



KD 5,000 FINE, 5-YEAR JAIL TERM AWAIT CERTIFICATE FORGERS

Kuwait leads fake degree purge

Employees told to update academic credentials

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Committee for Examining Academic Credentials has stressed to government and private sector entities the importance of updating their employees' data within a deadline that will be specified in notifications sent to each employer through the government application Sahel, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Assistant Undersecretary for Scholarships and Study Leaves at the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Narjes Abdulsoul told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday that the Committee for Examining Academic Credentials of employees in the public and private sectors, including citizens and expatriates, organized an orientation

forum at the CSC headquarters.

Present at the forum were representatives of ministries, government departments, public authorities and institutions, as well as State-owned companies. It aimed to clarify the role of the committee and the responsibilities of participating entities in achieving its objectives.

Abdulsoul explained that one of the primary objectives of the committee is to ensure the accuracy and integrity of employee data and to verify the academic qualifications of employees in the public and private sectors, whether citizens or expatriates, in order to guarantee the continuation of their financial and employment benefits.

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Weekend weather whiplash brings rain, fog, dust

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department forecasted cloudy conditions with scattered rainfall, fog and variable winds that could raise dust over the weekend.

The department indicated that the weekend weather will be warm to hot, with mild conditions during the early evening hours and cooler temperatures at night.

Acting Director of the department Dharar Al-Ali told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the weather charts and numerical forecasts showed that Kuwait is affected by the extension of a surface low-pressure system combined with a warm and humid air mass, which started Thursday and will continue on Friday. This is expected to increase low and mid-level cloud cover and bring scattered rain showers.

Al-Ali revealed that winds will be variable, turning southeasterly, and will range from light to moderate in speed. There is also a possibility of fog developing in some areas during the evening and early morning hours, potentially reducing horizontal visibility.

He revealed that beginning Saturday, the low-pressure system will gradually subside and will be replaced with a relatively dry air mass. As a result, winds will shift from southerly to northwesterly, becoming moderate to occasionally active, and raising dust particularly in open areas.

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Gray skies hang over Kuwait highways Thursday, yet the iconic Water Towers provide a striking splash of color.

Court upholds jail for colonel, expats over fake licenses

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah and Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Court of Cassation upheld the four-year prison sentence with hard labor imposed on a colonel, head of the licensing unit at the Jahra Traffic Department, and several expatriates, for involvement in the issuance of forged driving licenses and the use of forged work permits and academic certificates.

Investigations proved the defendants' involvement in processing driving license applications based on falsified documents, including work permits and academic certificates that were proven to be forged.

The Court of Cassation rejected the appeals filed by the defendants and upheld the ruling of the lower and appeals courts, which found them guilty of forgery.

Also, the court acquitted the colonel of bribery charges due to insufficient evidence.

Kuwait Embassy in US celebrates national milestones

The Kuwait Embassy in the United States held on Wednesday a reception marking the 65th Independence Day and the 35th Liberation Day.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement, Kuwait Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah extended sincere and great congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people.

She affirmed Kuwait's pride for deep-rooted strategic relations between the US and Kuwait, referring that this

occurrence coincides with the 35th anniversary of the operations of the US-led international coalition launched to liberate Kuwait.

Sheikha Al-Zain underlined the importance of culture and heritage in cementing understanding and friendship among nations.

She pointed to Kuwaiti Sadu House's participation this year in preparing for opening the Sadu exhibition in a way that shows Kuwait's cultural identity richness and enhances the country's civilized presence in the US.

The event featured some senior officials in the US Administration, diplomatic corps members and several dignitaries. (KUNA)



Kuwait Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah in a group photo during a reception marking Kuwait's 65th Independence Day and the 35th Liberation Day.

Digital payments lead Kuwait spending habits

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): Digital payment adoption in Kuwait has surged, leaving cash with just a 30 percent share of everyday spending. Visa's Country Manager for Kuwait Mohammad Reyad attributes this to a rapid national embrace of digital payment solutions.

In an interview with KUNA, Reyad said the shift reflects a fundamental change in consumer payment habits by prioritizing digital solutions for daily needs as Kuwait is building a more efficient financial system and a digital economy, directly supporting the goals of Kuwait Vision 2035.

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Lebanese minister affirms strong ties with Kuwait



Photo during a press conference held at the Lebanese Embassy.

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Historic ties highlighted at embassy reception

Kuwait marks national days amid Saudi bonds

RIYADH, Feb 12, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed on Wednesday that Kuwait gives exceptional attention and care to the historical relations between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

This came in a statement by Ambassador Sheikh Sabah to KUNA on the occasion of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Saudi Arabia celebrating the country's national holidays.

He added that the large attendance of fellow officials and Saudi citizens at the celebration in clear evidence of the depth and strength of the ties between both countries.

Sheikh Sabah stated that Kuwaiti-Saudi relations are more than a relationship between two countries, but are built on that of family, brotherhood and a shared history that continues to grow.

He extended his congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the national holidays of Kuwait.

Sheikh Sabah also offered his congratulations to King Salman bin Abdulaziz and to the Saudi people on the occasion of the Saudi Arabian Foundation Day.

The Kuwait Embassy in the King-

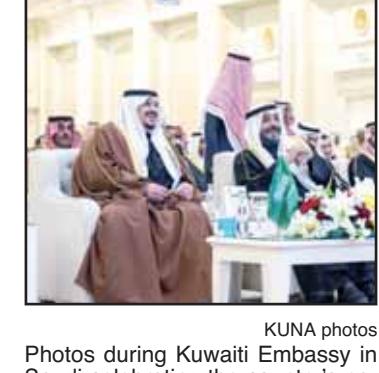


dom of Saudi Arabia celebrated on Wednesday the 65th Independence Day and the 35th Liberation Day.

The ceremony was attended by Deputy Governor of Riyadh Province Prince Mohammad bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz, some senior officials, dignitaries and the heads of diplomatic missions in the Kingdom.

At the beginning, Kuwait Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah welcomed the attendees, expressing appreciation to all who took part in Kuwait's celebrations of the two dear occasions.

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KUNA photos
Photos during Kuwaiti Embassy in Saudi celebrating the country's national holidays.

2 Epstein's scandals are far from over



8 KFH wins Forbes Middle East 'Most Valuable Bank' Award



KFH wins Forbes Middle East 'Most Valuable Bank' Award

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaitah affirmed Thursday the approval of detailed internal regulations for the Women's Shelter, supporting family protection.

In a statement, Al-Huwaitah said the regulations implement Law No. 16 of 2020 on Protection from Domestic Violence, ensuring victims receive safety, dignity, and comprehensive support.

The guidelines define procedures for reception and accommodation, confidentiality standards, beneficiaries' rights and responsibilities, and administrative and technical roles within the center, enhancing governance and service quality.

She emphasized that the regulations mark an important step toward a safe, professional shelter environment that respects privacy and provides psychological, social, and legal support.

The ministry remains committed to updating organizational frameworks according to best international practices

to promote family stability and uphold women's dignity.

Al-Huwaitah reiterated that protecting women from violence is a national responsibility requiring collaboration among all sectors, with the ministry continuing to develop preventive and remedial services in line with Kuwait's vision for social justice and rights protection. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Thursday discussed enhancing healthcare cooperation with representatives of US hospitals and medical companies to support the development of Kuwait's health system.

Al-Awadhi said the ministry seeks direct partnerships between specialized departments in Kuwait and leading US institutions to facilitate expertise exchange, and reduce overseas treatment cases.

For his part, Assistant Undersecretary Dr. Hisham Kalander noted that cooperation with institutions such as Johns Hopkins Hospital and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute has helped improve service quality and expand visiting doctor and telemedicine programs, with plans to sign further memoranda of understanding. (KUNA)

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:10 Asr 15:11
 Sunrise .. 06:30 Maghrib .. 17:35
 Zohr 12:02 Isha 18:53

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm and visibility will decrease due to fog and it will improve later on with light variable wind to light to moderate south-easterly wind, with speeds of 10-32 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station Max Exp Min Rec

Kuwait Airport 25 19

Weather

By Night: Mild to rather cold and partly cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 10-32 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Abdaly	23	17
Bubyan	18	13
Jahra	25	19
Faillaka Island	18	14
Salmiyah	20	19
Ahmadi	20	14
Jal Aliyah	24	16
Nuwaibis	27	16
Wafra	26	18

Kuwait embassies in China, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Oman mark National Days



Kuwait embassy celebrations in Abu Dhabi.



Kuwait's Ambassador to China Jassem Al-Najem



KUNA photos

BEIJING, Feb 12, (KUNA): The Embassy of in China held a reception Wednesday marking the 65th National Day of Kuwait and the 35th Liberation Day, in the presence of Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Miao Deyu, senior officials and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Beijing.

Kuwait's Ambassador to China Jassem Al-Najem extended his highest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Moshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdulla Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people. In a speech, Ambassador Al-Najem highlighted the depth of historic bilateral relations between Kuwait and China, noting that this year marks the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties.

He said that since the inception of relations, the two countries have enjoyed deep-rooted friendship and steady development in cooperation, achieving tangible progress across political, economic, trade, energy and cultural fields. He reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to its strategic partnership with China and to advancing cooperation in ways that serve mutual interests and shared benefits.

Abu Dhabi

Kuwait's Embassy in UAE hosted Tuesday celebration marking Kuwait's 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day, attended by UAE officials, diplomats and Kuwaiti community representatives, led by Deputy Prime Minister

and Interior Minister Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

In remarks during the event, Kuwait's Ambassador to the UAE Jamal Al-Ghunaim extended congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Moshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Ghunaim said the national holidays reflect the unity of Kuwaitis behind their leadership and recall Kuwait's development and achievements since its founding.

Liberation Day remains a symbol of Kuwait's determination and the sacrifices made to defend its security, stability and sovereignty, he said. He described Kuwait-UAE relations as a model of strong fraternal ties, noting continued growth in cooperation across political, economic, cultural and social fields.

Qatar

The Kuwait Embassy in Qatar marked on Wednesday the 65th Independence Day and the 35th Liberation Day, in the presence of a plethora of ministers, officials, ambassadors and dignitaries.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement, Charge d'Affairs at Kuwait Embassy Minister Plenipotentiary Mohammad Al-Zogbhi conveyed congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Moshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His

and Interior Minister Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdulla Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti government and Kuwaiti people on the national days.

Marking the national days is an occasion to renew loyalty to Kuwait and its leadership, and work to serve Kuwaitis as well as show Kuwait's clear message for peace to the whole world and cement collaboration and friendship among the world's nations and peoples, he added.

Oman

The Embassy of the State of Kuwait in the Sultanate of Oman held a celebration on Wednesday to mark the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day.

The event was attended by the Omani Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, along with several ministers, members of the Omani State Council and Shura Council, and members of the diplomatic corps in Oman.

In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the Kuwaiti Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Al-Hajri, extended his warmest congratulations to the Kuwaiti political leadership and people.

He affirmed that the State of Kuwait is witnessing comprehensive development across all sectors under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Moshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



A photo of the symposium participants.

Kuwait hails Japan for science, tech support

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammary

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The 22nd Kuwaiti-Japanese Joint Symposium entitled, "Advancement in Petroleum Industries," was held recently with discussions on critical energy topics.

The symposium was held through the collaborative efforts of the Petroleum Research Center at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Japan Cooperation Center for Petroleum, Japan Petroleum Institute, and Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC).

KISR Director General Dr. Faisal Al-Humaidan inaugurated the event, during which he affirmed the deep and decades-long history of cooperation between Kuwait and Japan, which traces back to the assistance provided by the Arabian Oil Company in establishing KISR.

Al-Humaidan stressed that this mutually beneficial relationship has strengthened over the years, covering joint

research to bridge technological gaps and hosting distinguished Japanese scientists at KISR facilities. He praised the Japanese government for its unwavering support for science and technology.

Meanwhile, Japanese Ambassador Kenichiro Mukai underscored the importance of oil and natural gas as stable and sustainable energy sources, even amidst projections of decline in their overall share of energy consumption.

He stressed the need for balanced energy mix, requiring stronger and more stable supply systems and accelerated efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

Wadha Al-Khatib, CEO of KNPC, underscored the sturdiness of the Kuwait-Japan partnership, recognizing the vital role of exchanging expertise and knowledge for development and innovation.

He affirmed the commitment of KNPC to focus on sustainability, digital transformation and operational improvement, citing effective partnerships with research institutions like KISR as fundamental to achieving a sustainable future.

Focus on Kuwait cultural identity

Diplomatic Institute marks 'Quraish'

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12:

Assistant Foreign Minister for Saud Nasser Diplomatic Institute Ambassador Nasser Al-Subaie pointed out that organizing the 'Quraish' program is in line with the commitment of the Institute to put the spotlight on the Kuwaiti cultural identity in the diplomatic field, while strengthening the humanitarian and social dimensions of official events.

In his speech at the event, Al-Subaie said this is achieved through effective national partnerships that bring together State institu-



Artefacts showing the depth and cultural diversity of the national heritage.

tions with the private sector and public benefit organizations.

The event, which is in partnership with Warba Bank, featured the unique

contributions of people with disabilities who showcased their own handcrafted heritage products.

According to Al-Subaie, Kuwaiti artisans and

historians also contributed, presenting traditional crafts, artifacts, and historical manuscripts that document an important aspect of Kuwait's history, showing the depth and cultural diversity of the national heritage.

He confirmed that this partnership is a manifestation of the belief of the Institute in the importance of joint institutional work in promoting national culture, consolidating the concepts of social inclusion, and celebrating authentic Kuwaiti values. He stated that culture is vital in building a balanced and open diplomacy, which depicts the civilizational image of the State of Kuwait.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Sudanese Minister of Culture, Information, Tourism and Antiquities Khalid Al-Eisir expressed the deep appreciation of the Sudanese government for the support that the brotherly State of Kuwait — its leadership, government and people — provided to Sudan in facing the aggression perpetrated by the Rapid Support Forces militia.

In a press conference, Al-Eisir affirmed that the Kuwaiti assistance was provided at the humanitarian and economic levels, contributing significantly to ongoing efforts to alleviate the suffering of Sudanese citizens. He said Kuwait was among the first countries to help Sudan through the establishment of an airbridge of 36 flights carrying food, medicine and shelter supplies.

He added that three relief ships were dispatched from the ports of Safaga and Jeddah, Islamic ports, in cooperation with the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center.

This is in addition to life-saving medications for kidney failure and cancer patients sent from the Turkish port of Mersin, which reached the Sudanese refugees in Chad.

On the economic front, Al-Eisir disclosed that Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) approved the \$5 million grant to support the cholera response efforts in Khartoum, River Nile and Gezira states in cooperation with UNICEF.

He added the Fund also approved the following:

■ \$4 million grant to enhance the resilience of internally displaced persons (IDPs), including \$2 million to support 500 smallholder farms in White Nile, Gezira, Kassala and Red Sea states

■ \$3.2 million grant to improve the conditions of Sudanese refugees in Chad, in cooperation with UNHCR

■ \$2.5 million to improve the conditions of IDPs and strengthen host communities

He expressed his deep gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Moshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdulla Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, affirming that the Sudanese people deeply appreciate the support of Kuwait for the unity and stability of Sudan.

He expressed his deep appreciation for the diplomatic role of Kuwait, praising the strong framework established by Kuwaiti diplomacy and its active presence in various sectors, particularly the economic sector.

He stressed that Sudan is indebted to the State of Kuwait for its continuous support to the Sudanese people.

He stressed that his visit to Kuwait comes in a positive spirit, aiming to solidify bilateral relations and strengthen trust, so that the partnership between the two countries becomes a tangible and sustainable reality.

Regarding investments, he pointed out that Sudan is a vast country, and that the security situation in some areas will not hinder investment in other stable regions.

Belgian embassy closure postponed

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation Maxime Prévost announced on his X platform account the postponement of the closure of the Belgian Embassy in Kuwait for one year.

Other Voices

Epstein's scandals are far from over

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjari

THE Jeffrey Epstein case is the story of a system laid bare. Files of this kind do not distribute verdicts.

They distribute suspicion. And in the worlds of finance and politics, suspicion alone can redirect careers, freeze deals, and place public figures and institutions under an uncomfortable spotlight long before any evidence matures into a courtroom verdict.

Will the newly released documents affect Arab, Gulf, and Kuwaiti figures whose names appear in them? Most likely yes. Not through street protests or domestic pressure, but through international institutions, business partners, and corporate boards. The decisive metric here is reputation. Governance rules, compliance departments, and risk commit-

tees treat ethical exposure as an investment variable even when personal convictions are absent because public opinion in open markets can be unforgiving.

A recent oversight hearing in Washington shows how political turbulence amplifies that uncertainty. US Attorney General Pam Bondi, questioned about the Justice Department's handling of the Epstein files, repeatedly avoided direct answers and drifted into partisan talking points as the session escalated into heated exchanges. When Governments and global investors see the official source of information in Washington turn into theater, they act defensively to protect their brands from anyone perceived as tainted, Arab or otherwise.

The harsh conclusion is that Arab figures who remained close to Epstein after his 2008 conviction may never face automatic prosecution, yet they lose the simplest defense, "we did not know." Questions will linger until convincing answers emerge and with more than three million documents now in circulation, further revelations are almost certain.

Progress on major projects discussed

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): Minister of Public Works

Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan chaired on Thursday the 46th meeting of the ministerial committee tasked with following up the executive status of major development projects in the country. The meeting reviewed updates on major projects included in memoranda of understanding signed between Kuwait and other countries, notably cooperation on Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, electricity systems, renewable energy development, and low-carbon waste recycling initiatives.

Discussions also addressed housing development, environmental infrastructure for wastewater treatment plants, free and economic zones, land reclamation, ecosystem rehabilitation, expansion of afforestation programs, environmental protection efforts, and measures aimed at combating sand encroachment nationwide.

Al-Mashaan affirmed that the executive contract for the North Kabd Wastewater Treatment Plant project will be signed in February with the designated Chinese state-owned company, under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdulla Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior officials.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and committee rapporteur Ambassador Sameeh Johar Hayat said the meeting falls within periodic reviews of agreements and memoranda signed with other governments, stressing continued coordination among state bodies to accelerate implementation of major projects. The committee also reviewed progress on Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, including a proposal by China Baowu Steel Group to establish an iron and steel plant on Boubyan Island, with Kuwait expressing interest in supporting and potentially co-investing in the project.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdulatif Al-Mishari, Minister of Finance Dr. Yaqoub Al-Refaie, Director General of KDIPA Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Al-Majed, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and committee rapporteur Ambassador Sameeh Johar Hayat, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel, and senior officials from the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs.

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The harsh conclusion is that Arab figures who remained close to Epstein after his 2008 conviction may never face automatic prosecution, yet they lose the simplest defense, "we did not know." Questions will linger until convincing answers emerge and with more than three million documents now in circulation, further revelations are almost certain.

Al-Anjari

LOCAL

diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Back to square one ... issue lies with minister selection

"IT was widely believed that 'parliamentary obstructionism' was the sole obstacle to the stability of the executive authority. However, the current political landscape raises a fundamental question: Does the problem lie in the Parliament and its oversight role, or in the mechanism for selecting ministers?" Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Today, despite the executive authority possessing full powers, we find that ministerial appointments still revolve around the same traditional names. Undoubtedly, the problem of ministerial appointments in our region is not a recent phenomenon, rather, it is the fruit of decades of relying on personal trust, or what is known as 'good guy,' at the expense of political and technical competence."

"This approach has remained unchanged in Kuwait for 60 years, rendering any change in names a mere cosmetic procedure that fails to address the core of reform.

"In advanced countries, the selection of ministers is not left to chance or personal connections. There are what are called 'leadership labs' and technical committees that work for months to examine the resumes and the social and political conduct of officials nominated for ministerial positions.

"In some major countries, nominated candidates undergo rigorous vetting that includes their criminal record, financial integrity, intellectual leanings, past political stances and crisis management skills.

"The complete file is presented to the Prime Minister, who selects based on technical criteria, rather than searching for names to fill vacancies at a later date.

"In reality, however, a true minister is not someone who waits for a predetermined 'ceiling' to be set for him, but rather someone who comes to office with his own vision and professional convictions.

"Competent national figures do not accept positions merely to fill vacancies, they strive to establish a new reality and transform the ministry from an administrative center into a center of productivity.

"The method of selecting ministers has not changed till today, meaning that the National Assembly has, for many years, been nothing more than a scapegoat for selection errors and mismanagement.

"It has become clear that the problem lies at the root and in the selection process, which requires a comprehensive overhaul.

"For months, we have witnessed the circulation of names of potential Cabinet reshuffle candidates, to the point that some officials were certain they would become ministers, but things changed later.

"While we acknowledge the constitutional right of the executive branch and the Prime Minister's right to choose his team, the situation remains unchanged. Despite the absence of the National Assembly, which was always used as a pretext for 'obstruction' and hindering the formation of the Cabinet, we find ourselves facing the same predicament. We witnessed this in recent days."

Also:

"Legends say that there was once a lion cub living in the Cuckoo Island forest. His father, the king of the jungle, assigned him a task, alongside a monkey known for his energy and speed in completing tasks," Hamad Salem Al-Marrri wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The cub was lazy, which prompted his father, the lion, to constantly reprimand him for his lack of productivity. The lion praised the monkey and urged the cub to be as productive and efficient as him, thus, planting a deep-seated resentment towards the monkey in the cub's heart.

"As the years passed, the cub grew up to be a lion and was crowned king of the jungle, succeeding his father. The animals of the jungle gathered to congratulate and pledge their allegiance to him. When he saw the monkey among them, he called him over and asked, 'Where is your hat?' The monkey replied, 'I do not wear a hat.' The lion slapped him hard across the face and banished him. Every time he saw the monkey, he called him back and asked, 'Where is your hat?' The monkey would give the same answer, and the lion would slap him hard. This continued for many days until the news spread among all the animals, and talk began to circulate that the lion was a dictator and a tyrant, for beating the monkey without any good reason."

