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His Highness the Amir receives the Kingdom of Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister and the official delegation accompanying him, on the occasion of his official visit to the country.

Amiri Diwan photo

Talks affirm strength of bilateral relations

Kuwait Amir, Crown Prince, PM receive Crown Prince of Bahrain

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday, the Kingdom of Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa and the official delegation accompanying him, on the occasion of his official visit to the country.

The reception was attended by His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Prince Salman conveyed to His Highness the Amir, the greetings and appreciation of King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, and his wishes for His Highness the Amir, long-lasting health and for the people of Kuwait further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Amir conveyed his greetings to King Hamad wishing him continued good health, and the people of Bahrain further progress and prosperity.

During the meeting, cordial discussions took place, reflecting the deep-rooted historical relations between the two countries and their peoples, and ways to strengthen these relations across various fields to serve their common interests.

They also reviewed issues of mutual concern and the latest developments regionally and internationally.

The meeting was attended by Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, Retired Lieutenant General Jamal Al-Dhiyab Director of the Office of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh

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KUWAIT ENDS EASY LICENSES, TIGHTENS DRIVING STANDARDS



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

We do not want to fan the flames of hatred among people

PEOPLE belong to the land as much as the land belongs to its people.

Therefore, no matter how harsh the sovereign measures are, there should be enough compassion to compel everyone to leave the matter to the ruler and the government.

This includes the citizenship issue, for which the ruler and the government have the authority to take whatever measures are necessary to address it.

However, on the other hand, some people, who consider themselves above accountability, use the social media to spread poison without regard for people's feelings. If someone were to suffer harm, they would seek help and prayers from others. These people forget the eternal wisdom: "As you sow, so shall you reap."

As we have said regarding the sensitive citizenship issue, the people have entrusted the matter to the ruler and the Council of Ministers. May Allah bring everyone out of this crisis safely. Nevertheless, we must pause to ponder on what is circulated on social media, especially by those who mock, ridicule and tarnish the reputation of those whose citizenship was revoked, with a gloating tone, as if there is vendetta between them.

tween them.

While freedom of expression is guaranteed, there are limits. People's feelings should not be sold or bought. No one has the right to slander or bully others.

Until recently, those whose citizenship was revoked were citizens with full rights, just like any other Kuwaiti. They have children and grandchildren. They have feelings. Most of them served this country, and some even gave their lives for it. Some of them left their mark on the nation's history, hence, gloating is inhumane. No one has the right to harm their dignity. Thus, it is the duty of the relevant authorities to address this issue and stop those who disrupt social stability.

Indeed, many who were subject to these procedures have no other homeland than this country. Today, the number of illegal residents (Bedouns) has increased.

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Tougher tests for all drivers

Uber, Careem talks signal expansion

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff



Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah delivers his speech at the opening of the forum.

Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah revealed that the representatives of Uber and Careem, who are participating in the National Forum for Transport and Smart Services, discussed with him the significance of promoting investment in Kuwait.

In his speech at the opening of the forum, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef affirmed that the State welcomes investment, while stressing the necessity of employing Kuwaiti nationals.

He said the government supports the private sector through labor subsidies, and that a quota for the employment of Kuwaiti citizens in private companies will be specified in the future. He stressed that this is the type of support the government expects from private companies.

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Photo by Samer Shiger

Tuesday drizzle casts a gloomy mood over Kuwait City.

Kuwait-Saudi coordination drives Durra field forward

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: In a move indicating an accelerated pace in the development of Durra gas field, Oil Minister Tariq Al-Roumi announced that coordination with the Saudi side is advancing swiftly, clearing the way for the launching of the tendering process later this year, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement Tuesday, Al-Roumi explained that Durra offshore field is among the largest projects in the region. He disclosed that the tenders will cover a wide range of technical and engineering works. He added that these efforts are being exerted through close cooperation between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to ensure full preparedness in all aspects of the project.

He affirmed that the project is not facing any major challenges, describing the current situation as stable and encouraging.

He also stated that the prevailing oil prices are acceptable in light of global conditions, with expectations that they will improve soon.

At the same time, energy experts believe that available indicators suggest the Durra field tenders will

pique the interest of international engineering firms, considering the size of the reserves and the project's significance in the strategies of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to expand offshore natural gas production.

Experts indicated that Khafji Joint Operations is making preparations to receive bids for project management consultancy services as part of the development of production facilities, including engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) works for both the offshore and onshore components.

They expect that the Durra field tenders will involve advanced technical services designed to ensure efficient implementation, strict adherence to project schedule, and the application of the highest standards of safety and quality throughout all stages of development.

Last September, Khafji Joint Operations issued a tender for project management, followed by an introductory meeting with bidding companies. This entails the seriousness of the preparations and the gradual shift from the planning phase to execution.

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Higher Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship Investigation issued two decisions, published in the official gazette (Kuwait Al-Yaum) on Tuesday, stipulating the revocation of the Kuwaiti citizenship of nine individuals with dual nationalities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The first decision revokes the Kuwaiti citizenship of a woman, based on Article 10 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 (Kuwaiti Nationality Law), which states that "a Kuwaiti woman who marries a foreigner does not lose her Kuwaiti citizenship unless she acquires her husband's nationality upon her request."

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian tasked Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi with conducting negotiations with the United States.

In a post on the social media platform X on Tuesday, Pezeshkian said he instructed Araghchi to prepare the ground for fair and equitable negotiations based on the principles of dignity, wisdom, and national interest, within the framework of Iran's interests, provided a suitable climate free from threats and unreasonable demands is available.

Pezeshkian added that the decision came in response to requests from friendly governments in the region to engage with the proposal put forward by the US president regarding negotiations. (KUNA)

Price dip sparks gold rush in Kuwait

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Gold traders confirmed that Kuwaitis seized the opportunity presented by the significant drop in gold prices over the past two days, filling their coffers with the precious metal after a three-day decline.

They revealed to the newspaper that Kuwaiti purchases accounted for 70 percent of gold purchases, compared to 30 percent for sales and liquidations. This is considered a sound economic strategy

given the fluctuations in the global economy, not to mention the geopolitical challenges that the region is facing and the escalating tensions between the United States and Iran.

They agreed that the local gold market witnessed a surge in Kuwaiti gold purchases, citing several factors behind the recent sharp decline in the price of the precious metal, which reached around 12 percent two days before resuming a slight, albeit fluctuating, upward movement.

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Kuwait airport T2 sets new aviation benchmark in Gulf

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: The new Kuwait International Airport project is not just a building, as it is the gateway of the country to the future, keeping pace with the latest global technologies in the field of aviation, say those in charge of the project.

According to the Government Performance Monitoring Agency in a post on its 'X' platform account on Monday, the completion rate of the project as of December 2025 reached around 81.14 percent. It indicated that T2 Airport Terminal is one of the most vital and strategic projects in the country. Its role extends beyond simply increasing passenger capacity, because it serves as a global air hub connecting the East and West, thereby, redefining the concept of travel in the Gulf and Middle East region and establishing a new era of leadership in the aviation sector.

The project includes a passenger jetway that is around 550 meters long and 75 meters wide, featuring two main lanes, each with three traffic lanes and parking on both sides.

The lane closest to the terminal is designated for taxis, while the other lane is open to all passengers. The passenger arrival area has five entrances: the two outer entrances are for business and first-class passengers, while the three middle entrances are for economy class passengers.

The terminal also features a central

concourse with signage directing passengers to their gates, as well as lounge areas furnished specifically for the project using environmentally friendly materials and a selection of restaurants and cafes.

The airport has 189 elevators, 94 of which are panoramic, along with 30 jetways – nine for Type C aircraft and 21 for Type C and Type F aircraft.

The project includes short-term parking with about 5,000 spaces, general parking, parking for people with disabilities, multi-passenger vehicle parking, and parking for electric vehicles, including spaces with charging points and others designated for environmentally friendly vehicles.

The parking garage consists of four floors, three of which are for parking and one for services, distributed to eight sections separated by open spaces.

The project features extensive green spaces with more than 87,600 plants, in addition to around 4,000 concrete planters covering the parking garage facades. Irrigation relies on collected water and treated wastewater.

The third phase of the project includes the buildings, support services for the new passenger terminal, most notably the main building cooling plant, the catering building responsible for preparing and supplying meals to aircraft, and the technical support building responsible for shipping and storing materials for the airside.

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5 Al-Jarallah hosts Tanzanian Ambassador

9 ALSAYER honored with Toyota's prestigious 70th Year Award



talabat leads conversation on digital economy & technology at the NFTSS

15 Zain Kuwait reaffirms role as key partner of the local sports scene

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Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:15	Asr	15:06
Sunrise ..	06:36	Maghrib ..	17:28
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:46

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: A significant decrease in temperature and mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-35 km/h and some high clouds will appear.
By Night: Rather cold with light

Weather			
to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h.			
Station	Max	Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	30	15	13
Abdaly	29	13	13
Bubyan	23	11	15
Jahra	30	14	
Failaka Island	26	13	
Salmiyah	24	17	
Ahmadi	29	12	
Jal Aliyah	28	13	
Nuwaisib	28	13	
Salmiyah	31	15	

Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah takes part in UAE-Kuwait Media Forum



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah with Counselor Hamad Al-Mansouri.



From Right-Left: Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Mahmoud Al-Rasheed and colleague Saud Al-Farhan.



Photos by Samer Shaqair
Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah upon arrival at the event. Colleague Mohammad Al-Farhan is also seen in picture.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah participated in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)-Kuwait Media Forum at the invitation of Dubai Press Club, which organized the event as part of the "UAE and Kuwait ... Brothers Forever" program, reports Al-Seyassah daily. Media figures, journalists, artists and intellectuals from both countries attended the forum held Sunday evening at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Kuwait, under the slogan, "Brothers Forever."

The forum is an important platform for discussing frameworks for enhancing Gulf media integration and strengthening cooperation among media institutions in the region. The aim is to consolidate professional partnerships and coordinate media efforts to produce a unified and responsible discourse that serves the shared interests of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and their citizens, who are bound by ties of brotherhood and a common destiny. On the sidelines of the forum, fellow participants and colleagues congratulated Al-Jarallah on his safe return from medical treatment and the resumption of his regular activities and professional duties. They wished him continuous good health, well-being, and an enduring distinguished presence in the field of journalism.

Al-Jarallah expressed his appreciation to the colleagues and friends for their warm sentiments and kind wishes, extending his best wishes to them for perpetual success in their endeavors.

Thyroid tumors witness increase among women

Colon, prostate cancer common in men: Dr Yousef

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Consultant and Head of the Surgical Oncology Department at Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC) Dr. Amal Yousef said the center organized a scientific workshop on head and neck tumors, featuring international experts from the United Kingdom and the United States of America, with doctors from various medical disciplines in attendance.

Yousef confirmed that the workshop is an advanced scientific platform for discussing 28 complex cases like tumors in the jaw,

facial bones, thyroid gland and tongue. She stated this was done through a multidisciplinary medical team approach, which includes oncological surgeons, radiologists, radiation therapists, chemotherapists and pathologists in order to develop comprehensive treatment plans for each case.

She disclosed that the medical team performed 11 complicated surgical procedures during the workshop, such as surgeries for thyroid, salivary gland, jaw, facial bone and tongue tumors. She considers these surgeries a reflection of the advanced skills of the medical staff and their readiness to handle the most complex head and neck tumor



Dr. Amal Yousef

surgeries. Regarding epidemiological indicators, she stated that the latest data from KCCC showed that breast cancer topped the list of cancers among women in Kuwait, while colon cancer is the most common among men, followed by prostate cancer and then leukemia. She indicated that thyroid tumors are witnessing a significant increase in diagnosis rates, particularly among women. She said the risk factors include childhood radiation exposure, genetic factors, advancing age, obesity, iodine imbalances, and the presence of goiter accompanied by antibodies. She also affirmed the commitment of KCCC to keep on organizing workshops and scientific conferences, as well as attract international expertise, to develop treatment services, raise the efficiency of medical staff, and achieve the best possible treatment outcomes for patients.

Relations with Kuwait model of unique fraternity: UAE VP

DUBAI, Feb 3, (KUNA): UAE Vice President and Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum affirmed that UAE-Kuwait relations are deeply rooted in history and represent a unique model of fraternity.

Kuwaiti nationals have been partners in the UAE's success stories from the very beginning, contributing their knowledge, expertise, and steadfast support to laying the foundations of comprehensive development, Emirates News Agency (WAM) quoted him as saying on Monday.

Sheikh Mohammad made the comments during his meeting with a number of Kuwaiti businessmen on the sidelines of the UAE-Kuwait Economic Forum in Dubai.

The forum is part of the "UAE and Kuwait: Brothers Forever" week, which celebrates the deep-rooted ties between the two nations.

"Our celebration of the 'UAE and Kuwait: Brothers Forever' week is a message of gratitude and loyalty, reflecting the depth of the bond between our two peoples and our appreciation for Kuwait's remarkable support and contributions to the UAE's development," Sheikh Mohammad said.

"These events are not merely a celebration, but a manifestation of a solid partnership based on mutual trust, shared destiny, and a common history that we hold with pride and honour," he pointed out. The meeting highlighted the historical ties and cooperation between the UAE and Kuwait, with particular focus on the early role played by Kuwaiti businessmen in the UAE's economic landscape, both before and after the founding of the Union.

Furthermore, he also praised the contributions of Kuwaiti businessmen who chose the UAE as the home for their businesses and investments, emphasizing that the success of these partnerships reflects the UAE's open economic environment and embodies a practical model of Gulf integration based on trust and sustainable cooperation.

"We will continue to strengthen our historical ties so that the UAE and Kuwait continue forward hand in hand, brothers forever. To Kuwait and its people, we say: you are always in our hearts, and our partnership remains enduring and renewed across generations," he added.

Regional media shows massive growth: JPPI

RIYADH, Feb 3, (KUNA): Director General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Joint Program Production Institution (JPPI), Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Al-Sabah praised on Tuesday the participation of media institutions and content creators from various countries at the Saudi Media Forum, saying it reflects regional media development.

In a press statement on the sidelines of his participation in the forum, currently held in Riyadh from February 2 to 4, Sheikh Mubarak said the institution is taking part with a dedicated pavilion at the accompanying Future of Media Exhibition (FOMEX).

He said that this is in line with its approach to supporting Gulf media events and strengthening its presence among active regional media organizations.

He noted that the pavilion showcases a selection of the institution's works and programs that reflect the shared Gulf identity, in addition to introducing a number of new productions scheduled for launch during the current year.

Sheikh Mubarak said the accompanying media exhibition represents an important platform to highlight the latest technologies and innovations in media and digital production, stressing that it offers an opportunity to strengthen partnerships and exchange expertise among Gulf, Arab, and international media entities.

The Saudi Media Forum kicked off on Monday in Riyadh, with the participation of media experts, academics, and specialists, including Kuwaiti Ministry of Information Undersecretary Dr. Nasser Muhayssen.

At the opening of the forum, Saudi Minister of Media Salman Al-Dossary said that the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, had contributed to enhancing the status of the Saudi Media Forum and granting it a broader dimension and a deeper vision, noting that this patronage reflects the great interest in developing the media sector and its role in keeping pace with global transformations.

Handling labor disputes

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: The Labor Relations Department at the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has started implementing a new mechanism for receiving and handling labor complaints, particularly those filed against small and medium enterprises (SMEs), reports Al-Rai daily quoting a source from PAM.

According to the source, this is in line with ongoing efforts to develop the work system and improve the quality of services. He disclosed that the new mechanism allows the receipt of complaints through the labor relations departments in the governorates, instead of centralizing them in Mubarak Al-Kabeer as the practice earlier. He pointed out that this move will ease pressure and ensure a fairer and more organized distribution of cases.

The source indicated that the new distribution of complaints will be on appointment basis, taking into account the nature of each case and its registration source -- whether in terms of the governorate or the relevant labor department. He emphasized that this step saves time and effort for workers, and expedites the resolution of labor disputes.

The source reiterated that this mechanism is in line with the continuous efforts of PAM to improve the work environment, raise administrative efficiency, and achieve greater speed and flexibility in resolving disputes. He added this serves the interests of all parties involved in labor relations and guarantees the stability of the labor market.

Kuwait's new Foreign Minister congratulated by top officials

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received phone calls from his peers and other senior officials in the Gulf region and beyond, congratulating him on his new post.

The well-wishers include Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah Al-Saud, Bahraini Foreign Minister Dr. Abdulatif Al-Zayani, and Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, according to a statement from the Kuwaiti



Sheikh Jarrah Jaber

Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The well-wishers also include, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Jordan Ayman Al-Safadi, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdulatty,

Qatari Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan Al-Muraikhi and Minister of State at the Qatari Foreign Ministry Mohammad Al-Khulaifi, and UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jassem Al-Budaiwi and Secretary General of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Haitham Al-Ghais also spoke by phone with Sheikh Jarrah to express wishes for his success in strengthening the cooperation between Kuwait and the two organizations.



Photo by Rizk Taufiq
Swiss President Guy Parmelin says visit to Kuwait was historic and memorable.

Visit historic: Swiss President

'We seek to boost economic, scientific bonds with Kuwait'

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Swiss President Guy Parmelin affirmed that his visit to Kuwait is historic and momentous, especially since it coincides with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and marks the first official visit by a Swiss president to Kuwait.

In a press statement during an event organized by Ambassador of Switzerland to Kuwait Tiziano Balmelli on the sidelines of the Swiss President's visit, Parmelin confirmed that he had positive and constructive meetings with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. He emphasized that these meetings proved the depth of friendly relations between the two countries and the mutual commitment to developing these relations.

He said Switzerland looks forward to strengthening economic and scientific cooperation with Kuwait in the coming period, pointing out that the fundamental elements are in place, including the free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the agreement on the protection and promotion of investment, and the agreement on the avoidance of double taxation. He stressed that all the frameworks are ready, and work is ongoing to activate them.

He explained that the current focus is on strengthening communication between the private sectors of both countries and connecting companies and industries more broadly. He stated that organizing the Swiss-Kuwaiti Business Day in Kuwait is considered a vital platform for supporting this direction, with the participation of new Swiss companies seeking to expand their operations in the Kuwaiti market.

Swiss companies

He added that the number of Swiss companies operating in Kuwait is witnessing continuous growth, and that the possibility of Kuwaiti participation in similar economic events to be held in Switzerland in the future is being explored.

He emphasized that human and personal relations are at the heart of the Swiss-Kuwaiti relationship, pointing out that business leaders and entrepreneurs are the primary drivers of this partnership, which has spanned decades. Regarding agreements, he said there is no need to sign new agreements now, given the existence of a comprehensive legal framework.

He stressed that the role of governments is limited to creating a suitable environment, while the investment decision rests with the private sector.

He also highlighted the importance of the memorandum of understanding with the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, considering that linking the economy with scientific research contributes to the development of innovative ideas and joint projects.

He also disclosed that the strategic dialogue between the GCC countries and Switzerland will be held in the near future, as per the agreements that are being implemented now.

He confirmed that economic and investment agreements are available, both at the GCC level and specifically with Kuwait, including agreements on investment protection and the avoidance of double taxation. He added "the challenge today lies in encouraging the private sector to utilize these tools and actively pursue partnerships and joint ventures. This visit serves as a catalyst to the practical application of these agreements."

He stressed that the celebration of 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries is a manifestation of a mature and stable partnership, expressing his confidence that the future holds promising prospects for more cooperation and shared success. He said his visit to Kuwait aims to put weight on the existing frameworks and encourage companies to utilize them in order to strengthen the economic and investment partnership between the two countries.



KUNA photo
Acting Director General of KUNA Mohammad Al-Mannai receives the award from Director of Communication at ICESCO's Media and Communication Sector, Barakat Al-Wuqayan.

KUNA receives ICESCO Award for major jump in media field

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3, (KUNA): The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) on Monday honored KUNA in recognition of its prominent role in developing media work and enhancing the professional capabilities of media practitioners.

The recognition took place during a meeting at KUNA headquarters between Acting Director General of KUNA Mo-

hammad Al-Mannai and Director of Communication at ICESCO's Media and Communication Sector, Barakat Al-Wuqayan.

Al-Mannai expressed appreciation for the initiative, affirming KUNA's continued commitment to expanding horizons of cooperation and joint training that serve professional media and strengthen its developmental and cultural mission.

KISR, Australian Embassy launch international aquaculture forum

Kuwait emerges as regional hub for biodiversity

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal stated on Monday that the organization of the Second International Conference on Successful Aquaculture and Biodiversity Conservation is in line with the commitment of his ministry, represented by Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), to reinforce international partnerships, exchange expertise, and support scientific research.

Al-Jalal made the statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the occasion of the launching of the conference that KISR organized under his patronage and in his presence, in cooperation with the Australian Embassy in Kuwait. The conference will run until Wednesday.

He asserted that the conference makes an effective contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to solidifying Kuwait's standing as a regional hub for research and innovation in the fields of food security and environmental sustainability.

