



Scan the QR code to access the Arab Times WhatsApp Channel



His Highness the Amir during a visit to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) headquarters in Sharq.

## HH Amir visits KFAS on 50th anniversary, chairs meeting

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, visited on Sunday the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) headquarters in Sharq on the 50th anniversary of its establishment.

Continued on Page 4



Amiri Diwan photos

## KD 150-300 FINE FOR BLOCKING GOV'T VEHICLES IN KUWAIT

### Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

## How long will the debts from the 'Manakh Crisis' persist?

FOR 44 years, the tragedy of the victims of the 'Manakh Market' crash has persisted without plausible solutions in sight.

This enduring stock market crash, which has impacted the national economy and the social stability of many Kuwaiti families, remains unresolved even with the existence of the Difficult Debts Settlement Authority – a body in charge of addressing this decades-long problem.

The fact that 668 cases remain open up to this day strongly suggests that the solutions implemented, thus far, are not genuine attempts to resolve the crisis, but merely temporary, inadequate fixes.

The human and financial cost of this inaction is substantial. Many of those originally burdened by these debts already passed away. Tragically, their children may now be suffering under the anguish of travel bans and other crippling hardships.

Financially, the legacy of these non-performing loans persists in the State budget, reflected in an item called 'Debts under Collection,' which currently amounts to a staggering KD7 billion – money that is essentially uncollectible.

Furthermore, the legislative response to the crisis, particularly Law No. 41/1993, exacerbated the suffering.

This law, issued by the National Assembly, imposed a punitive 15 percent penalty on the debtor for every missed payment, added directly to the outstanding balance.

This law also established a body whose opera-

tional costs continue to drain the public treasury each year.

The prolonged inability to resolve this issue is starkly contrasted by the swift and effective steps taken by other nations facing similar economic and financial challenges.

In the 1980s, Bahrain resolved what was known as the 'Cheque Crisis' with a single, decisive government action.

Similarly, in Britain, Margaret Thatcher's government tackled crises in the mining, unemployment and stock market sectors in 1985 through comprehensive economic restructuring.

While initially facing some repercussions, the financial sector of the United Kingdom rapidly recovered and triumphed over challenges with relative ease.

The ongoing failure in Kuwait to resolve the 'Manakh Market' crash stands as a poignant reminder of the need for decisive action and a political will that prioritizes permanent cure over temporary relief.

Likewise, France suffered a major financial crisis in the 1980s and resolved it through pragmatic measures, without imposing any negative repercussion on its citizens or the local economy.

Continued on Page 5

Follow me on:

@Ahmedaljarallah

Ahmed aljarallah

ahmed@aljarallah.com



Scan QR code to visit the website:

aljarallah.com

# Clear way for sirens always

Police, fire, ambulances take priority

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: In a move aimed at preventing the obstruction of government vehicles on all roads, the Ministry of Interior announced that imprisonment for up to three months and fine of not less than KD150 and not more than

KD300, or any of these two penalties, will be imposed on anyone who fails to yield the right-of-way to government vehicles, including that of the police, fire stations, civil defense, official convoys, their accompanying vehicles and ambulances.

Continued on Page 5



KUNA photo

Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaie in a group photo during the 16th International Invention Fair in the Middle East.

## Kuwait deepens leadership as regional innovation hub

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaie, who represented His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, on Monday inaugurated the 16th International Invention Fair in the Middle East, organized by the Scientific Club.

Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) supports the

exhibition, which runs from Feb 8-11, with the participation of 213 inventors from around the world, showcasing 166 inventions.

Al-Tabtabaie affirmed that Kuwait considers innovation and scientific research important, in accordance with the firm belief of the political leadership in supporting creative minds and building a knowledge-based future.

Continued on Page 4

## Kuwait, Malta strengthen cooperation across political and economic sectors

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: According to the Ambassador of Malta to the State of Kuwait, H.E. Prof. Dr. George A. Said-Zammit, the State of Kuwait is one of the friendliest and closest partners of the Republic of Malta.

Both countries enjoy excellent diplomatic relations and there exist already opportunities of collaboration and cooperation in various sectors. Diplomatic relations between Malta and Kuwait go back to more than fifty years ago (since 3 October 1972). The opening of embassies of the two respective countries have augmented bilateral relations with a view to further enhancing

their political, economic, and cultural bridges.

For Malta, the State of Kuwait is a reliable partner at the regional and international levels. On the other hand, Kuwait considers Malta's strategic position in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, and between South Europe and North Africa, as an ideal bridge between the Gulf region, North Africa and the European Union.

During the last three years in particular, cooperation between the two countries witnessed progress in various fields, including the business sector, investment in real-estate, culture, education, and environmental management. He pointed out that Malta, as a Member State of the European Union, represents an important gateway to enhance economic cooperation between Kuwait and the European markets.

Continued on Page 5

## Arab Times hails Alnaqeeb appointment as Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Jana Khaldoun Alnaqeeb has been appointed as Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times – a move widely seen as reinforcing the commitment of the newspaper to champion the empowerment of women and to expand female representation in media leadership.

Alnaqeeb joined the editorial leadership after three years with the newspaper, during which she supervised public relations and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

During her tenure, Alnaqeeb was instrumental in expanding community outreach through educational and cultural programs, launching a structured summer internship scheme, and building direct engagement channels with school and university students.

She also contributed to the development of the newspaper's digital strategy and attracting creative contributors, thereby, helping the publication deepen its reach among younger audiences.

Continued on Page 4



Jana Khaldoun Alnaqeeb

## Kuwait confirms 5-yr housing grace period

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Chairperson of the Women's Housing Committee at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) Sheikha Bibi Al-Yousef clarified that after investigation and review, it was determined that the grace period for women whose Kuwaiti citizenship was revoked and who are beneficiaries of rented housing extends to five years, not the previously stated two-year period, from the date of citizenship revocation.

She indicated that the housing unit should be handed over by the concerned beneficiaries to PAHW by the end of the five-year grace period. She said the specified grace period was established in accordance with a Cabinet decision.

## Lebanon voices concern over Kuwait's terror list

BEIRUT, Feb 9, (Xinhua): Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health expressed "great surprise" on Sunday following Kuwait's announcement that it had added eight Lebanese hospitals to its national terrorism sanctions list.

In a statement, the ministry said it received no advance notice from Kuwaiti authorities, adding that this action contradicts Kuwait's longstanding fraternal and diplomatic stance toward Lebanon.

The eight hospitals are situated in southern Lebanon, eastern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs, areas reportedly known for strong Hezbollah influence. Kuwaiti daily Al-Rai reported that Kuwait's committee for enforcing UN anti-terror resolutions made the decision based on "reasonable grounds" linking the facilities to terrorist activities.

Continued on Page 4

### Day by Day

WE have started to realize the importance of the Attorney General's role. In countries that respect the rule of law, the Attorney General has the right to dismiss frivolous cases, many of which are a waste of time of the judiciary.

Many cases are dismissed by the Attorney General because they are unnecessary and meaningless. I would like to thank the Attorney General for his correct approach, as this eases the burden on the judiciary and deters those who exploit such cases.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



8 Zain Great Idea: Demo Day unlocks a new wave of regional innovation and investment momentum



9 Weyay Bank and AUM launch student innovation challenge in collaboration with Plug and Play



10 NBK Egypt provides \$115 million financing for Safaga Terminal project

Prayer Timings			
Fajr .....	05:12	Asr .....	15:10
Sunrise ..	06:32	Maghrib ..	17:32
Zohr .....	12:02	Isha .....	18:51

# Local

**Expected weather for next 24 hrs:**  
**By Day:** Warm and cloudy with light to moderate southerly wind to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-32 km/h with a chance for light fog forming at night.  
**By Night:** Rather cold and partly

Weather			
cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-38 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait Airport	28	13	

Abdaly	27	12
Bubyan	22	10
Jahra	29	15
Fallaka Island	24	13
Salmiyah	27	17
Ahmadi	29	12
Jal Aliyah	27	15

KUNA, QNA sign cooperation agreement

## FM: Kuwait-Qatar bonds model of brotherhood, strategic partnership

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Sabah emphasized Sunday that Kuwait-Qatar historical relations represent a solid model of sincere brotherhood and enduring ties forged through close kinship and shared destiny over decades.

Speaking during the seventh session of the Kuwait-Qatar Joint Higher Committee for Cooperation, Sheikh Jarrah said these relations are built on mutual trust and deep understanding, strengthened through close cooperation across political, economic, and cultural fields, serving the interests of both nations.

The bilateral ties continue to advance steadily toward further development and prosperity, guided by the directives of the two countries' leaderships, which seek to expand cooperation and reinforce integration, reflecting the depth of the relationship and meeting future aspirations with confidence and determination, he added.

Sheikh Jarrah stressed that the meeting reflects a shared commitment to enhancing bilateral work mechanisms, activating follow-up tools, and implementing the outcomes of the Joint Higher Committee.

This approach aims to institutionalize cooperation, improve coordination and consultation across various fields, and strengthen the strategic partnership to achieve the aspirations of both peoples for stability, growth, and prosperity.

Kuwait and Qatar are celebrating the 55th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations, which Sheikh Jarrah said underscores their determination to further elevate bilateral ties.

He expressed hope that the committee's deliberations would yield constructive results to enhance cooperation frameworks and advance the longstanding relationship between the two countries.

In turn, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said the timing of the seventh session, amid sensitive regional and international circumstances, reflects the wise political will of the two nations' leaders and confirms their alignment on regional and international issues.

Sheikh Mohammad highlighted Qatar's appreciation for the shared visions with Kuwait regarding these matters and expressed a desire to increase coordination and cooperation on issues affecting the Gulf peoples, the Arab and Islamic nations, and the wider world.



Al-Seyassah photo

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Sabah and Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani during the meeting.

He also extended his congratulations to Kuwait on the upcoming 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day, wishing the country continued prosperity under its wise leadership.

### KUNA, QNA sign deal

Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) and Qatar News Agency (QNA) signed a co-operation and joint news exchange agreement, in the presence of Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Sabah and Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.

The agreement was signed on behalf of KUNA by Acting Director General

Mohammad Al-Mannaie, and on behalf of QNA by Qatari Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan Al-Muraikhi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building.

The agreement aims to establish bilateral cooperation based on equality in the exchange of news, videos, and photos, as well as to enhance the use of artificial intelligence and modern technological tools in media work. It also promotes the exchange of expertise and knowledge in AI-related applications.

Under the agreement, the two agencies will cooperate in the daily exchange of news in the agreed-upon language, along with photos and video clips.

Services will be exchanged through internet-based technologies or other means, provided that both parties share information about communication methods and data transfer to facilitate free access to each other's services.

The memorandum also stipulates providing necessary facilities and support for correspondents and envoys of each agency in the other party's country, as well as organizing exchange visit programs between the two agencies.

Other provisions of the agreement cover cooperation activities, news dissemination and distribution, expenses, and communication protocols, ensuring a framework for comprehensive media collaboration.

The seventh session of the Kuwait-Qatar Joint Higher Committee for Cooperation was held in Kuwait on Sunday.

During the session, the committee touched on the strong fraternal relations between the two countries and peoples, as well as vital areas of cooperation, including political, economic, investment, and cultural fields.

The meeting focused on ways to further enhance cooperation and take bilateral ties to new levels of integration, reflecting the shared desire to strengthen and develop Kuwait-Qatar relations across all sectors.

The committee also discussed recent developments at the regional and international levels and explored ways to enhance cooperation to address current challenges in the region.

The session concluded with the signing of the committee's meeting minutes along with several agreements and memoranda of understanding aimed at expanding cooperation and close coordination in various fields to serve the mutual interests of the two countries.



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi with some of the officers from the Royal Navy ship 'Al-Mabrouka'.

### 'Al-Mabrouka' arrival strengthens bonds

## Oman, Kuwait maritime ties witness growth

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi confirmed that the Omani ship, 'Al-Mabrouka,' is currently on a training mission, pointing out that it is one of the well-known training vessels in the Royal Navy of Oman.

During a reception organized by the Omani Embassy in Kuwait aboard the Royal Navy of Oman's ship on Monday, Al-Kharousi revealed that there are ongoing joint cooperation and training programs between the Royal Navy of Oman and the Kuwaiti Navy. He pointed out that the visit is part of the continuous cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

He said the crew of the ship consists of 184 personnel, while referring to what the ship cap-

tain, Colonel Zaher Al-Abri, mentioned regarding the joint cooperation program during this visit.

He expressed his wishes for the ship and its crew to succeed in their mission, affirming his aspiration for more development and progress in bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait.

He added the visit coincides with the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations of Kuwait in February. He then took the opportunity to extend his warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, and the leadership, government and people of the brotherly State of Kuwait on this occasion.

He confirmed that relations between the two countries, including maritime cooperation, are

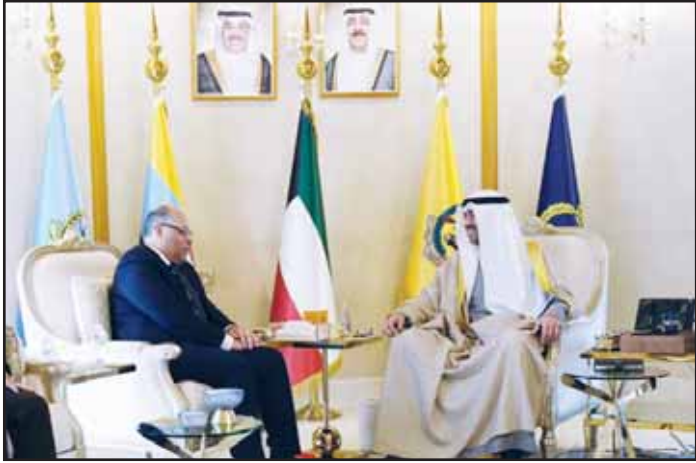
witnessing continuous strengthening and development and are always moving towards further progress.

On the other hand, Commander of 'Al-Mabrouka' Colonel (Navy) Zahir bin Mohammed bin Hamdan Al-Abri disclosed that the ship sailed from the Omani port last Tuesday and arrived at Shuwaikh Port on Friday. He said this visit is part of the training missions of the ship, which are an integral part of its duties and roles within the Royal Navy of Oman.

He added that aside from its training tasks, 'Al Mabrouka' undertakes other roles, such as being a command and control ship, and carrying out operational tasks and patrols in Omani seas, in order to strengthen the maritime security system and maintain the safety and security of international shipping lanes.



KUNA photo  
Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets the UK ambassador.



KUNA photo  
Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets the Egyptian ambassador.

## Defense Minister meets with Egypt, UK Ambassadors

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): Kuwait Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Monday met with Egypt's

Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Abu Al-Wafa and UK Ambassador to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed.

The Ministry of Defense said in a statement

that Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah received both ambassadors separately, and reviewed ways of booting cooperation in the military field.

## Army Chief meets Saudi, US, UK officials at Riyadh expo

RIYADH, Feb 9, (KUNA): The Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraian, held a series of bilateral meetings during his visit to the Global Defense Exhibition 2026 in Riyadh.



Al-Shuraian

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense stated that Lt. Gen. Al-Shuraian met with Saudi Arabia's Chief of General Staff, General Fayyadh Al-Ruwaili, and with

Oman's Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, Rear Admiral Abdullah Al-Raisi.

Additionally, he held talks with US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, Michael Domino, and the UK First Defense Advisor for the Middle East, Rear Admiral Edward Allgreen, focusing on strengthening military cooperation and exchanging views on issues of mutual interest.

Lt Gen Al-Shuraian, accompanied by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah, attended the Global Defense EXPO 2026 held in Riyadh.

During the visit, Lt. Gen. Al-Shuraian reviewed the latest advancements in defense and security industries, including cutting-edge technologies and systems in weaponry, land, sea, and air defense, as well as cybersecurity solutions and innovations aimed at enhancing military capabilities and combat readiness.

The expo is one of the largest regional and international platforms specializing in defense systems, bringing together top global companies and military institutions to showcase advanced defense technologies and innovations supporting modern armament systems and readiness enhancement efforts.

# Reaching hearts, minds of people

## UAE wraps up 'Brothers Forever' week

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has concluded the "UAE-Kuwait ... Brothers Forever" week – a grand celebration of the deep and enduring historical and fraternal ties between the two sisterly nations.**

The event, which was held from Jan 29 to Feb 4 in various emirates, featured a rich program of activities organized by official institutions, cultural, artistic and community organizations.

The week included an array of cultural, artistic, social and entertainment activities, spotlighting the long history of cooperation and integration between the two countries.

It emphasized that the UAE-Kuwait relationship transcends official frameworks, reaching the hearts and minds of both peoples and their deep-rooted human bonds.

As part of these celebrations, the Department of Economy and Tourism in Dubai organized a special 'FAM Trip' for Kuwaiti media outlets.

The trip aimed to familiarize them with the week's events, strengthen media cooperation, and provide a comprehensive first-hand experience, proving the brotherhood between the two countries.

The trip began with a warm welcome at the airport, including the presentation of sweets and souvenirs to the Kuwaiti media delegation -- a gesture symbolizing the close

relationship between the two nations.

A diverse program encompassing entertainment, cultural events and major concerts followed, creating memorable milestones through this media experience in Dubai.

The Taj Exotica Resort & Spa-Palm Jumeirah was the highlight of the media trip, offering a complete model of luxury hospitality in Dubai. Its prime location on the eastern crescent of Palm Jumeirah, with its direct views of the Arabian Gulf, makes it a prime example.

The hotel boasts of an elegant design that blends contemporary Indian touches with understated luxury, featuring spacious rooms and suites and amenities, including a private beach, swimming pools, fitness facilities and a full-service spa.

### Highlights

One of the highlights at the hotel was, Varq, a restaurant offering a sophisticated concept of contemporary Indian cuisine with regal touches, renowned for its use of edible gold and silver leaf.

Media representatives were introduced to the restaurant's philosophy, which blends traditional flavors with modern techniques, presenting innovative dishes that reflect the identity of Taj International restaurants.

The media delegation also experienced Dubai's vibrant cultural scene. Located in the heart of Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), Bull & Bear has emerged as a premier destination for discerning diners.

It offers an experience that combines an elegant ambiance, Art Deco-inspired design, and panoramic views of the Burj Khalifa and the Dubai skyline. The restaurant is famous for its exquisite steaks, featuring Angus and Wagyu beef, as well as Beef Wellington.

## Other Voices

## Statements on microphones

By Ahmad alsarraf

For many years, me and several others have called for moderation in the use of powerful loudspeakers in mosques, advocating for using less powerful ones. The goal is not to punish or disturb people, especially during the early morning hours.

People have different life-styles and habits, they are not programmed like robots.

It is wrong to assume that the timing of the call to prayer is suitable for everyone. In fact, the opposite is more accurate.

Loud noise from vehicle engines pollutes the environment. Therefore, the Ministry of Interior criminalized their use due to their harmful effects. High volume loudspeakers are no different, as they cause the same damage.

It is generally impermissible to use loudspeakers, especially during Ramadan, for reciting the Quran. This is incorrect. The Quran is not recited for someone sitting in their shop, walking on the street, managing their pharmacy, or driving a taxi.

The recitation of the Quran is intended for worshippers inside the mosque.

Some citizens, particularly the elderly, complain about the loud volume of loudspeakers, as it prevents them from sleeping.



alsarraf

The same applies to children, students and the sick. Those who wish to hear the Quran should listen to it recited by the most beautiful voices, such as the imams of the Two Holy Mosques, via television or mobile phone.

The spirituality that religious rituals aim to achieve does not necessarily mean disturbing others and shouting through loudspeakers.

Spirituality can be attained by going to the mosque and performing prayers there, not by loitering the streets and then complaining about not hearing the recitations or prayers through loudspeakers.

The above statement, this time, is not written by the columnist of this article or a friend of his, but by Saudi Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance Abdul Latif bin Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al-Sheikh, during a television interview with the program's host, Abdullah Al-Mudayfir. Al-Sheikh previously served as the General President of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. He holds a PhD with first honors in Islamic propagation from Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University and was special advisor to the Governor of Riyadh.

Now, what is the opinion of Mr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi, Minister of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, regarding this enlightened view? Will it be implemented in mosques during and after Ramadan?

□ □ □

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

# Opportunity for good or moment for misfortune

“IMAM ALI (Peace be Upon Him) has a saying that is not fleeting, not something that might pass by unnoticed, or a passing wave that disappears. Rather, it is a piece of wisdom that he (Peace be Upon Him) consistently shared during his sermons and meetings with his companions. He said, “Opportunity passes like a cloud, so seize opportunities for good.” **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Here, we do not know whether the ministerial post to which Abdullah Bouftain was nominated was an opportunity for good or an opportunity for misfortune. As the popular saying goes, ‘We wanted it to be joyful, but it turned into trouble,’ and so it is. It may seem like a blessing, but the good can quickly turn into evil, God forbid.

“I do not know whether those who plotted against Bouftain were among the envious and malicious, or among his supporters, or neither. But they did not like what they perceived as ‘unfair work’, if that applies to our friend. I have not met Abdullah Bouftain personally, but I occasionally follow him on social media. He is a master of the game and he excelled at it.

“Undoubtedly, he is a good speaker and a creative young man. Ideas are not just about manufacturing and innovation, they also come from eloquent speeches and captivating addresses that win hearts and minds. He succeeded in this area and built a wide following, especially among young people.

“After the Amiri decree was issued during the nine o’clock news, I reflected and said, ‘I hope replacing one person with another is not just a matter of moving a chair around. Abdullah is certainly successful, or at least successful, in speeches and presenting ideas, but being Minister of Information is a different story altogether, especially when we know the position encompasses both culture and media. How weighty culture is, and how crucial media is, at a time everything seems to be just a passing fad?”

“Culture is no longer just printed books or poems about a beloved or a homeland. Authors and poets are facing a near-deserted market. Poetry has become riddles without substance, and stories and novels are mere soulless anecdotes. You regret buying a novel and browsing through it, finding nothing worth your time. In fact, it is often less than trivial.

“I believe that Bouftain has experience in radio, television, arts, drama and theater, unlike his departing colleague who, as he says, has only recent experience (or so I think). His appointment as Minister of Culture is, in my opinion, an injustice to the man. Here, it is nothing more than a game played by opportunists. As the saying goes, ‘Give the bread to the baker, even if he eats half of it.’

“For many years, media and the arts have been neglected by the arts and culture sector. The bottom line is that it was a good opportunity to hand over media and culture to an inspiring generation that understands the language of young people, who constitute about 70 percent of the population -- both citizens and expatriates. Perhaps, Bouftain missed the opportunity, but you do your job, and leave the rest to Allah.”

**Also:**

“In a rapidly evolving era of medicine and psychotherapy, traditional treatments alone are no longer sufficient to address the physical, psychological, and social challenges individuals face,” **Dr. Reem Ahmad Al-Hazim** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“With this progress, innovative modern therapies have emerged, integrating the arts, applications, and theoretical sciences to enhance healing and improve the quality of life.

“One of the most prominent is theater therapy, which utilizes acting and theatrical performance as a means of expression and overcoming trauma. Through role-playing and storytelling, the patient is empowered to cope with stress and anxiety, develop skills to regain self-confidence, and overcome social isolation.

“Color therapy has also emerged. It employs lighting and color techniques to alter mood, guided by a physician or therapist. Bright colors may be used to stimulate mental activity and improve mood, while calming colors can promote relaxation, reduce stress, and stimulate healing.

“Therapeutic play has also emerged, providing a safe space for children to express their feelings, fears, and various sensations. Interactive play and simple activities help develop problem-solving skills and promote positive behavior.

“Therapies that connect people with nature have also appeared, and there are many. Among the most well-known are animal therapy and horticultural therapy. Animal therapy primarily relies on the presence of animals, such as dogs, horses and cats, in the patient’s vicinity.

“Research has indicated that interaction with animals can reduce blood pressure, stimulate the release of endorphins, and enhance focus, thus, aiding in the rehabilitation of the patient.

“Horticultural therapy is closest to my heart due to my specialization of over 30 years in the field of botany and

agriculture. Horticultural therapy engages the patient’s five senses. When a person is in a field, garden or orchard, they activate and utilize his senses of smell, touch, hearing, taste and sight. In its simplest form, horticultural therapy is direct work with plants to calm the nerves, stimulate the senses, and improve both physical and mental performance.

“These activities are excellent for supporting physical rehabilitation, especially given the widespread use of modern technology in our time, which has significantly reduced daily physical activity.

“Gardening improves quality of life and reduces feelings of depression and psychological stress amidst the fast-paced and complex rhythm of modern life.

“Walking among plants and breathing in the oxygen-rich air in the morning, taking advantage of sunlight, is very beneficial.

“All these therapies and innovative medical techniques complement the role of the physician, not replace it.

“The best approach is to combine innovations with direct follow-up from a specialist physician and to develop treatment protocols with a therapist to achieve a holistic therapeutic experience that ensures the highest levels of patient safety.

“Garden therapy is an invitation to healing and recovery in close proximity to living beings in general, and plants in particular.”

□ □ □

“Construction contracts are among the most common contracts due to their direct connection to engineering and construction work, as well as financial rights.” Attorney **Sarah Al-Jassem** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“However, reality shows many disputes arising from contractors’ errors in executing construction work.

“Contractors often resort to subcontracting work, which raises a legal issue concerning the determination and blurring of responsibilities between the parties, especially since any defect could result in serious material and technical damages that may be irreparable.

“Civil law regulates this type of work, stipulating that the contractor is obligated to execute the agreed work according to the terms, specifications and best practices, and is responsible for any error or negligence in its execution.

“Construction errors can vary, including violating agreed technical specifications, using materials that do not conform to approved specifications, breaching professional standards, unjustified delays in execution, or carrying out defective work that threatens the building’s safety.

“Many property owners make the mistake of assigning the work to another contractor upon discovering defects, errors or delays in execution.

“This creates a problem by blurring the lines of responsibility between the previous and subsequent contractors, thus, losing the right to compensation by proving the error, the damage, and the causal link between the fault and the contractor.

“Before handing over the site to a new contractor, the project owner must take precautionary legal measures to document the current state of the completed work. This documentation aims to determine the actual percentage of completion, identify technical deficiencies and defects, and list the defective or non-compliant work. This is achieved by appointing a specialized engineering expert from the court, who is vital in this type of dispute for proving damages.

“The expert examines the completed work to determine its conformity with the contract and specifications, estimates the cost of repairing defects or removing faulty work, identifies technical deficiencies and damages, determines the percentage of work actually completed, and accurately identifies damages and violations.

