



Action, not rhetoric: Kuwait's message to the world

PM highlights Kuwait reform drive at WGS

DUBAI, Feb 4, (KUNA): The World Governments Summit is a leading global platform, an open laboratory for ideas, a live workshop for shaping solutions, and a bridge linking the ambitions of governments with the aspirations of peoples, said His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In a speech at the World Governments Summit 2026, His Highness conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, along with their best wishes for the success of the summit.

His Highness the Prime Minister expressed sincere appreciation to the UAE leadership, government, and people, for hosting the summit, praising the UAE's distinguished model of fraternal, cultural and humanitarian relations with Kuwait.

His Highness said that shaping the future of governments is important, but such visions must be actionable, stressing that the real challenge lies not in formulating aspirations, but in transforming them into decisions, policies and tangible results that directly impact people's daily lives.



PM Diwan photo  
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah delivers a speech at the World Governments Summit 2026 held in Dubai.

Recalling his address at the summit a year earlier on Kuwait's future vision and global economic challenges, Sheikh Ahmad said that Kuwait today presents a reality shaped by determination, hard work and effective implementation, underscoring that future governments are built through action, not speeches.

Over the past year, Kuwait has undertaken major reform steps to enhance financial stability, ensure fiscal sustainability, reform and diversify the national economy and increase private sector participation.

Among the most notable measures was the approval of the Financing and Liquidity Law to regulate public debt and financial obligations, alongside preparations to issue the first legislation governing sovereign sukuk locally and internationally in accordance with Islamic Sharia.

These reforms, he noted, boosted international confidence in Kuwait's economy, reflected in S&P Global Ratings upgrading Kuwait's sovereign credit rating in November 2025 from A+ to AA- with a stable outlook.

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Translator to the shepherd: 'The general will give you one pound sterling if you slaughter your dog.'



Stanley Maude: "Tell the shepherd I will give him another pound if he skins his dog."



"I will give you a third pound if you cut your dog into small pieces."



Shepherd, calling out: "Will you give me another pound if I eat my dog?"



Officer: "No, I just wanted to see what you were like."



President, annoyed: "That means the house will be in chaos."



Presidential official: "No, Mr. President, just two or three hours and the work will be done."



Officer calls the factory owner: "The President wants to see you."



The factory owner finds the President waiting for him and he asks how the project began.



Presidential official to the businessman: "Why do you refuse to see the President?"



Factory owner: "The governor revoked the factory's license and ordered us to vacate!"



Mubarak to the governor: "You must leave your office in a few minutes."



Photo by Samer Shiqr  
First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Undersecretary Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib, and senior officials pay respects at the military funeral of First Sergeant Khalid Al-Sharaf at Sulaibikhat Cemetery. — See Page 4

Boftain resigns

Amiri decree names acting info minister

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): An Amiri decree has been issued, accepting the resignation of Minister of Information and Culture Abdullah Boftain and naming Minister of State for Communication Affairs and Information Technology Omar Al-Omar, in addition to his post, as Acting Minister of Information and Culture.

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Ministry of Social Affairs issued a circular to the heads of the boards of directors of charitable societies regarding the regulations for collecting donations during the holy month of Ramadan for the year 1447 AH.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the circular, stating that:

■ It is prohibited to collect all forms of donations in mosques.

■ Charitable societies must obtain approval from the ministry before receiving any donation from outside Kuwait, in accordance with Article 30 of Law No. 24/1962 concerning clubs and public benefit societies.

■ Charitable societies are prohibited from collecting cash donations in any form in their headquarters, public places or elsewhere.

■ The collection of donations is limited to the use of licensed methods stipulated in the regulations governing donation collection as per Ministerial Resolution No.128A/2016 and its amendments. These methods include K-Net, online donations, bank transfers, smartphone applications, electronic collection devices and SMS messages from telecommunications companies.

■ It is prohibited to collect all forms of donations in certain locations, such as shopping malls, public squares and other similar venues, without approval from the ministry.

■ The use of bank accounts is restricted to accounts belonging to the charitable societies and approved by the ministry.

■ Associations are required to ensure their representatives present their identification cards upon the request of inspection and monitoring teams assigned by the ministry.

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Left: Acting Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani and Japanese Ambassador Mukai Kenichiro during the ceremonial cake-cutting. Right: Members of the diplomatic corps and guests.



Photos by Samer Shiqr

Partnership across decades

Kuwaiti-Japanese relations extend to sports, culture, AI

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Acting Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani described the Kuwaiti-Japanese relations as historical and strategic -- extending back to 1961, asserting that this relationship is deep-rooted and extensive at various levels.

Al-Daihani made the statement on the sidelines of the reception that the Japanese Embassy in Kuwait organized at the Regency Hotel on the occasion of Japan's National Day and the birthday of Japanese Emperor Naruhito.

More than 300 guests attended the event, including Al-Daihani, who attended as the guest of honor, along with the representatives of government bodies, diplomatic corps, regional and international organizations, business community and media.

He revealed that several Japanese companies existed in Kuwait even before the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries, indicating that this is a manifestation of the depth of early cooperation and mutual trust between the two countries.

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Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah with Japanese Ambassador Mukai Kenichiro.

MoH opens 6 new vaccination clinics

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Ministry of Health on Wednesday announced the opening of six vaccination clinics in primary healthcare centers in different areas.

This is part of a plan to develop primary healthcare services and facilitate access to immunization services for beneficiaries near their homes.

The clinics, which have started operating, are located in the following health centers: Abu Futaira Residential Health Center (for children and adults), Mubarak Al-Hasawi Health Center in Hatteen (for children and adults), West Abdullah Mubarak Health Center Block Six (for children), Mutlaa Health Center N11 (for children), Musaed Al-Saleh Health Center in

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Son of late dictator Gaddafi killed in Libya, say officials

CAIRO, Feb 4, (AP): Seif al-Islam Gaddafi, the son and one-time heir apparent of Libya's late dictator Muammar Gaddafi, was killed in the northern African country, Libyan officials said Tuesday.

The 53-year-old was killed in the town Zintan, 136 kilometers (85 miles) southwest of the capital, Tripoli, according to Libyan's chief prosecutor's office.

The office said in a statement that an initial investigation found that Seif al-Islam was shot to death, but did not provide further details about the circumstances of his killing.

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In this Feb. 25, 2011, file photo, Seif al-Islam Gaddafi speaks to the media at a press conference in a hotel in Tripoli, Libya. (AP)

2 China Kuwait's top trade partner: Hayat

ABK Group announces EOY 2025 financial results

Day by Day

WE will miss Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, a capable minister who preferred to work quietly.

Al-Mutairi always wore a gentle smile and handled matters with poise. He believed that simplicity is the best approach, and accordingly chose to work calmly and away from publicity. He was fully aware of the intricate network of interests and responsibilities linking various ministries, so he worked in a discreet and professional manner to overcome challenges.

Yes, these matters required time, but in the end they were accomplished. Al-Mutairi succeeded in reaching solutions despite the overlap between the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Kuwait Municipality and other entities.

Tourism, youth development and media are vital sectors that demand quick decision-making. However, there are forces more powerful than ambition. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Prayer Timings			
Fajr .....	05:15	Asr .....	15:07
Sunrise ..	06:36	Maghrib ..	17:28
Zohr .....	12:02	Isha .....	18:47

# 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	21	11	
Abdaly	20	12	
Bubyan	14	08	
Jahra	26	15	
Failaka Island	17	11	
Salmiyah	19	15	
Ahmadi	15	11	
Jal Aliyah	20	12	
Nuwaisib	27	14	

## Kuwait PM meets UAE Pres., UAE Vice Pres., DP World Chief at World Gov'ts Summit



President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

DUBAI, Feb 4, (KUNA): President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan received on Tuesday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, on the sidelines of the World Governments Summit currently held in Dubai.

During the meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, along with their best wishes to the UAE and its brotherly people for continued progress and prosperity.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the leadership of the UAE for their kind initiative in celebrating Kuwaiti-Emirati relations, noting that the gesture reflects the deep-rooted, fraternal and historical ties binding the two brotherly countries and peoples.

The meeting was attended by Undersecretary of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Ambassador to the UAE Jamal Mohammad Al-Ghunaim, Consul General



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum.

of Kuwait in Dubai and the Northern Emirates Khaled Abdulrahim Al-Zaabi, and Director of the Prime Minister's Office Hamad Mubarak bin Sabt.

### UAE Vice President

UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum received on Tuesday His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, on the sidelines of the World Governments Summit in Dubai.

During the meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, along with their best wishes for the UAE and its brotherly people for continued progress and prosperity.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah praised Dubai's continued success in organizing the World Governments Summit, noting that it reflects the UAE's prominent regional and international standing, commending the high level of organization and the broad international par-



PM Diwan photos  
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives the Chairman and CEO of DP World Sultan Ahmad bin Sulayem.

ticipation witnessed at the summit year after year.

The meeting was attended by Undersecretary of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Ambassador to the UAE Jamal Mohammad Al-Ghunaim, Consul General of Kuwait in Dubai and the Northern Emirates Khaled Abdulrahim Al-Zaabi, and Director of the Prime Minister's Office Hamad Mubarak bin Sabt.

### CEO of DP World

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Chairman and CEO of DP World Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem and his accompanying delegation on the sidelines of the World Government Summit currently held in Dubai.

The meeting was attended by Undersecretary of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Ambassador to the UAE Jamal Al-Ghunaim, Consul General of Kuwait in Dubai and the Northern Emirates Khaled Al-Zaabi, and Director of the Prime Minister's Office Hamad bin Sabt.

# China Kuwait's top trade partner: Hayat

Relations stand at new historical starting point: Ambassador Yang Xin

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The depth of the historical relationship between Kuwait and the People's Republic of China was celebrated at an event marking the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and the launching of the Happy Spring Festival at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.**

Speaking at the event, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Sameeh Hayat put the spotlight on the five-decade-long ties as a "distinguished model of international relations, based on mutual trust, respect and steadfastness." He underscored the deep-rooted historical foundations of the bilateral relationship, indicating that they predate the official declaration.

He recalled the historic 1965 visit of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad to China, which paved the way



Left: Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah amidst the many ambassadors and diplomats at the event. Right : Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Sameeh Hayat and the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Yang Xin at the cake-cutting ceremony.



Photos by Mohammad Morsi

for political and economic cooperation. He said this cooperation culminated in the establishment of diplomatic relations and embassies in 1971, positioning Kuwait as the first Gulf and Arab state to take this step.

He also cited China's "honorable stances towards Kuwait," particularly its unequivocal support for Kuwait's sovereignty and legitimacy during the Iraqi invasion in 1990 -- a position that "will remain etched in Kuwaiti memory."

He added the economic relationship remains robust, disclosing that Kuwait is the fifth largest supplier of crude oil to China, while China has been Kuwait's top trading partner for the past eight years.

He described the current partnership as an "advanced stage of strategic coordination and practical cooperation" under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

He said the major milestone was Kuwait's signing of the Belt and Road Initiative cooperation document in 2014 -- the first country in the Middle East to do so -- reflecting a "convergence of developmental visions" and a desire to strengthen Kuwait's strategic position in global trade.

He mentioned as well the declaration of a comprehensive partnership in 2018, followed by His Highness the Amir's visit to China in September 2023 when he was Crown Prince, marking a "qualitative

leap" that resulted in seven memoranda of understanding on renewable energy, infrastructure and environmental governance.

Looking ahead, Kuwait expressed readiness to host the third Arab-Gulf-Chinese Summit in 2030.

On the other hand, Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Yang Xin revealed that bilateral relations stand at a "new historical starting point," witnessing a rapid acceleration in mutually beneficial cooperation.

He cited major projects, including the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, as significant contributors to Kuwait's national development plan, alongside the increasing presence of Chinese smart industry products in Kuwaiti households.

He talked about the extraordinary growth in trade, indicating that the volume of trade between the two nations increased from \$22 million at the time of establishing diplomatic relations to around \$18.58 billion in 2025 -- more than 800 times increase.

He also cited the growing cultural and humanitarian exchange, evidenced by the presence of a Chinese medical team for over 50 years and the opening of the first Chinese cultural center in the Gulf region in Kuwait.

On future prospects, he touched on Sino-Arab and Sino-Gulf relations in light of the upcoming summits, confirming the commitment of China to work with Kuwait to boost confidence and expand cooperation to contribute to building a China-Arab community with a shared future.



Left: Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah receives the Bangladeshi Ambassador to Kuwait Major General Sayed Tareq Hussain in his office. Right: Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah and Bangladeshi Ambassador to Kuwait Major General Sayed Tareq Hussain, accompanied by Political Counsellor and Head of Chancery at the Embassy of Bangladesh Mohammad Moniruzzaman discussing various issues. Arab Times Managing Editor Marlon Aquino Malinao also attended the meeting.



Photos by Rizk Taufiq

## Why parking place less in public areas?

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Municipal Council Member Dr. Hassan Kamal submitted questions to the Kuwait Municipality regarding the reservation and leasing of spaces in public parking areas.

Kamal pointed out that traffic studies identified the current and future need for parking spaces, and that multi-storey parking projects have been implemented and are managed by the Ministry of Finance and other entities.

He pointed out that spaces in these parking areas were reserved and leased to private companies for extended periods, which led to the reduction of the number of available public parking spaces.

He asked the Municipality to clarify its role in the implementation and management of public parking sites, the extent to which the reservation or leasing of portions of these sites is permitted, and whether the Municipal Council resolutions authorize their private use.

## Al-Jarallah: professional, responsible journalism effective tool

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah on Wednesday met with Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the State of Kuwait Major General Sayed Tareq Hussain, who was accompanied by Political Counsellor and Head of Chancery at the Embassy of Bangladesh Mohammad Moniruzzaman.

During the meeting, they discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in the media field, the role of the press in supporting bilateral

relations, and the exchange of media expertise. This exchange depicts an accurate picture of shared issues, while strengthening bridges of communication and understanding between the two nations. Al-Jarallah praised the Bangladeshi Embassy's role in supporting media cooperation and its commitment to maintain communication with Kuwaiti media institutions.

He stressed that "professional and responsible journalism is an effective tool in raising awareness, promoting dialogue, and highlighting positive efforts that serve the mutual inter-

ests of friendly nations."

Meanwhile, Ambassador Hussain expressed his gratitude to the Editor-in-Chief for the warm welcome, praising the professional role of Kuwaiti media and its credibility and influential presence.

He affirmed his embassy's commitment to support media cooperation and solidify the partnership with the Kuwaiti press in a way that serves the friendly relations between Bangladesh and Kuwait.



HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Translator to the shepherd: ‘The general will give you one pound sterling if you slaughter your dog.’

IN HIS book, “Social Glimpses from the History of Iraq,” Iraqi intellectual Ali Al-Wardi told a story about the affairs in the Arab world, not only Iraq, regarding loyalty and patriotism.

Al-Wardi explains how, for many Arabs, money is more important than the homeland and even more precious than their own people.

Al-Wardi says that in 1917, British General Stanley Maude entered a region of Iraq where he encountered a shepherd. Stanley approached him and asked his translator to tell him: “The General will give you one pound sterling if you slaughter your shepherd dog.”

It is well known that the dog is the most important element in a shepherd’s job, as it guides the flock and helps protect the sheep from predators. At that time, one pound sterling was enough to buy half a flock of sheep.

The shepherd was delighted, his face beaming, and he brought the dog and slaughtered it at the General’s feet. Then the General said to the shepherd: “I will give you another pound if you skin it.”

The shepherd promptly took the pound sterling and skinned the dog.

Stanley said to the shepherd, “I will give you a third pound if you cut the dog into small pieces.”

Immediately, the shepherd complied, took the pound, and left.

Then, the shepherd ran after the General and his men, calling out, “Will you give me another pound if I eat the dog?”

The English officer replied, “No, I only wanted to see the people’s character and understand your mentality. You slaughtered, skinned and butchered your companion and dearest friend for three pounds. Moreover, you offered to eat it for a fourth pound.”

Then, the General turned to his soldiers and said, “As long as there are many people like this shepherd, you have nothing to fear.”

Hosni Mubarak and the Governor

One day, after the late Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak finished his appointments at the Presiden tial Palace, he returned to his home in Heliopolis and heard disturbing noises on the ground floor.

When Mubarak went downstairs, he found laborers doing some maintenance works, along with an official in charge of the renovation of presidential palaces and villas.

Mubarak called him over and asked, “What is going on here? What is all the commotion about?”

Stanley Maude: “Tell the shepherd I will give him another pound if he skins his dog.”

“I will give you a third pound if you cut your dog into small pieces.”

Shepherd, calling out: “Will you give me another pound if I eat my dog?”

Officer: “No, I just wanted to see what you were like.”

President, annoyed: “That means the house will be in chaos.”

Presidential official: “No, Mr. President, just two or three hours and the work will be done.”

Officer calls the factory owner: “The President wants to see you.”

The factory owner finds the President waiting for him and he asks how the project began.

Presidential official to the businessman: “Why do you refuse to see the President?”

Factory owner: “The governor revoked the factory’s license and ordered us to vacate!”

Mubarak to the governor: “You must leave your office in a few minutes.”

The official replied, “Mr. President, the First Lady wanted some renovations and a change of colors in the living room and the curtains.”

President Mubarak, upset, said, “That means the house will be in chaos for two or three days.”

The presidential aide quickly responded, “No, Mr. President, it will only take two or three hours. Just relax a little while, and when you come back, everything will be fine.”

Surprised, President Mubarak asked, “How can the work be done in two or three hours? I know very well that painting takes time – the plaster needs to dry, sanding, applying the first coat, applying the second coat, and so on. It is a long story.”

The presidential aide replied, “You are absolutely right, Mr. President. But this time we are using quick-drying paints, and I assure you it will not take much longer.”

Mubarak asked, “Are these materials imported?”

The presidential aide replied, “No, sir, it is an Egyptian product manufactured in a new factory in Borg El Arab. Only the raw materials are imported.”

President Mubarak left him and went upstairs. After waking up from his nap, he went downstairs to the ground floor, where he found no workers and everything in order -- the walls were painted and new curtains were hanging.

Mubarak instructed the aide, “Remind me where that factory is located.”

The aide replied that the factory is in Borg El Arab and owned by an Egyptian citizen.

Hosni Mubarak said, “Well, tell the factory owner I want to meet him, but do not tell anyone.”

The aide contacted the factory owner and informed him of the President’s request to meet him.

The next day, the businessman arrived at the Presidential Palace and found an entry permit in his name at the gate.

The factory owner entered to find the President waiting for him. The President asked him about the factory’s history and how the project began.

The factory owner said, “I am hoping to bring the most advanced global technologies to Egypt.”

Mubarak asked him if he was facing any problems.

The businessman replied, “No, Mr. President. Thank Allah, everything is fine, except the factory has not received its official license yet. I need to wait until I get the license, so I can import new equipment.”

At that point, the President instructed his secretary to contact the governor and gave directives for the procedures to be completed immediately.

The meeting ended. A few months later, President Mubarak remembered the businessman and told the official, “Call him and tell him the President wants to meet with him.”

To everyone’s surprise, the businessman declined.

The official asked, “Why are you refusing to meet with the President? Are you aware of what you are saying?”

The businessman calmly replied, “I did not mean any offense. Frankly, after the President intervened, the governor revoked the temporary license and issued an order to evacuate the factory, otherwise, the equipment would be confiscated.”

Upon learning of this, Mubarak was furious and ordered the governor’s dismissal.

Mubarak sent a message to the governor: “Leave your office within a few minutes.”

The factory resumed production efficiently, as if nothing happened.

■ A girl said to Mahatma Gandhi, “I love you.” Mahatma Gandhi replied, “Do you mean my brother? He is more handsome than I am, and he is standing behind you.”

The girl turned around and saw no one. Gandhi said, “If you were truly in love with me, you would not have looked back.”

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■ We have said, and we say it again: Kuwait needs an official spokesperson capable of refuting rumors and false news. The official spokesperson confirms accurate news and denies the hoaxes circulating among the people.

News has a great impact, either positive or negative. Who is responsible for fulfilling this essential request?

In your life, you will encounter three types of people -- those who are with you because they have no one else, those who are with you until they find someone else better than you, and those who are with you because they want no one else but you. Never let go of the last type, for each of them has their own needs and circumstances.

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■ “O My servant, do not worry or weep over anything you have lost. I swear by My might and majesty, I will compensate you for what you have lost to a degree that will astonish the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth.” A Hadith Qudsi (revealed to Prophet Muhammad – may the peace of Allah be upon him.)

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■ He said to her, “Didn’t you realize that the bull is male?” She said, “Didn’t you know that the sun is female?” He said, “Didn’t you know that knowledge is male?” She said, “Didn’t you know that wisdom is female?” He said, “Ugliness is female.” She said, “Despicability is male.” He told her that beauty is male, and she told him that happiness is female. He said that poetry is male, and she said that feelings are female.

Briefs

**EXERCISE:** Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdulwahab Al-Waheeb headed on Wednesday to Qatar for the conclusion of the joint Gulf tactical exercise “Arabian Gulf Security 4.”

The ministry said in a statement that the exercise is being held with the participation of the security agencies of GCC countries, to strengthen cooperation, joint security coordination and the exchange of experiences. (KUNA)

**DEATH:** The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced that a fire, which broke out in a prefabricated room at a camp in Salmi, resulted in the death of one person, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

KFF stated that the fire was extinguished by firefighters from Jahra Industrial Area Fire Station. Investigations are underway to determine the circumstances leading to the fire.

**BEDOUN:** Acting Secretary General of the Central Agency for Remedying Illegal Residents Status (CARIRS) Brigadier General Dr. Sharif Al-Kandari had a meeting with acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Dr. Fatima Salman to deliberate on issues of mutual concern, particularly those related to illegal residents (bedoun) and their involvement in sporting activities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement on Tuesday, CARIRS revealed that Al-Kandari warmly welcomed Salman in its headquarters at Naif Palace, in the presence of senior officials from both entities, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen coordination.

