



Ramadan Kareem

رمضان كريم

KUWAIT'S FREELANCE VISA PLAN SEEKS TO END RESIDENCY TRADE

Labor market shake-up underway

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah revealed that he faced significant challenges due to the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), and his first decision was to rescind existing regulations.

Speaking at the first dialogue session titled "Success Partners" organized by PAM with representatives of private sector companies on Monday, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef said he considered himself "one of the people" and emphasized that all companies should have representation on PAM's board of directors.

He stressed that the fate of all companies should not be determined by the decisions of only six or seven individuals, adding that the country's fate is everyone's responsibility.

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Photo by Samer Shiger
First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah (third from left) at the first dialogue session titled 'Success Partners' organized by PAM.

- PAM rules scrapped in reform blitz
- No one above law, says Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef
- Fake firms under fire
- Salaries must be paid on time
- Children under 18 allowed family residency
- Degree equivalency under study
- Unified standards for driver licenses
- Worker transfers between contracts proposed



Opinion

■ Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Oh, 'Commerce', do not bother the women selling food from their homes!

YEARS ago, Vice President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ruler of Dubai His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid was invited to a luncheon hosted by some of Dubai's dignitaries. A wide variety of traditional Emirati dishes were served and the Sheikh enjoyed the food. He asked, "Who prepared this?" He was told, "A local woman, named Umm Khamis (I believe), prepared it. She works from home."

That day, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid summoned her and granted her a restaurant license. Later, the restaurant became a chain.

I wanted to begin with this story to illustrate that many families in need do not resort to begging. Instead, they rely on themselves to meet their needs, even when they lack social security, support or assistance. They do not ask anyone for help.

Among these people are women who cook in their homes and sell meals to those who request them. This is common in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, in other Arab countries, and indeed, worldwide. In Kuwait, we have not heard of anyone complaining about this food, even if it is poisoned. On the contrary, it is popular due to its cleanliness and quality.

Recently, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued a decree threatening these families with dire consequences. The threat even extended to imprisoning women who cook in

their homes and sell meals. My question is simple: What harm does it do to the ministry, municipality, or any other entity if a woman cooks and sells food? Should she be forced to rely on others?

On the other hand, if someone wants home-cooked meals, will the ministry prevent them from eating? Or if someone prefers to eat at someone's home, will the authorities issuing these decrees try to silence them?

We understand that restaurant owners and others are unhappy with this very limited competition, but no one has the right to prevent people from eating, whether at a restaurant or a home. This is a fundamental right, and no one denies it. As long as no one complains, there is nothing preventing these families from working in this field, as long as they are earning a living and not resorting to begging.

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Consumers protected, prices in Kuwait remain stable

Markets gear up to meet Ramadan demand

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): As the holy month of Ramadan approaches, attention turns to local markets, which witness an increase in consumption rates.

Early preparations are underway by the Union of Cooperative Societies in coordination with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to ensure the availability of essential goods in cooperative societies and markets, maintain price stability and strengthen supervision of sales outlets across all governorates.

Preparations by the Union of Cooperative Societies and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry continue through boosting stock levels and organizing promotions and discounts to maintain market balance and enhance the availability of high-demand goods. This reflects an ongoing commitment to price stability and providing diverse options to meet various needs during the holy month.

Supervisory efforts by the Ministry are intensifying through increased inspection campaigns and close monitoring of prices

to ensure compliance with regulations and to deter any violations or exploitative practices, reinforcing a fair and stable commercial environment during the holy month.

Faisal Al-Ansari, Director of the Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Tuesday the ministry has prepared a team to monitor prices during Ramadan, which started operating at central markets on "Wholesale Street" in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area.

Al-Ansari added the department's focus was keeping basic food prices stable.

Prices and invoices displayed to consumers in shops on Wholesale Street have been reviewed, and shops have pledged not to raise prices, maintaining them as they were before, during and after Ramadan.

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Day by Day

HESITATION is the greatest cause of defeat. This is a fact acknowledged by political experts.

Hesitation squanders gains, and its consequences halt the progress of nations.

In war, whoever pulls the trigger one second before the enemy wins. That one second between the launch of a missile makes the difference between victor and vanquished. Victory comes because you pulled the trigger first while your enemy hesitated.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



KUNA photo

With the first signs of spring in Kuwait, these days are filled with the beauty of Nuwair flowers, spreading like a vivid painting of tiny suns. Their bright yellow blooms appear across public and private gardens, roadsides and residential areas. Adding to the scene are butterflies and bees, along with mild, pleasant weather, creating a charming view that delights onlookers.



KPC photo
Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) CEO Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Ahmad Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Kuwait Oil Company CEO Ahmed Al-Eidan during their participation in the event.

KPC drives afforestation, cuts carbon emissions nationwide

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah confirmed that the corporation and its subsidiaries keep on striving to achieve their strategic sustainability goals, which include afforestation and green spaces expansion.

Sheikh Nawaf made the statement during his participation in the launching of the second edition of the Sidr tree planting initiative at Ahmadi Oasis – a project of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC). He affirmed the important environmental role of the Sidr tree in stabilizing the soil, purifying the air, and withstanding harsh climatic conditions.

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Agencies must update staff credentials: CSC

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has instructed government agencies to update the academic qualifications and certificates of all employees in the integrated system.

Sources explained to the newspaper that this instruction aims to ensure compliance with the regulations, and the continuation of financial rights and benefits for the employees.

Sources said the update will guarantee smooth work processes, protect employees' interests, and save time and effort, indicating the CSC underscored the need to circulate the instruction to all departments within each sector of the agencies.

Continued on Page 5

Detained KNG personnel freed ahead of Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Undersecretary of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG), Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas, issued a decision to release military personnel detained for disciplinary reasons on the occasion of the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the National Guard explained that the decision was made based on the directives of the Chair of the National Guard, Sheikh Mubarak Hamoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and his deputy, Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, to

allow these personnel to spend the holy month with their families.



Al-Barjas

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Amiri Diwan on Tuesday thanked all citizens and residents who offered condolences over the demise of **Sheikha Adla Humoud Hamad Al-Malek Al-Sabah**. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Civil Service Commission announced Tuesday that Wednesday and Thursday, Feb 25 and 26, will be official holidays for all ministries, government bodies and

public institutions on the occasion of Kuwait's National Day and Liberation Day.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the Commission said official working hours will resume on Sunday, March 1.

It added that entities with special nature of work will determine their holiday schedules in accordance with the relevant authorities, taking into account the public interest. (KUNA)

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Ramadan Timings

Imsak Wednesday..... 05:05
Iftar Wednesday..... 17:39
Imsak Thursday..... 05:05

8 NBK wins 2 Global Finance Sustainable Awards for '26



9 FY 2025 marks a year of exceptional growth for Zain Group

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:06	Asr	15:14
Sunrise ..	06:26	Maghrib ..	17:39
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:56

Local

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Warm with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-32 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.			
By Night: Rather cold with light			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait Airport	26	12	
Abdaly	29	11	

Buayan	22	08
Jahra	29	15
Failaka Island	25	11
Salmiyah	25	18
Ahmadi	25	12
Jal Aliyah	28	13
Nuwaisib	26	14
Wafra	27	15

GCC Media Foundation marks 50 years of joint productions

Minister Al-Omar hails legacy of preserving Gulf identity and shaping generations

By Mohammad Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar stressed that unifying the vision on joint Gulf media production is a strategic step toward shaping a balanced and responsible media discourse as per the aspirations of leaders, responds to the awareness of our generations, and safeguards heritage in a world marked by accelerating changes, expanding platforms and mounting challenges.

Al-Omar delivered a speech as the representative of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during the celebration of the Joint Program Production Institution of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held recently at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, commemorating its 50th anniversary.

With the theme, "Fifty Years of Gulf Tales," the event was held under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister.

Al-Omar stated that the Foundation represents a well-established media institution and a pioneering model of media cooperation among GCC countries. It has contributed to consolidating the Gulf presence as a platform for awareness, a source of culture, a mirror of identity, and a bridge of communication among the peoples of the region.

He pointed out that 50 years is not merely a span of time but a prolonged journey of institutional collaboration, during which the Foundation has succeeded, through its diverse productions, in addressing generations, instilling values, and reinforcing Gulf and Arab identity. Its works have become an integral part of the collective memory of Gulf families and a hallmark of quality, purposeful content that blends authenticity with innovation.

He continued stating that Kuwait has consistently affirmed its belief that media and culture are fundamental pillars in building individuals and shaping awareness. This belief is reflected in its



Omar Al-Omar, Minister of Information and Culture



Jassim Al-Budaiwi, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)



Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, GCCJPI Director-General



Officials during the opening ceremony.



Minister of Health and Ahmed Al-Jarallah

continuous support for joint Gulf media and cultural initiatives, stemming from its conviction that collective Gulf action ensures the strengthening of regional and international presence.

He emphasized support for the development and modernization approach adopted by the institution's current administration, as well as the project submitted to the GCC Secretariat General. The project includes recommendations aimed at enhancing governance, consolidating regulatory frameworks, and ensuring sustainable, efficient and professional performance.

He said the next phase requires a deeper and more comprehensive vision that keeps pace with rapid transformations in the media industry, invests in modern technologies, and strengthens joint Gulf content to make it more influential, competitive, and present at the regional and international levels.

He pointed out that the responsibility today extends beyond preserving the legacy, as it also involves developing and expanding its impact in a manner that reinforces Gulf media as a form of soft power expressing values, preserving identity, and strengthening unity.

He expressed his aspiration for a more prominent and influential institution that builds upon its rich heritage and confidently advances toward the future as an active partner in fostering unified Gulf awareness and a media landscape that reflects a bright and civilized image.

He commended the efforts of all those who have contributed to the institution's journey since its establishment, from the founding fathers to the dedicated

staff who have served with sincerity and devotion, thereby, creating a lasting media legacy in the hearts of Gulf citizens.

He stated that their contributions are regarded as a sincere message transcending time, and that their impact will remain firmly embedded in the memory of joint Gulf action.

He expressed hope that the institution will continue to serve the people and embody the spirit of cooperation upon which

the shared Gulf journey is founded.

Meanwhile, GCC Secretary General Jassim Al-Budaiwi expressed his deepest gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad for Kuwait's generous patronage and unwavering support in hosting the headquarters of the GCC and its institutions. He added that this is a genuine commitment to strengthening Gulf cooperation.

He emphasized that the Foundation is not just a media production entity but a pioneering Gulf institution that utilizes media as an effective tool for education and awareness-building, reinforcing Gulf identity and consolidating the principles of unity and integration among the peoples of the region.

He said this proves the vital role of media in supporting development and keeping pace with rapid transformations in a responsible and purposeful manner.

Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Al-Jaber, Director General of the Joint Program Production Foundation, stated that the entity has never been simply a production institution but rather an idea and a symbol of joint Gulf action, as well as a cornerstone of Gulf media.

He affirmed that since its inception,



Photos by Mohammad Morsi

Musical performance.







Ramadan Kareem

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Selling from home an honorable way to earn for ordinary families

"I RECEIVED a message from my dear friend and colleague, Dr. Jassim Al-Fahad, a member of the Kuwait House of Awareness and Head of the 'Consultants Club', addressing the issue of working and selling from home and the surrounding perspectives related to regulation, oversight, and the limits of responsibility," columnist **Bassam Fahad Thunayan Al-Ghanim** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Al-Ghanim

"This message prompted me to reflect on this important topic and present it from a balanced perspective that takes society's interests into account. It also opened an important discussion about the concept of working from home, the limits of regulation, and the distinction between legitimate protection of society and unintentional infringement on families' livelihoods.

"With the rising cost of living and the increasing burdens on many families, seeking additional sources of income has become both legitimate and necessary. This underscores the importance of selling and working from home as one of the most honorable ways for ordinary families to improve their economic circumstances, not by relying on assistance, but through work that stems from their own effort and skill.

"Selling grape leaves, ma'amoul, cake, or traditional dishes is not a negative phenomenon as it is sometimes portrayed, but rather a natural extension of the culture of work and earning an honest living.

"Most of those who engage in this activity are low-income families who use a simple home skill or a well-developed recipe to meet their needs. Sales volume is often limited, depending on pre-orders or personal connections, and is not comparable to restaurants or large commercial enterprises.

"From a health perspective, many home kitchens are clean, organized, and carefully managed, since cooking is done in small quantities under the direct supervision of the family.

"In many cases, these kitchens are more committed than some commercial kitchens that operate under the pressure of mass production and the pursuit of quick profits. The woman who cooks for her children is the same one who ensures the quality of what she offers to others.

"Most importantly, working from home is not limited to food but extends to broader fields that create new and diverse income opportunities and reduce reliance on government employment.

"There are simple handicrafts and products, such as accessories, gifts, candles, natural soaps, and decorations. Flowers, a popular item for social occasions, can also be produced with limited resources.

"There are also sewing, tailoring, embroidery, alterations, simple garment making, and name embroidery. These skills are common in many homes and can become a source of steady income.

"Home-based businesses can include printing and packaging services and preparing event boxes. These activities rely more on skill and organization than on capital.

"Additionally, home-based education, such as private tutoring, literacy classes, Quran memorization, or basic language instruction, provides both economic and educational benefits.

"Simple digital services, now accessible to everyone, such as managing social media accounts, data entry, writing basic content, and responding to clients, cannot be overlooked. These are suitable opportunities for young people, retirees, and housewives.

"Providing childcare or assisting the elderly within residential neighborhoods represents a much-needed humanitarian field built on trust and a good reputation.

"From an economic perspective, these activities do not threaten the national economy, nor do they cause significant tax losses. On the contrary, they help reduce the need for other services. Support and social welfare preserve the dignity of the family and promote a culture of work and productivity instead of dependency and waiting.

"The state's role should be one of flexible and fair regulation, not prohibition or restriction.

"What is needed is the establishment of clear and simple health requirements, with the possibility of issuing appropriate licenses, such as visits from a specialized inspector to ensure compliance with minimum standards, without turning procedures into an administrative or financial burden that cuts off livelihoods and closes doors to the less fortunate.

"In conclusion, selling and working from home is not dangerous or chaotic, but a dignified source of income, a practical solution, and a positive social experience. If these activities are properly organized and supported, they become an economic and humanitarian resource that strengthens society from within and allows ordinary families to work with dignity and security."

□ □ □

"A Lebanese judge in Tripoli sentenced three young Muslim men, who entered a church in the Akkar district near Tripoli in northern Lebanon and desecrated an image of the Virgin Mary, to an unprecedented punishment, one never before seen in Lebanese jurisprudence," columnist **Ahmed Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Instead of imprisoning them for blasphemy for a term of three months to three years, the judge ordered them to memorize verses from the Quran, including the 200-verse Surah Al-Imran, by heart.

"The decision was widely welcomed by the Lebanese community, both politically and publicly. Mahasen Haddara called for honoring the judge, saying, 'I have never known an official Muslim to honor Islam as Judge Jocelyn Matta did.'

"Syrian lawyer Michel Shamas commented in a Facebook post, 'There is a vast difference between judges who are jailers and judges who are educators. There is a vast difference between a judiciary whose goal is reform and one whose goal is imprisonment and revenge.'

"He quoted Aristotle - 'Good judges with a bad law are a thousand times better than a good law with bad judges.'

"The ruling was widely praised by the Lebanese public and lauded by several prominent political figures, including then-Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who described it on his official Twitter account as 'the pinnacle of justice and an education of shared values between Muslims and Christians.'

"Former Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati also commended the ruling. Judge Sheikh Khaldoun Arimat, head of the Islamic Center for Studies and Media, stated, 'The ruling to preserve Quranic verses affirms the high status of Mary and Jesus Christ in Islam and demonstrates to non-Muslims our true faith, which brings glad tidings and does not repel, and reinforces coexistence, especially given Lebanon's diverse religious and sectarian makeup.'

"Maronite Archbishop Maroun Ammar of Sidon and Deir al-Qamar also praised the ruling. Judge Jocelyn Matta declined to comment on the case, as judges in Lebanon are not permitted to speak to the media about their rulings.

"Incidentally, Fares al-Khoury was Syria's first permanent representative to the United Nations and a staunch advocate for Syria's independence from France.

"The famous incident of him sitting in the French delegate's seat, which enraged the delegate, culminated in his historic retort, 'You could not tolerate me sitting in your place for half an hour, so how can you accept your armies occupying our country for over twenty-five years?'

"When General Gouraud claimed that France had come to Syria to protect the Christians of the East, Fares al-Khoury went to the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus on a Friday and ascended its pulpit, where he delivered a sermon, 'If France claims

to have occupied Syria to protect us Christians from the Muslims, then I, as a Christian, bear witness from this pulpit that there is no god but Allah.'

"The worshippers of the Umayyad Mosque then embraced him, lifted him onto their shoulders, and carried him through the old quarters of Damascus in a patriotic scene that the city still remembers today. The Christian residents of Damascus marched through the city, chanting, 'There is no god but Allah.'

"Fares al-Khoury was the founder of the Arab Law Institute and contributed to the establishment of the Arab Scientific Academy. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of his career was his appointment as Minister of Islamic Endowments. The then-MP Abdul Hamid al-Tabbaa defended him, saying, 'We entrust our endowments to you more than we trust in ourselves.'

"May God have mercy on Fares al-Khoury, a shining Syrian icon and a model of a responsible individual. A salute of appreciation and praise to Judge Jocelyn Matta."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

314,000 Captagon pills worth KD1m seized

Kuwait-Iraq operation busts major drug network

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: In a high-impact and coordinated security operation, the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) at the Interior Ministry, in cooperation with Iraqi security authorities, dealt a major blow to an international criminal network involved in drug smuggling.

The proactive operation resulted in the arrest of an illegal resident in Kuwait and the seizure of around 314,000 Captagon pills, with an estimated market value of KD1 million.

The ministry attributed the success of the operation to the intensified security coordination and intelligence exchange between Kuwait and Iraq.

The Criminal Security Sector, represented by DCGD, closely collaborated with its Iraqi

counterpart to thwart the scheme of the network to smuggle and distribute the narcotics.

The suspect, identified as an illegal resident, was arrested after a period of meticulous intelligence gathering, surveillance and monitoring, which culminated in a carefully executed entrapment in Mina Abdullah.

The operation was carried out under the field supervision of DCGD Director Brigadier General Mohammad Qabazard, alongside his assistant, Brigadier General Sheikh Hamad Al-Sabah.

Security sources revealed that officers later raided a livestock pen in Jahra, where the suspect had been distributing narcotics. An additional quantity of narcotic pills was discovered there, also estimated to be worth about KD1 million.

During questioning, the suspect admitted ownership of the seized drugs and trafficking

them in coordination with an accomplice residing outside the country. Investigations further established that the suspect has a previous record related to drug trafficking.

The suspect, along with the confiscated narcotics, has been referred to the Narcotics Prosecution to complete the necessary legal procedures.

The ministry stressed that this operation reflects the State of Kuwait's firm and ongoing commitment to combat cross-border drug trafficking, in accordance with the directives of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef.

The joint security achievement highlights the effectiveness of regional cooperation in confronting organized crime, enhancing community protection, and preserving national security.

Kuwait committed to empower women in judiciary – Al-Sumait

Over 120 women now serve in courts and prosecution

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait affirmed on Monday the State of Kuwait's unwavering commitment to empowering women in judiciary sector.

The country believes that humanitarian value of justice is achieved through honesty, integrity and knowledge, not a particular gender, Al-Sumait, also Chairman of the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, said during an event organized in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry's human rights affairs department to mark the International Day of Women Judges.

Attending and patronizing the event, the minister said that women nowadays are holding leading positions at Public Prosecutions and judicial circles, he added.

In 2014 about 22 women joined judicial corps in Kuwait, and some of them were promoted to be judges in 2022, he said.

He pointed out that up to 122 women have



MoJ photo

Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait affirmed on Monday the State of Kuwait's unwavering commitment to empowering women in judicial sector.

joined the judiciary and public prosecution so far, making up 8 percent of the total workforce in this sector.

He underlined continued support of the Ministry of Justice and the institute for efficient nationals and creating an institutional and training environment which enables female judges and

Attorney General restructures Public Prosecution leadership

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Attorney General Saad Al-Safran issued decrees for restructuring several leadership positions within the Public Prosecution based on a strategic vision aimed at selecting qualified legal professionals and utilizing their expertise in leadership roles, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the Public Prosecution announced that the decrees included the appointment of First Senior Advocate General Sultan Boujrouh as Head of Judicial Inspection and First Senior Advocate General Bader Al-Musaed as Head of the Technical Office, based on their proven legal and administrative experience. The decrees also include the appointment of Advocate General Abdulaziz Al-Ghaith as



Saad Al-Safran

Head of the Criminal Appeals Prosecution and Advocate General Fahad Al-Ateeqi as Head of the First Instance Prosecution.

The Public Prosecution affirmed that this step reflects its ongoing commitment to developing its work system and enhancing institutional performance to meet current demands, improve the quality of its work, and expedite case resolution, thereby upholding the principles of justice and the rule of law.

MoE announces school hours for Ramadan '26

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Eng. Mohammed Al-Khalidi, issued a decision regarding school working hours for students during the holy month of Ramadan in kindergartens, public schools, private Arabic schools, and religious schools, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to the decision, school hours during Ramadan will follow the schedule set for each educational stage for the 2025/2026 academic year, as follows:

- Kindergarten: 9:40 am to 1:10 pm
- Primary School: 9:25 am to 1:45 pm
- Intermediate School: 9:20 am to 2:00 pm
- Secondary School: 9:30 am to 2:10 pm

The decision also specified that working hours for employees in all sectors, central departments, regional education offices, and supervisors will be during the morning period from Sunday to Thursday, totaling four and a half hours, from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm.

Employees are allowed to come to work at any time during the workday, provided they complete the full four and a half hours starting from their arrival time.

The grace period granted to female employees during Ramadan, which is 15 minutes at the beginning and 15 minutes at the end of the workday, must be observed.

The fingerprint attendance system, as outlined in Civil Service Council Resolution No. 6/2024, must continue to be followed.

The resolution stipulates that official working hours for the evening shift are four and a half hours, including the 15-minute grace period at the start of the workday and the 15-minute grace period granted to female employees at the end of the workday.



GAC photo

Cigarettes hidden inside a car tire seized at Nuwaiseeb border crossing.

704 cartons seized


Nuwaiseeb crossing foils large cigarette smuggling

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Inspectors at the Nuwaiseeb border crossing thwarted two attempts to smuggle a total of approximately 704 cartons of cigarettes in two vehicles, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the General Administration for Customs (GAC) explained that the first seizure occurred after a vehicle aroused suspicion, and a search revealed 200 cartons of cigarettes concealed inside soap boxes.


The second seizure involved a vehicle attempting to leave the border crossing with 504 cartons of cigarettes hidden in the rear parts of the vehicle.

The vehicle entry and exit records have been included in the case file. Seizure reports are being prepared, and the suspects will be referred to the Criminal Investigation Department for further legal action.