“Once a contractor’s fault is established, the employer has the right to demand that the defects be rectified at the contractor’s expense and to receive compensation for any material or moral damages incurred, before handing over the work to a new contractor for completion.

“The previous contractor is held accountable for the work performed and any defects therein. The subsequent contractor is not responsible for previous errors unless it is proven that they were aware of them and continued the work without correcting them.

“This underscores the importance of legal procedures before handing over the site to the new contractor to prevent the loss of rights and the difficulty of assigning blame to the actual perpetrator.

“Disputes arising from contractor errors require a thorough legal and technical understanding, especially given the current boom in construction.

“Legal procedures remain the best way to protect rights, ensure a fair separation of responsibilities among contractors as they succeed one another in executing a project, and achieve justice in accordance with the law.”

— Compiled by **Saeed Mahmoud Saleh**



Hassan Ali Karam

# Wedding vows gone awry

Suitor flees with woman's KD 15,000

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: A marriage arrangement between a young woman and a man, which began in September 2024, ended with a fraud complaint being filed at a police station in the Capital, reports Al-Anba daily.**

The woman accused a customs officer of misappropriating KD15,000 that she obtained through a bank loan, after he disappeared and stopped responding to her calls once he received the money.

According to the details of the case, the woman filed a report accusing the man of fraud and stated that she met him by chance at the Ministries Complex in September 2024. The two exchanged introductions, after which the accused expressed his wish to marry her.

The complainant stated that the man later asked her to assist him in furnishing what he described as their future marital home. This re-

quest prompted her to take a loan of KD15,000 from a local bank. She handed the amount to the accused in cash immediately after exiting the bank on Jan 22, 2026. She added that the accused suddenly disappeared after receiving the money and stopped answering her telephone calls.

A security source said that once the complaint was registered, the case file was referred to the Criminal Investigation Department to take the necessary legal measures and carry out investigations aimed at locating the accused and confronting him with the complainant’s statements.

The source disclosed that the accused was contacted and later appeared voluntarily. During questioning, he admitted that there had been a marriage proposal which he later found unconvincing, as stated by the complainant, dating back to September 2024. He also confessed in detail to receiving KD15,000 from her, explaining that he used the money to settle accumulated debts and that he was unable to

return the amount or repay the loan due to his financial obligations.

The source added that the complainant was summoned to confront the accused with his statements. The investigation did not reveal any new information beyond what both parties had already stated, confirming that the money had indeed been handed over, in line with the complainant’s testimony.

In accordance with legal procedures, the accused was referred to the Public Prosecution to take further action.

The source concluded by calling on citizens and residents to remain vigilant and not be deceived by promises, stressing the importance of never handing over money to anyone under any circumstances without clear and legally binding guarantees. The source also emphasized the need to promptly report any suspected cases of fraud or exploitation, in order to safeguard personal rights and assist security authorities in apprehending suspects and taking the necessary legal measures against them.

# Fugitive facing 90 years jail in drug trafficking case held

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9:** The Criminal Investigation Department officers apprehended a man wanted by law for evading a total of 90 years in prison sentences, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, all the cases filed against the man are related to the possession and trafficking of narcotics. The source indicated that the wanted man had been on the run since 2013.

The source stated that the detectives received information about the suspect’s whereabouts — at the house of his friend in Zahraa.

A team from the Criminal Investigations Department immediately arrested the fugitive. He was transferred to the Central Prison after being interrogated regarding his whereabouts and the individuals who provided him safe haven during his more than 10 years in hiding.

□ □ □

**Drugs found on expat:** A chance discovery of four bags of crystal meth in the possession of an expatriate — led to the seizure of a quarter kilogram of crystal meth and

heroin in Farwaniya, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source said that a patrol from the Farwaniya Support Unit stopped an expatriate on suspicion during a routine security patrol and found four bags of crystal meth in his possession.

The source confirmed that the suspect was referred to the Drug Control General Department for questioning.

During interrogation, he confessed to possessing narcotics at his residence and drug trafficking. After obtaining a warrant, a search was carried out at his residence in Farwaniya, which resulted in the seizure of a quarter kilogram of crystal meth, along with an undisclosed quantity of heroin.

The source stated that the drugs were confiscated and that all necessary legal measures were taken against the suspect who, along with the seized items, were referred to the competent authorities to complete the investigation procedures.

He added that this seizure is part of intensified security efforts to track down drug dealers and promoters and to firmly deal with anyone who attempts to threaten the security and safety of society.

# KU offers car services for students and staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9:** Kuwait University, represented by its Security and Safety Department, announced that the mobile in-campus car repair service was launched on Sunday.

This is in line with the efforts of the University to provide support services that make campus life easy.

The service is exclusive for the students, faculty and staff who benefit from a special discount through the contract signed with a car repair and maintenance company.

Services include tyre repair and replacement, tyre balancing, oil change, battery replacement, brake maintenance and vehicle towing.

The Security and Safety Department underscored the need to present the University identification card when availing the service to benefit from the discount.

The service is available from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.

To request the service, those concerned should call 50551111, while the number of the Security and Safety Department is 24983333

# MoJ extends deadline for ‘comptroller’ application

**By Jaber Al-Hamoud/Mohammad Ghanem Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff**

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9:** The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has extended the application deadline for the ‘comptroller’ position until Feb 15.

In addition to the previously advertised supervisory roles, the ministry announced a new opening for ‘Family Disputes and Social Research Supervisor’ position in the Family Counseling Department.

It called on interested applicants -- who satisfy the criteria set forth in Ministerial Decision No. 101/2025, which governs the additional conditions and controls for filling supervisory positions, as amended by Ministerial Decision No. 291/2025 -- to submit their applications.

Applications for all positions must be submitted through the official website of the ministry by Feb 16.

For those applying for the new ‘Family Disputes Comptroller’ position, if they previously applied for any other supervisory role, they must withdraw their initial application and submit a new one for the Family Disputes role.

Meanwhile, the Board of Directors of the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) endorsed, by majority vote, the findings of the technical evaluation of bids for Tender No. A/H M A/300), which dealt with the planning and study of the Sulaihiya Juvenile Court building. The bids of five local firms that met the technical evaluation criteria will be opened once the Ministry of Public Works (the relevant authority) ask the Agency to review the evaluation results.

# Trio nabbed for illegal fishing and assault bid

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA):** Kuwait’s Ministry of Interior, through the Coast Guard, announced on Monday the arrest of three individuals for engaging in illegal fishing using an unauthorized boat and attempting to run over a security officer.

According to an official statement, the incident occurred during a routine maritime patrol when the Coast Guard spotted a boat violating fishing regulations. The boat’s captain failed to comply with orders to stop and tried to flee. Pursued to the shore, the suspects attempted to escape in a vehicle, during which one of them tried to run over a Coast Guard officer.

Authorities managed to apprehend them without any injuries to the security personnel.

The three suspects include one Kuwaiti citizen and two illegal residents, all with prior criminal records. The boat was not registered for fishing.

Following legal procedures, the Coast Guard seized and destroyed the vessel and referred the suspects to the competent authorities for prosecution.

The Interior Ministry emphasized that anyone attempting to break the law or threaten the safety of security personnel will face strict consequences, reaffirming its commitment to maintaining security and safety in Kuwait’s territorial waters.

Ex-KFA head knifed by duo in Mayfair murder attempt

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9:** Former President of Al-Qadsia Club and Kuwait Football Association Fawaz Al-Hasawi was stabbed at his residence in Central London recently. Mainstream and social media reports indicate that two unidentified individuals broke into the Mayfair home of Al-Hasawi early morning on Monday. Armed with knives, the suspects entered his bedroom with the intent to kill him.

Al-Hasawi resisted and struggled with the assailants, who then fled the scene, abandoning their weapons. He was transported to the nearest hospital.

Security authorities have initiated an investigation into the attack, including a review of CCTV footages from the house and surrounding streets.

While his condition is reported as stable, Al-Hasawi sustained multiple stab wounds in both hands, a neck wound and facial abrasions.

His lawyer, Attorney Khawla Mubarak Al-Hasawi, provided an update on his condition. She posted on the ‘X’ platform, “Given the many inquiries about my brother Fawaz’s condition following the incident, I want to reassure everyone who asked about him.

### Special Buffet

## LARGEST SPREAD IN TOWN

### Child Buffet

~~KD 4.250~~

**KD 3.400**

### Adult Buffet

~~KD 7.450~~

**KD 5.950**

EVERY THURSDAY

DINNER ONLY

6 PM TO 11 PM

EVERY FRIDAY

LUNCH & DINNER

12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM & 6 PM TO 11 PM

EVERY SATURDAY

LUNCH ONLY

12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM

AVAILABLE AT

**HAWALLY BRANCH**

BEIRUT ST, LULU AL WATAN COMPLEX, OPPOSITE CBK

22626782 ☎ 22626783

AVAILABLE AT

**FAHAHEEL BRANCH**

1ST FLOOR, AL HOOR BUILDING BLOCK NO.11, BEHIND TO CENTERPOINT

23911175 ☎ 23911174



KUNA photo  
Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal, Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Al-Mailem, and Vice President for Research Dr. Abdullah Sultan attend the opening ceremony of the Fifth Scientific Research Conference.

Strengthening academic excellence

Kuwait University launches 5th Scientific Research Conference

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): The Fifth Scientific Research Conference opened today at Sabah Al-Salem University City under the theme “Promoting Academic Excellence through Interdisciplinary Research and Innovation.”

In his opening speech, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal emphasized that strengthening interdisciplinary research is essential for academic excellence, serving national priorities, supporting Kuwait’s future vision, and fostering knowledge that drives sustainable development across sectors.

Al-Jalal highlighted innovation as a core pillar of higher education, bridging scientific research and practical application, transforming knowledge into societal benefits, praising Kuwait University’s role in cultivating research culture, preparing national talent, and advancing the country’s comprehensive development goals.

Meanwhile, Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Al-Mailem stressed that scientific research is the foundation of the university’s mission, driving knowledge production, providing tools to address societal challenges, generate practical solutions, and advance academic and national development goals.

She noted that this year’s conference theme emphasizes bridging disciplines to achieve academic excellence, accelerating interdisciplinary research that fosters innovation, cultivates creativity, and strengthens the university’s scientific

community, reflecting a commitment to knowledge integration and societal progress.

Al-Mailem also expressed appreciation to community development partners, particularly the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, for their continuous support, which enriched the event and exemplified a successful model of collaborative community partnership.

Vice President for Research at Kuwait University Dr. Abdullah Sultan said the annual event reflects the university’s strong commitment to knowledge support, advancing scientific production, and enhancing its global presence by developing its research system in line with strategic plans and future aspirations.

He added that this year’s conference theme, “Promoting Academic Excellence through Interdisciplinary Research and Innovation,” underscores leading universities’ priority to integrate knowledge across disciplines, delivering innovative solutions and directly advancing sustainable development while addressing complex scientific and societal challenges.

Sultan noted that the Research Sector continues to develop research infrastructure, support researchers, improve the quality of scientific publications, and strengthen international partnerships to empower national competencies, enhance the university’s research output, serve society, and support sustainable development in Kuwait.

Ministry of Health hosts global workshop on nuclear medicine

MoH to launch molecular imaging for Alzheimer’s diagnosis

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Ministry of Health, represented by the Nuclear Medicine Departments Council, organized an international workshop entitled, “Latest Developments in Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging for the Diagnosis of Neurological Diseases.”

The workshop, held under the patronage of Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, witnessed the participation of several experts and specialists from around the world to discuss the latest diagnostic advancements in neurological diseases.

In a press statement, Dr. Abdul Redha Ismail, Head of the Nuclear Medicine Departments Council, highlighted the diagnostic applications for neurological diseases in Kuwait.

He also unveiled the plan to introduce specialized radioactive materials for diagnosing Alzheimer’s disease using molecular imaging in the near future. He said this development coincides with the availability of modern treatments, and that the official announcement of the introduction of this technology will be made as soon as the necessary requirements are met.

He added that this year’s workshop focused on neurological diseases, including epilepsy and the identification of epileptic foci in preparation for surgical intervention, as well as age-related dementia and brain tumors.

He affirmed that the diagnosis rates for these diseases in Kuwait are within the global average, indicating that the workshop is in line with the commitment of the ministry to support continuing medical education and enhancing the integration of advanced scientific knowledge and its applications, which contribute to developing the medical diagnostic system and, consequently, the quality of healthcare.

He disclosed that the field of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging has been wit-



Photo by Samer Shaqir  
Participants attend the Ministry of Health’s international workshop on the latest developments in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging for diagnosing neurological diseases.

nessing rapid advancements in recent years, thereby, putting the specialization on the map of clinical services in various applications that extend beyond oncology and cardiology.

He pointed out that the workshop gathered experts and lecturers from various specializations in and outside Kuwait. He considers this a model, which confirms that the development of health services is achieved through the exchange of expertise, strengthening partnerships, and investing in and developing national expertise.

On the other hand, head of the workshop Dr. Mohammad Al-Shaheen disclosed that the nuclear medicine departments in Kuwait are conducting many diagnostic tests annually for various diseases, noting the use of the latest diagnostic equipment for neurological diseases, such as PET/CT and PET/MRI.

He said the ministry is in the process of introducing several tests, such as amyloid testing for diagnosing Alzheimer’s disease. He explained that the diagnostic role of nuclear medicine supports clinicians in reaching an accurate diagnosis, which helps in developing an appropriate treatment plan.

He disclosed that the workshop aims to strengthen cooperation between medical specializations and keep abreast of the latest glob-

al scientific developments.

He added that the workshop’s topics include movement disorders, epilepsy, dementia and Alzheimer’s diseases, as well as tumors of the nervous system, methods of diagnosis, and monitoring treatment response.

He said the workshop discussed the latest developments in diagnosing diseases of the nervous system through scientific and interactive lectures.

He revealed that the first topic addressed movement disorders and epilepsy, reviewing the role of imaging techniques in supporting diagnosis and assisting in assessing the patient’s condition. The second topic is on memory disorders and dementia, highlighting the importance of early diagnosis and the role of modern technologies in identifying and monitoring these diseases. The third and fourth topics are on tumors of the nervous system, the role of imaging in diagnosing tumors, assessing their spread and helping to monitor the disease after treatment, and developments in the field of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging, such as the role of artificial intelligence, and the use of the latest radioactive materials in diagnosing nervous system diseases.

Continued from Page 1

Lebanon voices

The Lebanese ministry responded that these hospitals provide medical services to all Lebanese citizens without discrimination, and remain a vital part of the national healthcare system, adding that it will seek clarification from Kuwaiti authorities to prevent misunderstandings and safeguard its healthcare institutions.

Earlier this month, the ministry condemned threats against hospitals in southern Lebanon, following reports that the Israeli military dropped leaflets warning that Hezbollah is using a hospital in the city of Bint Jbeil.

Arab Times

Alnaqeeb holds a degree in Mass Communications and Visual Media from the American University in Washington. She has a diverse professional background spanning academia, the private sector, and creative consulting. She is also active in civic and cultural activities, including co-founding the Kuwait Charity Run and The Yoga Center Kuwait, alongside ongoing work in photography, blogging and archival projects.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Times, which was founded in 1961, is celebrating its 65th anniversary this year.

The Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers convey their heartfelt congratulations to Alnaqeeb, wishing her success in her new endeavor, as well as Kuwait Times on its 65th anniversary.

HH Amir

Upon his arrival, His Highness the Amir was received by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, KFAS Director General Dr. Amina Rajab Farhan, and members of the Foundation’s Board of Directors.

During the visit, His Highness the Amir chaired a meeting of the KFAS Board of Directors, reflecting his continued support for the Foundation and its strategic role in advancing science, research, and innovation in Kuwait.

His Highness also toured the Foundation’s facilities, where he was briefed on its history and key achievements since its establishment. He addressed the Foundation’s staff with his wise guidance, reaffirming his full support and encouragement, and praising the effective role played by those overseeing its work.

Kuwait deepens

He stressed that innovation is a pillar of the comprehensive development process and a key element in building a sustainable and competitive economy.

He stated “it is an honor to be with you today, representing His Highness the Crown Prince, at this significant scientific event, which enjoys the attention and support of the political leadership, in recognition of the role of innovation in building the future of Kuwait.”

He pointed out that the exhibition has evolved into a global platform that embraces creative minds, strengthens the innovation ecosystem, and provides a stimulating environment for developing inventions capable of keeping pace with rapid global transformations.

He said Kuwait’s hosting of the exhibition is a clear affirmation of its steadfast approach to consolidating its position as a regional hub for supporting innovation and scientific research, and as a unifying platform for scientific and technological initiatives that better serve societies and promote sustainable development.

He added that the annual increase in the number of participants proves the exhibition’s advanced international standing and confirms

that the global community trusts the State of Kuwait as an incubator of creativity and a unifying platform for inventors.

He asserted that the number of participating inventors reached 213 from various countries around the world, a clear indicator of the growing global presence and expanding reach of this event. He expressed his pride in hosting the exhibition in Kuwait, citing its global impact and distinguished international reputation. He disclosed that it is ranked first in the Middle East and second globally after the Geneva International Exhibition of Inventions, reflecting the quality of its organization and the importance of the scientific content presented.

On the other hand, Talal Jassim Al-Kharafi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Scientific Club and Chairman of the Higher Committee of the Exhibition, stated that the continuous organization of the International Invention Fair in the Middle East -- now in its 16th edition -- with the participation of more than 30 Arab and foreign countries, reflects the significant support extended by the political leadership to inventors and innovators.

In his opening remarks at the exhibition, Al-Kharafi added that the success achieved by this annual scientific event would not have been possible without the generous patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince and the support of the State for inventors, as well as the provision of a stimulating environment that enables them to innovate.

He praised the tireless efforts of the Scientific Club’s volunteers, who spared no effort to ensure the success of the exhibition.

He disclosed that the club has been organizing this event for 18 years, with only two interruptions due to the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, thus, completing 16 years of continuous and dedicated work.

He also expressed his appreciation for the role of the strategic partners that are supporting and sponsoring this international scientific event, foremost of which are KFAS, Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the League of Arab States.

Dr. Bassam Al-Faili, CEO of the Corporate Development Sector at KFAS, confirmed the commitment of the Foundation to encourage the development of innovative solutions through the application of science, technology and innovation.

Al-Faili stated that the Foundation is honored to sponsor this illustrious event, expressing his pleasure at the huge base of participants, which extends beyond Kuwait to include sister and friendly countries around the world.

Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Kuwait, said that the inventions on display -- particularly in the UAE pavilion and other participating pavilions at the international exhibition -- reflect the excellence of this edition in terms of the quality and caliber of the ideas presented.

He stated that the showcased innovations highlight the eagerness of inventors and participants from across the region to engage with diverse international experiences and present ideas with strong market potential.

Minister Plenipotentiary and Director of the Economic Relations Department at the League of Arab States Rehab Ezz Al-Din described the exhibition as a vital platform for supporting Arab youths in the fields of innovation, entrepreneurship and the digital economy.

Meanwhile, after the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Minister Al-Tabtabaie, accompanied by Al-Kharafi, toured the exhibition pavilions.

During the tour, the minister listened to explanations from participating inventors and innovators, who briefed him on their projects competing for the exhibition’s awards. He also made a point of taking commemorative photographs with each of them.

In addition, the League of Arab States is participating in the exhibition for the second consecutive year, represented by its Secretariat General and seven of its specialized organizations.



albander  
hotel & resort  
البندر  
فندق ومنتجع



Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 46.000
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 102.148 / Net
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 53.361 / Net
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 119.173 / Net

Terms & conditions apply

Tel: +973 17701201 - Ext. 351 | Email: reservation@albander.com | www.albander.com | @albanderhotelandresort

## Kuwait’s Amir to patronize, attend ‘Deerat Al-Khair’ national operetta

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, will graciously patronize and attend the national operetta “Deerat Al-Khair” tomorrow, Tuesday.

The ceremony will take place at 10:00 am on February 10, 2026, at the Bayan Palace Theater.

The national operetta is being held under His Highness’s patronage as part of cultural and national celebrations, highlighting Kuwait’s values, heritage, and spirit of generosity, and reflecting national unity and loyalty to the homeland.

The event is expected to be attended by senior officials, dignitaries, and guests, underscoring its national significance and the importance of artistic and cultural expressions in strengthening national identity.



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

## Inventors showcase cutting-edge solutions

# Kuwaiti engineers shine at ME Expo

By Bassam Al-Qassas  
Al-Seyassah and Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: On the sidelines of the 16th International Invention Fair in the Middle East, held under the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the newspaper interviewed several inventors who presented outstanding innovations that reflect the extent of scientific ambition and the diversity of creative fields.

In an interview with four Kuwaiti female engineers who presented an invention related to road pavement, Eng. Zainab Bin Haider pointed out that the presence of several potholes on the roads in the country was the primary motivation behind the idea. She explained that she and her colleagues -- engineers Safa Karam, Sheikhha Al-Khalifan and Rabab Abdullah -- conducted a series of research studies based on conventional road repair methods, in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Works, which provided the necessary support and facilities.

Meanwhile, Al-Khalifan explained that the device integrates all pothole repair stages into a single unit, begin-

ning with cleaning the pothole and ending with pouring the filling material, while maintaining pressure balance throughout the process.

She said the device relies on cold asphalt, which is characterized by its fast drying time, thereby, reducing implementation period by half.

In another section of the exhibition, the newspaper interviewed Kuwaiti engineers Mohammad Al-Dhibyan and Khaled Ahmed Al-Jumah, who presented a project on using artificial intelligence to control oil wells and address the problem of blowouts.

Al-Dhibyan disclosed that the program is based on analyzing vast quantities of data from previous oil wells, including wells that experienced blowouts and others that did not. He stated that artificial intelligence can predict risks and offer faster and more accurate solutions, contributing to the reduction of economic, environmental and human losses.

The exhibition also witnessed the distinguished participation of female inventors from Tajikistan. Tajik Ambassador to Kuwait Zubaydullo Zubaydov stated that this group of inventors has obtained the highest international

certifications.

In this context, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in the Tajik capital Prof. Parvina Alizoda revealed that one of her innovations enables doctors to review a patient’s health condition prior to the appointment through an electronic system based on precise examinations and a 10-day follow-up period.

Prof. Samira Repeka presented an herbal treatment for liver diseases, stressing that it has no side effects and has been proven effective in treating jaundice within six months.

Prof. Madina Krifa showcased several innovations in the treatment of fractures, for which she obtained international patents, in addition to her expertise as a prominent orthopedic surgeon.

Moreover, Prof. Mukhlis Abdul Rahman from Bangladesh presented an innovation consisting of bags made from ultra-durable fabrics that have been tested and proven resistant to various elements.

The interview concluded with scholarship student Nurullah, who introduced a surgical clip designed to stabilize and lift the uterus and its appendages.



Kuwaiti engineers Mohammad Al-Dhibyan and Khaled Ahmed Al-Jumah



Kuwaiti engineers – Zainab Bin Haider, Safa Karam, Sheikhha Al-Khalifan and Rabab Abdullah



Left:Tajik Ambassador to Kuwait Zubaydullo Zubaydov with female inventors from Tajikistan. Right: Professor Mukhlis Abdul Rahman from Bangladesh.



Photos by Rezk Tawfik

## Al-Sumait highlights capacity-building and legal compliance

# Kuwait reaffirms commitment to IHL awareness

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Minister of Justice and Chairman of the National Permanent Committee for International Humanitarian Law, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, underscored the country’s commitment to building national capacities and strengthening awareness and understanding of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

This came in a speech delivered on his behalf by Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice, Awatif Al-Sand, during the launch of a special discussion forum organized by the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies. The three-day forum targets leaders

from various executive and judicial government bodies and is held in cooperation with the National Permanent Committee for International Humanitarian Law.

The national committee, in collaboration with relevant partners, has been keen to enhance compliance with the provisions of IHL in line with Kuwait’s obligations arising from its accession to the 1949 Geneva



Al-Sumait

Conventions, the 1977 Additional Protocols, and other international legal instruments and charters, the minister added.

He noted that, under its founding mandate, the committee is responsible for coordinating efforts among concerned government entities, participating in national, regional and international events, and contributing to the drafting and review of relevant national legislation.

Al-Sumait said that the committee works to build national capacities through seminars, discussion forums, training and educational programs, reflecting Kuwait’s commitment to the principles of international law and their institutional

and legislative consolidation.

In turn, Director of the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, First Advocate General Counselor Bader Al-Massad, noted the forum is an extension of the institute’s ongoing efforts to promote and entrench the culture of IHL and raise awareness of its importance in safeguarding human dignity.

Al-Massad affirmed the institute’s belief that effective application of IHL rules can only be achieved through deepening legal awareness and expanding the circle of beneficiaries, noting that the institute has issued numerous specialized publications addressing various aspects of IHL.



Minister Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem inaugurates the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations at the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy.

# Kuwait witnesses record surge in energy projects

## KAPP-backed partnerships fuel growth

By Mohammad Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem confirmed the unprecedented surge in the project proposals of the ministry -- the most extensive since the establishment of Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP).

Al-Mukhaizeem made the statement at the inauguration of the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations of the ministry on Monday.

He stressed the need to move beyond the current phase until all projects are completed, expressing his optimism that the commissioning of power plants will lead to increased production. He said the last major project implemented in partnership with the private sector was the North Zour Power Plant-Phase One, signed in 2013, indicating that phases two and three, with a capacity equivalent to 150 percent of Phase One, were signed last week.

He revealed there are three projects currently under consideration -- Khairan Power Plant with a capacity of 1,800 megawatts, and Shagaya Zones One and Two, totaling 1,600 megawatts. He expects these projects to be finalized within the next two months, while mentioning the collaboration with a State-owned company in the



Photos by Mohammad Morsi  
Minister Al-Mukhaizeem review a system presentation during the Ministry's National and Liberation Day celebrations.

People’s Republic of China, with a production capacity of 3,200 megawatts, in addition to the Nuwaiseeb power plant project, which is expected to be the largest in the history of Kuwait. He affirmed that KAPP already approved this project.

He explained that electricity and water projects require tremendous efforts and years of work before becoming operational, emphasizing that the most important step is to start, especially since three additional projects are expected to be launched this year.

Regarding the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations, Al-Mukhaizeem said the occasion is a special national holiday, in which all sectors of the ministry participate.

The events include highlighting the achievements of the ministry’s engineers, along with a historical exhibition showcasing the evolution of equipment and technologies used over the decades, emphasizing the vital role of the ministry in providing essential services, which its staff works hard to deliver round the clock.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary of the ministry Dr. Adel Al-Zamil revealed that a study is underway to transform the ministry into an institution within a comprehensive legislative framework that aligns with best global practices.