According to CARIRS, the discussion focused on mechanisms to strengthen collaboration and establish automated connectivity between the two sides, with the aim of simplifying procedures and integrating institutional efforts within a framework that reinforces intergovernmental cooperation and contributes to the development of a unified operational system in the interest of the public.

**PILGRIMS:** In preparation for the 1447 AH Hajj season, the Ministry of Health announced the opening of applications for those wishing to join the medical services team of the Kuwaiti Hajj mission, aiming to provide the highest level of healthcare to Kuwaiti pilgrims, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry invited interested candidates to register via the designated electronic link or by scanning the QR code.

The deadline for applications is the end of the workday on Wednesday, December 31, 2025. The Ministry of Health wished all applicants success.

Nuke safeguards in focus at MoH regional meeting

Exchange of expertise eyed

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Ministry of Health, represented by its Radiation Protection Departmen, hosted a regional workshop on the implementation of safeguards under the Small Quantities Protocol, in coordination with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and International Nuclear Safeguards Engagement Program (INSEP).

The workshop was held in the presence of Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Dr. Al-Mundhir Al-Hasawi, with the participation of international experts, trainees and representa-



Dr. Al-Hasawi

tives of nine countries, underscoring the event’s significance as a platform for exchanging expertise and strengthening regional partnerships.

The four-day workshop aimed to enhance practical understanding of nuclear safeguards implementation mechanisms, build technical capacities, and exchange best practices. This contributes to supporting the peaceful and safe use of nuclear technologies, strengthening the non-proliferation regime, and ensuring adherence to international standards for nuclear and radiation security and safety.

Director of the Radiation Protection Department Dr. Nasser Al-Huwaissari emphasized that hosting this workshop reflects the State of Kuwait’s commitment to support international cooperation in the field of nuclear safety and to enhance national and regional capabilities. He pointed out that such specialized meetings represent a fundamental pillar for exchanging experiences and unifying practices in line with international standards, and contribute to strengthening cooperation among participating countries in a manner that serves the shared objectives of the peaceful and safe use of nuclear technology.

One dead, 2 injured as expats on motorbike crash into camel

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: A camel fell onto three expatriates, killing one of them, injuring another who was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) at Sabah Hospital, and the other miraculously escaped injury, reports Al-Anba daily.

A team from Qash’aniyah Police Station rushed to Falah Road in the northern part of the country, as per the instruction of the director of the station and the deputy public prosecutor, to obtain the testimonies of those who witnessed the accident. It was discovered that a motorcycle collided with a camel, which fell onto the victims. This resulted in the death of one expatriate, while another sustained multiple fractures and internal bleeding, and the other was unscathed.

A security source informed the daily that the Operations Unit at the Ministry of Inte-

rior received a report from Abdally Clinic, stating that three individuals were referred to it. The source added a patrol from Qash’aniyah Police Station immediately went to the clinic and took the statement of the person who transported the three expatriates – a Bangladeshi.

When asked about the incident, the Bangladeshi revealed that he was driving along Falah Road at 8:30 am on the day of the accident, then he saw a group of people gathered on the road and they asked him for help. “When I got out, I found three people lying on the ground,” he added.

Eyewitnesses also stated that the three injured people were on a motorcycle when a herd of camels crossed the road, and one of the animals lagged behind, causing the collision.

Job evaluation will end in March

By Mohammad Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The annual job performance evaluation of about 35,500 employees at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy will be completed by the beginning of March, say reliable sources.

Sources affirmed that the ministry, through its sectors, departments, divisions and sections, already completed a huge portion of the evaluation process.

Sources said the ministry has requested permission from the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to manually enter the work assigned to some employees in 2025.

Meanwhile, the Certificates Verification Committee sent messages to the ministry employees through the Sahel application, urging them to visit their respective administrative departments to fulfill the requirements related to their educational qualifications. This is necessary to ensure the continuation of their employment rights and financial benefits.

Court clerk in ‘bribery’ case

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Criminal Court sentenced an expatriate court clerk and a law firm representative to four years in prison with hard labor, as they were found guilty of electronic forgery and acceptance of bribes.

Investigations revealed that the two men colluded to tamper with the file of an ongoing case through fraudulent electronic procedures, with the aim of causing one of the parties to miss the deadline for filing an appeal in exchange for a bribe.

**Road repairs continue:** The General Traffic Department announced the total closure of Othman Bin Affan Street -- from the Omar Bin Al-Khat-tab Roundabout to Shuhada Street, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to the department, the road closure started Sunday and will continue until 6:00 pm on Thursday to carry out road maintenance works.

Asian dies in hit-and-run mishap

By Munif Naif  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: A 27-year-old Kuwaiti citizen, described as ‘mentally disturbed’ and in an abnormal state, was arrested following a fatal hit-and-run incident in Sabah Health District.

According to a security source, the citizen ran over a Bangladeshi sanitation worker in his 50’s, killing him instantly, and seriously injured another Asian worker who was rushed to the hospital.

The victim’s body was transferred to

the Forensic Department. Authorities have launched an investigation to determine the circumstances leading to the accident.

□ □ □

**Power disconnected:** The Public Relations Department at Kuwait Municipality announced that a field inspection tour carried out by the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department in Farwaniya Governorate, targeting violations related to bachelor housing, resulted in the disconnection of electricity in 10 properties in Rabia, Firdous and Omariya, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

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# Kuwait keeps pace with Al-era teaching reforms

ICTP explores future of sustainable education

MUSCAT, Feb 4, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Ministry of Education on Wednesday affirmed keenness to keep pace with global transformations in the teaching profession to supports education development aligned with the artificial intelligence era.

This came in the ministry’s statement following the participation of Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei and his accompanying delegation in the International Conference on the Teaching Profession



Ministry of Education photo  
Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei participates in the International Conference on the Teaching Profession (ICTP) in Oman, alongside regional and international education leaders.

(ICTP), held in the Sultanate of Oman under the theme “Sustainable Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.”

It explained that the participation comes within the framework of ongoing efforts to review best international practices and exchange expertise with global educational institutions and experiences in developing the teaching profession and building educational capacities.

ICTP, which discusses the future of the teaching profession worldwide, includes dialogue sessions focusing on empowering teachers in the age of artificial intelligence without replacing them, and transforming the teaching profession, educational leadership and addressing the global shortage of teachers.

The conference also features interactive workshops on sustainable professional development and inclusive education in the age of artificial intelligence, and sessions highlighting the role of teachers as educational leaders capable of effectively employing technology to serve educational goals.

Kuwait’s delegation to the conference includes Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs Hamad Al-Hamad and Director General of Educational Districts Mohammad Al-Wazzan.

The two-day conference is organized by Oman’s Ministry of Education with the participation of more than 400 figures, including education ministers from the GCC countries, experts from regional and international organizations, the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), Education International, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, as well as specialists in artificial intelligence, school principals and teachers from the Gulf region.



Photo by Samer Shaqair  
First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Undersecretary Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib, and senior officials pay respects at the military funeral of First Sergeant Khalid Al-Sharaf at Sulaibikhat Cemetery.

## Kuwait honors ‘Martyr of Duty’ First Sergeant Khalid Al-Sharaf

By Munif Naif  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Kuwait bid farewell to First Sergeant Khalid Ahmed Al-Sharaf, a martyr of duty from the Directorate General of Correctional Institutions, in a military funeral on Wednesday.

Leading the mourners at Sulaibikhat Cemetery were First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, along with Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdulwahab Al-

Wuhaib, and senior security and military leaders.

The Ministry of Interior mourned the martyr of duty, who succumbed to injuries sustained in the fire that engulfed the Correctional Institutions building last month.

Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers, deeply saddened by this loss, extend their sincere condolences to the martyr’s family, praying to Almighty Allah to grant him His mercy, accept him to Paradise, and grant his family and loved ones patience and solace.

Solar desalination units launched

## Kuwaiti charities, UNDP partner to provide clean water for Gaza

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Kuwait Relief Society, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Association, Direct Aid Society and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a cooperation agreement at the UN House in Kuwait to support emergency access to clean drinking water for communities affected by the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

This will be achieved through the installation of three mobile solar-powered desalination units, serving around 180,000 people, including internally displaced persons in the southern Gaza Strip.

UNDP Resident Representative in Kuwait Emma Morley said “this partnership is in line with the approach of UNDP to work with the State of Kuwait in rebuilding infrastructure, not just to provide humanitarian aid. By supporting solutions that restore essential services, we are contributing to creating the conditions for an effective humanitarian response in some of the most complex crisis contexts.”

On the other hand, Special Representative of the UNDP Administrator for the Assistance to the Palestinian People Programme Jaco Seilliers pointed out that “by supporting access to safe drinking water in Gaza, we are contributing to improving public health, preserving human dignity, and strengthening the resilience of communities. Providing mobile, solar-powered desalination units ensures sustainable solutions for the most vulnerable

communities, thus, enhancing relief and humanitarian response efforts.”

Dr. Ibrahim Al-Saleh, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Relief Society, asserted that “we stand shoulder to shoulder with our partners at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity and Direct Aid Society, in cooperation with the UNDP, to respond to one of the most pressing needs in the Gaza Strip: safe drinking water. This agreement is not just a document, it is a promise to provide clean water to thousands of displaced families suffering under harsh conditions. We believe that access to water is a fundamental right to life. Through these mobile and advanced units, we seek to alleviate suffering immediately, reaffirming that ‘Kuwait stands with you’ in word and deed.”

Dr. Abdullah Abdul Rahman Al-Sumait, Director General of the Direct Aid Society, revealed “this project affirms the Society’s commitment to stand with our people in Gaza, supporting them in the most difficult circumstances, and providing their basic needs, especially clean drinking water, which is essential for life. We value this partnership with Kuwaiti charitable organizations and UNDP, which reflects the spirit of cooperation and joint action to serve humanity wherever it may be. We reaffirm our commitment to implement sustainable humanitarian projects that alleviate the suffering of those affected and strengthen their resilience, asking Allah to reward all those who contributed and supported this initiative.”



KUNA photo  
Representatives of Kuwaiti charities sign an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme.

Continued from Page 1

### Kuwaiti-Japanese

He pointed out that cooperation between Kuwait and Japan encompasses broad fields, most notably investment and economic exchange. He asserted that the relationship is distinguished and held in high esteem by the State of Kuwait, which is proud of its friendly relations and partnership with Japan.

Regarding his diplomatic posting, he stated that serving Kuwait is a national duty for every citizen, affirming his readiness to serve the country in any capacity.

He also touched on the remarkable diplomatic activity that Kuwait is witnessing, with the continuous visits of leaders and officials. He said Kuwait is an important hub for strengthening positive relations between brotherly and friendly nations, as well as an active center for diplomacy and regional and international dialogue.

Meanwhile, in his opening remarks at the event, Japanese Ambassador Mukai Kenichiro stressed that the celebration of Japan’s National Day, which coincides with the birthday of Emperor Naruhito, is a cherished occasion. He said the Emperor is the 126th Emperor of Japan and will celebrate his 66th birthday on Feb 23.

He touched on the status of Japan–Kuwait relations in 2025, describing it as a year that witnessed notable progress in bilateral ties. He highlighted key developments, including the visit to Japan by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, as well as the visit to Kuwait by the Japanese Foreign Minister and other officials. He affirmed his commitment to further strengthen this friendly relationship in various fields in 2026.

He said the energy, electricity, clean energy and water sectors are promising opportunities for deepening cooperation by benefiting from the advanced technologies possessed by

Japanese companies, thus, contributing to the realization of Kuwait Vision 2035.

He added that 2026 will witness more developments in new fields, such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and other advanced technologies. He stressed that the prospects for cooperation in these sectors hold increasing opportunities, hoping that Kuwait will invest in Japan to strengthen the partnership in these promising areas.

He also expressed his enthusiasm for advancing bilateral relations through the promotion of Japanese food products, such as Japanese Wagyu beef, which recently entered the Kuwaiti market, as well as through sports and cultural exchange, citing the upcoming Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya in 2026 and the International Horticultural Expo 2027 in Yokohama.

### Son of

Khaled al-Zaidi, a lawyer for Seif al-Islam, confirmed his death on Facebook, without providing details.

Abdullah Othman Abdurrahim, who represented Gaddafi in the U.N.-brokered political dialogue which aimed to resolve Libya’s long-running conflict, also announced the death on Facebook.

Seif al-Islam’s political team later released a statement saying that “four masked men” stormed his house and killed him in a “cowardly and treacherous assassination.” The statement said that he clashed with the assailants, who closed the CCTV cameras at the house “in a desperate attempt to conceal traces of their heinous crimes.”

Born in June 1972 in Tripoli, Seif al-Islam was the second-born son of the long-time dictator. He studied for a Ph.D. at the London School of Economics and was seen as the reformist face of the Gaddafi regime.





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Crown Prince, PM extend wishes

Kuwait Amir congratulates Sri Lanka on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Wednesday to the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Anura Kumara Dissanayake on his country's National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the President good health and further progress and prosperity for Sri Lanka and its people.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Wednesday to

the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Anura Kumara Dissanayake on his country's National Day.

His Highness the Crown Prince wished the President good health and further progress and prosperity for Sri Lanka and its people.

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Editor-in-Chief hosts businessman Hamad Al-Wazzan

Al-Jarallah pledges media support for family stability, awareness campaigns

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah had a meeting with Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwaiti Association for the Prevention of Family Disintegration Khalid Khalaf Al-Mutairi at his office on Wednesday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Captain Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem accompanied Al-Mutairi.

According to Al-Mutairi, the visit aims to strengthen media cooperation with the association and its role in supporting community issues.

He explained the nature of the work of the association and its role in promoting the stability of Kuwaiti families and preventing family disintegration.

He affirmed the importance of the media as a major partner in supporting the mission of the association by covering its activities and events in order to raise family awareness.

He also stressed the need to showcase awareness initiatives and articles that contribute to promoting the culture of family cohesion in society.

He stated that "cooperation with national media institutions helps in conveying the message of the association to various segments of society, while enhancing its preventive and awareness-raising role."

Meanwhile, Ahmed Al-Jarallah confirmed that supporting the mission and objectives of the association is the duty of all national media institutions, noting the importance of its role in serving Kuwaiti society and its efforts in promoting family stability and addressing social issues.

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Suleiman Al-Jarallah was also present at the meeting.

Moreover, Al-Jarallah met with businessman Hamad Al-Wazzan on the same day. Al-Wazzan visited to congratulate him on his safe return from medical treatment abroad.

Al-Wazzan expressed his wishes for continuous health and well-being and his appreciation for Al-Jarallah's distinguished media career and the prominent national role he had been



Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times, meets with Khalid Khalaf Al-Mutairi, Chairman of the Kuwaiti Association for the Prevention of Family Disintegration, alongside Captain Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem and Deputy Editor-in-Chief Suleiman Al-Jarallah.



Businessman Hamad Al-Wazzan visits Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times, to congratulate him on his safe return from medical treatment abroad.

playing throughout decades of service in the fields of journalism and media.

Al-Jarallah, in turn, highly valued this kind gesture from his friend, Al-

Council for Fatwa honors historical and cultural bonds

UAE celebrates Emirati-Kuwaiti fraternity ties

ABU DHABI, Feb 4, (KUNA): The UAE Council for Fatwa organized on Tuesday an event to celebrate the longstanding fraternal relations between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Kuwait.

Held at the Council's headquarters in Abu Dhabi, the event was themed "Emirati-Kuwaiti Fraternity: Historical Roots and Shared Religious Heritage." It was organized as part of the "UAE-Kuwaiti Relations Week," the UAE news agency (WAM) reported.

It was held in collaboration with the UAE National Library and Archives and attended by guests specializing in the cultural and historical ties of the Arabian Gulf.

The gathering aimed to highlight the spiritual and historical depth of the bilateral bond, reviewing key milestones and showcasing the



The UAE Fatwa Council organizes an event on historical and religious ties with Kuwait.

shared values established by the leadership of both nations.

In his speech, Secretary-General of the Council, Dr. Saba Al Kaabi em-

phasized that the two nations have consistently supported one another throughout history.

Meanwhile, Dr. Hosniya Al-Ali,

an educational programs advisor at the National Archives and Library, emphasized that Emirati-Kuwaiti relations are not merely a series of historical milestones, but rather a deeply rooted human experience in the collective consciousness of both nations.

She added that this bond-forged through kinship and solidarity-has built a shared civilizational landscape founded on moderation and coexistence.

Furthermore, Dr. Shama Al-Dhaheiri, Director of the Department of Public Fatwas and Civilizational Ijtihad, affirmed that the Emirati and Kuwaiti experiences serve as a model for utilizing religious discourse and civilizational jurisprudence to promote societal stability and peace through a disciplined, moderate approach.

Kuwait leads 57th Arab Human Rights Session

Palestinian issue tops agenda

CAIRO, Feb 4, (KUNA): The 57th ordinary session of the Arab Permanent Committee on Human Rights launched on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Kuwait, with the participation of representatives of Arab states to discuss issues related to the promotion and protection of human rights in the Arab region.

Chairman of the committee and Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the Arab League, Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi, said in his opening speech that the Palestinian cause remains at the top of joint Arab priorities.

He described it as a true test of the international human rights system amid ongoing grave violations committed against the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation.

Al-Mutairi said the committee would address the Palestinian issue under several agenda items, including reviewing draft recommendations submitted by the State of Palestine.

He expressed his appreciation to the Arab League and its Secretary-General of for continuous efforts to



Participants in the 57th session of the Arab Permanent Committee for Human Rights, chaired by Kuwait.

consolidate the principles of human rights and the General Secretariat's hosting of the work of the current session.

Al-Mutairi highlighted the negative impact of armed conflicts in the region on stability and development, calling for strengthened Arab solidarity and regional and international efforts to achieve lasting peace.

The two-day session will also re-

view developments related to the Arab Charter on Human Rights and mechanisms for its implementation, as well as a report by the Arab League General Secretariat on follow-up to previous committee recommendations.

Kuwait is participating in the meeting with a delegation headed by Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait sets

Associations must clearly record the donation date, donor's name and all other relevant information.

■ Donors must be provided with a copy of the deduction receipt after the data are recorded for each donor.

■ Associations must provide donors with a copy of their K-Net receipt once the withdrawal process is complete.

■ Record all non-cash donations, such as gold, silver, cars, valuables and other items, according to weight or type, and record their equivalent value in Kuwaiti Dinars. For gold and silver, a sales invoice must be attached to verify the sale price of the jewelry. For cars and other items, multiple price quotes must be obtained to ensure the highest offer is selected based on purchase requests, in accordance with the association's procedures. This process must be conducted only at the headquarters of the association.

■ All amounts recorded as donations must be written in both numerals and words.

■ Advertisements soliciting donations should not be displayed on the exterior or interior walls of mosques.

■ The ministry must be provided with a detailed report on donation revenues for the month of Ramadan, including K-Net statements, electronic devices, checks, online donations, bank transfers and text messages.

Moreover, as part of its commitment to regulate charitable work and the act of helping those in need, the ministry circulated a memo to the board members, adding a new category of aid recipients to the central aid system -- single Kuwaiti women aged 30 and above whose fathers are deceased. This will be implemented as a pilot program.

The memo stated that if the program proves beneficial, these individuals will continue to receive assistance as approved primary cases.

It also called for a thorough review of these cases as per procedures on the provision of aid. It underscored the importance of ensuring that those

reviewing these cases verify the existence of proof of the father's death.

It affirmed that the memo is in line with its commitment to regulate charitable work, as well as ensure transparency and compliance with the laws and regulations.

MoH opens

Shaab (for children and adults), and Sabah Al-Ahmad Health Center E (for children and adults).

This reflects a comprehensive geographical distribution and the diversity of beneficiary groups.

The ministry emphasized that this step is in line with its ongoing efforts to develop the primary healthcare system, enhance the efficiency of immunization services, alleviate the burden on health centers, ensure smooth service delivery and improve the quality of performance.

It urged parents and patients to take advantage of these clinics and visit their local health centers within the specified operating hours.

PM highlights

Kuwait translated this confidence into concrete action through a historic return to international debt markets with the issuance of USD 11.25 billion in sovereign bonds, full membership in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and achieving the highest development spending rate in five years, he added.

Sheikh Ahmad stressed that such financial tools serve a broader objective of building a diversified, sustainable economy based on effective partnership with the private sector.

His Highness cited major infrastructure projects, including the contract for Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, the inauguration of the new control tower and third runway at Kuwait International Airport, progress on the new

passenger terminal scheduled to open in 2027, and advances in railway projects linking Kuwait with Riyadh as part of a broader GCC transport network.

The Prime Minister also highlighted Kuwait's success in fostering an attractive investment environment, reflected in the opening of Goldman Sachs' office in Kuwait and Black-Rock obtaining a license to establish a local branch.

On energy, he pointed to strengthened partnerships in research, technology and knowledge transfer, including the 10th anniversary of cooperation with GE Vernova and the establishment of its regional technology center in Kuwait.

He also announced new opportunities for global energy companies in major oil and gas projects, while maintaining full state ownership and sovereignty over resources.

On governance and public services, Sheikh Ahmad said future governments are measured not only by economic strength, but by service quality, noting progress in digital transformation, including the expansion of the "Sahel" app to more than 25 million transactions and the launch of integrated digital initiatives across government entities.

During the past year, Kuwait introduced more than 50 legislative amendments, launched the Kuwait Visa platform, modernized residency systems and advanced tourism development, all within a comprehensive vision centered on economic diversification, effective governance, human capital investment and balanced openness to the world.

His Highness stressed that Kuwait's achievements stem from clear political will, bold decisions and rapid execution.

