



Massive growth ahead for banks

Kuwait project boom reshapes economy

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Former economic advisor and consultant at the Ministry of Finance Mohammad Ramadhan said the local banking sector is poised for enormous growth.

In an exclusive statement to the newspaper, Rama-

adhan confirmed the increase in capital expenditures in the State budget -- from KD2.24 billion in the 2025/2026 budget to more than KD3 billion in the 2026/2027 budget.

He explained that the increased spending -- fueled by several major development projects launched under the plans of the State -- is expected to positively impact banks, as most companies executing these projects rely heavily on banks for financing.

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Agricultural and industrial holdings must be managed prudently

WHEN the government announces a budget deficit of approximately 40 percent, it calls for a closer examination of the figures and a review of whether efforts to diversify income sources have been successful or if the situation remains unchanged.

The estimated budget deficit of KD 9.8 billion is equivalent to nearly thirty billion US dollars.

This figure is comparable to the budgets of many African countries, several Arab nations, and even some Eastern European states. Unlike these countries, which have multiple sources of income, Kuwait still relies heavily on a single commodity subject to price fluctuations, making it an insecure primary source of revenue.

Above all, we must acknowledge that the state possesses considerable potential if managed in a modern manner, in contrast to past decades when welfare-state policies dominated economic decision-making.

During that era, subsidies became an absolute right for everyone, costing approximately KD seven billion annually. Furthermore, due to haphazard appointment policies, the first section of the budget, which is allocated to salaries, has ballooned to consume around 73 to 75 percent of the total budget, while the remaining productive sectors receive a comparatively much smaller share than in other countries.

For many years, I, along with many economic and financial experts, have been calling for a change in the approach to managing national income sources, aiming to maximize GDP and reduce reliance on oil as the primary source of revenue.

We have called for giving the private sector space to play its economic role without government obstruction.

However, it appears that financial officials hold a different view, which is a perspective known only to senior officials familiar with the attitudes of successive governments.

For the past three decades, the National Assembly has often been used as a pretext to justify hindering the progress of government projects. Perhaps this viewpoint holds some truth.

Today, the government has huge potential to fulfill its role fully, without obstructive parliamentary interference.

Unfortunately, the opposite is happening. Restrictions on projects and decisions are increasing the deficits of companies and private-sector institutions. This includes the withdrawal of agricultural plots from beneficiaries who sought to reduce the burden on public funds by developing a small portion of the land for agritourism activities to boost their income, similar to practices in other Gulf countries.

Moreover, industrial and service plots have been confiscated over minor violations or even based on the mood of an employee when he is unhappy with some beneficiaries.

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Kuwait conference brings together experts

Youth mental health takes national priority

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi inaugurated the First National Conference on Child and Adolescent Mental Health recently, with the participation of local, regional and international experts in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Pediatrics, Developmental Medicine and Family Medicine.

In his speech at the opening ceremony, Al-Awadhi confirmed that Kuwait is prioritizing the mental health of children and adolescents, and it considers investment in this field vital for building a cohesive society capable of facing contemporary challenges.

He stressed that mental health is not just a supplementary aspect of healthcare, as it is the essential foundation for the healthy development of children, ensuring their ability to learn, being creative, and to interact positively with their family and community to contribute to a prosperous future for the nation.

He said the Health Ministry is keen on developing holistic mental health services for young people. He explained that this system extends beyond psychiatric clinics and inpatient wards, as it includes specialized weekly clinics in government hospitals to guarantee

easy access to these services.

He cited the opening of Hiba Clinic for Autism and Communication Disorders last year -- an important step towards providing services for children with developmental and communication disorders, thus, giving them better opportunities for integration and learning.

He also affirmed the strength of cooperation with the Addiction Treatment Center in terms of the provision of awareness and treatment programs for adolescents in order to protect and support them.

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Newswatch

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel-fattah El-Sisi extended congratulations to the State of Kuwait, its leadership, government and people, on the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day.

The greetings were conveyed during a visit by Secretary-General of the Egyptian Presidency Mohamad Yehia to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Cairo, where he was received by Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt Ghanim Al-Ghanim.

Yehia affirmed the Egyptian Presidency's keenness to personally convey congratulations to Kuwait on its national occasions, underscoring the depth and strength of Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations at all levels and expressing hope for their continued progress. (KUNA)



El-Sisi

FATF applauds Kuwait's AML, CTF 'progress'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Saturday commended Kuwait for the remarkable progress it has achieved in combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

FATF made the commendation at the plenary meeting held in Mexico City, where Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem represented the Minister of Finance and supervised the work of the National Committee for Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing on behalf of the Kuwaiti government.

According to the statement issued by the National Committee for Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, the FATF acknowledged the tremendous efforts and progress of Kuwait during the discussion of its post-observation report.

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8 KFH Group wins 5 prestigious awards from EMEA Finance



9 talabat unveils 'Next Tech Gen' in Kuwait



15 ABK Wealth Management signs strategic sponsorship with Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Participants stream across the iconic Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Bridge at the launch of the third Kuwait Sports Day on Saturday, as nearly 21,000 people of all ages transform the landmark into a sea of motion, unity and determination in celebration of fitness and healthy living. — See Page 16

Desert Warrior 9 reinforces Kuwait-UK strategic alliance, shared security goals

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: British Ambassador to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed revealed that the joint training exercise -- 'Desert Warrior 9' -- is a manifestation of the strong defense relationship between Kuwait and Britain.

Speaking at the conclusion of the joint exercise conducted by Kuwait Army and the British military mission under the patronage of Chief of the General Staff of Kuwait Army Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraiaan, Rasheed stated "the joint training exercise in an operational environment that simulates real-world challenges proved the efficiency, discipline and strong cooperation between the two forces."

He pointed out that such exercises are vital for improving interoperability, boosting mutual trust, and supporting the defense partnership based on a shared commitment to maintain regional security and stability.

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British Ambassador to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed (right) at the conclusion of 'Desert Warrior 9.'



Kuwait Army photos

A group photo during the 'Desert Warrior 9' conducted by Kuwait Army and the British military mission.

Justice Minister unveils PAMA reforms

New safeguards for minors' funds

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Minors' Affairs (PAMA), Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, has issued Ministerial Resolution No. 1/2026 concerning the operational regulations of PAMA's Standing Committee.



Al-Sumait

The resolution aims to develop an investment framework for the funds of minors, individuals with diminished legal capacity, and those without legal capacity, while strengthening governance and oversight of their management.

The resolution provides for the implementation of the attached regulations outlining the committee's responsibilities and operational procedures, as well as determining the remuneration of its chairman and members in accordance with the policies and controls approved by PAMA's Board of Directors.

The Director General is tasked with implementing the resolution, which takes effect from the date of issuance and supersedes any previous conflicting decisions.

According to the regulations, the Standing Committee shall be formed by a decision of the Minister of Justice and will consist of three to five members representing the Public Authority for Investment, nominated and approved by the Board of Directors of PAMA. A substitute member shall be appointed in the event of a vacancy, following the same procedures.

The bylaws authorize the committee to prepare and approve strategies, policies, and regulations for investing PAMA's funds and assets, and to oversee their implementation in line with best risk-management practices and internationally recognized institutional investment standards, while adhering to the provisions and principles of Islamic Sharia.

The committee is tasked with preparing short-term and long-term investment plans, identifying funding sources, studying and approving investment opportunities, conducting feasibility studies, establishing guarantee and surety frameworks, and setting the

Continued on Page 4

Kuwait embarks on Digital Twin project

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) is pushing for the implementation of the 'Digital Twin of Kuwait' project, which is part of its plan to adopt modernization in the communications and information fields.

This is one of five ambitious development projects in the current strategy of PACI, which recently requested approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to issue a tender for its implementation. However, CAPT returned the request to PACI, urging the latter to address certain issues first.

The project aims to harness data collected by PACI through various existing projects in order to integrate the information into a realistic digital replica of the country.

The main function of the project is to document the on-the-ground reality -- everything visible on the Earth's surface -- and generate a high-resolution digital version of such crucial data.

The project is included in the national program for developing a cohesive and transparent government -- one of nine programs in the current development plan.

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Markets placed under strict Ramadan watch

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry recently carried out two major inspection campaigns, one focusing on industrial plots and another on central markets, to ensure compliance with the regulations and monitor prices and product availability for Ramadan.

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Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:08	Asr	15:12
Sunrise ..	06:28	Maghrib ..	17:36
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:54

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: A significant decrease in temperature and warm with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-45 km/h with a chance for blowing dust over open areas.

Weather

By Night: Rather cold with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-42 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	34	18
Abdaly	35	17

Bubyan	26	16
Jahra	35	16
Failaka Island	27	15
Salmiyah	28	19
Ahmadi	26	13
Jal Aliyah	35	17
Nuwaisib	32	17
Wafra	36	15



HH the Amir



HH the Crown Prince



HH the Prime Minister

Amir congratulates Bahrain King on Nat'l Action Charter 'versary

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain on the 25th anniversary of the endorsement of Bahrain's National Action Charter.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations on the occasion, praising the prominent developmental achievements realized by the Kingdom of Bahrain under the King's prosperous reign along its civilizational path.

His Highness prayed to Almighty Allah to grant King Hamad continued good health and well-being, and to bestow further progress and prosperity upon the Kingdom of Bahrain and its people under his wise leadership.

Crown Prince

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of

Bahrain on the 25th anniversary of the endorsement of Bahrain's National Action Charter.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his sincere congratulations on the occasion, praising the prominent developmental achievements realized by the Kingdom of Bahrain under the King's prosperous reign along its civilizational path.

His Highness prayed to Almighty Allah to grant King Hamad continued good health and well-being, and to bestow further progress and prosperity upon the Kingdom of Bahrain and its people under his wise leadership.

Prime Minister

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain on the 25th anniversary of the endorsement of Bahrain's National Action Charter.

PM meets Lebanon PM, UNHCR chief, Oracle CEO



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives the Lebanese counterpart.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives the UNHCR chief.

MUNICH, Feb 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Friday with the Lebanese Prime Minister Dr. Nawaf Salam, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference in Munich.

During the meeting, they reviewed the strong bilateral ties and ways to further strengthen cooperation across various fields, in addition to exchanging views on several issues of common interests.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi, and Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Reem Al-Khaled.

PM meets UNHCR chief

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on



PM Diwan photos: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives the Oracle CEO.

Friday with Barham Salih, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

During the meeting, they reviewed means of sustaining cooperation between Kuwait and the UN body, including efforts to protect and support refugees all over the world.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi, and Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Reem Al-Khaled.

PM meets Oracle CEO

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, met with Oracle CEO Mike Cecilia during the Munich Security Conference, currently taking place in Munich.

The meeting focused on the latest advancements in technology and artificial intelligence, as well as strategies to advance Kuwait's digital transformation agenda. Discussions also addressed initiatives aimed at developing national talent and strengthening human capital capabilities in alignment with Kuwait's broader development vision.

14mn pills seized in joint drug bust

3 held in Kuwait-UAE operation

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: In a remarkable security achievement proving the strong coordination and unity among Gulf states in combating the drug trade, the security authorities in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) confiscated about 14 million Captagon pills.

The Drug Control General Department (DCGD) at the Interior Ministry in Kuwait spearheaded the joint operation, which dealt a huge blow to drug smuggling networks.

In a press statement on Saturday, the Ministry of Interior confirmed that the intelligence and field operation was conducted jointly with the UAE under the guidance of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef and Chairman of the National Anti-Narcotics Bureau in the UAE Sheikh Zayed bin Hamad Al-Nahyan. It affirmed that a total of 14,062,500 Captagon pills weighing 2,250 kilograms were confiscated during the operation.

According to the ministry, the contraband was meticulously concealed in a commercial shipment of five containers of corn in Dubai. Security officers arrested three Arabs involved in the shipment.

The ministry affirmed that the joint operation dismantled the criminal network that attempted to flood the Gulf countries with such a huge quantity of psychotropic substances.

Under the leadership of DCGD Director Brigadier General Mohammad Qabazard, and his assistant, Brigadier General Sheikh

Hamad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, the department continues to record security achievements locally and internationally, directing security strikes against drug dealers and traffickers despite the constant development of their smuggling methods.

No to ATVs on roads: The Traffic Investigation Unit at the General Traffic Department has intensified security campaigns against all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) plying through public roads.

The latest campaign resulted in the arrest of seven individuals, including two minors. Five of those arrested were referred to the Traffic Detention Center, while the two minors were referred to the Juvenile Detention Center.

A security source explained that the ongoing campaigns aim to stop the use of ATVs on public roads, indicating that those arrested in the recent campaign endangered their lives and that of other road users. The source urged the public to refrain from using ATVs on public roads to avoid legal repercussions.

95 citations issued: The Public Relations Department at Kuwait Municipality announced that the Audit and Municipal Services Monitoring Department in Farwaniya Governorate conducted a field campaign to inspect health licenses for shops and advertising permits and to take regulatory action against violators, reports Al-Anba daily.

The department confirmed that the third field campaign in Farwaniya Governorate resulted in the issuance of 95 citations for violations of shop and advertising regulations and for unauthorized use of space, in addition to 11 warnings.

It indicated that this third campaign will be followed by several field visits in all governorates according to a schedule covering the coming weeks.



Kuwait's FM Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan.



Kuwait FM Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets Canadian counterpart Anita Anand.

Kuwait FM meets Saudi, Canadian counterparts

MUNICH, Feb 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met with his Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan on the sidelines of the 62nd Munich Security Conference on Friday.

During the meeting, both ministers tackled historical and fraternal relations between the two countries and their peoples, and means to promote them at all levels, along with the latest regional and international developments, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

Canadian FM

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met with Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anita Anand, on the sidelines of the 62nd Munich Security Conference, in the German city of Munich.

In a statement on Saturday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the meeting touched on bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and explored ways to enhance and develop cooperation across various fields. The two sides also discussed the latest regional and global developments.

Palestinian FM

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Friday with Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Varsen Shahin on the sidelines of the 62nd Munich Security Conference.

The meeting discussed bilateral relations, and means of developing and enhancing them in varied levels, along with the latest regional and international developments, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a news statement.

Omani FM

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met with Omani peer Badr Al Busaidi on the sidelines of the 62nd Munich Security Conference on Friday.

The meeting reviewed historic and fraternal relations between the two countries and their nations, and means of developing them on all levels, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.



Cake-cutting at Kuwait Embassy in India.



KUNA photos

National Days marked at Kuwait Embassy in Hanoi.

Embassies in India, Canada & countries mark National Days

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): Kuwait Embassy in India held celebrations on Thursday evening to mark Kuwait's 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day.

The ceremony was attended by Indian Minister of Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, heads of Arab and foreign missions accredited in New Delhi, apart from an elite team representing all segments of Indian society.

In a statement to KUNA, Kuwait Ambassador to India Mishaal Al-Shemali extended his heartfelt greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the government and people of Kuwait.

Ambassador Al-Shemali affirmed that Kuwaiti-Indian relations have become stronger thanks to the directives of the political leadership of both countries, rising to the level of a strategic partnership encompassing all areas of cooperation.

He added that working groups are currently holding meetings to prepare a number of agreements, memoranda of understanding, and visits by senior officials in the coming period.

Kuwait's embassies in Tunisia, Vietnam, Bulgaria, as well as the Permanent Mission to the United Nations and the Consulate General in Geneva celebrated the 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day, attended by senior officials, diplomats, and prominent public figures.

In Tunisia, the event was attended by Tunisian Minister of National Defense Khaled Al-Shehli and National Council of Regions and Districts President Imad Derbali.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Tunisia Mansour Al-Omar conveyed 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 and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Al-Omar said in a statement to KUNA that the occasion reflects pride in Kuwait's development achievements and underscores the depth of Kuwaiti-Tunisian ties, noting continued cooperation and development support through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

The Tunisian Minister Al-Shehli praised Kuwait's solid stand by his country and its continuous support, while highlighting the deep bilateral ties. He also commended Kuwait's progress and Vision 2035 reform drive.

In Hanoi, celebrations coincided with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Vietnam and was attended by Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Minh Hang and other officials.

Kuwait Ambassador to Vietnam Yousef Al-Sabagh extended his heartfelt 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, the wise government and the Kuwaiti people.

He noted the steady growth of the bilateral ties, elevated to a strategic partnership during the Vietnamese Prime Minister's visit to Kuwait in 2025.

For his part, the Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade praised the bilateral relations, wishing the government and people of Kuwait further development, and for the bilateral relations to further progress and prosperity.

Tanzanian ambassador extends Ramadan greetings to HH Amir

ON the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, I am pleased to extend my sincere greetings and best wishes to H.H. Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the leadership, government, and people of the State of Kuwait, as well as to all Muslims and Islamic nations, praying that this blessed month brings goodness, peace, and blessings to all.

Ramadan represents a valuable opportunity to strengthen the values of solidarity, compassion, and mutual un-



Saidi Massoro

Saidi Hussein Massoro

Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the State of Kuwait

derstanding among peoples, and to renew the spirit of co-operation and peace within our societies.

On this blessed occasion, I wish the State of Kuwait and its people, as well as the entire Islamic world, continued peace, stability, and prosperity, and may this holy month bring goodness and harmony to all.

MoCI crackdown on counterfeit items intensified

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Director of the Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Faisal Al-Ansari issued a directive to intensify field inspections, even during official holidays.

In a press statement, Al-Ansari disclosed that

Head of Rai Center Faraj Al-Mutairi and Commercial Inspector Ali Al-Owaihni uncovered a violation during a recent field inspection, leading to the closure of a stall in the Friday Market for selling items bearing forged trademarks.

Around 800 counterfeit items, including women's shoes and handbags bearing fake trademarks, were confiscated. This is a violation of intellectual property rights and anti-commercial fraud laws.

Al-Ansari confirmed that a report was filed regarding the incident and it will be referred to the Commercial Prosecution to complete the necessary legal procedures.

He stressed that the ministry does not tolerate those who sell counterfeit goods in order to protect the rights of consumers and the original trademark owners, as well as to promote a fair and regulated commercial environment.

diwaniya



A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Going to Khafji, Basra for cheaper goods is 'invalid'

"THERE is an economic analyst who publishes economic analyses on social media and represents a well-known media organization," columnist Engineer **Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"I have listened to him, and he sometimes reflects public sentiment, especially since he provides technical information related to the local economy."

"However, in his latest report, he claimed that Kuwaitis are turning to neighboring countries because, as he said, they are cheaper than Kuwait, even though some of these countries impose Value Added Tax (VAT)."

"On this point, I disagree with him, as there are many factors that must be considered. Goods in some neighboring countries are not necessarily cheaper than in Kuwait, and many citizens from those countries come to Kuwait, where goods are often more affordable."

"Furthermore, goods in our country are subsidized, of good quality, and reasonably priced. Basic food items are subsidized in most Kuwaiti households, which is an important point to consider."

"The Gulf economies are similar in several aspects, so buying and selling often depend on individual preference."

"From the 1960s until a year before the invasion, Kuwaitis would travel to Basra every weekend to buy necessities, especially vegetables and basic food items, due to their quality and affordability. Residents of chalets near Khafji also travel there weekly, not only for shopping because it is cheaper, but also for tourism."

"Kuwaitis are naturally inclined to travel, which is why many frequent the popular markets of Paris, London, and other capitals during their holidays. Although most of the goods are made in China, they are often considered superior to those found in Middle Eastern markets. But are these countries really cheaper than Kuwait, despite their high and complex taxes?"

"We must also acknowledge that the Gulf states rely on imports for most goods, which means price differences are not significant."

"Regarding the point raised by the analyst, whom I respect, about encroachment on state property, I believe the state bears responsibility, not individuals. The government must implement a clear policy to determine fees for using state property. Real estate and rental prices are subject to supply and demand, as the Kuwaiti market operates freely."

"Therefore, the justifications given for going to Khafji, Basra, and other places to buy cheaper goods are, in my opinion, invalid."

"We should not make a flawed comparison between Kuwait and other countries. Although Kuwait has faced a budget deficit for 30 years, does that mean Kuwaitis have lost their common sense?"

"In reality, the issue lies in the lack of sound selection for those who assume senior financial and economic positions."

Also:

"In today's fast-paced world, marked by growing financial and social pressures, wedding celebrations have sparked widespread discussion, with many calling for a return to simply announcing the marriage." Kuwaiti journalist **Hamed Al-Hamli** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Traditionally, these celebrations expressed the joy of the union, bringing together family and friends and lasting late into the night. Today, however, most guests offer their congratulations and leave within minutes. Many celebrations have turned into extravagant displays, sometimes costing hundreds of thousands."

"A new trend is emerging, promoting the simplification of wedding celebrations, not as forced austerity, but as a conscious choice that values substance over appearance."

"The idea to simplify weddings is driven by several social and economic factors, foremost among them financial pressures."

"In Gulf countries such as Kuwait, grooms often face huge debt, with wedding expenses including luxurious hall rentals, expensive attire, and lavish meals. These costs can reach 30,000 dinars."

"Such expenses place many young couples under financial strain, negatively affecting the beginning of their married lives."

"According to recent studies, more than 60 percent of young people in the Arab region prefer smaller weddings to avoid these expenses."

"With social changes and the rise of social media, weddings are often judged by how 'impressive' they appear on Instagram or TikTok."

"This pressure, however, comes at the cost of privacy and intimacy. Many couples now choose to celebrate with a small circle of friends and family, allowing for deeper connections rather than performing for hundreds of guests."

"The COVID-19 pandemic also shifted this perspective, forcing many to opt for smaller weddings, which they found to be more enjoyable and less costly."

"Large weddings have become a source of waste, whether in food, venues, or travel. Choosing a smaller wed-

ding saves money and can be seen as a socially responsible decision."

"Simplifying weddings offers multiple benefits. On a personal level, it allows couples to save money that can be invested in buying a home, enjoying a longer honeymoon, or building a more secure financial future. It also reduces psychological stress. Rather than worrying about complex arrangements, the couple can focus on each other, strengthening their emotional bond. Socially, this trend encourages a return to more authentic traditions."

"In Arab culture, weddings were traditionally simple celebrations without extravagance. Simplifying weddings restores balance and reduces the social competition that can strain relationships."

"Simplifying the celebration does not mean sacrificing joy, but rather redesigning it. Priorities can be set, with choices such as professional photography or folk music left to the couple."

"This trend has become evident in recent months, with couples increasingly announcing their marriages on social media among families. Simplifying weddings is not a rejection of tradition, but an adaptation to modern realities."

"Ultimately, a successful wedding is not one that dazzles others, but one that builds a strong foundation for married life. For those planning a wedding, cutting costs may be the wisest choice."