He added that a review of electricity and water consumption tariffs is being conducted, taking into account low-income households. He expects both studies to be completed this year.

## How long

In Kuwait, however, there is a flawed approach to problem-solving: the saying, “Do not worry, time heals all wounds.”

In reality, this only exacerbates the problem. If the ‘Manakh Market’ crash had been addressed promptly, perhaps, by liquidating the assets of those indebted, the situation would have been different. Those who died in despair would at least have been spared the daily suffering they endured.

The good thing is that these debts were not inherited, otherwise, the children and grandchildren would have faced travel bans, asset seizures, and an inflated debt management apparatus.

Furthermore, the value of the assets back then would have far exceeded the debt, and the State would have saved public funds.

Today, this crisis has become a dilemma, but it remains solvable if there is a genuine will to reduce the budget deficit that has plagued the country for three decades.

Therefore, Your Highness, it is true that the future does not wait for the hesitant, for hesitation is the graveyard of opportunities.

The solution to this historic crisis is within the grasp of the current Cabinet, which must enact a law addressing the repercussions of the ‘Manakh Market’ crash.

This will pave the way for resolving many financial problems for some individuals and will eliminate the biggest problem, or rather, the most significant interest on bad debts.

It is unreasonable for the penalty to be 15 percent of the debt if the borrower defaults on any single payment.

Finally, and most importantly, liquidate the assets of these individuals and abolish the punitive interest of 15 percent.

The government will then find that it has recovered its debts, perhaps, even with a surplus.

## Clear way

The ministry warned that following the aforementioned government vehicles ‘in an emergency’ while they are using their sirens to overtake other vehicles is a traffic violation.

It explained that yielding the right-of-way means “enabling emergency vehicles to pass quickly and safely when

their audible and visual warning devices are activated, without obstruction or delay.”

It indicated that the procedures for yielding the right-of-way begin with immediate reduction of speed, gradually moving to the right side of the road, and then stopping on the side of the road if necessary.

## Kuwait, Malta

From the business perspective, Ambassador Said-Zammit referred that, during his tenure of office in Kuwait, a number of Maltese companies managed to penetrate successfully the Kuwaiti market, following rigorous quality assurance tests. He also mentioned that there is also interest in certain Kuwaiti companies in expanding part of their operations in his country. These business opportunities came partly as a result of a webinar that the Embassy of Malta coordinated with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and other related agencies and entities whose mission is to boost trade and business between the two countries. These positive opportunities of collaboration have to be contextualised in the light of Kuwait’s continuous efforts to diversify its economy and modernize its infrastructure, adding that the investment environment in this country provides promising opportunities for European investors, especially in the fields of renewable energy, blue economy, and logistics services.

In 2024, Malta imported goods from Kuwait worth €20,645, while exporting €3,221,986 to Kuwait. Main imports of goods were articles of apparel and clothing accessories, footwear, and leather goods. Main exports of goods were cereals, edible preparations, and essential oils. Inroads on education have been made again to attract Kuwaiti students to study at the University of Malta, mostly in medicine. There were also a good number of private Kuwaiti investor and corporate holder accounts that at some point held investments in securities listed on the Malta Stock Exchange.

As far as direct connections between Malta and Kuwait, the two countries are working towards the possibility of establishing direct flights, thus eliminating the waste of precious time that travellers currently have to spend in transition airports. Both countries strongly believe that the development of direct routes will facilitate and boost tourism, business, and trade. In 2025, the Ambassador of Malta, in collaboration with the Malta Tourism Author-


ity and Turkish Airlines, coordinated a one-week familiarisation trip in Malta to tour operators and travel agents from Kuwait. It was a successful experience for it gave the participants a real taste of Malta’s beauty, hospitality, and worth visiting. Malta’s history, unique culture and scenic beauty are definitely some of the main ingredients that attract thousands of tourists all the year round to enjoy our beaches, resorts, monuments, museums, theatres, and churches.

Malta is also an important destination for Kuwaiti students studying medicine and dentistry at the University of Malta. The Ambassador stressed that he wants to go beyond these two academic areas, and his desire is to diversify the areas of academic study that Kuwaiti students can take up in his country. He is also working for the possibility that Maltese students be granted scholarships to study Arabic and other subjects in Kuwait. In this context, he referred to the various agreements that the University of Malta and the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology signed in recent years not only with the Kuwait University, but also with respectable private universities, including the American University of Kuwait, the Arab Open University, and the Kuwait College for Science and Technology. He sees that educational opportunities for students from both countries will lead to a better understanding of each other’s culture and identity.

From a cultural perspective, Ambassador Said-Zammit mentioned the cultural similarities that exist between Malta and Kuwait, especially in language, place names, family names, and cuisine. Historically, one has to keep in mind that, in the ninth century of our Common Era, the Maltese Islands came to form an integral part of the Dar al-Islam along with Spain, Sicily, and North Africa. When, almost four hundred years later the Maltese Islands were occupied by the Spanish, the local culture in Malta remained largely semitic. Today, the semitic element in Maltese culture is still an inherent component of our national identity. The Maltese language is basically semitic, and about 60% of its vocabulary, for example the numbers and the days of the week, are exactly like Arabic. The rest of the language is made up of a mixture of Italian, French, Spanish and English vocabulary reflecting, in a way, Malta’s historical past when it was colonized by different dominations like the Knights of St. John, the French, and the British. Therefore, Maltese is the only semitic language in the world written in the Latin alphabet. This unique distinction has made Maltese one of the official languages of the European Union since 2003. Here, he referred to an exhibition

organized in December 2025 by the Embassy of Malta, the National Archives of Malta, and the Kuwait College for Science and Technology. This exhibition selected a number of common themes which testify to the similarities and close ties between Kuwait and Malta. These included the language, folklore, the sea, migration, and colonization.

At the end of his statement, the Ambassador of Malta to Kuwait expressed his aspiration to a new stage of joint cooperation, based on the launch of practical initiatives that enhance bilateral partnership and open up wider horizons for cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Malta, in order to serve the interests of the two countries and enhance their presence in the international arena.



Required for Academic Year 2026-2027 at Private American School

**KG**

- English Teacher (Native English speakers only)
- Female Physical Education Teacher/Lifeguard

**Elementary**

- Homeroom Teacher (Native English speakers only)
- Reading Intervention Program (RIP) Teacher
- Math Teacher
- Science Teacher

**Middle and High School**

- Computer Teacher
- Social Studies/Humanities Teacher (Native English speakers only)
- AP English Teacher (Native English speakers only)
- English Teacher (Native English speakers only)
- Science Teacher

Interested applicants may apply through our website at the following link:  
<https://www.abs.edu.kw/careers/abs>

‘It is been too long, I am desperate’

## Migrants languish in US detention centers amid dire conditions and prolonged waits

MIAMI, Feb 9, (AP): Felipe Hernandez Espinosa spent 45 days at “Alligator Alcatraz,” an immigration holding center in Florida where detainees have reported worms in their food, toilets that don’t flush and overflowing sewage. Mosquitoes and other insects are everywhere.

For the past five months, the 34-year-old asylum-seeker has been at an immigration detention camp at the Fort Bliss Army base in El Paso, Texas, where two migrants died in January and which has many of the same conditions, according to human rights groups. Hernandez said he asked to be returned to Nicaragua but was told he has to see a judge. After nearly seven months in detention, his hearing was scheduled for Feb 26.

Prolonged detention has become more common in President Donald Trump’s second term, at least partly because a new policy generally prohibits immigration judges from releasing detainees while their deportation cases wind through backlogged courts. Many, like Hernandez, are prepared to give up any efforts to stay in the United States.

“I came to this country thinking they would help me, and I’ve been detained for six months without having committed a crime,” he said in a phone interview from Fort Bliss. “It is been too long. I am desperate.”

The Supreme Court ruled in 2001 that Immigration and Customs Enforcement cannot hold immigrants indefinitely, finding that six months was a reasonable cap.

With the number of people in ICE detention topping 70,000 for the first time, 7,252 people had been in custody at least six months in mid-January, including 79 held for more than two years, according to agency data. That’s more than double the 2,849 who were in ICE custody at least six months in December 2024, the last full month of Joe Biden’s presidency.

The Trump administration is offering plane fare and \$2,600 for people who leave the country voluntarily. Yet Hernandez and others are told they can’t leave detention until seeing a judge.

The first three detainees that attorney Ana Alicia Huerta met on her



Migrants wearing face masks and shackles on their hands and feet sit on a military aircraft at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Tx on Jan 30, 2025, awaiting their deportation to Guatemala. (AP)

monthly trip to an ICE detention center in McFarland, California, to offer free legal advice in January said they signed a form agreeing to leave the United States but were still waiting.

“All are telling me: ‘I don’t understand why I’m here. I’m ready to be deported,’” said Huerta, a senior attorney at the California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice. “That’s an experience that I’ve never had before.”

A Chinese man has been held for more than a year without seeing an immigration judge, even though he told authorities he was ready to be deported. In the past, Huerta said, she encountered cases like this once every three or four months.

The Department of Homeland Security did not address questions from The Associated Press about why more people are being held longer than six months.

“The conditions are so poor and so bad that people say, ‘I’m going to give up,’” said Sui Cheng, executive director at Americans for Immigrant Justice.

The waiting time may depend on the country. Deportations to Mexico are routine but countries including Cuba, Nicaragua, Colombia and Venezuela have at times resisted accepting deportees.

Among those detained for months are people who have won protection under the United Nations Convention Against Torture, who cannot be de-

ported to their home country but may be sent elsewhere.

In the past, those migrants were released and could get a work permit. Not anymore, said Sarah Houston, managing attorney at Immigrant Defenders Law Center, who has at least three clients with protection under the U.N. torture convention who have been in custody for more than six months. One is from El Salvador, detained for three years. He won his case in October 2025 but is still in custody in California.

“They’re just holding these people indefinitely,” said Houston, noting that every 90 days, attorneys request the release of these migrants and ICE denies those requests. “We’re seeing people who actually win their immigration cases just languishing in jail.”

Hernandez, who doesn’t have a lawyer, said he signed documents requesting to be returned to his country or Mexico at least five times. An Oct. 9 hearing was abruptly canceled without explanation. He waited months with no news, until early February, when he learned his new hearing date.

## Health costs fueling voter stress and powering Democratic campaigns

COLLEGE PARK, Ga., Feb 9, (AP): US President Donald Trump’s second term has presented an array of opportunities for political opponents, from immigration crackdowns and lingering inflation to attacks on independent institutions and friction with overseas allies.

Many Democrats, however, are staying focused on health care, an issue that was once a political liability but has become foundational for the party in recent elections. They insist their strategy will help the party regain control of Congress in the November elections and fare better than chasing headlines about the latest outrages out of the White House.

Republicans last year cut about \$1 trillion over a decade from Medicaid and declined to extend COVID-era subsidies that had lowered the cost of health plans under the Affordable Care Act.

Democrats are filming campaign spots outside struggling hospitals, spotlighting Americans facing spiking insurance premiums and sharing their own personal health care stories.

US Sen Jon Ossoff of Georgia, one of the party’s most endangered incumbents this year, said at a rally Saturday attended by more than 1,000 people in an Atlanta suburb that health care is part of Trump’s abandonment of working people.

“While prices are going up and jobs are getting harder to find, they decided to let health insurance premiums double for more than 20 million Americans, including more than a million Georgians,” said Ossoff, the only Democratic senator seeking reelection this year in a state that Trump won in 2024. He said 200,000 people in Georgia had lost their coverage.

Brad Woodhouse, a Democratic strategist and executive director of advocacy group Protect Our Care, said health care is “a banger of an issue for Democrats.”

“I think it will be part of every single campaign, up and down the ballot,” he said.

Republicans defend their votes as reining in ballooning health spending and cracking down on what they call waste, fraud and abuse. Trump recently launched a website to help patients buy discounted prescription drugs.

“They are working every single day to make sure that we bring affordability to the people,” said Joe Gruters, chairman of the Republican National Committee.

But the party, despite controlling both chambers of Congress, has been unable so far to pass comprehensive legislation to offset Americans’ health costs.

Ron Bonjean, a Republican strategist, said the issue would remain his party’s “Achilles’ heel” until its leaders draft realistic proposals that can become law.



US Sen Jon Ossoff speaks during ‘Rally for Our Republic with US Senator Jon Ossoff’ at the Georgia International Convention Center on Feb 7, in College Park, Ga. (AP)

## Moderate candidate wins big in Portugal’s presidential runoff

LISBON, Portugal, Feb 9, (AP): Center-left Socialist candidate António José Seguro recorded a thumping victory over hard-right populist André Ventura in Portugal’s runoff presidential election Sunday, according to official results with 99% of votes counted.

Seguro won a five-year term in Lisbon’s riverside “pink palace” with 66.7% of votes, compared with 33.3% for Ventura.

The ballot was an opportunity to test the depth of support for Ventura’s brash style, which has struck a chord with voters and helped make his Chega (Enough) party the second-biggest in the Portuguese parliament, as well as gauge the public appetite for Europe’s increasing shift to the right in recent years.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen congratulated Seguro and said on social media that “Portugal’s voice for our shared European values remains strong.”

Seguro, a longstanding Socialist politician, positioned himself as a moderate candidate who will cooperate with Portugal’s center-right minority government, repudiating Ventura’s anti-establishment and anti-immigrant tirades.

He won the backing of other mainstream politicians on the left and right who want to halt the rising populist tide.



Center-left Socialist candidate António José Seguro celebrates after defeating far-right populist André Ventura in the second round of Portugal's presidential election in Lisbon on Feb 8. (AP)

In Portugal, the president is largely a figurehead with no executive power. Traditionally, the head of state stands above the political fray, mediating disputes and defusing tensions.

However, the president is an influential voice and possesses some powerful tools, being able to veto legislation from parliament, although the veto can be overturned. The head of state also possesses what in Portuguese political jargon

is called an “atomic bomb,” the power to dissolve parliament and call early elections.

In May, Portugal held its third general election in three years in the country’s worst bout of political instability for decades, and steadying the ship is a key challenge for the next president.

Ventura, an eloquent and theatrical politician, rejected political accommodation in favor of a more combative stance.

British PM's judgment in spotlight

## Starmer battles to keep job over Epstein fallout

LONDON, Feb 9, (AP): British Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s position hung by a thread on Monday as he tried to persuade his Labour Party lawmakers not to kick him out of his job after just a year and a half in office.

The prime minister lost his chief of staff on Sunday and is rapidly shedding support from Labour legislators after revelations about the relationship between former British Ambassador to Washington Peter Mandelson, appointed by Starmer, and the late offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Starmer’s judgment is in the spotlight like never before after the recent release of millions of Epstein-related documents by the US Justice Department showed how close Mandelson and Epstein were.

In a sign of the deepening crisis, Starmer’s director of communications, Tim Allan, said he was quitting Monday to allow a new “team to be built.”

Starmer was due to address Labour lawmakers behind closed doors in an attempt to rebuild some of his badly weakened authority.

He told staff on Monday morning that the Mandelson scandal had hampered the public’s respect for politicians, and “we must prove that politics can be a force for good.”

The political storm stems from Starmer’s decision in 2024 to appoint Mandelson to Britain’s most important diplomatic post, despite knowing he had ties to Epstein.

Starmer fired Mandelson in September after emails were published showing that he maintained a friendship with Epstein after the financier’s 2008 conviction for offenses involving a minor. Critics say Starmer should have known better than to appoint Mandelson, 72, a contentious figure whose career has been studded with scandals over money or ethics.

A new trove of Epstein files released in the United States has brought more details about the relationship, and new pressure on Starmer.

Starmer apologized last week for “having believed Mandelson’s lies.”

He promised to release documentation related to Mandelson’s appointment, which the government says will show that Mandelson misled officials about his ties to Epstein.

Police are investigating Mandelson for potential misconduct in public office over documents suggesting he passed sensitive government information to Epstein a decade and a half ago. The offense carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.

Mandelson has not been arrested or charged, and does not face any allegations of misconduct.

Starmer’s chief of staff, Morgan McSweeney, took the fall for the decision



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, (right), talks with Britain's ambassador to the United States Peter Mandelson during a welcome reception at the ambassador's residence on Feb 26, 2025 in Washington. (AP)

by quitting on Sunday, saying that “I advised the prime minister to make that appointment and I take full responsibility for that advice.”

McSweeney has been Starmer’s most important aide since he became Labour leader in 2020, and is considered a key architect of Labour’s landslide July 2024 election victory. But some in the party blame him for a series of missteps since then.

Some Labour officials hope that his departure will buy the prime minister time to rebuild trust with the party and the country. Senior lawmaker Emily Thornberry said McSweeney had become a “divisive figure” and his departure brought the opportunity for a reset.

She said Starmer is “a good leader in that he is strong and clear. I think that he needs to step up a bit more than he has.”

## Russian airstrike kills one in Ukraine as US pushes June deadline for peace deal

KYIV, Ukraine, Feb 9, (AP): A Russian airstrike on a residential area in eastern Ukraine killed one person and wounded two, officials said Sunday, after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the U.S. has given Ukraine and Russia a June deadline to reach a peace deal.

The attack on the city of Kramatorsk in Ukraine’s Donetsk region caused a fire in a nine-story apartment block, according to Ukraine’s State Emergency Service.

Russia also struck energy infrastructure in Ukraine’s Poltava region overnight into Sunday, Serhii Korotkiy, chief executive of Ukraine’s state-owned gas company Naftogaz said.

Russia has hammered Ukraine’s power grid, especially in winter, throughout the nearly 4-year-old war. It aims to weaken the Ukrainian will to resist in a strategy that Kyiv officials call “weaponizing winter.”

Zelenskyy told reporters Friday the US has given Ukraine and Russia a June deadline to reach a deal to end the war. If the June deadline is not met, the Trump administration will likely put pressure on both sides, he added.

“The Americans are proposing the end of the war by the beginning of this summer and will probably put pressure on the parties precisely according to this schedule,” Zelenskyy said. “And they say that they want to do everything



People stand in line for free hot meals that veterans of the 3rd Separate Assault Brigade of Ukraine's Armed Forces serve in residential neighborhood as repeated Russian air attacks on the country's energy sector leave people without power, heating and water in the harshest winter in decades in Kyiv, Ukraine on Feb 8. (AP)

by June. And they will do everything to end the war. And they want a clear schedule of all events.”

He said the US proposed holding the next round of bilateral talks next week in their country for the first time, likely in Miami. “We confirmed our participation,” he added.

The latest deadline follows US-brokered trilateral talks in Abu Dhabi that produced no breakthrough as the sides cling to mutually exclusive demands. Russia is pressing Ukraine to withdraw from the Donbas, where fighting remains intense - a condition Kyiv says it will never accept.

### Europe

**Norwegian ambassador resigns:** Mona Juul has stepped down as Norway’s ambassador to Jordan, also accredited to Iraq, after revelations about her contact with Jeffrey Epstein, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Sunday.

Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide called the resignation “right and necessary,” saying Juul’s contact with the convicted offender showed a “serious failure of judgment” and made it difficult to restore the level of trust required for the post, the ministry said in a statement.

Juul had been relieved of her work obligations last week while the ministry reviewed her knowledge of and contact with Epstein, according to the ministry.

The ministry said its internal fact-finding will continue even after Juul’s resignation, with particular attention to the rules that apply to state employees and officials both in and outside service.

Separately, the ministry said it had launched a review of its grants to and contacts with the International Peace Institute during the period when Juul’s husband, Terje Rod-Larsen, led the organization. Eide described information that has emerged about Rod-Larsen’s contact with Epstein as “very extensive” and “highly concerning,” adding that there was “no doubt” he had shown poor judgment.

Epstein, who died in 2019, was a U.S. financier accused of sex trafficking. The US Department of Justice said on Jan 30 that it had published more than 3 million additional



Juul

pages of materials under the Epstein Files Transparency Act, which it said was signed into law by President Donald Trump in November 2025. (Xinhua)

☐ ☐ ☐

**Romania truck crash kills 3:** Three people, including two children, were killed and one man was injured on Sunday afternoon after a head-on collision between a truck and a cargo van in Caras-Severin County in southwestern Romania, authorities said.

The crash occurred on an exit road, according to the Caras-Severin County Police Inspectorate, as cited by the official Agerpres.

Police said the truck crossed into oncoming traffic, killing the van’s 58-year-old driver and two passengers aged 16 and 13. The truck’s 50-year-old driver was slightly injured.

The Caras-Severin County Inspectorate for Emergency Situations said multiple emergency crews responded, and rescuers retrieved the bodies of three deceased victims from the van.

An investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of the crash. (Xinhua)

☐ ☐ ☐

**1 dead in France homeless shelter fire:** One person was killed and more than 80 others were evacuated after a fire broke out on Sunday at a homeless shelter in the southern French city of Montpellier, French media reported.

French media outlet Metropolitain reported that the fire occurred on Sunday morning at a shelter for the homeless in Montpellier, leaving one person dead.

Local rescue workers, including about 50 firefighters, evacuated more than 80 homeless people, including seven who had been trapped inside the building, the report said.

Police will open an investigation to determine the cause of the fire, it added. (Xinhua)

Building collapses in Samut Prakan, 4 injured

Thailand's ruling Bhumjaithai Party of Anutin tops election

BANGKOK, Feb 9, (Agencies): The Bhumjaithai Party of Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul is on track to win the most seats in Thailand's general election, according to unofficial results released by the state Election Commission after about 94% of polling stations had reported Monday.

It's the first decisive victory of a conservative party in Thailand in years. Sunday's election came against a backdrop of slow economic growth and heightened nationalist sentiment. Voter turnout stood at around 65%, significantly lower than in the 2023 election.

The commission's running count, shown on its website, indicated that Bhumjaithai won about 193 seats in the 500-member House of Representatives.

The House comprises 400 lawmakers directly elected based on constituencies, while 100 others are chosen from "party list" nominees, who gain seats according to each party's proportional share of the vote on a separate ballot indicating party preference.

A simple majority of 251 seats is needed for the body to elect a prime minister. The figures indicate Bhumjaithai will have to seek one or two partners to form a coalition govern-



Thailand's Prime Minister and leader of Bhumjaithai Party Anutin Charnvirakul, (center), speaks during a press conference at the party headquarters following the general election in Bangkok on Feb 8. (AP)

ment with Anutin returning as its head.

The progressive People's Party, which had been tipped to win the most seats, was holding down second place with 118 seats. It swept all constituencies in Bangkok and a majority in the capital's neighboring provinces. The party also took a lead in the party list totals, taking about 3.8 million more

votes on party list ballots than Bhumjaithai.

Pheu Thai, the populist party representing the political machine of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, trailed behind with 74 seats. It's considered a disappointing result for a political force that has often dominated Thai elections.

It's widely believed that Pheu Thai will accept, if asked, to join a coalition government led by Bhumjaithai.

Anutin has been prime minister since last September, after serving in the Cabinet of his immediate predecessor, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who was forced out of office for an ethics violation regarding mishandling relations with Cambodia. Anutin dissolved Parliament in December to call a new election after he was threatened with a no-confidence vote.

Subsequent border clashes with Cambodia allowed Anutin to recast himself as a wartime leader after his popularity initially slipped because of floods and financial scandals. His campaign focused on national security and economic stimulus.

Also:

**BANGKOK:** A large dome roof structure under construction in Thailand's Samut Prakan province collapsed on Monday at noon, injuring four people, according to Thai media reports.

Thai national daily Matichon reported that the building is located within a training center operated by the Metropolitan Electricity Authority. The authorities are currently investigating the cause of the collapse.

Takaichi looks to translate election gains into new conservative shift

TOKYO, Feb 9, (AP): Japanese Prime Minister **Sanae Takaichi**'s gamble that her personal popularity would lead to big election gains for her struggling party paid off hugely.

On Monday, she began the process of translating that new power, made manifest in a two-thirds supermajority gained in parliamentary elections the day before, into what she hopes will be sweeping conservative legislation that will shift Japanese security, immigration, economic and social policies.

The first steps include reappointing her Cabinet and pushing forward on a delayed budget and the votes next week that will reelect her as prime minister.

Takaichi, in an interview with public television network NHK



Takaichi

following her victory, said her efforts will make Japan strong and prosperous.

NHK, citing vote count results, said Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP, alone secured 316 seats by early Monday, comfortably surpassing a 261-seat absolute majority in the 465-member lower house, the more powerful of Japan's two-chamber parliament. That is a record since the party's foundation in 1955. With the 36 seats won by its new ally, Japan Innovation Party, the ruling coalition won 352 seats.

A smiling Takaichi placed a big red ribbon above each winner's name on a signboard at LDP headquarters as accompanying party executives applauded.

Despite the lack of a majority in the upper house, the huge jump from the preelection share in the more powerful lower house allows Takaichi to make progress on policies that aim to boost Japan's economy and military capabilities as tensions grow with China and she tries to nurture ties with the United States.

Top leader visits national defence ministry to mark Army Founding Day

Kim expected to issue major policy goals at N.Korea party congress in late February

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 9, (Agencies): North Korea will convene a major political conference later this month, the country's state media said Sunday, where leader Kim Jong Un is expected to outline his domestic and foreign policies for the next five years.

The ruling Workers' Party congress, which Kim previously held in 2016 and 2021, comes after years of accelerated nuclear and missile development and deepening ties with Moscow over the war in Ukraine that have increased his standoffs with the United States and South Korea.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said the party's political bureau met under Kim's supervision and decided the congress would be held in late February. State media did not immediately specify a date or release agenda details.

The congress will likely continue for days as a highly choreographed display of Kim's authoritarian leadership. In recent weeks, Kim has in-

spected weapons tests and toured military sites and economic projects as state media highlighted his purported achievements, crediting his "immortal leadership" with strengthening the country's military capabilities and advancing national development.

His recent activities and comments suggest Kim will use the congress to double down on economic development through "self-sustenance" and mass mobilization while announcing plans to further expand the capabilities of his nuclear-armed military, including upgrading conventional weapons systems and integrating them with nuclear forces.

Kim also could highlight his increasingly assertive foreign policy based on closer ties with Moscow and Beijing while hardening an adversarial approach toward rival South Korea as he continues to embrace the idea of a "new Cold War," experts say.

Kim's willingness to resume diplomacy with the US is unclear. Relations derailed in 2019 after his second summit with US President Donald



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, (center), attends a meeting at the headquarters of the central committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea in Pyongyang, North Korea on Feb 7. (AP)

Trump due to disagreements over sanctions against his nuclear weapons program.