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Crown Prince, PM extend greetings

Kuwait HH Amir congratulates Kosovo on Independence Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Tuesday to the President of the Republic of Kosovo Dr. Vjosa Osmani Sadiu on her country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the President lasting health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity for her country and people.

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

Tuesday to the President of the Republic of Kosovo Dr. Vjosa Osmani Sadiu on her country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished the President lasting health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity for her country and people.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Tuesday to the President of the Republic of Kosovo Dr. Vjosa Osmani Sadiu on her country's Independence Day.

Environmental patents on waste, water recycling earn top honors

KISR wins 4 awards at ME Invention Exhibition

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) achieved significant recognition at the 16th Middle East International Invention Exhibition, securing four scientific awards.

The event, supported by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and held under the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-

Khaled Al-Sabah, showcased 213 global inventors and served as a platform for innovation and investment opportunities.

The success of KISR stemmed from its participation in two patents on the environment, solid waste recycling and water recycling.

The first invention, "Antimicrobial Surfaces from Solid Waste," earned the Gold Medal with Honors and the Arab League Secretariat General Award in the Health and Hygiene category.

The inventors, Dr. Sultan Al-

Salem, Dr. Fadila Al-Salamin and Dr. Mohamed Sharif Al-Iskandarani from the Environment and Life Sciences Research Center, created an innovation that transforms solid waste into advanced antimicrobial materials.

This project promotes health and safety, reduces environmental impact, and supports the circular economy model.

The second invention, "Wetland System for Treating Wastewater Resulting from Reverse Osmosis Wastewater Treatment," won the

Gold Medal with Honors and the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity Award in the Environment and Recycling category.

Invented by Dr. Mishari Khaja and Dr. Mohammed Al-Muntasir Ahmed from the Water Research Center, this innovation is a vertical wetland system that employs a tidal strategy. Its function is to enhance oxygen transport and microbial activity, specifically for treating wastewater produced through reverse osmosis.

Council endorses new nursery specs and key site allocations

Hawally panel backs VTC tower, cyber parking spaces

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Municipal Council has approved new building regulations and infrastructure projects.

During its regular session, the Council endorsed the updated requirements and specifications for nursery buildings, incorporating them into the existing building regulations (Table Eight).

The specifications stipulate that basement construction must not exceed 100 percent of the total plot area, while ground floor construction is limited to a maximum of 50 percent of the plot area.

The remaining portion of the site may be covered with removable, translucent and lightweight materials suitable for agricultural activities.

Moreover, privately owned nurseries with a minimum area of 2,000 square meters are now permitted to subdivide the ground floor into multiple commercial units, including showrooms, warehouses and retail outlets.

One commercial license may be issued for these affiliated units — a measure intended to stimulate national investment and support business growth.

The Council also approved the follow-



The Municipal Council during its regular session.

Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

The site, which measures 1,376 square meters, had earlier been relinquished by the Ministry of Communications. It was originally allocated to the Ministry of Interior pursuant to Municipal Council Resolution No. 16/2019.

The committee also approved the request of the National Cybersecurity Center for the allocation of temporary surface parking spaces in Salmiya (Block 11).

In addition, the committee referred back to the executive branch the proposal of council member Nasser Al-Jadaan on the establishment of a U-turn on Al-Mu'taz Street in Salwa, in order to address the competent authorities concerning the adjustment of the required distance for the proposed U-turn.

The committee also returned to the executive branch the proposal to create a shortcut linking Street Seven and Mohammad Al-Mudaj Street to King Abdulaziz Road in Salwa, requesting an updated response on the matter.

The committee disapproved the letter of Shuhada Mayor Aqab Al-Otaibi on the establishment of a pedestrian walkway in the area to align with the healthy city standards adopted by the Ministry of Health.

The committee decided to retain on its agenda the request of the Ministry of Interior to reallocate the police station site in Jabriya (Block Seven) to use as headquarters of the Police Officers Club.

the construction of a tower associated with the National Vessel Traffic Systems (VTC) Center, Search and Rescue, and Navigational Aids project.

Meanwhile, the Hawally Governorate Committee at the Municipal Council, during its meeting on Sunday, approved the request of the Ministry of Interior to allocate a site for the construction of a tower as part of the National Center for Vessel Traffic Systems (VTC), Search and Rescue (SAR), and Aids to Navigation (ATON) project.

- ing:
- Recommendation of the Public Services Committee to relocate the landfill adjacent to Kuwait International Airport in order to enhance aviation safety standards,
 - Request of the Ministry of Defense to allocate two sites for the northern-north-western border centers project,
 - Reallocation of a police station site in Jabriya to serve as headquarters for the Police Officers Club's administration,
 - Allocation of a site on Awah Island for



Ministry of Justice photo

The Ministry of Justice and Kuwait University sign a memorandum of understanding to enhance legal and academic cooperation.

Al-Sumait discusses legal reforms

MoJ minister meets faculty and students of KU's College of Law


KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait held an open meeting with faculty members and students of the College of Law at Kuwait University, in the presence of several senior academic and administrative officials, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During the meeting, a direct discussion was held on a number of legal and legislative topics.

The minister listened to attendees' opinions and suggestions regarding the devel-


opment of the judicial system and ways to enhance integration between the academic and practical aspects of the legal field.

During the meeting, he emphasized the ministry's commitment to supporting communication with academic institutions and benefiting from the talents of young Kuwaiti professionals and specialized expertise, which contributes to the development of legislative work and the consolidation of a culture of dialogue and institutional partnership.





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Commitment to transparency growing: Nazaha Chairman

Nazaha activates code of conduct, 24 bodies earn top tiers

By Inaas Awadh and Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Kuwait Authority for Combating Corruption (Nazaha) organized its third ‘Performance’ conference on Sunday to activate the Code of Conduct for Public Sector Employees.

The conference was held at the Nazaha theater in Shamiya, with the participation of the representatives of various government agencies.

Entities that fulfilled the requirements of the different stages and progressed to higher levels within the project were honored for their achievements.

Nazaha announced that 24 government entities met the requirements for the gold, silver and bronze stages of the project.

This milestone is proof of a growing institutional commitment to implement the codes of conduct and reinforce governance and transparency in all government operations.

In his speech during the conference, Nazaha Chairman Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim emphasized that the event underscores the continuity of institutional efforts to monitor the implementation of the codes of conduct, assess accomplishments, and build upon them.

He stated that these efforts strengthen integrity, combat corruption, and consolidate public confidence in the performance of State



Photos during the third ‘Performance’ conference organized by the Kuwait Authority for Combating Corruption (Nazaha).

institutions.

He explained that the project originates from the National Strategy for Enhancing Integrity and Combating Corruption as one of its principal initiatives targeting the public sector.

He called on government entities to join the project and activate their codes of conduct, indicating that this will have a positive impact on performance quality and the advancement of good governance practices.

Meanwhile, Abrar Al-Hammad, Assistant Secretary General for the Prevention Sector at Nazaha, explained that the project contributes

to transformation in the work environment by embedding the values of integrity and transparency and implementing the principles of institutional governance.

She disclosed that the project was launched in 2022 with the participation of five entities, a number that has since increased to 28. “Out of these, 24 entities have completed the requirements of the various stages,” she added.

She emphasized that the project is voluntary and aims to expand participation and promote a culture of integrity throughout the public sector.



Photos by Mohammad Morsi

Continued from Page 1

Oh, ‘Commerce’,

For a long time, families in Kuwait have worked in this sector, albeit on a limited scale due to limited resources. We have not heard of anyone complaining, and these families do not cost the State anything. So, why restrict them? Did the ministry that issued this decision study the repercussions, or is it simply following the crowd, like all the other decisions issued by various ministries that were amended or canceled when the error was discovered?

Last year, the government issued a decree allowing people to work from home, which had several benefits, including reducing unemployment and enabling people to become self-reliant.

Yet, the same government is now targeting these struggling families. Is it not strange?

The Cabinet could issue a decree allowing these families, regardless of their circumstances, to obtain licenses to work from home, similar to the sectors permitted last year. This will be done through regular monitoring, unless some of those in the Cabinet or the relevant ministries begrudge people, even the bare minimum they can do, to avoid begging in the streets.

Therefore, we say: Fear Allah in the way you treat these families.

Labor market

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef highlighted the urgency of overhauling Kuwait’s labor laws to ensure it stays flexible and integrated with the country’s economic developments.

He explained that some companies appoint a Kuwaiti citizen as the authorized signatory while an expatriate effectively manages the company. The Kuwaiti citizen is ultimately responsible and bears the same legal consequences.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef issued a stringent warning regarding circumventing labor market regulations and registering companies in the names of citizens then leasing the license to foreigners. He cited a case where a Kuwaiti citizen, currently imprisoned, had established six companies generating KD 12,000 over two years, while expatriates laundered KD 100 million abroad.

“The political leadership is unwavering in its commitment to the rule of law,” Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef asserted, adding that citizens who circumvent regulations will face full legal accountability.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef highlighted the importance of timely payment of workers’ salaries, urging company owners to pay employees on time, even from their own pockets if necessary, to protect Kuwait’s reputation. “We don’t want to see workers go on strike,” he said, noting that the workers are poor people who came to Kuwait to earn a living.

He announced plans to introduce residency permits under the “freelance work” category, with fees ranging from KD 750 to 1,000 payable to the government. He described this step as part of efforts to combat the residency permit trade, adding that it will be finalized within two months.

“Reforming the labor market comes through regulating the corporate sector, supporting companies, listening to their proposals, and overcoming the obstacles they may face through the best possible means especially since companies represent the organizational and legal framework of the private sector, which will be heavily relied upon in Kuwait’s economy in the coming period,” Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef said.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef also addressed law enforcement and regulatory matters, noting that over 3,000 licenses had been revoked and 39,000 workers deported last year. He stressed that all nurseries and businesses must comply with regulations, citing the closure of nine unlicensed nurseries, one of which had witnessed the death of a child.

On family and residency matters, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef announced

that children under 18 will be allowed to join their families, while stressing that the decision does not apply to parents. He also discussed plans to establish unified standards for driver’s licenses and family visit visas, ensuring fairness in educational qualifications and residency approvals.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef addressed money laundering and illegal labor practices, citing recent cases where Kuwaiti citizens and expatriates illegally transferred large sums abroad or engaged in unlicensed business activities. He described an investigation into a delivery app company illegally employing over 500 workers, evading recruitment fees, and disbursing salaries through a network of expatriate employees. Those involved, including a prominent Kuwaiti citizen, have been apprehended, and legal action is underway following directives from His Highness the Amir.

He stressed that no one is above the law, affirming that even the Amir’s own children would be held accountable for any violations.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef praised Engineer Rabab Al-Osaimi’s appointment as PAM Director, highlighting her accessibility and leadership. He noted that many entrepreneurial ideas in Kuwait are sold abroad at high prices and emphasized that the dialogue with business owners aims to facilitate procedures, implement requests, and strengthen the business community.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef concluded by affirming that Kuwait will regain its status as a model for other countries and praised the “Land of Goodness” operetta performed in celebration of the National Days.

Meanwhile, PAM Director Al-Osaimi confirmed that the labor law will be reviewed, all observations will be considered, and the professional guide for job titles is under examination.

She said the inspection management plan is being continuously updated and noted that PAM processed 25 million transactions last year, of which 65 percent of the transactions (15 million) were processed through automated systems launched in 2018.

Al-Osaimi explained that PAM is working to introduce artificial intelligence systems on its website to assist employers and respond to their inquiries, contributing to facilitating procedures and accelerating transaction processing. It is also working on amending the labor law to keep pace with changes, enhance the efficiency of the legislative system, and develop the work environment.

The next phase will include recognition and equivalency of university degrees and that a study is underway to allow the transfer of workers between contracts, regardless of the type of contract under which they were recruited. This measure will be announced once approved by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef.

KPC drives

Present at the event were Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with the CEOs and managing directors of subsidiary companies and a number of oil sector employees.

Sheikh Nawaf stated that the tree planting initiative is in line with the efforts of KPC to protect the environment and improve the quality of life.

He expressed happiness over the fact that this event coincides with the renewed national spirit being witnessed in the country due to the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations. He said the oil sector is making significant contributions in various fields, specifically the oil industry, which is moving towards adopting environmentally friendly solutions and reducing carbon emissions.

He stressed that this tree planting is in accordance with the commitment of the State and the oil sector to establish the concept of sustainable development, considering its responsibility towards the land and its people, while

reinforcing the role of the country in balancing industrial progress with environmental protection.

Meanwhile, CEO of KOC Ahmed Al-Eidan revealed the project is in line with the commitment of the company to balance its operational processes with its environmental responsibilities. He pointed out that planting Sidr trees in the Ahmadi Oasis is part of the company’s strategic plan to enhance sustainability.

He said this step is an important addition to the journey of the oil sector towards achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, thus, ensuring a better environment and a more sustainable future for the next generations.

In a related development, sources informed the newspaper that KPC aims to achieve zero routine gas flaring in the coming years and it is proceeding with its reliance on new and unconventional energy sources, including the implementation of mechanisms for carbon capture and reuse in an environmentally friendly manner.

Sources also cited the success of Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) in commissioning the electrical frequency converter project at the Wafra Joint Operations, which aims to eliminate emissions from the on-site power plant.

Sources added that KPC has implemented numerous environmental protection measures at the Khafji Joint Operations.

Agencies must

Sources revealed that some government agencies have asked their employees to submit copies of their academic qualifications and certificates by the end of the workday on Thursday in order to start the necessary procedures and update their data in the integrated system as per the regulations.

Markets gear up

He explained that the department would continue conducting field inspections to ensure the stability, availability and supply of goods to consumers, and to prevent exploitation and price hikes during Ramadan. Price increases during seasons are considered exploitation and a violation.

He noted the ministry observed cooperation from most cooperative societies through offering discounts and purchase coupons for shareholders, valued at up to 150 Kuwaiti dinars (approximately USD 488) in some societies, KD 100 (approximately USD 326) in others, and KD 80 (approximately USD 261) in some cooperatives, following inspection campaigns.

He stated that if cooperatives wished to conduct discounts, they must apply through the Ministry’s website under the “Discounts and Sales” section, attaching invoices and prices before and after the discount. Applications are reviewed and approved within one working day by the Advertising and Promotional Department staff.

Al-Ansari emphasized that the ministry continues to develop its oversight tools in line with current requirements by enhancing fieldwork and employing modern electronic systems to monitor market movements and analyze price indicators proactively, contributing to the stability of the commercial system.

He added that the ministry is moving forward in developing business environment by simplifying procedures and enhancing digital services to facilitate companies’ and institutions’ compliance with approved regulations and improve commercial performance efficiency according to best regulatory practices.

He noted that the ministry was joining hands with various commercial sectors to reinforce fair competition principles and encourage quality offers that serve consumers and enhance confidence in the local market.

He also explained that complaints could be submitted through the unified government application “Sahel,” where the center head and inspectors will respond the following day.

New pact supports early warning system

KISR, MoD unite to fortify chemical security

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Defense, represented by the National Committee for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (NCPC), to strengthen scientific and technical cooperation in the field of chemical security, reports Al-Anba daily.

The MoU was signed by KISR Director General Dr. Faisal Al-Humaidan and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense and Chairman of NCPC, Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Al-Mishal.

Dr. Al-Humaidan emphasized that the MoU marks a significant step toward enhancing national chemical security through research and development, knowl-

edge exchange, and the development of national personnel in this vital field.

He explained that the MoU establishes an institutional framework to activate cooperation with the NCPC through joint research projects, the development of chemical analysis tools, the enhancement of technical capabilities and training, and the creation of effective systems for monitoring and assessing the environmental impact of chemicals. This will strengthen Kuwait’s regional and international standing in the field.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Al-Mishal praised the cooperation with KISR, noting that the MoU is part of the NCPC’s efforts to raise the level of technical and technological performance, develop national expertise, and fulfill

Kuwait’s commitments as an active member of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

He stated that through this collaboration, the committee aims to build a national scientific base that supports preventive policies, promotes the localization of knowledge, and establishes a national laboratory for chemical precursors.

Sheikh Dr. Abdullah stressed that the MoU represents a practical step toward enhancing the country’s preparedness for dealing with chemical hazards by expanding technical cooperation in developing a national early warning system, supporting rapid response mechanisms, and strengthening the integration of scientific and institutional expertise.





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

Crown Prince exchanges congratulatory greetings

Kuwait Amir receives Ramadan congratulations

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on Tuesday, received a congratulatory message from His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. In his cable, the Crown Prince conveyed his sincere greetings to the Amir, wishing him, the people of Kuwait, and the Arab and Muslim worlds a blessed Ramadan filled with pious deeds and divine blessings.

In his reply, the Amir extended similar sentiments to the Crown Prince, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow prosperity and welfare on Kuwait and the broader Arab and Muslim communities.

The Amir also received Ramadan greetings from His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Their messages expressed heartfelt congratulations, wishing the Amir a blessed month, continued health, and success in leading Ku-

wait on the path of progress.

In response, the Amir expressed his appreciation for the kind words and prayers, invoking Allah's protection for Kuwait and prayers for continued safety, prosperity, and health for its people.

His Highness the Amir exchanged congratulatory cables with leaders of Arab and Muslim countries to mark the advent of Ramadan. Similarly, the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received greetings from senior Sheikhs, including Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In their messages, the Sheikhs extended sincere congratulations and hoped the holy month would return for many years to come. The Crown Prince, in his replies, thanked them for their greetings and prayed to Allah Almighty for continued welfare, prosperity, and blessings for Kuwait and the Arab and Muslim worlds.



His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

Cabinet congratulates leadership, Kuwaitis, residents on Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet congratulated Tuesday His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, all citizens and residents on the holy month of Ramadan.

This came during the Cabinet's customary press conference, held at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The Cabinet wished both Muslim and Arab nations a blessed Ramadan and the dear nation perpetual security and prosperity.

At the onset of the meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister briefed the ministers on the outcomes of his participation in the recently held 62nd

Munich talks and reform plans reviewed



His Highness the Prime Minister chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

Munich Security Conference, underlining the significance of the event, which highlighted the current global security challenges and provided constructive dialogue to promote international security and settle crises.

He also reiterated Kuwait's commitment to opening up to international

relations and backing the resolution of conflicts by dialogue, peaceful means and promoting international peace and security.

His Highness the Prime Minister also kept the meetings posted on his meetings he had on the sidelines of the security conference with Yemeni

President Rashad Al-Alimi, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, UN Higher Commission for Refugees Dr. Barham Salih and Oracle's CEO Mike Sicilia. Afterwards, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdulatif Al-Mishari made a visual presentation on the development of building codes to fulfill traffic needs.

The presentation included Kuwait Municipality's efforts to develop building regulations and codes in order to address traffic chaos in different Kuwaiti areas. Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait made a visual presentation on the report of the Permanent National Committee for Combatting Trafficking in Persons and Migrant Smuggling regarding a relevant national strategy.

For his part, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem on his participation in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meeting in Mexico City on Saturday.

Humanitarian role hailed

Diplomats extend warm greetings to Kuwait on Ramadan, Nat'l Days

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: With the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan, the 65th anniversary of independence and the 35th anniversary of liberation, a number of ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions extended congratulations to Kuwait, its leadership and its people.

They affirmed the active and influential role that the country plays at the regional and international levels, indicating that the national holidays are a source of pride and honor in its rich history.

Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to Kuwait Zubaydullo Zubayzoda expressed his congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the wise government, and the generous people of Kuwait.

Zubayzoda stated that the national holidays of the State of Kuwait are considered a cherished occasion to reflect on the journey of this historic nation, which—through its wise leadership and the unity of its people — has laid the foundations of a modern State built on stability, development and mutual respect, enabling it to play an active and influential role regionally and internationally.

He added that as these glorious national events coincide with the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, the blessed month is welcomed with its noble humanitarian values that call for tolerance, solidarity and rapprochement among peoples — values that the State of Kuwait has consistently embodied in its policies and humanitarian initiatives.

vided an opportunity to experience the spirit of the holy month firsthand and to witness how traditions bring people together, adding that what impressed him most is the deep love of Kuwait for their traditions and their closeness to one another.

Dutch Ambassador Werish Ramsukh considers the blessed month of Ramadan to be a significant occasion for promoting the values of peace, tolerance and solidarity among peoples. He expressed his sincere congratulations and best wishes to His Highness the Amir and the generous Kuwaiti people on the occasion of the holy month.

Ramsukh stated that this blessed month offers an opportunity for spiritual reflection and strengthening bonds of unity, wishing Kuwait, its leadership and its people permanent security, prosperity and blessings.

Albanian Ambassador Alire Hosa extended his congratulations to the political leadership, government and people of Kuwait, stating that these glorious national occasions are shining milestones in the history of the State of Kuwait.

He affirmed that they embody the country's deep-rooted national unity, wise leadership, and strong determination, which have enabled it to reach remarkable accomplishments on various levels and to consolidate its prestigious standing regionally and internationally.

Cuban Ambassador Alain Pérez Torres also conveyed his congratulations to the political leadership, government, and the generous people of Kuwait, emphasizing that these glorious national occasions prove the strength and unity of the Kuwaiti people and the wisdom of its prudent leadership, which has guided the country toward stability and progress and reinforced Kuwait's distinguished role in supporting peace and humanitarian values at regional and international levels.

Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi extended his congratulations to Kuwait, its leadership, government and people, wishing the country continuous progress and prosperity, along with lasting stability, security and safety.

He also expressed hope that Kuwait will continue advancing toward fulfilling the aspirations of its brotherly people under its wise leadership, and that the distinguished Omani-Kuwaiti relations will witness more growth and development.

He added that the relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait are well established and have grown stronger and more steadfast over the years.

He said they have achieved enormous development through reciprocal visits between His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad.

He disclosed that these visits culminated in reinforcing the deep-rooted fraternal ties between the two brotherly nations through the implementation of major economic projects.

Egyptian Ambassador Mohamed Abu Al-Wafa expressed his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the political leadership and the generous people of Kuwait.

He said they are praying to Almighty Allah to grant His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad good health and well-being during the blessed month, and to bestow lasting security and stability upon the State of Kuwait.

He also prayed that Allah grant the country continuous progress and prosperity, and protect its leadership, government and people from all harm.

American Chargé d'Affaires Steve Butler extended his congratulations to all those celebrating in Kuwait, United States and around the world on this occasion.

He said that last year he had the honor of meeting many people — something close to his heart as an American — and that he was pleased to participate in distinctive Ramadan traditions, such as the cannon, iftar gatherings and ghabga.

He pointed out that these moments pro-

He added that the concurrence of these treasured national celebrations with the holy month of Ramadan gives this period a special dimension, as the blessed month embodies the noble values of solidarity, compassion, coexistence and mutual respect — principles deeply rooted in Kuwaiti society.

