Wednesday, a month after the start of nationwide protests sparked by the country’s economic woes, according to local currency traders.

On Tuesday, the rial fell to 1.5 million rial to \$1.

The protests in Iran began on Dec. 28 over the rial’s plummeting value and quickly spread. They were met by a violent crackdown by Iran’s theocracy.

The scale of the crackdown is starting to become clear as the country has faced more than two weeks of internet blackout, the most comprehensive in its history. Activists say the crackdown killed at least 6,221 people while many others are feared dead.

Iranian officials reached out to the wider Middle East on Wednesday over the threat of a possible U.S. military strike on the country, a month since the start of protests in Iran that soon spread nationwide and sparked a bloody crackdown.

Two nations, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have signaled they won’t allow their airspace to be used for any attack. But America has moved the USS Abraham Lincoln and several guided missile destroyers into the region, which can be used to launch attacks from the sea.

It remains unclear what U.S. President Donald Trump will decide about using force, though he laid down two red lines - the killing of peaceful demonstrators and the possible mass execution of detainees. The protests saw at least 6,221 people killed as Iran launched a bloody crackdown on the demonstrations, with many others feared dead, activists said Wednesday.

“Hopefully Iran will quickly ‘Come to the Table’ and negotiate a fair and equitable deal - NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS - one that is good for all parties,” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform on Wednesday. “Time is running out, it is truly of the essence!”

Mentioning the June strikes on Iran as the U.S. inserted itself in Israel’s 12-day war on the Islamic Republic, Trump wrote: “The next attack will be far worse!”

Iran’s mission to the United Nations was quick to respond to Trump, posting on X that “Iran stands ready for dialogue based on mutual respect and interests-BUT IF PUSHED, IT WILL DEFEND ITSELF AND RESPOND LIKE NEVER BEFORE!”

Iran’s state-run media, which now only refers to protesters as “terrorists,” remains the sole source of news for many as Tehran cut off access to the global internet some three weeks ago. But Iranians have become angry and anxious, seeing footage of protesters shot and killed while worrying about what may happen next as the economy - the original focus of the protests - sinks further.

“I feel that my generation failed to give a better lesson to younger ones,” said Mohammad Heidari, a 59-year-old teacher in Tehran. “The result of decades of teaching by my colleagues and me led to death of thousands, and maybe more injured and prisoners.”

Egypt’s Foreign Ministry said its top diplomat, Badr Abdelatty, separately spoke with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff to “work toward achieving calm, in order to avoid the region slipping into new cycles of instability.”

The statement offered no details, though Iranian state media quoted Araghchi as saying third-party mediators had been in touch. Witkoff, a billionaire real estate developer and Trump’s friend, had earlier negotiated over Iran’s nuclear program. There was no immediate acknowledgment from the White House of the call.

The Turkish foreign minister also spoke by phone with Araghchi about reducing regional tensions. Turkish officials have expressed concern that intervention in Iran could spark instability or trigger a refugee influx.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman held a call with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, saying the kingdom would “not allow its airspace or territory to be used for any military actions against Iran or for any attacks from any party, regardless of their origin.” That follows a similar pledge by the UAE.

Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE host U.S. air assets and troops. Both also have faced attacks in the last decade. A 2019 assault believed by the West to have been carried out by Iran briefly halved Saudi oil production. The UAE faced several attacks claimed by Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi rebels in 2022.

However, America’s biggest base in the region is Qatar’s vast Al Udeid Air Base, which serves as the forward operating headquarters of the U.S. military’s Central Command. Both Araghchi and Ali Larjani, a top Iranian security official, held calls with Qatar’s Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. Qatar acknowledged the calls but offered few specifics on what was discussed.

Iran attacked Al Udeid in June in response to Trump sending American warplanes to bomb Iranian nuclear enrichment sites during the war last year.

“Our position is exactly this: Applying diplomacy through military threats cannot be effective or constructive,” Araghchi told journalists Wednesday outside of a Cabinet meeting. “If they want negotiations to take shape, they must abandon threats, excessive demands and the raising of illogical issues. Negotiations have their own principles: They must be conducted on an equal footing, based on mutual respect, and for mutual benefit.”

While the protests have been halted for weeks after the crackdown, information trickling out of Iran via Starlink satellite dishes is reaching activists, who have been trying to tally the carnage.

On Wednesday, the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in multiple rounds of unrest in Iran, said the at least 6,221 dead it counted included at least 5,858 protesters, 214 government-affiliated forces, 100 children and 49 civilians who weren’t demonstrating. More than 42,300 have been arrested, it added.

The group verifies each death and arrest with a network of activists on the ground in Iran. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the death toll given that authorities cut off the internet and disrupted calls into the Islamic Republic.

Iran’s government has put the death toll at a far lower 3,117, saying 2,427 were civilians and security forces, and labeled the rest “terrorists.” In the past, Iran’s theocracy has undercounted or not reported fatalities from unrest.

That death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The protests began on Dec. 28, sparked by the fall of the Iranian currency, the rial, and quickly spread. The country has faced more than two weeks of internet blackout - the most comprehensive in its history.

Iran on Wednesday also announced the execution of Hamidreza Sabet, a man it convicted of spying for Israel. Sabet’s execution marks the 13th carried out by Iran against alleged spies for Israel since the June war.

US jobless claims dip slightly, signal labor market stability

Labor market shows ‘low hire, low fire’ pattern

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP): U.S. applications for unemployment benefits inched down modestly last week, remaining at historically healthy levels despite recent high-profile layoff announcements.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending Jan. 24 fell by 1,000 to 209,000 from the previous week’s number which was revised upward by 10,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. Analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet were expecting 205,000 new applications.

Applications for unemployment benefits are seen as representative of U.S. layoffs and are close to a real-time indicator of the health of the job market.

An assortment of high-profile companies have announced job cuts in the past year, including UPS, Amazon and Dow this week alone. That, combined with the government’s own sluggish labor market data, has left Americans increasingly pessimistic about the economy.

Earlier this month, the government reported that

hiring remained tepid in December, capping a year of weak employment gains that have frustrated job seekers even though layoffs and unemployment remained low.

Employers added just 50,000 jobs last month, nearly unchanged from a downwardly revised figure of 56,000 in November, the Labor Department said. The unemployment rate slipped to 4.4%, its first decline since June, from 4.5% in November, a figure also revised lower.

The economy gained just 584,000 jobs in 2025, an average of around 50,000 per month. That’s sharply lower than that more than 2 million added in 2024, which amounts to an average of nearly 170,000 per month.

The 2025 numbers represent the smallest annual job gains since the COVID-19 pandemic decimated the job market in 2020. Outside of recessions, it’s the slimmest annual increase since 2003.

The January jobs report is due out next Friday, with analysts forecasting another ho-hum 50,000 job gains.

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

Businesses and government agencies posted 7.1 million open jobs at the end of November, down from

7.4 million in October. Layoffs also dropped as companies seem to be retaining workers even as they are reluctant to add staff, a trend economists refer to as “low hire, low fire.”

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

The Federal Reserve, in an attempt to shore up a softening labor market trimmed its benchmark lending rate by a quarter-point three straight times at the end of last year. However, on Wednesday, the U.S. central bank chose to leave its benchmark lending rate alone in the midst of an improving economic outlook and what officials called a stabilizing labor market.

Thursday’s report from the Labor Department also showed that the four-week average of jobless claims, which balances out some of the week-to-week ups and downs, rose by 2,250 to 206,250.

The total number of Americans filing for jobless benefits for the previous week ending Jan. 17 fell by 38,000 to 1.83 million, the government said. That’s the fewest since Sept. 21, 2024.

China’s export strength poses global challenge

US envoy urges fair, reciprocal trade with China

BEIJING, Jan 29, (AP): The top U.S. envoy to China called Thursday for fair and reciprocal trade between the world’s two largest economies and expressed concern about projections that China’s dominance of global manufacturing will grow even further in the years to come.

U.S. Ambassador David Perdue told business and government leaders in Beijing that China should be congratulated on becoming a manufacturing powerhouse, but echoed fears in Europe and elsewhere that China’s exports pose a threat to factories and jobs in other countries.

“This is not healthy for the rest of the world,” he said in remarks to an annual dinner of the American Chamber of Commerce in China.

Perdue was appointed by U.S. President Donald Trump, who has imposed tariffs on imports from China and many other countries in a bid to reindustrialize and boost factory jobs in the United States.

China responded with tariffs on imports from the U.S. An ensuing tit-for-tat spiral drove tariffs sky-high before the two sides agreed to a series of 90-day truces. In late October, both countries agreed to a one-year pause when Trump met Chinese leader Xi Jinping in South Korea during a gathering of Asia-Pacific nations.

“They’ve been able to create the space we’ll need to work through a lot of tough, complicated issues,” Perdue said. China had reaped the benefits of free trade with the rest of the world, while American companies have faced a series of barriers to the Chinese market over the years, the U.S. envoy said.

“America’s not looking for a trade war, but we are looking to get fair, free, reciprocal trade,” he said.

Perdue said that work is underway for a visit by Trump to China in 2026, and that Xi is expected to visit the U.S. this year too. Trump has said he will come to China in April, but neither government has confirmed a date.

Partnership marks ‘historic milestone’

Vietnam–EU ties upgraded as global trade shifts

HANOI, Jan 29, (AP): Vietnam and the European Union on Thursday upgraded ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership, Vietnam’s highest diplomatic level, as both recalibrate trade during disruptions to global finance driven by U.S. tariff pressure.

The upgrade places the EU on the same diplomatic footing as the United States, China and Russia and was announced during a visit to Hanoi by European Council President António Costa.

“At a moment when the international rules-based order is under threat from multiple sides, we need to stand side by side as reliable and predictable partners,” Costa said, adding that the partnership is about “developing spheres of shared prosperity.”

Costa arrived in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi after India and the European Union reached a free trade

agreement on Tuesday after nearly two decades of negotiation.

Vietnam’s President Luong Cuong called the move a “historic milestone.”

The announcement comes less than a week after Vietnam reelected Communist Party General Secretary To Lam as the country’s top leader, endorsing his vision of economic growth driven by aggressive reforms.

Vietnam has been a major beneficiary of globalization, emerging as a key export hub for electronics, garments and consumer goods as multinational firms shifted production away from China.

That export-led growth has helped lift incomes and transform the economy, but Vietnam’s large and persistent trade surplus has drawn criticism, particularly from the U.S. and increasingly from Europe, where

officials have raised concerns about market access.

For the EU, the deal strengthens access to one of Asia’s fastest-growing manufacturing hubs and supports efforts to diversify supply chains as trade tensions increase.

Bilateral trade in the first 11 months of 2025 reached more than \$66.8 billion, up 6.6% from a year earlier. The EU is Vietnam’s fourth-largest trading partner, third-largest export market and fifth-largest import source. Vietnam is the EU’s biggest trading partner in Southeast Asia.

Vietnam hopes to continue growth to become a rich nation by 2045 and is aggressively seeking new markets to reduce reliance on the U.S., which is its largest export destination that absorbs about 30% of the goods Vietnam sends abroad. The two sides signed a free trade agreement in 2020.

Recovery slower but ‘clearly underway’

Germany cuts 2026 growth forecast as recovery slows

BERLIN, Jan 29, (AP): The German government on Wednesday trimmed its 2026 forecast for the country’s economy, Europe’s biggest, as growth picks up more slowly than previously hoped.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s government now expects gross domestic product to expand by about 1% this year and 1.3% in 2027, Economy Minister Katherina Reiche said. In October, it had predicted growth of 1.3% and 1.4% respectively.

The economy returned to modest growth of 0.2% last year after shrinking for two years in a row, according to preliminary official figures released two weeks ago.

Merz’s governing coalition took office in May, with revitalizing the economy as one of its priorities. It launched a program to encourage investment, set up a 500 billion-euro (\$596 billion) fund to pour money into Germany’s creaking infrastructure over the next 12 years and cleared

the way for increased defense spending. It is moving to subsidize energy prices for heavy industry, cut red tape and speed up the country’s lagging digitization.

“The background to the somewhat cautious estimate is the fact that the expected impetus from the financial and economic policy measures wasn’t realized quite as quickly and to the extent that we assumed,” Reiche told reporters. But she said data now points to a “clear recovery.”

Germany for years expanded exports and dominated world trade in engineered products like industrial machinery and luxury cars. But it has suffered from increasing competition from Chinese companies, higher energy costs following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and many other factors that have increased risks, including U.S. President Donald Trump’s tariffs and trade threats.

What's On

SPOTLIGHT



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

Weyay Bank boosts student wellbeing with a new student hall at Abdullah Al-Salem University



Mohammad Al-Othman, Emad Al-Ablani, Hisham Al-Nusif, Dr. Mona Al-Ahmad, and Dr. Adel Al-Hussainan during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the hall at the university.