"The future does not wait for the hesitant," he said, stressing that Kuwait has chosen to shape its future, lead change and cooperate transparently with the world to build stable and sustainable development.



Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal and Director of Kuwait University Dr. Dina Mailam during the university national celebration.



Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal and Director of Kuwait University Dr. Dina Mailam during the university national celebration.

Kuwait University holds nat'l celebrations

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): Kuwait University on Wednesday held its annual celebration marking the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day under the slogan "Our Beloved Country, a Symbol of Pride and a Foundation of Knowledge" at Sabah Al-Salem University City.

University Director Dr. Dina Al-Mailam extended congratulation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people, saying the occasion reflects deep pride, belonging and national unity.

She noted the university's keenness to organize such celebrations to reaffirm its national role, recall the country's history, and renew loyalty and responsibility toward Kuwait and its future.

Kuwait University is a leading academic institution, she reaffirmed, representing a cornerstone of the country's development drive by providing graduates a scientific and practical skills aligned with labor market needs, in line with Kuwait Vision 2035.



KUNA photos

Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal and Director of Kuwait University Dr. Dina Mailam during the university national celebration.

The two-day celebration features participation from colleges and university centers, as well as various public and private sector entities.

Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) participated on Wednesday in a celebration held by Kuwait University under the slogan "Our Beloved Country, a Symbol of Pride and a Foundation of Knowledge" marking the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day.

At Sabah Al-Salem University City, KUNA is showcasing its journalistic work, the process of producing news and reports, the agency's role in covering local and international events, as well as displaying a selection of media materials documenting Kuwait's history and development.

Staff at the pavilion also introduced visitors to the KUNA application and the KUNA Fact-Checking Observatory, explaining their role in facilitating access to official information and countering rumors.

Participating in the two-day event underscores KUNA's media role in community engagement and its support for national events celebrated at state institutions.





Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah poses with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah, and members of the Al-Sabah family during a luncheon at Azayez farm in northern Kuwait.

# HH Amir attends Sheikh Ali Jaber’s luncheon at Azayez farm

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): In the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, and Al-Sabah family members, a luncheon was held by Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Azayez farm in Kuwait’s northern Al-Abdali area on Wednesday.



Ceremonial cake-cutting by His Highness the Amir and the Crown Prince.



His Highness the Amir at Azayez farm, received by Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid.



Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah, Sheikh Salem Al-Abdulaziz, and Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed, and Sheikhs Ali Al-Khalifa, Duaij Al-Malik, Ali Jaber Al-Ali, and Ali Al-Yousef



His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf, Sheikh Meshaal Al-Jarrah, and Sheikh Fahad Al-Jaber



His Highness the Amir embracing Sheikh Khalid Al-Abdullah.



His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad shaking hands with Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem.



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali, Sheikh Thamer Al-Jaber, and Sheikh Sabah Bader Al-Sabah



Sheikhs Mansour Mubarak Al-Abdullah, Azzam Al-Sabah, and Athbi Al-Athbi



Sheikh Mohammed Al-Khaled and Sheikh Mubarak Al-Faisal



Sheikh Bader Ali Al-Malik, Sheikh Dr. Ali Salem Al-Ali, and Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij



Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Hamoud, Sheikh Fahad Jaber Al-Ali, and Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser



Sheikh Sabah Al-Jaber, Sheikh Nimr Al-Malik, and Sheikh Meshaal Jaber Al-Abdullah



‘This bill is a great victory for the American people’

# Trump signs bill to end partial government shutdown, setting stage for next fight

WASHINGTON, Feb 4, (AP): US President Donald Trump signed a roughly \$1.2 trillion government funding bill Tuesday that ends the partial federal shutdown that began over the weekend and sets the stage for an intense debate in Congress over Homeland Security funding.

The president moved quickly to sign the bill after the House approved it with a 217-214 vote.

“This bill is a great victory for the American people,” Trump said.

The vote Tuesday wrapped up congressional work on 11 annual appropriations bills that fund government agencies and programs through Sept. 30.

Passage of the legislation marked the end point for one funding fight, but the start of another. That’s because the package only funds the Department of Homeland Security for two weeks, through Feb 13, at the behest of Democrats who are demanding more restrictions on immigration enforcement af-



US President Donald Trump smiles after signing a spending bill that ends a partial shutdown of the federal government in the Oval Office of the White House, on Feb 3, in Washington. (AP)

ter the shooting deaths of Alex Pretti and Renee Good by federal officers in Minneapolis.

Difficult negotiations are ahead, particularly for the agency that enforces the nation’s immigration laws - US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries quickly warned Democrats would not support any further temporary funding for Homeland Security without substantial changes to its immigration operations., raising the potential of another shutdown for the department and its agencies.

“We need dramatic change in order to make sure that ICE and other agencies within the department of Homeland Security are conducting themselves like every other law enforcement organization in the country,” Jeffries said.

Speaker Mike Johnson said he expects the two sides will be able to

reach an agreement by the deadline.

“This is no time to play games with that funding. We hope that they will operate in good faith over the next 10 days as we negotiate this,” said Johnson. “The president, again, has reached out.”

But Johnson’s counterpart across the Capitol, Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., sounded less optimistic of a deal. “There’s always miracles, right?” Thune told reporters.

The funding bill that cleared Congress Tuesday had provisions that appealed to both parties.

Republicans avoided a massive, catchall funding bill known as an omnibus as part of this year’s appropriations process. Such bills, often taken up before the holiday season with lawmakers anxious to return home, have contributed to greater federal spending, they say.

Democrats were able to fend off some of Trump’s most draconian pro-

posed cuts while adding language that helps ensure funds are spent as stipulated by Congress.

Still, Johnson needed near-unanimous support from his Republican conference to proceed to a final vote on the bill. He narrowly got it during a roll call that was held open for nearly an hour as leaders worked to gain support from a handful of GOP lawmakers who were trying to advance other priorities unrelated to the funding measure.

The final vote wasn’t much easier for GOP leaders. In the end, 21 Republicans sided with the vast majority of Democrats in voting against the funding bill, while that exact same number of Democrats sided with the vast majority of Republicans in voting yes.

Trump had weighed in Monday in a social media post, calling on Republicans to stay united and telling hold-outs, “There can be NO CHANGES at this time.”

Chinese leader meets special envoy of Vietnam’s Lam

# China’s Xi, Russia’s Putin reinforce ties in video call

BEIJING, Feb 4, (Agencies): Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed his country’s growing economic cooperation with China in a video call with Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Wednesday.

The virtual meeting came in the middle of a series of meetings between Xi and Western leaders who have sought to boost ties with China despite differences over Russia’s war in Ukraine. European leaders have pressed China for years to end its support for Russia. China has continued to trade with Russia, providing some relief from Western economic sanctions.

“I would like to once again assure you of firm support for our shared efforts to ensure the sovereignty and security of our countries, our socio-economic welfare and the right to choose our own development path,” Putin said in opening remarks that were broadcast by Russian state television.

Many of America’s closest partners are exploring opportunities with China following clashes with President Donald Trump over tariffs and his demands to take over Greenland from NATO ally Denmark. The Xi-Putin call followed visits by the British and Canadian prime ministers to Beijing last month. The German chancellor is also expected to visit later this month.



Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks with Chinese President Xi Jinping via videoconference at the Kremlin in Moscow on Feb 4. (AP)

The Russian leader noted that “our partnership in the energy sphere is mutually beneficial and has a truly strategic character.”

He added that the two countries were “conducting an active dialogue in peaceful use of nuclear energy and developing high-tech projects, including in the industry sphere and space

research.”

Xi said that he and Putin would discuss a new “grandiose plan for the development of bilateral ties” and “exchange views on major strategic issues,” according to a Russian translation of his opening remarks. He noted that the two countries need to “use a historic opportunity to continue deep-

ening strategic cooperation.”

The call may have been in part to reassure Russia that China’s position on the Ukraine war hasn’t changed.

Russian Security Council Secretary Sergey Shoigu also visited Beijing last weekend, during which he met China’s top foreign policy official, Wang Yi. The two officials agreed their countries should maintain close ties in a turbulent world, state media reports said.

Putin, in his call with Xi, applauded China’s decision to allow visa-free entry for Russians, their partnership in energy including the peaceful use of nuclear power, and high-tech cooperation in space and industry.

**Also:**

**BEIJING:** China will consistently attach great importance to the development of China-Vietnam relations, said **Xi Jinping**, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president.

Xi made the remarks when meeting with **Le Hoai Trung**, special envoy of General Secretary of the Communist Party of **Vietnam** (CPV) Central Committee **To Lam**, on Wednesday in Beijing. Trung is a member of the Political Bureau of the CPV Central Committee and minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam.

# Russia and Ukraine envoys meet in Abu Dhabi for talks

KYIV, Ukraine, Feb 4, (AP): Envoys from Moscow and Kyiv met in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday for another round of US-brokered talks on ending the almost four-year war as Russian cluster munitions killed seven people at a market in Ukraine.

The delegations from Moscow and Kyiv were joined in the United Arab Emirates by US officials, **Rustem Umerov**, Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council chief, who was present at the meeting, said on social media.

Umerov said the planned two-day negotiations in Abu Dhabi started with all three delegations present, after which negotiators were to break into groups according to topics and then meet as a full group again at the end.

The American team was due to include special envoy Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump’s



Umerov

son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who also attended last month’s meeting, according to the White House.

The current talks also coincide with the expiry of the last remaining nuclear arms pact between Russia and the United States on Thursday. Trump and Putin could extend the terms of the treaty or renegotiate its conditions in an effort to prevent a new nuclear arms race.

Last month’s discussions in the Emirati capital, part of a US push to end the fighting, yielded some progress but no breakthrough on key issues, officials said.

The Abu Dhabi talks were held amid Ukrainian outrage over major Russian attacks on its energy system, which have occurred each winter since Russia launched its all-out invasion of its neighbor on Feb. 24 2022.

A huge Russian bombardment overnight from Monday to Tuesday included hundreds of drones and a record 32 ballistic missiles, wounding at least 10 people. This came despite Ukraine’s understanding that Russian President Vladimir Putin had told Trump he would temporarily halt strikes on Ukraine’s power grid.



Government supporters call for the release of former Venezuela president Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, a month after US forces captured them, in Caracas, Venezuela, on Feb 3. (AP)

## Venezuelans rally in Caracas to demand release of Maduro, wife

Thousands of people rallied in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas on Tuesday to demand the release of the country’s President Nicolas Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores, one month after they were seized by force during a US military operation in Venezuela.

Miranda state Governor Elio Serrano said that the mobilization showed people’s determination to tell the world they are still standing, adding the country’s acting president Delcy Rodríguez has “the support of the people.”

Jenny Escobar, president of the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs of Venezuela, said the rally reaffirmed people’s loyalty and steadfast support for Maduro and Flores.

Protesters marched on Plaza Venezuela toward Urdaneta Avenue in central Caracas, continuing demonstrations that have been held since Jan 3.

**Also:**

**CARACAS:** Venezuela’s Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB) expressed support on Tuesday for acting president Delcy Rodríguez’s efforts toward national reconciliation and unity, according to a statement from Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez.

The statement, posted on Tele-

gram, came exactly one month after the United States took by force Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, in a military raid.

Padrino stated that despite “open wounds,” the FANB supports Rodríguez’s efforts to strengthen the democratic system and take necessary actions to facilitate the return of Maduro and Flores.

“A month ago, Venezuela was attacked by the world’s largest nuclear power through an unprecedented and disproportionate military operation,” Padrino said, praising Venezuelan troops who responded with available means and forces. (Xinhua)



Cambodian President of the Senate Hun Sen, and his Pakistan counterpart Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani, attend a meeting at Vimean Samakipheap in Phnom Penh Cambodia on Feb 2. (AP)

## Cambodia and Pakistan to boost bilateral ties, cooperation

Cambodia and Pakistan on Tuesday vowed to further enhance bilateral relations and cooperation.

The commitment was made during a working discussion between Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet and Pakistan’s Senate Chairman Yusuf Raza Gilani in the capital Phnom Penh, said an official news release.

During the meeting, Hun Manet said Gilani’s visit will help strengthen bilateral cooperation in new fields, and Cambodia stands ready to provide support and increase the momentum of the relationship between the legislative institutions to an even closer level, it said.

Both sides discussed a wide range of potential sectors for cooperation, including politics and diplomacy, security and defense, trade and investment, agriculture, and technology, among others, the news release said.

They also agreed to continue strengthening their cooperation within both regional and international forums, according to the news release. Gilani arrived in Cambodia on Monday for a four-day official visit.

**Also:**

**ISLAMABAD:** The UN Security Council strongly condemned the latest surge in militant attacks in

southwestern Pakistan that has killed dozens of people, mostly civilians, as security forces on Wednesday pressed their operations in the insurgency-hit region.

The authorities said scores of militants have been killed in recent days as Pakistani forces crack down on the insurgents in the volatile Balochistan province, where about a dozen coordinated attacks began on Saturday, targeting civilians and buildings housing police and security personnel.

Federal and provincial officials said at least 36 civilians and 17 members of the security forces have been killed. (Agencies)

## US sends military team

# Gunmen kill 13 in northern Nigeria

ABUJA, Nigeria, Feb 4, (AP): Gunmen killed at least 13 people in northern Nigeria, the police said Wednesday, the latest in a surge of attacks that has plagued the West African country.

The attackers, “armed with dangerous weapons, began shooting sporadically” on Tuesday in Doma village in the Faskari area of northwestern Katina state, police spokesman Abubakar Sadiq Aliyu said in a statement.

Investigations were underway to determine the circumstances and identify those responsible, he added.

In a separate attack on Tuesday, armed men killed several people in the Woro and Nuku communities in north-central Kwara state on Tuesday, Gov. AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq said in statement. He did not provide a figure for the number of people killed, but local reports put the death toll at over 30. The police in the state are yet to comment.

Last week, armed extremists in



Nigeria police officers stand guard during a candlelight procession in honour of all protesters killed nationwide at the recently economic hardship protest, in Lagos, Nigeria on Aug 9, 2024. (AP)

northeastern Nigeria killed at least 36 people during separate attacks on a construction site and on an army base.

On Tuesday, the head of US Africa

Command said the United States had sent a small team of military officers to Nigeria, the latest step in its response to the security crisis.

## Subcontinent

**Sri Lanka to launch education reforms:** Sri Lanka will launch a major transformation of its education sector to build a skilled workforce and accelerate national development, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake said on Wednesday.

Addressing the 78th National Independence Day celebrations, the president said the reforms aim to create a modern, knowledge-based society capable of competing with developed nations. He said Sri Lanka must replace outdated thinking with progress, strengthen unity, and equip young people with education, technology, and skills needed for economic growth.

Dissanayake said the government is ready to begin a “transformative era” in education to develop knowledgeable, compassionate, and technologically competent citizens, adding that human capital would be the country’s main driver of development. (Xinhua)

**Afghan police arrest 128 drug smugglers:** Afghan police have detained 128 individuals on drug smuggling charges during operations over the past week, the country’s Ministry of Interior said in a statement on Wednesday.

According to the statement, police detained the suspects for their alleged involvement in the sale, purchase, and smuggling of narcotics during a series of targeted operations conducted in 15 of the country’s 34 provinces.

A quantity of illicit drugs, including methamphetamine, hashish, and stimulant tablets, was seized from the



Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake sings the country’s national anthem during the country’s 78th Independence Day ceremony in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Feb 4. (AP)

arrested individuals, the statement added. (Xinhua)

**5 detained over forgery in Afghanistan:** Police have arrested five individuals over forgery and forging documents in the eastern Afghanistan Pakia province, the Ministry of Interior Affairs said in a statement on Wednesday. “Police combating criminal offenses in Ahmddkhel District of Pakia Province have arrested five individuals in connection with forging documents intended for travel abroad,” the statement posted on the social media X said.

The arrested suspects will be handed over to the relevant authorities after the completion of preliminary investigations, the statement added. (Xinhua)



## Kuwait oil price surges to \$63.52 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by 19 cents to reach USD 63.52 per barrel on Tuesday, compared to USD 63.33 the previous day, reported the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on

Wednesday.

In global markets, the price of Brent crude went up USD 1.03 to reach USD 67.33 per barrel, while the West Texas Intermediate increased USD 1.07 to reach USD 63.21 pb.

# Business

Kuwait Oil Company partners with SLB to develop Mutriba field

## KUFPEC, TotalEnergies sign strategic partnership at KOGS 2026

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) signed Tuesday an agreement with TotalEnergies aimed at supporting KUFPEC's strategic directions, enhancing asset value and expanding its international footprint in exploration and production activities.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of Kuwait Oil and Gas Show (KOGS 2026) in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

It fosters a strategic partnership with France's TotalEnergies to exchange knowledge, share technical expertise, and assess collaboration across KUFPEC's global projects.

KUFPEC ECO Eisa Al-Maraghi told KUNA following the signing that the agreement reflects the company's commitment to building and bolstering strategic partnerships with leading global energy companies.

KUFPEC also signed a separate agreement for strategic partnership with Shell Kuwait Exploration and Production.

The agreements, he added, underscore KUFPEC's commitment to building long-term partnerships based on value creation through cooperation with leading global energy companies by establishing an organized platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange.

KUFPEC is a subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and is responsible for oil and natural gas exploration and production activities outside Kuwait.

Kuwait Petroleum International (Q8) signed Tuesday two strategic agreements with Italy's Eni and Oman's OQ Group to develop major energy and petrochemical projects, on the sidelines of the Kuwait Oil and Gas Show (KOGS 2026).

KOGS 2026 was held under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Q8 signed an agreement with Eni to build an industrial complex for biofuel production in Sicily, Italy. Q8's CEO Shafi Al-Ajmi said the joint investment between Q8 and Eni marks a significant step in expanding both companies' biofuel production capabilities and strengthens their longstanding partnership, which dates back to their collaboration at the Milazzo refinery in 1996.

Al-Ajmi explained that the complex will utilize Eni's



Photo during the conference.

Amiri Diwan photo

Ecofining technology to convert vegetable oil waste into 100 percent renewable biofuel, with an annual production capacity of 500,000 metric tons. The facility will be designed to produce hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) biodiesel and sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

He noted that these fuels are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 65 percent compared to conventional fossil fuel blends, supporting decarbonization efforts across land, sea, and air transport sectors, and aligning with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's 2050 energy trans-

sition strategy.

Separately, Q8 signed an agreement with Oman's OQ Group to develop a petrochemical complex in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. OQ Group CEO Ashraf Al-Mamari said the project reflects the partners' shared commitment to advancing a strategically important venture that supports regional cooperation, economic diversification, and Oman Vision 2040.

Al-Ajmi, on his part, highlighted that the project would strengthen economic ties between Kuwait and Oman's en-

ergy sectors, benefiting from Duqm's strategic location, advanced infrastructure, and competitive feedstock advantages.

Established in 1983, Q8 is a global marketing subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), operating more than 4,800 retail fuel stations across Europe, including over 2,800 in Italy.

The company also supplies aviation fuel to more than 70 international airports, produces and markets lubricants, and holds stakes in refineries in Italy, Vietnam, and Oman through partnerships with global oil companies.

Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) on Tuesday signed a contract with SLB, a global oilfield service provider and energy technology company, for design, development and production management of the strategic Mutriba oil field in north-west Kuwait.

The contract was signed on the sidelines of the 5th Kuwait Oil and Gas Show and Conference (KOGS 2026), held under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In a statement, KOC told KUNA that the project represents a strategic shift in Kuwait's oil sector, aiming to enhance production by developing remote fields and improving operational efficiency through global best practices.

The project targets production of more than 90,000 barrels per day from the Mutriba field. The contract is valued at KD 466 million (about USD 1.5 billion) with a duration of up to five years.

Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) on Tuesday hammered out a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with TotalEnergies to strengthen cooperation through expertise exchange, technical studies and scientific research.

The MoU notably includes studies related to oil exploration opportunities in Kuwait, according to a statement by the KOC.

The MoU was signed on the sidelines of the 5th Kuwait Oil and Gas Show and Conference (KOGS 2026), held under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

It also marks an important step toward deeper strategic cooperation, expressing confidence that the partnership will yield sustainable and positive outcomes, it added.

General index falls 0.66%

## Boursa Kuwait ends session lower

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Wednesday's session in negative territory, with the general index declining by 58.33 points, or 0.66 percent, to finish at 8,731.65 points.

Trading activity included 251.4 million shares exchanged through 17,463 cash transactions, with a total value of 73 million Kuwaiti dinars (approximately USD 222.6 million).

The Main Market Index also dropped by 46.61 points, or 0.57 percent, to settle at 8,134.06 points, as 115.4 million shares changed hands across 8,417 transactions worth 19.8

million dinars (around USD 60.3 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index slid 64.09 points, or 0.68 percent, closing at 9,311.72 points, with 135.9 million shares traded in 9,046 deals valued at 53.2 million dinars (approximately USD 162.2 million).

The Main 50 Index recorded the largest decline of the day, losing 100.78 points, or 1.15 percent, to end at 8,646.95 points. It saw 94.3 million shares traded through 6,103 cash transactions totaling 16.3 million dinars (about USD 49.7 million).

## Lulu Group Chairman meets Kuwait PM at WGS in Dubai



Yusuf Ali MA, Chairman of Lulu Group meets H.H. Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait on the sidelines of World Government Summits in Dubai.

## AlShamlan: KFH maintains efficient operational performance & strengthens sustainable growth

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Group Chief Executive Officer, **Khaled Yousef AlShamlan**, said that prioritizing core banking activities has enhanced operational efficiency, quality of customer service, and profit sustainability. In an interview with CNBC Arabia, he added that this focus has resulted in higher financing income, improved asset quality, and a sharper competitive edge.

