



Kuwaiti Prime Minister launches
Nayef Light Ammunition Factory
Page 4

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Kuwait courts on 'overdrive'

Travel ban lift tops enforcement

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Official statistics from the Statistics and Research Department in the Ministry of Justice revealed that the Execution Department completed a total of 527,970 procedures in November 2025.

According to the data, enforcement seizure procedures for debts owed to third parties ranked first with 164,346 or 31.1 percent of the total.

Continued on Page 5

This indicates an increase in the use of enforcement tools to protect the interests of creditors.

On the other hand, the renewal of arrest warrants for debtors recorded the lowest percentage -- 0.01 percent.

In terms of geographical distribution, the Capital Governorate ranked first with 24.3 percent of the total procedures, followed by Hawally Governorate with 20.3 percent, Ahmadi Governorate with 17.4 percent, Jahra Governorate with 16 percent, Farwaniya Governorate with 14.7 percent, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate with seven percent, and outlying areas with 0.3 percent.

Amiri Diwan announces reception for well-wishers
Amir greets citizens, expats ahead of Ramadan



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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): The Amiri Diwan on Monday conveyed congratulations of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the citizens and residents of Kuwait on advent of the fasting month of Ramadan.

The Diwan announced that His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Al-Sabah family will receive well-wishers on the blessed month on the first and second days of Ramadan from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the family's Diwan at Bayan Palace.

The Ramadan well-wishers will be allowed to enter the palace via the gate of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahad bin Abdulaziz road.

The Amiri Diwan prayed to His Almighty so he may safeguard His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and recur the gracious month with all blessings and goodness.

It has also hoped that Islamic states and their peoples may witness progress and prosperity.

Opinion

Why is the Minister of Information not from the ministry?



Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE appointment of an acting minister to head the Ministry of Information, Culture and Youth after the resignation of the former minister confirms the existence of chronic problems in our political landscape – the revolving door of ministerial positions and the resulting instability in vital sectors.

We must acknowledge the efforts of former Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, particularly his progressive vision for domestic tourism. His focus on leveraging agricultural landowners for side activities was a commendable step towards stimulating commercial activity, and

establishing a robust partnership between the public and private sectors. This proved his commitment to transform the political vision of the State into a practical policy.

However, the current situation brings to light a deeply rooted issue. The practice of appointing officials from outside the experienced staff of the ministry is a costly wastage of time and resources.

Any new minister, regardless of his reputation, faces a steep learning curve to grasp the technical intricacies and long-standing affairs of the institution.

Furthermore, it is a regrettable observation, shared by many throughout the Arab world, that prestige often eclipses competence. The instability inherent in frequent ministerial changes leads to a distinct lack of interest in continuously implementing long-term plans.

The familiar pattern of an incoming official bringing his own inexperienced team means that by the time the newcomer familiarizes himself with his roles, the appointee is often on the way

out, setting aside plans and vital studies to languish in desk drawers.

This is a sharp contrast to the situation in developed nations, where responsibility is defined by the continuity of plan execution. Ministers remain in their respective posts for extended periods, ensuring project completion.

Officials in civilized countries are not chosen based on favoritism or random selection. A rigorous vetting process includes thorough investigation into the character and suitability of candidates for sensitive roles.

The top ministerial post is undoubtedly sensitive, demanding an individual capable of realizing the political vision of the State.

The Ministry of Information and Culture in Kuwait has immense responsibilities, from overseeing radio and television to nurturing the cultural sector that made Kuwait a beacon of civilization and then culminating in the vital tourism sector. These fields require competent daily oversight, distinct from the political decisions of

the Cabinet.

Therefore, the preferable, logical and responsible course of action is to select the minister from the existing staff of the ministry.

The ministry has a plethora of undersecretaries and experts with extensive and sector-specific experience gained from rotating through various departments.

The media is the face of the State. Providing the media, cultural and tourism sectors with consistent and competent leadership is necessary for depicting a civilized image of the nation and ensuring its continuous progress.

It is now time to prioritize institutional knowledge and proven competence over political expediency.

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ahmed@aljarallah.com

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KUWAIT photo

Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States Sheikha Zain Al-Sabah during a ceremony honoring CNN former president Tom Johnson.

Ambassador commends CNN coverage on Kuwait liberation

WASHINGTON, Feb 16, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States Sheikha Zain Al-Sabah has commended the professional coverage of CNN former president Tom Johnson on Iraqi occupation of Kuwait which conveyed the justice of Kuwait's cause to the international community.

The ambassador made the statement on Sunday while holding a special reception of Johnson, on the 35th anniversary of Kuwait's Liberation Day, marking his book "Driven" which documents CNN's coverage of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Sheikha Zain Al-Sabah affirmed that Johnson's principled and professional coverage played a pivotal role in conveying the justice of Kuwait's cause to the international community and helped mobilize diplomatic, and military efforts to liberate Kuwait.

The discussion during the evening was moderated by prominent CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer, who began his career covering the Kuwait's occupation and liberation period, and added his professional insights and personal experience during this period.

The event featured a distinguished group of senior American journalists and media figures, alongside members of the diplomatic corps and US administration officials.

The occasion underscored the vital role of media in documenting key historical moments and reaffirmed the importance of responsible journalism in safeguarding truth.

In addition, it also underlined that professional journalism boosts justice values and international legitimacy - the principles that helped rally global support for Kuwait until the full restoration of its sovereignty.

KFAED marks over 6 decades of development diplomacy

FM reaffirms Kuwait's global humanitarian role

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of KFAED Board of Directors, Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, affirmed that Kuwait will continue to play its developmental and humanitarian role and strengthen its international partnerships.

His remarks came in a speech delivered at the Fund's annual ceremony, according to a statement issued by the Kuwait Fund.

The event honored several current employees who have served for more than 20 years, retired staff members, and outstanding participants in the training and qualification program for newly graduated Kuwaiti engineers and architects.

Sheikh Jarrah said the Fund embodies

Kuwait's humanitarian approach and strategic commitment to supporting brotherly and friendly countries, stemming from the vision of the late Amir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who believed that investing in people is a fundamental pillar for building a more prosperous and just future.

The establishment of the Fund in 1961, only months after Kuwait's independence,



KFAED photo
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of KFAED Board of Directors, Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, at the Fund's annual ceremony.

reflected the country's early commitment to promoting solidarity, international cooperation, and building bridges of friendship with nations worldwide, he added.

Today, the Fund stands as one of the most prominent tools of Kuwait's foreign policy and a key pillar of its development diplomacy, said the minister.

Sheikh Jarrah noted that the Kuwait Fund has implemented development projects in 106 countries across vital sectors, contributing to improving the quality of life for millions and reinforcing its status as a trusted partner in achieving sustainable development internationally.

He emphasized that the Fund's ongoing achievements are guided by the directives of His Highness the Amir Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and are made possible by the dedication of the Fund's men and women, who have formed the cornerstone of its developmental journey across generations.

In turn, Acting Director General of the Kuwait Fund Waleed Al-Baha said the institution has consolidated its position as a leading model in development and humanitarian work for over six decades, financing more than 1,000 development and humanitarian projects worldwide.

Continued on Page 5

Belgium delays embassy closure, keeps diplomatic channels open

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Belgian Ambassador to Kuwait Christian Dooms confirmed that Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Prévot has agreed to postpone the decision to close the Belgian Embassy in Kuwait.

In a press conference held at the Embassy of Belgium on Monday, Dooms clarified that the postponement pertains to the decision itself, not the closure process, meaning that both options remain on the table until 2027, when a decisive assessment will be conducted regarding the future of the embassy.

Dooms stated that it is important to be precise in the wording of the decision, as saying "the closure has been postponed" is entirely different from saying "the decision to close has been postponed."

He explained that he contacted the

minister's office to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation and received confirmation that the correct understanding is that the decision has yet to be finalized, not that the closure is inevitable at a later date.

He pointed out that on Nov 14, 2025, Minister Prévot announced a decision to close eight diplomatic missions and open five new ones as part of the global diplomatic repositioning and expansion plan of Belgium.

He added "some might think the restructuring is due to severe financial pressure, but it is based on the geopolitical review of the priorities of Belgium. While acknowledging that resources are not infinite and that opening new missions requires recalibration elsewhere, financial considerations were not the primary motivation behind the decision."

He affirmed his strong belief in the potential of bilateral relations, indicating that he recently observed signs of change and reform in Kuwait, particularly the surge in infrastructure projects and road works.

He considers this activity a positive message to Brussels and a contributing factor in reconsidering the closure decision.

Continued on Page 5

Death sentence for fatal scissors attack

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: The Criminal Court sentenced to death a Pakistani man residing in Farwaniya Governorate for murdering his father.

Case files indicate that the father and son had an argument over smoking inside their home, during which the son stabbed his father with scissors, leading to the instantaneous death of the latter. Records showed that the dispute began when the father reprimanded his son for smoking indoors.

Continued on Page 5

2 eclipses, none visible in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: The Al-Ojeiri Scientific Center announced that Kuwait's skies will witness an annual solar eclipse on Tuesday, followed by a total lunar eclipse on March 3, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Director of the Al-Ojeiri Scientific Center Yousef Al-Ojeiri told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Monday that the annual solar eclipse will occur around 3:00 pm Kuwait time on Tuesday, but will not be visible from Kuwait.



Dooms

meaning that both options remain on the table until 2027, when a decisive assessment will be conducted regarding the future of the embassy.

Dooms stated that it is important to be precise in the wording of the decision, as saying "the closure has been postponed" is entirely different from saying "the decision to close has been postponed."

He explained that he contacted the

Day by Day

THOSE who understand diplomacy say it is the art of lying.

It means to lie ... and lie again, as people are bound to believe some lies. They do not believe them all the time, but perhaps they believe them for a while.

Soft diplomacy was once seen through the eyes of diplomats. Diplomacy uses lies to achieve its goals.

Such is life.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

2 Russia, Kuwait military ties decades old

8 KFH promotes a culture of creativity in the 2025 Innovation Challenge program

9 65 years of excellence and prepare for the next phase of growth

10 NBK-Egypt reports net profit of EGP 8.09 billion for FY 2025

11 Gulf Bank brings employees together at 'Graish' gathering to celebrate

12 Scan the QR code to access the Arab Times WhatsApp Channel

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:07 Asr 15:13
 Sunrise .. 06:27 Maghrib .. 17:38
 Zohr 12:02 Isha 18:55

Local

Russia, Kuwait military ties decades old

Growing interest of Kuwaitis visiting Moscow: Ambassador Zheltov



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times Ahmed Al-Jarallah meets the Russian Ambassador Vladimir Zheltov.



Kuwaiti Commander of the Land Forces Artillery Brigadier General Faisal Al-Ajil, military officials, Russian ambassador during the cake-cutting ceremony.



Photos by Rizk Taufiq

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Russian Ambassador to Kuwait Vladimir Zheltov disclosed that the Embassy of Russia celebrates the Armed Forces Day, also known as Defender of the Fatherland Day, on Feb 23 each year.

In his speech at a reception held on the occasion, Zheltov stated that this day, which is rooted in the history of the Soviet Army, is a firmly established national occasion in contemporary Russian history.

Commander of the Land Forces Artillery Brigadier General Faisal Al-Ajil, along with several military officials, ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps attended the event.

According to the Ambassador, the presence of representatives of the Kuwaiti

General Staff and military officials proves the depth of historical relations between the two countries. He revealed that military cooperation between Russia and Kuwait extends back to the 1960s and 1970s. He pointed out that the participation of Kuwait in the event is a reflection of the strength of bilateral and military ties, which are influenced by developments in Eastern Europe.

On the possibility of defense or security deals, he indicated that discussions are underway between the two sides, adding that not everything reported in the media is the truth. He said the political consultations between the two countries' foreign ministries are ongoing at various levels. He revealed that the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister's visit to Moscow last September will be followed by another round of official-level political consultations in Moscow.

Regarding the Arab-Russian Summit, he clarified that its postponement is at the request of the Arab side for known reasons, emphasizing that it remains on the agenda of Russian-Arab relations and confirms the seriousness of these relations.

On tourism, he highlighted the growing interest of Kuwaitis in visiting Moscow and other Russian cities. He disclosed that he is keen on hearing the opinions of

Kuwaiti visitors about their experience in Russia, as they speak highly of Moscow as a wonderful tourist destination, particularly the services, security, and quality of facilities and amenities.

On coordination between Russia and countries in the region concerning regional events, he said there have been routine consultations according to the schedule, as well as intensive consultations between Russia, the Gulf states and other Arab countries, given the sensitivity of regional issues, including the Gaza Strip, Palestinian cause and Iranian nuclear program. He indicated that consultations are ongoing with a number of Gulf and Arab capitals on various issues.

He also praised the role of the Sultanate of Oman in mediation efforts, describing its leadership as "wise." He said Muscat has a distinguished history and track record in hosting regional and international negotiations, making it a suitable venue for launching dialogues and consultations.

He said some European capitals are raising sensitive issues, pointing out that Kuwait is not a place for exchanging insults. He added that his country appreciates the neutral stance of Kuwait and its commitment to prevent escalation.

Al-Jarallah: Al-Seyassah, Arab Times can play vital role to boost Kuwait, Canada ties



Photos by Rizk Taufiq

Left: Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah (center), is flanked by the Canadian Ambassador, Public Diplomacy Officer at the Embassy of Canada Lama M. Najia, Managing Editor of the Arab Times Marlon Aquino Malinao and colleague Mohammad Al-Farhan. Right: Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Canadian Ambassador in discussions. Public Diplomacy Officer at the Embassy of Canada Lama M. Najia, Managing Editor of the Arab Times Marlon Aquino Malinao and colleague Mohammad Al-Farhan are seen in attendance.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Tara Scheurwater met with Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah at the Dar Al-Seyassah Office on Monday.

After an exchange of pleasantries, both parties discussed the role of diverse media forms in fostering cultural exchange between nations, as well as various media-related issues of mutual interest.

They underscored the need for a balanced and professional media narrative that

accurately depicts the state of international relations.

Al-Jarallah highlighted the significance of the ongoing bilateral relations between Kuwait and Canada in all sectors.

He affirmed the crucial function of the press in "bringing peoples closer, no matter how far apart they might be." He said the Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers are ready to collaborate with the Canadian Embassy to strengthen the ties between the two friendly countries and their people.

On the other hand, Ambassador Scheurwater confirmed the important role of the Kuwaiti press in publishing the activities of diplomatic missions and embassies in the country. She stated that this highlights the position of the media as a vital partner in supporting international relations and strengthening the bond of friendship between peoples. Also present at the meeting were Public Diplomacy Officer at the Embassy of Canada Lama M. Najia, Managing Editor of the Arab Times Marlon Aquino Malinao and colleague Mohammad Al-Farhan.



KUNA photo

Kuwait embassies in Jordan, Italy celebrate National Days

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): The Kuwait embassies in Jordan, Italy, Cyprus and Argentina have marked the 65th Independence Day and the 35th Liberation Day, in the presence of some ministers, officials, the head of diplomatic missions and civil society representatives.

In Jordan, Kuwait's Ambassador Hamad Al-Marri conveyed sincere and great congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the government and Kuwaitis on these days.

The ambassador emphasized that national holidays reinforce loyalty to the homeland while highlighting Kuwait's steady progress toward new milestones and an elevated global standing.

Kuwaiti's Ambassador to Italy Nasser Al-Qahtani extended congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, the government and Kuwaitis on the days, wishing further progress and prosperity to the country under its wise leadership.

Al-Qahtani stressed, in a speech, the deep-rooted historic relations between Kuwait and Italy over decades.

Kuwait Embassy in Cyprus held a reception in the capital, Nicosia, that featured Cypriot trade, industry and energy minister Michael Damianos, along some senior Cypriot officials.

ly rooted values of generosity and humanitarian service in Kuwaiti society. Volunteer teams play a central role in promoting these values, as most national events are built on partnership and integration, whether with volunteer groups or various government entities, particularly the Ministry of Education, which plays a vital role in supporting these efforts and enhancing a sense of national belonging among younger generations.

Dr. Al-Huwaileh explained that Kuwait has long been a pioneer in humanitarian and charitable work, ranking among the leading Gulf countries in this field. These achievements reflect the deep-

anced, and compassionate, continuing to provide assistance and support both inside and outside Kuwait, reflecting its humanitarian mission.

She stressed that the exhibition aims to highlight the cultural and artistic movement within society and reinforce patriotism.

Dr. Al-Huwaileh commended the efforts in organizing such events, which contribute to spreading culture and art and encouraging community participation.

She expressed her happiness in participating in the celebration, extending her congratulations to everyone on the occasion of the national holidays and the upcoming holy month of Ramadan, and prayed that God continues to bless Kuwait with security, stability, and prosperity.

It is worth highlighting that the exhibition included a number of pavilions showcasing artworks and cultural activities that reflect national identity and Kuwaiti heritage, with participation from a number of Kuwaiti artists and relevant entities.

Cultural activities strengthen Kuwaiti identity

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaileh affirmed the importance of supporting cultural and artistic activities for their role in strengthening national identity and enhancing community awareness.

In a statement issued on Sunday morning during the cultural and artistic exhibition titled "Kuwait My Identity" organized by the Department of Women, Childhood, and Community Development as part of the National Day celebrations at the lobby of the Ministries Complex, she stressed that the Kuwaiti identity must remain clear, anchored in authentic social customs, and guided by the teachings of Islam, which emphasize tolerance, love, and loyalty.

Dr. Al-Huwaileh explained that Kuwait has long been a pioneer in humanitarian and charitable work, ranking among the leading Gulf countries in this field. These achievements reflect the deep-

rooted values of generosity and humanitarian service in Kuwaiti society. Volunteer teams play a central role in promoting these values, as most national events are built on partnership and integration, whether with volunteer groups or various government entities, particularly the Ministry of Education, which plays a vital role in supporting these efforts and enhancing a sense of national belonging among younger generations.

Dr. Al-Huwaileh affirmed that the ministry is committed to continuously promoting the concept of partnership based on national responsibility.

The minister noted that the "Kuwait My Identity" event embodies this approach by reaffirming that the Kuwaiti identity will remain tolerant, balanced, and compassionate, continuing to provide assistance and support both inside and outside Kuwait, reflecting its humanitarian mission.

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Court acquits defendants in cryptocurrency mining case

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Hamoud Mishari Al-Shami, acquitted three defendants of cryptocurrency mining, harming national interests, establishing an industrial project without a license, and using residential buildings for other purposes.

In its reasoning, the court affirmed that cryptocurrency mining remains a permissible activity in the absence of legislation regulating or criminalizing it.

The court pointed out that cryptocurrency mining cannot be categorized under traditional concepts, such as industrial projects

or crimes harming national interests through broad interpretation, as this will violate the principle of legality and infringe upon the sanctity of homes and constitutionally protected freedoms.

It clarified that Kuwait has not enacted legislation prohibiting or regulating cryptocurrency mining, either by banning it or by establishing controls for its practice.

It stated that including cryptocurrency mining under the definition of "industrial project" in Industry Law No. 56/1996 is an impermissible expansion of the interpretation of penal provisions. This activity does not involve converting raw materials into products, as it is a modern electronic activity that has a different nature than traditional industrial projects.

Campaign launched to support needy families

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): Balad Al-Khair Association launched on Monday its Ramadan campaign that aim to implement package of humanitarian and development projects to support families in needs inside Kuwait and abroad.

In a statement to KUNA, the Association's Director General Othman Al-Thuwaini said the campaign reflects Kuwait's long-standing leadership in humanitarian work.

He explained that local efforts include distributing Iftar meals and food baskets to families in need, supporting cancer and kidney patients, sponsoring orphans, helping young women cover marriage expenses renovating homes and implementing programs aimed at bringing joy to orphans across the country.



Al-Thuwaini

LOCAL

diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Land of Goodness'... a story of a nation and its sacrifices

"THESE days, during the month of national celebrations, Kuwait is painting the most beautiful image of unity between the leadership and the people, as captured in the operetta 'The Land of Goodness'. It tells a story not of a mere geographical location, but of a love forged by our forefathers with their blood and nurtured today by His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with unwavering determination," columnist **Sheikh Eng. Fahad Dawood Al-Sabah** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"In every scene of the operetta, the authenticity of the past embraces the aspirations of the future. 'The Land of Goodness' represents Kuwait, the Pearl of the Gulf, which will always shine as a beacon of culture and humanitarian giving. Today, we celebrate our identity, which shines ever brighter through our stability and unity. The true essence of the operetta lies not only in its songs but also in the dedicated efforts carried out under the leadership of His Highness the Amir."