Mohammad Al-Othman, Emad Al-Ablani, Hisham Al-Nusif, Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Dr. Mona Al-Ahmad, and Dr. Adel Al-Hussainan in a group photo.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: In a step that reflects its ongoing commitment to empowering youth and supporting national talent, Weyay Bank, Kuwait's first digital bank, announced the opening of the Weyay Student Hall at Abdullah Al-Salem University. This initiative comes as part of the Bank's comprehensive corporate social responsibility strategy, aimed at supporting students' academic journey and enhancing their overall well-being.

Attending the opening ceremony on behalf of the National Bank of Kuwait and Weyay Bank were Mohammad Al Othman, Chief Executive Officer of Consumer and Digital Banking at NBK Group, Emad Al-Ablani, Group Chief Human Resources Officer, Hisham Al-Nusif, Chief, Consumer Banking at NBK, Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, EVP - Head of Sales and Distribution Channels at Consumer Banking Group, and Amal Al-Duwaisan, Head of Weyay Bank, along with a number of senior leaders and representatives from both NBK and Weyay.

From Abdullah Al-Salem University, the ceremony was attended by Professor Mona Sulaiman Al-Ahmad, the University President, Dr. Adel Abdullah Al-Hussainan, the Secretary General of Abdullah Al-Salem University,

and a number of college deans.

The hall has been designed as an interactive digital space that allows students to make the most of their time between lectures through a smart experience that reflects the youthful and dynamic identity of Weyay Bank. The hall features digital screens and shared workspaces that support learning, communication, and time management, contributing to enhanced focus and renewed mental energy within an environment that stimulates innovation and interaction.

Commenting on the initiative, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Head of Weyay Bank, stated: "The opening of the Weyay Student Hall goes beyond providing a physical space on campus; it represents our vision of supporting the student community and empowering youth. We believe that true investment in the future begins with understanding students' daily needs and offering a supportive environment that contributes to their academic and personal growth."

The launch of the Weyay Student Hall is built upon several key pillars, including:

- Supporting the student community: Strengthening collaboration between

the banking and academic sectors through tangible initiatives.

- Enhancing student wellbeing: Improving the overall university experience by providing spaces for relaxation and reducing academic stress.
- Empowering young talent: Creating an interactive environment that encourages idea exchange and innovation beyond traditional academic settings.

Professor Mona Sulaiman Al-Ahmad, President of Abdullah Al-Salem University, expressed her appreciation for the initiative, stating: "This step reflects Weyay Bank's deep understanding of students' needs within the university campus. Providing spaces that support student wellbeing directly contributes to enhancing their educational experience and strengthens their ability to engage, innovate, and interact, aligned with our vision of preparing a knowledgeable and future-ready generation."

This initiative forms part of a broader series of programs and activities launched by Weyay Bank to strengthen its role as an active partner in the lives of Kuwaiti youth, reaffirming that its mission extends beyond digital banking services to becoming an integral contributor to the community and a supporter of future generations.



Group photo during the event.

Blood Donors Society inaugurated under Young Minds India initiative

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Blood Donors Society (BDS), Kuwait, a humanitarian initiative under Young Minds India, was formally inaugurated on Thursday at Amwaj Hall, Holiday Inn Hotel, Salmiya.

The event commenced at 6:30 pm with the Kuwait National Anthem, reflecting respect and gratitude to the host nation. The event was smoothly compered by Ms. Rakshida, a Grade 10 student of Gulf Indian School.

Her Excellency Ms. Halima Mohamed, Ambassador of the Republic of Kenya to Kuwait, inaugurated the Society and delivered the keynote address, highlighting the importance of voluntary blood donation as a life-saving humanitarian service.

Mr. B. M. Ibrahim, Founder and President of Young Minds India, outlined the vision and objectives of the Blood Donors Society and reaffirmed its commitment to community welfare and healthcare support.

Dr. Mohan Ram, Specialist in Leukemia from the Department of Hematology, addressed the gathering and spoke on the importance of blood donation, explaining its basic principles and its critical role in saving lives and supporting patients with serious medical conditions.

The event was attended by the Minister Counsellor from the Embassy of Sri Lanka, the Counsellor from the Embassy of Nepal, Mr. Husain Ali Alnakkas, Information Technology and Cyber Security Consultant, Mr. Sameer Humad, President of the Forum of Indian Doctors, along with eminent doctors, association leaders, sponsors, and community representatives.

Appreciation certificates were presented to volunteers in recognition of their dedicated service and contributions to the successful conduct of the programme.

The programme was successfully organized by the Young Minds India team.

Dedicated to staying Kuwait's go-to on-demand one-stop shop

talabat welcomes Lifestyle at Centrepont to its platform

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: In line with its ongoing efforts to build a network of partners capable of meeting customers' diverse growing needs, talabat, the leading on-demand online ordering platform in the MENA region, announced onboarding Lifestyle at Centrepont as its latest retail partner. This comes as part of the company's strategy to provide talabat customers with a comprehensive online ordering experience that covers a wide range of products conveniently and securely, in addition to connecting businesses with target customers on a broader scale.

"On our mission to remain the go-to platform for satisfying customers' diverse lifestyle needs, we are delighted to welcome Lifestyle at Centrepont to our growing network of partners as they bring a wide array of high-quality beauty and personal care products to the talabat shopping experience," commented Bader Al-Ghanim, Vice President and Managing Director at talabat Kuwait. "Although our promise to deliver convenience remains unchanged, the market's expectations for convenience continues to grow to include diversity, speed, safety, and exclusive benefits. Accordingly, we remain committed to enhancing the talabat offering so that we always meet, and even precede, customers' expectations for a consistently rewarding experience."

On his part, Rohit Nanda at Centerpoint Kuwait, said: "We are excited to embark on our partnership with talabat and be closer than ever before to our customers across Kuwait. In this fast-paced digital age, digital presence is no longer complementary to a brand's suc-



cess. With talabat's robust digital infrastructure and wide market reach, we are confident that we will be able to deliver our vast collection of beauty and personal care products to a wider market at their convenience."

It is worth noting that talabat's consistent expansion is part of a deliberate strategy for diversifying the products it offers customers, with categories ranging from food and groceries to health and wellness, flowers, medicine, toys, fashion, and much more. The company's ongoing effort to evolve its on-demand online shopping experience is part of its commitment to supporting the country's digital transformation journey, in line with the Kuwait 2035 Vision goals for reinforcing the country's digital economy.

Faith leaders share insights on religion and nation building in India

IMA Kuwait hosts inter-faith dialogue & community get-together

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait, under the esteemed patronage of Kuwait's Salsabeel Foundation, organized successfully an Inter-Faith Dialogue & Get Together Event on Friday, 16 January 2026, at Chef Naushad Restaurant, Farwaniya, to commemorate the 77th Republic Day of India. The thoughtfully curated Event brought together respected Representatives from Diverse Faith Traditions to engage in meaningful Dialogue and shared their thoughtful Ideas on the Event's Main Theme "Role of Religion in Nation Building".

The Event was conceived as a Platform for Constructive Dialogue, Mutual Respect & Shared National Values, highlighting India's long-standing Ethos of Unity in Diversity & reflecting on the Ethical and Moral foundations that have historically shaped India's nation-building journey. The Initiative underscored the conviction that Religion, when guided by Morality & Values of Compassion, Justice, Service & Mutual Respect, serves as a constructive force in strengthening National Unity, Social Harmony & responsible Citizenship - Core Ideals enshrined in the spirit of the Indian Republic.

The Event commenced with the recitation of Holy Quran by Mr Dawood Ad-sami, and convened by Mr Pervez Hanif who presented an overview of the Vision and Community role of Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait, within the Indian diaspora in Kuwait

Inter-Faith Perspectives on Nation Building

The Event featured Insightful Presentations from Distinguished Speakers representing Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam, each highlighting how Faith-based Ethical Values have positively contributed to India's Nation-Building Journey.

Father James Tusciano, Principal of Don Bosco School, emphasized the role of Compassion, Moral responsibility & Selfless Service in Nation building. Highlighting the exemplary life of Mother Teresa, he noted that Christian teachings promote care for the vulnerable section of the society and historically contributed to Education, Healthcare & Social Cohesion in India.

Dr Raghunandan Rayavaram, Community Secretary, Forum of Indian Doctors, highlighted the principles of Dharma (Righteous Duty) and the Vedic teaching 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' the world is one family - as foundational to India's inclusive



Photos during the event.



clusive Nation-building Ethos. He emphasized that Hindu Values promote Tolerance, Social Responsibility & respect for Diversity. He noted that these timeless teachings have sustained India's Pluralistic Society and fostered Harmony across Communities.

Capt. Jagdeep Singh Rangri, Port Captain KOC, highlighted core Sikh principles of Equality, Justice & Selfless Service (Seva) as vital contributors to Nation building. Emphasizing the spiritual message of 'Ek Allah, Ek Noor', he underscored the Oneness of Humanity and the rejection of all forms of discrimination. He further reinforced this message by playing verses from the Guru Granth Sahib, which was attentively heard by the audience, creating a reflective moment. He noted that Sikh teachings inspire Courage, Discipline & active Social Responsibility, encouraging Individuals to serve the Nation with integrity while upholding Human dignity and Unity.

Guest of Honor for the Evening Mr Abdul Aziz Al-Duaij, Former Director General, IPC Kuwait, in his remarks, praised India's remarkable Progress and Development, particularly in light of its vast diversity of Cultures, Languages & Faith traditions. Mr Al-Duaij noted that India's strength lies in its Unity in Diversity, strong Moral Character and the ability of its people to coexist harmoniously despite differences. He commended the Indian community for upholding these values and congratulated them on their national identity, expressing admiration for India's inclusive Ethos and Societal resilience. His address resonated strongly with the audience and was met with warm appreciation and applause.

Patriotic Children's Presentation

One of the most emotionally moving moments of the Evening was the Children's Patriotic Presentation during the rendition of "Saare Jahan Se Achha, Hindustan Hamara." Clad in Tricolor Attire, Children entered from different directions, waving Indian Flag and Singing along, later distributing Flags to the Audience. The spontaneous participation of Attendees turned the segment into a powerful collective expression of Patriotism and Unity, leaving a deeply touching and Memorable Impact.

Keynote Address:

Professor Saleem Engineer, National General Secretary of the Forum for Democracy and Communal Amity (FDCA), Visiting Scholar from India & Chief Guest of the Event delivered a thought-provoking Keynote address that beautifully linked religious teachings, human history, and moral philosophy to the theme "Role of Religion in Nation Building." Quoting Mahatma Gandhi and Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), he emphasized that the true essence of religion lies in uplifting Human Character and Moral Conduct, which form the Ethical foundation of any Strong and Enduring Nation.

He further explained that while religion is sometimes misused or misunderstood for personal or political gains, such distortions do not represent its true spirit. When properly understood and sincerely practiced, religion strengthens values such as honesty, compassion, discipline, and social responsibility - qualities he described as prerequisites for successful nation building.

Sci-fi animation blends doom and fun

In Oscar-nominated ‘Arco,’ apocalypse kids can get behind

LOS ANGELES, Jan 29, (AP): In all the dystopian visions of the future that the movies have trotted out over the last few decades, the one that sticks the most, surprisingly, is “WALL-E.” That’s not just because of the chattering sight of an over-polluted Earth or those sedentary humans glued to their screens. It’s because those quite plausible possibilities mean something different in a kids movie. It’s their future, after all.

Some of the same can be said about Ugo Bienvenu’s “Arco,” a charming and dreamy sci-fi animated movie where environmental catastrophe and cartoony fun collide. Like “WALL-E,” there are heroic robots in “Arco,” an Oscar nominee for best animated feature. But it’s the film’s plucky young protagonists that give Bienvenu’s future-set film its heart.

The film opens in a distant future where a family lives on “Jetsons”-like platforms in the clouds. They wear drab onesies (fashion sense has seemingly been lost along with the Earth’s surface) but sport rainbow cloaks that enable them to fly through time, leaving a rainbow streak behind.

Though 10-year-old Arco (voiced by Juliano Krue Valdi in the English dub) has been told he can’t fly until

he’s older, he sneaks off with his sister’s cape and, hoping for a glimpse of the dinosaurs, accidentally crash lands in 2075.

“Arco” is the unusual movie to exist in two future times, never our present. And it can take a moment to acclimate to both its jumbled timeline and the sheer amount of rainbows. But Bienvenu, a French comic-book artist making his directorial debut, richly imagines a 2075 future of recognizable extremes.

Storms have become so violent that homes now have protective bubbles around them. Adults work such long hours in a distant city that they are usually mere holograms to their kids - an image that will send shudders down the spine of any parent who Zooms from a work trip. For Iris (voiced by Romy Fay) and her baby brother, the family robot does most of the parenting. In fact, robots do most things: teaching, construction, medical aid.