Highlighting the Group's 2025 fiscal year performance, AlShamlan pointed to growth in all key financial indicators as evidence of a successful operational strategy and a solidified financial position.

AlShamlan said that KFH remains the most profitable bank in Kuwait, with 2025 net profit reaching KD 632.1 million, up 5% compared to 2024.

He noted that KFH successfully grew its net financing income by roughly 11.5% compared to the previous year, reaching approximately KD 1.3 billion.

AlShamlan noted that operating income rose to KD 1.8 billion, an 8.3% increase over the previous year driven by growth across all core activities. This growth occurred despite the previous year's figures including a KD 70.1 million profit from the sale of KFH-Bahrain in Q2 2024. He emphasized that these results demonstrate the success of the Group's strategy, a robust capital base, and strong operational performance.

He added that the net operating income in 2025 rose to KD 1.2 billion, a 10.7% increase compared to the previous year.

AlShamlan explained that the cost-to-income ratio improved to around 34.06% from 35.46% the previous year, noting that this progress reflects operational efficiency and expense management.

### Financial position

He pointed out that all key indicators in the 2025 financial position showed significant growth. Total assets rose to KD 42.8 billion, a 16.5% increase, reflecting strong operational performance and a growing volume of banking business. He also noted that rising customer confidence and the expansion of the financing receivables, which reached approximately KD 21.8 billion, up 14.4%, further drove these results.



Khaled AlShamlan

AlShamlan added that depositors' accounts reached KD 21 billion, an increase of 9.4%.

He said that the Group's non-performing financing (NPF) ratio reached 1.51% compared to 1.78% the previous year, adding that this ratio is positive and reflects the quality of the financing portfolio. Furthermore, he highlighted that the provisions coverage ratio stands at approximately 383% for KFH-Kuwait and about 287% for the Group.

### Subsidiary Performance

Regarding the contribution of international subsidiaries to profitability, AlShamlan explained that these entities continued to deliver strong results. "They accounted for approximately 44% of the Group's net profits, reflecting the strength of its regional and international presence. This performance also highlights the seamless integration across the Group's subsidiaries and their collective ability to build a diverse, global customer base."

### Economic growth

AlShamlan indicated that KFH continues its leading role in supporting economic growth, promoting financial inclusion and supporting the State's ambitious economic vision for a more stable and prosperous financial future, while diversifying the national



KFH head office

economy and achieving sustainable development in line with Kuwait Vision 2035.

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

### Real Estate Financing Law

Regarding the Real Estate Financing Law, AlShamlan anticipated a positive impact upon its implementation, noting its role in introducing new financing tools to address liquidity challenges and stimulate credit. He stated that this law complements the Real Estate Developer Law, supporting efforts to resolve the private housing crisis and driving growth across the real estate sector.

AlShamlan emphasized that KFH and the wider Kuwaiti banking sector are fully prepared, with ample liquidity, to finance future real estate projects and strengthen their role in the national economy.

Collaborating with various organizations to support segments of the community as part of its Sustainability Program

## stc reaffirms its commitment to sustainability by sponsoring annual Kuwait Sustainability Event 2026

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Kuwait Telecommunications Company stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, participated in the 5th annual Kuwait Sustainability Event (KSE) held at Mur-oj. The Company's participation aligns with its ongoing commitment to empower the community in diverse ways, aligning with the objectives and framework of its expansive Sustainability Program and comprehensive corporate social responsibility agenda.

Through an interactive booth designed to highlight the elements of governance, environment, and society (ESG), stc engaged with visitors of all ages and contributed to raising awareness of the importance of corporate social responsibility. The initiative focused on educating younger generations, encouraging sustainable behaviors, and promoting community participation.

The company partnered with KISWA to encourage visitors to donate their old and unused clothes, which were then redistributed to those in need. This initiative aimed to promote responsible consumption and reduce waste. The company also highlighted its collaboration with Tadwire, a recycling specialist, raising awareness among visitors about the importance of safe electronic waste disposal. Attendees were encouraged to recycle their old electronic devices responsibly, contributing to a smaller environmental footprint.

The booth also featured the participation of the NaematiFoundation, which collected donations and supported initiatives to provide food for underprivileged families. This collaboration aimed to strengthen social solidarity and emphasize the importance of supporting vulnerable groups in Kuwait.

Commenting on stc's participation, Ahmed AlNowaibet, Director of Public Relations and Social Media at stc, said, "The Kuwait Sustainability Event has become an important platform to engage with the community and raise awareness around responsible practices that positively impact both individuals and society as a whole. stc's par-



A group photo of stc officials during the Kuwait Sustainability Event.

ticipation reflects its longstanding experience in becoming part of purpose-driven initiatives that aim to enhance the social fabric of the community. Through this event we were able to translate some of the primary pillars behind our sustainability program into actionable initiatives that supported those in need in collaboration with members of the community."

Al Nowaibet added, "Achieving meaningful and lasting impact requires the collective efforts of organizations across both the public and private sectors, particularly when working toward a shared vision for a more sustainable future. At stc, we continuously enhance our CSR and Sustainability Programs to address evolving community needs, ensuring that our initiatives remain

**AlNowaibet:** Through this event we were able to translate some of the primary pillars behind our sustainability program into actionable initiatives

impactful, inclusive, and aligned with community objectives. On behalf of stc, I would like to extend our appreciation to the organizers and all those who contributed to the various activations that we held at our booth to achieve a common goal for our community. Moving Forward, stc will continue to utilize its resources and network to empower the community while encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices that support future generations."

stc also offered visitors the opportunity to view the Company's latest Sustainability Report at its booth, providing an overview of the Company's current and future sustainability initiatives. The report reflects how stc embeds values such as transparency, fairness, responsibility, and ethics across its operations and decision making processes.

### About stc

Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) is a Kuwaiti shareholding company incorporated pursuant to Amiri Decree No. 187 on 22 July, 2008, to operate and manage the third GSM mobile network in Kuwait as per Law No. 2 of 2008. Accordingly, stc launched its operations in December 2008 and was listed on Boursa Kuwait in December 2014.

stc Kuwait is a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and solutions to customers, both for individuals and enterprises, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and is a subsidiary of stc Group. stc Kuwait has expanded its portfolio by acquiring companies such as Qualitynet General Trading and Contracting Company (solutions by stc) in Kuwait, and e-portal Holding Company and its subsidiaries.



19.42% increase in net profit to KD 62.59 million

# ABK Group announces EOY 2025 financial results

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced its strong financial results for the financial year 2025, once again reaffirming its position as a leading financial institution.

### Financial Results

ABK reported a net profit of KD 62.59 million, representing a 19.42% increase, alongside a 10% rise in earnings per share (EPS) to 22 fils. Operating profit increased by 15.94% to KD 124.53 million, while total assets reached KD 6.93 billion, and customer deposits stood at KD 4.07 billion.

Meanwhile, loans and advances amounted to KD 4.57 billion, and operating income saw an increase of 10.32% to KD 221.47 million. The Bank's non-performing loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.29%, with NPL coverage reaching 366%, a capital adequacy ratio (CAR) of 19.11%, and shareholders' equity grew by 8.46% to KD 681.16 million, underscoring ABK's financial stability, sound financial position, and robust balance sheet.

The Board of Directors proposed the distribution of cash dividends of 10%, equivalent to 10 fils per share, in addition to bonus shares of 5%, equivalent to five shares for every 100 shares held. These recommendations are subject to approval by the Annual General Assembly.

On this occasion, Mr. Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK Group, stated,

"The strong financial results and sustained profit growth reflect the success of our business model, demonstrating ABK's ability to keep pace with rapid economic changes through proactive plans that meet the expectations of all stakeholders, including customers and shareholders."

He added that growth across several financial indicators was driven by a clear strategy focused on diversifying income sources and enhancing operational efficiency. These indicators, he noted, confirm that ABK is on the right path to strengthening shareholder equity and reinforcing its position in the banking sector in Kuwait, the UAE, and Egypt, supported by prudent risk management and a strong focus on asset quality.

Mr. Behbehani explained that the Board's recommendation to distribute cash dividends and bonus shares reflects the Bank's strong financial position and its ability to generate sustainable returns for shareholders. He noted that the bonus share distribution aims to strengthen the Bank's capital base and support its ambitious expansion plans to capitalize on future investment opportunities.

"These distributions demonstrate that ABK is built on solid foundations of growing profitability and strong asset quality, and that it remains committed to creating long-term added value for our shareholders," he said.

Mr. Behbehani also highlighted the Bank's exceptional success in issuing Tier II subordinated bonds during the past financial year, with a value of KD 30 million. The issuance witnessed strong investor demand, exceeding the offered amount by more than five times, reflecting high confidence in ABK's credit standing and the overall financial stability of Kuwait.

He noted that the strong demand for the issuance is a clear testament to the investment community's confidence in the Bank's financial strength and ambitious vision, underscoring the efficiency of its business



Talal Behbehani:

■ Our sustained growth in net profit reflects the success of ABK's business model



Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol:

■ The financial results confirm the success of our strategies driven by continued investments in service and solution development

Mr. Behbehani concluded by expressing his sincere appreciation to the Board of Directors, Executive Management, and all employees, who form the foundation of ABK's achievements. He also extended his gratitude to shareholders, customers, the Central Bank of Kuwait, and regulatory authorities in Kuwait, the UAE, and Egypt for their continued support.

### Successful Strategy

On his part, Mr. Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group Chief Executive Officer of ABK, stated, "The financial results achieved reflect the success of our strategies and ABK's continuous alignment with developments in the banking industry, driven by ongoing investments in enhancing services and banking solutions for all customer segments across Kuwait, the UAE, and Egypt."

He added that during 2025, the Bank continued implementing its branch renovation plan, introducing interactive spaces equipped with the latest technologies to facilitate transactions at record speed while ensuring customer comfort and privacy, reaffirming that customer convenience remains a top priority.

### Digital Transformation

Mr. Van Der Tol noted that ABK continued to invest significantly in digital transformation by developing smart banking solutions that meet customer expectations and deliver a seamless banking experience. He said, "These efforts are evident through the launch of our new mobile application, ongoing enhancements to the Bank's website, and the introduction of additional digital services, positioning ABK among financial institutions that adopt advanced technologies in line with the highest industry standards."

### Employees and Customers

He highlighted the Bank's continued focus on employee development through training programs conducted in cooperation with specialized institutions, in addition to online learning initiatives and participation in job fairs to attract top talent. He affirmed that these efforts have contributed to enhancing service quality and expanding the Bank's growing customer base and further emphasized that the bank focuses on developing Kuwaiti talent to assume leadership roles in the future.

ABK also continued to engage with customers through various events and exclusive offers aimed at meeting their evolving needs and keeping pace with local, regional, and global banking developments.

### CSR

Mr. Van Der Tol emphasized that CSR remains a core pillar of ABK's identity, stating, "The Bank continued to invest in community development initiatives, support education, and empower youth and women, while strengthening financial inclusion through banking awareness programs. This included ongoing support for the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign in cooperation with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association in which the bank was ranked among the top performers for the campaign."

He concluded by reaffirming ABK's commitment to advancing its digital transformation journey and strengthening its position as a leader in banking innovation, confidently looking ahead to achieving further milestones that positively impact the Bank's future and enhance shareholder value.



ABK also maintained its strong credit ratings from Moody's and Fitch at A2 and A, respectively, reflecting its leadership in providing innovative banking solutions across multiple business sectors.

### ABK Wealth Management

Mr. Behbehani announced a major milestone in ABK's growth journey in 2025 with the official launch of ABK Wealth

Management, following the integration of ABK Capital and Private Banking services. This launch addresses the growing demand for specialized investment solutions and reflects the Bank's vision to become the most trusted financial partner for clients seeking to build and protect their wealth.

He stated, "The launch of ABK Wealth Management demonstrates our ability to adapt to changes in the global financial landscape and leverage our strong financial position to offer exclusive investment opportunities and innovative products across multiple asset classes."

### ESG

Mr. Behbehani emphasized that alongside financial success, ABK remains committed to embedding environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles, as well as corporate social responsibility (CSR), at the core of its strategy. The Bank continued to issue its annual sustainability report, reinforcing investor and customer confidence in ABK as a responsible and sustainable financial institution.

He stressed, "Adopting ESG standards is an ongoing journey of development and improvement, with a firm commitment to transparency and alignment with international best practices."



## 2025 Financial Results





# ZainTECH highlights its role in shaping AI and regional digital economy at IDCF 2026

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: As strategic partner to the second edition of the International Digital Cooperation Forum (IDCF) 2026, held 4 and 5 February 2026 at the Jumeirah Messilah Hotel, Kuwait City, ZainTECH is supporting the Forum’s momentum on responsible artificial intelligence, digital investment, and cross-border cooperation, as key players from across the digital ecosystem convene under the theme “Inclusive prosperity in the age of AI.”

Hosted by the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), the two-day IDCF Forum brings together senior policymakers, ministers, business leaders, and international organizations from 60 countries to move beyond dialogue and align policy, investment, and innovation around the opportunities and risks of AI-driven digital transformation. It was attended by Dr. Hajar El-Haddaoui, Director General of the IDCF.

IDCF 2026 is being held on the sidelines of the 5th DCO General Assembly, during which Member States adopted the Kuwait Declaration on Responsible AI for Global Digital Prosperity, setting a shared political direction for the ethical, inclusive, and human-centric development and deployment of artificial intelligence.

Andrew Hanna, CEO of ZainTECH, said: “IDCF 2026 highlighted the critical role of collaboration between governments, industry leaders and the private sector in advancing responsible AI at scale. We fully support DCO’s efforts



ZainTECH CEO Andrew Hanna delivering the opening keynote.



Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Andrew Hanna, and Dr. Hajar Al-Haddawi during the conference.



Andrew Hanna and Daai Al-Oud with the Zain and ZainTECH team at the company's booth.

- As strategic partner to the DCO-hosted 2nd International Digital Cooperation Forum (IDCF)
- Forum highlights Kuwait’s prominence on the global digital map as leaders from 60 countries convene
- DCO General Assembly adopt the Kuwait Declaration on Responsible AI for Global Digital Prosperity

to translate shared priorities into practical solutions that strengthen digital infrastructure, skills, and innovation.”

Hanna added: “AI is already transforming economies and institutions. But its real value lies not in speed or scale, it lies in trust. ZainTECH is shaping the future of AI and the regional digital economy by focusing on building digital ecosystems that are inclusive, secure, and built to last through a simple operating model that is Digital, Intelligent and Resilient.”

On the sidelines of the Forum, ZainTECH hosted a dedicated booth, welcoming delegates, partners, and innovators to explore its integrated digital solutions portfolio and engage directly with its experts. The booth served as an interactive touchpoint to showcase how ZainTECH enables organizations to translate AI ambition into trusted execution, through practical use cases and solution pathways spanning data and AI, cybersecurity, cloud, and end-to-end digital transformation, aligned with its Digital, Intelligent and Resilient operating model.

Across plenary discussions, ministerial engagements, and curated side events, conversations underscored that AI-enabled growth will deliver broad-based prosperity only when anchored in responsible governance, trusted digital foundations, skills development, and sustained international cooperation.

## Japan backs initiative

# US, allies target China’s grip on critical minerals

WASHINGTON, Feb 4, (AP): The Trump administration wants to create a critical minerals trading bloc with its allies that will use tariffs to maintain price floors and defend against China’s tactic of flooding the market to undermine any potential competitors.

Vice President JD Vance said Wednesday that the trade war over the past year exposed how dependent most countries are on the critical minerals that China has a stranglehold on.

“We want members to form a trading bloc among allies and partners, one that guarantees American access to American industrial might while also expanding production across the entire zone,” Vance said at a meeting of foreign ministers at the State Department.

“What is before all of us is an opportunity at self-reliance that we never have to rely on anybody else except for each other, for the critical minerals necessary to sustain our industries and to sustain growth.”

Critical minerals are needed for everything from jet engines to smartphones. China dominates the market for those ingredients crucial to high-tech products.

“I think a lot of us have learned the hard way in some ways over the last year, how much our economies depend on these critical minerals,” Vance said at the opening of a meeting that Secretary of State Marco Rubio is hosting with officials from several dozen European, Asian and African nations.

Two days ago, President Donald Trump announced Project Vault, a plan for stockpile of rare elements to be funded with a \$10 billion loan from the U.S. Export-Import Bank and nearly \$1.67 billion in private capital.

Trump’s Republican administration is making such bold moves after China, which controls 70% of the world’s rare earths mining and 90% of the processing, choked off the flow of the elements in response to Trump’s tariff war. The two global powers are in a one-year truce after Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in October and agreed to pull back on high tariffs and stepped-up rare earth restrictions.

But China’s limits remain tighter than they were before Trump took office.

Xi spoke with Trump on Wednesday, according to Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington. Details were not immediately available.

Vance said some countries have signed on the trading bloc, which is designed to ensure stable prices and will provide members access to financing and the critical minerals. He hoped others would agree after the meeting.

Administration officials said this plan will help the West move beyond complaining about the problem of access to critical minerals to actually solving it.

“Everyone here has a role to play, and that’s why we’re so grateful for you coming and being a part of this gathering that I hope will lead to not just more gatherings, but action,” Rubio said.

In addition to creating the stockpile, the government last week also made its fourth direct investment in an American critical minerals producer when it extended \$1.6 billion to USA Rare Earth in exchange for stock and a repayment agreement.

Seeking government funding these days is like meeting with private equity investors because officials are

scrutinizing companies to ensure anyone they invest in can deliver, said Pini Althaus, who founded Oklahoma rare earth miner USA Rare Earth in 2019. He said the government is demanding terms designed to generate a return for taxpayers as loans are repaid and stock prices increase.

Japan’s minister of state for foreign affairs, Iwao Horii, said at the meeting that Tokyo was fully on board with the U.S. initiative and would work with as many countries as possible to ensure it is a success.

“Critical minerals and (their) stable supply is indispensable to the sustainable development of the global economy,” he said.

The Export-Import Bank’s board this week approved the \$10 billion loan - the largest in its history - to help finance the setup of the U.S. Strategic Critical Minerals Reserve. It is tasked with ensuring access to critical minerals and related products for manufacturers, including battery maker Clarios, energy equipment manufacturer GE Vernova, digital storage company Western Digital and aerospace giant Boeing, according to the policy bank.

The bank’s president and chairman, John Jovanovic, told CNBC that the project creates a public-private partnership formula that “is uniquely suited and puts America’s best foot forward.”

“What it does is it creates a scenario where there are no free riders. Everybody pitches in to solve this huge problem,” he said.

Manufacturers, which benefit the most from the reserve, are making a long-term financial commitment, Jovanovic said, while the government loan spurs private investments.

The stockpile strategy may help spark a “more organic” pricing model that excludes China, which has used its dominance to flood the market with lower-priced products to squeeze out competitors, said Wade Senti, president of the U.S. permanent magnet company AML.

The administration also has injected public money directly into the sector. The Pentagon has shelled out nearly \$5 billion over the past year to help ensure its access to the materials after the trade war laid bare just how beholden the U.S. is to China.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers last month proposed creating an agency with \$2.5 billion to spur production of rare earths and the other critical minerals. The lawmakers applauded the steps by the Trump administration.

“It’s a clear sign that there is bipartisan support for securing a robust domestic supply of critical minerals that both reduces our reliance on China and stabilizes the market,” Sens. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., and Todd Young, R-Ind., said in a joint statement.

Building up a stockpile will help American companies weather future rare earth supply disruptions, but that will likely be a long-term effort because the materials are still scarce right now with China’s restrictions, said David Abraham, a rare earths expert who has followed the industry for decades and wrote the book “The Elements of Power.”

The administration has focused on reinvigorating critical minerals production, but Abraham said it’s also important to encourage development of manufacturing that will use them. He noted that Trump’s decisions to cut incentives for electric vehicles and wind turbines have undercut demand for these elements in America.

## A special design inspired by the Kuwaiti identity

# NBK announces limited-edition KWD Visa Prepaid Card in celebration of Kuwait’s National holidays

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: In celebration of Kuwait’s national holidays, in which the country commemorates its beautiful history and achievements, National Bank of Kuwait announced a limited-edition issuance of KWD Visa Prepaid Card with a special design inspired by Kuwaiti identity.

This step comes as part of the bank’s keenness to share the joy of national celebrations with its customers through special products that combine Kuwaiti identity with contemporary features, in addition to promoting its easy and secure digital banking experience.

NBK’s limited-edition Visa Prepaid Card offers customers a diverse range of benefits that add value to their experience during the national holiday season, as cardholders can benefit from up to 25% cashback through the NBK Rewards Program, which the largest loyalty program in Kuwait offering a wide range of rewards and offers at hundreds of partners.

The card also allows customers to issue and use it immediately via the NBK Mobile Banking App without the need to visit a branch, which reflects the Bank’s commitment to providing innovative digital solutions that make it easier for customers to conduct their transactions quickly and securely.

Moreover, the card is widely accepted inside and outside Kuwait, with a guarantee of the highest levels of protection and security during purchases, whether through points of sale or online.

As for its design, this new limited edition comes with a distinctive national layout that embodies the spirit of national celebrations and highlights the Kuwaiti identity in a modern way. With this, the card gives customers a unique banking experience that suits the atmosphere of the national holidays and enhances their patriotic bond towards these cherished celebrations.

NBK seeks to be the most pre-



Bader Al-Janah

**Janah:**

- We made sure that this issue carries the national spirit through a special design that combines Kuwaiti identity and contemporary features.
- Prioritizing customers by presenting exceptional banking services is a deep-rooted corporate culture at NBK.
- We will continue to provide developed payment solutions that suit the customers’ lifestyle and always enrich their banking experiences.



Instant Issuance and Usage

Up to 25% NBK Rewards Points

Control Your Budget in a Secure Way

pared financial partner for the future of banking, and to remain closest to its customers by anticipating their needs and meeting their aspirations with the highest levels of quality and innovation.