□ □ □

"The story of Jeffrey Epstein is not just an individual crime, but a mirror reflecting the darkness within power and mankind; a philosophical reflection exploring the pervasiveness of corruption among the elite class, the mechanisms of silent filth in the world, and the intersection of their shared illusions and desires," Kuwaiti writer **Hussain Al-Rawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Regarding the reasons that corrupt the powerful, Lord Acton said, 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'"

"Epstein rose from humble beginnings to billionaire status through a network of connections that placed him above the law."

"For the philosopher Nietzsche, the 'will to power' is a drive that transforms into boundless destruction, which Epstein used to turn others into instruments of his desires."

"Arendt's 'banality of evil' appears here. Evil becomes routine within closed circles, expressed through financial deals and the exploitation of minors, until it becomes an ordinary part of the system."

"Evil deepened in Ghislaine Maxwell, the engineer of recruitment and cover-up, who exploited girls' need for opportunity, adding a second layer to the corruption. Even after being sentenced to 20 years in prison, she refused to testify before Congress in February 2026. She offered to cooperate in exchange for a presidential pardon from Trump, claiming she could exonerate prominent figures."

"Her silence functioned as a tool for preserving the system. If we ask how corruption is sustained, Rawls argues that elites design systems that protect their privileges and guarantee impunity. The poor are held accountable, while the powerful remain protected."

"For Foucault, power is a network that produces and controls knowledge. Epstein confined his actions to a separate world, his island and his private plane where everything seemed permissible, hidden from public scrutiny."

"Sex is often used as a tool of control, transforming desire into blackmail. Was Epstein's island merely a nightclub, or a project to control the powerful by holding their secrets?"

"This possibility exposes the fragility of power. The intersection of passion and vanity draws them together, united by a shared desire for attraction."

"Wealth amplifies illusion, and crime becomes an expression of exceptionalism. But the victims are real human beings, minors drawn into a network that exploited their innocence. Voices like Virginia Giuffre remind us that philosophy is incomplete unless it places the victim at the center."

"There is a lesson reminiscent of Shelley's Frankenstein - man creates a monster and then abandons responsibility, allowing it to escape and destroy. Elites construct networks of corruption and then evade their moral duty."

"After the publication of more than 3.5 million pages in 2026, which confirmed the absence of a clear official client list, a vast web of relationships emerged, accompanied by persistent and suspicious obfuscation that continues to shield most of them."

"Maxwell calls for amnesty as if nothing happened. The monster has evolved and become part of the system. The open question remains - Is the problem Epstein, or a system that allows monsters to rise and remain hidden? Philosophy offers a lens to understand power."

"We refuse to justify bad faith and insist that corruption is not destiny, but the result of human choices."

"The Epstein story stands as a stark lesson in the fragility of morality and justice in a world shaped by influence and wealth, portraying those who live above the law as a result of a system that sustains them there."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



KU photo
President of Kuwait University Dr. Dina Musa'ed Al-Mailem presents a memento to the guest Dr. Rashid Mohammad Al-Marri.

MoU focus on education, research

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Kuwait University received a delegation from the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) at Sabah Al-Salem University City on Tuesday.

President of the University Dr. Dina Musa'ed Al-Mailem, together with the vice presidents and their assistants, attended the meeting as part of efforts to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the two sides.

The GCC delegation was headed by Dean of the Faculty of Law and Head of the GCC Emergency Management Center (Kuwait Branch) Dr. Rashid Mohammad Al-Marri, who was accompanied by several members of the Secretariat.

The meeting reaffirmed the validity of the MoU, which was signed on Nov 13, 2024.

Discussions centered on mechanisms to strengthen joint cooperation and activate various programs and initiatives stipulated in the agreement, particularly in the fields of education, training, research and scientific studies.

The MoU stipulates a comprehensive framework for institutional collaboration in higher education, specialized training, scientific research and academic studies.

It covers the organization of joint seminars, workshops and programs to develop the capabilities of national staff, reinforce institutional preparedness, and promote the exchange of successful academic and research experiences.

Through this cooperation, both parties are keen on realizing common goals and to advance scientific and knowledge integration among educational institutions in the GCC member states.

Birds near airport pose major threat

EPA, DGCA adopt measures

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Environment Affairs Committee at the Municipal Council held its meeting recently during which it recommended that the executive branch should coordinate with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Environment Public Authority (EPA), Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), and other concerned entities to implement urgent measures to reduce bird congestion around Kuwait International Airport.

The recommendation includes addressing issues related to the plant nurseries, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh slaughterhouse, livestock pens and camps located in the area.

Committee Chairperson Alia Al-Farsi stated that the meeting reviewed the decision of the Public Services Committee at the Cabinet about the request of DGCA to take urgent and temporary measures to prevent bird flocks near the airport. Al-Farsi added that the committee recommended gradually assessing the impact of temporary measures in coordination with the DGCA by establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to evaluate their effect on bird behavior and population density along the runway the airport.

The discussion also touched on the need to find permanent solutions, such as identifying an alternative site for the landfill adjacent to the airport, given the risk it poses to the aviation sector.

Al-Farsi disclosed that the committee recommended clarifying the status of implementing the plan of Kuwait Municipality to convert the South Seventh Ring Road landfill into a waste treatment facility.

This recommendation is based on the response of the executive body about the solid waste management plan and the need to expedite the implementation of the relevant Municipal Council resolution issued on July 14, 2025.

Customs seizes 'booze' concealed in container

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: In the presence of Saleh Al-Omar, Deputy Director General for Ports, Search, and Customs Investigation at the General Administration of Customs, customs officers seized 3,144 bottles of alcoholic beverages from a container that arrived in Kuwait, reports Al-Anba daily.

The liquor was discovered during an inspection of a shipment declared to contain iron sheets.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Interior, the container was listed on its customs manifest as carrying iron sheets but had not been claimed by the concerned party within the legally specified period.

As a result, the shipment was opened and subjected to a precautionary inspection, which uncovered the contraband concealed in an innovative manner inside the container.

The General Administration of Customs initiated the necessary legal procedures and coordinated with the Drug Control General Department to take custody of the seized items and complete the required steps in preparation for referring those involved to the competent authorities.

Case dropped against ex-KFA head, officials

By Munif Naif/Jaber Al-Humoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Court of Cassation upheld the acquittal of former Kuwait Football Association President Haif Al-Daihani, his deputy Ahmed Aqla, and Secretary General Salah Al-Qanaei in the case filed against them for broadcasting false news and harming the interests of the country.

The charges stemmed from events related to the organization of the football match between the Kuwaiti and Iraqi national teams.

The Public Prosecution previously charged the defendants with disseminating information deemed offensive and detrimental to public interest, within the context of the controversy surrounding the arrangements and organization of the match.

The First Instance Court acquitted the defendants due to insufficient evidence, a ruling upheld by the Court of Appeals later.

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Illegal parking tickets: The General Traffic Department conducted a traffic campaign recently, during which about 3,200 traffic violation citations were issued and 47 vehicles were impounded.

According to a security source, traffic officers issued 322 traffic citations to the owners/drivers of cars parked illegally in front of hospitals in all governorates during the 24-hour campaign.

Other Voices

The doctor's advice

By Ahmad alsarraf

My acquaintance with cardiology and catheterization consultant Dr. Ibrahim Al-Rashdan is limited. I have met him only once for a few minutes.

However, from family and friends, I know that he is a distinguished cardiologist who is kind and is highly skilled in his work. Recently, Dr. Al-Rashdan has been active in sharing informative interviews and short videos, in which he clarifies many aspects of heart health that patients often overlook.

He revealed that heart disease, particularly coronary artery disease, is the leading cause of death, surpassing even cancer and road accidents.

Dr. Al-Rashdan highlighted that conditions such as diabetes and obesity have a particularly dangerous impact on the coronary arteries.

He also emphasized that the heart never stops working from before birth until death, with its valves opening and closing approximately 100,000 times a day.

Dr. Al-Rashdan explained that many people with high blood pressure feel anxious when their readings are elevated. This anxiety is often unnecessary, as the high reading may result from testing under improper conditions. Complete relaxation is essential, free from worry or distractions, and certainly not during meals or after an argument.

He also noted that some people worry about losing muscle mass during weight loss, but this concern is generally unfounded, as some muscle loss is a natural part of the process. Muscle can be preserved by increasing protein intake and performing weight training exercises.

Dr. Al-Rashdan emphasized that blood pressure medications are beneficial and come in various forms with different effects.

He indicated that 90 percent of people with high blood pressure require two types of these medications to control their blood pressure, and some may need three.

Dr. Al-Rashdan went on to explain that acid reflux is often misdiagnosed. In many cases, it is not caused by the esophagus but by blocked arteries in the heart, particularly in people with high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol, smokers, and the elderly. These individuals should monitor their condition by having their coronary arteries checked.

He said the common belief that cholesterol medication must be taken before bedtime is both unnecessary and unhealthy, as modern medications are often more effective when taken in the morning.

Dr. Al-Rashdan also noted that coffee is not only safe for the heart but can be beneficial, and it is recommended to drink it daily in moderation.

Some may comment on this advice by asking — what if future research shows that coffee is not beneficial for the heart?

The answer is simple. Medical science was not as advanced ten years ago as it is today. Modern science can now produce precise research results that were previously unavailable.

Until new evidence emerges, the latest discoveries, medical or otherwise, remain the best course of action.

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New office to enhance judicial cases 'solution'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Attorney General Saad Abdulkarim Al-Saqr issued a decree on the establishment of the Criminal Appeals Prosecution Office -- a step aimed at reinforcing judicial oversight, enhancing performance in felony and misdemeanor cases, and improving the efficiency and quality of appeal procedures, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

As per the decree, Attorney General Abdulaziz Yousef Al-Ghathit was appointed as head of the office. He will supervise appeals and oral pleadings, contributing to the reinforcement of justice principles and ensuring the integrity of judicial work.

The Criminal Appeals Prosecution Office will review court judgments, prepare appeal memoranda, keep pace with modern judicial principles, train prosecution personnel, and submit analytical reports to the Attorney General.

The office shall consist of two units specialized in reviewing acquittals and the reasoning behind them, in addition to establishing a digital library to document notable appeals and pleadings.

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PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Friday with Rashad Al-Olaimi, President of the Yemeni Presidential Council, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

Talks explore closer cooperation

Kuwait PM meets Yemen Pres at sidelines of Munich conference

MUNICH, Feb 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Friday with Rashad Al-Olaimi, President of the Yemeni Presidential Council, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

During the meeting, they reviewed the strong bilateral ties and ways to further strengthen cooperation across various fields, in addition to exchanging views on several issues of common interests.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi, and Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Reem Al-Khaled.

GCC news agency heads' panel convenes virtually

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): The Committee of Heads of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) News Agencies held its 25th meeting via videoconference on Thursday, organized by the GCC General Secretariat, in cooperation with Bahrain News Agency (BNA).

The meeting was presided over by BNA Director-General Abdulla Buheji, in the presence of Acting Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Mohammad Al-Mannai and GCC countries' representatives, the GCC General Secretariat said in a press release.

The conferees underlined the significance of continuing to hold training courses for 2027 in the GCC news agencies and to partake in the photo exhibition organized on the sidelines of GCC courses in the host country of the summit to highlight GCC accomplishments, according to the release.

They, further, stressed that it is essential to maintain the exchange of visits between editors, photographers and technicians in GCC news agencies in order to gain experience and get familiar with the state-of-the-art professional and technical advancement, it said.

Kuwait honors global innovators

213 innovators recognized as 16th Invention Expo concludes

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaie, representative of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah who sponsored the 16th Middle East International Invention Exhibition, honored the winners of the exhibition awards.

The exhibition ran for four days, with the participation of 213 inventors representing more than 30 Arab and foreign countries.

- Following are the winners:**
- Grand Prize - six Chinese inventors
 - Kuwait Scientific Club Award - Palestinian inventor Cesar Al-Lahham
 - Geneva International Exhibition of Inventions Award - Swiss inventor Kabir Singh Dhat
 - Secretariat General of the Arab League Award - three Jordanian inventors (Ghadir Sweifan, Mayada Hadiya and Patrick Okechukwu)
 - Association of Arab Universities Award - three Kuwaiti inventors (Dr. Sultan Majid Al-Salem, Dr. Fadila Al-Salman and Dr. Sharif Al-Iskandarani)
 - Union of Scientific Research Councils Award - six Kuwaiti inventors (Dr. Abdulrahman Mutab Al-Azmi, Dr. Fawzi Muwafaq, Dr. Laila Al-Haddad, Dr. Abdulhamid Amwas, Mohammad Amira and Tasneem Habib)
 - Arab Organization for Agricultural Development Award - Egyptian inventor Suzanne Doush
 - Arab Organization for Administrative Development Award - Algerian inventor Bouhamdoun Saber
 - Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport Award - Saudi inventor Abdullah Al-Ghadhib
 - Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development Award - Iraqi inventors Najwa Abu Majdad, Al-Zahraa Abdul-Amir and Fatima Mohsen
 - Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands Award - Saudi inventor Bader Jazaa
- Regarding the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity Awards, which are granted exclusively to Kuwaiti inventors, following are the winners:
- First place - Qatr Al-Nada Al-Anzi
 - Second place - Sheikhha Al-Khalfan
 - Third place - Mishari Khaja
 - Fourth place - Saad Makhseed
 - Fifth place - Khalid Al-Hazzaa
- Following are the winners of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Patent Office awards, which are granted to inventors from GCC member states:**
- First place - Saudi inventors Abdulaziz Al-Askar, Fatima Al-Otaibi, Wissam Al-Din Saber and Khalid Ghoneim
 - Second place - Emirati inventors Amira Fares, Salem Al-Zahmi, Fatima Bahaa Al-Din and Waleed Ahmed
 - Third place - Saudi inventor Al-Jazi Asiri
- Other winners include:**
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) International Award - Chinese inventor Kam Tong-long
 - WIPO Middle East Award went - Iranian inventor Sayed Ahmadi
 - International Federation of Inventors Associations (IFIA) International Award - four Chinese inventors
 - EIVA-Middle East Award - Saudi inventor Duaa Khodari
 - UNESCO Award - four Chinese inventors
- Meanwhile, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Naji Scientific Club and Head of the Organizing Committee Talal Al-Kharafi attributed the success of the 16th edition to the dedicated efforts of the organizing club, supporting entities, sponsors, and the volunteer, scientific and judging committees that worked hard with the highest level of professionalism and integrity.
- He commended the efforts of the inventors and innovators who came to Kuwait with their ideas, seeking to transform them into realities that better serve humanity and contribute to building a more sustainable world.
- He congratulated the winners, stressing that every participant is a winner for having the courage to present his idea on such an international scientific platform.



Scientific Club photo
Representative of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Minister of Education Engineer Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabai, honors the winners of the 16th International Invention Exhibition in the Middle East.

He expressed his appreciation to His Highness the Crown Prince for his generous patronage, and to His Highness' representative, the Minister of Education, for attending both the opening and closing ceremonies.

He thanked the ministries, authorities and State institutions for their cooperation and for providing the necessary facilities to ensure the success of the event. He also thanked the representatives of the Arab League and its specialized organizations, the GCC Secretariat General, and the participating international organizations and institutions.

Majed Al-Rafiq, Director of the Examination Department at the Patent Office of the GCC Secretariat General, congratulated the winners of the office's awards.

He disclosed that the Secretariat participated this year with six inventors representing the six GCC member states -- one from each country, continuing its regular involvement in this scientific event.

Abdullah Bouhadida, Assistant CEO for Investment and Corporate Finance at Aayan Leasing and Investment Company and a member of the Union of Investment Companies, expressed his happiness over the participation of the Union in the exhibition, emphasizing that genuine investment begins with knowledge, technology and human capital.

Moreover, Al-Tabtabaie honored the representatives of Arab and international organizations and institutions concerned with inventions and intellectual property, including President of the International Federation of Inventors Associations (IFIA) Ali Reza Rastkar, and representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Dr. Amr Abdel Aziz.

The representatives of the partners, sponsors and



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The Governor of Ahmadi and officials from Kuwait Oil Company during the launch of the event.



The Governor of Ahmadi is following up on the activities and events accompanying Sport Day.



KOC photos
Children's participation in the Ahmadi Sport Day activities.

Ahmadi holds annual Sport Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): In festive atmospheres showing societal participation which coincides with Kuwait's national days celebration, Al Ahmadi Sport Day kick-started on Thursday, in the presence of Al Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Co-organized by the Kuwait Oil Company and Al Ahmadi Governorate, the three-day event is held for the third year in a row at Al Ahmadi Park to create spaces for families and individuals to spend amusing time and partake in entertainment contests, along

sport, technical and cultural activities.

Such an event contributes to boosting societal interaction and cementing sport culture as a healthy life. Sport is a cornerstone in shaping a healthy and balanced society as it plays a key role in boosting social bonds and planting positive values.

This method shows concerted efforts of national institutions and official bodies to back initiatives which embody a shared vision toward developing the society and stimulating all groups to get engaged in varied heritage, cultural and sport activities.

Continued from Page 1

New safeguards

foundations and controls for establishing or participating in companies and acquiring real estate and securities. It is also responsible for preparing the proposed budget and submitting it to the Board of Directors.

The resolution authorizes the committee to contract with a specialized entity to provide Sharia advisory services to ensure compliance with Islamic Sharia provisions, with the option of referring Sharia-related matters to the relevant committee formed by a decision of the PAMA's Board of Directors for its opinion. It also permits the committee to contract internal and external auditors with expertise in auditing transactions that comply with Islamic Sharia.

The resolution further regulates the mechanism for holding committee meetings, which are convened at the invitation of the chairperson. A meeting shall be considered valid if attended by more than half of the members, provided that the chairperson or their representative is present. The committee may convene meetings remotely through modern means of communication.

Youth mental

He stressed that the mental health of children and adolescents is a national responsibility requiring the concerted efforts of health, educational and social institutions, along with the vital role of the family as the primary caregiver of the child.

He added that investing in prevention, awareness and early intervention programs is the most effective way to protect children

and ensure that they are raised in a healthy and safe environment.

Meanwhile, Dr. Hussein Al-Shatti, Chairman of the Conference Organizing Committee, stated that the conference aims to identify common causes and challenges, and to lay down an effective and sustainable action plan to unify efforts among various disciplines in relevant medical and educational institutions.

FATF applauds

The FATF praised Kuwait for the extensive measures it has taken since the adoption of the mutual evaluation report in June 2014 to strengthen the national framework for combating money laundering, terrorist financing, and the financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The task force stressed that these efforts demonstrate a high level of political commitment and coordinated institutional action, which contributed to ensuring the effectiveness of the national system.

It approved the action plan of Kuwait to support and monitor continuous efforts to further develop its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing framework.

It also decided to put the State of Kuwait under enhanced monitoring -- a step intended to ensure the sustainability of the progress achieved and the continuous implementation of reforms outlined in the approved plan.

It stated that Kuwait has undertaken broad and comprehensive reforms in its anti-money laundering, counter-terrorism financing, and counter-proliferation financing systems, thereby, addressing 95 percent of the recommendations included in the mutual evaluation report within a record timeframe.

Al-Salam Charity launches ‘Peace Village 3’ in Yemen

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): Al-Salam Association for Humanitarian and Charitable Work inaugurated “Peace Village 3” in Yemen as part of its humanitarian and development efforts aimed at improving the quality of life and providing an integrated environment for residents through a package of vital service projects.

Director General of the association Hamad Al-Aoun told KUNA on Saturday during the opening that the project includes 10 residential buildings comprising 108 apartments, in addition to a mosque accommodating around 550 male and 150 female worshippers.

The village also features a vocational training center with an annual capacity of 320 trainees to support the economic empowerment of beneficiary families.

Al-Aoun added that the village includes a school with nine classrooms serving up to 324 students, as well as a medical center capable of providing healthcare services to more than 200 cases daily.

The project also comprises a water desalination plant with a production capacity ranging between 80,000 and 120,000 liters per day, alongside water networks estimated at 450 liters per second to ensure the sustainability of essential services.



KUNA photo
Hamad Al-Aoun, Director General of the Al-Salam Association for Humanitarian and Charitable Work, delivers his speech.

Additionally, the village features a public park spanning approximately 700 square meters with a capacity of 200 children, a sports field covering about 550 square meters, a solar energy system, and other service and development facilities, including a Quran memorization center and a computer lab.

Al-Aoun said the project aims to foster an integrated community built on education, healthcare and sustainable development, contributing to long-term stability for beneficiaries in Yemen.

Farmers’ market initiative supports local producers

Fresh produce hits Al-Edailia



KUNA photo
Minister of State for Communication and Information Technology Affairs and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar during a tour of the farmers' market.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): Minister of State for Communication and Information Technology Affairs and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar said on Thursday that the farmers’ market initiative contributes to backing Kuwaiti farmers and enhancing their products at local markets.

Speaking to KUNA and Kuwait TV, Al-Omar said the initiative, organized by supreme tourism committee in collaboration with Ghalia Company, is a key step to for sale

outlets close to residential areas, which farmers to offer their products to consumers.

Establishing the market inside residential areas helps citizens and expats get fresh local produce, he added, noting that this experience which took place in Al-Edailia area park, deserves continuation due to its economic and social dimensions.

Meanwhile, head of Ghalia Abdulrazzaq Al-Mutawa said the Company has 40 selling stands, along with others for honey and dairy products.

He indicated that they want, through this step, to help local producers and back food security in Kuwait. The market will last until next Saturday.

Continued from Page 1

Agricultural and

As a result, addressing the budget deficit is likely to remain a challenge for the government for some time, despite the availability of practical solutions.

The first key solution is to encourage the private sector, which is the strongest economic driver in all countries that aim to diversify income sources by collecting taxes and fees, stimulating domestic consumer spending, and promoting free trade locally, regionally, and internationally.

Meanwhile, we are nearing the completion of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, which will serve as the country’s strategic link between East and West.

When discussing entertainment projects and their importance, the main point is that citizens and residents would spend their money within the country rather than traveling and spending it abroad.

Tourism spending overseas amounts to approximately KD four billion annually, with Kuwaitis spending about 11 percent of their yearly income abroad. This massive outflow of funds significantly reduces local investment opportunities in the entertainment and tourism sectors.

It is essential to clarify responsibilities for addressing all ongoing avenues of waste. Service ministers, including the Minister of Commerce and Industry and their subsidiaries, must lift restrictions on investors and those entitled to use industrial and service plots. This responsibility also lies with the Minister of Finance, Kuwait Municipality, and other relevant authorities.

It appears that these institutions are contributing to further constraining the national economy through unprecedented restrictions.

As a result, the budget deficit continues to grow due to the absence of a

sound economic and financial vision. Important measures such as lifting subsidies on goods and services, encouraging domestic consumer spending, developing a comprehensive plan for Kuwaitization, avoiding arbitrary decisions, and motivating young Kuwaitis to join the private sector, provided their work boosts productivity rather than creating disguised unemployment, remain unimplemented.