Director General of KISR Dr. Faisal Al-Humaidan and Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Melissa Kelly stressed the importance of strengthening scientific and research cooperation in the areas of aquaculture and biodiversity conservation, considering them the two essential pillars for supporting food security and the sustainability of resources.

The conference is being held with the participation of an elite group of experts and scientists from around the world, and in the presence of a number of ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps.

Al-Humaidan pointed out that Kuwait focuses on environmental sustainability and the proper management of natural resources, stressing that the marine sector is the main pillar in achieving food security and diversifying the national economy.

He explained that the marine environment in the Gulf region has been exposed to several chal-



KISR photo
A glimpse of the tour of Minister Al-Jalal and the Australian Ambassador at the accompanying exhibition.

lenges, including urban expansion, pollution, overfishing and climate change, which have affected fish stocks. He added that these challenges have underscored the importance of aquaculture as a sustainable solution that enhances self-sufficiency and alleviates pressure on natural fisheries.

He confirmed that KISR prioritizes supporting scientific research and encouraging investment in aquaculture as a strategic objective, affirming the institute's commitment to organize and host scientific conferences that help link research outcomes with practical applications.

He praised the fruitful cooperation with the Australian Embassy, expressing his appreciation for its efforts in organizing the conference, which reflects the depth of scientific partnership and the exchange of expertise between the two countries, and contributes to strengthening research and development in areas of mutual interest.

Meanwhile, Kelly underscored the importance of strengthening scientific and research cooperation between the two countries, commending the strong historical ties linking Australia and Kuwait.

She added that bilateral relations are witnessing continuous development in various fields, particularly in scientific research and aquaculture, in a manner that supports food security and preserves biodiversity.

She expressed her country's pride in its longstanding scientific partnership with KISR, affirming that this cooperation is the cornerstone of bilateral relations and contributes to supporting Kuwait's transition toward a knowledge-based economy, as well as enhancing its food and health security.

She added that cooperation in the field of aquaculture is the natural extension of relations between the two countries, as both are maritime nations with deep historical and cultural connections to the sea.

She confirmed that the conference is witnessing the participation of a number of Australian experts and scientists who are presenting Australia's experiences and policies in aquaculture, scientific innovation, and the promotion of natural resource sustainability.

Cuba invites Kuwaiti tourists to explore UNESCO heritage

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Cuban Ambassador to Kuwait Allen Pérez Torres affirmed that his country is a tourist destination, which is rich in history, culture and natural beauty, stressing that Kuwaiti visitors can discover captivating stories in every corner of the country.

Torres made the statement on the sidelines of a tourism conference organized by the Cuban Embassy to highlight the island's most prominent tourist attractions and promote Kuwaiti tourism.

Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas Nawaf Al-Ahmad, representatives of Kuwaiti tourism agencies, and ambassadors of Latin American countries attended the event.

Torres disclosed that several Cuban cities, such as Old Havana – a UNESCO World Heritage Site – as well as Trinidad and Cienfuegos, boast of meticulously preserved historical centers that offer a vivid picture of life in old Cuba and reflect the influence of Neoclassical and Baroque architecture, which constitute the country's unique character.

He added "Cuban culture is vibrant and dynamic, a product of a rich blend of African, Spanish and Caribbean influences." He indicated that music and dance are considered the soul of the island, with energetic rhythms like son, rumba and mambo echoing through the streets, bars and cafés. He said visitors can also enjoy live performances, learn salsa from local



Cuban Ambassador to Kuwait, Allen Pérez Torres, delivers a speech at the event.

instructors, and visit renowned jazz clubs that have hosted legends of world music.

He pointed out that the Cuban people are the country's true wealth, thanks to their warmth and hospitality, making every visitor feel at home.

He also highlighted Cuba's flavorful cuisine, beautiful beaches with crystal-clear waters, and the world-famous Cuban tobacco, which allows tourists to visit tobacco farms and learn firsthand about the production of the renowned Cuban cigars.

He stated that Cuba has high-quality hotel infrastructure capable of receiving Kuwaiti tourists and that about 70 Kuwaiti citizens visited Cuba over the past year, hoping to increase this number in the coming years by strengthening tourism cooperation and intensifying promotion of the Cuban destinations in Kuwait.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait Amir,

Abdulaziz Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan, and Mazen Al-Issa Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs at the Amiri Diwan.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah separately received at Bayan Palace the Kingdom of Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister and the accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his official visit.

Prince Salman conveyed the greetings and best wishes of King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa to His Highness the Crown Prince, while the discussions reviewed the deep-rooted relations between the two countries and their peoples and addressed ways to further enhance cooperation across various domains.

The meeting was attended by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Head of the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with senior officials.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also received Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister and the accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace. During the meeting, His Highness conveyed greetings and best wishes to King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa.

The meeting was attended by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Head of the Premier's Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel, Premier's Diwan Undersecretary Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, and Assistant Foreign Minister for GCC Affairs Ambassador Najeeb Al-Bader.

Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa arrived in Kuwait on Tuesday on an official visit aimed at reinforcing deep-rooted relations and longstanding historical ties between the two countries.

Kuwait and Bahrain share strong bonds founded on common history, unity of destiny, and convergence of views on regional and international issues, strengthening their relationship over time and underscoring a shared commitment to mutual interests.

Bilateral relations are widely described as solid and steadily advancing, supported by the wise leadership of both countries and, reflected within society in both nations.

Kuwaiti-Bahraini relations date back centuries and are characterized by political alignment, rational approaches to regional challenges, adherence to dialogue, and continuous expansion of cooperation across sectors serving both peoples.

His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah paid key visits to Bahrain, notably a state visit in February 2024, and another in December 2025 to attend the GCC Supreme Council session.

In January 2026, former Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya led Kuwait's delegation to the 12th session of the Kuwaiti-Bahraini Joint Higher Committee, reflecting sustained coordination and institutional cooperation.

Strong political relations positively influence economic and trade ties, supported by partnerships between Kuwaiti and Bahraini institutions and recent agreements expanding cooperation, including a joint environmental accord to protect natural resources.

Kuwait, in turn, supported Bahrain prior to its full United Nations membership by facilitating diplomatic training and opening its embassies to Bahraini personnel establishing overseas missions.

In April 2019, the two countries signed eight cooperation documents during the Joint Higher Committee session in Manama, covering areas including customs, e-commerce, environment, culture, agriculture, and trade development.

To strengthen security cooperation, both sides signed a memorandum of understanding in July 2023 during the first meeting of the joint security committee between their interior ministries.

The two countries maintain educational agreements promoting academic exchange, with universities in both states hosting students from Kuwait and Bahrain across diverse disciplines.

At the popular level, relations are marked by close kinship ties, shared traditions, and strong social cohesion, reflecting deep-rooted cultural affinity between the two societies.

Bahrain currently chairs the Gulf Cooperation Council and holds non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council for 2026-2027, reflecting international confidence in its balanced diplomatic approach.

Price dip

Among these factors was US President Donald Trump's nomination of Kevin Warsh to head the Federal Reserve once the current chairman's term ends.

Bader Al-Arbash, an official at Bader Al-Arbash & Sons Jewelry Company, stated that the Kuwaiti gold market is currently experiencing a constant influx of gold buyers. He attributed the high demand in January to the price surge expected in the second half of the month, when gold proved to be the safest investment option while still providing satisfactory long-term returns.

He explained the decline in gold prices over the past three days as a market correction resulting from profit-taking in trading and portfolio markets, in addition to several technical factors related to the stock and bond markets.

He believes that gold prices will stabilize and not experience sharp declines, with the price per ounce fluctuating between \$4,600 and US\$4,800 in the near future.

He emphasized that the losers in the current 12 percent drop are speculators, not those who hold gold for investment or treasury purposes. He anticipates a return to the price surge seen in late January if there is further military escalation in the region, potentially pushing the price per ounce to around \$6,000.

He advised local consumers to purchase gold as a reserve, not for quick resale (speculation), whenever prices rise.

Fawaz Al-Duaij, CEO of Al-Duaij Jewellery, stated that the local gold market is currently experiencing tremendous activity, with buying significantly exceeding selling. He anticipates that gold prices will remain at their current level without sharp declines or exaggerated increases.

However, he added that if the political conflict in the region intensifies, geopolitical tensions escalate, and Iran is subjected to a military strike, the price of an ounce could potentially rise to more than \$6,000.

He explained that the current unavailability of gold coins in the market is due to a general shortage of gold resulting from the massive surge in demand since the beginning of this year, following the dramatic global price fluctuations.

Mohammed Mansour, manager of Mansour Al-Sarheed Gold Shops and a jewelry expert, stated that gold prices have witnessed a significant decline, and he anticipates further drops in the coming days.

He pointed out that despite the price decrease, there is still strong consumer demand. He dismissed any link between rising gold prices and the potential US strike on Iran, arguing that gold prices fluctuate due to international market activity, not military conflicts.

Mohammad Hatab Adel Al-Abdullah, Marketing Director of Dar Al-Sabaik Company, said the buying volume in the local market reached 70 percent, with sales accounting for around 30 percent. He added that buying activity continued despite the global decline in gold prices by about 12 percent.

He pointed out that one of the most important factors contributing to the global drop in gold prices was the decline in financial and technology stocks on Wall Street, which strongly encouraged traders to compensate for these losses by selling gold to generate liquidity.

He also mentioned profit-taking and Trump's statements regarding the appointment of Warsh in the coming period.

He indicated that the Federal Reserve's decision to hold interest rates steady at the end of last week was a contributing factor to the decline in gold prices, but this factor had a slight impact, especially since everyone was anticipating the interest rate decision.

Meanwhile, gold continued its decline Monday, affected by the rising dollar, as investors awaited the approach of Warsh regarding interest rate cuts.

Gold fell 9.3 percent in spot trading before recovering to close down about 4.53 percent at \$4,645 an ounce, while US gold futures for April delivery fell 4.8 percent to \$4,516.70 an ounce. Gold hit an all-time high of \$5,594.82 last Thursday.

Silver pared its losses in spot trading, falling 0.11 percent to \$78.62, after plunging more than 15 percent at the start of trading. It also reached an all-time high of \$121.64 on Thursday, according to Reuters.



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His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah holds banquet in honor of Bahrain Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa.

Crown Prince Diwan photos

Kuwait Crown Prince holds banquet in honor of Bahraini peer

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held a banquet Tuesday in honor of visiting Bahraini Crown Prince and Premier Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace.

Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa and accompanying delegation concluded on Tuesday an official visit to the country.

The high-level dignitary was seen off by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh

Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Cabinet Affairs Shereedah Al-Mousherji and Chief of Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Sabah, in addition to senior state officials.

‘Kuwaiti press open to global dialogue’

Al-Jarallah hosts Tanzanian Ambassador

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: The Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah met with His Excellency the Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to Kuwait Saidi Hussein Massoro at his office in Dar Al-Seyassah on Tuesday.

Massoro was accompanied by Councilor Ibrahim Is haka Juma and Public Relations Officer at the Embassy Maysaa Fahd Al-Jeghami.

Colleague Mohammed Al-Farhan was also present at the meeting.

The discussions focused on strengthening cooperation between the two nations in the media and cultural spheres. The goal is to strengthen ties by increasing knowledge exchange through the respective countries' media outlets.

Massoro commended the Kuwaiti press for its prominent position in the region. He affirmed the commitment of his country to expand the media and cultural collaboration to solidify the bonds of friendship between the Tanzanian and Kuwaiti nations.

He also congratulated Al-Jarallah on his safe return following medical treatment, extending wishes for continuous good health and well-being.

Al-Jarallah welcomed the Ambassador, reiterating the Kuwaiti press' dedication to global dialogue and openness to diverse cultures, especially with media institutions in friendly African countries.

He emphasized the need to



Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism Ahmed Al-Jarallah meets Tanzanian Ambassador Saidi Hussein Massoro at Dar Al-Seyassah, discussing media and cultural cooperation.



Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times, Tanzanian Ambassador to Kuwait Saidi Hussein Massoro at Dar Al-Seyassah, with members of the embassy and colleague Mohammed Al-Farhan in attendance.

adapt to the rapid pace of developments in the media and journalism, particularly in light of

the digital revolution and modern communication technologies.

Photos by Rezk Tawfiq

Kuwait pushes digital agenda at WGS 2026

Bridging policy and technical expertise

DUBAI, Feb 3, (KUNA): The World Governments Summit 2026 opened in Dubai on Tuesday under the theme “Shaping Future Governments,” bringing together governments, international organizations, leaders, and decision-makers to address challenges and propose practical, sustainable solutions.

His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received an invitation directed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to attend the summit from vice President of the UAE, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum.

The summit aims to strengthen international cooperation, advance government policymaking, and anticipate future trends across key sectors including artificial intelligence, economy, governance, education, and sustainability.

This edition records the largest leadership participation in the summit's history, with more than 35 heads of state, over 150 governments, and upwards of 500 ministers and global experts, alongside academics and scientists, including recipients of international awards in future sciences and technology.

The agenda includes 24 global forums, more than 35 ministerial and high-level meetings, and the release of 36 strategic reports.

Discussions focus on global gov-



KUNA photo

ernance, effective leadership, societal well-being, human capital, economic prosperity, emerging opportunities, the future of cities, demographic shifts, and forward-looking prospects, through more than 320 sessions featuring over 450 global figures.

Dr. Ahmad Al-Mansouri, faculty member at the Department of Media at UAE University, told KUNA that the World Governments Summit 2026 represents a major global event that reflects the UAE's standing as an international hub for ideas and future governance.

He said the summit has evolved into a global laboratory for sharing successful experiences and formulating practical responses to shared challenges facing governments in a rapidly changing world, rather than remaining a platform for discussion alone.

Al-Mansouri added that the summit's focus on artificial intelligence, sustainability, the future of cities, and human development demonstrates a deep understanding of global transformations and the need for new policy tools, noting that its outcomes provide valuable knowledge to enhance public policy and government efficiency.

Political analyst and writer Dr. Essa Al-Amiri told KUNA that Kuwait's participation in the summit reflects a strategic approach that goes beyond protocol to active engagement in future-oriented discussions, particularly in digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and smart governance.

He noted that the participation aligns closely with Kuwait Vision 2035, especially in building a more efficient government apparatus, diversifying income sources, and strengthening the knowledge economy, while benefiting from international best practices adaptable to the Kuwaiti context.

Al-Amiri said Kuwait's presence contributes to improving policy quality through intellectual exchange and experience-sharing, adding that the summit has become an influential platform that links political leadership with technical expertise to transform visions into implementable policies.

From the opening of the World Governments Summit in Dubai.

Continued from Page 1

We do

We have said many times before that their problem must be solved either by granting opportunities to travel to other countries and rectify their status, or by obtaining passports from the countries to which they were assigned. The State must find a way out for them in order to alleviate the burden of the State and to end their suffering.

Yes, I emphasize that no one is questioning the sovereign procedures. Nonetheless, we reiterate that the relevant authorities must rein in those who are fanning the flames, pretending to be the sole defenders of sovereign decisions, when their methods are often vulgar and offensive.

Undoubtedly, no official condones this. We have statesmen at the highest levels of the sovereign and executive branches with a humanitarian perspective. They bear a great and crucial responsibility.

On this basis, they refuse to tarnish people's reputation, regardless of their circumstances, because a person is not held accountable for what is beyond his control. Human dignity remains protected for the accused. Even prisoners are protected from defamation.

It has become imperative to stop those who use social media to attack individuals facing issues, such as citizenship revocation, because they do not represent the true nature of Kuwaitis, their culture or the customs and traditions upheld by the Kuwaiti society for four centuries. These individuals must be restrained, because they are damaging Kuwait's reputation abroad.

Accordingly, we entrust this matter to First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef in order to prevent these individuals from inciting hatred among the people.

Tougher tests

He also asserted that there has been an improvement in law enforcement, adding that public respect for the law has increased.

He confirmed that the Ministry of Interior is ready to support companies, indicating the General Traffic Department (GTD) will introduce a system similar to those applied in other countries, under which a driving license will not be issued immediately. He pointed out that applicants must complete training hours and pass the tests before obtaining such a license.

He stated that it is illogical for anyone to obtain a driving license just because he knows how to park or has basic driving abilities.

He emphasized the importance of completing the specified training hours and examinations, and achieving the required scores to qualify for a driving license. He cited the practice in Abu Dhabi, where the test requires 20 hours of training, and if the applicant fails, additional hours are imposed. He said the license is issued only after full mastery of all requirements — from traffic signs to proper driving skills. He added “we are facing a problem with taxi drivers. They do not speak Arabic, they are unfamiliar with the roads, and they are unable

to communicate with customers.”

He said the ministry refers any expatriate who commits a serious traffic violation for deportation, while emphasizing the need for companies to establish driving schools in their countries of origin to train drivers on Kuwaiti laws and traffic regulations before their arrival in Kuwait.

He affirmed as well his interest in technology and his desire to use it in the same way as advanced countries.

He pointed out that GTD has opened its doors to everyone, and announced his readiness to meet with any company that has a new product it wishes to introduce to Kuwait. He added he is willing to meet with the managers of companies participating in the forum on the same day, even without an appointment.

On the other hand, GTD Director General Brigadier General Omar Al-Sari revealed that the department is currently working on the establishment of four academies for training and qualifying individuals prior to the issuance of a driving license. He explained that the objective of this training is to ensure the drivers' competence, particularly those with limited driving experience, through accredited programs that require 20 training hours for those residing in Kuwait and 40 hours for those arriving from abroad.

He said the training programs will include simplified educational materials designed to help trainees understand the road network in Kuwait, its traffic systems, traffic laws and regulations. He indicated that the proposed academies will be established

in Sabahiya, South Khaitan, Capital Governorate and Jahra.

He added that training will be conducted under the supervision of instructors who speak the trainees' native language, ensuring accurate communication of information and enabling trainees to better understand the characteristics of Kuwaiti roads and comply with traffic laws.

He revealed that the training centers will undergo a comprehensive overhaul, with both training and testing being shifted to an external evaluation system that more accurately simulates real traffic conditions, using mechanisms similar to those adopted by the department in its official tests.

He further stated that coordination is underway regarding the allocation of land for the ministry to establish the training academies, as well as regulating the companies that will operate the academies.

He emphasized that this initiative aims to enhance the quality of driver training for citizens and expatriates who intend to obtain a driving license, focusing on raising driver standards and curbing hazardous driving behaviors.

He added that the project includes specialized training programs for motorcycle riders and delivery drivers, offered through courses conducted in their native language in cooperation with the contracting companies. He said qualified instructors will be recruited from the trainees' countries of origin to teach them Kuwait's traffic laws and regulations before they begin work.

Assistant Director General for Edu-

cational Affairs at GTD Brigadier Khaled Al-Adwani confirmed that the department is entering a new phase of comprehensive development, with all services expected to become fully electronic in the current and upcoming year.

Al-Adwani disclosed that the ministry will issue a tender this month for the establishment of driving academies, aimed at improving driving skills and enhancing road safety standards.

He said the department is also preparing to launch the Uber and Careem applications, enabling citizens to register within two months, which will help streamline transportation procedures and traffic-related services.

He indicated that the recommendations presented at the conference will be submitted to the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior.

He also confirmed the decline in the number of fatal traffic accidents, stating that deaths fell to just 193 in 2025.

He added that seatbelt compliance among drivers has now reached 100 percent.

He said the forum aims to establish global applications, integrate citizens into these platforms, and position Kuwait as an attractive destination for investors and tourists.

He went on to disclose that traffic safety objectives for 2035 include reducing traffic accidents by 50 percent, achieving international traffic safety benchmarks, lowering the death rate per 100,000 people, and implementing smart transportation systems to ensure the highest possible level of

road safety.

Mohammed Al-Ibrahim, Chief Executive Officer of Jazz Events — the organizer of the forum — welcomed the participants to the inaugural National Forum for Transportation and Smart Services, which is being held in cooperation with the ministry, represented by GTD. He stated that the forum seeks to establish a national platform that brings together government entities and the private sector to create a sustainable framework for developing the delivery and light transportation sector.

He asserted this will be achieved through improving road safety, modernizing legislation, adopting smart technologies, and building effective partnerships that enhance service quality and safeguard road users.

Antonio Al-Asmar, Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Uber, welcomed Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, expressing his sincere thanks and appreciation for his patronage of the forum.

Kuwait airport

This is in addition to the airspace infrastructure works, including the eastern reservoir for collecting and reusing rainwater for irrigation, along with a similar reservoir on the western side of the project.

The project also features a strategic tunnel, constructed at a depth of about 17 meters and extending for about five kilometers, to serve future projects and directly connect to the new passenger terminal (T2).

'World today undergoing major changes unseen in century'

Xi calls for cooperation with Uruguay in multiple areas

BEIJING, Feb 3, (Xinhua): China and Uruguay should strengthen the alignment of development strategies, and deepen cooperation in areas such as economy and trade, finance, agriculture and animal husbandry, infrastructure construction, and information and communications technology, Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Tuesday.