Kim has rejected Trump's overtures for dialogue since the US president began his second term in January

2025. Kim insists Washington abandon demands for the North to surrender its nuclear weapons as a precondition for future talks.

Entering his 15th year in rule, Kim finds himself in a stronger position

than when he opened the previous congress in 2021 during the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. Navigating what was seen as his toughest stretch in a decade of power, Kim acknowledged his previous economic policies failed and issued a new five-year development plan through 2025.

He called for accelerated development of his nuclear arsenal and issued an extensive wish list of sophisticated assets including solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles, multi-warhead systems, tactical nuclear weapons, spy satellites and nuclear-powered submarines.

Kim has exploited geopolitical turmoil to his advantage. He used Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a window to accelerate weapons testing and align himself with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has accepted thousands of North Korean troops and large quantities of military equipment for the war.

Kim also has pursued closer ties with China, traditionally the North's primary ally and economic lifeline.

He traveled to Beijing in September for a World War II event and the first summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in six years.

While Kim's strict information blockade prevents precise assessments, South Korean analysts say the North's economy appears to have improved over the past five years, possibly due to a gradual recovery in trade with China and an industrial boost from arms exports to Russia.

Kim visited the Ministry of National Defence on Sunday on the occasion of the 78th founding anniversary of the Korean People's Army, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported Monday.

In his speech, Kim extended congratulations and greetings to all officers and soldiers, and encouragement to overseas special operations units, the KCNA report said.

As indicated by the Ninth Congress of the Party, the coming five years will be a period in which "the army's outstanding role will become further enhanced," Kim said.

Nicaragua govt blocks key pathway used by Cuban migrants to reach US

MEXICO CITY, Feb 9, (Agencies): Nicaragua's government on Sunday blocked Cuban citizens from entering the country without a visa, effectively cutting off a key route for Cuban migration to the United States at a time when the Trump administration has put the Caribbean island in an economic chokehold.

Nicaragua's government confirmed to The Associated Press that it suspended an exemption that allows Cubans to enter the Central American nation without a visa.

The move would effectively cut off Cubans from a country that has long acted as a bridge for Caribbean migrants traveling to the U.S. For years, Cuban migrants would fly to Nicaragua and meet up with smugglers, who would then help them migrate north through Central America and Mexico to get to the US border.

Experts say Nicaragua kept its doors open to people from countries like Cuba and Haiti in a move to weaponize migrants fleeing turmoil against its longtime adversary, the US.

But the change comes amid mounting pressure by Trump administration on Latin American nations to fall in line with its vision for the hemisphere, particularly on issues like migration and security.

After a U.S. military operation deposed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in early January, the Trump administration began to step up pressure, particularly on adversary govern-



A man rides on the bed of a bicycle cart in Old Havana, Cuba on Feb 7. (AP)

ments like Cuba and Nicaragua.

At the end of January, Trump threatened to impose tariffs on countries that provide oil to Cuba, thrusting the island into an even deepen economic and energy crisis that's likely to fuel even more migration from a nation that has seen record numbers of people leaving in recent years.

As the Trump administrations carries out a contentious migratory crackdown and largely eliminated access to asylum along the southern border, migration to the US has hit record lows, but the new

rules in Nicaragua would put up extreme new barriers for Cuban migrants who hope to reach the US in the future.

What remains is primarily Guyana, a small South American nation where Cubans have also traveled to in order to reach the US. From Guyana, Cuban migrants normally travel through the perilous jungled trenches of the Darien Gap dividing Colombia and Panama before winding their way up through the Americas.

In the past, migrants with few other options have also taken precarious boat rides from Cuba to Florida's coast.

Meanwhile, the Mexican government on Sunday dispatched two navy vessels carrying more than 800 tons of food supplies as humanitarian assistance to Cuba, the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

The statement said the ships departed from the eastern port of Veracruz and are expected to arrive in four days. One ship is transporting staples and personal hygiene products, and the other is loaded with powdered milk.

Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum on Friday pledged that her government will send humanitarian aid, including food and other basic supplies, to Cuba.

Sheinbaum also said that efforts are being made "to resume oil shipments to Cuba," after Mexico halted crude and refined products shipments to the island in mid-January.



Tents are set up in a camp used to shelter families threatened by flooding from the Sebou River in Oulad Slama municipality near Kenitra, Morocco on Feb 8. (AP)

Storm Marta kills at least 4 in Morocco as country battles floods

Flash floods caused by a storm in northern Morocco killed at least four people as the country struggled with days of heavy rain and water releases from overfilled dams that forced mass evacuations, local authorities said Sunday.

Three children - a girl and two boys aged 2 to 14 - and a man in his 30s died in a car that was swept

away in a village near Tétouan, about 270 kilometers (168 miles) north of the capital Rabat, according to a statement from the Interior Ministry citing local authorities. Another person remains missing.

Local authorities said they will open an investigation into what happened.

The flash floods were caused by

a storm system known as Marta, which moved into Morocco over the weekend and dumped up to 92 millimeters (3.6 inches) of rain on some northern cities, Houssine Youabed of Morocco's General Directorate of Meteorology told The Associated Press. Storm Marta also reached neighboring Spain and Portugal. (AP)

Close ally kidnapped after release: Machado

Venezuela frees several opposition members

CARACAS, Venezuela, Feb 9, (AP): Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado on Monday said one of her closest allies was kidnapped hours after being released from prison.

The government had released several prominent opposition members from prison Sunday after lengthy politically motivated detentions. Machado said on social media that Juan Pablo Guanipa was taken around midnight in a residential neighborhood of the capital, Caracas.

"Heavily armed men, dressed in civilian clothes, arrived in four vehicles and violently took him away," she posted on X. "We demand his immediate release."

The releases of the opposition figures came as the government of acting President Delcy Rodríguez has faced mounting pressure to free hundreds of people whose detentions months or years ago have been linked to their political activities. The releases also followed a visit to Venezuela of representatives of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The government's press office did



Political activist Dignora Hernandez, left, is embraced by an opposition supporter after her release from custody on Feb 8. (AP)

not immediately respond to a request for comment early Monday.

Rodríguez was sworn in as Venezuela's acting president after the Jan. 3 capture of then-President Nicolás Maduro by the U.S. military. Her government began releasing prisoners days

later.

Some of those freed Sunday joined families waiting outside prisons for their loved ones to be released. They chanted "We are not afraid! We are not afraid!" and marched a short distance.

Subcontinent

**Sri Lanka seeks return of 103 fugitives:** Sri Lanka Police have issued Interpol red notices to secure the return of 103 criminal suspects currently residing overseas, a police spokesperson told the media on Sunday.

Police spokesperson F. U. Wootler said authorities have already brought three wanted individuals back to the country so far this year.

He added that law enforcement agencies also confiscated property worth 50 million Sri Lankan rupees (about 162,000 U.S. dollars) belonging to suspects who committed crimes and fled abroad.

Police said efforts are ongoing to trace the remaining fugitives and recover additional assets linked to criminal activities overseas. (Xinhua)



**Afghanistan highway collision kills 3:** At least three people were killed and three others injured in a traffic accident on the Jalalabad-Torkham highway on Sunday evening, according to a statement from the Nangarhar provincial police office.

The collision occurred in the Samarkhail area when a passenger vehicle collided with a tanker on the highway linking Jalalabad, capital of eastern Nangarhar province, to the Torkham border crossing point. The crash resulted in three fatalities at the spot and left three others wounded, said the statement.

The injured were transported to a nearby medical facility for treatment. Authorities have urged drivers to strictly adhere to traffic regulations to prevent further loss of life. (Xinhua)

Tinubu to visit UK

Nigeria truck crash kills 30

KANO, Nigeria, Feb 9, (AP): A truck carrying passengers crashed in northern Nigeria because of reckless driving, killing at least 30 people and injuring several others, authorities said Sunday.

The trailer was driving along a highway in Kwanar Barde town in Kano's Gezawa local government area when it lost control, according to a statement from the Kano governor's office.

Road accidents are frequent in Africa's most populous country, in part due to poor road conditions and lax enforcement of traffic laws.



Yusuf

Also:

**LONDON:** Nigeria's president is set to make a state visit to the U.K. in March, the first such trip by a Nigerian leader in almost four decades, Britain's Buckingham Palace said Sunday.

Officials said President Bola Tinubu and first lady Oluremi Tinubu will travel to the UK on March 18 and 19.

## Kuwait’s stock market closes lower

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): The Boursa Kuwait ended Monday’s trading session on a negative note, with the general index slipping 20.56 points, or 0.23 percent, to close at 8,735.53 points.

Trading activity was moderate, with a total of 232.7 million shares exchanged in 16,748 trans-

actions, generating a turnover of KD 67.6 million (around USD 206.18 million).

The main market index recorded a sharper drop of 33.42 points, or 0.41 percent, settling at 8,156.15 points. It saw 111.1 million shares traded through 7,167 deals, totaling KD 18.7 million (approximately USD 57 million).

# Business

### Innovative startups shine at Zain’s regional accelerator finale

## Zain Great Idea: Demo Day unlocks a new wave of regional innovation and investment momentum

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, hosted Demo Day as the decisive and concluding milestone in the journey of its flagship startup accelerator Zain Great Idea (ZGI), opening the door to partnerships and investment for entrepreneurs from six Arab countries where the Group operates across the regional map.

At the event, founders from 11 tech startups across six of Zain’s regional markets (Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) delivered pitches to a select audience of investors, business partners, and executive leaders from across the region. They showcased their business progress and strategic growth plans and had the opportunity to connect and engage directly to explore potential pathways for investment, collaboration, and partnerships.

The event was held at the Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait, joined by Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Sheikh Jaber Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and CEO of Zain Kuwait Nawaf Al-Gharabally, along with senior executives from Zain Group and its operating companies. This directly reflected Zain’s vision of turning business accelerators into real growth engines and platforms that empower startups.

Zain Ventures is unlocking new growth pathways by exploring partnership and investment opportunities with the current Zain Great Idea cohort. This embodies the company’s commitment to turning acceleration tracks into scalable funding and growth opportunities.

The step also comes as part of Zain Ventures’ strategy of linking innovation to outcomes by enabling promising startups to accelerate their expansion, strengthen their readiness for commercial and investment partnerships, and enter new markets with greater confidence.

Bader Al-Kharafi said: “The final stop of this journey is where ideas turn into opportunities, and opportunities into real partnerships and investments. It is the moment of transformation that will take these ideas to the market. In every idea, I find new inspiration, and with guidance and mentorship, young people’s ideas turn into a reality that shapes the future.”

He added: “This gathering creates opportunities that transform dreams into value and innovation into reality. Today, we test the strength of the business models we have built together, to see the extent to which they can generate economic value.”

Al-Kharafi explained that over the past 15 years, Zain Great Idea has not been “a passing local initiative,” noting: “Our objective was to establish a smart ecosystem that connects talent with opportunity, an ecosystem that turns ideas into startups that lead change.”

He continued: “Today, we proudly lead the largest regional business accelerator across six markets: Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. We know modern technologies are the vital nerve of business expansion, which is why we adopted, in this edition of ZGI, a clearer vision that reshapes traditional investment by building a platform that brings together technological momentum, support and guidance, and the flow of smart investments.”

He added: “This year, we delivered a stronger, more integrated model by combining Zain Ventures’ investment support and venture capital with ZainTECH’s advisory expertise and advanced technology solutions across artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and cybersecurity.”

Addressing the founders, Al-Kharafi said: “My message to you is clarity, decisive decision-making, continuous discussion of problems, awareness of challenges before they arise, and the pursuit of partnerships that create value. An investor does not bet on the idea alone, but on a team with a clear vision and a decision-maker who executes without hesitation.”

He concluded: “What we are celebrating today is a collective effort carried out by teams driven by a passion for leadership and change. This effort did not pass



Bader Al-Kharafi, Sheikh Jaber Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Nawaf Al-Gharabally with the ZGI founders and Zain team.



Bader Al-Kharafi and Sheikh Jaber Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah listen to the business pitches at Demo Day.

- Bader Al-Kharafi:**
- “In every idea, I find new inspiration, and with guidance and mentorship, young people’s ideas turn into a reality that shapes the future”
  - Zain’s award-winning accelerator brought together technological momentum, support and guidance, and the flow of smart investments.
  - 11 tech startups from 6 Arab countries showcased their business models to investors and business partners.
  - Zain Ventures unlocks new growth pathways for the current ZGI cohort by exploring investment and partnership opportunities.

without global recognition and appreciation, as ZGI has recently gained an international stature by winning the ‘Rising Star in Business’ award from the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris.”

Al-Kharafi concluded by saying: “My appreciation goes to the ZGI and Zain Ventures teams, who succeeded in turning this regional vision for the program into an impactful reality in the world of entrepreneurship.”

The event embodied the legacy spanning more than 15 years of Zain Great Idea, which in its latest edition moved to an unprecedented regional level across six markets within Zain Group’s regional operations, strengthening its position as a platform that connects talent with opportunity and accelerates the transformation of innovations into companies capable of scaling and creating impact.

The latest edition gained momentum through the integrated roles of Zain Ventures, the Group’s investment arm, and ZainTECH, its regional digital solutions provider, combining corporate governance with practical market access. Participants benefited from advanced academic and technical support, in addition to being connected with Zain’s technical, commercial, and enterprise teams to explore pilot implementations and build commercial partnerships across the Group’s markets.

Throughout the journey over the past months, founders of the participating startups moved through multiple milestones including intensive bootcamps, mentoring and guidance sessions, as well as the Silicon Valley international accelerator program, which was one of the season’s most prominent phases.

The global acceleration experience in Silicon Valley enhanced the startups’ readiness through structured training and refined business pitches, culminating in the international tour’s own Demo Day in Palo Alto, which provided a high-quality environment to accelerate potential partnership and funding opportunities.

Since its launch in Kuwait, ZGI has generated measurable, positive impact across the startup ecosystem. This edition further elevated that role by serving as a digital bridge between local innovation in the region’s markets and global technology players, reflecting Zain’s core belief that investing in creative talent is essential to advancing a knowledge-based economy.

Demo Day brought together a number of entrepreneurs representing Zain’s various regional markets, as they worked to address real-world challenges through scalable, technology-enabled solutions.

Representing Kuwait, Nour Al-Fadhli lead VEHAB, a VR platform reshaping rehabilitation through immersive 360° simulations that support

physical and cognitive recovery in realistic environments.

Also representing Kuwait, Ahmad Al-Ebrahim co-founded theQA, Kuwait’s first research platform connecting brands with verified local participants for fast, high-quality insights, while Eid Al-Mujaibel founded Tenmeiya, an Arabic-first platform enabling creators to monetize digital content and products simply in one place.

Hanan Al-Kulaib and Basma Al-Humaidhi, co-founders of Playbook Kuwait, made it easier for parents to discover and book kids’ parties while helping vendors grow, and Rashed and Yousef Al-Otaibi co-founded Outing, a trusted Kuwaiti booking platform for verified chalets, villas, and holiday homes with secure payments and reliable listings. Completing Kuwait’s representation, Abdulwahab Al-Tabtabaei co-founded Farah, a one-stop digital destination for planning weddings and streamlining the journey for couples.

Across the wider regional cohort, founders showcased how innovation is being built across different markets and sectors. Representing Saudi Arabia, Maha and Leen Al-Rossais co-founded WePay, an escrow-based fintech platform designed to elevate transaction security and trust between buyers and sellers, whether individuals or businesses.

Representing Bahrain, Ghassan Esfahani co-founded Wajba, a platform that helps F&B businesses sell surplus food at discounted prices, cutting waste, recovering revenue, and making meals more affordable. From Iraq, Khalid Al-Saady founded Jaamila.com, an online platform connecting buyers and sellers while enabling digital trade, inventory management, and more streamlined supply chain workflows.

From Jordan, Ahmad Al-Saif founded Alefredo EdTech, an AI-powered education assistant that manages the entire academic journey — from any grade to the first day at university. Alefredo has served thousands of students across multiple countries and recently expanded its impact through the acquisition of a UK-based tutoring platform, accelerating its vision to simplify education for families.

The cohort also included representation from the UAE, where Kausar Tahir founded MeNOW Health, a femtech solution supporting marginalized women by bridging science, empathy, and innovation to create more informed and empowering women’s health experiences.

Recently, Zain Great Idea was recognized as one of the “Corporate Rising Stars” for 2025 at the Corporate Startup Stars Awards in Paris, a global acknowledgment presented at a gala hosted at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) headquarters and co-organized with Mind the Bridge.

In its tenth edition, the Corporate Startup Stars Awards spotlighted corporations that embed open innovation into their strategy and build structured pipelines for startup collaboration, with the Corporate Rising Star category celebrating five high-potential organizations demonstrating outstanding commitment to working with startups and strengthening emerging innovation ecosystems.

## Real estate transactions increase 68% in early Feb

### Nursery real estate sector surges

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Despite a slight quantitative decline of 1.2 percent (two transactions) year on year, the value of real estate transactions in the local market increased tremendously in the first week of February, rising by 68.2 percent (KD94.3 million) -- 158 transactions valued at KD232.4 million, compared to 160 transactions worth KD138.1 million in the first week of February 2025

The newspaper obtained a copy of the weekly statistical report from the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Departments at the Ministry of Justice, indicating that the nursery real estate market experienced an unparalleled upswing from Feb 1-5, with 21 transactions worth KD 79.28 million.

This contrasts sharply with the complete absence of transactions during the entire year of 2025. It shows a sudden

resurgence in a sector that had been dormant for extended periods due to recent regulatory decisions concerning land use in industrial and agricultural areas, construction regulations in agricultural zones, the determination of permissible development ratios, and stricter oversight of illegal land use in the country. As usual, residential real estate accounted for the largest share of transactions, with 77 deals totaling KD 32.7 million, compared to 110 deals worth KD 51.1 million in the first week of February last year.

This is a decrease of 30 percent in quantity and 36 percent in quality -- a difference of 33 deals worth KD 18.4 million. Despite a relative increase of 11 percent in the number of investment real estate transactions this week, with 48 deals totaling KD39.90 million compared to 43 deals worth KD68.7 million last year, the significant decrease in transaction value of 41.4 percent (KD 28.74 million) reflects the completion of small to medium transactions.

In contrast, the commercial sector witnessed a significant surge during the first week of February, recording 12 deals worth KD80.48 million. This is an increase of more 638 percent in both quantity and value, compared to the single transaction worth KD10.9 million recorded in the first week of February last year.

### KOTC opens tender for travel services

## KPI announces tender for retail & automotive network assessment

By Najeh Bilal  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) announced a public tender for consultancy services to conduct a comprehensive and integrated assessment of the commercial, financial and operational aspects of its retail and automotive services network, which is slated for transfer to the company, as published in the official gazette, ‘Kuwait Al-Youm’.

The company expects the consultant to provide clear and quantifiable recommendations to support its decision-making in selecting the optimal operating model.

Interested parties can obtain details through the unified commercial platform for the oil sector.

In addition, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced list of nine companies invited to participate in a limited tender related to the organizational structure improvement and management strategy for Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPPEC).

The tender will be issued one month after the publication of this announcement in the official gazette. Any interested party whose name does not appear on the list of invited companies may submit an application to participate in the tender, along with supporting documents, within 30 days from the date of

publication of this announcement.

KPC also announced the awarding of the tender for the supply of printer ink to the winning bidder -- Neomtech for Modern Communications Services, as it submitted the lowest price and met all specifications and conditions, with a total value of KD43,470.

The tender for providing travel services to Kuwait Oil Tankers Company (KOTC) was also announced, with the opening date set for Feb 8 and the closing date for March 17.

The Higher Procurement Committee for Tenders at KPC and its subsidiaries, at the request of the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), announced the list of companies invited to participate in the tender for the installation of an aviation fuel filtration system at Mina Abdullah Refinery, including a tank farm.

The committee disclosed that 37 companies were invited, and the tender will be issued 30 days after the publication of this announcement in the official gazette.

Any interested party whose name does not appear on the list of companies invited to participate in the tender may submit an application to participate, along with supporting documents, within 30 days from the date of publication of this announcement.

### Participants burned more than 7 mln calories in one day

## Gulf Bank & Suffix review success of the 11th Gulf Bank 642 Marathon

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: As the title sponsor of the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon, Gulf Bank recently hosted representatives from Suffix, the event’s organizing partner, at its headquarters for a comprehensive review of the key success factors of the marathon’s eleventh edition and to discuss opportunities for further development in future editions. The meeting reflects the Bank’s ongoing commitment to advancing community sports initiatives and ensuring the long term sustainability of this national sporting platform.

During the visit, Suffix representatives expressed their sincere appreciation for Gulf Bank’s continued support and strategic leadership, emphasizing that the marathon’s sustained success is driven by the Bank’s clear vision and strong commitment to promoting sports culture, encouraging active lifestyles, and reinforcing the role of major sporting events in supporting national economic and social development.

The eleventh edition represented a major milestone in the marathon’s journey, evolving beyond a conventional race into a fully integrated community platform that brings together athletes, families, and fitness enthusiasts from across Kuwait. The event attracted more than 10,000 runners and welcomed over 20,000 attendees, reflecting strong public engagement and reaffirming its position as one of Kuwait’s most prominent community sporting events. Its inclusion on the “Visit Kuwait” platform further highlights its growing role in supporting sports tourism and positioning Kuwait as a regional destination for major sporting activities.

The marathon also received widespread positive engagement across Gulf Bank’s social media platforms, with hundreds of supportive and encouraging comments from participants, families, and community members. These interactions reflected high levels of satisfaction with the organization, atmosphere, and overall experience, further reinforcing the marathon’s strong reputation and the Bank’s credibility in delivering large scale, community focused initiatives.

The latest edition also witnessed significant progress in female participation, with women accounting for 40.6% of total registrations. This achievement reflects the growing societal awareness of the importance of physical activity, wellness, and balanced lifestyles, as well as the increasing



Najla Aleisa receives an honorary shield from Ahmad Al-Huzami.

ing participation of women in national sports initiatives.

Collectively, participants burned more than 7 million calories on race day, held on November 29, 2025, highlighting the event’s tangible impact on promoting public health and wellbeing.

The successful organization and delivery of this large scale event were supported by nearly 500 dedicated volunteers, including a significant number from “Sawaadee AlKhaleej”, Gulf Bank’s volunteer team. Their active engagement and professionalism played a vital role in ensuring smooth operations and delivering a high quality experience for participants and visitors. This strong volunteer presence reflects Gulf Bank’s deep rooted commitment to social responsibility, community partnership, and employee involvement in national initiatives.

This edition focused on delivering a comprehensive and immersive experience that extended beyond the traditional concept of a road race. Participants’ enthusiasm was sustained throughout the event through dynamic entertainment performances, interactive stations along the route, family friendly activities, and a vibrant festive atmosphere. These elements transformed the marathon into a nationwide celebration of health, unity, and community spirit.

In recognition of Gulf Bank’s outstanding contribution, The CEO of

Suffix, Ahmad Al-Huzami, presented a commemorative trophy to the Bank for achieving the highest level of employee participation among all participating organizations. The trophy was received by Mrs. Najla Aleisa, Chief Marketing Officer of Gulf Bank, reflecting the Bank’s strong corporate culture, which actively promotes wellbeing, teamwork, and employee engagement as core organizational values.

It is also noteworthy that, for the first time since the marathon’s launch, registration closed several days before race day due to exceptionally high demand. This unprecedented response reflects the growing enthusiasm among individuals and families to participate in organized sports events and adopt healthier lifestyles, as well as the increasing trust in the marathon as a professionally managed and high quality national sporting platform.

Through its continued title sponsorship and strategic partnership with Suffix, Gulf Bank reaffirms its commitment to supporting initiatives that enhance quality of life, encourage social cohesion, and contribute to Kuwait’s long term development goals. The Gulf Bank 642 Marathon remains a flagship example of how the Bank leverages its resources, expertise, and influence to create meaningful, sustainable, and wide reaching impact for the community.

A joint initiative empowering students to develop innovative digital solutions for the banking sector

# Weyay Bank and AUM launch student innovation challenge in collaboration with Plug and Play

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Weyay Digital Bank and the American University of the Middle East (AUM) have successfully concluded a Student Innovation Challenge aimed at empowering AUM students to develop creative digital ideas and turn them into practical solutions for the Weyay app, in collaboration with the global innovation platform Plug and Play.

The closing ceremony was held at AUM’s Cultural Center and attended by Mr. Mohammed Al Othman, Chief Executive Officer of Consumer and Digital Banking Group at the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK); Mr. Tareq Al Othman, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Human Soft Holding Company; senior leaders from NBK and Weyay Bank; AUM leadership and staff; as well as students’ families.

The challenge marked the outcome of a strategic partnership designed to enable students to build innovative, market-ready digital solutions while enhancing the readiness of Kuwaiti youth for the job market, particularly in innovation and financial technology.

**Plug and Play: Global Expertise Driving Innovation**

Plug and Play is a global innovation platform and startup accelerator that connects startups with major corporations, investors, universities, and government entities to foster innovation and develop cutting-edge technologies. Its involvement added significant value to the challenge by introducing a global innovation framework and aligning student ideas with internationally recognized best practices in corporate innovation, ensuring high-quality outcomes with strong potential for future development.

Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Mohammed Al Othman, Chief Executive Officer of Consumer and Digital Banking Group at the National Bank of Kuwait, said:“I am proud to be at the American University of the Middle East, which stands as a benchmark for higher education in Kuwait. We are equally proud to partner with AUM and the global Plug and Play platform to deliver this innovation challenge. At Weyay, we firmly believe that true innovation begins by listening to young people and involving them in shaping the future of banking. This challenge was not just a competition—it was a real platform for transforming student ideas into practical digital solutions that reflect our vision as a digital bank closely aligned with the aspirations of the next generation.”

Mr. Tareq Al Othman, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Human Soft Holding Company, added:“We are proud of our partnership with Weyay Bank and Plug and Play in this challenge, which offered our students a hands-on educational experience that closely mirrors real-world work environments. Such initiatives reflect AUM’s commitment to bridging academic learning with practical application and empowering students to develop both innovative and professional skills.”

Dylan Palladino, Director of Plug and Play in the UAE, expressed his appreciation to AUM for hosting the challenge and for its role in ensuring the initiative’s success. He also commended Weyay Bank for its collaboration and for selecting Plug and Play as a key partner. Palladino praised the students’ performance, noting that they developed AI-powered solutions and generated more than 250 implementable ideas within just two days. He highlighted the students’ strong critical-thinking skills, which were clearly evident throughout their final pre-



Mohammed Al Othman speaking during the ceremony.