Mexican Ambassador Eduardo Patricio Eduardo Peña Hallerextended his congratulations to Kuwait, HH the Amir, government and people, stressing that these cherished national occasions stand as honorable symbols of the sovereignty, resilience and notable achievements of Kuwait.

He stated that Mexico takes pride in the friendly and cooperative relations uniting the two countries, relations that have witnessed steady growth based on mutual respect, dialogue and cooperation in various fields, showing a shared commitment to promote peace, development and international cooperation.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Secretary General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, Ghada Al-Taher, said these historic occasions reflect the rich heritage of unity, resilience and wise leadership of the country.

She added that they also highlight the active contributions of Kuwait to the promotion of regional and international peace, humanitarian efforts, and sustainable development in line with Kuwait Vision 2035 and the shared priorities of the United Nations.

She asserted that the United Nations reaffirms its commitment to strengthening its solid partnership with the State of Kuwait — its leadership, government and people — as well as to support comprehensive and sustainable development, enhance multilateral cooperation, and contribute to a future of peace and prosperity for all.

She concluded with prayers to Almighty Allah that these cherished national days remain a source of pride, unity, and renewed determination, guiding Kuwait toward more progress and accomplishments in the years ahead.

Tanzanian Ambassador congratulates Kuwait on National & Liberation Days

On the occasion of the National Day and Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait, I am pleased to extend my sincere congratulations and best wishes to H.H. Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the leadership, government, and people of the State of Kuwait on this important national celebration.

This occasion also offers an opportunity to recall with appreciation Kuwait's remarkable journey of development and progress since independence, through which the country has built a modern and prosperous nation while maintaining its valued traditions and unity.

This occasion reflects Kuwait's remarkable development achievements and its continued humanitarian and diplomatic contributions in promoting stability and peace in the region and beyond. We value the friendly relations and cooperation between the United Republic of Tanzania and the State of Kuwait and look forward to further strengthening our partnership in areas of mutual interest. The Embassy is pleased to join the people of Kuwait in celebrating this special occasion and wish the State of Kuwait continued peace, prosperity, and progress.

Saidi Hussein Massoro
Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the State of Kuwait



Saidi Hussein Massoro, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the State of Kuwait



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US civil rights leader, presidential candidate Jackson dies at age 84

CHICAGO, Feb 17, (AP): The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, a protégé of the Rev Martin Luther King Jr and two-time presidential candidate who led the Civil Rights Movement for decades after the revered leader's assassination, has died. He was 84.

His daughter, Santita Jackson, confirmed that Jackson died at home, surrounded by family.

As a young organizer in Chicago, Jackson was called to meet with King at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis shortly before King was killed and he publicly positioned himself thereafter as King's successor.

Jackson led a lifetime of crusades in the United States and abroad, advocating for the poor and underrepresented on issues from voting rights and job opportunities to education and health care. He scored diplomatic victories with world leaders, and through his Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, he channeled cries for Black pride and self-determination into corporate boardrooms, pressuring executives to make America a more open and equitable society.

And when he declared, "I am Somebody," in a poem he often repeated, he sought to reach people of all colors. "I may be poor, but I am Somebody; I may be young;



Jesse Jackson concedes defeat in the Illinois Democratic primary on March 16, 1988, in Chicago. (AP)

but I am Somebody; I may be on welfare, but I am Somebody," Jackson intoned.

It was a message he took literally and personally, having risen from obscurity in the segregated South to become America's best-known civil rights activist since King.

Despite profound health challenges in his final years including a rare brain disorder that affected his ability to move and speak, Jackson continued protesting against racial injustice into the era of Black Lives Matter.

Russian and Ukrainian officials in Geneva for US-brokered talks after almost 4 years of war

GENEVA, Feb 17, (AP): Delegations from Moscow and Kyiv were in Geneva on Tuesday for another round of US-brokered peace talks, a week before the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his government's delegation was in Switzerland and Russian state news agency Tass said the Russian delegation had also arrived. Talks, to be held over two days, were expected to start later in the day.

"Tough" discussions about the future of Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory are expected as US President Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, and son-in-law Jared Kushner, sit down with the delegations, according to a person familiar with the talks who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. That's because Russian officials are still insisting that Ukraine cede control of its eastern Donbas region.

In Geneva, military leaders from the three countries will discuss how cease-fire monitoring will work, and what's needed to implement it, the person said. During previous talks in Abu Dhabi, military leaders looked at how a demilitarized zone could be arranged and how everyone's militaries could talk to one another, they said.

But expectations for any breakthrough in the latest negotiations are



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, firefighters put out the fire following a Russian air attack in Odesa, Ukraine on Feb 17. (AP)

low, with neither side apparently ready to budge from their positions on key territorial issues, despite the United States setting a June deadline for a settlement.

Ukraine's short-handed army is locked in a war of attrition with Russia's bigger forces along the roughly 1,250-kilometer (750-mile) front line. Ukrainian civilians are enduring Russian aerial barrages that repeatedly knock out power and destroy homes.

The future of the almost 20% of Ukrainian land that Russia occupies or still covets is a central question in the talks, as are Kyiv's demands for postwar security guarantees with a U.S. backstop to deter Moscow from invading again.

Trump described the Geneva meeting as "big talks."

"Ukraine better come to the table fast," he told reporters late Monday as he flew back to Washington from his

home in Florida.

It wasn't immediately clear what Trump was referring to in his comment about Ukraine, which has committed to and taken part in negotiations in the hope of ending Russia's devastating onslaught.

The commander of the US military - and NATO forces - in Europe, Gen. Alexus Grynkeiwich, and Secretary of the US Army Dan Driscoll will attend the meeting in Geneva on behalf of the U.S. military and meet with their Russian and Ukrainian counterparts, Col. Martin O'Donnell, a spokesman for the US commander said.

Overnight, Russia used almost 400 long-range drones and 29 missiles of various types to strike 12 regions of Ukraine, injuring nine people, including children, according to the Ukrainian president.

Zelenskyy said tens of thousands of residents were left without heating and running water in the southern port city of Odesa.

Zelenskyy said Moscow should be "held accountable" for the relentless attacks, which he said undermine the US push for peace.

"The more this evil comes from Russia, the harder it will be for everyone to reach any agreements with them. Partners must understand this. First and foremost, this concerns the United States," the Ukrainian leader said on social media late Monday.

Joint military exercises planned

United States plans to deploy more high-tech missile launchers to Philippines

MANILA, Philippines, Feb 17, (AP): The United States plans to deploy more high-tech missile systems to the Philippines to help deter aggression in the South China Sea, where the treaty allies on Tuesday condemned what they called China's "illegal, coercive, aggressive, and deceptive activities."

Beijing has repeatedly expressed alarm over the installation in the northern Philippines of a US mid-range missile system called the Typhon in 2024 and of an anti-ship missile launcher last year. It said the US weapons were aimed at containing China's rise and warned that these were a threat to regional stability.

China has asked the Philippines to withdraw the missile launchers from its territory, but officials led by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr have rejected the demand.

US and Philippine officials held annual talks Monday in Manila on broadening security, political and economic engagements and boosting collabora-

tion with regional security allies.

The US and the Philippines outlined in a joint statement Tuesday specific defense and security plans for this year, including joint military exercises, Washington's support to help modernize the Philippine military and efforts "to increase deployments of US cutting-edge missile and unmanned systems to the Philippines."

The longtime allies "underscored their support for preserving freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce and other lawful uses of the sea for all nations," the statement said.

"Both sides condemned China's illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive activities in the South China Sea, recognizing their adverse effects on regional peace and stability and the economies of the Indo-Pacific and beyond," it added.

Confrontations between Chinese and Philippine coast guard forces have spiked in the disputed waters in recent years. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and



A US M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) fires a missile during a Combined Joint Littoral Live Fire Exercise at the joint military exercise called 'Balikatan' (Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder), in a Naval station in Zambales province, northern Philippines on April 26, 2023. (AP)

Taiwan are also involved in the territorial standoffs.

Neither side elaborated on the planned missile deployments but Philippine an-

bassador to Washington, Jose Manuel Romualdez, who took part in Monday's talks, said US and Filipino defense officials discussed the possible deployment this year of "upgraded" types of US missile launchers that the Philippines may eventually decide to purchase.

"It's a kind of system that's really very sophisticated and will be deployed here in the hope that, down the road, we will be able to get our own," Romualdez told The Associated Press.

The Typhon missile system that the US Army deployed to the main northern Philippine region of Luzon in April 2024 and an anti-missile launcher called the Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System that was deployed in April last year also to Luzon have remained in the Philippines, Romualdez said.

During joint drills, US forces have exhibited the missile systems to batches of Filipino forces to familiarize them with the weapons' capabilities and usage, military officials said.

Romualdez said the US missile deployments to the Philippines did not aim to antagonize any country.

"It's purely for deterrence," he said. "Every time the Chinese show any kind of aggression, it only strengthens our resolve to have these types."

The Typhon missile launchers, a land-based weapon, can fire the Standard Missile-6 and the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile. Tomahawk missiles can travel over 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers), which places China within their target range, from the northern Philippine region of Luzon.

Last year, the US Marines deployed the anti-ship missile launcher, the Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, to Batan island in the northernmost Philippine province of Batanes, which faces the Bashi Channel just south of Taiwan.

The sea passage is a critical trade and military route that the US and Chinese militaries have tried to gain strategic control of.

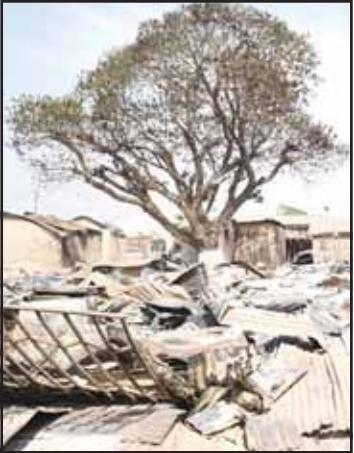
US troops arrive in Nigeria to help train its soldiers: Nigerian military

ABUJA, Nigeria, Feb 17, (AP): About 100 US troops plus equipment have arrived in Nigeria to help train soldiers in the West African country as the government fights against Islamic militants and other armed groups, the Nigerian military announced Monday.

The arrival followed a request by the Nigerian government to the US government for help with training, technical support and intelligence-sharing, the military said in a statement.

The deployment follows an easing of tensions that flared between the US and Nigeria when US President Donald Trump said the country wasn't protecting Christians from an alleged genocide. The Nigerian government has rejected the accusation, and analysts say it simplifies a very complicated situation in which people are often targeted regardless of their faith.

Maj Gen Samaila Uba, spokesman for Nigeria's Defense Headquarters, previously has said that the US troops won't engage in combat or have a direct operational role, and that Nigerian forces will have complete command



Burned homes sit days after an attack in the village of Woro, Nigeria on Feb 5. (AP)

authority.

In December, US forces launched airstrikes on Islamic State group-affiliated militants in northwestern Nigeria. Last month, following discussions with Nigerian authorities in Abuja, the head of US Africa Command confirmed a

small team of US military officers were in Nigeria, focused on intelligence support.

Nigeria is facing a protracted fight with dozens of local armed groups increasingly battling for turf, including Islamic sects like the homegrown Boko Haram and its breakaway faction Islamic State West Africa Province. There is also the IS-linked Lakurawa, as well as other "bandit" groups that specialize in kidnapping for ransom and illegal mining.

Recently, the crisis has worsened to include other militants from the neighboring Sahel region, including the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, which claimed its first attack on Nigerian soil last year. Several thousand people in Nigeria have been killed, according to data from the United Nations. Analysts say not enough is being done by the government to protect its citizens.

While Christians have been among those targeted, analysts and residents say the majority of victims of the armed groups are Muslims in Nigeria's Muslim-dominated north, where most attacks occur.



Tarique Rahman, Chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, right, stand with Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin for national anthem after Rahman was sworn in as country's prime minister during a ceremony at the National Parliament in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Feb 17. (AP)

Election largely peaceful

Tarique Rahman sworn in as Bangladesh PM

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Feb 17, (AP): Bangladesh's new prime minister was sworn in on Tuesday after his party's landslide win in last week's parliamentary elections, the country's first since the massive 2024 uprising and a vote billed as key to the nation's future political landscape after years of intense rivalry and disputed polls.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, whose term will last the next five years, is the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and former President Ziaur Rahman. He is also Bangladesh's first male prime minister in 35 years. Since 1991, when Bangladesh returned to democracy, either Rahman's mother or her archrival Sheikh Hasina had served as prime ministers.

The country's figurehead President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath of office for Rahman. Dozens of Cabinet members and members of the new government were also being sworn in on Tuesday.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its partners won 212 seats in the 350-member Parliament while an 11-party alliance led by the Jamaat-e-Islami party, the country's largest Islamist party, won 77 seats to be the opposition.

A new party - the National Citizen Party, or NCP - formed by the student leaders who led the 2024 uprising was part of the 11-party alliance led by Jamaat-e-Islami. The NCP secured six seats.

In Bangladesh, voters elect 300



Jamaat-e-Islami party supporters protest alleged irregularities and manipulation in the results of the national election in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Feb 16. (AP)

members of Parliament directly while the remaining 50 posts are reserved for women and distributed proportionately among the winning parties.

Rahman, 60, who returned to the country in December - after 17 years in self-exile in London and shortly before his mother's death - has promised to work for democracy in Bangladesh, a country of 170 million people.

An interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus that took over after Hasina was toppled, oversaw the election. The vote was largely peaceful and deemed

as acceptable by international observers.

Foreign dignitaries and diplomats attended the ceremony Tuesday. Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and an Indian delegation were among the guests, as well as dignitaries from Nepal, Sri Lanka and other countries.

Earlier on Tuesday morning, head of the election commission A.N.M. Nasir Uddin administered the oath of office separately to all the newly elected lawmakers.

Suicide bomber and gunmen kill 11 soldiers, child in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Feb 17, (AP): A suicide bomber backed by a group of gunmen rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into the wall of a security post after troops signaled for it to stop in a former Pakistani Taliban stronghold in northwestern Pakistan, causing part of the compound to collapse and killing 11 soldiers and a child, the military and police said Tuesday.

The military said in a statement that the attackers overnight had sought to breach the checkpoint but were thwarted by security forces. It said troops later pursued and killed 12 "khwarij," a term authorities use for the Pakistani Taleban, or TTP.

It said the attack occurred Monday night in Bajaur, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province along the Afghan border. The military said nearby civilian homes were also heavily damaged in the blast, killing a young girl and wounding seven other civilians, including women and children.

Local police official Zafar Khan said shortly after the suicide bombing, a group of militants tried to sneak into the security post. That triggered a shootout that killed 12 militants were killed, he said, adding that a search was underway in Bajaur.

Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zadari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in separate statements condemned the attack. They expressed sorrow over the "martyrdom" of security personnel and a civilian, and offered condolences to their families.



Sharif

Lat/Am

Guatemala ends emergency powers:

Guatemala lifted its state of emergency Monday, one month after President Bernardo Arévalo sought special powers following the killing of 10 police officers by suspected gang members.

The measure had restricted some constitutional rights, allowing authorities to do things like make arrests without a warrant issued by a judge. That will not be allowed under less restrictive measures scheduled to take effect Tuesday, but Arévalo has not detailed exactly what those will be.

The new measures would not require congressional approval or renewal. (AP)

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6 killed in Brazil bus rollover:

In the early hours of Monday, a bus overturned on a federal highway in Sao Paulo state, southeastern Brazil, killing at least six people and injuring 45 others.

According to Brazil's Federal Highway Police, the bus, on the BR-153 federal highway, was carrying rural workers when one of its tires blew out. The driver lost control of the vehicle, which veered off the road and overturned.

Police said all the injured have been taken to hospitals for treatment. The passengers departed from Maranhao state in northeastern Brazil and were heading to Santa Catarina state in the south for the apple harvest. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Costa Rica probes killing of US citizen:

Costa Rican authorities said Monday they were investigating the killing of a U.S. citizen in an apparent robbery.

Kurt Van Dyke, a 66-year-old Costa Rica resident and local hotel owner in Puerto Viejo on the country's Caribbean coast, was killed Saturday, according to the Judicial Investigation Agency.

His body showed signs of strangulation and stab wounds and was undergoing an autopsy, the statement said. Two men armed with at least one gun had threatened Van Dyke and a woman, stolen objects from the home and apparently a vehicle, authorities said. The woman escaped without serious injuries. (AP)

Kuwaiti oil barrel price up to \$65.26 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil barrel went up one cent to reach USD 65.26 per barrel Monday, compared with USD 65.25 pb on Friday, according to Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday. In international markets, Brent crude oil price went up 90 cents to USD 68.65 pb, while West Texas crude increased 86 cents to USD 63.75 pb.

Banks to operate 10:00 AM–1:30 PM during Ramadan

KBA announces Ramadan banking hours across Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Secretary-General of the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), **Sheikha Al-Essa**, announced that customer service hours at main branches and single-shift branches in residential and commercial areas of local banks during the holy month of Ramadan will run from 10:00 am to 1:30 pm, in accordance with a circular issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait.

In a press release issued by the association, Al-Essa explained that customer service hours at branches located in shopping malls will be divided into two periods (except on Fridays): the first from 11:00 am to 3:30 pm, and the second from 8:00 pm to 12:00 am.

There may be slight variations in the operating hours of mall branches, at the discretion of each bank, taking into account Iftar and Suhoor times, as well as the official working hours of the malls.



Sheikha Al-Essa

Airport branches will operate 24 hours a day, with each bank setting its own schedule, also considering Iftar and Suhoor times.

The Kuwait Banking Association extended its warmest congratulations and best wishes on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the people of Kuwait, and all valued bank customers.

Al Khiran digital branch in 2 shifts

ABK announces Ramadan hours

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) extends its greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as well as the government, people, and residents of Kuwait on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, hoping it bestows an abundance of blessings.

During this time, all ABK branches will be functional from 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Furthermore, the Al Khiran Mall digital branch will be functional to service customers in two shifts from 11 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and from 9:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.

The Bank has also confirmed its full operational readiness to serve customers 24/7 via its various digital platforms. This includes Online Banking via eahli.com,



Mobile Banking through the ABK app, as well as the Bank's call center Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899.

Boursa warns against fraud and impersonation scams

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Boursa Kuwait has urged all traders and stakeholders to remain vigilant against fraud and scam attempts, including those by entities or individuals impersonating Boursa or a licensed broker, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

It clarified that such fraud attempts may involve impersonating the Chairman, members of the Board of Directors, the CEO, executive management, or any employee of Boursa Kuwait through email, the website, or social media channels, with the intent of defrauding traders and stakeholders.

Leading region in transparency

NBK wins 2 Global Finance Sustainable Awards for '26

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: In a renewed affirmation of its institutional leadership and commitment to sustainable practices in responsible finance, governance and disclosure, National Bank of Kuwait announced winning two prestigious awards from Global Finance magazine, as part of the magazine's sixth annual Sustainable Finance Awards for 2026: Best Sustainable Finance Bank in Kuwait for 2026, marking the second consecutive year the Bank has received this accolade, and Best Bank for Sustainability Transparency in the Middle East for 2026, a distinction that NBK has earned for the first time at the regional level, underscoring its growing leadership and impact across the wider Middle East.

The Global Finance Sustainable Finance Awards acknowledge leading financial institutions in 56 countries across global, regional and local categories, with winners selected after evaluating their sustainability efforts and financing initiatives that aim to reduce the negative impacts of climate change. The winners for 2026 are scheduled to be honored during the magazine's Investment Banking and Sustainable Finance Awards ceremony, which will take place in London on April 21, 2026.

NBK was awarded Best Sustainable Finance Bank in Kuwait based on a rigorous evaluation criteria adopted by the editorial board of Global Finance magazine, including an assessment of NBK's sustainability-related governance policies and objectives, as well as its measurable achievements in environmental and social sustainability financing. The assessment covered the period from January to December 2025, during which NBK delivered tangible progress in expanding its sustainable finance portfolio and strengthening ESG practices across the organization.

By the end of 2025, NBK recorded a significant leap in its sustainable assets, achieving a 23% year-on-year growth to reach USD 6.11 billion, surpassing 61% of its 2030 strategic target of USD 10 billion. The Bank's sustainable loans also grew by 21% year-on-year, reaching USD 3.06 billion, while sustainability-linked loans surged by 60% to USD 955.39 million. In parallel, sustainable investments rose by 32% amounting to USD 2.49 billion. These results underscore NBK's accelerating momentum in scaling sustainable finance across its portfolio.

Further contributing to this win was also the Bank's signing of the first green financing agreement in Kuwait with Mabanee Group, marking a milestone in the country's sustainable finance landscape. NBK successfully structured and led the country's first-ever green loan, valued at approximately USD 81 million to finance the development of a state-of-the-art mixed-use commercial building designed to achieve LEED Gold Certification.

Meanwhile, NBK was named Best Bank for Sustainability Transparency in the Middle East in recognition of its exceptional leadership in sustainability disclosures and its alignment with the highest international reporting standards. A key factor behind this regional win was the publication of NBK's first Green Bond Allocation and Impact Report, which set a new benchmark for disclosure quality and transparency in sustainable finance reporting across the Middle East. The report, released following the successful issuance of NBK's inaugural USD 500 million green bond, provided detailed, verifiable insights into the allocation of proceeds and the environmental impact achieved, reflecting the Bank's commitment to rigorous measurement, transparency, and accountability.

Global Finance magazine's evaluation for this award relied on a combination of nomination submissions and independent research focused on the reliability, integrity, and depth of sustainability reporting. NBK's leadership in transparency was further demonstrated through the publication of its first standalone Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) report, making it the first and only bank in Kuwait to independently release such a report. The Bank also advanced its climate-risk related management practices by integrating climate change risk considerations into its Internal Capital Adequacy Assessment Process (ICAAP) in line with Pillar 2 requirements, reinforcing NBK's commitment to organizational resilience and business continuity.

These advancements in transparency and integration of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles strengthened NBK's overall positioning, earning the Bank stronger ratings from global ESG rating agencies and placing it among the top-rated banks in the region. Morningstar Sustainalytics upgraded NBK's ESG Risk Rating from '27.1 - Medium Risk' to '19.4 - Low Risk,' while Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) raised NBK's ESG rating from 'BBB' to 'A', reflecting the Bank's enhanced performance and leadership in sustainability.