Iris, a sharp young girl, sees Arco’s rainbow fly into the woods and runs to find him. At the same time, three bumbling, oddly dressed fellows, dressed in primary colors and wearing rainbow glasses, come looking for him. This trio - voiced in the English dub by Will Ferrell, Andy



This image released by Neon shows the character Arco, voiced by Oscar Tresanini, in a scene from ‘Arco.’ (AP)

Samberg and Flea - are a goofy and very French addition to the movie. Ferrell and company are a marked improvement from the original.

But there’s no harm in giving “Arco” some Saturday-morning-cartoon slapstick to go with the apocalyptic doom. Those three, believing they’re hot on a time-travel trail, stay in pursuit while Arco and Iris develop a friendship and learn about each’s eras.

Parents remain largely absent. In “Arco,” kids are left to fend for themselves in a world of technology and ecological disaster. (In one of the movie’s most damning moments, the kids find refuge in a library because no one goes in there anymore.) But while there’s no shortage of films that comment on our overly digital lives, technology is far from a villain in “Arco.” It is closer to the savior.

So while Bienvenu’s film bears similarities to movies before it - Arco is far from the first future boy to fall from the sky - it’s the first that I recall that so directly confronts ecological apocalypse and yet still finds a thrillingly optimistic note to end on. Thrilling because it puts the future in the hands of the young. “Arco” dares to imagine a fate for them, somewhere over the rainbow.

“Arco,” a Neon release in theaters Friday, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for action/peril, mild thematic elements and a brief injury image. Running time: 89 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

Music

New talent to shine

What to know about the 2026 Grammy Awards

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): Sunday’s Grammys mark a return to normalcy after the 2025 show was altered to focus on Los Angeles-area wildfire relief efforts.

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

Here’s what you need to know about the 2026 Grammys, including how to stream and where you can see music’s biggest stars walking the red carpet. The main show will air live from LA’s Crypto.com Arena on CBS beginning at 8 p.m. Eastern. Paramount+ premium plan subscribers will be able to stream the telecast live, too. (Paramount+ essential subscribers will have on-demand access the next day.)

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

The Premiere Ceremony will take place ahead of the Grammys telecast, at 3:30 p.m. Eastern from the Peacock Theater. It can be streamed at the Recording Academy’s YouTube channel and on live.GRAMMY.com.

The show will feature a special segment in which all eight of this year’s best new artist nominees will perform. That means Leon Thomas, Olivia Dean, global girl group Katseye, The Marías, Addison Rae, sombr, Alex Warren and Lola Young will all share the stage before going head-to-head for one of the night’s biggest prizes.

Sabrina Carpenter, Justin Bieber, Clipse and Pharrell Williams will also perform. Reba McEntire, Brandy Clark and Lukas Nelson will take the stage for the in memoriam. Ms. Lauryn Hill will pay tribute to D’Angelo and Roberta Flack. Post Malone, Andrew Watt, Chad Smith, Duff McKagan and Slash will honor Ozzy Osbourne.

Doechii and Harry Styles are the first confirmed presenters.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Associated Press will stream a four-hour red carpet show with interviews and fashion footage. It will be streamed on YouTube and APNews.com. Kendrick Lamar leads the nominations with nine total. He’s up for record, song and album of the year - marking the third time he’s had simultaneous nominations in those big categories - as well as pop duo/group performance, melodic rap performance, rap song and rap album. He’s also nominated twice in the rap performance category.



Olivia Dean performs during weekend two of the Austin City Limits Music Festival on Oct. 11, 2025, in Austin, Texas. (AP)

Film



This image released by Amazon MGM Studios shows first lady Melania Trump in a scene from the film ‘Melania.’ (AP)

Melania’s film debuts ahead of global release

‘Melania’ gives rare peek into first lady’s life

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP): Melania Trump is capping her first year back as first lady with the global release of a documentary she produced about the 20 days leading up to husband Donald Trump’s return to the White House.

“Melania” was to premiere Thursday at the Kennedy Center, where the Trumps were expected to walk the red carpet before the film opens in theaters worldwide Friday. They hosted a similar viewing at the White House last Saturday.

The first lady has said that she got the idea for the documentary after her husband won the 2024 election and that it will give viewers a rare, behind-the-scenes look at her life.

“My new film, ‘Melania,’ provides a window into an important period for America, the 47th presidential inauguration,” she said Wednesday before ringing the bell to open the New York Stock Exchange. “For the first time in history, people will witness the 20 days leading up to the inauguration, through the eyes of an incoming first lady.”

A private person, Melania Trump still remains a bit of a mystery to the public in her husband’s second term.

She said the film will show what it takes to step into the high-profile role as she juggles being a businessperson, a wife and a mother, as well as the coordinator of her family’s move back to the Executive Mansion.

“Everyone wants to know. So here it is,” she says in the trailer for the nearly two-hour film.

In another scene from the trailer, it is Inauguration Day and Melania Trump is inside the Capitol, waiting to be escorted into the Rotunda for the ceremony. She turns her head, looks directly into the camera that had been documenting her every move and says, “Here we go again.”

She wrote in her self-titled memoir published in 2024 about how much she values her privacy. She is not as frequently seen or heard from as often as some of her recent predecessors, which may be influencing the public’s perceptions of her. But she also likes to do things her way.

The U.S. public is divided on their views of the first lady, but a significant number - about 4 in 10 adults - had no opinion or had not heard of her, according to a CNN poll from January 2025. About 3 in 10 adults saw her favorably while roughly the same share had an unfavorable opinion.

Her standing among Republicans was higher, with about 7 in 10 saying in the poll that they viewed her favorably, but around one-quarter did not have an opinion.

Experts said the film could help improve perceptions of her.

“I think it’s an attempt, in a way, to really augment or tailor or really refine her image for the American public,” said Katherine Sibley, who teaches history at Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia. “She’s a mystery to the American people.”

Melania Trump, 55, said she’s honored to execute the traditional duties of first lady, such as holding state dinners, hosting the annual Easter Egg Roll and decorating for Christmas. But she also has suggested she wants to leave her mark in other ways, too.

“I want to impact Americans’ lives,” she said this week during an interview on Fox News Channel’s “Fox & Friends.”

She spent chunks of time away from Washington last year working on the documentary and was deeply involved in every aspect of its development, according to Marc Beckman, her longtime senior adviser.

The well-being and safety of children remains one of her top priorities, and she has used her influence to lobby Congress to pass the “Take It Down Act,” making it a federal crime to publish intimate images online without consent. The president signed the bill into law and had her sign it, too.

Her advocacy for foster children was enshrined in an executive order creating a “Fostering the Future” program. It’s part of the “Be Best” child-focused initiative she launched in the first term.

She also wrote to Russian President Vladimir Putin last year for help reuniting children who had been separated from their families because of his war against Ukraine. She had her husband hand-deliver the letter when the leaders met in Alaska, and she later announced that eight children had been reunited with their families.

The first lady accompanied the president on visits to disaster zones, where she helped console victims. She has taken a prominent role in the administration’s efforts on artificial intelligence and education and launched a global version of the foster child program.

She told guests at a White House Christmas reception that she is working on a new legislative effort for 2026, but has not yet shared details.

It was unclear how much money Melania Trump stands to earn or what her plans are for any film proceeds. Experts said it was unusual for a first lady to pursue a project of this kind from the White House - but not unusual for the Trumps.

“As far as I know, she’s the first first lady to be paid a lot of money to have a documentary made about her and it is unprecedented in terms of the Trumps because they are always breaking precedent,” said Katherine Jellison, professor emerita of history at Ohio University.

Presidents and first ladies generally refrain from pursuing outside business ventures while in office to avoid potential conflicts of interest or raising ethical concerns.

Both Trumps participate in numerous business ventures, selling everything from watches, fragrances and Bibles for him to jewelry, Christmas ornaments and digital collectibles for her.

The movie also marks another link between the Trumps and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, who has worked to improve a once-tense relationship with the president. The documentary, which was produced by AmazonMGM Studios and is said to have cost \$40 million, will stream exclusively on the Amazon Prime Video streaming service after its theatrical run.

Amazon has declined to comment on the financial arrangements.

The film was set for release in approximately 1,600 screens worldwide on Friday, including about 1,500 in the United States. The premiere is to be simulcast in 21 theaters nationwide for invited guests on Thursday to help build excitement for the launch.

The movie is the first project by director Brett Ratner since he was accused of sexual misconduct in the early days of the #MeToo reckoning. Ratner’s lawyer has denied the allegations.

He shares producer credits with the first lady, Beckman and Fernando Sulichin of New Element Media. Filming began in December 2024.

Rose Byrne named Harvard’s Hasty Pudding Woman of the Year

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Jan 29, (AP): Rose Byrne, fresh off her Golden Globe Award win and Oscar nomination for the leading role in “If I Had Legs I’d Kick You,” was named as the 2026 Woman of the Year by Harvard University’s Hasty Pudding Theatricals on Wednesday.

Byrne, who also has starred in “Bridesmaids,” “Neighbors,” “Insidious,” and “Damages,” will be honored Feb. 13 with a parade through the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts. After that, she will receive her pudding pot award at a celebratory roast. She will then attend a performance of Hasty Pudding Theatricals’ 177th production “Saloon-eey Tunes.”

In her review of “If I Had Legs I’d Kick You,” The Associated Press’ Jocelyn Noveck wrote that the film gave Byrne “a chance to display versatility and grit in surely the toughest dramatic role of her career.”

Actor Michael Keaton is the 2026 Man of the Year. He will receive his pudding pot Feb. 6.

“We are thrilled to honor Rose Byrne as our Woman of the Year,” Hasty Pudding Theatricals President Daisy Nussbaum said in a statement. “Hot off a Golden Globe win and an Oscar nomination, it’s only right that she receives the most prestigious award of all: a pudding pot.”

The Pudding is the oldest theatrical organization in the nation and one of the oldest in the world. Since 1951, it has bestowed the award annually on women including actors Meryl Streep, Julia Roberts, Scarlett Johansson and Annette Bening. Last year, the winner was “Wicked” star Cynthia Erivo.

Byrne, who is Australian, also acted in “Juliet, Naked,” “Get Him to the Greek,” and “28 Weeks Later.” Her theater credits include “Medea, You Can’t Take it With You” at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and she will star opposite Kelli O’Hara in the revival of “Fallen Angels” on Broadway starting in March.



Rose Byrne poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy for ‘If I Had Legs I’d Kick You’ during the 83rd Golden Globe Awards on Sunday, Jan. 11, at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)

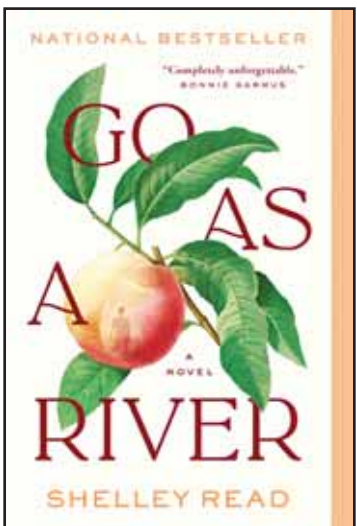
61-year-old author proves it’s never too late to write a hit novel

Read’s debut novel ‘Go as a River’ becomes a global sensation

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): From her house up high in Colorado’s Elk Mountains, author Shelley Read can only look out in amazement at the worldwide success of her debut novel, “Go as a River.”

“There were upward of 30 translations already secured before the novel was introduced in the US,” says Read, a fifth-generation Coloradan who lives with her husband in Crested Butte, in a home they built themselves. “And that is when I was like, ‘Oh my goodness.’ It’s thrilling, scary, magnificent.”

Published in 2023 by Spiegel & Grau, “Go as a River” received little major review attention beyond trade publications when first released and its honors are mostly regional, including a High Plains Book Award and a Reading the West Book Award. But her novel has been a hit in the US and well beyond, appearing on bestseller lists everywhere from North America to Scandinavia and selling more than 1 million copies. Mazur Kaplan, co-founded by producer Paula Mazur and independent book seller Mitchell Kaplan, is working on a film adaptation. Eliza Hittman, whose credits include the award-winning “Never Rarely Sometimes Only,” is expected to direct.



This cover image released by Spiegel & Grau shows ‘Go as a River’ by Shelley Read. (AP)

Read’s 300-page novel spans from the 1940s to the 1970s, and centers on a 17-year-old Colorado farm girl’s ill-fated romance with an itinerant Indigenous man and how it haunts and changes lives for decades to come.

“Go as a River” proves that some books can break through without high-profile endorsements or author name recognition. It also adds the 61-year-old Read to a special list of first-time authors - from Frank McCourt to Louis Begley - middle aged or older who finally get around to that book they had been meaning to write and receive wide acclaim.

“What she’s done is unusual,” says Spiegel & Grau co-founder Cindy Spiegel. “Every now and then someone comes along who has a vision that they’ve held for many, many years and they really do write it down. Most people don’t.”

A native of Colorado Springs, Read is a graduate of the University of Denver who has a master’s degree from Temple University’s creative writing program. She is a longtime educator who parsed and absorbed so many books, with works by Virginia Woolf and Czeslaw Milosz among her favorites, that one of her own inevitably came out on the other end.