Tareq Al Othman delivers his speech during the ceremony.



Mohammed Al Othman, Tareq Al Othman, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, and Deema Shaath



Part of the audience.



One of the participating teams presents its project to the judging panel.



Tareq Al Othman presents Mohammed Al Othman with a commemorative gift in the presence of Amal Al-Duwaisan and Shaikha Al-Baghli.

sentations.

**Academic-Banking Partnership with a Global Vision**

The challenge brought together more than 60 AUM students from various academic disciplines, working in multidisciplinary teams to address five digital challenges inspired by user experience within digital banking services.

Spanning three days, the program included intensive workshops and interactive sessions on design thinking, ideation, prototyping, and solution testing, guided by experts from Weyay Bank and Plug and Play.

On the final day, teams presented their solutions to a judging panel comprising representatives from Weyay Bank, Plug and Play, and AUM. Projects were evaluated based on clarity, feasibility, and relevance to the defined challenges, resulting in the selection of three winning teams.

First place was awarded to Team 7, consisting of Rayan Al Nouri, Dana Al Ajmi, Awrad Al Qattan, and Abdulrahman Hussein. Team 9, made up of Yousef Al Najm, Omar Hamdan, Abdulrazzaq Al Khamees, and Roaa Al Baj, secured second place, while Team 8, comprising Mohammed Moeen, Abdullah Al Marri, Ayah Al Shammari, Ali Jamak, and Ahmed Bouabbas, claimed third place. The event concluded in a celebratory atmosphere reflecting the high level of engagement and excellence demonstrated throughout the challenge.

Speaking about his experience, student Abdulrazzaq Al Khamees said:“I gained a great deal from this challenge, especially in learning the fundamentals of artificial intelligence. It also strengthened our teamwork and collaboration as one group. I strongly encourage all students, particularly newcomers, to take part in university activities, as they play a major role in personal development and skill building.”

Student Fatima Malallah commented: “Participating in this challenge was a valuable experience. I gained new knowledge in artificial intelligence and learned the importance of teamwork and coordination among team members.”

Rayan Al Nouri added:“This challenge was a genuine opportunity to learn and experiment, particularly in the field of AI, while also enhancing communication and teamwork skills. Such initiatives play an important role in shaping students both academically and professionally.”

Dana Al Ajmi said:“This experience allowed us to step outside the traditional academic framework and explore new ways of thinking and collaborating, while also developing our technical skills. I encourage students to make the most of university activities, as they have a significant impact on building real-world experience.”

**Promising Educational and Career Outcomes**

In addition to cash prizes, the challenge offered participants valuable educational and professional opportunities, including hands-on experience in innovation and design thinking, as well as direct interaction with experts in design and financial technology.

The initiative reaffirms the shared commitment of Weyay Bank and AUM to supporting Kuwait’s innovation ecosystem and strengthening collaboration between the academic and banking sectors – contributing to the development of a new generation capable of leading the future of digital financial services.



One of the winning teams in the Innovation Challenge.



Mohammed Al Othman, Tareq Al Othman, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Shaikha Al-Baghli, and Dylan Palladino during the ceremony.



Mohammed Al Othman, Tareq Al Othman, Amal Al-Duwaisan and Shaikha Al-Baghli honoring the team that won first place in the Innovation Challenge.



A group photo with the teams that won the top three places in the Innovation Challenge.

In collaboration with the International Finance Corporation

NBK Egypt provides \$115 million financing for Safaga Terminal project

CAIRO, Feb 9: Reinforcing its leadership in advancing Egypt’s sustainable economic development agenda, National Bank of Kuwait – Egypt (NBK – Egypt) continues to strengthen its role as a leading financial partner in the financing of strategic national projects. In this context, the Bank has entered into a \$115 million financing agreement in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to support the development of Noatum Ports – Safaga Terminal in Egypt.

This financing aligns with the Bank’s commitment to supporting national projects that deliver sustainable long-term economic impact. These initiatives are instrumental in advancing logistics infrastructure, improving the efficiency of Egypt’s port network, and consolidating the country’s strategic position as a regional hub for global trade and supply chains.

This financing was supported by IFC, with participation from NBK – Egypt through a long-term syndicated loan with a tenor of up to 15 years. This reflects the confidence of international and regional financial institutions in the strength of the Egyptian economy, the quality of project execution, and their capacity to generate sustainable economic and developmental returns. It also underscores confidence in the operational capabilities of AD Ports Group and highlights Egypt’s strategic role within global trade and supply chain networks.

The financing has secured all required approvals, and financial close is expected during the first quarter of 2026.

Egypt’s Economic Growth

Mr. Yasser El-Tayeb, Vice Chairman, CEO and Managing Director of NBK – Egypt, stated that the Bank’s participation in this significant financing reflects its strategic commitment to its role as an active development partner in supporting the national economy, emphasizing that financing major national projects represents a central pillar of the Bank’s strategic direction.

He added that port development and logistics infrastructure projects constitute a key driver of economic growth due to their direct impact on stimulating foreign trade activity, enhancing the competitiveness of the Egyptian economy, and creating sustainable employment opportunities. Ports in particular represent one of the most critical components of such projects, given their contribution to expanding external trade flows and supporting the state’s plans to maximize the benefits of Egypt’s unique geographic location as one of the most important logistics hubs along the Red Sea.



NBK – Egypt

Moreover, El-Tayeb emphasized that long-tenor financing extended by the banking sector serves as a decisive catalyst in translating development strategies into operational projects with real economic impact, reflecting the approach embraced by leading international banking institutions in advancing national economic development.

The Bank’s Strength and Expertise

In the meantime, Mr. Walid El-Seyoufi, Deputy Managing Director of NBK – Egypt, affirmed that the Bank’s success in arranging and participating in financing of this scale reflects the strength of its financial position and its proven expertise in funding major strategic projects, as well as its ability to deliver integrated financing solutions aligned with national priorities and development plans.

He noted that the project represents a qualitative addition to the Bank’s financing portfolio given its contribution to supporting Egypt Vision 2030 through en-

hancing infrastructure efficiency, stimulating investment, improving productivity, and generating direct and indirect employment opportunities, thereby contributing to inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

El-Seyoufi added that the Safaga Terminal constitutes a strategically significant project due to its role in supporting trade flows across the Red Sea and connecting regional and international markets. This aligns with the direction of global financial institutions toward supporting infrastructure initiatives that deliver broad economic impact.

He further noted that the Noatum Ports – Safaga Terminal project is valued at approximately \$200 million. The terminal is located on Egypt’s Red Sea coast and represents the first international maritime terminal in Upper Egypt, providing additional developmental significance from both economic and geographic perspectives.

Sustainable Finance

Mr. Ahmed El-Shall, Head of Corporate and Syndication at NBK – Egypt, stated that the Bank’s participation in this financing underscores its confidence in the project’s economic viability, as well as its commitment to supporting projects that incorporate environmental and sustainability considerations, in line with global banking best practices.

El-Shall explained that the Bank follows a clear strategy focused on financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects, which international experience has shown to be among the most important drivers of long-term economic growth. He further noted that this transaction is not the first of its kind, as the Bank has previously participated in financing several major national projects across multiple sectors, including the expansion of Damietta Port, the Tahya Misr multipurpose terminal at Alexandria Port, Abu Qir Port, the Max Port breakwaters, and the development of Sokhna Port, in addition to other infrastructure projects in the electricity, energy, roads, and related sectors. He added that several additional large-scale projects are currently under review, which the Bank is seeking to finance.

Furthermore, El-Shall affirmed that the banking sector plays an increasingly critical role in directing investments toward sectors with the greatest developmental impact, a role undertaken by leading global financial institutions through supporting strategic projects that contribute to inclusive development and improvements in quality of life.

International institutions signal improved outlook for economy

‘Kuwait transitioning from stability to growth’

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): Progress achieved in financial reform programs and clarity of Kuwait’s economic vision have positively reflected on Kuwait’s economic ratings by leading global financial institutions and rating agencies.

The ratings, starting with the international Bretton Woods institutions, passing through international credit rating agencies, and extending to reports by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, boosted confidence in the economy.

This collective progress contributes to reshaping the international perception of the Kuwaiti economy - not merely as an asset-rich economy, but as one that is gradually moving toward more efficient and sustainable resource management.

Economists, in separate statements to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), said specialized international ratings and assessments reflect a tangible improvement in the performance of the Kuwaiti economy and confirm that it is proceeding along a sound economic path.

The experts explained that Kuwait’s economy was currently undergoing a transition from managing stability to managing growth in the coming phase, which requires shifting from maintaining short-term stability to creating sustainable growth drivers by empowering the private sector, stimulating high-quality investment and developing labor market.

Chairman of the Board of the Union of Investment Companies, Abdullah Al-Turkait, said positive indicators issued by specialized international institutions, like IMF and World Bank, reflect a tangible improvement in Kuwait’s economic performance and confirm it was on a path of gradual recovery and more balanced growth.

This, he said, reflected soundness of economic policies and the state’s ability to manage challenges.

Al-Turkait added that recent international reports indicate how the positive shift in how international institutions view Kuwait’s economy reflects a high level of confidence in reforms, as well as the Kuwaiti economy’s ability to adapt to regional and global changes, particularly amid volatility related to energy markets.

He stated IMF expects Kuwait’s economy to return to a growth trajectory in 2025, recording real growth of 2.6 percent, with continued improvement in 2026 driven by recovery of economic activity and increased contribution from non-oil sectors.

The World Bank, meanwhile, expected sustained growth of around 2.2 percent in 2025 and 2.7 percent in 2026.

Al-Turkait noted that the improvement in economic indicators reflects the continuity of Kuwait’s reform efforts to improve the investment climate, simplify procedures, and develop the legislative and regulatory environment, thereby enhancing long-term economy’s competitive attractiveness.

He added that these reports were based on an objective reading of several factors, most notably improved financial stability and the adoption of a balanced monetary policy that supports growth without leading to significant inflation increases.

IMF estimates inflation would decline to 2.3 percent in 2025, compared to about 2.9 percent in 2024.

Al-Turkait explained that Kuwait’s international credit ratings continued to improve and remain stable over the past year, reflecting strength of its financial position and external standing.

He pointed out that Standard & Poor’s raised Kuwait’s sovereign rating in November 2025 to “AA-” with a stable outlook, based on progress in financial reforms and the enactment of legislation supporting financial sustainability- most notably the financing and liquidity law-along with efforts to diversify non-oil revenue sources.

He emphasized that this improvement and stability in credit ratings directly reduce the cost of sovereign and corporate financing, enhance international investor confidence and improve Kuwait’s ability to lure foreign direct investment (FDI), thereby supporting sustainable economic growth over the medium and long term.

On the domestic level, he said these positive indicators directly enhance investor confidence, help accelerate development projects, improve the business environment and support the private sector.

He noted that FDI inflows into Kuwait increased by eight percent year-on-year, reaching 223 million Kuwaiti dinars (approximately USD 725 million) during the 2024-25 fiscal year, reflecting the attraction of foreign capital across various sectors, particularly in light of investment-friendly reforms.

Al-Turkait considered that the key factors driving international institutions to present a positive picture of Kuwait’s economy include progress in financial reform programs, clarity of economic vision, increased focus on diversifying income sources, reducing reliance on oil and strengthening the role of the private sector in economic development.

For his part, Secretary-General of the Kuwaiti Economic Society, Mohammad Al-Jouan, affirmed international institutions’ positive indicators were not based on impressions, but rigorous quantitative models and analyses of financial, monetary and structural trends.

Their positive stance toward Kuwait, he said, reflects recognition of the Kuwaiti economy’s ability to absorb shocks and maintain stability in a highly volatile global environ-

ment.

Al-Jouan explained that the impact of these indicators goes beyond media coverage and directly affects investor behavior, sovereign financing costs, and confidence of international financial institutions.

In practical terms, these assessments enhance Kuwait’s investment appeal to long-term institutional investors, support fair pricing of sovereign risk in debt and financing instruments and give policymakers greater room to maneuver economically without immediate market pressure.

Al-Jouan stated that the key factors contributing to the improved outlook of international institutions toward Kuwait’s economy can be summarized in six interrelated pillars.

The first was improved fiscal discipline and more efficient management of financial surpluses, reflecting the state’s ability to manage economic cycles with greater flexibility.

The second was the robustness of the banking sector and its operation under an advanced supervisory framework led by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in line with international best practices for risk management and governance.

The third factor, he said, was gradual progress in institutional reforms and enhanced transparency, particularly in disclosure and financial governance. The fourth was monetary policy stability and the Kuwaiti Dinar’s peg to a basket of currencies, which has strengthened monetary policy credibility and reduced volatility.

He pointed out that two fundamental factors had a direct impact on changing the international assessment. The first was adoption of strategic fiscal decisions, most notably the passage of the public debt law. Previously, global rating agencies viewed the state’s solvency as heavily concentrated in the Future Generations Fund, with limited flexible financing tools, which placed pressure on the sovereign rating despite strong assets.

The shift in this approach helped rebalance assessments of the state’s financing capacity.

The sixth factor, he said, was intensified government efforts at the highest levels-under wise guidance from the political leadership to combat corruption and reduce waste in the public budget.

This is a critically important element in international assessments, as it reflects the state’s seriousness in protecting public funds, improving spending efficiency and strengthening confidence in financial management.

Al-Joudan noted that these combined developments have helped reshape the international view of Kuwait’s economy not only as an asset-rich economy, but as one that is gradually moving toward more efficient and sustainable resource management.

Regarding future expectations, Al-Jouan said that maintaining a positive outlook depends on three main paths: accelerating structural reform and diversifying the economic base away from oil; activating and empowering the private sector as a true engine of growth, and transitioning from managing stability to managing sustainable growth.

He added if reform momentum was maintained, Kuwait was likely to see further gradual improvements in ratings and indicators. However, if implementation slows, indicators will remain positive in terms of fundamentals but may lose relative momentum compared to more rapidly transforming regional economies.

He explained that future expectations for international economic indicators related to Kuwait remain cautiously and deliberately positive, closely linked to the speed and depth of reform implementation on the ground.

Al-Joudan said indicators were likely to improve further if reform momentum continues, particularly in financial, legislative and institutional areas-while maintaining fiscal discipline and efficient resource management.

He pointed to the recent positive assessment issued by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in the area of combating money laundering and terrorism financing, stressing that this evaluation should be treated as a starting point rather than an endpoint, through addressing technical observations and strengthening effective implementation.

He clarified that progress in this area was directly reflected as a positive indicator for credit rating agencies as well as the World Bank and IMF when assessing the strength of the state’s institutional and financial framework.

Enhancing international credibility and compliance with governance and financial transparency standards raises global confidence and reduces what is known as reputational risk, an indirect but influential factor in creditworthiness assessments.

Al-Jouan stated that the upcoming transition from managing stability to managing growth requires moving from maintaining financial stability to creating sustainable growth drivers through empowering private sector, stimulating high-quality investment and developing capital markets.

If the results of the FATF report are practically leveraged alongside the completion of structural reforms, Kuwait is likely to witness further improvement in indicators.

Meanwhile, Professor of Economics at Gulf University for Science and Technology, Dr. Osama Al-Falah, said that international economic reports are among the most neutral tools for evaluating countries’ economic performance, as they are largely based on numerical data and precise technical indicators, lending credibility and objectivity to their results.

Dr. Al-Falah added that Kuwait’s positive evaluations from prominent international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and global credit rating agencies reflects an improvement in domestic economic reality, and enhances confidence among investors and stakeholders.

Supporting community and youth initiatives

Warba sponsors Al-Shamiya Carnival

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting community initiatives and enhancing quality of life, Warba Bank announced its sponsorship of the Al-Shamiya Carnival, reaffirming its dedication to maintaining an active presence at the heart of the community and contributing to the creation of safe, meaningful recreational spaces that gather families together and strengthen social bonds.

Warba Bank’s support for the event reflects its firm belief in the importance of initiatives that encourage community engagement and offer a high-quality entertainment experience for both citizens and residents. The carnival is being held at Friendship and Peace Park in the Shuwaikh Residential Area, bringing families together in a vibrant atmosphere filled with diverse activities and entertainment.

A Long-Standing Partner in Community Events

On this occasion, Mr. Abdullah Nasser Al-Shuail, Senior Director of Branches and Private Banking at Warba Bank, stated:“Our sponsorship of Al-Shamiya Carnival aligns with our corporate social responsibility strategy, which places serving the community and supporting its initiatives at the forefront of our priorities. At Warba Bank, we believe our role extends beyond providing banking solutions to actively contributing to the development of a vibrant and connected society.”

He added: “We are always glad to support family-oriented events and youth initiatives that enhance social cohesion, and we are proud to back creative Kuwaiti youth who have successfully organized this distinguished



Governor of the Capital's visit to Warba Bank's pavilion at the Al-Shamiya Carnival.

event. Warba Bank will continue its commitment to being part initiatives that provide a positive and safe recreational environment and contribute to bringing joy to community members of all ages.”

Ongoing Support for Youth-Led Initiatives

Warba Bank’s sponsorship of Al-Shamiya Carnival builds on its strong track record in supporting youth projects and community initiatives. The Bank consistently strives to be a strategic partner to events that highlight young national talents and provide them with creative platforms that contribute to community development and foster an entrepreneurial spirit.

This sponsorship marks the second consecutive year that Warba Bank supports the carnival, having sponsored the

event last year as well. During the event, the Bank also introduced visitors to its range of services, most notably the Gold Account and Youth Account, which offer tailored benefits for customers, particularly through advanced digital services designed to simplify procedures and provide a smooth, user-friendly banking experience.

Warba Bank is among the banks that have achieved significant success in a relatively short period, securing a leading position in Islamic digital banking. With one of the largest shareholder bases among local banks, the Bank remains close to all segments of society. This sponsorship further reinforces Warba Bank’s position as a trusted banking partner that combines innovation with social responsibility in delivering high-quality financial services and products.



Group photo during the event

Albenali: Supporting initiatives that unite communities

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait sponsors the annual Porsche Club Kuwait Festival

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced its sponsorship of the Porsche Club Kuwait Festival 2026 for the fifth consecutive year, reaffirming its commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its continued support for community-driven sporting and lifestyle events in Kuwait.

The Bank’s ongoing sponsorship reflects the continued success of the festival over recent years, its strong attendance, and its growing status as one of the most anticipated annual automotive and family events in Kuwait. Through this partnership, ABK aims to support initiatives that bring communities together while contributing to the development of vibrant social and recreational platforms in the country.

The two-day event, held at Kuwait Motor Town, attracted members of Porsche Club Kuwait, Porsche drivers from Kuwait and across the GCC, as well as a large number of car enthusiasts and families eager to explore the brand’s latest models, distinctive designs, and heritage. The festival also celebrated 72 years of cooperation between Porsche Kuwait and Porsche AG, featuring exciting races, displays of rare Porsche vehicles, and activi-



Sager Albenali, Chief Communications Officer

ties designed for visitors of all ages.

During the event, ABK’s booth introduced visitors to the Bank’s diverse range of banking products, services, and financial solutions tailored to different customer segments, in addition to exclusive offers provided in collaboration with several partners in the local market.

On this occasion, Sager Albenali, Chief Communications Officer at ABK, said, “Our continued sponsorship of the Porsche Club Kuwait Festival reflects the success the event has achieved over the years and its ability to bring together individuals and families around shared interests and positive experiences. At ABK,

we believe that supporting successful initiatives that foster engagement and community interaction is an integral part of our CSR commitment.”

He added, “Our partnership with Porsche Club Kuwait highlights shared values centered around excellence, innovation, and teamwork. By supporting such gatherings, we aim to contribute to creating a dynamic environment that encourages specialized hobbies, strengthens social connections, and supports sustainable community development.”

Albenali noted that ABK, through its CSR program, continues to support events that enhance Kuwait’s position as a vibrant destination for entertainment and lifestyle activities, while reinforcing the Bank’s role as a partner in creating meaningful experiences for all segments of society.

ABK’s participation in sponsoring the festival reflects its ongoing commitment to community engagement and reinforces its leading presence across various segments in Kuwait, highlighting its position as a responsible banking institution that actively contributes to the development of the local community.

### 'It's an important moment for Latino culture'

## Puerto Rico stops for 13 minutes to applaud history, Bad Bunny

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, Feb 9, (AP): The Super Bowl lasted all of 13 minutes for many Puerto Ricans in San Juan and beyond.

People turned their backs to TV screens as food, music and chatter filled the first half of the game until a hush fell across the island. The halftime show was starting.

This was Puerto Rico's moment, a spotlight on a collective son who quit bagging groceries a decade ago and became the world's most streamed artist on Spotify last year. Since then, Bad Bunny has used his platform to applaud immigrants, sing about Puerto Rico's identity and turmoil and denounce US immigration policies.

"He appeared at the right moment in the history of Latin America," said Marielys Rojas, 39, who is originally from Venezuela but has lived the last 22 years in Puerto Rico.

She was among the hundreds who gathered by a grassy knoll near a beach in Puerto Rico's capital to watch the halftime show on a huge screen as waves crashed behind them and the sounds of coquis, an endemic frog, filled the salty air.

Amarilys Reyes, 55, arrived at the seaside watch party with her 22-year-old daughter.

She had never watched a Super Bowl and didn't know who was playing, but it didn't matter. Like many others, she was only there for Bad Bunny.

"It's the biggest show of his life," Reyes said.

Energy, nerves and excitement had been building across Puerto Rico ever since the NFL, Apple Music and Roc Nation announced that Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio would headline the Super Bowl XL Halftime Show.

Watch parties were quickly organized across the US mainland and the island. Some dubbed it "Super Bori Sunday," a shortened nod to "Boricua," which refers to someone with Puerto Rican ancestry, while others referred to it "The Benito Bowl: Morcilla, Sancocho, Mofongo, Reggaetón and a little bit of Football."

One woman wrote on social media that she would watch the halftime show with her 87-year-old mother in Puerto Rico so they could dance together, while another person posted that they had prepared a PowerPoint presentation for their American



Bad Bunny performs during halftime of the NFL Super Bowl 60 football game between the New England Patriots and the Seattle Seahawks, Sunday, Feb. 8, in Santa Clara, Calif. (AP)

friends dubbed "Bad Bunny 101."

Creativity flowed as Feb. 8 approached: One bar in Puerto Rico posted a promo featuring the quarterbacks from the Seattle Seahawks and New England Patriots sitting on the iconic white plastic lawn chairs that grace the cover of Bad Bunny's newest album.

Even the Teletubbies got in on the excitement, shaking their colorful rumps to

Bad Bunny's "Baile Inolvidable" a day before the show.

Wonder Woman also lent her support, with Lynda Carter noting on social media that she was a "huge fan" of Bad Bunny, whom she noted was an American citizen: "Make no mistake." But criticism of the first all-Spanish NFL halftime show spiked as the first half ended.

Jake Paul, a YouTuber-turned-boxer who has property in Puerto Rico and has posted about life on the island, wrote on X: "Turn off this halftime. A fake American citizen performing who publicly hates America. I cannot support that."

Puerto Ricans quickly responded.

"Don't you live where he's from?" wrote one person while many others noted that Puerto Ricans are US citizens.

Luke Lavanway, a 35-year-old who lives in New York but was vacationing in Puerto Rico to escape the ongoing cold snap, said he had no problem with a halftime show in Spanish.

"That's part of us," he said. "That's what makes us great, and we should just enjoy it."

The crowd that had gathered for the halftime show began streaming out of the watch party as soon as the second half started, smiling as they reflected on what they had just witnessed.

"I thought it was phenomenal that Bad Bunny brought all Latinos together in one place and represented them all equally," said Carlos Ayala, 36, of San Juan. "It's an important moment for Latino culture."

He also thought it fantastic that Ricky Martin sang Bad Bunny's, "Lo que le pasó a Hawaii," which laments gentrification in Puerto Rico, a worsening issue for many on an island with a more than 40% poverty rate.

"Transmitting that message is extremely important in these times," he said, adding that he also appreciated the light posts and exploding transformers featured during the show, a nod to Puerto Rico's chronic outages "so the world can see what we live through."

### Variety

**TUCSON, Ariz.:** The urgent investigation into the apparent kidnapping of 84-year-old **Nancy Guthrie** continued Sunday, a week after the mother of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie was reported missing in Arizona.



Guthrie

Flanked by her siblings, Guthrie said "we received your message" and that: "This is the only way we will have peace. This is very valuable to us, and we will pay."

An FBI spokesman said Savannah Guthrie was referring to a message that was sent to the Tucson-based television station KOLD on Friday. The station declined to share details about the message's contents as the FBI conducted its review.

Investigators believe Nancy Guthrie was taken against her will from her home just outside Tucson last weekend. DNA tests showed blood on Guthrie's front porch was a match to her. Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos has said.

Multiple press outlets have received alleged ransom letters during the past week. At least one letter made monetary demands and established Thursday evening and Monday evening as deadlines. Law enforcement officials declined to affirm that the letters were credible but said all tips were being investigated seriously. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** Paul Thomas Anderson won the top prize at the 78th Directors Guild Awards, putting the "One Battle After Another" filmmaker on course to potentially win his first Oscar.

The DGA Awards, held Saturday night at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California, is among the most reliable Academy Awards precursors. In the last 10 years, nine DGA winners have gone on to win best director at the Oscars. In the guild's nearly eight-decade history, only eight times has the guild not predicted the Oscar winner.

The award adds to a virtual awards-season sweep for "One Battle After Another," which has won with critics groups, the Gotham Awards and the Golden Globes. It's considered the favorite for best picture at the March 15 Oscars. Academy voting begins Feb. 26.

The other nominees were Ryan Coogler ("Sinners"), Guillermo Del Toro ("Frankenstein"), Josh Saffdie ("Marty Supreme") and Chloé Zhao ("Hamnet").

As he's often done through awards season, Anderson in his brief speech paid tribute to late assistant director Adam Somner, who died in 2024. "Obviously," he said, "we are up here minus one." (AP)

**MILAN:** Russian figure skater Petr Gumennik has been forced to change his short program music two days before the men's program at the Milan Cortina Olympics after joining a growing list of figure skaters dealing with copy-right issues.

Gumennik, who is participating as a neutral athlete at the Winter Games, had been working all season to music from "Perfume: The Story of a Murderer," a psychological thriller film. But the 23-year-old Russian national champion learned in the last few days that he did not have proper permission to perform to the music, leaving him in limbo as the Winter Games began.