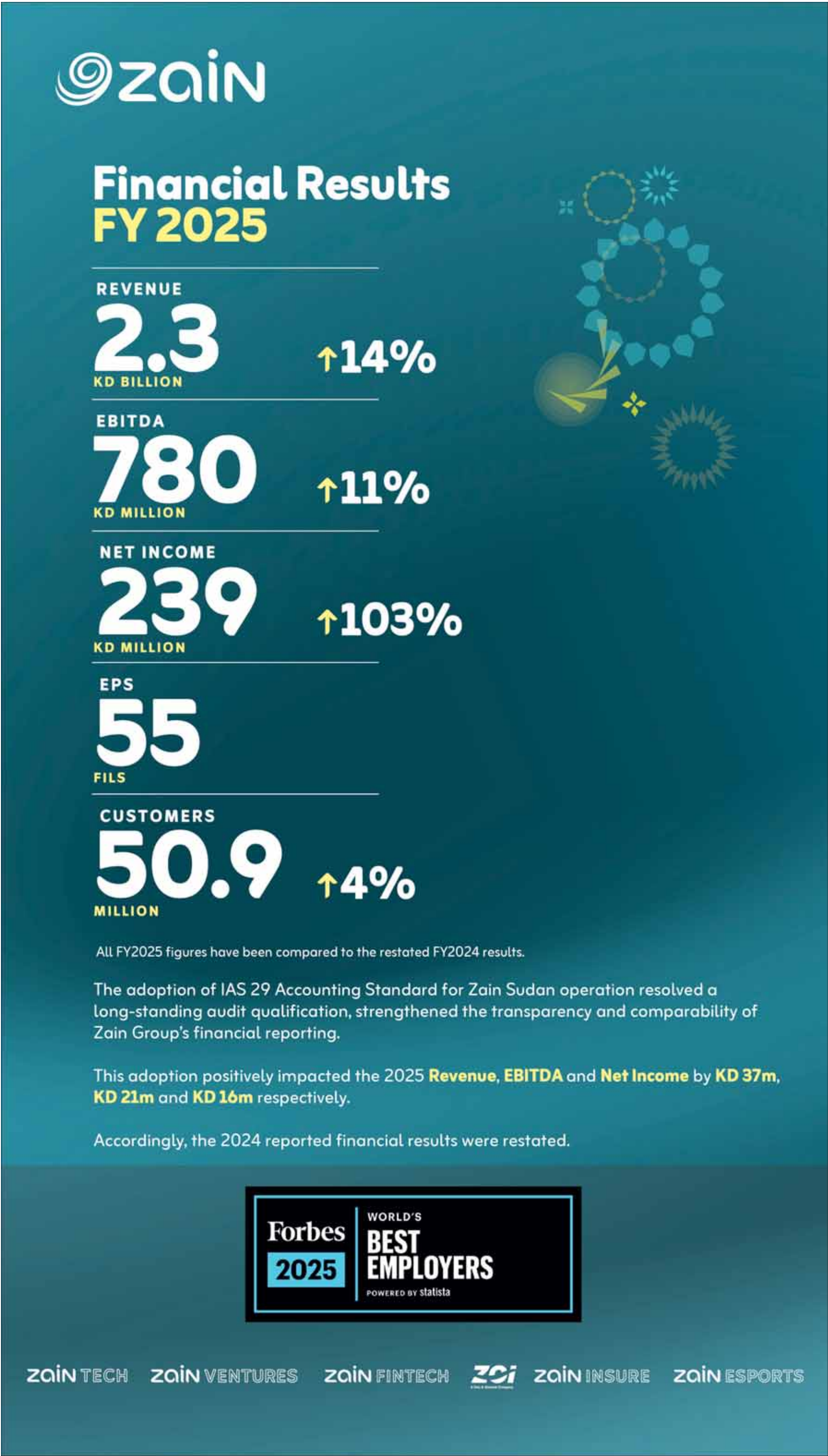
This double recognition from Global Finance magazine underscores NBK's unwavering commitment to integrating ESG standards across all aspects of its operations. It reaffirms the Bank's leadership in driving the transition toward a more sustainable economy, while upholding the highest levels of transparency, disclosure, and integrity.

Global Finance magazine, founded in 1987 and based in New York, is one of the oldest magazines specializing in the finance and economics sectors, and has a readership of more than 50,000 executives and investment and strategic decision-makers in financial institutions in 188 countries around the world.

The magazine conducts numerous annual surveys on innovation and profitability among banks and financial institutions worldwide, selecting the best at the regional and global levels.



NBK wins Best Bank for Sustainable Finance in Kuwait and Best for Sustainability Transparency in the Middle East.



Revenue up 14% to reach 16-year high of KD 2.3 billion

FY 2025 marks a year of exceptional growth for Zain Group

Net income soared 103% to reach 13-year high of KD 239 million

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communications (TechCo) operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa announces robust consolidated financial results for the full-year 2025 (FY-25), and fourth quarter (Q4-25) ended 31 December 2025. The Group now serves 50.9 million active customers, a 4% year-on-year (YoY) increase.

Group Key Performance Indicators for the Full-Year 2025

Total Active Customers	50.9 million
Consolidated Revenue	KD 2.3 billion
EBITDA	KD 780 million
EBITDA Margin	34%
Net Income	KD 239 million
EPS	55 fils

For FY-2025, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 2.3 billion (USD 7.44 billion), up14%YoY. Consolidated EBITDA for the period reached KD 780 million (USD 2.54 billion), with EBITDA growth of 11%, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 34%. Consolidated net income reached KD 239million (USD 777 million), up 103% YoY. Earnings per share amounted to55 fils (USD 0.18).

All FY-2025 figures are compared to the restated FY-2024 results following the application of IAS 29.

Applying IAS 29 on Group’s subsidiaries in Sudan - Impact on Revenue, EBITDA and Net Income

Zain held an Extraordinary General Assembly on 4 December 2025, during which shareholders approved amendments to certain Articles of Association and endorsed the application of IAS 29(Financial Reporting in Hyperinflationary Economies) to Zain’s operations in Sudan. The implementation of IAS 29 had the following key impacts:

1. Audit qualification resolved: It addressed the 10 yearlong standing audit qualification relating to the application of IAS 29 in Sudan.

2. Positive impact on FY 2025 results: For the full year 2025, reported revenue increased by US\$119 million, EBITDA increased by US\$67 million, and net income increased by US\$50 million.

3. Restatement of FY 2024 comparatives: The application of IAS 29 required a restatement of FY 2024 results.

The cumulative impact of Applying IAS 29 on Group’s subsidiaries in Sudan resulted in accumulated losses within retained earnings. The Extraordinary General Assembly held on 4 December 2025 authorized the Board of Directors to utilise voluntary and statutory reserves, as well as share premium, to offset any accumulated losses arising from the application of IAS 29 for the financial year ending 31 December 2025. In accordance with this resolution, the Board of Directors approved a transfer from the share premium account to eliminate the deficit in retained earnings.

Group Key Performance Indicators for the Fourth Quarter of 2025

Consolidated Revenue	KD 600 million
EBITDA	KD 214 million
EBITDA Margin	36%
Net Income	KD 47 million-
EPS	11fils

For Q4-25, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 600 million (USD 2 billion), up 10% YoY. EBITDA for the quarter reached KD 214 million (USD 696 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 36%. Net income reached KD 47 million (USD 151 million). Earnings per share amounted to 11 fils (USD 0.03).** All Q4-2025 figures are compared to the restated Q4-2024 results following the application of IAS 29.

Key Operational & consolidated notes for Q4& 12 months ended 31 December 2025

1. 2025 annual cash dividend paid out totaled 35 fils, reflecting a 63% payout ratio; while total dividend paid during calendar year 2025 totaled 60 fils

2. Zain Group invested USD 1.5 billion in CAPEX, a 40% increase, representing20% of revenue, on network expansion, technology modernization, digital transformation initiatives

3. Data revenue grew 13% YoY to USD 2.8 billion, representing 37% of Group’s 2025revenue

4. New business verticals delivered USD 743 million in revenue, representing a robust growth of 67% YoY, and now account for around 10% of Zain Group’s total revenue

5. Groupwide Enterprise revenue grew 13% YoY with ZainTECH revenue growth of 55% YoY

6. Fintech groupwide revenue up 28% YoY, total transactions volume up 24%

7. Dizlee (API Platform) revenue up 51% YoY offering over 289 live services from 58 partners

8. ZainOmantel International (ZOI) revenues soared 100% YoY to reach USD 401 million

9. Social media followers exceed 35.5 million, 4 billion views and 1.5 bn interactions across all platforms through appealing, relevant content

10. Regional insurtech push sees Zain Insure launch fully Digital Motor Insurance App in Kuwait

11. BEDE Kuwait rolls out powerful suite of business-grade financial services for SMEs

12. Zain ranks first in the regional Telecom sector in Forbes “World’s Best Employers” list

Commenting on the 2025full year results, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group, Mr.Osamah Al Furaih said, “The collaborative efforts of Board and executive management in the systematic implementation of the company’s transformative ‘4WARD-Progress with Purpose’ strategy has resulted in an excellent year of growth that has future-proofed Zain for



Osamah Al Furaih

Chairman, Osamah Al Furaih:

■ “An excellent year of growth driven by the transformative ‘4WARD-Progress with Purpose’ strategy that has future-proofed Zain for many years ahead”

many years ahead. The focus on network expansion, digital innovation and comprehensive ESG programs, is driving sustainable value creation for our stakeholders.”

The Chairman concluded, “A note of appreciation for the government bodies in Kuwait and across our markets for supporting the ICT sector and empowering Zain to provide meaningful connectivity to the communities, businesses, and governments we proudly serve.”

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi commented,

“The strong financial performance in 2025 was underpinned by multiple key strategic initiatives across our TechCo business operations. Disciplined CAPEX and OPEX management, the accelerated momentum of our new business verticals, combined with targeted investments of USD 1.5 billion in network expansion, technology upgrades, and fiber optic deployment, ensuredour ability to meet the growing lucrative demand for digital services from government, enterprise, and individual clients.”

“All our key operations recorded solid financial results for the year that we expect to replicate in 2026 and beyond. Zain Kuwait maintained its market leadership with a healthy 4% revenue growth due to a focus on growing the government and enterprise business and launching 5G Advanced services that enhancing the customer experience. Kuwait now ranks among the first countries worldwide to deploy 5G Advanced commercially, underscoring its pioneering role in adopting cutting-edge telecom technologies and enhancing its position as a forward-looking digital hub.”

“Zain Saudi Arabia recorded its highest ever revenue of SAR 11 billion on the back of its 5G network and focus on B2B revenue as well as fostering its digital operator ‘Yaqoot’ and fintech business, ‘Tamam’. Zain Iraq revenues surged by 20%, fueled by the sustained commercial momentum, continued network deployment, and the successful diversification of revenues from its subsidiaries, Next Generation and Horizon. The gradual restoration of the network and customer growth in Zain Sudan is driving exceptional growth on all financials making it Zain’s most profitable operation for the year. Both Zain Jordan and Bahrain’s 5G expansion are paying off with healthy revenue and customer growth.”

“Nurturing the investments we made in new business verticals are yielding significant results, with annual revenue for ZOI (up 100%), Zain-TECH (up 55%), and fintech services (up 28%) across our footprint registering impressive growth of 67% combined to reach USD 743 million in 2025, representing 10% of the Group’s total revenue. We will continue to foster these lucrative business lines and confident they will continue their trajectory growth in the years ahead.”

“The launch of Zain Insure in Kuwait reflects Zain’s ongoing transformation into becoming a TechCo as we expand our base of activities beyond telecom services to delivering customer-first

digital solutions underpinning our competencies in technology innovation and convenient delivery of financial services. We are gradually extending Zain Insure digital services to Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, and KSA, offering motor, device and other insurance services depending on local market conditions.”

“Following the step-up acquisition of the Kuwait tower network, we expect our infrastructure expansion plans to make significant progress soon. Over the last five years, TASC Towers has operated as an independent digital infrastructure company acquiring and managing the physical tower infrastructure of Zain Jordan and Zain Iraq on a sale-and-leaseback basis. We expect to finalize the integration of TASC’s tower assets with Ooredoo Group in the coming months, that will place the region on the world telecom tower map by also providing shared telecom infrastructure services to multiple mobile network operators across the region, thus reducing the region’s carbon footprint.”

“Zain witnessed significant upgrades in multiple global Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)indices during 2025 highlighted by a significant improvement in its Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) rating in ESG, which upgraded Zain from ‘BBB’ to ‘A’ as of September 2025. Additionally, in the S&P Global ESG Index, our level grew above the average for telecom companies globally, as well as surpassing the global average in the FTSE4Good Index. These milestones underscore Zain’s unwavering commitment to sustainability and strengthening corporate governance frameworks that have taken the company’s ESG leadership agenda to new heights”

“Our ranking as the number one telecommunications company and among the top-three employers across the MENA region on Forbes annual ‘World’s Best Employers’ list for 2025 reflects our seriousness in taking responsible business action by building a thriving, diverse and inclusive workplace.”

“The appeal of the Zain brand and of our marketing and social media campaigns continue to grow evident by the impressive 35.5 million followers we have across our various online platforms. With 4 billion views and 1.5 billion interactions during 2025 reaffirms the advertising and marketing investments we make across all our businesses in making Zain one of the most loved brands and the ICT provider of choice for individuals, businesses and governments across the region.”

Financial KPIs of key markets for the 12 months ended December 31, 2025

Kuwait: Zain Group’s flagship operation maintained its market leadership, with a customer base of 2.6 million. Full year 2025 revenue grew 4% YoY to reach KD 386 million (USD 1.3 billion), while EBITDA reached KD 139 million (USD 452 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 36%. For the full year net income dropped 21% YoY, reaching KD 87 million (USD 282 million). Comparatively, net income is lower YoYdue to the \$80 million one-time gain from step-up acquisition of IHS (Kuwait TowerCo) in Q4 2024.Excluding this one-time gain of last year, net income growth would have been 1% YoY. Data revenue grew by 4% and represented 36% of total revenue.

Saudi Arabia: The operator generated record all-time high revenue of USD 2.93 billion up 6% YoY, with EBITDA reaching USD 925 million, up 4% YoY,reflecting an EBITDA margin of 32%. Net income for the year increased 1% YoY to reach USD 161 million. Supported byits dynamic 5G network data revenue for the year grew 3%, representing 39% of total revenue. Customers served stood at 8.1 million.Focus on the enterprise sector, alongside the growth of its digital operator ‘Yaqoot’ and fintech arm ‘Tamam’, enhanced revenue streams and profitability. Read more on Zain KSA FY 2025 results

Iraq: Revenues grew 20% YoY to reach USD 1.29 billion. EBITDA reached USD 473 million, up 7% YoY, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 37%. Net profit jumped 15% to reach USD 150 million. The operator’s customer base grew 6% YoY to reach 20.9 million customers. This growth was fueled by sustained commercial momentum and the successful diversification of Zain Iraq’s subsidiaries, Next Generation and Horizon, in addition to an aggressive network expansion



Bader Al-Kharafi

Vice-Chairman & Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi:

■ “Targeted investments in technology upgrades and focus on new business verticals have driven revenues to record levels”

■ EBITDA grew by 11% to reach \$2.54 billion (780 million) reflecting a 34% margin

■ Q4’25 revenue up10% to KD 600m (USD 2bn); Net profit up 84% to KD 47 million (USD151m)

■ The application of the IAS 29 standard resolved the audit qualification, resulting in increased FY 2025 revenue of \$119 million, EBITDA of \$67 million and net profit of \$50 million

■ Growth verticals delivered USD 743million in revenue, representing a growth of 67% YoY

■ Kuwait solidifies market lead with 5.5G launch, robust revenue growth in KSA, Iraq, Sudan

■ CAPEX spend increases 40% to reach USD 1.5 bn, reflecting 20% of revenues

■ Data revenue grew 13% YoY to USD 2.8 billion representing 37% of total revenue

■ Fintech revenue grew 28% YoY with transaction volume growing 24% YoY

■ Groupwide Enterprise growth of 13% YoY driven by ZainTECH’s 55% revenue jump

■ ZOI revenues soared 100% YoY, highest-ranked network in the region

■ Zain Insure launches fully Digital Motor Insurance App in Kuwait

■ BEDE Kuwait rolls out powerful suite of business-grade financial services for SMEs

■ Zain ranks first in the regional Telecom sector in Forbes “World’s Best Employers” list

and optimized operational efficiencies throughout the year

Sudan: The operation delivered exceptional performance in 2025, following the stabilization of Khartoum, a pivotal milestone that enabled the full restoration of commercial activities and a strong rebound in business performance. Revenue for the year soared 92% YoY to USD 661 million, while EBITDA increased 143% to USD 373 million, achieving an outstanding 56% margin. Net income soared to USD 290 million, reflecting the strength of the operational turnaround.Operational recovery progressed rapidlyby restoring 814 sites throughout the year, bringing the active network to 90% in safe areas. Customer base expanded 22% YoY to 12.3 million, supported by the restoration of coverage and service availability. Data revenue grew 108% YoY, accounting for 32% of total revenue.

Jordan: Revenue grew7% YoY to reach USD 595million, EBITDA increased 1% to reach USD 227 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 38%. Net income for the year reached USD 75 million. With the expansion of 4G, Fiber and 5G services across the country, data revenue grew 15% representing 55% of total revenue. Zain Jordan customer base grew 2% to reach 4.2 million customers, maintaining its market leadership.

Bahrain: Revenue is up 7% YoY to reach USD 219 million while EBITDA reached USD 62 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 28%. Net income grew 1% to reach USD 15.9 million, with data revenue growing 5% to represent 46% of total revenue. Read more on Zain Bahrain FY 2025 results.



Zain headquarters

Al-Ruwaieh: Diverse initiatives and strategic partnerships underscore KFH's CSR leadership

KFH reinforces community role with comprehensive ‘Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan’ campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched its annual Ramadan campaign, “Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan”, comprising a diverse array of social, voluntary, cultural, health, and sporting initiatives. The campaign exemplifies KFH’s ongoing commitment to the community and underscores its leading role in social responsibility.

KFH Head of Public Relations and Media, **Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh** stated that the campaign’s past successes have turned it into an annual tradition that embodies the values of generosity and solidarity championed by the Bank.

He explained that KFH is keen on further developing the campaign every year in collaboration and strategic partnership with the relevant entities.

Ramadan Basket (Majla)
Al-Ruwaieh explained that the campaign started with the distribution of Ramadan food basket (Ramadan Majla) to families in need, in collaboration with Kuwait Food Bank and Relief, underscoring the Bank’s efforts to strengthen social solidarity during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Iftar Meals
He further stated that the Iftar meals initiative continues throughout the month of Ramadan. Thousands of meals, produced in certified central kitchens, are distributed daily to various locations across Kuwait.

Volunteering Team
He highlighted that KFH’s volunteering team, which consists of bank employees from different departments, is helping to distribute Iftar meals. This reflects teamwork and underscores the significance of social responsibility and volunteering.

Hospitality service at mosques
Al-Ruwaieh added that the campaign extends to offering hospitality services at mosques during Taraweeh and Qiyam prayers during Ramadan, serving prayers and strengthening community ties.

Quran Competition
Al-Ruwaieh highlighted KFH’s commitment to continue organizing the Quran competition, the largest terms of prizes’ value and number of participants. The contest is dedicated to children and the youth from 7 to 18 years of age, and encourages the discovery of talents in Tajweed, recitation and memorization of the Holy Quran. Since its launch 14 years ago, the contest has amassed over 10,000 participants, affirming its significant impact within the community. Another competition for memorizing and reciting the Holy Quran is being held for KFH employees with valuable prizes.



KFH team with volunteers from the Kuwait Food Bank.

The Holy Quarn mobile app
He further highlighted the successful application of KFH, the Holy Quran app, which is available on iOS and Android platforms. The app has become one of the major reliable applications, thanks to its exclusive features and user-friendly design. It also undergoes continuous updates that contribute to improving the user’s experience and supporting Quran recitation and memorization.

Sports and Health Events
Al-Ruwaieh highlighted the Bank’s commitment to organizing health and sports events during the Holy Month. Notably, KFH is sponsoring the “FASTING VS CALORIES BY KFH” tournament in cooperation with Levo Club. Held over an entire week, this initiative aims to raise health awareness, promote a culture of balanced nutrition, and create a positive environment that integrates physical activity with health education.

Cooking Courses and Healthy Home Nutrition
Al-Ruwaieh explained that KFH continues to implement its initiative for female customers and employees. This program features specialized cooking courses led by some of Kuwait’s most renowned chefs, aiming to introduce concepts of healthy home nutrition and encourage better eating habits.

Celebrating the Joy of Gergean with Children
Al-Ruwaieh emphasized that KFH remains committed to celebrating Gergean with children to help preserve Kuwait’s rich heritage and tradition. This year, the Bank’s outreach includes Sabah Al-Ahmad Cardiac Center, Kuwaiti Society for Guardians of the Disabled, and Kuwait Down Syndrome Society. Events are also scheduled at Al-Shamiya and Al-Khalidiya parks, as well as several public and private schools in partnership with Coded Academy. These efforts aim to bring joy to all children, with a special focus on patients, orphans, and those with special needs.

Sharing Iftar Meals with Government Entities
Al-Ruwaieh noted that KFH is maintaining its tradition of hosting Iftar meals for public sector employees on duty during the Holy Month. This initiative serves as a token of appreciation for their tireless efforts in ensuring public safety and serving the community around the clock.

Daily Social Media Engagement
Al-Ruwaieh explained that KFH is utilizing its social media channels throughout the Holy Month to share health awareness videos featuring specialists. This is complemented by awareness messages produced in collaboration with relevant authorities, alongside interactive competitions and comprehensive coverage of the Bank’s Ramadan events.

A comprehensive portfolio of charitable, social, and sports initiatives

For the second consecutive year, Gulf Bank continues its Ramadan program under the slogan ‘Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together’

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Gulf Bank has announced, on the occasion of the upcoming Holy Month of Ramadan, the launch of its Ramadan program for this year under the slogan “Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together”, for the second consecutive year. The program comprises an integrated portfolio of charitable, social, and sports initiatives designed to reinforce humanitarian and social values, spread happiness, and create a positive and sustainable impact that benefits the wider community.

This program reflects Gulf Bank’s ongoing approach to driving meaningful and lasting social impact through well-designed initiatives that target various segments of society, combining direct support, community engagement, and the promotion of a positive and healthy lifestyle.

In this regard, the Chief Marketing Officer at Gulf Bank, Mrs. Najla Aecisa, stated:

“Guided by our strategy to embed the principles of social sustainability, we were keen during the Holy Month of Ramadan to develop a comprehensive program that includes charitable initiatives as well as social and sports activities, supported by Gulf Bank’s volunteer team, Sawaaed Al-Khaleej.”

She added: “Each year during this blessed month, we are committed to mobilizing our available resources and contributing time, effort, and financial support to implement meaningful initiatives that embody the values of giving and revive our cherished traditions. Some activities will be organized ahead of the start of Ramadan, while many others will be implemented throughout the holy month.”

Community Giving and Support for Underprivileged Families

Gulf Bank places supporting underprivileged families at the forefront of its priorities during Ramadan, stemming from its firm belief in the importance of social solidarity and strengthening the spirit of cooperation throughout the holy month. In this context, the Bank participates in the ‘JoyLand’ initiative, which aims to distribute household essentials and Eid clothing to underprivileged families ahead of Ramadan, contributing to improving their quality of life, meeting their basic needs, and bringing joy to their hearts, particularly with the approach of Eid.