For nearly three decades, she taught writing and literature among other subjects at Western Colorado University. During that time, a character kept turning up in her thoughts, the germ of

what became her novel’s protagonist, Victoria Nash. There was something about Victoria, an empathetic quality, Read related to. But she had her career and two young children, and “was just trying to keep my head above water as a super busy mom and with a lot of very intense challenges.”

With Victoria unwilling to leave her be, Read began jotting down notes on Post-its, napkins and other papers that might be around. With her husband’s encouragement, she took early retirement and committed to completing her book. She had written stories in her early years, but had never attempted a full-length narrative.

“I had no idea where it was going. I had no intentions about where it was going, because I had never written a novel before,” Read says, speaking via Zoom from her home. “Once I figured out this was going to be a novel, I was like, ‘Oh no!’ I have studied novels thousands of times throughout my life, but I never even considered that I would write one.”

Read stepped down in 2018 and by the following year had finished a manuscript, drawn in part from such historical events as a 1960s flood in Iola, Colorado, and from her life-

long affinity for the local landscape. First-time authors of any age struggle to find representation, but during a 2017 writers conference at Western Colorado University, Read had met Sandra Bond, a Denver-based agent. A “Colorado girl,” Bond calls herself.

“We hit it off immediately,” Bond says. “We have very similar backgrounds in growing up in Colorado.”

Read’s manuscript “knocked my socks off,” Bond remembers, but it wasn’t an easy sell. The second half of the book “didn’t quite meet the standards of the first” and Bond didn’t have the editing skills to fix it. “Go as a River” was turned down by 21 publishers before Spiegel signed it up. Spiegel & Grau, which began as a Penguin Random House imprint and reopened in 2020 as an independent a year after PRH shut it down amid a corporate reorganization, has worked with authors ranging from Ta-Nehisi Coates and Sara Gruen to Iain Pears and Kathryn Stockett.

“I had a feeling Cindy might be able to see how to guide Shelley in revising the second half - what was really working and what wasn’t and why,” Bond says.

Spiegel and Read worked on revisions - the finished version is entirely from Victoria’s perspective; the original draft shifted narrators midway. Meanwhile, the publisher showed the manuscript to the international agent Susanna Lea, who “read it one sitting” and quickly arranged for meetings with foreign publishers. It was mid-July, and she remembers tracking down publishers in Norway and Finland and other parts of Scandinavia at a time of year when book executives usually are on vacation.

“Suddenly, they were all reachable,” she says.

Read is working on a second novel, set in southeastern Colorado, where her homesteader-grandparents lived. “Go as a River” allowed her a few indulgences, from installing solar panels on her house to a little travel, not to mention paying off college tuition for her son and building up the family retirement savings.

“Not too sexy,” she acknowledges. “We’re still do-it-yourselfers, & I still drive an old Toyota pickup. The main thing about the royalties is that I get to be a writer for a living, and that is a dream come true.”

Fashion

Michele balances restraint and sparkle

Valentino couture opens somber, ends in drama

PARIS, Jan 29, (AP): Valentino’s first couture show since house founder Valentino Garavani’s funeral in Rome opened under a somber shadow, with many guests fresh from the ceremony - then snapped it off with a jolt of pure theater.

VIP guests, including Sir Elton John and Kirsten Dunst, were guided through near-darkness to their “seats”: simple stools set against circular pods, each punctured by a small kinky-feeling viewing window.

When the show began, the blinds lifted; the classical music soundtrack cut by the sharp punctuation of barking dogs.

Inside the hubs, models appeared like mannequins behind glass - private viewing holes turned into a couture peep show.

The white, sterile-lit staging leaned into the idea of a curated gaze.

Each guest saw a slice, not always the whole: a face, a shoulder, a shimmer of fabric, then the next.

The set read like a sterilized, futuristic cell - clean, white, clinical - made more unsettling by the soundscape, which kept slipping from elegance into angry animal sounds.

It was a clever piece of showcraft: creative director Alessandro Michele, a maximalist by instinct, using restriction as a hook.

He didn’t flood the room with spectacle; he rationed it.

The often dazzling clothes, however, didn’t always match the set’s ambition.

Michele delivered disco sheen - sparkle, gems, bedazzled headwear and layered gold collars with a faint circus edge - but the couture itself felt comparatively restrained, even cautious.

There were strong flashes: bold sleeves that swelled toward leg-of-mutton proportions; sequined surfaces that caught the light with that Valentino polish; and occasional provocation in the way the body was framed.

The skirts of giant billowing dresses nicely overwhelmed the human form.

But for a designer known for excess, the collection often played it safe.

Front row heat underlined the stakes.

The room pulled in a heavy mix of celebrity and brand power, from Dakota Johnson to Lily Allen and Tyla, plus global ambassadors and high-wattage fashion regulars.

The atmosphere said “event.”

The collection said “reset”: a designer calibrating his volume, testing how far he can bend Valentino’s couture codes without breaking them.

Michele can stage a show - that much is settled.

For Suzy Menkes, the emotion around this Valentino couture show was immediate.

Coming straight from Garavani’s funeral in Rome to Paris couture week, the fashion industry doyenne and former International Herald Tribune fashion



A model wears a creation as part of the Elie Saab Spring/Summer 2026 Haute Couture collection presented in Paris, Wednesday, Jan. 28. (AP)

critic said “people do feel emotional” because “it is an end of an era.”

She described a wider pattern, too: “one designer or elderly designer after another” has “gently disappeared.” But this, she suggested, felt like “a special one” - not only inside the industry, but beyond it.

Menkes said Valentino was “a designer that everybody could understand,” with “so many clients and fa-

mous people” that it wasn’t just “those who were contracted to fashion who knew of him.”

Asked about her own history with Valentino, she traced it back “about 45 years ago,” when she was a junior journalist - “he didn’t pay much attention” to her, she recalled, though he was “always polite,” surrounded by “an enormous number of people” from fashion and “social society.”



From top: Romana Maggiora Vergano, Shay Mitchell and Kirsten Dunst pose for photographers upon arrival at the Valentino Spring/Summer 2026 Haute Couture collection presented in Paris, Wednesday, Jan. 28. (AP)

She acknowledged that “we’ve got some really good designers who are taking over and doing a terrific job,” but insisted the transition doesn’t feel identical: “it’s not the same character... it doesn’t seem to be the same person who was there before.”

Technology

Fed up with AI junk?

How to reduce AI slop in your social media feeds

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): AI slop seems to be everywhere. Low-quality digital content made with artificial intelligence has flooded our feeds, screens and speakers. Is there anything we can do about it?

If you want fewer cartoonish videos of dead celebrities, creepy or absurd images or fake bands playing synthetic tunes, a few platforms have rolled out settings and features to help minimize AI-generated content.

Here is a guide on how to use them. But first, a caveat from Henry Ajder, who advises businesses and governments on AI and has been studying deepfakes since 2018. He warned that it’s “incredibly difficult” to entirely remove AI slop content entirely from all your feeds.

He compared AI slop to the smog generated from the industrial revolution, when there weren’t any pollution controls in place.

“It’s going to be very, very hard for people to avoid inhaling, in this analogy.”

Pinterest’s move to lean into the AI boom made it something of a poster child for the AI slop problem, as user complained that the online mood-board for pinning inspirational material by themes has become overrun with AI content.

So Pinterest recently rolled out a “tuner” that lets users adjust the amount of AI content they see in their feeds.

It rolled out first on Android and desktop operating systems, before starting on a more gradual roll out on iOS.

“Now, users can dial down the AI and add more of a human touch,” Pinterest said, adding that it would initially cover some categories that are “highly prone to AI modification or generation” such as beauty, art, fashion and home decor.

More categories have since been added, including architecture, art, beauty, entertainment, men’s, women’s and children’s fashion, health, home décor, and sport, food and drink.

To use the tuner, go to Settings and then to “refine your recommendations,” and then tap on GenAI interests, where you can use toggles to indicate the categories you’d like to see less AI-content.

It’s no surprise that AI-generated videos proliferate on TikTok, the short-video sharing app. The company says there are at least 1.3 billion video clips on its platform it has labeled as AI-generated.

TikTok said in November it was testing an update to give users more control of the AI-generated content in their For You feeds. It’s not clear when it will be widely available. TikTok did not respond to requests for comment.

To see if you have it on the TikTok mobile app, go to Settings, then Content Preferences, then to Manage Topics where you’ll see a set of sliders to control various types of content, such as dance, humor, lifestyle and nature.

You can also access the controls from the For You feed, by tapping the Share button on the side of a post, then tap Why this Video, then Adjust your For You, and then Manage topics.

There should be a new slider that allows you to dial down - or turn up - the amount of AI-generated content that you receive. If you don’t see it yet, it might be because you haven’t received the update yet. TikTok said late last year that it would start testing the feature in coming weeks.

These controls are not available on the desktop browser interface.

You won’t be able to get rid of AI content altogether - TikTok says the controls are used to tailor the content rather than removing or replacing it entirely from feeds.

“This means that people who love AI-generated history content can see more of this content, while those who’d rather see less can choose to dial things down,” it said.

Song generation tools like Suno and Udio let users create music merely by typing some ideas into a chatbot window. Anyone can use them to spit out polished pop songs, but it also means streaming services have been flooded with AI tunes, often by accounts masquerading as real artists.

Among the music streaming platforms, only Deezer, a smaller European-based player, gives listeners a way to tell them apart by labeling songs as AI.

“Deezer has been really, really pushing the anti-AI generation music narrative,” said Henry Ajder.

Deezer says 60,000 fully AI-generated tracks, or more than 39% of the daily total, are uploaded to its platform every day and last year it detected and labeled more than 13.4 million AI tracks. The company says the people doing it are trying to make money by fraudulent streams.

‘Harmony’ delivers simple message to preserve the planet

King Charles’ film lays out his environmental philosophy

WINDSOR, England, Jan 29, (AP): King Charles III is clearly thinking about his legacy.

In his new film, “Finding Harmony: A King’s Vision,” Charles delivers a simple message - that humanity needs to restore the balance between man and nature if it hopes to solve global warming and many of the other problems facing the world today. Helping spread that gospel, he hopes, will be his legacy.

“It all boils down to the fact that we are actually nature ourselves, we are a part of it, not apart from it, which is really how things are being presented for so long,” Charles says in the closing moments of the documentary before turning to Shakespeare. “Maybe, by the time I shuffle off this mortal coil, there might be a little more awareness ... of the need to bring things back together again.”

Charles and Amazon Prime unveiled the film on Wednesday at Windsor Castle, near London, ahead of a red-carpet premiere attended by celebrities including Kate Winslet, who narrates the film.

The film spells out the king’s philosophy that humans will only thrive if they learn to work with nature, not against it, because they are as much a part of the natural world as animals, insects and trees. Charles first addressed these ideas in

his 2010 book “Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World.”

It also gives him the chance to confront those who have lampooned him as a dilettante flitting aimlessly from one cause to another with no rhyme or reason. On the contrary, the film argues, climate change, urban planning, sustainable agriculture, traditional crafts and fostering understanding between religions - causes to which the king has devoted much of his adult life - are inter-related issues that must be dealt with to create sustainable communities.

Charles, 77, was “haunted” by press coverage that mocked him for a 1986 TV interview in which he said he talked to his plants, Winslet says in the narration, accompanied by images of critical newspaper headlines.

“Those criticisms really upset him. He got treated very unfairly, seen very unfairly, and those of us that knew him better were quite upset by that,” Ian Skelly, co-author of the king’s 2010 book. “It was difficult to know how to respond, but I really felt for him.”

Charles has been campaigning on environmental issues since at least 1971 when he gave his first speech on conservation while still an undergraduate at the University of Cambridge. He has since started a successful organic food

firm and helped build a sustainable village in western England.

Environmentalist Tony Juniper, who worked with the king on both the film and book, believes the king is uniquely qualified to deliver his message because he began speaking out on environmental issues long before they were popular and because he continues to do so, even as other world leaders shun environmental protection in favor of energy security and economic growth.

“I do feel as though the world is now hungry for some new big ideas,” Juniper said. “And I do hope that one of those big ideas that people would like to consider as we face into these multiple challenges of the 2020s and beyond is the idea of harmony.”

While Charles first addressed the idea of harmony 16 years ago, he is returning to the topic partly because the growth of streaming platforms like Amazon Prime give him a chance to reach new audiences worldwide.

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



Britain’s King Charles III and Queen Camilla attend the premiere of Finding Harmony: A King’s Vision, at Windsor Castle in Berkshire, England, Wednesday, Jan. 28. (AP)

‘Sleep, exercise and novelty keep the brain healthy’

Your brain trains like a muscle – here’s how to keep it strong

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

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By Joanna Fong-Isariyawongse
University of Pittsburgh

If you have ever lifted a weight, you know the routine: challenge the muscle, give it rest, feed it and repeat. Over time, it grows stronger.