Both sides should explore the potential for cooperation in emerging fields including green development, digital economy, artificial intelligence, and clean energy, so as to drive economic growth and transformation, Xi said when holding talks with President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay Yamandu Orsi in Beijing.

Orsi on Sunday began a week-long state visit to China. He is the first leader from Latin America to visit China in 2026, and his visit follows those of leaders from Ireland, the Republic of Korea, Canada, Finland and Britain.

"On this day 38 years ago, China and Uruguay established diplomatic relations," Xi said, pointing out that over the years, regardless of changes in the international situation, the two countries have always got along with each other on the

basis of mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Xi called on both sides to carry forward their traditions and deepen their comprehensive strategic partnership under the new circumstances, to make sure their friendship grows stronger and more vibrant.

China and Uruguay should continue to firmly support each other's core interests and major concerns, strengthen friendly exchanges at all levels and across all areas, enhance exchanges of experience in governance, and continuously deepen strategic mutual trust, Xi emphasized.

Xi said that the fourth plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China had adopted the recommendations for formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan, outlining a blueprint for China's development over the next five years, which will offer broad opportunities for countries worldwide, including Uruguay.

The peoples of China and Uruguay share a natural affinity, Xi noted, adding the two sides should continue to deepen exchanges in areas like culture, education, sports, media and subnational

engagement, and facilitate personnel exchanges, to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two peoples.

The world today is undergoing major changes unseen in a century, said Xi, noting the international landscape is marked by a mix of turbulence and transformation, while unilateral bullying is intensifying.

Also:

BEIJING: China supports Venezuela in safeguarding its sovereignty, dignity and legitimate rights, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday.

A month ago, the United States blatantly launched military strikes against Venezuela and forcibly seized President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, said spokesperson Lin Jian at a daily press briefing.

"The hegemonic act has seriously violated international law and infringed upon Venezuela's sovereignty, jeopardizing peace and stability in Latin America and the Caribbean. China firmly opposes it," Lin said.

China will work with the international community to resolutely defend the purposes and principles of the UN

Charter, the fundamental principles of international justice and international fairness, Lin added.

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BEIJING: China hopes that the United States will respond positively to Russia's constructive proposal on the follow-up arrangements of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) and truly maintain global strategic stability, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday.

The New START treaty, signed by Russia and the United States in 2010, is set to expire on Feb 5, 2026. Russian President Vladimir Putin said in September 2025 that Russia would continue to observe the core limits of the treaty for one year after its expiration, provided that the US refrains from actions that undermine the existing strategic balance.

China's position on trilateral nuclear arms control talks involving China, the United States and Russia is clear, spokesperson Lin Jian said at a regular news briefing in response to a query about the US side expressing interest in China joining the relevant negotiations.



Chinese President Xi Jinping holds a welcome ceremony for President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay Yamandu Orsi in the Northern Hall of the Great Hall of the People prior to their talks in Beijing, capital of China on Feb 3, 2026. Xi held talks with Orsi, who is on a state visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday. (Xinhua)



This image taken from video shows Austin Appelbee, (right), posing with his family in Quindalup, Western Australia on Feb 3. (AP)

13-year-old boy swims for hours to save family swept out to sea

MELBOURNE, Australia, Feb 3, (AP): A 13-year-old boy is credited with saving the lives of his mother and two younger siblings with an hourslong swim after the family was swept out to sea off the Australian coast.

Austin Appelbee swam 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) to shore to raise the alarm after he got into difficulties on Friday with his mother Joanne Appelbee, 47, brother Beau, 12, and sister Grace, 8, police said.

Austin said he initially set off for help on an inflatable kayak that was taking water. He abandoned the kayak then took off his life jacket because it impeded his swimming.

He said he tried to focus on positive thoughts as he swam for around four hours through rough seas for shore, raising the alarm at 6 p.m.

"The waves are massive and I have no life jacket on. ... I just kept thinking 'just keep swimming, just keep swimming,'" Austin said on Tuesday. "And then I finally I made it to shore and I hit the bottom of the beach and I just collapsed."

The family, from the state capital Perth, were on vacation and were using kayaks and paddle boards hired from their hotel around noon when rough ocean and wind conditions started dragging them out to sea.

Internal document shows Vietnamese military preparing for possible American 'war of aggression'

HANOI, Vietnam, Feb 3, (AP): A year after Vietnam elevated its relations with Washington to the highest diplomatic level, an internal document shows its military was taking steps to prepare for a possible American "war of aggression" and considered the United States a "belligerent" power, according to a report released Tuesday.

More than just exposing Hanoi's duality in approach toward the US, the document confirms a deep-seated fear of external forces fomenting an uprising against the Communist leadership in a so-called "color revolution," like the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, or the 1986 Yellow Revolution in the Philippines.

Other internal documents that The 88 Project, a human rights organization focused on human rights abuses in Vietnam, cited in its analysis point to similar concerns over US motives in Vietnam.

"There's a consensus here across the government and across different ministries," said Ben Swanton, co-director of The 88 Project and the report's author. "This isn't just some kind of a fringe element or paranoid element within the party or within the government."

The original Vietnamese document titled "The 2nd U.S. Invasion Plan" was completed by the Ministry of Defense in August 2024. It suggests that in seeking "its objective of strengthening deterrence against China, the



US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, (left), and General Secretary of Vietnam's Communist Party To Lam talk during a meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam on Nov 2, 2025. (AP)

US and its allies are ready to apply unconventional forms of warfare and military intervention and even conduct large-scale invasions against countries and territories that "deviate from its orbit."

While noting that "currently there is little risk of a war against Vietnam," the Vietnamese planners write that "due to the US's belligerent nature we need to be vigilant to prevent the U.S. and its allies from 'creating a pretext'

to launch an invasion of our country."

The Vietnamese military analysts outline what they see as a progression over three American administrations - from Barack Obama, through Donald Trump's first term, and into Joe Biden's presidency - with Washington increasingly pursuing military and other relationships with Asian nations to "form a front against China."

In his term, Biden in 2023 signed a "Comprehensive Strategic Partner-

ship" with Vietnam, elevating relations between the nations to their highest diplomatic level on par with Russia and China as "trusted partners with a friendship grounded in mutual respect."

In the 2024 military document, however, Vietnamese planners said that while the US views Vietnam as "a partner and an important link," it also wants to "spread and impose its values regarding freedom, democracy, human rights, ethnicity and religion" to gradually change the country's socialist government.

"The 2nd US Invasion Plan provides one of the most clear-eyed insights yet into Vietnam's foreign policy," Swanton wrote in his analysis. "It shows that far from viewing the US as a strategic partner, Hanoi sees Washington as an existential threat and has no intention of joining its anti-China alliance."

Vietnam's Foreign Ministry did not answer emails seeking comment on The 88 Project report or the document it highlighted.

The US State Department refused to comment directly on the "2nd US Invasion Plan," but stressed the new partnership agreement, saying it "promotes prosperity and security for the United States and Vietnam."

"A strong, prosperous, independent and resilient Vietnam benefits our two countries and helps ensure that the Indo-Pacific remains stable, secure, free and open," the State Department said.

Where is Morales? Bolivia's former leader vanishes from public view

LA PAZ, Bolivia, Feb 3, (AP): The almost monthlong disappearance from public view of Bolivia's towering socialist icon, ex-leader Evo Morales, shortly after the Jan. 3 US seizure of his close ally former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, is alarming his supporters, roiling his enemies and galvanizing the internet.

On Monday, he missed a ceremony that he typically attends welcoming students back from summer break. On Sunday, Morales was a no-show for the fourth straight weekly broadcast of his political radio show, which he has hosted without interruption for years.

Since early January, he has skipped scheduled meetings with members of his coca-leaf growing union in Bolivia's remote Chapare region and his daily stream of social media content has all but dried up.

Although Morales has spent the past year evading an arrest warrant on charges of human trafficking, his fugitive status hasn't stopped the firebrand union leader from speaking at rallies, receiving supporters, giving interviews, posting on X - or even running an unconventional presidential campaign last year - all from his political stronghold in the Chapare.

Morales rejects the statutory rape allegations as politically motivated.

The question of Morales' whereabouts has set off furious speculation as the Trump administration imposes its political will in South America through sanctions, punitive tariffs, electoral endorsements, financial bailouts and military action.

Morales' close associates have privately declined to provide an explanation for his absences while publicly telling supporters that the former president has been recovering from dengue fever, a mosquito-borne viral illness with symptoms that typically last no longer than a week.

"We have asked our brother Evo Morales to rest completely," said Dieter Mendoza, vice president of a body of farmers known as the Six Federations that runs the coca-leaf trade in the tropics, declining to elaborate.

For Morales' rivals, the mystery has stirred resentful memories of 2019, when he resigned under pressure from the military after his disputed bid for an unconstitutional third term provoked mass protests.



Supporters hold a sign with an image of former President Evo Morales and a message that reads in Spanish, 'Without Evo, there are no elections,' during a protest demanding he be allowed to compete in the upcoming presidential election, near the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in La Paz, Bolivia on May 29, 2025. (AP)

Aid agencies in S.Sudan decry restricted access as govt, opposition troops fight

JUBA, South Sudan, Feb 3, (AP): Humanitarian organizations in South Sudan said Monday that restricted access to the conflict-hit eastern state of Jonglei has left thousands of people in need of lifesaving medical care and food assistance at risk, as the United Nations raises concern over a growing number of displaced people.

The International Rescue Committee's country director for South Sudan, Richard Orengo, said that "intensified fighting and the militarization of key areas have forced the suspension of services."

Medical organization Doctors Without Borders, also known by its French name Médecins Sans Frontières, or MSF, said that the government has suspended all humanitarian flights, cutting off medical supplies, staff movement and emergency evacuations. At least 23 critically ill patients, including children and pregnant women, urgently require evacuation, MSF said.

The World Food Program, a Rome-based UN agency, has warned that escalating violence threatens to cut off food assistance to hundreds of thousands of people, as nearly



South Sudanese women line up for food rations at a World Food Programme (WFP) distribution point organized by Catholic Relief Services in Jonglei state, South Sudan on Nov 13, 2024. (AP)

60% of Jonglei's population is expected to face crisis-level hunger during the upcoming rainy season. The rains typically cut off access roads, and the violence has prevented the early delivery of aid.

Civilians are bearing the brunt of the

escalating fighting in South Sudan's Jonglei state, which is pushing one of the country's most fragile regions toward collapse and raising fears of a slide back into full-scale war after an eight-year peace deal, the United Nations and aid groups said.



Wildfires burn in Los Alerces National Park in Argentina on Jan 31. (AP)

Argentina fires rage pristine Patagonia forests

These days, the majestic, forested slopes of Argentina's Patagonia look like a war zone.

Mushroom clouds of smoke rise as if from missile strikes. Large flames illuminate the night sky, tainting the moon mango-orange and turning the glorious views that generations of writers and adventurers imprinted on the global psyche into something haunted.

Vast swaths of the Los Alerces National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site home to 2,600-year-

old trees, are now ablaze.

The wildfires, among the worst to hit the drought-stricken Patagonia region in decades, have devastated more than 45,000 hectares (174 square miles) of Argentina's forests in the last month and a half, forcing the evacuation of thousands of residents and tourists. As of Monday, the inferno was still spreading.

The crisis, with most of Argentina's fire season still ahead, has reignited anger toward the country's radical libertarian president,

Javier Milei, whose harsh austerity drive in the last two years has slashed spending on programs and agencies that not only work to combat fires but also protect parks and prevent blazes from igniting and spreading in the first place.

"There has been a political decision to dismantle firefighting institutions," said Luis Schinelli, one of 16 park rangers covering the 259,000 hectares (1,000 square miles) of Los Alerces National Park. "Teams are stretched beyond their limits." (AP)

Africa

Guinea announces partial cabinet reshuffle: Guinean President Mamady Doumbouya appointed officials to 20 ministerial portfolios on Monday, including 18 ministers and two secretaries-general, according to a presidential decree.

The appointments follow the collective resignation of the outgoing government after the December 2025 presidential election.

The decree states that this partial reshuffle aims to fill vacant positions. The new government maintains institutional continuity, with most former ministers either retained or reassigned, while several new figures have been introduced.

The appointments cover key departments, including justice, security, economy and finance, and foreign affairs. Additionally, positions of secretaries-general, who hold ministerial rank, were also



Doumbouya

filled. (Xinhua)

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13 al-Shabab militants killed in Somalia: Somali security forces killed 13 al-Shabab militants, including five commanders, and injured eight others during a sting operation carried out on Sunday evening in the Maxaa Sacid area of southeastern Somalia.

The National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) said on Monday that the operation targeted a house where senior al-Shabab leaders were holding a meeting. (Xinhua)

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Drone attack airport in eastern DR Congo: The airport in the provincial capital of Tshopo in northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) came under a drone attack over the weekend, local authorities said Monday.

Several drones carrying non-conventional munitions targeted Bangboka Airport, located in Kisangani, the capital of Tshopo province, between Saturday and Sunday, the Tshopo regional government said in a statement issued Monday. (Xinhua)

Kuwait oil price down to \$63.33 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by USD 1.61 to reach USD 63.33 per barrel on Monday, compared to USD 64.94 on Friday, reported the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on

Tuesday.
In global markets, the price of Brent crude dropped USD 3.54 to reach USD 67.09 per barrel, while the West Texas Intermediate went down USD 2.23 to reach USD 62.99 pb.



Photo by Samer Shaqir
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah at the Kuwait Oil and Gas Show Conference.

KPC to boost refining capacity

Kuwait strengthens status as ‘trusted’ energy partner: PM

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times
Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: The major turnout for an annual oil and gas conference in Kuwait is a testament to the nation’s transformation into a “trusted” international energy partner, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said on Tuesday.

Underlining an existential “economic shift” Kuwait has seen as part of its long-term development plan, “Kuwait Vision 2035,” His Highness the Prime Minister told the Kuwait Oil and Gas Show Conference (KOGS) that this strategy is a roadmap towards a more “diverse and sustainable” economy that places greater emphasis on the long-term value of the nation’s natural resources.

Such a strategy will revolve around the virtues of “flexibility and creativity,” in a bid to transform Kuwait into a global and competitive “energy hub,” he emphasized, citing the crude project “Shaheen” that promises to be the “biggest foreign investment” in the history of the national oil industry, pending its completion in the next few months.

His Highness the Prime Minister went on to say that Kuwait is inviting international oil companies to assist in efforts to develop offshore oil and gas production, which will be instrumental in propping up the operations of Kuwait Oil Company, he explained.

The fifth edition of KOGS is the biggest in the event’s history, according to the chief executive of state-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah, citing the impressive turnout the talks have garnered.

KPC is pushing forward with its strategy to raise its refining capacity by 1.4 million barrels per day (bpd) on a national level, while the figure for abroad is at 600,000 bpd, the official told a press conference after the opening of KOGS.

He went on to say that KPC would rely on the completion of marquee oil production projects to bring the strategy to fruition, in addition to leveraging the expertise of international firms into reaching a crude output of “four million bpd

by the year 2035,” added the official.

In light of growing global energy demand, he said that stability in global markets was necessary to ensure long-term supply, predicting the “pivotal role” that oil will play by providing a quarter of global energy supply by the year 2050 given the expected shortcomings of other sources.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Ahmad Al-Eidan said the entire world is facing unprecedented challenges, while the oil and gas sector is undergoing fundamental transformations that necessitate a higher level of cooperation.

In his speech at the opening of the Fifth Kuwait Oil and Gas Conference and Exhibition, Al-Eidan pointed out that this cooperation necessitates better knowledge exchange and investment in technology and innovation to ensure energy security and achieve a balance between meeting global needs and environmental responsibility.

He stated that the conference reflects the Kuwaiti leadership’s vision to solidify the position of the country as a global hub for dialogue on energy, innovation, strategy and cooperation, amidst the rapid developments in the global oil and gas sector.

He said the conference gathered decision-makers, technical experts and partners from around the world, underscoring the shared responsibility for shaping the future of energy and transforming global challenges into opportunities for growth, stability and prosperity.

He added that this year’s conference technical program, themed “Transforming Tomorrow’s Energy,” witnessed exceptional engagement from the technical community.

He indicated that 200 outstanding scientific papers were selected from over 1,500 submissions and will be presented in 31 technical sessions.

He also disclosed that the program includes eight high-level sessions, a ministerial session, an opening session, and six strategic sessions with the participation of industry executive leaders, along with 56 speakers -- top experts.

Reinforcing its role in driving sustainable economic development

NBK participates as strategic partner in KOGS 2026

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced its participation as a Strategic Partner of the Kuwait Oil & Gas Show (KOGS 2026), which kicked off yesterday in Kuwait City under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al Sabah. The event witnessed the attendance of senior government officials, global energy company leaders, international organizations, investors, and industry experts, to discuss current energy issues and explore the future of the sector.

A delegation from the Bank’s executive management attended the conference, led by Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Salah Al-Fulaij, Chief Executive Officer, NBK– Kuwait, and Mr. Pradeep Handa, Chief, Foreign Corporate Banking.

KOGS 2026 stands as one of the region’s most prominent energy platforms, convening an elite gathering of global industry leaders to help shape the future trajectory of the energy sector.

This year’s conference places a strategic emphasis on energy transition, innovation, and sustainable economic development, core themes that closely align with NBK’s enduring commitment to responsible financing and its support for national development objectives.

NBK’s participation underscores its central role in advancing Kuwait’s efforts to build a more sustainable and resilient economy, while reinforcing the importance of embedding responsible banking principles within business strategies, risk management frameworks, and long-term value creation.

Furthermore, the Bank’s participation in the conference also reaffirms the depth of its long-standing and close relationship with the oil sector, as one of the most vital pillars of the Kuwaiti economy. Over the decades, NBK has played a central role in financing energy projects and supporting national companies operating in this sector, reflecting its sustained commitment to strengthening the country’s economic foundations and advancing sustainable growth.

As part of the conference’s knowledge sharing aspect, Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, Group Chief Human Resources Officer – NBK, will participate in a keynote panel titled “Shaping a Responsible Future: People, Planet, and Principles,” exploring how companies are embedding ESG principles into their operations,



Isam Al-Sager and Salah Al-Fulaij during the conference.

alongside Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, within governance frameworks, environmental protection efforts, and operational processes.

The session will discuss how these efforts are driving stronger performance, improving stakeholder trust, and building more resilient organizations across the industry.

In addition, the Bank’s Group Sustainability and Human Resources teams are participating in multiple knowledge-sharing sessions to showcase NBK’s multidisciplinary capabilities in sustainable finance, climate action, ESG risk management, and the development of an inclusive workplace such as NBK’s proprietary women’s empowerment initiative, NBK RISE.

During the conference, NBK will deliver a presentation on the transformation of the global energy landscape and the growing importance of sustainable

finance for Kuwait’s oil and gas sector. The presentation will also highlight the Bank’s issuance of Kuwait’s first green bond, valued at USD 500 million in 2024, alongside its ongoing efforts to strengthen sustainability governance, climate risk assessment, stress testing, and risk-based pricing frameworks to support clients in their transition toward sustainability.

The knowledge sharing sessions highlight the importance of a collaborative partnership for Kuwait’s energy transition, whereby the oil and gas sector delivers technical expertise, and financial institutions provide capital, structuring, and risk insights.

NBK’s participation in KOGS 2026 reflects its continued commitment to supporting responsible growth, advancing national priorities, and contributing to the development of Kuwait’s energy sector and broader economy.

In collaboration with Strategy Focused Group

NBK launches HR Business Partner Excellence Program

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: In a step that reflects its ongoing commitment to developing human capital and enhancing its key role in supporting corporate performance, National Bank of Kuwait announced the launch of the HR Business Partner Excellence Program, in collaboration with Strategy Focused Group.

This valuable program aligns with NBK’s vision to enhance the human resources’ abilities to influence, lead, and raise the level of corporate performance through an advanced training model that is parallel to the bank’s strategic priorities for 2026, and includes two pivotal layers.

HR Business Partners

The first layer of the program, titled “HR Business Partners Workforce Architect Masterclass,” focuses on HR Business Partners, targeting up to 15 participants through an intensive two-day foundational workshop.


This layer aims to provide HR Business Partners with the skills and confidence needed to move from an operational support role to being effective strategic partners in supporting and achieving the goals of business groups.

Moreover, this layer focuses on deepening the understanding of business strategy and its connection to corporate performance and human resources strategy, along with enhancing Business Efficiency through business acumen. It also covers workforce engineering, defining the scope and responsibilities of the strategic HR partner, strategic workforce planning, and change management, in addition to organizational consulting, stakeholder and influence management. The first layer also includes enhancing integration and partnership with centers of expertise, in addition to practical applications through simulations of business cases in each area, which are consistent with the work environment in the banking sector in general, and NBK in particular.