Given such a tight timeframe, Gumennik also was unable to get clearance for his music from last season, which came from the space opera film "Dune." So, he pivoted to "Waltz 1805" by Edgar Hakhobyan, for which Gumennik was able to get permission. The men's competition begins Tuesday night with the short program. (AP)

### Super Bowl



Bad Bunny performs during halftime of the NFL Super Bowl 60 football game between the New England Patriots and the Seattle Seahawks, Sunday, Feb. 8, in Santa Clara, Calif. (AP)

### Super Bowl show shines with star power, strong message

## Bad Bunny brings Puerto Rican pride to world stage

SANTA CLARA, Calif., Feb 9, (AP): The sun hung low when Bad Bunny emerged in Puerto Rico's sugar cane fields during his halftime show, surrounded by jíbaros in pavas (rural farmers in traditional straw hats), viejitos playing dominos (an affectionate term for older men) and a piragua stand (shaved ice) - undeniable symbols of Puerto Rico.

From a small Caribbean island with a complicated colonial history, to the world: The artist born Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio brought Puerto Rican culture to the Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California, for his 2026 Super Bowl halftime show in what was always going to be a landmark moment for Latinos.

He started with his huge reggaeton-and-then-some hits, "Tití Me Preguntó" moving into "Yo Perreo Sola," as he emerged on top of the casita ("little house") from his Puerto Rican residency - Cardi B, Jessica Alba, Pedro Pascal, Karol G, Young Miko, Ronald Acuña Jr., Alix Earle and Dave Grutman were guests at his pari de marquesina ("house party.")

Then he crashed through the roof - Daddy Yankee's "Gasolina" played for a moment, clearly an acknowledgment and celebration of the Puerto Rican artists who laid the path for his career to go global.

"Mi nombre es Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio," he introduced himself to the crowd in Spanish. "Y si hoy estoy aquí en el Super Bowl 60, es porque nunca, nunca dejé de creer en mí y tú también deberías de creer en ti, vales más de lo que piensas."

In English: "My name is Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, and if I'm here today at Super Bowl 60 it's because I never, ever stopped believing in myself and you should also believe in yourself, you're worth more than you think."

The strings of his song "Monaco"



Lady Gaga (left) and Ricky Martin perform during halftime of the NFL Super Bowl 60. (AP)

played - then, a surprise Lady Gaga emerged at a real wedding scene, singing her portion of the Bruno Mars-duet "Die with a Smile," joined by the salsa band Los Sbrinos. Her dress featured a maga, Puerto Rico's national flower.

As they performed, the couple was married and Benito served as their witness and signed their certificate.

It also gave Benito time for a fashion change - rocking a white suit like a classic salsero - for "Baile Inolvidable" and "NuevaYol," with a block party set where he took a shot with Toñita, owner of one of the last Puerto Rican social clubs in New York City, Brooklyn's Caribbean Social Club.

Ricky Martin, one of Puerto Rico's greatest crossover artists, performed Bad Bunny's "Lo Que Le Pasó a Hawaii," ("What Happened to Hawaii"), a rallying cry for Puerto Rico's cultural autonomy in an era of neocolonialization. Martin sat in a plastic chair in front of a plantain tree; a scene that mirrored the cover of Bad Bunny's 2025 album "Debí Tirar Más Fotos."

Behind Martin, jíbaros in pavas climbed power poles that exploded, symbolic of Puerto Rico's frequent blackouts and failing power grid. It queued up a moving performance of 2022 song "El Apagón" ("The Black-out"), in reference to Hurricane Maria, its aftermath and the continued anger and frustration over persistent, chronic power outages.

As he sang one of his most political songs, Bad Bunny held a Puerto Rico flag in red, white and baby blue - reflective of the Puerto Rican independence movement.

For around 13 minutes during the halftime show sponsored by Apple Music and Roc Nation, all eyes on the field - and around the world - were on Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio.

Bad Bunny performed entirely in Spanish - as all of his music is recorded in the language, though he has collaborated with English-language artists. The only English singing came from Gaga.

He did speak in English at the end of the set, however, when he said, "God Bless America," and then named coun-



tries in the Americas: "Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil" and so on, including the United States and Canada - a reminder that while it is common to use "America" as a synonym for the US in the US, it is the name used across two continents.

"And my motherland, mi patria, Puerto Rico, seguimos aquí." In English, "My homeland, Puerto Rico, we are still here."

Behind him, a screen read "The only thing more powerful than hate is love" in English text, a direct reference to one of his recent speeches at the 2026 Grammys.

He ended with "D+MF" as he walked out of the stadium, joined by musicians with güiros (a percussive instrument made of a hollow gourd) and pandere-tas (tambourines, a symbol of plena.)

For years, Bad Bunny has been one of the most-streamed artists on the planet. And on Sunday, he made it clear that his global popularity translates seamlessly to the biggest stage in the US. (Though he is no stranger to it. He previously appeared during the

halftime show at Super Bowl LIV in 2020 alongside Jennifer Lopez and Shakira. He sang in Spanish alongside two artists whose bilingual hits helped usher in a crossover era for Latin music in the '00s.)

Consider Bad Bunny's 2026 halftime performance the cherry on top of a huge moment for the 31-year-old global superstar, who just 10 years ago was working at an Econo supermarket in Puerto Rico.

Last week, he took home album of the year at the 2026 Grammys for his "Debí Tirar Más Fotos," an album that marries folkloric tradition in local Boringuen genres like bomba, plena, salsa and música jíbara with contemporary styles like reggaeton, trap and pop. It marked the first time an all-Spanish language album won the top prize.

Like most headliners, Bad Bunny kept details of his halftime performance under wraps ahead of time, though many theorized there would be some kind of political performance. He's been critical of President Donald Trump in the past and at the Grammys last Sunday, said "ICE out" while accepting a televised award. Bad Bunny's latest tour skipped the continental US; in an interview he said it was at least partially inspired by concerns that his fans could be targeted by immigration agents.

At a press conference on Thursday, Bad Bunny told Apple Music's Zane Lowe and Ebro Darden viewers could expect a huge party - and joked that while viewers didn't need to learn Spanish to enjoy his set; they should learn to dance.

"I want to bring to the stage, of course, a lot of my culture," he said at the time. "I don't want to give any spoilers. It's going to be fun."

Of course, he delivered on just that - with a message of hope and a reminder of Puerto Rico's resiliency.

Lebanese filmmaker acclaimed for powerful storytelling

A new script for Lebanon: Will Angela Mrad step into politics?

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Dr. Angela Mrad is a Lebanese filmmaker, acclaimed author, film director and media personality, widely recognized for her commanding cinematic voice and strong international profile, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Mrad holds an honorary doctorate in film writing and directing, in addition to an honorary doctorate in media and journalism.

Through her body of work, she fuses artistic expression with a clear humanitarian purpose. She is regarded as a peace ambassador for women’s rights, notably through her distinguished films ‘Taa Al-Ta’neeth’ (Feminine Ending), ‘Muftaraq Tariq’ (Crossroads),

‘Al-Shayha Al-Abyad’ (The White Veil), and ‘Istifal’ (Separation).

Her films have earned prestigious international accolades, positioning her among the leading female directors in the Arab world.

She participated as a jury member at major international film festivals in India, Monaco and other global venues, reflecting her insight and extensive experience within the international film arena.

Her most recent award-winning film, ‘LUMINA AM 91N,’ marks a new milestone in her career, combining imagination, emotion and innovation in a way that has resonated strongly with audiences and international film

festivals.

In addition to her cinematic career, Mrad is a prominent media figure, radio and television presenter, and public speaker, dedicated to turning storytelling into a vehicle for awareness, empowerment and global dialogue.

She pursued her education at the Jesuit University in Beirut. Originally from the Ashrafieh district, she was born in Beirut on June 14, 1991.

Will Mrad, widely known for her patriotism, enter the upcoming political elections as an independent candidate for the Greek Orthodox seat in Ashrafieh? The current political climate calls for change, and a new script is required to produce a truly Lebanese film worth watching.



Angela Mrad

Stage



A scene from the ‘Nagamandala’ dance drama.

‘Nagamandala’ fuses dance, and literature

Innovative Bharatanatyam drama brings Girish Karnad’s masterpiece to life in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: A landmark cultural event took place on February 6, 2026, at the Boy Scout Theater in Hawally, Kuwait, with the staging of Nagamandala, a dance drama inspired by the acclaimed Kannada play by Girish Karnad.

This performance marked the first time the play was reimagined as a Bharatanatyam dance drama in Kuwait, creating a unique fusion of classical Indian dance and regional literature.

The production was directed and choreographed by Vinitha Pratish, artistic director of Srishti Productions and Srishti School of Classical Dance, Kuwait, with assistance from Arya BR.

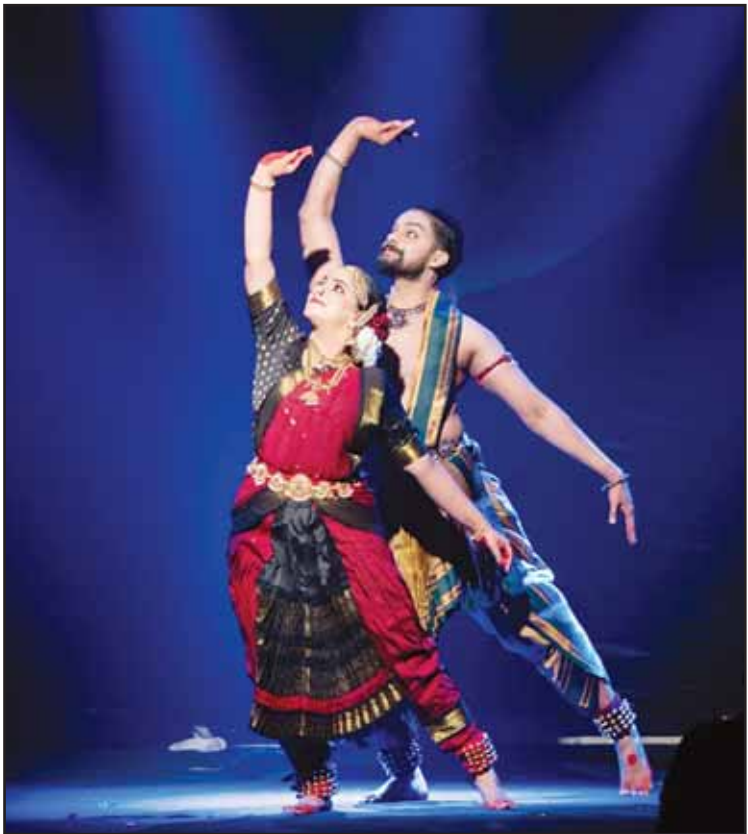
The performers were talented students from Srishti, representing Kuwait and other countries, whose dedication and artistry vividly brought the story to life on stage. Srishti has been presenting innovative dance dramas for over 20 years, and this performance highlighted their continuing creative evolution.

What set this production apart was its innovative choreography, which fused the precise, expressive language of Bharatanatyam with subtle elements of folk music, creating a rich and textured storytelling experience.

The timeless themes of love, identity, and transformation resonated deeply with a diverse audience, demonstrating the universality of Karnad’s narrative.

The theatrical experience was further enhanced by a carefully curated musical score that blended classical rhythms with modern fusion instruments, including the bass guitar.

A live orchestra led by Arun Gopinath from Canada, featuring musicians Kiran Gopinath, Easwar Ramakrishnan, Raghunadhan Savitry, Sasi Kottakkal, Dheera Ragesh, and Devna Prasanth, added depth, energy, and emotion to the performance.



Srishti Productions ‘Nagamandala’ drama captivates audience in Kuwait.



Scene from the Bharatanatyam dance drama.

Lifestyle

Women unite to embrace strength

Women celebrate themselves and honor friendships on Galentine’s

NEW YORK, Feb 9, (AP): Christie O’Sullivan of Trinity, Florida, has spent 21 Valentine’s Days with her husband, but her favorite celebration was one spent with a girlfriend before she got married.

They took the day off work, got massages, and went out for parties and a fancy dinner.

“For me, it was 10 out of 10. That whole day was intentional,” said O’Sullivan. She remembers it as empowering “on a day that’s usually filled with pressure to be in a relationship, or sadness because I wasn’t currently in one.”

Galentine’s Day became a pop culture phenomenon with a 2010 episode of the TV comedy “Parks and Recreation” that celebrated female friendships around Valentine’s Day. Amy Poehler’s character, Leslie Knope, gathered her gal pals on Feb. 13.

“What’s Galentine’s Day? Oh, it’s only the best day of the year,” said Knope.

Honoring female friendships can happen any day of the year, of course. Whether on Feb. 13 or another day, here are some ways to create a fun-filled experience:

Chela Pappaccoli of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, has been hosting a Galentine’s Day bash at her home for the last three years. She has a DJ hired, and this year invited 45 of her nearest and dearest. So far, she has 34 confirmations, and is assembling gift bags for her guests to take home. There are no men allowed “unless the DJ happens to be male.”

The event may be extravagant, but Pappaccoli says it’s worth it.

“It’s an escape to just be with your girls, be silly, do something fun and just focus on the friendships you’ve created and enjoying each other’s company,” she says.

Liz Momblanco of Berkley, Michigan, who describes herself as a “serial hobbyist,” invites her friends to take classes like cookie and cake decorating, calligraphy and stained glass.

“I enjoy learning something new



Anastasia Richman, (from left), Chela Pappaccoli, Nova Brown and Maria Suppa pose at a Galentine’s Day party hosted by Pappaccoli in Franklin Lakes, N.J. on Feb. 16, 2025. (AP)

and having a shared experience,” said Momblanco, who has attended day retreats for women that offer activities like floral arranging, yoga or a cold plunge.

Marney Wolf, who runs the retreat company Luna Wolf, says providing an opportunity for art and creativity builds community.

“It bonds you, whether it’s the smallest thing or really deep. You watch these grown women turn into almost like a childlike kindergarten response like, ‘Oh my gosh! Good job! You’re so talented!’ That little lift is the easiest thing to do,” she said.

Wolf takes care to schedule Galentine’s-themed retreats near Valentine’s Day because some women don’t have someone to spend Feb. 14 with.

“I know it can be a really lonely time for people and I think some take it for granted,” she says.

Pappaccoli said a couple of divorced friends come to her party, and “even if you’re married it can be depressing because your husband may not be doing what you want or your boyfriend may not support you in the way you want,” she says.

“It’s nice to know that you don’t need that. You can still celebrate the holiday, but turn it around a little bit and celebrate the relationships you want to.”

Galentine’s Day get-togethers can forge new friendships. And spending quality time with a friend provides an opportunity to put the phone away, avoid distractions and build memories.

O’Sullivan is a social media strategist for businesses but appreciates that her bestie Valentine’s Day was without cellphones.

“We could be fully present - no photos, no texts, no nothing,” she says.

“So while that means there’s no actual record of that day occurring, it also means the details became a core memory without it.”

Some celebrate Galentine’s Day by just going out for coffee or playing cards. You might go with a group of women friends to a play or museum, or take a hike or a workout class.

Other ideas include thrift store shopping, country line dancing, roller skating, karaoke, junk journaling, and getting manicures and pedicures.

Spring Festival holiday sparks surge in weddings

China’s wedding dress makers push boundaries

HEFEI, Feb 9, (Xinhua): As the Spring Festival approaches and much of the country prepares to celebrate, 36-year-old bridal store owner Li Tao has been busy completing his last orders before the holiday.

“Many couples plan to hold their weddings during the Spring Festival holiday. Between December and January alone, we shipped more than 2,000 wedding dress packages from our online and physical shops,” Li told Xinhua in his 300-square-meter wedding dress store in east China.

The gowns in Li’s store are made at his nearby factory in Dingji Town, which is located in Lu’an City of Anhui Province and known as one of China’s top destinations for wedding dresses. The town produces and sells nearly 5 million gowns each year, generating about 2.4 billion yuan (about 345 million U.S. dollars) in revenue. Its products are sold nationwide and exported to more than 30 countries and regions, including the United States, New Zealand and Spain.

With numbers of marriage registrations rebounding across multiple regions last year, the town’s bridal industry is gaining momentum and branching out beyond traditional wedding gowns.

The rebound was partly attributed to reforms easing restrictions on where couples can register their marriages, alongside other supportive measures.

In Shanghai, marriage registrations rose 38.7 percent year on year to 125,102. Cities with large population inflows also recorded strong gains, with Shenzhen up 28.5 percent and Suzhou rising 33.5 percent. Nationwide, 5.15 million marriages were registered in the first nine months of 2025, which was up 8.5 percent from the year before.

The rebound has led to a clear pickup in related orders and production. “Our wedding dress shop had a nearly 20 percent year-on-year increase in sales in 2025, and our factory output rose more than 20 percent,” Li said.

Xu Xiaolong, manager of a factory operated by Lu’an Zhongyuan Wedding Dress Co., Ltd., told Xinhua that the factory had struggled to keep up with orders during last year’s peak season. “This year, we plan to add a new production line to boost capacity by nearly 30 percent,” he said.

And recent changes go beyond numbers. In Xu’s view, younger consumers are placing higher demands on both the quality and design of wedding dresses.

Many companies have established in-house design teams and developed their own brands, testing sample garments in brick-and-mortar stores before moving to mass production based on customer response.

The town is now home to more than 400 wedding dress brands, many of which are expanding their reach through e-commerce platforms. It has

also established a bridal design and research center in collaboration with institutions such as the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology.

Xu’s factory has also expanded beyond traditional wedding gowns, producing other bridal outfits worn on the wedding day, including traditional Chinese dresses and formal attire for mothers.

“In the past, mothers often wore a simple red coat or traditional Qipao to weddings,” Xu said. “Now, whether they are in big cities or small towns, mothers dress up for the occasion. Styles have become more varied, with fabrics and designs suited to the seasons – light acetate for summer, warm wool for winter.”

Xu noted that the factory also adjusts fabrics and designs to follow current trends, including the recent popularity of Chinese-style and vintage-inspired mothers’ attire.

A recent survey by China Youth Daily, which polled 1,333 people, found that 62.4 percent of respondents would prioritize attire and makeup when planning their wedding – the highest percentage among all factors surveyed, surpassing venue decoration and location.

In China, a wedding ceremony is traditionally more than a personal milestone for couples. It is a major event that brings together two extended families, symbolizing the joining of households as well as individuals.

Variety

**AQABA, Jordan:** Global superstar **Shakira**, the Queen of Latin Pop, is set to perform live in Jordan for the very first time as part of her highly anticipated Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran World Tour, with an exclusive concert taking place on 28 March 2026 at Ayla Oasis Development in Aqaba. Organized by 165 Entertainment, the landmark event is supported by a strong coalition of national partners, including Ayla, Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), the Jordan Tourism Board, Hyatt Regency Aqaba Ayla Hotel, and Zain, reflecting a unified public-private effort to position Jordan as a premier destination for world-class entertainment and tourism.



Shakira

The concert is expected to attract 12,000 attendees, bringing together fans from Jordan and across the region for a landmark live music event on the Red Sea. The Aqaba stop forms part of Shakira’s 2026 world tour, one of the most anticipated global music tours of the year, celebrating her latest era and repertoire, combining her iconic hits with new material in a high-energy, state-of-the-art production. (AP)

**MILAN:** A project in Olympics host city Milan has invited parkgoers to reflect on the values of sport - both figuratively and literally.

“Together to Reflect” was conceived as a collective artwork that takes shape as slender stakes topped with mirrors, on which people write their thoughts about sports and the Games.

Anthony Cardamone was scrolling through Instagram when the initiative caught his eye. That prompted him to head to a corner of the public park known by its Italian acronym BAM with his wife and 7-year-old daughter on Sunday. It was the only day scheduled for people to write

their messages.

“For me, sport is about being together, it’s about sharing and measuring your own abilities,” said Cardamone, whose daughter wrote the word “brave” on one of the dozens of mirrored flowers. (AP)

**SHENYANG:** A collection of 189 historical artifacts documenting the Japanese invasion of China has been recently donated to the September 18th Historical Museum in Shenyang, capital of northeast China’s Liaoning Province, by a local collector.

The donated historical materials and artifacts include various categories such as certificates, manuscripts, letters and photo albums. They documented the numerous crimes committed by the Japanese military during its war of aggression.

Among them, an album photographed by the Japanese military contains 154 original photos about Japan’s invasion of China, documenting activities such as Japanese troops’ reconnaissance and marches.

According to the museum, during Japan’s military inva-

sion of various parts of China, a large number of Japanese war correspondents went deep into the front lines of Japanese-occupied areas to document the war through images. (Xinhua)

**NEW YORK:** At Flushing Town Hall in New York, a captivating performance of ancient Chinese yayue, or court music, was presented on Friday.

The show was delivered by the Yuzhen Jinsheng Yayue Orchestra from Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University, as part of their world tour. The performance featured a complete set of ritual instruments, meticulously reconstructed based on archaeological specifications. Prior to this, the orchestra had also performed at Cary Hall in Lexington, near Boston, on Jan. 31.

The ensemble traveled with bronze bells (bianzhong), stone chimes (bianqing) and other instruments, all reconstructed at a one-to-one scale based on artifacts unearthed from the Nan Yue King’s Mausoleum, an archaeological site dating back more than 2,000 years. (Xinhua)

Medications help, but healthy habits remain essential

Achieved your weight loss goal on GLP-1 drugs – what now?

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



By Amy J. Sheer

University of Florida

GLP-1 drugs have ushered in a new era in weight loss. In just a few years, medications such as semaglutide and tirzepatide, known by the brand names Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro and Zepbound, have gone from niche diabetes treatments to household names, reshaping how America thinks about weight loss.

A November 2025 Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that 1 in 8 US adults have tried a GLP-1 medication for weight loss, diabetes or another condition. And we expect that number to rise now that one of these drugs, Wegovy, has become available in pill form, increasing its accessibility for many people.

These drugs’ ability to help patients lose anywhere from 15% to 20% of body weight has made them one of the most powerful nonsurgical obesity treatments ever seen.

GLP-1, short for glucagon-like peptide-1, is a hormone your gut normally makes that helps control blood sugar and appetite after eating. It signals the pancreas to release insulin when blood sugar rises and slows how quickly food leaves the stomach, which helps people feel full sooner.

Modern GLP-1 medications are designed to amplify these effects, leading to better blood sugar control and substantial weight loss for many patients.

But success brings a new question that millions of people are confronting: What happens after the weight comes off? And just as importantly, what should patients do when their progress suddenly stalls, even while still on the medication?

As an obesity medicine physician, I’ve seen firsthand how life-changing GLP-1 drug therapy can be for my patients. But I also remind each of them that no medication - GLP-1s included - replaces the foundational importance of nutrition, physical activity, sleep and mental health. These lifestyle pillars are essential for maintaining muscle and bone health, preventing significant weight regain and supporting long-term cardiovascular and metabolic health.

The key is simple but critical: Every weight-loss or health plan must be tailored to each person.

In 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that more than 40% of American adults live with obesity. For most people, the real challenge isn’t losing weight - it’s keeping it off.

Researchers have known this for decades. As early as the mid-20th century, studies of commercial diet programs showed that while short-term weight loss was common, regaining weight long term was the norm.

This is because when people lose weight, the body’s natural inclination is to return to its previous weight - a phenomenon called metabolic adaptation. As a result, the brain releases more of the hunger hormone ghrelin and dials down leptin, one of the hormones that signals fullness and energy sufficiency.

The net effect is simple: After weight loss, people are hungrier, feel less satisfied after eating and burn fewer calories than expected. The body interprets weight loss as a threat to survival

and responds by slamming the brakes on metabolism through sophisticated energy-conserving mechanisms. Put plainly, when there’s less body weight to maintain, the body does less work - but it also becomes extra efficient, burning fewer calories than predicted and nudging weight back up.

Add to that an environment filled with ultraprocessed foods, oversized portions, high stress and limited time for movement, and it’s no surprise that so many people’s weight ends up yo-yoing despite their best efforts.

Clinical trials on GLP-1 medications also follow these well-established patterns. A pivotal 2021 clinical study of more than 1,900 adults, known as the STEP 1 trial, laid the groundwork for the use of these drugs as a treatment for weight loss.

But a follow-up 2021 study, known as STEP 4, showed that within 48 weeks of no longer taking semaglutide, participants regained approximately two-thirds of their prior weight loss, while those who remained on GLP-1 drug therapy continued to lose weight.

This is not because people lack discipline, but rather because their biology fights hard to return to its old set point.

Although obesity is now widely recognized as a chronic disease, clinical guidance has not kept pace with this new generation of highly effective medications.

For most patients, the most effective long-term strategy after achieving a target weight is to continue GLP-1 treatment. Clinicians aim for the lowest dose that still helps regulate appetite and stabilize weight.

Another option patients may pursue is to slowly taper off the drugs over about three to six months and to focus on reinforcing lifestyle choices that support goals for overall health

and weight maintenance.

Plateaus in weight loss are normal, even on GLP-1 drug therapy.

In clinical trials, weight loss with GLP-1 medications tends to follow a predictable curve: rapid early losses during drug initiation and dose increases, a gradual slowing and eventual plateau. A plateau, typically defined as little or no weight change for eight to 12 weeks, is not a sign of failure but rather the body adapting to a lower weight.

But before assuming that a GLP-1 medication has stopped working, clinicians will typically consider how the patient is using the drug, such as whether it’s being taken properly, with little to no missed doses, and whether it is being stored properly.

Clinicians will also evaluate a patient for medical conditions that might make weight loss more challenging, such as perimenopause or hypothyroidism, which is underactive thyroid.

They will also take into consideration whether the patient is on other drugs that might be obesogenic, meaning causing weight gain, or if they are using an FDA-approved GLP-1 drug versus a compounded medication, which can have variable quality and unknown efficacy.

Helpful strategies to prevent weight regain related to diet include building meals around lean protein and noticing where calories might be creeping in, such as snacks, sugary drinks and alcohol.

With GLP-1 drugs, the goal for nutrition has shifted from calorie restriction to calorie quality. Aim for a healthy balance of vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains. And make sure your water intake is sufficient, especially since GLP-1 medications not only reduce hunger but can also reduce feeling thirsty. (AP)



An icebreaker makes the path for a cargo ship with an iceberg in the background near a port on the Alexandra Land island near Nagurskoye, Russia, May 17, 2021. (AP)

Calls grow for cleaner fuels as global warming worsens

Rising Arctic shipping fuels black carbon and accelerates ice melt

REYKJAVIK, Iceland, Feb 9, (AP): As rising global temperatures speed up the melting of sea ice in the Arctic Ocean, it’s set off a boom of ships taking routes that previously were frozen and not traversable.