Of course, muscles only grow when the challenge increases over time. Continually lifting the same weight the same way stops working.

It might come as a surprise to learn that the brain responds to training in much the same way as our muscles, even though most of us never think about it that way. Clear thinking, focus, creativity and good judgment are built through challenge, when the brain is asked to stretch beyond routine rather than run on autopilot. That slight mental discomfort is often the sign that the brain is actually being trained, a lot like that good workout burn in your muscles.

Think about walking the same loop through a local park every day. At first, your senses are alert. You notice the hills, the trees, the changing light. But after a few loops, your brain checks out. You start planning dinner, replaying emails or running through your to-do list. The walk still feels good, but your brain is no longer being challenged.

Routine feels comfortable, but comfort and familiarity alone do not build new brain connections.

As a neurologist who studies brain activity, I use electro-

encephalograms, or EEGs, to record the brain’s electrical patterns.

Research in humans shows that these rhythms are remarkably dynamic. When someone learns a new skill, EEG rhythms often become more organized and coordinated. This reflects the brain’s attempt to strengthen pathways needed for that skill.

For decades, scientists believed that the brain’s ability to grow and reorganize, called neuroplasticity, was largely limited to childhood. Once the brain matured, its wiring was thought to be largely fixed.

But that idea has been overturned. Decades of research show that adult brains can form new connections and reorganize existing networks, under the right conditions, throughout life.

Some of the most influential work in this field comes from enriched environment studies in animals. Rats housed in stimulating environments filled with toys, running wheels and social interaction developed larger, more complex brains than rats kept in standard cages. Their brains adapted because they were regularly exposed to novelty and challenge.

Human studies find similar results. Adults who take on genuinely new challenges, such as learning a language, dancing or practicing a musical instrument, show measurable increases in brain volume and connectivity on MRI scans.

The takeaway is simple: Repetition keeps the brain running, but novelty pushes the brain to adapt, forcing it to pay attention, learn and problem-solve in new ways. Neuroplasticity thrives when the brain is nudged just beyond its com-

fort zone.

Just like muscles, the brain has limits. It does not get stronger from endless strain. Real growth comes from the right balance of challenge and recovery.

When the brain is pushed for too long without a break - whether that means long work hours, staying locked onto the same task or making nonstop decisions under pressure - performance starts to slip. Focus fades. Mistakes increase. To keep you going, the brain shifts how different regions work together, asking some areas to carry more of the load. But that extra effort can still make the whole network run less smoothly.

Neural fatigue is more than feeling tired. Brain imaging studies show that during prolonged mental work, the networks responsible for attention and decision-making begin to slow down, while regions that promote rest and reward-seeking take over. This shift helps explain why mental exhaustion often comes with stronger cravings for quick rewards, like sugary snacks, comfort foods or mindless scrolling. The result is familiar: slower thinking, more mistakes, irritability and mental fog.

This is where the muscle analogy becomes especially useful. You wouldn’t do squats for six hours straight, because your leg muscles would eventually give out. As they work, they build up byproducts that make each contraction a little less effective until you finally have to stop. Your brain behaves in a similar way.

Likewise, in the brain, when the same cognitive circuits are overused, chemical signals build up, communication slows and learning stalls.

But rest allows those strained circuits to reset and function more smoothly over time. And taking breaks from a taxing activity does not interrupt learning. In fact, breaks are critical for efficient learning.

Among all forms of rest, sleep is the most powerful. Sleep is the brain’s night shift. While you rest, the brain takes out the trash through a special cleanup system called the glymphatic system that clears away waste and harmful proteins. Sleep also restores glycogen, a critical fuel source for brain cells. And importantly, sleep is when essential repair work happens. Growth hormone surges during deep sleep, supporting tissue repair. Immune cells regroup and strengthen their activity.

During REM sleep, the stage of sleep linked to dreaming, the brain replays patterns from the day to consolidate memories. This process is critical not only for cognitive skills like learning an instrument but also for physical skills like mastering a move in sports.

On the other hand, chronic sleep deprivation impairs attention, disrupts decision-making and alters the hormones that regulate appetite and metabolism. This is why fatigue drives sugar cravings and late-night snacking.

Sleep is not an optional wellness practice. It is a biological requirement for brain performance.

Exercise strengthens the brain as well as the body.

Physical activity increases levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor, or BDNF, a protein that acts like fertilizer for neurons. It promotes the growth of new connections, increases blood flow, reduces inflammation and helps the brain remain adaptable across one’s lifespan. (AP)

Move to improve organ transplants and patient safety

US proposes new transplant system rules to boost use of marginal organs

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP): The government proposed new rules for the nation’s transplant system Wednesday that aim to increase use of less-than-perfect organs and set additional safety standards for donor groups.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said the proposal would strengthen its oversight of organ procurement organizations or OPOs, groups that retrieve organs from deceased donors. More than 100,000 people are on the US transplant list, the vast majority seeking a kidney, and thousands will die waiting for a new organ. Wednesday’s move is part of an ongoing overhaul of the complex transplant system that began during the first Trump administration.

But it comes after donations from the deceased dropped last year for the first time in over a decade, sparking concern about mistrust in the system. While organ transplants have been rising -- just over 49,000 last year compared with 48,150 in 2024 -- that year-over-year increase also slowed.

“Every missed opportunity for organ donation is a life lost,” CMS Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz said in a statement Wednesday.

He said the proposed rule, expected to be finalized later in the year, “strengthens accountability, clarifies expectations and gives us stronger tools to remove underperforming or-



Surgical instruments are arranged during an organ procurement surgery June 15, 2023, in Tennessee. (AP)

ganizations, protect patients and honor the incredible gift of life.”

In a step toward more potentially usable organs, the proposal urges maximizing the use of “medically complex organs,” typically those from older or sicker donors. CMS would add new requirements for how OPOs track the retrieval and usage of those less-than-perfect organs, which the agency said may need “special or additional considerations” in finding an appropriate recipient.

Many OPOs already have increased retrievals of those less-than-perfect organs, especially kidneys. For example, a less-than-perfect donated kidney might not be good enough to last the lifetime of a young recipient but it could give an older, sicker patient, who might not get another offer, some time off dialysis. Yet for a variety of reasons, many transplant centers don’t accept medically complex donated organs even when medical criteria suggest they’d be a good match for a patient.

ByHeart formula

Botulism probe targets 2 firms

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): Two companies processed and supplied dried milk powder that could be a culprit in the outbreak of botulism tied to By-Heart infant formula that has sickened dozens of babies, The Associated Press has learned.

Organic whole milk powder that tested positive for the type of bacteria that causes botulism was made from milk provided by Organic West Milk Inc., a California company, and processed at a Dairy Farmers of America plant in Fallon, Nevada, company officials said.

The source of the contamination, however, is not yet known. Both companies and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration emphasized that the investigation into the unprecedented outbreak that has sickened 51 babies in 19 states is ongoing.

Bill Van Ryn, an owner of Organic West Milk, said he learned last week that a sample of his company’s milk powder collected by the FDA had tested positive for the germ that causes botulism. But that doesn’t mean his product is the source of the outbreak, Van Ryn stressed.

“Nothing has been proven about our milk yet,” he said, adding: “Something happened in the process of converting the milk to powder and then in converting it to baby formula.”

Organic West, which supplies milk from 55 farmers, didn’t sell organic whole milk powder to any infant formula maker besides ByHeart, Van Ryn said. The milk company has halted sales of the powder used in any product intended for babies and children until more is known about the source of the outbreak, he added.

Powdered milk is made by pasteurizing liquid milk, concentrating it through evaporation and spraying it into a hot chamber, which causes the water to evaporate and leave behind fine, dry milk particles.

The Dairy Farmers of America is a global dairy cooperative. Its plant in Nevada processes about 1.5 million pounds of raw milk daily into 250,000 pounds of whole milk powder.

The Dairy Farmers of America said in a statement that Organic West was the source of milk for the sample that FDA collected that tested positive for botulism bacteria. The milk was processed into powder that met all required tests, the company said. Organic West subsequently sold the milk powder to ByHeart.

Late bedtimes linked to 16% higher heart risk

Being a night owl may not be great for your heart, but there’s a solution

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP): Being a night owl can be bad for your heart.

That may sound surprising but a large study found people who are more active late at night - when most of the population is winding down or already asleep - have poorer overall heart health than the average person.

“It is not like, that, night owls are doomed,” said research fellow Sina Kianersi of Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School, who led the study. “The challenge is the mismatch between your internal clock and typical daily schedules” that makes it harder to follow heart-healthy behaviors.

And that’s fixable, added Kianersi, who describes himself as “sort of a night owl” who feels a boost in “my analytical thinking” after about 7 or 8 at night.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the US The American Heart Association has a list of eight key factors that everyone should heed for better heart health: being more physically active; avoiding tobacco; getting enough sleep and a healthy diet; and controlling blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and weight.

Where does being a night owl come in? That has to do with the body’s circadian rhythm, our master biological



A person looks out of a window in an apartment building in Kansas City, Mo., May 3, 2020. (AP)

clock. It follows a roughly 24-hour schedule that regulates not just when we become sleepy and when we’re more awake but also keeps organ systems in sync, influencing things like heart rate, blood pressure, stress hormones and metabolism.

Everybody’s circadian rhythm is a little different. Prior research has suggested night owls might have more health problems, as well as risk factors like higher rates of smoking and less physical activity, than people with more typical bedtimes, Kianersi said.

Over 14 years, the night owls had a 16% higher risk of a first heart attack or stroke compared to the average population, the researchers found.

The night owls, especially women, also had overall worse cardiovascular health based on meeting the heart association’s eight key factors, the researchers reported Wednesday in the Journal of the American Heart Association.

Unhealthy behaviors - smoking, insufficient sleep and poor diet - appear to be the main reasons.



People are silhouetted against the sky at sunset as they run at Shawnee Mission Park, Sept. 26, 2024, in Shawnee, Kan. (AP)

Average lifespan tops 79 yrs

US life expectancy hit an all-time high in 2024: CDC

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): US life expectancy rose to 79 years in 2024 - the highest mark in American history.

It’s the result of not only the dissipation of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also waning death rates from all the nation’s top killers, including heart disease, cancer and drug overdoses.

What’s more, preliminary statistics suggest a continued improvement in 2025. “It’s pretty much good news all the way around,” said Robert Anderson, of the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which released the 2024 data on Thursday.

Life expectancy, a fundamental measure of a population’s health, is an estimate of the average number of years a baby born in a given year might expect to live, given death rates at that time.

For decades, US life expectancy rose at least a little bit almost every year, thanks to medical advances and public health measures. It peaked in 2014, just shy of 79 years.

It was relatively flat for several years before plunging as the COVID-19 pandemic killed more than 1.2 million Americans. In 2021, life expectancy fell to just under 76 1/2 years. It has been rebounding since.

The data reflect not only a complete turnaround from the pandemic but also a lasting improvement in the drug overdose epidemic, said Andrew Stokes, a researcher at Boston University.

The bad news is that the US still ranks below dozens of other countries, Stokes noted.

Gerber recalls arrowroot biscuits over possible plastic, paper pieces

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): Gerber, the maker of baby foods and other products, is recalling certain lots of its arrowroot biscuits because they might contain pieces of soft plastic or paper and should not be eaten.

The recall includes 5.5-ounce packages of the biscuits, often given to teething babies, with best-by dates between Oct. 16 and Dec. 16, 2026. The plastic and paper pieces came from a supplier of arrowroot flour, who initiated the recall.

No illnesses or injuries have been reported. Consumers should check the back of the packages for the codes of affected lots. The products can be returned to the place of purchase for a refund, Gerber officials said in a statement. No other Gerber products are affected by the recall.



Flood waters cover the Chibuto-Chaimite road in Gaza province, Mozambique, Saturday, Jan. 17. (AP)

La Nina, warming devastate southern Africa

Climate change worsened rains, floods

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 29, (AP): Human-caused climate change worsened the recent torrential rains and floods which devastated parts of southern Africa, killing more than 100 people and displacing over 300 000, researchers said Thursday.

A study by the World Weather Attribution, which analyzed the recent heavy rainfalls that caused severe flooding in parts of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, showed that the region experienced a year’s worth of rain in a period of 10 days.

It resulted in widespread damage to housing and infrastructure estimated to run into the millions of dollars, and caused untold human suffering, including the loss of lives.

Many homes and buildings in Mozambique were completely submerged under water, while roads and bridges were swept away in the South African provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga and parts of Zimbabwe.

The study was conducted by scientists from across the world using peer-reviewed methods to assess the impact of climate change on severe weather patterns and events.

The data obtained from the recent downpours, the rare magnitude of which occurs roughly once every 50 years, confirmed a “clear move toward more violent downpours,” the study shows.