"I would like to express my gratitude to His Highness, who turned the dream into reality. Thanks to the 'Land of Goodness', which has given us identity and pride, Kuwait will endure, and its torch will remain a guiding light that can never be extinguished. The operetta captures the feelings of every citizen and resident of this blessed land. It is an artistic masterpiece that goes beyond melody, using the ink of loyalty to paint the journey of a nation that has always known only giving. When we speak of 'the Land of Goodness,' we speak of a nation rooted in humanity, whose influence reaches far beyond its geographical borders."

"The voices of the traditional pearl diver harmonize with the rhythms of modernity, proclaiming to the world, 'This is Kuwait... the source of generosity and the haven of peace.' This operetta is a reflection of the overflowing love the people hold for their leader. It is a heartfelt message of gratitude to His Highness the Amir for all he does for the advancement of Kuwait. I pray that God preserves him as a treasure and a support, and continues to bless our Kuwait with security and safety under his wise leadership."

"It is important to acknowledge the contributions of those who oversaw this national operetta. I would like to thank the coordinator of the operetta, Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad. I also extend my gratitude to all the entities and officials who contributed to the success of this national operetta."



Sheikh Fahad

"Queuing is a fundamental civilized behavior that helps organize the lives of individuals in society. It is based on principles of justice, equality, and respect for the rights of others. This behavior is evident in many daily situations, such as parking lots, bakeries, banks, cafes, hospitals, government offices, schools, and even recreational areas," writer and TV presenter **Ghani Jumaa** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Queuing is more than just standing in line; it is a societal culture that reflects human awareness and respect for public order. Queuing in parking lots is particularly important, as it helps regulate the flow of vehicles and prevents congestion and accidents. When drivers wait their turn to enter or exit and adhere to designated spaces, it prevents chaos and facilitates smooth traffic flow. It also reduces tension and disputes between drivers, as many accidents and injuries have occurred due to parking conflicts. In bakeries and supermarkets, especially during peak hours, queuing is essential to ensure fairness among customers."

"Respecting queues and not cutting in line creates a calm and comfortable atmosphere, contributing to faster service and more organized operations. It also reflects an individual's character and respect for the rights of others. Queuing in banks is one of the most organized forms of queuing, as financial institutions rely on numbering and waiting systems."

"Adhering to this system facilitates transactions, reduces congestion, and ensures that everyone receives service without discrimination or favoritism. Queuing is particularly important in hospitals, given the sensitive nature of patients' health. Following the queue in clinics and pharmacies ensures fair and organized medical care, reduces pressure on medical staff, and prevents chaos that could negatively affect patient health."

"Similarly, in schools, queuing is observed during morning assemblies, book collection, entering classrooms, and even class participation. This behavior helps instill values of order and discipline in students, preparing them to become responsible individuals in the future. Queuing in government offices facilitates transactions, reduces complaints and congestion, and strengthens trust between citizens and the institution."

"It also enables employees to perform their work efficiently without unnecessary stress. Even in parks, amusement parks, cinemas, and restaurants, queuing is an important behavior that ensures everyone enjoys the service without chaos or inconvenience and demonstrates respect for others."

"Queuing achieves many important goals, most notably ensuring fairness

and equality among all individuals, organizing time and reducing random waiting, minimizing chaos, problems, and disputes among people, spreading mutual respect and promoting good manners, improving the efficiency of services in public and private institutions, enhancing community awareness of the importance of order and law, and instilling values of discipline in younger generations."

"In conclusion, queuing is a fundamental pillar of a civilized society. Although it may seem like a simple behavior, its impact is significant. When individuals queue, order is maintained, and everyone feels comfortable and respected. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every member of society to follow this practice and encourage it in others, so that it becomes a common culture that helps build a cooperative and organized society."

□ □ □

"Curricula are not merely neutral educational tools, but they are a fundamental pillar in building national awareness, instilling social and historical values, and preserving collective memory and national achievements," columnist **Khaled Ahmed Al-Tarrah** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Neglecting the role of educational field expertise, particularly in curriculum development, is a grave mistake in the process of educational reform and modernization. Undoubtedly, foreign expertise can contribute to the development and modernization of teaching methods and tools. However, such expertise should remain confined to purely educational and technical aspects, while the Ministry of Education retains responsibility for the educational, historical, and national framework."

"There is no doubt that the process of modernizing and developing curricula requires the inclusion of important historical milestones in Kuwait, from the era of the Emirate to the establishment of the modern state, along with its political, social, and economic developments, without neglecting the constitutional relationship between the ruling system and the people. Herein lies the historical significance of the 1921 document, which established the principles of allegiance during the Consultative Council. The document emphasized preserving the ruling family to prevent any internal discord."

"The absence of such historical periods from the curriculum represents not only a knowledge gap but also a deficiency in national consciousness. School curricula can be seen as a mosaic of history - political, social, and cultural - reflecting the course of transformations and the construction of the modern state. Undoubtedly, there are positive aspects of this development that are worthy of being instilled in the minds of pupils and students for forming the foundation for early awareness."

"Foreign expertise is not responsible for interpreting national history, shaping its narrative, or determining its priorities in the collective consciousness. This is a distinctly national task that begins in the earliest stages of education and continues through secondary school. The goal is to produce cohesive educational outcomes capable of preparing students to meet the challenges of university education, both inside and outside Kuwait."

"Kuwait's cultural and political history includes periods worthy of in-depth study in the curriculum, adapted appropriately for each age group. These periods should then be taught using advanced educational methods that balance historical accuracy with contemporary relevance, without distortion or selective misrepresentation of facts. Foreign expertise can, and indeed should, be utilized in developing school administration, teaching methods, and teacher training programs, based on scientific and methodological principles, to help raise the overall standard of education."

"It is essential to build strong bridges between society, represented by parents and stakeholders in education, and educational decision-makers, ensuring that the process of curriculum development and modernization is based on sound scientific foundations. Politics must be kept out of the curriculum development and modernization process to prevent distortion or selective representation of information. Education, in its essence, is not an experimental field but a major national responsibility. It is a trust placed in those who record history for future generations. Therefore, the Ministry of Education's role in review and oversight is critical to achieving the ultimate goal of curriculum development and preserving the national memory for generations to come."

"Educational reform in Kuwait should be guided by a national vision formalized in a Cabinet-approved document, ensuring that education does not become a laboratory for experiments, but rather follows a stable, unified vision and a systematic plan that is protected from arbitrary change or distortion."

"Similarly, in schools, queuing is observed during morning assemblies, book collection, entering classrooms, and even class participation. This behavior helps instill values of order and discipline in students, preparing them to become responsible individuals in the future. Queuing in government offices facilitates transactions, reduces complaints and congestion, and strengthens trust between citizens and the institution."

"It also enables employees to perform their work efficiently without unnecessary stress. Even in parks, amusement parks, cinemas, and restaurants, queuing is an important behavior that ensures everyone enjoys the service without chaos or inconvenience and demonstrates respect for others."

"Queuing achieves many important goals, most notably ensuring fairness



Dr. Khaled Al-Tarrah



Al-Seyassah photo

Trio nabbed in forgery, fraud

Gang of diesel thieves busted

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: The Criminal Security Department's Forgery and Counterfeiting Unit dismantled a criminal gang involved in fraudulent transactions, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Two members of the gang were arrested at their homes in Hawally and Salmiya, while the third was apprehended at Kuwait International Airport before departing for his home country.

Investigations revealed that the three-member gang, all of Arab nationality, had been carrying out this criminal activity for two years. They rented a floor in a prominent tower in Sharq and routinely sublet the space to multiple companies.

According to a security source, the Forgery and Counterfeiting Department received information about commercial spaces being sublet to multiple companies using the automated code system. The investigation showed that the gang had rented the floor and advertised commercial offices for KD 250 per month to inactive companies needing an office to complete their transactions.

The suspects' locations were identified, and the first two were arrested, while the third was apprehended before leaving Kuwait for his home country.

During searches of the gang members' residences, rental contracts were found, and the accused confessed to their activities. They were presented to the Public Prosecution, which ordered their transfer to the Central Jail pending charges of forgery.

Diesel thieves held: The Security Control Department in Rawdatain apprehended a seven-member gang involved in stealing diesel fuel from the Rawdatain oil field and selling it to black market traders in Abdali and Sabriya, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to security sources, authorities received information regarding the illegal sale of diesel fuel.

A team was formed and successfully arrested the gang members. Cash was found in the suspects' possession, which they con-

fessed was the proceeds from selling the stolen fuel.

The suspects and the seized items were referred to the relevant authorities for further legal action.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed its ongoing security campaigns and commitment to taking firm action against any attempts to exploit national resources or engage in the illicit trade of subsidized commodities.

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Plan pondered to tighten airport, border security

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: General Administration of Customs (GAC) announced that a joint coordination meeting was held with the Ministry of Interior to discuss ways to improve work mechanisms and strengthen security and customs coordination at Kuwait International Airport, as well as the three land border crossings - Nuwaisseeb, Al-Abdali, and Al-Salmi, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The meeting was inaugurated by Saleh Al-Omar, GAC's Vice President for Customs Ports and Investigation Affairs.

The Ministry of Interior was represented by Brigadier General Ali Al-Banna, acting Head of the Ports Security Sector, along with Brigadier General Bader Al-Shaya, Director General of Kuwait International Airport Security, Brigadier General Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Assistant Director General of Land Border Security, and directors of relevant departments.

GAC stated that the meeting covered several topics, including operations at Kuwait International Airport and the land border crossings, methods for improving field procedures, and ways to enhance preparedness and coordination among the relevant authorities to facilitate procedures, strengthen oversight, and achieve the highest levels of performance efficiency.

Police nab wanted man

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Two individuals were detained at the Jahra police station on charges of damaging public property, attempting to escape, and disobeying police instructions, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to security sources, authorities received information about a man whose citizenship had been revoked, was wanted for financial crimes, had an outstanding court order against him, and was hiding at a relative's house.

A team was formed to apprehend the suspect, who attempted to flee. Police officers were surprised when another vehicle, not belonging to the suspect, deliberately rammed their patrol.

Backup was called in, and both the fugitive and the other individual were arrested.

It was revealed that the wanted man had sought the help of a Gulf national friend, who arrived to assist him in escaping and deliberately rammed the patrol.

The sources confirmed that the first accused will be transferred to the Central Jail.

Other Voices

Semaan Ja'ja' 1840

By Ahmad alsarraf

SEMAAN led his herd of a thousand goats across the rugged mountains, leaving his village of Bsharri, situated at an altitude of 1,550 meters, and heading toward the other side of the mountains overlooking the Bekaa Valley, with its green plains, pastures, and milder climate, before the winter snows isolated Bsharri from the world for several months, as was his annual custom.

Just as the snow began to recede and it was time to return to his village, an unforeseen event temporarily halted his journey.

When the obstacle was finally cleared, he was met with an early snowfall, leaving him stranded as the roads back to Bsharri were blocked.

He decided to stay until the following spring. He built a hut for himself and his family in a semi-deserted area called Barqa, using barren stones and hard juniper wood. This wood comes from a perennial resinous tree that grows in Lebanon at altitudes ranging from 1,400 to 2,800 meters above sea level. These trees once covered the mountain slopes, but the Ottomans cut down most of them to use their timber for building railway tracks due to its hardness and resistance to decay.

The landowners noticed the unusual shepherd, his family, and their goats on their territory. Their leader, from the Harfoush clan, sent his soldiers to expel them.

The Harfoush clan was the most prominent Shiite clan to rule the Bekaa Valley in the 17th and 18th centuries, tracing its lineage to the Khuza'a tribe, whose influence extended throughout the Bekaa Valley.

Semaan learned of the approaching soldiers and fled, hiding in a nearby cave. The soldiers ordered the mother and her children to leave the area immediately, demolished their small hut, and gave them some time to gather their flock of goats.

The mother, Warda, asked them to stay a little longer and share her food. Driven by hunger, they accepted her invitation. Emboldened, she decided to slaughter one of her goats and a sheep for them.

They were overjoyed by her hospitality and deeply moved by her generosity despite their mistreatment of her in terms of destroying her home and frightening her children, consulted among themselves. They decided to allow her to stay until her husband returned and agreed to inform their leader of their request.

Semaan returned from his hiding place after the soldiers had left and decided to remain in the area, never to return to Bsharri. The region was beautiful and fertile, with rich pastures and a milder climate than that of his village.

This took place in 1840. Today, thanks to Warda's wisdom, the town of Barqa in the Baalbek-Hermel district has a population of approximately 3,000, with Maronites making up over 85 percent of the residents.

All are members of the Ja'ja' family, and like the rest of the "tribes," Many bear Arabic names such as Hisham, Hamdan, and Rakan.

Barqa is now known as a tourist destination, especially for hiking and mountaineering enthusiasts.

Located just 11 kilometers from the town of Deir al-Ahmar, Barqa is famous for its apple, cherry, and almond orchards, as well as its vineyards, which are cultivated by local Muslim residents and sold to Maronites for the production of high-quality Barqa wine.

The town is also home to several well-known Maronite churches, schools, and production facilities.

□ □ □

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Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

LOCAL

Crown Prince, PM extend greetings

Kuwait's HH Amir congratulates Lithuania on Independence Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Monday to Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the President of Lithuania lasting health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity for his country and people. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable on Monday to Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

Talks follow up on joint initiatives

GCC Sec-Gen Al-Budaiwi meets with EU Special Representative

RIYADH, Feb 16, (KUNA): Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jasem Al-Budaiwi met with the European Union (EU) Special Representative for the Gulf Luigi Di Maio on Saturday on the sidelines of the 62nd Munich Security Conference in Germany.

During the meeting, they reviewed the trajectory of relations between the GCC and the EU, exploring ways to enhance and develop them across various fields of mutual interest to meet the aspirations of both sides for a more comprehensive and effective partnership.

The discussion also addressed the follow-up mechanism for the outcomes of the 29th Joint GCC-EU Ministerial Meeting, hosted by Kuwait in October 2025, and the ongoing efforts to implement the agreed-upon joint initiatives and projects.

Both sides emphasised the significance of strengthening coordina-

KUNA photo
Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Jassim Al-Budaiwi, with the European Union's Special Envoy for the Gulf, Luigi Di Maio.

tion and consultation mechanisms to contribute to solidifying security and stability, supporting sustainable development paths, and achieving the mutual interests of the GCC and EU member states.

Kuwaiti Prime Minister launches Nayef Light Ammunition Factory

First-of-its-kind project boosts national defense industry

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): Under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Nayef Light Ammunition Factory was inaugurated on Monday, a step aimed at strengthening Kuwait's national defense capabilities.

The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Defense, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense, Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Mubarak Abdullah Al-Sabah, and several senior Kuwaiti Armed Forces commanders.

During the event, His Highness the Prime Minister pressed the operational button, marking the official launch of the factory's light ammunition production line.

He also toured the facility and received a briefing on the project, which represents the Ministry of Defense's first experience in ammunition manufacturing in Kuwait and the first of its kind in the country.

His Highness reviewed the production stages and mechanisms, which are carried out in accordance with the highest standards of quality and safety, in line with the requirements of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for light ammunition manufacturing.

In a press statement, the Prime Minister expressed pride in inaugurating this national industrial landmark, describing it as a strategic addition to Kuwait's defense capabilities and a reflection of the state's firm commitment to enhancing its security and military system in line with advanced technical standards.



PM Diwan photos
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah sponsors and attends the opening ceremony of the Nayef Light Ammunition Factory.

General Eng. Salah Saud Al-Azmi said that the project reflects the political leadership's vision and is among the key initiatives aimed at enhancing the overall performance of the Armed Forces. He noted that it meets the essential needs of security agencies and opens prospects for developing ammunition and training a generation capable of designing, building, and operating such vital projects.

Chinese Consul to Kuwait Liu Xiang also addressed the ceremony, praising the historic ties between the

two friendly countries and noting that the establishment of the factory elevates the strategic partnership between Kuwait and China.

For his part, CEO of China North Industries Corporation (NORINCO) Ji Wei said the factory stands as a testament to building an independent and sustainable national defense industry, affirming continued cooperation with Kuwaiti partners to produce high-quality ammunition, transfer managerial and technical expertise, and train national cadres.



Proceedings of the 16th meeting of the Technical Committee on Intellectual Property at the League of Arab States.

Driving innovation, global recognition

Kuwait joins Arab League push to advance regional IP systems

CAIRO, Feb 16, (KUNA): The Arab League's Technical Committee on Intellectual Property (TCIP) launched its 16th meeting on Sunday with Kuwait taking part, focusing on advancing intellectual property systems across Arab countries and strengthening regional coordination in this field.

Speaking at the opening session, Arab League Director of the Legal Affairs Department Dr. Maha Bakheit affirmed the league's commitment to supporting and developing intellectual property frameworks.

Bakheit noted that recent months have shown significant progress in Arab intellectual property, according to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and international indicators, several Arab states have improved their global innovation rankings, increased registrations for patents and trademarks, and placed a greater focus on copyright and the creative industries. She welcomed the recent Arab accessions to WIPO treaties, like the Madrid Protocol, describing it as great commitment of integrating into the global protection system and facilitating innovators' access to international markets.

She added that the League, in cooperation with national IP offices, are working to support the inclusion of new languages within international IP systems, to facilitate access, and reduce costs. She explained that the meeting agenda includes several key items, notably the cooperation agreement on the Arab Electronic IP Register project, promot-



KUNA photos
Representative of the State of Kuwait at the 16th meeting of the Technical Committee on Intellectual Property in Cairo.

ing multilingualism and developing a practical guide on protecting intellectual property rights in the digital environment.

She praised the efforts of national IP offices in Arab countries and their role in shaping unified Arab positions at international forums, expressing hope that the meeting will produce practical recommendations that boost innovation and creativity in the Arab world.

Kuwait is represented at the meeting by the Manager of Copyright Department at Kuwait National Library, Athari Alhayef.

25 bakeries to ease shortages**IICO, WFP step up Gaza food aid**

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): The International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) announced Monday the implementation of a relief project to operate 25 bakeries in the Gaza Strip in partnership with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

The initiative comes as part of IICO's efforts to mitigate the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza since October 2023, which has severely undermined food security amid blockade conditions, damaged infrastructure, fuel shortages and lack of basic supplies.

In a press statement, IICO said the project aims to provide bread free of charge, particularly following the shutdown of several bakeries, flour shortages and soaring prices beyond residents' means.

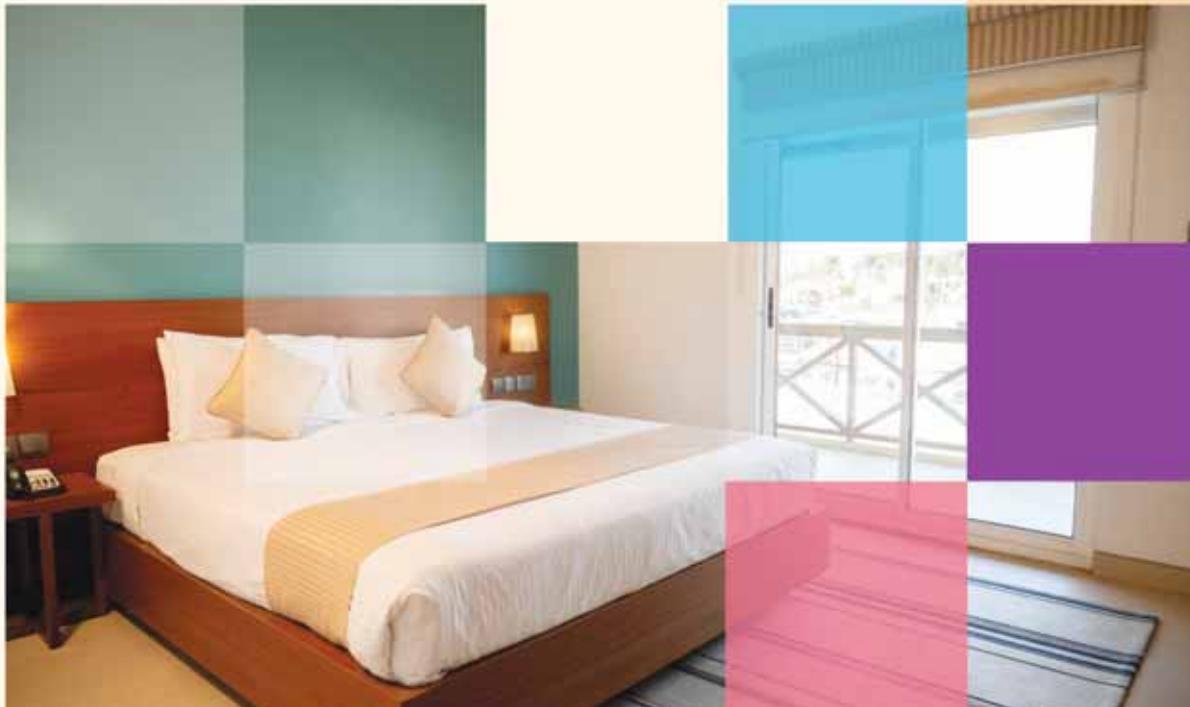
The project includes supplying around 190 tons of wheat flour and essential production materials to operate the bakeries for one full month, ensuring daily and

regular bread distribution to 19,019 displaced persons across various areas of the Strip.