"After the lion persisted in beating the monkey, the wolf asked him why he kept hitting the monkey without any justification. The lion replied that he hated the monkey and could not stand him, and that he just wanted an excuse to beat him. The wolf advised him, 'Your actions will only increase the people's hatred for you. You should ask him a logical question, like asking him to bring you an apple. If he brings you a red one, slap him and say, "I want a green one." If he brings you a green one, slap him and say, "I want a red one." As the lion was walking through the forest, he saw the monkey working diligently. He called him over in front of all the animals and asked him to bring him an apple. The monkey asked, 'Do you want a red one or a green one?' The lion, without hesitation, slapped him hard and said, 'Where is your hat?'

"This story applies to some employees who were promoted and given an administrative position through favoritism or administrative corruption, especially since the current job evaluation system prioritizes attendance and punctuality over productivity, proficiency and respectful interaction with the public and colleagues. Once they assume their positions, they become arrogant towards their colleagues and harbor resentment, particularly if those colleagues are more active and efficient. This is done to mask their low productivity and lack of administrative knowledge.

"This type of manager is more prevalent in the public sector than the private sector. The private sector focuses on productivity and evaluates employees according to high-quality standards, unlike the bloated public sector, which suffers from disguised unemployment, low productivity, and the absence of a proper mechanism for evaluating employee performance.

"Furthermore, promotions in the public sector are based on length of service rather than experience, productivity and innovation.

"The real tragedy is when this type of official assumes a leadership position. He will use his position to attack anyone who was previously better than him, trying to portray himself as decisive and knowledgeable, while in reality, he is draining the ministry of competent individuals who flee from his tyranny and injustice."

□ □ □

"The city of Samarra, north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, was teeming with life and knowledge, boasting of its great university headed by esteemed scholar Abu Al-Hasan, one of the leading thinkers in Iraq, around whom students from all over the Arab world gathered," Mohammad Al-Fawzan wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"One of the students was a poor but sharp-witted and ambitious young man who dreamed of one day becoming a pillar of knowledge in his country. On a hot day, this student left his teacher's class hungry, possessing only a fil and a half, while his simple meal – a loaf of bread and a radish – cost two fils.

"The student bought a loaf of bread for one fil, then went to the greengrocer, saying, 'I only have half a fil, can I buy a bunch of radishes with it?'

"The greengrocer replied sarcastically that a bunch of radishes cost one fil.

"The student pleaded with him to give him the radishes for half a fil and he would share with him some useful pieces of Islamic jurisprudence.

"The vendor laughed loudly and said dismally, 'If your knowledge were of any use, it would have brought you half a penny to complete the price of the radishes. Go, soak your knowledge in water and drink it to satisfy your hunger.'

"These words struck the student like a dagger to the heart. He stood stunned and thought to himself, 'Truly, what good is knowledge that does not feed its possessor? Ten years of studying have not even provided me with half a penny.'

"At that moment, the student decided to quit his studies and find a job to sustain himself. A few days later, Abu Al-Hasan noticed his smart student was missing and inquired about him in the classroom. He was told that the student quit his studies to work, because poverty overwhelmed him.

"The teacher, pushed by compassion, went to the student's house and asked him why he abandoned his studies. The student recounted his story, tears streaming down his face. The teacher reached out, removed his ring, and said, 'Take this ring, sell it, and improve your situation.'

"The student went to the goldsmiths market and offered the ring for sale. One of them exclaimed in surprise, 'This ring is precious! I will buy it from you for a thousand dinars. But, how did you get it?'

"The student replied that the ring was a gift from his teacher, Sheikh Abu Al-Hasan. "The goldsmith went with him to the teacher to verify his claim, and Abu Al-Hasan confirmed that he indeed gave him the ring.

"The goldsmith paid the price and left. When the student returned, his teacher asked him, 'Who did you go to when you wanted to sell the ring?'

"He replied, 'To the goldsmiths market, of course.'

"The teacher asked him why he did not go to the radish seller. The student answered, 'Because only goldsmiths know the value of jewels and metals.' The professor smiled and said, 'My son, you have answered your own question. Why did you let a radish seller judge your knowledge? Does anyone truly value knowledge except those who recognize its worth? Resume your studies, and do not let someone who does not know your value put you on their scale. My son, do not let someone who does not know your worth evaluate you. Not everyone who sees you understands your true essence. Only goldsmiths know the value of gold, and only scholars understand the worth of a scholar.'

"How many among us have lost ourselves because we believed a cheap opinion from an unworthy tongue? Value yourself in the eyes of those who see your essence, not in the eyes of those who see you as merchandise in a radish market."

Compiled by Saeed Mahmoud Saleh



MoE photos

Many schools took part in the annual robotics contest.

Preparing generation with hi-tech skills

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: In line with the ongoing cooperation between the Ministry of Education and local and regional organizations, and as part of the commitment of the ministry to support and advance the comprehensive educational process, the ministry is exerting tremendous efforts to hold high-quality educational activities that contribute to the development of the skills of students, refining their scientific and technical abilities, and promoting innovation and creative thinking.

Acting Director of the Computer Guidance Department at the ministry Mona Salim Awadh stressed that the annual Kuwait School Robotics Competition is an exceptional educational event that integrates the theoretical and practical aspects.

She said the competition plays a crucial role in developing the students' logical thinking and

problem-solving skills, while fostering positive competition and teamwork.

She explained that the competition serves as a stimulating educational platform that enables students to present their innovations and technological projects, as well as to provide them with hands-on experience in programming and robotics, as per the demands of digital transformation and rapid technological advancement.

She stressed the importance of such competitions in identifying and nurturing promising talents and encouraging students to pursue scientific and technical specializations that support the path of sustainable development in Kuwait.

On the other hand, President of MILSET International Robotics Organization Dr. Idris Al-Waradi affirmed that the 20th Annual Kuwait School Robotics Competition for middle school

students is among the most prominent competitions specializing in modern technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

He highlighted the importance of showcasing pioneering educational initiatives that contribute to preparing a generation equipped with awareness and the tools needed for the future.

He pointed out that the cooperation between the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education and MILSET reflects Kuwait's leading role in advancing the science and technology ecosystem and underscores its significant contribution to spreading the culture of science and modern technologies in the Arab world.

It is worth noting that the results of the 20th Annual Kuwait School Robotics Competition (MILSET Asia) showed several schools winning in the categories for girls and boys.

Funds scandal case shelved

Tow cars, stick to rules

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Osaimi, overturned the decision of the Public Prosecution to dismiss the case regarding the embezzlement of public funds in a thermal camera maintenance tender at the Ministry of Interior.

The court also ordered referral of the nine defendants for trial, including former senior officials in the Ministry of Interior, an engineer, technicians and representatives of two contracting companies.

The defendants are accused of involvement in the embezzlement of KWD1,889,000 of public funds by one of the companies, harming national interests, forgery and negligence of duty.

The case was based on the report of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) about the thermal camera maintenance contract for 2012 and 2013. The report included remarks on the supply and installation of an underground invisible system, as well as network and

equipment maintenance.

The Public Prosecution previously decided to close the case and dismiss the suspicion of crimes, but the Criminal Court, while considering the appeal against the closure decision, returned the case to the prosecution to complete the investigations.

After completing the procedures, the court decided to cancel the closure decision and refer the accused for trial.

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Tow cars, stick to rules: The General Traffic Department issued awareness brochures, reminding motorists about the ministerial decree regulating the towing and hauling of vehicles and equipment on public roads, reports Al-Anba daily.

The department stressed that drivers of towing and hauling vehicles (cranes) must ensure they remain on the right side of the road, comply with the minimum and maximum speed limits, maintain the safety and security of towing connections, and prevent the presence of persons inside the towing vehicle cabin other than the driver.

It also underscored the need to obtain a towing and hauling permit from the vehicle inspection units.

Furthermore, the department confirmed that the length of the towed vehicle must not exceed 15 meters, and the height of the towing vehicle, along with its load, must not exceed four meters.

KFF, MoH join forces

Fire drill conducted at KU students housing

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammary

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Security and Safety Department at Kuwait University, in collaboration with the Student Housing for International Students, organized an evacuation drill at the International Student Housing Complex in Sabah Al-Salem University City.

The drill involved several agencies, such as Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) and the Emergency Medical Services Department in the Ministry of Health.

The goals of the drill include ensuring preparedness, raising safety awareness, and strengthening the emergency response capabilities of university staff and students.

Officials and supervisors from various security and safety departments were present to observe the drill.

During the drill, the functionality of alarm systems, emergency exits, designated shelter procedures, and response times to external assembly points were rigorously tested. The results confirmed the readiness of all involved authorities and the reliability of the approved emergency protocols.

Director of the Security and Safety Department Yousef Al-Khamis disclosed that this drill is a component of the regular training schedule of the department.

He said the purpose is to assess response speed and raise awareness of the university community in order to improve the ability to respond swiftly and systematically to different emergency situations.

He added that such level of commitment underscores the dedication of the university to apply the highest security and safety standards.

Faleh Al-Masoud, Director of Student Housing for International Students, added that the precautionary drill included the evacuation of four residential buildings. He stated that the student housing facilities are equipped with 58 emergency exits and designated shelters.

The drill consisted of injury scenarios to ensure highly efficient handling of medical emergencies. It concluded within record time -- 12 minutes and 18 seconds, during which 235 people were evacuated.

This record is an affirmation of the exceptional level of preparedness, organization and coordination among all participating entities.

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LOCAL



Officials and educators pose for a group photo during the Fifth Golden Teacher Award ceremony.

5th Golden Teacher Award honors creative educators

MoE backs innovation in classrooms

By Inas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Academy for Development and Innovation at the Teachers Association, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, organized a ceremony to announce the winners of the Fifth Golden Teacher Award, under the patronage and in the presence of acting Undersecretary of the ministry Mohammad Al-Khalidi.

The event took place in a celebratory atmosphere that underscored the appreciation of the community for the role and efforts of teachers in supporting the educational development process.

In his speech at the ceremony, Al-Khalidi expressed his happiness over participating in this great educational event, praising the initiative, which embodies the status of teachers in society.

He added "the ministry firmly believes that the teacher is the cornerstone of developing the educational process, the builder of generations, and the bearer of the message of knowledge and values."

He pointed out that supporting educational creativity and promoting excellence and innovation in the educational field are priorities aligning with the aspirations of Kuwait Vision 2035 for sustainable and high-quality education.

He commended the Teachers Association's efforts in supporting educational creativity and promoting a culture of excellence and innovation in the educational field.

He congratulated the winners and praised all participants who presented exemplary models of dedication, sincerity and commitment, asserting that they are a source of pride and that their efforts elevate the educational process and build a brighter future for the nation.

Meanwhile, Head of the Teachers Association Hamad Al-Hawli affirmed that the award is now a national platform for discovering and empowering creative educational talents. He said the fifth edition of the award witnessed an advanced level of ideas and initiatives that reflect a growing awareness of the importance of innovation in education.

He stated that "we, in the association, believe that true investment begins with the teacher. The 'Golden Teacher' is not just an award, as it is an incubator for creative ideas and a space to highlight inspiring educational models that make a difference in classrooms and contribute to building a generation capable of creativity and competition."

He pointed out that the association continues to launch high-quality initiatives, in partnership with the ministry, to support the educational field and improve the status of teachers, considering they are vital for any reform or development project.

The ceremony concluded with the honoring of the winners amidst widespread praise from the attendees, reaffirming that the Kuwaiti teacher remains a vital element of development and the foundation of educational advancement, and that supporting innovation in the educational field is a pillar for building a more distinguished and sustainable educational future.

The winners include Noor Fahad Al-Rashidi from Al-Firdous Intermediate School (Girls) in the educational field, Abeer Mohammad Al-Hajri from Moudhi Al-Obaidi Intermediate School (Girls) in the technological field, Noura Mosaad Al-Mosaad from Hind Bint Athatha Primary School (Girls) in the crafts field, and Bashayer Rashed Al-Huwayhan from Umm Al-Alaa Al-Ansariyah Secondary School in the arts field.

The Fifth Golden Teacher Award is the first competition to implement a track of initiatives supporting innovation in the educational field, specifically the teachers.

The competition was launched last October, during which 78 teachers applied and 19 of whom qualified for the first round.

Other Voices

Mahmoud Radwan... and 'The Time of Souad'

By Ahmad alsarraf

An English proverb says: "The jack of all trades is the master of none."

If we were given the choice between being treated by a consultant surgeon who knows his job and knows nothing outside of surgery, and someone who does not perform any work professionally but knows a little about everything, whom would we choose? The answer is simple yet difficult at the same time.

For example, if we want to undergo open-heart surgery, it is safer to consult the best cardiologist. But, if we want to choose someone to accompany us on a trip or an evening out, we will not care whether they are a consultant on 'fun' or a specialist in the art of travel, we will most likely choose the one closest to our hearts and sensibilities.

Even more wonderful is to find Abdulhussein Abdulredha and Ibrahim Al-Rashdan combined in one person. My next article (for Friday) will be about the latter.

I see in consultant dermatologist Dr. Khaled Montasser what I am looking for. He is a charming and elegant man, his smile not merely etched, but indelible on his face. He is an unparalleled speaker, a brilliant novelist, a fierce fighter, a serious researcher, and a liberal with vast knowledge.

Dr. Montasser stopped practicing medicine, choosing instead to wield the pen rather than the scalpel or stethoscope, dedicating himself entirely to defending the security of his homeland and his family, upholding reason within his country, promoting love and peace, rejecting extremism, and combatting the ideologies of extremist groups who demand that others parrot their words, read what they approve of, advise against reading, consume what they deem permissible, wear what they approve of, and follow them to paradise... even by force.

In a tweet by Mahmoud Radwan, critiquing Dr. Montasser's latest novel, "The Time of Souad," he describes it as a testament to the complex relationship between art, homeland and political transformations



alsarraf

in modern Egypt. The novel does not portray Souad Hosny merely as an artist in the history of Egyptian cinema, but rather, through a keen narrative awareness, transforms her into a concentrated icon or symbol of the Egyptian State itself: its rise, its defeats, its alienation and its unfulfilled dreams.

Dr. Montasser weaves intricate dramatic and psychological threads, linking the tragedy of Souad Hosny (the Cinderella) to the trajectory of the nation, so that the individual body becomes a mirror of the nation's collective body.

The personal biography becomes a key to understanding political and cultural transformations. Thus, the novel here is not simply a story about an Egyptian artist, but an anatomy of an entire era. On screen, Souad was a source of laughter, joy and spectacle. Her smile was iconic and her presence was always accompanied by happiness.

But behind the scenes, Souad Hosny suffered from profound psychological anguish, severe physical pain, and a crushing loneliness unseen by the public.

Such was the condition of Egypt, which exported various forms of artistic and cultural delight, while at its core, it was grappling with political crises, defeats and deep intellectual fractures. Her joy here is not genuine, but a defensive mask concealing her pain.

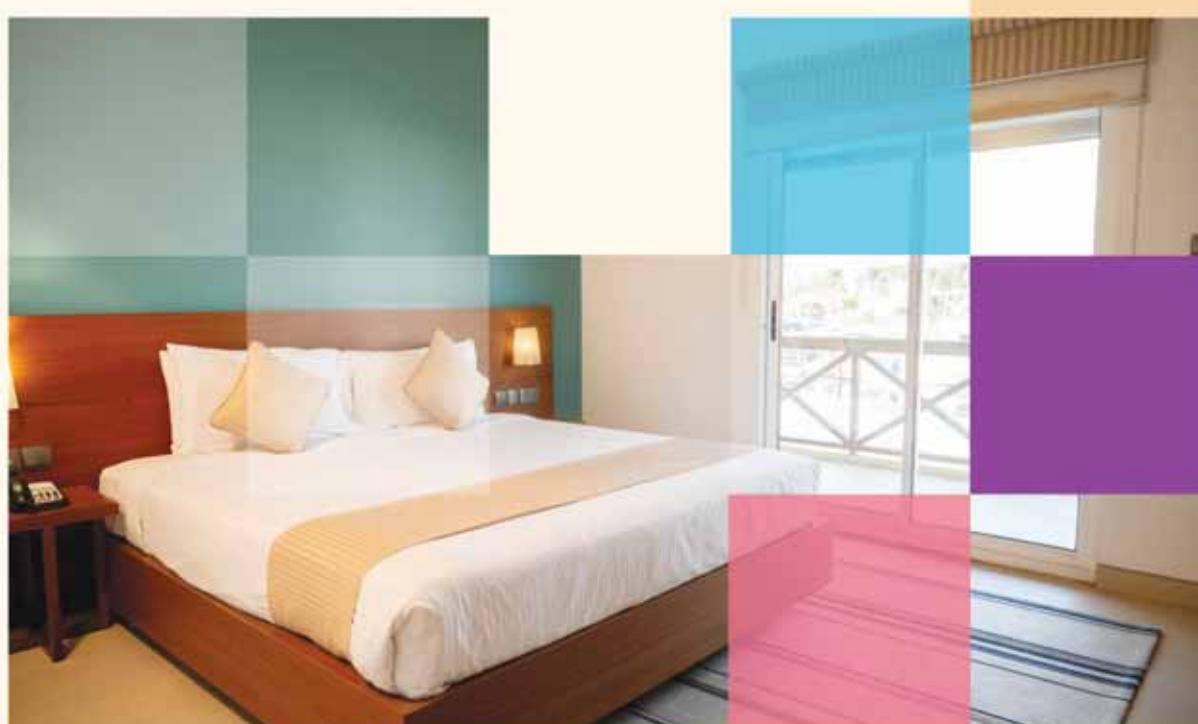
Then came the rise and the fall, or the transition from enlightenment to regression. Souad Hosny, or rather Egypt, was once at the height of her brilliance, especially during the years of liberation, progress and diversity. Souad was a daughter of an era that dreamed, experimented, and took artistic and intellectual risks.

But this rise did not last. With the decline of her health and mental state, Cinderella Souad withered, and so did Egypt. Beauty eroded as the attack of isolation paved the way for cultural desolation.

The exploitation and plundering of Souad's body, or rather the body of Egypt, culminated in the assassination of her body, both physically and spiritually, through silence, abandonment and defamation. Almost everyone participated in the crime. Did Souad Hosny commit suicide or she was murdered? The same question applies to Egypt.

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KUNA photo

Youth Minister honors KNRC winners

Kuwaiti Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Dr. Tareq Al-Jalalma Wednesday honored the winners of the third edition of the Kuwait National Robotics Competition (KNRC), organized by the Public Authority for Youth.

Addressing the closing ceremony, the minister underlined the Kuwaiti wise leadership's commitment to back-

ing the championship in a way that contributes to empowering Kuwaiti youth and providing a nurturing environment for developing their scientific and technical skills.

The minister said that this is primarily meant to prepare a generation capable of keeping pace with the requirements of modern advancement.

KU meets Omani envoy to explore new avenues of academic synergy

KU photo
Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Musaad Al-Mailem poses with Omani Ambassador Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi during his visit to Sabah Al-Salem University City.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Musaad Al-Mailem had a meeting with His Excellency Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Kuwait Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi at Sabah Al-Salem University City on Sunday.

The cordial visit included discussions on the latest academic and research developments, as well as ways to improve cultural and intellectual exchange between the two brotherly nations.

Al-Mailem stated that the visit aims to strengthen academic, research and tourism cooperation between Kuwait University and the educational institutions and universities in the Sultanate of Oman.

She pointed out that such collaboration will contribute to broadening cooperation in the tourism and academic sectors, advancing scientific research, and reinforcing cultural ties, in a manner that reflects the deep-rooted fraternal relations between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi expressed his pleasure and pride over the visit to Kuwait University.

He praised the illustrious academic standing of the university and its leading role in supporting higher education and scientific research. He then unveiled his aspiration to open more avenues for cooperation that serve the educational and intellectual interests of the two countries.

LOCAL

Mauritania lauds KFAED role in national development progress

ALGIERS, Feb 12, (KUNA): Mauritanian Minister of Economic Affairs and Development Abdoullah Ould Souleymane Ould Sheikh Sidia and Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab and Economic Development (KFAED) Waleed Al-Bahar met on Wednesday to discuss the means of bolstering development collaboration, lauding the KFAED's role in his country.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of participation of the two sides in the 49th session of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Governing Council in Rome, Mauritania's economic ministry said in a statement. Both sides reviewed their distinguished relations and KFAED's contributions to development path in Mauritania. The talks also focused on the portfolio of KFAED-funded development projects mainly in vital infrastructure, water, food security support fields and more, it noted.

Meanwhile, Al-Bahar stressed readiness to continue backing Mauritanian development programs and commended progress made by the country in managing foreign fundings and improving economic indicators.

KUNA photo

Mauritanian Minister of Economic Affairs and Development, Abdoullah Ould Souleymane Ould Sheikh Sidia, with Waleed Al-Bahar, Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

Photo by KUNA

INTERNATIONAL

North America

Suspect in Canada shooting identified: The suspect in a school shooting in Canada was an 18-year-old who had a history of police visits to her home to check on her mental health, authorities said Wednesday, a day after the attack that killed eight people in a remote part of British Columbia.

Police said Jesse Van Rootsehaar was found dead from an apparent self-inflicted wound following the assault on a school in the small mountain community of Tumbler Ridge.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Deputy Commissioner Dwayne McDonald said Van Rootsehaar first killed her mother and stepbrother at the family home before attacking the nearby school. She had a history of mental health contacts with police, he said. The motive was unclear. Police initially said nine people were killed Tuesday, but McDonald clarified Wednesday that there were eight fatalities. (AP)



McDonald

Multi-car crash in immigration operation: A federal immigration operation in the US city of Saint Paul in the state of Minnesota ended in a car crash on Wednesday and injured several people.

The Saint Paul Police Department said federal agents were pursuing a person in a vehicle when it crashed into other cars in Cathedral Hill neighborhood, adding that the pursued driver and another motorist were hospitalized with non-life-threatening injuries.