In addition, Gulf Bank implements the Ramadan Food Basket initiative in collaboration with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, the Kuwait Food Bank, and Basta, whereby Ramadan food baskets are distributed to underprivileged families prior to the holy month, as an integral part of Kuwait’s deeply rooted Ramadan traditions. This initiative seeks to provide essential food supplies and enhance the sense of security and stability among beneficiary families.

Furthermore, the Bank is collaborating with Lulu Hypermarket and one of the cooperative societies to cover the cost of the Ramadan Food Baskets (Machla) for a number of Kuwaiti shoppers, in a humanitarian gesture that reflects the values of community participation, while extending congratulations on the advent of the holy month.

Marketing Campaign and Ramadan TV Commercial

As part of its annual tradition, Gulf Bank is launching its Ramadan marketing campaign through a Ramadan television commercial titled “A Part of Me”. This humanitarian, social, and national production conveys a profound message that reflects the essence of giving during Ramadan, highlighting the importance of donating items of personal value, based on the belief that genuine giving stems from sharing what matters most with those in need.

The campaign embodies the concepts of social solidarity and the humanitarian spirit that characterizes Kuwaiti society, while also reflecting authentic Ramadan traditions and national celebrations. This reinforces Gulf Bank’s position, since its establishment, as an integral part of Kuwait’s social and national fabric.

As an extension of the awareness message conveyed by the Ramadan advertisement, the bank is organizing a special donation drive to collect clothes and essential items in collaboration with a charitable organization, in preparation for distributing them to those in need—serving as a practical and tangible application of the concept “A Part of Me.”

The bank will also donate all items used in the Ramadan advertisement to support the donation campaign, amid expectations of strong participation and engagement from various segments of society.

Enhancing Customer Value and Experience

As part of its continuous efforts to enhance customer experience and deliver added value beyond traditional banking services, Gulf Bank has launched an exclusive offer in collaboration with Abyat for Rose Gold Credit Cardholders. The offer enables customers to benefit from special discounts on selected products for a period of three days, coinciding with preparations for Ramadan and household needs, reflecting the Bank’s commitment to rewarding its customers during key occasions.



A group photo of the Gulf Bank and Kuwait Food Bank teams distributing food supplies to needy families.



A section of the attendees at ‘Quraish’ gathering.



Gifting Ramadan food baskets to Lulu Hypermarket and Al Zahraa Cooperative Society customers.



Community Engagement and Participation

In line with its commitment to community engagement and cultural awareness, Gulf Bank invites its customers to participate in the Ramadan Crescent Observation initiative and learn about the scientific and astronomical aspects related to crescent sighting through Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre..

This initiative aims to promote knowledge, link religious traditions with science, and raise awareness across different age groups.

The Bank will also organize interactive competitions across its social media platforms to reinforce Kuwaiti values, customs, and traditions, while encouraging positive engagement with purposeful content that reflects the spirit of the holy month, particularly among youth.

Supporting Entrepreneurs and Kuwaiti Businesses

As part of its commitment to supporting entrepreneurship and the local economy, Gulf Bank collaborates with a number of Kuwaiti businesses and corporate banking clients through the Nuqsa Al-Khaleej initiative. This initiative aims to support small and medium enterprises, enhance their innovation and development capabilities, and empower Kuwaiti entrepreneurs with tangible growth opportunities, contributing to economic development and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among youth.

National Identity and Authentic Ramadan Traditions

Gulf Bank continues to celebrate Kuwaiti heri-

tage and authentic Ramadan traditions by organizing the ‘Quraish’ Employees’ Gathering, which brings together the Gulf Bank family at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre. The event revives one of Kuwait’s longstanding Ramadan customs and strengthens employee bonds, while also commemorating the Bank’s 65th anniversary, reflecting its rich legacy of achievement and community service.

The Bank also places special emphasis on children through organizing Gargaian celebrations, one of the most cherished Ramadan traditions eagerly anticipated by children each year, with particular attention given to children with special needs and those living in orphanages, with the aim of spreading joy, inclusion, and a sense of community in a festive Ramadan atmosphere.

On the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr, children will enjoy a special experience filled with Eid surprises and gifts, in collaboration with leading children’s gift stores.

Health and Active Lifestyle

Driven by its belief that health and wellness are fundamental components of quality of life, Gulf Bank will organize weekly running activities every Tuesday throughout Ramadan, in collaboration with professional trainers from Running Club. This initiative follows the significant success of the 11th edition of the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon and aims to encourage community members to maintain an active and balanced lifestyle during the holy month.

Concluding her remarks, Mrs. AlEisa stated: “We take pride in being the bank closest to the community, and we remain committed to fulfilling our responsibilities by organizing meaningful initiatives that strengthen social bonds, support emerging businesses, and encourage a healthy lifestyle throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan.”



Warba Bank team at the event.

‘Your coffee is on Us’

Warba Bank marks National Days at T4

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Warba Bank’s branch at Terminal 4 (T4) announced its annual celebration of Kuwait’s National Days, continuing its longstanding tradition of marking this cherished occasion with the community.

The branch organized a traditional Ardha performance and offered hospitality to arriving and departing passengers last Thursday, in addition to providing complimentary coffee to its customers throughout the month of February in collaboration with the Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company at T4, under the slogan “Your Coffee is on Us.”

Warba Bank also reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening ties with the wider Kuwaiti community, particularly during national celebrations. In this context, the Bank participated in a special event organized by the Public Authority for Sport in celebration of the National Days.

The event was held at the Authority’s headquarters under the patronage and in the presence of His Excellency the Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs, Dr. Tariq Hamad Nasser Al-Jalahma, who toured the participating booths and praised the organizers’ efforts in delivering this distinguished national celebration.

Abdullah Nasser Al-Shuail, Senior Director of the Branches and Private Banking at Warba Bank, stated that Warba Bank is taking part in numerous events, activities and festivals held in celebration of the National Days.

These included participation in flag-raising ceremonies at several locations and government buildings, organizing dedicated initiatives by the Bank, and contributing to celebrations arranged by official and community entities in honor of this meaningful national occasion.

Speaking of the airport celebrations, Al-Shuail said: “We are always close to our customers and committed to be present with them even during their travel journeys.

This time, we celebrated by offering hospitality and preserving the heritage of the traditional Ardha in honor of the National Days, reflecting a deeply rooted social commitment within Warba Bank’s culture.”

Regarding the celebration at the Public Authority for Sport, Al-Shuail noted that Warba Bank strives to



Abdullah Al-Shuail

engage with its customers during national festivities, adding that extending congratulations on this cherished occasion for Kuwaitis and residents alike is both an institutional and social duty that the Bank observes annually.

He further added: “Our participation in the National Day celebrations is an integral part of our social responsibility and a sincere expression of our belonging to this generous nation.

At Warba Bank, we believe our role extends beyond providing banking services to actively contributing to initiatives that strengthen national unity and bring joy to our community.”

Al-Shuail concluded by emphasizing that since its establishment, Warba Bank has consistently implemented social responsibility programs through sponsorship agreements, volunteer initiatives and ongoing engagement with various social institutions and community segments.

The Bank has maintained its position at the forefront of private sector institutions committed to embedding corporate social responsibility principles into meaningful programs and initiatives with genuine social impact.

Warba Bank is among the banks that have achieved significant success in a relatively short period, securing a leading position in Islamic digital banking.

With one of the largest shareholder bases among local banks, the Bank remains close to all segments of society.

This sponsorship further reinforces Warba Bank’s position as a trusted banking partner that combines innovation with social responsibility in delivering high-quality financial services and products.

TV veteran makes family a priority

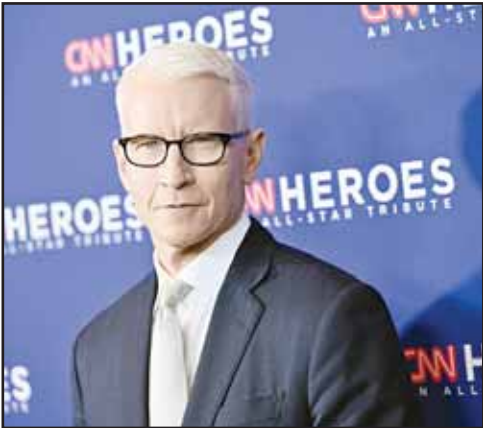
Cooper to exit ‘60 Minutes,’ but to remain with CNN

NEW YORK, Feb. 17, (AP): Anderson Cooper, who has reported for CBS’ “60 Minutes” for the past two decades in addition to hosting a week-night news program on CNN, said Monday that he’s leaving the CBS broadcast to spend more time with his family.

His decision comes at a time of turmoil at “60 Minutes.” Cooper appeared on the show Sunday night, introducing a brief piece on filmmaker Ken Burns. It’s not likely to be his last time on the show; he’s expected to finish the current broadcast season, which ends in May.

“Being a correspondent at ‘60 Minutes’ has been one of the great honors of my career,” Cooper said in a statement. “I got to tell amazing stories, and work with some of the best producers, editors and camera crew in the business. For nearly 20 years, I’ve been able to balance my jobs and CNN and CBS, but I have little kids now and I want to spend as much time with them as possible, while they still want to spend time with me.”

Cooper’s exit from what remains the most prestigious show in television news is sure to raise questions about whether it had anything to do with the leadership of Bari Weiss, editor-in-chief of CBS News since last fall. Cooper’s spokesperson



Anderson Cooper attends the 16th annual CNN Heroes All-Star Tribute in New York on Dec. 11, 2022. (AP)

said Monday he had no additional comment.

He has contributed stories to “60 Minutes” since the 2006-2007 television season in a unique job-sharing arrangement with CNN. His prime-time cable news show, “Anderson Cooper 360,” has aired since 2003.

In a statement, CBS News praised Cooper for his two decades of work.

“We’re grateful to him for dedicating so much of his life to this broadcast, and understand the importance of spending more time with family,” CBS said. “‘60 Minutes’ will be here if he ever wants to return.”

His exit comes at a time of unease at the Sunday night newsmagazine known for its ticking stop-watch. At Weiss’ direction, the show in December held off at the last minute showing a report from correspondent Sharyn Alfonsi about the Trump administration’s immigration policy. She said a greater effort was needed to get an interview with administration officials, while Alfonsi complained privately that the decision was political in nature. The story aired a month later with additional administration comments, but no on-camera interviews.

President Donald Trump sued “60 Minutes” for how it handled an interview with his 2024 election opponent, Kamala Harris. Much to the consternation of many at the broadcast, CBS’s parent company Paramount Global settled with Trump out-of-court.

Cooper’s exit from CBS was first reported by the online news site Breaker.



Honoree Frederick Wiseman addresses the audience at the 2016 Governors Awards, Nov. 12, 2016, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Documentary pioneer

Oscar-winning filmmaker Frederick Wiseman dies

NEW YORK, Feb. 17, (AP): Frederick Wiseman, the celebrated director of “Titicut Follies” and dozens of other documentaries whose in-depth, unadorned movies comprised a unique and revelatory history of American institutions, died Monday at age 96.

The death was announced in a joint statement from his family and from his production company, Zipporah Films. Additional details were not immediately available.

“He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, colleagues, and the countless filmmakers and audiences around the world whose lives and perspectives were shaped by his unique vision,” the statement said.

Among the world’s most admired and influential filmmakers, Wiseman won an honorary Academy Award in 2016 and completed more than 35 documentaries, some several hours long. With subjects ranging from a suburban high school to a horse race track, his work was aired on public television, screened at retrospectives, spotlighted in festivals, praised by critics and fellow directors and preserved by the Library of Congress.

Wiseman was in his mid-30s before he made his first full-length movie, but was soon ranked with - and sometimes above - such notable peers as D.A. Pennebaker and Robert Drew for helping to establish the modern documentary as a vital and surprising art form.

Starting with “High School” and the scandalous “Titicut Follies,” he patented a seamless, affecting style, using a crew so tiny that Wiseman served as his own sound engineer. The results led to acclaim, amusement, head-shaking, finger-pointing and - with “Titicut Follies” - prolonged legal action.

“I don’t set out to be confrontational, but I think sometimes the content of the movie runs against people’s expectations and fantasies about the subject matter,” Wiseman told Gawker in 2013.

Wiseman’s vision was to make “as many films as possible about different aspects of American life,” and he often gave his documentaries self-explanatory titles: “Hospital,” “Public Housing,” “Basic Training,” “Boxing Gym.” But he also dramatized how people functioned within those settings: an elderly welfare applicant begging for assistance, a military trainee complaining of harassment, a doctor trying to coax coherent answers out of a dazed heroin addict, sales clerks at Neiman Marcus rehearsing their smiles.

Institution

“The institution is also just an excuse to observe human behavior in somewhat defined conditions,” Wiseman told The Associated Press in 2020. “The films are as much about that as they are about institutions.”

For “Titicut Follies,” which premiered in 1967, Wiseman visited the Massachusetts-based Bridgewater State Hospital for the criminally insane. He amassed footage of nude men being baited by sadistic guards and one inmate being force-fed as he lies on a table, liquid pouring down a rubber hose shoved into his nose. The images were so appalling and embarrassing that state officials successfully restricted its release, giving the film exalted status among those determined to see it.

In “High School,” released in 1968, Wiseman recorded daily life in a suburban Philadelphia school. He filmed a student being questioned about whether he has permission to make a phone call, an English teacher earnestly analyzing the lyrics of Simon & Garfunkel’s “The Dangling Conversation,” an awkward sex education class in which boys are told the more active they are, the more insecure they must be.

“What we see in Fred Wiseman’s documentary ... is so familiar and so extraordinarily evocative that a feeling of empathy with the students floods over us,” The New Yorker’s Pauline Kael wrote. “Wiseman extends our understanding of our common life the way novelists used to.”

Wiseman made movies without narration, prerecorded soundtracks and title cards. But he disputed, forcefully, that he was part of the “cinema verite” movement of the 1960s and ‘70s, calling it a “pompous French term that has absolutely no meaning.”

He also differed with how others interpreted his viewpoint. While Oscar-winner Errol Morris dubbed him “the undisputed king of misanthropic cinema,” Wiseman insisted that he was not a muckraker out to correct injustice. He saw himself as a subjective, but fair-minded and engaged observer who discovered through the work itself how he felt about a given project, combing through hundreds of hours of footage and unearthing a story - sometimes despairing, sometimes hopeful. For “High School II,” he visited a school in East Harlem in the 1990s, and was impressed by the commitment of the teachers and administrators.

“I think it’s as important to document kindness, civility and generosity of spirit as it is to show cruelty, banality and indifference,” Wiseman said when he accepted his honorary Oscar.

Community

He was as adventurous in his 80s and 90s as he was in his 30s, making “Crazy Horse” about the famed Parisian dance revue, the four-hour “At Berkeley,” about the California state university, and the 2 1/2 hour “Monrovia, Indiana” about an aging rural community. Wiseman also had a long career in theater, staging plays by Samuel Beckett and William Luce among others and adapting his movie “Welfare” into an opera. In 2025, he had brief acting roles in two acclaimed movies - as a poet in “Jane Austen Wrecked My Life” and off-screen as a radio announcer in “Eephus.”

Much of his own work was made through Zipporah, named for his wife, who died in 2021. They had two children.

Wiseman was born in Boston, his father a prominent attorney, his mother an administrator at a children’s psychiatric ward and a would-be actor who entertained her son with stories and imitations. His education was elite - Williams College and Yale Law School - and his real life experiences were invaluable for the movies he would end up making.

In the 1950s and early ‘60s, he worked in the Massachusetts attorney general’s office, was a court reporter in Fort Benning, Georgia; and Philadelphia, a research associate at Brandeis University and a lecturer at Boston Law School. Drafted into the Army in 1955 and stationed in Paris, he picked up some practical film knowledge by shooting street scenes with a Super 8 camera.

“I reached the witching age of 30 and figured I better do something I liked,” Wiseman told the AP in 2016. “It was just a few years after the technological developments that it made it possible to shoot synchronous sound ... so that opened up the world for filmmaking. And there were so many good subjects that hadn’t been filmed, as there still are.”

His new career began with narrative drama. He read William Miller’s “The Cool World,” a novel about young Black people on the streets of Harlem, called up the author and acquired rights. Wiseman served as producer of the low-budget, 1964 adaptation that was directed by Shirley Clarke, and he became confident that he could handle a movie himself.

While teaching at Boston Law School, Wiseman organized class trips to the nearby Bridgewater facility. In 1965, he wrote to officials there, proposing a film - ultimately “Titicut Follies” - that would give the “audience factual material about a state prison but will also give an imaginative and poetic quality that will set it apart from the cliché documentary about crime and illness.”

Around the time the movie was screened at the New York Film Festival, the state of Massachusetts sought an injunction, alleging that Wiseman had violated the prisoners’ privacy. For more than 20 years, Wiseman was permitted to show “Titicut Follies” only in prescribed settings such as libraries and colleges. The ban was finally relaxed when Superior Court Judge Andrew Meyer in Boston first ruled that the documentary could be shown to the general public if faces were blurred, then, in 1991, lifted all restrictions.

Obituary



Robert Duvall poses for a portrait during an interview in Los Angeles on June 5, 2015. (AP)

Oscar-winning actor known for versatility and dedication

Robert Duvall, ‘Godfather’ mainstay, dead at 95

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 17, (AP): Robert Duvall, the Oscar-winning actor of matchless versatility and dedication whose classic roles included the intrepid consigliere of the first two “Godfather” movies and the over-the-hill country music singer in “Tender Mercies,” has died at age 95.

Duvall died “peacefully” at his home Sunday in Middleburg, Virginia, according to an announcement from his publicist and from a statement posted on his Facebook page by his wife, Luciana Duvall.

“To the world, he was an Academy Award-winning actor, a director, a storyteller. To me, he was simply everything,” Luciana Duvall wrote. “His passion for his craft was matched only by his deep love for characters, a great meal, and holding court. For each of his many roles, Bob gave everything to his characters and to the truth of the human spirit they represented.”

The bald, wiry Duvall didn’t have leading man looks, but few “character actors” enjoyed such a long, rewarding and unpredictable career, in leading and supporting roles, from an itinerant preacher to Josef Stalin. Beginning with his 1962 film debut as Boo Radley, the reclusive neighbor in “To Kill a Mockingbird,” Duvall created a gallery of unforgettable portrayals. They earned him seven Academy Award nominations and the best actor prize for “Tender Mercies,” which came out in 1983. He also won four Golden Globes, including one for playing the philosophical cattle-drive boss in the 1989 miniseries “Lonesome Dove,” a role he often cited as his favorite.

In 2005, Duvall was awarded a National Medal of Arts.

He had been acting for some 20 years when “The Godfather,” released in 1972, established him as one of the most in-demand performers of Hollywood. He had made a previous film, “The Rain People,” with Francis Coppola, and the director chose him to play Tom Hagen in the mafia epic that featured Al Pacino and Marlon Brando among others. Duvall was a master of subtlety as an Irishman among Italians, rarely at the center of a scene, but often listening and advising in the background, an irreplaceable thread through the saga of the Corleone crime family.

Efficiency

“Stars and Italians alike depend on his efficiency, his tidying up around their grand gestures, his being the perfect shortstop on a team of personality slugers,” wrote the critic David Thomson. “Was there ever a role better designed for its actor than that of Tom Hagen in both parts of ‘The Godfather?’”

In another Coppola film, “Apocalypse Now,” Duvall was wildly out front, the embodiment of deranged masculinity as Lieutenant Colonel Bill Kilgore, who with equal vigor enjoyed surfing and bombing raids on the Viet Cong. Duvall required few takes for one of the most famous passages in movie history, barked

out on the battlefield by a bare-chested, cavalry-hatted Kilgore: “I love the smell of napalm in the morning. You know, one time we had a hill bombed, for 12 hours. When it was all over, I walked up. We didn’t find one of ‘em, not one stinkin’ dink body.”

“The smell, you know that gasoline smell, the whole hill. Smelled like - victory.”

Coppola once commented about Duvall: “Actors click into character at different times - the first week, third week. Bobby’s hot after one or two takes.”

He was Oscar-nominated as supporting actor for “The Godfather” and “Apocalypse Now,” but a dispute over money led him to turn down the third Godfather epic, a loss deeply felt by critics, fans and “Godfather” colleagues. Duvall would complain publicly about being offered less than his co-stars.

Fellow actors marveled at Duvall’s studious research and planning, and his coiled energy. Michael Caine, who co-starred with him in the 2003 “Secondhand Lions,” once told The Associated Press: “Before a big scene, Bobby just sits there, absolutely quiet; you know when not to talk to him.” Anyone who disturbed him would suffer the well-known Duvall temper, famously on display during the filming of the John Wayne Western “True Grit,” when Duvall seethed at director Henry Hathaway’s advice to “tense up” before a scene.

Award

Duvall was awarded an Oscar in 1984 for his leading role as the troubled singer and songwriter Mac Sledge in “Tender Mercies,” a prize he accepted while clad in a cowboy tuxedo with Western tie. In 1998, he was nominated for best actor in “The Apostle,” a drama about a wayward Southern evangelist which he wrote, directed, starred in, produced and largely financed. With customary thoroughness, he visited dozens of country churches and spent 12 years writing the script and trying to get it made.

Among other notable roles: the outlaw gang leader who gets ambushed by John Wayne in “True Grit”; Jesse James in “The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid”; the pious and beleaguered Frank Burns in “M-A-S-H”; the TV hatchet man in “Network”; Dr. Watson in “The Seven-Per-Cent Solution”; and the sadistic father in “The Great Santini.”

“When I was doing ‘Colors’ in 1988 with Sean Penn, someone asked me how I do it all these years, keep it fresh. Well, if you don’t overwork, have some hobbies, you can do it and stay hungry even if you’re not really hungry,” Duvall told The Associated Press in 1990.

In his mid-80s, he received a supporting Oscar nomination as the title character of the 2014 release “The Judge,” in which he is accused of causing a death in a hit-and-run accident. More recent films included “Widows” and “12 Mighty Orphans.”

Robert Selden Duvall grew up in the Navy towns of Annapolis and the San Diego area, where he was born

in 1931. He spent time in other cities as his father, who rose to be an admiral, was assigned to various duties.

The boy’s experience helped in his adult profession as he learned the nuances of regional speech and observed the psyche of military men, which he would portray in several films.

Duvall reportedly used his Navy officer father as the basis for his portrayal of the explosive militarist in “The Great Santini,” based on the Pat Conroy novel. He commented in 2003: “My dad was a gentleman but a seether, a stern, blustery guy, and away a lot of the time.” Bobby took after his mother, an amateur actress, in playing a guitar and performing. He was a wrestler like his father and enjoyed besting kids older than himself.

Concentration

He lacked the concentration for schoolwork and nearly flunked out of Principia College in Elmhurst, Illinois. His despairing parents decided he needed something to keep him in college so he wouldn’t be drafted for the Korean War. “They recommended acting as an expedient thing to get through,” he recalled. “I’m glad they did.” He flourished in drama classes.