Total project cost stands at KD 184,570 (approx. USD 602,000), with KD 305 (approx. USD 990) sufficient to provide bread for nearly 1,000 people, reflecting the project's efficiency in translating donations into direct humanitarian impact.

IICO estimated total beneficiaries at approximately 570,570 people, noting the initiative not only secures food but also helps curb malnutrition, ease pressure on the health sector and provide a measure of stability for families facing dire humanitarian conditions.

The organization affirmed that supporting bakery operations in Gaza constitutes an urgent humanitarian response to save lives, preserve dignity and strengthen the resilience of affected families, urging donors to continue backing its relief efforts in the Strip.



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LOCAL

ABEGS and Ministry of Education promote dialogue, education and cultural awareness

Kuwait marks national holidays through art and music for peace

By Inas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: The art exhibition and concert, "From Kuwait ... Peace," was launched Sunday in celebration of the national holidays, depicting the values of peace and openness for which Kuwait is renowned.

The event was organized in cooperation with the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) and under the patronage of Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei.

Also in attendance were Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs Hamad Al-Hamad — who represented the minister, Director of ABEGS Dr. Mohammad Al-Shuraika, several ambassadors of Arab and foreign countries, as well as diplomatic, academic and intellectual figures.

In his opening remarks, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs Hamad Al-Hamad conveyed the greetings of the minister on the occasion of the national holidays. He described the celebration as "a moment of collective awareness that renews the meanings of belongingness and responsibility, and recalls the journey that made Kuwait a nation firmly rooted in its values, balanced in its pride in identity, and open to humanity."

Al-Hamad stressed that investing in culture and the arts is, in essence, an investment in societal awareness and in building a value system that promotes peace and co-existence.

He affirmed the commitment of the ministry to integrate the roles of education and culture, based on its conviction that human development extends beyond formal instruction to nurturing emotions, refining aesthetic appreciation, and instilling national and universal values.



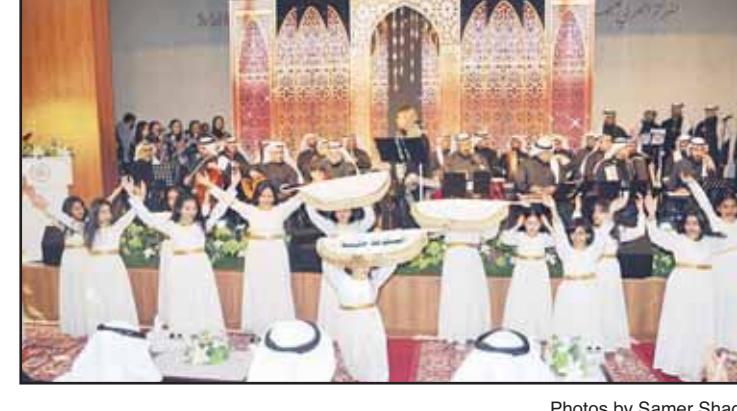
Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Educational Affairs, Hamad Al-Hamad inaugurates the 'From Kuwait ... Peace' art exhibition and concert.



Diplomats, cultural figures, and officials attend the 'From Kuwait ... Peace' event, highlighting Kuwait's commitment to education, arts, and cultural dialogue.



Kuwaiti musicians and singers perform at the 'From Kuwait ... Peace' concert, celebrating the nation's values of harmony, cultural openness, and artistic expression during the national holidays.



Photos by Samer Shaqair

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait courts

In the Travel Ban Section, a total of 6,458 procedures were completed. Orders to lift travel bans topped the list with 2,599 or 40.2 percent of the total. This entails financial settlement or the fulfillment of obligations.

The Capital Governorate recorded the highest percentage of these procedures at 38.8 percent, followed by the outlying governorates at 30 percent, and the remaining percentage distributed among the other governorates.

The Rental Section recorded 12,976 procedures. Fee collection receipts ranked first with 39.8 percent, while the file joining and consolidation procedures, as well as receipts for warnings or judgments, recorded the lowest percentage.

The Capital Governorate ranked first in this section with 53.8 percent, followed by Farwaniya and Hawally governorates, then Ahmadi, Jahra and Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorates.

In the Inheritance Section, a total of 1,998 procedures were processed. Disbursement forms and disbursement confirmation orders accounted for 29.4 percent each, followed by disbursement authorizations with 29.2 percent.

The Jahra Governorate ranked first with 34.2 percent, followed by the Capital Governorate with 32.2 percent.

Regarding the advertising sector, 4,383 electronic notices were received and 3,500 of which were completed -- 79.9 percent completion rate.

Completion rates varied among the courts, with Ahmadi Court achieving 100 percent and the Capital Governorate recording 60 percent.

As for traditional notices, 12,476 notices were received and 11,011 of which were completed -- 88.3 percent completion rate.

The Capital Governorate and Jahra governors ranked first with 97 percent completion rate each.

The completion rate for electronic notices in the Family Court reached 88.4 percent, while traditional notices achieved a high completion rate of 99 percent -- showing procedural efficiency in this sector, which is related to family rights.

In a legal analysis of these figures, Attorney Enam Haidar confirmed to the newspaper that the rise in the rate of enforcement proceedings against debtors' assets held by third parties entails a growing trend towards activating enforcement mechanisms.

She pointed out that this is an affirmation of the commitment of creditors to obtain their rights through legal channels, under judicial oversight of the procedures.

Attorney Jarrah Al-Wawan explained that the disparity in the completion rates of electronic notifications in the courts proves the importance of accelerating the digital transformation and standardizing work mechanisms. He stressed that judicial notification is vital in ensuring the validity of litigation and due process.

Attorney Jassim Bandar pointed out that the figures recorded in the Family Court enforcement, particularly the payment orders, indicate the high volume of judgments related to alimony and family obligations.

He asserted that the speed of enforcement in this type of case impacts social stability, hence, the need for continuous development of the enforcement system to achieve balance between effectiveness and legal safeguards.

According to observers, these indicators reflect an increased pace of work in various enforcement sectors, in line

with the efforts of the ministry to increase procedural efficiency and expedite the enforcement of judgments. They said this will boost confidence in the judicial system and guarantee the stability of transactions.

The Family Court executed a total of 62,866 enforcement procedures within the same month. Disbursement orders topped the list at 32.5 percent, while renewals of arrest warrants for debtors accounted for the lowest percentage at 0.003 percent.

The Capital Governorate Court handled 30.6 percent of the total procedures, followed by the Hawally and Ahmadi governorates.

Death sentence

The court affirmed that the crime was premeditated and deliberate, justifying the decision to impose the maximum penalty on the defendant as per Kuwaiti law.

Despite the plea for leniency by the defense lawyer citing the social and psychological condition of the defendant, the court upheld the maximum sentence, stressing the need to apply the law for societal protection and deterrence.

FM reaffirms

Al-Bahar added that the Fund's projects embody Kuwait's humanitarian message based on the principle of "Partners in Development," reaffirming its role as a key arm of Kuwait's foreign policy in strengthening ties with brotherly and friendly nations.

He noted that the annual ceremony represents a renewed opportunity to strengthen bonds among the Fund's family members and to reaffirm commitment to responsible and distinguished performance, honoring past contributions while encouraging future generations to continue the path of development and giving.

2 eclipses,

He explained that the main path of the annular eclipse will be centered over Antarctica and will extend to parts of South Africa and Chile. This will be the first solar eclipse visible globally this year.

An annular eclipse is characterized by an optical phenomenon known as a "ring of fire," where the moon does not completely cover the sun's disk due to its relative distance from Earth, leaving a bright ring around the dark lunar disk. The path of the annular eclipse extends approximately 4,282 kilometers. The eclipse will be partially visible across a wide geographical area, with the sun appearing partially obscured by the moon in regions including all of Antarctica, Southeast Africa, the southern tip of South America, and large parts of the Pacific, Indian, Atlantic, and Southern Oceans.

The highest percentage of solar disk coverage will reach about 88 percent in the Australian Heard and McDonald Islands, as well as in the French Southern Territories and Antarctica.

Regarding the total lunar eclipse, Al-Ojeiri explained that the moon will turn a dark red color, known as a "blood moon". This phenomenon will last for about 58 minutes and will be visible in parts of western North America, Australia, New Zealand, and East Asia. The total lunar eclipse will occur on Tuesday, March 3, at approximately 2:00 pm Kuwait time, but it will not

be visible from Kuwait. Visibility will be concentrated over the Pacific Ocean and western North America.

He highlighted that about 1.5 percent of the moon's diameter will enter the Earth's shadow, leading to the complete disappearance of the moon's disk at the peak of the eclipse.

Belgium delays

He added that keeping the embassy in Kuwait has political significance, given the geopolitically sensitive location of Kuwait in the Gulf region. He pointed out that a presence on the ground provides a direct and accurate understanding of developments, which cannot be compensated by managing relations from another country.

On the economic front, he said Kuwait has essential presence in Belgium, with more than 500 Kuwaiti-owned gas stations, in addition to investments in the petrochemical sector near the port of Antwerp -- a major economic powerhouse in Belgium.

He also cited the investments of the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) in Belgium, while declining to disclose specific figures due to their confidential nature.

He discussed the potential for enhanced cooperation between the Port of Antwerp-Bruges and Kuwaiti ports, in light of major projects such as the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port. He indicated that the Kuwaiti side confirmed opportunities for European companies to act as subcontractors in these projects.

He also revealed his efforts to persuade major Belgian companies operating in other Gulf countries to enter the Kuwaiti market, affirming that these companies enjoy a distinguished international reputation for their work on major projects worldwide.

Regarding the impact of the potential closure of the embassy, he admitted that the uncertainty already affected some aspects, such as the decrease in visa applications, due to the belief among some that the embassy was on the verge of closing. He explained that one of his objectives in announcing the postponement was to reassure the public that the embassy is currently operating and is not a "caretaker mission."

He stated that he is working hard to arrange high-level visits, including the Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister and the Belgian Prime Minister, to strengthen political communication, given the current high-level diplomatic activity in Kuwait.

He reiterated that he is hoping to maintain the embassy in Kuwait, considering the current phase presents an opportunity to revitalize bilateral relations politically, economically and culturally, and to demonstrate the importance of continuous diplomatic representation between the two countries.

On the canceled and newly established missions, he disclosed that diplomatic missions will open in Oman and Albania, and that a permanent representative will be appointed to the African Union in Addis Ababa, Namibia and Uzbekistan.

He also mentioned the appointment of an ambassador to Syria, based in Beirut. He added the diplomatic missions that will be canceled include those in Sarajevo, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Havana, Rio de Janeiro and Guangzhou.

firmed that Kuwait, throughout its modern history, has stood as a model of a State that believes in the transformative power of education and culture in shaping individuals, reinforcing the sense of belongingness,

and instilling human values—while harmonizing pride in national identity with a thoughtful openness to the wider world.

Al-Shuraika disclosed that for about five decades, ABEGS played

'Endowment forum charts sustainable development'

Generosity fuels social progress



KUNA photo

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi, on Monday, described the Endowment Forum as a platform to assess the progress of endowment work, explore future prospects and reinforce its role as a pillar of sustainable development and human investment.

Kuwaitis have been inherently devoted to extending a helping hand, making generosity a defining feature of Kuwait's national identity, he remarked.

He stated this during the opening of the 28th Endowment Forum, organized by the General Secretariat of Awqaf under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Representing His Highness the Amir, the minister conveyed His Highness' greetings and sincere wishes for the forum's success in serving Kuwait and further advancing the noble mission of endowment.

Father Bigoul Anba Bishoy offers Ramadan greetings to Kuwait's leadership and people

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Father Bigoul Anba Bishoy, a senior priest of St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Kuwait, congratulated the State of Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people, as well as all residents of this blessed land on

the approaching holy month of Ramadan, and wished the country continued security, stability, progress, and prosperity.

In a press release, Father Bigoul extended his heartiest congratulations to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (may God protect him), His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (may God protect him), His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (may God protect him), the government of the State of Kuwait and all its institutions.

He prayed that God would return the blessed month to Kuwait and its people with goodness and blessings.

Father Bigoul explained that the holy month of Ramadan renews the values of mercy and purity and reinforces compassion, tolerance, and solidarity. The most beautiful aspect of this month is that it highlights the shared humanity among people and unites hearts through goodness and kindness.

Kuwait, known for its genuine commitment to coexistence and mutual respect, presents a refined humanitarian image during Ramadan, reflected

in its social customs. Among the most notable are visits to diwaniyas (traditional Kuwaiti gathering places) and Ramadan iftars (fast-breaking meals), which bring people closer, strengthen the spirit of unity, create social cohesion, and affirm that this nation, through the love of its people, warmly embraces everyone. These authentic social traditions make Ramadan in Kuwait an exceptional occasion, embodying the spirit of one family and a compassionate society. They reinforce the values of participation and solidarity, making everyone feel like partners in a single nation and shared journey.

Father Bigoul concluded his greetings with a prayer that God protect and bless the two sisterly countries - Kuwait and Egypt - and safeguard humanity from all harm. He prayed that God grant everyone health and safety and that He return this holy month to all with goodness and blessings.

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No clear path to ending partial govt shutdown as lawmakers dig in over DHS oversight

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla., Feb 16, (AP): Lawmakers and the White House offered no signs of compromise Sunday in their battle over oversight of federal immigration officers that has led to a pause in funding for the Department of Homeland Security.

A partial government shutdown began Saturday after congressional Democrats and President Donald Trump's team failed to reach a deal on legislation to fund the department through September. Democrats are demanding changes to how immigration operations are conducted after the fatal shootings of US citizens Alex Pretti and Renee Good by federal officers in Minneapolis last month.

Congress is on recess until Feb 23, and both sides appear dug into their positions. The impasse affects agencies such as the Transportation Security Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, US Coast Guard, the Secret Service, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and US Customs and Border Protection.

The work at ICE and CBP goes on unabated because Trump's tax and spending cut law from 2025 provided billions more to those agencies that can be tapped for deportation operations. About 90% of DHS employees were to continue working during the shutdown, but do so without pay - and missed paychecks could mean financial hardships. Last year there was a record 43-day government shutdown.

White House border czar Tom Homan said the administration was unwilling to agree to Democrats' demands that federal officers clearly identify themselves, remove masks during operations and display unique ID numbers.

"I don't like the masks, either," Homan said. But, he said, "These men and women have to protect themselves."

Democrats also want to require immigration agents to wear body cameras and mandate judicial warrants for arrests on private property.



An information screen is displayed in Terminal 1 at O'Hare International Airport, in Chicago on Feb 15. (AP)

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Democrats are only asking for federal agents to abide by rules followed by law enforcement agencies around the country.

"And the question that Americans are asking is, 'Why aren't Republicans going along with these commonsense proposals?'" Schumer said. "They're not crazy. They're not way out. They're what every police department in America does."

Sen Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., said he could back Democrats calls to equip immigration officers with body cameras and would support efforts to bolster training. But he balked at their demands that federal officers remove masks and clearly identify themselves, noting some officers taking part in immigration enforcement operations have faced doxing and other harassment.

"What are you going to do, expose their faces so you can intimidate their families?" Mullins said. "What we want is ICE to be able to do their job. And we would love for local law enforcement and for states to cooperate with us."

Republican Sen Katie Britt of Alabama, a Trump ally who had pushed for a two-week extension of DHS funding while negotiations continued, said it was "shortsighted of Democrats to walk away" from talks.

Trump made enforcement of the nation's immigration laws a centerpiece of his 2024 campaign for the White House and he promised to be aggressive in detaining and deporting people living in the United States without legal permission.

DHS reports it has deported more than 675,000 migrants since Trump's return to office last year and claims some 2.2 million others have "self-deported" as the Republican president has made his immigration crackdown a priority.

"President Trump is not going to back away from the mission, the mission that American people said they wanted him to complete, and that is securing our border and making sure that we actually do interior enforcement," Britt said.

Homan was on CBS' "Face the Nation," Schumer and Mullin appeared on CNN's "State of the Union" and Britt was interviewed on "Fox News Sunday."

'Enforcement would not stop in Twin Cities'

'Small' security force will remain in Minnesota: WH border czar

WASHINGTON, Feb 16, (AP): White House border czar Tom Homan said Sunday that more than 1,000 immigration agents have left Minnesota's Twin Cities area and hundreds more will depart in the days ahead as part of the Trump administration's drawdown of its immigration enforcement surge.

A "small" security force will stay for a short period to protect remaining immigration agents and will respond "when our agents are out and they get surrounded by agitators and things got out of control," Homan told CBS' "Face the Nation." He did not define "small."

He also said agents will keep investigating fraud allegations as well as the anti-immigration enforcement protest that disrupted a service at a church service.

"We already removed well over 1,000 people, and as of Monday, Tuesday, we'll remove several hundred more," Homan said. "We'll get back to the original footprint."

Thousands of officers were sent to the Minneapolis and St. Paul area for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's "Operation Metro Surge." The Department of Homeland Security said it was its largest immigration enforcement operation ever and proved successful. But the crackdown came under increasing criticism as the situation grew more volatile and two US citizens were killed.

Protests became common. A network of residents worked to help immigrants, warn of approaching agents



White House border czar Tom Homan holds a news conference at the Bishop Whipple Federal building on Feb 12, in Minneapolis. (AP)

or film immigration officers' actions.

The shooting deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal officers drew condemnation and raised questions over officers' conduct, prompting changes to the operation.

Homan announced last week that 700 federal officers would leave Minnesota immediately, but that still left more than 2,000 in the state. He said Thursday that a "significant drawdown" was already underway and would continue through this week.

Homan said enforcement would not stop in the Twin Cities and that mass

deportations will continue across the country. Officers leaving Minnesota will report back to their stations or be assigned elsewhere.

When asked if future deployments could match the scale of the Twin Cities operation, Homan said "it depends on the situation."

As the Trump administration's immigration crackdown in Minnesota winds down, Minneapolis will need to decide how to manage makeshift memorials for two US citizens killed by federal agents last month.

Piles of flowers, signs and artwork

swiftly formed to commemorate the lives of Renee Good and Alex Pretti at the locations where they were fatally shot. The memorials are the site of candlelight vigils and musical performances and draw a regular stream of visitors.

The public grieving spots echo the community-driven memorial to George Floyd, who was murdered in 2020 by a police officer less than one mile (1.61 kilometers) from Good's killing. It took the city more than five years to figure out how to officially memorialize the site of George Floyd Square, and construction is set to begin this year.

Now, the city has two more high-profile memorials to manage.

A memorial for Good sprung up within hours of her Jan. 7 killing on a Minneapolis street.

And before the smell of tear gas used by federal agents had dissipated on the day of Pretti's killing on Jan. 24, Minneapolis protesters were already using branches, police tape and candles to mark the space. Later, people placed crosses, stuffed animals, American flags and images of Pretti.

Minneapolis resident Karel Hoffmann said that while she remained outraged with Good and Pretti's killings, the memorials represented community solidarity.

"This is so unfair, the trauma, for everyone, is too much," Hoffmann said as she visited Pretti's memorial recently. "We're all in this together. And I'm really glad they have this here so everybody can come and be together."

Avalanche kills 2 skiers in Italy

ROME, Feb 16, (AP): An off-trail avalanche killed two skiers and injured another on Sunday on the Italian side of the Mont Blanc massif, near the border between France and Switzerland, officials said.

At least three skiers were caught up in Sunday morning's avalanche in the Couloir Vesses, a well-known freeride route in Courmayeur, in the upper Val Veny, according to Italy's Alpine Rescue.

One of the victims was taken to a hospital in serious condition but later died, the agency said. Fifteen rescuers, three canine units and two helicopters took part in the search and rescue efforts.

Courmayeur, a town with about 2,900 inhabitants, is some 200 kilometers (124 miles) northwest of Milan, one of the venues hosting the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics.

Another person was partially buried by an avalanche in Trentino, but was rescued by his companions, authorities reported Sunday.

A record 13 backcountry skiers, climbers and hikers died in the Italian mountains over a week ending Feb. 8, Alpine Rescue said last Monday, including 10 in avalanches triggered by an exceptionally unstable snowpack.