Executive Leadership Program

The other layer of the program, titled “The Workforce Architect: Executive Leadership Program” targets heads of human resources units within the NBK Group, through an intensive two-day strategic training program. This layer is scheduled to take place next June and aims to enhance the ability of human resources leaders to provide strategic advice, actively participate in guiding executive decisions, and outline the structure of the future workforce at the Group level.

This layer of the program focuses on developing strategic foresight skills and building future scenarios, along with preparing strategic feasibility studies and developing a human resources strategy at the bank level. It also highlights the key role human resources play in transactions of mergers and acquisitions, as well as their role in supporting digital transformation and sustainability practices in line with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards, in addition to their role in addressing workforce risk



Ghena Ben Ghareeb:

- The program reflects NBK’s commitment to developing leaders capable of making a real impact on the business and decision-making levels.
- A high-quality program aimed at NBK’s Human Resources partners and leaders, aligned with its strategic priorities for 2026.



Group photo

management. The layer also includes developing executive communication skills and enhancing the advisory role of HR leaders in senior management decision-making.

On this occasion, SVP - Head of HR Strategic Business Partners at NBK Group, Ms. Ghena Ben Ghareeb commented: “The launch of the HR Business Partner Excellence Program is an important milestone in NBK’s journey towards developing its HR system, through which we focus on building advanced strategic capabilities that are in line with our future aspirations, as we strongly believe that human capital is a fundamental pillar in the process of leading change and achieving institutional sustainability”.

Ben Ghareeb also explained that this program

reflects NBK’s commitment to preparing leaders capable of making real impact at the business and decision-making levels, noting that the collaboration with Strategy Focused Group comes within the framework of the Bank’s desire to benefit from the best global practices in developing leaders, and help them adapt to the specific nature of the banking work environment.

Through this program, NBK confirms its unwavering commitment to long-term investments in developing its human capital and enhancing its ability to lead institutional transformation, which in turn supports the bank’s leading position and helps it keep pace with its strategic aspirations that wish to establish a more sustainable and innovative future.

‘Oil Innovates 4’ bridges academia & industry, says Al-Roumi

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3, (KUNA): The “Oil Innovates 4” Award has become one of the leading national initiatives reflecting the Ministry’s approach to embracing innovation and reinforcing the role of youth as active partners in developing the oil sector and shaping its future, said Oil Minister Tareq Al-Roumi.

Speaking at the award ceremony honoring the winners and marking the conclusion of the fourth edition, Al-Roumi said the initiative comes within the framework of supporting young national talents and linking academic outputs with the needs of the oil sector.

He noted that the projects submitted by students from the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University represent an advanced model of

integration between academic knowledge and practical application through realistic solutions.

He affirmed that the Ministry will continue supporting and developing the award, building on its outcomes, studying the submitted projects, and directing them toward paths that serve the Ministry’s objectives and help transform promising ideas into practical, implementable applications.

In turn, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nimer Fahad Al-Malik Al-Sabah said that the award is an effective institutional tool for linking educational outputs with the needs of the oil sector and opening pathways for national competencies.

Sheikh Nimer added that the award is part of a clear vision to serve as an intellectual and applied platform

for attracting ideas and transforming them into projects capable of development and contributing to addressing operational challenges facing the sector.

Meanwhile, Director of Public Relations and Petroleum Media at the Ministry, Sheikha Tamath Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, said that this distinguished initiative opened the door for national talent projects to keep pace with rapid changes in the energy sector.

She added that since the award’s launch, the Public Relations and Petroleum Media Department has been keen to develop its organizational and media framework in an integrated manner to present it as a professional platform combining scientific content with institutional organization.

UAE-Kuwait trade volume tops \$14.8 bln: UAE Minister

DUBAI, Feb 3, (KUNA): UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani bin Ahmad Al-Zeyoudi said the bilateral non-oil trade volume with Kuwait grew by 9.1 percent on annual basis to hit AED 54.5 billion (nearly USD 14.8 billion) in 2025.

The volume of exchanged investments went up sharply by 60 percent by the end of 2024 to more than USD 10 billion, he said in a speech to the

UAE-Kuwait Economic Forum in Dubai on Monday.

Hailing the forum, Al-Zeyoudi said it takes place at a time when the bilateral ties were gaining unprecedented momentum in keeping with the shared will of leaders of both countries.

He expressed hope for opening wider prospects for the strategic partnership and integration in all areas, particularly in trade and investment.

Offer limited to first 600 eligible female customers

Gulf Bank launches exclusive offer for female Rose Gold Credit Card holders in collaboration with Abyat

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: On the occasion of the upcoming Holy Month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank has announced the launch of a limited-time exclusive shopping offer tailored specifically for its female customers holding the Rose Gold Credit Card, in collaboration with Abyat.

As part of this initiative, Rose Gold cardholders will be eligible to enjoy a 25% discount, capped at KD 50, when shopping in the Ramadan preparation section at Abyat's Flagship Store in Shuwaikh, for a duration of three days only starting from tomorrow (Thursday). The offer is available on a first-come, first-served basis and is limited to the first 600 eligible customers, reinforcing the exclusive nature of the promotion and underscoring the bank's focus on delivering high-value privileges to its customers.

This collaboration comes as part of Gulf Bank's broader strategy to provide differentiated banking solutions and lifestyle benefits that cater to the evolving needs of women, particularly during significant seasonal periods such as Ramadan, when household preparation and purchasing activity typically increase.

Abyat is recognized as one of Kuwait's leading destinations for home furnishing and interior finishing solutions, offering a wide and diverse product portfolio that includes furniture, décor, kitchenware, lighting, and building and finishing materials. Through this partnership, Gulf Bank aims to enhance the overall customer experience by aligning its financial products with trusted retail brands that add tangible value to customers' everyday lives.

Commenting on the initiative, Gulf



Bank's Chief Marketing Officer, Mrs. Najla Aleisa, stated that the collaboration with Abyat provides Rose Gold cardholders with an opportunity to benefit from exclusive savings on selected products, particularly as they prepare their homes for the Ramadan season. She noted that this initiative forms part of a broader series of carefully curated offers designed to meet the lifestyle and financial expectations of female customers.

Mrs. Aleisa further emphasized that women empowerment remains a core strategic pillar for Gulf Bank, particularly within the financial services sector. Through dedicated products such as the Rose Gold Credit Card



and targeted partnerships with leading retailers, the bank continues to support women's financial independence, encourage informed spending, and enhance their access to exclusive privileges that reflect their evolving roles and aspirations.

She also highlighted that the Rose Gold Credit Card is enrolled in the Gulf Points loyalty program, offering cardholders a dual advantage. In addition to benefiting from exclusive partner discounts such as the Abyat offer, customers earn Gulf Points on their spending, which can be redeemed in multiple ways. These include cash-back credited directly to the card, gifting Gulf Points to family and friends, and using them for flight bookings, hotel reservations, and car rentals worldwide.

Furthermore, cardholders can redeem their Gulf Points through Gulf Bank's Online Store available on the bank's mobile application, allowing customers to purchase a wide range of

products directly using their accumulated points, enhancing convenience and flexibility.

Positioned as a premium lifestyle product, the Rose Gold Credit Card extends beyond traditional payment functionality to offer a comprehensive suite of benefits across shopping, travel, dining, and exclusive services. The card also provides a range of travel-related privileges, including discounts on flights and hotel bookings, car rental offers, complimentary airport lounge access in selected destinations, and travel insurance benefits that support Schengen visa applications.

Through initiatives such as this limited-time offer with Abyat, Gulf Bank continues to reinforce its commitment to delivering meaningful value, empowering women financially, and offering tailored experiences that combine practicality, exclusivity, and lifestyle relevance, especially during important occasions such as the Holy Month of Ramadan.

One of six dealers worldwide recognized by Toyota Motor Corporation

ALSAYER honored with Toyota's prestigious 70th Year Award

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est. Co. W.L.L (ALSAYER) is proud to announce it has been honored with the 70th Year Award from Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC). This elite recognition, bestowed upon only six Toyota dealers worldwide, celebrates seven decades of unwavering commitment to automotive excellence, market leadership, and the enduring partnership between ALSAYER and TMC.

The award signed by Mr. Akio Toyoda – Chairman, designed and manufactured by the prestigious Taya Shikitten Corporation, includes the legendary phoenix, which symbolizes the enduring power of life with victory over adversity, underscores ALSAYER Group's commitment to excellence, development and innovation over seven decades. We dedicate it to our valued customers, for their great trust and support.

According to Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO of ALSAYER Group

"Receiving this award from Toyota Motor Corporation is a moment of immense pride for the entire Al-Sayer Group family," the Group stated. "It underscores a legacy built on trust, development, and a shared vision for the future of mobility. We dedicate this achievement to our valued customers, whose loyalty and support have been the cornerstone of our success for seventy years."

The award marks a historic milestone for the Kuwaiti automotive sector, highlighting a journey that began in 1954 when ALSAYER became the world's second-ever Toyota dealer.



Since its inception, the Group has been a pioneer in the region, transforming the local landscape through a relentless focus on innovation and the "Customer First" philosophy.

A Legacy of Global Significance

The 70th Year Award is not merely a celebration of longevity; it is a testament to ALSAYER's role as a global benchmark for dealership operations which includes:

- Decades of Market Leadership: Maintaining a leadership position in

the Kuwaiti market through strategic growth.

- Operational Excellence: Continuous investment in world-class facilities and service standards.
- Brand Stewardship: Upholding the core values of Toyota while adapting to the evolving needs of the Kuwaiti customer.

Strong Performance of Toyota and Lexus Powered by a Legacy of Kaizen

Central to ALSAYER's success is the philosophy of Kaizen (continuous

improvement), which has driven the Group to reach unprecedented global milestones. This journey of growth is defined by a series of industry-leading achievements:

- Pioneering Luxury: The successful launch of the Lexus trademark in 1989, followed by the 2010 opening of the world's largest Lexus luxury showroom in Kuwait.
- Customer Centricity: The launch of the "No. 1 by Far" program, a revolutionary 360-degree customer care initiative that was the first of its kind globally.
- Unmatched Service Excellence: Winning the TMC Customer Service Excellence Award for 16 consecutive years—a feat achieved by only three Toyota distributors worldwide.
- Technological Leadership: The recent implementation of the AutoStore robotics parts warehouse system, making ALSAYER the first Toyota dealer globally to adopt such advanced automation.

These milestones reflect a continuous expansion of facilities and a dedication to staying at the forefront of the global automotive industry.

Driving the Future of Kuwait's Automotive Market

As ALSAYER enters its eighth decade, the Group remains committed to pioneering new standards in the industry. From futuristic mobility solutions to digital transformation in customer service, ALSAYER continues to lead by example, ensuring that the partnership with TMC remains a catalyst for further growth and excellence in Kuwait.

Event encourages fitness, wellness, and community engagement

ABK sponsors Al Shaab Co-op Sports Day to promote healthy living

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced its recent sponsorship of Al Shaab Co-operative Society's sports day event held at Al Shaab park, reaffirming its commitment to promoting a healthy and active lifestyle within the Kuwaiti community.

The event drew a diverse crowd of participants of all ages, who engaged in a range of activities, including endurance challenges, medical examinations, and educational sessions on nutrition. By supporting such events, the Bank aligns itself with health and fitness, promoting a positive and active lifestyle among its customers and the community at large.

As part of its sponsorship, ABK also showcased its wide range of banking products and services at its booth, and disseminated exciting cash prizes, thus engaging with the attendees. This not only offered the opportunity to educate attendees about its offerings, but to also demonstrate its commitment to holistic wellbeing, thereby enhancing its reputation as a caring and socially responsible financial institution.

Sager Albenali, Chief Corporate Communications Officer at ABK, highlighted the Bank's dedication to supporting such events, stating, "The event provided a platform for the Bank to engage with a diverse audience on a deeper level, fostering a positive brand image and creating meaningful relationships beyond traditional banking services."

He added that the sponsorship comes as part of the bank's social responsibility program and its constant keenness to encourage community members to practice sports and follow a healthy lifestyle over time to prevent diseases. He noted that the bank's cooperation with many partners is to sponsor activities held throughout the year, including awareness seminars and health conferences, pointing out the bank's keenness to strengthen its



Group photo



A group of bank employees during the event.



A large crowd attended the sports.

items, construction materials, and food and beverage segments. The growth was further solidified by an 81.5% y/y increase in machinery and electrical re-exports, highlighting the country's successful evolution into a regional logistics hub. Fitch reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's 'A+' credit rating with a stable outlook, highlighting a sovereign balance sheet and fiscal reserves that remain significantly more robust than those of its global peers. Driven by strong non-oil momentum, the agency projects the Saudi Arabia's GDP to grow by 4.8% y/y in 2026.

Global markets were positive during the month supported by continued inflows in the markets despite the elevated investor demand for safe haven assets like gold. MSCI World and S&P 500 rose by 2.2% and 1.4% respectively during the month. Strong corporate results from major US tech companies supported the growth. However, the continued depreciation of USD and concerns over declining consumer confidence weighed on the U.S. stocks' performance. Nasdaq Composite index rose by 1.2% during the month, supported by higher-than-expected corporate earnings results. Emerging Markets, as measured by MSCI EM Index, gained 8.8% during the month, supported by Chinese equities. Chinese stocks registered 3.8% gains for the month, majorly driven by artificial intelligence trades and optimism about the domestic tech sector in response to U.S. curbs on high-tech exports. South Korea, Taiwan and Brazil equities registered strong gains for the month.

The yield on the 10-year US treasury notes increased by 8 bps during the month, to 4.26%, amid hovering geopolitical uncertainties. During the FOMC meeting on January 27-28th, 2026, the U.S. Federal Reserve opted to hold interest rates at 3.50% – 3.75%, citing low job gains, elevated inflation levels, and signs of economic stabilization as reasons. This brought a pause in the current rate cut cycle of three consecutive cuts in late 2025.

Oil (Brent) prices closed the month at USD70.69 per barrel, gaining 16.2% during the month. This was primarily driven by heightened tensions between US and Iran which elevated the concerns of supply disruptions among investors, resulting in an increase in the geopolitical premium of oil prices. Additionally, supply disruptions stemming from the shutdown of Kazakhstan's largest oil field Tengiz, which remained shut until the end of January, supported the rally.

The key driver for market movements in February 2026 will be the extent of headwinds posed by geopolitical tensions. Although markets remained relatively resilient in January, overvaluation of tech stocks (indicated by S&P 500 Shiller CAPE ratio at second-highest levels ever of 39-40), raise market-wide concerns. For GCC markets, corporate earnings will drive stock movements. While global oil oversupply worries pose challenges, positive reform momentum and capital expenditure should be closely watched from a long-term perspective.

About Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz"

Established in 1974, Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C "Markaz" is one of the leading asset management and investment banking institutions in the MENA region with total assets under management of over KD 1.61 billion (USD 5.28 billion) as of 30 September 2025. Markaz was listed on the Boursa Kuwait in 1997. Over the years, Markaz has pioneered innovation through the creation of new investment channels.

Cementing its proactive role in driving digital transformation & sustainability across Kuwait’s vital sectors

talabat leads conversation on digital economy & technology at the NFTSS

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Expanding on its influence as a pillar of Kuwait’s digital landscape, talabat, the leading on-demand online ordering platform in the MENA region, concluded its participation in the National Forum for Transport and Smart Services (NFTSS) as the Main Partner. Organized by ALGAS Events in collaboration with the General Traffic Department – the Ministry of Interior, and held under the patronage and attendance of His Excellency the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, the one-day forum took place on February 3 at the Four Seasons Hotel. This partnership is a testament to talabat’s commitment to driving innovation-driven, technology-backed sustainable progress in line with its dedicated support of Kuwait Vision 2035.

As part of talabat’s participation as Main Partner, Abdullah Al-Mansour, Director of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait, and Amal Bukhamseen, Manager of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait, shared valuable insights about the present landscape of digital transformation within the transport and road safety sector, as well as the future digital solutions that can be adopted to support the development of the digital economy and ensure a safer and smoother experience for all commuters across Kuwait.

Other experts from the public and private sectors contributed their vast expertise on the topic, including government officials and decision-makers, representatives from online ordering platforms, transport and logistics companies, as well as technology innovators, entrepreneurs, academics, and a distinguished group of specialists.

During his keynote address titled “From Governance to Sustainability,” Al-Mansour shared insights on building an effective partnership model for transport and smart services sector, inspired by the talabat success story of moving from a “service and logistics marketplace” to “digital economy,” from a “luxury” to a “national infrastructure supporting the digital economy.”

“In this time and age of digital economies, sustainable governance is essential for the success of aspiring endeavors that promise efficiency, convenience, safety, and collective welfare,” Al-Mansour clarified. “Discussions such as the ones had at the NFTSS are crucial for advancing with confidence toward achieving Kuwait Vision 2035. Establishing sustainable



Abdullah Al-Mansour, Director of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait, receives a commemorative award from His Excellency the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, during the National Forum for Transport and Smart Services.



Abdullah Al-Mansour delivers a keynote address titled ‘From Governance to Sustainability,’ showcasing a timeline of talabat’s 22-year history and its evolution from a logistics marketplace to a pillar of the digital economy.

governance that provides protection, offers proactive solutions, and attracts investments is critical for the fruition of the synchronized efforts shared by all relevant parties; governance that

provides clarity, responds with agility, and reduces friction.”

To this effect, Al-Mansour closed his keynote address saying: “To ensure this dialogue doesn’t end to-

day, I would like to propose the establishment of a Permanent National Committee for Transportation and Smart Services. This committee would bring together the Ministry

of Interior, tech platforms, and local operators to meet regularly. Our goal? To anticipate challenges, co-create regulations, and ensure Kuwait remains a leader in the regional



Amal Bukhamseen, Manager of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait, speaks during a panel session on ‘Regulation, Legislation, and Collective Responsibility,’ highlighting the importance of data-driven insights in operational excellence.



Partnership Group Portrait – Key participants and representatives from talabat and the Ministry of Interior pose with awards at the NFTSS forum held at the Four Seasons Hotel.

digital economy.”

On her part, Bukhamseen participated in the panel discussion on “Regulation, Legislation, and Collective Responsibility,” during which she reflected on the company’s experience and practical expertise in this field. She added: “As a tech company in the first place, data-driven insights are at the heart of the operational excellence that defines our success. However, it is worth noting that this model is adjustable to virtually any conceivable sector that runs of the orchestration of numerous moving parts to achieve efficiency. By pairing data with our close proximity to the various stakeholders, we are able to offer sustainable solutions that delivery on the market needs in a time-less manner.”

Besides talabat’s representatives, the forum hosted a distinguished lineup of speakers and experts, including Brigadier Khaled Abdullah Al-Adwani, Assistant Director General of the General Traffic Department for Education and Coordination Affairs; Eng. Mohammed Al-Mansouri, Road Safety Awareness Specialist at the Integrated Transport Centre – Abu Dhabi; and Dr. Rami Al-Sahhar, Managing Director and Technology Consultant at Protiviti, alongside a number of local and international specialists.

The forum agenda covered a wide spectrum of vital topics, including notably road safety within the framework of Kuwait Vision 2035, relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks, traffic violations and modern penalty systems, principles of corporate responsibility and governance, applications of smart technologies, and global best practices. The various discussions also took inspiration from successful international case studies, whereby practical, implementable solutions were identified with the aim of enhancing safety standards, improving operational efficiency, and elevating service quality in Kuwait.

Beyond its partnership with the Ministry of Interior within the scope of the NFTSS, talabat continues to contribute to national initiatives that aim to improve working conditions and enhance quality of life for delivery riders, such as its central role in the success of the National Road Safety Week. These efforts and more are part of talabat’s strategic mission to drive the technological maturity of the national market and economy, aligning with global best practices in digital transformation.

Modi praises Trump's leadership

Trump to cut tariffs on Indian goods to 18% after Modi agrees to stop buying Russian oil

WASHINGTON, Feb 3, (AP): President Donald Trump said Monday that he plans to lower tariffs on goods from India to 18%, from 25%, after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to stop buying Russian oil.

The move comes after months of Trump pressing India to cut its reliance on cheap Russian crude. India has taken advantage of reduced Russian oil prices as much of the world has sought to isolate Moscow for its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Trump said that India would also start to reduce its import taxes on U.S. goods to zero and buy \$500 billion worth of American products.

“This will help END THE WAR in Ukraine, which is taking place right now, with thousands of people dying each and every week!” Trump said in a Truth Social post announcing the tariff reduction on India.

Modi posted on X that he was “delighted” by the announced tariff reduction and that Trump’s “leadership is vital for global peace, stability, and prosperity.”

“I look forward to working closely with him to take our partnership to unprecedented heights,” Modi said.

Trump has long had a warm relationship with Modi, only to find it complicated recently by Russia’s war in Ukraine and trade disputes.

Trump has struggled to make good on a campaign pledge to quickly end the Russia-Ukraine war and has been reluctant since his return to office to place pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin. He has simultaneously imposed tariffs without going through Congress to achieve his economic and foreign policy aims.