US Department of Homeland Security official Tricia McLaughlin told Patch and Newsweek that immigration

and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authorities attempted to stop a targeted vehicle, as its driver, who had entered the United States from Honduras, tried to evade law enforcement. He drove recklessly and crashed into multiple vehicles, including an ICE one.

Saint Paul's Mayor Kaohly Her said in a statement that the incident showed the ongoing ICE presence was creating chaos and endangering residents in the city, according to Minnesota Public Radio.

Because of the reckless way ICE was running its operation, one person ended up in the hospital and several residents had their cars damaged, she added, calling for an end to the federal immigration enforcement campaign in the region known as Operation Metro Surge. (Xinhua)

Nurses on strike in NY approve contracts: Nurses on strike at two major New York City hospital systems have approved new contracts, but ones striking at another system rejected the proposal, ensuring that the monthlong walkout will continue at some of the city's major medical centers.

The New York State Nurses Association announced Wednesday that its members at Montefiore and Mount Sinai approved new three-year deals while nurses at New York Presbyterian rejected the proposal.

The nurses who will be returning to work in the coming days represent about 10,500 of the roughly 15,000 nurses who walked off the job Jan. 12 in what the union said is the largest and longest strike of its kind in city history.

"This hard-earned victory shows hospitals that they can't cut corners on patient care," Nancy Hagans, the union's president, said in a statement. "Now it's time for New York-Presbyterian to do the right thing, agree to a fair contract and bring all our nurses back to work."

Brendan Carr, CEO of Mount Sinai, urged hospital staff to come together with empathy and respect and a "shared culture" as its unionized nurses return to work starting Saturday. (AP)

'Legislation is needed to prevent voter fraud'

US House Republicans push strict proof-of-citizenship requirement for voters

WASHINGTON, Feb 12, (AP): US House Republicans rushed to approve legislation on Wednesday that would impose strict new proof-of-citizenship requirements ahead of the midterm elections, a long shot Trump administration priority that faces sharp blowback in the Senate.

The bill, called the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility, or SAVE America Act, would require Americans to prove they are citizens when they register to vote, mostly through a valid US passport or birth certificate. It would also require a valid photo identification before voters can cast ballots, which some states already demand. It was approved on a mostly party-line vote, 218-213.

Republicans said the legislation is needed to prevent voter fraud, but Democrats warn it will disenfranchise millions of Americans by making it harder to vote. Federal law already requires that voters in national elections be US citizens, but there's no requirement to provide documentary proof. Experts said voter fraud is extremely rare, and very few noncitizens ever slip through the cracks. Fewer than one in 10 Americans don't have paperwork

proving they are citizens.

"Some of my colleagues will call this voter suppression or Jim Crow 2.0," said Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Wis., presenting the package at a committee hearing.

But he said "those allegations are false," and he argued the bill is needed to enforce existing laws, particularly those that bar immigrants who are not citizens from voting. "The current law is not strong enough," he said.

The GOP's sudden push to change voting rules at the start of the midterm election season is raising red flags, particularly because President Donald Trump has suggested he wants to nationalize U.S. elections, which, under the Constitution, are designed to be run by individual states.

The Trump administration recently seized ballots in Georgia from the 2020 election, which the president insists he won despite his defeat to Democrat Joe Biden. The Department of Justice is demanding voter rolls from states, including Michigan, where a federal judge this week dismissed the department's lawsuit seeking the voter files.

Secretaries of state have raised concerns that voters' personal data may be shared with Homeland Security to verify citizenship and could result in people being unlawfully purged from the rolls.

"Let me be clear what this is about: It's about Republicans trying to rig the

next election," said Rep. Jim McGovern of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the Rules Committee, during a hearing ahead of the floor vote. "Republicans are pushing the Save America Act because they want fewer Americans to

vote. It's that simple."

The legislation is actually a do-over of a similar bill the House approved last year, which also sought to clamp down on fraudulent voting, particularly among noncitizens. It won the support of four House Democrats, but stalled in the Republican-led Senate. Only one Democrat, Rep. Henry Cuellar of Texas, voted for the revised bill.

This version toughens some of the requirements further, while creating a process for those whose names may have changed, particularly during marriage, to provide the paperwork necessary and further attest to their identity.

It also requires states to share their voter information with the Department of Homeland Security, as a way to verify the citizenship of the names on the voter rolls. That has drawn pushback from elections officials as potentially intrusive on people's privacy.

The new rules in the bill would take effect immediately, if the bill is passed by both chambers of Congress and signed into law.

But with primary elections getting underway next month, critics said the sudden shift would be difficult for state

election officials to implement and potentially confuse voters.

Voting experts have warned that more than 20 million US citizens of voting age do not have proof of their citizenship readily available. Almost half of Americans do not have a US passport.

"Election Day is fast approaching," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska. "Imposing new federal requirements now, when states are deep into their preparations, would negatively impact election integrity by forcing election officials to scramble to adhere to new policies likely without the necessary resources."

In the Senate, where Republicans also have majority control, there does not appear to be enough support to push the bill past the chamber's filibuster rules, which largely require 60 votes to advance legislation.

That frustration has led some Republicans, led by Sen. Mike Lee of Utah, to push for a process that would skip the 60-vote threshold in this case, and allow the bill to be debated through a so-called standing filibuster - a process that would open the door to potentially endless debate.



A 'VOTE HERE' sign is posted amongst political signs as people arrive to vote at the Rutherford County Annex Building, an early voting site on Oct 17, 2024, in Rutherfordton, NC. (AP)

be shared with Homeland Security to verify citizenship and could result in people being unlawfully purged from the rolls.

"Let me be clear what this is about: It's about Republicans trying to rig the

Russia launches barrage of drones, missiles at Ukrainian cities: officials

KYIV, Ukraine, Feb 12, (AP): Russia launched a barrage of ballistic missiles and drones at Ukrainian cities in overnight attacks, officials reported on Thursday as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Moscow was "hesitating" about another round of US-brokered talks on stopping the fighting.

Washington has proposed further negotiations next week between Russian and Ukrainian delegations in Miami or Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates, which was the location of the last meeting, Zelenskyy said late Wednesday. Ukraine "immediately confirmed" it would attend, he said. "So far, as I understand it, Russia is hesitating," Zelenskyy told reporters in a messaging app interview late Wednesday.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Thursday that another round of talks was expected "soon" but gave no further details.

American officials made no comment on the possibility of further talks as part of a yearlong peace effort by the Trump administration. Zelenskyy said last week that the United States has given Ukraine and Russia a June deadline to reach a deal.

But with Russia's invasion of its neighbor marking its fourth anniversary later this month, disagreements between Moscow and Kyiv over key



A man walks at a ruined city market following a Russia's attack in Odessa, Ukraine on Feb 12. (AP)

issues have held up a comprehensive settlement. The issues include who keeps the Ukrainian land that Russia's army has so far occupied, especially in the eastern Donbas industrial heartland, and Moscow's demands for Kyiv to surrender more territory.

Ukraine wants Western-backed security guarantees, including a date for joining the European Union, and a postwar reconstruction package in

place before it can contemplate signing a proposed 20-point settlement, Zelenskyy said.

Russia has meanwhile continued to pound Ukrainian civilian areas, including residential areas and the power grid, and Moscow has not responded to a U.S. proposal for an "energy ceasefire" that would also halt Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian oil facilities, Zelenskyy said.

Bulgaria appoints caretaker govt until elections



Bulgarian President Iliana Yotova, right, appoints Andrey Gyurov to lead as Prime Minister of a caretaker government in a country that will hold elections for the eighth time in the last five years, Sofia, Bulgaria on Feb 12. (AP)

A general view of the round table during a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defense Ministers Session at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Feb 12. (AP)

US allies at NATO focus on Europe as Trump administration steps back

BRUSSELS, Feb 12, (AP): European allies at NATO on Thursday brushed aside concerns that the United States has stepped back from its leadership role of the world's biggest security organization, leaving them and Canada to do the lion's share of defending Europe.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth did not attend Thursday's gathering of defense ministers at NATO headquarters in Brussels. His no-show came after Secretary of State Marco Rubio skipped the last meeting of NATO foreign ministers in December.

It's rare for members of a US administration to miss a meeting of the organization's top decision-making body, the North Atlantic Council, at the level of ministers, let alone two meetings in a row. Under Secretary of Defense Elbridge Colby was sent in Hegseth's place.

"Sadly for him, he is missing a good party," Icelandic Foreign Minister Borgeirur Katrin Gunnarsdottir told reporters. "Of course, it's always better that the ministers attend here, but I would not describe it as a bad signal."

"I'm not disappointed," German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said. "Each of us has a full agenda. And one time the American defense minister is here, and one time not, so it's his deci-

sion and his duties he has to fulfill."

When asked what NATO's purpose was in its infancy in 1949, NATO's first secretary-general, the British general and diplomat Lord Hastings Ismay, was reputed to have replied: "To keep the Americans in, the Russians out."

Nowadays, Germany is stepping up. After Russia invaded Ukraine four years ago, it vowed to spend 100 billion euros (\$118 billion) to modernize its armed forces in coming years.

A big part of NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte's job is to keep the Americans in.

"They have to take care of the whole world. This is the United States," Rutte told reporters before chairing the meeting. "I totally accept it, agree with it."

"They have always consistently pleaded for Europe doing more, Canada doing more, taking more care of the defense of NATO territory, of course in conjunction with the United States," he said. That means more European spending on conventional weapons and defense, while the US guarantees NATO's nuclear deterrent.

But doubts linger, and surprises from the Trump administration cannot be ruled out. Allies still wonder whether more US troops will be withdrawn from Europe.

"What for me is the most important is the no-surprise policy that has been agreed between the NATO secretary-general and the US," Dutch Defense Minister Ruben Brekelmans said.

Publicly at least, the Trump administration is doing much less at NATO. A year ago, Hegseth warned that America's security priorities lie elsewhere and that Europe would have to look after itself, and Ukraine in its battle against Russia's full-scale invasion.

Supports of US guns and money that were sent to Ukraine by the previous administration of President Joe Biden have dried up under Trump. European allies and Canada are obliged to buy weapons from the United States to do now.

Western backers of Ukraine were also meeting at NATO on Thursday to drum up more military support. A scheme proudly championed by the Pentagon under Biden, the Ukraine Defense Contact Group is now chaired by the U.K. and Germany.

U.K. Defense Secretary John Healey announced that Britain would provide "an extra half a billion pounds (\$682 million) in urgent air defense to Ukraine. This is Britain being a force for good in the world, building a new deal for European security within NATO."

The political uncertainty that has plagued the EU and NATO member state during this period has eroded public trust in institutions, created an opening for populist and nationalist groups, and paved the way for Russian hybrid influence.

President Yotova, who announced the appointment, said that she expects Gyurov to propose the members of his cabinet within seven days. She would then have to approve the proposal and set the election date, which she had previously indicated would be April 19.

Gyurov, 50, holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Truman State University in Missouri and a Ph.D. from the University of Vienna in Austria. Having held senior positions in parliament.

Andrey Gyurov, deputy governor of the Bulgarian National Bank, will lead a caretaker government whose main task will be to organize free and fair elections in a country that will hold elections for the eighth time

in the last five years, Sofia, Bulgaria on Feb 12. (AP)

academia and European financial institutions, he was appointed deputy governor of the central bank in Sofia in 2023. Before that he was also a lawmaker and floor leader of the reformist "We Continue the Change" group in parliament.

Nationwide protests erupted at the end of 2025, sparked by public anger over corruption, injustice, and perceived oligarchic influence, forcing the resignation of the governing coalition led by the center-right GERB party. Several subsequent attempts to form a new government within the current fragmented parliament have failed.

INTERNATIONAL

S.Korea former interior minister gets 7-year sentence for aiding martial law

Kim's daughter close to being designated North Korea's future leader: spy agency

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 12, (AP): South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers on Thursday that it believes the teenage daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is close to being designated as the country's future leader as he moves to extend the family dynasty to a fourth generation.

The assessment by the National Intelligence Service comes as North Korea is preparing to hold its biggest political conference later this month, where Kim is expected to outline his major policy goals for the next five years and take steps to tighten his authoritarian grip.

In a closed-door briefing, NIS officials said they are closely monitoring whether Kim's daughter - believed to be named Kim Ju Ae and around 13 years old - appears with him before thousands of delegates at the upcoming Workers' Party Congress, said lawmaker Lee Seong Kweun, who attended the meeting.

First appearing in public at a long-range missile test in November 2022, Kim Ju Ae has since accompanied her father to an increasing number of events, including weapons tests, military parades and factory openings. She traveled with him to Beijing last September for Kim's first summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in six years on the sidelines of a World War II event.

Speculation about her political future intensified last month when she joined her parents on a New Year's Day visit to Pyongyang's Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, a sacred family mausoleum displaying the embalmed bodies of her late grandfather and great-grandfather, the country's first- and second-generation leaders. Some experts saw the visit as the clearest sign yet that she's positioned to be the heir to her 42-year-old father.

South Korean officials initially expressed doubt that she could be chosen as a North Korean leader, citing the country's deeply conservative culture and tradition of male-dominated leadership. But her increasingly prominent appearances in state media have prompted a reassessment.

In its previous assessment of Kim Ju Ae's status in September, the NIS told lawmakers that Kim Jong Un's decision to bring her along on his trip to China was likely part of an effort to build a "narrative" possibly paving the way for her succession.

"In the past, (NIS) described Kim Ju Ae as being in the midst of 'successor training.' What was notable today is that they used the term 'successor-designate,' a shift that's quite significant," Lee said.

According to Lee, the agency cited her growing presence at high-profile military events, her inclusion in the



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, center left, and his daughter, center right, arrive at the East Pyongyang Grand Theatre in Pyongyang, North Korea on June 29, 2025. (AP)

family visit to Kumsusan, and signs that Kim Jong Un was beginning to seek her input on certain policy matters.

Despite her increased visibility in propaganda, North Korean state media have never published the name of Kim Jong Un's daughter, only referring to her as his "respected" or "most beloved" child.

In 2023, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers that Kim Jong Un and

his wife also likely have an older son and a younger third child whose gender is unknown.

Since its foundation in 1948, North Korea has been ruled by male members of the Kim family, beginning with the country's founder Kim Il Sung and followed by his son, Kim Jong Il.

Also:

SEOUL: South Korea's former interior minister was sentenced Thursday to seven years in prison for abetting then-President Yoon Suk Yeol's brief declaration of martial law in 2024.

The verdict for Lee Sang-min came a week before a different judge at the same Seoul court rules on whether Yoon's actions amounted to rebellion, a crime for which prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Lee, who led the ministry of interior and safety, was convicted for helping carry out the declaration and passing along Yoon's orders to the country's police and fire chiefs to cut water and electricity to news organizations that were critical of his policies. The instructions weren't carried out since martial law was lifted quickly after lawmakers broke through a military and police blockade at the National Assembly and unanimously voted to lift it.

Lee denied receiving or issuing instructions to cut off utilities to the news organizations, disputing testimony

from other officials, including former National Fire Agency Commissioner General Heo Seok-gon, who said Lee conveyed such orders by phone. Lee also denied conspiring about or planning the martial law declaration.

Judge Ryu Kyung-jin said testimony from other officials, security camera footage and other evidence clearly showed Lee attempted to carry out Yoon's orders and that it was indisputable Lee played an important role in enforcing martial law.

The judge, however, acquitted Lee of lesser charges of abusing his power, citing a lack of evidence.

Lee smiled quietly after the verdict. His legal team didn't immediately say whether he would appeal. Prosecutors had sought a 15-year sentence.

Lee is the second member of Yoon's Cabinet convicted in connection with martial law. Former prime minister Han Duck-soo received a sentence of 23 years in prison but has appealed.

The conservative Yoon has defended martial law as a necessary act of governance against the liberals, whom he described as "anti-state" forces obstructing his agenda with their legislative majority.

He was later removed from office and has been under arrest since July while facing multiple criminal trials, with the rebellion charge carrying the most severe punishment.

Wang calls for joint efforts to deepen China-Hungary friendship, cooperation

BUDAPEST, Feb 12, (Xinhua): Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Wednesday called on China and Hungary to make joint efforts to advance bilateral ties.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks as he and Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto met the press following their talks in Budapest, the Hungarian capital.

Noting that the two sides enjoy a traditional friendship, Wang said that over the more than 70 years since establishing diplomatic ties, China and Hungary have consistently adhered to mutual respect, equality and win-win cooperation, setting an example of a new type of international relations and forging an all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era.

Wang said his visit to Hungary was aimed at deepening friendship and expanding cooperation, adding that he and Szijjarto reached broad consensus during their talks and are fully confident about the future development of bilateral relations. Looking ahead, Wang called on the two sides to continue making efforts in five aspects.

First, jointly consolidate the foundation of mutual trust. High-level political mutual trust guarantees the steady and long-term development of China-Hungary relations, Wang said.

Guided by the important consensus reached between the leaders of the two countries, both sides are ready to enhance strategic communication and deepen strategic mutual trust, while supporting each other on issues concerning their core interests and major concerns, he said.

China highly appreciates Hungary's steadfast commitment to the one-China principle and will, as always, support Hungary in safeguarding its sovereignty, security and development interests and in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions, Wang said.

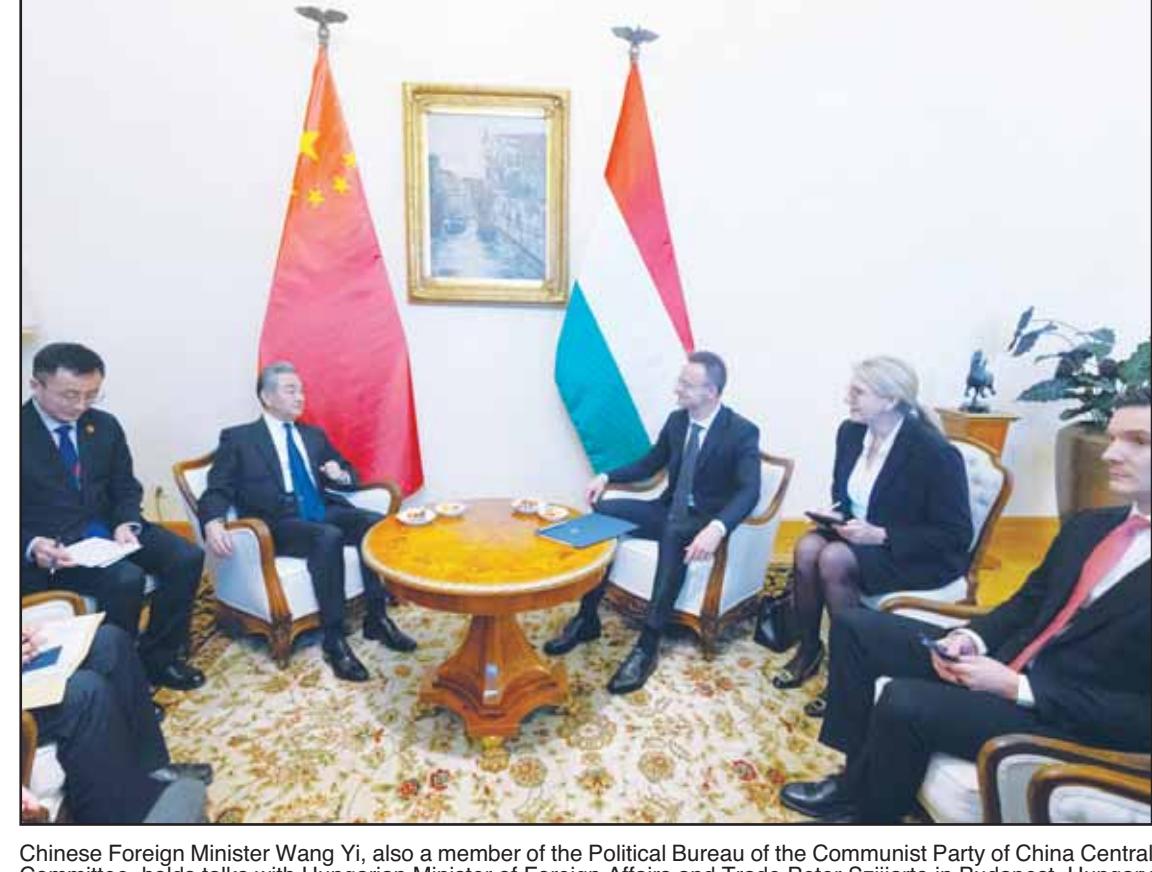
Second, jointly deepen mutually beneficial cooperation. Highlighting high-quality, practical cooperation as the driving force for the robust growth of bilateral relations, Wang said the two sides will continue to align the Belt and Road Initiative with Hungary's Opening to the East policy and advance flagship projects such as the Hungary-Serbia railway toward early

operation.

Wang noted that it is precisely because of the friendly China-Hungary relationship that Hungary has become one of the most important European destinations for Chinese investment. He expressed hope that Hungary will create a more favorable business environment and provide greater policy support for Chinese companies investing and operating in the country.

He added that China will remain committed to high-level opening-up, sharing opportunities and pursuing common development with countries around the world. Wang welcomed Hungary to ride the "fast track" of Chinese modernization and expand cooperation in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, the digital economy, new energy, green development and high-end equipment, continuously upgrading China-Hungary cooperation.

Third, jointly enhance people-to-people exchanges. Wang said the people-to-people bond is the source of vitality for bilateral relations, noting that the recently unveiled seventh Confucius Institute in Hungary has built another bridge of friendship between the two peoples.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, holds talks with Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto in Budapest, Hungary on Feb 11. (Xinhua)

Bangladesh votes in first election since ousting former PM Hasina

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Feb 12, (AP): Voters cast ballots across Bangladesh on Thursday in a parliamentary election seen as a critical test of the country's democracy after years of political turmoil.

After a slow start, crowds came to polling stations in the capital, Dhaka, and elsewhere by midmorning. Balloting will continue through Thursday with results expected Friday.