This handout image released by the Italian Alpine Rescue shows the avalanche that killed two men in the Couloir Vesses, a well-known free-ride route in Courmayeur, in the upper Val Veny, northern Italy on Feb 16. (AP)

Expectations low for latest US-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine, Feb 16, (AP): A Ukrainian delegation was heading to Geneva on Monday for another round of US-brokered talks with Russian officials, ahead of next week's fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

There was no anticipation of any significant progress on ending the war at the Tuesday-Wednesday meeting in Switzerland as both sides appear to be sticking to their negotiating positions on key issues, despite the United States setting a June deadline to reach a settlement. The future of Ukrainian land that Russia occupies or still covets is a central issue.

Ukrainian defenders remain locked in a war of attrition with Russia's bigger army along the roughly 1,250-kilometer (750-mile) front line. Ukrainian civilians endure Russian aerial barrages that repeatedly knock out power and smash homes, while Ukraine has developed drones that can fly deep into Russian territory and strike oil refineries and arms depots.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, emergency services personnel work to extinguish a fire at a house following a Russian air attack in Barvinkove, Kharkiv region, Ukraine on Feb 11. (AP)

Rubio plugs Orbán's bid for another term after April elections during Budapest visit

BUDAPEST, Hungary, Feb 16, (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday enthusiastically endorsed Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's bid to serve a fifth straight term after upcoming elections in April, emphasizing during a visit to Budapest the strong personal relationship between the nationalist leader and US President Donald Trump.

Orbán, who has led Hungary since 2010, is one of Trump's most vocal supporters in the European Union, and has actively courted the US president's favor leading up to the April 12 vote in which he will face the toughest challenge of his last 16 years in power.

Rubio was in the Hungarian capital for meetings with Orbán and his government where he signed an agreement on US-Hungarian civilian nuclear cooperation that includes the possible purchase of compact nuclear reactors - known as small modular reactors or SMRs - as well as US-supplied nuclear fuel and spent fuel storage technology.

At a news conference in Budapest, Rubio said US-Hungary relations - which both he and Orbán described as experiencing a "golden age" under Trump - go beyond mere diplomatic cooperation.

"I'm going to be very blunt with you," Rubio said. "The prime minister and the president have a very, very close personal relationship and working relationship, and I think it has been beneficial to our two countries."



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, (left), and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán shake hands after a news conference in Budapest, Hungary on Feb 16. (AP)

"That person-to-person connection that you've established with the president has made all the difference in the world in building this relationship," Rubio continued, addressing Orbán. "President Trump is deeply committed to your success because your success is our success."

Rubio's stop in Hungary followed a visit to Slovakia on Sunday after he previously attended the Munich Security Conference in Germany.

Led by euroskeptic populists who oppose support for Ukraine and vocal-

ly back Trump, Slovakia and Hungary are both friendly territory for Rubio in his push to shore up energy agreements with both Central European countries.

Widely considered Russian President Vladimir Putin's most reliable advocate in the EU, Orbán has maintained warm relations with the Kremlin despite its war against Ukraine while building ties with Trump and his MAGA - short for the 2016 Trump campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" - movement.

Thousands of Czechs rally in support of leader Pavel

PRAGUE, Feb 16, (AP): Thousands of demonstrators gathered across the Czech Republic on Sunday to voice their support for President Petr Pavel in his dispute with the country's foreign minister.

Organizers from the Million Moments for Democracy non-governmental group said rallies took place in some 400 municipalities, including the second largest city of Brno. The demonstrators followed tens of thousands who rallied in Prague two weeks ago.

Pavel's refusal to appoint a government minister representing the right-wing Motorists for Themselves Euro-skeptical party, which is led by Foreign Minister Petr Macinka, is at the core of the dispute.

Pavel said Filip Turek was ineligible to become the environment minister after a daily published posts from his Facebook page found to be racist, homophobic and sexist.

Turek apologized for some posts but denied posting others.

Macinka accused the president of violating the country's constitution and threatened him with consequences if he failed to appoint his controversial associate. Pavel accused Macinka of blackmailing him.



People demonstrate in support of Czech President Petr Pavel in Pardubice, East Bohemia, Czech Republic on Feb 15. (AP)

Asia

Myanmar expels East Timor's top diplomat: Myanmar's military government ordered East Timor's senior diplomat to leave the country after judicial authorities from the fellow Southeast Asian country accepted a criminal complaint against Myanmar's armed forces, state media said Monday.

The move sharply escalates tensions between the two countries and is a rare step between members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which East Timor joined only last year.

There was no immediate response from East Timor's government to efforts to contact it by phone and online for comment.

East Timor, also known as Timor Leste, is Asia's youngest nation. It gained independence from Indonesia in 2002.

A statement from Myanmar's Foreign Ministry, published in the state-run Myanma Alinn newspaper, said East Timor's President José Ramos-Horta engaged in mid-January with the members of the Chin Human Rights Organization, which documents alleged abuses especially in Myanmar's northwestern Chin state. (AP)

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Major parties lose ground in NZ's latest poll: Support for New Zealand's two main political parties has slipped, while New Zealand First has surged into double digits, according to a new political poll on Monday.

The survey of 1,003 eligible voters conducted between Feb. 7 and 11 showed the ruling National Party down two points to 34 percent and the opposition Labour Party down three points to 32 percent.

The Green Party rose four points to 11 percent, New Zealand First gained one point to 10 percent, ACT increased one point to 9 percent, and Te Pati Maori (the Maori Party) edged up to 2 percent, according to the latest iNews Verian poll.

Based on these results, the governing National-ACT-New Zealand First bloc would hold a comfortable 65-seat majority over the left bloc's 59 seats, it said. (Xinhua)

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Myanmar military leader Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing visits a polling station during the final round of general election in Mandalay, central Myanmar, on Jan 25. (AP)

Bondi terror attack suspect appears in court: A man accused of killing 15 people in a mass shooting at a festival on Sydney's Bondi Beach appeared in court Monday for the first time since his release from the hospital.

Naveed Akram appeared in Sydney's Downing Center Local Court via a video link from the maximum security Goulburn Correctional Center 200 kilometers (120 miles) away.

He did not enter pleas to the charges against him, including murder and com-

mitting a terrorist act. The brief court appearance focused on extending a gag order that suppresses the identities of victims and survivors of the attack who have not chosen to identify themselves publicly.

Defense lawyer Ben Archbold told reporters outside court that Akram was doing as well as could be expected and it was too early to indicate any intention of pleas.

Akram, 24, was wounded and his father Sajid Akram, 50, was killed in a gunbattle with police after the attack on a Hanukkah celebration at the beach Dec 14. (AP)

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2 US Marines referred to prosecutors for theft in Tokyo: Two US Marines based in western Japan are suspected of breaking into restaurants in central Tokyo and stealing cash, a case that was recently referred to prosecutors, local media reported Sunday.

In the case referred to prosecutors on Friday, the two men, aged 26 and 20, allegedly stole a total of 27,000 yen (about 176 US dollars) from cash registers at two restaurants in Tokyo's Kabukicho nightife district on the morning of Dec 24, Kyodo News reported, citing Tokyo police.

The police also suspect their involvement in a same-day theft of more than 10 million yen at another Kabukicho restaurant. (Xinhua)

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Double-decker bus overturns in Thailand, 40 injured: A double-decker bus overturned in southern Thailand on Sunday, resulting in injuries to more than 40 people, among whom over 10 were seriously injured, according to Thai media reports.

Local media Khao Sod reported that police in southern Thailand's Trang Province received a case report stating that a double-decker bus had overturned on a road in the province that day.

The bus, with 52 people on board, set off from Phuket on Saturday and was originally scheduled to arrive in Betong District, Yala Province, on Sunday at noon.

The injured have been sent to the hospital for treatment, and the cause of the accident is still under investigation. The passengers on the vehicle said that the driver might have been driving under fatigue. (Xinhua)

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Fire performers carry a dragon during a molten iron fireworks performance known as 'fire dragon steel flowers' ahead of Lunar New Year celebrations at an amusement park on the outskirts of Beijing on Feb 14. (AP)

8 dead, 2 injured in China fireworks store explosion

An explosion and its resulting blaze at a fireworks retail store in Dong'an Village, Donghai County of east China's Jiangsu Province, left eight people dead and two others with minor burns Sunday afternoon, according to local authorities of Donghai County.

The blast occurred at around 2:30 pm Sunday, triggered by a villager's improperly setting off fire-

works near the store. The resulting fire was extinguished by approximately 4:00 pm following prompt rescue efforts.

Those responsible for the incident have been taken into custody. An investigation into the exact cause of the accident and follow-up responses are currently underway.

Setting off firecrackers at midnight on the Lunar New Year is a tradition in China, but many places have banned fireworks in recent years, at least in part because of air pollution. They may make a comeback in some places after some governments eased their bans last year.

The Lunar New Year, also known as the Spring Festival in China, falls on Tuesday. It will mark the start of the year of the horse in the Chinese zodiac. (Agencies)

South Africa will deploy troops to fight gang violence, says president

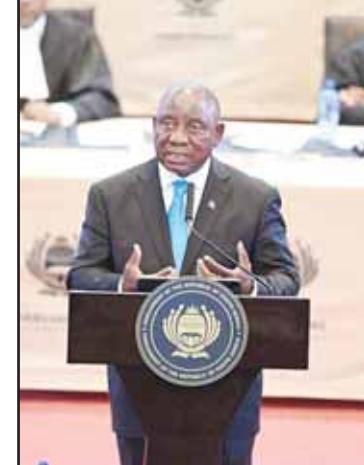
JOHANNESBURG, Feb 16, (Agencies): South Africa's president said that the country would send its troops into communities to help police fight the scourge of illegal mining and gang violence in its two provinces with the two biggest cities.

According to South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, "organized crime is now the most immediate threat to our democracy," endangering both economic stability and public safety, particularly in Gauteng and the Western Cape.

"Children here in the Western Cape are caught in the crossfire of gang wars. People are chased out of their homes by illegal miners in Gauteng," he told Parliament in his annual State of the Union address. As a result, "I will be deploying the South African National Defence Force to support the police," Ramaphosa said.

South Africa has one of the highest homicide rates in the world, with an average of around 63 killings per day in 2025. Guns are the most commonly used weapon, according to authorities, and illegal firearms are used in many crimes, despite the stringent rules governing gun ownership.

Authorities in South Africa have



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa gives his State of the Nation address in Cape Town, South Africa, on Feb 12. (AP)

long struggled to prevent gangs of miners from entering some of the 6,000 closed or abandoned mines in the gold-rich nation to search for remaining reserves. The government claims that the miners, referred to as

"zama zamas," or "hustlers" in Zulu, are typically armed, undocumented foreign nationals who are involved in crime syndicates. In 2024 alone, South Africa lost over \$3 billion in gold to the illegal trade, according to authorities.

Ramaphosa said to combat the negative effects of rising crime rates on people's lives, the government is prioritizing technology-driven intelligence and coordinated law enforcement against criminal syndicates.

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"Also:

DAR ES SALAAM: Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan has advanced the country's economic diplomacy through a series of bilateral talks on the sidelines of the 39th African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa, the Directorate of Presidential Communications said Sunday.

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Boursa Kuwait closes higher

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): The Boursa Kuwait ended Monday's trading session on a positive note, with its general index climbing 22.95 points, or 0.27 percent, to reach 8,682.29 points.

Trading activity saw 198.2 million shares exchanged through 13,931 cash transactions, with a

total value of KD 67.19 million (about USD 205 million). The Main Market Index edged up by 8.93 points, or 0.11 percent, settling at 8,067.38 points. Trading on this market included 69.2 million shares across 5,415 deals worth KD 13.3 million (approximately USD 40.5 million).

Business

In collaboration with KFAS

KFH promotes a culture of creativity in the 2025 Innovation Challenge program

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) concluded its participation in the 10th "Innovation Challenge 2025" program, organized by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) in partnership with Imperial Executive Education. The program emphasized the importance of teamwork and creative thinking in developing innovative solutions.

Learning Journey

The four-month program began in Kuwait and concluded at Imperial College Business School in London. KFH team, comprising Noor Al-Essa, Abdulwahab Alkhudhari, Hamad AlAyoubi, and Soud Alnafisi, successfully transformed innovative ideas into practical solutions. Supported by a select group of international academics and experts, these solutions are designed to add real value for customers while enhancing operational efficiency.

KFH Acting Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer, Ahmad Alhammadi, congratulated KFH team participating in the "Innovation Challenge 2025". He praised their innovative ideas, noting that they reflect the excellence of KFH's young national talent. He highlighted their ability to provide solutions that keep pace with the latest banking tech-



Participants from Kuwait Finance House.

nologies, ultimately enhancing work performance and service quality for customers.

Alhammadi explained that KFH operates with a clear vision to cultivate distinguished future leaders. He emphasized the bank's commitment to the continuous development and qualification of its employees through an integrated suite of specialized training programs, designed according to rigorous scientific standards.

Furthermore, he noted that KFH's

exceptional performance indicators reflect the success of its efforts to empower human capital and enhance the capabilities required to achieve its strategic goals.

Innovative solution

Alhammadi praised the Innovation Challenge program for providing a high-caliber platform to hone national talent. He noted its role in building a new generation of leaders capable of transforming creative ideas into practical solutions for real-world professional challenges.



Officials from Kuwait Finance House and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences with the trainees.

He added: "We are pleased with how the 'Innovation Challenge 2025' has empowered KFH employees and sharpened their skills". He also highlighted KFH's eagerness to support KFAS initiatives, which aim to build a robust innovation system that strengthens the private sector and establishes Kuwait as a regional leader in knowledge and creativity.

Pioneers of change

It is worth noting that the Innovation Challenge program has pro-

vided participants with an effective platform to implement ideas, leverage new skills, and integrate them into their professional environments. The program empowers participants to become pioneers of change, fostering the spread of innovation tools and methodologies within their workplaces.

In a move to drive institutional transformation, KFAS has partnered with Imperial Executive Education for the tenth "Innovation Challenge 2025". The col-

laboration aims to strengthen the innovative capacity of Kuwaiti organizations and foster long-term sustainable growth.

As a leading national initiative, the Innovation Challenge 2025 uses an applied learning model to help participants solve institutional hurdles. Working alongside world-class faculty from Imperial Executive Education, participants develop strategic solutions that are presented directly to executive leaders at the program's conclusion.

Kuwaiti banks post KD 1.67 bln in 2025 profits

Strong ratings boost appeal of bank shares on Boursa Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): Locally listed banks' stocks were drawing strong interest from foreign investors due to their solid financial standing, high returns and strong ratings from global credit rating agencies, in addition to Kuwait's own creditworthiness, economists said.

This, they agreed, supported trading activity on one of the Gulf region's most active stock exchanges.

In separate interviews with the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the economists said banks' stocks represented the first line of defense against any technical or geopolitical fluctuations in the stock market.

This explains foreign investors' interest in this segment, given its balanced operational efficiency and active presence both inside and outside Kuwait.

Board member of Sorouh Holding Company, Suleiman Al-Woqayan, said listed bank stocks serve as the "leading compass" of genuine market movement, as their prices were accessible to investors.

He added that board of directors keen to approve annual cash dividends or bonus shares, making these stocks a psychological focal point for some traders who engage in buying and selling activity.

He explained that foreign investors, through their portfolios on the exchange, have two main objectives: market stability and returns ranging between 4-5 percent, sometimes rising to 10 percent during seasonal upturns when major deals were concluded or development projects were awarded to banks.

This is reflected in increased trading in both Islamic and conventional bank shares.

Al-Woqayan emphasized that banks' stocks movements were generally "balanced" in nature, pointing to the limited scope for manipulation or speculation, as their prices typically fluctuate within a narrow range.

This makes it difficult for speculators to exert pressure on prices. Moreover, most banks' shares attract both local and foreign investors targeting long-term investment.

He noted that foreign investors account for 10 percent and 20 percent of trading in banks' stocks and expected this pace to continue through the end of the first quarter, unless geopolitical developments affect the market.

He added that foreign capital tended to exit quickly during crises.

Financial markets analyst Ibrahim Al-Failakawi described listed banks' stocks as "defensive, safest, and most active in trading."

He pointed out that companies in other sectors sometimes face administrative or financial challenges that limit their market activity, unlike banks, which operate within the strongest and most dominant system in the market.

Al-Failakawi added that government ownership and large stakes held by major private sector groups enhance the im-

portance of bank shares in balanced trading.

Foreign investor demand for this segment further confirms its strength and importance. In addition, their generous and relatively stable dividends make them defensive stocks against financial, speculative or geopolitical crises.

He noted that Islamic bank shares attract more interest than conventional banks, particularly from local investors seeking Sharia-compliant investments.

He stressed that the robust monetary policy strategy adopted by the Central Bank of Kuwait and implemented by banks provided an overall protective umbrella, making listed banks' stocks the most prominent and resilient, and a focus of investor attention.

He added that higher credit ratings further fuel demand for bank shares, serving as an additional incentive for their performance on the exchange and strengthening confidence in long-term investment prospects.

Most Kuwaiti banks consistently receive high ratings.

Meanwhile, Deputy Head of the Investment Unit at the Kuwait Investment Company, Fawzi Al-Dhefiri, said Kuwaiti banks were the main driver of the local economy and play key roles when the government launches major capital projects.

This reflects their financial strength and ability to finance such projects, in addition to their solid financial positions.

He noted that their risks are lower compared to other listed sectors, which was reflected in their profits, cash dividends and bonus shares.

He pointed to ongoing competition between Islamic and conventional banks to capture larger market shares, contributing to active trading throughout the year.

He also said that the Central Bank of Kuwait's precautionary policy compelled banks to maintain provisions above international accounting standards, demonstrating awareness of their importance within the exchange market.

Al-Dhefiri stated that banks' financial positions were strong and resilient, reducing exposure to potential risks and increasing capital adequacy ratios compared to regional peers. This consistently enhances their ability to attract both local and foreign investments.

He added that the good ratings banks receive from international institutions reflect their financial strength and capacity to sustain operations and grow shareholder profits, encouraging foreign investors to invest in their shares.

Kuwaiti Islamic and conventional banks listed on Boursa Kuwait recorded net profits of approximately 1.67 billion Kuwaiti dinars (about USD 5.09 billion) in 2025, compared to about KD 1.66 billion (around USD 5.06 billion) in 2024.

Cash dividends and bonus shares totaled around KD 1.2 billion dinars (approximately USD 3.66 billion), including KD 942.7 million (about USD 2.87 billion) in cash dividends and KD 287.4 million (about USD 876.5 million) in bonus shares.

Value soars 125%

Real estate transactions jump 24%

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: The local real estate market witnessed a significant quantitative and qualitative leap during the second week of February, with the number of transactions rising by 24 percent year-on-year.

The total value of transactions surged by 125 percent. The number of transactions reached 154, valued at KD 180.46 million, compared to 124 transactions worth KD 80.22 million during the same period last year.

The weekly statistical report from the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Departments at the Ministry of Justice, covering the period from February 8 to 12, revealed an annual increase of 30 transactions.

Liquidity increased by approximately KD 100.24 million, driven by significant activity in the residential, investment, commercial, and warehouse sectors, while the industrial sector saw a decline.

Residential real estate accounted for the largest share of transactions, with 92 deals totaling KD 57.67 million. This represents a 12.19 percent increase in the number of transactions and a 74 percent increase in value compared to 82 deals worth KD 33.16 million during the same period last year. The growth reflects continued demand

for private housing amid regulatory developments in the sector.

Investment real estate ranked second in transaction volume, with 42 deals totaling KD 34.82 million. Investment real estate saw a 23.5 percent increase in the number of transactions, with eight additional deals, and a 36.7 percent increase in value, totaling an additional KD 9.34 million compared to 34 deals worth KD 25.47 million during the same period last year.

Commercial real estate ranked third in the number of transactions, with 14 deals, but ranked first in terms of value, recording KD 75.34 million. This represents a 366 percent increase in the number of transactions, with 11 additional deals, and a 395 percent increase in value, which is an increase of KD 60.13 million, compared to three transactions worth KD 15.21 million during the same week last year.

The warehouse sector recorded four transactions worth KD 11 million during the week under review, after having no transactions during the same period last year.

The industrial sector declined to two transactions worth KD 1.63 million, compared to five transactions worth KD 6.38 million, a decrease of 60 percent in number and 74.4 percent in value, indicating a drop in demand for this type of property.



Al-Fagaan delivering his speech.



Al-Fagaan with Mohsen and Alotaibi.



Glimpse of the event.

Gulf Bank brings employees together at 'Graish' gathering to celebrate 65 years of excellence and prepare for the next phase of growth



Ahmad Al Bahar delivers his speech.



