



Amiri Diwan extends thanks to Ramadan well-wishers Page 5



Ramadan Kareem
Mohammed Al-Naki
Al-Naki Diwaniya
Receiving guests on Sunday 22nd February 2026
from 6:30 pm at
Mansouriya Area, Block No. 1,
Jassim Al-Wazzan Street, Opp. Al-Othman Mosque

Ghabqa penalty talk fake news, says Mol

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Ministry of Interior has denied reports circulating on social media claiming that fines and six-month prison sentences would be imposed on organizers of Ghabqa food gatherings held without a permit, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The General Department of Public Relations and Security Media of the Ministry of Interior stated in a press release that the information being circulated is completely false and not based on any official decision or circular.

The ministry stressed the importance of verifying information and obtaining it from official sources.

It urged the public to refrain from spreading rumors, as they may cause confusion and stir public opinion.

The ministry emphasized that any decisions or regulatory measures will be announced via official and approved channels.

Ramadan Timings

Imsak	Sunday	05:02
Iftar	Sunday	17:42
Imsak	Monday	05:01

Trump thanks Kuwait

Kuwait injects \$1bn into Board of Peace

WASHINGTON, Feb 21, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday announced Kuwait's contribution of USD one billion in support of the Gaza Board of Peace, underlining Kuwait's commitment to support all endeavors to alleviate suffering of the Palestinian people and restore security and stability to the Gaza Strip.

This came during the Kuwaiti top diplomat's remarks during the first meeting of the Board, presided by US President Donald Trump. "We renew Kuwait's principled, firm and historic support for the brotherly Palestinian people and their just cause," Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah told the audience.

He added that the Palestinian cause had always been one of the Kuwaiti foreign policy pillars, which required supporting all efforts to champion peace, including President Trump's 20-point plan.

Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah appreciated President Trump's efforts to end the struggle resulting in establishing an independent Palestinian state on the June 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as capital, in accordance with relevant international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

"Success of this track is dependent on solidarity of the international community," concluded Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Washington is hosting the Board meeting on Gaza, with the State of Kuwait participating among member states.

The meeting discussed Gaza's reconstruction, governance arrangements, security frameworks, and humanitarian assistance following the ceasefire agreement.

US President Donald Trump on Thursday thanked the State of Kuwait for its financial contribution to the Board of Peace.

"I'm pleased to announce that Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, UAE, Morocco, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and Kuwait have all contributed more than USD 7 billion toward the relief package. That's great. Thank you."

He told the first meeting of the Board that "every dollar spent" is an investment in stability and hope of "a new and harmonious Middle East."

Trump also announced a contribution of USD 10 billion to the Board.

On the United Nation's role, Trump said "I think the United Nations has great potential, really great potential. We're going to make sure the United Nations is viable, and you have some very good people at the United Nations can do a good job."

On boots on the ground, the US President said Albania, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, have all committed troops and police to stabilize Gaza.

Continued on Page 5

Partial commercial cases lead non-criminal filings

Misdemeanors dominate criminal caseloads in Kuwait

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Statistics and Research Department at the Ministry of Justice revealed that the number of non-criminal cases received in December 2025 totaled 10,170.

Partial commercial cases topped the list at 23.2 percent, while sales cases ranked the lowest at 0.6 percent.

No urgent proof of cases were recorded at the Experts Department or in bankruptcy cases during the same month.

Statistical analysis of cases in the Court of First Instance in December 2025 showed that the total number of non-criminal cases reviewed reached 48,697.

Partial commercial cases had the largest share at 25.0 percent, compared to only 0.02 percent for bankruptcy cases.

The analysis, which highlighted indicators related to case registration, adjudication and completion rates for non-criminal and criminal cases, as well as the performance of the electronic notification department, showed that the number of resolved cases reached 20,771.

The highest proportion of resolved cases was recorded for partial commercial cases at 26.5 percent, while bankruptcy cases registered the lowest percentage at 0.02 percent.

The overall completion rate for non-criminal cases reached 42.7 percent, with fee exemption cases achieving the highest completion rate at 100 percent, while sales cases recorded the lowest at 24 percent.

Regarding the distribution of non-criminal cases by court, the Capital Court accounted for the largest share at 50.7 percent, followed by Farwaniya (15.9 percent), Ahmadi (14.6 percent), Hawally (12.7 percent), Jahra (5.8 percent), and finally the Capital Markets Court (0.3 percent).

Continued on Page 5



Kuwait Towers: National landmark, icon of Arab heritage

— Details Page 12 —



Sheikh Nasser Mohammad receives Ramadan greetings from royals, notables



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs receives Ramadan well-wishers at his Diwan



ABK and ABK Wealth Management win four prestigious awards at the International Finance Annual Awards 2025

Kuwait Bar targets expats offering online legal advice

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Board of Directors of Kuwait Bar Association took disciplinary measures in order to protect the integrity of the legal profession and ensure full compliance with its governing regulations.

Key decisions included the removal of 11 lawyers from the register of the Association after a thorough review of their professional status confirmed that they did not meet the registration requirements stipulated in the Legal Profession Law.

Also, three law firms were suspended due to serious professional and legal violations.

The suspensions were imposed after it was established that these firms were being managed by individuals not authorized to practice law.