More than 127 million people are eligible to vote in Bangladesh's first election since former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government collapsed in 2024 after weeks of mass protests, dubbed by many as a Gen Z uprising. Hasina fled the country and her party is banned from the polls. She is living in exile in India.

Tarique Rahman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party is a leading contender to form the next government. He is the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and returned to Bangladesh in December after 17 years in self-exile in London. Rahman has pledged to rebuild democratic institutions, restore the rule of law and revive the struggling economy.

Challenging the BNP is an 11-party alliance led by the Jamaat-e-Islami, the country's largest Islamist party, which was banned under Hasina but



A woman casts her vote at a polling station during Bangladesh's national parliamentary election, in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Feb 12. (AP)

has gained prominence since her removal. The conservative religious group's growing influence has fueled concern, particularly among women and minority communities, that social freedoms could come under pressure if they come to power. Bangladesh is more than 90% Muslim, while around

8% are Hindu.

Shafiqur Rahman, chief of Jamaat-e-Islami, expressed optimism after casting his vote in a polling station.

"(It the election) is a turning point," he told The Associated Press. "People demand change. They desire change. We also desire the change."

Argentina's Senate backs President Milei's contentious labor overhaul after protests



A Molotov cocktail bursts into flames in front of police during a march by unions and opposition supporters against a labor reform bill proposed by President Javier Milei's government in Buenos Aires, Argentina on Feb 11. (AP)

reversed.

Supporters of Milei's revamped labor law say high severance payouts and taxes make it almost impossible to fire employees, constraining productivity and discouraging business from formal employment. Almost half of Argentines work off the books. Private sector job

growth has remained stagnant for 14 years. "With the modernization of the labor system, more people will have access to formal, legal employment," Milei's La Libertad Avanza party said in a statement as the debate kicked off. "We are rebuilding Argentina from the ground up, starting with employment."

Africa

N. Sudan ferry sinking kills 21: The death toll from the ferry accident in River Nile State of northern Sudan has climbed to at least 21, local authorities announced on Thursday.

"Twenty-one bodies have been recovered from the boat that sank on Wednesday," the River Nile State government said in a brief statement.

It added that search operations for missing persons are ongoing, with civil defense teams continuing rescue efforts. An eyewitness from the area told Xinhua that the boat was carrying more than 30 passengers. (Xinhua)

2 dead in Sudan drone strike: A drone strike at a mosque killed two children and injured 13 others in Sudan's central region of Kordofan early Wednesday, a local doctors group said, as the country's civil war continues.

The Sudan Doctors Network, which monitors the conflict, said the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, which are fighting the army, carried out the strike in al-Rahad city in North Kordofan.

A spokesperson from the doctors' network, Mohamed Elsheikh, told The Associated Press that the children had been attending a lesson at dawn.

Targeting children inside mosques "represents a dangerous escalation in the pattern of repeated violations against civilians," the network added. (Xinhua)



People survey the damage done by cyclone Gezina in Toamasina, Madagascar on Feb 11. (AP)

Tropical Cyclone Gezina collapsed houses in Madagascar's main port city and left at least 31 people dead as it crossed the Indian Ocean island with high winds and rain, authorities said Wednesday.

Madagascar's weather service issued red alerts for several regions warning of possible floods and landslides as the storm made landfall late Tuesday with wind speeds of more than 195 kph (121 mph). It then roared across the large island of 31 million people, many of whom live in poverty and have inadequate shelter from storms.

Madagascar is especially vulnerable to cyclones blowing in off the Indian Ocean and was battered by another deadly cyclone less than two weeks ago. (AP)

Madagascar cyclone death toll rises to 31:

Kuwait oil price surges to \$66.98 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up 58 cents to reach 66.98 per barrel on Wednesday, compared to USD 66.40 pb the previous day, reported the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

In global markets, the price of Brent crude went up by 60 cents to reach USD 69.40 per barrel, and the West Texas Intermediate rose 67 cents to reach USD 64.63 pb.



Khalid AlRukhayes receives the award on behalf of KFH Group CEO, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan.

Ranked 1st in Kuwait & 5th regionally

KFH wins Forbes Middle East 'Most Valuable Bank' Award

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) won the "Most Valuable Bank" award from Forbes Middle East at the Top Advisors and Investors Summit awards ceremony. The event, held in Abu Dhabi, UAE, was attended by a distinguished group of regional banking and economic leaders, financiers, and investors.

Deputy General Manager Global Markets Trading and Investments at KFH, Khalid AlRukhayes received the award on behalf of KFH Group CEO, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan.

Forbes Middle East reported that KFH continued to lead the Kuwaiti banking sector in market value, ranking first locally and fifth regionally in the "Middle East's 30 Most Valuable Banks" list for 2025.

With a market value exceeding KD 15 billion, KFH stands among the largest and most influential banking institutions in the region. This ranking and award represent significant additions to KFH's track record, solidifying its regional leadership and reaffirming strong local, regional, and international confidence in its financial performance and robust position.

Sustainable Growth

The award also reflects KFH's ability to achieve sustainable growth, expand the global reach of Islamic finance, and support vital sectors that contribute to the diversification of regional economies.

KFH continues to achieve significant milestones in financial inclusion, digitalization, and the expansion of its innovative banking solutions. By maintaining excellence in operational efficiency, financial performance, and strategic expansion, KFH remains a dominant force, further cementing its position among the largest banks in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, KFH reported a net profit of KD 632.1 million attributable to the bank's shareholders for the year 2025, representing an increase of 5.0% compared to the previous year. These historic profits are the highest in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Net financing income for 2025 reached KD 1.3 billion, up 11.5% year-



Forbes Middle East 'Most Valuable Bank' Award.

on-year. Net operating income reached KD 1.2 billion, reflecting a 10.7% increase. Financing receivables reached KD 21.8 billion, up KD 2.7 billion, or 14.4%. Total assets reached KD 42.8 billion in 2025, marking an increase of KD 6.1 billion, or 16.5%. This growth was accompanied by an upward trend across all key financial indicators.

KFH is a premier global Islamic banking institution. Established in 1977 as Kuwait's first Islamic bank, it has since grown into an extensive operational network with over 600 branches across 10 countries.

Award Methodology

Utilizing its established methodology for bank rankings, Forbes Middle East's research team compiles data on banks listed across the region's stock exchanges, ranking them primarily by market value. As the regionally licensed edition of the world-renowned American magazine, Forbes Middle East provides comprehensive coverage of business, economics, investment, and entrepreneurship in the Arab world. The publication is recognized for its specialized lists, analyses, and exclusive interviews with global leaders and billionaires, published in both Arabic and English.

Trade reaches up to \$2 bln annually

KCCI hosts German economic delegation to boost relations

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) hosted a high-level economic delegation from the Federal Republic of Germany on Wednesday.

German Ambassador to the State of Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz was part of the delegation, led by Florian Walther – the representative of Kuwait at the German Emirati Joint Council for Industry and Commerce.

Also present were representatives of 14 companies operating in various economic sectors.

The meeting commenced with KCCI warmly welcoming the delegation, thereby, underscoring the deep-rooted relationship between Kuwait and Germany. This partnership is founded on mutual respect, shared interests, and cooperation in vital sectors.

KCCI affirmed the strong economic partnership, disclosing that bilateral trade over the past decade consistently ranged between \$1.5 and \$2 billion annually.

It added that Germany is globally recognized for its expertise in engineering, advanced manufacturing,

industrial services, and technological innovation.

The meeting also touched on the potential for stronger cooperation in these fields.

KCCI considers the meeting an important platform for identifying cooperation opportunities, implementing bilateral projects, and building strategic partnerships that serve the economic interests of both nations.

On the other hand, German Ambassador Reibnitz expressed his gratitude to KCCI for organizing the meeting.

He also pointed out the importance of the visit of the delegation, considering it is the first since 2024. He indicated this is an affirmation that both the Kuwaiti and German sides are committed to expanding and developing horizons for bilateral cooperation.

Moreover, Walther expressed his pleasure over attending the meeting. He disclosed that the primary objectives of the meeting include boosting trade and investment exchange, and strengthening bilateral relations by facilitating introductions between companies.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The National Bank of Kuwait concluded its participation in the Innovation Challenge Program, organized by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, for the tenth consecutive year, in collaboration with Imperial College London. This comes as part of the Bank's commitment to promoting a culture of innovation and developing its young leaders, which supports the institutional transformation and sustainable development process, and contributes to pushing Kuwait's economy towards a knowledge-based model.

The program, which is one of the most prominent and leading initiatives in building innovation skills in the private sector, provided a comprehensive educational experience that lasted for four months, during which participants learned about the latest innovation approaches to apply when facing real challenges related to their companies, enabling them to lead change and launch new solutions in the areas of products, services and operational processes.

The program was inaugurated in Kuwait before moving to the Imperial College London Campus in South Kensington, where the participants had the opportunity to work alongside a select group of academics and global experts to address corporate challenges chosen according to each company's priorities, with the aim of creating added value and achieving sustainable growth and profitability.

The participants' educational journey consisted of intensive training that focused on practical application based on design thinking, understanding customer needs, developing innovative and feasible solutions, and ultimately presenting the projects to company boards of directors at the end of the program, which tangibly shows learning outcomes and opens the way for transforming ideas into real institutional initiatives.

During the program, the NBK team faced a challenge that is part of the Bank's operational and digital priorities. Team members analyzed the problem, scrutinized it, and developed innovative proposals aimed at enhancing efficiency and increasing customer value. The project was also discussed with Mr. Salah Al-Fulaij, NBK-Kuwait CEO, alongside other leaders and officials that also evaluated the presented models.

Moreover, NBK's team benefited from the academic mentorship provided by Imperial College experts throughout the program, which focused on translating theoretical ideas into practical, impactful solutions and equipping the participants with the necessary tools to measure the impact of innovation and evaluate the feasibility of new initiatives. This experience gave the team the advanced skills of building effective teams that can lead to change, incorporate innovative thinking into the institution's strategy, and turn operational challenges into real opportunities for development.

The Innovation Challenge program represents a significant platform for transferring knowledge to work environments

within participating companies, as it contributes to establishing a culture of innovation and spreading its tools across different departments, which enhances the efficiency of institutions and their ability to develop products, services and operational processes that keep pace with the rapid developments in global markets.

On this occasion, **Maryam Al-Nasrallah**, AVP - Talent Management, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, commented: "We are pleased to participate in this program, which embodies our strong commitment to developing human capital and investing in future leaders, as we always believe that establishing a culture of innovation is a fundamental pillar in our strategy to enhance competitiveness and support the digital transformation journey within the bank. This participation accentuates the importance of initiatives that combine academic education with practical application, given their significant impact on preparing leaders capable of keeping pace with market changes and meeting customer needs in modern and innovative ways".

Al-Nasrallah added: "We are keen to work with state institutions and strategic partners to make a positive impact on society and establish a motivational environment for the new generation, providing them with real opportunities to acquire knowledge, develop their skills, and build their future capabilities".

Al-Nasrallah also emphasized that NBK will continue its commitment to supporting programs and initiatives aimed at developing national competencies, especially as Kuwait's youth has remarkable potential that needs proper guidance to invest in supporting the path of sustainable development and enhancing the country's position on the map of innovation and knowledge.

Finally, she praised the pivotal role of KFAS in promoting investment in technology and innovation by learning from global experiences and benefiting from the best professional and academic expertise around the world.

NBK continues to support programs that aim to develop its employees' skills and prepare them to lead, as it strongly believes that investing in innovation, developing national competencies, and maintaining the Bank's local and regional leadership in the banking sector are the most important pillars of its success.

Business

Kuwait marks 60 years of ties with Switzerland

KDIPA, WAIPA host high-level investment forum in Zurich



A section of the forum attendees.

KUNA photo

ZURICH, Feb 12, (KUNA): The Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), the elected President of the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) for the 2025-2027 term, in collaboration with WAIPA, organized a High-Level Forum on Finance, Technology and the Future of Investment Promotion in Zurich.

The event brought together senior decision-makers from the finance, business, and technology sectors, along with heads of investment promotion agencies from around the world.

The forum opened with welcoming remarks delivered by Mohammad Yousef Mulla Yaqoub, Acting Director General of KDIPA and President of WAIPA, Hilda Al-Hinai, Secretary General of the Arab-Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Ismail Ersahin, Executive Director and CEO of WAIPA.

The forum also saw the participation of Abdulmohsen Al-Mukhaizem, President and CEO of the Kuwait Investment Office in London, along with a leading group of international experts and senior officials.

The forum highlighted financial and technological developments that are contributing to reshaping the global investment landscape, including investment trends in Europe, the role of public and private investments, and the importance of innovation in improving the investment environment and enhancing economies' ability to attract value-added investments.

During the opening session, Mohammad Yousef Mulla Yaqoub delivered a keynote address in which he stated, "As President of WAIPA, we strongly believe in the mission and vision of this organization, which serves as a global platform empowering Investment Promotion Agencies and guiding investors toward destinations offering clarity, stability, and long-term partnerships."

He added, "This year marks 60 years of relations between the State of Kuwait and the Swiss Confederation, and as we gather here in Zurich, I thank all participants for joining this important forum and wish you productive and insightful discussions."

Ismail Ersahin noted that the forum reflects the growing momentum of the role of investment promotion agencies at the global level, adding, "IPAs play an essential role as catalysts and enablers of international investment, and amid current global volatility their importance has never been more important."

The forum also included a specialized training program for Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs), "WAIPA IPA Masterclass: Innovating IPA Performance in a Changing Global Investment Landscape," which formed one of its key components.

The program focused on strengthening the capabilities of IPAs and equipping them with practical tools to navigate global economic transformations.

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The discussions further enriched participants' understanding of best practices for advancing innovation and investment driven ecosystems aligned with the requirements of advanced markets and global supply chains.

KDIPA highlighted that the forum

General index inches up 0.10% to 8,703.86 points

Boursa closes higher amid modest gains

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): The Boursa Kuwait ended Thursday's trading session on a positive note, as the general market index rose by 8.86 points, or 0.10 percent, to close at 8,703.86 points.

Trading volume reached 146.2 million shares, executed through 11,847 cash transactions, with a total value of KD 45.9 million (approximately USD 140 million).

The main market index advanced 19.28 points, or 0.24 percent, to 8,083.03 points. Around 58.4 million shares changed hands across 4,595 transactions,

valued at KD 8.9 million (USD 27.14 million).

Similarly, the premier market index edged up 7.07 points, or 0.08 percent, to settle at 9,287.18 points. It saw 87.7 million shares traded through 7,252 transactions, with a total value of KD 37 million (USD 112.8 million).

In contrast, the Main 50 Index slipped 19.86 points, or 0.23 percent, finishing at 8,627.01 points. Trading volume in this segment stood at 49.6 million shares across 3,441 deals, worth KD 7.7 million (USD 23.4 million).

Organized by KFAS in collaboration with Imperial College

NBK concludes its participation in the Innovation Challenge Program



Salah Al-Fulaij, Mohammed Al-Kharafi, Zaid Al-Sager, Emad Al-Abdani, Amir Hanna, and Jad Zakhour with Dr. Bassem Al-Faili and the National Bank of Kuwait team participating in the Innovation Challenge Program.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The National Bank of Kuwait concluded its participation in the Innovation Challenge Program, organized by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, for the tenth consecutive year, in collaboration with Imperial College London. This comes as part of the Bank's commitment to promoting a culture of innovation and developing its young leaders, which supports the institutional transformation and sustainable development process, and contributes to pushing Kuwait's economy towards a knowledge-based model.

The program, which is one of the most prominent and leading initiatives in building innovation skills in the private sector, provided a comprehensive educational experience that lasted for four months, during which participants learned about the latest innovation approaches to apply when facing real challenges related to their companies, enabling them to lead change and launch new solutions in the areas of products, services and operational processes.

The program was inaugurated in Kuwait before moving to the Imperial College London Campus in South Kensington, where the participants had the opportunity to work alongside a select group of academics and global experts to address corporate challenges chosen according to each company's priorities, with the aim of creating added value and achieving sustainable growth and profitability.

During the program, the NBK team faced a challenge that is part of the Bank's operational and digital priorities. Team members analyzed the problem, scrutinized it, and developed innovative proposals aimed at enhancing efficiency and increasing customer value. The project was also discussed with Mr. Salah Al-Fulaij, NBK-Kuwait CEO, alongside other leaders and officials that also evaluated the presented models.

Moreover, NBK's team benefited from the academic mentorship provided by Imperial College experts throughout the program, which focused on translating theoretical ideas into practical, impactful solutions and equipping the participants with the necessary tools to measure the impact of innovation and evaluate the feasibility of new initiatives. This experience gave the team the advanced skills of building effective teams that can lead to change, incorporate innovative thinking into the institution's strategy, and turn operational challenges into real opportunities for development.

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Photo during the meeting.

US energy chief visits Venezuela to push oil overhaul

Trump administration moves to revive Venezuela's oil industry

CARACAS, Feb 12, (AP): United States Energy Secretary Chris Wright arrived Wednesday in Venezuela for a firsthand assessment of the country's oil industry, a visit that further asserts the U.S. government's self-appointed role in turning around Venezuela's dilapidated energy sector.

Wright met Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez at the Miraflores presidential palace in the capital, Caracas. He is expected to meet with government officials, oil executives and others during a three-day visit to the South American country.

Wright's visit comes as the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump continues to lift sanctions to allow foreign companies to operate in Venezuela and help rebuild the nation's most important industry. It follows last month's enactment of a Venezuelan law that opened the nation's oil sector to private investment, reversing a tenet of the self-proclaimed socialist movement that has ruled the country for more than two decades.

"I bring today a message from President Trump," Wright told reporters as he stood next to Rodríguez with flags from both countries behind them. "He is passionately committed to absolutely transforming the relationship between the United States and Venezuela, part of a broader agenda to make the Americas great again, to bring our countries closer together, to bring commerce, peace, prosperity, jobs, opportunity to the people of Venezuela."

Rodríguez was sworn into her new role after the brazen Jan. 3 seizure of then-President Nicolás Maduro in a U.S. military attack in Caracas. She proposed the overhaul of the country's energy law after Trump said his administration would take control of Venezuela's oil exports and revitalize the ailing industry by luring



Venezuelan acting President Delcy Rodríguez, right, meets with U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright, left, at Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela, Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2026. (AP)

foreign investment.

Rodríguez on Wednesday acknowledged that Venezuela's relationship with the U.S. has had "highs and lows" but said both countries are now working on a mutually benefiting "energy agenda."

"Let diplomatic dialogue ... and energy dialogue be the appropriate and suitable channels for the U.S. and Venezuela to maturely determine how to move forward," she said.

Rodríguez's government expects the changes to the

country's oil law to serve as assurances for major U.S. oil companies that have so far hesitated about returning to the volatile country. Some of those companies lost investments when the ruling party enacted the existing law two decades ago to favor Venezuela's state-run oil company, PDVSA.

The new law now grants private companies control over oil production and sales, ending PDVSA's monopoly over those activities as well as pricing. It also allows for independent arbitration of disputes, remov-

ing a mandate for disagreements to be settled only in Venezuelan courts, which are controlled by the ruling party.

Foreign investors view the involvement of independent arbitrators as crucial to guard against future expropriation.

Wright told reporters the reform "is a meaningful step in the right direction" but "probably not far and clear enough to encourage the kind of large capital flows" the U.S. would like to see in Venezuela.

Wright planned to visit oil fields Thursday.

Venezuela, which has the world's largest proven oil reserves and produces about 1 million barrels a day, has long relied on oil revenue as a lifeblood of its economy.

Trump imposed crippling sanctions on Venezuela's oil industry during his first term, locking out the state-owned company Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. of the global oil markets in an attempt to topple Maduro. That pushed his government to rely on a shadowy fleet of unflagged tankers to smuggle deeply discounted crude into global supply chains.

In December, Trump ordered a blockade of all "sanctioned oil tankers" entering or leaving the South American country, ramping up pressure on Maduro in a move that seemed designed to put a tighter chokehold on Venezuela's economy. U.S. forces that month also began seizing oil tankers off Venezuela's Caribbean coast.

Since Maduro's Jan. 3 ouster, the Trump administration set out to control the production, refining and global distribution of Venezuela's petroleum products and oversee where the revenue flows. The administration also began lifting broad sanctions, but also continued seizing tankers - now in agreement with Venezuela's government - including one this week in the Indian Ocean after it was tracked from the Caribbean Sea.

Wright on Wednesday told reporters the blockade is "essentially over" as the U.S. is "flowing Venezuelan crude out, selling it at a much higher price than Venezuela was selling it before," and the revenue is being used in specific projects benefiting Venezuelans.

Economists urge stronger action as economy falters

Britain records weakest quarterly growth amid investment slowdown

LONDON, Feb 12, (AP): The British economy barely grew in the final three months of 2025, official figures showed Thursday, with critics blaming uncertainty surrounding the government's budget for lower than anticipated business investment and consumption.

The Office for National Statistics said the British economy, the world's sixth-largest by many measures, expanded by only 0.1% on a quarterly basis, the same rate as that recorded in the third quarter.

The economy grew by 1.3% over the year as a whole, up from 1.1% the previous year. It's the highest annual level of growth since 2022.

Economists said uncertainty ahead of the Labour government's budget in late November meant businesses and consumers took a wait-and-see approach.

For much of the period, there had been expectations that Treasury chief Rachel Reeves would break key promises not to raise income tax levels. In the end, the tax rises were far more modest than anticipated.

"The overwhelming final quarter caps off another disheartening year for the U.K. economy with growth tailing off unnervingly quickly after the strong start to 2025, as rising taxes, heightened uncertainty and poor productivity increasingly squeezed activity," said Suren Thiru, economics director at accounting body ICAEW.

Some recent economic indicators have pointed to a pickup in growth in the early part of 2026. However, growth is not expected to rise dramatically over the full year. Last week, the Bank of England cut its growth forecasts for

the next two years, from 1.2% to 0.9% for 2026, and from 1.6% to 1.5% for 2027.