On this occasion, Mr.Bader Al-Janah, Vice President – Consumer Banking Group at NBK, commented: “We are proud to launch this limited-edition NBK Visa Prepaid Card, which reflects our commitment to innovation and providing exclusive seasonal offers that align with customer aspirations, especially during national events that hold great value for Kuwaiti society”.

Al-Janahadded: “We made sure that this edition carries a national appeal with a special design that ex-

presses our pride in these dear occasions. The design combines Kuwaiti identity and innovation in payment solutions”.

He also noted NBK’s credit and prepaid cards are not simply payment tools, but a gateway to a unique lifestyle and a wide range of exclusive benefits that allow customers to participate in the Bank’s special campaigns throughout the year with prestigious companies and institutions from diverse sectors.

Additionally, Al-Janah called customers to take advantage of the cashback offer and card benefits by issuing it through the NBK Mobile Banking App, stressing that the Bank continues to provide advanced payment solutions that suit customers’

lifestyles and always enrich their banking experience.

Finally, he emphasized that providing an exceptional customer-first banking experience is a deep-rooted corporate culture at NBK, as its year-round exclusive offers reflect the unwavering commitment to bringing an integrated banking experience supported by innovative payment solutions and advanced banking products, which meet the customers’ aspirations and enrich their banking experience.

It is worth noting that NBK has proudly maintained over the past years the highest level of distinguished banking services, and it constantly strives to provide a more innovative banking experience for its customers.

## AGOA restored after lapse, set to expire again in Dec

# Trump extends African trade deal AGOA until year-end

CAPE TOWN, Feb 4, (AP): U.S. President Donald Trump has extended a 26-year-old free-trade agreement with African countries that was left in doubt last year when his administration allowed it to expire while enforcing his policy of reciprocal tariffs.

Trump on Tuesday signed into law an extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, or AGOA, according to the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

But the extension is short-term, lasting only until Dec. 31. The trade office said the agreement, which gives eligible sub-Saharan African nations duty-free access to the U.S. market for some products, would be modified to account for tariffs the U.S. has imposed on other countries as part of the Republican president’s America First policy.

The agreement is key to many African countries that feared it would be another economic blow following the new tariffs and cuts to U.S. aid under Trump.

**Here is what to know.**

AGOA was introduced in 2000 under former U.S. President Bill Clinton. Only some nations are eligible, and the U.S. can remove countries that fail to meet requirements including establishing market-based economies or upholding democratic standards and human rights. The East African nation of Uganda was removed in 2024 by the Biden administration for enacting a strict anti-gay law that the U.S. called a human rights violation.

The agreement allows some 1,800 products to be exported to the U.S. duty-free, including crude oil,

cars and car parts, clothing, textiles and agricultural produce. It drives much of the trade between the U.S. and Africa, which was valued at more than \$100 billion in 2024 by the U.S. trade office.

AGOA included 34 African countries when the Trump administration allowed the expiration at the end of September, with many businesses in those nations claiming the end of the deal would endanger tens of thousands of jobs.

The extension until the end of 2026 is short compared to the 10-year extension agreement when it previously came up for renewal in 2015.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement Tuesday that the Trump administration would work with Congress “to modernize the program to align with President Trump’s America First trade policy” without giving details of possible changes.

South Africa, the continent’s most advanced economy and one of the biggest beneficiaries of AGOA, said it welcomed the renewal but was concerned by the short-term nature of the extension. Minister of Trade and Industry Parks Tau told South African news outlet News24 that he hoped the U.S. would soon “provide certainty” of the AGOA details.

The Trump administration has applied political pressure on sub-Saharan Africa’s two biggest economies, South Africa and Nigeria, leaving them uncertain where they might fit into a renewed form of the agreement that is highly important to both nations.

Trump has criticized the South African government as anti-American and made baseless claims that a

white minority group in the country is being violently persecuted. The U.S. has applied 30% tariffs, among the highest in the world, raising fears that its biggest African trade partner would be removed from AGOA due to the diplomatic fallout.

Similarly, U.S. ties with Nigeria have been strained over Trump’s allegations that Christians are being persecuted in Africa’s most populous country, claims officials say are inaccurate.

Trump’s America First policy has been especially hard on Africa by cutting billions of dollars for the now-dismantled United States Aid Agency while imposing tariffs on small or struggling economies. Some African countries such as Lesotho have said the double blow has been almost impossible to bear.

The U.S. has moved to renegotiate assistance methods for Africa, including a series of bilateral health agreements announced in recent months. The pledges of assistance also commit African nations to invest in their own health systems, which the Trump administration says will improve self-sufficiency and cut waste.

The U.S. has called on African nations to remove trade barriers to American imports. The U.S. trade office said AGOA would follow the America First policy and “must demand more from our trading partners.”

The aggressive trade policies have pushed some African nations to enhance ties with other countries or regions, especially China, which is already the continent’s largest trading partner.



## Soto's film offers ironic allegory of the art world

# In 'A Poet,' a Colombian farce of literary failure, stubborn belief

LOS ANGELES, Feb 4, (AP): In Simón Mesa Soto's "A Poet," Oscar Restrepo (Ubeimar Rios) is a failed Colombian writer who keeps a photo of the author José Asunción Silva above his mantle. Silva died at age 30, and even Oscar would admit his own career would be a lot better if he had died young, too.

Mid-aged in Medellín, Oscar is unemployed, divorced and living with his mother (Margarita Soto). His case isn't one of misunderstood genius, either. Oscar is prone to self-made disaster.

A more successful friend, Efrain (Guillermo Cardona), calls him "a walking problem."

"You're a poem," Efrain tells him. "A pretty sad one."

But in the pantheon of sad-sack protagonists, Oscar is a triumph. Rios, a nonprofessional actor who squints behind thick glasses and whose arms hang stubbornly low from his hunched shoulders, creates in Oscar a figure of farcical perfection: a tortured artist, equal parts comedy and tragedy.

There's little that's lyrical or beautiful about Oscar's life. This is a guy who, on a rare visit to his teenage daughter (Alisson Correa), asks if he can borrow \$10. At the same time, Oscar is a stout believer in the grandest ideals of art. Give him a drink, or a microphone, and he'll soon be rhapsodizing about the power of "poesía." For someone one step from the gutter, he's comically high minded.

But it's been decades since he was published. He declares: "I'm a poet." His sister corrects: "You're unemployed." Yet Oscar manages to land a job teaching at a local high school. The students mostly laugh at him, but Oscar believes one, a soft-spoken young woman named Yurlady (Rebeca Andrade), shows tremendous potential. Redemption for Oscar is, maybe,



This image released by 1-2 Special shows Ubeimar Rios in a scene from 'A Poet'. (AP)

at hand.

Yurlady, herself, doesn't have any real literary ambitions. But Oscar, resolving to mentor her, helps her apply to Poetry Viva, a workshop for

young writers run by Efrain, a smooth-talker acclaimed for his social issues writing. He's the central foil to Oscar – a pompous but savvy achiever who urges Yurlady not to submit her simple from-the-heart poems but something about racism or poverty that will win over liberal-minded European judges.

In this, Soto's film is an ironic allegory about art worlds beyond poetry. "A Poet" premiered at last year's Cannes Film Festival, winning an award in the Un Certain Regard section. Soto first broke out in Cannes with a prize-winning short in 2014. In the intervening years, as a Colombian filmmaker, he's surely encountered some stereotypical expectations. The film industry would no doubt be more welcoming to, say, a cartel tale from Soto then a Medellín-set, Woody Allen-like farce about an unsuccessful poet.

But while "A Poet" might remind you of some other films – one would be Cord Jefferson's "American Fiction" – it is, like Oscar, steadfastly its own thing. Filmed on grainy 16mm, it's even rough and dirty around the edges, as if the movie is wearing its protagonist's clothes.

But if Soto's film is loose and gritty, its satire is remarkably precise. This is a farce of creative life where the only pure artistic intention is a joke. Success belongs to hypocrites like Efrain. Yurlady's working class family sees only a chance for money. But Oscar, for all his foolishness, is at least uncompromising. He's wrong about almost everything, except what really counts.

"A Poet," a 1-2 Special released in theaters last week, is unrated by the Motion Picture Association. In Spanish with English subtitles. Running time: 124 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

## People

### TV host mom missing

## Forced entry signs at Guthrie family home

TUCSON, Ariz., Feb 4, (AP): Investigators found signs of forced entry at the Arizona home of "Today" show host **Savannah Guthrie's** mother, a person familiar with the investigation said Tuesday, as the host asked for prayers to help bring back the 84-year-old, whom authorities believe was taken against her will.

The host described her mother as "a woman of deep conviction, a good and faithful servant" in a social media post late Monday. She asked supporters to "raise your prayers with us and believe with us that she will be lifted by them in this very moment. Bring her home."

Nancy Guthrie must be found soon because she could die without her medication, Pima County Sheriff

Chris Nanos said, urging whoever has her to free her.

"If she's alive right now, her meds are vital. I can't stress that enough. It's been better than 24 hours, and the family tells us if she doesn't have those meds, it can become fatal," Nanos said.

Investigators also found specific evidence in the home showing there was a nighttime kidnapping, the person told The Associated Press. Several of Guthrie's personal items, including her cellphone, wallet and her car, were still there after she disappeared.

Investigators are reviewing surveillance video from nearby homes and working to analyze data from cellphone towers. Police are also reviewing information from license plate cameras in the area, according to the person, who was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the case and spoke to AP on condition of an anonymity.

The motive remains a mystery. Investigators do not believe at this point that the abduction was part of a robbery, home invasion or kidnapping-for-ransom plot, the person said.

For a second day Tuesday, "Today" opened with Nancy Guthrie's disappearance, but Savannah Guthrie was not at the anchor's desk. Nanos said Monday that she is in Arizona. The host grew up in Tucson, graduated from the University of Arizona and previously worked as a reporter and anchor at Tucson television station KVOA.

Nancy Guthrie was last seen Saturday night at her home in the Tucson area, where she lived alone and was reported missing Sunday. Someone at church called a family member to say Guthrie wasn't there, leading family to search her home and then call 911, Nanos said.

Nancy Guthrie has limited mobility, and officials do not believe she left on her own. Nanos said she is of sound mind.

Nanos said investigators took samples they hope will provide at least part of a DNA profile, KVOA reported.

Searchers used drones and search dogs and were supported by volunteers and Border Patrol. The homicide team was also involved, Nanos said Sunday. The FBI has offered to help, sheriff's department spokesperson Angelica Carrillo said.

On Monday morning, Nanos said search crews had been pulled back.

"We don't see this as a search mission so much as it is a crime scene," the sheriff said.

Even so, a sheriff's helicopter flew over the desert Monday afternoon near Nancy Guthrie's home in the affluent Catalina foothills area on the northern edge of Tucson. Her brick home has a gravel driveway and a yard covered in prickly pear and saguaro cactus.

Savannah Guthrie, who has two siblings, was 16 when their father died. Nancy Guthrie raised them on her own. The host often brought her mother on "Today" as a guest.

"She has met unthinkable challenges in her life with grit, without self-pity, with determination and always, always with unshakeable faith," Savannah said on the show in 2022 on Nancy Guthrie's 80th birthday.

"She loves us, her family, fiercely, and her selflessness and sacrifice for us, her steadfastness and her unmovable confidence is the reason any of us grew up to do anything."

## Music



Rihanna performs during the halftime show at the NFL Super Bowl 57 football game between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Philadelphia Eagles on Feb. 12, 2023, in Glendale, Ariz. (AP)

## Bad Bunny to bring Latin music to halftime spectacle

# How Super Bowl show became a global pop stage

LOS ANGELES, Feb 4, (AP): Once upon a time, the Super Bowl halftime show belonged to marching bands and pageantry. But these days, it belongs to global pop stars, cinematic production and moments that ripple beyond the stadium.

Over the years, the league's brief intermission has transformed into one of entertainment's biggest stages, hosting era-defining performances from Prince in the rain to Rihanna's record-setting return. Usher's tightly choreographed showcase and Kendrick Lamar's layered, visually driven storytelling.

What began as intermission filler has evolved into a global spectacle, rivaling the NFL's championship game itself for attention from more than 100 million viewers worldwide.

That evolution continues this year as Bad Bunny prepares to take the halftime stage, placing Latin culture and Spanish-language music at the center of America's most-watched television event.

"The halftime performance has come a long way," said Dan Marino, the Hall of Fame quarterback who played 17 seasons with the Miami Dolphins and competed in the 1985 Super Bowl. As an NFL analyst, Marino's had a front-row seat to several halftime shows.

"Not a lot of people really watched it," he continued. "But now, people love to watch the halftime show."

That shift did not happen overnight. For decades, the halftime show reflected the NFL's family-friendly image, built around marching bands, drill teams and patriotic spectacle. As the Super Bowl grew into an unofficial national holiday - and a global broadcast event - the league began rethinking

the power of those 12 to 15 minutes, gradually turning the break into a cultural platform capable of launching careers, shaping narratives and, at times, sparking national conversation.

Last year, Lamar used the halftime stage as a narrative space, weaving choreography, costuming and staging to explore themes of identity, power and perception. The performance stayed within league parameters while still drawing broad interpretation and debate over its imagery and tone.

Lamar's show became the most-watched halftime performance on record, drawing roughly 133.5 million viewers, surpassing Usher's 2024 performance, which reached about 129.3 million. That number from Lamar's set is about six million more than Fox's broadcast of the Philadelphia Eagles' 40-22 victory over the Kansas City Chiefs.

"I think the live element is pretty exciting for people because it's a massive production and there's so many moving pieces," said actor Scarlett Johansson, who doesn't consider herself a football enthusiast. But she's intrigued by the unpredictability of the halftime show like Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson's infamous "wardrobe malfunction," Lady Gaga dropping from a stadium roof and Rihanna's pregnancy reveal.

"You kind of watch with nervous excitement," Johansson said. "You know at any moment something could maybe go wrong. That's why it's so fun to watch it because you've got all this anticipation. The production is so huge and so many people have come together to create this one moment. It's kind of awesome."

Kris Jenner agrees, calling the halftime show a "giant surprise."

reported Tuesday by the Press Association news agency, which obtained the sentencing documents.

Holdrick, who was already serving other sentences for separate armed robberies, initially denied being responsible for the burglary but later changed his plea to guilty. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** Of course it would take those mischievous Minions to thrust what has become a yearslong musical nightmare for figure skaters into the global spotlight just days before they step onto the ice for the Milano Cortina Olympics.

Spanish skater Tomas-Llorenç Guarino Sabate revealed this week that the music he has used all season, a medley from the animated comedy film "Minions" from Illumination Entertainment, could not be used in the biggest event of his career.

"I was informed that I am no longer permitted to use this program due to copyright clearance issues," Sabate explained Monday, four days before the opening ceremony. "I will face

"The production level and how quickly they put it together as they're breaking into commercial and come back with this fabulous, epic show," said Jenner, the matriarch of "The Kardashians" reality television show. "Through all the years and technology, it gets better and better. It's so exciting to watch and see what they come up with next and who is going to perform. It's such a big deal."

Usher said his appearance with the Black Eyed Peas during the 2011 Super Bowl taught him not to "take the moments for granted because you only get 13 of them."

His show in 2024 was vastly different from the NFL's first Super Bowl halftime show in 1967, which featured marching bands from the University of Arizona and Grambling State University, a historically Black college, along with hundreds of flying pigeons, thousands of balloons and two soaring men wearing jetpacks.

After the inaugural Super Bowl, the NFL kept bringing back other marching bands, drill teams, signed Chubby Checker and Up with People, an organization that stage positive thinking through dance and song performances. However, none of those acts were considered huge draws.

But as the Super Bowl's popularity soared and game day emerged as an unofficial holiday in the US, the NFL wanted the halftime show to grow in the same capacity. The league tapped New Kids on the Block and Gloria Estefan the first two years of the '90s. Then it saw a huge breakthrough when Michael Jackson headlined the 1993 show at the Rose Bowl in Southern California, where the King of Pop notoriously moonwalked across the stage and performed hits including "Billie Jean," "Black or White" and "Heal the World."

this challenge head-on and do everything I can to make the best of the situation." (AP)

**MACAO:** China's Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) will roll out a series of festive events to welcome the Chinese New Year, including community activities, float parades, and drone displays, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) revealed Tuesday.

At a press conference, the MGTO unveiled programs for the 2026 Chinese New Year Activities, the Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Horse, and the 2026 Chinese New Year Drones and Fireworks Displays.

The parade will run from Feb. 19 to March 8, featuring float processions, cultural performances, and exhibitions. Approximately 1,300 performers from Macao, Hong Kong, the Chinese mainland, and several overseas countries will take part, along with 17 themed floats, the office noted.

The tourism office said it will also host three drones and fireworks displays. For the first time, fireworks and 3,888 drones in formation will dazzle the sky above the sea overlooking Macao Tower. The sessions are scheduled on Feb. 19, Feb. 23, and March 3, each spanning about 15 minutes. (Xinhua)

## Variety

**LONDON:** An armed robber who smashed into a luxury London home where Hollywood star **Anya Taylor-Joy** was staying and tried to force his way into the actor's bedroom with a crowbar was sentenced to three years in prison, officials said Wednesday.

Prosecutors said that the way Kirk Holdrick and another masked man tried to get into the star's bedroom, rather than steal expensive items in the house, suggested they intended to target Taylor-Joy and her husband personally.

The "Queen's Gambit" star and her husband, musician Malcolm McRae, were staying at a London house on Feb. 12, 2023 when Holdrick and another man, who were both wearing balaclavas and gloves, scaled a wall and broke into the property.

McRae locked the door of their bedroom before the intruders tried to prise the door open. The burglars fled after McRae shouted out that he had a gun.

The Crown Prosecution Service said Holdrick was sentenced to three years in prison for the case at London's Woolwich Crown Court on Dec. 12. The details of the case were



Taylor-Joy



German artist pays tribute to Milan landmark

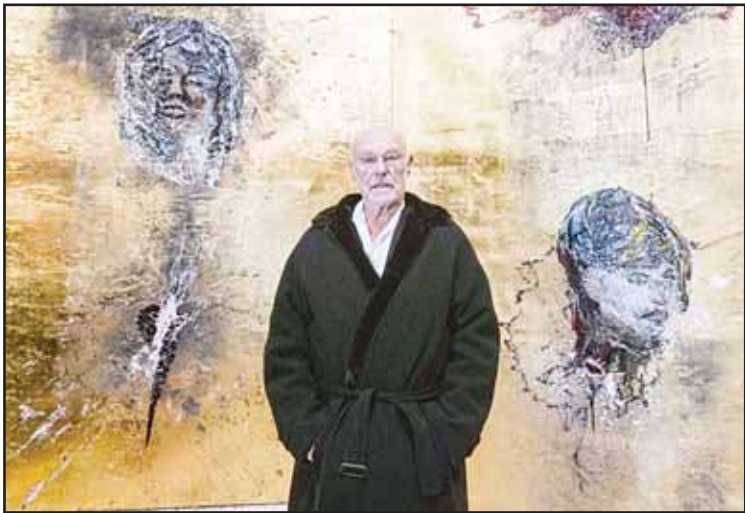
Kiefer honors forgotten female alchemists with monumental exhibition

MILAN, Feb 4, (AP): German contemporary artist Anselm Kiefer pays tribute to one of Milan’s most majestic yet melancholy spaces inside Palazzo Reale with the site-specific exhibition titled “The Women Alchemists,” previewed on Tuesday as part of the city’s cultural programming for the 2026 Winter Olympics

The artist was inspired by the crumbling caryatids, or sculpted female figures that served as architectural supports, inside the palace’s Sala delle Cariatidi, a ceremonial hall severely damaged in a 1943 Allied bombing during World War II.

Kiefer said he was immediately inspired by the room and the fragmented female figures, left as a memorial to the destruction of war.

“I quickly came to the idea of the women alchemists, that is, women who were equal with men, who experimented with medicine exactly as men,” said Kiefer, 80, one of Ger-



German painter and sculptor Anselm Kiefer is photographed during the presentation of his exhibition Le Alchimiste, at Palazzo Reale, part of the official cultural programme for the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy, Tuesday, Feb. 3. (AP)

many’s most acclaimed postwar artists known for monumental works that examine history, memory and collective trauma.

He set to work on 42 panels, some six meters (nearly 19 feet) tall, each featuring a female alchemist whose contributions to early chemistry and medicine were lost to history, elevating male achievement instead.

Despite the subject matter, the artist insisted his was not a feminist exhibition.

“I am half woman. How can it be feminist?” he asked a packed conference room, to applause.

The show’s curator, Gabriella Belli, clarified that the show was “an act of important recognition, and not necessarily an act of justice or feminism.”

Kiefer initially wanted to hang the paintings high on the wall above the fragile caryatids, but that wasn’t allowed.

Instead, the paintings zig-zag across

the ballroom floor like ornamental screens, creating a pathway for visitors to reflect on the lives of the 38 women depicted, including Milan’s own Caterina Sforza, whose father was Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan from 1466-1476.

The images play off the original wall mirrors by the artist’s intention, creating “an interaction between what is hidden, and what is revealed,” Kiefer said. He achieved the effect by recreating the museum space in his studio, placing mirrors in their corresponding positions.

Kiefer represents each of his female alchemists in full figure, contrasting with the crumbling half-bodies of the caryatids.

The imposing canvases invite reflection in the swirls of thick paint, dominated by a blueish-green, gold, black and silver. The female alchemists, often seen as witches, are depicted with three-dimensional plants that formed

the basis of their work, and books where they recorded their results. There are clouds and shrouds, denoting their mystery.