The announcement of the agreement with India comes as his special envoy, Steve Witkoff, and son-in-law Jared Kushner are expected to hold another round of three-way talks with Russian and Ukrainian officials in Abu Dhabi later this week aimed at finding an endgame to the war, according to a White House official who requested anonymity to describe the upcoming meeting.

Trump has voiced that he believes that targeting Russia’s oil revenue is the best way to get Moscow to end its nearly four-year war against Ukraine, a view that dovetails with his devotion to tariffs.

In June, Trump announced the United States would impose a 25% tariff on goods from India after his administration felt the country had done too little to narrow its trade surplus with the U.S. and open up its markets to American goods. In August, Trump imposed additional import taxes of 25% on Indian products because of its purchases of Russian oil, putting the combined rate increase at 50%.

With the commitment to stop buying Russian oil and the lower rate, the tariff rate on Indian products could fall to 18%, which is close to the 15% rate charged

on goods from the European Union and Japan, among other nations.

Historically, India’s relationship with Russia revolves more around defense than energy. Russia provides only a small fraction of India’s oil but the majority of its military hardware.

But India, in the aftermath of the Russian invasion, used the moment to buy discounted Russian oil, allowing it to increase its energy supplies while Russia looked to cut deals to boost its beleaguered economy and keep paying for its brutal war.

The announced tariff reduction comes days after India and the European Union reached a free trade agreement that could affect as many as 2 billion people after nearly two decades of negotiations. That deal would enable free trade on almost all goods between the EU’s 27 members and India, covering everything from textiles to medicines, and bringing down high import taxes for European wine and cars.

The deal between two of the world’s biggest markets also reflected a desire to reduce dependence on the U.S. after Trump’s import tax hikes disrupted established trade flows. While the cost of Trump’s tariffs have largely been borne by American businesses and consumers, the taxes can reduce trade volumes among countries.

In recent months, India has accelerated a push to finalize several trade agreements. It signed a deal with Oman in December and concluded talks for a deal with New Zealand.

Trump seemed to hint at a positive call with Modi on Monday morning, posting to social media a picture of the two of them on a magazine cover.

When the pair met last February, the U.S. president said that India would start buying American oil and natural gas. But the talks proved frustrating and the tariffs imposed last year by Trump did little to initially change India’s objections.

While the U.S. has been seeking greater market access and zero tariff on almost all its exports, India has expressed reservations on throwing open sectors such as agriculture and dairy, which employ a bulk of the country’s population for livelihood, Indian officials said.

The Census Bureau reported that the U.S. ran a \$53.5 billion trade imbalance in goods with India during the first 11 months of last year, meaning it imported more than it exported.

At a population exceeding 1.4 billion people, India is the world’s most populous country and viewed by many government officials and business leaders as geopolitical and economic counterbalance to China.

result, trade diversification efforts by our partners are on turbo charge, looking to reduce dependence on the U.S.”

Trump supporters such as Paul Winfree, who was deputy director of the White House Domestic Policy Council during Trump’s first term, are wary of the relative decline in U.S. Treasury note holdings by foreign central banks and view the national debt as a vulnerability rivals would like to exploit.

Winfree, CEO of the Economic Policy Innovation Institute, a think tank, said that some of Trump’s advisers do not feel America has fully benefited from the dollar’s status as the world’s dominant currency.

“But the fact remains that every other country is jealous of our status, and many of our adversaries would love to challenge the U.S. dollar and Treasuries,” he said.

White House spokesman Kush Desai insists America’s standing on the global stage has not been diminished.

“President Trump remains committed to the strength and power of the U.S. Dollar as the world’s reserve currency,” he said.

The most eye-opening deal so far has been the pact announced last week between the 27-country EU and India, the world’s fastest growing major economy. Negotiators had been at it for nearly two decades before they closed the agreement.

Likewise, an EU trade deal announced two weeks ago with the Mercosur nations of South America took a quarter century of negotiation. It will create a free-trade market of more than 700 million people.

“Some of these deals have been in the works for quite some time,” said Maurice Obstfeld, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund. “The pressure from Trump made them more eager to accelerate the process and reach agreement.”

France to replace Zoom

Europe pushes to reduce reliance on US tech firms

LONDON, Feb 3, (AP): In France, civil servants will ditch Zoom and Teams for a homegrown video conference system. Soldiers in Austria are using open source office software to write reports after the military dropped Microsoft Office. Bureaucrats in a German state have also turned to free software for their administrative work.

Around Europe, governments and institutions are seeking to reduce their use of digital services from U.S. Big Tech companies and turning to domestic or free alternatives. The push for “digital sovereignty” is gaining attention as the Trump administration strikes an increasingly belligerent posture toward the continent, highlighted by recent tensions over Greenland that intensified fears that Silicon Valley giants could be compelled to cut off access.

Concerns about data privacy and worries that Europe is not doing enough to keep up with the United States and Chinese tech leadership are also fueling the drive.

The French government referenced some of these concerns when it announced last week that 2.5 million civil servants would stop using video conference tools from U.S. providers - including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex and GoTo Meeting - by 2027 and switch to Visio, a homegrown service.

The objective is “to put an end to the use of non-European solutions, to guarantee the security and confidentiality of public electronic communications by relying on a powerful and sovereign tool,” the announcement said.

“We cannot risk having our scientific exchanges, our sensitive data, and our strategic innovations exposed to non-European actors,” David Amiel, a civil service minister, said in a press release.

Microsoft said it continues to “partner closely with the government in France and respect the importance of security, privacy, and digital trust for public institutions.”

The company said it is “focused on providing customers with greater choice, stronger data protection, and resilient cloud services - ensuring data stays in Europe, under European law, with robust security and privacy protections.”

Zoom, Webex and GoTo Meeting did not respond to requests for comment.

French President Emmanuel Macron has been pushing digital sovereignty for years. But there’s now a lot more “political momentum behind this idea now that we need to de-risk from U.S. tech,” Nick Reiners, at the Eurasia Group.

“It feels kind of like there’s a real zeitgeist shift,” Reiners said

It was a hot topic at the World Economic Forum’s annual meeting of

global political and business elites last month in Davos, Switzerland. The European Commission’s official for tech sovereignty, Henna Virkkunen, told an audience that Europe’s reliance on others “can be weaponized against us.”

“That’s why it’s so important that we are not dependent on one country or one company when it comes to very critical fields of our economy or society,” she said, without naming countries or companies.

A decisive moment came last year when the Trump administration sanctioned the International Criminal Court’s top prosecutor after the tribunal, based in The Hague, Netherlands, issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, an ally of President Donald Trump.

The sanctions led Microsoft to cancel Khan’s ICC email, a move that was first reported by The Associated Press and sparked fears of a “kill switch” that Big Tech companies can use to turn off service at will.

Microsoft maintains it kept in touch with the ICC “throughout the process that resulted in the disconnection of its sanctioned official from Microsoft services. At no point did Microsoft cease or suspend its services to the ICC.”

Microsoft President Brad Smith has repeatedly sought to strengthen trans-Atlantic ties, the company’s press office said, and pointed to an interview he did last month with CNN in Davos in which he said that jobs, trade and investment, as well as security, would be affected by a rift over Greenland.

“Europe is the American tech sector’s biggest market after the United States itself. It all depends on trust. Trust requires dialogue,” Smith said.

Other incidents have added to the movement. There’s a growing sense that repeated EU efforts to rein in tech giants such as Google with blockbuster antitrust fines and sweeping digital rule books haven’t done much to curb their dominance.

Billionaire Elon Musk is also a factor. Officials worry about relying on his Starlink satellite internet system for communications in Ukraine.

Washington and Brussels wrangled for years over data transfer agreements, triggered by whistleblower Edward Snowden’s revelations of U.S. cyber-snooping.

With online services now mainly hosted in the cloud through data centers, Europeans fear that their data is vulnerable.

U.S. cloud providers have responded by setting up so-called “sovereign cloud” operations, with data centers located in European countries, owned by European entities and with physical and remote access only for staff who are European Union residents.

The idea is that “only Europeans can take decisions so that they can’t be coerced by the U.S.,” Reiners said.

Central banks dump dollars, turn to gold as confidence wavers

US allies seek to shield economies from Trump’s tariffs

WASHINGTON, Feb 3, (AP): Bullied and buffeted by President Donald Trump’s tariffs for the past year, America’s longstanding allies are desperately seeking ways to shield themselves from the president’s impulsive wrath.

U.S. trade partners are cutting deals among themselves -- sometimes discarding old differences to do so - in a push to diversify their economies away from a newly protectionist United States. Some European governments and institutions are reducing their use of U.S. digital services such as Zoom and Teams.

Central banks and global investors are dumping dollars and buying gold. Together, their actions could diminish U.S. influence and mean higher interest rates and prices for Americans already angry about the high cost of living.

Last summer and fall, Trump used the threat of punishing taxes on imports to strong-arm the European Union, Japan, South Korea and other trading partners into accepting lopsided trade deals and promising to make massive investments in the United States.

But a deal with Trump, they’ve discovered, is no deal at all.

The mercurial president repeatedly finds reasons to conjure new tariffs to impose on trading partners that thought they had already made enough concessions to satisfy him.

Just months after reaching his agreement with the EU, Trump threatened new tariffs on eight European countries for opposing his attempts to seize control of Greenland from Denmark - though he quickly backed down. And last month, he said he’d slap 100% tariffs on Canada for breaking with the United States by agreeing to reduce Canadian tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles.

“Our trading partners are discovering that the largely one-sided deals they concluded with the U.S. provide little protection,” said former U.S. trade negotiator Wendy Cutler, senior vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute. “As a

Honor underscores his influence on Afrobeats

Fela Kuti's Grammy lifetime award is a major win for African music

LAGOS, Nigeria, Feb 3, (AP): Fela Kuti became the first African to be awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Recording Academy at the Grammys Special Merit Awards.

He was honored posthumously on Saturday alongside Chaka Khan, Cher, Carlos Santana and Whitney Houston.

The award underscores the artist's contribution to music and as the inspiration of one of the most popular contemporary African music genres, Afrobeats. Nigerian music critics welcomed the recognition as a reflection of his enduring influence.

"What the recognition means locally is the inspiration Fela has provided for over 50 years," Joey Akan, a Nigerian music critic and founder of Afrobeats Intelligence, told The Associated Press.

Fela, a saxophonist and father of Afrobeat - different from Afrobeats - known more popularly by his first name, was born in 1938 in colonial Ni-

geria. His music career, which spanned decades between the late 1950s and up to the 1990s across multiple countries, is a signature blend of high-octane horn, jazz, and funk with Yoruba rhythms.

To Nigerians, he wore many hats: a pioneering musician, an activist who was a thorn in the side of Nigeria's successive military rulers, a cultural reference in the fight against Western imperialism, a chain-smoking serial polygamist.

But for the music part, a notable theme in his decades' worth of work is his protest against Western cultural hegemony, which some critics say the Recording Academy is a part of. He railed against the neocolonial vestiges of British rule in Nigeria and the corrupt postcolonial leadership of his birth country, especially the military governments.

In his 1977 track "Colonial Mentality," he sang "De ting wey black no good/Na foreign things them dey like/

No be so?" ("The things that are Black are inferior/It is foreign ones they like. Is that not so?")

In a 1989 polemic, "Beasts of No Nation," he railed against the United Nations and almost every global leader of the time. "Dem call the place United Nations/Hear oh another animal talk/Wetin united inside United Nations?" ("They call the place United Nations/Hear another nonsense narrative/What is united in the United Nations?")

He was jailed many times by Nigerian autocratic governments for his criticism, most notably for 20 months by Nigeria's then-junta leader Muhammadu Buhari in 1984. In 1977, nearly 1,000 soldiers stormed his self-styled Kalakuta Republic, his residence in Lagos, and burned it down. His mother, Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti, a prominent activist, died from injuries sustained in the raid.

"Regardless of the contrast with what Fela represented and what the award



Women sit under portraits of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti at the New Afrika Shrine in Lagos, Nigeria, on Sunday, Oct. 21, 2012. (AP)

represents, I think it is a net positive for African music," Dolapo Amusat, the founder of WeTalkSound, a Nigerian creative company, told the AP. "And it shows how far Fela's influence is and how widespread his acclaim is."

Fela died in 1997 due to complications from AIDS. His legacy helped create one of the most successful periods in Nigerian music, with artists like Burna Boy and Wizkid often referencing Fela.

In recent years, music from Africa has gained significant recognition at the Recording Academy. In 2024, the academy introduced the Best African music performance category. Burna Boy, Tems, and South Africa's Tyla have won various awards at the ceremonies since 2020.

Many global artists, including Beyoncé, Mos Def, Nas, and J.Cole have also sampled Fela, with his songs soundtracking many Hollywood productions.

Powerful recognition

Bad Bunny's big win seen as boost for US Latinos

LOS ANGELES, Feb 3, (AP): The record that won album of the year at the 2026 Grammy Awards Sunday night - Bad Bunny's "Debí Tirar Más Fotos" - is the one many industry experts labeled the most deserving, and therefore an unlikely candidate for victory.

In the same breath, the Grammys - not a place historically known for fervent political messaging - was filled with celebrities taking anti-Immigration and Customs Enforcement stances. Of the nine televised awards handed out to seven different artists, nearly half addressed immigration in their acceptance speeches.

Both feel like a surprise. But it is no accident.

The Grammy Awards have long been criticized over a lack of diversity, with a history of artists of color, women, rap, Latino and R&B musicians being snubbed for top prizes.

In the past few years, however, that reputation has started to become challenged as the Recording Academy worked to add thousands of new voters across a variance of backgrounds. The results are notable: 3,800 new Recording Academy members were added in 2025. Half - 50% - are 39 and under, 58% are people of color and 35% identify as women. (Last year all Latin Grammy voting members were invited to join the Recording Academy, though it's not clear how many became Grammy voters.)

The 2025 Grammy ceremony seemed to reflect these changing dynamics as well, as Beyoncé and Kendrick Lamar won major categories. And in 2026, that trend appears to have continued.

Bad Bunny is one of only a few Latino album of the year winners, a short list that includes Santana in 2000 for "Supernatural" and Stan Getz and João Gilberto's "Getz/Gilberto" in 1965.

"There's so much amazing Latin music that has been overlooked and that's part of what is so beautiful about this moment," says Vanessa Díaz, co-author of "P FKN R: How Bad Bunny Became the Global Voice of Puerto Rican Resistance." "And that's why it feels like a win."

By a number of metrics, "Debí Tirar Más Fotos" was 2025's most-streamed release, globally. But it is not only a commercial success story, it is an artistic one.

Tradition

The album is a love letter to Puerto Rico that marries folkloric tradition in local Borinquen genres like bomba, plena, salsa and música jíbara with contemporary, internationally recognized styles like reggaeton, trap and electronic pop. That combination of new and old is something the Recording Academy has historically celebrated - looking at you, Bruno Mars' retro hooks - but to be recognized for an all-Spanish language release is uncharted territory.

The album is also political, but its messages are not exclusive to Puerto Rican or even Latino identity, says Albert Laguna, associate professor of ethnicity, race and migration and American studies at Yale. "The lyrics on this album align with global struggles," he says. Take, for example, "Lo que le pasó a Hawaii" ("What happened to Hawaii"), a rallying cry for cultural autonomy in an era of neocolonialization.

Bad Bunny won with a career-defining album on the year of its eligibility - differing from Beyoncé's "Cowboy Carter" victory in 2025, which some viewed as the Recording Academy attempt to course correct after not awarding her the top prize in past years, like in 2017 when the decade-defining "Lemonade" was nominated, or 2023 when "Renaissance" was eligible.

In the case of Bad Bunny, the Recording Academy is meeting the pop culture zeitgeist where it is at, celebrating an artist at the peak of their popularity: Next week Bad Bunny will perform at the Super Bowl half-time show, an event that is gearing up to be a landmark moment for Latino culture.

It is also a powerful recognition of his talents at a time when some communities have voiced anxieties about even speaking Spanish in certain public spaces in the US amid growing anti-immigrant sentiment and raids.

"A lot of people feel like this is a tense moment, it's a difficult moment. And here's someone giving us a sonic language in which to narrate this complex present," Laguna says. "There's pleasure, in political critique, that the music makes possible in a beautiful way. And I think that's very much welcomed."

Anti-ICE sentiment permeated all corners of Sunday's Grammys as immigration enforcement surges in the United States.

During the CBS broadcast, Bad Bunny, Billie Eilish and first-time Grammy winner Olivia Dean used their time on screen to send a message. "No one is illegal on stolen land," said Eilish. "(Expletive) ICE."

"I'm up here as a granddaughter of an immigrant," said Dean. "I am a product of bravery, and I think that those people deserve to be celebrated."

But the comments actually began at the pre-televised Premiere Ceremony, in which 86 Grammys were handed out.

There, Shaboozey accepted his first Grammy with tears in his eyes. "I want to thank my mother ... an immigrant in this country," he said.

"Immigrants built this country, literally, actually. So, this for them," he concluded. "Thank you for bring your culture, your music and your stories."

Kehlani did the same: "Imma leave this and say, (expletive) ICE."

Backstage, SZA similarly cursed ICE and stressed the importance of being able "to disseminate mutual aid."

"I'm scared," Gloria Estefan said backstage after winning an award. "There are hundreds of children in detention centers. ... I don't recognize my country in this moment right now."



Bad Bunny accepts the award for album of the year for 'Debí Tirar Más Fotos' during the 68th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday, Feb. 1, 2026, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Music



The team from 'KPop Demon Hunters' pose in the press room with the award for best song written for visual media for 'Golden' during the 68th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday, Feb. 1, in Los Angeles. (AP)

First Grammy win highlights genre's global appeal

S.Korea cheers K-pop's 'Golden' moment

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 3, (AP): South Koreans celebrated on Monday as the song "Golden" claimed K-pop's first Grammy Award, a milestone that critics say highlights the genre's global appeal and signals broader acceptance in the American mainstream.

The Grammy win for "Golden" - from the Netflix animated film "KPop Demon Hunters" - which also contended for song of the year, could help strengthen K-pop's US foothold and boost the genre's prospects at future awards, music critic Lim Hee-yun said.

The win for best song for visual media capped a highly visible night for K-pop at the Grammys - an institution where the genre has long been undercelebrated despite its massive international following.

Rosé of the juggernaut girl group Blackpink joined Grammy favorite Bruno Mars on stage to belt out their megahit "APT.," which was a song of the year nominee. The girl group Katseye, created by a partnership between South Korea's HYBE and US label Geffen Records, earned two nominations, including best new artist, for their song "Gabriela."

The awards captured a moment in which K-pop is surging as a youth-driven global phenomenon and increasingly attracting interest from the US film and music industries.

American legacy studios, struggling to reach younger audiences, have taken note of K-pop's viral strength on social media and short-form platforms - a momentum that has driven collaborations such as Rosé and Bruno Mars and projects like Katseye and "KPop Demon Hunters," according to Lim Hee-yun.

There is debate over whether "Golden," an English-language pop song from a Sony Pictures Animation film, qualifies as K-pop. Still, the Grammy award sparked joy in South Korea, where the film inspired Demon Hunters-themed ramen and boosted tourism to Seoul's old fortress walls and other cultural sites featured in the film.

"It feels unreal," said Kim Na-young, a 50-year-old who said she saw the movie at least five times. "Sony made it, Netflix released it, but the film was definitely about Korea."

"KPop Demon Hunters" follows the three members of the fictional Korean girl group HUNTR/X as they use their music and martial arts skills to keep demons out of the human world.

The film went on to become Netflix's most popular release of all time, with songs like "Golden" and "Soda Pop" climbing global music charts and its characters becoming popular Halloween costume choices in the United States. The singers behind HUNTR/X - Ejae, Audrey Nuna and Rei Ami - gained huge followings.

After winning their award at the Grammys' Premiere Ceremony, the songwriters of "Golden" delivered their acceptance speech in both English and Korean, highlighting its bilingual appeal.

Historical

"This is just crazy because this is like a historical moment for you know, as being a Korean American," said Ejae, who co-wrote and provided the lead vocals for the song. "It's a song that also represents Korea."

Some South Koreans saw the Grammy win as the latest significant moment marking the rise of South Korean pop culture, following the 2020 Oscar triumph of Bong Joon Ho's "Parasite."

"When Parasite won, it felt like South Korean culture had entered the global mainstream. The Grammy win takes that recognition even further," said Park Jeong-eon, 48, recalling trips abroad in the 2000s when she felt that South Korea was little known.

Seo Ga-yeon, who studies K-pop at a university, said she could emotionally relate with the personal story of Ejae, who struggled as a young K-pop trainee in South Korea before establishing herself as an artist

in the United States.

"I think it was above all her outstanding vocal performance - overflowing with emotion, as if she was singing about her own life, almost like a cry - that made 'Golden' a success," Seo said.