“Way back when I was in college,” Duvall told the AP in 1990, “there was a wonderful man named Frank Parker, who had been a dancer in World War I. We did a full-length mime play and I played a Harlequin clown. I really liked that.”

“Then, I played an older guy in ‘All My Sons,’ and at one point I had this emotional moment, where this emotion was pouring out. Parker said at that moment he didn’t think acting can be carried any further than that. And this guy was a very critical guy. So I thought, at that moment at least, this is what I wanted to do.”

After two years in the Army, he used the G.I. Bill to finance his studies at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York, hanging out with such other young hopefuls as Robert Morse, Gene Hackman and Dustin Hoffman. After a one-night performance in “A View From the Bridge,” Duvall began getting offers for work in TV series, among them “The Naked City” and “The Defenders.”

Between his high-paying jobs in major productions, Duvall devoted himself to directing personal projects: a documentary about a prairie family, “We’re Not the Jet Set”; a film about gypsies, “Angelo, My Love”; and “Assassination Tango,” in which he also starred. Duvall had been a tango dancer since seeing the musical “Tango Argentina” in the 1980s and visited in Argentina dozens of times to study the dance and the culture. The result was the 2003 release about a hit man with a passion for tango.

His co-star was Luciana Pedraza, 42 years his junior, whom he married in 2005. Duvall’s three previous marriages - to Barbara Benjamin, Gail Youngs and Sharon Brophy - ended in divorce.

Indian Muslims celebrate holy month with devotion

Faith, food, community define Ramadan in India

By Shakeel Ahmad Khan
Arabic Interpreter
Embassy of India

In India, home to the world's second-largest Muslim population after Indonesia, Ramadan is observed not only as a religious duty or Islamic ritual by Muslims, but also as a broad cultural celebration that resonates across communities. Over the years, it has evolved into a shared social experience embraced by people from diverse backgrounds, cutting across religious, social and economic lines.

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is regarded as the holiest and most spiritually significant month for Muslims worldwide. During this sacred period, Muslims fast daily from dawn to sunset, breaking their fast at sunset with a meal known as Iftar in India and futoor in the Arab world. In addition to fasting, the month is marked by increased devotion, with Muslims dedicating more time to prayer, reflection and the recitation of the Holy Quran.

Ramadan in India is a deeply spiritual and culturally rich month-long observance that weaves Islamic values with distinctive local traditions and customs. The holy month is marked by fasting, charity, acts of kindness and intensified prayers, creating a unique atmosphere of devotion and togetherness. As the sun sets, major cities across the country come alive, transforming into vibrant hubs of late-night gatherings, bustling food streets and lively social interaction.

Ramadan in India is also a season of communal harmony, celebrated with deep enthusiasm and devotion, where traditional customs and rituals passed down through generations remain alive. In many towns and cities, the age-old practice of Sehri is still heralded by Zaharidarsmusicians who walk the streets beating drums to wake families for the pre-dawn meal.

Preparations for the holy month begin in mid-Sha'ban, with the period from the 15th of Sha'ban to the month's end dedicated to cleaning and household readiness. Women traditionally clean and decorate homes and courtyards, wash utensils, and stock up on food supplies to ensure the family's needs are met. This allows them to devote themselves fully to worship during Ramadan, reciting the Holy Quran during the day, performing nightly prayers, and attending women's gatherings to study the Quran and Hadith.

Culinary Heritage

In India, Ramadan is as much a celebration of food as it is of prayer. The Iftar meal, which marks the breaking of the fast at sunset, is a central part of the holy month and brings families and communities together. Traditionally, the fast is broken with dates, following the Sunnah, before moving on to a variety of savory and sweet dishes. Popular items on Indian Iftar tables include samosas, biryani, haleem, pakoras, lassi, sevaiyan, maqooti, and the refreshing sharbat Rooh Afza.

Sweet treats hold a special place during Ramadan. Sheer khurma, a vermicelli pudding cooked in milk with nuts and cardamom, is widely enjoyed, while phimi (a fragrant rice pudding flavored with saffron and cardamom) is another favorite dessert shared among family and friends.



Left: Worshipers offer evening prayers at a mosque during Ramadan, embracing reflection, devotion, and unity in the holy month. Right: Worshipers and families gather at a bustling Ramadan market near Jama Masjid in New Delhi, as food stalls glow under festive lights and communities come together to break their fast during the holy month.



The pre-dawn meal, known as Sehri, is equally important. Eaten before sunrise, it provides the energy needed for the day-long fast and typically includes foods rich in complex carbohydrates and proteins, such as eggs, bread, and yogurt. These meals not only nourish the body but also strengthen the sense of community and spiritual reflection during the holy month.

Iftar Gatherings

Iftar gatherings are a cherished tradition among Muslims across India, cutting across social and economic backgrounds. Community Iftars are organized in neighborhoods, mosques, educational institutions and cultural centers, fostering a spirit of unity and inclusiveness. Political parties and social organizations also host Iftar events, often inviting both Muslims and non-Muslims as a gesture of communal harmony.

In many mosques, fruits and cooked meals are distributed free of charge every evening during Ramadan, supported by community donations. Contributions collected from well-wishers are used to assist the poor and underprivileged, ensuring that no one is deprived of a proper meal during the holy month.

Charity

Charity occupies a central place in Islamic teachings and assumes even greater importance during Ramadan. Muslims throughout India are encouraged to give generously to those in need, viewing acts of charity (known as Sadaqah) as a means of earning spiritual reward and divine blessings. Special efforts are made to support disadvantaged families, provide food, clothing and financial assistance, and strengthen the bonds of compassion within society.

Social Exchanges

Ramadan is also a time of strengthened social ties. Families, relatives and neighbors exchange visits, share greetings and present gifts. Special banquets and gatherings are organized, reinforcing bonds of kinship and friendship. These interactions add a social

warmth to the spiritual essence of the holy month, reflecting both devotion and togetherness.

Key Regional Traditions Highlights

Indian cities celebrate this holy month of festive season with colorful activities, foods and fun.

■ Old Delhi (Chandni Chowk/Jama Masjid area): The heart of the city transforms the surrounding area into the buzzing of food stalls, including Karim's and local eateries serving kebabs, pakora, nihari and shaahitukda.

■ Hyderabad (Charminar/Laad Bazaar): Famous for Haleem, a thick stew that is a staple Ramadan dish, and the bustling, illuminated Laad Bazaar.

■ Mumbai (Mohammed Ali Road/Minara Masjid): A culinary, luminous spectacle, with special stalls serving tawa fried food, khiri, kebabs, and mawa jalebi.

■ Lucknow (Old city, Chok, Husainabad and Aminabad): Known for its Nawabi charm, serving special sheermal (saffron-infused bread) and kebabs.

■ Kolkata (New Market): Offers a mix of Bengali charm with traditional dishes like mutton rezala and biryani.

■ Malerkotla (Punjab): Notable for high levels of communal harmony, where Hindu and Sikh communities often participate in Iftar.

Ramadan Culmination

The month-long observances of fasting, prayer, charity, and community gatherings culminate with Eid-ul-Fitr, the festival marking the end of Ramadan. The occasion is celebrated with special prayers, festive attire, and visits to friends and family. In India's multi-religious society, Eid has a broad social resonance, with Eid Milan events organized in many cities, inviting both Muslims and non-Muslims to share in the celebrations, strengthening bonds of communal harmony and cultural unity.

Film



Isabelle Huppert stands on the red carpet during the premiere of the film 'The Blood Countess', during the 76th Berlin International Film Festival, Berlinale, in Berlin, Monday Feb. 16. (AP)

Carnival parade honors marginalized voices

Samba schools celebrate female authors

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 17, (AP): Samba and literature rarely share the same stage, but at this year's Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, two samba schools used their parades to tell the stories of Black Brazilian female authors. It's an unusual recognition of writers who have been historically marginalized due to their race and gender.

On Saturday, 79-year-old Conceição Evaristo, a writer from Minas Gerais known for her powerful works centering on Black women's experiences, sat majestically atop a float designed by samba school Imperio Serrano at Rio's famed Sambodrome. Two days later, the samba school Unidos da Tijuca dedicated its parade to the late Carolina Maria de Jesus, a favela-based diarist who died nearly five decades ago, and also featured Evaristo.

"For Black women in Brazil everything is very difficult," Evaristo said during an interview at the school's warehouse while preparations were in full swing. The parade, she said, "presents other forms of knowledge that are born in Black communities" while celebrating Brazil's diversity.

Samba is a Brazilian music and dance genre driven by syncopated rhythms that grew out of Afro-Brazilian traditions. Every year, schools



Brazilian writer Conceicao Evaristo is honored by the Imperio Serrano samba school during Carnival celebrations at the Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro, early Sunday, Feb. 15. (AP)

based in low-income neighborhoods spend months preparing a parade complete with a samba song, towering floats and dazzling costumes, which they then present to judges at a fierce competition during Carnival.

Themes are often entwined with political messaging. This year, Porto da Pedra advocated for greater rights for sex workers, while schools in previous years have criticized former President Jair Bolsonaro or called attention to the plight of the Yanomami Indigenous people.

In the early hours of Tuesday morning, dancers, performers and percussionists from the Unidos da Tijuca school made their way down the Sambodrome's central alley while a song about de Jesus rang out across the grounds. Books of all shapes, sizes and colors featured prominently on the floats and costumes.

It was "an act of historical reparation," according to a leaflet presenting the parades at the venue, which also said that de Jesus died poor and forgotten in 1977.

Both de Jesus and Evaristo rose from humble backgrounds. In the 1950s, de Jesus kept a diary that chronicled her struggles to earn an income and feed her three children in a poor, urban community known as a favela in Sao Paulo.

Her diary has sold more than a million copies since its 1960 publication, according to a website dedicated to de Jesus run by the prestigious museum Instituto Moreira Salles.



Logan Paul poses for a photo at the Tempo by Hilton Times Square on March 26, 2025, in New York. (AP)

Logan Paul sells Pikachu Illustrator Pokémon card for record \$16.5M

NEW YORK, Feb 17, (AP): Logan Paul has set a new world's record - for the auction price of a trading card.

The wrestling and social media star's rare Pickachu Illustrator Pokémon card, a "Holy Grail" for collectors, sold for \$16.5 million Monday at Goldin Auctions after 41 days of bidding. Paul had purchased the card in 2021 for \$5.275 million, a Guinness record at the time for a Pokémon card. He had added a diamond necklace and custom case and wore the card at WrestleMania 38 in 2022.

Guinness World Records adjudicator Sarah Casson was on hand Monday for the auction's closure, which was livestreamed on YouTube, and confirmed the price was a record not just for a Pokémon card, but for any trading card sold at auction.

"Oh my gosh, this is crazy," said Paul, who placed the card around the neck of winning bidder A.J. Scaramucci, a venture capitalist and son of former White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci.

The card was designed by Atsuko Nishida for a 1998 contest. Only a few dozen are believed to exist, and Paul's card is believed the only with a quality rating of 10.

Books

First post-Assad fair offers unprecedented access

Damascus book fair draws crowds, with censorship eased in new Syria

DAMASCUS, Syria, Feb 17, (AP): Abdul-Razzaq Ahmad Saryoul began publishing books in Syria in 2003 but he used to abstain from participating in the annual International Damascus Book Fair because of tight measures by the country's security agencies and bans on many books under Bashar Assad's rule.

In the first post-Assad book fair to be held in Damascus, which wrapped up Monday, Saryoul was surprised when he was issued a permit the day he applied to take part without being asked what his books are about. The wide range of titles available made this year's fair "unprecedented," he said.

Another publisher, Salah Sorakji, was proud to offer Kurdish books in the Syrian capital for the first time in decades. During the Assad era, ethnic Kurds suffered from discrimination, including bans on their language.

The first book fair since Assad was unseated in December 2024 witnessed high turnout, with state media reporting that 250,000 people attended on the first day, Feb. 6, trekking out to fairgrounds where it was held about 10 miles (16 kilometers) from the city center. The fair's director, Ahmad Naasan, said about 500 publishing companies from some 35 countries took part.

While the new freedom of expression was widely welcomed, the introduction of some previously forbidden books by Islamist writers sparked anxiety among religious minorities.

Religious books were among the best selling at previous fairs in the majority Sunni Muslim country. This year, however, books of the Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyya - who lived in Damascus seven centuries ago and whose teachings are followed by Sunni jihadi groups - were sold openly at the fair after being banned for decades.

The circulation of books spreading an extreme ideology raised alarms in Syria, where sectarian killings have left hundreds of Alawites and Druze dead over the past year in sectarian attacks by pro-government Sunni fighters.

Assad, a member of the Alawite religious minority, officially espoused a secular ideology. The Assad dynasty launched brutal crackdowns on the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups during the family's five-



A visitor looks through a book at a stall selling Islamic titles during the 57th Damascus International Book Fair in Damascus, Syria, Monday, Feb. 16, the first edition since the collapse of the Assad regime. (AP)



Women search for books at a stall selling Islamic books during the Damascus International Book Fair in Damascus, Syria. (AP)

decade rule.

The only known book to be banned this year - "Have You Heard the Talk of the Rafida?" - included audio addresses by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq who was killed in a U.S. strike in 2006. Iraq reportedly asked Syrian authorities to remove it because it incites hatred against Shiite Muslims.

A bearded man wearing a military

uniform who identified himself by his nom de guerre Abu Obeida, bought a copy of Ibn Taymiyyah's famous book "Al-Aqida Alwasitiyyeh" or "The Fundamental Principles of Islam."

"Before liberation this book was banned in Syria," Abu Obeida told The Associated Press, standing at a stand selling religious books. "Anyone who had such a book used to be taken to jail."

Variety

NEW YORK: Former US President Barack Obama said he did not see evidence that aliens with us," after sending social media abuzz by saying aliens were real on a podcast over the weekend.

During a lightning round of questions with podcast host Brian Tyler Cohen, Obama was asked, "Are aliens real?" "They're real," he answered, continuing: "But I haven't seen them. And, they're not being kept in Area 51."

On Sunday, the former president released a statement on Instagram, appearing to clarify what he meant by his comments that have since gone viral. (AP)



Obama

NAIROBI: The fourth Global Tourism Resilience Day Conference and Expo opened on Monday in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, with a focus on promoting the resilience of the global tourism sector.

The three-day conference, organized by the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Center, brought together more than 200 policymakers, industry leaders, development partners and investors to explore solutions to overcome disruptions in the tourism sector.

Rebecca Miano, Kenya's cabinet secretary of tourism and wildlife, said that threats facing the tourism sector range from physical challenges to reputational risks caused by misinformation and cybercrime, which can shift demand. (Xinhua)

NEW YORK: Musicians from Bard College Conservatory of Music's US-China Music Institute and China's Central Conservatory of Music on Sunday ushered in the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Horse, with multiple pieces featuring horses.

Around 1,000 people attended the 7th annual "The Sound of Spring" Chinese New Year Concert in the Rose Theater at Jazz at Lincoln Center in celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year, which starts on Feb. 17. (Xinhua)

Dr. Al-Arabi explains benefits of multi-stage pregnancy scans

Ultrasound and blood test in early pregnancy vital to assess fetal health

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Dr. Tariq Al-Arabi, a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology, emphasized the importance of combining detailed ultrasound scans with blood tests in the early stages of pregnancy.

In a press statement, Al-Arabi explained that this combi-

nation plays a vital role in ensuring the accuracy of results and medical reassurance regarding the well-being of the fetus.

He said the first accurate ultrasound scan typically begins between the 11th and 14th weeks of pregnancy, and it is a crucial step in the early assessment of fetal health. He added that the ultrasound scan measures the translucency of the fetal neck and examines the nasal bone, both of which are

important indicators for the early detection of certain genetic syndromes.

He added that the second stage of the detailed examination takes place between the 18th and 22nd weeks of pregnancy, known as a detailed ultrasound.

During this scan, the fetus' organs are fully assessed, including the brain, heart, digestive system, urinary system, spine and limbs, in addition to the placenta and the amount

of amniotic fluid.

He pointed out that in some cases, 4D ultrasound is added and 5D ultrasound technology is also available, which is often used in the sixth and seventh months of pregnancy.

He added that 5D ultrasound provides a high-resolution image combining advanced visual clarity with medical reassurance on the condition of the fetus.

Colorectal cancer up in youth

Lifestyle, gut health drive early-onset 'cancer' risk

By Christopher Lieu and Andrea Dwyer

University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

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

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An increasing number of people are dying of colorectal cancer at a young age, including those as young as 20. Actor James Van Der Beek, who was diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2023, died at age 48 on Feb. 11, 2026, bringing the disease back into the limelight.

The Conversation US asked gastrointestinal oncologist Christopher Lieu and cancer researcher Andrea Dwyer to explain what's known about early-onset colon cancer and what young people can do to protect themselves.

Researchers have identified a number of factors associated with increasing numbers of young people developing colorectal cancer, but there is no one clear answer that explains this trend.

Lifestyle factors like ultra-processed foods and alcohol, as well as lack of exercise, have been linked to early-onset colorectal cancer. However, these are correlations that aren't proven to be the cause of colorectal cancer in young adults.

Many researchers are focusing on the gut microbiome, which is an ecosystem of microorganisms in your gut that helps your body digest food and carry out other important functions. When the microbes in the gut are out of balance - a condition called dysbiosis - this causes a disruption that allows for inflammation and negative health effects, including increased cancer risk.

Beyond genetics, several lifestyle factors can increase your risk of developing colorectal cancer.

For example, someone's diet plays a role in cancer risk. Eating a lot of red meat and processed foods and not enough dietary fiber can increase your risk of colorectal cancer. Alcohol also causes cancer - even having less than one drink a day can increase your cancer risk.

Smoking, obesity and lack of exercise are other factors that increase cancer risk.

There is a lot of debate among researchers on whether there are differences in survival rates between those with early-onset colorectal cancer survival and those who develop the disease after age 50.

Finding cancer at an early stage can lead to five-year survival rates as high as 80% to 90%. When cancer is detected at an advanced stage where it has spread to other parts of the body, survival rates are closer to 10% to 15%.

One study found that young patients with metastatic colon cancer had a slightly lower survival rate compared with those age 50 or older.

The most common signs and symptoms for early-onset colorectal cancer are blood in the stool, abdominal pain and a change in bowel habits, or any combination of these conditions. Unexplained anemia, or low red blood cell levels, is another potential symptom. These are warning signs that people should not ignore.

Having these symptoms does not necessarily mean you have colorectal cancer, but they are worth discussing with a physician. In some cases, your doctor may request a colonoscopy for further evaluation.

The first step is to have a conversation with your health care team about which test is right for you. Understanding what your risk category is helps guide screening, prevention and lifestyle changes to reduce your likelihood of colorectal cancer.

People with an average risk for colorectal cancer typically have no personal or significant family history of colorectal cancer, hereditary cancer, precancerous polyps or inflammatory bowel disease. They have several options for screening, including stool tests that check for blood and abnormal cells, as well as imaging scans to visualize the colon and rectum. Screening is recommended to begin at age 45 and should continue at regular intervals until age 75.

People with a high risk of colon cancer typically have a personal or family history of colorectal cancer, hereditary cancer or inflammatory bowel disease. They may also have several lifestyle risk factors. Colonoscopy is the only recommended screening test for those with high risk, and earlier and more frequent screening may be necessary.

Communication and action are key. Talk to your health care team about your personal risk based on your age, family history and any signs and symptoms to ensure you're matched with the screening exam and test best for you.

Take charge of your health. There are lifestyle factors you can control to reduce your personal risk of colorectal cancer. These include regular physical activity; a diet high in fruit, vegetables and fiber, and low in processed meats; and maintaining a healthy weight. Moderating or eliminating alcohol and tobacco use can also reduce your colorectal cancer risk. (AP)



The medical team after the operation.

Safe option for high-risk gallbladder patients

Kuwait performs first non-surgical procedure to treat acute cholecystitis

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17, (KUNA): The Ministry of Health announced Monday the successful completion of the first procedure of its kind in Kuwait to treat acute cholecystitis (gallbladder inflammation) without surgical intervention.

In a press statement, the Ministry said the procedure was carried out by the Gastroenterology Unit at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, led by Consultant of Internal Medicine, Gastroenterology and Advanced Therapeutic Endoscopy Dr. Yousef Al-Shamali.

The innovative intervention involved connecting the gallbladder to the small intestine through a stent implanted using endoscopic ultrasound-guided stenting (EUS-guided stenting), offering a minimally invasive alternative to conventional surgery.

The Ministry explained that the delicate procedure followed a comprehensive evaluation of the patient's condition, which confirmed she was not a suitable candidate for traditional surgery.

The interventional technique represented a safe and effective treatment option that helped save her life, prevent potential complications, and reduce risks associated with anesthesia and open surgery.

A multidisciplinary team participated in the procedure, with close cooperation between gastroenterologists, surgeons, anesthesiologists, and nursing staff. The operation was fully successful, and the patient's clinical indicators gradually improved until she made a full recovery and was discharged from



KUNA photos

Medical team at work during the operation.

hospital in stable condition.

Hospital Director and Head of the Internal Medicine Department Dr. Nada Al-Hassan said the achievement reflects the hospital's high level of readiness, both in terms of qualified medical personnel and advanced infrastructure and technical equipment.

She noted that introducing such specialized procedures opens new horizons for treating complex cases locally and enhances patients' confidence in national healthcare services.

Dr. Al-Hassan added that integration among medical specialties and continued institutional support have helped create a professional environment capable

of adopting the latest global practices in advanced therapeutic endoscopy, affirming continued commitment to developing services and expanding precise interventional procedures in line with international standards.

The Ministry stressed that the accomplishment underscores the ability of nationally trained medical cadres, educated at leading international centers, to perform complex and delicate interventions within Kuwait, reflecting the notable development of the country's healthcare infrastructure and strengthening the standing of Kuwait's medical system in advanced interventional procedures.

Most life-forms depend on Earth's 2.5M fungi species

Mystical, overlooked fungi helping scientists learn more about nature

ANGWIN, Calif., Feb 17, (AP): Jessica Allen crunched through fallen leaves among Manzanita trees hunting for something few have spotted before: the Manzanita butter clump - a rare and little-known yellow mushroom found, so far, only along North America's Western coastlines.

It was last seen here in California's Napa County two years ago, and Allen, a fungi scientist, was keen to find it. But within minutes, something caught her attention. She knelt, pulled a hand lens to her eye, and peered nose-close into a rock: lichens - a type of fungi - bursting with dazzling shapes, textures and colors.

"It's so easy to get distracted, but there's so many lichen!" she said excitedly.

"That was a good rock," said ecologist Jesse Miller, president of the California Lichen Society.

"Ok, let's go find some mushrooms," she exclaimed.