“Kiefer is an alchemist in the way he approaches art,” said Belli, the curator. “For him, painting is always birth, destruction, regeneration, birth, destruction, regeneration. This is the process of alchemy, which is the transformation of matter.”

“The Women Alchemists” runs Feb. 7-Sept. 27, part of the city of Milan’s cultural calendar to accompany the Games that also includes the rare opening of a room in the Sforza Castle featuring a wall painting by Leonardo da Vinci.

Kiefer has a long history with Italy and Milan. His installation, “The Seven Heavenly Palaces,” is a permanent exhibition across town in the Hangar Bicocca, making the similarly monumental “The Women Alchemists” exhibition a powerful counterpoint.

Art



Left: Powder covers the hammers of Felice Tagliaferri, a blind sculptor, in his studio in Cesena, Italy, Friday, Jan. 16, 2026. Right: Stefania Terre, who is blind, touches a life-size reproduction of the head of Michelangelo’s David during a visit to the Omero Tactile Museum in Ancona, Italy, Jan. 15, 2026. (AP)



Stefania Terre uses a small light on her fingers while touching a life-size reproduction of the head of Michelangelo’s David as she poses for a long-exposure photograph at the Omero Tactile Museum. (AP)



Michela Marcato, (left), who is blind, and her partially sighted partner Massimiliano Naccarato pose for a photo during a visit to the Colosseum in Rome, Dec. 17, 2025. (AP)

Italy expands accessible tourism for people with disabilities

Touching history: Italy opens art to the blind

ROME, Feb 4, (AP): On a recent weeknight, long after the swarms of tourists had left Rome’s Colosseum, a small group of people walked around outside the darkened amphitheater, pausing every so often to take in a new aspect of its history, art or architecture with every sense but sight.

Michela Marcato, 54, has been blind since birth. She and her partially sighted partner were touring the site amid a new effort by Italy to make its myriad artistic treasures more accessible to people with blindness or low vision and enhance how all visitors experience and perceive art.

As she listened to her tour guide, Marcato traced her fingers over a small souvenir model of the Colosseum. She felt the grooves of its archways and rugged rubble of its crumbled side. What she hadn’t realized before holding it was the elliptical shape of building.

“Walking around it, I personally would never have realized it. I would never have understood it,” she said. “But with that little model in your hand, it’s obvious!”

Italy and its art-filled cities have no shortage of tourists, but they haven’t always been overly welcoming to visitors with disabilities. People who use wheelchairs often find elevators and doorways that are too narrow, stairs without ramps and uneven pavements.

But in 2021, as a condition of receiving European Union pandemic recovery funds, Italy accelerated its accessibility initiatives, dedicating more attention and resources to removing architectural barriers and making its tourist sites and sporting venues more accessible.

The ancient city of Pompeii recently installed a new system of signage to make the vast archaeological site more accessible to blind and disabled people. The project uses braille signs, QR-coded audio guides, tactile models and bas-relief replicas of artifacts that have been excavated over the years.

The city of Florence, for its part, has produced a guide on the accessibility options at the Uffizi Gallery and its other museums, with detailed information on routes and requirements - including the presence of companions - for sites such as the Boboli Gardens, which because of their historic structures are not fully accessible.

**Travelers**

An inclusive tourism model doesn’t just honor the human rights of people with disabilities; it also makes economic sense. Nearly half of the world’s population aged over 60 has a disability, and disabled travelers tend to bring two or more companions, according to the World Tourism Organization.

Giorgio Guardi, a tour guide with the Radici Association, which has been leading tours of Rome for people with disabilities since 2015, said the aim of accessible tourism is to create an experience that is enjoyable for everyone involved, companions included.

That often means slowing down, touching what can be touched and experiencing artwork with different senses. The association often organizes walking tours at night, when there are fewer people out and

less distracting ambient noise at famous landmarks.

But it isn’t always possible for blind people to touch artworks, so guides have to get creative.

Take Rome’s central Campo dei Fiori piazza and its imposing statue of Giordano Bruno, the 16th-century philosopher burned at the stake during the Inquisition for alleged heresy.

The statue, which stands atop a large pedestal in the middle of the piazza, is too high for visitors to touch. On a recent nighttime tour of the piazza, Guardi encouraged his clients to instead assume Bruno’s position: Hunched over, wearing a heavy hooded cape and clasping a book with both hands.

As one of his clients assumed the position, Guardi draped the cape over him. Others in the group lined up to touch the Bruno impersonator to feel the contours of his drooped shoulders, heavy with the weight of the Inquisition. Visitors who were deaf were also part of the tour, aided by a sign-language interpreter who recounted Bruno’s tragic end.

Aldo and Daniela Grassini, both blind, were avid travelers and art collectors who grew increasingly frustrated that they weren’t allowed to touch art when they visited museums around the world. In the early 1990s, they founded what subsequently became Italy’s only publicly funded tactile museum, the Museo Omero in the Adriatic coastal city of Ancona, where all the art is meant to be handled.

Named for the blind poet Homer, the museum features life-sized replicas of some of Italy’s most famous artworks, from ancient Roman and Greek statues to the head of Michelangelo’s David, as well as contemporary artworks.

Technology

Paris raids X offices

Spain considers social media ban for under-16s

MADRID, Feb 4, (AP): Spain plans to ban social media access for children under 16, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Tuesday, in a move designed to shield young people from the harms of online content.

Sánchez chided the world’s biggest tech companies in a speech at a Dubai summit for allowing illegal content such as child sex abuse and non-consensual sexualized deepfake images and videos to proliferate on their platforms, saying that governments also needed to “stop turning a blind eye.”

“Today, our children are exposed to a space they were never meant to navigate alone,” Sánchez said. “We will no longer accept that.”

Spain joins a growing number of countries, including Australia and France, which have taken or are considering measures to restrict minors’ access to social media.

In January, France approved a bill banning social media for children under 15, paving the way for the measure to take effect at the start of the next school year in September. The bill would also ban the use of mobile phones in high schools.

Australia has started implementing the world’s first social media ban for under-16s, after its government passed a measure that holds platforms including TikTok, Twitch, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for failing to prevent children from having accounts.

Denmark has introduced similar legislation to ban access to social media for users under 15, while the U.K. said last month it would consider banning young teenagers from social media, as it tightens laws designed to protect children from harmful content and excessive screen time.

Verification

Sánchez said that Spain would require social media companies to enforce the ban with age verification systems, “not just check boxes, but real barriers that work.”

Many social media apps require users to be at least 13, though enforcement varies. Users are often asked to declare their own age.

Spain’s ban will be added to an already existing measure centered on digital protections for minors that is being debated by parliament, a government spokesperson said. Sánchez said that could happen as early as next week.

It’s unclear if Sánchez’s left-wing coalition will get the approval needed in Parliament, where his government lacks a majority. A spokesperson for the far-right Vox party accused the government “of making sure that no one criticizes them,” while the main opposition party - the center-right Popular Party - said it had proposed similar restrictions last year, seemingly offering its support.

Spain has joined five other European countries in what the Spanish leader dubbed a “coalition of the digitally willing” to coordinate the regulation of social media platforms at a multinational level.

Additionally, Sánchez said Spain would make it a criminal offense to manipulate algorithms to amplify illegal content and would hold tech executives liable for failing to take down criminal content from their platforms. “No more pretending that technology is neutral,” he said.

Both measures would require parliamentary approval to change Spanish law, a government spokesperson said.



French prosecutors raided the offices of social media platform X on Tuesday as part of a preliminary investigation into allegations including spreading child sexual abuse images and deepfakes. They have also summoned billionaire owner Elon Musk for questioning.

X and Musk’s artificial intelligence company xAI also face intensifying scrutiny from Britain’s data privacy regulator, which opened formal investigations into how they handled personal data when they developed and deployed Musk’s artificial intelligence chatbot Grok.

Grok, which was built by xAI and is available through X, sparked global outrage last month after it pumped out a torrent of sexualized nonconsensual deepfake images in response to requests from X users.

The French investigation was opened in January last year by the prosecutors’ cybercrime unit, the Paris prosecutors’ office said in a statement. It’s looking into alleged “complicity” in possessing and spreading pornographic images of minors, sexually explicit deepfakes, denial of crimes against humanity and manipulation of an automated data processing system as part of an organized group, among other charges.

Prosecutors asked Musk and former CEO Linda Yaccarino to attend “voluntary interviews” on April 20. Employees of X have also been summoned that same week to be heard as witnesses, the statement said. Yaccarino was CEO from May 2023 until July 2025.

A spokesperson for X did not respond to multiple requests for comment. X’s lawyer in France, Kami Haeri, told The Associated Press: “We are not making any comment at this stage.”

In a message posted on X, the Paris prosecutors’ office announced the ongoing searches at the company’s offices in France and said it was leaving the platform while calling on followers to join it on other social media.

Penny the Doberman takes top prize at 150th Westminster Show

NEW YORK, Feb 4, (AP): The dog was Penny. The win was priceless.

A Doberman pinscher named Penny won best in show Tuesday night at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, netting US show dogs’ most coveted prize - and giving veteran Andy Linton another win after nearly four decades. Linton got best in show in 1989 with another Doberman, named Indy.

Penny “is as great a Doberman as I have ever seen,” Linton told a supportive crowd. Despite health problems, he guided the 4-year-old dog through a razor-crisp performance.

“I had some goals, and this was one of them,” Linton said, adding later in a conversation with reporters that as he’s winding down his career, winning at the milestone 150th annual Westminster show is “extra-special.”

Runner-up - and cheers just as loud - went to a Chesapeake Bay retriever named Cota. While Dobermans have won five times including Tuesday, no retriever has ever won, and their fans applaud every encouraging sign.

Cota also seemed to enjoy the moment, particularly when his handler, Devon Kipp Levy, let him play with the ribbon.

Other finalists included an Afghan hound named Zaida, a Lhasa apso called JJ, a Maltese named Cookie, an old English sheepdog dubbed Graham and a smooth fox terrier called Wager. The judge, two-time Westminster-winning

handler David Fitzpatrick, called the lineup one “that will go down in history.”

Each dog is assessed according to how closely it matches the ideal for its breed. The winner gets a trophy, ribbons and bragging rights.

A crowd favorite at the 2025 Westminster show, Penny has rocked show rings since. A throng of handlers and other dog folk cheered for the seemingly undistractable dog and for Linton in early-round action Tuesday afternoon.

Ringside afterward, Penny politely but pointedly nudged her nose into a visitor’s leg, looking for something - pets, as it turned out. She’s generally “very chill,” Linton said later, “but she can get pumped up for a bad guy. Or a squirrel.”

Co-owner Greg Chan of Toronto said Penny is “very demanding and very smart,” but she’s also “a pleaser - she’ll do anything for food.” (Her favorite snack? “Everything.”)

Penny came out on top after 2,500 dogs, spanning more than 200 breeds, strutted their stuff at the show.

Even if they didn’t make the finals, there were plenty that scored meme-able moments or lightened up the crowd.

Over two nights of semifinals, spectators cheered extra-loud for a Xoloitzcuintli named Calaco, a hairless dog who went around the ring like he had nothing to prove. A vizsla named Beamer charmed the crowd by hopping into a box set out for his handler’s tools, and Storm the Newfoundland got laughs when he jumped up on his handler, standing almost as tall as she. Spectators cheered so loud

for a golden retriever named Oliver that they drowned out the arena’s announcer, and chants of “Lumpy! Lumpy!” resounded as Lumpy the Pekingese strolled before a judge.

One dog that made history in the semifinals was Millie, a Danish-Swedish farmdog. The small, spiny breed just became eligible for the Westminster show this year, and Millie bested about 10 other farmdogs Tuesday afternoon to get to the evening round.

Westminster wins often go to pooches with professional handlers or owners with decades or even generations of experience behind them. But just reaching the elite, champions-only show is a major accomplishment in dogdom, especially for first-timers such as Joseph Carrero and his Neapolitan mastiff, Dezi.

After yearning for a Neo since his teenage years, Carrero finally got one when he was 35. A heavy equipment operator from Indian Springs, Nevada, he started showing the dog only because the breeder wanted him to. Now Carrero himself breeds and handles his Neos in the ring, while also working full-time and then some.

“It’s really hard for us to do this, but we enjoy it, and he enjoys it,” Carrero said as a visitors gathered around to greet the jowly, 190-pound dog.

Boerboels, which are formidable guard dogs originally from South Africa, played a major role in how Natalie Ridenhour met her late husband and why she eventually left metropolitan life for a farm in Royse City, Texas.



Penny, a doberman pinscher, poses for photos with handler Andy Linton, after winning Best in Show of the 150th Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, Tuesday, Feb. 3, in New York. (AP)



Experts unlock why some patients resist immunotherapy

Up to 40 pct cancer cases worldwide are preventable: WHO

GENEVA/LYON, Feb 4, (Xinhua): Up to 40 percent of cancer cases worldwide are preventable, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Tuesday.

In a joint news release issued from Geneva and Lyon ahead of World Cancer Day, the WHO said the conclusion is based on a new global analysis conducted by the WHO and its International Agency for Research on Cancer.

The study examined 30 preventable risk factors, including tobacco and alcohol use, high body mass index, physical inactivity, air pollution, ultraviolet radiation, and, for the first time, nine cancer-causing infections.

Published the same day in Nature Medicine, “the analysis estimates that 37 percent of all new cancer cases in 2022, around 7.1 million cases, were linked to preventable causes,” said the release, noting that “the findings highlight the enormous potential of prevention in reducing the global cancer burden.”

Drawing on data from 185 countries and 36 cancer types, the study identifies tobacco as the leading preventable cause of cancer worldwide, accounting for 15 percent of all new cases. It is followed by infections and alcohol consumption.

Globally, three cancer types, lung, stomach, and cervical cancer, accounted for nearly half of all preventable cases in both men and women. Lung cancer was primarily associated with smoking and air pollution, stomach cancer was largely attributable to Helicobacter pylori infection, and cervical cancer was overwhelmingly caused by human papillomavirus (HPV).

“This is the first global analysis to show how much cancer risk comes from causes we can prevent,” said Andre Ilbawi, WHO Team Lead for Cancer Control, and author of the study. “By examining patterns across countries and population groups, we can provide governments and individuals with more specific information to help prevent many cancer cases before they start.”

According to the report, the burden of preventable cancer was substantially higher in men than in women, with 45 percent of new cancer cases in men compared with 30 percent in women. Among men, smoking accounted for an estimated 23 percent of all new cancer cases, followed by infections at 9 percent and alcohol at 4 percent. Among women globally, infections accounted for 11 percent of all new cancer cases, followed by smoking at 6 percent and high body mass index

at 3 percent.

The findings underscore the need for context-specific prevention strategies that include strong tobacco control measures, alcohol regulation, vaccination against cancer-causing infections such as HPV and hepatitis B, improved air quality, safer workplaces, and healthier food and physical activity environments, says the WHO.

Meanwhile, scientists in Australia have mapped the “neighborhoods” of lung cancer cells and found that cell metabolism plays a key role in determining how patients respond to immunotherapy.

Researchers from the University of Queensland’s (UQ) Frazer Institute studied cell interactions at cellular resolution in non-small cell lung carcinoma, the most common form of lung cancer, to better understand why some patients don’t respond to immunotherapy treatment, said a UQ statement on Wednesday.

Using machine-learning algorithms and computational approaches, the study, published in Nature Communications, examined how cells interact and metabolize glucose, which cancer cells thrive on, said Associate Professor Arutha Kulasinghe from UQ’s Frazer Institute.

“We were able to dive deep into the complex nature of cells, basically looking at the cells’ personal lives in the complex composition of a tumor, and found certain metabolic neighborhoods were associated with response and resistance to immunotherapy,” Kulasinghe said.

Immunotherapy is costly and benefits only a minority of patients, he said, adding that “it’s important to understand how to identify these patients, and those that might need combination or alternative therapies.”

Lead author James Monkman from UQ’s Frazer Institute said higher glucose uptake in cancer cells was associated with poorer outcomes.

“We know cancer cells love sugar, and we analyzed where glucose was being processed in the cells and where it wasn’t,” Monkman said. “You could have a region of a tumor processing glucose in a completely different way to another area of the tumor.”

The next step is to develop targeted treatments, such as with metabolic inhibitors, to make immunotherapy more effective, and eventually enable precision medicine tailored to each patient’s tumor, with plans to extend the approach to other cancers, the researchers said.

Livestock hit

FMD in S. Africa sparks concerns

CAPE TOWN, Feb 4, (Xinhua): The ongoing foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks in South Africa are expected to inflict heavy economic losses on the beef and dairy industries, two of the country’s largest agricultural sub-sectors, a report has warned.

The report “Initial Cost Estimates Linked to the FMD Crisis,” recently released by the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP), said that a total of 24,400 FMD cases were reported in domestic livestock in South Africa, a figure “significantly surpassed” the previous 20-year-high of 7,700 FMD cases in 2022.

BFAP is a South African-based non-profit organization that provides independent, data-driven research and policy analysis for the agricultural and food sectors.

According to the report, the FMD spread to eight of the country’s nine provinces, excluding only the Northern Cape, for the first time on record in 2025, with nearly 21,600 cases reported in the second half of the year.

As a result, South Africa’s beef exports for the first 11 months of 2025 fell to 24,773 tons, down from 38,677 tons in the same period of 2024.

“Between 2025 and 2026, it is expected that the volume of beef exports could decrease to roughly 13,000 tons, with a 1.8 billion rand (about 113 million U.S. dollars) reduction in export earnings,” said the report.

It also noted that more than 821 million rand in South Africa’s beef export revenue was lost during three major waves of the FMD in the country between 2019 and 2025, warning that “this total figure could increase to 2.6 billion rand by the end of 2026 at the current trajectory.”

According to the analysis, between 2025 and 2030, the economic fallout of FMD outbreaks could reach 3.2 billion rand for the beef industry under a medium-burden scenario and around 11.3 billion rand under a high-burden scenario.

In the report, BFAP cited its earlier estimates as saying that losses to the beef industry output could accumulate to 25.6 billion rand over the next 10 years.

Gene mutation blocks schizophrenia therapy

Study reveals how isolation triggers anxiety

BEIJING, Feb 4, (Xinhua): A group of Chinese researchers have shown that social isolation triggers “iron accumulation” in specific regions of the brain to induce anxiety, providing inspiration for the development of new interventions for anxiety disorders, according to a study recently published in the journal Cell Metabolism.

In daily life, many people have after prolonged periods of being alone, even without any particular incident occurring, often experienced restlessness and anxiety, and even developed a fear of social interaction. This loneliness-induced anxiety and its underlying biological mechanisms have long perplexed the scientific community.

Researchers from South China University of Technology, east China’s Zhejiang University and Southern Medical University in Guangdong Province in south China conducted this study by constructing a mouse model that simulates human long-term isolation.

They discovered that in mice housed alone, the iron content in a brain region called the ventral hippocampus, a sub-region more focused on the regulation of emotions, had demonstrated abnormal iron accumulation.

Further studies revealed that excess iron acts as an erroneous signal, activating a molecule known as iron-a-synuclein (a-Syn), which triggers excessive neuronal firing, like an electrical short circuit continuously sending anxiety alarms to the body.

More importantly, this change precisely targets the emotional center of the brain, causing the brain to mount a highly specific stress response to social isolation.

The study demonstrates that under psychological stress, iron, which helps maintain neural health, can directly drive the remodeling of synaptic structure and function. Termed “ferroplasticity,” the mechanism directly links brain iron metabolism disorders to emotional disturbances, shedding new light on the understanding of mental illnesses.

The researchers conducted nasal administration of various agents in mice, targeting molecular iron or a-Syn for intervention. After two weeks of treatment, anxiety behaviors of these mice significantly decreased, and their neuronal activity returned to normal.

The study not only unveils the longstanding mystery

Ethics and transparency issues raised

US lawmaker raises new concerns over FDA’s ultra-fast drug review program

WASHINGTON, Feb 4, (AP): A Democratic lawmaker raised new concerns about a Food and Drug Administration program designed to drastically shorten the review of certain drugs, including whether senior officials involved in the effort are complying with federal ethics rules.

In a letter sent Tuesday, Rep. Jake Auchincloss of Massachusetts took issue with the lack of transparency in FDA’s handling of the program and questioned its legal underpinnings, noting that Congress did not sign off on the plan.

Under the Commissioner’s National Priority Voucher program, drugmakers are promised expedited reviews of one to two months for new medicines that support “national interests.” It’s at the center of FDA Commissioner Marty Makary’s stated goal of “cutting red tape” at the agency.

But Auchincloss says details about the program have been “shrouded in secrecy,” in part because the FDA has not responded to multiple congressional inquiries.

“The public must have transparency about the ‘voucher’ program, under which drug approvals have been made almost wholly and in an unprecedented manner by the FDA’s political leadership,” states Auchincloss, who is a member of a House subcommittee on health.

The new scrutiny came on the same day that the FDA held an employee town hall on the program, according to three agency staffers who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss confidential agency matters. Much of the debate surrounding the program involves concerns that drug decision-making is being taken away from agency scientists.

But FDA leaders used Tuesday’s event to stress that final approval decisions continue to be made by drug center staffers, not political appointees.

“The approval decision remains with the relevant product center, using the center’s normal processes,” stated a slide presented at the meeting and



Dr. Marty Makary, commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration speaks at an event on addiction recovery in the Oval Office of the White House, Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026, in Washington, as Attorney General Pam Bondi and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum listen. (AP)

shared with the AP.

In his letter, Auchincloss asserts that the FDA has failed to publish or release financial disclosure forms for eight senior FDA officials who vote on which drugs should receive priority vouchers. Membership of group, which was first reported by Stat News, is mostly comprised of officials closely aligned with Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., including Deputy FDA Commissioner Dr. Sara Brenner, Dr. Vinay Prasad, who oversees vaccines, and Dr. Tracy Beth Hoeg, FDA’s drug center director.