South Korea's governing Democratic Party said the Grammy win was a historically significant moment in which K-pop "finally overcame the long-standing Grammy barrier."

The Recording Academy had long overlooked major K-pop acts like BTS. Some analysts question whether "Golden" should truly be considered K-pop's first Grammy win.

"The film, of course, used K-pop as material and helped bring it global attention, but I feel there's a distance between 'Golden' and K-pop," said Jinmo Lim, another music critic, who described the Grammy win as recognition of K-pop's growing international appeal rather than a victory for the genre itself.

Lim Hee-yun said "Golden" sounds more like American pop - "Katy Perry or early Lady Gaga" - than a typical K-pop idol track, which may have helped it reach a broader audience. While K-pop groups usually have four or more members who rotate vocal parts to engage fans, "Golden" is carried almost entirely by a single lead vocalist.

Group composition, precision in style and choreography, and passionate - almost religious - fan bases are key elements that define K-pop, he said, though the genre has become increasingly difficult to pin down musically.

"For people who knew little about K-pop, or had only heard of BTS or Blackpink, 'KPop Demon Hunters' certainly boosted awareness of the K-pop world and even sparked interest in traveling to South Korea," Lim Hee-yun said. "K-pop groups are likely to receive far more attention in the future than they would have without the film."

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Chuck Negron, a founding member of Three Dog Night whose lead vocals powered a string of hits including "Joy to the World," "One" and "An Old Fashioned Love Song" for one of the top rock acts of the late 1960s and early '70s, died Monday. He was 83.

He died of complications from heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease at his home in the Studio City neighborhood of Los Angeles, according to his publicist Zach Farnum.

Negron also sang lead on "Easy To Be Hard" and "The Show Must Go On." The band's other hits include "Black and White," "Mama Told Me (Not to Come)," "Never Been to Spain" and "Shambala."

In December 1972, the band hosted and performed on the inaugural edition of Dick Clark's "New Year's Rockin' Eve."

By 1975, album sales had declined and the band

had its last Billboard Hot 100 hit with "Til the World Ends." Internal strife fractured the group and it fell apart the next year.



Negron

quick ascension to the top of the charts. He spent his fortune on drugs and even ended up on Los Angeles' Skid Row for a time. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Cher may have wanted to turn back time on her rather chaotic Grammys presenting experience. But the pop legend's obvious good humor made her series of flubs one of the most enjoyably meme-worthy moments of the night.

In what amounted to a Grammys version of John Travolta's Adele Dazeem moment at the Oscars - if much more understandable - Cher, presenting record of the year at Sunday's show, seemed to momentarily award it to the late Luther Vandross. (AP)

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NEW YORK: But the entertainment giant cautioned that in the second quarter its Experiences division, which includes its theme parks, will likely see modest operating income growth due in part to a decline in visits from international tourists to the US.

There's been a drop in foreign visitors to the US attributed to several factors, including President Donald Trump's return to the White House, tariffs, an immigration crackdown and repeated jabs about the US possibly trying to acquire Canada and Greenland. (AP)



Tourists pay a fee to access the Trevi Fountain, in Rome, Monday, Feb. 2. (AP)

Visitors welcome charge as small price for comfort

Rome implements Trevi Fountain fee to control tourist flow

ROME, Feb 3, (AP): Tourists hoping to get close to the Trevi Fountain had to pay 2 euros (\$2.35) starting Monday as the city of Rome inaugurated a new fee structure to help raise money and control crowds at the one of the world’s most celebrated waterworks.

The first tourists to pass through the new ticket check seemed nonplussed by the tariff, noting it was a small price to pay for quality access to a fountain made famous by Federico Fellini’s movie “La Dolce Vita.”

“Before, there were problems accessing the fountain. There were a lot of people. Now, it’s very easy,” said Ilhan Musbah, a tourist from Morocco. “You can take photos, you feel good, you’re comfortable, and on top of that 2 euros is not much.”

The tourist fee was rolled out in conjunction with a new 5-euro (nearly \$6) tourist ticket fee for some city museums. In both cases, Rome residents are exempt from the fees and the extra revenue will actually expand the number of city-

run museums that are free for registered Roman residents.

It’s all part of the Eternal City’s efforts to manage tourist flows in a particularly congested part of town, improve the experience and offset the maintenance costs of preserving all of Rome’s cultural heritage. Officials estimate it could net the city 6.5 million euros (\$7.6 million) extra a year.

The city decided to impose the Trevi Fountain fee after seeing positive results already from a yearlong experiment to stagger and limit the number of visitors who can reach the front edge of the basin by imposing lines and pathways for entrance and exit.

“I think tourists were shocked by the fact that the city of Rome is only asking for 2 euros for a site of this level,” Alessandro Onorato, Rome’s assessor of tourism, said Monday. “I believe that if the Trevi Fountain were in New York, they would have charged at least \$100.”

The fee follows a similar ticketing system at Rome’s Pantheon monument and the more complicated tourist day-

tripper tax that the lagoon city of Venice imposed last year in a bid to ease overtourism and make the city more livable for residents. The Italian fees still pale in comparison to the 45% price hike that French authorities announced for the Louvre Museum for most non-European visitors, where tickets can now run to 32 euros (\$37) from 22 euros.

The Trevi fee, which can be paid in advance online, enables tourists to get close to the fountain during prime-time daylight hours. The view for those admiring the late Baroque masterpiece from the piazza above remains free, as it is up close after hours.

The towering fountain features the Titan god Oceanus flanked by falls cascading down the travertine rocks into a shallow turquoise pool, where Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg famously took their nighttime dip in “La Dolce Vita.” While bathing is prohibited nowadays, legend has it that visitors who toss a coin over their shoulders and make a wish will return to Rome.

Craft

‘The art of ‘hat’ is a form of worship’

Iraqi calligrapher finishes colossal Quran manuscript

ISTANBUL, Feb 3, (AP): Iraqi calligrapher Ali Zaman gazes with pride at his masterpiece - a colossal, handwritten manuscript of the Quran that has taken six years of craft and devotion to complete.

The finished work consists of 302 double sided scrolls, each measuring 4 meters (13 feet) in length and 1.5 meters in width. The sheets, resembling heavy parchment, were custom made for Zaman with a blend of traditional materials including eggs, corn starch and alum.

“Anytime I think of this Quran ... it gives me very nice feeling that the mighty God gave me the life to be able to finish this thing and complete it. I feel very proud,” the 54-year-old told The Associated Press at a mosque in Istanbul where the manuscript is kept.

Islamic calligraphy is regarded as one of the most valued artistic traditions in the Muslim world. The art form served to preserve and embellish Islam’s holy book and was later also used to adorn mosques, palaces and manuscripts.

In Turkey, it flourished during the Ottoman era when the art was supported by the state and calligraphers developed distinctive styles.

Today, Istanbul is considered an important center for the art, known as “hat” in Turkish.

Art expert Umit Coskunsu says that because of the Islamic tradition’s restrictions on depicting figures, calligraphy became a central form of artistic expression. He describes “hat” as a form of worship.

“The art of hat is not just calligraphy, it is seen as a means of worshipping God and coming closer to Him,” Coskunsu said. Zaman was born in Ranya, a town in Sulaymaniyah governorate, in Iraq’s northern semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

He moved his family to Istanbul in 2017 to pursue his Quran project and to hone his craft because, he says, the art of calligraphy is more valued in Turkey than in his home country.

Zaman says he developed an interest in Islamic calligraphy around the age of 12 when he was first exposed to it in Iraq.

“The art of calligraphy was very attractive to me ... I felt that I could find my soul in it,” he said.

Each sheet of the manuscript was entirely handwritten. Zaman says he labored from dawn to dusk over a period of six years in a small room reserved for him at the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque in Istanbul.

The manuscript is being touted as the world’s largest, though it has not received that recognition officially. Ac-



Iraqi calligrapher Ali Zaman works on a scroll of a massive handwritten manuscript of the Quran, Islam’s holy book, at the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey, Jan. 14. (AP)



Rekar Zaman, son of Iraqi calligrapher Ali Zaman, holds a scroll of a massive handwritten manuscript of the Quran at the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey, Jan. 14. (AP)

cording to Guinness World Records, the largest printed Quran was achieved by the Holy Quran Museum in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, in March 2025. Zaman’s son remembers long absences while his father worked on the project. “We only saw him when we would bring him food

or when he came home at night to sleep,” said Rekar Zaman. “Thank God, we see more of him now.”

The manuscript is stored in stacked scrolls, and covered for protection from dust and moisture, at the mosque where he created it.

His ultimate wish is for it to go to a buyer who can put it on public display.

“I want for this Quran to be in a country - in a museum, or in a place that is special for calligraphy - where it can be appreciated and valued,” Zaman said.

Dog Show

Paws and partners shine

Westminster couples bond over dogs, and each other

NEW YORK, Feb 3, (AP): Must love dogs. Really, really love dogs.

The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show spotlights the bond between people and dogs. But reaching the United States’ premier canine event also can be about another kind of love.

“For me, it would be very hard to do this without somebody who was as vested in it as I am,” said two-time Westminster-winning handler Bill McFadden, who’s half of a dogdom power couple. His wife, Taffe McFadden, handled the second-place winner in 2019, and she and Bono the Havanese were among past finalists who appeared Monday evening in a special tribute to Westminster’s 150th annual show.

Yes, the McFaddens - who met at a dog show in the late 1970s and married in 1985 - have faced and sometimes beaten each other at various shows. And no, there are no hard feelings.

“I think some of my best memories are watching Taffe win best in show,” Bill said Saturday while the couple readied for Westminster. “If one of us takes the big ribbon home, it’s awesome. Doesn’t matter which one.”

After starting with agility and other sports on Saturday, the storied show got down to its traditional business Monday. Dogs ranging from teeny Chihuahuas to towering Irish wolfhounds started competing in the multi-round, breed-by-breed competition that leads to the best in show award Tuesday night.

Showcase

Some finalists were chosen Monday, starting with Zaida, an Afghan hound who has twice won the World Dog Show, a major international showcase. She’d never gotten this far at Westminster before, and handler Willy Santiago told the crowd he’d been waiting for “this day for all my life.”

“She’s the dog that makes me feel everything can happen,” he said, choking up.

Zaida’s rivals will include a Lhasa apso named JJ, who won the massive AKC National Championship show in December.

“He’s a show dog all the time,” breeder, handler and co-owner Susan Giles of Manakin Sabot, Virginia, said in an interview earlier Monday. A Lhasa owner for 53 years, she said JJ is everything the breed is supposed to be, though he departs from one norm for a breed that’s generally reserved with strangers: “He’ll talk to everybody.”

Also advancing were Graham, an old English sheepdog whose grandfather, Swagger, was runner-up at Westminster in 2013, and Cookie, a Maltese who pulled off an upset in the toy dog semifinals. Cookie bested two-time prior Westminster finalist and former AKC National Championship winner Comet the shih tzu.

Graham loves showing. “He comes from a long line of dogs that love it, and we’re just happy to be on the end of his lead,” handler and longtime breeder Colton Johnson told the audience.

Three more finalists will be chosen Tuesday night.

A number of veteran Westminster handlers are married couples, and no wonder.

The McFaddens, for instance, travel the country to 150 to 200 dog shows a year and share their home with a varying cast of canines that need feeding, exercise, grooming and training.

“I can’t even imagine trying to date and explain to somebody, ‘Now, I’m going to be gone five days a week, and I’m going to have like 20 dogs with me,’” said Bill McFadden, who largely credits his wife “for any semblance of order that we have” at their home on five acres (two hectares) in Acampo, California.



Wilbur the beagle, a blue triangle beagle canine actor known for his role in ‘The Rip,’ jumps onto his handler’s legs at the 150th Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, Monday, Feb. 2, 2026, in New York. (AP)

Variety

BUDAPEST: A China-Hungary musical joint premiere was held Monday evening in Budapest as the European tour of “The New Four Seasons of Hungary and China Concert” opened at the Liszt Academy of Music.

The concert featured The Hungarian Four Seasons by Hungarian composer Peter Stefan and The Chinese Four Seasons by Chinese composer Wen Ziyang.

Hungarian pianist Gergely Kovacs performed Stefan’s piano work, which incorporates more than 50 Hungarian folk melodies and depicts scenes of the changing seasons. Chinese violinist Lu Siquing led the United Chinese-Hungarian Chamber Orchestra in performing Wen’s The Chinese Four Seasons, a composition inspired by China’s traditional 24 solar terms.

Although created in different cultural contexts, both works reflect a shared understanding of time and seasonal change. (Xinhua)

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VATICAN CITY: Michelangelo’s “The Last Judgment,” the imposing fresco of heaven and hell which dominates the Sistine Chapel, is undergoing its first major restoration in three decades, the Vatican said Monday.

The Sistine Chapel will remain open to visitors during the three-month cleaning, albeit with scaffolding partially obstructing the view of the fresco, the Vatican Museums said in a statement.

The cleaning, the first major restoration since 1994, will remove microparticle buildup on the plaster from so many people visiting each day. The museum called the film a “widespread whitish haze, produced by the deposition of microparticles of foreign substances carried by air movements.” (AP)

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LONDON: A British think tank raised concerns about the health of the artificial intelligence (AI) news environment, calling for the government’s engagement in fostering rules, including fair payment and transparent source disclosure of the AI-generated news.

In a report released this week, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) said that AI tools are rapidly becoming the primary gateway through which the public accesses news, fundamentally reshaping the news ecosystem. (Xinhua)

Findings may improve understanding of infant learning

2-month-olds see the world in more complex way than experts thought

NEW YORK, Feb 3, (AP): A new study suggests that babies are able to distinguish between the different objects they see around them at 2 months old, which is earlier than scientists previously thought.

The findings, published Monday in *Nature Neuroscience*, may help doctors and researchers better understand cognitive development in infancy.

“It really tells us that infants are interacting with the world in a lot more complex of a way than we might imagine,” said lead author Cliona O’Doherty. “Looking at a 2-month-old, we maybe wouldn’t think that they’re understanding the world to that level.”

The study looked at data from 130 2-month-olds who underwent brain scans while awake. The babies viewed images from a dozen categories commonly seen in the first year of life, such as trees and animals. When babies looked at an image like a cat, their brains might “fire” a certain way that researchers could record, O’Doherty said. If they looked at an inanimate object, their brains would fire differently.

The technique - known as functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI - allowed scientists to examine visual function more precisely than in the past. Many previous studies relied on how long an infant looked at an object, which can be difficult to assess at younger ages. Some of those past studies suggested that infants as young as 3 to 4 months could distinguish between categories such as animals



In this undated photo, baby Sadie attends her 2-month Foundcog scan with her mother Donna at Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience in Dublin, Ireland. (AP)

and furniture.

“What we’re showing is that they really already have this ability to group together categories at two months,” O’Doherty said. “So it’s something much more complex than we would’ve thought before.”

In the new study, many of the babies returned at 9 months, and researchers successfully collected data from 66 of them. In the 9-month-olds, the brain was able to distinguish living things from inanimate objects much more strongly than in the 2-month-olds, O’Doherty said.

Someday, researchers said, scientists may be able to connect such brain imaging to cognitive outcomes later in life.

Liuba Papeo, a neuroscientist at the National Center for Scientific

Research in France, said the number of babies in the study is one thing that makes the work “impressive and unique.” Brain imaging with very young infants presents challenges.

“One - perhaps the most obvious - is that the infant needs to (lie) comfortably in the fMRI scanner while awake without moving,” she said in an email.

O’Doherty, who did the work at Trinity College Dublin in Ireland, said the key was making the experience as comfortable as possible for the babies. Inside the scanner, they reclined on a bean bag so they were snug.

The images “appear really big above them while they’re lying down,” she said. “It’s like IMAX for babies.”

‘High nanoplastics exposure risks kidney damage’

Personalized vaccines trial offers hope for kids with aggressive brain cancers

SYDNEY, Feb 3, (Xinhua): Australia has launched a world-first clinical trial using personalized mRNA vaccines to treat children and adolescents with advanced or treatment-resistant brain tumors.

The PaedNEO-VAX study, co-led by Australia’s University of Queensland (UQ) and the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), will enroll patients at eight pediatric hospitals across Australia, offering new hope for families facing the country’s deadliest childhood disease, said a UQ statement on Tuesday.

Clinical lead Jordan Hansford from SAHMRI said the trial was available for pediatric patients with relapsed and unresponsive high-grade brain tumors, including gliomas and medulloblastomas.

Phase I will assess safety, followed by Phase II to test effectiveness and impact on survival and quality of life, Hansford said.

The trial’s scientific lead Brandon Wainwright from UQ’s Frazer Institute said personalized mRNA cancer vaccines had shown promising results in adults with rare and hard-to-treat cancers, including pancreatic cancer and melanoma.

“After identifying unique cancer markers in each child’s tumor using genome sequencing and advanced data analysis, we will select tumor-specific vaccine targets,” Wainwright said.

Customized vaccines for each child will be manufactured in the Australian state of Queensland by Southern RNA and sent to trial sites for dosing within about 10 weeks of trial enrollment, backed by 2.58 million Australian dollars (1.81 million U.S. dollars) in federal funding, researchers said.



New Australian research warns that high nanoplastics

exposure could damage kidney cell health and function, raising concerns over the effects of tiny plastic particles on human health.

Researchers from Australia’s Flinders University have led new study on whether nanoplastics can accumulate or cause damage in kidneys, the body’s major blood filtering system, said a news release on Tuesday.

The study, published in the international journal *Cell Biology and Toxicology*, found that while lower concentrations of nanoplastics (less than 1 micron or 0.001mm in diameter) had limited short-term effects of immediate toxicity to the kidney cells, higher burdens can compromise overall cell health and function, causing changes to the cell shape, survival and cell regulation.

“The results also indicate that the effects are influenced not only by concentration but also by polymer composition and particle size, with some combinations inducing significant cellular changes even at relatively low doses,” said the study’s first author Hayden Gillings, a PhD candidate in nanoplastics and health at Flinders University.

Sustained or repeated damage to regulatory kidney cells could impair kidney function, reduce filtration efficiency, clearance capacity, and lead to their potential buildup of nanoplastics in kidney tissue, researchers warned.

The findings also highlight the need for exploring biological outcomes, including potential DNA damage and long-term functional consequences, to fully assess the risks posed by environmental nanoplastics to kidney health and systemic exposure.

Rising plastic waste is breaking down across Earth’s land, sea, and air, causing the proliferation of microplastic (pieces less than 5mm) and nanoplastic pollution which threatens all lifeforms, the researchers warned, urging tougher measures to curb their release into the environment, food chain, and living organisms.

More cold

Phil sees shadow, winter continues

PUNXSUTAWNEY, Pa., Feb 3, (AP): Punxsutawney Phil predicted six more weeks of wintry weather Monday, a forecast sure to disappoint many after what’s already been a long, cold season across large parts of the United States.

His annual prediction and announcement that he had seen his shadow was translated by his handlers in the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club at Gobbler’s Knob in western Pennsylvania.

The news was greeted with a mix of cheers and boos from the tens of thousands who braved temperatures in the single-digits Fahrenheit to await the annual prognostication. The extreme cold kept the crowd bundled up and helped keep people on the main stage dancing.

Usually guests can come up on stage and take pictures of Phil after his prediction, but this year the announcer said it was too cold for that and his handlers were afraid to keep him out too long. Instead, the audience was asked to come to the stage, turn around and “do a selfie.”

The club says that when Phil is deemed to have not seen his shadow, that means there will be an early spring. When he does see it, it’s six more weeks of winter. Phil tends to predict a longer winter far more often than an early spring.

The annual ritual goes back more than a century, with ties to ancient farming traditions in Europe. Punxsutawney’s festivities have grown considerably since the 1993 movie “Groundhog Day,” starring Bill Murray.

Phil isn’t the only animal being consulted for long-term weather forecasts Monday. There are formal and informal Groundhog Day events in many places in the U.S., Canada and beyond.

Michael Venos, who tracks Groundhog Day predictions at [countdowntogroundhogday.com](#), said the early results Monday indicated a split verdict.

Agreeing with Punxsutawney Phil that more winter weather is on the way this year have been General Beauregard Lee, a Georgia groundhog, and groundhog mascot Dover Doug in Pennsylvania.

Experts warn against unregulated supplements

Do you really need to control your cortisol? Probably not, doctors say

NEW YORK, Feb 3, (AP): Cortisol, what is known as the stress hormone, is the talk of the internet.

Wellness influencers warn about the various symptoms of chronically high cortisol: waking up at 3 a.m., swollen “cortisol face” and accumulating belly fat. And many offer diet and exercise routines that they claim will help.

But do you really need supplements and advice from influencers to control your cortisol? Doctors say it’s very unlikely.

Don’t be so quick to label this hormone as a villain, they say. And if you suspect something is off, talk to a professional.

Here’s what to know.