Allen and Miller are enchanted by what they describe as the wondrous and mystical world of fungi, and they're part of a growing community of people working to protect them. Nearly all life-forms depend on the estimated 2.5 million fungi species on Earth, and they contribute an estimated \$54 trillion to the global economy as food, medicine and more, according to a study published in Springer Nature. Despite their essential role, they've been largely neglected by conservation efforts even as they face increasing threats from pollution, habitat loss and climate change. That's been changing in the last decade thanks in part to citizen scientists and a greater understanding of fungi diversity.

"It's a pretty exciting time in fungal conservation," said Allen, mycologist for NatureServe, a hub for biodiversity data throughout North America. In that role, Allen is helping accelerate and support fungal conservation in the U.S. and Canada.

Fungi are neither plants nor animals. They're an enormous kingdom of life-forms that include yeasts (essential for breads, cheeses and alcohol), molds (the fuzzy stuff on forgotten fruit), lichens (a symbiosis of fungus and algae or cyanobacteria) and mushrooms (which range from edible to psychoactive to deadly). They're among the planet's great connectors and decomposers. Forests need them, and many animals rely on them for food and nesting.

People have derived medicines like penicillin from fungi. Some are used as building material or can store planet-warming carbon. But scientists have only documented about 155,000 species, 6% of the millions they believe are out there.

Conservation starts with knowing what species exist, where they are, how they're doing and their threats, which requires boots on the ground. This allows conservationists to



Gina Min, a member of the California Lichen Society, looks closely at lichen on a large rock during a CALS field trip at the University of California, Davis' McLaughlin Reserve in Lower Lake, Calif., Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026. (AP)

assess imperiled species and where to put resources. That's where groups like the California Lichen Society come in.

"They tend to be the people that often make the most important discoveries, and they're the ones who are going to be keeping an eye on those rare species over time," said Allen.

On a chilly recent day, dozens of lichenologists and amateur lichen lovers fanned out across a reserve to get close to rocks and trees. These annual forays are part treasure hunt, part data collection excursion and part nature hike, except its explorers often don't make it far.

Every powdery, leafy and branchy lichen was an invitation into a miniature world where "Wow!", "What the hecks!" and "Oh my gods!" abound. As chemist Larry Cool put it: "Lichenologists make terrible hiking partners" because they keep stopping.

Cool's interest in lichens stretches back 53 years to the day he learned they can be used as natural dyes. "Lichen are more than the sum of its parts and are mysteriously unpredictable," he said. "I get a lot of pleasure seeing the incredible variety of creation."

Ken Kellman is also an amateur lichenologist, but you wouldn't know that from his immense knowledge. A retired air conditioning and heating mechanic, he's geeked out over them the last 10 years or so, learning on his own and from friends. That obsession has helped scientists discover the biodiversity in his hometown of Santa Cruz, Calif.

Doctors, society unite to save young woman

A Beijing ICU tale of hope and kindness

BEIJING, Feb 17, (Xinhua): During the Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, almost every corner of China is adorned with the lucky colors of red and gold. Yet, inside an intensive care unit (ICU) in a hospital in the Chinese capital, hurried footsteps still break the silence, and the air carries a sense of urgency beneath its disciplined calm.

For 22-year-old Xiaoqian and her parents, a rural family from a remote village in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, their recent trip to Beijing for medical care felt like a true miracle. It reflected the compassion, efficiency, and dedication of the healthcare community and society as a whole.

About two weeks ago, when Xiaoqian was transferred to the Peking University People's Hospital, she was on the verge of death, battling a severe infection following surgery.

When she first arrived, the young girl was curled up in a ball in pain due to abdominal wall infection, recalled

Guo Peng, director of the hospital's emergency department. "She was in severe septic shock, and her vital signs were extremely unstable."

From fluid resuscitation and anti-shock therapy to MRI scans, immediate measures were taken as soon as she got out of the ambulance. And Xiaoqian was diagnosed with necrotizing fasciitis, a rare but serious disease that can develop very quickly into a life-threatening emergency.

"Surgery must be done immediately; that was the only hope," Zhu Fengxue, director of the hospital's department of critical care medicine, told Xinhua. "With any delay, the infection would worsen."

Some doctors set down their lunch boxes mid-bite; others cut short their brief breaks after marathon shifts. Physicians from different departments worked together, completing the surgery successfully in the shortest possible time.

To everyone's delight, Xiaoqian was finally out of danger. But new

problems emerged. Patients with necrotizing fasciitis require intensive care, with recovery measured in weeks, not days. Although medical insurance partly covered her medical fees, the possibility of relapse and the potentially astronomical costs ahead still deeply worried her rural family.

"Watching our daughter suffering, we just don't know how to go on," said Xiaoqian's mother with tears, admitting that she and her husband had even thought about stopping the treatment due to financial burden.

Yet that was definitely the last thing the doctors would have wished to see. For these Chinese medical professionals, saving a life does not end when a patient leaves the operating table or the ICU.

At noon on Feb. 11, with support from the hospital, one of Xiaoqian's doctors helped the family launch an online fundraising campaign. The medical staff took the lead in donating and sharing the appeal across social media platforms.

The bird was later released back into nature on the grounds of the hospital park. "When an injured cormorant does approach humans, it is usually an animal in extreme distress that has lost its natural shyness," the statement said. A cormorant is a large bird with a long neck, wedge-shaped head and a distinctive sharp beak with a hooked tip.

A fishhook in the bird's beak would be extremely dangerous for the animal. Infections, pain and even starvation are possible, the firefighter department said.

'Injured seabird' desperately pecks at hospital door for help

BERLIN, Feb 17, (AP): An injured seabird sought help by pecking at the door of an emergency room at a hospital in Germany until medical staff noticed it and called firefighters to help with its rescue.

The cormorant, a shiny black waterbird, had a triple fishing hook stuck in its beak when it made its presence known at the glass door of the Klinikum Links der Weser hospital in the northern city of Bremen on Sunday.

In a joint effort, medical staff and firefighters removed the fishhook and treated the wound, the Bremen firefighter department said in a statement.



An injured cormorant stands in front of the door of an emergency room at a hospital in Bremen, Germany, Sunday, Feb. 15. (AP)

SPORTS

Barca loses La Liga leadership after losing to Girona

Yamal misses penalty

MADRID, Feb 17, (Xinhua): FC Barcelona surrendered top spot in La Liga after a 2-1 defeat to Girona which exposed the defensive fragility that has troubled Hansi Flick's side in recent weeks.

Pau Cubarsi's header put Barcelona ahead just before the hour, but Girona hit back almost immediately through Thomas Lemar before Fran



Barcelona's Jules Kounde fights for the ball against Girona's Joel Roca during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Girona and Barcelona in Girona, Spain. (AP)

Beltran's late strike sealed the comeback. The result leaves Real Madrid top of the table following Saturday's win over Real Sociedad.

If Flick was looking for signs of improvement after Thursday's 4-0 Copa del Rey loss to Atletico Madrid, he did not find them in an open, chance-filled game in which both sides created plenty and neither managed to impose control.

The first half was played at a frantic pace. Raphinha dragged an early effort wide for Barcelona, while Lamine Yamal shot straight at Paulo Gazzaniga after breaking through on goal.

Girona responded with a series of dangerous moments down Barcelona's right, with Hugo Rincon's crosses causing problems. Viktor Tsygankov set up Vladislav Vanat for a good opening, but the striker failed to connect cleanly, and goalkeeper Joan Garcia then had to react sharply to keep out Vanat after another low delivery from Rincon.

Barcelona went close in the 43rd minute when Raphinha struck the post as he tried to slide the ball past Gazzaniga. The best chance, though, arrived in first-half stoppage time when Daley Blind fouled Dani Olmo to concede a penalty. Yamal stepped up, sent Gazzaniga the wrong way, but also hit the post as Girona escaped again.

The second half followed a similar pattern. Girona winger Bryan Gil broke forward but was crowded out before Cubarsi finally broke the deadlock in the 58th minute, steering a header in from Jules Kounde's cross.

Barcelona's lead lasted only three minutes. Joel Roca drove a low cross into the area and Lemar was left with space to finish after Barcelona failed to clear.



Barcelona's Fermin Lopez fights for the ball against Girona's Bryan Gil and Vitor Reis during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Girona and Barcelona in Girona, Spain. (AP)

Girona then came close to moving ahead, but Garcia produced two fine saves - first to deny Roca and then to block Vanat's follow-up - as the match

continued to swing from end to end. Yamal fired narrowly wide at the other end, but Girona's persistence paid off in the 86th minute when Beltran drove

in from the edge of the area, with Barcelona appealing in vain for a foul on Kounde in the build-up.

Roca was sent off deep into stoppage

time for a late challenge on Yamal, but it did little to dampen Girona's celebrations after a win that lifts the club further away from relegation trouble.

Lecce wins again to move clear of Serie A relegation zone

Own goal dispatches giant-killer Macclesfield as Brentford moves into fifth round of FA Cup

MACCLESFIELD, England, Feb 17, (AP): Brentford will face West Ham in the fifth round of the FA Cup after dispatching Macclesfield 1-0, an own goal ending the fairy tale run of the sixth-tier giantkiller.

The Macclesfield part-timers knocked out cup holder Crystal Palace in the last round and were hailed for pulling off one of the greatest shocks in the competition's long history.

But they could not match Brentford, which progressed thanks to a 70th minute own goal from Sam Heathcote.

The big defender dived to cut out a cross from Aaron Hickey but instead diverted the ball past his own keeper.

It was a cruel denouement for Macclesfield, which held the Premier League club throughout an even first half before tiring in the second 45 minutes.

"I couldn't be any prouder," Macclesfield coach John Rooney told TNT Sports. "The lads were outstanding and the shape was really good. We train two times a week and we've put that performance on against a Premier League side."

The fifth-round tie will take place at West Ham's Olympic Stadium on the weekend of March 7-8.

Brentford has never passed the quarterfinals of the competition.

"Credit to Macclesfield," Brentford captain Nathan Collins said. "They made it extremely hard for us. They put up a great fight."

□ □ □

Lecce beat Cagliari 2-0 and gained a vital three points in its struggle to



Macclesfield's Luis Lacey, left, and Brentford's Michael Kayode fight for the ball during the English FA cup fourth round soccer match between Macclesfield and Brentford in Macclesfield, England. (AP)

avoid relegation from Serie A.

The southern club remained in 17th place but the win took it three points clear of the relegation zone. It was tied on points with the two clubs above it, Cremonese and Genoa. After a goalless first half, the visitor was more

clinical in a decisive second period.

Omri Gandelman put Lecce ahead with a header after 65 minutes, and Ylber Ramadani doubled the lead 11 minutes later with a powerful shot into the bottom corner.

It was the second win in a row for

Lecce after a run of eight games without a victory and only the second time in 12 games it has scored twice in one match.

It was the second loss in succession for Cagliari, which remained in 13th place, a point behind Parma and one clear of Torino.

N. Carolina Central ends Morgan St streak

Iowa State stuns Big 12 leader Houston with 17-4 closing run

AMES, Iowa, Feb 17, (AP): Nate Heise hit a go-ahead 3-pointer and Tamin Lipsey came up with an offensive rebound in the final seconds to cap No. 6 Iowa State's rally in a 70-67 victory over Big 12 leader and second-ranked Houston on Monday night.

Heise was 3 for 3 from 3-point range hours after sister Taylor Heise scored to help the U.S. Women's Olympic hockey team beat Sweden 5-0 to reach the gold-medal game in Milan.

The Cyclones (23-3, 10-3) closed with a 17-4 run to take down a second top-10 team in three days. Iowa State topped No. 8 Kansas 74-56 on Saturday.

The Cougars (23-3, 11-2) had their six-game winning streak snapped and their conference lead was cut to a half-game over No. 4 Arizona heading into their matchup Saturday in Houston. Iowa State is third, a game behind Houston.

Heise hit the 3-pointer from the left corner with 1:17 to play to give the Cyclones a 69-67 lead. Houston had two chances to tie or take the lead, but was called for a shot-clock violation with 43 seconds to play, then Chris Cenac Jr., missed a shot with four seconds left.

Blake Buchanan was fouled after rebounding Cenac's miss, but missed the front end of a one-and-one. Lipsey, though, got the offensive rebound, tapping the ball back to Joshua Jefferson, who was fouled with a second left. Jefferson made his first free throw for the

final margin.

Jefferson led Iowa State with 12 points. Heise had 11 and Buchanan had 10.

Gage Lattimore scored 21 points and North Carolina Central beat Morgan State 80-76, halting the Bears' six-game winning streak.

Lattimore added five rebounds for the Eagles (10-14, 6-3 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference). Dionte Johnson totaled 16 points, five rebounds, five assists, and three steals. Jae Slack had 14 points.

Elijah Davis led the way for the Bears (10-14, 6-3) with 25 points. Alfred Worrell Jr. added 13 points and six rebounds. Walter Peggs Jr. also scored 13.

Jerquarius Stanback totaled 13 points and 10 rebounds to help Alabama State beat Mississippi Valley State 92-55, extending the Delta Devils' losing streak to 24.

Asjon Anderson also scored 13 and added six assists for the Hornets (9-17, 6-7 Southwestern Athletic Conference). R'Chaun King shot 3 of 3 from the field and 7 of 8 from the free-throw line, also scoring 13.

Michael James led the Delta Devils (1-25, 0-12) with 26 points. Daniel Mayfield scored 13 and X'Zaezion Barnett tallied nine points and three steals.

Erik Pratt led Stony Brook with 21 points and sealed the victory with a layup with 30 seconds left as the Seawolves knocked off Drexel 72-69.



Iowa State guard Nate Heise (0) drives to the basket over Houston guard Kingston Flemings (4) during the second half of an NCAA college basketball game in Ames, Iowa. (AP)

Another twist at Marseille as Benatia reverses decision

PARIS, Feb 17, (AP): Marseille's chaotic season took another twist on Tuesday as sporting director Medhi Benatia returned to the club two days after quitting.

He resigned on Sunday, just days after the departure of coach Roberto De Zerbi. But, in a statement, the club's American owner Frank McCourt said Benatia had agreed to come back until the end of the season to "oversee all sporting activities."

As a consequence, club president Pablo Longoria moves into a more institutional role "in order to represent Marseille within French and especially European bodies," added the statement, which was shared

by several media outlets.

Marseille drew 2-2 at home to Strasbourg on Saturday, after leading 2-0, and sits 12 points behind leader Lens in fourth place. That draw followed a crushing 5-0 defeat at Paris Saint-Germain and elimination from the Champions League after a 3-0 loss at Club Brugge, leading to a furious response from the fans.

Benatia was reportedly loyal to De Zerbi, who left three days after the humiliating PSG defeat.

During Saturday's match against Strasbourg, both stands behind the goals were vacated by the club's Ultras in protest. One banner urged McCourt and Longoria to leave, along with the words "all of your

projects go up in smoke!"

Nine-time French champion Marseille has not won a trophy since the now-defunct League Cup in 2012. The club realistically only has the French Cup to play for. It is at home to Toulouse in the quarterfinals next month.

McCourt was expected to meet with some of the Ultras groups later on Tuesday, amid reports Habib Beye would soon be named as coach.

A Marseille defender from 2003-07, Beye was sacked by Rennes last Monday.

Marseille assistant coach Jacques Abardonado took charge in an interim role following De Zerbi's departure.

Arundell cleared to play after Six Nations red card deemed enough

DUBLIN, Feb 17, (AP): England winger Henry Arundell was cleared to play on Tuesday after his red card against Scotland in the Six Nations was deemed sufficient punishment.

Arundell was yellow-carded twice in the first half at Murrayfield on Saturday in England's 31-20 loss.

The first was for not releasing a tackled player. He returned and scored England's first try, then was yellow-carded again for taking out opposite winger Kyle Steyn in the air. The two yellows became an automatic red card.

In Arundell's absence for 30 minutes, Scotland

scored 21 points.

At his disciplinary hearing, he accepted that both yellows were for foul play. The panel upheld the red card but determined "no further sanction was appropriate" because the first yellow was for a technical offense and the second yellow was for a different kind of foul.

England next host Ireland at Twickenham on Saturday.

Meanwhile, The Irish Rugby Football Union is investigating "cowardly" racist abuse directed at Edwin Edogbo after he was targeted on social media following his international debut, the federation said.

Edogbo, who was born to Nigerian parents, came on as a replacement in Ireland's 20-13 victory over Italy in the Six Nations in Dublin on Saturday.

The Press Association news agency in Britain reported that posts on the IRFU's social media accounts celebrating his first cap prompted targeted racist abuse.

The federation said in a statement released to the PA that it will "continue to fully support all affected by the cowardly actions of a minority," and that investigations are underway.

"It is clear that racist abuse has no place in Irish society and the IRFU has a zero tolerance policy

towards racism of any form," it added.

Edogbo played the final 10 minutes against Italy after coming on for James Ryan.

□ □ □

Ex-New Zealand international and National Rugby League premiership winner Matt Utai has undergone surgery after being shot during an alleged drive-by attack outside his home in southwestern Sydney, Australian media reported.

Utai, a star of the Canterbury Bulldogs' NRL grand final victory in 2004, remains in a hospital and New South Wales state police are investigating, Australian Associated Press reported.

"It's a brazen ambush," police superintendent Rodney Hart said. "We strongly believe that this is a targeted attack."

"Whether the victim was the intended target or it was somebody that he knows or associates with or is related to, will all form part of the investigation."

Hart acknowledged media reporting of the incident but didn't identify Utai by name, saying that a 44-year-old victim had been shot in the lower leg and in the upper shoulder, chest area and was stabilized on the scene by paramedics.

A vehicle suspected of being used in the attack was set ablaze in a nearby

suburb.

Utai played international rugby league for New Zealand and Samoa, and played 167 games in Australia's top-flight NRL between 2002 and 2013, initially for the Bulldogs and then for Wests Tigers.

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SPORTS

Salim Al-Raya storms to Al-Shajar Cup victory

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The horse Salim Al-Raya, owned by Al-Asimi, secured victory in the Sheikh Dr. Ali Nasser Al-Ali Al-Sabah Cup for the Al-Shajar Stud of Egyptian Arabian horses – C4 – covering 1,200 meters in a time of 1:29.25. The win came in the ninth race of the 16th meet at the Kuwait Shooting and Equestrian Club.

Sheikh Ahmed Ali Nasser Al-Ali Al-Sabah presented the Al-Shajar Stud Cup to Al-Asimi's stable. Sheikh Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser, Secretary General and Chairman of the Supreme Equestrian Committee, alongside Alaa Hamad Al-Rumi, owner of Al-Raya Stud, also presented commemorative shields to Sheikh Ahmed Ali Nasser Al-Ali Al-Sabah in recognition of his support for Egyptian Arabian horse racing at the club.

Sheikh Dr. Ali Nasser Al-Ali Al-Sabah, owner of Al-Shajar Stud, said: "This achievement began as an idea from Al-Raya Stud owner, Alaa Hamad Al-Rumi, which he shared with breeders of purebred Arabian horses in our beloved



Sheikh Ahmed Ali Nasser Al-Ali Al-Sabah receives commemorative shield.

country. Today, we celebrate the outstanding collaboration and success in promoting Arabian horse

breeding—a heritage from our ancestors and from our father Ismail, peace be upon him, the first to ride

and domestic horses, as documented in Ibn Kathir's Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya."

New Zealand 'powers' into T20 World Cup Super Eights

Teenage Canadian Samra's century proves in vain



New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra plays a shot during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Canada and New Zealand in Chennai, India. (AP)

CHENNAI, India, Feb 17, (AP): Canada batter Yuvraj Samra's exhilarating century proved in vain as New Zealand advanced to cricket's T20 World Cup Super 8s with an eight-wicket win on Tuesday.

New Zealand's resounding victory knocked 2024 semifinalist Afghanistan out of the tournament, with the Black Caps joining England, South Africa, West Indies, India and Sri Lanka in the next round.

On a perfect batting wicket, Glenn Phillips (76 not out) and Rachin Ravindra (59 not out) led New Zealand to 176-2 in 15.1 overs as the Black Caps claimed their third win in Group D.

Samra's 110 off 65 balls, which included six sixes and 11 fours, had earlier guided Canada to 173-4 after captain Dilpreet Bajwa won the toss and elected to bat.

The 19-year-old Samra, who caught the eye last year when he smashed a 15-ball half century against Bahamas, became the first batter from an associate country to score a hundred at the T20 World Cup.

"I manifested this moment ever since we qualified for the World Cup. Every single day I dreamed about scoring a hundred on this stage," he said. "To do it here, in my first appearance (in Chennai),

and as the youngest player in this World Cup - it's truly a dream come true."

Bajwa made 36 off 39 balls and together with Samra put on 116 for the first wicket.

New Zealand struggled to stem the flow of runs and felt the absence of captain Mitchell Santner, who was ruled out of the game due to a "dodgy burger" on Monday night, and fast bowler Lockie Ferguson.

Ferguson is on paternity leave but is expected to re-join the team for the Super 8s.

Samra was dropped, but not before he had raised his century off 58 deliveries, when the ball burst through the hands of James Neesham at long-off.

His belligerent knock ended in the final over when Phillips caught him at deep backward square leg at the second attempt.

When it came to New Zealand's reply, Finn Allen and Tim Seifert fell inside four balls in the power play before Phillips and Ravindra shared an electrifying 146-run partnership in just 12 overs.

Pathum Nissanka's unbeaten 100 powered Sri Lanka into the T20 World Cup Super 8s and left former champion Australia's prospects hanging by a thread.

Sri Lanka thrashed Australia by eight wickets with two overs to spare. Pavan Rathnayake hit the winning runs straight after Nissanka reached his century off 52 balls and was greeted by massive cheers in Pallekele International Stadium. The packed crowd roared again



Canada's captain Dilpreet Bajwa bowls a delivery during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Canada and New Zealand in Chennai, India. (AP)

one delivery later when Rathnayake finished the match with a boundary to deep square.

The third win from three matches ensured Sri Lanka advanced to the second round, two years after failing to do so for the first time at the T20 World Cup in the West Indies.

Australia could be knocked out in the group stage for the first time since 2009 if unbeaten Zimbabwe beats Ireland on Tuesday.

Despite the short boundaries, Australia was all out for 181 and Sri Lanka chased it down in style at 184-2.

Kusal Mendis joined Nissanka

at 8-1 and was the main aggressor in their 97-run stand off 66 balls. Mendis hit his third half-century of the tournament then was out for 51 off 38 in the 13th over.

Nissanka then finished the match with Rathnayake, scoring 51 of the last 79 runs. He achieved his second T20 century and the second for Sri Lanka in men's T20 World Cup history after bashing five sixes and 10 boundaries. Rathnayake was 28 not out.

The Australians started the match impressively. Captain Mitch Marsh, making his first tournament appearance after a groin injury and Travis Head opened with 104 runs off 51 deliveries. Head was 56 off 29 with three sixes and seven boundaries when he was caught at long-off.