The forms, which are collected annually by the Office of Government Ethics, list investments, outside income and other financial details for senior government officials and their spouses. Such disclosures are considered critical to avoiding potential conflicts of interest at the FDA, where staffers are often involved in regulating multibillion-dollar, publicly traded companies.

A Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson didn’t immediately respond to AP’s questions about the letter.

Elsewhere in his letter, Auchin-

cross questions whether the FDA had the legal authority to establish the voucher program without action from Congress, which typically legislates such programs into law. His letter states that the FDA’s legal office “was not consulted nor provided findings to support the agency’s claim,” that it could independently establish the program.

Several senior FDA staffers have declined to sign off on drug approvals going through the program due to legal concerns, as previously reported by the AP.

Auchincloss also notes that FDA officials did not respond to two letters he sent last year requesting information. In the new letter, the lawmaker instructs the agency to “affirm or refute,” his findings.

In November, Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Rep. Frank Pallone of New Jersey sent a letter seeking answers to 15 questions about the FDA’s voucher program. Pallone is the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which oversees health agencies.

The agency did not respond to the letter, according to a committee staffer.

Wearables

Experts create ‘flexible’ chip

BEIJING, Feb 4, (Xinhua): Chinese researchers have unveiled a new flexible chip that could drive the next wave of innovation in wearable technology.

The breakthrough, detailed in a study published in the journal Nature, aims to enable more efficient and powerful computing directly on the body -- such as on skin or integrated into fabrics -- reducing reliance on distant data centers.

Most current wearables rely on rigid chips, which can be uncomfortable and limit functionality. While flexible electronics exist, they often lack the processing power for tasks like real-time health tracking, forcing devices to send data to the cloud, a slow and energy-intensive process.

To overcome this, a research team from Tsinghua University created the FLEXI series of chips. One of their key advantages lies in a “compute-in-memory” design, which allows calculations to happen inside the memory itself. This approach slashes energy use and boosts speed, making it ideal for small, battery-powered wearable devices.

In a real-world test, the team used a FLEXI chip to run a neural network that analyzed heart rate, breathing, temperature, and skin moisture. It identified daily activities with 97.4 percent accuracy, demonstrating standalone health monitoring without phones or the cloud.

“Our FLEXI platform merges high performance, ultra-low power, and strong durability,” said Ren Tianling, a professor from Tsinghua University. “It opens the door to a new class of wearable devices that are comfortable, long-lasting, and smart enough to process data on the spot.”

This advance lays a solid hardware foundation for the future of edge AI, paving the way for smarter, more autonomous devices in healthcare, smart clothing, and the Internet of Things, Ren added.

Guidelines confusion?

By Michael I Goran

University of Southern California

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

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The Dietary Guidelines for Americans aim to translate the most up-to-date nutrition science into practical advice for the public as well as to guide federal policy for programs such as school lunches.

But the newest version of the guidelines, released on Jan. 7, 2026, seems to be spurring more confusion than clarity about what people should be eating.

I’ve been studying nutrition and chronic disease for over 35 years, and in 2020 I wrote “Sugarproof,” a book about reducing consumption of added sugars to improve health. I served as a scientific adviser for the new guidelines.

I chose to participate in this process, despite its accelerated and sometimes controversial nature, for two reasons. First, I wanted to help ensure the review was conducted with scientific rigor. And second, federal health officials prioritized examining areas where the evidence has become especially strong - particularly food processing, added sugars and sugary beverages, which closely aligns with my research.

My role, along with colleagues, was to review and synthesize that evidence and help clarify where the science is strongest and most consistent.

The dietary guidelines, first published in 1980, are updated every five years. The newest version differs from the previous versions in a few key ways.

For one thing, the new report is shorter, at nine pages rather than 400. It offers simpler advice directly to the public, whereas previous guidelines were more directed at policymakers and nutrition experts.

Also, the new guidelines reflect an important paradigm shift in defining a healthy diet. For the past half-century, dietary advice has been shaped by a focus on general dietary patterns and targets for individual nutrients, such as protein, fat and carbohydrate. The new guidelines instead emphasize overall diet quality.

Some health and nutrition experts have criticized specific aspects of the guidelines, such as how the current administration developed them, or how they address saturated fat, beef, dairy, protein and alcohol intake. These points have dominated the public discourse. But while some of them are valid, they risk overshadowing the strongest, least controversial and most actionable conclusions from the scientific evidence.

What we found in our scientific assessment was that just a few straightforward changes to your diet - specifically, reducing highly processed foods and sugary drinks, and increasing whole grains - can meaningfully improve your health.

My research assistants and I evaluated the conclusions of studies on consuming sugar, highly processed foods and whole grains, and assessed how well they were conducted and how likely they were to be biased. We graded the overall quality of the findings as low, moderate or high based on standardized criteria such as their consistency and plausibility.

We found moderate to high quality evidence that people who eat higher amounts of processed foods have a higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, dementia and death from any cause.

Similarly, we found moderately solid evidence that people who drink more sugar-sweetened beverages have a higher risk of obesity and Type 2 diabetes, as well as quite conclusive evidence that children who drink fruit juice have a higher risk of obesity. And consuming more beverages containing artificial sweeteners raises the risk of death from any cause and Alzheimer’s disease, based on moderately good evidence.

Whole grains, on the other

hand, have a protective effect on health. We found high-quality evidence that people who eat more whole grains have a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and death from any cause. People who consume more dietary fiber, which is abundant in whole grains, have a lower risk of Type 2 diabetes and death from any cause, based on moderate-quality research.

According to the research we evaluated, it’s these aspects - too much highly processed foods and sweetened beverages, and too little whole grain foods - that are significantly contributing to the epidemic of chronic diseases such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease in this country - and not protein, beef or dairy intake.

Our report was the first one to recommend that the guidelines explicitly mention decreasing consumption of highly processed foods. Overall, though, research on the negative health effects of sugar and processed foods and the beneficial effects of whole grains has been building for many years and has been noted in previous reports.

On the other hand, research on how strongly protein, red meat, saturated fat and dairy are linked with chronic disease risk is much less conclusive. Yet the 2025 guidelines encourage increasing consumption of those foods - a change from previous versions.

The inverted pyramid imagery used to represent the 2025 guidelines also emphasizes protein - specifically, meat and dairy - by putting these foods in a highly prominent spot in the top left corner of the image. Whole grains sit at the very bottom; and except for milk, beverages are not represented.

Scientific advisers were not involved in designing the image.

An important point we encountered repeatedly in reviewing the research was that even small dietary changes could meaningfully lower people’s chronic disease risks.

For example, consuming just 10% fewer calories per day from highly processed foods could lower the risk of diabetes by 14%, according to one of the lead studies we relied on for the evidence review. Another study showed that eating one less serving of highly processed foods per day lowers the risk of heart disease by 4%.

You can achieve that simply by switching from a highly processed packaged bread to one with fewer ingredients or replacing one fast-food meal per week with a simple home-cooked meal. Or, switch your preferred brands of daily staples such as tomato sauce, yogurt, salad dressing, crackers and nut butter to ones that have fewer ingredients like added sugars, sweeteners, emulsifiers and preservatives.

Cutting down on sugary beverages - for example, soda, sweet teas, juices and energy drinks - had an equally dramatic effect. Simply drinking the equivalent of one can less per day lowers the risk of diabetes by 26% and the risk of heart disease by 14%.

Here are some simple examples. - Instead of flavored yogurts, buy plain yogurt and add your favorite fruit or some homemade simple fruit compote.

- Instead of sugary or diet beverages, use a squeeze of citrus or even a splash of juice to flavor plain sparkling water.

- Start with a plain whole grain breakfast cereal and add your own favorite source of fiber and/or fruit.

- Instead of packaged “energy bars” make your own preferred mixture of nuts, seeds and dried fruit.

- Instead of bottled salad dressing, make a simple one at home with olive oil, vinegar or lemon juice, a dab of mustard and other flavorings of choice, such as garlic, herbs, or honey.

You can adapt this way of thinking to the foods you eat most often by making similar types of swaps. They may seem small, but they will build over time and have an outsized effect on your health. (AP)



India starts as title favorite amid political tension

# Pakistan’s boycott of game against India looms over T20 World Cup

NEW DELHI, Feb 4, (AP): With a boycott looming, the Twenty20 World Cup may be the first major International Cricket Council tournament in 14 years to miss a head-to-head contest between traditional rivals India and Pakistan.

The T20 event opens Saturday with Pakistan against the Netherlands, and India finishing off the Day 1 program against the United States.

It’s the scheduled Feb. 15 encounter in Colombo between Pakistan and India that has plunged the 20-team tournament into crisis.

Pakistan’s government has refused permission for its national cricket team to take the field in a marquee Group A game.

There’s a chance the countries might face off in the semifinals or final, but it’s unclear whether the cricketers will be asked to extend the boycott into the playoffs.

The sport’s global organizers have urged the Pakistan Cricket Board to “explore a mutually acceptable resolution” which “protects the interests of all stakeholders.” After concluding a 3-0 Twenty20 series win over Australia on Sunday, Pakistan captain Sal-

man Ali Agha said he will follow the government’s instructions.

“It’s not our decision. We can’t do anything about it,” Agha said. “We will do whatever our government and the (PCB) chairman say.” The government decision reportedly was in support of Pakistan’s cricket board, which backed Bangladesh after the ICC refused its request to shift its games from India to Sri Lanka because of security concerns.

The ICC Board, of which Bangladesh is a full member, decided to replace Bangladesh with Scotland in the draw.

Pakistan cricket chairman Mohsin Naqvi subsequently accused the ICC of “double-standards.” The 20 teams are divided into four groups, with the top two from each qualifying for the Super Eights. Two teams from each group in the second round will advance to the semifinals on March 4 and 5. The final is set for March 8.

India will host games in its five major cities: New Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai. Co-host Sri Lanka, where Pakistan will play all its games, will host matches at Pallekele and two venues in Colombo.

Here’s a breakdown of each group: Pakistan, which will concede two competition points if it goes ahead with forfeiting the game against India, can’t afford a slip-up against three associate countries in the group - the Netherlands, Namibia, and the United States.

The U.S. shocked Pakistan at Dallas in the last Twenty20 World Cup in 2024 with a victory in a thrilling super over that eventually led to Pakistan’s group-stage exit.

In 2022, the Netherlands also sprung a surprise in Australia when its thrilling win against South Africa paved the way for Pakistan to qualify for the semifinals.

Defending champion India is the favorite after warming up with a 4-1 series victory over New Zealand, capped with a massive total of 271 in the last game.

Australia is the favorite to advance from a group that also includes co-host Sri Lanka, Ireland, Oman, and Zimbabwe.

But the Australians are coming off a reality check following a 3-0 series loss to Pakistan in Lahore on slow spin-friendly wickets of Gaddafi Stadium - including its biggest-ever defeat

by 111 runs in the last game.

The 2021 champions have failed to qualify for the semifinals in the last two T20 World Cups.

Sri Lanka was last to finalize its squad, tinkering with the batting lineup until the last minute. Dhananjaya de Silva was left out while Kamindu Mendis and Kusal Perera were recalled. The co-host will be banking more on its premier spinner Wanindu Hasaranga to make an impact, with the wickets likely to suit the ace leg-spinner.

Oman, playing in its fourth T20 World Cup, will be led by the recalled Jatinder Singh. Zimbabwe has bolstered its squad by including Graeme Cremer, the 39-year-old leg-spinner who returned to international cricket last October after a seven-year absence.

Ireland, led by veteran Paul Stirling, has retained 12 players from the 2024 edition. Ireland, playing in its ninth Twenty20 World Cup, has some happy memories when in 2009 and 2022 it qualified for the second round and also beaten West Indies and England.

England and the West Indies are expected to advance from a group containing first-timer Italy, Nepal, and

Scotland.

England has loads of experience, including Jos Buttler, captain Harry Brook, paceman Jofra Archer, Ben Duckett, Phil Salt, and Adil Rashid, in its bid to replicate its 2022 success.

Two-time champion West Indies comes into the tournament after losing back-to-back series against Afghanistan and South Africa. Led by Shai Hope, the West Indies has plenty of experienced power-hitters. Coach Darren Sammy is also banking on youngster Quenin Sampson to shine in the middle order.

Nepal went winless in the last tournament but has improved, with 23-year-old all-rounder Rohit Paudel showing lots of composure at a young age.

Scotland, a last-minute inclusion in the draw, has Afghan-born fast bowler Zainullah Ihsan, former New Zealand international Tom Bruce, and a Pakistan-heritage Safyaan Sharif. Ihsan and Sharif made it to India after a visa delay,s which Sharif described as “hell of a week.” Italy’s long-awaited debut in a major cricket tournament will come against Scotland at Kolkata’s Eden Gardens on Sunday.

Afghanistan, New Zealand, and South Africa will be competing for two spots in the next stage from a group that also contains Associate nations Canada and the UAE.

Afghanistan had a memorable tournament in 2024 before losing to South Africa in the semifinals. With pitches likely to suit spinners in Sri Lanka and India, Afghanistan has one of the strongest spin combinations,s with T20 leading bowler Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Ur Rahman spearheading the attack.

South Africa went close to winning its maiden Twenty20 World Cup in 2024 before falling to India in the final. Quinton de Kock, who came out of his retirement last year, has been in ominous form. Veteran David Miller has recovered from injury and is declared for the tournament.

Canada will be making its second successive appearance in the tournament after winning all six games in the Americas Regional Qualifier. Canada finished fourth in the group stage in the last edition when it beat Ireland by 12 runs.

UAE featured in the 2014 and 2022 editions but didn’t go beyond the group stage.

## ‘It’s not unusual’

Vonn’s decision to compete with torn ACL is risky but possible, experts say

MILAN, Feb 4, (AP): Lindsey Vonn’s decision to compete in Alpine skiing at the Milan Cortina Olympics, despite a torn ACL, is risky but not unexpected, experts in orthopedics and sports medicine said.

“It’s not unusual for any elite athlete. People will push through with something that us normal folks wouldn’t push through because the stakes are a little higher,” said Dr. Catherine Logan, an orthopedic surgeon with the Joint Preservation Center in Denver, Colorado, who has worked with U.S. ski, snowboard and lacrosse teams.

Vonn, who came out of retirement to earn a spot on the U.S. Olympic team at age 41, crashed in a World Cup downhill event in Switzerland on Friday. The damage to her left knee included a “completely ruptured” ACL and bone bruising, “plus meniscal damage,” Vonn said Tuesday at a news conference.

After physical therapy and on the advice of doctors, she decided to continue.

“My knee is not swollen, and with the help of a knee brace, I am confident that I can compete on Sunday,” Vonn said.

By doing so, Vonn risks doing more damage to the knee - or worse, said Dr. Yana Klein, an emergency and sports medicine specialist at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

“She might blow out her knee entirely,” Klein said. “At these really high racing speeds, the big risk is that the knee is just not stable enough to compete.”

Klein stressed that decisions like this are complicated and made with “athlete safety as the top priority.”

Here’s what to know about the ACL and this type of injury:



United States' Lindsey Vonn smiles as she arrives for a press conference by the U.S. ski team at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. (AP)

cartilage that acts as a shock absorber between the femur and the tibia - is considered a severe injury, said Dr. Mia Hagen, a sports medicine surgeon at UW Medicine in Seattle.

It’s often treated with surgery within months of the injury, according to guidelines from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. It can take nine months to a year to recover after surgery.

“Some people can return earlier, but others never return to their sport of injury,” Hagen said.

Vonn will rely on an external knee brace - and on her sheer physicality, Logan said.

“Skiing is possible with a ruptured ACL,” she said. “It really relies on our quad strength, our hip strength and our neuromuscular control.”

If Vonn develops significant swelling or excess fluid in the knee joint, it could affect her power, strength and edge control, or the ability to manage the angle of the skis relative to the snow, Logan said. But if she’s able to control those factors, she could still be competitive.

“For an elite alpine skier like Lindsey is, to perform at an Olympic event, it’s still possible,” she said.

## Kanté joins Fenerbahce after delay

ISTANBUL, Feb 4, (AP): Fenerbahce has completed the transfer of World Cup winner N’Golo Kanté after his arrival at the Turkish club was delayed by administrative problems.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed. Fenerbahce president Sadettin Saran thanked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday “for the significant support he provided in ensuring the positive conclusion of this process.”

Kanté joined from Saudi Pro League team Al-Ittihad.

The deal had looked all but dead on Tuesday when Fenerbahce blamed Al-Ittihad for making the transfer collapse. Fenerbahce said the deal could not initially go through due to administrative errors by the Saudi Arabian club.

But Al-Ittihad later posted a farewell message on X, saying it agreed “to sell the remaining period” of Kanté’s contract.

The 34-year-old Kanté, who joined Al-Ittihad in 2023, recently returned to France’s national team and made his 65th appearance for Les Bleus in November in a 4-0 win against Ukraine. Kante won the World Cup with France in 2018.

Fenerbahce is chasing its first Turkish league title in 12 years. In the transfer window it also recruited another France international, midfielder Mattéo Guendouzi, who hopes to reclaim a place in the national squad ahead of the World Cup.

## OKC reaches 40 wins first this season as Hartenstein records maiden triple-double

OKLAHOMA CITY, Feb 4, (AP): Isaiah Hartenstein had his first career-triple double, Isaiah Joe scored 22 points and the Oklahoma City Thunder rolled past the Orlando Magic 128-92.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 20 points and nine assists, Lu Dort scored 18 points and first-time All-Star Chet Holmgren added 16 points and 10 rebounds for the defending champion Thunder (40-11), who became the first team this season to reach 40 wins.

Hartenstein finished with 12 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists in 23 minutes. The eighth-year center became the 10th Thunder player to record a triple-double.

Oklahoma City played without Jalen Williams, who missed his eighth straight game with a hamstring injury, and Ajay Mitchell, who sat out his sixth game in a row with an abdominal strain.

Jalen Suggs led Orlando with 20 points, and Paolo Banchero added 17 points on 6-of-17 shooting. Franz Wagner, the Magic’s leading scorer, missed his fifth straight game with a high left ankle sprain.

**Hawks 127, Heat 115**

In Miami, All-Star Jalen Johnson had 29 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists, CJ McCollum added 26 points off the bench and the Atlanta Hawks beat the Miami Heat to snap a two-game slide.

Nickel Alexander-Walker scored 19 for the Hawks, who led most of the way and spoiled Miami’s celebration of the 20th anniversary of its 2006 NBA championship. Dwyane Wade and Shaquille O’Neal were sitting courtside, and most of the players from that first Heat title team were in attendance.

Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 21 points for the Heat. Pelle Larsson and Simone Fontecchio each had 18, and Bam Adebayo finished with 16 points and 14 rebounds for Miami.

Atlanta took the lead for good with 4:31 left in the opening quarter and answered every Miami rally attempt with a run of its own.

The Hawks took a 21-point lead in the second quarter; Miami quickly got within 11, but Atlanta had the margin out to 17 points again by halftime.

**Celtics 110, Mavericks 100**

In Dallas, Jaylen Brown had 33 points and 11 rebounds, and the Boston Celtics beat Dallas , overcoming another stellar showing from Cooper Flagg and handing the Mavericks their season-worst fifth consecutive loss.

Flagg scored 36 points in the rook-



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) drives against Orlando Magic guard Anthony Black, left, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. (AP)

ie No. 1 pick’s first meeting with the team he grew up watching because Boston was the closest NBA city to his hometown, about 200 miles south of Newport, Maine.

Payton Pritchard scored 26 points for the Celtics, who were playing without Anfernee Simons. Boston acquired Nikola Vucevic for Simons in a trade with Chicago earlier in the day, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press.

**Bucks 131, Bulls 115**

In Milwaukee, Kyle Kuzma matched a season high with 31 points and the Milwaukee Bucks snapped a five-game skid, beating the Chicago Bulls 131-115 in a meeting of short-handed teams.

Milwaukee was missing its top two scorers due to injury, while the Bulls traded away three players earlier in the day.

The Bulls sent Kevin Huerter and Dario Saric to Detroit as part of a three-team deal in which they acquired Mike Conley Jr. from Minnesota and Jaden Ivey from the Pistons. They also traded Nikola Vucevic and a second-round pick to Boston for Anfernee Simons and a second-round selection.

Chicago was missing leading scorer Josh Giddey due to a strained left hamstring.

Cade Cunningham scores 29 points to lead Pistons to 124-121 win over Nuggets

Detroit, All-Star Cade Cunningham had 29 points and 10 assists and the Detroit Pistons beat the Denver

Nuggets.

All-Star Jalen Duren added 19 points and 13 rebounds, and Duncan Robinson scored 20 for the Pistons, who have won five of six, including a 109-107 win in Denver on Jan. 27. They came into the game following a record-setting win on Sunday, beating the Brooklyn Nets 130-77 and setting a franchise mark with a 53-point margin of victory.

Jamal Murray led the Nuggets with 32 points and eight assists while Nikola Jokic had 24 points and 15 rebounds.

**Lakers 125, Nets 109**

In New York, LeBron James scored 25 points, Luka Doncic had 24 and the Los Angeles Lakers rolled to a victory over the Brooklyn Nets in Austin Reaves’ first game since Christmas.

Reaves had 15 points in 21 minutes after missing the last 19 games with a strained left calf. He entered late in the first quarter with the Lakers already well in control and helped them continue to pour it on during their 20-for-25 shooting start to the game.

Jake LaRavia scored 18 points for the Lakers, who finished 5-3 on their road trip and play next against Philadelphia at home Thursday night, a few hours after the NBA’s trade deadline has passed.

**Knicks 132, Wizards 101**

In Washington, Karl-Anthony Towns had 19 points and 14 rebounds, and the New York Knicks rolled to their seventh straight victory

over the Washington Wizards.