Cortisol is a hormone and you need it to survive. It comes from the adrenal glands, located above the kidneys, and is one of many hormones at play in times of stress. It can influence inflammation, the immune system, metabolism, blood pressure and many other bodily functions.

Cortisol is incredibly attuned to your body and environment. It fluctuates throughout the day, rising in the morning when you wake up and falling at night before you go to sleep. It also rises when you’re sick or in other times of stress, doctors say.

“Our cortisol level is regulated by the minute,” said Dr. Roberto Salvatori, a Johns Hopkins University endocrinologist. “It is very sensitive.”

It’s rare that people have a disorder where cortisol on its own is the cause. If a person’s cortisol level is chronically low, doctors would diagnose them with adrenal insufficiency. This includes an autoimmune condition called Addison’s disease, in which the immune system attacks the adrenal gland.

People with Cushing’s syndrome have cortisol levels that are too high. Among its causes are tumors, which are usually benign, in the adrenal or pituitary glands. It is treated with medication, surgery or both.

The symptoms of either high or low cortisol are wide-ranging and can overlap with signs of other health is-



A German soccer fan reacts at a fan zone after a quarter final match between Germany and Spain at the Euro 2024 soccer tournament in Berlin, Germany, July 5, 2024. (AP)

sues.

Adrenal insufficiency can manifest as fatigue, unintentional weight loss, low blood pressure and loss of appetite. Cushing’s syndrome comes with weight gain, high blood pressure, brittle bones, weight gain around the face and belly, abnormal hair growth in women, sleep issues and more.

Diagnoses take time, multiple tests and an understanding of a patient’s overall health, doctors said. Cortisol can be measured through the patient’s saliva, blood or urine.

“There’s a lot of nuance to interpreting cortisol and that’s what makes me a little bit nervous about patients getting cortisol testing for themselves without having some kind of physician oversight,” said Dr. Katie Guttenberg, an endocrinologist at UTHHealth Houston.

A one-off cortisol blood test won’t provide useful information for most people, she said, and could lead to unnecessary stress and medical follow-ups. For example, women who are on birth control will have falsely high cortisol blood results, because of how the medicine works in the body.

Endocrinologists say there are no proven over-the-counter treatments for high or low cortisol, despite claims that supplements like ashwagandha and magnesium are helpful in “lowering cortisol.”

Beyond Cushing’s syndrome, chronically high cortisol is a concern, said Dr. James Findling, an endocrinologist with the Medical College of Wisconsin, but more research into treatments is needed.

He worries about people taking unregulated supplements when it’s not always clear what’s in them.

“They’re not innocuous,” Findling warned.

Even in patients who have Cushing’s syndrome, the medications have to be carefully dosed, Salvatori said, because an overcorrection could drive cortisol levels too low and cause other health issues.

Salvatori notes there is a condition called “pseudo Cushing’s syndrome,” which is often milder but causes some of the same physical effects despite the patient not having a tumor. It can be caused by alcoholism and other chronic issues.

Local residents grapple with health issues

Forever chemicals everywhere as PFAS in carpet mills contaminate drinking water

NEW YORK, Feb 3, (AP): A major investigative collaboration among five newsrooms shows how chemicals used to make carpets stain-resistant have contaminated swaths of the South.

In the mills of northwest Georgia, workers treated carpets with these chemicals starting in the 1970s. Carried in manufacturing wastewater, the chemicals spread into rivers and, ultimately, drinking water.

The odorless and colorless compounds - called PFAS by scientists and known colloquially as forever chemicals because they take decades or more to break down - are now everywhere in the region. That includes in people, where PFAS circulate in blood and lodge in some organs.

As the carpet industry grappled with the risks to human health and the environment, its executives coordinated privately with the local public water utility in ways that would effectively shield their companies from oversight. And carpet makers kept using PFAS for years - even as scientific evidence solidified concerns in the 2000s and 2010s about the threats they can pose, including certain cancers and a compromised immune system.

Major carpet companies say they have complied with all regulations and have stopped using PFAS. They point out that their suppliers falsely assured them older formulations of the chemicals were safe.

The full story of Georgia’s power structures prioritizing a prized industry over public health is emerging through interviews and court records from lawsuits against the industry and its chemical suppliers. The reporting shows how the economic engine that sustained northwest Georgia polluted parts of Alabama and South Carolina, too.

Here are takeaways from the investigation’s reporting on the toxic legacy of the South’s carpet empire. Some linked articles may have restrictions.

Carpet making in the US has been



Faye Jackson gets her blood tested at a medical clinic in Calhoun, Ga., on Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2025, as her daughter Marie waits outside for her turn. Their blood tests revealed they have PFAS levels above the safety threshold outlined by national health experts. (AP)

centered in northwest Georgia for decades. Fleets of semi-trucks stamped with logos of the world’s largest carpet companies rumble around a region where textiles have employed families for generations. Some of those local residents have health conditions linked to forever chemical exposure.

“Around here, you have to understand the people. That’s all we know, right?” said Marie Jackson, a former carpet worker who has PFAS in her blood and nodules growing on her thyroid gland. “You go in, you know your job, you do your job, you go home.”

Reporting by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The Associated Press and FRONTLINE (PBS) showed how a lack of state and federal regulations let carpet companies and their chemical suppliers legally switch among different versions of PFAS. For decades, mills of the two largest carpet companies - Shaw Industries and Mohawk Industries Inc. - sent PFAS-polluted wastewater through sewer pipes for treatment that did not remove the chemicals. Much of the tainted water ended up in the Conasauga River.

Both Shaw and Mohawk said that they stopped using PFAS in 2019 and that they have operated in accordance with permits issued by Dalton Utilities, the local water provider. The utility said it takes direction from federal and state regulators, who have not prohibited PFAS in industrial wastewater.

In South Carolina, detective work identified PFAS contamination - a discovery that led to a lawsuit and then a possible path for companies to reduce future pollution.

The Post and Courier traced a local river watchdog’s discovery of forever chemicals to a river by a Shaw Industries factory. Instead of fighting in court, Shaw proposed a solution: Install a special filtration system called granular activated carbon to capture PFAS before it leaves the factory. The watchdog group agreed and withdrew the lawsuit.

The Conversation

From ski jumping to speedskating

Winter sports represent physics in action

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

By Amy Pope
Clemson University

During the 2026 Winter Olympics, athletes will leap off ramps, slide across ice and spin through the air. These performances will look different to my students who have studied physics through sports. These feats will be something the students have already measured, modeled or felt. As a physicist, I help my students see the games as a place where classroom lessons come to life.

I spend a lot of time thinking about how abstract ideas such as kinematics, forces, energy, momentum and motion are understood in the real world. Recently, I listened to a meeting of the Clemson football team’s offense to gain an appreciation for what my student-athletes do. But I came out with an idea for a new introductory physics class.

While sitting in the back row, listening to the coach break down the Tigers’ upcoming game, I realized that I could understand every single word said, despite never having played football. Most of the guys were called Sam or Mike, and they continually talked about gaps and boxes. I knew the terminology. I followed the diagrams. I could repeat the language. And yet, I understood absolutely nothing about how that information translated into a strategy for winning the game.

It dawned on me that my confusion is likely similar to how many students experience physics. They can follow the individual pieces, equations, definitions and vocabulary, but they have trouble connecting those pieces to real-world meaning. Physics makes sense as a subject of study, yet it often seems disconnected from everyday life.

I created Clemson’s Physics of Sports class to close the gap. The course begins not with abstract problems or idealized systems, but with sports that people already care about. The class then reveals the physics that make those activities possible.

Many introductory, algebra-based physics courses have students study frictionless blocks sliding down imaginary planes. In my course, students analyze the newest Olympic sports.

Ski mountaineering, making its Olympic debut in 2026, requires athletes to climb steep, snow-covered slopes entirely under their own power. My students uncover an elegant physics problem involving friction, the force that resists sliding between surfaces.

To accelerate uphill, the skis must experience a small amount of friction while moving in the forward direction. However, the same skis must provide enough friction in the opposite direction to prevent the skier from sliding back down the slope.

Skiers resolve this contradiction using climbing skins on their skis that are engineered to grip the snow in one direction while allowing smooth sliding in the opposite direction. In class, students examine how the skin material’s design helps climbers summit the mountain efficiently.

Students also look at how specialized materials assist in ski jumping.

The skintight suits skiers wear are not for aesthetics; they help control the physics of air. Loose fabric increases drag and can even generate lift, much like a wing-suit worn by skydivers. Tight-fitting clothing minimizes these effects, making competition fairer by leveling the field for all athletes.

When it comes to skating, small changes in physics can set medalists apart from the rest of the field. In class, students investigate how speedskaters can lean dramatically toward the ice without falling by analyzing their centripetal acceleration and the forces acting on their bodies during high-speed turns. Centripetal acceleration is the accelerating force directed toward the center of a turn. It keeps the skater moving in a curved path rather than moving along a straight path.

Figure skating provides another striking example where small changes in body positioning can dramatically affect the athlete’s performance. Angular momentum, which describes how much rotational motion an object has, depends on both how fast the object spins and how its mass is distributed. Angular momentum allows skaters to control how many times they spin in midair.

In class, students don’t just watch the elite athletes - they model these concepts with their own movements. By sitting on a rotating stool with weights in their outstretched hands, students emulate a figure skater by pulling their arms inward and spinning much faster as their mass moves closer to their axis of rotation.

By studying sports, students begin to see physics not as a collection of formulas but as a framework for understanding how the world works. A basic understanding of physics allows students to critically evaluate everyday claims, ranging from viral sports clips to misleading headlines and exaggerated performance claims.

In highlight reels, for example, athletes often appear to steer left or right after taking off on a jump. Physics students know that can’t be the case - once airborne, there is no way to change that path without pushing on something.

Elite athletic performances aren’t the only places to see physics in action, of course. The same principles underlie most everyday experiences. With sports as an entry point, students can learn a language that allows them to interpret the physical world around them.

Physics does not live only in textbooks or exams. It is written into every stride, turn and jump, at every level, from recreational activities to Olympic competitions. (AP)

‘Rozier should receive \$26.6 million salary despite charges’

MIAMI, Feb 3, (AP): An arbitrator has decided Miami Heat guard Terry Rozier should be receiving his \$26.6 million salary for this season despite being on administrative leave while facing federal gambling-related charges, the National Basketball Players Association said.

Rozier’s paychecks for this season have been placed into an interest-bearing account. While the collective bargaining agreement between the league and its players allows for the withholding of salary in certain situations, the union argued that Rozier’s case did not apply.

“We are pleased with the arbitrator’s ruling and remain committed to ensuring Terry’s due process rights are protected and that he is afforded the presumption of innocence throughout this process,” the NBPA said in a statement first released to ESPN and then to other outlets.

The arbitration ruling essentially means nothing to the Heat, who have

had Rozier’s salary on their books this season and counting against their cap.

Rozier was arrested in October as part of a sprawling probe that saw charges brought against more than 30 people, including Portland coach Chauncey Billups.

Federal officials alleged that Rozier conspired with associates to help them win bets based on his statistical performance in a game when he was with the Charlotte Hornets on March 23, 2023 - more than seven months before the lien was prepared and nearly eight months before it was formally filed. Rozier played sparingly in that game and gamblers who wagered that he would finish “under” certain statistical totals won those bets.

The Heat acquired Rozier from the Hornets on Jan. 23, 2024, in exchange for Kyle Lowry and a 2027 first-round draft pick. The NBA was aware of unusual prop bet activity surrounding Rozier’s performance in that Hornets game against the New Orleans Pelicans;

it was flagged by sportsbooks that afternoon.

The league looked into the matter and did not find enough evidence to sanction Rozier and has since noted Rozier cooperated with that probe. The Hornets have not said if they were aware of any federal probes into Rozier’s conduct at that time.

Details of the federal investigation were not disclosed to the Heat when the trade was made. It seems unlikely that Miami would have gone forward with the trade had it known there was a potential of charges being filed.

Rozier’s lawyers have asked for the charges against him to be thrown out, arguing that the government overreached by turning a private dispute over bettors’ use of nonpublic information into a federal case. Rozier has pleaded not guilty to wire fraud conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy charges. He was released on \$3 million bond and is due back in court in March.

Milan-Cortina poised for Olympic breakthroughs



Chinese short track speed skater Lin Xiaojun (left) attends a training session ahead of the upcoming Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics in Beijing, China. (Xinhua)

New sports, new stars

BEIJING, Feb 3, (Xinhua): With snow having settled deep across the Alps, blanketing the mountains of northern Italy in white, preparations for the Milan-Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games are entering their final stretch.

Four years after Beijing hosted the 2022 Winter Olympics under unprecedented pandemic conditions, Milan-Cortina 2026 will unfold in a very different global landscape.

Organizers say the challenge now is not simply to host another successful Games, but to define a distinctive Italian approach, rooted in culture, landscape, and innovation.

Milan-Cortina 2026 will mark a Winter Games jointly hosted by a global metropolis and an Alpine mountain town. Roughly 2,900 athletes from around the world are expected to compete for 116 gold medals, spread across Italy’s cities, valleys, and peaks.

The opening ceremony will be held on February 6 at Milan’s iconic San Siro stadium. Legendary Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli will lend his voice to the spectacle, joining a lineage of global stars who have helped turn Olympic ceremonies into cultural touchstones.

The Games will conclude on February 22, with the closing ceremony to be staged at the Verona Arena. Built nearly 2,000 years ago, the amphitheater has long hosted operas, concerts, and cultural festivals.

Northern Italy itself offers a rare blend of jagged Alpine ridgelines and tranquil lakes, along with medieval towns and modern cities. Skiing and skating are deeply rooted in daily life, forming a local winter culture that spans generations.

Milan-Cortina 2026 will be the most



IOC President Kirsty Coventry gestures as she speaks during the opening of the IOC Session, ahead of the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy. (AP)

spread-out Winter Olympics ever, spanning two regions - Lombardy and Veneto - and the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano. From Milan, Italy’s cultural and financial center, to the alpine town of Cortina d’Ampezzo, the Games will be staged across a wide range of settings with deep sporting traditions.

“It will showcase an Italian vision of the Winter Olympics - bold, inspiring and beautifully diverse,” said organizing committee president Giovanni Malago. “It will weave together majestic Alpine valleys, dynamic metropolitan centers, and some of the most breathtaking landscapes our country has to offer.” The Games’ mascots are Tina and Milo, a sister-and-brother pair of stoats symbolizing the meeting of nature and city life. Their names draw directly from the host cities - Tina from Cortina, Milo from Milan - while six snowflake companions, known as Flo, represent teamwork, resilience, and the pursuit of limits.

Milan-Cortina 2026 will be the first Winter Olympics fully built on a multi-hub hosting model. Competition venues will be divided into four clusters:

the urban hub of Milan, and the mountain venues of Cortina, Valtellina, and Val di Fiemme.

Milan will anchor the Games culturally and ceremonially, serving as the core hub for ice sports, while the mountain clusters will stage snow events.

Tradition will also be reimagined. Organizers say that for the first time, the symbolic lighting and extinguishing of the Olympic flame will be doubled, with two Olympic cauldrons symbolizing unity across distance.

On the field of play, ski mountaineering will make its Olympic debut, blending uphill skiing, climbing and high-speed descents into one of the most physically demanding sports on snow.

The Milan-Cortina Games will also feature more women’s events than any Winter Olympics in history. Of the 116 events, 50 are women’s competitions, and 12 are mixed, meaning women will compete in a record 53.4 percent of events. Female athletes will comprise 47 percent of all participants.

Four women’s events will debut, including dual moguls, doubles luge, large hill ski jumping, and sprint ski mountaineering. For the first time, men and women will race identical distances in cross-country skiing.

Italy has long been fertile ground for winter sports champions, having hosted World Cups, world championships, and previous Winter Olympics.

China arrives with momentum of its own. At Beijing 2022, the delegation claimed nine gold medals, its best Winter Olympic performance ever. Now, Chinese athletes are preparing for another push, with strengths concentrated in short track speed skating, freestyle skiing, and snowboarding.

Alongside young talents like Gu Ailing and Su Yiming, veterans also remain central to the narrative. Aerials star Xu Mengtao, 35, is set to compete in her fifth Olympic Games and chase new heights with her 40 World Cup wins and seven crystal globes.

Ancelotti keeps Brazil World Cup squad open

Argentina must stay humble at World Cup, says former forward Saviola

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 3, (Xinhua): Argentina must guard against complacency at this year’s FIFA World Cup despite entering the tournament as favorite, former forward Javier Saviola said.

The Albiceleste will be aiming for its fourth consecutive major tournament victory, having won the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and the past two Copa America titles.

“I think that after becoming world champion, yes, Argentina arrives as favorite,” Saviola told reporters during an event in Rio de Janeiro.

“But I also think you have to go about things with humility and keep your feet on the ground because we know that World Cups are serious business. We know there are tremendously competitive teams that will do everything possible to win,” he said.

Saviola, who represented Argentina at the 2006 World Cup in Germany and earned 39 caps for his country, said Lionel Scaloni’s team would benefit from having an established squad led by Lionel Messi, that is used to playing together. “For the most part, the players who were a part of the last World Cup will be there again this time,” the former Barcelona and Real Madrid player said.

“There is a lot of excitement and a lot of expectation that Argentina can once again be the best national team in the world. They have the squad and the coaching staff to achieve it.” The World Cup will be played in the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19.

Three-time World Cup champion Argentina has been drawn in Group J alongside Algeria, Austria and Jordan.

Brazil manager Carlo Ancelotti said Monday he is close to finalizing his squad



Inter Miami’s Lionel Messi acknowledges fans before the start of an international friendly soccer match against Colombia’s Atletico Nacional in Medellin, Colombia. (AP)

for this year’s FIFA World Cup, but left the door open for adjustments.

With much of the European season still to be played, Ancelotti said there was time for players to push late claims for selection.

“It is not closed,” the Italian said at an event in Rio de Janeiro. “I have said before that Brazil is lucky to have many good players. The list is not closed, but we are close to the final list. There are some positions that are not 100% defined.” Ancelotti praised the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) for its pre-tournament planning. The CBF announced last month that Brazil would be based in New Jersey, using the modern Columbia Park complex in Morristown as its main training facility.

“I think at this moment we have very good logistics, a fantastic training center, a very private hotel to work well,” the 66-year-old said.

“The CBF allowed us to focus on the technical side and gave us peace of mind to work well for the World Cup, which is very important. We are preparing with positivity and optimism.” The World Cup will be played from June 11 to July 19 in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Brazil will begin its Group C campaign against Morocco on June 13 before facing Haiti on June 19 and Scotland on June 24.

Ancelotti’s team will prepare for the tournament with friendlies against France in Boston on March 26 and Croatia in Orlando five days later.

The CBF is also reportedly close to confirming a friendly against Panama in late May and a final warmup match against Egypt in the United States on June 6.

British soccer union wants fewer headers for pros, and none for kids

BOSTON, Feb 3, (AP): The union representing British soccer players will announce on Tuesday the first comprehensive protocol for preventing the brain disease CTE, expanding the heightened concern over concussions to include the damage that can be caused by the less forceful blows from heading the ball.

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The guidelines from the Professional Footballers’ Association, which represents current and former players in the Premier League, the FA Women’s Super League and the English Football Leagues, recommend no more than 10 headers per week - including practice - for professionals. Children under 12 shouldn’t head the ball at all, the PFA said, part of a chronic traumatic encephalopathy prevention protocol designed to reduce head impacts across a player’s lifetime.

“CTE is preventable. Period,” Dr. Adam White, Director of Brain Health at the PFA, said on Monday at the first-ever Global CTE Summit, which was held in San Francisco while the NFL descended on the Bay Area for Sunday’s Super Bowl.

“It is the principles of less heading, less force, less often and later in life that matter,” White told The Associated Press. “These could apply to any sport and are the best hope we have of stopping current and future players from the same fate as former generations.”

The degenerative brain disease now known as CTE was studied in boxers more than a century ago as punch drunk syndrome and first diagnosed in American football players in 2005. It has since become a concern in ice hockey, soccer and other contact sports and among combat veterans and oth-



Brann’s Fredrik Pallesen Knudsen, left, goes for the header with Sturm’s Maurice Malone during the Europa League opening phase soccer match between Sturm Graz and SK Brann in Graz, Austria. (AP)

ers who sustain repeated blows to the head.

A 2017 study found CTE in 110 of 111 brains donated by former NFL players. The disease can only be identified post-

humously through an examination of the brain.

The NFL, college football and many other sports have instituted protocols that guide teams and athletes on returning to play after sustaining a possible concussion.

But the British soccer protocol is the first comprehensive plan to combat CTE by addressing the less dramatic, sub-concussive blows that can be common in practice, according to Chris Nowinski, the founder of the Concussion and CTE Foundation.

Among the more recent concerns are the routine head hits sustained by football lineman, and those from soccer players heading the ball. Research funded by the union and the Football Association found that Scottish pros have a risk of dementia that is 3.5 times greater than the general population; studies of brains from British soccer players found the majority had CTE, including Jeff Astle, Gordon McQueen and Chris Nicholl.