Cameron Green was stumped by Kusal Mendis on 3 and Marsh went in the next over, lbw to Dushan Hemantha, who took 3-37.

Fast bowler Matheesha Pathirana injured his calf after only four deliveries and hobbled off with help, and Sri Lanka Cricket said he will undergo a scan on Tuesday.

Australia was 151-4 after 15 overs but lost 30-6 in the last five, fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera claiming 3-36.

"One of the best performances in the recent past," Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka said. "We were still positive after losing Pathirana. We had that confidence and knew about the wicket. Everyone wanted to contribute somehow: Chameera, Theekshana, Hemantha. Pathirana is a big miss.

Abdulkarim replaces Radan as the head coach of Jahra

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Al-Jahra has dismissed Croatian coach Rodion Gasanin "Radan" from his role as first-team manager and appointed national coach Ahmed Abdulkarim to take charge for the remainder of the season.

The club is seeking to improve its results and secure survival in the top division next season, particularly after failing to earn a single point in its last seven league matches.

Al Jahra appointed Radan last summer in an effort to benefit from his vast experience, especially within Kuwaiti football. Over the course of his career, he previously coached the Kuwait national team and managed clubs such as Qadsia, Kuwait Club and Al Nasr. He captured four league titles, in addition to winning the Amir Cup, Crown Prince Cup and Super Cup. He also enjoyed a successful spell in Bahrain, claiming two league championships, three Crown Prince Cups and the Bahrain FA Cup.

Al Jahra is counting on Abdulkarim's experience to restore stability during the decisive phase of the campaign and improve its position in the standings to avoid relegation. The club currently sits ninth (second from bottom) with seven points, five rounds before the end of the second phase. It is two points ahead of bottom-placed Al-Tadhamon, two points behind Al-Nasr in eighth, and eight points adrift of seventh-placed



Jahra new head coach, Ahmed Abdulkarim

Al-Shabab.

Abdulkarim brings extensive experience, having previously worked with several local clubs, including Al Jahra, Al-Sulaibikhat and Al-Nasr. He also spent a long period within the technical staff of the Kuwait national team before ending his tenure with the "Blue" last summer.

'Ready for the challenge'

US & Canada set for 7th Olympic women's hockey gold showdown

MILAN, Feb 17, (AP): The United States and Canada will face off for Olympic gold for a seventh time since women's hockey debuted at the 1998 Nagano Games in a border rivalry that never gets old.

And this time, the Americans are the favorites at the Milan Cortina Games.

The U.S. clinched its berth with a 5-0 win over Sweden in semifinal play. And the defending champion Canadians followed with Marie-Philip Poulin scoring twice to set the Olympic career goal record in a too-close-for-comfort 2-1 victory over Switzerland.

The outcomes set up the latest showdown between the sport's global powers in the gold medal final on Thursday.

And it could very well be the last meeting between the two teams' long-time stars: Poulin, nicknamed "Captain Clutch," and U.S. captain Hilary Knight, who has already announced these will be her fifth and final Olympics.

For the Americans, it didn't matter who they faced in a tournament they've dominated by going 6-0 and outscoring their opponents by a combined margin of 31-1.

"We've played them quite a few times, so obviously, won't be surprised, but I know they've got a game first too," defender Lee Stecklein said. "Whoever we face, we've got to be ready for that challenge."

Goalie Aerin Frankel stopped 21 shots for her third shutout of the tournament, and the Americans blew the game open with Abbey Murphy, Kendall Coyne Schofield and Hayley Scamurra scoring on consecutive shots over a 2:47 span late in the second period. Cayla Barnes opened the scoring and Taylor Heise also scored.

The U.S. has yet to trail or be tied after 0-0, and in position to become the third women's team to do so over the entire tournament, joining Canada in 2006 and 2010. The Americans also extended their shutout streak to 331 minutes, 23 seconds, going back to Czechia's Barbora Jurickova beating Frankel on a breakaway in the second period of a tournament-opening 5-1 win.

"I think we're looking incredible. The whole tournament we've really been consistent," Scamurra said. "I don't even think we're at the peak, but I think our peak is getting that gold medal in hand for sure."

The Canadians have had their struggles during a tournament Poulin missed two games - including the loss to the U.S. - with a right knee injury before returning for a 5-1 win over Germany in the quarterfinals.

Poulin opened the scoring 1:49 into the second period by skipping a shot from between the circles that bounced and banked



Canada's Renata Fast (14) challenges with Switzerland's Laura Zimmermann (11) during a women's ice hockey semifinal game between Canada and Switzerland at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy. (AP)

in off goalie Andrea Braendli's stick. She made it 2-0 some 6-1/2 minutes later by converting a rebound after Braendli stopped a shot from Daryl Watts.

Poulin now has 20 career goals in five Olympic appearances, and broke the record of 18 held by former teammate and Hockey Hall of Famer Hayley Wickenheiser.

Ann-Renee Desbiens stopped seven shots.

Rahel Enzler scored for Switzerland 4:53 into the third period. Braendli, coming off a 40-save outing in a 1-0 quarterfinal win over Finland, finished with 44 saves.

Now it's on to the gold medal game in a tournament the U.S. already beat Canada 5-0 in a preliminary round game last week. The Americans won Olympic gold in 1998 and 2018, with Canada winning the other five tournaments.

The U.S. has had the recent edge in the rivalry between the sport's two global powers in having won seven straight dating to beating Canada twice at the world championships in April.

"Nothing matters. It's the gold medal game," Heise said of a potential rematch against Canada. "Obviously, I'm going to say we've done great and we've had great success. You want to take that confidence and motivation, but you want to move forward. We're going to look for us and we're going to do what we need to do on Thursday and hopefully come on top."

Sweden and Switzerland will play for bronze in a rematch of their meeting at the 2014 Sochi Games. Switzerland won 4-3 to win its first and only women's hockey medal.

The Swedes are seeking to win their third Olympic medal, and first since winning silver at the 2006 Turin Games after upsetting the U.S. in the semifinals.

Let's avoid microscopic VAR intervention: UEFA referees' chief

MILAN, Feb 17, (AP): European soccer must avoid going in the direction of microscopic VAR intervention, UEFA refereeing director Roberto Rosetti said on Tuesday.

Technology was introduced to erase clear and obvious errors, but supporters have become frustrated that it is causing matches to be refereed.

Rosetti did not criticise any one competition, although he shared the general concern that VAR was at risk of going too far.

"I believe we forgot the reason why VAR was introduced," Rosetti said. "We forgot a little bit. Everywhere. You remember, eight years ago, I came to London (to brief journalists). We discussed 'what VAR stands for'.

"We spoke about clear mistakes. Why we spoke about clear and obvious mistakes. Technology works so well in factual decisions. For interpretations, subjective evaluation is more difficult.

"I believe that we need, at the end of the season in our meetings, to

speak about this. We cannot go in this direction of microscopic VAR intervention. We love football like it is. When you are watching (a) situation with a super slow motion, you can find a lot of things."

Rosetti also said more work was needed to come up with a common interpretation of the handball law across Europe, and said he would speak again to referees' chiefs around the continent about it.

"We must speak only one technical language (on handball)," he said. "We were speaking a lot for sure before the season, we need to speak again (and have) only one uniform and consistent interpretation. We are working for this."

Rosetti said European soccer's governing body was delighted with the new captain-referee communication protocol that was introduced ahead of Euro 2024.

"We are very happy with this," he said. "It's about respect and about protecting the image of the game."

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NEWS



Jens Luraas Oftebro, of Norway, poses on the podium after winning the gold medal in the nordic combined individual Gundersen large hill/10km at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Tesero, Italy. (AP)

Sports

Victory is the only option

All eyes on Qadsia vs Al Ain as Kuwaiti club fights for survival

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

ABU DHABI, Feb 17: Qadsia Club faces a defining night in its Gulf Champions League campaign as it takes on Al Ain FC at 9:30 pm at Hazza bin Zayed Stadium in the sixth and final round of the group stage. Simultaneously, Sitra Club meets Zakho SC in a match with no bearing on qualification.

The equation is simple for Qadsia: victory is the only option. The Kuwaiti side sits third with seven points, two behind second-placed Al Ain, which needs just a draw to advance. Zakho leads the group with 10 points and has already secured its spot in the next round, while Sitra was eliminated in the previous round and remains bottom with two points.

Qadsia's campaign began with a 3-1 loss to Zakho, followed by a narrow 1-0 defeat to Al Ain. A goalless draw with Sitra came next, before back-to-back 1-0 wins over Sitra and Zakho revived its qualification hopes.

Under Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul, Qadsia has enjoyed a strong run domestically. It recently clinched the Super Cup after a dramatic 4-3 comeback victory over Al Arabi SC in the semifinal, and then edged Kuwait Club 4-3 on penalties following a 1-1 draw in the final.

Despite the cup success, Qadsia is out of the title race in the Kuwait Premier League for the ninth consecutive season. It currently occupies third place with 22 points, trailing leader Kuwait Club by 11 points with 10 rounds remaining.

Defensively, the team will miss Algerian center-back Sofiane Bouchar



Qadsia holds final training session ahead of key clash.

due to suspension after accumulating yellow cards. Maaloul is expected to pair Yousef Al-Haqan with Khaled Ibrahim in central defense, while Khaled Sabah stands ready if needed. The likely lineup mirrors recent matches, with Rashid Al-Dosari and Moath Al-Dhafiri in defense; Abdullah Moutawa, Athbi Shehab, Mubarak Al-Faneeni and Neeskens Kebano in

midfield; Mbengue Ablaye and Mehdi Humaidan leading the attack; and Hamid Al-Qallaf guarding the net. Experienced options such as Bader Al-Mutawa, Abdullah Al-Awadhi, Abdullah Al-Ghaniman, Tayeb Meziani and Talal Al-Fadhel provide depth off the bench.

Qadsia is fully aware of the challenge ahead. Al Ain tops the UAE league ta-

ble without defeat after 16 rounds, recording 11 wins and five draws.

The match will be overseen by a Saudi officiating crew led by Mohammed Al-Samael, assisted by Ibrahim Al-Dakhil and Saad Al-Subaie. Oman's Mohammed Al-Manai will serve as the fourth official, while Mohammed Al-Huwaish and Faisal Al-Qahtani will handle VAR duties.

Al-Jalahma chairs first board meeting at Public Authority for Sport

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Sport convened its meeting recently under the chairmanship of Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, marking his first session since taking office. The meeting was attended by board members and senior executive officials of the Authority.

According to a statement, discussions focused on key strategic priorities, including upgrading sports infrastructure, strengthening governance and transparency standards, and increasing support for sports federations and clubs. The board also reviewed performance indicators and the progress of ongoing projects.



KUNA photo
The Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs chairs the first Board of Directors of Public Authority for Sport meeting.

Dr. Al-Jalahma stressed the importance of accelerating implementation, enhancing administrative efficiency, and expanding cooperation with relevant stakeholders to meet the ambitions of the next phase and reinforce Kuwait's standing on the regional and international sports stage.

He further highlighted the need for teamwork to deliver a qualitative shift in institutional performance and elevate the overall sports system.

The meeting concluded with agreement on a phased action plan outlining clear priorities and specific timelines, alongside regular performance reviews to ensure the Authority achieves its strategic goals.

Sabah Al-Ahmad Cooperative Society launches Ramadan Football Tourney

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 17: Mohammed Al-Khshman Al-Ajmi, Chairman of the Sabah Al-Ahmad City Cooperative Society, announced the launch of the fifth edition of the Ramadan Football Tournament for both seniors and youth, set to begin on the 3rd of Ramadan at the Sabah Al-Ahmad area stadium, featuring participation from numerous teams.

Al-Ajmi extended his greetings to the nation and the leadership on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, and thanked the society's shareholders and local residents for their dedication in ensuring the tournament's success. He noted that this year's edition promises highly competitive matches, building on last year's success, which was recognized as one of the best-organized and most rewarding tournaments in Kuwait.

He added that the tournament aims to bring joy to both adults and youth in the community, fostering a friendly yet competitive Ramadan atmosphere. Al-Ajmi also praised the cooperative society members for



Mohammed Al-Khshman Al-Ajmi, Chairman of the Sabah Al-Ahmad City Cooperative Society.

their ongoing efforts to develop the society, meet the needs of residents, and serve the shareholders.

Valuable cash prizes have been set for the top two teams in both categories. Each player on the first-place teams will receive 200 Kuwaiti Dinars, while players on the second-place teams will receive 150 Kuwaiti Dinars each.

Best of the Rest

Infantino receives Lebanese passport: FIFA President Gianni Infantino received a Lebanese passport at the Interior Ministry in Beirut on Monday, months after he was granted citizenship by the country's president.

Infantino, who is married to Lebanese citizen Lina al-Ashkar, thanked President Joseph Aoun at a meeting at the Interior Ministry where Infantino filed documents and had a photograph and fingerprints taken before being handed his new blue Lebanese passport.

Infantino also has citizenship in Italy and Switzerland.

"I'm very proud and very happy to be here in Beirut at the Ministry of Interior to finally get my Lebanese passport," Infantino said in a video carried by local TV stations. "I love Lebanon." Lebanese women normally cannot pass their citizenship to their foreign husbands and children under Lebanese law. But Aoun made an exception for Infantino and granted him and his family members citizenship.

Lebanese men married to foreign women automatically pass their nationality to their children, while their wives become eligible for citizenship after being married for a certain period of time.

FIFA is the international soccer governing body. (AP)

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Guimaraes returns to Brazil: Newcastle United captain Bruno Guimaraes has arrived in his native Brazil to begin treatment on a hamstring injury that is expected to sideline him for at least six weeks.

The 28-year-old will undergo a tailored recovery program under the supervision of Brazil team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar at Atletico Mineiro's training center in Belo Horizonte.

"With the support of the best club medical department in Brazil, [Guimaraes] is preparing to return to the pitch in top form," Atletico said in a social media post alongside images of the midfielder at the facility. "We hope you'll be back soon, Bruno!" it added.

The Brazil international sustained the injury in the final minutes of Newcastle's 2-1 Premier League win at Tottenham last Tuesday.

Magpies manager Eddie Howe said the midfielder would likely be unavailable until early April in a best-case scenario.

Guimaraes will aim to be fully fit for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada, which begins on June 11. (Xinhua)

Italy's golden charge ends US' Olympic dream

Luraas Oftebro wins 2nd gold in Nordic combined

MILAN, Feb 17, (AP): Italy's Davide Ghiotto, Andrea Giovannini and Michele Malfatti beat U.S. world record-holders Casey Dawson, Emery Lehman and Ethan Cepuran by 4 1/2 seconds to win the men's team pursuit gold medal in speedskating at the Milan Cortina Olympics.

Buoyed by raucous cheering from the home crowd at the Milano Speed Skating Stadium, the Italians finished in 3 minutes, 39.20 seconds to give their country its first Olympic title in this event since the 2006 Turin Games.

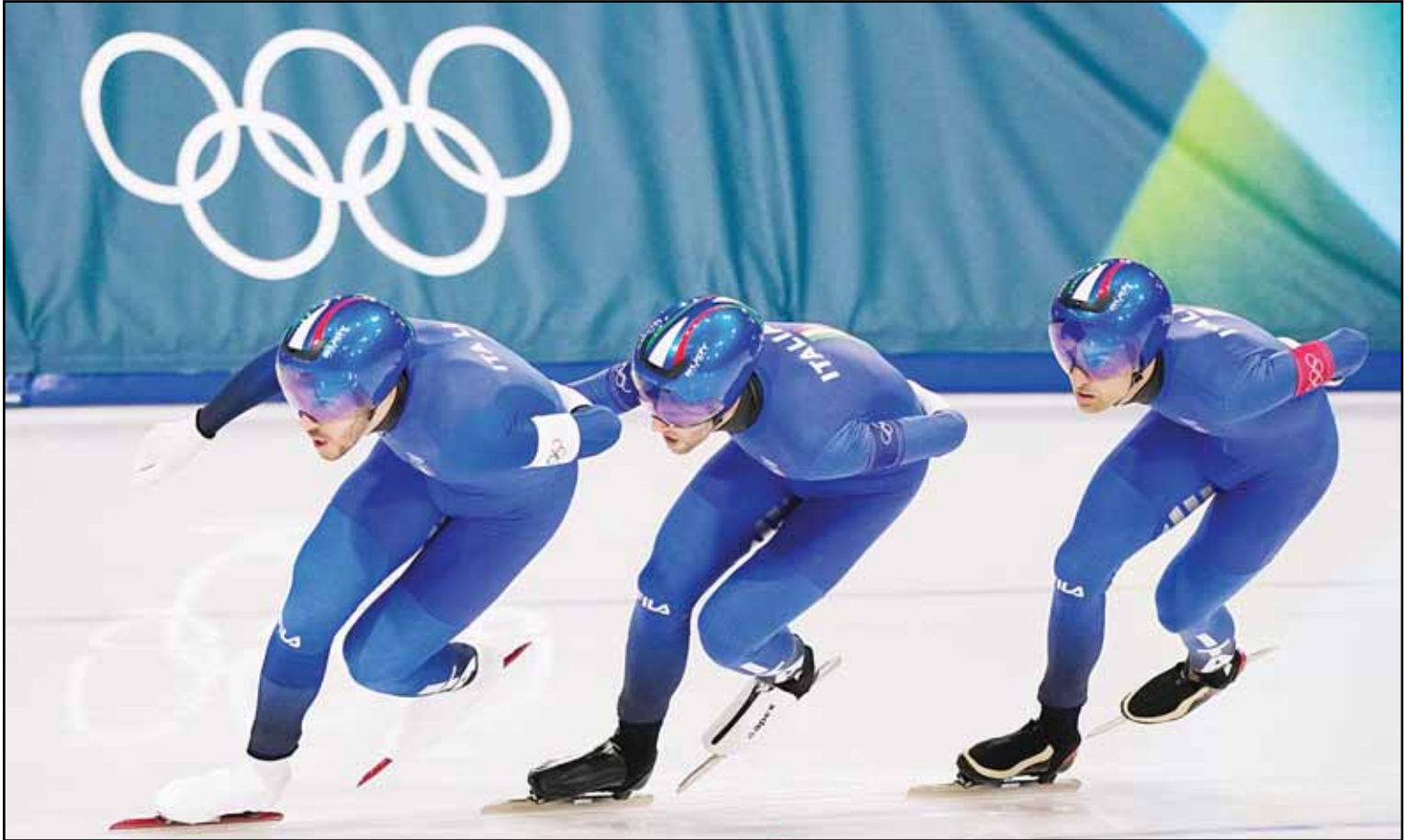
The United States started well and led for the early stages. But Italy charged ahead over the closing laps, extending their advantage. When it ended, Ghiotto, Giovannini and Malfatti raised their arms and pumped their fists. On the opposite side of the track, silver medalists Dawson, Lehman and Cepuran leaned over, hands on knees.

This was supposed to be, the Americans hoped, the crowning achievement for a trio that owns the world record and took home a bronze from the 2022 Beijing Olympics.

Dawson, Lehman and Cepuran are fond of saying that they might not necessarily be the three strongest skaters, but they know they are the best team around, helped by advancements such as being at the forefront of the revolutionary switch to the pushing method and the use of computer technology to study aerodynamics.

They prioritize this event over individual races; indeed, Dawson withdrew from the Olympic 10,000 meters last week to focus on team pursuit.

But the Italians were simply better, taking two head-to-head races: The final was a rematch of a quarterfinal won by the Italians on Sunday. The Americans were able to remain in medal contention despite that loss because the four fastest quarterfinal times advanced out of that round and they were still second-best



Team Italy with Davide Ghiotto, white armband, Andrea Giovannini, red armband, and Michele Malfatti, blue armband, competes in the semifinal of the men's team pursuit speedskating race at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy. (AP)

overall.

The semifinals and final are based on who wins each heat.

China's Liu Hanbin, Wu Yu and Li Wenhao claimed the bronze for the country's first team pursuit medal, barely defeating Netherlands by .09 of a second in the third-place race.

The women's medal races were later Tuesday, with 2022 Olympic champion Canada facing Netherlands for the gold, and the U.S. meeting Japan for the bronze.

In team pursuit, which was added

to the Olympics in 2006, three skaters from each country participate together, and two teams race against the clock in each heat, starting at opposite sides of the track.

The women do six laps for a total of 2,400 meters; the men race eight laps covering 3,200 meters.

Norway's Jens Luraas Oftebro turned on the afterburners and galloped uphill past his rivals on the 10-kilometer cross-country ski race to claim his second straight gold medal in Nordic combined at the Milan Cortina Winter

Games.

Johannes Lamparter of Austria, who finished second behind Oftebro in the normal hill event, won his second silver and Ilkka Herola of Finland, who had never medaled in four Olympics, got bronze.

The event begins with a single ski jump in the morning where distance and style points are computed into a time advantage for the best jumper. The rest of the field starts the cross-country ski race behind the leader according to the ranking from their jump and the first

to cross the line is the winner.

Japan's Ryota Yamamoto got an eight-second head start over Lamparter after the ski jump and Norway's Andreas Skoglund started 16 seconds back.

Oftebro, who won the normal hill event last week, started 22 seconds behind in fifth place. Herola started 32 seconds back in seventh place.

Lamparter, ranked first in the world coming into the Olympics, broke out to an early lead as Oftebro led a group of seven chasing him.

By the halfway mark, Lamparter had been caught and the three eventual medalists were nearly on their own as Skoglund tried in vain to hang on.

On the second-to-last hill, Oftebro exploded, leaving Herola and Lamparter behind and building enough of a gap to ease up in the home stretch and glide across the finish line.

Niklas Malacinski was the highest-placed U.S. finisher in 13th.

Yamamoto finished 15th.

Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara delivered Japan's first Olympic gold medal in pairs skating, earning a world-record score for their free skate to climb from fifth after their short program to the top step of the podium at the Milan Cortina Games.

The two-time defending world champions, whose uncharacteristic slip on a lift the previous night had left them playing catch-up, scored 158.13 points for their free skate. That gave Miura and Kihara a career-best 231.24 points and their long-sought gold medal to go with the silver they helped the Japanese team win last week.

Anastasiia Metelkina and Luka Berulava earned the first medal for Georgia at a Winter Games with their silver, scoring 221.75 points. Minerva Fabienne Hase and Nikita Volodin of Germany took bronze with 219.09.

The chaotic short program on Sunday night had left some of the best in the world skating early and out of contention.

Deanna Stellato-Dudek and Maxime Deschamps, the 2024 world champions from Canada, cost themselves about 10 points when she inexplicably fell while getting down from a lift. Stellato-Dudek also took a hard fall during their warmup for the free skate on Monday night, sliding into one of the padded barriers and then flexing her shoulder when she got back up.

The 42-year-old Stellato-Dudek, who was born in the Chicago area, was undoubtedly envisioning a much different Olympic debut. The Canadian pair wound up with 192.61 points, putting them 11th among the 16 teams that made the free skate.