The increase in marine Arctic traffic, which received increased attention as President Donald Trump pushed for the United States to take over Greenland, has come with a heavy environmental cost: black carbon, or soot, that spews from ships and makes the ice melt even faster. Several countries are making a case for ships in the Arctic to use cleaner fuels that cause less pollution in meetings this week with international shipping regulators.

Glaciers, snow and ice covered in the soot emitted by ships have less ability to reflect the sun. Instead, the sun’s heat is absorbed, helping to make the Arctic the fastest warming place on Earth. In turn, melting Arctic sea ice can affect weather patterns around the world.

“It ends up in a never-ending cycle of increased warming,” said Sian Prior, lead adviser for the Clean Arctic Alliance, a coalition of nonprofits focused on the Arctic and shipping. “We need to regulate emissions and black carbon, in particular. Both are completely unregulated in the Arctic.”

In December, France, Germany, the Solomon Islands and Denmark proposed that the International Maritime Organization require ships traveling in Arctic waters to use “polar fuels,” which are lighter and emit less carbon pollution than the widely used maritime fuels known as residuals. The proposal includes steps that companies would take to comply and the geographic area it would apply to - all ships traveling north of the 60th parallel. The proposal was expected to be presented to the IMO’s Pollution Prevention and Response Committee this week and possibly another committee in April.

A 2024 ban on using a type of residual known as heavy fuel oil in the Arctic has had only modest impacts so far, partly because of loopholes.

The push to reduce black carbon, which studies have shown has a warming impact 1,600 times that of carbon dioxide over a 20-year span, is happening at a time of conflicting interests, both internationally and among the countries

that have coastlines in the Arctic.

In recent months, Trump’s periodic comments about the need to “own” Greenland to bolster U.S. security have raised many issues, from Greenland’s sovereignty to the future of the NATO alliance. Pollution and other environmental issues in the Arctic have taken a backseat.

Trump, who has called climate change a “con job,” has also pushed back against global policies aimed at fighting it. Last year, the IMO was expected to adopt new regulations that would have imposed carbon fees on shipping, which supporters said would have pushed companies to use cleaner fuels and electrify fleets where possible. Then Trump intervened, lobbying hard for nations to vote no. The measure was postponed for a year, its prospects at best uncertain. Given that, it’s hard to see the IMO making fast progress on the current proposal to limit black carbon in the Arctic.

Even inside Arctic nations, which are most impacted by black carbon and other shipping pollution, there are internal tensions around such regulations. Iceland is a good example. While the country is a world leader in green technologies such as carbon capture and the use of thermal energies for heating, conservationists say the country has made less progress on regulating pollution in its seas. That is because the fishing industry, one of the country’s most important, holds huge sway.

“The industry is happy with profits, unhappy with the taxes and not engaged in issues like climate or biodiversity,” said Arni Finnsson, board chair of the Iceland Nature Conservation Association.

Finnsson added that the costs of using cleaner fuels or electrifying fleets have also prompted resistance.

“I think the government is waking up, but they still have to wait for the (fishing) industry to say yes,” he said.

The country has not taken a position on the pending polar fuels proposal. In a statement, Iceland’s Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate said the proposal was “positive with regard to its purpose and basic content,” but that further study was needed. The statement added that Iceland supports stronger measures to counter shipping emissions and reduce black carbon.

The UNFPA reported that the country records 521 neonatal deaths per 100,000 live births, ranking highest in the Asia-Pacific region and among the highest globally.

The agency currently supports nearly 500 family health centers across Afghanistan and plans to deliver essential health services to about 4.5 million people in 2026, with particular attention to remote and underserved areas, the report added.

Ongoing shortages of funds and trained medical staff continue to challenge efforts to reduce preventable deaths.

Tanzania’s Zanzibar has concluded its annual performance evaluation for malaria elimination, with Chinese expertise featured for the first time to help the archipelago refine its prevention and control strategies.

The meeting, held from Feb. 2 to 7, focused on assessing achievements in malaria elimination in 2025, formulating the 2026 work plan, and identifying priority areas for the next round of Global Fund malaria grant applications.

Addressing Zanzibar’s practical needs, Liu Yaobao, a public health expert from the 35th Chinese medical team in Zanzibar, introduced China’s successful strategies, including establishing multi-sector collaboration mechanisms, strengthening surveillance and rapid response systems, enhancing grassroots prevention and control capacity, and expanding health education.

Children hit hard amid public vaccine distrust

‘Take the vaccine, please,’ US health official appeals as measles cases rise

WASHINGTON, Feb 9, (AP): A leading US health official has urged people to get inoculated against the measles at a time of outbreaks across several states and as the United States is at risk of losing its measles elimination status.

“Take the vaccine, please,” said Dr. Mehmet Oz, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services administrator whose boss has raised suspicion about the safety and importance of vaccines. “We have a solution for our problem.”

Oz, a heart surgeon, defended some recently revised federal vaccine recommendations as well as past comments from President Donald Trump and the nation’s health chief, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., about the efficacy of vaccines. From Oz, there was a clear message on the measles.

“Not all illnesses are equally dangerous and not all people are equally susceptible to those illnesses,” he told CNN’s “State of the Union.” “But measles is one you should get your vaccine.”

An outbreak in South Carolina in the hundreds has surpassed the recorded case count in Texas’ 2025 outbreak, and there is also one on the Utah-Arizona border. Multiple other states have had confirmed cases this year. The outbreaks have mostly impacted children and have come as infectious disease experts warn that rising public distrust of vaccines generally may be contributing to the spread of a disease once declared eradicated by public health officials.

Asked in the television interview whether people should fear the measles, Oz replied, “Oh, for sure.” He said Medicare and Medicaid will continue to cover the measles vaccine as part of the insurance programs.

“There will never be a barrier to Americans get access to the measles vaccine. And it is part of the core schedule,” Oz said.

But Oz also said “we have advocated for measles vaccines all along” and that Kennedy “has been on the very front of this.”

Questions about vaccines did not come up later in a Kennedy interview on Fox News Channel’s “The Sunday Briefing,” where he was asked about what kind of Super Bowl snack he might have (probably yogurt). He also he eats steak with sauerkraut in the mornings.

Critics of Kennedy have argued that the health secretary’s longtime skepti-



Matt Caldwell, (left), a Lubbock Fire Department official, administers a measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine to Clair May at the Lubbock Health Department on Feb. 26, 2025. (AP)

cism of U.S. vaccine recommendations and past sympathy for the unfounded claim that vaccines may cause autism may influence official public health guidance in ways contrary to the medical consensus.

Oz argued that Kennedy’s stance was supportive of the measles vaccine despite Kennedy’s general comments about the recommended vaccine schedule.

“When the first outbreak happened in Texas, he said, get your vaccines for measles, because that’s an example of an ailment that you should get vaccinated against,” Oz said.

The Republican administration last month dropped some vaccine recommendations for children, an overhaul of the traditional vaccine schedule that the Department of Health and Human Services said was in response to a request from Trump.

Trump asked the agency to review how peer nations approach vaccine recommendations and consider revising US guidance accordingly.

States, not the federal government, have the authority to require vaccinations for schoolchildren. While federal requirements often influence those state regulations, some states have begun creating their own alliances to counter the administration’s guidance on vaccines.

US vaccination rates have dropped and the share of children with exemp-

tions has reached an all-time high, according to federal data. At the same time, rates of diseases that can be protected against with vaccines, such as measles and whooping cough, are rising across the country.

Kennedy’s past skepticism of vaccines has come under scrutiny since Trump first nominated him to lead the Department of Health and Human Services.

During his Senate confirmation testimony last year, Kennedy told lawmakers that a closely scrutinized 2019 trip he took to Samoa, which came before a devastating measles outbreak, had “nothing to do with vaccines.”

But documents obtained by The Guardian and The Associated Press undermine that testimony. Emails sent by staffers at the US Embassy and the United Nations said that Kennedy sought to meet with top Samoan officials during his trip to the Pacific island nation.

Samoa officials later said Kennedy’s trip bolstered the credibility of anti-vaccine activists before the measles outbreak, which sickened thousands of people and killed 83, mostly children under age 5.

Oz’s comments mark a broader pattern among administration officials of voicing discordant and at times contradictory statements about the efficacy of vaccines amid an overhaul of U.S. public health policy.

Seed guardians of the Amazon

A family’s battle to save endangered plants

ALTO ILA, Ecuador, Feb 9, (AP): On a recent journey into the Ecuadorian Amazon jungle, Ramón Pucha realized he was being trailed. Fresh puma tracks now lined the path alongside his own footprints. Unfazed, he continued his trek, focused entirely on the precious cargo he carried - seeds from some of the world’s most endangered plant species.

Pucha and his family have spent years recreating their own piece of jungle with rescued species on a 32-hectare farm called El Picaflor in the Indigenous Quichua community of Alto Ila, 128 kilometers (80 miles) southeast of the capital, Quito.

“I have a passion for nature, for plants, for animals,” said Pucha, 51, noting that his drive to protect the environment is so intense that many people in his community consider him “crazy.”

To save endangered plant species, Pucha ventures deep into the jungle, often alone, for up to five days at a time. On more than one occasion, he said he returned empty-handed because - as a consequence of climate change and severe droughts across the region - many of the large trees had stopped producing seeds annually.

Once the seeds reach home, Pucha’s wife, Marlene Chiluisa, takes charge. She plants them in suitable soil and compost so that they can begin to grow into plants that are then replanted in the rainforest. The



Seeds of the genus Anthurium hang from a branch on the farm of Ramon Pucha, which he has turned into a conservation site to preserve native species and promote biodiversity, in Alto Ila, in Ecuador’s Amazon region, Tuesday, Feb. 3. (AP)

family even shares the fruits of their labor, selling or gifting a percentage of the plants to neighbors committed to forest regeneration.

Jhoel, the couple’s 21-year-old son, has stepped into his father’s role as the family’s successor. An expert botanist, he moves through the forest identify-

ing plants by their common, traditional and scientific names with ease. He also serves as a guide, ferrying visitors across the turbulent Ila River in a precarious craft made of wooden planks lashed to a buoy.

Yet, for all their effort, the family’s struggle remains a solitary one.

“Nobody gives us any incentive-not the government, not foundations, not anyone,” said Chiluisa.

Ecuador’s Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock recognizes the importance of the family’s work, calling El Picaflor a “living laboratory” and a vital seed bank in an area scarred by 50 years of constant logging.

But while Ecuador was the first country to enshrine the “rights of nature” in its constitution, that reputation is now at risk. Environmentalists and Indigenous groups warn that President Daniel Noboa’s decision to merge the Ministry of Environment with the Ministry of Energy and Mines threatens the very landscape the family is fighting to save.

As he walks across the property that was once barren pastureland, Pucha pauses to observe the plants, describing the unique purpose of each one.

His eyes light up as he points to a small, growing tree, which he says is now rare in the area - a type of fine wood that will reach maturity in 100 years. Though he knows he will never see it fully grown, he remains committed to his mission.

Nicholas claims first Korn Ferry Tour title

Gotterup wins Phoenix Open playoff as Matsuyama struggles at the finish

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz., Feb 9, (AP): Chris Gotterup shot 7-under 64 and won the Phoenix Open with a birdie on the first hole of a playoff Sunday after Hideki Matsuyama pulled his tee shot into the water.

The leader by one heading into the final round, Matsuyama had converted all of his previous five 54-hole leads into wins, but limped to the finish at TPC Scottsdale’s Stadium Course.

The two-time Phoenix Open champion nearly hit his tee shot in the water left of the reachable par-4 17th and pulled his drive on 18 left into the church pew bunkers - his 11th missed fairway of the day. Matsuyama hit his second shot into the face of the bunker and couldn’t get up-and-down from 43 yards to send the tournament to a playoff. He shot 68 to match Gotterup at 16-under 268.

Gotterup, winner of the season-opening Sony Open, closed with five birdies on his final six holes and stayed locked by hitting balls off the first tee before uncorking a massive drive on 18 in the playoff.

Matsuyama yanked his tee shot even further left than he did in regulation, caroming it off the bank of the lake into the water. The Japanese star hit his third shot to onto the green after a drop, but Gotterup left no doubt by sinking his 27-foot birdie putt for his fourth career PGA Tour win.

Top-ranked Scottie Scheffler went from being in danger of the missing the cut with a shaky first round to turning heads as his name moved toward the top of the leaderboard. He closed with a 64 to tie for third at 15 under.= Patrick Reed capped off his remarkable month in the Middle East by winning the Qatar Masters on Sunday, his second European tour victory in three weeks that all but assures the former Masters champion will have a full PGA Tour card in 2027.

Reed closed with a 2-under 70, turning back an early threat from Jacob Skov Olesen and a late charge by Calum Hill for a two-shot victory at Doha Golf Club.

In the last three weeks, Reed has won the Dubai Desert Classic, lost in a playoff in Bahrain and won in Qatar. No one has posted a lower 72-hole score in three



Chris Gotterup smiles as he poses for photographs after winning the Phoenix Open golf tournament in Scottsdale, Ariz. (AP)

straight European tour events. He will move into the top 20 in the world ranking for the first time since 2021.

The 35-year-old American chose to leave LIV Golf after his win in Dubai. He is virtually assured of being among the top 10 players in the Race to Dubai who get full PGA Tour cards in 2027. Reed leads the Race to Dubai and already has more

points than the player who got the 10th card a year ago and still has four majors and four Rolex Series events to play.

James Nicholas won the Astra Golf Championship on Sunday for his first Korn Ferry Tour title, making a 13-foot eagle putt on the par-5 18th for a 5-under 66 and a two-stroke victory. Nicholas played 29 holes Sunday in the weather-delayed event, also shooting 66 in the third round. The 28-year-old former Yale player won in his 69th start on the tour, finishing at 19-under 265 at Country Club de Bogota.

Norman Xiong was second. He also closed with a 66. Carson Young was third at 16 under after a 65.

Ian Holt, coming off consecutive victories in the Bahamas and Panama, tied for 49th at 5 under. He had a 71 on Sunday.

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) - Elvis Smylie won LIV Golf Riyadh on Saturday night in his tour debut, closing with an 8-under 64 under the lights to hold off Jon Rahm by a stroke. The 23-year-old Australian also led Ripper GC to the team title.

Smylie, who won the Australian PGA Championship in 2024, finished at 24-under 264 under. Rahm closed with a bogey-free 63. He won the points title on LIV Golf last year without ever winning an individual tournament.

Will Enefer closed with a 3-under 69 and made birdie on the first playoff hole to win the Cape Town Open for his first Challenge Tour title. Enefer defeated Hennie Otto in the playoff at Royal Cape Golf Club. The tournament was co-sanctioned with the Sunshine Tour.

Wooyoung Cho closed with a 5-under 67 to win the Philippine Golf Championship by four shots over Pavit Tangkamolprasert on the Asian Tour.

Declan O’Donovan closed with a 5-under 67 for a five-shot victory over Brady Watt to capture his first professional title in the Webex Players Series-Sydney on the PGA Tour of Australasia. ... Jack Buchanan closed with a 5-under 67 for a six-shot victory in the Africa Amateur Championship, earning him a spot in the British Open at Royal Birkdale this summer.

Jakucionis hits 6 3-pointers without a miss

Clippers dominate Timberwolves



Indiana Pacers centre Jay Huff, center, drives to the hoop between Toronto Raptors forwards R.J. Barrett, left, and Scottie Barnes (4) during first-half NBA basketball game action in Toronto. (AP)

MINNEAPOLIS, Feb 9, (AP): Kawhi Leonard had 41 points and eight rebounds and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the slumping Minnesota Timberwolves 115-96.

John Collins had 15 points on 6-of-9 shooting, and Yanic Konan Niederhauser also scored 15 points. The Clippers took command with a 17-3 run closing out the third quarter.

Anthony Edwards led Minnesota with 23 points, and Julius Randle had 17. The Timberwolves have lost three of their last four, all to sub-.500 opponents. Minnesota made just 8 of 33 3-point attempts and committed 20 turnovers while being held under 100 points for just the second time this season.

Ayo Dosunmu, making his Timberwolves debut after being acquired in a trade with Chicago, had 11 points and two steals.

The Timberwolves were coming off one of their most frustrating losses of the season, when they blew an 18-point third-quarter lead in a home loss to the lowly New Orleans Pelicans.

The first half was more of the same for Minnesota. Leonard scored 24 points and helped key an 18-2 run late in the second quarter that gave the Clippers a 54-42 lead.

Minnesota made just 3 of 18 3-point attempts and committed 13 turnovers in the first half. Edwards was 0 for 6 on 3s and turned it over a team-high four times in the first half.

Los Angeles played without its two key trade deadline acquisitions. Darius Garland, who arrived from Cleveland in the James Harden trade, remained sidelined with a sprained big toe on his right foot. The Clippers had already said wingman Benedict Mathurin, picked up in a swap with the Pacers, wouldn’t debut with his new team until Tuesday in Houston.

**Heat 132, Wizards 101**

In Washington, Kasparas Jakucionis was 6 for 6 from 3-point range and scored 22 points, Bam Adebayo also had 22 and the Miami Heat routed the Washington Wizards .

Norman Powell added 21 points for Miami, and Kel’el Ware had 19 points and 14 rebounds. The Heat snapped a two-game losing streak and added to their team record with a 14th 130-plus point effort of the season.

Andrew Wiggins had 11 points and 10 rebounds as eighth-place Miami closed within a half-game of seventh-place Orlando in the Eastern Conference.

Tristan Vukcevic had 14 points to lead Washington. The Wizards lost back-to-back games for the first time since a nine-game slide from Jan. 7-24.

Alex Sarr added 12 points and 12 rebounds for the Wizards, who saw both Ky-shawn George and Bilal Coulibaly depart early with injuries.

The Heat turned an early nine-point deficit into a 74-52 lead by halftime. They outrebounded the Wizards 36-22 in the half.

Miami forced 10 third-quarter turnovers to extend its lead to 107-75.

**Raptors’ 122, Pacers 104**

In Toronto, Scottie Barnes had 25 points and 14 rebounds to help the Toronto Raptors beat the Indiana Pacers.

Barnes was 12 of 20 from the field and had six assists, four blocks and two steals in 33 minutes. Toronto won its second straight to move 10 games above .500 at 32-22.

RJ Barrett had 20 points, eight rebounds and five assists, and Sandro Mamukelashvili added 17 points. Trayce Jackson-Davis had 10 points and 10 rebounds in 15 minutes in his Toronto debut following a trade with Golden State.

Pascal Siakam led Indiana with 18 points, Jay Huff had 15 and Jarace Walker 13. Last in the Eastern Conference, the injury-ravaged Pacers have lost four straight to fall to 13-40.

Toronto rookie center Collin Murray-Boyles left with 3:47 left in the first quarter and did not return after he sprained his left thumb. He had two points in eight minutes.

Indiana swingman Johnny Furphy left after taking a bad fall in the third quarter. The Pacers said he was out with right leg soreness.

Best of the Rest

**Bucks sign Thomas:** Cam Thomas has signed with Milwaukee after getting waived by the Brooklyn Nets, the Bucks announced on Sunday.

The 24-year-old guard had spent his entire career with the Nets, who selected him out of LSU with the 27th overall pick in the 2021 draft.

Thomas averaged 15.6 points, 3.1 assists, 1.8 rebounds and 24.3 minutes in 24 games with Brooklyn this season. He had missed about seven weeks with a left hamstring strain but returned on Dec. 27.

Hamstring issues also limited Thomas to 25 games last season, though he scored 24 points per game when available. Thomas, who is 6-foot-3, averaged 22.5 points and played 66 games in 2023-24.

Thomas is shooting a career-low 39.9% overall this season, and he’s made 32.5% of his 3-point attempts. He has shot 43.5% overall and 34.3% from 3-point range in 239 career games, including 88 starts. (AP)

□ □ □

**Davis is expected to return this season:** Washington Wizards general manager Will Dawkins said he expects Anthony Davis to return to the court this season, but that the timeline will become clearer during the All-Star break.

Dawkins’ remarks came a day after The Athletic reported that the Wizards were likely to shut down the injured 10-time All-Star forward for the remainder of the season, citing a league source it did not name.

Washington acquired Davis - who has been recovering from a sprained finger on his non-shooting hand since Jan. 8 - ahead of Thursday’s trade deadline as the centerpiece of an eight-player deal with Dallas. His initial expected return timeline was six weeks.

“The plan for AD right now is to go back to Dallas and finish his rehab,” Dawkins said. “During All-Star break, he takes another visit for a doctor. And that’s a big appointment for us to kind of see where his progress is at.” (AP)

Dembélé stars, PSG routs bitter rival Marseille to regain top spot

Monaco goalkeeper gets away with a blunder in draw at Nice

PARIS, Feb 9, (AP): Bal-lon d’Or winner Ousmane Dembélé starred with two goals and an assist as Paris Saint-Germain crushed bitter rival Marseille 5-0 to reclaim top spot in Ligue 1.

The win restored defending champion PSG’s two-point lead over Lens after 21 rounds, with Marseille in fourth place behind Lyon after the humiliating defeat.

“We wanted to send a message that we’re back,” Dembélé said after PSG’s biggest winning margin against Marseille.

“It was almost perfect,” PSG coach Luis Enrique said. “It’s an important day for our fans because we made history, 5-0 never happened before.”

Despite PSG’s attacking flair, Marseille coach Roberto De Zerbi’s choices will be scrutinized following a truly dismal performance from his side lacking composure and fight. Marseille was eliminated from the Champions League following a 3-0 defeat against Club Brugge less than two weeks ago.

“Once again, I say sorry to the fans,” De Zerbi said. “I’m not in the players’ heads, I thought we had prepared well for this game but clearly not. We need to understand why we played this way in Bruges and here.”

Top scorer Mason Greenwood, fellow forward Amine Gouiri and new signing Ethan Nwaneri were anonymous in attack, with veteran Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang on the bench.

De Zerbi dropped goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli after a couple of poor performances and replaced him with Jeffrey de Lange, who was out of sorts, albeit not helped by his defense.

De Lange was easily beaten when Dembélé side-footed in a cross from left back Nuno Mendes in the 12th minute following a quick break launched by Désiré Doué.

However, PSG could have been down to 10 players before then. Midfielder Vitinha caught defender Leonardo Balerdi’s ankle with a late tackle but escaped with a yellow card.



Marseille’s Facundo Medina, left, tries to block a shot from PSG’s Joao Neves during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Marseille in Paris. (AP)

Having denied Bradley Barcola with a fine low save, De Lange was beaten again in the 37th when Dembélé profited from a glaring error from Balerdi.

He let the ball through his legs on PSG’s right flank, allowing Dembélé to attack the penalty area, dribble past him and find the roof of the net.

“We can’t accept this, we don’t come here to play like this,” said Balerdi, who did not mention his own performance. “We were not good enough and you could see it. Against such a team you pay for it.”

Marseille’s weak defense cracked in 10 second-half minutes, with Facundo Medina scoring an own-goal over the head of De Lange, and Dembélé setting up Khvicha Kvaratskhelia for a clinical volley before Lee Kang-in slotted home the fifth.

Marseille’s 1-0 win over PSG in

September will seem like a distant memory.

PSG fans were in the spotlight after last season’s match at Parc des Princes was marred by homophobic and racist chanting, with a warning to “stop discriminatory chants” posted on the giant screen.

There were brief discriminatory chants about Marseille at the start of the game and referee Willy Delajod stopped play for about one minute around the 70th, at which point a message was posted on the big screen.

Monaco goalkeeper Philipp Köhn got away with a blunder in a 0-0 draw at Nice in the French Riviera derby.

Köhn stopped the ball going out for a corner but slid and mis-kicked it to attacking midfielder Sofiane Diop on the edge of the penalty area in the 72nd minute. Diop’s curling shot was going

in until defender Thilo Kehrer acrobatically heeled the ball away.

Folarin Balogun hit the crossbar for Monaco in the third minute.

Veteran striker Ciro Immobile drew a blank on his league debut for Paris FC in a 0-0 draw at Auxerre.

During the 2019-20 season he finished as the “Capocannoniere” (top scorer) in the Italian league with 36 goals for Lazio and has scored 304 goals overall at club level.

Immobile played forward Jonathan Ikoné clean through during the second half, but Ikoné’s shot was saved.

Angers moved up to ninth after beating Toulouse 1-0 thanks to a brilliant lob from defender Lilian Raolisoa from nearly 40 meters out in the 89th.

Le Havre moved up to 13th after winning 2-1 at home to Strasbourg.

Lens beat Rennes 3-1.

Khan joins Kuwait Cricket Club to lead coaching & high-performance programs

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Kuwait Cricket was pleased to welcome Kabir Khan, who officially arrived in Kuwait to assume his role as General Manager – High Performance & Technical.

A former Pakistan international Test and ODI cricketer, Kabir Khan brings with him extensive global coaching and leadership experience. He has successfully guided national teams such as Afghanistan and the UAE to ICC World Cups, and more recently has been closely involved in the development of emerging cricket nations, including Saudi Arabia.

Widely respected for building competitive high-performance structures and driving long-term



Kuwait Cricket’s national squad listens to as the newly appointed high-performance leadership addresses players during a training session in Kuwait.

player development, Kabir Khan’s appointment represents a significant milestone in Kuwait Cricket’s long-term strategic vision.

In his role, Kabir Khan will:

- Lead the national team coaching operations
- Oversee high-performance pathways
- Drive talent identification and development
- Establish unified technical frameworks across men’s, women’s, and junior programs

His arrival signals a renewed focus on performance excellence, sustainability, and structured growth, as Kuwait Cricket looks to further strengthen its presence on the international stage under his experienced and progressive leadership.

Al-Nassr hopeful Ronaldo will return for Champions League Two

RIYADH, Feb 9, (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo is yet to win a major trophy since arriving in Saudi Arabia, and Al-Nassr will be hoping the 41-year-old Portuguese star returns to action on Wednesday to help the Riyadh club move closer to silverware.

Al-Nassr takes on Arkadag of Turkmenistan with a place in the quarterfinals of the Asian Champions League Two on the line.

Ronaldo hasn’t played any part in Al-Nassr’s most recent two games in the Saudi Pro League amid reports he was unhappy with the way the club is being funded, particularly after watching rival Al-Hilal sign

Karim Benzema in last month’s transfer window.

Al-Nassr, Al-Hilal, Al-Ittihad and Al-Ahli are all majority owned by Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund. In a statement, the SPL outlined that no player is bigger than the club or the league.