There are, indeed, several sectors that could serve as sources of national income. For example, farms in Al-Abdali and Al-Wafra, which can produce meat and other food products, could also be developed for tourism and recreational purposes.

Industrial plots could be utilized to establish processing industries, increasing national income and helping to reduce the budget deficit. Pressures on beneficiaries of agricultural plots have driven many Kuwaitis to spend their weekends at farms in Khafji or in Iraq, purchasing fruits and vegetables instead of investing in local Kuwaiti farms.

This is just one example of the negative impact of restrictive practices on agricultural and industrial holdings. If these assets were managed wisely, they could generate substantial revenue for the state.

Massive growth

He presented a positive overall outlook for the 2026/2027 fiscal year budget, stating it will remain on track as long as capital spending is directed towards infrastructure, development and service projects.

He also pointed out that growth in non-oil revenues is a positive indicator in terms of the overall performance of the budget.

On the estimated budget deficit of

KD9.8 billion, Ramadhan clarified that it does not pose a major problem, particularly since the profits of the Kuwaiti sovereign wealth fund, whose assets exceed \$1 trillion, are not included in the State budget revenues.

On the occasional discrepancy between estimated and actual deficits, he acknowledged that such gaps occurred in recent years. He argued that deficit estimates are not a major concern, as they are based on a longer and different timeframe than actual estimates.

He cited the remarkable difference between actual and estimated deficits recently, which he attributed to over-estimation of budget expenditures, production volumes, costs and other aspects.

Asked about the possibility of an increased deficit in the coming years due to declining oil prices, Ramadhan stated that predicting oil prices is impossible due to various factors, such as the political situation, voluntary or mandatory reductions of OPEC+ quota by some countries, and many other reasons.

About the growth of non-oil revenues from KD2.9 billion in fiscal 2025/2026 to KD3.5 billion in the new fiscal year, he considers it a positive development based on certain factors like the increased government fees for some services and decrease in the value of energy subsidies due to the drop in oil prices.

He also stressed the importance of expediting the implementation of economic programs aimed at diversifying non-oil revenue sources, given the impact of fluctuating oil prices on the State budget.

Kuwait embarks

The allocation for the project in the current budget reached KD150,000 and the target completion date is on Feb 28,

2027, as per the latest report on the development plan.

Markets placed

In a press statement, the ministry revealed that its emergency teams carried out an intensive inspection campaign targeting service plots in South Amghara, specifically at the construction materials waste site.

It confirmed that the campaign led to the discovery of several violations, and that the necessary legal measures were taken against those who committed violations, while 48 plots in the area were ordered closed.

It added that the inspection campaigns will continue in various areas, stressing that it will not tolerate any violations and will firmly apply the law on anyone proven to have committed violations, as part of its commitment to maintain order and protect the market.

Meanwhile, Director of the Commercial Control Department in the ministry Faisal Al-Ansari revealed the intensification of field campaigns in various central markets, which were conducted

under the supervision and in the presence of Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai.

Al-Ansari said the primary goal of this campaign was to assess the readiness of the markets to meet the demand for Ramadan food products.

The campaign covered shops selling meat, poultry, dates and other Ramadan supplies. The emergency teams monitored the availability and quality of basic commodities and looked into the commitment of shop owners to adhere to the announced prices.

Violations recorded included non-compliance with specified prices, weight cheating, and failure to abide by other regulatory requirements.

Desert Warrior

He expressed his deep appreciation to all military personnel involved in the exercise, and commended the exceptional level of cooperation and hospitality of the Kuwaiti side, which reflects the strength of bilateral relations.

In addition, British Defense Attaché Captain Neil Marriott (Royal Navy)

considers ‘Desert Warrior 9’ an affirmation of the strength and depth of the Kuwaiti-British defense partnership, which is built on professionalism, mutual trust, and a shared commitment to ensuring readiness. He said the closing demonstration during the ‘VIP Day’ showcased the advanced operational proficiency of the participating forces and the vital role of high-level training in developing capabilities and guaranteeing operational preparedness.

He pointed out that training is the core of the evolving strategy of the Kuwait Army and joint exercises contribute significantly to strengthening partnership, enhancing interoperability, and creating a lasting impact.

Several dignitaries attended the high-profile exercise, including Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Al-Mishal, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nimer Al-Fahad, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Army Major General Sabah Al-Jaber, British Assistant Chief of the Defense Staff Major General John Swift, senior commanding officers at the Kuwaiti and British armed forces, and officials in the Ministry of Oil and Kuwait Oil Company (KOC).



JOINT OPERATIONS

SAUDI ARABIAN CHEVRON INC. (SAC)

KUWAIT GULF OIL COMPANY (K.S.C.)

Joint Operations (Saudi Arabian Chevron Inc. / Kuwait Gulf Oil Company) announces the below-mentioned Public Tenders for the procurement of materials. Kuwaiti and Saudi merchants registered with either company wishing to participate in any of the below-mentioned Tenders should submit their bids electronically through "SMART BY GEP" <https://smart.gep.com>.


For first-time registration, please contact TLQX@Chevron.com - BHSJ@Chevron.com for support and guidance.

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The start date for the following Tenders will be on **Sunday, 15 FEB 2026** and closing date will be on **Tuesday, 17 MAR 2026 @ 09:00 A.M.**

S. NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS CLOSING DATE	FEES (KD)	CLOSING DATE
1	048590	S/F IMODCO SBM OFFSHORE, SINGLE BUOY MOORING	35	17/3/2026
2	048589	HOSE COUPLING	5	17/3/2026
3	048500	MARINE ROPE	15	17/3/2026
4	048496	3 PHASE SEPARATOR	100	17/3/2026
5	048493	MANIFOLDS	35	17/3/2026
6	048491	S/F CAMERON	25	17/3/2026
7	048481	METAL PLATE	25	17/3/2026
8	048480	METAL HOSE	15	17/3/2026
9	048492	CONTROL VALVE	5	17/3/2026
10	048727	CASSING & ACCESSORIES, VALLOUREC	50	17/3/2026
11	048610	LINER HANGER, SCHLUMBERGER OILFLD-SMITH	50	17/3/2026
12	048708	CASSING & ACCESSORIES, TENARIS	35	17/3/2026
13	048702	WELLHEAD SYSTEM FOR CAMERON	25	17/3/2026



Ramadan Mubarak to you and our beloved Kuwait. Wishing you a month filled with blessings, joy, and prosperity.



TSA agents working without pay at airports

US Homeland Security Department enters partial shutdown due to lack of funding

WASHINGTON, Feb 14, (Agencies): The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) entered a partial shutdown as temporary funding for the department expired at the end of Friday.

The Senate on Thursday failed to advance a funding bill for the DHS, as Republicans and Democrats did not reach an agreement on reforming immigration enforcement regulations, following two fatal shootings by federal law enforcement officers in the city of Minneapolis in Minnesota.

The Congress has recently passed a funding package to fund multiple US federal agencies for the remainder of the fiscal year 2026, yet the DHS only received a two-week continuing resolution at current funding levels. A shutdown of the US Department of Homeland Security that took effect early Saturday impacts the agency responsible for screening passengers and bags at airports across the country. Travelers with airline reservations may be nervously recalling a 43-day government shutdown that led to historic flight cancellations and long delays last year.

Transportation Security Administration officers are expected to work without pay while lawmakers remain without an agreement on Homeland Security's annual funding. TSA officers also worked through the record shutdown that ended Nov. 12, but aviation experts say this one may play out differently.

Trade groups for the US travel industry and major airlines nonetheless warned that the longer DHS appropriations are lapsed, the longer security lines at the nation's commercial airports could get.

Here's what to know about the latest shutdown and how to plan ahead.

Funding for Homeland Security expired at midnight. But the rest of the federal government is funded through Sept 30. That means air traffic controllers employed by the Federal Aviation



Travelers walk with their luggage past TSA agents at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport on Nov 13, 2025, in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)

Administration will receive paychecks as usual, reducing the risk of widespread flight cancellations.

According to the department's contingency plan, about 95% of TSA workers are deemed essential personnel and required to keep working. Democrats in the House and Senate say Homeland Security won't get funded until new restrictions are placed on federal immigration operations.

During past shutdowns, disruptions to air travel tended to build over time, not overnight. About a month into last year's shutdown, for example, TSA temporarily closed two checkpoints at Philadelphia International Airport. That same day, the government took the extraordinary step of ordering all commercial airlines to reduce their domestic flight schedules.

John Rose, chief risk officer for global travel management company Altour, said strains could surface at airports more quickly this time because the TSA workforce also will be remembering the last shutdown.

"It's still fresh in their minds and potentially their pocketbooks," Rose said.

It's hard to predict whether, when or where security screening snags might

pop up. Even a handful of unscheduled TSA absences could quickly lead to longer wait times at smaller airports, for example, if there's just a single security checkpoint.

That's why travelers should plan to arrive early and allow extra time to get through security.

"I tell people to do this even in good times," Rose said.

Experts say flight delays also are a possibility even though air traffic controllers are not affected by the DHS shutdown.

Airlines might decide to delay departures in some cases to wait for passengers to clear screening, said Rich Davis, senior security advisor at risk mitigation company International SOS. Shortages of TSA officers also could slow the screening of checked luggage behind the scenes.

Most airports display security line wait times on their websites, but don't wait until the day of a flight to check them, Rose advised.



This image made from video shows the South Carolina State University campus in Orangeburg, SC, after a shooting in a residential complex on Feb 13. (AP)

Shooting at South Carolina State University dorm kills 2

Two men were killed and another was wounded in a shooting in a dorm room at South Carolina State University just four months after another deadly shooting at the campus.

Henry L. Crittington, 19, died at the scene of the Thursday night shooting at the Hugine Suites housing complex, and Terrell Thomas, 18, died at the hospital, authorities said. The condition of the third man was not known, and his name was not released.

Both men killed were not students, while the wounded man was enrolled, officials said.

An eight-hour lockdown on campus was lifted Friday morning. No arrests were announced, but authorities said there was no longer a threat.

A police report indicated that there were two women in the room, but investigators did not release details about what led to the shooting. (AP)

Canada's PM and opp'n leader hold hands during school shooting vigil

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Feb 14, (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and the country's main opposition leader held hands Friday as they paid tribute to the victims of one of the worst mass shootings in the country's history at a vigil in a devastated British Columbia town.

Carney and Opposition Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre joined hands as an Indigenous leader sang a prayer outside the town hall in Tumbler Ridge.

Carney and Poilievre also spoke. The prime minister named each of the six people killed at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School and said the mother and brother of the shooter who were killed also "deserve to be mourned."

Authorities said the 18-year-old alleged shooter, identified as Jesse Van Rootselaar, killed her 39-year-old mother, Jennifer Jacobs, and 11-year-old stepbrother, Emmett Jacobs, in their home on Tuesday before heading to the nearby Tumbler Ridge Secondary School and opening fire, killing five children and an educator before killing herself.

Carney said he sat with people who are "living through something no one should ever have to endure."

"When you wake up tomorrow, and the world feels impossible, know that millions of Canadians are with you. When the cameras leave and the quiet sets in - know that we will still be here," Carney said.

A crowd of hundreds attended the



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney, (right), and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre join hands while attending a vigil for the victims of a mass shooting, in Tumbler Ridge, BC on Feb 13. (AP)

vigil. Some held photos of loved ones they lost.

Carney said the community has always been defined by people caring for each other.

"And when the unimaginable happened on Tuesday, you were there again. First responders at the school within two minutes. Teachers shielding their children," he said.

Poilievre commended Carney for his "tremendous grace." Canada's political leaders flew from Ottawa together.

British Columbia Premier David Eby said the students of the school won't ever have to return to the building if they don't want to.

"I will promise that not one of you will ever be forced to go back to that school. We will provide a safe place for you to go back to school," Eby said.

Authorities on Thursday identified those killed at the school as Kylie Smith, Abel Mwansa, Zoey Benoit and Ticaria Lampert, all age 12, as well as 13-year-old Ezekiel Schofield and assistant teacher Shannda Aviugana-Durand, 39.

Navalny poisoned by Kremlin with dart frog toxin: European nations

LONDON, Feb 14, (AP): Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was poisoned by the Kremlin with a rare and lethal toxin found in the skin of poison dart frogs, five European countries said Saturday.

The foreign ministries of the UK, France, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands said analysis of samples taken from Navalny's body "conclusively confirmed the presence of epibatidine." It is a neurotoxin found in the skin of dart frogs in South America that is not found naturally in Russia, they said.

The countries said in a joint statement that "Russia had the means, motive and opportunity to administer this poison." They said they were reporting Russia to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

They made the announcement as Navalny's widow Yulia Navalnaya attended the Munich Security Conference in Germany as the second anniversary of Navalny's death approaches.

Navalny, who crusaded against official corruption and staged massive anti-Kremlin protests as President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe, died in an Arctic penal colony on Feb. 16, 2024. He was serving a 19-year sentence that he believed to be politically motivated.

"Russia saw Navalny as a threat," British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said. "By using this form of poison the Russian state demonstrated the despicable tools it has at its disposal and the overwhelming fear it has of political opposition."

Navalny's widow, said last year that two independent labs had found that her husband was poisoned shortly before he died. Navalnaya has repeatedly blamed Putin for Navalny's death, something Russian officials have vehemently denied.

Navalnaya said Saturday that she had been "certain from the first day" that her husband had been poisoned, "but now there is proof."

"Putin killed Alexei with chemical weapon," she wrote on social network X, calling Putin "a murderer" who "must be held accountable."

Russian authorities said that the politician became ill after a walk and died from natural causes.



Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny speaks to the media in front of security officers standing guard at the Foundation for Fighting Corruption office in Moscow, Russia on Dec 26, 2019. (AP)



A nearly flooded bridge is seen in Confolens as severe flooding hits western France amid storm Nils on Feb 12. (AP)

Storm aftermath leaves 2 dead in France

The aftermath of a deadly storm continued to disrupt parts of France on Friday, with flooding concerns persisting in the southwest even as wind alerts were lifted, according to weather service Météo-France.

Government spokesperson Maud Bregeon said on TF1 that France had recorded two deaths linked to Storm Nils: one on Thursday in the Landes department and a second "in the last hours" in Tarn-et-Garonne.

She said the second victim was a man who was found in his garden.

Network operator Enedis said the storm left up to 900,000 customers without power at its peak; by Friday morning it had restored service to about half of those affected and mobilized 3,000 personnel, including 2,100 technicians.

Flood vigilance remained high.

Météo-France maintained red flood alerts for Gironde and Lot-et-Garonne - to remain in place Saturday - due to a significant Garonne river flood episode.

Météo-France said the storm had "uncommon strength" and swept in from France's western seaboard overnight Wednesday into Thursday and has now moved on tracking east into Europe. (AP)

Rubio's speech to EU allies takes softer tone but sticks to Trump's firm stance

MUNICH, Feb 14, (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio offered a reassuring message to America's allies on Saturday, striking a less aggressive but still firm tone about the administration's intent to reshape the trans-Atlantic alliance and push its priorities after more than a year of President Donald Trump's often-hostile rhetoric toward traditional allies.

Reminding his audience at the annual Munich Security Conference about America's centuries-long roots in Europe, Rubio said the United States would remain forever tied to the continent even as it pushes for changes in the relationship and the international institutions that have been the bulwark of the post-World War II world order.

Rubio addressed the conference a year after Vice President JD Vance stunned the same audience with a harsh critique of European values. A series of statements and moves from the Trump administration targeting allies followed, including Trump's short-lived threat last month to impose new tariffs on several European countries in a bid to secure U.S. control of Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

On Friday, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz had opened this year's gathering by calling for the US and Europe



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio walks to a meeting of G7 foreign ministers at the Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany on Feb 14. (AP)

to "repair and revive trans-Atlantic trust together," saying that even the US isn't powerful enough to go it alone in a world whose old order no longer exists. But he and other European officials made clear that they will stand by their values, including their approach to free speech, climate change and free trade.

While offering a calmer and more reassuring tone than the one often heard over the past year, Rubio made clear that the Trump administration is sticking to its guns on policy. He denounced "a climate cult" and "an unprecedented wave of mass migration that threatens the cohesion of our societies."

Europe

Britain's top civil servant resigns: Britain's Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, **Chris Wormald**, has become the third senior official to step down in less than a week amid the political fallout over former British ambassador to the United States Peter Mandelson, the Cabinet Office has announced.

"It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as a civil servant for the past 35 years, and a particular distinction to lead the Service as Cabinet Secretary," Wormald said in a statement.

The Cabinet Office added that Prime Minister Keir Starmer will appoint a new Cabinet Secretary "shortly."

According to the British government, the Cabinet Secretary is the Prime Minister's most senior policy adviser and acts as Secretary to the Cabinet, responsible to all ministers for the running of Cabinet Government.

Wormald was appointed to the post in December 2024. Previously, he served as Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health and at the Department for Education. (Xinhua)



Wormald

Fire in Budapest suburb kills 3: At least three people died and nearly two dozen others were injured after a building used as temporary lodgings for workers caught fire early Friday in a suburb of Hungary's capital, authorities said.

Firefighters extinguished the fire in Budakeszi, about five miles (eight kilometers) west of Budapest, after it engulfed the two-story building in the early morning hours, according to Hungary's National Directorate General for Disaster Management.

More than 40 paramedics and 18 emergency vehicles were dispatched to the scene. Firefighters pulled several survivors and three gas cylinders from the building. The bodies of two men and a woman were found beneath the collapsed roof of the building, a spokesperson for the disaster management authority said. (AP)

Germany's airport resumes operations: Departures resumed at Germany's Cologne Bonn Airport on Friday after a brief suspension caused by a security incident.

Around 6:30 am (0530 GMT) in the morning, operations were halted and the security checkpoints were closed after the incident, police said.

An airport spokesman said that departures were disrupted for around two and a half hours. Around 12 flights were affected and delayed, with no cancellations reported.

An initial investigation revealed that a bag undergoing security checks had been handed to its owner despite being flagged for extra screening, police said. (Xinhua)

N.Korea leader inspects memorial museum of overseas military ops

S.Korea’s drone regret sensible but insufficient says Kim’s sister

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 14, (Agencies): The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Friday it was “sensible” for a South Korean government official to express regret for alleged civilian drone flights over North Korea but warned of counterattacks if they recur.

The statement by Kim Yo Jong came after South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-young on Tuesday expressed “deep regret” over the alleged flights and stressed that Seoul’s liberal government seeks “mutual recognition and peaceful co-existence” between the war-divided rivals.

North Korea threatened retaliation last month after accusing South Korea of launching a surveillance drone flight in September and again in January.

The South Korean government has denied operating any drones during the times specified by North Korea but law enforcement authorities are investigating three civilians suspected of flying drones into the North from border areas.

The development threatens to further dampen prospects for a push by Seoul to resume long-stalled talks with North Korea amid a deepening nuclear standoff.

Kim Yo Jong said Chung’s com-



This photo provided by the North Korean government shows Kim Yo Jong, sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, delivering a speech during a national meeting against the coronavirus, in Pyongyang, North Korea, on Aug 10, 2022. (AP)

ments displayed “sensible behavior” but were insufficient as a government response, demanding stronger measures from Seoul to prevent similar activities in the future.

“I give advance warning that re-occurrence of such provocation as violating the inalienable sovereignty of the DPRK will surely provoke a terrible response,” she said, using the initials of North Korea’s formal name,

the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

“Various counterattack plans are on the table and one of them will be chosen without doubt and it will go beyond proportionality,” she said without specifying.

The Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, said the alleged drone flights ran counter to the government’s principles of reduc-

ing tensions and that it plans to take unspecified steps to prevent similar incidents.

Analysts say North Korea’s drone accusations were likely driven by its efforts to dial up anti-South Korea sentiments ahead of the ruling Workers’ Party congress in late February. North Korea could add leader Kim Jong Un’s declaration of a hostile “two-state” system on the Korean Peninsula in the party constitution during the congress, the first of its kind in five years.

There have been no public talks between the Koreas since 2019 and drone flights are a source of animosity between the rivals.

Meanwhile, Kim inspected the Memorial Museum of Combat Feats at the Overseas Military Operations under construction, the official Korean Central News Agency reported Saturday.

During the inspection on Friday, Kim learned about the construction progress as well as the creation and installation of sculptures, the report said.

The DPRK leader stressed the importance of “successfully building the museum into a sacred monument, which will be glorified eternally as a symbol of the feats and immortality of the fallen fighters,” it said.



Junya Ogawa bows after being elected as the new leader of the Centrist Reform Alliance (CRA) in Tokyo, Japan on Feb 13. (Xinhua)

Junya Ogawa elected new leader of Japan’s main opposition (CRA)

TOKYO, Feb 14, (Xinhua): Junya Ogawa was elected new leader of Japan’s main opposition force, the Centrist Reform Alliance (CRA), on Friday.

Ogawa, former secretary general of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ), won a simple majority vote by the party’s 49 lower house lawmakers against Takeshi Shina, the CDPJ’s former acting policy chief.

The new leader’s term will run until the end of March next year.

Ogawa told media before the leadership election in Tokyo that he would strive to achieve unity within the party and gain more external support, as the newly created party suffered a heavy loss in the recent general election.

Also:

BEIJING: An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.6 jolted **Ryukyu Islands**, Japan at 2148 GMT on Thursday, the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences said.

The epicenter, with a depth of 10 km, was initially determined to be at 25.72 degrees north latitude and 128.62 degrees east longitude.

We must erase everything and move forward: Anutin

Thailand’s ruling conservative party moves closer to forming new coalition govt

BANGKOK, Feb 14, (AP): Thailand’s ruling conservative Bhumjaithai Party on Friday moved closer to forming a new government after the Pheu Thai Party, the third place finisher in the country’s general election, agreed to join it in a proposed ruling coalition.

Bhumjaithai won 193 seats in the 500-member House of Representatives in Sunday’s election, according to unofficial results from the Election Commission, positioning it to return incumbent Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul to office with a Cabinet of his choosing.

The populist Pheu Thai Party, backed by former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, finished third with 74 seats. Together, the two parties would command 267 seats, surpassing the 251 seats required for a majority. Several smaller parties also pledged their support.

“Bhumjaithai and Pheu Thai will look into the future. We agreed that both our parties have people with abilities great enough to lead Thailand into a stable and sustainable future,” Anutin said in a news conference.

He was joined by Pheu Thai leaders, including Yodchanan Wongsawat, a nephew of Thaksin who had been the party’s candidate for prime minister.

The two parties had previously partnered after the 2023 election, when Pheu Thai - then the second-largest party - led negotiations as the senior partner in their government-to-be.