Britain's Labour government, which has lost significant support since it won the general election in 2024 partly because of the economy, is hoping that with growth tepid and with inflation expected to fall sharply this year, the Bank of England will cut its main interest rate by a further quarter of a percentage point in March to 3.50%. Last week, the bank kept it unchanged at 3.75%.

"The task for 2026 is for the government to double down on its growth agenda to build a sustained economic recovery that will eventually flow into people's pay packets," said Simon Pittaway, senior economist at the think tank Resolution Foundation.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending Feb. 7 fell by 5,000 to 227,000 from the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's basically in line with the 226,000 new applications that analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet had forecast.

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

On Wednesday, the government reported that U.S. employers added a surprisingly strong 130,000 jobs in January and the unemployment rate fell to a still-low 4.3% from 4.4%. However, government revisions cut 2024-2025 U.S. payrolls by hundreds of thousands. That reduced the number of jobs created last year to just 181,000, a third of the previously reported 584,000 and the weakest since the pandemic year of 2020.

While weekly layoffs have remained in a historically low range mostly between 200,000 and 250,000 for the past few years, a number of high-profile companies have announced job cuts recently, including UPS, Amazon, Dow and the Washington Post in recent weeks.

Mounting layoff announcements in the past year, combined with the government's own sluggish labor market reports, have left Americans increasingly pessimistic about the economy.

The Labor Department also recently reported that job openings fell in December to the lowest level in more than

Fed rate cut outlook hinges on hiring trends

US unemployment claims fall to 227,000

WASHINGTON, Feb 12, (AP): The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell last week, remaining within the historically healthy range of the past few years.

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The Labor Department also recently reported that job openings fell in December to the lowest level in more than

five years, another sign that the American labor market remains sluggish, even though the economy is registering solid growth.

Data over the past year has broadly revealed a labor market in which hiring has clearly slowed, hobbled by uncertainty raised by President Donald Trump's tariffs and the lingering effects of the high interest rates the Fed engineered in 2022 and 2023 to tamp down a spike of pandemic-induced inflation.

Economists are conflicted about whether the stronger-than-expected January job gains are a one-off or possibly the first sign of a recovering labor market, which could lead the Fed to further delay more cuts to its key interest rate.

Some Fed officials have specifically argued that last year's weak hiring shows that borrowing costs are weighing on growth and discouraging companies from expanding. A sustained pickup in hiring could undercut that theory.

Fed officials signaled in December that they expect to reduce their key rate once more this year, while Wall Street investors expect two reductions, according to futures pricing.

Thursday's unemployment benefits report from the Labor Department also showed that the four-week moving average of jobless claims, which balances out some of the weekly volatility, rose by 7,000 to 219,500.

The total number of Americans filing for jobless benefits for the previous week ending Jan. 31 increased by 21,000 to 1.86 million, the government said.

Nvidia and TSMC fuel Taiwan's rapid growth – and rising risks

AI boom supercharges Taiwan's economy but deepens inequality



A visitor wears a virtual reality headset inside the Museum of Innovation at TSMC or Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp., a Taiwanese multinational semiconductor contract manufacturing and design company, in Hsinchu, Taiwan, on Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026. (AP)

na at ING Bank.

Worries that the AI craze may prove to be a bubble prone to a bust similar to the dot.com crash in 2000 that swept through markets, alarming many in Taiwan.

"I'm also very nervous about it," C.C. Wei, TSMC's chairman said when asked about a potential AI bubble during an earnings call in January. "Because we have to invest about \$52-\$56 billion (this year)."

"If we did not do it carefully, that will be a big disaster to TSMC for sure," he said. "I want to make sure that my customers' demands are real."

In a recent report, analysts from Fitch Ratings argued that AI demand will remain strong at least in the near term. In the longer term, however, the risks "will depend on the evolution of AI, as well as trade and investment policies and the adaptability of Taiwanese firms," they wrote.

Taiwanese electronics company Asia Vital Components, a key supplier of liquid cooling systems for Nvidia, is investing heavily in research and development. Its chairman, Spencer Shen, said he saw no signs of a slowdown in AI-related demand so far. The company is already designing thermal solutions for 2028 AI servers, he said.

"We do not believe this is a bubble," Shen told The Associated Press in an interview. "AI is driven by companies with real products and massive cash flows, like Amazon, Microsoft, Google and Meta."

"In fact, AI infrastructure is still in short supply," Shen added. "I expect AI to trickle through to our everyday level and change the way that things will work fundamentally."

Some in Taiwan believe that its pivotal role in the technology sector,

especially as a maker of computer chips whose main material is silicon, helps to protect the island from attack by communist-ruled Beijing, whose leaders have vowed to reunite the island with the Chinese mainland, by force if necessary.

The two governments split in 1949 during a civil war. Beijing has been stepping up pressure, conducting military drills nearby. Exercises in late December included live rounds landing closer to the island than before, Taiwan officials said.

Such geopolitical factors cloud the economic outlook, though many in Taiwan including its former President Tsai Ing-wen believe its importance to global chipmaking would deter China from attacking.

The risk of an invasion is unclear. Both global tech companies and Chinese industries would suffer from massive disruptions of the chip supply chain, said Wu of National Taiwan University.

Still, some companies have been identifying contingency scenarios in recent years on how to respond in case of military action by China, said Chen Shin-horng, vice president of the semi-official Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research.

"We need to understand the potential risk, potential damages to Taiwan," said Chen.

While many of its core research and development activities are in Taiwan, TSMC already has plants in China, Japan and the U.S., and it's expanding its offshore production in the U.S., Germany and Japan.

Roughly 65% of Foxconn's manufacturing is in China, and the company has factories in other parts of the world such as India, Mexico and the U.S. AVC has been expanding its production capacity in Vietnam.

While some have called for Taiwan to diversify its economy away from technology to reduce risks, others argue that doubling down on its world-leading technology is the way forward. "It is our greatest strength," said Shen of AVC.

The AI boom has done wonders for Taiwan's stock exchange, where the benchmark Taiex has climbed nearly 250% over the past decade, making many investors rich. Economists have significantly upgraded forecasts for Taiwan's economic growth for 2026 based on its robust AI-related exports.

But as is true elsewhere, the wealth is not evenly spread. Many Taiwan residents feel they have been left behind.

Taiwan's wealth gap, according to official data, has roughly quadrupled over the past three decades.

The pay of tech workers already earning high wages, especially chip engineers and managers, has skyrocketed. For other traditional industries, such as plastics and machine toolmakers, growth has lagged.

Economists say that gap might widen as the AI frenzy continues.

"It can be tough to make a living," said Jean Lin, a 30-something manager of a takeaway outlet selling bento meals in a Taipei neighborhood where Foxconn's office is located.

"Many of the younger generation still can't afford to buy an apartment," Lin, who wishes to start her own business one day, added. "A lot of young people still feel they don't have much money."

TAIPEI, Feb 12, (AP): In Taipei, real estate agent Jason Sung is betting that home prices around a high-tech industrial park in the northern part of Taiwan's capital will soon take flight - because of computer chip maker Nvidia.

The area is where Nvidia plans to build its new Taiwan headquarters as it rapidly expands on the island, set to surpass Apple to become the biggest customer of Taiwan semiconductor maker TSMC, the biggest contract manufacturer of the advanced chips needed for artificial intelligence.

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang describes Taiwan as the "center of the world's computer ecosystem." It's riding high on the global AI frenzy. Its economy grew at an 8.6% annual pace last year, and it's hoping to maintain that momentum after it recently sealed a trade deal with U.S. President Donald Trump that cut U.S. tariffs on Taiwan to 15% from 20%.

"We have been lucky," said Wu Tsong-min, an emeritus economics professor at National Taiwan University and a former board member of Taiwan's central bank.

But Taiwan's heavy reliance on computer chip makers and other technology companies carries the growing risk of the AI craze turning out to be a bubble.

"What if the AI bubble is real, and what if its rapid growth pace slows, what's next for Taiwan? That's the question many have been asking," Wu said.

Escalating tensions with Beijing, which claims independently governed Taiwan as mainland China's territory, are another abiding threat, despite the island's vital role in global chip and AI supply chains.

An island of about 23 million people, Taiwan depends heavily on exports. They jumped nearly 35% year-on-year in 2025, as shipments to the U.S. surged 78% due to ballooning AI demand.

That's thanks largely to TSMC, or Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp., and electronics giant Foxconn, which makes AI servers for Nvidia and is a major supplier to Apple.

Taiwan has undergone massive economic changes while shifting from mainly labor-intensive industries such as plastics and textiles to advanced manufacturing like semiconductor fabrication.

The AI frenzy has made TSMC one of the world's top 10 most valuable companies. Its profit jumped 46% last year to \$1.7 trillion Taiwan dollars (\$54 billion).

The chipmaker is investing heavily both in Taiwan and in new factories in Arizona in the U.S. It produces more than 90% of the world's most advanced chips.

Foxconn, formally known as Hon Hai Precision Industry Co., has doubled its value since 2023. The maker of Apple's iPhone and iPads now produces AI servers and racks and has a partnership with OpenAI to supply AI data center equipment.

Taiwan's heavy reliance on its technology industry means its biggest risk is that growth will be "very highly contingent on the AI boom and tech race continuing," said Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater Chi-

What's On

SPOTLIGHT



Got a birthday or event?

Share your story and snapshots with Arab Times!
Email your write-up and photos to
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From tiny violins to global stages

Kuwait Music Academy winter concert celebrates young talent



Ivaylo with trophies & Mr Karol



Ivaylo Shabanliyski with Mr Karol & Prof. Cezary



Dina & Mahsa Raeisi with Mr Karol



The Winner Danah Ahmed with Special Prize. Aside Mr. Kamil, Mr. Karol & Prof. Cezary



Talented ladies pianists: Mrs Fajer with daughters Aisha & Farah. Aside Prof Cezary, Mr Karol



Amy Wanas plays electric guitar



The Last Chopin chords by The Best Danah Ahmed



After 1st Concert at 9 am gathering for common photos.



Debut of Orchestra frenetically applauded.

By Cezary Owerkowicz
Special to the Arab Times

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Last Friday, the Kuwait Music Academy (KMA) held its winter parade of musical talents. The gatherings of family and friends are dear to us. Tradition does not allow us to overlook holidays, anniversaries, and above all, our children's events. Such occasions cannot be postponed—children cannot wait.

Our children are the most important part of our lives. They expect us to share their joy and to be proud of their first steps, as well as their incessant achievements. They eagerly await our interest, encouragement and recognition.

Let Us Meet and Play

The KMA Winter Concerts have become a cherished tradition, distinguished by a unique family atmosphere. For music to truly come alive, it requires both a performer and a listener—family members, friends and colleagues who are there to listen. Performing before an audience is more challenging, yet far more rewarding. It teaches us how to present ourselves and how to share something meaningful with others—skills that must also be learned. Life is a social form of existence. The ability to perform is essential later in life.

The Joy of Small and All

KMA teaches students of all ages and levels. It is especially touching to watch the youngest children as they climb onto the piano stool or clutch a tiny violin and bow. At times, they are nervous, at times confident and joyful, but

always eager for our approval. Older performers strive to convey their sensitivity and skills through familiar melodies and rhythms, and they too value recognition.

It is a great joy and satisfaction to witness the small and great successes born of the talents and efforts of our youths in the seven consecutive concert sessions, held throughout the day—from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. This experience is shared by the huge, friendly audience, and in particular, by the teachers, who are usually part of performances.

Let Us Play Together

Since last year, the highly successful concerts by KMA teachers have become a new feature of the program. Every school grows with its students. This academic year marked a major milestone with the formation of the KMA Orchestra under the baton of Viktor Shramko, thanks to his tremendous efforts and the support of the entire KMA team.

The orchestra's first public performance was the highlight of the Gala Concert. It began its public journey with a dignified rendition of the Kuwaiti National Anthem, followed by a highly successful program that included the works of Vivaldi and Haydn, along with two engaging transcriptions.

The Gala Concert continued with outstanding solo performances, starting with young pianists Mohammed Ghazal and Reyna Philip. It culminated with the impressive performances of older students, including the talented Kuwaiti pianist, Yousef Al Khulaif, who delivered a highly musical interpretation of Ravel, while

Danah Ahmed presented a brilliant Chopin performance. Danah won two first prizes last year at the Kuwaiti and Bahraini international music competitions.

Excellent pianists, vocalists, guitarists, percussionists, violinists and flutists—all of them deserved the audience's applause and appreciation.

By Their Fruits You Will Know Them

Teaching has something in common with gardening: seeds are planted, and fruits grow proudly in many places. The future paths of our students have been highlighted in several Arab Times reports, covering successive Kuwaiti music competitions and festivals. Many have gone on to graduate from prestigious universities and perform around the world. We are immensely proud of them. We remember them with gratitude.

Among them are Donia Jarrar in California, (the score of her opera about Palestinian women is deposited in the Library of Congress), Magda Boukanan in Canada at the University of Montreal, Feifei Li at the Royal Academy in the United Kingdom, Firas Barber in Paris and Patil Zakarian who performs successfully from Brazil to Amsterdam.

Most recently, Nigel Rosario achieved enormous success at Belmont University in Nashville, USA. He shared on Facebook how his studies under Mr. Karol at KMA contributed significantly to his achievements, affirming his strong connection to the KMA musical family.

For those who create, teach and nurture our School Family, this is the greatest satisfaction of all.

A proud moment for IBPC Kuwait

Mr. Suresh KP to represent Kuwait at Loka Kerala Sabha



KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Mr. Suresh KP, Secretary of the Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) Kuwait, has been selected to represent the Kerala expatriate Business and Professional community from Kuwait at the upcoming Loka Kerala Sabha, scheduled to be held at the Kerala Legislative Assembly.

The invitation is widely viewed as an important recognition of the structured and collective efforts of IBPC Kuwait and the Indian business and professional community in the country. It also reflects the Government of Kerala's continued focus on strengthening business engagement and enhancing the welfare of Non-Resident Keralites living abroad, by creating formal platforms for dialogue and representation.

IBPC Kuwait has consistently functioned as an institutional forum to present the concerns, ideas, and aspirations of Indian professionals and businesspersons in Kuwait in a constructive and coordinated manner. The selection is seen as a continuation of this collaborative engagement between overseas organisations and Kerala's development initiatives.

Several Indian diaspora organisations in Kuwait have welcomed and congratulated Mr. Suresh KP on this responsibility. Many have recalled his dedicated service to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly his role as Chief

Coordinator of the Indian Community Support Group (ICSG), which provided critical assistance during a challenging period.

With over three decades of involvement in promoting India-Kuwait bilateral trade, cultural exchange, and community-oriented initiatives, Mr. Suresh KP's participation at the Loka Kerala Sabha is expected to add value to discussions on expatriate welfare, overseas investment, and diaspora collaboration.

The IBPC Executive Committee and members have congratulated Mr. Suresh KP on this achievement and expressed confidence that he will articulate the interests of the Kuwaiti expatriate business community with clarity, balance, and purpose at the Loka Kerala Sabha.

This development marks a proud moment for IBPC Kuwait and the wider Indian business community in the country.

Dr. Sameer Humad, President of the FID, warmly

Forum of Indian Doctors Kuwait releases 21st 'Health and Wellness' guide at DOCFEST 2026

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Forum of Indian Doctors (FID) Kuwait, the Premier Sociocultural Association of Indian Doctors in the state of Kuwait, commemorated the release of the 21st Edition of the annually published Health guide – Health and Wellness and held the DOCFEST 2026 – Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the cultural variety show at the Hotel Regency on 6th February 2026.

The Chief Guest were H.E Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi, Hon. Minister of Health Kuwait, Guest of Honors H.E. Mrs. Paramita Tripathi, Ambassador of India to Kuwait, Padma Shri H.E. Sheikha Shaikha Ali Al Jaber Al Sabah and Dr. Ibrahim Al Tawalah President Kuwait Medical Association.

The event was also attended by a galaxy of dignitaries including H.E. Troy Torrington Ambassador of Guyana, Dr. Khaled Al Khaldi Director KCCC, Dr. Amal Ayed Abdullah HOD OBG Farwaniya Hospital, Dr. Mariam A Khud HOD Neonatology Maternity Hospital, Senior doctors from Kuwait, Senior Indian Businessman, Presidents and Secretaries of leading Associations in Kuwait.

The Guests were escorted to the Dias, Chief Guest Minister of Health, Kuwait H.E. Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi by Dr. Sameer Humad, Guest of Honor Indian Ambassador H.E. Mrs. Paramita Tripathi by Dr. Mohan Ram and Guest of Honor KMA President Dr. Ibrahim Al Tawalah by Dr. Philipose George and Guest of Honor H.E Sheikha Shaikha Ali Al Jaber Al Sabah by Dr. Susovana Sujit Nair.

Dr. Susovana Sujit Nair Vice President anchored the program. The evening commenced with the national anthems of Kuwait and India, followed by the recitation of the Holy Quran by Mohammad Faizan. The Guests were escorted to the Dias, Chief Guest Minister of Health, Kuwait H.E. Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi by Dr. Sameer Humad, Guest of Honor Indian Ambassador H.E. Mrs. Paramita Tripathi by Dr. Mohan Ram and Guest of Honor KMA President Dr. Ibrahim Al Tawalah by Dr. Philipose George and Guest of Honor H.E Sheikha Shaikha Ali Al Jaber Al Sabah by Dr. Susovana Sujit Nair.

Dr. Philipose George, General Secretary of the FID warmly welcomed the assembled dignitaries, guests and members and family of FID members.

Dr. Sameer Humad, President of the FID, warmly



Photo during the event.

welcomed the guests and highlighted the community health promotion activities which are regularly conducted by the FID to raise awareness among the public about a variety of medical issues. He briefed them on the activities of the association. He took the opportunity to thank all the well-wishers and sponsors for the continuous support to the organization.

H.E. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi gave the inaugural address. He congratulated to the FID and the Indian community at large. He highlighted the close bond between Kuwait and India and praised the Indian doctors for their dedication and hard work in upgrading the health care facilities. He expressed special thanks to the spouses and children of the doctors for their commendable support.

H.E. Mrs. Paramita Tripathi praised the Indian doctor's dedication and work ethics and congratulated FID on bringing out a helpful Health guide on Health and Wellness.

H.E. Sheikha Shaikha Ali Al Jaber Al Sabah stressed the importance of yoga and meditation for healthy life and praised the role of FID in highlighting it in the Health Guide.

President Dr. Ibrahim Al Tawalah highlighted the valuable contributions made by Indian doctors. The 21st FID health guide - Health and Wellness, was officially introduced by Chief Editor Dr. Arijit Chattopadhyay together with Co-Editors Dr. Philipose George, Dr. Rajendra C. Mishra, Dr. Jibin John Thomas, Dr. Rajesh Vasudeva, Dr. Yousuf Dar, Dr. Mohamad Quadri and Dr. Soumya R. Shetty. He informed the topic of Health and Wellness was to update Healthy Life Style and importance of SHIELD for achieving good, happy and healthy life.

The current edition "Health and Wellness," is a collection of articles authored by experts in the Medical fields. It provides a valuable insight in management and the latest advances in medical field. The topics are written in simple non-technical language with the general public in mind. The Health guide was officially released by H.E. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi and the first copies were presented to H.E. Mrs. Paramita Tripathi, H.E. Sheikha Shaikha Ali Al Jaber Al Sabah and Dr. Ibrahim Al Tawalah. All the office bearers of FID joined during the unveiling of the Health Guide.

Features

ARAB TIMES
FRIDAY-SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13-14, 2024



In this photo provided by the Saudi Media Ministry, Prince William of Wales, speaks to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during his visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Monday, Feb. 9. (AP)

Shared heritage celebrated

Saudi Arabia, UK declare 2029 as Saudi-British Cultural Year

RIYADH, Feb 12, (KUNA): The Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport jointly announced on Wednesday the designation of 2029 as the Saudi-British Cultural Year.

The announcement was made on the sidelines of the visit of His Royal Highness Prince William, Prince of Wales and Heir to the Throne of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said the announcement reflects the strength of bilateral ties between the two kingdoms, rooted in more than a century of relations that have evolved into a multidimensional international partnership encompassing culture, education and innovation.

It underscores shared values and a mutual commitment to building a long-term strategic partnership.

SPA added that Saudi-British cultural cooperation has witnessed notable growth in recent years, becoming a key pillar of bilateral relations through joint initiatives in heritage preservation, visual arts, culinary arts, architecture and higher education. The momentum in cultural exchange lays solid foundations for the 2029 Cultural Year, a year-long celebration of creative dialogue and shared heritage aimed at strengthening ties for future generations in both countries.

People

Police activity lifts hopes

FBI combs desert terrain for clues in Guthrie case

TUCSON, Ariz., Feb. 12, (AP): Fresh surveillance images from Nancy Guthrie's porch the night she went missing, coupled with intense police activity across Arizona and the detention of a man had raised hopes that authorities were nearing a major break.

But then the man was released

after questioning, leaving it unclear Wednesday where the investigation stood into last week's disappearance of Guthrie, the 84-year-old mother of "Today" show host

Guthrie

vannah Guthrie.

FBI agents carrying water bottles to beat the 80-degree F (26.7-degree C) heat walked among rocks and desert vegetation at Guthrie's Tucson-area home. They also fanned out across a neighborhood about a mile (1.6 kilometers) away, knocking on doors and searching through cactuses, bushes and boulders. Several hundred detectives and agents are now assigned to the investigation, which is expanding in the area, the Pima County Sheriff's Department said.

In a nearby neighborhood, two investigators emerged from daughter Annie Guthrie's home with a paper grocery sack and a white trash bag. One, still wearing blue protective gloves, also took a stack of mail from the roadside mailbox. They drove away without speaking to reporters.

Barb Dutrow, who was jogging through a neighborhood where teams were searching, said an FBI agent told her they were looking for anything that might have been

tossed from a car. Dutrow, who was visiting from Louisiana for a convention, said she "can't imagine the feeling of the family of having their mother taken."