Sami Mahfouz delivers his speech.



Faisal AlAdsani delivers his speech.

Ahmad Al Bahar:

- 2026 Marks the Beginning of a Transformational Phase for Gulf Bank

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: On the occasion of the approaching Holy Month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank brought its employees together for the annual "Graish" gathering, the final staff event before Ramadan, while also celebrating the Bank's 65th anniversary. The event was held at the Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Centre (JACC) and reflected the Bank's appreciation for its people, its legacy, and its shared values.

The gathering was attended by the Chairman, Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Al Bahar, and senior executive management led by the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Sami Mahfouz, and the Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Faisal AlAdsani, along with a large number of employees from different departments and branches. The event created a warm and welcoming space to strengthen relationships, celebrate achievements, and look ahead with confidence.

A Shared Vision for the Future

In his speech, Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Al Bahar congratulated employees on the arrival of the Holy Month of Ramadan and wished them and their families continued health, peace, and prosperity. He thanked employees for their dedication and highlighted their important role in the Bank's success.

He noted that celebrating Ramadan alongside the Bank's 65th anniversary is a special moment that reflects Gulf Bank's strong legacy and close connection with the community. He emphasized that this legacy inspires the Bank to continue improving and growing in line with the needs of customers and shareholders.

Mr. Al Bahar explained that 2026 will mark the start of a new transformational phase for the Bank, guided by its 2030 Strategy. This includes the planned transition to Islamic banking and the continued evaluation of the potential merger with Warba Bank. He stressed that these initiatives will open new opportunities and strengthen the Bank's position in the market.

He concluded by thanking employees and management for their teamwork and positive spirit, reaffirming that Gulf Bank will continue building on its achievements and investing in its people.

Working Together for Continued Success

Acting Chief Executive Officer Mr. Sami Mahfouz congratulated employees on both the upcoming Holy Month and the Bank's long journey of success. He emphasized that Gulf Bank is built on trust, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

He highlighted that employees are the Bank's greatest asset and the main reason behind its strong performance and customer satisfaction.

Mr. Mahfouz noted that the coming period will focus on several key priorities, including the Islamic banking transformation, digital development, customer service improvement, and strong governance practices. He explained that these efforts aim to make banking easier, faster, and more secure for customers.

He assured employees that executive management remains fully committed to supporting them through training, open communication, and continuous development. He encouraged everyone to continue sharing ideas and working together to achieve common goals.

He expressed his confidence that, through teamwork and dedication, Gulf Bank will continue

Sami Mahfouz:

- We Are Entering an Important Stage and the Future Looks Promising

to grow and succeed.

A Story of Growth and Opportunity

Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer Mr. Faisal AlAdsani described the gathering as a true family event that reflects Gulf Bank's supportive and inclusive culture.

Mr. AlAdsani emphasized that

He shared his personal journey with the Bank, which began more than 20 years ago as a young employee. Through learning, hard work, and guidance, he progressed into leadership roles, demonstrating the Bank's commitment to developing talent from within.

Gulf Bank values effort, integrity, and continuous improvement. He noted that employees who show commitment and passion are always given opportunities to grow and advance.

He encouraged colleagues to see new projects and challenges as chances to learn, develop new skills, and achieve professional



Najla Aleisa during the gathering.

success. He also thanked teams involved in digital transformation, including the launch of the Corporate Banking App, which has improved services for business and SME clients.

Honoring Achievements and Team Spirit

The event included a special



Ahmad Al Bahar, Sami Mahfouz, and Faisal AlAdsani among the attendees.



A group photo of the marketing and human resources teams.



Honoring Abdullah AlSagheer, the sports ambassador at Gulf Bank.



Part of the audience.



Gulf Bank celebrates the success of its Football Team winning the Banks Cup Championship for the tenth time.

ceremony to honor long serving employees in appreciation of their loyalty and valuable contributions over the years.

Gulf Bank also celebrated the success of its Football Team, which recently won the Banks Cup Championship for the tenth time, highlighting the importance of teamwork, discipline, and healthy lifestyles. The Bowling Team was also recognized for reaching the finals of the Banks Championship.

These achievements reflect the Bank's belief in encouraging balance between professional excellence and personal wellbeing.

Serving the Community with Purpose

During the gathering, Mrs. Najla Aleisa, Chief Marketing Officer at Gulf Bank, presented the Bank's Ramadan social responsibility program, which includes a wide range of charitable and community activities.

She explained that this year's Ramadan message focuses on kindness, generosity, and shared responsibility through the "A Piece of Me" campaign. The campaign encourages people to donate items they value to support those in need.

Mrs. Aleisa emphasized that the campaign reflects Gulf Bank's belief in giving back to society and strengthening community ties.

As part of this initiative, Gulf Bank will launch a donation campaign on February 25, in line with Kuwait's National and Liberation Days, from its historic headquarters in the heart of Kuwait City. The location reflects the Bank's strong connection to Kuwait's heritage and values.

She concluded by reaffirming that Gulf Bank remains committed to supporting social development and making a positive difference in people's lives.

The Human Capital Gulf Bank's Most Valuable Asset

In his address, the Bank's Acting General Manager of Human Resources, Mr. Hamed Al-Tamimi, stated:

"Throughout a journey spanning more than 65 years, Gulf Bank has consistently affirmed that success has never been the result of an easy path. Rather, it is the outcome of bold decisions made by founders who believed in the vision from its inception in 1960, and of employees who followed in their footsteps, distinguished by discipline, dedication, and high levels of professionalism."

He added that the Bank has witnessed significant developments in the way it delivers its services, kept pace with rapid technological transformations, and successfully navigated major challenges, enabling it to continue achieving further milestones.

This continuity, he emphasized, is not a coincidence, but rather a reflection of the strong spirit of teamwork that has consistently demonstrated a high sense of trust and responsibility, in line with the values established by the founding generation.

Concluding his remarks, he noted that in light of accelerating global change and rising expectations, the Bank recognizes that the coming phase requires intensified efforts and renewed determination to preserve its leading position and continue progressing toward excellence. This will be driven by its human capital, which remains its most valuable asset and deserves the highest appreciation and recognition.

Marking 11.3% growth

NBK-Egypt reports net profit of EGP 8.09 billion for FY 2025

CAIRO, Feb 16: National Bank of Kuwait – Egypt (NBK-Egypt) recorded net profit of EGP 8.09 billion (Equivalent to KWD 51.24 million) in FY2025, up from EGP 7.27 billion (Equivalent to KWD 51.87 million) in FY2024, representing year-on-year growth of 11.3%.

Net Operating Income stood at EGP 16 billion in FY2025, representing a significant increase of 18.4% from EGP 13.5 billion in FY2024. Net Interest Income grew by 18.5%, reaching EGP 13.7 billion compared with EGP 11.6 billion in FY2024. Net Operating Income (excluding interest) rose to EGP 2.3 billion in FY2025 from EGP 1.9 billion in FY2024, an increase of 18%. Income from financial investments increased to EGP 53 million from EGP 31 million in the prior year, marking growth of 70%, while the Cost-to-Net Operating Income ratio stood at 25.4% in FY2025.

Total assets expanded to EGP 225 billion by the end of FY2025, representing growth of 14.7% from EGP 196 billion at year-end 2024. Total loans and credit facilities increased to EGP 121 billion, rising 17.4% from EGP 103 billion. Customer deposits also recorded solid growth, reaching EGP 180 billion compared with EGP 160 billion in the prior year, an increase of 12.7%. In the meantime, The ratio of operating income to total net income stood at 85.4% in FY2025, compared to 85.6% in the corresponding period of 2024.

Profitability indicators remained robust, with Return on Average Assets (ROAA) at 3.8% and Return on Average Equity (ROAE) at 30.7%.

Commenting on the financial results announced by NBK-Egypt, Ms. Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer, National Bank of Kuwait, and Chairman of NBK-Egypt, said: "The strong growth in NBK-Egypt's profitability and business performance at the end of 2025 reflects the resilience of our financial position and the flexibility of our business model to generate earnings and deliver sustainable growth, despite ongoing operational challenges."

Al-Bahar explained that the financial results achieved by NBK-Egypt in 2025 once again validate the Group's strategic vision since entering the Egyptian market in 2007, while highlighting the substantial opportunities and long-term potential offered by this promising market.

"NBK Group views the Egyptian market as a long-term strategic investment. Egypt represents one of the largest economies in the region and a core growth market in which we remain committed to expanding our presence. We regard it as the Group's second domestic market," Al-Bahar added.

She emphasized that NBK-Egypt continues to rank among the most profitable operations within the Group, delivering some of the strongest returns on equity and assets.

Furthermore, Al-Bahar highlighted that NBK-Egypt, the largest Kuwaiti investment in Egypt, has established a clear footprint within the country's banking sector, positioning itself among the fastest-growing banks. She added that financial indicators confirm the Bank remains on the right trajectory toward further expansion and strengthening its market share.

Al-Bahar underscored that Egypt's economic landscape continues to strengthen, supported by far-reaching reform initiatives and resolute policy actions advanced by both the government and the Central Bank of Egypt. These measures are reinforcing macroeconomic stability and unlocking compelling avenues for investment, expansion, and long-term value creation. She expressed firm conviction in the Egyptian economy's resilience and its promising trajectory.

'Digitalization boosts oil efficiency'

Minister Al-Roumi inaugurates KOTC fleet monitoring center

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16, (KUNA): Minister of Oil Tareq Al-Roumi on Monday inaugurated the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company's (KOTC) Fleet Performance Monitoring Center, in the presence of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Chief Executive Officer Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah and senior oil sector officials.

In a statement to reporters on the sidelines of the opening ceremony, Al-Roumi said the center marks a key step in keeping pace with global developments in artificial intelligence and digital transformation, aiming to facilitate maritime operations.

He noted that the center enables real-time transmission of operational data from fleet vessels, providing a comprehensive performance overview and supporting decision-making in line with international maritime transport standards.

For his part, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah said KPC's digitalization strategy is a core pillar in enhancing efficiency and competitiveness across the oil sector through automation and AI applications from production to refining and export.

He added that monitoring the tanker fleet through the new center would help reduce operating costs, increase profit-

ability and enhance safety standards.

Sheikh Nawaf highlighted progress in digital initiatives, including specialized AI centers that improved drilling rig scheduling, raised production efficiency by about 16 percent and reduced downtime by nearly half.

He explained that digital transformation projects have also been implemented by Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) and Kuwait Petroleum International (Q8) to enhance refinery performance.

On overseas refining, he said KPC's strategy focuses on securing reliable outlets for Kuwaiti crude, noting that the Milazzo Refinery in Italy can process up to 100 percent Kuwaiti crude if needed.

The Vietnam refinery is operating at 125 percent of its designed capacity and has begun generating profits, while the Duqm refinery in Oman is achieving operational efficiency above 100 percent with positive financial results, he added.

For his part, Acting KOTC CEO Sheikh Khaled Ahmad Al-Malik Al-Sabah said the center forms part of the company's digital transformation strategy and represents a significant step in advancing fleet management systems to support efficient and sustainable energy transport for Kuwait.



Shaikha Al-Bahar



Yasser El-Tayeb

Al-Bahar:

- Strong profit growth reflects the strength of our financial position and the resilience of our business model
- NBK-Egypt ranks among the fastest-growing banks and maintains a clear and expanding footprint in the Egyptian market
- Financial indicators confirm that we are on the right trajectory toward further expansion and strengthening our market share
- The Egyptian economy is one of the region's largest and offers significant long-term growth potential

El-Tayeb:

- NBK-Egypt continues to deliver strong performance, achieving robust growth across all key financial indicators
- We remain focused on strengthening our position in retail banking alongside our corporate banking franchise, as we move forward decisively toward digital transformation
- The Bank supports the global shift toward sustainable finance and actively backs environmentally responsible projects
- The Bank's commitment to corporate social responsibility remains a top priority as we continue to expand our efforts year after year



Meanwhile, Vice Chairman, CEO, and Managing Director of National Bank of Kuwait-Egypt, Mr. Yasser El-Tayeb, said: "Nothing illustrates the Bank's strength more clearly than its robust financial results and performance metrics, underscoring its capacity to sustain growth and deliver solid outcomes in 2025 despite a challenging local and global operating environment."

El-Tayeb noted that NBK-Egypt continues to achieve balanced growth across all business segments while maintaining efficiency levels and risk metrics consistent with both growth objectives and long-term sustainability. He attributed this performance to the Bank's prudent strategic approach and its disciplined business model, which enables it to respond to client needs with a high degree of flexibility.

El-Tayeb noted that the majority of NBK-Egypt's income is derived from credit operations within the Corporate Banking segment, alongside Retail Banking, with its role expanding significantly in recent years. The Bank's credit portfolio demonstrates broad diversification across its corporate client base, encompassing large, medium, and small enterprises, while its retail portfolio similarly spans a wide spectrum of customer segments. This diversification underscores the resilience and depth of the Bank's income streams.

He affirmed that the Bank aims to further strengthen its position in the retail banking sector in the period ahead by offering advanced products and services tailored to the needs of diverse customer segments, reinforcing its positioning as a comprehensive financial partner capable of meeting their full range of financial requirements. The Bank also continues to expand its Islamic banking services to serve a broad client base, consistently enhancing its product offering. NBK-Egypt remains among the leading institutions in the Egyptian market providing Islamic banking services and products alongside its conventional banking solutions.

El-Tayeb further noted that, in recognition of the pivotal role technological tools and electronic channels play in the banking sector, and their importance in strengthening competitive positioning, NBK-Egypt has actively accelerated the expansion of its digital banking services, committing substantial investments to this domain. These efforts aim to deliver a distinctive banking experience that enables customers to conduct most of their transactions anytime and anywhere. More broadly, the Bank continues to encourage clients to expand their use of electronic payment channels, in alignment with the public policy direction of the Egyptian government and the Central Bank of Egypt.

He added that NBK-Egypt is committed to supporting the global shift toward sustainable finance and the transition to a green economy by backing environmentally responsible projects that promote sustainability and greater reliance on renewable energy. The Bank also evaluates solutions designed to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change and reduce carbon emissions, recognizing sustainable finance as a critical mechanism for safeguarding long-term financial stability.

Addressing the Bank's corporate social responsibility, El-Tayeb stated that since NBK Group's entry into the Egyptian market in 2007, NBK-Egypt has remained dedicated to fulfilling its role in serving the community through contributions, donations, and support extended to a wide range of charitable initiatives. The Bank has also established partnerships with credible and active civil society organizations, empowering them to serve as effective implementation partners in advancing its community development agenda.

Reaffirming support for STEM & robotics education

ALSAWER celebrates young minds at KNRC

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Backed by ALSAYER Group as the strategic sponsor, the Kuwait National Robotics Competition (KNRC) hosted their major robotics competition over the course of a week from February 1st to the 8th, and with the final ceremony being on the 11th of February 2026 in the Kuwait University Conference Center, across Kuwait and diverse age categories.

This event was held under the presence of the Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, The President of Kuwait University Dina Al-Mailem, Director General of the Public Youth Authority Nasser Al-Sheikh, and the Acting Dean of the College of Science at Kuwait University Dr. Haider Behbehani. The awards ceremony highlighted the incredible skills and passions students have in robotics. ALSAYER Group was proud to see their partnership with KNRC in dedicating and advancing hands-on education in science, technology, and innovation.

The championship features four main contests: VEX IQ Robotics Competition, VEX V5 Robotics Competition, Drones Competition, and Seaperch Competition. These categories provide students with opportunities to expand their skills in engineering, programming, and teamwork while tackling challenges that mirror real-world applications of technology.

Throughout the competition stu-



Photo during the event.

dents were able to showcase their skills through various challenges, displaying their innovative problem-solving skills during a match and their teamwork when communicating with their teammates. These activities allowed students to express themselves in the best way possible, allowing them to learn soft skills like organizations, teamwork, communication, and leadership.

Eng. Ibrahim Al-Fouzan, Senior Business Director at ALSAYER, said: "We are concluding an important milestone in the fourth season of the Kuwait National Robotics Competition, and we celebrate the integration of efforts in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The innovative solutions we have witnessed reflect our rising generation's awareness of the tools of the age and its ability to use them to create the future. We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Kuwait University - College of Science, the Ministry of Education, the General Authority for Youth, and our partners in the private sector, for their great role in supporting and empowering youth, enhancing the educational and innovative environment, nurturing talents, and advancing the development and innovation process in our country.

Dr. Haider Behbehani, Acting Dean of the College of Science at Kuwait University, noted that the competition paves the way for student teams

to showcase their skills and talents under tough conditions, where they will have to rely on their ability and teamwork with their peers. "These contests revealed remarkable levels of innovation, collaboration, and structured thinking," Behbehani said, pointing to the VEX Robotics and Aerial Drones categories as clear demonstrations of students' expanding skills.

Eng. Nehad AlHaj Ali, Group Manager of the Corporate Excellence Department at ALSAYER Group, emphasized that "the competitive nature of this event truly highlighted the intelligent young minds of the future and their ability to collaborate, coordinate, design, and develop effective technological solutions in a highly pressurized environment. At ALSAYER Group, we renew our pledge to be a constant supporter of these initiatives. Seeing these young people programming robots and racing hydrogen cars gives us confidence that Kuwait's technological future is in good hands and bright minds."

With the completion of the competition and the awards ceremony, this prestigious championship showcased the great support of ALSAYER Group and other sponsors who have dedicated themselves to ensuring success for every participant, reinforcing Kuwait's leadership in robotics education and innovation.

Event highlights women's role in investment and economic growth

Boeing, CFA Society, and AmCham Kuwait champion women's financial leadership



Photo during the event.

need to equip women with financial knowledge, including understanding investments, risk management, and capital allocation, as a pathway to stronger participation in economic

decision-making and sustainable family wealth planning. The discussion also addressed practical steps for women professionals, founders, and emerging leaders to build in-

vestment confidence and engage more actively in financial markets and long-term financial planning.

Rt. Brig. Gen. Musaed Al Hawli, Managing Director of Boeing and AmCham Kuwait Board Member, underscored the importance of corporate support in advancing women's financial capacity. He noted: "At Boeing, corporate social responsibility is embedded in how we operate worldwide. Supporting women's capacity building, particularly in financial literacy, is essential to strengthening communities and advancing sustainable growth. Through initiatives like this Diwaniya, we reaffirm our commitment to empowering women in Kuwait."

The Diwaniya formed part of AmCham Kuwait's ongoing efforts to promote inclusive economic growth and strengthen women's leadership pipelines by ensuring access to financial education and investment awareness. By focusing on financial literacy as a core leadership competency, the event aimed to help women better manage personal and family wealth, make strategic investment decisions, and contribute meaningfully to broader economic development.

AmCham Kuwait remains committed to collaborating with financial institutions, policymakers, and private sector leaders to expand financial education initiatives that enable women to take on greater roles in investment, governance, and capital stewardship across Kuwait's evolving economy.

Throughout the session, speakers highlighted the growing

Features

ARAB TIMES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026

Fennell's film records the year's biggest opening

Powered by women, 'Wuthering Heights' tops box office with \$34.8M

LOS ANGELES, Feb 16, (AP): Emerald Fennell's bold reimagining of "Wuthering Heights" brought crowds of women to movie theaters this weekend. The Warner Bros. release topped the box office charts and nabbed the title for the year's biggest opening with \$34.8 million in ticket sales in its first three days in North American theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday. According to PostTrak polling, an estimated 76% of those ticket buyers were women. By the end of Monday's Presidents Day holiday, the total could rise to \$40 million from its 3,682 locations.

The romantic drama starring Margot Robbie and Jacob Elordi as the star-crossed Catherine and Heathcliff, won out over the weekend's other newcomers, including the animated "GOAT" and the heist thriller "Crime 101." "Wuthering Heights" is also performing even better internationally, where it's expecting to rake in an additional \$42 million from 76 territories.

The Warner Bros./MRC production cost a reported \$80 million to produce, not accounting for the millions spent on marketing and promotion. If the four-day totals match the estimates, that makes for a strong \$82 million global debut. And the film still has several big openings on the horizon, in Japan and Vietnam on Feb. 27, and in China on March 13.

Fennell's version of "Wuthering Heights," which takes many liberties with Emily Brontë's novel, largely divided critics. It's currently sitting at a mixed 63% on Rotten Tomatoes. While that didn't dissuade audiences from buying tickets, only 51% of the opening weekend audience said that they would "definitely recommend" the film to friends. Moviegoers also gave it a less-than-stellar B CinemaScore.