That alliance collapsed last year following controversy surrounding then-Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Thaksin’s daughter, over border tensions with Cambodia. Anutin then secured enough parliamentary support in September to become prime minister.

Addressing their past disputes on Friday, Anutin said that “We must erase everything and move forward.”

Bhumjaithai has announced that six smaller parties with a combined eight seats have also pledged to join its coalition.

The progressive People’s Party, which finished second with 118 seats, has ruled out joining a Bhumjaithai government.

Pheu Thai’s result was considered its worst performance in decades. Elec-



In this photo released by Bhumjaithai Party, Pheu Thai Party prime minister candidate Yodchanan Wongsawat, center, shakes hands with Thailand’s Prime Minister and leader of Bhumjaithai Party Anutin Charnvirakul at Bhumjaithai, the party headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand on Feb 13. (AP)

toral politics since 2001 had been dominated by populist parties loyal to Thaksin, who served as prime minister until he was ousted by an army coup in 2006, setting off a tussle for power against Thailand’s conservative royalist-military establishment.

The party alienated some pro-democracy supporters in 2023 by breaking its

campaign promise not to align with pro-military parties and instead formed a government including them.

Last year it angered conservatives when Paetongtarn was found to be too chummy with Cambodia’s leader Hun Sen in a leaked phone call. She was kicked out of office for an ethics violation, giving Anutin his chance to take her place.

“For the first time in its history, (Pheu Thai) will be a mid-sized party that can at most play the role of a junior coalition partner,” said Ken Lohatepanont, a University of Michigan doctoral candidate in an online commentary on Thai politics. Especially galling was losing all the seats it had held in the northern city of Chiang Mai, Thaksin’s hometown.

He and other election observers suggest that for Bhumjaithai to establish a more stable government, it will invite another major partner - either the fourth-place Kula Tham Party, with 58 seats, or the Democrat Party, Thailand’s oldest, with 22.

Thailand’s business community hailed Bhumjaithai’s decisive victory, with the hope that it would bring stability as the country struggles with a lagging economy.

Negotiations on forming a new government unfolded amid mounting allegations of electoral irregularities, prompting frustrated voters to stage protests in several parts of the country. Demonstrators called for recounts and, in some constituencies, fresh by-elections.

The Asian Network for Free Elections, one of the observer groups in the polls, said the vote was conducted in a generally peaceful and orderly manner. But it flagged “procedural irregularities in several polling stations,” including inadequate public information and inconsistent access for election observers.

The legal monitoring group iLaw, which also observed the election, reported receiving more than 4,000 complaints. These included cases where the number of ballots exceeded the number of eligible voters, officials denying observers access to vote counting, disputes over recount requests, and inaccuracies in the recording of final tallies.

Election results must be certified within 60 days of the election before Parliament can convene and elect a new prime minister.

Return of millions of Afghans from Pakistan, Iran pushes Afghanistan to brink, UN warns

GENEVA, Feb 14, (AP): The return of millions of Afghans from neighboring Pakistan and Iran is pushing Afghanistan to the brink, the UN refugee agency said on Friday, describing an unprecedented scale of returns.

A total of 5.4 million people have returned to Afghanistan since October 2023, mostly from the two neighboring countries, UNHCR’s Afghanistan representative Arafat Jamal said, speaking to a UN briefing in Geneva via video link from Kabul, the Afghan capital.

“This is massive, and the speed and scale of these returns has pushed Afghanistan nearly to the brink,” Jamal said.

Pakistan launched a sweeping crackdown in Oct. 2023 to expel migrants without documents, urging those in the country to leave of their own accord to avoid arrest and forcible deportation and forcibly expelling others. Iran also began a crackdown on migrants at around the same time.

Since then, millions have streamed across the border into Afghanistan, including people who were born in Pakistan decades ago and had built lives and created businesses there.

Last year alone, 2.9 million people returned to Afghanistan, Jamal said, noting it was “the largest number of returns that we have witnessed to any single country.”

Afghanistan’s Taliban rulers have criticized the mass expulsions.

Afghanistan was already struggling with a dire humanitarian situation and a poor human rights record, particu-



Afghan refugees who returned after fleeing Iran to escape deportation and conflict arrive at a UNHCR facility near the Islam Qala crossing in western Herat province, Afghanistan, on June 20, 2025. (AP)

larly relating to women and girls, and the massive influx of people amounting to 12% of the population has put the country under severe strain, Jamal said.

Already in just the month and a half since the start of this year, about 150,000 people had returned to Afghanistan, he added.

Afghan authorities provide care packages for those returning that include some food aid, cash, a telephone SIM card and transportation to parts of the country where they might have family. But the returns have strained resources in a country that was already struggling to cope with a weak econo-

my and the effects of a severe drought and two devastating earthquakes.

In November, the UN development program said nine out of 10 families in areas of Afghanistan with high rates of return were resorting to what are known as negative coping mechanisms - either skipping meals, falling into debt or selling their belongings to survive.

“We are deeply concerned about the sustainability of these returns,” Jamal said, noting that while 5% of those who return say they will leave Afghanistan again, more than 10% say they know of someone who has already left.

US strikes another drug boat in Caribbean, 3 dead

WASHINGTON, Feb 14, (AP): The US military said Friday that it has carried out another deadly strike on a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the Caribbean Sea.

US Southern Command said on social media that the boat “was transiting along known narco-trafficking routes in the Caribbean and was engaged in narco-trafficking operations.” It said the strike killed three people. A video linked to the post shows a boat moving through the water before exploding in flames.

Friday’s attack raises the death toll from the Trump administration’s strikes on alleged drug boats to 133 people in at least 38 attacks carried out since early September in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth declared last week that “some top cartel drug-traffickers” in the region “have decided to cease all narcotics operations INDEFINITELY due to recent (highly effective) kinetic strikes in the Caribbean.”

However, Hegseth did not provide any details or information to back up this claim, made in a post on his personal account on social media.

President Donald Trump has said the US is in “armed conflict” with cartels in Latin America and has justified the



US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks at the Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine on Feb 9. (AP)

attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs. But his administration has offered little evidence to support its claims of killing “narcoterrorists.”

Tarique Rahman now poised to lead country

Bangladesh Nationalist Party claims victory

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Feb 14, (AP): The Bangladesh Nationalist Party has claimed victory in the country’s first election since the 2024 uprising, positioning itself to form the next government and potentially reshape Bangladesh’s political landscape after years of intense rivalry and disputed polls.

The party’s media unit said on X Friday that it had secured enough seats in Parliament to govern on its own, though rival group Jamaat-e-Islami raised concerns over delayed results.

The final tally has not yet been announced by the Election Commission, but several local media outlets reported the BNP crossing the 151-seat threshold needed for a majority in the 350-member Parliament.

The Election Commission said Friday the voter turnout in Thursday’s election stood at 59.44%. More than 127 million voters were eligible.

Akhter Ahmed, a senior secretary of the Election Commission, said Friday that a majority of voters backed a proposal for constitutional reforms that was held alongside the election. The proposal included prime ministerial term limits and stronger checks on executive power.

He said they would publish of-



Bangladesh Nationalist Party Chairperson Tarique Rahman greets supporters after his party won the national parliamentary election, in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Feb 14. (AP)

ficial notifications, legitimizing the results, soon.

The BNP is headed by 60-year-old Tarique Rahman, its prime ministerial candidate who returned to Bangladesh in December after 17 years in self-exile in London. He is the son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, who died in December.

Saleh Shibly, press secretary to Rahman, said the BNP leader called on his supporters to hold special prayers alongside the weekly Friday

service and not to hold any celebratory rallies or processions.

The US Embassy in Dhaka congratulated Rahman and his party on the win, calling it a “historic victory.”

“The United States looks forward to working with you to achieve shared goals of prosperity and security for both our countries,” U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent T. Christensen wrote on X.

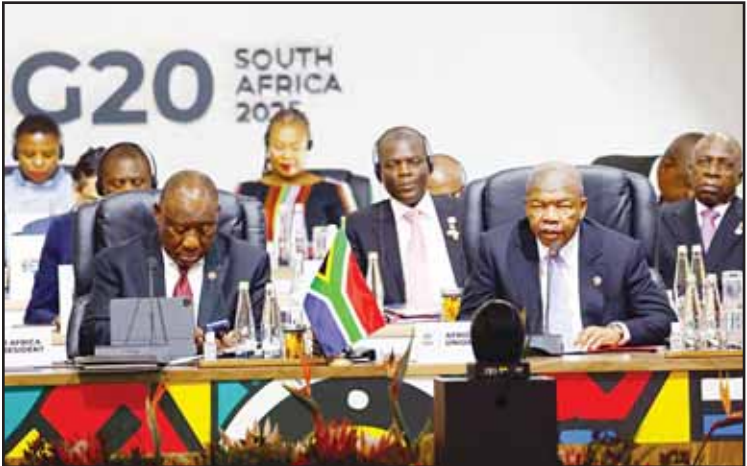
China congratulated the BNP for taking the lead in the election.

African Union summit opens as youth anger grows over bloc of oldest serving leaders

NAIROBI, Kenya, Feb 14, (AP): Africa’s top regional body is hosting its annual summit in Ethiopia this weekend to discuss the future of the continent of some 1.4 billion people, as the organization faces widespread discontent.

Set up to “promote the unity and solidarity of the African States,” analysts say the African Union faces a legitimacy crisis among youth for failing to meet their expectations. Meanwhile, several African countries battle military coups, disputed elections and protests inspired by economic hardship worsened by foreign aid cuts.

Africa has the youngest population in the world, with more than 400 million people aged 15 to 35 years old. But it is also home to several of the oldest and longest-serving leaders - a paradox that has contributed to an upsurge in coups.



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Chairperson of the African Union Joao Lourenco attend a plenary session on the opening day of the G20 Summit, in Johannesburg, South Africa on Nov 22, 2025. (AP)

Oil barrel price down to \$65.25 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil barrel went down USD one to reach USD 65.25 per barrel Friday, compared with USD 67.08 pb the day before, according to Kuwait Petrole-

um Corporation (KPC) on Saturday. In international markets, Brent crude oil price went up 23 cents to USD 67.75 pb, while West Texas crude increased five cents to USD 62.89 pb.

Business

At the 8th Middle East Banking Awards 2025

KFH Group wins 5 prestigious awards from EMEA Finance

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Group secured five prestigious awards for 2025 from EMEA Finance at the 8th Middle East Banking Awards. The accolades include: Best bank in Kuwait, Best Islamic bank in Kuwait, Best bank for SMEs in the Middle East, Best SME product in the Middle East (Zaheb), and Best Islamic bank in Bahrain.



Yousef Almutawa

This recognition underscores KFH's excellence and regional leadership, reflecting its commitment to delivering world-class innovation. Furthermore, it highlights KFH's dedicated support for the SME sector, a commitment driven by the sector's vital role in maintaining economic stability, fostering national development, and empowering the entrepreneurial spirit of our community.

Best Bank Award

The "Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait" award reflects KFH's pioneering financial solutions and its commitment to the highest professional standards, which continue to transform the Islamic finance industry. It also highlights the bank's excellence in launching diverse initiatives that establish KFH as a global benchmark for Islamic banking.

KFH's record profits and leading financial indicators, coupled with its commitment to innovation, digital transformation, and social responsibility, underscore the bank's sustained trajectory of success. These awards further validate KFH's dedication to its core values as it continues to solidify its position as a premier global Islamic financial institution.

Best bank for SMEs

KFH Group Chief Corporate Banking Of-



Khalid AlRukhayes receiving an award from EMEA Finance.

Almutawa:

- KFH recognized for excellence in supporting SMEs

AlRukhayes:

- The awards reflect KFH's leadership in innovative financial and funding solutions

ficer, **Yousef Almutawa** said that being named "Best Bank for SMEs" and "Best SME Product" in the Middle East reflects KFH's excellence in supporting Kuwait's SME sector. By offering integrated financing solutions, such as Murabaha,

Ijara, and Tawarruq, alongside advanced digital services, KFH remains a pioneer in the industry. As the first bank to establish a specialized SME department, KFH continues to empower businesses through financial advisory and training,

driving both sustainability and digital transformation to strengthen the local economy.

He revealed that KFH's eCorp platform for corporate customers has witnessed a remarkable increase in usage following the launch of its upgraded e-services and mobile app. The platform provides an exceptional banking experience tailored specifically for the corporate sector." KFH has introduced a new suite of digital services designed to enhance user flexibility. These include full-authority individual accounts, electronic update of data, and "Zaheb" payment service. Additionally, users can now issue QR-verified IBAN certificates, access details of existing credit facilities, request new credit facilities, view transaction details, request new transactions, and process outstanding payments," Almutawa explained.

He added that the newly updated platform offers a wide array of services, ranging from salary transfers and chequebook requests to viewing account statements, tracking interbank transfers, and managing user permissions within a multi-registration system. Furthermore, the platform offers a comprehensive suite of services, including standing order management, monthly statement subscriptions, and automated coverage services. Users can also issue balance verification certificates, reactivate dormant accounts, and execute transfers at direct rates (360T). Additionally, the platform supports clearing company distribution subscriptions, the opening of new investment accounts and deposits, and the issuance of remittances, letters of credit, and guarantees. Other features include drawdowns from existing credit facilities, "Zaheb" payments, all types of transfers, beneficiary management (local and international), lost card reporting, and IBAN sharing.

He added that KFH plays a major role and provides SMEs with a range of services. These include cash financing, various types of letters of credit and letters of guarantee, advanced digital support, offering corporate customers with POS services, dedicated mobile app that facilitate the management of the businesses' accounts includ-

ing, payroll transfer, view performance reports. "KFH also supports training and sustainability. In this regard, the Bank launched the Growing Sustainably Training Program in cooperation with the UNDP to support sustainable business practices. In addition, KFH's role goes beyond financing businesses, its efforts extend to strategic partnerships, advisory and the exchange of expertise to promote the growth of businesses."

Speaking at the awards ceremony in Dubai, Deputy General Manager Global Markets Trading and Investments at KFH, **Khalid Al-Rukhayes** stated: "We are delighted to receive these five prestigious awards from EMEA Finance. This recognition underscores KFH's leadership and our steadfast commitment to delivering innovative financial solutions that meet customer expectations while adhering to the highest international standards."

He added: "These awards also reflect outstanding achievements in delivering services, products, and initiatives that create tangible value for the Group's communities, including SMEs. Combined with high-quality operations and a diverse customer base, KFH has successfully consolidated its position as a trusted partner to both its customers and the wider community."

The EMEA Finance Middle East Banking Awards celebrate the region's most outstanding achievements in financial services. Now in its 18th edition, the program continues to draw participation from the Middle East's most prestigious financial institutions.

As some of the most esteemed honors in the regional banking industry, the EMEA Finance Awards recognize institutions that demonstrate exceptional financial performance, service quality, and industry leadership. In selecting winners, the prestigious financial group evaluates key metrics including market share, product growth, and profitability, alongside the strength of a bank's business strategy, industry contributions, issuance market presence, and innovation in products and services.

Stake raised to 72.26%

Markaz leads KD 64.1 mln Jazeera Airways stake deal

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" announced the successful execution of a Voluntary Acquisition Offer (VAO) valued at KD 64.12 million on behalf of Boodai Reliance Real Estate Company W.L.L. to acquire additional shares in Jazeera Airways K.S.C.P., acting as the Acquisition Manager for the transaction.

Under the offer, Boodai Reliance Real Estate acquired an additional 16.65% stake in Jazeera Airways' issued share capital through the purchase of 36.64 million shares at an offer price of KD 1.750 per share. Following the completion of the transaction, Boodai Reliance's total ownership in the airline increased to 72.26%, further reinforcing its long-term strategic position in the company.

The VAO represents one of the notable strategic equity acquisitions in Kuwait's capital markets and highlights Markaz's proven capability in executing complex, high-value public-market transactions. It also highlights Markaz's role in facilitating strategic stake-building for clients while navigating shareholder dynamics, market sensitivities, and regulatory requirements through disciplined execution across pricing, shareholder engagement, regulatory coordination, and settlement.

Commenting on the transaction, **Ali Khalil**, Chief Executive Officer of Markaz, said: "We are pleased to have successfully executed this high-profile transaction for Boodai Reliance Real Estate Company, strengthening its strategic position in Jazeera Airways. This accomplishment reflects our ability to navigate the complexities of capital markets, adhere to regulatory requirements, and protect the interests of shareholders while achieving our client's investment objectives. It is also a testament to the depth of expertise within our investment banking teams and further cements our position as a trusted partner for clients seeking to build and consolidate meaningful positions in Kuwait's listed companies."

Echoing similar sentiments, **Mishaal Al-Ussaimi**, Group Chief Executive Officer of Boodai Corp, said: "This strategic acquisition represents a significant step in consolidating our long-term investment in Jazeera Airways. Our increased stake reflects our conviction in the company's long-term fundamentals and growth trajec-



Ali Khalil



Mishaal Al-Ussaimi

tory. Executing a transaction of this scale in the public markets requires a partner that understands not only regulation, but also market dynamics and stakeholder expectations. Markaz provided the structure, clarity, and execution discipline needed to complete the process efficiently and responsibly, allowing us to advance our strategic objectives with confidence."

As Acquisition Manager, Markaz was responsible for the structuring, coordination, and end-to-end execution of the offer, in compliance with Capital Markets Authority (CMA) regulations and exchange requirements.

The successful closing further reinforces Markaz's track record as a specialized acquisition manager and trusted wealth partner, while continuing to strengthen its investment banking and capital markets franchise in support of institutional, family office, and strategic investors seeking long-term value creation in listed companies.

Annual celebration at Zain HQ brought together executive management & employees

Zain family gathers to mark Kuwait's National celebrations

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: As Kuwait marks its 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day, Zain joined the nationwide celebrations with a line-up of community activations and heritage-inspired experiences that reinforced the spirit of unity and belonging.

As it does every year, the Zain Family came together for its annual celebration at the company's Shuwaikh HQ. The gathering brought together employees and executive leadership, led by Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi and Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Al-Gharabally. The event was also attended by H.E. Qudsi Rasheed, the United Kingdom's Ambassador to Kuwait, alongside members of the company's executive management and a large number of employees from across divisions, all coming together to express their love and loyalty to Kuwait during this cherished national season.

During the ceremony, Zain recognized long-serving employees marking 20, 25, 30, and 35 years of service, honoring the dedication and impact that have helped shape the company's journey and sustain its success over the past four decades.

The celebration also included a range of interactive activities inspired by Kuwait's heritage and national pride, with employees joining in a vibrant, welcoming atmosphere that reflected the Zain Family spirit.

Held every February, this annual gathering is one of Zain's flagship employee initiatives, bringing staff and executive management together to strengthen connections across the organization and renew the one-team spirit in celebration of Kuwait.

Over the years, the Kuwaiti community has come to expect Zain's strong presence at the country's biggest social and entertainment events throughout the year, particularly during the National Days season. Audiences also eagerly anticipate Zain's national TVC productions for the emotion and sincerity they carry, as the company continues to add its distinct signature to its community engagement.

This year's national commercial stood out with a particularly distinctive character, as Zain unveiled its new TVC, performed by the acclaimed artist Abdulmajid Abdullah. The commercial was brought to life by the people of Kuwait themselves, with Kuwaitis at the heart of the story through their authentic presence and spirit.

Reflecting Zain's closeness to the community, the company launched its own "Zain Studio" at Al-Kh-iran Mall and opened its doors to the public, inviting everyone to take part in filming scenes and appearing within the commercial's musical segments. The experience became a unifying, interactive space that celebrates the nation and shows its beauty through its people.

The TVC resonated strongly with audiences, generating widespread engagement. It was produced by Big Films, with Joy Productions serving as the advertising agency, lyrics by Mohammad Al-Sheridah, music composition & arrangement by Abdulla Ismael Al-Shatti, mixing and mastering by Suhaib Al-Awadhi, and directed by Mahi Seoudi.

As part of its annual February tradition, Zain main-



Bader Al-Kharafi addresses the Zain Family.



Bader Al-Kharafi, Nawaf Al-Gharabally, and UK Ambassador Qudsi Rasheed at the event.



Honoring employees for 30 years of service.



Honoring employees for 25 years of service.

tains a direct and active presence in community celebrations where Kuwaitis gather to express love for their nation. Through these activations, Zain shares the joy of the National Days up close, in its own way, through a wide range of entertainment programs and heritage segments.

This year's national activations began in early February and included Zain's sponsorship of the February Kuwait Festival, organized by Rotana, featuring a star-studded line-up of Gulf and Arab artists at The Arena Kuwait at 360 Mall.

Zain takes pride in its strategic support for this national festival since its inception, reflecting its commitment to playing a leading and active role in the events and activities that accompany Kuwait's

national occasions every February, particularly as the Kuwaiti public looks forward to this major annual celebration for the prominent Kuwaiti, Gulf, and Arab music stars it attracts.

In addition, Zain sponsored Kuwait University's special National Days celebration, which saw strong participation from students and university officials. Zain also sponsored the flag-raising ceremony at social care homes under the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Zain's annual participation in the country's biggest national events reflects its love and loyalty to Kuwait during its celebrations, and reinforces the role of the private sector, especially national companies, in sharing the joy of these occasions alongside the Kuwaiti people as an integral part of the fabric of society.

Other Voices

Kuwait forecasts record KD 9.8 billion budget deficit

By **Kamel Al-Harami**
Independent Oil Analyst

KUWAIT'S budget for the next fiscal year starting April 2027 is forecasted with a deficit of KD 9.8 billion, which is the largest in the country's history. Total income is estimated at KD 16 billion, with 79 percent coming from oil revenues, while total expenditures are projected at around KD 26 billion, resulting in a shortfall of nearly KD 10 billion.

This deficit will likely be covered by borrowing from international banks, while keeping Kuwait's overseas investments, valued at close to \$1 trillion, intact to continue generating income for the state and future generations.

The budget appears conservative, as it assumes oil prices could fall to \$57 per barrel, a scenario that is highly unlikely. OPEC+ will not allow crude oil prices to drop to such a level, which would harm all producers. A decline of more than \$31

per barrel from the current \$68 per barrel could even push some producers into bankruptcy.

Our budget is so conservative that next year's total income is expected to be more than KD 2 billion lower than the current year, while expenses are increasing by the same amount, resulting in a budget deficit of KD 2 billion.

It is unlikely that oil prices will weaken, and they are expected to remain around \$68-\$70 per barrel for the rest of this year, with a similar level anticipated next year. Once again, predicting lower prices next year is difficult.

The only scenario that could significantly weaken oil prices is if Iran resumes full oil exports and returns to the market, which would impact global prices. In



Kamel Al-Harami

such a case, OPEC+ would almost certainly intervene, taking the necessary measures to stabilize the markets and maintain price levels, preventing any further decline.