A day earlier, authorities said they had stopped a man near the U.S.-Mexico border, just hours after the FBI released videos of a person wearing a gun holster, ski mask and backpack and approaching Nancy Guthrie's home in Tucson. The man told media outlets early Wednesday that he was released after several hours and had nothing to do with Guthrie's disappearance last week.

Authorities have not said what led them to stop the man Tuesday but confirmed he was released. The sheriff's department said its deputies and FBI agents also searched a location in Rio Rico, a city south of Tucson where the man lives.

It was the latest twist in an investigation that has gripped the nation since Nancy Guthrie disappeared on Feb. 1. Until Tuesday, it seemed authorities were making little headway in determining what happened to her or finding who was responsible.

The black and white images released by the FBI showing a masked person trying to cover a doorknob camera on Guthrie's porch marked the first significant break in the case. But the images did not show what happened to her or help determine whether she is still alive. FBI Director Kash Patel said investigators spent days trying to find lost, corrupted or inaccessible images.

Even though the images do not show the person's face, investigators are hopeful someone will know who was on the porch. More than 4,000 calls came into the Pima County sheriff's tip line within the past 24 hours, the department said Wednesday afternoon.

"It's time to tell my story"

Michael Douglas announces 'raw' memoir for Oct release

NEW YORK, Feb 12, (AP): Oscar-winner Michael Douglas will have a memoir out this fall, a "raw, sweeping" account he says will illuminate his storied personal and professional lives.

"After being asked for many years, I've finally decided it's time to tell my story on my own terms," Douglas said in a statement released Wednesday through Grand Central Publishing, which has set an Oct. 6 release date.

"Not the highlight reel, not the version shaped by headlines or box office numbers, but the real one. I've lived a life that unfolded in public while be-



Douglas

ing deeply private at the same time, and there's a difference. This is about where I came from, what I fought against, and what I chose for myself. Fame can blur the truth; this is my attempt to bring it back into focus."

Douglas' book, written in collaboration with Michael Fleming, is currently untitled. Financial terms were not disclosed; Douglas was represented by Shane Salerno of the Story Factory.

The 81-year-old actor has been on screen, and in the news, for decades. The son of Hollywood giant Kirk Douglas, he broke through in the 1970s in the hit TV series "The Streets of San Francisco" and went on to star in such cultural touchstones as "Fatal Attraction," "Wall Street" and "Basic Instinct." He also produced the Oscar-winning "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," a project that Douglas' father had longed to take on himself.

Variety

CHICAGO: Cardi B was part of Bad Bunny's Super Bowl halftime show. What she did exactly, well, that turned into a perplexing question for two major prediction markets. At least one Kalshi trader filed a complaint with the Commodity Futures Trading Commission over how the prediction market handled Sunday's appearance by the Grammy-winning rapper. The result of a similar event contract on Polymarket also drew the ire of some users on that platform.

Prediction markets provide an opportunity to trade - or wager - on the result of future events. The markets are comprised of typically yes-or-no questions called event contracts, with the prices connected to what traders are willing to pay, which theoretically indi-

cates the perceived probability of an event occurring.

The buy-in for each contract ranges from \$0 to \$1 each, reflecting a 0% to 100% chance of what traders think could happen. More than \$47.3 million was wagered on Kalshi's market for "Who will perform at the Big Game?" A Polymarket contract had more than \$10 million in volume.

Cardi B joined singers Karol G and Young Miko and actors Jessica Alba and Pedro Pascal on a starry front porch during the halftime spectacle. She danced to the music, but it was unclear whether she was singing along during the show, which included performances by Ricky Martin and Lady Gaga. (AP)

□ □ □

NEW YORK: Actor Blake Lively and director Justin Baldoni came to a New York courthouse on Wednes-

day to see if her lawsuit alleging sexual harassment on the set of the 2024 romantic drama "It Ends With Us" could be settled before a May trial.

The talks between lawyers went on over a six-hour period before Lively and Baldoni left the Manhattan federal courthouse separately and went straight to their waiting cars without saying anything. Lively looked stern as she walked out while Baldoni was smiling. Their lawyers did not immediately comment.

Mandatory settlement talks are generally required before a civil case proceeds to trial. They are not held in public.

Their acrimonious yearlong litigation has cast a wide net across the entertainment world, drawing into the headlines other actors, musicians and celebrities and raising questions about the power, influence and gender dynamics in Hollywood. (AP)

BAFTA winners feel the weight of glory

How the coveted BAFTA mask trophies are made

LONDON, Feb 12, (AP): Those winning a prize at the upcoming British Academy Film Awards will bag a coveted bronze mask trophy - and get a bit of an arm workout taking it home.

Along with the honor of being named the best of the year in the industry, winners at the BAFTA ceremony on Feb. 22 will be awarded one of the dozens of the 3-kilogram (6.6-pound) prizes.

This year the cast and crew of "One Battle After Another," "Sinners," "Hamnet," "Marty Supreme," and "Sentimental Value" are in the running for the trophies at the EE BAFTA ceremony, to be held at London's Royal Festival Hall.

As with many things in show business, all that glitters is not gold. The BAFTA masks are made of phosphor bronze, polished to a mirror finish that will reflect the happy face of its new owner.

Craftsmen at the AATi Foundry in Braintree, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) northeast of London, use

a sandcasting technique to make about 350 bronze trophies each year for all the BAFTA ceremonies - covering the film, television and gaming industries.

They are created in batches, and making one from start to finish takes around a week, the foundry's director Hugh Bisset said Tuesday.

The process starts with a pattern by the tooling team, often out of timber or 3D printing. That tool moves to the molding team which uses sand to make two recessed impressions of the mask, one each side. They are then closed together, ready for molten hot bronze - up to 1,200 degrees Celsius (2,192 Fahrenheit) - to be poured into it.

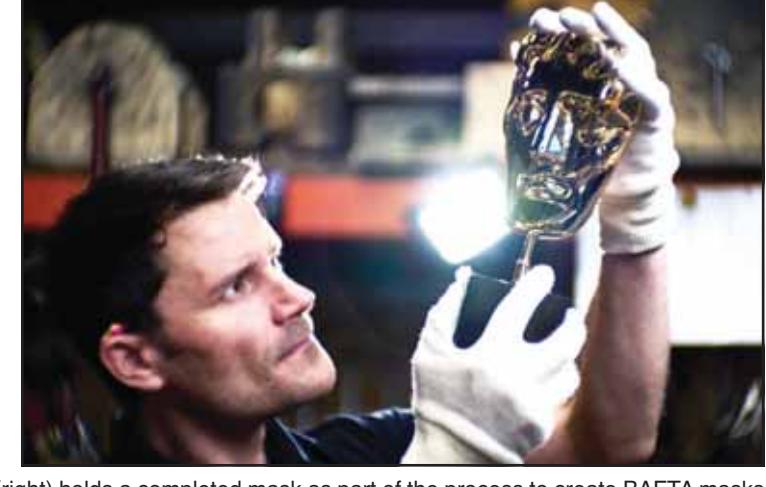
The metal takes about three or four hours to cool down, when it can then be removed from the sand. The masks' surfaces look dull and a bit rough around the edges at this stage, but after fettling, threading and polishing they are ready to be assembled before being checked over extremely carefully.

Bisset says it's important that the masks are shiny and have no polish left on them.

"The thing I'm always conscious of is that these amazing actors and actresses, they pick up their awards and my big concern is that a smudge of polish will end up over their lovely, beautiful white dress," he said. "There's lots of things we need to think about."

Bisset reckons the diligence and care that his skilled team puts into the making of the masks reflects the hard work of the winning filmmakers and movie stars.

And while it's still unknown if favorites Jessie Buckley, Timothée Chalamet and Teyana Taylor will get the glory on Sunday, whoever does win will take home something worth more than its heavy weight in bronze. "There's a lot of metal in it," but each mask also has "a lot of time and love being put into it," Bisset said.



Left: A British Academy Film Awards mask is polished and a foundry worker (right) holds a completed mask as part of the process to create BAFTA masks at FSE Foundry in Braintree, England on Tuesday, Feb. 10. (AP)

Obituary

'Dawson's Creek' star mocked his own hunky persona

Actor James Van Der Beek dies at 48



James Van Der Beek arrives at the 71st Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles on Sept. 22, 2019. (AP)

curls up together. Racier shows like "Euphoria" and "Sex Education" owe a debt to "Dawson's Creek."

Van Der Beek sometimes struggled to get out from under the shadow of the show but eventually leaned into lampooning himself, like on Funny Or Die videos and on Kesha's "Blow" music video, which included his laser gun battle with the pop star in a nightclub and dead unicorns.

"It's tough to compete with something that was the cultural phenomenon that 'Dawson's Creek' was," he told Vulture in 2013. "It ran for so long. That's a lot of hours playing one character in front of people. So it's natural that they associate you with that."

More than a decade after the show went off the air, a scene at the end of the show's third season became a GIF. Dawson was watching as his soul mate embarks on a love affair with his best friend and burst into tears.

"It wasn't scripted that I was supposed to cry; it was just one of those things where it's a magical moment and it just happens in the scene," Van Der Beek told Vanity Fair. He seemed exasperated when he told the Los Angeles Times: "All of a sudden, six years of work was boiled down to one seven-second clip on loop." (Van Der Beek himself recreated the GIF in 2011 for Funny or Die and gave it a second life.)

While still on "Dawson's Creek," Van Der Beek hosted "Saturday Night Live" - the musical guest was Everlast - and landed a plumb role in "Varsity Blues," playing a second-string high

school quarterback who leaps into the breach when the star suffers an injury.

Van Der Beek's character, Mox, turns out to not be a football fanatic, preferring to read Kurt Vonnegut and yearning for the college education that will allow him to escape the jock mentality of his Texas town.

"I don't want your life," he screams at one point. Critic Roger Ebert called him "convincing and likable."

Projects

Some of his projects after "Dawson's Creek" included co-creating and playing Wesley "Diplo" Pentz, a dull but likable music producer in the mockumentary satire on ViceLand, "What Would Diplo Do?" In 2019, he made it to the semifinals of ABC's "Dancing with the Stars" and played a balding, out-of-shape ex-boyfriend on "How I Met Your Mother." "The more you make fun of yourself and don't try to go for any kind of respect, the more people seem to respect you," he told Vanity Fair in 2011. "I've always been a clown trapped in a leading man's body."

Between 2003 and 2013, he made appearances in shows like "Criminal Minds," "One Tree Hill," and "How I Met Your Mother." He played himself with a crackpot intensity in the Krysten Ritter-led ABC drama "Don't Trust the B- in Apartment 23," and the short-lived "CSI" spinoff "CSI: Cyber" and CBS' "Friends With Better Lives."

He's also appeared in movies such as Kevin Smith's 2001 comedy "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back" and its 2019 sequel, "Jay and Silent Bob Re-

boot." He was in the Bret Easton Ellis adaptation of "The Rules of Attraction" in 2002 opposite Jessica Biel and Kate Bosworth.

In 2025, he was unmasked as Griffin on "The Masked Singer," after singing a cover of John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads" and "I Had Some Help" by Post Malone and Morgan Wallen.

Van Der Beek, who was raised in Cheshire, Connecticut, started acting at 13 after suffering a concussion playing football that prevented him from playing for a year. He landed the role of Danny Zuko in his school production of "Grease." He stuck with theater, landing at 16 in 1994 an off-Broadway role in "Finding the Sun" by Pulitzer Prize-winner Edward Albee and one of the songs in a revival of "Shenandoah" at the prestigious Goodspeed Opera House in his home state.

He earned a scholarship to New Jersey's Drew University but left school early when he was cast in "Dawson's Creek." In 2024, he returned to campus to accept an honorary degree for his "selfless service and exemplary commitment to the mission of Drew," the university said.

Drew University President Hilary Link welcomed Van Der Beek with a popular quote from his "Dawson's Creek" character: "Edge is fleeting," she said, "but heart lasts forever. So on this morning, we pay tribute to that heart." He is survived by his wife, Kimberly, and six children, Olivia, Joshua, Annabel, Emilia, Gwendolyn and Jeremiah.

day to see if her lawsuit alleging sexual harassment on the set of the 2024 romantic drama "It Ends With Us" could be settled before a May trial.

The talks between lawyers went on over a six-hour period before Lively and Baldoni left the Manhattan federal courthouse separately and went straight to their waiting cars without saying anything. Lively looked stern as she walked out while Baldoni was smiling. Their lawyers did not immediately comment.

Mandatory settlement talks are generally required before a civil case proceeds to trial. They are not held in public.

Their acrimonious yearlong litigation has cast a wide net across the entertainment world, drawing into the headlines other actors, musicians and celebrities and raising questions about the power, influence and gender dynamics in Hollywood. (AP)

Court examines Insta's impact on teens and body image

Social media cannot cause clinical addiction: Instagram chief

LOS ANGELES, Feb 12, (AP): Adam Mosseri, the head of Meta's Instagram, testified Wednesday during a landmark social media trial in Los Angeles that he disagrees with the idea that people can be clinically addicted to social media platforms.

The question of addiction is a key pillar of the case, where plaintiffs seek to hold social media companies responsible for harms to children who use their platforms. Meta Platforms and Google's YouTube are the two remaining defendants in the case, which TikTok and Snap have settled.

At the core of the Los Angeles case is a 20-year-old identified only by the initials "KGM," whose lawsuit could determine how thousands of similar lawsuits against social media companies would play out. She and two other plaintiffs have been selected for bellwether trials - essentially test cases for both sides to see how their arguments play out before a jury.

Mosseri, who's headed Instagram since 2018 said it's important to differentiate between clinical addiction and what he called problematic use. The plaintiff's lawyer, however, presented quotes directly from Mosseri in a podcast interview a few years ago where he used the term

addiction in relation to social media use, but he clarified that he was probably using the term "too casually," as people tend to do.

Mosseri said he was not claiming to be a medical expert when questioned about his qualifications to comment on the legitimacy of social media addiction, but said someone "very close" to him has experienced serious clinical addiction, which is why he said he was "being careful with my words."

He said he and his colleagues use the term "problematic use" to refer to "someone spending more time on Instagram than they feel good about, and that definitely happens."

It's "not good for the company, over the long run, to make decisions that profit for us but are poor for people's well-being," Mosseri said.

Mosseri and the plaintiff's lawyer, Mark Lanier, engaged in a lengthy back-and-forth about cosmetic filters on Instagram that changed people's appearance in a way that seemed to promote plastic surgery.

"We are trying to be as safe as possible but also censor as little as possible," Mosseri said.

In the courtroom, bereaved parents of children who

have had social media struggles seemed visibly upset during a discussion around body dysmorphia and cosmetic filters. Meta shut down all third-party augmented reality filters in January 2025. The judge made an announcement to members of the public on Wednesday after the displays of emotion, reminding them not to make any indication of agreement or disagreement with testimony, saying that it would be "improper to indicate some position."

During cross examination, Mosseri and Meta lawyer Phyllis Jones tried to reframe the idea that Lanier was suggesting in his questioning that the company is looking to profit off of teens specifically.

Mosseri said Instagram makes "less money from teens than from any other demographic on the app," noting that teens don't tend to click on ads and many don't have disposable income that they spend on products from ads they receive. During his opportunity to question Mosseri for a second time, Lanier was quick to point to research that shows people who join social media platforms at a young age are more likely to stay on the platforms longer, which he said makes teen users prime for meaningful long-term profit.

"Often people try to frame things as you either priori-

itize safety or you prioritize revenue," Mosseri said. "It's really hard to imagine any instance where prioritizing safety isn't good for revenue."

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg is expected to take the stand next week.

In recent years, Instagram has added a slew of features and tools it says have made the platform safer for young people. But this does not always work. A report last year, for instance, found that teen accounts researchers created were recommended age-inappropriate sexual content, including "graphic sexual descriptions, the use of cartoons to describe demeaning sexual acts, and brief displays of nudity."

In addition, Instagram also recommended a "range of self-harm, self-injury, and body image content" on teen accounts that the report says "would be reasonably likely to result in adverse impacts for young people, including teenagers experiencing poor mental health, or self-harm and suicidal ideation and behaviors." Meta called the report "misleading, dangerously speculative" and said it misrepresents its efforts on teen safety.

Meta is also facing a separate trial in New Mexico that began this week.

Film



A poster of the Konkani movie 'Crazy Mogi.'

D'Silva's film delights with love, laughter, and twists

Award-winning Konkani film 'Crazy Mogi' premieres in Kuwait

By John Fernandes

Online Media Manager

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The much-anticipated Konkani film 'Crazy Mogi' premiered in Kuwait on Feb 12 at Ozone Cinema, Trio Mall, Khatia, and will continue screenings until Feb 18. (Children below 15 years are not permitted). Directed and written by Christ Silva, the film stars John D'Silva, Merlyn

D'Silva, Samantha Da Costa, Kenny Fernandes and an ensemble cast that keeps audiences entertained with charm, humor, and engaging performances.

The 2023 romantic comedy-drama follows young lovers Arjun and Joaquin as they navigate the highs and lows of love with the help of their friend Roy. Packed with romance, comedy, and unexpected twists, the film offers a light-hearted yet mature take on modern relationships, misunderstandings, and

personal growth, leaving viewers laughing, cheering, and thoroughly charmed.

Already acclaimed internationally, 'Crazy Mogi' has won 14 awards at the 12th Goa State Film Festival and received enthusiastic responses from Konkani-speaking communities in Dubai, London, and Qatar. With its heartwarming story and award-winning appeal, the film showcases the rising strength of Konkani cinema while delighting audiences in Kuwait.

'Swords into Plowshares' captivates viewers

Epic drama revives forgotten Chinese history



This undated photo shows a still of the historical epic TV series 'Swords into Plowshares.' (Xinhua)

Central to the plot is King of Wuyue Qian Hongchu, whose realm, primarily in present-day Zhejiang Province and part of Fujian Province in east China, became a rare haven of peace and prosperity. The series traces his transformation from a carefree prince to a ruler steering a southern kingdom through turbulence. Along the way, he witnessed the depths of human suffering in an era so brutal that it descended at times into cannibalism.

His legacy culminated in the bloodless surrender of Wuyue territory to the Song Dynasty (960-1279) -- a pivotal act that helped reunify China. By choosing to end the conflict rather than prolong it, he brought lasting peace to his realm, embodying the drama's central metaphor: turning swords into plowshares.

As the epic series presents history authentically with refined, archaic dialogue and immaculate attention to detail, many viewers have taken to reading, with young people in particular turning to social media platforms and AI chat-

bots to learn about their history and deepen their understanding of 10th-century China.

Reading lists with titles like "10 books to accompany 'Swords into Plowshares'" have proliferated online, and sales of related history books have surged. On JD.com, more than 68,000 copies of seven relevant titles have been purchased, and an eight-volume history book of the era has trended on WeChat's reading platform.

Vloggers like 29-year-old Liu Zhanyuan are riding this wave of interest by posting detailed historical accounts related to the series. Just two of the explanatory videos he has posted helped him gain over 30,000 new Rednote followers in two weeks. "I was concerned viewers might abandon a brilliant drama simply for lack of context," he said of his motivation.

The history aficionado said he admires the series for several reasons, including its rare focus on a neglected historical era, its nuanced and non-judgmental portrayal of complex characters.

Ancient Chinese history is often

framed through a binary lens of order versus chaos or unity versus division. The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period is not an era that later generations look back on with pride.

Yet, as Liu observed, "The series illuminates the transition between the two powerful dynasties, Tang and Song, providing the missing link in understanding the history's continuity."

On the newfound enthusiasm, Liu said that while history has often been regarded by many young people as a dry, academic subject, this series is igniting their interest, driving them to explore the enduring strengths.

As depicted in the drama, the Kingdom of Wuyue emerged as an oasis of peace and prosperity while war and devastation swept much of China amid dynastic upheaval, regional conquests, and conflicts with the nomadic Khitan people from beyond the Great Wall.

The story of the Wuyue Kingdom has also brought to life obscure historical sites, such as a temple commemorating the kings of the Qian family, located near the famed West Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang's capital. Visits to the temple have surged by 30 to 40 percent year-on-year on the weekends following the series premiere, according to official statistics.

On Jan. 28, the newly opened Yijin City archaeological site museum in Hangzhou drew large crowds. Visiting the ruins of Wuyue Kingdom, local visitor Guo Shengxia, 36, said, "I've lived within the old city walls all my life, but only now do I feel a deeper connection to this land. Every inch of land beneath my feet is rooted in the history of Wuyue."

The series' lead actor, Bai Yu, who plays Qian Hongchu, reflected, "Having gone through this creative journey, what stays with me most is a deeper appreciation for the peace we enjoy today."

Variety

WASHINGTON: As the Trump administration prepares to close the Kennedy Center for a two-year renovation, the head of Washington's performing arts center has warned its staff about impending cuts that will leave "skeletal teams."

In a Tuesday memo obtained by The Associated Press, Kennedy Center President Richard Grenell told staff that "departments will obviously function on a much smaller scale with some units totally reduced or on hold until we begin preparations to reopen in 2028," promising "permanent or temporary adjustments for most everyone." (AP)

THE HAGUE: Netherlands: Cees Nooteboom, a Dutch novelist, travel writer and journalist who was lauded for his insights into European history and culture and often tipped as a possible winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, died Wednesday, his publisher announced. He was 92.

Publishing house De Bezige Bij said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press that Nooteboom "died very peacefully on his beloved

island of Menorca." The publisher said the message was written on behalf of his wife, photographer Simone Sassen.

"We will miss the friendship, erudition, passion, and idiosyncrasies of this internationally acclaimed writer," the publishing house added. It did not give a cause of death. (AP)

NEW YORK: Herman Diaz's first novel since his Pulitzer-Prize winning "Trust" is a futuristic thriller in which a young orphan survives by stealing electricity from the grid and selling it on the black market.

Riverhead Books announced Wednesday that the 464-page "Ply" will be published Sept. 29. At least in one way, the book marks a shift from his previous work. "Trust," published in 2022, was set around the stock market crash of 1929. Diaz's "In the Distance," a Pulitzer finalist in 2018, takes place in the American West in the 19th century.