It was also compounded by the current La Nina weather phenomenon which naturally brings wetter conditions in the southern Africa region but was now operating within a much warmer atmosphere.

“Our analysis clearly shows that our continued burning of fossil fuels is not only increasing the intensity of extreme rainfall, but turning events that would have happened anyway into something much more severe,” said Izidine Pinto, a senior climate researcher at the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute.

Pinto, who co-authored the study, said the climate models used struggled to pinpoint exactly how much worse the recent floods were made by climate change, but that a 40% increase in the intensity of the rains would be impossible to explain without human-caused climate change.

“It means what would have already been a serious period

of heavy rain has been transformed into a more violent deluge that communities are not equipped to deal with,” he said.

The affected regions in southern Africa are no strangers to heavy downpours and flooding, but scientists were alarmed by the magnitude of the recent events.

“This event was a surprise to us because we have experienced the previous ones 25 years ago, which flooded the same areas,” said Bernardino Nhamumbo, a researcher with the Mozambique weather service.

“There are places that have recorded in two to three days the rainfall that was expected for the entire rainy season, so this was very challenging to accommodate in any circumstances.”

According to Nhamumbo, Mozambique is downstream to nine international rivers, so when an event like this happens a lot of damage is expected not only because of the heavy rainfall but also because of the stream flow.

“We forecast well because we have different models, but these are those events that even with a good forecast you cannot hold the damages that are associated,” he said.

The central and southern parts of Mozambique were the hardest hit, with the Gaza provincial capital of Xai-Xai and the nearby town of Chokwe largely submerged under water.

The researchers have also called for the development of climate models in Africa in order to best understand the dynamics and extent of the impact of climate change in the continent’s various regions.

According to Friederike Otto, professor of climate science at the Centre for Environmental Policy at Imperial College in London, the lack of climate models developed in Africa was part of the reason why most models struggled to pinpoint exactly how much worse the recent floods were made by climate change.

“All climate models that we have that are freely available are developed outside of Africa. They are all developed within climate modeling centers in the US, Europe and some in Asia. “But there is not a single climate model that is developed in Africa. Because of this they are usually designed so that they get the weather best in the regions they are made for, and that is true for all models,” she said.

Dube’s 65 off 23 in vain

Seifert leads New Zealand past India for T20 victory

VISAKHAPATNAM, India, Jan 29, (AP): Shivam Dube struck 65 runs off 23 balls but his effort went in vain as New Zealand beat India by 50 runs in the fourth T20 .

Dube raced to a 15-ball 50, hitting seven sixes and three fours in all, but he didn’t find much support from the Indian lineup. Rinku Singh scored 39 off 30 balls.

This was after New Zealand scored 215-7 in 20 overs, thanks to a 100-run opening stand between Devon Conway and Tim Seifert.

Seifert scored 62 off 36 balls, with three sixes and seven fours, while Conway made 44 off 23 balls.

Daryl Mitchell scored 39 not out off 18 balls with three sixes.

In reply, India was bowled out for 165 runs in 18.4 overs. Mitchell Santner picked 3-26 in four overs, while Ish Sodhi (2-46) and Jacob Duffy (2-33) returned a brace each.

India already had an unassailable 3-0 series lead. Thiruvananthapuram will host the final T20 on Saturday.

Put into bat, New Zealand got off to the best start of this series. The opening duo scored 71 runs in the powerplay as Seifert reached 50 off 25 balls.

Their 100-stand came off 49 deliveries, but Kuldeep Yadav provided the breakthrough immediately after.

Rachin Ravindra was caught and bowled off Jasprit Bumrah for 2.

Yadav (2-39) struck again to remove Glenn Phillips for 24, while Seifert holed off Arshdeep Singh in between. New Zealand was down to 137-4 in the 14th over.

It further lost two more middle-order wickets and was 163-6 at one stage. But Mitchell pulled things back in the lower order and took 19 runs off Bumrah’s penultimate over.

He added 33 off 12 balls with Matt Henry as New Zealand crossed 200.

In reply, India lost Abhishek Sharma for a golden duck - bowled off Henry. Suryakumar Yadav batted at No. 3 in the absence of injured Ishan Kishan, but was out for 8.

Sanju Samson (24) and Rinku Singh added 46 off 28 balls for the third wicket. Santner then struck twice in successive overs to remove both Samson and Hardik Pandya (2).

Dube then came to the crease, even as Zakary Foulkes trapped Singh lbw in the 11th over to leave India 82-5.

Dube put on 63 off 27 balls with Harshit Rana (9), but was run out in the 15th over to end India’s hopes for an unlikely win.



New Zealand's Tim Seifert plays a shot during the fourth T20 cricket match between India and New Zealand in Visakhapatnam, India. (AP)

Olympic harmony on display

Olympic ceremony preparation an exhilarating journey: Director

MILAN, Jan 29, (AP): Inside a cavernous tent near Milan’s San Siro stadium, classically trained dancers from La Scala’s academy mimicked Nordic walkers and figure skaters during a rehearsal Saturday for the opening number of the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics opening ceremony, which will take place on Feb. 6.

The young dancers are among some 1,200 volunteers who have been rehearsing since November in the tent large enough to mark the actual stage while Italian Serie A soccer wrapped up its final soccer matches before turning the iconic stadium into an Olympic venue.

“The preparation of the Olympic ceremony is a very complicated journey but also an exhilarating journey, because you get to meet all these volunteers, dance classes, normal people,” opening ceremony creative director Marco Balich told The Associated Press during a rare behind-the-scenes tour.

Volunteers include Balich’s butcher, the head of his office and an 88-year-old widow.

“And all of them join in to create something for the nation, for the joy of being part of a huge event like the Olympics,” said Balich, the producer of a record 16 Olympic and Paralympic ceremonies including the 2006 Turin opening ceremony.

Over the next two weeks, rehearsals will amp up to some nine hours a day -- all in pursuit of Olympic emotion for what is billed as the most viewed moment of the Games. Some 60,000 people are expected to attend the ceremony live in San Siro, including a U.S. delegation led by U.S. Vice President JD Vance, while millions around the world will watch on official broadcasters.

The theme of this year’s opening ceremony is “Harmony,” an especially potent message as the world order is shaken and populations from Ukraine to Gaza to Iran are exposed to violence.

The concept of an Olympic Truce, originating in ancient Greece and revived by Olympic officials in the 1990s, is even more urgent this year, Balich said. The truce aims to promote peace and dialogue through sport by ceasing hostilities for a week before the Olympics and a week after the Paralympics, which close March 15. Getting belligerents to cooperate is another matter.

“In this moment, where forces and bullies are predominant, I think it’s very important for all of us to embrace the values that the Olympics represents, which is to compete respectfully and peacefully between all the countries and nations, summarized in the title ‘Harmony,’” Balich said.

Balich’s ceremony will highlight Italian excellence and creativity, including a nod to Milan’s role as a fashion capital, and eye-openers he won’t reveal to preserve the surprise.

Some moments of the opening ceremony have been announced: U.S. pop star Mariah Carey, crossover tenor Andrea Bocelli, mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli, Italian singer Laura Pausini and concert pianist Lang Lang will perform.

Others are prescribed by Olympic protocol. They include the unveiling of the Olympic rings, the parade of athletes and, in the final moment, the lighting of the Olympic cauldron.

This year there will be two cauldrons, inspired by Leonardo da Vinci’s geometric studies: one in Milan, at the Arco della Pace some four kilometers (2½ miles) from San Siro, and the other in Cortina, some five hours and 400 kilometers (250 miles) away.

Director of ceremonies Maria Laura Iascone promised some “Olympic magic,” to transfer the flame over the final legs, given the extraordinary distances involved.

As the dual cauldron lighting illustrates, the 2026 Games are the most spread out in Olympic history. So that athletes even in far-flung venues near the Swiss and Austrian borders can participate, the Parade of Athletes will be beamed in from three other venues, including Cortina.

“This event will bring a lot of this magic and images. We keep a balance between the protocol moments that will be, let’s say, serious, very precise, and also moments where emotion will be brought through the participation of key roles and people,” Iascone said.



Dallas Mavericks' Jaden Hardy, left, and Minnesota Timberwolves' Donte DiVincenzo, right, compete for the ball in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Dallas. (AP)

Hawks beat Celtics to avenge blowout loss

CLEVELAND, Jan 29, (AP): Donovan Mitchell scored 25 points, Jaylon Tyson had 20 and the Cleveland Cavaliers used a big third quarter to beat the Los Angeles Lakers 129-99 and spoil LeBron James’ return to Northeast Ohio.

De’Andre Hunter added 19 points, and Jarrett Allen had 17 points and nine rebounds to help Cleveland to its season-best fifth straight victory.

James had only 11 points, the first time in 13 trips to Cleveland as an opposing player he has not had at least 20. The 41-year old Akron native was 3 of 10 from the field, including 0 of 3 on 3-pointers, and was 5 of 6 from the line in 27 minutes.

It also was James’ worst loss in Cleveland as a visiting player. He is 10-3, but has been on the losing end in his last two.

James teared up during a timeout with 7:46 remaining in the first quarter when the Cavaliers showed video highlights of him scoring 25 straight points during Game 5 of the 2007 Eastern Conference finals against the Detroit Pistons.

Luka Doncic led the Lakers with 29 points. Los Angeles fell to 3-2 on its seven-game road trip.

Spurs 111, Rockets 99

In Houston, Victor Wembanyama had 28 points, 16 rebounds and five blocks to help the San Antonio Spurs rally for a victory over the Houston Rockets.

The Spurs trailed by 16 and didn’t have a lead until late in the third quarter. Wembanyama scored nine points, with five free throws, to power an 11-0 run to open the fourth quarter that put the Spurs on top 95-86 with less than



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) is fouled by Cleveland Cavaliers guard Donovan Mitchell, right, in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Cleveland. (AP)

eight minutes to go.

A pair of free throws by Alperen Sengun got the Rockets within five before San Antonio used a 10-4 run, with six points from Dylan Harper, to make it 107-96 with about 2 1/2 minutes to play.

Wembanyama’s big game comes after he was 5 of 21 for 14 points in a loss to Houston last week.

The victory gives the Spurs a 2-1 lead in the season series with the final game set for March 8 in San Antonio.

Hawks 117, Celtics 106

In Boston, Nickeil Alexander-Walker scored 21 points, Jalen Johnson had 19 points and 14 rebounds and the Atlanta Hawks beat the Boston Celtics to avenge a lopsided home loss.

Onyeka Okongwu added 17 points, Dyson Daniels had 15 and Corey Kispert 13 to help the Hawks win their fourth straight.

Jaylen Brown led Boston with 21 points. He shot 9 for 20, missing all five of his 3-point attempts.

The Hawks hit 42.9% of their 3-pointers (18 of 42) and had 29 assists on 45 baskets. Boston was 9 of 34 from beyond the arc.

Hawks coach Quin Snyder was asked before the game if his team would remember a 132-106 loss at home Jan. 17 in the clubs’ last meeting. He replied: “You want to feel it.”

It looked like his team did from the start. They were locked in defensively, opening a 21-point lead late in the opening quarter on Alexander-Walker’s 3-pointer.

Warriors 140, Jazz 124

In Salt Lake City, Stephen Curry scored 27 points, Moses Moody had 26 and the Golden State Warriors beat the Utah Jazz.

Gui Santos had 16 points off the bench for the Warriors. Golden State made 23 3-pointers and never trailed over the final three quarters. Moody led the way with five 3s.

Brice Sensabaugh scored 22 points

off the bench for Utah. Keyonte George had 19 points and seven assists. Ace Bailey also scored 19 points for the Jazz and Lauri Markkanen had 18.

Timberwolves 118, Mavericks 105

In Dallas, Julius Randle scored 31 points, Naz Reid added 23 and the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the short-handed Dallas Mavericks.

The Mavericks were without rookie No. 1 pick Cooper Flagg, who sat for left ankle injury management on the first night of a back-to-back. Flagg played the previous three games after an ankle sprain sidelined him for two games.

Klay Thompson sat with left knee soreness for Dallas, which is without 10-time All-Star Anthony Davis due to a hand injury. Star guard Kyrie Irving hasn’t played all season after tearing an ACL last March.

Magic 133, Heat 124

In Miami, Paolo Banchero had 31 points and 12 rebounds, Anthony Black scored 26 points and the Orlando Magic beat the Miami Heat to snap a four-game skid.

Desmond Bane finished with 23 points on 10-of-16 shooting and Jalen Suggs scored 16 for the Magic, who are 3-0 against the Heat this season.

Simone Fontecchio scored 23 points in 19 minutes for the Heat. Norman Powell added 22 points and Bam Adebayo had 21.

Pacers 113, Bulls 110

In Indianapolis, Aaron Nesmith made a go-ahead reverse layup with 13.9 seconds left and blocked Coby White’s attempt from close range with 2.9 seconds remaining, and the Indiana Pacers rallied from a 14-point fourth-quarter deficit to beat the Chicago Bulls.