Budget deficits will likely persist for Kuwait and other OPEC+ countries, as oil prices are expected to remain relatively weak. Global demand for oil continues to be low, while the market is supplied with an extra surplus of 2.5 million barrels in stock, putting downward pressure on prices. However, prices are not expected to fall as low as \$57 per barrel, resulting in an estimated KD 10 billion deficit for next year's budget.

Weak oil prices pose challenges for all producing countries, as none have developed alternatives to reduce dependence on oil. Transitioning away from a single source of income is difficult, and there is insufficient creativity so far to address this reliance. In Kuwait, we have adopted another mechanism, which is perhaps not the best, for generating income by creating our Sovereign Wealth Fund, now worth more than \$1 trillion in

overseas investments and producing revenue. However, this is not an industry that can provide jobs for the more than 15,000 new graduates entering the workforce each year. The government must create and make these jobs available, which contributes to recurring deficits in the annual budget, accounting for 76 percent of total expenditures.

The weakest area in the budget is capital spending for future developments and investments, which covers only 12 percent of the budget. This should be higher to support projects that create sustainable and meaningful job opportunities.

The KD 9.8 billion budget deficit can be addressed by borrowing from international banks, backed by our oil reserves and Sovereign Wealth Fund.

It is time to establish a think tank to explore additional sources of income beyond the two we currently rely on.

☐ ☐ ☐

Email: nafikuwaiti@yahoo.com

Ambassador highlights synergies between Viksit Bharat 2047 and Kuwait Vision 2035

Embassy of India launches ‘Viksit Bharat 2047: India-Kuwait Dialogues’ in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Embassy of India in Kuwait launched the “Viksit Bharat 2047: India-Kuwait Dialogues” today at a special event held at Hotel St Regis, Kuwait. This new initiative of the Embassy will be a series of talks that will provide a platform to present India, or Bharat, and its various aspects to Kuwait, fostering conversations, stimulating the exchange of ideas, and building connections, relationships, and partnerships between India and Kuwait. The scope of the India-Kuwait Dialogues will be varied – its future editions are expected to feature speakers from different fields, including policymakers, investors, innovators, artists, thought leaders, chefs, fashion and jewellery designers, authors, sports and film personalities.

The Inaugural Talk under the “Viksit Bharat 2047: India-Kuwait Dialogues” was organised by the Embassy today in collaboration with the Indian Business & Professional Council (IBPC) – Kuwait. Renowned economist, Dr. Rajat Kathuria, Dean of Shiv Nadar University, was the Keynote Speaker at the Inaugural Talk which was themed on ‘India’s sustained growth: Despite a challenging global environment’. The Talk was attended by more than 100 participants, including eminent economists and thought leaders, business leaders and professionals, investors and entrepreneurs, and members of the diplomatic corps and the media.

Ambassador of India to Kuwait, H.E. Mrs. Paramita Tripathi, in her Opening Remarks, spoke about India’s strong economic trajectory, emphasizing that India continued to be the world’s fastest-growing major economy, with projections to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2030. Referring to the synergies between India’s Viksit Bharat 2047 and Kuwait’s Vision 2035, she stated that it created opportunities for co-investment, technology partnerships, and policy learning that can set new benchmarks for South-South cooperation.

Dr. Rajat Kathuria delivered an insightful talk on the theme “India’s sustained growth: Despite a chal-



India-Kuwait dialogues begin with focus on growth and partnership.

Embassy of India photos

lenging global environment”. He highlighted India’s sustained GDP growth and its strong macroeconom-

ic indicators. He provided insights into how India’s Union Budget 2026, which was presented by the Fi-

nance Minister in Parliament on 1 February 2026, re-inforced India’s commitment to sustained and inclusive growth, fiscal prudence, and long-term economic resilience, and how this translated into opportunities for foreign investment, including from Kuwait. Dr. Kathuria also emphasized that India’s vast consumer base, a powerful demand engine, and strong domestic consumption had helped stabilize the economy, while the government’s stepping up capital expenditure, particularly in infrastructure, such as roads, railways, ports, airports, and metro systems, was laying the groundwork for strong private-sector participation.

Dr. Kathuria’s presentation was followed by a lively Q&A Session, during which questions focused on how India plans to navigate global economic uncertainties, deepen structural reforms, enhance ease of doing business, and further strengthen bilateral trade and investment ties with Kuwait. Participants sought clarity on sector-specific opportunities in infrastructure, renewable energy, manufacturing, and digital innovation, as well as on policy measures to ensure regulatory stability and investor confidence.

Mr. Kaizar Shakir, Chairman, Indian Business & Professional Council (IBPC) - Kuwait, welcomed the forward-looking vision of the Union Budget 2026, observing that its reform-oriented measures align closely with Kuwait’s Vision 2035. He noted that these complementarities merit deeper exploration to bolster investor confidence and unlock new avenues for collaboration between India and Kuwait, particularly in key economic and technological sectors.

The ‘VIKSIT BHARAT 2047: INDIA-KUWAIT DIALOGUES’ is part of the Embassy’s initiative to stimulate meaningful engagement between key stakeholders in Kuwait and India and to promote informed discussions on strengthening bilateral partnerships, and exploring new avenues of cooperation in line with a shared vision of growth, innovation, and sustainable development under Viksit Bharat 2047 and Kuwait’s Vision 2035.

In line with its firm commitment to social responsibility by serving Kuwaiti society

NBK launches its annual Ramadan campaign with comprehensive social, health & recreational activities

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: National Bank of Kuwait announced the launch of its annual Ramadan campaign “Doing Good Deeds” for 2026, which includes a wide range of community, health, humanitarian, and entertainment initiatives aimed at promoting the spirit of solidarity and reviving the noble values of this holy month.

The campaign will launch on February 15, 2026, with a wide range of events that reflect the Bank’s firm commitment to social responsibility.

On this occasion, Talal Al-Turki, Vice President - Head of Public Relations and Event Management at the National Bank of Kuwait, commented: “At NBK, we are keen to ensure that our Ramadan initiatives reflect the humanitarian and social message we believe in.

Through this campaign, which is an extension of our commitment to society, we seek to promote positive values, encourage the spirit of participation and compassion by supporting those most in need, urge community members to adopt a healthy lifestyle.”

Al-Turki added: “We cherish these events,” “Al-Turki added, “which are practical representations of our identity during the month of Ramadhan, and we are constantly striving to improve them year after year to include more interactive initiatives that better serve our society”.

Al-Turki emphasized that community work is a genuine investment in Kuwait’s future, which is why NBK is strongly committed to launching initiatives that promote human values and combine awareness, entertainment, and social solidarity.

Moreover, Al-Turki noted that these efforts come as part of NBK’s dedication to promoting sustainable initiatives, which create a long-term impact on society and highlights the Bank’s position as part and parcel of the Kuwaiti society.

NBK’s Ramadan Challenge

This is an event that aims to promote physical activity in Ramadan, which extends for 10 days in Al Shaheed Park, where phase 1 has been equipped with



Talal Al-Turki

Al-Turki: Events and activities are practical representations of NBK’s identity during Ramadhan ■ We always ensure that our Ramadan initiatives reflect the humanitarian and social message we believe in. ■ At NBK, we strive to promote positive values, encourage the spirit of participation and compassion, and support those most in need

solar-powered arches to count the movement of participants while walking or running throughout the event.

The challenge targets 2000 adults and children, hoping to encourage a healthy lifestyle and add a joyful atmosphere to the Holy month.

“Kasrat Seyam:” Break of Fasting

NBK is also returning with its annual initiative “Kasrat Seyam”: Break of Fasting, during which NBK teams are assigned in different areas of Kuwait once a week throughout the holy month, to distribute a “Break of Fasting” meal before Iftar time to drivers at traffic lights.

This initiative aims to reduce accidents resulting from speeding while heading to Iftar and to promote traffic safety.

Iftar Meals

Through the Iftar initiative, NBK distributes 1,800 Iftar meals in 6 different locations to ensure access to the largest number of people in need and workers in various areas of Kuwait, which is a step that further promotes the concept of social solidarity in the holy month of Ramadan.

Sho6 Sho6 Tournament

This tournament, which is a knowledge-based competition with an authentic Kuwaiti touch, is inspired by the famous Kuwaiti game that relies on general knowledge.

The tournament takes place over two days during the weekend with the participation of 64 teams, each team consisting of 3 players, on the 55th floor of Al Hamra Tower.

The tournament provides an enjoyable competitive atmosphere that combines knowledge and entertainment, providing cash prizes of KD 250 for each of the first-place team winners and KD 150 for each of the second-place team winners.

Penalty Shootout Tournament

This year’s campaign also includes organizing the Penalty Shootout Tournament, in which teams of two players (one player and one goalkeeper) compete over two days in a knockout system, with the first-place team receiving KD 500 and the second-place team receiving KD 250.

Kout Bu 6 Tournament

Reviving Kuwait’s heritage, this card tournament extends for two days at the end of the week with 64 teams. This game is an enjoyable experience that requires skill, speed and intuition, and is scheduled to be held on the 55th floor of Al Hamra Tower.

NBK Eidiya

To conclude the month with the same enjoyable and holy atmosphere, NBK is also launching “NBK Eidiya”, during which gifts and Ramadan bags are distributed to passersby and families in high-traffic areas of Kuwait, with the aim of spreading happiness and sharing the joy of Eid with society.

These initiatives come as part of NBK’s unwavering commitment to community work, in addition to boosting its social responsibility leadership in supporting humanitarian, health, educational and recreational activities.

In partnership with CODED

talabat unveils ‘Next Tech Gen’ in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: In an effort to equip Kuwait’s next generation with practical technology skills and real-world industry exposure, talabat, the MENA region’s leading on-demand online ordering platform, has launched Next Tech Gen (NTG), a long-term knowledge-sharing program.



Al-Mansour

Through structured monthly visits to universities, schools, and academies, talabat leaders and experts will share hands-on insights across key tech-driven functions, including product and data, logistics and operations, artificial intelligence (AI), automation, digital platforms, strategy, and marketing.

The program kicked off in collaboration with CODED, the first coding bootcamp and tech academy in the MENA region, with an interactive workshop on data and product development, including application building. Held at CODED’s offices, the session welcomed 70 participants, primarily undergraduate students, bootcamp graduates, and professionals transitioning into tech careers.

“Technology’s true impact comes from investing in people,” said Abdullah Al-Mansour, Director of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait. “Through Next

Tech Gen, we’re sharing our experience and expertise to help young talent build meaningful careers in tech. It’s worth noting that talabat itself started as a homegrown idea, and we hope this initiative inspires the next generation of innovators to create solutions that shape Kuwait’s digital future.”

Hashim Behbehani, Co-founder and Chief Operations Officer of CODED, added: “We are delighted to be taking part in talabat’s Next Tech Gen program, which raises the benchmark for technology training in the market and prepares Kuwait’s youth for utilizing the latest technologies in line with their communities’ needs and the global standards. With the momentous advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) and other data driven technologies, technology training would be incomplete without adequate knowledge of the right tools to collect, evaluate, and process data as a prerequisite to developing new digital solutions and training existing technologies.”

The NTG session featured expert talks delivered by talabat leaders as well as real case studies, followed by an interactive discussion.

This initiative supports Kuwait Vision 2035 by fostering local digital capabilities and empowering national talent to lead the country’s growing tech ecosystem. It also builds on talabat’s broader efforts in Kuwait, including sponsoring Academy X, CODED’s women’s empowerment program and hosting regular school and university visits at its headquarters.



talabat supports tech talent under Kuwait Vision 2035.



New drug law 2025 highlighted at AU’s preventive health lecture

AU organizes anti-drug awareness lecture with Ministry of Interior

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: As part of its unwavering commitment to supporting its students and fostering a safe and responsible campus environment, the Health& Safety and Security Department at the Australian University (AU) organized an awareness lecture titled “Drugs: The Illusion of Happiness and the Reality of Destruction,” in collaboration with the General Directorate for Drug Control at the Ministry of Interior. This initiative aligns with the university’s ongoing efforts to implement effective community responsibility programs aimed at protecting youth and empowering them with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions.

The lecture was delivered by Dr. Ayed Al Humaidan from the General Directorate for Drug Control, who highlighted the major risks of drug use and its health, psychological, and social impacts on young people. He also discussed recent legal updates under the new Drug Law No. 159 of 2025, in addition to outlining various types of narcotics, prevention methods, and early intervention strategies. He emphasized the importance of student awareness in protecting themselves



Australian University organizes ‘Drugs: Illusion vs. Destruction’ talk

and their peers and contributing to a healthier and safer community. The event was also attended by several

representatives from the General Directorate for Drug Control, including Warrant Officer Abdulaziz Al Du-

waila, Warrant Officer Hussain Haider, and Warrant Officer Jasem Al Sayegh, underscoring the Ministry’s continued support for community-awareness initiatives within educational institutions.

This event is part of a broader series of integrated programs launched by AU to promote preventive awareness, grounded in the belief that educational institutions are key partners in supporting national efforts to reduce social risks. The lecture also featured a booth prepared by the Ministry of Interior, offering detailed information on drug classification, legal procedures, and safety guidelines, along with an open discussion that allowed students and staff to ask questions and receive clarifications.

In closing, Mr. Abdulmohsen Al Rifai, Senior Manager of Health and Safety and Security at AU, emphasized the importance of organizing such awareness events, especially in educational settings. He stressed the importance of “the university joining efforts with families to protect and safeguard young people, who are the foundation and future of society.”

What's On

SPOTLIGHT



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Ambassador Tripathi inaugurates Bharat Mela showcasing India's diversity

Bharat Mela 2026 celebrates India's vibrant culture, cuisine, and heritage at the sea beach front of Green Island, Kuwait



Embassy of India photos

Bharat Mela draws 250,000+ to celebrate India's culture in Kuwait.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Embassy of India in Kuwait, in association with the Touristic Enterprise Company (TEC) of Kuwait, organized Bharat Mela, a vibrant celebration of India's rich cultural diversity, culinary traditions, and artistic heritage, on Friday, 13 February 2026, at the scenic beachfront of Green Island on Arabian Gulf Road, Kuwait. More than 2,50,000 people attended the Bharat Mela, including members of the Indian community, the diplomatic community, and nationals of diverse countries, including Kuwait.

The day-long, family-friendly festival transformed the venue into a lively showcase of India's unity in diversity. The Bharat Mela was inaugurated by Mrs. Paramita Tripathi, Ambassador-designate of India to Kuwait, with the festive beats of Kerala's traditional 'Panchavadyam' and the lighting of the traditional ceremonial lamp.

In her Welcome Remarks, Ambassador Tripathi underscored the importance of cultural engagement in fostering mutual understanding and further strengthening the longstanding friendly relations between India and Kuwait. She highlighted the constructive role of the Indian community in Kuwait in deepening bilateral ties and appreciated their continued efforts in promoting people-to-people connections between the two countries.

Spread over the picturesque beachfront of the Green Island in Kuwait, Bharat Mela offered visitors an immersive cultural experience through a wide range of attractions:

i. Culinary Delights: Visitors enjoyed a rich spread of Indian regional cuisines, featuring aromatic northern dishes, distinctive southern flavours, popular street food, traditional meals, and festive sweets, offering a flavourful journey through India's diverse culinary landscape.

ii. Live Performances: A spectacular line-up of 57 performances, featuring classical and folk dances, traditional music, performance yoga, traditional martial arts, and contemporary cultural presentations by more than 700 artists in vibrant traditional attire, showcased the richness and diversity of India's regional identities. Performances by the Dawoodi Bohra community's 'BurhaniBand' and the traditional 'Panchvadyam' ensemble were widely appreciated by the audience. Energetic flash-mob performances and the rhythmic beats of Punjabi dhol further elevated the festive atmosphere, adding to the enthusiasm and celebratory spirit.

iii. Cultural Exhibits and Interactive Experiences: Displays of textiles, handicrafts, artistic traditions, tourism destinations, and cultural showcases highlighted India's centuries-old craftsmanship and living traditions. Interactive segments in-

cluded presentations of Indian attire, henna art, bangle and bindi wearing experience, and the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam initiative.

More than 30 stalls were set up at Bharat Mela offering culinary experiences, handicrafts, and games. There was a dedicated children's play area to keep the young ones engaged. The energetic emcees, the cultural coordinators and the performers, from around 4 years to more than 60 years, ensured colourful and energetic performances on stage which were hosted throughout the day and ensured an atmosphere of festivity and fun.

Held from 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM, the open-to-public event, with free entry, created a welcoming space by the sea where families and cultural enthusiasts could experience the sights, sounds, and flavours of India in a joyful open-air setting.

More than a cultural festival, Bharat Mela served as a meaningful bridge between communities, offering Kuwaiti society a glimpse into India's spirit of unity in diversity and an opportunity to experience its living traditions firsthand.

The Embassy of India in Kuwait expressed its sincere appreciation to all sponsors, participants, performers, volunteers, and attendees for their support in making Bharat Mela 2026 a resounding success and a true celebration of India's vibrant cultural heritage.



Photos during the event.

Dr. Shalin Anna Simon leads new council at vibrant gathering

IDAK celebrates 20 years of excellence

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Indian Dentists' Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK), hosted its biennial Meet and Greet program on February 6th at the Reem Ballroom of the Al Kout Beach Hotel.

This event served as a vibrant hub for Indian dental practitioners working in Kuwait to connect, exchange ideas, and strengthen professional ties.

The Vice president of IDAK, Dr. Aju Wilson, welcomed the attendees to the debut event of the newly elected Council which assumed office in January, 2026.

In her presidential address, Dr. Shalin Anna Simon, expressed gratitude for the overwhelming turnout and welcomed nearly forty new members into the growing IDAK family. Reflecting on the association's journey, she highlighted the significance of the upcoming 20th anniversary celebrations and emphasized that IDAK's true purpose lies in "Enriching Lives, Elevating Potential."

She reiterated that IDAK serves as a professional and social support network for Indian dentists in Kuwait; fostering mentorship, collaboration, and camaraderie among both young graduates and experienced clinicians. She also urged the members to actively participate in the Alliance by contributing their talents, ideas and time to make the association more inclusive and impactful. She outlined a dynamic schedule of events for the year that will include dental camps as well as continuing dental education (CDE) programs .The year

will conclude with the release of the oral health guide and a cultural showcase highlighting the members' in-house talents at the much awaited Bidecennial Celebrations in November.

The current Council felicitated the former Council's efforts under the leadership of Dr George P. Alex for strengthening the association's professional presence, expanding member engagement, and introducing impactful programs that have contributed to IDAK's steady growth. Mementos were presented as tokens of appreciation, and members lauded the outgoing council for laying a strong foundation for the years ahead with a standing ovation. This gesture underscored the Alliance's spirit of respect, collective progress and the culture of continuity, as the new leadership builds upon the achievements of its predecessors while charting the course for the upcoming term.

Joint Secretaries Dr.Fawwaz Khan and Dr. Bankima Malhotra introduced the newly appointed Executive Chairpersons to the gathering who in turn introduced their respective committee members. The newly formed teams expressed enthusiasm about organizing a wide range of professional, social, and community-oriented programs throughout the term that will span two calendar years. To commemorate the occasion of IDAK's upcoming bidecennial anniversary, a logo design competition was held for its members. The winning design, created by Dr. Deepesh Nair was

released by the Past Presidents of IDAK, symbolizing their leadership, the continuity of the association, and its journey over the years. The logo was chosen for its symbolism, creativity and alignment with IDAK's vision and legacy.

Nearly 40 new members were formally welcomed to IDAK by the Immediate Past President Dr. George P. Alex and the President -Elect Dr.E.T. Roy. The growing number of members in IDAK is a reflection of the positive impact that Indian dentists provide within the healthcare segment of Kuwait.

The sponsors for the event that included Rasasi Perfumes, President company, Kent RO, Glowmed and Al Mulla were felicitated for their generous support .The vote of thanks was delivered by the Treasurer Dr.Sudhin Kurian Thomas while Dr.Reeby Thomas and Dr. Suraj John served as Masters of Ceremonies. The formal proceedings were followed by a fun filled session of games and entertainment that allowed for a relaxed evening. The evening concluded with a grand buffet dinner laid out by Al Kout Beach hotel.

The Indian Dentists' Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK), plans to organize more educational workshops, scientific programs, social gatherings as well as sporting events and community outreach initiatives in the months ahead ; continuing its mission to empower dental professionals and contribute meaningfully to Kuwait's healthcare landscape.

Massive savings and cultural festivities at LuLu's National Day promotion

LuLu Hypermarket launches 'I Love My Kuwait' Hala February campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: LuLu Hypermarket is set to deliver an unforgettable shopping and cultural experience this Hala February as it celebrates Kuwait's National and Liberation Days with its grand 'I Love My Kuwait' promotion. Running across all LuLu Hypermarket outlets in Kuwait, the campaign brings together massive shopping savings, cultural pride, and family-friendly entertainment, making it one of the most anticipated retail events of the season.

The promotion was officially inaugurated on 12th February at LuLu Hypermarket's Al-Qurain outlet by renowned tech influencer Aziz Al Zaabi & Lifestyle influencer Snafiya alongside the senior management team of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait. The opening ceremony marked the beginning of weeks filled with exciting offers, festive activities, and cultural showcases designed to honor Kuwait's rich heritage and national spirit.

As part of the 'I Love My Kuwait' promotion, shoppers can enjoy massive discounts across every major shopping category. Customers will find unbeatable savings on groceries, health and beauty products, fresh and frozen foods, household essentials, and a wide range of electronic items. The promotion also features incredible deals on clothing, footwear, and accessories, ensuring something special for every member of the family.

Tech enthusiasts are in for a major highlight with the Hala Digital Shopping Festival, offering exclusive discounts on mobiles, consumer electronics, IT accessories, and wearable technology. From the latest smartphones to essential gadgets and accessories, the festival is designed to deliver exceptional value for technology lovers.

Adding a strong local touch to the celebrations, LuLu Hypermarket is also

running the 'Proudly from Kuwait' campaign. This initiative offers special discounts on fresh local produce and products from Kuwaiti brands, reinforcing LuLu's commitment to supporting local businesses and celebrating homegrown quality.

Beyond shopping, the 'I Love My Kuwait' promotion is enriched with a vibrant lineup of cultural and entertainment activities. Visitors can enjoy traditional cultural performances that showcase Kuwait's heritage & entertainment shows. Children will also take center stage with special Hala Kuwait performances, bringing joy, color, and lively energy to the celebrations.

With its perfect blend of exceptional value, cultural pride, and festive entertainment, LuLu Hypermarket's 'I Love My Kuwait' promotion promises to be a memorable celebration for families and shoppers across Kuwait this Hala February.



Photos during the event.