Mikal Bridges scored 23 points and Jalen Brunson added 21 for New York, although the Knicks did lose Josh Hart to a sprained left ankle in the third quarter. Hart, who dealt with right ankle trouble earlier this season, walked gingerly to the tunnel immediately after leaving the game and did not play again.

**Jazz 131, Pacers 122**

In Indianapolis, Isaiah Collier had a career-high 22 assists - the most in the NBA this season and the most by a Utah player since John Stockton in 1992 - and the Jazz beat the Indiana Pacers 131-122 on Tuesday night with just seven healthy players.

Lauri Markkanen scored 27 points for the Jazz, who were short-handed after trading Georges Niang, Kyle Anderson, Walter Clayton Jr. and Taylor Hendricks to Memphis earlier Tuesday for Jaren Jackson Jr., Jock Landale, John Konchar and Vince Williams Jr.

**7ers 113, Warriors 94**

In San Francisco, rookie VJ Edgecombe had 25 points, seven rebounds and seven assists, Andre Drummond added 12 points and 11 rebounds, and the Philadelphia 76ers won their fifth straight game,over the Golden State Warriors, who were missing Stephen Curry because of a painful right knee.

Trendon Watford had 16 points and eight rebounds off the bench while Adem Bona made all five of his first-half field goals in nine minutes to help the Sixers to a 58-57 lead at the break. Bona finished with 11 points.

## Sabalenka stays top-ranked despite loss, Djokovic up to third

MELBOURNE, Australia, Feb 4, (AP): Carlos Alcaraz completed a career Grand Slam of singles victories with his Australian Open title, but there was some solace for the man he defeated, 24-time Grand Slam singles champion Novak Djokovic.

While Alcaraz maintained his No. 1 ranking on the ATP tour ahead of Jannik Sinner, Djokovic, who beat Sinner in the semifinals at Melbourne Park, moved up one place to No. 3. It is the first time the 38-year-old

Djokovic has been inside the top three since August 2024.

On the WTA Tour, Aryna Sabalenka maintained her top ranking despite her loss in the final to Elena Rybakina, Rybakina moved up two places to third in the rankings, with Iga Swiatek in between at No. 2.

Three Americans followed in the WTA rankings - No. 4 Amanda Anisimova, Coco Gauff and Australian Open semifinalist Jessica Pegula. Elina Svitolina

moved up two places to No. 10 after her semifinal loss to Sabalenka at Melbourne Park.

American Learner Tien was one of the biggest improvers on either tour by moving up five places on the ATP Tour to No. 24, a career high. The 20-year-old Tien, who lost to now No. 4-ranked Alexander Zverev in the quarterfinals, became the youngest American man to reach the final eight of a major since 2002.

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## IOC President Coventry stresses keeping sport as neutral ground

MILAN, Feb 4, (Xinhua): International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Kirsty Coventry emphasized the critical need to keep sport a neutral ground in her speech to the 145th IOC Session, ahead of the 2026 Milano Cortina Winter Olympics.

“[We must] focus on our core. We are a sports organization. We understand politics, and we know we don’t operate in a vacuum. But our game is sport,” Coventry spoke in front of her fellow IOC members.

Keeping sport a neutral ground, she said, is paramount, “a place where every athlete can compete freely, without being held back by the politics or divisions of their governments. In a world that is increasingly divided, this principle matters

more than ever. It is what allows the Olympic Games to remain a place of inspiration, where the athletes of the world can come together and showcase the best of our humanity.”

Coventry, delivering her first Session speech as president, further underscored the need to focus on the IOC’s core mission.

“We cannot be all things to all people. The Olympic Games, and the values they represent, are our greatest asset,” she said.

She noted that while sport plays a broader role in health, inclusion and education - and the IOC will continue supporting that - its top responsibility is keeping the Games strong and meaningful.

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Change Name

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Left-arm spinner Bethell the unlikely hero

England warms up in style for T20 World Cup by sweeping Sri Lanka

PALLEKELE, Sri Lanka, Feb 4, (AP): England rounded off its T20 World Cup preparations in style by sweeping the series 3-0 against Sri Lanka. Left-arm spinner Jacob Bethell (4-11) was the unlikely hero as he grabbed the last four wickets in eight balls and Sri Lanka crumbled to 116 all out in the third and final game. Sam Curran’s career-best 58 off 48 balls had earlier lifted England to 128-9. Fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera also took a career-best 5-24 in his first game of the series. “That was awesome, a great win to be part of,” England captain Harry Brook said. “We’ve shown we can adapt to surfaces. Tonight was a tricky one to bat on . . . the World Cup is here so when we have the opportunity to play here, we have the experiences to carry over.” Sri Lanka needed 17 off 17 balls before Bethell ran through the tail by claiming three wickets in the 18th over. He then had Maheesh Theekshana caught at short third man. In Bethell’s game-turning over, Jos Buttler hung onto a brilliant diving catch to dismiss Dunith Wellalage, Chameera offered a tame catch in the covers and skipper Dasun Shanaka was stumped while trying to go for a big shot on a dusty wicket. For the second game in succession, Sri Lanka’s batters struggled to cope with England’s spinners, losing their last eight wickets for just 54 runs with



England’s Jacob Bethell appeals unsuccessfully during the third T20 cricket match between England and Sri Lanka in Pallekele, Sri Lanka. (AP)

Will Jacks (3-14) also starring. Kusal Mendis top-scored with 26 and Pathum Nissanka (23) hit three sixes in his 12-ball knock before slicing Liam Dawson to Jacks on the edge of the circle in the covers. Earlier, England crashed to 34-4 inside the power play after Brook had won his third successive toss and elected to bat. With the ball gripping on the surface, Chameera varied his pace intelligently and made an immediate impact when he had Ben Duckett trapped leg before wicket for a first-ball duck. Matheesha Pathirana struck twice with his slinging action when Bethell was caught behind and Brook lobbed an easy catch to extra cover after being beaten by a slower delivery. England slipped to 47-5 when Theekshana hit the top of Buttler’s stumps with a delivery that zipped back in. Curran then held one end up with a gritty knock that featured six fours and a six. Chameera picked up three wickets towards the end, while Curran fell when he top edged to third man in the final over. “Very disappointed,” Shanaka said. “We lost 3-0. As captain I need to address the areas really well to play a good World Cup. We are looking forward to it and we desperately want to deliver something special.” The World Cup starts Saturday.

Barca reaches Copa semifinals



Barcelona’s Marcus Rashford fights for the ball against Albacete’s Lorenzo Aguado during a Copa del Rey quarterfinal soccer match between Albacete and Barcelona, in Albacete, Spain. (AP)

Albacete’s giant-killing run ends

MADRID, Feb 4, (AP): Lamine Yamal and Ronald Araujo scored in each half as Barcelona beat second-division Albacete 2-1 to reach the semifinals of the Copa del Rey. Albacete had shocked Real Madrid in the round of 16, eliminating the Spanish powerhouse in what was the debut of new coach Alvaro Arbeloa. It was Barcelona’s 16th win in its last 17 matches across all tournaments, with its only setback a loss at Real Sociedad in the Spanish league last month. Barcelona has reached the Copa’s last-four in four straight seasons. It won last year’s edition in a final against Madrid.

“We knew it wouldn’t be easy,” Araujo said. “Copa matches aren’t decided until the very end. They found a goal and it’s normal for them to come at you in the final minutes. The team handled it well. We’re in the semifinals and that’s what’s important.” Yamal gave the visitors the lead with a left-footed shot from inside the area in the 39th minute after an assist by midfielder Frenkie de Jong. It was his fifth goal in his last six club matches. Araujo added to the lead with a header in the 56th after a corner by Marcus Rashford. It was the central defender’s first goal since taking time off to deal with his mental health last year. Barcelona coach Hansi Flick did not include Raphinha, Gavi and Pedri in his squad.

Albacete had a goal chalked off for offside in the 84th but finally got on the board three minutes later through Javi Moreno. Ferran Torres’ late goal for Barcelona also was disallowed for offside. Albacete almost equalized a few minutes later but were denied by a goal-line clearance from Gerard Martin. Albacete, which also eliminated first-division Celta Vigo in the round of 32, sits 12th in the second division. It reached the semifinals of the Copa in 1994-95. “We are very proud,” Moreno said. “Who would have imagined we could knock out Celta, Real Madrid and put up a good fight against Barcelona?” Barcelona leads the Spanish league, sitting a point ahead of Madrid.

Marseille moves into French Cup quarterfinals

Nkunku, Rabiot shine as Milan closes gap on Inter with victory over Bologna

BOLOGNA, Italy, Feb 4, (AP): AC Milan extended its unbeaten Serie A run to 22 matches and kept the pressure on leader Inter Milan after a 3-0 win at Bologna , with French players Christopher Nkunku and Adrien Rabiot shining. After a 1-1 draw with Roma, AC Milan got back to winning ways to move within five points of city rival Inter. In the absence of Christian Pulisic, Ruben Loftus-Cheek opened the scoring in the 20th minute from Rabiot’s assist. Nkunku made it 2-0 from the penalty spot after he was fouled by Bologna goalkeeper Federico Ravaglia.



AC Milan’s Luka Modric, right, plays the ball as Bologna’s Jens Odgaard closes in during the Serie A soccer match between Bologna and Milan in Bologna, Italy. (AP)

Rabiot completed the win in the 48th minute with a left-footed strike after intercepting a long throw-in. After 23 matches, Milan has a four-point lead over third-placed Napoli. Bologna stands 10th, 25 points off the pace. Marseille avoided plunging into crisis by defeating Rennes 3-0 to move into the French Cup quarterfinals. The southern club had no room for mistake after exiting the Champions League last week with a 3-0 loss at Club Brugge. It was an embarrassing defeat that was followed by a 2-2

draw at Paris FC in Ligue 1 on Saturday after Roberto De Zerbi’s players threw away a two-goal lead. Marseille needed just two minutes to break the deadlock against Rennes when Amine Gouri scored from close range against his former club, after excellent work from Timothy Weah to recover the ball in the box. Gouri then turned provider to set up Mason Greenwood in the 46th minute, with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang sealing the win on the break with seven minutes left. Marseille recruit Ethan Nwaneri was lucky to escape a red card after an awful tackle near the hour-mark on Glen Kamara, who was forced off. Reims also progressed to the quarterfinals with a 3-0 defeat of Le Mans. Marseille’s 3-0 loss at Club Brugge on Wednesday, coupled with Benfica’s remarkable injury-time goal against Real Madrid, sent De Zerbi’s side into 25th place in the Champions League table and out of the competition. Marseille, which won the Champions League in 1993, is third in the French league, nine points behind leader Paris-Saint-Germain. The bitter rivals face off this weekend in Paris in “Le Classique.” Bayer Leverkusen reached the German Cup semifinals for the third straight season after beating St. Pauli 3-0. Martin Terrier scored from the edge of the area in the 32nd minute, Patrik Schick volleyed home at the back post to double the lead in the 63rd and Jonas Hofmann added a third following a counterattack in stoppage time. Leverkusen won the cup in the 2023-24 season as part of its undefeated domestic campaign, and lost in the semifinals last season.

Kuwaiti fencer Al-Saeed makes impressive debut with bronze

ABU DHABI, Feb 4: Kuwait Fencing Academy athlete Joud Al-Saeed claimed the bronze medal in the saber event at the 8th Arab Women’s Clubs Games, held in the UAE. This marked her first international appearance, making the achievement a remarkable debut in her fencing career. Al-Saeed dedicated her victory to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Kuwait Olympic Committee, the Kuwait Fencing Federation, and all those who supported her journey from the start. Reflecting on the experience, Al-Saeed said competing at this Arab-level championship helped her hone her skills and gain valuable competitive experience. She expressed her commitment to continue training and achieve even greater success in upcoming tournaments.



Joud Al-Saeed

Knights of the Arabs launched to unite Arab fans at 2026 World Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Jordanian administrative expert Moatasem Al-Siddiq has announced the launch of “Knights of the Arabs for Fans” (AKF), a groundbreaking initiative to organize and lead Arab supporters at the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The project aims to transform fan presence from spontaneous cheering into a form of “popular diplomacy”, showcasing Arab chivalry and ethics. The initiative is backed by an advisory council of prominent Arab figures, including Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Khalidi (Kuwait), Engineer Madani Al-Mahdi (Sudan/USA), and leading sports and cultural personalities from Saudi Arabia, Oman, Morocco, and Iraq, ensuring broad Arab representation and cross-border coordination. Al-Siddiq emphasized that the program goes beyond organizing chants. Partnering with the Amina Foundation, it seeks to train the “cultured knight” — fans who combine sporting passion with moral discipline, acting as ambassadors for their countries and the Arab world. The vision extends beyond 2026, positioning the initiative as the official organized fan partner for Morocco 2030 and Saudi Arabia 2034, aiming to establish a lasting legacy for Arab supporters. The program invites ambitious young Arabs and influential sports figures to join, coordinating with national federations and official authorities to ensure that Arab fan sections appear united, disciplined, and proud, reflecting both heritage and future aspirations.



Moatasem Al-Siddiq

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France's Pierre-Edouard Bellemare moves the puck during a training session prior to the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy. (AP) – See Page 14

# Sports

## Kuwait submits bid to host 2035 AFC Asian Cup

Australia, South Korea join race

**KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 4:** The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has confirmed that Australia, South Korea, and Kuwait have officially submitted bids to host the 2035 AFC Asian Cup, while also expressing interest in hosting the 2031 edition.

The AFC is expected to announce the host countries for both tournaments during a single General Assembly meeting, following a proposal

by AFC President Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa. Japan has also indicated its desire to host the 2035 edition independently, adding another contender to the bidding process.

The AFC will now work closely with participating member associations to ensure the submission of all required documentation for their bids.

For the 2031 tournament, three other bids have been submitted: India, Indonesia, and a joint bid from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is confirmed as the host for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, with the official tournament draw scheduled for April.



The Asian Cup trophy

Zain Premier League resumes following a short break

### Qadsia looks to maintain momentum against Kuwait Club

By Hassan Mosa  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4:** The Zain Premier League resumes today following a short break for the Super Cup, won by Qadsia. The 13th round kicks off with two exciting matches: Al-Shabab hosts neighbor Al-Fahaheel at 4:40 p.m., while Al-Nasr travels to face Al-Tadamon at 7:05 p.m.

Upcoming fixtures include a crowd-pulling clash between Qadsia and Kuwait Club in Hawally tomorrow, Al-Arabi vs. Kazma the following day, and Al-Salmiya vs. Al-Jahra, also tomorrow.

Fifth-placed Al-Fahaheel (17 points) enters the game with multiple objectives: to challenge Kazma and Qadsia for third place and to avenge their 1-0 first-leg defeat to Al-Shabab. A loss could see Al-Fahaheel drop in the standings, especially with Al-Salmiya, equal on points, set to face Al-Jahra, eighth in the table.

Meanwhile, seventh-placed Al-Shabab (14 points) seeks a win to overcome recent setbacks. The team drew 1-1 with Al-Nasr last round and



A file photo of players in action.

suffered heavy defeats to Qadsia (1-4) and Al-Arabi (0-5) in rounds 10 and 11.

The Al-Nasr vs. Al-Tadamon clash is crucial for both teams, who are near the bottom with 6 points for Al-Nasr and 5 points for Al-Tadamon.

Al-Nasr, ninth, has shown improved form, securing draws against Qadsia (0-0), Al-Salmiya (1-1), and

Al-Shabab (1-1). It aims to take revenge against Al-Tadamon, who defeated them 1-0 in the first round.

For tenth-placed Al-Tadamon, a win is essential to avoid the relegation zone and maintain hope of escaping the league's "bottom-four" fight. Despite a postponed match against Kazma, it understands the importance of a victory today.

## Minister of Youth and Sports 'hits' the ground running with field visits

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4:** Dr Tariq Al-Jalahma, Minister of State for Youth and Sports, began his tenure immediately after taking the oath before His Highness the Amir, starting with field visits to key sports federations rather than formal receptions. This proactive approach opens direct communication with club and federation officials, allowing a clear understanding of the real situation beyond office reports.

During these visits, the minister can assess the actual needs of each sports body, including funding, facilities, budgets, and organization, while discussing challenges, highlighting achievements, and planning improvements for local tournaments and international competitions for national teams and clubs.

Dr. Al-Jalahma's initiative is being hailed as a "strong start", reflecting his commitment to direct engagement with officials and supporting the development of sports in Kuwait. The minister's visits began with



Minister of Youth and Sports meets with officials during a visit to discuss developments in handball and national sports initiatives.

the Football Federation, followed by the Handball Federation, where he praised their outstanding organization of the 22nd Asian Championship. Kuwait's national handball team secured the bronze medal and qualified for the World Cup finals for the 10th time. He commended the professionalism and effort demonstrated by the federation, noting it showcases the capabilities of national sports staff in hosting major tournaments successfully.

Dr. Al-Jalahma also visited the Volleyball Federation at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex, reviewing recent developments and preparations. He inspected the hall set up to host the West Asia Club Volleyball Championship, organized by Kuwait SC, which kicked off yesterday.

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### Chelsea suffers 2-4 aggregate defeat

## Havertz's stoppage-time strike sends Gunners to English League Cup final



Arsenal's Noni Madueke, left, and Chelsea's Marc Cucurella challenge for the ball during the English League Cup semifinal second leg soccer match between Arsenal and Chelsea in London. (AP)

**LONDON, Feb 4, (AP):** What's shaping up to be a banner season for Arsenal will include a trip to Wembley Stadium for the English League Cup final.

Kai Havertz scored in stoppage time against his former club to earn Arsenal a 1-0 win over visiting Chelsea, sealing a 4-2 victory on aggregate.

Without a trophy since 2020, Mikel Arteta's team leads the Premier League by six points in its bid to become English champion for the first time since 2004, and also finished top of the Champions League standings after eight straight wins.

For good measure, Arsenal has advanced to the fourth round of the FA Cup, too.

"The last three or four years we've been at the top of the Premier League competing and got really close but haven't been good enough," said Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice, referring to the team's three straight runner-up finishes.

"That's why this season we have that extra desire and fire in our bellies to go one step further in every competition. There's a long way to go, but to be in a cup final with this club is amazing."

Havertz played for Chelsea from 2020-23, and his finish that sealed the two-legged win over his old club wasn't too dissimilar to the one that saw off Man City and clinched the Champions League title for the Stamford Bridge club in 2021.

Having come on as a 69th-minute substitute, the German forward had the final say when he latched onto Rice's pass on a counterattack and rounded goalkeeper Robert Sanchez to slot home.

It was virtually the last kick of a scrappy and cagey match that was a contrast to Arsenal's 3-2 win at Stamford Bridge last month.

Chelsea was happy to soak up pressure for the opening hour and stay in the contest.

The visitors then brought on Cole Palmer and Brazilian winger Estevao in an attempt to take the game to Arsenal, but found the best defense in England too sturdy to breach, managing only long-range efforts and a couple of dangerous set-pieces.

## 'Sanctions are disproportionate' Morocco to appeal sanctions over chaotic Africa Cup final

**RABAT, Morocco, Feb 4, (AP):** Morocco has decided to appeal a ruling that resulted in fines of \$415,000 and match bans because of a chaotic Africa Cup of Nations final, its soccer federation said.

CAF, African soccer's governing body, last month fined the host and Senegal over unrest at last month's final in the Moroccan capital.

Senegal won the game 1-0 after extra-time and decided not to appeal the ruling.

The Moroccan federation and forward Ismael Saibari were issued fines totalling \$415,000. Saibari and captain Achraf Hakimi were also banned from games. During the final, ball boys tried to seize a towel belonging to Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, apparently to distract him, an incident that alone led to a \$200,000 fine for the host.

Morocco sees CAF's sanctions as disproportionate to the incidents.

"Given the incompatibility of these sanctions with the scale and severity of the incidents (...), the FRMF has decided to appeal these decisions," Morocco's soccer federation said in a statement.

The final was marred by Senegalese players walking off the field in protest at a stoppage-time penalty and fans attempting to storm the pitch. Outraged visiting supporters threw chairs and clashed with stewards. Eighteen are awaiting trial on hooliganism charges.

CAF fined the Senegalese soccer federation and national team coach



In this file photo, PSG's Achraf Hakimi, right, is challenged by Newcastle's Lewis Hall during a Champions League opening phase soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Newcastle. (AP)

Pape Thiaw a total of \$715,000. It also issued match suspensions to Thiaw and bans to two other players.

The match bans apply only to Africa games, not the World Cup kicking off in June, which Senegal and Morocco have qualified for.

After the tumultuous final, the tension moved from the pitch to social media. In Morocco, human rights groups warned against a surge in what they called "hate speech toward sub-Saharan residents."

In response, officials from Morocco and Senegal called for calm, and sought to reaffirm their countries' economic and diplomatic ties.

### Newell's targets Messi homecoming

**Buenos Aires, Feb 4, (Xinhua):** Lionel Messi's boyhood club, Newell's Old Boys, has outlined plans to sign the World Cup winner on a short-term deal next year.

The Argentine team's vice president, Juan Manuel Medina, said the club had discussed the plan since 2024 but did not provide details of any direct negotiations with the 38-year-old.

"We are working on Leo playing for Newell's in the first half of 2027, but for now there is nothing more than that," Medina told Argentine news outlet TN.

Messi began his youth career at Newell's in 1995 before signing with

Barcelona at the age of 13 in late 2000. He is currently contracted to Inter Miami until December 2028, meaning he would need special permission from the MLS club.

"It's a project that goes beyond Newell's," Medina added. "It's a project for the city of Rosario, the province and Argentine football. It all depends on what we can offer in terms of infrastructure and a competitive sports program." Messi's former Argentina international teammate Angel Di Maria is also from Rosario and is currently playing with Newell's local rival Rosario Central.