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Margot Robbie in a scene from 'Wuthering Heights.' (AP)

The mid-February weekend has hosted big superhero movies on occasion, including "Black Panther" and "Deadpool," but a more relevant comparison is

"Fifty Shades of Grey" and its two sequels. The first movie opened to over \$85 million, the third to \$38.6 million.

"GOAT," an animated Sony release produced by basketball star Stephen Curry, landed in second place with an estimated \$26 million from 3,863 locations. It's projected to bring in another \$6 million on Monday, which would bring its four day total to \$32 million - the biggest animated debut since "Elemental" in 2023. It also pulled in \$15.6 million internationally, bringing its global total to \$47.6 million.

The family-friendly film was the only new opener of the weekend to get an A CinemaScore. Sony Pictures Animation was also behind "KPop Demon Hunters."

"Crime 101" made an estimated \$15.1 million in its first three days. Amazon MGM Studios opened the Chris Hemsworth and Mark Ruffalo led Los Angeles-set thriller in 3,161 theaters. It's expected to pull in about \$17.8 million by the end of Monday, but the movie has a long way to go to even hit its production budget, which reportedly exceeded \$90 million. Audiences, who were 56% men, also gave "Crime 101" a B CinemaScore.

Further down the charts was Briarcliff Entertainment's sci-fi comedy "Good Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die," starring Sam Rockwell and Haley Lu Richardson. It made an estimated \$3.6 million from 1,610 locations.

The Walt Disney Studios also celebrated a milestone this weekend, becoming the first studio to cross \$1 billion at the global box office in 2026, driven almost entirely by "Avatar: Fire and Ash," but also helped by the continued success of "Zootopia 2," which remains in the top 10 after twelve weekends in theaters.

People

Awards

Guthrie appeals

Glove DNA tied to suspect: FBI

TUCSON, Ariz., Feb 16, (AP): A glove containing DNA found about two miles from the house of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie's mother appears to match those worn by a masked person outside her front door in Tucson the night she vanished, the FBI said Sunday.

The glove, discovered in a field beside a road, was sent for DNA testing. The FBI said

in a statement that it received preliminary results Saturday and was awaiting official confirmation.

Guthrie comes as law enforcement gathers more potential evidence as the search for Guthrie's mother heads into its third week. Authorities had previously said they had not identified a suspect.

On Sunday night, Savannah Guthrie posted an Instagram video in which she issued an appeal to whoever abducted her mother or anyone who knows where she is being kept. "It is never too late to do the right thing," Guthrie said. "And we are here. And we believe in the essential goodness of every human being, that it's never too late."

Nancy Guthrie, 84, was last seen at her Arizona home on Jan. 31 and was reported missing the following day. Authorities say her blood was found on the front porch. Purported ransom notes were sent to news outlets, but two deadlines for paying have passed.

Revealed

The discovery was revealed days after investigators had released surveillance videos of the masked person outside Guthrie's front door. A porch camera recorded video of a person with a backpack who was wearing a ski mask, long pants, jacket and gloves.

On Thursday, the FBI called the person a suspect. It described him as a man about 5 feet, 9 inches tall with a medium build. The agency said he was carrying a 25-liter "Ozark Trail Hiker Pack" backpack.

Late Friday night, law enforcement agents sealed off a road about two miles (3.2 kilometers) from Guthrie's home as part of their investigation. A series of sheriff's and FBI vehicles, including forensics vehicles, passed through the roadblock. The investigators also tagged and towed a Range Rover SUV from a nearby restaurant parking lot late Friday. The sheriff's department later said the activity was part of the Guthrie investigation but no arrests were made.

On Tuesday, sheriff deputies detained a person for questioning during a traffic stop south of Tucson. Authorities didn't say what led them to stop the man but confirmed he was released. The same day, deputies and FBI agents conducted a court-authorized search in Rio Rico, about an hour's drive south of the city.

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



Clint Bentley, (center), and the team from 'Train Dreams' accept the award for best feature film during the Film Independent Spirit Awards on Sunday, Feb. 15, at the Hollywood Palladium in Los Angeles. Regina King looks on from right. (AP)



Jeremy Kleiner, (from left), accepts the best new scripted series award for 'Adolescence' with Nina Wolarsky, (center), and Erin Doherty during the Film Independent Spirit Awards. Lamorne Morris looks on from right. (AP)



Rose Byrne accepts best lead performance award for 'If I Had Legs I'd Kick You.' (AP)



Erin Doherty accepts the award for best supporting performance for 'Adolescence.' (AP)



Alex Orlovsky, (from left), Lee Sung Jin, and Marc Marrie accept the award for best first feature for 'Lurker.' (AP)



Clint Bentley accepts award for best director for 'Train Dreams.' (AP)



The cast of 'The Long Walk' accept the Robert Altman Award during the Film Independent Spirit Awards on Sunday, Feb. 15, at the Hollywood Palladium in Los Angeles. (AP)



Adolfo Veloso accepts best cinematography award for 'Train Dreams.' (AP)



Cristian Carretero, (left), and Lorraine Jones Molina accept the John Cassavetes Award for 'Esta Isla (This Island).' Dylan O'Brien, far right, and Jane Levy look on from right. (AP)

Rose Byrne wins top acting prize for 'If I Had Legs I'd Kick You'

'Adolescence' and 'Train Dreams' top Spirit Awards

LOS ANGELES, Feb 16, (AP): Clint Bentley's lyrical Denis Johnson adaptation "Train Dreams" won the top film award at the Film Independent Spirit Awards on Sunday in Los Angeles, while "Adolescence" dominated the television categories. Both were released on Netflix.

Bentley also won best director for the film starring Joel Edgerton, whom he thanked profusely for "being the heartbeat of our film."

"We're so grateful to Netflix," Bentley said. "It's very, very hard these days to film in the United States, but it's worth it and we're proud to be able to pull it off."

Edgerton missed out on the top acting prize, however, which went to Rose Byrne for "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You." The organization switched to gender-neutral acting categories in 2022.

Byrne was one of the few actors nominated for both a Spirit Award and an Oscar, for her performance as a mother on the edge.

"I share this with Mary Bronstein, my writer-director who fought for eight years to get this movie made," Byrne said.

She added that this was a film that could have only been made

independently. Her character, she said, is "fierce and ferocious and a middle-aged woman."

"Adolescence" won new scripted series, best actor for Stephen Graham, best supporting actor for Erin Doherty, and the breakthrough prize for Owen Cooper.

The show, which serves as a fundraiser for Film Independent's round programs, was held at the Hollywood Palladium for the first time since 1994, as its longtime beachside perch in Santa Monica undergoes renovations. Comedian and "Saturday Night Live" veteran Ego Nwodim hosted the celebration of independent film and television, which was livestreamed on YouTube.

"In the spirit of independent filmmaking, we don't have a permit," Nwodim said in her opening. "If I shout 'cameras down,' you know what to do."

"The Secret Agent" won the international feature prize. The film is also nominated for best picture and best international film at the Oscars.

"I really believe that programming films in the cinemas is more and more a political act," said director Kleber Mendonça Filho.

He dedicated the award to the late actor Udo Kier, who was part of the ensemble of "The Secret Agent."

"The Perfect Neighbor," about a deadly shooting incident in Florida constructed primarily from police bodycam footage, won best documentary. Filmmaker and producer Geeta Gandbhir thanked Netflix for "giving us a global platform." It's also up for the best documentary Oscar.

Eva Victor won the screenplay prize for "Sorry, Baby." Naomi Ackie also won the supporting award for Victor's film, over fellow nominees like Zoey Deutch ("Newbie Vague"), Kirsten Dunst ("Roofman"), Nina Hoss ("Hedda") and Archie Madekwe ("Lurker").

The awards sometimes overlap significantly with major Oscar contenders and winners, as it did with "Anorak," and "Everything Everywhere All At Once," and sometimes not. Organizers limit eligibility to productions with budgets less than \$30 million, meaning more expensive films like "One Battle After Another" are not in the running.



Geeta Gandbhir accepts best documentary award for 'The Perfect Neighbor.' (AP)



Wagner Moura, (from left), Emilia Lesclaux, and Kleber Mendonça Filho accept the award for best international film for 'The Secret Agent.' (AP)



Kirsten Dunst arrives at the Film Independent Spirit Awards. (AP)



Kaia Gerber arrives at the Film Independent Spirit Awards. (AP)

RK program highlights national pride, unity and belonging

Radio Kuwait Urdu celebrates Kuwait's National and Liberation Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: In a vibrant display of patriotism and community spirit, Radio Kuwait (RK) Urdu Service organized a special live transmission to commemorate Kuwait's 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day. The event was followed by a ceremonial cake-cutting to mark the occasion.

The live program featured prominent content creators from the community who shared heritage-inspired experiences, reinforcing the values of unity, pride, and belonging. The special National Day and Liberation Day transmission celebrated Kuwait's independence and liberation in a colorful and enthusiastic manner.

The entire RK FM team, along with the guests, wore traditional Kuwaiti attire to honor the national spirit. Influencers including Tooba, Huda, Shabnam, Aisha, Zarak, Osama, Saad, Ahmed, Maa, and Ahmed Abu Bakr participated in the broadcast, sharing their personal journeys with the audience. Additionally, live callers joined the program through calls and messages to

convey their greetings to the Government and people of Kuwait on this auspicious occasion.

The transmission was hosted by Radio Kuwait Urdu Service Coordinator In-Charge Nida Mirza and Razia Ashraf leading the show. Sheila Martis managed the live callers, while Anees Backer handled sound engineering. Live media coverage was provided by Irfan Shafiq and Sulman Khan.

The whole program was conducted under the supervision of Shejoun Al Marshoud, Supervisor of Programs, Foreign Services.

The program concluded with a cake-cutting ceremony, commemorating the celebrations of National and Liberation Day. Radio Kuwait extends warm wishes to all on this joyous occasion. May the flag of Kuwait always fly high, symbolizing pride, honor, and unity. The celebrations serve as a reminder to cherish and take pride in being part of this remarkable nation.



Kuwait Radio Urdu service team with guests celebrating Kuwait's 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day.

Heritage



Wulong Karst: A geological and historical masterpiece in the heart of Chongqing.

China's Wulong Karst: breathtaking natural, historical landscape

The Wulong Karst region, located in Chongqing, China, stretches as a breathtaking natural landscape where deep mountains and vast caves intertwine with stone bridges and eroded cliffs, creating a truly awe-inspiring panorama.

The word "karst" refers to the rock formations created by the erosion of carbonate rocks by

water over thousands of years, forming caves, natural bridges, valleys, underground rivers, and tunnels, a living testament to the forces of nature.

Within this landscape stands the historic Tianfu Post Office, originally an important postal station during the Tang Dynasty, preserving a part of the region's cultural heritage.

In 2007, the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) inscribed the Wulong Karst region on its World Natural Heritage List, recognizing its unique scientific and aesthetic value, which remains a living bridge between stunning natural beauty and rich human history. (KUNA)

Chinese filmmakers highlight diversity, global reach

Chinese cinema builds bridges at Berlin Film Festival

BERLIN, Feb 16, (Xinhua): As the 76th Berlin International Film Festival unfolded, snow fell gently over Potsdamer Platz, dusting the Berlinale's iconic red carpet in white and creating a cinematic backdrop for an evening dedicated to Chinese cinema and cross-cultural exchange.

More than 200 guests, including filmmakers from China and around the world, gathered at a nearby venue on Thursday for the China Film Night 2026 Shanghai International Film Festival Reception. Animated conversations filled the hall as industry professionals exchanged ideas, bringing warmth to the wintry evening.

The reception came as Chinese cinema maintained a notable presence at this year's Berlinale. Titles such as

Shanghai Daughter and Light Pillar were screened in sections including Panorama and Perspectives, underscoring the diversity of contemporary Chinese filmmaking.

"Chinese films have been gaining momentum overseas in recent years," said Chen Guo, managing director of the Shanghai International Film and TV Events Center, the event's organizer.

"In the past, overseas audiences often associated Chinese cinema mainly with kung fu films or historical epics," Chen told Xinhua. "Today, however, whether it is a record-breaking animated blockbuster like 'Ne Zha' or contemporary urban stories, Chinese films are resonating more widely with international audiences," she said.

That diversification extends beyond genre to storytelling approaches. Young director Shen Zhongmin's Shanghai Daughter, screened in the Panorama section, offers a case in point.

"International audiences may not grasp every historical detail about China, but universal emotions bridge that gap," Shen told Xinhua.

Shen also highlighted the role of the Shanghai International Film Festival, describing it as an open and professional platform that helps like-minded filmmakers connect, refine their projects and bring them to larger stages.

Xu Zuo, whose feature debut Light Pillar was selected for the Perspectives section, said the Shanghai International Film Festival's presence in Berlin

has created a valuable platform for exchanges between Chinese and international filmmakers.

According to Jiao Hongfen, chairman of the China Film Producers' Association, as China's economy develops, global audiences are increasingly interested in seeing China on screen.

Chinese filmmakers are bringing their stories to international viewers, fostering closer exchanges between Chinese and foreign cinema, Jiao said.

As China has become the world's second-largest film market, it is important not only to tell China's stories to the world, but also to welcome outstanding films from across the globe into China, promoting mutual engagement and win-win results, he added.

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Half of Australian teens at risk of mental health issues by 20

Should people with autism and high needs have separate diagnosis?

NEW YORK, Feb 16, (AP): As the definition of autism has widened, there's been a growing push to create a new diagnosis, called profound autism, for those who need constant and lifelong care.

The reason? To ensure that they get the support and services they need.

Judith Ursitti, president of the Profound Autism Alliance, said people in this category now lack appropriate treatments, support and enough providers trained to handle their level of care. And the vast majority of clinical research doesn't include them.

"If you don't have research, you won't have treatments. You won't have achievable services and supports," said Ursitti, whose adult son has profound autism. "There are people across the spectrum who have high support needs that are intermittent. The difference with our population is they're constant."

Autism rates have been rising for decades, and two of the main reasons for the increase have, in a strange twist, taken some of the focus off of helping people with round-the-clock needs. The diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder is now very broad, including many people with low support needs. Also, better awareness of the condition has helped many more children get diagnosed

than in the past - and most of those cases are relatively mild.

At the same time, the Trump Administration is promoting unproven and debunked claims about what causes autism, which experts say muddles efforts to understand the condition and fuels misinformation that threatens public health, even as officials funnel more money into research.

Overall in the U.S., an estimated 1 in 31 children has autism spectrum disorder.

Researchers estimate around a quarter have "profound autism," a term introduced in 2021 by a group of experts, the Lancet Commission. It describes people who need constant care for life, have a certain level of intellectual disability and are nonverbal or minimally verbal.

In the past, these people may have been diagnosed with autistic disorder - one of five subtypes, along with Asperger's, of a diagnosis called pervasive developmental disorders. But in 2013, the American Psychiatric Association removed that diagnosis and created autism spectrum disorder.

Some in the autism community worry that creating a separate diagnosis of profound autism would reduce

attention on the broader spectrum and the individual needs of everyone on it.

Dena Gassner, an autistic senior research scientist at Drexel University and mother of an autistic adult with moderate support needs, said she struggles with the idea of assigning someone the label of profound autism. She said it could be stigmatizing.

She said there's nothing wrong with being autistic; the problem lies in "the massive lack of supports and services" in our society. "We need to come together in a unified voice to talk about services for the entirety of the spectrum."

Andy Shih, chief science officer for Autism Speaks, said no matter where people fall on the debate about profound autism, "there's absolutely no doubt that we need to elevate awareness about the needs of this group."

Also:

MELBOURNE: Half of Australian teenagers are projected to experience anxiety or depression by age 20, driven by bullying, poverty and racism, a new study warns.

The study, led by Australia's Burnet Institute, found that school-based initiatives, such as bullying prevention, racism education, and social and emotional learn-

ing that build resilience from early childhood, were the most cost-effective and impactful prevention programs, said a statement from the institute on Monday.

Interventions addressing early risk factors like child maltreatment and family financial stress also showed strong returns, according to the study published in the Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry.

The study warned that young people exposed to bullying, racial discrimination, or maltreatment face about three times higher risks of developing common mental disorders.

"Real progress means preventing harm before it starts, by investing in interventions that address the conditions that put young people at risk, like poverty, abuse and discrimination," said Professor Susan Sawyer, study co-author and director of the Center for Adolescent Health at Australia's Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the Royal Children's Hospital.

The study's new modelling found that investing between 50 million and 1 billion Australian dollars (35.44 million to 710 million U.S. dollars) annually into prevention programs could prevent up to 787,000 young Australians from experiencing anxiety and depression by 2050.

Harmful neurotoxin found in 'silver fillings'

US health service to phase out use of dental fillings with mercury by 2027

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M., Feb 16, (AP): The federal agency that provides health care to Native Americans and Alaska Natives has announced it will phase out the use of dental fillings containing mercury.

The Indian Health Service has used fillings, known as dental amalgams, that contain elemental mercury to treat decayed and otherwise damaged teeth for decades. Native American rights and industry advocates have called for an end to the practice, arguing it exposes patients who may not have access to private dentistry to a harmful neurotoxin.

The use of mercury-containing amalgams, also known as "silver fillings" due to their appearance, has declined sharply since 2009 when the US Food and Drug Administration reclassified the devices from low to moderate risk. The industry has largely abandoned them in favor of plastic resin alternatives, which are also preferred for aesthetic reasons.

The Indian Health Service says it will fully implement the move to mercury-free alternatives by 2027.

Already, the percentage of the Indian Health Service's roughly 2.8 million patient user population receiving them has declined from 12% in 2005 to 2% in 2023, the latest year of available data, agency documents show.

The US Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees IHS, said growing environmental and health concerns about mercury exposure, and global efforts to reduce materials containing the hazardous heavy metal prompted the change announced this month.

"This is a commonsense step that protects patients and prevents harm before it starts," Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., said in a statement.

The agency's switch to mercury-free alternatives also upholds legal responsibilities the US government has to the 575 federally recognized tribes, he said.

According to the US Food and Drug Administration, dental amalgam fillings can release small amounts of mercury vapor during placement, removal, teeth grinding and gum chewing. It recommends that certain people at high

risk for adverse effects of mercury exposure, including pregnant women, children under 6, and those with existing neurological conditions avoid the fillings. But the administration, along with the American Dental Association, says available evidence does not link mercury-containing fillings to long-term negative health outcomes.

The World Health Organization has created a plan to encourage countries around the world to phase out the use of dental amalgams, citing potential for mercury exposure. In 2013 several countries, including the U.S., signed onto the Minamata Convention, a global agreement targeting the adverse health and the environment effects of mercury. In November, signatories to the convention agreed to phase out the use of mercury-containing dental amalgams by the year 2034.

While Kennedy's decision to stop its use within the IHS by 2027 puts the US ahead of the global schedule, the country is still behind many other developed nations that have already banned the practice.

China tests lunar mission facility

WENCHANG, Hainan, Feb 16, (Xinhua): At the future "departure gate" for China's crewed lunar journeys at the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in the southern island province of Hainan, personnel in blue uniforms bustle around a newly constructed tower, meticulously inspecting and maintaining tens of thousands of components as part of post-launch operations.

This new launch pad, constructed specifically for China's crewed lunar missions, saw its first launch on Feb. 11 with the successful low-altitude demonstration and verification of the Long March-10 carrier rocket, along with the maximum dynamic pressure abort flight test of the new-generation crewed spacecraft Mengzhou.

"We have newly built the technical area and launch area for the crewed lunar missions. This test was also a trial for the entire new facility, primarily verifying the launch pad's flame trench capacity, concrete ablation resistance, high-flow water spray system performance, and our personnel's post-test processing capabilities," said Di Baoguang of the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site.

Located at 19 degrees north latitude, the launch site is China's lowest-latitude spaceport. It offers advantages such as a wide range of launch azimuths, high payload efficiency, fewer transportation constraints and safe debris drop zones, making it suitable for launching high-lift carrier rockets.

Construction on the crewed lunar mission project at Wenchang began in April 2024. In less than two years, a white launch tower standing approximately 120 meters tall, equivalent to a 40-story building, has risen on the site, making it the tallest launch tower in China currently.

The Long March-10 carrier rocket to be used for the crewed lunar missions reaches a maximum height of 92.5 meters, and the Mengzhou spacecraft is also relatively large in size. The tower's height is perfectly suited to the dimensions of these vehicles, Di explained.

Unlike the launch pad used for China's current crewed spacecraft, Shenzhou, this new tower dedicated to crewed lunar missions features no rotating service structure.

"Due to the differences in rocket property, some testing procedures can be completed through the launch platform and umbilical arms, eliminating the need for the enclosed rotating service structure. Meanwhile, this fully open tower design enhances typhoon resistance, making it better suited to the extreme coastal weather conditions," Di said.