Actress charms crowd at Cambridge event

Byrne honored as Harvard's Hasty Pudding Woman of the Year

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Feb 14, (AP): Dozens of cheering fans lined the streets of Cambridge Friday to celebrate the Australian actress Rose Byrne, who was honored as the 2026 Woman of the Year by Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals.

Byrne, the Golden Globe Award winner and Oscar nominee for her leading role in "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You," waved to fans and blew kisses as her car made its way slowly near Harvard University campus. Byrne, who also has starred in "Bridesmaids," "Neighbors," "Insidious" and "Damages," later received her pudding pot award at a celebratory roast and attended a performance of Hasty Pudding Theatricals' 177th production "Saloonie Tunes."

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

"I'm so excited to be in the parade and to see Rose Byrne. I loved her movie 'If I Had Legs I'd Kick You,'" said Jacqueline Metzger, a junior at Harvard and president of the university's short-form improv group. "It was like so anxiety inducing and the best movie I've seen all year. So I'm super excited, and we love her. We love Rose Byrne."

The parade included a colorful cast of characters, some in bright wigs, one dressed as a cactus, and several dressed

as revolutionary soldiers. Before heading inside Farkas Hall for the roast, Byrne joined members of the Hasty Pudding Theatricals players in chorus line-style dancing.

At the roast, Byrne was put through a mock therapy session inspired by "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You."

Based on her work in previous "Peter Rabbit" movies, she was asked to read in a scene from a new, fake entry into the series. This one saw her confronting a rabbit under the influence of drugs who shows up late one night.

"I don't like it when you lie. Do you even care about the kids?" Byrne yells at the rabbit, who appears to be staggering. "How am I supposed to stay calm when you are ruining our lives? I know you are using again."

The roast closed with Byrne donning a wedding dress and marrying the pudding pot. "This is marvelous," she said, after getting her gold pudding pot.

Afterward, Byrne told reporters the day on campus with students had been "magical" and then spoke on what it's meant for "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You" to be recognized this awards season.

"It is a tougher subject; it isn't a typical kind of Oscar fair, I suppose, and so it is very meaningful that the work is being recognized," she said. "It really will live on and it's very fearless and kind of radical and I'm really proud of that."

Byrne also talked about returning to the stage in March af-



Rose Byrne, Hasty Pudding 2026 Woman of the Year, displays the Pudding Pot posing for photos during a news conference at Farkas Hall theater, on the campus of Harvard University, Friday, Feb. 13, in Cambridge, Mass. (AP)

ter five years in the revival of "Fallen Angels" on Broadway, saying she was "absolutely terrified" but looking forward to starring opposite the "brilliant" Kelli O'Hara.

Friday's event comes more than a week after the Justice

Department released a huge trove of records surrounding Jeffrey Epstein, a longtime donor to the organization. The documents showed Epstein regularly donated \$50,000 per year to Hasty Pudding between 2013 and 2019 to secure top-tier donor states and received special perks totaling more than \$300,000.

In an undated news release announcing Epstein's donations, Hasty Pudding officials described Epstein as a "well-known science and Harvard philanthropist" and said he "put his substantial support behind Harvard's famous and oldest theatrical troupe."

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

Byrne also acted in "Juliet, Naked," "Get Him to the Greek" and "28 Weeks Later." Her theater credits include "Medea, You Can't Take it With You" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Actor Michael Keaton, known for his roles in films such as "Batman," "Birdman," "Beetlejuice" and "Spotlight," is the 2026 Man of the Year. He received his pudding pot Feb. 6.

People

Road sealed

Search intensifies for Nancy Guthrie

TUCSON, Ariz., Feb 14, (AP): Law enforcement investigating the disappearance of "Today" show host **Savannah Guthrie's** mother sealed off a road near Nancy Guthrie's home in Arizona late Friday night.

A parade of sheriff's and FBI vehicles, including forensics vehicles, passed through the roadblock that was set up about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) from the house.

The Pima County Sheriff's Department said the activity was part of the Guthrie investigation but declined to detail specifics.

Guthrie, 84, was reported missing on Feb. 1. Authorities say her blood was found on the front porch of her Tucson-area home. Purported ransom notes were sent to news outlets, but two deadlines for paying have passed.

Authorities have expressed concerns Guthrie's health because she needs daily medication. She is said to have a pacemaker and has dealt with high blood pressure and heart issues, according to sheriff's dispatcher audio on broadcastify.com.

Investigators have studied surveillance video, sorted through thousands of tips and submitted DNA and other evidence for laboratory analysis.

The FBI said it has collected more than 13,000 tips since Feb. 1, the day Guthrie was reported missing. The sheriff's department, meanwhile, said it has taken at least 18,000 calls.

On Tuesday, authorities released footage showing an armed, masked person at Guthrie's doorstep on the night she was abducted. The videos - less than a combined minute in length - gave investigators and the public their first glimpse of who was outside Guthrie's home in the foothills outside Tucson.

Experts say the video could contain a mountain of clues.

Investigators are pleading with people to share home surveillance camera footage from specific dates leading up to the disappearance of Nancy Guthrie as they deal with thousands of tips in their hope to crack the case of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie's missing mother.

Investigation

It was unclear Thursday where the investigation stands. Fresh surveillance images of a masked person on 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.

On Wednesday, FBI agents carrying water bottles to beat the 80-degree Fahrenheit (27-degree Celsius) 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, brush and boulders.

"They were just asking some general questions wondering if there was anything, any information we could shed on the Nancy Guthrie issue. Wanted to look around the property and after that, cameras and such," Ann Adams, a neighbor of Nancy Guthrie's other daughter, Annie Guthrie, told The Associated Press on Wednesday. Annie Guthrie lives several miles away from her mother.

"They did ask specifically for the 31st of January and the morning of the first of February and then they wanted to know if we saw anything suspicious on cameras since then," Adams said.

Authorities have said Guthrie, 84, was taken against her will. She's been missing since Feb. 1. DNA tests showed blood on her porch was hers, and authorities say she takes several medications and there's concern she could die without them.

News stations in Tucson also reported Wednesday that people with Ring doorbell cameras in the area got an alert saying investigators are requesting footage from Jan. 11 between 9 p.m. and midnight regarding the Guthrie case. That's nearly three weeks before Guthrie went missing.

Ring allows local public safety agencies to submit requests to users in the community that appear publicly on the "Neighbors" feed, according to the Ring website. Users in a designated area receive a notification.

The stations also reported that a pair of black gloves were recovered during agents' search and have been submitted for DNA analysis.

Several hundred detectives and agents are now assigned to the investigation, which is expanding in the area, the Pima County Sheriff's Department said.

Two investigators emerged from daughter Annie Guthrie's home Wednesday 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.

Film



Berlinale Festival Director Tricia Tuttle poses for photographers at the opening ceremony red carpet of the International Film Festival. (AP)



Michelle Yeoh holds the honorary Golden Bear at the opening ceremony of the International Film Festival, Berlinale, in Berlin, Thursday, Feb. 12. (AP)



Hiam Abbass, (from left), Director Leyla Bouzid and Eya Bouterka pose for photographers at the photo call for the film 'In A Whisper.' (AP)



Laila Mahmudi, from left, Liam Hussaini, (front left), director Shahrbanoo Sadat and Katja Adomeit pose for photographers at the photo call for the film 'No Good Men.' (AP)

Afghan political rom-com opens Berlinale

Love found in unexpected places at Berlin Fest

BERLIN, Feb 14, (AP): A surprising and touching Afghan political rom-com that is said to feature the first ever on-screen intimate scene in an Afghan movie opened the 76th Berlin Film Festival Thursday.

Set in a Kabul newsroom in 2021, with the Taliban on the cusp of returning to power, "No Good Men" tells the workplace love story of camerawoman Naru, separated from her cheating husband and struggling to keep custody of her young son while trying to build a career in a male dominated industry and patriarchal society.

Director Shahrbanoo Sadat said the intimate scene cost her lead actor three weeks before shooting began, and forced her to step into the role herself.

"The joke was everyone who wanted to play Naru, they didn't want to do that scene, I wanted to do it, I didn't want to do the rest of the film," Sadat said.

And it wasn't just the casting that was met with resistance. The Afghan film industry is small, she said, so the expectation is that the movie will be "good PR" for the country.

Sadat had her own ideas, though.

"I love Afghanistan, but I cannot close my eyes to patriarchy, sexism, all the big topics, and just say the good things about Afghanistan, so I'm disappointing my people," she said. Making an Afghan film in Europe, with European funding, she also felt added pressure to be a political and feminist filmmaker or make a war movie.

Sadat received multiple letters of complaint from funders who said it was inappropriate for them to support a rom-com given the political situation in Afghanistan.

"For me it was like, wait a minute, what? I feel offended that you feel offended about my project," she said. "I'm coming from a war country, and this is my way of expressing myself, to go through the oceans of unprocessed feelings, not only personal but also historical and also social, and trying to make a lighter film."

"I wanted to humanize Afghan characters and tell a story that is universal but also in Afghanistan," she added.

While she said she made the movie about one woman, she also made it for all the "good men" in Afghanistan who are "not taking advantage of the privilege that the patriarchal society is offering them for free."

"No matter what, they are standing next to the women in their life, I really wanted to tell them. I see you, I admire you, I respect you," she said. "Now I'm going to cry... because women's situation is not going to change alone."

Elsewhere in the festival, French-Lebanese filmmaker Danielle Arbid also leans into romance and humor instead of war and unrest to tell the tale of a Palestinian widow who finds love in Beirut with an undocumented Sudanese man 40 years her junior. "Only Rebels Win" opens the Panorama section of the competition. Arbid sees it as a feminist film.

"It's the idea that women can also fall in love at 70. It's not

only old rich men who can fall in love with young women. ... This is my way of thinking. I hope we are not out of the market," she joked.

While she admits people in Lebanon consider her provocative for the sexual references in her films, this one has no sex - though the "idea is already a problem."

"Succession" actor Hiam Abbass stars as Susanne and actor Amine Benrachid, who is himself a Sudanese-Chadian refugee, plays her love interest Osmane.

Abbass, a Palestinian living in exile in France for the past 37 years, says it's no coincidence that these types of stories are setting the tone for this year's festival.

"We're a mixture of a lot of things, and to the contrary of what a lot of people think, we are very rich, but not in the sense of money. We're very rich because we are very rich in humanity," said Abbass.

"Today if we talk about things that happen in our own country, our language is very universal and basically what we say of the world corresponds to what a lot of people live today, and what a lot of people suffer from," she added.

Arbid said that war did not define her life when she lived in Lebanon as a teen.

"I was obsessed about falling in love with the neighbor. I wouldn't care. And I wanted the West to see me as a human being," she said. "I want to make the characters in my films human enough that you can love them and feel you can be like them."

Variety

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif.: Taylor Swift boosted ticket sales to the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-am without even being there.

Pebble Beach had an extra buzz Friday morning with rumors swirling in the cool Pacific breeze Swift would be there to watch her fiancé, Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, playing in the PGA Tour event that combines corporate CEOs and celebrities with golf's best.

Alas, Swifties, it was just another pretty day at Pebble Beach.

"It was busy without her," said Mackenzie Hughes, who played in the group. "With her, I think it would have literally been pandemonium."

It still was good news for the Monterey Peninsula Foundation, which runs the event. Tournament Director Steve John said



Swift

when Kelce was announced as playing in the pro-am, more than \$60,000 in tickets were sold over the next 12 hours.

Swift is rumored to be in town. But she was not at Spyglass Hill on Thursday, where Kelce was playing with pro partner Keith Mitchell along with Hughes and retired NFL quarterback Alex Smith.

No matter, Pebble Beach is the main attraction, and John said some \$21,000 tickets for the second round were sold between 6:30 p.m. Thursday and 6:30 a.m. Friday, two hours before Kelce played. (AP)

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.: Bad Bunny really wanted to see Carlos Correa play for Puerto Rico at home in the World Baseball Classic. Correa, the infielder for the Houston Astros left off the WBC roster over insurance coverage, said Friday that the music superstar and fellow native of Puerto Rico had offered to pay for a policy.

"It means a lot that he's that involved," Correa told reporters at the Astros' spring training complex. "He tried to do everything possible. I wanted to play and make sure that I

was going to go out there and play for Team Puerto Rico in Puerto Rico. The fact that he did that means a lot in how much he cares for the country, how much he cares for the fans back home. I'm deeply grateful that he tried that hard."

Correa, who has a \$200 million contract through 2028, had surgery in 2014 to repair a broken right tibia and both San Francisco and the Mets failed to approve his physicals for a contract during the 2022-23 offseason. (AP)

LONDON: President Donald Trump's \$10 billion lawsuit against the BBC can go to trial in 2027, a US judge has said.

Judge Roy K. Altman of the federal court for the Southern District of Florida rejected an attempt by Britain's national broadcaster to delay proceedings.

He set a provisional start date of Feb. 15 2027 for a two-week trial. Altman's court order was issued Wednesday.

Trump filed a lawsuit in December over the way the BBC edited a speech he gave on Jan. 6, 2021. The claim seeks \$5 billion in damages for defamation and \$5 billion for unfair trade practices. (AP)

Over 70 years, Kuwait Radio achieves media milestones

Kuwait marks World Radio Day under ‘AI: A Tool, Not a Voice’ theme

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): Kuwait joins countries around the world on Friday in marking World Radio Day 2026, commemorating a medium that has, for decades, enhanced awareness and knowledge while conveying key events across the globe.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed February 13 as World Radio Day in 2011, a date later endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012, which coincides with the anniversary of the launch of UN Radio in 1946.

On this occasion, the world recognizes radio’s impact in connecting societies, promoting dialogue and raising public awareness of the importance of radio all around the world.

This year it is held under the theme “Artificial Intelligence: A Tool, Not a Voice,” focusing on integrating modern technology into radio broadcasting while pre-

serving human oversight.

The theme underscores that AI should support, not replace, human judgment, warning that overreliance on automation could undermine credibility and increase risks of misinformation.

According to the UN, the 2026 initiative encourages radio stations to view AI as an opportunity for growth and innovation, provided it is used ethically and responsibly to uphold professional standards, creativity and public service values- thereby strengthening audience trust.

Recently, AI has enabled radio stations to better analyze audience preferences, tailor content in real time, improve production efficiency and enhance interactivity, reinforcing radio’s sustainability in the information age.

In Kuwait, the first broadcast of Kuwait Radio began with the well-known phrase “This is Kuwait” at 7:00 p.m. on May 12, 1951, transmitted from a small device in a room at the former Police and Public Security building

headed by Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

In June 1960, Kuwait Radio introduced its first news bulletin, followed in October by four full newscasts and three brief bulletins daily.

The station today houses a comprehensive archive featuring recordings and interviews with prominent artists, scholars and public figures locally and across the Arab world.

During the Iraqi invasion in 1990, Iraqi forces occupied the radio station and Ministry of Information buildings. Within days, however, Kuwait Radio resumed broadcasting from Al-Khafji in Saudi Arabia, later moving to Ras Al-Zour and subsequently to Dammam at the onset of the liberation war.

It continued 24-hour transmissions, delivering news and messages in cooperation with coalition and friendly Arab stations.

Kuwait Radio also began broadcasting from Cairo on

January 1, 1991, via the Sawt Al-Arab network under the name “Kuwait Radio from Cairo,” continuing until 1992.

In 1996, Kuwait Radio inaugurated the Middle East’s largest news studio at the time, capable of linking more than four correspondents live to provide comprehensive regional and international coverage.

Over seven decades, Kuwait Radio has played a pivotal role in achieving its media objectives, earning numerous awards at regional and international festivals.

In 2019, the Arab States Broadcasting Union selected Kuwait Radio as the Arab hub for World Radio Day celebrations.

In November 2024, the Union endorsed Saad Al-Fendi, Director of the General Program at Kuwait Radio, as First Vice-Chairman of the Permanent Committee for Broadcasting (ASBU), coinciding with Kuwait’s designation as Arab Capital of Culture and Arab Media Capital for 2025.

Japan’s fine delicacy set to enter local gourmet scene

Kuwait welcomes Wagyu: Advancing trade, culinary exchange between Japan and Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: On Thursday, February 12, 2026, the Embassy of Japan in the State of Kuwait held the Wagyu (Japanese Beef) Promotion Seminar at Sakura Japanese Restaurant in Crowne Plaza Hotel. In his opening remarks, Ambassador of Japan, H.E. Mr. Mukai Kenichiro said that he is delighted to announce that after extensive and successful negotiations between the Japanese and Kuwaiti authorities, both sides have reached an agreement permitting the import of Halal Wagyu from Japan to Kuwait. After much anticipation, this milestone paves the way for food suppliers in Kuwait to finally bring this exquisite delicacy to the local market.

The seminar was attended by leading restaurant and hotel operators, food importers and culinary chefs. The program featured a live demonstration on the proper handling, cooking, and serving of A5 Wagyu – the highest grade of Japanese beef. In addition, representatives from Wagyu exporting companies in Japan shared distinctive characteristics of premium wagyu beef brands, Omi Beef and Kurohama Beef. The event concluded with a tasting session, where attendees enjoyed a variety of Wagyu dishes, including Roast Beef, Wagyu Sando (beef cutlet sandwich), and Wagyu Steak.

About Wagyu

Wagyu is renowned as the pinnacle of artisan beef, produced in limited quantities under strict Japanese standards. Its unparalleled flavor and exquisite tenderness, enhanced by rich marbling, create a dining experience unlike any other.

Globally, this delicacy secured its place on the menus of gourmet chefs, fine-dining establishments, and discerning home kitchens. And now it shall finally be enjoyed by Kuwait’s fine culinary community.

Japan-Kuwait latest interactions

This achievement is the fruit of the extended history of deep friendship, partnership, and various levels of interactions between Japan and Kuwait.

Intensive high-level bilateral visits in 2025 boosted it.

Finally, those visits were culminated in the meeting held between the Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba and His Highness Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, in New York in September 2025, where both sides welcomed the agreement that facilitates the importation of Wagyu from Japan to Kuwait.

Wagyu is just the beginning

H.E. Ambassador Mukai noted that throughout his tenure in Kuwait, and in all his interactions here, he has come to admire the discerning nature of the people when it comes to food. Kuwaitis truly embody



Photos from Wagyu seminar with cooking demo and tasting session



Some attendees at the Wagyu (Japanese Beef) promotion seminar.

the spirit of gourmets, constantly in pursuit of the finest flavors, and their endorsement of a dish serves as a clear testament to its exceptional quality and taste.

The Ambassador expressed his delight at this milestone, emphasizing that it will undoubtedly elevate trade

relations to an entirely new level. He further conveyed his hope that the introduction of fine Wagyu would mark only the beginning, as he looks forward to fostering even deeper and broader cooperation, alongside enriched cultural exchange between the two friendly nations.

Heritage

Exhibition highlights Kuwait-US relations, Sadu art legacy

Kuwait Al-Sadu Society launches ‘Beyond the Textile’ expo in Washington

WASHINGTON, Feb 14, (KUNA): Kuwait Al-Sadu Society, in cooperation with the Middle East Institute, opened the ‘Beyond the Textile’ exhibition in Washington to mark Kuwait’s National Day celebrations.

In her speech at the opening ceremony held on Thursday, Kuwait’s Ambassador to the United States Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah highlighted the strength of Kuwait-US relations, noting they span more than 65 years and were built on dialogue, patience, trust, and shared purpose.

Meanwhile, Head of Kuwait Al-Sadu Society Sheikha Bibi Duajj Al-Sabah highlighted the history of Sadu art as a symbol of Kuwaiti heritage and the creativity of Bedouin women in turning natural materials into enduring cultural masterpieces.

In a statement to KUNA, Sheikha Bibi said the exhibition, held under the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, highlights Sadu as a living knowledge system that inspires contemporary art.

She added that the exhibited works show Sadu’s evolution from preservation to innovation, strengthening its presence on the global stage.

The exhibition, which will be open to the public until August 23, coincides with the 65th anniversary of Kuwait’s independence and the 35th anniversary of its liberation, highlighting the deep cultural ties between Kuwait and the United States.

Kuwait Al-Sadu Society was founded in 1991 to preserve traditional textile heritage, document related crafts, and pass them on to future generations.

In 2022, the society was granted consultative status with UNESCO, a non-governmental organization.



A Photo of the Al-Sadu Society exhibition in the US capital, Washington.



Head of Kuwait Al-Sadu Society Sheikha Bibi Duajj Al-Sabah during her speech during the launch of ‘Beyond the Textile’ exhibition in Washington.



Photos of the Al-Sadu Society exhibition in the US capital, Washington.

This year’s shows feature sharper skills, high-tech flair

People, robots celebrate Lunar New Year in China

BEIJING, Feb 14, (Agencies): It’s not just people - in China, the robots are also getting ready to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

Friday was dress rehearsal day for four cute humanoid robots, each about 95 centimeters (3 feet) tall at a mall in western Beijing. Curious onlookers stopped to watch.

Friday was dress rehearsal day for four cute humanoid robots, each about 95 centimeters (3 feet) tall at a mall in western Beijing. Curious onlookers stopped to watch.

Each robot got a colorful lion costume and within minutes the moves started: Bend the knees, up, to the left, to the right, shake the mask, and do it all again!

Ahead of the Lunar New Year celebrated next week, and as part of different “fairs” and activities around Beijing, some venues have been busy setting up their stages and props.

For a second year in a row, one of the fairs will be devoted to technology and - yes, again - robots will take center stage.

People will see them dancing and also them stacking blocks on top of others to make a little tower, skewering hawthorn berries onto a



Humanoid robots in lion dance costumes perform on stage during a media preview of a robotic temple fair ahead of Lunar New Year in Beijing, China, Friday, Feb. 13. (AP)

stick - coated with a syrup, a popular sweet snack - or playing soccer.

“This year, the number of our robots has increased a lot,” said Qiu Feng, a member of the organizing committee. “They will perform dance, martial arts, Peking Opera, poetry and soccer.”

“Some events were also available last year but the fineness of the actions and the high-tech vibe are stronger” this time, Qui added.

China has been scaling up its efforts to develop better robots that can perform different activities, powered by artificial intelligence and with less human intervention.

But though they can now do things that were difficult to imagine a few years ago, humans are still needed to help them - for example, to dress them or move them when they stop in the middle of a mini-soccer field.

“Technology is developing faster and becoming more advanced every day,” Qui also said. “As long as we keep up with this trend, our ... fair will continue to evolve and rise with the times.”

The robots performing at the mall were developed by some Chinese startups, like Booster Robotics. The company will display around 20 humanoid robots, which will also dance and play soccer.

“It is an AI environment, which means, once the whistle sounds, the remote control will all be put aside and all its decision-making and motion control are made by the robots themselves,” said Ren Zixin, director of marketing at Booster Robotics.