The protocol also includes annual education, support for research and care for ex-players who suspect they are living with CTE. It follows the publication of a CTE prevention framework published in 2023 by researchers assembled by the Concussion and CTE Foundation and Boston University’s CTE Center.

Company concludes sponsorship of 22nd Asian Men’s Handball Championship

Zain Kuwait reaffirms role as key partner of the local sports scene

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Zain Kuwait successfully concluded its sponsorship of the 22nd Asian Men’s Handball Championship (Road to Germany), hosted by Kuwait at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Sports Complex, with the participation of 15 national teams, as part of the qualifiers for the 2027 World Championship in Germany. Through this initiative, Zain reaffirmed its role as a key partner in supporting the local sports scene.

Zain took part in the closing ceremony, attended by former Minister of Information and Culture and former Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al Mutairi, Asian Handball Federation President Bader Al-Theyab, and Kuwait Handball Federation President Shabeeb Al-Hajri.

During the ceremony, Zain Kuwait’s Community Partnerships Team Leader Faisal Al-Duwaihees honored Al-Azraq goalkeeper Hasan Safar with the tournament’s Best Player award on the sidelines of the event.

Zain congratulated Kuwait’s national handball team on its standout performance throughout the tournament, after Al-Azraq delivered an impressive run that culminated in securing third place and clinching qualification to the 2027 World Championship in Germany, reflecting the strong technical capabilities and wide fan base of Kuwaiti handball.

The company also congratulated Bahrain’s national team on winning the title for the first time in its history.

This comes as an extension of Zain’s approach to supporting major regional tournaments hosted by Kuwait, showcasing the country’s organizational excellence and sporting presence at both the local and continental levels, within an ongoing strategic partnership with the Kuwait Handball Federation.

Zain expressed its thanks and appreciation to the Federation for its significant efforts in delivering this outstanding edition of the Asian championship.

Zain’s support for the tournament aligns with its vision to empower young athletes, spotlight national talents, and reinforce the values of fair competition within a healthy sporting environment that positively impacts society.

It also contributes to strengthening Kuwait’s position as a dynamic regional sports hub through hosting high-caliber continental tournaments.



Al-Mutairi, Al-Theyab, and Al-Hajri honor Bahrain’s national team with the championship title.



Al-Duwaihees honors Al-Azraq star Hasan Safar with the tournament’s Best Player award.



Zain is proud to have been part of this continental sporting event hosted on Kuwaiti soil.

Charlotte roars back from 22-pt hole to sink Pelicans

Short-handed Rockets edge Pacers

CHARLOTTE, N.C., Feb 3, (AP): LaMelo Ball overcame an early head-to-head collision with coach Charles Lee to score 24 points, and the surging Charlotte Hornets fought back from a 22-point deficit to beat the New Orleans Pelicans 102-95 on Monday for their seventh straight win.

Kon Kneupel added 17 points, hitting four 3s, and Brandon Miller and Grant Williams each scored 16 as Charlotte pulled within a half-game of the Atlanta Hawks for the 10th spot in the Eastern Conference.

The Hornets overcame 17 turnovers while matching their longest winning streak since March 2016.

Trey Murphy III scored 27 points to lead the Pelicans, who have lost six of their last nine. Zion Williamson finished with 14 points and 11 rebounds, while Derik Queen had 16 points.

Rockets 118, Pacers 114

In Indianapolis, Alperen Sengun matched his season high with 39 points, and Jabari Smith Jr. added 19 to help short-handed Houston



Houston Rockets center Alperen Sengun (28) drives past Indiana Pacers forward Bennedict Mathurin (00) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis. (AP)

overcome the absence of All-Star forward Kevin Durant to beat Indiana.

Durant sat out, coach Ime Udoka said, after spraining his left ankle when he stepped on a fan’s foot. The Rockets already were missing center Steven Adams, who is expected to miss the rest of this season following surgery on his injured left ankle, so Sengun did the heavy lifting.

He made 13 of 25 from the field and 13 of 18 from the free-throw line including 8 of 12 during the fourth quarter. Houston won its

third straight, got its fifth victory in six games and captured its third straight on the road.

All-Star forward Pascal Siakam finished with 27 points and Benedict Mathurin added 25 to lead the Pacers, who charged back from a 12-point deficit in the third quarter to take the lead. But they didn’t have quite enough to extend their winning streak to a season-best three straight.

Grizzlies 137, Timberwolves 128

In Memphis, Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 30 points, Ty Jerome added 19 and Memphis built a 20-point

lead in the second half and held on for a victory over Minnesota.

Memphis maintained a double-digit advantage through much of the fourth quarter. Minnesota, behind Donte DiVincenzo and Anthony Edwards, seemed poised to overtake Memphis, but the Grizzlies never let the Timberwolves within nine points and snapped a six-game losing streak.

Jaylen Wells scored 18 points for Memphis, while Cam Spencer and Vince Williams Jr. added 16 points apiece.

Edwards led Minnesota with 39 points and seven rebounds. Jaden McDaniels scored 29 points and DiVincenzo finished with 21, including 13 in the fourth. Minnesota had its four-game win streak halted.

76ers 128, Clippers 113

In Inglewood, Tyrese Maxey scored 29 points, including seven 3-pointers, Dominick Barlow added 26 points and 16 rebounds, and Philadelphia beat Los Angeles for their fourth consecutive victory.

The game featured two big names who weren’t selected as All-Star reserves: Joel Embiid of the Sixers and Kawhi Leonard of the Clippers.

Embiid had 24 points as he continues to gain full strength after a right ankle injury. The Sixers improved to 11-10 without Paul George, who is serving a 25-game suspension for violating the NBA’s anti-drug program.

Aghli Nayef captures Al-Nawasi Cup



Al-Roumi and Al-Kandari present the ‘Marbat Al-Nawasi’ Cup to the winner.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: The horse “Aghli Nayef”, owned by Al-Fahran Stables, claimed the Al-Nawasi Stable Cup, sponsored by Allam Ali Al-Kandari, for purebred Arabian horses of Egyptian bloodlines, after winning the 1,600-meter race in a time of 2:02.10. The victory came in the seventh race of the 14th meeting at the Hunting and Equestrian Club.

In other results, “Mahmas”, owned by Al-Owaimer, won the Al-Anbaa Newspaper Cup in the fifth race, while “Batal Dubai”, owned by Al-Shouri, captured the Hunting and Equestrian Club Cup in the sixth race.

At the conclusion of the event, Hamad

Allam Al-Kandari, representing his father, the owner of Al-Nawasi Stable, along with Alaa Hamad Al-Roumi, owner of Al-Raya Stable, presented the trophies to the winners. Al-Roumi also handed Al-Kandari a commemorative shield in recognition of his continued support for horse racing.

Hamad Allam Al-Kandari reaffirmed Al-Nawasi Stable’s commitment to supporting purebred Arabian horses of Egyptian bloodlines, emphasizing the importance of preserving this valued equestrian tradition.

He added that horse owners and enthusiasts remain united in their efforts to sustain and promote this branch of equestrian sport.

Best of the Rest

Tigre edges Racing with late goals: Ignacio Russo and Gonzalo Martinez struck late as Tigre continued its impressive start to the season with a 3-1 home win over Racing in Argentina’s Apertura tournament.

Tigre’s David Romero opened the scoring just before halftime when he dribbled half the length of the pitch before rounding goalkeeper Facundo Cambeses and rolling the ball into an empty net.

The visitors equalized in the 80th minute through Gabriel Rojas, whose first-time effort from 20 yards flew in off the gloves of Felipe Zenobio.

Russo restored his side’s lead against the run of play five minutes later with a long-range shot on the counterattack. (Xinhua)

Sudan’s Amer completes Kazma’s foreign line-up

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Kazma Club has completed its foreign-player roster after signing Sudanese professional Amer Abdullah on a six-month deal.

Amer becomes Kazma’s fifth foreign player, joining Algerians Idriss Chaabi and Moaz Haddad, Yemeni Nasser Mohamdoh, and Cameroonian Didier Lamkel.

The club made significant changes to its foreign contingent during the winter transfer window, which closed last Saturday, parting ways with four players: Jordanians Anas Al-Awadat, Ali Azayza, and Youssef Abu Jazar, along with Beninese striker Samson Akinyoola.

Kazma explained that Al-Awadat returned to Al-Wehdad of Jordan due to personal circumstances that required his presence in his home country, while Azayza was loaned to Al-Shabab of Saudi Arabia. Both players, whose contracts run until June 2028, are set to return to Kazma at the end of the current season.



Amer Abdullah celebrates after scoring a goal.

Meanwhile, the club terminated Abu Jazar’s contract after head coach Dragan Tadić was unconvinced by his level, while Akinyoola’s contract was canceled after he suffered an injury expected to keep him sidelined for nearly two months.

Amer, born in 1999 to an Australian father, previously played for Australian clubs Avondale and Green Gully. He also impressed at the Arab Cup finals held in Qatar last December, scoring against Senegal in the group stage and earning praise from fans.

Benzema joins Al-Hilal to present a threat to Ronaldo’s title hopes

RIYADH, Feb 3, (AP): France icon Karim Benzema swapped one Saudi club for another on Monday when joining Al-Hilal from rival Al-Ittihad - a move that could be bad news for Cristiano Ronaldo.

The former Real Madrid d’Or winner has joined Saudi Pro League leader Al-Hilal, which is one point ahead of Ronaldo’s Al-Nassr.

Ronaldo is still waiting for his first league title since moving to Saudi Arabia in 2022 and has seen his main rival strengthen with the addition of five-time Champions League winner Benzema.

The former Real Madrid striker, a teammate of Ronaldo’s at the Spanish giant, led Al-Ittihad to the title last year, as well as the King’s Cup.

Al-Hilal is Saudi Arabia’s most successful team with 21 league titles and four Asian Championships.

Last year it stunned Manchester City at the Club World Cup 4-3 and knocked out Pep Guardiola’s team.

Coached by two-time Champions League finalist Simone Inzaghi, it represents a major threat to Ronaldo’s hopes of being crowned league champion after sparking a wave of top soccer players - including Benzema - to move to the Saudi league.

Benzema’s deal comes at a time when there are reports Ronaldo is unhappy about a lack of transfer activity from Al-Nassr.

Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund is the majority owner of Al-Hilal, Al-Ittihad and Al-Nassr.

Al-Hilal is accustomed to making



In this file photo, Al Ittihad’s Karim Benzema celebrates at the end of the Soccer Club World Cup first round soccer match between Al Ittihad and Auckland City FC at King Abdullah Sports City stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

spectacular signings, having lured Neymar from Paris Saint-Germain in 2023. It previously tried to sign Kylian Mbappe for a world record \$332 million and last year moved for Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes.

Ronaldo joined Al-Nassr after leaving Man United as a free agent in 2022. The five-time Ballon d’Or winner has become the face of soccer in Saudi Arabia but his only trophy has been the Arab Champions Cup.

He was absent from Al-Nassr’s Saudi Pro League match against Al Riyadh on Monday amid reports he is unhappy.

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NEWS



Athletes from France walk inside the Olympic Village ahead of the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy. (AP)
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Sports

Kuwait Club edges Muharraq to keep semifinals hopes alive

Two sides meet again on February 9 in Manama

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Kuwait Club claimed a 107-101 victory over Bahrain's Muharraq in the first leg of the West Asia Super League (WASL) Gulf zone semifinals at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex.

The two sides will meet again on February 9 in Manama, Bahrain. Kuwait Club needs a win to secure a semifinal spot, while a Muharraq victory would push the contest to a deciding match on February 16 in Kuwait. The winner will face Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad in

the semifinals. Meanwhile, Qatar's Al-Arabi will take on UAE's Shabab Al-Ahli, with the victor set to meet Al-Ula from Saudi Arabia.

Elsewhere, Al-Qadsia faces a straightforward clash against Al-Sahel tonight at 7:30 pm in Round 13 of the domestic league, while Al-Arabi and Al-Nasr will meet at 5:00 pm. Both games will take place at the Federation Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex.

Al-Qadsia, second in the standings with 22 points, is the favorite against seventh-placed Al-Sahel, who has 14 points. In contrast, the encounter between sixth-placed Al-Nasr (15 points) and eighth-placed Al-Arabi (13 points) promises a closer contest.

The league follows a three-round format, with the top four teams advancing to the semifinals, played as best-of-three series.



Kuwait Club player soars over an opponent to score.

West Asia Volleyball Club Championship kicks off in Kuwait

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: The 4th West Asia Club Volleyball Championship begins today at the Volleyball Federation Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex, hosted by Kuwait Club and running until February 14. The tournament features 11 teams divided into three groups:

Group A: Qatar's Al-Rayyan (defending champion), Oman's Majis, Iraq's Gaz Al-Janoub

Group B: Host Kuwait Club, Lebanon's Shabab Al-Batroun, Qatar's Al-Wakrah, Bahrain's Al-Ahli

Group C: Kuwait's Burqan, Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad, Oman's Al-Seeb, Bahrain's Dar Klub

The opening day features three matches: Al-Rayyan vs. Majis at 2:00 pm, Al-Ahli vs. Al-Wakrah at 4:00 pm, and Kuwait Club facing Shabab Al-



A file photo of Kuwait Club and Burqan players fighting for the ball.

Batroun at 6:00 pm.

Kuwait Club prepared with a training camp in Turkey, playing four friendly matches. The team will rely on professional players, including Estonian Vino, Canadian Hough, and Kazma's Brazilian Costa, while welcoming back Abdulaziz Al-Anzi from Al-Nasr.

The preliminary round follows a single round-robin format, with the top two teams from each group plus the two best third-placed teams advancing to the knockout quarterfinals. Semifinals and finals are also played in knockout format, with the champion earning direct qualification to the Asian Club Championship as West Asia's representative.

In the previous edition (2025, Bahrain), Al-Rayyan won the title, with Al-Arabi (Qatar) second, Al-Ahli (Bahrain) third, Al-Salam (Oman) fourth, Masafi Al-Shamal (Iraq) fifth, and Al-Qadsia (Kuwait) sixth.

Arab Squash Federation renews confidence in Waleed Al-Sumai'i



Highlights from the Arab Squash General Assembly.

MANAMA, Feb 3: The Arab Squash Federation's General Assembly has renewed its trust in Kuwaiti Federation President Waleed Al-Sumai'i, endorsing him as President of the Arab Federation for the 2026-2030 term. The decision was made during a meeting held on the sidelines of the 31st Arab Championship in Bahrain.

The newly formed executive council includes Dr. Ali Jihad (Iraq) and Anas Al-Mutabaqani (Saudi Arabia) as Vice Presidents, along with members Yusuf Al-Abd (Egypt), Uday Draghmeh (Palestine), Dhafer Kabara (Lebanon), Shahad Al-Najada (Jordan), and Rasha Fteis (Libya).

The meeting was attended by representatives from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Bahrain, and Qatar. The financial and administrative reports were approved in the presence of Secretary-General Fayez Al-Mutairi and Treasurer Waleed Al-Mazidi.

Al-Sumai'i expressed gratitude to Bahrain for hosting the championship and meeting, and thanked the assembly members for their support. He also wished success to all member countries in upcoming championships across all age categories, which will be organized according to a well-planned program.

Kuwait gears up for Division IV Ice Hockey World Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 3: Kuwait's Winter Sports Club is stepping up preparations to host the Division IV Ice Hockey World Cup from April 12-18, 2026. The tournament will feature six national teams: Kuwait, Singapore, Armenia, Iran, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Fahid Al-Ajmi, club president, emphasized that hosting the event underscores Kuwait's growing presence in international ice hockey. He highlighted that the Supreme Organizing Committee has been working since the International Ice Hockey Federation's announcement in October, forming committees for logistics, finance, facilities, techni-



Winter sports officials hold press conference.

cal support, PR, and media to ensure a successful tournament.

The ice arena and its facilities are being prepared to meet international

standards. Organizers are also finalizing arrangements for accommodation, transportation, opening and closing ceremonies, and special fan activities during the event.

Kuwait's national team will undergo a training camp in Sweden before the tournament, followed by a domestic camp. Al-Ajmi expressed confidence in the team's potential to achieve strong results and contend for the championship.

He extended gratitude to the Public Authority for Sport, government entities, and national sponsors for their support, which will help showcase the tournament in a distinguished

Paris Saint-Germain quiet during the window

City goes big again as Premier League clubs dominate transfer window

LONDON, Feb 3, (AP): Manchester City went big again in the January transfer window and will hope it reaps more rewards than last year.

City was the biggest spender as Premier League clubs dominated the midseason window - splashing out a reported \$115 million on Antoine Semenyo and Marc Guehi to boost its four-pronged trophy pursuit. Last year City spent more than \$200 million in a bid to salvage its campaign but still ended up emptyhanded for the first time in eight years.

City's outlay in this window was less but still represented a big chunk of the spending from England's top flight, which was around \$500 million, according to stats website Transfermarkt.

Premier League clubs outspent their rivals in Spain, Italy, France and Germany.

Crystal Palace signed Wolverhampton striker Jorgen Strand Larsen on deadline day for a club record fee, reportedly up to \$65 million.

Last year's Champions League winner Paris Saint-Germain was quiet during the window but looked to the future with the signing of 18-year-old midfielder Dro Fernandez from Barcelona. The most eye-catching signing in France was Lyon's loan deal for Brazil forward Endrick from Real Madrid, who scored a hat trick in only his second game for his new club.

One of the biggest moves of deadline day came in Saudi Arabia, where Karim Benzema swapped Al-Ittihad for league leader Al-Hilal.

Premier League champion Liverpool is already planning for next sea-

son after its title defense unraveled early. Liverpool secured a deal for French defender Jeremy Jacquet, who will join from Rennes in the summer.

Palace was the second biggest spender in England with a reported outlay of around \$105 million, following the signing of Strand Larsen.

The London club's defense of the FA Cup came to an end in humiliating fashion at the hands of non-league Macclesfield last month. Palace also had to cope with the departure of captain Guehi to Man City, while manager Oliver Glasner announced he is leaving at the end of the season.

Striker Jean-Philippe Mateta was also expected to leave in this window, but reports on Monday said a move to AC Milan fell through.

The signing of Strand Larsen followed a deal for Brennan Johnson and the loan of Evann Guessand.

"I'm coming in to hopefully help win some games and bring the team back to where it was at the start of the season, because obviously that was amazing," Strand Larsen said.

Wolves made late moves for England midfielder Angel Gomes on loan and striker Adam Armstrong. Sunderland signed Ecuador winger Nilson Angulo, Chelsea winger Tyrrique George went to Everton on loan and Luca Netz joined Nottingham Forest.

Man City midfielder Kalvin Phillips went on loan to second-tier Sheffield United on Monday.

Atletico Madrid signed Nigeria forward Ademola Lookman from Atalanta on deadline day and Mex-

ico midfielder Obed Vargas from Seattle Sounders.

Atletico previously sold midfielder Conor Gallagher to Tottenham and let Giacomo Raspadori go to Atalanta.

Also, Barcelona brought back full back João Cancelo on a loan from Al-Hilal, while veteran goalkeeper Marc-André Ter Stegen, who lost his position as a starter to Joan Garcia, was sent to fellow Catalan club Gi-

rona on loan.

Real Madrid stayed quiet, with its only transaction being the loan of young Brazil forward Endrick to Lyon.

Defending Italian champion



In this file photo, Serbia's Veljko Birmančević, centre, controls the ball ahead Austria's Stefan Posch, right, during an international friendly soccer match between Austria and Serbia at the Ernst Happel Stadion in Vienna, Austria. (AP)

Napoli signed Alisson Santos from Sporting Lisbon on loan on deadline day, with an option to make it a permanent deal.

Italian teams were very active during the window. Napoli reportedly spent \$37 million, and Lazio topped that with an outlay of \$43 million on five signings, including Kenneth Taylor for \$20 million.

AC Milan, Inter and Juventus were restrained with their business.

The most talked about transfer of the winter window in France was the arrival in Lyon of 19-year-old Endrick, who was barely used by Madrid. Lyon also gave itself more attacking options with the arrival on loan of the much-traveled Ukrainian international forward Roman Yaremchuk.

Paris FC made headlines with a deal bringing Italy striker Ciro Immobile from Bologna. The 35-year-old Immobile committed to the club until the end of the season, with an option for an additional year.

Marseille landed Algeria midfielder Himad Abdelli on Monday. Marseille previously registered the arrivals of Netherlands midfielder Quinten Timber and 18-year-old winger Ethan Nwaneri on loan from Arsenal.

Leipzig signed two players on Monday: Germany youth international Brájan Gruda on loan from Brighton and 18-year-old winger Ayodele Thomas from PSV Eindhoven. Cologne signed Felipe Chavez from Bayern Munich on loan and Borussia Monchengladbach secured a loan deal for Hugo Bolin from Malmo.