Family prepares for lifelong care challenges

Growing debate over 'profound autism' hits home for family raising twins with it



Ronan Murphy hugs his mother, Andrea, while looking at the snow falling outside their home in Ayer, Mass., on Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026. (AP)

The Murphys knew early on that their children had a greater-than-average chance of having neurodevelopmental disabilities. Twin births are associated with a higher risk. Some studies suggest the type of in vitro fertilization they used is too.

The boys arrived nearly a month early. At first, the couple wasn't too concerned that the babies missed developmental milestones; twins born prematurely tend to run a bit behind. But when the boys weren't walking at around 1 1/2 years old, the Murphys sought an evaluation and began speech and occupational therapy. At age 4, the boys were officially diagnosed with level 3 autism, representing the highest level of need, like profound autism.

Autism

In the United States, an estimated 1 in 31 children have autism spectrum disorder. Researchers estimate around a quarter have "profound autism," a term introduced in 2021 by a group of experts, the Lancet Commission, to describe people most disabled by the developmental condition.

But some in the autism community worry that creating a separate diagnosis would reduce attention on the broader spectrum and the individual needs of everyone on it.

Andy Shih, chief science officer for Autism Speaks, said no matter where people fall on the debate, "there's absolutely no doubt that we need to elevate awareness about the needs of this group."

Despite such challenges, the Murphys view these outings as beneficial -- for them, the boys and the community that sees them.

"We can't live our lives in a bubble," said Matthew Murphy, 48. "We want them to experience life."

Wherever they are, the Murphys focus on the joy amid the struggles. They nurture Ronan's artistic, outdoorsy, boisterous personality and Connor's quiet and reserved nature. And they savor the affection both boys shower on them -- like when Connor nuzzled into his mom as they sang "You Are My Sunshine" together.

"They bring a light to you no matter how bad of a day you're having," their dad said. "It's all unconditional love."

Aid to Africa drops sharply

Call for action as Africa's malaria fight stalls

ADDIS ABABA, Feb 16, (Xinhua): African leaders issued an urgent call to action on Saturday as progress toward eliminating malaria on the continent has "stalled," with Africa accounting for 96 percent of global cases.

The appeal was made Saturday during a joint media briefing by the African Union (AU) and the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) on the margins of the ongoing 39th AU Summit at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital.

According to the AU, the continent accounts for 96 percent of global malaria cases and 97 percent of malaria-related deaths. Africa's progress of achieving a malaria-free Africa by 2030 through coordinated action and accountability.

Describing Africa's fight against malaria as "a test of leadership and determination," AU Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development Amma Twum-Ampah noted that only five AU countries remain on track to meet the elimination milestones under the current framework.

Meanwhile, Africa has seen a sharp decline in development assistance to the health sector, down to roughly 39 billion U.S. dollars in 2025 from about 80 billion U.S. dollars in 2021, Claver Twum-Ampah, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), has said.

In his remarks at a side event of the 39th AU Summit on Africa's health sovereignty in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, on Sunday, Gate said Africa spends approximately 145 billion U.S. dollars annually on health while governments finance less than half, which "unfortunately" leaves households to bear heavy out-of-pocket payments.

Across many countries on the continent, he noted, families sell vital assets to pay medical bills, which in turn results in not only social but also macroeconomic consequences.

"Health financing cannot be an auxiliary budget line. It must be integrated into national fiscal frameworks and financed predictably, just as nations finance infrastructure, energy, and security," Gate said.

According to Gate, it is unacceptable that a continent of over 1.4 billion people, carrying nearly a quarter of the global disease burden, is served by fewer than 1,000 pharmaceutical manufacturers, and it produces only a small share of the medicines it consumes.

"Import dependence exposes our health systems to external prices, external decisions, and external disruptions," said Gate, noting that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) would help address these problems by harmonizing regional value chains.



This screenshot from a video released by the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) on Feb. 16, shows Shenzhou-21 taikonauts Zhang Lu (center), Wu Fei (left) and Zhang Hongzhang sending their Chinese New Year greetings aboard China's Tiangong space station. (Xinhua)

Send greetings to Earth

China's space station crew rings in Year of the Horse

BEIJING, Feb 16, (Xinhua): They are 400 km above Earth and cannot go home for the Spring Festival this year, but China's taikonauts have found their own ways to make the traditional Chinese holiday warm and sweet.

The Shenzhou-21 crew aboard the space station Tiangong, which means Heavenly Palace, are celebrating the upcoming Chinese Lunar New Year, the Year of the Horse. On Monday, Chinese New Year's Eve, the three taikonauts sent their greetings to Earth via a video released by the China Manned Space Agency.

"I wish everyone all the best and peace," said commander Zhang Lu.

This is the second time he has spent the festival in space. Zhang also took part in the Shenzhou-15 mission, launched in November 2022, and stayed in orbit for six months back then.

For taikonaut Wu Fei, this is his first Spring Festival in orbit, an experience he described as fresh and proud.

"The Year of the Horse calls for the vigor of a galloping steed. Let us keep striving for our dreams and working for happiness," the young flight engineer said. "I wish you a safe and smooth journey ahead, and a life that gets better and better."

It is also the first time payload specialist Zhang Hongzhang has rung in Chinese New Year in space.

Noting that scientific experiments on the space station are progressing steadily, the bespectacled, poetry-loving taikonaut said: "In the new year, we will continue to explore the cosmos like a galloping horse, writing new chapters in the vast starry sky."

As a scientist-turned-taikonaut, he also made a wish for the prosperity of China's science and technology efforts, saying: "May every endeavor be rewarded."

Notably, this is the fourth Spring Festival taikonauts have celebrated aboard the space station since it was completed in 2022.

Though far from home, these space explorers feel the same festival warmth as people on Earth.

The Shenzhou-21 trio have decorated the space station with red lanterns, Chinese knots and paper-cut craft. They will also enjoy the traditions they usually share with their families on Earth, such as eating dumplings and delicacies that stand for prosperity, peace and good fortune.

Compared with previous crews, the Shenzhou-21 team has one more dish on their table: a freshly-baked cake made in the space oven.

Launched on Oct. 31, 2025, the space journey of the Shenzhou-21 crew has already exceeded 100 days.

All tasks including scientific experiments, equipment maintenance and health management are progressing smoothly, according to the

Leonard thrills home crowd with 31-point barrage for Stripes

Edwards claims MVP award, leads Stars to tourney win in entertaining NBA All-Star Game

INGLEWOOD, Calif., Feb 16, (AP): Anthony Edwards won the Most Valuable Player award while leading his "Stars" team past their fellow Americans on the "Stripes" team 47-21 to win the final of the NBA All-Star Game.

The Minnesota Timberwolves star claimed his first All-Star MVP award with a tying 3-pointer in the first round-robin game followed by eight points in the final, which was the only chapter without a dramatic late finish in this mini-tournament comprising the main event of All-Star weekend at the Los Angeles Clippers' Intuit Dome.

The NBA's fourth format in four years matched two teams of American All-Stars against a team representing the World, hoping to stoke nationalistic passion from players and fans during an Olympic year.

The slightly older Stripes had beaten the slightly younger Stars on De'Aaron Fox's 3-pointer at the buzzer in the second 12-minute, round-robin game. But Edwards led the Stars to victory in the rematch with the Stripes, who appeared to run out of gas while playing in their third straight mini-game.

"We chose to compete today, and we came out on top," Edwards said. "I ain't going to lie, Wembanyama set the tone. He came out and played hard, and we had to follow that."

Indeed, Victor Wembanyama effectively challenged his fellow All-Stars to take this game seriously, and they largely appeared to do it. Despite going 0-2, Wembanyama led the World team in scoring in both games with 14 points in the opener and 19 in the third game.

Along with the late-game theatrics,



USA Stars lift the championship trophy after a win over USA Stripes in the NBA All-Star basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

the event generally appeared to be played at a higher level of competitiveness than most All-Star Games in recent years, suggesting the league might have finally cracked the code on the long-standing question of how to make this midseason showcase more entertaining.

"It was a pretty good display of basketball," Wembanyama said. "Better than last year, in my opinion. It was fun. ... I think being honest with ourselves is good. It's a game we love, it's a game I personally cherish, so being competitive is the least I can do."

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver thanked the All-Stars for playing hard when he presented the championship trophy to the Stars.

Kawhi Leonard thrilled his home

crowd with a 31-point barrage for the Stripes in the final round-robin game, but he managed just one point in the final. Tyrese Maxey led the Stars with nine points in the clincher.

Scottie Barnes won the opening 12-minute game for the Stars with a game-ending 3-pointer in overtime, beating the World 37-36 after Edwards forced OT.

After Fox's dagger in the second game, Leonard utterly dominated the third game before hitting a tiebreaking 3-pointer with 3.5 seconds left in the Stars' 48-45 victory.

The World team was loaded with talent, but NBA scoring leader Luka Doncic and three-time MVP Nikola Jokic both sat out its second game, likely to preserve the health of two



USA Stars guard Anthony Edwards drives past USA Stripes forward Kawhi Leonard in the NBA All-Star basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

superstars who have struggled with injury in the past month.

John Tesh took the court with his band before the game for a live rendition of "Roundball Rock," the iconic 1990s theme song of "NBA on NBC,"

to mark the league's return to the network this season. That network partnership is also the reason the All-Star Game was an afternoon affair on the West Coast, because NBC airs the Winter Olympics at night.

The Intuit Dome crowd included former President Barack Obama, who received a standing ovation pregame.

Edwards scored 13 points and forced overtime on a 3-pointer with 13.3 seconds left in regulation to begin the mini-tourney.

Edwards hit a 14-footer to begin the

first-to-five-points overtime period. Wembanyama made a 3-pointer, but Raptors star Barnes ended it by draining his only shot of the game.

Karl-Anthony Towns added 10 points, but Norman Powell - a born-and-raised Californian who represents Jamaica internationally - missed a potential winning shot for the World at the regulation buzzer.

NBA scoring leader Doncic played the first 5:05 for the World in the opening game before sitting down. The Lakers superstar hadn't played since Feb. 5 due to a hamstring strain, but he was determined to play after receiving his sixth All-Star nod.

Donovan Mitchell took a pass under the net from LeBron James and kicked it out to Fox on the perimeter for the

winner.

Jaylen Brown led the Stripes with 11 points, and James scored eight to begin his record 21st All-Star appearance.

Edwards and Cade Cunningham scored 11 points apiece for the Stars.

"Old heads 1-0," James said with a laugh. "We've got a lot of guys that have played a lot of basketball, so no matter what's going on, we know how to keep our composure and execute."

A few hours beforehand, the top scorer in NBA history said the game's presence in the Los Angeles area meant "nothing, because this is not our building. This is a road game."

Indeed, the Clippers fans in Intuit Dome booted James and Doncic whenever they touched the ball in the first two games.

Leonard thrilled his home crowd with a dynamic effort, going 11 of 13 and 6 of 7 from beyond the arc. The seven-time All-Star made his first seven shots with five 3-pointers amid raucous cheers from the extra-steep supporters' section called The Wall behind one basket at this futuristic 18-month-old arena.

He was unstoppable despite a reasonable defensive effort from the World team led by Wembanyama, who scored 19 points before missing a tying 3-pointer attempt at the buzzer.

James put the Stripes ahead with 31 seconds left on a putback dunk, but Wembanyama hit two free throws to tie it before Leonard called game.

Jokic and Doncic didn't play, leaving the World with just seven players.

The All-Star weekend stays out West in February 2027 when Phoenix hosts for the fourth time.

Augsburg beats Heidenheim

Leipzig's Champs League hopes hit by draw with lowly Wolfsburg



Leipzig's Willi Orban, top left, and Wolfsburg's Moritz Jenz in action during the Bundesliga soccer match between RB Leipzig and VfL Wolfsburg in Leipzig, Germany. (AP)

BERLIN, Feb 16, (AP): Leipzig's Champions League hopes took a blow in a 2-2 draw with lowly Wolfsburg in the Bundesliga.

It could have been worse for the Red Bull-backed club with Brajan Gruda salvaging the draw in the 89th minute and Leipzig goalkeeper Maarten Vandvoort saving Christian Eriksen's effort from the last kick of the game.

Leipzig dropped to fifth, two points behind Stuttgart and just a point above Bayer Leverkusen with 12 rounds remaining. Only the top four qualify for Europe's premier club competition.

Wolfsburg moved a point above the relegation zone.

Lyon secures 13th straight victory

PARIS, Feb 16, (AP): After narrowly escaping relegation for financial reasons last season, resurgent Lyon is on a stunning run and secured a 13th straight win in all competitions after beating Nice 2-0 at home in Ligue 1.

Lyon was without teenage Brazil striker Endriks through suspension. But he was hardly missed as midfielders Corentin Tolisso and Noah Nartey grabbed the goals for third-place Lyon, which kept a fourth straight clean sheet and moved five points clear of fourth-place Marseille.

Tolisso started and finished a counterattack to put Lyon ahead in first-half stoppage time and Nartey netted in the 64th minute after Nice failed to clear a cross from Pavel Šulc.

Nice was almost relegated last season due to financial irregularities and huge debts, staying up only after winning an appeal, and has been transformed under coach Paulo Fonseca.

Mohamed Amoura broke the deadlock for Wolfsburg early in the second half after Adam Daghim surged past Max Finkgräfe and Nicolas Seiwald before laying the ball back. Amoura fired inside the far post.

The otherwise excellent Wolfsburg goalkeeper Kamil Grabara gifted Leipzig a way back with a kickout that went straight to Gruda, who laid it off for Yan Diomande to equalize in the 70th.

Wolfsburg substitute Matthias Svanberg restored his team's lead eight minutes later, but Gruda replied in the 89th to salvage a point for Leipzig after its German Cup exit to Bayern Munich.

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif., Feb 16, (AP): Collin Morikawa went 45 starts over more than two years to finally win again on the PGA Tour, and he faced a wait that felt just as long on the final hole in the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. He kept his poise, hit a 4-iron to the collar of the green and made birdie for a one-shot victory.

In a wild final round of wind and lead changes, Morikawa had the right response for Scottie Scheffler's bold charge by making two straight birdies down the stretch, and then making the one that mattered the most - after a 20-minute wait - for a 5-under 67. He finished at 22-under 266.

Morikawa won by one shot over Sepp Straka and Min Woo Lee for his first PGA Tour title since the Zozo Championship in Japan in October 2023.

The timing couldn't have been better. Morikawa began telling friends this week he and his wife are expecting their first child, and winning was "the best way to announce it to the world."

Scheffler began the final day eight shots behind and was 7 under through seven holes before the wind began whipping. He had three eagles in his round of 63, the last one a 6-iron to 30 inches on the final hole that allowed him to tie Morikawa for the lead.

Morikawa charged his way into the mix with a 62 on Saturday to get within two shots of the lead. The Cal alum won for the seventh time on the PGA Tour since turning pro a week before the 2019 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach. Winning at Pebble moves him back to the top 10 in the world.

Anthony Kim capped off a stunning comeback in life and in golf when he made four straight birdies on the back nine, closed with a 9-under 63 and won LIV Golf Adelaide

for his first victory in nearly 16 years.

Kim vanished from the game in

2012 and went through struggles

with drugs and alcoholism.

LIV Golf brought him in as a wild card in 2024, and he made it through qualifying to stay in the league for this season.

He started five shots behind Jon Rahm and Bryson DeChambeau, who have combined to win four majors since 2020. The 40-year-old American surged past both of them to win by three shots and collect \$4 million.

Rahm's last win had been the 2010 Houston Open.

David Toms made a 25-foot par

putt to stay in the game and finished

with a tap-in birdie on the par-5 18th

for a 1-over 73 and a one-shot vic-

tory in the Chubb Classic, his first victory on the PGA Tour Champions in nearly three years.

Toms struggled for so much of

Sunday with a pair of double bogeys

on the front nine to let other back into the mix.

Boo Weekley closed with a 67 to catch Toms. Defending champion Justin Leonard joined them with birdie on the 17th, though he failed to birdie the 18th from a greenside bunker. He closed with a 70.

Toms reached the bunker in two on the 18th and blasted out to a foot to finish at 13-under 203. It was his fifth PGA Tour Champions title and first since he won the Galleri Classic in 2023.

M.J. Daffue of South Africa closed with a 3-under 69 to win the NTT

Data Pro-Am by four shots in a tournament co-sanctioned by the Challenge Tour and the Sunshine Tour.

Charley Hull rallied with a 7-under 65 to win the Saudi Ladies International by one shot over Akie Iwai (67) and Casandra Alexander (68) in a Ladies European Tour event that ended on Saturday.

Yunseo Yang closed with a 3-under 69 in windy conditions that yielded only three rounds under par for an eight-shot victory at Royal Wellington to become the first South Korean winner of the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific. The victory gets the 18-year-old Yang into the Women's British Open, the Evian Championship and the Chevron Championship on the LPGA.

Struggling Rayo Vallecano stuns Atletico amid fan boycott

MADRID, Feb 16, (AP): Struggling Rayo Vallecano upset Atletico Madrid 3-0 in La Liga in a stunning win watched by only around 5,000 people because of a protest by Rayo fans.

It was Atletico's second consecutive Spanish league loss but came only three days after it had routed Barcelona 4-0 in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semi-final at home. Coach Diego Simeone rested some of his regular starters after Thursday's match against Barcelona.

"The team isn't choosing games," Simeone said. "We competed poorly, and when you compete poorly, the opponent plays better than you and beats you."

Rayo, which hadn't beaten Atletico in 19 straight games since 2013, moved out of the relegation zone with the victory, which ended a four-game losing streak for the team in all competitions.

The match was played at Butarque Stadium, home

of second-division club Leganes in Madrid, because the field at Rayo's Vallecas Stadium remained in poor condition after the grass had to be fully replaced. Rayo's home game against Oviedo last weekend had to be postponed on short notice because of the field condition.

Rayo fans have been upset with club president Martin Perea and called for a boycott of the game against Atletico. Hundreds of Rayo fans protested outside Vallecas Stadium hours before Sunday's match at Butarque.

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About 5,300 fans attended the match at Butarque, which had many empty seats.

Butarque holds about 12,000 fans in southern Madrid.

The victory moved Rayo to 16th place. Its last league win had been 2-1 against Mallorca in January.

"We always prefer to have the fans close to us, but we respect their decision," Rayo defender Andrei Ratiu said.

"We've made some complaints, and hopefully little by little things will get done, because that would be beneficial for everyone."

Ratiu assisted in Fran Perez's opener in the 40th minute.

Atletico has won three of its last four matches. It lost 1-0 at home to Basque Country rival Real Sociedad on Wednesday in the first leg of the Copa semifinals.

Oviedo had beaten Girona 1-0 at home in the previous round to end a 15-game winless streak.

Valencia scored twice in the second half to win 2-0 at city rival Levante, with Largie Ramazani and Umar Sadiq finding the net for the visitors.

The result, which ended a three-game losing streak for Valencia across all competitions, moved the club out of the relegation zone and up to 14th place.

Levante, which has only won one win in six league matches, stayed in 19th place.

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It feels like I won a championship: MJ

Reddick wins Daytona 500 for Michael Jordan-owned 23XI Racing

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla., Feb 16, (AP): Tyler Reddick won the Daytona 500 in a car owned by Michael Jordan when Chase Elliott crashed as he and Reddick were battling for the win in NASCAR's season opener.

Reddick, in a Toyota for 23XI Racing, led only one lap on Sunday: the one to the checkered flag for the team owned by the NBA Hall of Famer and three-time Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin.

"Just incredible how it all played out. Just true Daytona madness," Reddick said. "I've already lost my voice from screaming. Never thought I'd be Daytona 500 champion."

Neither did Jordan, who met Reddick in victory lane for a bear hug and the two then jointly hoisted the Harley J. Earl trophy into the air. Jordan, who turns 63 on Tuesday, will get a Daytona 500 ring for his birthday and made it known in victory lane he wears a size 13.

"It feels like I won a championship, but until I get my ring, I won't even know," Jordan said.

It was a celebration that included multiple stars of NASCAR as Reddick is teammates with Bubba Wal-

lace, who went to victory lane in tears after dominating a huge chunk of the race but finishing 10th.

Jordan wrapped his arms around Wallace from behind and spoke closely into Wallace's ear in a brief speech of encouragement.

"I don't want my emotions to take away from the monumental day they just accomplished. Happy birthday, MJ. That's a massive birthday present," Wallace said. "I thought this was our week, the best 500 I've ever had, and come up short, sucks."

"Led a lot of laps, lap leader, I believe. It was a good day for us, but damn. Try again next year."