"After rewriting America's past with his two previous novels, Herman Diaz now gives us a glimpse into the future," Riverhead's announcement reads in part. "Ply" questions the place of technology in the American experiment with a plot that grabs both heart and mind." (AP)

Conference to showcase latest in skin diagnosis, laser tech

Kuwait hosts dermatology conference to boost medical standards

By Marwa Al-Bahrani

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi affirmed the commitment of the ministry to push for the advancement of the healthcare system, improve medical services, and build a qualified national workforce in line with the highest international standard.

This was part of the speech that Al-Awadhi delivered on Thursday at the inauguration of the Kuwait Conference on Dermatology, Laser and Aesthetic Medicine.

Participants in the three-day conference include doctors and consultants from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, other Arab nations, Europe, the United States of America, India and countries in the Far East.

Al-Awadhi stressed that the commitment of the ministry is rooted in its belief in the importance of continuing medical education and staying abreast of the latest scientific developments in various specializations.

He pointed out that organizing the conference is in line with the vision of the ministry to support scientific and professional developments. He praised the achievements of Kuwaiti Dermatologists Association, including the organization of more than 30 workshops and training



Photo by Samer Shaqair
Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi delivers a speech at the opening of the Kuwait Conference on Dermatology, Laser, and Aesthetic Medicine.

programs in recent years. He added that these programs have trained more than 200 doctors on the latest methods of diagnosing and treating chronic skin diseases.

He revealed that the notable achievements include the development of the first national treatment consensus for psoriasis in Kuwait, which serves more than 10,000 patients annually.

He also cited the launching of an advanced training course on hidradenitis suppurativa in cooperation with a specialized European institution, as well as the strengthening of partnership with the European Society for Laser and Energy-Based Devices to facilitate the transfer of the latest treatment technologies.

He highlighted the implementation of more than 15 community awareness campaigns on shingles and chronic skin diseases, such as psoriasis, eczema, vitiligo and alopecia, which benefited over 50,000 people.

He mentioned as well the activation of cooperation with Gulf and international associations through the signing of scientific agreements and the organization of joint conferences and workshops.

He said the dermatology departments in the facilities of the ministry provide services to more than 500,000 patients annually, indicating that these departments have witnessed significant development through the introduction of the latest laser and phototherapy technologies and the provision of innovative and internationally approved

medications.

He also underscored the development of infrastructure, reduction of waiting times, and enhancement of the efficiency of specialized clinics.

He emphasized that the conference is an important scientific platform for exchanging expertise and showcasing the latest advancements in the diagnosis and treatment of skin diseases, as well as the medical applications of laser technology.

He is hoping that the conference will be successful and produce recommendations that contribute to the advancement of medical practice and healthcare services in Kuwait.

On the other hand, Dr. Abeer Al-Badali, Head of the Conference Organizing Committee, stated that organizing the conference reflects the belief of the Association in the importance of keeping pace with rapid scientific advancements in this vital specialization and supporting evidence-based medical practices, which positively impact the quality of services provided to patients.

She added that the scientific committee was keen to prepare a comprehensive and balanced scientific program featuring lectures, workshops, and discussion sessions that address the needs of doctors.

Cholera deaths decrease

'Severe malnutrition' in Sudan up by 14 pct: WHO

GENEVA, Feb 12, (Agencies): World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General **Tedros Ghebreyesus** warned of a sharp rise in severe malnutrition in Sudan, stressing that an estimated 4.2 million people could be affected by 2026 including more than 800,000 cases of severe acute malnutrition, a 14 percent increase compared to 2025.

Speaking at a press conference in Geneva, Ghebreyesus said, "The humanitarian situation is worsening due to the lack of sustained access to aid threatening the lives of millions of people".

He emphasized that ongoing attacks on healthcare facilities since the start of the conflict are "exacerbating the crisis".

Speaking to the latest International Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), he noted that "two new areas in North Darfur have surpassed thresholds for acute malnutrition, one of three key metrics used to determine famine", while famine conditions were previously confirmed in two other cities in November last year.

Ghebreyesus also revealed that WHO has verified "about 205 attacks on healthcare facilities resulting in 1,924 deaths and 529 injuries", underlining the urgent need to protect medical facilities and healthcare workers.

He called for intensified humanitarian efforts to provide food and medical aid to Sudan's most vulnerable populations, warning that "without urgent intervention the situation could escalate into a deeper humanitarian catastrophe".

Meanwhile, South Sudan has managed to reduce cholera cases and prevent around 94,000



Tedros

deaths since the confirmation of the outbreak in September 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) has said.

In a statement issued Monday, the WHO said joint efforts involving the health ministry and partners, including government agencies, have reduced new cholera cases from an average of 1,000 at the peak of the outbreak in December 2024 to 114 in the last week of September 2025.

WHO Representative in South Sudan Humphrey Karamagi said the country's experience highlights the importance of sustained investment in preparedness, early detection and rapid response to infectious disease threats.

South Sudan's Ministry of Health activated a multisectoral response within 24 hours of outbreak confirmation, with the number of affected counties down to 12 from 55. The outbreak is now restricted to 29 out of 517 administrative divisions, according to the statement.

The WHO noted that this is South Sudan's largest and longest cholera outbreak since its independence in 2011.

The outbreak began in Renk, a border town receiving large numbers of returnees and refugees fleeing conflict in neighboring Sudan, where cholera transmission was already ongoing. Population movements contributed to the rapid spread of the disease.

The 13th batch of the Chinese medical team in South Sudan on Wednesday provided first-aid training to local staff at the clinic of the University of Juba.

Emmanuel Abdalla Lokosa, a 43-year-old laboratory technician at the clinic, was among 10 medics who attended the program, with a focus on wounds and fractures caused by falls and accidents.

He told Xinhua that the training facilitated by Chinese orthopedic doctor Fang Yong had reawakened and furnished his mind with knowledge.

Meanwhile, South Sudan has managed to reduce cholera cases and prevent around 94,000

Human activities made wildfires up to 3 times more likely

Climate change set the stage for deadly wildfires: study

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, Feb 12, (AP): Human-caused climate change had an important impact on the recent ferocious wildfires that engulfed parts of Chile and Argentina's Patagonia region, making the extremely high-risk conditions that led to widespread burning up to three times more likely than in a world without global warming, a team of researchers warned on Wednesday.

The hot, dry and gusty weather that fed last month's deadly wildfires in central and southern Chile was made around 200% more likely by human-made greenhouse gas emissions while the high-fire-risk conditions that fueled the blazes still racing through southern Argentina were made 150% more likely, according to World Weather Attribution, a scientific initiative that investigates extreme weather events soon after they happen.

That probability will only increase as humans continue to burn fossil fuels and blanket the planet with more heat-trapping gases, researchers added.

The blazes that tore through Chile's Biobio and Nuble regions in mid-January killed 23 people, destroyed over 1,000 houses and other structures and forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes. All were caused by human activity, whether through arson or negligence.

In southern Argentina, the fires first ignited by lightning forced the evacuation of thousands of tourists and residents and burned through over 45,000 hectares (174 square miles) of native forest, including vast swaths of the Los Alerces National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site home to 2,600-year-old trees.

The study, confirming what had been widely suspected, brings the first scientific assessment of global



A cow rests on the charred forest floor following wildfires on the outskirts of Cholila, Argentina, Jan. 26, 2026. (AP)

warming's role in intensifying some of the most serious wildfire emergencies to grip Chile and Argentina in years.

It's the latest in an emerging subfield of climate science known as weather attribution, which is evolving rapidly in response to a growing thirst for public information about how climate change influences natural disasters.

The World Weather Attribution report has not yet been peer-reviewed or published in a scientific journal, but it relies on widely accepted methods, including the analysis of data and computer model simulations to compare today's climate with past weather patterns.

"Overall, we're confident in saying that the main driver of this increased fire risk is human-caused warming," Clair Barnes, a research associate with World Weather Attribution, said in a briefing with reporters. "These trends are projected to continue in the future as long as we

continue to burn fossil fuels."

Record droughts and scorching temperatures created conditions conducive to wildfires in Chile and Argentina, the study found, while single-species plantations of highly flammable trees like pines helped the fires spread more easily in both areas. The invasive species have replaced native, more fire-resistant ecosystems in the region, turning shrub, brush and grass into kindling.

In Argentina's Patagonia, the town of El Bolsón recorded its highest January temperature on record - 38.4 degrees Celsius (101 degrees Fahrenheit). The town of Esquel, near Los Alerces National Park, logged 11 consecutive days of maximum temperatures in January, its second-longest heat wave in 65 years. Temperatures in Chile ahead of the fires were high but not record-breaking.

The researchers estimated that seasonal rainfall from November to January, before the peak burning

period, was around 25% weaker in Chile and 20% less intense in Argentine Patagonia than it would have been without a rise in global temperatures of at least 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.

"This, together with higher-than-average temperatures, led to vegetation being submitted to stress, very low humidity in the soil," said Juan Antonio Rivera, an Argentine researcher and author of the study. "Once the wildfires began ... there was sufficient fuel to extend and be sustained over time."

Chile has increased its budget for fighting wildfires by 110% in the last four years under left-wing President Gabriel Boric, improving fire forecasting and investing in new equipment.

But in Argentina, a harsh austerity program under libertarian President Javier Milei may have hobbled the country's ability to respond to the fires, researchers said, citing budget cuts to firefighting crews, a lack of planning and deregulation of tourism activities in Patagonia's national parks. It's a claim echoed to The Associated Press by firefighters, park rangers and officials involved in disaster relief.

Milei, like his ally U.S. President Donald Trump, has denied that climate change is related to human presence. His office did not immediately respond to a request for comment early Wednesday.

"Unfortunately, with a government that does not understand climate change and its connection to human activities, where nature is secondary in terms of priorities, these situations get worse and wildfires end up having greater impacts than they should," said Rivera. "The situation is still not under control."



Porwares Tantikanpanit, (left), drinks coffee in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, Feb. 11. (AP)

Thai govt initiative

Coffee chains cut default sugar content in a new health push

BANGKOK, Feb 12, (AP): For many Thais, a meal doesn't feel complete without an iced coffee or tea so sugary it could pass for dessert. The government, concerned about the health consequences, wants them to dial it back.

Starting Wednesday, nine major coffee chains across the country have pledged to cut the default sugar content in some of their drinks by half in a government initiative aimed at tackling excessive sugar consumption.

According to the Health Department, Thais consume an average of 21 teaspoons of sugar per day, more than three times the World Health Organization's recommended limit of six teaspoons. Health officials warn that such high intake increases the risk of obesity, diabetes and other diseases.

The initiative is the first significant step to change consumers' sugar consumption behavior, said Amporn Benjapornpitak, the director general of the department.

Pakorn Tungkasereerak, the department's deputy, said 2025 data show that about 45% of Thais aged 15 and older are obese, while 10% of the population has diabetes.

A survey by the Bureau of Nutrition found that a 22-ounce (650-milliliter) iced coffee contains an average of nine teaspoons of sugar, while a 10-ounce (300-milliliter) serving of bubble milk tea - an iced milk tea with tapioca pearls known as boba - can contain as much as 12 teaspoons.

Sirinya Kuiklang, an office worker, said she approves of the changes. She already orders her drinks at just 25% of the standard sugar level, but she is aware that many others consume too much sugar.

"It's good for Thai people," she said. Another office worker, Porwares Tantikanpanit, said he has enjoyed his non-coffee beverages at their current sugar levels but is willing to adjust if shops reduce the sweetness.

Leonard comes up big as Clippers snatch win from Rockets

OKC cruises past the Suns, Cavs beat Wizards in Harden's home debut

HOUSTON, Feb 12, (AP): Kawhi Leonard scored 27 points and his three-point play with two seconds remaining lifted the Los Angeles Clippers to a 105-102 victory over the Houston Rockets.

Leonard, who had 12 rebounds, scored 19 points in the fourth quarter to extend his career-best streak of 20-point games to 33.

The Clippers led by four points when Kevin Durant made one of two free throws before a layup by Alperen Sengun cut the lead to 102-101 with 43 seconds left. Leonard missed a 3-pointer and Jabari Smith Jr. grabbed a rebound to give Houston the ball.

Sengun shot 1 for 2 from the line with 7.2 seconds left to tie it and Leonard got the rebound before the Clippers called a timeout. Leonard then made a fadeaway jumper as he was fouled and hit the free throw to make it 105-102.

Thunder 136, Suns 109

In Phoenix, Jalen Williams scored 28 points, Isaiah Joe added 21 and the hot-shooting Oklahoma City Thunder cruised to victory over the Phoenix Suns. Oklahoma City led by at least 20 points for the entire second half, pushing the advantage to 37 in the third. Williams shot 11 of 12 from the field and added five assists and four rebounds. Joe made 6 of 8 3-pointers.

Kenrich Williams added 15 points and Chet Holmgren had 13. The defending champion Thunder - who have won four of six - shot 58.4% from the field and got 74 points from players coming off the bench.

Cavaliers 138, Wizards 113

In Cleveland, Sam Merrill scored a career-high 32, Donovan Mitchell added 30, and the Cleveland Cavaliers rolled to a victory over the Washington Wizards in James Harden's first home game.

Harden had 13 points and 11 assists in 28 minutes for his second double-double in three games since being traded by the LA Clippers to the Cavaliers on Feb. 4. He was only 1 of 4 from the field, but went 10 of 12 from the foul line.

Cleveland has won five straight



Miami Heat center Bam Adebayo (13) goes to the basket between New Orleans Pelicans forward Zion Williamson (1) and center Derik Queen (22) in the second half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans. (AP)

and 10 of its last 11. It was the fifth time this season the Cavaliers haven't trailed in a game.

Knicks 138, 76ers 89

In Philadelphia, Jose Alvarado scored a season-high 26 points and Mikal Bridges added 22 points as the New York Knicks beat the Philadelphia 76ers. The Knicks bounced back from an overtime home loss to the Indiana Pacers on Tuesday night for their 10th win in 12 games. Two of those victories have come against the Sixers. The teams split their four-game season series.

Spurs 126, Warriors 113

In San Francisco, De'Aaron Fox scored 27 points and Victor Wembanyama added 26 to send the San Antonio Spurs into the All-Star break on a six-game winning streak after beating the Golden State Warriors.

Wembanyama followed up his 40-point performance against the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night with another strong outing to give the Spurs a 38-16 record at the break. After missing the playoffs the past six seasons, the Spurs have the

second-best record in the Western Conference.

Keldon Johnson scored 21 for San Antonio.

Nuggets 122, Grizzlies 116

Denver, Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray warmed up for their appearances in the NBA's All-Star festivities by teaming up to help the Denver Nuggets hold off the Memphis Grizzlies.

Jokic had the 184th triple-double of his career with 26 points, 15 rebounds and 11 assists. Murray added 22 points and was 4 for 4 from the

foul line in the final 11.7 seconds.

Tim Hardaway Jr. added 21 points for the Nuggets, who head into the break at 35-20 despite an injury-riddled season that has seen all five starters miss time and six of their top rotation players go out for significant stretches.

Jazz 121, Kings 93

In Salt Lake City, Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 23 points in his home debut to lead the Utah Jazz to a 121-93 victory over the Sacramento Kings.

Lauri Markkanen scored 19 points to help the Jazz win their second

straight game. Isaiah Collier added 12 points and 14 assists. Brice Sennaba added 19 points on the bench.

Heat 123, Pelicans 111

In New Orleans, Bam Adebayo had 27 points, 14 rebounds and four blocks and the short-handed Miami Heat beat the New Orleans Pelicans in the final game for both teams before the All-Star break. Miami used only nine players, with Tyler Herro, Norman Powell, Pelle Larsson and Andrew Wiggins sidelined. Herro missed his 15th straight game.

Timberwolves 133, Blazers 109

In Minneapolis, Julius Randle had 41 points and the Minnesota Timberwolves beat Portland to end the Trail Blazers' winning streak at three.

Randall, who also had seven rebounds, capped his night with a windmill dunk that put the crowd at the Target Center on its feet. Jaden McDaniels added 21 points for the Timberwolves, playing their final game before the All-Star break.

Jrus Holiday scored 23 points for the Trail Blazers.

Pacers 115, Nets 110

In New York, Jarace Walker had 23 points, Kam Jones secured the victory with a 3-pointer with 16 seconds remaining, and the short-handed Indiana Pacers beat the Brooklyn Nets.

Micah Potter had 19 and Ethan Thompson had 15 for the Pacers, who won for the second straight night after winning in overtime over the New York Knicks on Tuesday night to end a four-game losing streak.

Hornets 110, Hawks 107

In Charlotte, Brandon Miller had 31 points and nine rebounds, LaMelo Ball made seven 3s and scored 24 points and Charlotte held on to beat the Atlanta Hawks, just hours after two of the Hornets' starters were suspended by the NBA for fighting.

Kon Knueppel added 18 points on four 3s, and Miller hit five 3s as the Hornets finished 19 of 51 from beyond the arc for their 10th win in 11 games.

Dyson Daniels scored 21 points for Atlanta. Jalen Johnson added 19 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists.

The NBA suspended Hornets forwards Miles Bridges and Moussa Diabate for four games for their role in a fight on Monday night against the Detroit Pistons.

Gunners close in on quarterfinal meeting against Chelsea

Maanum shines with two goals, Arsenal routs Leuven in 1st leg

LEUVEN, Belgium, Feb 12, (AP): Defending champion Arsenal took a big step toward the Women's Champions League quarterfinals by routing OH Leuven 4-0 in the first leg of their knockout playoff round.

After the victory in the inaugural Women's Champions Cup on Feb 1, Arsenal dominated from the start in Belgium to close in on a quarterfinal meeting against London rival Chelsea.

Frida Maanum led the visitors with two goals, and Olivia Smith showed she was worth the record transfer fee. Arsenal paid Liverpool for her in July. Also, Kim Little came on as substitute to play her 400th game for Arsenal.

Maanum headed in the opener after meeting a cross by Caitlin Foord from the right in the 22nd minute.

Smith doubled the advantage a quarter of an hour later with a clinical finish as the Canada forward found the far corner of the net with a first-time low shot. Maanum was left unmarked in the box to add her second, with Foord setting her up again early in the second half before substitute Alessia Russo completed the rout with her fifth of the campaign.

The revamped Women's Champions League format has followed the men's competition with an opening league phase of six rounds instead of eight.

The top four in the standings -



Arsenal's Katie McCabe, left, fights for the ball with Leuven's Jada Conijnbergen during the women's Champions League knockout play-off soccer match between OH Leuven and Arsenal in Leuven, Belgium. (AP)

Barcelona, Lyon, Chelsea and Bayern - advanced directly to the quarterfinals. Teams placed fifth to 12th went to the playoffs round.

Arsenal finished the league phase in fifth while Leuven was 12th in its first campaign in the European top competition.

The two met in the 18-team league phase with Arsenal beating Leuven 3-0 away.

Real Madrid remains on course for an all-Spanish quarterfinal against three-time champion Barcelona after coming from a goal down to win 3-2 at Paris FC.

After going behind in the 10th minute, Madrid needed just six min-

utes to turn the game around before halftime in the French capital.

Caroline Weir equalized on a rebound from close range in the 39th and Athenea's low shot finished off a fast counter in the last minute of the first half to put the visitors ahead.

The 20-year-old forward Linda Caicedo controlled goalkeeper Misa Rodríguez's long pass before before making it 3-1 in the 83rd before Maeline Mendy pulled a goal back in the 89th to narrow the deficit ahead of the second leg. Paris had taken the lead through Kaja Korošec, who was at the far corner to volley the opener into the roof of the net off a corner kick from Maelle Garbino.

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Infantino and Ceferin call agreement to end Super League as a victory for soccer

BRUSSELS, Feb 12, (AP): FIFA President Gianni Infantino praised the agreement to formally end the divisive Super League project and said, "Football wins when we unite."

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin also hailed the consensus as a victory for soccer.

Their comments came during the 50th UEFA Congress in Belgium on Thursday, a day after Super League's end was signaled by an agreement of principles between Real Madrid and UEFA.

Madrid, the 15-time European champion, and its president Florentino Pérez looked even more isolated after Barcelona formally pulled out of Super League.

"Yesterday, we heard the great news about the agreement between UEFA, the EFC (European Football Clubs) and Real Madrid," Infantino said.

He congratulated Ceferin, EFC leader Nasser al-Khelaifi and Pérez for having reached the agreement.

"I would like to ask you to clap hands for Alexander, for Nasser and for Florentino," he said. "Because football wins when we unite."

Infantino in the past was accused of being complicit in the formation of the breakaway plans by Europe's elite clubs before belatedly denying he colluded with the rebels after months of silence.

Ceferin said he was "very happy" that Madrid and Barcelona "joined the family again."

"Honestly speaking, we were all tired of these disputes," he said. "We had some disagreements with the president of Real Madrid but let me be clear, we never lost respect to ourselves, to each other, and we never lost the love for the game. And let me be even clearer, the only winner of this situation is football, nobody else."

Ceferin said Al-Khelaifi's "leadership has been instrumental in turning dialogue into a shared direction of travel, so thank you very much for that."

Madrid and Barcelona won a ruling at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg against Champions



In this file photo, FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks during an interview conducted with The Associated Press in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

League organizer UEFA more than two years ago, but no new clubs publicly came forward to join the breakaway project which had no clear path forward.

The agreement on Wednesday between Madrid, UEFA and the influential EFC group said principles were agreed that "will also serve to resolve their legal disputes."

It was announced as European soccer leaders met in Brussels on the eve of UEFA's annual congress of 55 member federations.

Madrid had been at the head of 12 Spanish, Italian and English clubs who challenged UEFA in April 2021 by launching a breakaway Super League which hoped to start play with 20 teams. But the project collapsed within 48 hours amid a fierce backlash in England by fans and the government which threatened legislation to protect the traditional structure of European soccer.