“The Saudi Pro League is structured around a simple principle: every club operates independently under the same rules,” the league said. “Cristiano has been fully engaged with Al-Nassr since his arrival and has played an important role in the club’s growth and ambition. But no individual - however significant - determines decisions beyond their own club.”

Despite the absence of the five-time Ballon d’Or winner, Al-Nassr beat reigning champion Al-Ittihad 2-0 on Friday.

Ittihad is the only one of three Saudi teams in the top-tier AFC Champions League Elite not to have secured a place in the round of 16, with two group games remaining.

Despite losing star striker Karim Benzema last week to Al-Hilal, which has a history of making high-profile signings, including Neymar from Paris Saint-Germain in 2023, Ittihad will advance to the next round if it defeats Al-Gharafa of Qatar on Tuesday.

Let’s continue making ever-better cars on various roads: Toyoda

# TOYOTA GAZOO Racing claims sweeping 1-2-3 finish at Rallye Monte-Carlo

MONTE-CARLO, Feb 9: TOYOTA GAZOO Racing World Rally Team (TGR-WRT) opened the 2026 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) season with a historic one-two-three finish at Rallye Monte-Carlo, led by a breakthrough victory from Oliver Solberg and co-driver Elliott Edmondson in the No.99 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1.

Solberg was joined on the podium by teammates Elfyn Evans and Scott Martin in second place in the No. 33 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1, followed by third-place winners Sébastien Ogier and Vincent Landais in the No. 1 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1. Together, they secured Toyota’s first-ever podium lockout at the iconic season opener and the first single-manufacturer sweep at the event since 2015.

Following this opening round, TGR-WRT currently occupies the top three positions in the drivers’ championship standings. Toyota also leads the manufacturers’ championship with a total of 59 points.

Akio Toyoda, TGR-WRT Chairman, commented: “Oliver and Elliott, congratulations on your victory! I never thought that I would be able to say congratulations to you for the second time so soon. I am happy to have such reliable team-mates join the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing WRT family. I also want to thank Elfyn, Scott, Seb, and



TGR-WRT celebrates on the podium after the historic achievement.

Vincent for making a 1-2-3 finish in this season opener.”

Toyoda added: “Thank you to everyone on the team for achieving the best possible results on such difficult roads and conditions. I believe we will face many tough situations this season as well. Let’s continue making ever-better cars on various roads.”

Competing in his first full season with TGR-WRT’s Rally1 line-up, Solberg delivered a commanding perfor-

mance across one of the most demanding editions of Rallye Monte-Carlo in recent memory. The 24-year-old took control of the rally from the second stage of the opening leg and went on to become the youngest winner of Rallye Monte-Carlo in the modern era, as well as the first member of his family to claim victory at the legendary event.

The win also marked Solberg’s second victory in just his first two starts with the Toyota GR YARIS Rally1,



Drivers in action during the race.

following his debut triumph at Rally Estonia, underlining a remarkable start to his tenure with the team.

As the rally progressed, crews faced constantly changing conditions across stages in the French Alps and the mountains above Monaco, with snow, ice, rain, mud, and very limited dry asphalt. Despite the treacherous surfaces and several close calls, Solberg maintained composure throughout the event and ultimately secured victory by a

51.8-second margin.

On the final day, Evans and Martin delivered a strong and consistent drive to finish second, claiming their fifth Rallye Monte-Carlo podium together with TGR-WRT. The duo also topped the rally-ending Power Stage and placed second in the Super Sunday classification, ensuring a valuable points haul at the season’s opening round.

Ogier and Landais completed the podium in third after a closely fought

battle across the latter stages of the rally, securing Ogier’s 15th Rallye Monte-Carlo podium finish from 17 starts and reinforcing Toyota’s dominance at the event.

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nürburgring 24 Hours endurance race. Toyota’s participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established TGR, to consolidate all of its motorsports activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota’s belief that ‘the roads build the people and the people build the cars,’ TGR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota’s commitment to making ‘ever-better’ cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, TGR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone.

Round two of the 2026 FIA WRC is Rally Sweden (February 12-15), the only full winter event of the season. Held entirely across snow and ice, rally demands sharp tyre strategy, precise vehicle control, and unyielding driver confidence in extreme winter conditions.



One of the winners celebrates with the trophy.

## Exciting races highlight third day of Kuwait camel racing

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Kuwait Grand Championship for the sport of fathers and forefathers continued to enjoy strong success as it moved into its fourth day, with yesterday’s events producing intense and thrilling competition among the participating camels.

The camel Al-Tayyari, owned by Fahad Mugbil Al-Ajmi, brought an end to the UAE camels’ winning streak by claiming victory in the Jatha’a Qaad heat. Ezz Malak, owned by Abdullah Obaid Al-Kabti of the UAE, finished second, followed by Mikhlaab, owned by Hamad Al-Nuaimi of the UAE, in third place.

In the Jatha’a Abkar heat, Al-Naifah, owned by Mohammed Talal Al-Ajmi of Kuwait, emerged victorious, while Ghala, owned by Abdullah Mohammed Al-Qafli of the UAE, took second and Saddab, owned by Rashid Mohammed Al-Qafli, placed third.

Other races produced the following results: Bahr, owned by Saeed Salem Al-Marri of Qatar, won the citizens’ Jatha’a Qaad heat. Shabab, owned by Salem Mohammed Talib of Qatar, came second, with Al-Shariss, owned by Zayed

Majdal Al-Otaibi of Kuwait, third. Mardi (Mohammed Talal Al-Ajmi, Kuwait) finished fourth, Al-Faiz (Misfer Mabkhout, Kuwait) fifth, and Al-Sanafi (Hussein Al-Dawas, Kuwait) sixth.

In the Jatha’a Abkar race, Tamoooh, owned by Mohammed Kurdi Al-Marri of Qatar, secured first place, followed by Shouda, owned by Sultan Rashid Hamoud Al-Sahli of Kuwait, and Yahala, owned by Rashid Mohammed Al-Faqli, in third.

The heats dedicated to the Sheikh’s camels were particularly fierce, with the lead changing hands throughout. Qatnah of the Presidential Camels won the opening heat, Maghnoud of Al-Sheehaniya responded by taking the second, and Al-Wazna gave Al-Sheehaniya the advantage in the third. However, Al-Mufriq of the Presidential Camels claimed victory to restore parity, as the contests ended on equal footing.

With the final day approaching, camels from GCC countries and across the Arab world are now gearing up to assert themselves and leave a strong impression in the championship finale.

# Gremaud again denies Gu Oly gold medal in freeski slopestyle

US defends title

LIVIGNO, Italy, Feb 9, (Agencies): Mathilde Gremaud successfully defended her Olympic freeski slopestyle title and denied Eileen Gu a gold medal for a second straight Winter Games.

Gremaud won the final with a score of 86.96 from the best of her three jumps, while Gu again took silver behind her Swiss rival with her best effort of 86.58.

Gremaud, who took her career medal haul to four at the Olympics including a silver eight years ago, said that her winning run was the best of her life.

She also said that the final was about her performing better than ever before, not beating Gu.

Gu needed a huge score on her final run when she had one last chance to better Gremaud, but that effort barely lasted. Gu skittered off the first rail and toppled to her side, dashing her title hopes.

Knowing she had locked up the gold after Gu fell, Gremaud tied a Swiss flag around her neck and wore it like a cape as she cruised down the course on her victory lap. After coming off the course, she embraced her teammates to celebrate her fourth career Olympic medal. Nearby, ecstatic supporters waved Swiss flags.

Gremaud, who turned 26 the day before the final, has now beaten Gu twice in Olympic finals by the slightest of margins: 0.33 points in



Gold medalist Switzerland's Mathilde Gremaud celebrates after winning after the women's freestyle skiing slopestyle finals at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Livigno, Italy. (AP)

2022, and 0.38 in 2026.

Canada’s Megan Oldham claimed bronze.

Strong as Gremaud was in the jumps, Gu was undone by the railing section at the start of her run.

Gu led after the first of three runs when she nailed her routine, but Gremaud laid down her winning run on her second go to move to the top of the points table. Gu then wobbled off the rail on her second run; even though she kept her balance, but the mistake resulted in a low score.

That same rail section had caused Gu to fall during Satur-

day’s qualifying, when she had to execute perfectly on a second go to advance to the final.

But when it mattered most on Monday and Gu had her last shot to snatch a win, the result was the same: Just seconds into her run she went tipping off the rail and tumbled in the snow.

Gu also said her first run was her best ever, and she was feeling good about even topping that on her final go - until she hit that fatal snag.

Gu, who was born in America but competes for China, became a global star at the 2022 Beijing Games where she won three med-

als, including gold in freeski half-pipe and big air. She will now turn to defending her titles at these Games.

Gremaud’s medal chest includes a bronze in big air from 2022. She is also a two-time world champion in slopestyle in 2025 and 2023, among other titles.

The United States successfully defended its title in the figure skating team event at the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics on Sunday, with Japan finishing a close second and host Italy taking bronze.

The United States and Japan entered the men’s free skate - the final segment of the competition - tied atop the overall standings.

American star Ilia Malinin did not land his signature quad Axel but electrified the crowd with a backflip in his routine. Despite minor errors, the 21-year-old scored 200.03 points to win the free skate and earn the maximum 10 points, sealing victory for Team USA.

Skating last under intense pressure, Japan’s Shun Sato delivered a clean performance and posted a season-best 194.86 points, placing second.

Italy’s Matteo Rizzo, competing in his third Olympic Games, scored 179.62 points to finish third, helping the host nation secure a podium place.

## Italy’s long-awaited World Cup debut ends with big defeat against Scotland

KOLKATA, India, Feb 9, (AP): Italy’s 45-year wait ended in a disappointing 73-run defeat against Scotland at the T20 World Cup on Monday, with captain Wayne Madsen dislocating his shoulder inside the first six overs of Group C game.

Italy, where the sport’s national federation was formed in 1980, crashed to 137 all out in 16.4 overs as Madsen didn’t take further part in the historic game after damaging his left shoulder while attempting a catch at mid-wicket.

There was some silver lining in Italy’s maiden appearance in a major global tournament when Benjamin Manenti scored 52 off 31. Benjamin and his brother Harry (37) briefly threatened the tall target with a 73-run stand before both fell in successive overs and Italy lost the last six wickets for 21 runs.

Opening batter George Munsey’s blazing knock of 84 off 54 balls, which featured 13 fours and two sixes, had led Scotland to 207-4 - the highest-ever total by an associate nation in the tournament - after Madsen won the toss and elected to chase.

“I imagine everyone will be flat in the

dressings room and disappointed,” vice-captain Harry Manenti said. “We wanted to show the world what we have. We get another chance in a few days’ time and hopefully we can bounce back.”

Munsey was the star for Scotland and also held four catches, including a brilliant low catch at point to dismiss opener Justin Mosca off the first ball before Italy succumbed to off-spinner Michael Leask, who finished with an impressive 4-17.

Under-prepared Scotland, which replaced Bangladesh, lost to the West Indies at the same venue in its first game, but came back strongly to get its first points in the tournament.

Scotland originally missed out after losing to Italy in the qualifiers, but was drafted in late as a replacement for Bangladesh in Group C. The ICC rejected the Bangladesh Cricket Board’s request to shift its games from India to Sri Lanka due to security concerns.

Munsey set the tempo of a strong total with the first century partnership of the tournament and added 126 runs with his opening partner Michael Jones (37).

# Real wins in Valencia, Betis takes Copa revenge

MADRID, Feb 9, (Xinhua): Second-half goals from left back Alvaro Carreras and Kylian Mbappe gave Real Madrid a 2-0 win away to Valencia, keeping the defending champion one point behind FC Barcelona in the La Liga title race.

Carreras opened the scoring in the 65th minute with an individual effort, riding a pair of weak challenges before finishing. Mbappe sealed the victory in injury time as Madrid, largely subdued before the break, steadily forced Valencia deeper in the second half.

While Madrid stayed on Barcelona’s heels, Valencia slipped closer to the relegation zone in a difficult

week that also saw the club eliminated from the Copa del Rey.

Antony scored in the 29th minute as Real Betis avenged its recent Copa del Rey quarterfinal loss to Atletico Madrid with a 1-0 league win at the Metropolitan Stadium.

Betis, beaten 5-0 at home by Atletico just three days earlier, tightened defensively and was fortunate when a potential second-half equalizer for the hosts was ruled out for offside.

Gorka Guruzeta scored twice in the first half as Athletic Club returned to winning ways with a 4-2 home victory over Levante in a match that descended into chaos late on.

Guruzeta headed home in the 29th minute and added a low finish five minutes later after Levante was reduced to 10 men when Alan Maturo was sent off for hauling down Inaki Williams.

Athletic missed chances to extend its lead, and Unai Elgezabal’s overhead kick pulled a goal back for Levante in the 81st minute. Nico Serrano restored a two-goal cushion five minutes later, but Jon Ander Olasagasti struck in the 94th minute to make it 3-2 before Robert Navarro sealed the win in the ninth minute of added time.

Sevilla salvaged a 1-1 draw at home to Girona thanks to a late goal

from Kike Salas and a stoppage-time penalty save by Odysseas Vlachodimos, who denied Cristhian Stuani with the final kick of the match.

Girona had taken the lead in the second minute through Thomas Lemar and was left frustrated after failing to secure all three points against a Sevilla side that struggled to create chances.

Getafe ended a nine-match winless run with a 2-0 victory away to Alaves.

Alaves edged the first half but failed to respond after Luis Vazquez gave Getafe the lead in the 53rd minute, with Mauro Arambarri adding a penalty in the 72nd.

ARAB TIMES

Kuwait's No.1 English Newspaper

For Subscriptions and Complaints

Please Call

51508991

51526559

NEWS



Oman's Vinayak Shukla plays a shot during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Oman and Zimbabwe in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP) – See Page 15

# Sports

**'No alternative but to beat Zakho'**

## Maaloul: Al-Qadsia's destiny is in its hands

**By Hassan Mosa**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Al-Qadsia head coach Nabil Maaloul has underlined that victory is the only acceptable outcome for his side as it targets all three points.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, the Tunisian coach said: "We have no alternative but to beat Zakho," adding that "Al-Qadsia now controls its own destiny after the win over Sitra."

Maaloul described the group as highly competitive, while stressing his team's full readiness to claim victory in today's clash.

He also pointed out that Al-Qadsia's performances have improved markedly following the return of injured players and changes to some of the foreign professionals, noting that the primary goal is to win and make the club's supporters happy.

For his part, defender Youssef Al-Haqan said that lifting the Super Cup has given the squad a major morale boost, emphasizing that the match against Zakho will be approached with the clear objective of securing all three points.

Al-Qadsia will be determined to secure a crucial victory when it host Iraq's Zakho at 8:00 pm today at Mo-



Al-Qadsia head coach Nabil Maaloul addresses the media during a press conference.

ammed Al-Hamad Stadium, in the fifth round of Group A of the 2025-2026 Gulf Clubs Champions League.

In the same group, UAE side Al Ain visit Bahrain's Sitra at 6:00 pm.

Zakho has already clinched the first semifinal berth, leading the group with 10 points, while the second spot remains wide open among Al Ain (6 points), Al-Qadsia (4 points) and Sitra (2 points).

Al-Qadsia heads into today's clash looking to achieve more than one ob-

jective. It is keen to avenge its 3-1 defeat in the first leg, a match in which it had taken the lead before Zakho mounted a comeback, and it also aims to keep its semifinal hopes alive.

The "Yellows" are enjoying a strong run of form and stability. They recently lifted the Super Cup after edging Al-Arabi 4-3 in the semifinals and then defeating Kuwait Club on penalties (4-3) following a 1-1 draw in the final. They also shared a 1-1 draw with Ku-

wait Club last Friday in the 13th round of the Zain Premier League, leaving them third in the standings, two points behind second-placed Al-Arabi.

Despite the absence of several players, including Abdulaziz Wadi, Khaled Sabah, Ahmed Al-Yahya and Ali Jaragh, head coach Nabil Maaloul still has a wealth of options capable of delivering the result. Key names include Bader Al-Mutawa, Mubarak Al-Fanaini, Rashid Al-Dossary, Moaz Al-Dhafiri, Athbi Shehab and Khaled Ibrahim, alongside foreign professionals Mehdi Humaidan (Bahrain), Abilay (Nigeria), Sofiane Bouchard and Tayeb Mzianni (Algeria), and Neeskens Kebano (DR Congo), as well as promising youngsters Abdullah Al-Awadi, Abdullah Al-Ghaniman and Abdullah Mutawa.

Zakho, meanwhile, arrives amid a period of instability, with a noticeable dip in form in the Iraqi league. It currently sits eighth with 27 points, 10 points adrift of leader Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya after 17 rounds.

These results prompted the club to part ways with Qatari coach Wissam Rizk, appointing Iraqi assistant Mohammed Nomi as interim head coach. Several names have been linked with the role, including Syrians Firas Al-Khatib of Al-Fahaheel and Nizar Mahrous, as well as Iraqis Ayoub Odisho and Adnan Hamad.

## Boxing and squash get a boost as Al-Jalahma tours federations



Boxing Federation management welcomes Minister of Youth and Sports.

**By Khaled Al-Enezi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: As part of his hands-on approach since taking office, Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, Minister of State for Youth and Sports, visited the Kuwait Boxing Federation the day before yesterday. He was welcomed by federation chairman Abdullah Al-Otaibi and board members. The meeting focused on discussing key issues affecting the sport, identifying challenges and needs, and exploring ways for the ministry to better support national sports organizations.

The minister emphasized his commitment to fostering collaboration and backing initiatives that help realize the ambitions of Kuwaiti sports, with a particular focus on advancing boxing and elevating the overall sports sector.

Abdullah Al-Otaibi praised the minister's initiative, noting that such visits help address priorities and remove ob-

stacles, aiming to restore Kuwaiti sports to its former standing, enhance technical performance, and promote the country on international stages.

He added: "The meeting was productive. The minister listened to our main challenges and promised to help overcome them, laying the groundwork for the sport's growth." Al-Otaibi also highlighted the federation's determination to develop boxing at both local and international levels, supported by the state's strong commitment.

Following this, Minister Al-Jalahma visited the Kuwait Squash Federation, where he was received by federation president Waleed Al-Sumai'i, secretary-general Hamed Al-Omran, treasurer Mishal Al-Sharqawi, assistant secretary Hamad Al-Dughaym, and board members Omar Al-Qudaybi and Adel Al-Gharib.

The visit aimed to hear the federation's feedback, review the challenges it faces, and work toward solutions to strengthen the sport in the future.

### Al-Rayyan takes on Al-Wakra

## Kuwait Club eyes championship semifinals spot against Al-Seeb

**By Khaled Al-Enezi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Kuwait Club will face Oman's Al-Seeb today at 5:00 pm in the quarterfinals of the 4th West Asia Volleyball Championship. The tournament is being hosted by Kuwait at the federation hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex and will run until February 14.

Earlier today, a "Qatari derby" will see Al-Rayyan takes on Al-Wakra at 1:00 pm, followed by a match between Bahrain's Al-Ahli and Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad at 3:00 pm. The quarterfinals will conclude at 7:00 pm with Bahrain's Dar Kulaib facing Iraq's Gaz Al-Janoub.

The preliminary round concluded the day before yesterday, with Kuwait losing 2-3 to Bahrain's Al-Ahli, Al-Ittihad defeating Dar Kulaib 3-2, and Al-Seeb beating Barqan 3-0. As a result, Al-Ahli topped Group B, Kuwait finished second, Al-Wakra third, and Lebanon's Shabab Al-Batron came fourth. In Group A, Al-Rayyan led the standings, followed by Gaz Al-Janoub and Oman's Majis. In Group C, Dar Kulaib claimed first place, with Al-Seeb second, Al-Ittihad third, and Barqan fourth.

According to the tournament format, the top two teams from each group advance to the quarterfinals, along with the



Brazilian Costa spikes the ball during the West Asia Volleyball Championship.

two best third-placed teams.

Kuwait Club is determined to secure a win today, maintain its run for the 4th edition title, and advance to the semifinals the day after tomorrow. The team will rely on key players Abdullah Bouftain and Abdullah Jassim, alongside foreign talents Estonian Oliver Vieno, Canadian Nicholas Hawk, and Brazilian Lenson Costa, on loan from Kazma.

## Kuwait sets Feb 14 national sports day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): Kuwait has rescheduled its National Sports Day to February 14, one week after the event was postponed because of unfavorable weather conditions, Kuwait Sports for All Federation Chairman Faisal Al-Maqseed announced on Monday.

Al-Maqseed said the decision to delay the annual event was taken to ensure the safety of participants and

to help protect public property, noting that the new date provides more suitable conditions for the celebrations.

He added that National Sports Day remains a community-oriented initiative aimed at promoting physical activity and a healthy lifestyle, expressing confidence that the event will be held smoothly and enjoyably for all participants.

## Qurain too strong for Al-Arabi

**By Khaled Al-Enezi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Qurain Club's basketball team delivered a commanding performance against Al-Arabi, securing a 104-69 victory in the 14th round at the federation hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex. Meanwhile, Al-Sulaibikhat defeated Al-Nasr 107-86, while Kuwait Club's games against Al-Qadsia and Kazma were postponed due to its participation in the Gulf qualifiers of the West Asia Championship.

The win lifted Qurain to 23 points, placing them third in the standings, just

ahead of Kazma with 22 points. Kuwait Club leads the league, followed by Al-Qadsia with 24 points each. Al-Sulaibikhat sits fifth with 21 points, Al-Nasr sixth with 17, Al-Arabi seventh with 16, and Al-Sahel eighth with 15 points.

The tournament is structured as a league divided into three groups, with the top four teams advancing to the semifinals, played as best-of-three playoff series. The top four clubs are edging closer to semifinal qualification, while Al-Sulaibikhat remains in contention for one of the final spots in the third group of the preliminary round.



Seattle Seahawks chair Jody Allen celebrates with the trophy after the team's win in the NFL Super Bowl 60 football game against the New England Patriots in Santa Clara, Calif. (AP)

### Seattle pummels Patriots

**SANTA CLARA, Calif., Feb 9, (AP):** The "Dark Side" defense carried Sam Darnold and the Seattle Seahawks to a Lombardi Trophy.

Devon Witherspoon, Derick Hall, Byron Murphy and the rest of Mike Macdonald's ferocious unit pummeled Drake Maye, and the Seahawks beat the New England Patriots 29-13 to win the franchise's second Super Bowl.

"We never waver, man. We believe in each other. We love each other, and now we're world champions," Macdonald said.

Darnold threw a touchdown pass to AJ Barner, Kenneth Walker III ran for 135 yards and Jason Myers set a Super Bowl record by making all five of his field-goal tries.

"To do this with this team, I wouldn't want it any other way," Darnold said. "So proud of our guys, our defense. I mean, I can't say enough great things about our defense, our special teams."

Walker became the first running back to win the Super Bowl MVP award since Hall of Famer Terrell Davis did it with Denver 28 years ago.

Uchenna Nwosu punctuated a punishing defensive performance by snag-

ging Maye's pass in the air after Witherspoon hit his arm and running it back 45 yards for a pick-6.

"We went through a lot, but we believed," Witherspoon said. "All of you all doubters out there who said all that other stuff, you all don't know what's going on in this building. We're one of one over here."

Seattle won its first Super Bowl a dozen years ago behind its "Legion of Boom" defense, then was denied a repeat when New England's Malcolm Butler intercepted Russell Wilson at the goal line. The Seahawks hadn't been back to the Super Bowl since.

Darnold became the first quarterback in the 2018 NFL draft class to win a Super Bowl, ahead of Josh Allen, Baker Mayfield and Lamar Jackson.

Labeled a bust, dumped by two teams and considered expendable by two others, Darnold proved his doubters wrong while helping the Seahawks go 17-3.

After leading the NFL with 20 turnovers in the regular season, Darnold didn't have any in three playoff games. He wasn't particularly sharp against a solid Patriots defense but protected the ball and made enough plays, finishing 19 of 38 for 202 yards.

"I know we won the Super Bowl, but we could have been a little bit better on offense, but I don't care about that right now," Darnold said. "It's an unbelievable feeling, man. I'm just so happy

for the guys in the locker room and the coaches that put in so much effort throughout the whole season."

The Seahawks sacked Maye six times, including two apiece by Hall and Murphy. Hall's strip-sack late in the third quarter set up a short field and Darnold connected with Barner on 16-yard scoring toss to make it 19-0.

Julian Love's interception set up another field goal that made it 22-7 with 5:35 left.

The Patriots (17-4) punted on the first eight drives, excluding a kneel-down to end the first half.

"Just reminding them that we're 307 days into what hopefully is a long, successful relationship and program, and it's OK to be disappointed," New England coach Mike Vrabel said.

Down 19-0, Maye and the Patriots' offense finally got going. He hit Mack Hollins over the middle in traffic for 24 yards and then lofted a perfect 35-yard TD pass to Hollins down the left side to cut the deficit to 19-7.

Tom Brady once led Bill Belichick's Patriots to the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history, when New England rallied from a 28-3 deficit against Atlanta for a 34-28 overtime victory.

But Maye, who was runner-up to Matthew Stafford for the AP NFL MVP award in the closest race in two decades, didn't come close. He had a chance to narrow the gap, but his ill-advised pass into triple coverage was

picked by Love and the Patriots trailed by 15 when they got the ball back with 5:35 left. Maye said after the game that he had a pain-relieving injection in his right shoulder, which he injured in the AFC championship win at Denver, but said it didn't affect his play.

Then came Nwosu's touchdown, a fitting way to cap an overwhelming effort by the NFL's stingiest defense.

"Definitely hurts. They played better than us tonight," Maye said.

Maye's 7-yard TD pass to Rhamondre Stevenson late in the game only made the margin smaller.

The Seahawks took a 3-0 lead on Myers' 33-yard field goal on the game's opening drive. Myers connected from 39 and 41 yards to extend the lead to 9-0 at halftime. He was good from 41 on Seattle's first drive of the third quarter to make it 12-0.

Cornerback Christian Gonzalez made two outstanding plays to prevent potential touchdowns in the second quarter. He raced back and leaped in the air to slap away a deep pass to Rashid Shaheed that could have been a 76-yard TD.

On Seattle's last drive in the first half, Gonzalez knocked down a pass to All-Pro wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba that would have been a 23-yard TD.

Rylie Mills pushed left guard Jared Wilson into Maye and took both of them down on one of Seattle's sacks.