Hamlin, who drives for Joe Gibbs Racing, was involved in the final caution when he and teammate Christopher Bell collided with nine laps remaining. It set up the final push to the finish over the final four laps.

Elliott had control on the final lap after leader Carson Hocevar was spun off the track and it appeared the son of NASCAR Hall of Famer Bill Elliott would

finally win his first Daytona 500.

Instead, Reddick made a huge surge, hit Elliott to cause Elliott to crash and sailed past to give Jordan a victory in NASCAR's biggest event of the year.

Jordan was the face of the December federal antitrust lawsuit that NASCAR settled on the ninth day of trial. The settlement changed the revenue-sharing model in the United States' top motorsports series.

Jordan watched the win from a suite overlooking the superspeedway built by the France family he just beat in federal court.

"I can't even believe it. It was so gratifying," Jordan said. "You never know how these races are going to end. You just try to survive. We hung in there all day. Great strategy by the team, and we gave ourselves a chance at the end. Look, I'm ecstatic."

The victory marked a Daytona sweep for three team owners heavily involved in the trial. Bob Jenkins, who joined 23XI in suing NASCAR, opened the weekend with a victory when Chandler Smith won the Truck Series opener on Friday night for Front Row Motorsports.



Tyler Reddick, (45) celebrates a win during the NASCAR Daytona 500 auto race at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla. (AP)

Burgan overcomes Al-Sulaibikhat

Kazma holds unbeaten Kuwait Club to dramatic draw

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Kuwait Club dropped its first point of the Handball Premier League season after being held to a thrilling 30-30 draw by Kazma in Round 11 at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex. The result ended Kuwait Club's perfect run of 10 consecutive victories since the league kicked off on September 2.

In the same round, Burgan secured a 39-33 win over Al-Sulaibikhat.

The clash between Kazma and Kuwait Club was filled with drama, particularly at the start of the second half when Kuwait Club's goal-keeping duo, brothers Ali and Hassan Safar, were both shown red cards. Teammate Mohammed Amer was also dismissed with a blue card, leaving the team without a specialist



Kazma player goes for a goal against Kuwait Club.

goalkeeper.

Algerian coach Said Hejazi was forced to field team captain Abdullah Al-Khamis in goal — a situation Kazma could not fully exploit. Nevertheless, Kazma managed to score a last-gasp equalizer to secure a valuable point.

Despite the setback, Kuwait remains top of the standings with 21 points in the three-phase competition. Kazma is second with 14 points, level with Burgan who sits third on goal difference. Al-Arabi occupies fourth place with 12 points, followed by Qadsia in fifth with 10. Al-Salmiya has eight points, Al-Sulaibikhat seven, while Al-Nasr sit bottom with two points.

The league continues during the month of Ramadan, with Round 12 set to begin tomorrow, Wednesday. Al-Nasr will meet Qadsia at 8:00 pm, followed by Burgan against Al-Arabi at 10:00 pm.

Meillard clinches slalom gold to close out men's Alpine program

Velzeboer adds a second Olympic title to her tally

BORMIO, Italy, Feb 16, (AP): Loic Meillard of Switzerland used a strong second run to win the men's slalom Monday on a day that saw Brazilian ski racer Lucas Pinheiro Braathen fall in the first run, ending his bid for another Olympic gold.

The event closes out the men's Alpine program at the Milan Cortina Games.

Meillard adds gold to a silver he won in the team combined and bronze from the giant slalom.

Meillard finished in a two-run combined time of 1 minute, 53.61 seconds. He edged Fabio Gstrein of Austria by 0.35 seconds, while Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway took bronze. It was quite a contrast of runs, too, with snow and fog in the morning and the sun peeking out for the afternoon.

Norway's Atle Lie McGrath, the first-run leader, straddled a gate and was out. He was so irate that he threw his ski poles over the netting on one side. He then went outside the netting on the other side, trudging along the snow. He sat down and then fell back, breathing heavily.

McGrath has been racing with a heavy heart, with his grandfather dying the day of the opening ceremony. McGrath wore an armband as a tribute.

Pinheiro Braathen made history by winning the giant slalom Saturday, becoming the first athlete from South America to win a medal at a Winter Olympics. But his ski slipped out on a fast first run and his bid for another medal was over. Pinheiro Braathen represented Norway before switching to Brazil, his



Switzerland's Loic Meillard speeds down the course, during an alpine ski, men's slalom race, at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Bormio, Italy. (AP)

mom's home country.

Switzerland led the men's Alpine skiing medal table in Bormio with eight (four gold, two silver and two bronze). Austria (two silvers) and Italy (silver, bronze) each had two, while Brazil (gold), U.S. (silver) and Norway (bronze) brought home one apiece.

Xandra Velzeboer was barely done celebrating her Olympic gold medal in the 500 meters when Dutch short track speedskating teammate Jens van 't Wout won his second gold.

So, Velzeboer went out and won the 1,000 meters gold medal Monday, four days after she topped the podium

in the 500 at the Milan Cortina Olympics. Van 't Wout captured the men's 1,500 meters title on Saturday.

She finished first in the final in 1 minute, 28.437 seconds, with Canada's Courtney Sarault in second for the silver medal followed by South Korea's Kim Gilli, who took bronze.

Home favorite Arianna Fontana, in her sixth Games and owner of 13 Olympic medals in her career, was fourth.

Velzeboer passed Sarault with three laps to go and held off challenges, sticking her right skate over the line and raising both arms aloft.

A smiling Velzeboer then high-fived teammates as she took a victory lap and lifted both hands up to

her helmet as if in disbelief.

Velzeboer went to Plan B pretty early on in the final. She had wanted to pass Fontana.

Sarault, the bronze medalist in last week's 500, led but went wide thinking the ice "had a little bit more glide than it did - it didn't." That allowed Velzeboer and Gilli to accelerate into the first and second positions, respectively, before the Canadian fought back to finish second in 1:28.523.

Velzeboer's victory keeps the 1,000 title in Dutch hands. Suzanne Schulting had won back-to-back golds in the 1,000 in the past two Games, but wasn't entered in the 1,000 for Milan Cortina.

PSG feels the heat ahead of Champs League playoff

PARIS, Feb 16, (AP): Paris Saint-Germain is under pressure for the first time this season and tensions have started appearing.

After failing to qualify automatically for the last 16 of the Champions League, last year's winner faces a playoff against Ligue 1 rival Monaco.

PSG heads to Monaco for Tuesday's first leg on the back of a 3-1 defeat at Rennes, which allowed Lens to reclaim top spot in Ligue 1.

PSG is also out of the French Cup and has lost six games overall this season.

The Rennes defeat prompted PSG's Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembélé to question the attitude of his teammates.

"I think we need to show more desire," he said. "Because if we play as individuals on the pitch it won't work, we won't win the trophies we want."

Without giving names, he suggested some players are putting themselves first.

"Last season we put the club first before thinking about ourselves. I think we need to rediscover that," Dembélé added. "We're in the second half of the season and Paris Saint-Germain should come first, not individual players."

Dembélé's comments led coach Luis Enrique to issue a stern reminder about keeping a united front.

"I will never allow any player to be above the club," he said. "I am the person responsible for the team."

Luis Enrique's strong man-management has helped PSG become a far more unified team. He made it clear that, unlike previous seasons, there would be no pampered players.

Dembélé found that out the hard way, when Luis Enrique dropped him for a Champions League game at Arsenal early last season on disciplinary grounds.

It worked as Dembélé went on to score 35 goals overall and help PSG win the Champions League for the first time.

PSG's surge to the title was largely unexpected - as was Dembélé's sud-

denly prolific scoring - and the element of surprise has now gone.

Last season stretched until the Club World Cup final in mid-July and saw some PSG players appear in more than 60 games.

The team's high-octane style and incessant closing down demands a lot. Perhaps as a consequence, and with little recovery time over the summer, the club has been hit by injuries to key players throughout this campaign.

Dembélé has not been able to form the same understanding in attack with Désiré Doué, with both players being injured twice.

Luis Enrique also seems uncertain on his best goalkeeper, which does not help the defense.

Last season's Champions League success was helped by spectacular shot-stopping from goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma in the knockout rounds.

But Luis Enrique decided, perhaps surprisingly, to recruit Lucas Chevalier from Lille despite his lack of experience compared to Donnarumma, a European Championship winner with Italy who made 251 appearances for AC Milan before joining PSG.

Donnarumma is now with Manchester City.

Chevalier impressed for Lille last season and was considered by Luis Enrique to be better at passing from the back than Donnarumma, which gives PSG options to attack from deeper and keep more control of possession.

Yet Chevalier has looked out of his depth at times and lost his place to Matvei Safonov, who was Donnarumma's backup last season.

PSG reached the last 16 last season by beating French side Brest 10-0 over two legs.

It promises to be a harder test against Monaco, which beat PSG earlier this season in Ligue 1 and is improving in defense, with four clean sheets in the past six games.

Coach Sébastien Pocognoli is waiting on the fitness of attacking midfi-

ler Maghnes Aklouche, midfielder Lamine Camara and goal-scoring winger Ansu Fati.

Manawer Al-Mutairi welcomes Al-Jalahma's appointment

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Manawer Al-Mutairi, Chairman of the Sports Media Coordinators Association, described the appointment of Tareq Al-Jalahma as Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs as a prudent step that has been widely welcomed across Kuwait's sporting community.

Al-Mutairi said Al-Jalahma possessed the experience and qualifications needed to bring meaningful progress to Kuwaiti sports, emphasizing that the decision reflects the principle of placing the right person in the right position. He noted that Al-Jalahma is a former international player with Qadsia Sports Club and a respected sports analyst known for his clear and firm opinions.

He added that the announcement has created a positive atmosphere within the sports sector, with many athletes expressing optimism about the next phase. Al-Mutairi also voiced the association's readiness to cooperate with the new minister to help develop Kuwaiti sports and serve the nation's interests in the period ahead.



Manawer Al-Mutairi

Real Madrid faces Benfica again

MADRID, Feb 16, (Xinhua): Real Madrid and coach Alvaro Arbeloa face a vital moment in the season in the first leg of the Champions League play-off against Benfica in Lisbon.

It's not yet three weeks since Benfica's epic 4-2 win in the last game of the group stage which saw a 98th minute goal from goalkeeper Anatoly Trubin qualify Jose Mourinho's side for the play-off, while condemning Real Madrid to play two extra games it could have done without in a packed season.

Real Madrid paid a heavy price for that defeat, with both Raul Asencio and Rodrygo shown red cards in the closing moments and both are suspended for Tuesday's return to Lisbon.

Asencio's suspension is a problem given that Dean Huijsen is struggling for form in central defense, as shown by the penalty he

Best of the Rest

Di Maria scores in Rosario Central win: Enzo Copetti and Angel Di Maria scored second-half goals as Rosario Central rose to fourth in Argentina's Apertura tournament standings on Sunday with a 2-0 home win over Barracas Central.

Copetti opened the scoring just before the hour at El Gigante in Rosario with a glancing header after Agustín Sandez's cross from the left wing.

Di Maria doubled the advantage in the 90th minute by combining with Julian Fernandez and lifting a shot over goalkeeper Marcelo Mino.

The visitors controlled just a third of the total possession and managed only three shots on goal.

Rosario Central is now fourth in Group B with eight points from five games, three points ahead of 12th-placed Barracas.

"We needed this win," 2022 World Cup winner Di Maria said after the match. "I was very keen to get on the scoresheet again after getting two assists in my last two games. I'm at a unique stage in my career and enjoying every moment." Earlier, Boca Juniors was held to a goalless home draw by Platense, a result that left the Buenos Aires club seventh in Group A with seven points. Platense is fifth, one point ahead.

Elsewhere in Argentina's top flight on Sunday, Instituto Cordoba won 2-0 at home to Central Cordoba and Gimnasia LP was held to a goalless home draw by Estudiantes. (Xinhua)

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Arsenal's Noni Madueke controls the ball during the English FA Cup soccer match between Arsenal and Wigan Athletic in London. Arsenal won 4-0. (AP)

Sports

President of KU honors students who participated in the tournament

Kuwait University shines at 2nd GCC Women's Sports Tournament in Qatar



President of Kuwait University, Professor Dr. Dina Musaed Al-Mailam, honors the university's students who participated in the tournament.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Kuwait University, represented by the Sports Activities Department of the Deanship of Student Affairs, participated in the 2nd Gulf Sports Tournament for female students from universities and higher education institutions in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait University, the tournament was hosted by Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar from February 6 to 11, 2026.

The KU delegation was headed by Dr. Salem Al-Shammari, the acting Dean of Student Affairs, and included 35 members, including administrators, coaches, and athletes. The university team competed in six sporting events - badminton, padel, 3x3 basketball, athletics, fencing, and table tennis. They achieved first place in three events.

In fencing, Yasmin Al-Shawaf, a student from the College of Engineering and Petroleum, won first place. Jana Al-Mukaimi from the College of Education secured second place.

In padel, Thamarah Al-Shallal from the College of Life Sciences and Rayan Al-Hajri from the College of Engineering and Petroleum both won second place.

Badriya Al-Antari from the College of Education earned second place in the shot put competition.

The university's participation aimed to promote women's sports activities and encourage positive athletic competition.

In a separate press statement, the President of Kuwait University, Professor Dr. Dina Musaed Al-Mailam, honored the university's female students who participated in the tournament.

She praised the students' outstanding performance during the tournament and expressed pride in them, highlighting that they elevated the university's profile among 16 Gulf universities and higher education institutions.

Dr. Al-Mailam noted that the university's fourth-place finish in the overall rankings reflects the students' determination, perseverance, and sense of belonging, adding that the university believes in the principle of a sound mind in a sound body, and that sports activities are an integral part of the university's identity, contributing to the development of well-rounded leadership qualities.

Dr. Al-Mailam concluded by expressing her hope that the students will achieve more medals and higher rankings in future competitions.

Al-Qadsia finalizes preparations ahead of decisive clash with Al-Ain



Qadsia players intensify training for the decider.

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DUBAI, Feb 16: Al-Qadsia wrapped up its training at Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium ahead of Wednesday's crucial Group A match against UAE's Al-Ain in the final round of the Gulf Club Champions League.

Al-Qadsia needs a win to advance to the semifinals, currently sitting third in the group with 7 points. Al-Ain, second with 9 points, require only a draw to secure their spot, while Iraqi side Zakho have already qualified as group leaders with 10 points.

Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul intensified preparations at Qatara Stadium since Sunday, taking advantage of the Kuwait Football Association's decision to postpone Qadsia's previous match against Burgan in the Amir Cup preliminary round. The extra

time allowed the team to train effectively and gradually increase intensity to reach peak readiness.

Maaloul confirmed that most key players are fit for the clash, including Khaled Sabah, who had missed previous matches due to injury.

The coach expressed satisfaction with the team's recent performances, including wins over Al-Arabi and Kuwait Club to claim the Super Cup, a draw against league leader Kuwait Club, and last week's victory over Zakho — results that have kept its semifinal hopes alive.

Maaloul emphasized the importance of correcting mistakes and staying focused in the decisive match, expressing full confidence in his players' ability to secure victory and a spot in the Gulf Club Champions League semifinals.

Kuwait Club crushes Qadsia to stay top

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: Kuwait Club delivered a commanding 120-84 victory over Qadsia in a postponed second-division league match at the Federation Hall of the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex.

The win allowed Kuwait Club to maintain its lead at the top of the standings with 26 points, while Qadsia remains close behind in second place with 25 points.

Kazma also impressed, overwhelming Al-Arabi 115-59. The victory lifted Kazma to 24 points in third place, while Al-Arabi sits seventh with 17 points.

In the clash between defending champions Kuwait Club and Qadsia, Serbian coach Goran Stojkov set the tone early. Kuwait Club opened the game with an 11-point lead by the end of the first quarter (33-22) and outscored Qadsia 28-20 in the second quarter.



By the third quarter, Kuwait Club had stretched the lead to 29 points (90-61) and controlled the fourth quarter as well, scoring 30 points to seal a decisive victory.

Qadsia signs Pakistani for remainder of season

League resumes as Kuwait Volleyball Association holds GA

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 16: The Kuwaiti Volleyball League returns to action today after a 37-day suspension caused by the participation of Kuwait Club and Burgan in the fourth West Asia Clubs Volleyball Championship, recently hosted by Kuwait Club. The hosts secured third place, while Qatar's Al-Rayyan lifted the title.

Competition restarts with two fixtures at the Volleyball Association Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex. Yarmouk faces Qadsia at 5:00 pm, followed by Burgan taking on Al-Sulaibikhat at 7:00 pm.

Kuwait Club leads the standings with 20 points. Qadsia sits second on 16 points, ahead of Al-Arabi (15) and Kazma (14). Al-Sulaibikhat has 11 points, while Burgan and Al-Shabab are tied on 10 points, with Burgan ahead on set difference. Yarmouk have three points, while Al-Nasr and Al-Sahel are yet to register a point.

Off the court, Qadsia strengthened its squad by signing Pakistani professional Murad Jehan for the remainder of the season alongside Brazilian player Caio. The team also welcomed back star Nasser Dashti after a four-month absence due to family reasons.

Meanwhile, the Ordinary General Assembly of the Kuwait Volleyball Association will convene at 6:00 pm today at the association's headquarter

ters to fill two vacant board positions — Secretary-General and Board Member — for the 2024-2027 term.

Talal Al-Nimsh of Kazma has applied for the Secretary-General post, while Ziyad Al-Enezi of Al-Nasr has applied for Board Member. With no other candidates in the race, both are set to win by acclamation.

The current Board is headed by President Dr. Jaber Al-Mari (Al-Sahel), alongside Vice President Nasser Al-Enezi (Al-Jahra), Treasurer Talal Al-Adwani (Burgan), Assistant Treasurer Hamad Al-Bathali (Al-Sulaibikhat), Assistant Secretary Nayef Al-Khameeli (Al-Tadhamon), and members Nayef Al-Failakawi (Yarmouk), Dhari Al-Arif (Kuwait Club), and Jassim Al-Failakawi (Al-Shabab).



Nasser Dashti returns after a four-month absence.

England survives Italy scare to reach World Cup Super Eights

Afghanistan registers first win

KOLKATA, India, Feb 16, (AP): England survived a scare before sealing a 24-run win over Italy on Monday to qualify for the Super Eights stage of cricket's Twenty20 World Cup.

Ben Manenti smashed 60 off only 25 balls, with six sixes, as Italy threatened to chase down a target of 202-7 set by England in their Group C clash.

Grant Stewart also hit 45 in 23 deliveries but Sam Curran (3-22) and Jamie Overton (3-18) held their nerve in the last two overs as Italy was bowled out for 178.

Earlier, Will Jacks thumped 53 not out off 22 balls as England notched up its highest total of the tournament in a must-win game.

The two-time champion is now through to the Super Eights, along with group rival West Indies, co-host India and South Africa.

In Delhi, Afghanistan shrugged off back-to-back defeats in its first two games to finally register a first win at the tournament, beating the United Arab Emirates by five wickets.

Azmatullah Omarzai hit 40 not out off 21 balls and opener Ibrahim Zadran scored 53 off 41 deliveries as Afghanistan, coming off the narrowest of narrow losses to 2024 runner-up South Africa in a Group D contest decided after a second Super Over, finished on 162-5 in 19.2 overs.

It was a good all-round showing from Omarzai, who also picked up 4-15 in four overs to help restrict UAE to 160-9 after his team had won the toss.

Steve Smith, who hasn't played a T20 international for Australia in two years, was brought in as a squad replacement for injured fast bowler Josh Hazlewood but has not been included in Monday's team.

England's top-order struggled to get going at the



England's Jacob Bethell plays a shot during the T20 World Cup cricket match between England and Italy in Kolkata, India. (AP)

start against Italy, the team reaching 92-4 just past the halfway mark.

But Jacks came to the rescue, hitting four sixes and putting on 54 off 25 balls with Curran (25) for the sixth wicket. Jacks then added another 35 off 16 deliveries with Overton (15) to take England beyond 200.

Jofra Archer struck twice in the first over to leave Italy on 1-2. It later became 22-3, with Overton dismissing skipper Harry Manenti for 12.

Ben Manenti and opener Justin Mosca then added

92 in 48 balls, with the former's swashbuckling half-century giving Italy hope of pulling off a shock win.

Stewart also cracked 21 runs off leg-spinner Adil Rashid in the 18th over but Curran and Overton led England home.

Afghanistan only has a slim chance of qualifying for the Super Eights despite beating the UAE.

New Zealand has four points from two wins and could knock out Afghanistan if it beats Canada in Chennai on Tuesday. The Afghans play Canada in their final game in Chennai on Thursday.