Busch's Daytona 500 pole sets stage for redemption run

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla., Feb 12, (AP): Kyle Busch won the pole for NASCAR's season-opening Daytona 500 to give the driver with the longest active losing streak in "The Great American Race" a shot at the victory that has escaped him his entire career.

Busch is 0 for 20 in the Daytona 500 and hasn't started in the top five since 2016, when he still drove for Joe Gibbs Racing. He started fourth and finished third that year, then was a career-best second to then-teammate Denny Hamlin in 2019.

"Kyle, we've got to get him this 500," said team owner Richard Childress.

No driver has ever won their first Daytona 500 after 20 previous attempts. The

time NASCAR champion. He's won three races since joining RCR - all in his first season - and takes a 93-race losing streak into the Daytona 500.

"Sounds really good right now - being able to qualify on my first pole for the Daytona 500, that's pretty special," said Busch, who wore custom-designed Olympic-themed racing shoes at Daytona International Speedway.

He earned the pole Wednesday night with a lap at 183.925 mph in a Chevrolet for Richard Childress Racing, the team that signed him before the 2023 season when his contract was up with Gibbs and his salary was too high for most teams.

"Feels really good for RCR as a group," Busch said. "Just a valiant effort by everybody here. It would be really nice to be doing an interview like this about being No. 1 come Sunday."

But his time in the No. 8 has been rocky for the two-

time NASCAR champion. He's won three races since joining RCR - all in his first season - and takes a 93-race losing streak into the Daytona 500.

Chase Briscoe, last year's pole-sitter, qualified second in a Toyota for Joe Gibbs Racing.

"It's a really big deal, not only for myself, but I haven't even checked my phone, I'm sure (Bass Pro Shops owner) Johnny Morris is ballistic already," Briscoe said of his sponsor.

"He gets super fired up for this race. He's called me two or three times this week telling me he's so excited to get here and asking me how the car is. It's a big deal for him, as well. It should be awesome to be on the front row again Sunday."

Although 37 drivers were locked into the race ahead

of time trials, the starting order is not determined until after a pair of Thursday night qualifying races. Of those locked in, 36 drive chartered cars that guarantee a spot in every race. An additional slot went to seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson under a provisional rule that allows for a 41st "world-class driver" trying to enter a Cup event.

Johnson is a two-time Daytona 500 winner and finished third last year. He left full-time NASCAR racing after the 2020 season.

There were two spots open for those not already locked in and they were claimed by Corey Heim for 23XI Racing and Justin Allgaier for JR Motorsports. They were the fastest cars in time trials.

Heim, last year's Truck Series champion, will be making his Daytona 500 debut. Allgaier is in for the fourth time in his career and the second consecutive year while driving for two-time race winner Dale Earnhardt Jr.

Change Name

I have changed my name from Nooruddin Bashiruddin khairdi to Nooruddin Bashir

Historic World Cup win for Italy as Sri Lanka eases past Oman



Italy's Anthony Mosca plays a shot during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Italy and Nepal in Mumbai, India. (AP)

Captain Shanaka breaks own record



Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis, left, watches as Kusal Mendis, center, runs back to his crease after both run to same crease during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Oman and Sri Lanka in Pallekele, Sri Lanka. (AP)

Kalugamage - the player of the match against Nepal - comes from Sri Lanka's spin heritage.

For all of them, this World Cup is about laying roots for the future.

Nepal, at its third T20 World Cup, was riding high after giving England a mighty scare at the same venue on Sunday.

But Kalugamage picked 3-18, including Nepal captain Rohit Paudel. Ben Manenti (2-9) dismissed Lokesh Bam - hero of the England game - for 3 and Nepal couldn't recover. The last seven wickets fell for 30 runs and Nepal was shot out with three balls to spare.

The Sydney-based Mosca

brothers hit nine sixes and eight boundaries - Anthony was 62 not out off 32 balls and Justin 60 not out off 44 - to dismantle the Nepal attack in just 12.4 overs.

Their unbeaten 124 runs was the highest partnership between siblings in men's T20 World Cups, surpassing the 96 by Pakistan's Kamran and Umar Akmal against Australia in 2014.

The first ever 10-wicket win for Italy was only the second ever by an associate nation in tournament history.

"It is pretty extraordinary," stand-in Harry Manenti said. "It is something that a lot of people in Italy, and a lot of people in this team dreamt for a long time.

When we qualified (for this World Cup) it was a special moment. But our goal was always to compete in this competition and compete at this level, and we showed that today."

Shanaka's 19-ball 50 after Kusal Mendis' 61 and Pavan Rathnayake's 60 against a weak bowling attack propelled Sri Lanka to a tournament-best 225-5.

Oman labored to 120-9 in reply, the wickets shared by five bowlers. Off-spinner Maheesh Theekshana led with 2-11 off four overs.

Sri Lanka has two wins from two games but was yet to meet Group B rivals Australia and Zimbabwe.

Oman's 43-year-old Mohammad Nadeem became the oldest man to score a half-century in the history of the T20 World Cup with an unbeaten 53 from 56 balls. Nadeem was one of the only two Oman batters to reach double figures with Wasim Ali scoring 27.

Sri Lanka lost Pathum Nissanka and Kamil Mishra inside the power play but Rathnayake and Mendis featured in a brisk 94-run third-wicket stand off 52 balls.

Shanaka smacked five sixes to surpass his previous Sri Lanka record of a 20-ball half-century against India in 2023 before he holed out at long-off off the next ball.

intense with six points between third-placed Hoffenheim and sixth-placed Leverkusen. Only the top four qualify for Europe's most lucrative competition. Hoffenheim hosts Freiburg on Saturday, when Leverkusen hosts St. Pauli and fifth-placed Stuttgart hosts Cologne. Leipzig, which is ahead of Stuttgart on goal difference, welcomes Wolfsburg on Sunday.

Colombia star Luis Díaz is in arguably the form of his life with five goals in his last three games for Bayern, including Wednesday's cup win over Leipzig and a hat trick against Hoffenheim last weekend.

Borussia Dortmund hosts Mainz on Friday when it will aim to maintain some pressure on Bayern by provisionally cutting the gap to three points with its sixth consecutive win. But Mainz has won its last three.

The battle for Champions League qualification remains

Frustration over mistakes grows

Bundesliga referees and VAR under scrutiny

BERLIN, Feb 12, (AP): Germany's referees are under scrutiny after a plethora of questionable decisions and incorrect calls compounded by anger over the video assistant referees' failure to correct them.

It's leading to widespread frustration among players and coaches, while fans' patience is tested by lengthy VAR checks that don't always bring clarity, or contentious calls that aren't checked at all.

The latest example came in the German Cup on Wednesday when Leipzig was aggrieved not to be awarded at least a free kick after Bayern Munich defender Josip Stanić clearly fouled Antonio Nusa on the edge of the penalty area early in Bayern's 2-0 win.

"It's absolutely crazy," Leipzig coach Ole Werner said. "If four people can't see that as a foul then it's not a foul, I'm sorry."

Bayern also had a questionable call go its way in the Bundesliga against Hoffenheim last weekend, when defender Kevin Akpoguma was sent off early. There was no VAR intervention.

The previous weekend, there were contentious decisions in Bundesliga games between Eintracht Frankfurt and Bayer Leverkusen, Leipzig and Mainz, Hoffenheim and Union Berlin, and Augsburg's match against

St. Pauli.

Augsburg midfielder Elvis Rexhebećaj called for VAR to be scrapped altogether after he was incorrectly penalized in the subsequent game against Mainz. A minutes-long delay for VAR failed to correct referee Patrick Ittrich's erroneous call. Ittrich acknowledged his mistake after the match but by then it was too late.

"The biggest problem is there's no common denominator," Dortmund coach Niko Kovac said. "Whoever is sitting in the studio or whoever is refereeing has a different perception and that makes it difficult. Regardless of who's sitting there the decisions should be consistent."

Bayern visits relegation-threatened Werder Bremen on Saturday. The league leader has recovered from an uncharacteristic two-game run without a win and shouldn't face many problems against a team that failed to get a bounce in new coach Daniel Thione's debut last weekend. Bremen is 11 games without a win.

Borussia Dortmund hosts Mainz on Friday when it will aim to maintain some pressure on Bayern by provisionally cutting the gap to three points with its sixth consecutive win. But Mainz has won its last three.

The battle for Champions League qualification remains



Bayern's Harry Kane, left, misses a chance during the German Cup soccer match between Bayern Munich and RB Leipzig in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Mubarak Al-Kabeer horse racing festival ends on a high note



Al-Adhab presents a commemorative shield to Eid Al-Walan.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Equestrian Club, under the leadership of trainer Talal Al-Nisf, successfully hosted its horse racing festival as part of the 15th meeting at Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber Racecourse. The event drew a large crowd and was attended by Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Atabi, Governor of Farwaniya, and Sultan Al-Adhab, Director General of Horse Racing at the club.

The festival saw impressive victories from "Al-Fateh" (Al-Zoubi), "Zaa'ma" (Al-Furaij), "Namos" (Al-Farrawi), "Madoukh" (Al-Sarhan), and "Majham Al-Jumhat" (Al-Khudaib), each taking home trophies in the five featured races. Sultan Al-Adhab also presented commemorative shields to Eid Al-Walan, Director of Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber Racecourse, and to Sheikh Athbi Nasser.

Al-Adhab highlighted that the club, led by Talal Al-Nisf, is dedicated to promoting equestrian sports and supporting all enthusiasts of this esteemed hobby.

Burgan secures commanding win

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Burgan secured a commanding 34-20 victory over Al-Nasr in their Round 10 clash of the Premier League, held at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex. In the same round, Al-Arabi defeated Al-Sulaibikhat 35-27.

Round 11 actions begin on Saturday with Al-Nasr facing Al-Salmiya at 5:00 pm, followed by a high-profile showdown between Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi at 7:00 pm. The action continues on Sunday, when Al-Sulaibikhat meets Burgan and Kuwait Club takes on Kazma.

Kuwait Club sits atop the standings with 20 points. Kazma are second with 13 points, while Burgan moved into third with 12. Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi share fourth and fifth place on 10 points each. Al-Sulaibikhat is sixth with seven points, Al-Salmiya seventh with six, and Al-Nasr remains at the bottom with two points.

The Premier League is contested over three



Abdulaziz Khaled Al-Lanjaz pierces Al-Nasr's defense.

rounds, with the championship awarded to the team accumulating the highest total of points.

Rosenior returns to Hull in FA Cup fourth round, Macclesfield seeks another upset

LONDON, Feb 12, (Xinhua): Chelsea coach Liam Rosenior can expect a warm welcome when he takes his side to play former club, Hull City in the fourth round of the FA Cup on Friday night.

Rosenior was surprisingly sacked by the Championship (second division) club after a relative successful spell after he helped the team from the north of England avoid relegation and then led it to within a whisker of the play-offs to the Premier League.

He returns after a successful start at Chelsea and could have Liam Delap in his side, with Delap also returning to the club where he had a successful loan spell.

Hull City is enjoying an excellent season under current coach Sergej Jakirovic and is fourth in the Championship, although both coaches are likely to make changes to their regular starting 11s.

The round has two all-Premier League ties with Aston Villa at home to Newcastle United where both coaches Unai Emery and Eddie Howe will be tempted to rest tired players while also knowing the Cup offers the best chance of lifting a title this season.

Liverpool is at home to Brighton, who is currently struggling for form in the league, but knocked Manchester United out of the third round with a 2-1 win at Old Trafford.

Manchester City should have a comfortable passage into the fifth round, although Pep Guardiola's tie at home to Salford City (League Two) is a local derby that helps to capture some of the old romance of the Cup.

Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta will rest regular starters for the visit of Wigan Athletic, who currently sits third from bottom of League One. The game highlights how fortunes can change in football given that 12 years ago the two teams met in the semifinal of the competition, with Arsenal reaching the final on penalties after 120 minutes ended 1-1.

West Ham should be able to forget its battle to avoid relegation with a visit to another League One struggler, Burton, while the Premier League's bottom club, Wolverhampton Wanderers travels to Grimsby Town of League Two.

Grimsby produced one of the biggest shocks of recent years earlier this season when it knocked Manchester United out of the EFL Cup and fans will be looking for another surprise against a rival that is virtually doomed to playing in the Championship next season.

Burnley should have few problems with Mansfield Town, although the League One side will look to defend deep against a Burnley that isn't exactly prolific in scoring goals.

Championship sides Stoke City and Oxford United could give some problems to Premier League rivals Fulham and Sunderland, while big-spending Birmingham City has an interesting game at home to Leeds United.

Macclesfield pulled off one of the biggest shocks in the entire history of the FA Cup in the third round when it knocked cup-holder Crystal Palace out of the competition and now the team coached by John Rooney (Wayne Rooney's younger brother) is looking for a repeat.

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Sri Lanka's Pavan Rathnayake plays a shot during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Oman and Sri Lanka. (AP)
- See Page 15

Sports

Kuwait Shooting Club honors Arab Women's Clubs Games medalists

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Kuwait Shooting Sport Club President Duaij Al-Otaibi praised the national women's shooters after they secured five medals — one gold, two silver and two bronze — at the 8th Arab Women's Clubs Games held recently in Sharjah, UAE.

Speaking to reporters during a ceremony honoring the medal winners, Al-Otaibi said the achievement reflects the athletes' high level of performance, commitment and determination throughout the competition.

He noted that the medal tally was the result of intensive preparation and serious training.

He stressed that the club remains committed to recognizing Kuwaiti shooters who excel in international events, highlighting that such recognition serves as motivation to continue achieving success. Al-Otaibi also commended delegation head Amina Ismail, along with the technical and administrative staff, for their efforts in supporting the team.

Expressing pride in the accomplishment, he pointed out that the success coincides with Kuwait's national celebrations in February, extending his congratulations to the country's leadership on the occasion.

Al-Otaibi further thanked Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jahma, the Public Authority for Sport and the Kuwait Olympic Committee for their continued support, affirming the club's determination to secure more victories in upcoming competitions.

The ceremony was attended by Club Vice President Sheikh Sabah Salman Al-Humoud, Secretary Obaid Al-Osaimi, a board member and head of the Kuwaiti delegation, as well as the honored shooters



The shooters pose with officials during the ceremony.

Basketball team earns bronze

Kuwait's Al-Fatat grabs multiple medals

SHARJAH, Feb 12, (KUNA): Kuwait's Al-Fatat Club capped off a successful campaign at the 8th Arab Women's Clubs Games in Sharjah, UAE, securing medals across multiple sports.

The club's women's basketball team earned the bronze medal after defeating Iraq's Ghaz Al-Shammal 101-74 in the third-place playoff, demonstrating consistent performance throughout the tournament.

In table tennis, Kuwaiti duo Maryam Baron and Menwah Al-Shammari claimed silver in the women's doubles, while the club also secured another silver in the women's team event, underscoring the players' skill and teamwork against tough competition from Arab clubs.

Adding to the medal tally, taekwondo athlete Fatmeh Al-Jeemaz captured bronze in the +73 kg category, showcasing her determination and strong performance



KUNA photo
Silver medalists Maryam Baron and Menwah Al-Shammari.

against regional competitors.

The Games, which concluded on Thursday, aimed to promote Arab women's sports and facilitate experience exchange among participating teams. Al-Fatat's achievements highlight the club's dedication to nurturing talent and advancing women's sports in Kuwait.

Al-Nasser and Al-Asiri clinch gold

Kuwait dominates Weightlifting Championship in Abu Dhabi



KUNA photo
Winners celebrate on the podium.

ABU DHABI, Feb 12, (KUNA): Kuwait weightlifting team claimed three medals — two gold and one bronze — at the Masters Weightlifting Championship (Abu Dhabi 2026), currently underway in the UAE capital.

The championship features competitors from 43 countries, competing across official weight categories under the regulations of the International Weightlifting Federation. The event began on February 7.

Mohammad Al-Nasser won gold in the 110 kg category for the 45-year-old age group, showcasing his dominance and reaffirming his strong record in regional and international competitions.

Fellow Kuwaiti Yousef Al-Asiri claimed gold in the 35-year-old category after an outstanding performance, while Nawaf Al-Nasser secured the bronze medal in the 40-year-old group after advancing to the finals.

Speaking to KUNA, Mohammad Al-Nasser attributed his victory to long-term dedication, intensive training, and disciplined preparation camp. He emphasized that the achievements of Al-Asiri and Nawaf Al-Nasser mark a significant milestone for Kuwaiti weightlifting on both regional and international stages.

He also noted that the Abu Dhabi Championship is regarded as one of the most competitive global events, given the participation of elite athletes from around the world.

Brignone completes dramatic comeback; Ukrainian excluded

Woods upsets Kingsbury for gold

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy, Feb 12, (AP): Italian skier Federica Brignone's long, painful climb back to the top is complete.

The 35-year-old earned the first Olympic gold medal of her decorated career by winning the women's super-G.

Less than a year removed from breaking multiple bones in her left leg — which resulted in two surgeries and months of rehab — Brignone navigated the tricky technical Trofane course in 1:23.41.

Romee Miradoli of France and Cornelia Huetter of Austria were in silver and bronze position as the back half of the field — typically filled with less-accomplished racers — prepared to hit the starting gate.

Racing in foggy conditions in flat light the can make the nuances of the course difficult to navigate, and with IOC President Kirsty Coventry and Italy President Sergio Mattarella near the finish below, Brignone triumphantly raised her poles after crossing the line.

Brignone's victory made her the oldest female gold medalist in women's alpine. The gold is also her fourth Olympic medal. Brignone claimed silver in the super-G and bronze in the team event in Beijing four years ago. She also earned bronze in the super-G in Pyeongchang in 2018. Brignone's four medals under the rings now match Deborah Compagnoni for most by an Italian women's skier.

Brignone was precise and fast, a



Gold medal's winner Italy's Federica Brignone celebrates following an alpine ski, women's super-G race, at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. (AP)

combination hard to come by for many top contenders whose runs were over long before the finish.

Downhill champion Breezy Johnson of the U.S. caught her right pole on a gate shortly after exiting the speedbuilding chute at the course and lost her balance. She ended up in the catch fence but was able to get to her feet.

Johnson was hardly the only one who ran into trouble. Italy's Sofia Goggia, currently atop the World Cup season standings in the super-G, 2018 Olympic gold medalist Ester Ledecka of Czechia and American Mary Bocock, in the race after U.S. star Lindsey Vonn severely injured her left leg in the downhill on Sunday, were all

unable to make it down safely.

Brignone was one of four flag bearers for Italy during the opening ceremonies. At one point, still bothered by the pain in her left leg nearly 10 months after her terrifying crash in Val di Fassa, Brignone asked curler Amos Mosaner to carry her on his shoulders. Mosaner obliged, leaving Brignone free to wave the flag.

The familiar combination of red, white and green was visible across a wide swath of stands on Thursday when Brignone finished, as a crowd emboldened by the early success of the host country roared at the 2026 Games roared its approval.

Vladislav Heraskevych was barred

from racing after refusing to give up his plan to race in a helmet commemorating athletes who have been killed since Russia invaded his country. The International Olympic Committee says it breaks rules against making statements on the field of play.

IOC President Kirsty Coventry turned up at the sliding track in a last-minute bid to change Heraskevych's mind ahead of the opening run of the competition Thursday morning.

Heraskevych, who had been a contender for the medals, refused and was excluded from the Olympics.

Heraskevych said it "looks like discrimination" to bar him from competing. Coventry, who said she'd hoped to find a compromise, was tearful on what she called an "emotional morning."

In a big upset, Cooper Woods of Australia won freestyle skiing gold in men's moguls by edging Canadian great Mikael Kingsbury — the sport's most decorated skier — on a tiebreaker.

American skier Jessie Diggins overcame bruised ribs to take bronze in the women's 10-kilometer cross-country skiing race. Frida Karlsson won her second gold medal of the Milan Cortina Games by leading a 1-2 finish for Sweden.

Alessandro Haemmerle of Austria and Canada's Eliot Grondin repeated as gold and silver medalists in men's snowboardcross after another close finish between the two rivals.

Grondin looked to be in position to flip the result from Beijing 2022 coming over the final roll, but Haemmerle closed the small gap over the final meters and thrust his board ahead of Grondin's to successfully defend his title.

Sheikh Al-Yousuf pledges \$100K if Qadsia wins the Gulf Club Champions League title

By Hassan Mosa

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KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, Chairman of the Kuwait Football Association, announced a \$100,000 personal reward for Al-Qadsia Club should it wins the Gulf Club Champions League title.

To support Kuwait's representative in the regional tournament, the FA has postponed Al-Qadsia's preliminary round match against Burqan in the Amir Cup, originally scheduled for Saturday. Al-Qadsia will now travel to the UAE to face Al-Ain next Wednesday in the sixth and final round of Group A.

The team needs a win against Al-Ain to reach the semifinals, currently sitting third with 7 points, while Al-Ain is second with 9 points, where a win or draw secures their progression.

Today's preliminary round matches:
Al-Tadamon vs. Al-Jahra at Al-Sadaqa wal Salam Stadium, 4:45 pm
Kazma vs. Khaitan at Sabah Al-Salem Sta-

dium, 7:45 pm

Al-Salmiya will face Al-Sulaibikhat on Saturday at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium at 7:45



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousuf, Chairman of the Kuwait Football Association.

pm to conclude the preliminary round.

All six teams are eager to improve their results, especially after none advanced beyond the quarterfinals of this season's Crown Prince Cup.

Kazma aims to overcome last-minute disappointment after being eliminated by Al-Sulaibikhat on penalties (4-3) in the Crown Prince Cup.

The team has shown strong performances recently, following significant squad changes, especially in their foreign player roster. Khaitan hopes to make an impact this season after missing out on First Division title contention.

Al-Tadamon seeks to bounce back under Bosnian coach Igor, chasing their first win in recent matches, while Al-Jahra looks to end a series of poor results with a victory tonight.

Al-Salmiya aims to recover from a 1-2 loss to Al-Tadamon and secure a semifinals spot, while Al-Sulaibikhat looks to repeat its surprise elimination of Kazma from the Crown Prince Cup.