Meanwhile, Chinese AI companies are racing to launch new models over the Lunar New Year holiday, angling for the next game-changing DeepSeek moment.

Days ago, a mysterious test version dubbed Pony Alpha became a hot topic in the AI community for its exceptional coding performance, sparking widespread speculation about its developer. On Thursday, it was revealed to be GLM-5 by Beijing-based AI company Zhipu AI.



Dar Ben Turkia Palace ... A unique architectural blend in the heart of Tunis.

Dar Ben Turkia Palace shines as Ottoman architectural gem in Tunis

TUNIS, Feb 14, (KUNA): In the heart of the historic Medina of Tunis stands Dar Ben Turkia Palace, an Ottoman-era landmark built in the late 18th century that has become a prominent museum and tourist destination.

The palace reflects a unique architectural blend combining Ottoman, Arab, Andalusian and Roman influences, showcasing Tunisia’s rich and diverse cultural heritage.

Its grand entrance leads to a winding vestibule designed in accordance with traditional architectural styles of the period, ensuring privacy before opening onto a

square central courtyard paved with stone and adorned with a marble fountain.

The courtyard serves as the heart of the residence, surrounded on all four sides by living quarters that once housed small families. The rooms are characterized by classical design elements, including arched doorways, decorative plasterwork and harmonious proportions.

Today, Dar Ben Turkia Palace stands as a testament to the artistic refinement and architectural ingenuity of its time, offering visitors an immersive glimpse into life in Tunis during the Ottoman era.

Colon cancer rises among young adults, now top killer under 50

Who is most at risk for colorectal cancer and key warning signs

WASHINGTON, Feb 14, (AP): Colorectal cancer is a threat not just to older adults but increasingly to young men and women, too. It's now the top cancer killer of Americans younger than 50.

The deaths of "Dawson's Creek" actor James Van Der Beek at 48 this week, and a few years ago "Black Panther" star Chadwick Boseman at 43, highlight the risk for younger adults.

"We're now starting to see more and more people in the 20-, 30- and 40-year-old range developing colon cancer. At the beginning of my career, nobody that age had colorectal cancer," said Dr. John Marshall of Georgetown University's Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center, who has been a cancer doctor for more than three decades.

That trend "is shaking us all, to be blunt," said Marshall, who is also medical consultant to the Colorectal Cancer Alliance.

Here's what to know about colorectal cancer - at any age - and how to protect yourself.

More than 158,000 cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year, according to the American Cancer Society. Among all ages, it's the nation's second leading cancer killer, behind lung cancer - expected to claim more than 55,000 lives this year.

For the population overall, cases and deaths have inched down in recent years. That's thanks in part to screening tests



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

that can spot tumors early, when they're easier to treat - or even prevent them if precancerous growths are found and

removed.

The vast majority of colorectal cancer cases and deaths still are in people 50 and older. That older age group has seen the most progress, with deaths dropping by about 1.5% a year over the past decade, according to cancer society statistics.

But while it's still relatively rare in the under-50 crowd, their colorectal cancer diagnoses have been rising since the early 2000s.

And last month, cancer society researchers reported that colorectal cancer mortality in Americans under 50 had increased by 1.1% a year since 2005, becoming the deadliest cancer in that age group. This year, the society estimates 3,890 people under age 50 will die of it.

Risk factors at any age include obesity, lack of physical activity, a diet high in red or processed meat and low in fruits and vegetables, smoking, heavy alcohol use, having inflammatory bowel disease or a family history of colorectal cancer.

Marshall advises everyone to eat lots of fruits and vegetables and whole grains. "Meat's not evil" but eat less of it, he said.

And a recent study found that a three-year exercise program improved survival in colon cancer patients and reduced cancer recurrence.

Symptoms include blood in stool or rectal bleeding;

changes in bowel habits such as diarrhea, constipation or narrowing of stool that lasts more than a few days; unintended weight loss; and cramps or abdominal pain.

"Don't ignore symptoms. Get it checked," Marshall stressed. Survival is far more likely when colorectal cancer is diagnosed early, before it spreads.

Medical guidelines say the average person should start getting screened at age 45 - too late for some young adults.

People known to be at higher risk are supposed to talk with their doctors about whether to start screening even earlier.

How often people need to get checked depends on the type of screening they choose. There are a variety of options, including yearly stool-based tests or colonoscopies that may be done every 10 years as long as no problems were found. There's also a newer blood test for adults 45 or older.

No one knows what's causing the rise in cases in younger adults. But Georgetown's Marshall said many young patients lack common risk factors. He wonders if changes in young people's gut bacteria - the microbiome - might play a role.

Also, where cancer occurs along the question mark-shaped colon - it starts on one side of the abdomen and swoops to the other before ending with the rectum - influences how aggressive it is and how it's treated. Marshall said there's a marked difference in where younger and older people's tumors tend to strike, another clue being explored.

New crew to replace evacuated astronauts

New astronauts launch to the ISS

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Feb 14, (AP): A new crew rocketed toward the International Space Station on Friday to replace the astronauts who returned to Earth early in NASA's first medical evacuation.

SpaceX launched the replacements as soon as possible at NASA's request, sending the US, French and Russian astronauts on an expected eight- to nine-month mission stretching until fall. The four should arrive at the orbiting lab Saturday, filling the vacancies left by their evacuated colleagues last month and bringing the space station back to full staff.

"It turns out Friday the 13th is a very lucky day," SpaceX Launch Control radioed once the astronauts reached orbit. "That was quite a ride," replied the crew's commander, Jessica Meir.

NASA had to put spacewalks on hold and deferred other duties while awaiting the arrival of Americans Meir and Jack Hathaway, France's Sophie Adenot and Russia's Andrei Fedyaev. They'll join three other astronauts - one American and two Russians - who kept the space station running the past month.

Satisfied with medical procedures already in place, NASA ordered no extra checkups for the crew ahead of lift-off and no new diagnostic equipment was packed. An ultrasound machine already up there for research went into overdrive Jan. 7 when used on the ailing crew member. NASA has not revealed the ill astronaut's identity or health issue. All four returning astronauts went straight to the hospital after splashing down in the Pacific near San Diego.

It was the first time in 65 years of human spaceflight that NASA cut short a mission for medical reasons.

With missions becoming longer, NASA is constantly looking at up-grades to the space station's medical gear, said deputy program manager Dina Contella. "But there are a lot of things that are just not practical and so that's when you need to bring astronauts home from space," she said



Crew 12 mission astronauts, (from left), pilot Jack Hathaway, Russian cosmonaut Andrei Fedyaev, commander Jessica Meir and ESA astronaut Sophia Adenot, of France, leave the Operations and Checkout building before heading to pad 40 at the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Friday, Feb. 13, on a mission to the International Space Station. (AP)

earlier this week.

In preparation for moon and Mars trips where health care will be even more challenging, the new arrivals will test a filter designed to turn drinking water into emergency IV fluid, try out an ultrasound system that relies on artificial intelligence and augmented reality instead of experts on the ground, and perform ultrasound scans on their jugular veins in a blood clot study.

They also will demonstrate their moon-landing skills in a simulated test drawing extra attention because of the impending launch of four astronauts to the moon on Artemis II, humanity's first lunar voyage in more than half a century.

Adenot is only the second French woman to launch to space. She was 14 when Claudie Haignere flew to Russia's space station Mir in 1996, inspiring her to become an astronaut. Haignere cheered her on from the Florida launch site, wishing her "Bon vol," French for "Have a good flight," and

"Ad astra," Latin for "To the stars."

Hathaway, like Adenot, is new to space, while Meir and Fedyaev are making their second station trip. On her first mission in 2019, Meir took part in the first all-female spacewalk. The other half of that spacewalk, Christina Koch, is among the four Artemis II astronauts waiting to fly around the moon as early as March. A ship-to-ship radio linkup is planned between the two crews.

Meir wasn't sure astronauts would return to the moon during her career. "Now we're right here on the precipice of the Artemis II mission," she said ahead of liftoff. "The fact that they will be in space at the same time as us ... it's so cool to be an astronaut now, it's so exciting."

SpaceX launched the latest crew from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. Elon Musk's company is preparing its neighboring Kennedy Space Center launch pad for the supersized Starships, which NASA needs to land astronauts on the moon.

'FMD a national disaster'

Health worker succumbs to Nipah in India's West Bengal

NEW DELHI, Feb 14, (Xinhua): A 25-year-old nurse infected with the Nipah virus and undergoing treatment inside a hospital died Thursday, officials said.

According to health officials, the nurse died of cardiac arrest at a private hospital in Barasat, North 24-Parganas district, about 26 km north of Kolkata, the capital city of West Bengal.

The woman was one of two health workers in the state who tested positive for Nipah earlier this year. The other, a man, has recovered and was discharged from the hospital.

Typically, the human infection with Nipah presents as an encephalitic syndrome marked by fever, headache, drowsiness, disorientation, mental confusion and coma, which can potentially lead to death.

Foot-and-mouth disease: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced on Thursday that the ongoing outbreak of the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) across the country has been classified as a national disaster.

The president made the announcement in the annual State of the Nation Address (SONA) before a joint sitting of the two houses of Parliament at Cape Town City Hall.

"While the rest of our agriculture sector is thriving, the cattle industry is today facing one of the worst outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease our country has experienced," said Ramaphosa.

He warned that the disease "is damaging our economy, resulting in export bans, trade restrictions and devastation of herds."

"We have classified foot-and-mouth disease as a national disaster and will be mobilizing all necessary capabilities within the state to deal with this crisis," Ramaphosa said.

The government has decided to vaccinate the national herd of 14 million cattle, which will require 28 million vaccine doses over the next 12 months, he said.

"The state will facilitate the acquisition of the vaccines centrally to ensure that we get the right vaccine for the particular strain of the virus in South Africa," Ramaphosa said. "We will work closely with the private sector to enable an efficient rollout, and most importantly, we will ensure that commercial, private and communal farmers have immediate access to vaccines."

The president said that a task team made up of farmer organizations and experts would report to him every month on progress made in tackling what he described as a pandemic.

It is not the first time that South Africa has taken such a step this year. According to Ramaphosa, just a few weeks ago, catastrophic flooding in Limpopo and Mpumalanga was declared a national disaster, which claimed at least 45 lives and caused widespread destruction of homes, schools, clinics and other infrastructure.

Dengue: Dengue larvae were found in 40 percent of schools inspected by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Health, according to an official from the country's National Dengue Control Unit.

Acting Director of the National Dengue Control Unit Kapila Kanangara told journalists on Saturday that recent surveys have revealed an increase in the percentage of schools where dengue mosquito larvae were detected.

He said health authorities were continuing inspection and prevention campaigns to reduce breeding sites and limit the spread of dengue, which remains a major public health concern in the country.

Experts warn move will escalate climate pollution

Trump's EPA revokes scientific finding that guided US climate regulations

WASHINGTON, Feb 14, (AP): The Trump administration on Thursday revoked a scientific finding that long has been the central basis for US action to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change, the most aggressive move by the Republican president to roll back climate regulations.

The rule finalized by the Environmental Protection Agency rescinds a 2009 government declaration known as the endangerment finding that determined that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases threaten public health and welfare. The Obama-era finding is the legal underpinning of nearly all climate regulations under the Clean Air Act for motor vehicles, power plants and other pollution sources that are heating the planet.

The repeal eliminates all greenhouse gas emissions standards for cars and trucks and could unleash a broader undoing of climate regulations on stationary sources such as power plants and oil and gas facilities, experts say. Legal challenges are near certain.

President Donald Trump called the move "the single largest deregulatory action in American history, by far," while EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin called the endangerment finding "the Holy Grail of federal regulatory overreach."

Trump called the endangerment finding "one of the greatest scams in history," claiming falsely that it "had no basis in fact" or law. "On the contrary, over the generations, fossil fuels have saved millions of lives and lifted billions of people out of poverty all over the world," Trump said at a White House ceremony, although scientists across the globe agree that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are driving catastrophic heat waves and storms, droughts and sea level rise.

Environmental groups described the move as the single biggest attack in US history against federal authority to address climate change. Evidence backing up the endangerment finding has only grown stronger in the 17 years since it was approved, they said.

"This action will only lead to more climate pollution, and that will lead to higher costs and real harms for American families," said Fred Krupp, president of Environmental Defense Fund, adding that the consequences would be felt on Americans' health, property values, water supply and more.

The EPA also said it will propose a two-year delay to a Biden-era rule restricting greenhouse gas emissions by cars and light trucks. And the agency will end incentives for automakers who install automatic start-stop ignition systems in their vehicles. The device is intended to reduce emissions, but Zeldin said "everyone hates" it.

Zeldin, a former Republican congressman who was tapped by Trump to lead EPA last year, has criticized



President Donald Trump speaks during an event with Environmental Protection Agency director Lee Zeldin to announce the EPA will no longer regulate greenhouse gases, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, Thursday, Feb. 12, in Washington. (AP)



The Shell Norco oil refinery operates in Norco, La., April 7, 2025. (AP)

his predecessors in Democratic administrations, saying that in the name of tackling climate change, they were "willing to bankrupt the country."

The endangerment finding "led to trillions of dollars in regulations that strangled entire sectors of the United States economy, including the American auto industry," Zeldin said. "The Obama and Biden administrations used it to steamroll into existence a left-wing wish list of costly climate policies, electric vehicle mandates and other requirements that assaulted consumer choice and affordability."

The endangerment finding and the regulations based on it "didn't just regulate emissions, it regulated and targeted the American dream. And now the endangerment finding is hereby eliminated," Zeldin said.

The Supreme Court ruled in a 2007 case that planet-warming greenhouse gases, caused by the burning of oil and other fossil fuels, are air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

World struggles to eradicate polio as cases rise

Malawi vaccinates children against polio

BLANTYRE, Malawi, Feb 14, (AP): In a classroom in southern Malawi, children sit in rows on the floor as a health worker moves among them administering an oral vaccine that protects against polio.

The new vaccination campaign that began on Wednesday is another reminder that the world still hasn't managed to eradicate the ancient disease, which primarily affects children and can cause paralysis, despite a concerted effort for more than 35 years by the World Health Organization and its partners.

Health officials believe they came close several times, including five years ago, when just five cases of the natural polio virus were reported globally.

But a WHO report said that there were 38 cases of the natural polio virus between January and October 2025 - all in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the last two countries where it remains endemic - and another 151 cases of a vaccine-derived polio virus strain in 13 countries.

Those vaccine-derived cases have overtaken natural polio virus cases in recent years, and complicated the eradication effort as one of a number of



A healthcare worker administers polio vaccine to a child in the Ndirande Township of Blantyre, Malawi, Wednesday, Feb. 11. (AP)

missteps in the global fight. They come about when the weakened live virus in oral polio vaccines mutates into a form capable of sparking new outbreaks.

That's the problem in Malawi, which reported last month that it had discovered the vaccine-derived Type 2 polio virus strain in sewage water in the southern city of Blantyre, prompting health authorities to launch a new immunization campaign using a modified vaccine.

By WHO regulations, Malawi was required to declare an outbreak on confirming the polio virus traces.

Malawi's deputy health minister, Charles Chilambula, was among the

officials promoting the vaccination drive. It involves 1.7 million doses being administered to children at schools and taken door-to-door through some of the city's neighborhoods by health workers.

In an attempt to reassure people, Chilambula said that the doses will protect against the vaccine-derived form that's been discovered in Blantyre in environmental samples. Malawi's Health Ministry said that it's using the novel oral polio vaccine that's designed to stop circulating vaccine-derived Type 2 outbreaks.

"It's very important that we do the vaccine now, because it also deals with this virus which we have detected," Chilambula said.

Polio is a highly contagious incurable disease that affects the nervous system, and both the wild virus and the vaccine-derived strain can cause irreversible paralysis. It's spread through contaminated food or water. Around one in 200 cases results in paralysis, WHO says, typically affecting the legs.

In the early 20th century, polio struck fear in communities across the world and paralyzed hundreds of thousands of children annually before the advent of vaccines in the 1950s.



The moon moves in front of the sun during an annual solar eclipse, or ring of fire, seen from San Antonio, Texas, Oct 14, 2023. (AP)

Solar eclipse

A 'ring of fire' to dazzle Antarctica

NEW YORK, Feb 14, (AP): The first solar eclipse of the year will grace Antarctica, and only a lucky few will get to bask - or waddle - in its glow.

Tuesday's annular solar eclipse, known as a "ring of fire," will only be visible in the southernmost continent, home to research stations and diverse wildlife.

"The penguins down there are going to have a great show," said astronomer Joe Llama with Lowell Observatory.

Clear skies permitting, more people can catch a partial eclipse with small bites taken out of the sun from the tips of Chile and Argentina and bits of southeastern Africa including Madagascar, Lesotho and South Africa.

Solar eclipses happen when the sun, moon and Earth align just so. The moon casts a shadow that can partially or totally block out the sun's light from Earth.

It's "this beautiful coincidence between the size and the distance of the moon and the sun," said astrophysicist Emily Rice with the City University of New York.

During an annular, or ring-shaped, eclipse, the moon just happens to be farther away from Earth in its orbit so it doesn't totally cover the sun. Only a thin sliver remains visible.

"The sun essentially gets its core taken out," Llama said.

Wrexham reaches 5th round for first time in 29 years

Neto powers Chelsea into FA Cup fifth round

HULL, England, Feb 14, (AP): Pedro Neto scored a hat trick, including directly from a corner kick, as Chelsea beat Hull City 4-0 in the fourth round of the FA Cup.

Also, Wrexham reached the fifth round for the first time in 29 years after beating Ipswich 1-0 in an all-Championship matchup.

Hull and Chelsea had met eight times before in the FA Cup and Chelsea progressed every time. Host Hull never looked like halting that arresting run as the Premier League side took control from the off.

Pedro Neto's drilled shot from just outside the box gave Chelsea the lead going into halftime, and his low corner squeaked through a throng of bodies straight into the goal six minutes into the second period.

Young Brazilian Estêvão made it 3-0 minutes later when he side-footed home from 12 meters out, and Pedro Neto finished a nicely worked fourth.

"Pedro Neto is an incredible player," Liam Delap, who recorded three assists, told TNT Sports.

"He is playing in a position he is not even used to but he showed his quality.

Wrexham will discover in Monday's draw who it meets next for a place in the quarterfinals.

A first-half goal from Josh Windass separated Wrexham from Ipswich, which didn't get a shot on target.

Both teams are in contention for promotion to the Premier League; Ipswich was in third place and hoping for an immediate return to the league it left last summer.

Wrexham was seven points behind in sixth and bidding for a fourth consecutive promotion that would take it into the top tier for the first time in its 158-year history.

"We started both halves well but we weren't able to get the goal," Ipswich boss Kieran McKenna told BBC Wales. "Second half we tried everything ... but we just couldn't get back into the game.



Hull City's Lewis Koumas, left, and Chelsea's Jesse Derry battle for a head ball during the English FA Cup fourth round soccer match between Hull City and Chelsea in Hull, England. (AP)

Lucas Braathen wins giant slalom, secures South America first medal

Australia's Anthony makes history with dual moguls gold



Brazil's Lucas Pinheiro Braathen, center, winner of an alpine ski, men's giant slalom race, jumps in celebration on the podium flanked by second placed Switzerland's Marco Odermatt, left, and third placed Switzerland's Loic Meillard, at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Bormio, Italy. (AP)

BORMIO, Italy, Feb 14, (Agencies): Brazilian ski racer Lucas Pinheiro Braathen turned in a powerful final run to win the Olympic giant slalom Saturday and earn South America's first medal at a Winter Games.

With snow falling and fog settling in, the 25-year-old Pinheiro Braathen remained cool and relaxed as he navigated his way through the technical Stelvio course. After seeing his place - No. 1 - he fell to the snow before starting to scream.

He finished in a two-racer combined time of 2 minutes, 25 seconds. He beat Swiss racer Marco Odermatt, the defending Olympic champion, by 0.58 seconds. Odermatt's teammate, Loic Meillard, earned bronze.

Pinheiro Braathen is the fun-loving, samba-dancing skier who's ready to get this party started. On the back of his helmet, he has in big letters "Vamos Dançar" - "Let's Dance." Fittingly enough, it's Carnival season, too, a festival of parades, masquerades and partying made famous in places such as Brazil.

There's plenty to celebrate because, "Brazil is an Olympic champion in Alpine skiing," he said.

Pinheiro Braathen comes from a family where his mother is Brazilian and his father is Norwegian. He started racing for Norway until abruptly retiring before the 2023 season, only to return a year later representing Brazil.

Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva celebrated his country's first ever Winter Olympics medal on his social media channels.

"This unprecedented result shows Brazilian sport has no limits. It is the reflection of talent, dedication and continuous work to strengthen sport in every dimension," Lula said. "Congratulations to Lucas Pinheiro and all the team involved in this historic achievement, which inspires new generations and widens the horizon for Brazilian sport." It's another medal at the Milan Cortina Games for the 28-year-old Odermatt. He added this to the silver in the team event, where he partnered with Meillard, and bronze in the super-G.

Atle Lie McGrath of Norway wore a black armband in remembrance of his grandfather, who died on the day of the opening ceremony. He finished fifth.

'It's time for me to show up for others and in other ways'

Chris Paul retires as All-Star weekend begins, ending a 21-season NBA run

LOS ANGELES, Feb 14, (AP): Chris Paul, who was a 12-time All-Star selection and two-time Olympic gold medalist, announced his retirement in the capper of a 21-season career that will surely merit induction into the Basketball Hall of Fame.

Paul made the announcement on the first day of the NBA's All-Star weekend at the home of the Los Angeles Clippers in Inglewood, California. Paul spent his final season - an abbreviated one - with the Clippers, who sent him home in December and wound up trading him to Toronto earlier this month.

The Raptors knew Paul would never play in Toronto, and that begged the question about whether the Wake Forest legend would try to finish the season with another team in pursuit of the thing he never got - an NBA title.

The answer came Friday. He's done. He said last summer that he has hated missing events with his children over the last few years, and now he can devote himself much more to his family and other interests.

"It's time for me to show up for others and in other ways," Paul wrote on a social media post, announcing the decision.

He strongly hinted earlier this season that this year was going to be his last. Paul was a four-time All-NBA first team selection, and he ranks second in NBA history with 12,552 assists and 2,728 steals. He was the first player to score at least 20,000 points while recording at least 10,000 assists; LeBron James and Russell Westbrook have both since done that as well.

"It feels really good knowing that I played and treated this game with the utmost respect since the day my dad introduced me to it," Paul wrote. "It was the very first relationship I ever knew."

Paul played for New Orleans, Houston, Oklahoma City, Phoenix, Golden State, San Antonio and the Clippers during his career, spending the last four years with four different teams.