Pascal Siakam scored 20 points, Andrew Nembhard had 18, Jarace Walker added 16, Bennedit Mathurin had 15 and Nesmith finished with 14 for the NBA-worst Pacers, who improved to 3-0 against Chicago this season.

China bans 73 people from soccer for life

BEIJING, Jan 29, (AP): China banned 73 people from soccer for life on Thursday and deducted points from nine top-tier clubs in its latest anti-corruption campaign over alleged match-fixing.

Former national team coach and Everton player Li Tie and Chen Xuyuan, former president of the Chinese Football Association (CFA), were among those banned.

“For 73 industry personnel, including Chen Xuyuan and Li Tie, whose criminal offenses have been confirmed by effective judicial judgments, the CFA has imposed lifetime bans on participating in any football-related activities,” a CFA of-

ficial said. In 2024, Li - who managed the national team from 2019 to 2021 - and Chen were convicted of accepting millions of dollars in bribes. Li was sentenced to 20 years in prison, while Chen received a life term.

Nine Chinese Super League clubs were also punished with point deductions and fines.

Shanghai Shenhua, which finished second last season, and Tianjin Jinmen Tigers were hardest-hit. The two clubs were each docked 10 points and fined 1 million yuan (\$143,788). Defending champion Shanghai Port will start the 2026 season with five points deducted.



Creative Director and Executive Producer Marco Balich gestures as volunteer dancers perform during rehearsals for the opening ceremony of the Milan Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games, at a compound in a big tent next to San Siro Stadium, in Milan, Italy. (AP)

Tyson Fury coming out of retirement

LONDON, Jan 29 (AP): Former world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury is to come out of retirement to face Arslanbek Makhmudov on April 11.

The highly-anticipated fight was confirmed by Turki Alalshikh, chairman of the Saudi General Entertainment Authority and president of the Saudi Boxing Federation. No venue has yet been announced.

“Excited to be back,” Tyson said. “Heart has always been, and always will be, in boxing.”

Fury retired last year, after losing for a second time to Oleksandr Usyk in December 2024. Before his two bouts with Usyk, the British boxer was unbeaten in 35 fights, winning 34 and drawing one.

Fury had announced on Jan. 4 that he would be coming out of retirement.

“I am thrilled about the opportunity,” said Makhmudov, a Russian heavyweight who is based in Canada. “I’m coming to deliver a war. Tyson Fury has been a big champion. I will be more ready than ever to leave with a massive W.”

Two-time world champion Fury ended the reign of Wladimir Klitschko with a points win in 2015 that saw him crowned Super WBA, IBF and WBO title holder.

He didn’t fight again until 2018, but a thrilling trilogy with American Deontay Wilder resulted in a draw and two victories that helped him claim the WBC crown.

Fury previously said he was retiring after he beat Dillian Whyte in 2022. However, he was back in the ring the following year.

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SPORTS

Al-Habshi receives invitation to participate in this year's celebrations

Jahra Governor: Kuwait Sports Day a landmark national event

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habshi hailed Kuwait Sports Day as a longstanding national occasion that highlights the leadership's commitment to promoting sports and encouraging a healthy, active lifestyle. He emphasized the key role of sports in improving quality of life and fostering public health awareness across the community.

During a meeting with Faisal Al-Muqseed, Chairman of the Kuwait Sports for All Federation, and Vice Chairman Abdullah Al-Adwani, Governor Al-Habshi received an invitation to participate in this year's celebrations on February 7th at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Bridge, under the patronage of Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for



Governor Hamad Al-Habshi welcomes Faisal Al-Muqseed, Chairman of the Kuwait Sports for All Federation, and Vice Chairman Abdullah Al-Adwani.

Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

Al-Habshi praised the event as a successful example of collaboration between government institutions, sports authorities, and community organizations. He lauded the Public Authority for Sports

and the Kuwait Sports for All Federation for their efforts in organizing the event, which promotes physical activity and encourages broad community engagement.

He also highlighted the governorate's ongoing support for sports initiatives and programs targeting all age groups, noting that Kuwait Sports Day embodies national unity and reinforces positive values such as teamwork and cooperation.

Governor Al-Habshi urged residents of Jahra to participate actively in the celebrations and take advantage of the event's diverse activities, which have significant benefits for both physical and mental health. He wished success to the organizers and affirmed the event's role in achieving its important objectives.

Sabalenka continues dominance with fourth straight Australian Open final



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus plays a forehand return to Elina Svitolina of Ukraine during their semifinal match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026. (AP)

Belarusian set to face Rybakina again

MELBOURNE, Jan 29, (AP): Not even a point penalty for hindrance slowed Aryna Sabalenka's run to a fourth consecutive Australian Open final.

The top-ranked Sabalenka overpowered Elina Svitolina 6-2, 6-3 to move within one victory of a third Australian Open title in four years.

A rematch of the 2023 final against Elena Rybakina was set up when the No. 5 seed ousted No. 6 Jessica Pegula 6-3, 7-6 (7) in the second semifinal.

Her semifinal was mostly one way until Rybakina had match point. The 2022 Wimbledon champion missed three match points on Pegula's serve and then was broken twice while serving for the match.

Pegula rallied and had two set points in the tiebreaker but wasn't able to convert, and Rybakina finally clinched it 29 minutes after her first match point.

"Really, really stressful," Rybakina said. She admitted to flashbacks from the 2024 Open when she lost the longest women's tiebreaker ever at a Grand Slam to Anna Blinkova 22-20 in a three-set defeat.

"I'm proud no matter the situation. It got very tight, I stayed there," she said of the win over Pegula. "I was fighting for each point."

For Pegula, it became a matter of swing or miss out.

"Sometimes when you're on the brink of losing everything you get a little clarity because you're kind of just like, 'Screw it, I'm just going to try and stay in this,'" she said. "I played a couple of really good points to save the match points, and, you know, she missed a couple short balls ... a couple free points to take some pressure off."

All four players reached the semifinals without dropping a set - in Australia for the first time in 56 years - and Sabalenka and Svitolina were each on 10-match winning streaks to start the season after titles in warmup events.

Sabalenka kept both of her streaks alive. As has become customary for Ukrainians against players from Russia and Belarus, there was no hand-



Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan waves after winning her semifinal match against Jessica Pegula of the U.S. at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

shakes at the net. There was also no group photo before the match.

Sabalenka is the third woman in the Open era to reach four consecutive singles finals at the Australian Open after Evonne Goolagong Cawley and Martina Hingis.

"It's an incredible achievement but the job's not done yet," an emotional Sabalenka said in her on-court TV interview. "I've been watching her game, (Svitolina) was playing incredible. I felt like I had to step in and put as much pressure as I could back on her. I'm glad the level was there. I think I played great tennis."

The only hiccup was the hindrance to start the fourth game. Hindrance is called for a distraction that prevents a player from making a shot, and can include an opponent's loud noise.

Umpire Louise Azemar Engzell deemed Sabalenka made a prolonged grunt after she shanked

a forehand. The shot seemed to be going long but landed inside the baseline, giving Svitolina the chance to play on. That's when the umpire intervened.

Sabalenka asked for a video review but, after going to the tape, Azemar Engzell confirmed her decision that the grunt was more elongated than usual.

"That's actually never happened to me ... especially with my grunting," Sabalenka said. "Then she called it, and I was, like, 'What? What is wrong with you?'"

Sabalenka said it worked as motivation - she broke serve in that game.

"It actually helped me - I was more aggressive. I was not happy with the call, and it really helped me to get that game," Sabalenka said. She added with a laugh, "So if she (Azemar Engzell) ever wants to do it again - like, I want to make sure that she's not afraid of it - go ahead, call it. It's going to help me."

Rybakina is back into a major final for the first time since '23, and says she learned a lot from that match. She's also coming off a win over Sabalenka in the deciding match of the WTA Finals last November, when she picked up a record \$5.2 million in prize money.

"I could take only positive from that week," she said. "This is what I'm trying to do ... remembering some good stuff from this WTA Final."

After reaching her first semifinal in Australia and winning a title in a warmup tournament in New Zealand, Svitolina will return to the top 10 for the first time since she took a maternity break in 2022.

The Auckland title was her first foray back on tour after an early end to the 2025 season for a mental health break. She said the rest and time out prolonged her career.

"Definitely very, very happy with the two weeks here and in New Zealand, as well, winning," she said. "Gutted to not make it through tonight but it's very difficult when you're playing the world No. 1, who is really on fire."

"It was really complicated for me today," she added, "but, yeah, I just want to take positives from the past weeks and just carry them through for the season."

Kristoffersen leads Norwegian 1-2 in last slalom before Oly

SCHLADMING, Austria, Jan 29, (AP): Henrik Kristoffersen ended his wait of nearly 11 months for another World Cup win on Wednesday, triumphing in the last slalom before the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics.

Racing under the floodlights, Kristoffersen beat his Norwegian teammate and first-run leader Atle Lie McGrath by 0.34 seconds with an all-attacking, wild final run.

His 34th career victory could have hardly come in a more fitting place, as Kristoffersen lives in Salzburg, an hour-long drive from Schlading, where he also earned his first career win in January 2014.

"It's a little bit of an emotional rollercoaster. I don't cry a lot, and I never cry for pain or sadness, but today I cry for joy," Kristoffersen said in a tearful course-side interview.

He hadn't triumphed since winning back-to-back races in one weekend in Slovenia in early March.

Kristoffersen won the traditional night race for a record fifth time, moving him one past Austrian standout Benjamin Raich, the two-time gold medalist from the 2006 Olympics who won the event four times between 1999 and 2007.

"Fifth time Schlading, I guess this is my house," Kristoffersen said.

The victory also moved him within two wins of Norwegian record holder Aksel Lund Svindal, who took 36 career World Cups before retiring in 2019.

Defending Olympic champion Clément Noël posted the fastest second-run time and the Frenchman improved from eighth to third position, trailing Kristoffersen by 0.54 seconds.

The rest of the field, led by Lucas Pinheiro Braathen in fourth, was more than 1.5 seconds off the pace.

Loic Meillard, who beat Pinheiro Braathen to win a GS on the same hill Tuesday, skied out in the second run of the slalom.

Pinheiro Braathen lost his lead in the slalom season standings. Now on 451 points, he trails his former Norwegian teammate McGrath by a single point.

Kristoffersen, who became the seventh different winner in nine slalom races this season, climbed to fifth with 373 points.

There are two more slaloms scheduled in March.

The last men's World Cup race before the Olympics is a downhill in Crans-Montana on Sunday.

Police Show Jumping Championship heats up

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The first International Police Sports Federation Show Jumping Championship continued today at the Police Sports Federation Arena in Subhan and will conclude tomorrow, featuring intense competition among top riders aiming for podium finishes.

Today's rounds include jumps at 120 cm, 130 cm, and 140 cm, while Saturday will see heights of 125 cm, 135 cm, and 145 cm contested.

The Police Sports Federation Arena has recently hosted a variety of equestrian events, including the Equestrian League, Dressage Championships, and the Global Dressage Challenge, held under the International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI). A dressage training camp was also organized, reflecting the strong collaboration between the Kuwait Equestrian Federation and the Police Sports Federation.

Brigadier General Sheikh Mubarak Ali Al-Yousuf, Chairman of the Police Sports Federation, expressed his gratitude to First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf for his continued support of sports and local athletic initiatives.

He stated, "The conclusion of the local show jumping league will be hosted at the Police Federation facilities, highlighting our partnership with the Kuwait Equestrian Federation. This demonstrates the commitment of sports institutions to unify efforts and advance equestrian sports in Kuwait. All facilities will be available for competitions, training camps, and equestrian activities, helping develop local riders and raise the standard of the sport."

The judging panel is led by International



Brigadier General Sheikh Mubarak Ali Al-Yousuf

Judge Nidar Al-Mustafa, alongside Khaled Al-Ansari, Raghad Al-Dabbous, Ibtisam Al-Aarouri, and external judge Ines Bigdel. Course design is handled by Andreas Stoyper-Bamberger.

International Bahraini Judge Mohammed Dadallah oversees the arena judges, assisted by Badr Al-Haifi, Asma Malallah, Dr. Yahya Al-Hadban, and Anna Alexandra Spirento, with Dr. Haya Ibrahim serving as the FEI veterinary delegate.

Invincible no more

Bayern aims to make amends against Hamburg in Bundesliga

BERLIN, Jan 29, (AP): Bundesliga opponents suddenly know Bayern Munich is beatable after Augsburg's shock win over the league leader last weekend.

Promoted Hamburger SV will be the first team to test this new reality when Bayern visits on Saturday.

Like Augsburg before, Hamburg has not shown much to suggest it can pull off an upset. Merlin Polzin's team has not won a game since early December after beating Werder Bremen in the Northern derby and it hasn't scored in its last two games.

Bayern, which routed Hamburg 5-0 in the reverse fixture, made a record start to the league through 18 rounds and will be keen to reassert its superiority after Augsburg's 2-1 win derailed its bid to complete the season unbeaten.

It was Bayern's first league defeat since last March.

"The crucial thing will be our reaction to it," Joshua Kimmich said.

Coach-less Eintracht Frankfurt hosts Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday. Frankfurt hasn't had much to cheer of late but it did snap its run of conceding three goals in every game this year when it lost only 2-0 to Tottenham in the Champions League on Wednesday. The club is reportedly close to signing coach Albert Riera from Slovenian league leader NK Celje as Dino Toppmöller's replacement.

High-flying Hoffenheim hosts Union Berlin on Saturday. Christian Ilzer's team is third and well positioned for Champions League qualification after four straight wins and just one defeat in 14 Bundesliga games.

Leipzig and Stuttgart are level on points in their duel for fourth place, the last for Champions League qualification. Leipzig hosts improving Mainz on Saturday before Stuttgart entertains Freiburg on Sunday.

Borussia Dortmund forward Serhou Guirassy missed a big chance against Inter Milan on Wednesday and appears to have lost the confidence that helped him amass 70 goals in 119 Bundesliga appearances for Dortmund, Stuttgart and Cologne. He scored 21 Bundesliga goals for Dortmund last season and has only six so far in 2025-26. Guirassy will get another chance against last-placed Heidenheim on Sunday.

He's back. Bayern's Jamal Musiala scored from a narrow angle in Wednesday's win over PSV Eindhoven, his first



Bayern's goalkeeper Jonas Urbig saves during a Champions League opening phase soccer match between PSV and Bayern Munich in Eindhoven, Netherlands. (AP)

goal since returning from a broken leg.

Former Real Madrid star Lucas Vázquez scored his first goal for Leverkusen to beat Werder Bremen 1-0 last weekend. He set up another goal in the Champions League on Wednesday. The 34-year-old Vázquez missed much of the season with injury but is now an option for Kasper Hjulmand's side.

Edin Džeko scored on his Schalke debut last weekend, when he became the oldest player to score in Germany's second division at 39 years, 314 days. He could start against Bochum on Saturday.

Leverkusen's Eliesse Ben Seghir was diagnosed with a ligament injury in his left ankle after returning from the Africa Cup of Nations with Morocco. But Burkina Faso defender Edmond Tapsoba is making progress on his comeback.

Hamburg suspended French winger Jean-Luc Dompé "until further notice" for drink driving after police detected alcohol with a breathalyzer test at a traffic stop on Sunday. The club said in a statement it will "decide on further consequences after further internal deliberations."

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NEWS



Arsenal's Viktor Gyokeres scores his side's opening goal during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Arsenal and Kairat Almaty in London. (AP)

Sports

Al-Mutawa rolls back years as Al-Qadsia reaches final



Veteran striker Bader Al-Mutawa celebrates after scoring the decisive goal.

Kuwait Club showdown looms

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Al-Qadsia fans had waited patiently for this moment – and its perseverance paid off. The team delivered an impressive performance in the second half of its Super Cup semi-final against traditional rival Al-Arabi, overturning a 1-3 deficit to secure a thrilling 4-3 victory.

Veteran striker Bader Al-Mutawa, 41, who came on as a substitute at halftime, led the charge and scored the decisive goal to seal the win for Al-Qadsia.

With this victory, Al-Qadsia advances to play Kuwait Club in the Super Cup final next Sunday. This matchup is a rematch of last season's final, when Kuwait Club claimed the title after eliminating Al-Qadsia's other rival, Al-Arabi, in the semi-finals. In recent years, Al-Arabi has dominated the derby clashes, while Al-Qadsia has struggled with inconsistent performances, keeping them away from competing for local titles. This comeback, however, comes at an ideal moment – boosting morale as the team prepares for the Gulf Champions League and the



Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi players jump for the ball during the semifinals match.

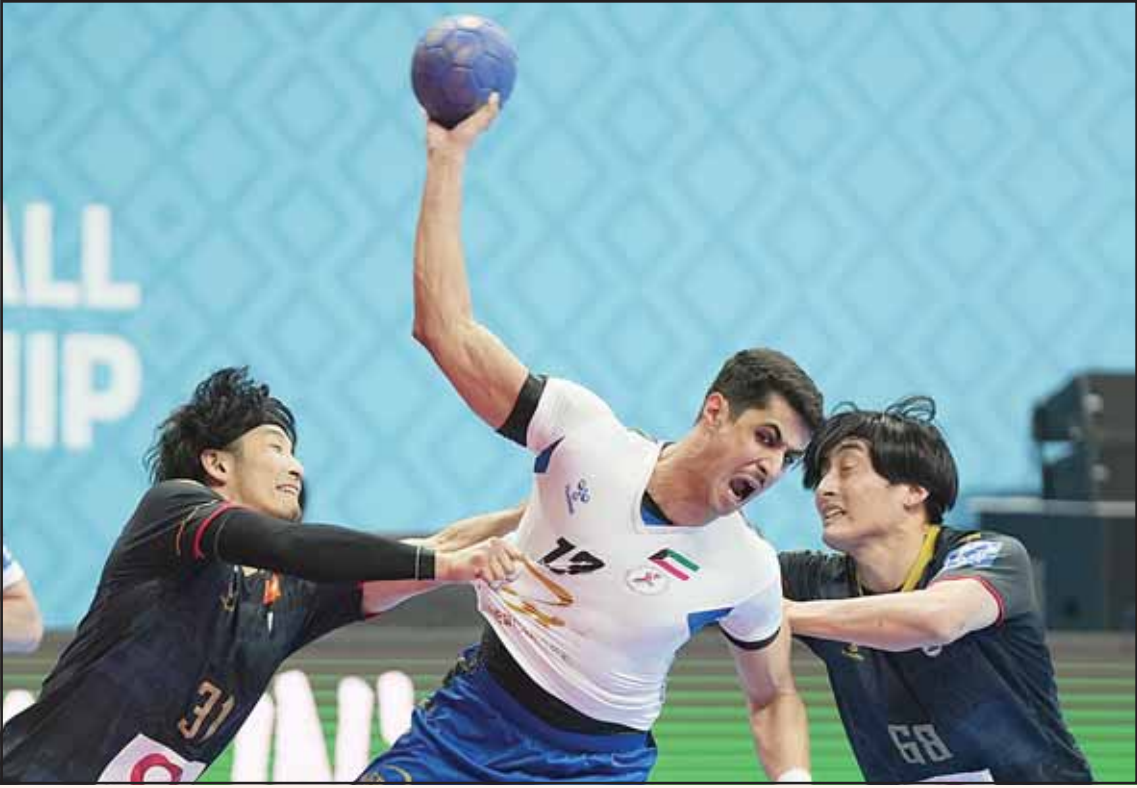
KUNA photos

Amir Cup, following its exit from the Crown Prince Cup and slim chances of claiming the Zain Premier League title.

Al-Qadsia midfielder Youssef Al-Haqan credited the turnaround to the halftime pep talk from Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul. "Maaloul told us at halftime that this match is a matter of honor," he said. "Coming back to beat Al-Arabi was not easy."

Al-Arabi coach Nasser Al-Shatti cited "forced substitutions" due to injuries to Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi and Salman Al-Awadhi as a factor in his team's defeat. He also noted the team's fatigue after recent tough matches against Kuwait Club, Al-Qadsia, and Al-Fahaheel. "Failing to hold the lead in the derby is no excuse," he added. "We congratulate Al-Qadsia on their victory."

Kuwait edges Japan to win 3rd place at the Asian Handball Championship



Kuwaiti player is held by the Japanese as he goes for a shot during the bronze medal match.

KUNA photo

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Kuwait defeated Japan 33–32 on Thursday to secure third place at the 22nd Asian Handball Championship.

Kuwaiti took control in the first half, opening a 19–16 lead with a display of pace, discipline, and sharp concentration. Japan mounted a strong comeback for much of the second half, applying sustained pressure, but Kuwait responded with determination and resilience. A strong fighting spirit in the closing stages allowed Kuwait to hold on for a narrow 33–32 victory, sealing the bronze-medal finish.

Bucharest Open offers a key test for Kuwait women's figure skating team



Seven-member Kuwaiti women's figure skating team.

KUNA photo

BUCHAREST, Jan 29, (KUNA): A seven-member Kuwaiti women's figure skating team is set to compete in the 2026 Bucharest International Open, which begins Saturday at Berceni Arena in Romania and features wide international participation. Fahad Al-Ajmi, President of the Kuwaiti Winter Sports Club and supervisor of the delegation, told KUNA that the skaters will take part in several age groups and competitive levels, noting that the tournament offers a valuable platform

to develop their skills and gain international experience. Al-Ajmi said the team completed an intensive preparation program at the club's ice rink under the guidance of professional and international coaches. He added that the participation aligns with the club's strategy to raise athletes' performance standards and strengthen Kuwait's presence in international competitions, expressing hope that the team will deliver positive results that reflect the continued growth of figure skating in Kuwait.

Real dropped by Benfica into playoff round alongside PSG

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, Jan 29, (AP): More than \$1 million in fines and bans for Senegal and Morocco have followed a shambolic Africa Cup final this month that FIFA condemned and Africa's soccer body called unacceptable. The bans apply only to Africa games and not the World Cup kicking off in June that Senegal and Morocco have both qualified for. In the Jan. 18 final in Rabat won by Senegal 1-0 in extra time, Senegal left the field in protest during stoppage time for 15 minutes, fans tried to storm the field and fighting broke out among journalists afterward. The Senegalese Football Association was fined \$615,000 in total, the Moroccan Football Association was fined \$315,000 in total, and Senegal coach Pape Thiaw fined \$100,000 and suspended for five Africa games for bringing the game into disrepute, the Confederation of African Football said. Senegal players Iliman Ndiaye and Ismaila Sarr were banned for two African

games, Morocco's Achraf Hakimi banned for two games with one suspended, and Morocco's Ismael Saibari banned for three games and fined \$100,000 for unsporting behavior. Senegal was angered in stoppage time of a 0-0 draw when Morocco was awarded a penalty. Thiaw led a walk-off by his players and delayed the game for 15 minutes. Morocco missed the penalty and Senegal scored the only goal in extra time. Beside supporters jumping the barricades and players from both side scuffling on the sidelines, there was a bizarre sequence in which Moroccan ball boys attempted to seize a towel belonging to Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy in an apparent bid to distract him. That behavior by the ball boys alone led to a \$200,000 fine for Morocco. Morocco coach Walid Regragui said the Africa Cup final gave African soccer a "shameful" image. The incidents also reflected badly on Morocco, which will co-host the 2030 World Cup alongside Spain and Portugal. FIFA president Gianni Infantino called the Africa

Cup incidents ugly and expected sanctions from CAF. Morocco was hoping to host the 2030 World Cup final at the under-construction Hassan II Stadium, set to be the largest soccer arena in the world with a capacity of 115,000 after its planned completion in 2028. Spain said this week it will host the 2030 final. CAF dismissed an appeal by Morocco to have the result canceled and Morocco declared the winner because of the Senegalese walk-off. The game even strained diplomatic ties between Senegal and Morocco and prompted political officials in the nations to pledge to stay friends and call for calm. In Morocco, rights groups denounced what they called hate speech targeting sub-Saharan African residents in the country. Senegal Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko said on an investment-related trip to Morocco days after the final that the reaction to it should be seen as "emotional outbursts produced by fervour and not as political or cultural rifts."

\$1 million in fines & bans for Senegal and Morocco

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, Jan 29, (AP): More than \$1 million in fines and bans for Senegal and Morocco have followed a shambolic Africa Cup final this month that FIFA condemned and Africa's soccer body called unacceptable. The bans apply only to Africa games and not the World Cup kicking off in June that Senegal and Morocco have both qualified for. In the Jan. 18 final in Rabat won by Senegal 1-0 in extra time, Senegal left the field in protest during stoppage time for 15 minutes, fans tried to storm the field and fighting broke out among journalists afterward. The Senegalese Football Association was fined \$615,000 in total, the Moroccan Football Association was fined \$315,000 in total, and Senegal coach Pape Thiaw fined \$100,000 and suspended for five Africa games for bringing the game into disrepute, the Confederation of African Football said. Senegal

players Iliman Ndiaye and Ismaila Sarr were banned for two African games, Morocco's Achraf Hakimi banned for two games with one suspended, and Morocco's Ismael Saibari banned for three games and fined \$100,000 for unsporting behavior. Senegal was angered in stoppage time of a 0-0 draw when Morocco was awarded a penalty. Thiaw led a walk-off by his players and delayed the game for 15 minutes. Morocco missed the penalty and Senegal scored the only goal in extra time. Beside supporters jumping the barricades and players from both side scuffling on the sidelines, there was a bizarre sequence in which Moroccan ball boys attempted to seize a towel belonging to Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy in an apparent bid to distract him. That behavior by the ball boys alone led to a \$200,000 fine for Morocco.