He also was a past president of the



In this file photo, Los Angeles Clippers guard Chris Paul drives to the basket during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Orlando Magic in Orlando, Fla. (AP)

National Basketball Players Association - instrumental in getting the league through the bubble season when the pandemic struck in 2020 - and championed the NBA establishing better ties with Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

"From the moment he entered the league, Chris distinguished himself with his savvy playmaking skills, elite competitiveness and intense work ethic," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement, in which he called Paul "one of the greatest point guards in NBA history."

Paul is 15th all-time in regular-season games played and 36th in points, was a six-time steals champion, five-time assists champion, a nine-time All-Defensive team pick, 11-time All-NBA selection and was part of the NBA's 75th anniversary team.

He's one of six players in NBA history to have reached \$400 million in career earnings.

"I've been playing basketball since I was 4 years old, and there's nothing other than my family that brings me more joy than the hard work and all that stuff that goes into it," he said in 2024. "Yeah, that's why we get to play

a child's game and say it's my way of life."

Paul became arguably the most accomplished player in Clippers franchise history while leading the team to six winning seasons from 2011-17, including the Clippers' first two Pacific Division titles and three playoff series victories. Paul returned to Los Angeles as a free agent last July, rejoining a franchise where he is loved by fans - but it went bad quickly, and Paul's last game with the Clippers was Dec. 1.

It turned out to be his last NBA game, period.

"While this chapter of being an 'NBA player' is done, the game of basketball will forever be engrained in the DNA of my life, spanning three decades," Paul wrote. "It's crazy even saying that!! Playing basketball for a living has been an unbelievable blessing that also came with lost of responsibility. I embraced it all."

Paul is one of seven players to have an NBA career span at least 21 seasons. And he's already in the Hall of Fame: the 2008 Olympic 'Redeem Team' was enshrined as part of the 2025 class. It won't be long before he goes in on his own as well.

"It was an accident," Fischer said.

Fiala, 29, is in his 12th NHL season and fourth with the Kings. He has 40 points in 56 games this season. (AP)

□ □ □

Paraguay to face Greece in friendly: Paraguay will meet Greece in a friendly next month as part of its preparations for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the South American country's football association said.

The match will be played in Athens during the next FIFA international window on March 27, the association said.

It will be followed by a previously announced friendly against Morocco in Lens, France, four days later.

The matches will provide one of the last opportunities for manager Gustavo Alfaro to test his squad ahead of the World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

The Albirroja will play its first match in the tournament against the United States in Group D on June 12.

It will also face Australia and a yet-to-be-confirmed qualifier. It will be Paraguay's first appearance in football's showcase tournament since the 2010 edition in South Africa, where it reached the quarterfinals for the first time. (Xinhua)

Best of the Rest

Fiala out of Olympics because of a leg injury:

Switzerland forward Kevin Fiala has been ruled out for the rest of the Milan Cortina Olympics with an injury to his left leg.

Fiala was taken off the ice on a stretcher late in Switzerland's game against Canada on Friday. The Swiss Ice Hockey Federation on Saturday called it a lower leg injury that was ending his time at the Games.

The Los Angeles Kings winger went down when he collided with Tom Wilson with just under three minutes left in Canada's 5-1 victory.

Fiala backed into a hit on Wilson near the boards, their legs got tangled up and both players fell to the ice. Fiala couldn't get up and after a stoppage in play medical personnel attended to him.

Fiala was placed face down on a stretcher, and his left leg appeared to be in an air cast as he was wheeled out.

"I haven't seen him yet. I think he went to the hospital. Obviously it doesn't look very good," Swiss coach Patrick Fischer said after the game. "Tough moment for Kevin and the whole team, obviously."

No penalty was assessed on the play.

CAF chief dismisses report on cancellation

'2027 Africa Cup will take place as planned in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya'

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania, Feb 14, (AP): The 2027 Africa Cup of Nations will go ahead as originally planned in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, the president of the Confederation of African Football said.

Patrice Motsepe, speaking after a meeting of CAF's executive committee, said the tournament will be played in June and/or July and that the organization will be announcing exact dates soon.

Motsepe addressed several issues including last month's Africa Cup in Morocco and the hosting of the Women's Africa Cup of Nations again next month.

Motsepe said the women's tournament will go

ahead at planned from March 17 to April 3, rebuffing reports that Morocco wanted to withdraw from hosting the tournament for the third time straight after South Africa offered to take over. "Morocco came to assist. There were many countries that wanted to host it, but because we didn't have time, our standards were very, very high," Motsepe said.

"As we speak now, we still have an engagement with Morocco. Some of the other countries say, 'please can we host it?' But they want to change the date. We can't change the date because it's one of those qualifiers for the Women's World Cup. So, the WAF-

CON continues, we will make sure it takes place within that window."

British newspaper The Guardian reported Thursday that the 2027 Africa Cup was to be scrapped and that Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya would instead host the 2028 tournament, but Motsepe said the report was erroneous.

"There was an allegation that I am here to tell Tanzania and Kenya and Uganda that I'm taking away the AFCON because our three countries are not going to be ready. That's totally unfounded," Motsepe said.

"AFCON next year in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda is going to be enormously successful ... East Africa is

going to be a powerhouse of the best football on the continent." If the three East African countries do stage the 2027 tournament, it will be the first since 2013 the competition hasn't been moved

because of problems with the original host.

Motsepe expressed his "deep gratitude" to Morocco for hosting the "most successful AFCON in the history of this competition,"

but also his disappointment at the disturbances that marred the final, with on-field battles between stewards and Senegal fans, and the Senegal team walking off the field.

Change Name

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Change Name

I, RASHIDA holder of Passport No. P9482250 do hereby change my name to **RASHIDA** (as Given name) **KHANDWALA** (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **RASHIDA KHANDWALA** and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents

Change Name

I, SHAIKH SHAKEEL ISHAQE holder of Passport No. V 7434465 my address : **OMKAR CHS. PLOT No. 424, FLAT.No.302, NEAR SAI ANGAN BUILDING TPS, TAKKA PANVEL, NAVI MUMBAI. PIN; 410206, MAHARASHTRA, INDIAN** do hereby change my name to **SHAIKH SHAKEEL ISHAQUE** (New Name)



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‘We hope to be one of the pillars of their success locally, regionally, and globally’

ABK Wealth Management signs strategic sponsorship with Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: ABK Wealth Management, the investment arm of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait Group, has signed a strategic sponsorship agreement with Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait as part of its commitment to supporting and developing the talents and capabilities of younger generations, in line with its responsibility toward Kuwaiti society.

The signing ceremony took place at the academy’s headquarters in the presence of Dr. Abdulaziz Jawad, Chairman of ABK Wealth Management; Mohammed Mustafa Al Marzouq, CEO of Tamdeen Sports Company, and several officials from both organizations.

On this occasion, Dr. Abdulaziz Jawad stated, “We are keen to sponsor Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait as part of our social responsibility programs aimed at developing and supporting the talents of the new generation.

We hope to be one of the pillars of their success locally, regionally, and globally.

“This sponsorship reaffirms ABK Wealth Management’s support for all efforts aimed at developing the capabilities and talents of youth in the country.

Our choice of Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait reflects our confidence in the important role it plays in the sports sector.”

Jawad added that the sponsorship coincides with the recent relaunch



Dr. Abdulaziz Jawad and Mohammed Mustafa Al Marzouq exchange the agreement.

of the ABK Wealth Management brand in its new identity and comes as part of the company’s ongoing commitment to supporting youth, providing them with opportunities to develop their skills, benefit from the expertise of international coaches, and encouraging them to practice sports and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

He continued, “Our approach to sponsorships stems from our firm commitment to corporate social responsibility programs and sustainability standards, contributing effectively to Kuwait’s development journey.



Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait logo

This agreement goes beyond traditional sponsorship to in-



Dr. Abdulaziz Jawad is pictured between Mohammed Mustafa Al-Marzouq, Sharif Al-Rafei, and Saqr Al-Bin Ali during the sponsorship announcement.



ABK Wealth Management logo

clude an integrated package of activities such as tennis tournaments, client and employee gatherings, and other benefits that ensure sustainable added value and help build relationships and partnerships that benefit all parties.”

On his part, AlMarzouq welcomed the sponsorship, emphasizing the importance of supporting sustainable initiatives.

He said, “Thanks to this sponsorship, we will be able to expand our programs, enhance their impact, and provide world-class training opportunities in cooperation with an institution that shares our values of commitment to social responsibility.”

He noted that the academy, the first international tennis academy branch of the Rafa Nadal Academy outside of Mallorca, Spain, combines high-level sports train-

ing with academic education. It is the first of its kind in Kuwait and the Middle East, located at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex at 360 Mall.

The academy features a wide range of state-of-the-art facilities and a distinguished team of internationally recognized coaches who provide group and individual training in fitness, tennis, padel, and squash.

The programs benefit from the expertise and experience of the Rafa Nadal Academy in Spain, where the coaching team develops young players and trains beginners and advance players who wish to discover and enjoy the game of tennis.

The academy includes 15 tennis courts, a fitness center, two squash courts, three indoor padel courts, a swimming pool.

The main covered multi-purpose stadium accommodates more than 5,000 spectators, while the secondary outdoor court seats 1,500 spectators.

All facilities are equipped with the latest global technologies and highest standards.

In conclusion, AlMarzouq emphasized his commitment to ensuring that ABK Wealth Management clients benefit from this opportunity, praising the collaboration between the two parties aimed at achieving development and well-being for clients in the local market.



Al-Murraab poses with Al-Qadsia players and the Super Cup at Al-Qadsia Club.

No margin for error

Qadsia steps up preparations in UAE ahead of decisive Al-Ain clash

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

ABU DHABI, Feb 14: Qadsia launches its preparations this evening in the United Arab Emirates as it gears up for a crucial showdown against Al-Ain next Wednesday in the sixth and final round of Group A in the Gulf Champions League.

Sitting third with seven points, Qadsia has no margin for error – only a win will send it through to the semifinals. Al-Ain, second on nine points, requires just a draw to secure qualification, while Iraq’s Zakho has already advanced after claiming top spot in the group with 10 points.

Head coach Nabil Maaloul opted to rest several players in recent sessions following the Kuwait FA’s decision to postpone its match against Bursaspor.

The club is also awaiting a response from the Gulf federation regarding its appeal over the yellow card shown to Algerian professional Sofiane Bouchar in last week’s match against Zakho. The booking currently sidelines him from the decisive encounter with Al-Ain.

Defender Youssef Al-Haqan acknowledged the challenge ahead, describing Al-Ain as a strong side capable of delivering convincing performances, but stressed that Qadsia are fully prepared for the test.

He highlighted the team’s high morale and fighting spirit, especially after a series of positive results, and voiced confidence in the fans’ support in the must-win fixture.

Midfielder Jassem Al-Matar emphasized the need for intense focus against Al-Ain, expressing hope that Qadsia can rise to the occasion in the final group-stage round.

Reflecting on advice from club legend Jassem Yaqoub, Al-Matar said he was honored to receive guidance from a player of such stature and confirmed his commitment to applying the recommendations fully.

Deja vu for Kazma, Kuwait Club begins Amir Cup title defense

Al-Tadamon advances with dramatic extra-time goal

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Kuwait Club kicks off its Amir Cup title defense today against Al Jazeera at 4:45 pm at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, while Al-Arabi faces Al-Sahel at 7:45 pm at Naif Al-Dabbous Stadium in the final preliminary-round fixtures.

Although Kuwait Club holds a clear advantage on paper, it remains wary of potential surprises that often define knockout competitions.

The Whites continue to impress domestically, sitting nine points clear at the top of the Zain Premier League with ten rounds remaining as it chases a fifth straight title. It has also secured a place in the Crown Prince Cup final, underlining its strong season.



Player sits injured during Khaitan and Kazma match.

Al Jazeera, meanwhile, seeks to produce a competitive display similar to its First Division form, where it currently occupies fourth place, six points behind leader Al-Sahel.

Al-Arabi enters its clash aiming to rediscover momentum after a difficult spell. The “Green” endured back-to-back 1-0 league defeats to Kuwait Club and Kazma, settled for a 1-1 draw with Al-

Fahaheel, and fell 4-3 to Al-Qadsia in the Super Cup semifinal.

Al-Sahel, sitting atop the First Division standings, looks to capitalize on Al-Arabi’s inconsistency and secure a quarterfinal berth.

Kazma suffered another cup setback, echoing its earlier Crown Prince Cup elimination. After losing to Al-Sulaibikhat on penalties following a 2-2 draw, it once again exited via shootout – this time against Khaitan, which prevailed 3-1 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at Naif Al-Dabbous Stadium.

Khaitan’s young goalkeeper Barak Al-Enezi emerged as the match hero, saving three penalties after replacing the injured Ahmad Al-Dosari in the second half.

Khaitan now awaits the winner of the Al-Arabi versus Al-Sahel encounter.

Elsewhere, Al-Tadamon secured a 1-0 victory over Jahra at Al-Sadaqa and Al-Salam Stadium. Hamed Al-Rashidi netted the decisive goal, finishing a pass from his brother Fahad just three minutes before the end of extra time to send his side through.

Al-Shweilan praises Al-Fatat stars, calls for ongoing support to sustain achievements

By Suzanne Nasser

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: Fadila Al-Shweilan, Chairwoman of Al-Fatat Sports Club, expressed her pride in the club’s players following their success at the recent Arab Women’s Club Games in Sharjah. She emphasized that “their achievement goes beyond rankings or titles — it represents a national message carried with responsibility and excellence.”

Speaking to Al-Seyassah as she welcomed the players back at Kuwait Airport yesterday Al-Shweilan said: “I congratulate my daughters on this outstanding accomplishment. They honored the trust placed in them, proving that

Kuwaiti women’s sports can compete and shine internationally. We reached our goal, raised our national flag high, and delighted our supporters with this triumph.”

She added that the team’s participation reflected a deep sense of national pride: “The players understood that representing Kuwait comes before the club. When competing abroad, they carry the flag of Kuwait in their hearts even before raising it above their heads.”

Al-Shweilan called on authorities to continue supporting the athletes: “We hope relevant organizations recognize their achievements, reward their efforts, and boost their morale with ongoing support and deserved incentives for raising Ku-



Fadila Al-Shweilan, Chairwoman of Al-Fatat Sports Club.

wait’s name and flag in Arab and regional competitions.”

Highlighting the importance of local competitions, she noted: “Sus-

taining league, cup, and tournament play is essential for producing international success. We encourage the Public Authority for Sports, the Kuwait Olympic Committee, and all federations to maintain consistent local competitions, as stability is key to preparing players who can represent the nation at their best.”

She concluded by thanking sports authorities for their support, particularly the Public Authority for Sports, the Kuwait Olympic Committee, and the basketball, table tennis, and taekwondo federations, for facilitating the players’ participation. “This support is invaluable and shows everyone’s commitment to the growth of women’s sports,” she said.

Iglesias rescues draw for Celta Vigo at Espanyol

MADRID, Feb 14, (AP): Borja Iglesias scored in stoppage time, after having another seemingly good goal ruled out through VAR, to salvage a 2-2 draw for Celta Vigo at Espanyol in the Spanish league.

A rueful Iglesias shook his head and smiled after having a 77th-minute goal disallowed when a long check determined there had been an offside infringement.

His frustrations grew when Ramón Terrats pulled the ball back for fellow substitute Tyrhys Dolan to score what he thought was the winner for Espanyol in the 86th minute.

But Iglesias equalized in the third minute of stoppage time when Pablo Durán set him up with his heel after a good run from Sergio Carreira.

“I think we’re doing a lot of things well,” said Iglesias, who felt he should have been awarded a penalty for the goal he had ruled

out.

Celta’s Ferrán Jutglà broke the deadlock in the 38th after being set up by right back Javi Rueda, and Espanyol keeper Marko Dmitrovic made a flying save to thwart Carreira after the break.

Espanyol coach Manolo González made a triple substitution to rejig the home team, and it paid off when substitute Kike García equalized with a brilliant strike inside the post.

Terrats and Dolan thought they’d engineered a memorable comeback only for Iglesias to have the final say.

Espanyol remained sixth and Celta a point behind in seventh.

Real Madrid is hosting Real Sociedad later and aiming for an eighth successive league win to pressure Barcelona before the leader’s match at Girona on Monday.

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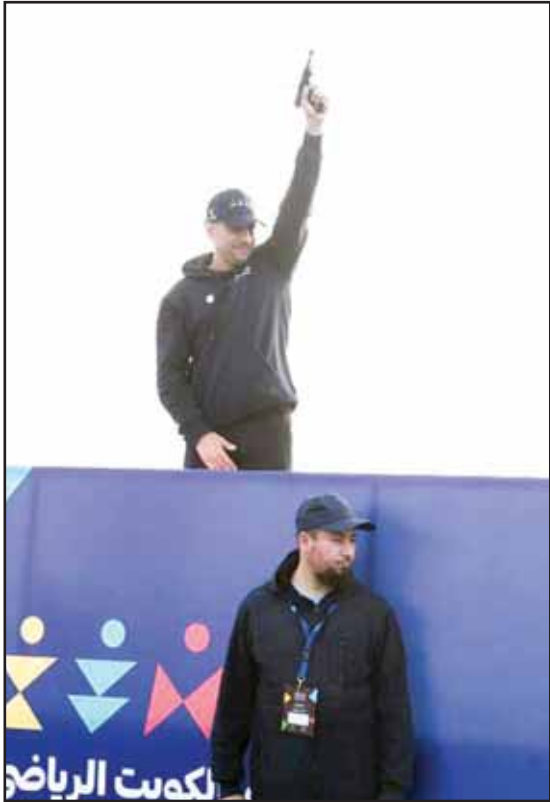


Bayern's Harry Kane scores his side's second goal during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Werder Bremen and Bayern Munich, in Bremen, Germany. (AP)

Sports

Strong turnout shows Kuwait's growing health and fitness awareness: Al-Jalahma

Nation unites on Sheikh Jaber Bridge for Kuwait Sports Day



Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma inaugurates the event.



The kids not left out of the celebration.



Cycling races in progress.



Officials take part in the event.



Cyclists wait for proceedings to start.



Musical performances add a festive atmosphere to the celebration.



Participants led by Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma patiently wait for the kick off.

Photos by Rizk Taufiq

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14, (KUNA): The third edition of Kuwait Sports Day kicked off on Saturday on the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Bridge, attracting around 21,000 participants in a lively celebration of sports, health, and community engagement.

Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma inaugurated the event, highlighting the growing public interest in physical activity and an active lifestyle across all age groups.

The day featured a variety of activities, including running, walking, and cycling races, alongside fitness challenges and recreational competitions designed for families and children. Musical performances and entertainment shows added a festive atmosphere to the celebration.

Organized by the Kuwait Sports for All Federation in partnership with government and private entities, the event was held under the patronage of the political leadership and with support from official sports, youth, and health authorities.

Kuwait Sports Day aligns with the Public Authority for Sport's 2022–2028 strategy, which aims to promote

sports for all, integrate physical activity into daily life, and enhance community engagement to improve public health and overall quality of life.

The event welcomed citizens, residents, families, youth, children, people with disabilities, government institutions, private organizations, sports clubs, federations, and volunteers, emphasizing inclusivity and nationwide participation. The day concluded with participants receiving commemorative medals, earning wide praise for both organization and sportsmanship.

Commenting on the event, Al-Jalahma said the strong turnout reflects the community's increasing awareness of sports' role in promoting health and quality of life.

Speaking after participating in the event, Al-Jalahma noted that Kuwait Sports Day coincides with the country's national celebrations, representing social cohesion and solidarity. He also extended congratulations to the political leadership on the occasion.

The minister emphasized the ministry's commitment to expanding and diversifying the event each year, encouraging all segments of society to adopt an active lifestyle.

He praised the role of government bodies, private entities, volunteers, and participants, noting that teamwork is key to the event's success. Al-Jalahma expressed hope that next year's edition will be even more outstanding, meeting the aspirations of Kuwait's leadership and society.

The Sports Village, a highlight of Kuwait Sports Day, created a vibrant and engaging atmosphere along the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Bridge, combining sports, recreation, and cultural experiences for visitors.

Interactive zones, cafes, and restaurants were spread throughout the area, offering a unique blend of activity, leisure, and social interaction. At the heart of the village, a traditional folkloric band performed patriotic songs that mixed national chants with the excitement of the sporting event, adding a cultural and heritage touch to the celebration.

The Sports Village provided a complete community experience, combining fitness, entertainment, and national pride. A fully equipped rest area ensured families and participants could enjoy the day comfortably and safely, creating a festive and inclusive environment for all.

Zubidzoda: Sport is a pillar of public health and a bridge between nations

‘Active diplomatic participation in Kuwait Sports Day reflects community partnership and aligns with national celebrations’

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 14: The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in the State of Kuwait, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dr. Zubidullo Zubidzoda, expressed his pride in the participation of the Diplomatic Corps and accredited diplomatic missions in the “Kuwait Sports Day” event, affirming that the strong diplomatic presence reflects the depth of humanitarian and social partnership between the diplomatic community and Kuwaiti society.

In a press statement issued on this occasion, Ambassador Zubidzoda noted that the participation of the Diplomatic Corps went beyond protocol attendance, representing active engagement in the sports activities and programs. This participation, he said, stems from a shared belief in the importance of sport as a way of life and from a commitment to supporting national initiatives that promote public health and quality of life.

He highlighted that what distinguished the event was its inclusive community spirit, forming a vibrant human mosaic that brought together residents of Kuwait — citizens and expatriates alike — in a harmonious scene that reflects the values of coexistence for which Kuwait has long been known. He stressed that this societal harmony is deeply rooted in Kuwait's longstanding approach of embracing diverse nationalities and cultures within a framework of mutual respect and civilizational openness.

The Dean added that sport, in such occasions, becomes a universal human language

that dissolves barriers, builds bridges of communication, and strengthens people-to-people diplomacy alongside official diplomatic relations — giving the event dimensions that extend well beyond athletics.

Ambassador Zubidzoda also linked the event to Kuwait's national festive season, noting that the alignment of community and sports activities with the celebrations of *Independence Day* and *Liberation Day* adds a profound national and humanitarian dimension, reflecting the security, stability, and prosperity that Kuwait enjoys under its wise leadership.

On this occasion, he extended his highest congratulations and best wishes to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, 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; as well as to the Kuwaiti government and the Kuwaiti people, praying for the continued security, progress, and prosperity of the State of Kuwait.

He concluded by affirming that the Diplomatic Corps will remain a supportive partner in all initiatives that enhance human well-being and promote the values of friendship and international cooperation, wishing Kuwait continued success in its development and humanitarian journey.



Strong diplomatic presence.



Strong turnout for the Kuwait Sports Day.