Finally, the Board approved the filing of several reports against expatriates who posted videos on social media platforms offering legal advice — a violation of the law.

These measures were implemented following the completion of the necessary legal procedures, in line with the commitment of the Board to address violations and protect the legal profession.

Kuwait revokes licenses of 3 private pharmacies

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: In line with its commitment to protecting public health and strengthening oversight of the pharmaceutical sector, the Ministry of Health announced that Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi has approved the recommendations of the committee formed under Ministerial Resolution No. 390/2025 regarding violations of Law No. 28/1996 on the regulation of the pharmacy profession and the distribution of medicines, along with its amendments.



Al-Awadhi

The ministry explained that these decisions are part of enforcing the law against violators and reinforcing the principles of accountability and professional discipline.

The decisions included revoking the licenses of three private pharmacies for violating provisions of Law No. 30/2016, which amends certain aspects of Law No. 28/1996, as well as Ministerial Resolution No. 237/2025, which governs the regulations and procedures for licensing private sector pharmacies and the distribution of medical products.

Also, the operation of a private pharmacy has been suspended for six months for violating Articles 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the same resolution.

It further included referring the case of another pharmacy to the Public Prosecution for serious violations, including operating without a licensed pharmacist from the Ministry of Health, distributing and selling unregistered medications, and selling Ministry-owned medicines that are not authorized for sale outside ministry pharmacies.

The measures also involved coordination with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to revoke the commercial licenses of pharmacies whose health licenses had been canceled and to take the necessary legal action against them.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Interior was contacted to cancel the residency permits of two individuals found to be operating a pharmacy without a license.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait promotes legal reforms to support cross-border investments

NEW YORK, Feb 21, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait affirmed its keenness to actively participate and contribute to updating and amending the UNCITRAL Model Law in line with evolving international legal developments.



Boqrais

This came in a statement delivered Friday evening by member of Kuwait's delegation from the Fatwa and Leg-

islation Department, State Attorney Abdullah Boqrais during the 83rd session of second work group on dispute settlement of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

Boqrais said the meeting addressed legal amendments aimed at enhancing recognition and enforcement of arbitral decisions issued in electronic form, in keeping with technological progress and facilitating international trade and investment.

Kuwait's delegation included Deputy Director of the Department Counselor Tahani Al-Rashidi and State Attorney Abdullah Bougehis.

NewsWatch

RİYADH: Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, **Jassem Al-Budaiwi**, said Saturday the anniversary of **Saudi Arabia's** Founding Day represents a historic milestone deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Kingdom's citizens and GCC peoples, reflecting a rich cultural heritage and a legacy of achievements.

In a statement, Al-Budaiwi extended his highest congratulations to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King **Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud**, Crown Prince **Mohammad bin Salman**, and the Saudi people on the occasion of the Founding Day anniversary. (KUNA)

BEIRUT: Lebanese President **Joseph Aoun** on Saturday strongly condemned Israeli occupation airstrikes carried out overnight by land and sea, targeting the **Sidon** area and several towns in **Beqaa**, describing them as hostile acts undermining stability.

In a statement, President Aoun said the attacks target Lebanon's diplomatic efforts with friendly countries, foremost the **United States**, to stabilize the situation and halt hostilities, stressing they constitute a renewed violation of sovereignty and international obligations. (KUNA)

DOHA: Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh **Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani** on Saturday discussed with Iranian Foreign Minister **Dr Abbas Araghchi** efforts aimed at reducing escalation in the region.

A statement by **Qatar's** Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the discussions took place during a phone call received by the Prime Minister from the Iranian foreign minister, during which they reviewed de-escalation efforts and stressed the continuation of negotiations between the **United States** and **Iran**. (KUNA)

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:03	Asr	15:16
Sunrise ..	06:22	Maghrib ..	17:42
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:59

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08-35 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold with light

Weather

to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06-28 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	29	17
Abdaly	30	13

Jahra	29	16
Salmiyah	25	18
Jalaliyah	30	13
Jal Aliyah	30	13
Nuwaisib	28	14
Salmiyah	29	15

Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs receives Ramadan well-wishers at his Diwan



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah receives His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah receives the First Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah.



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs receives Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah.



Former Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Saadoun extends congratulations to Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah.



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah receives Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah.



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs receives the Oman Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah recently received well-wishers at his Diwan on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Among those who extended their congratulations were His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, as well as several ruling family members, ministers, public figures and citizens. Sheikh Hamad exchanged greetings with the well-wishers, praying to Almighty Allah that the blessed month will

return to Kuwait, its leadership and its people with goodness, prosperity and blessings, and that He will protect the nation and maintain its security and stability.

The attendees engaged in cordial conversations and discussions on the occasion.

Sheikh Hamad pointed out that Ramadan is a valuable spiritual opportunity to strengthen the values of compassion, solidarity and kinship, and to promote love and communication among members of the society.

Sheikh Nasser Mohammad receives Ramadan greetings from royals, notables



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah extends Ramadan greetings to Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah.



Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah receives HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Sabah.



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah among the royalty, prominent Kuwaitis received by Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah on Saturday met with well-wishers at his Diwan in Shuwaikh Palace on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Present at the gathering were His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, senior members of the ruling family, a number of ministers and diplomats, and a large gathering of citizens.

His Highness Sheikh Nasser welcomed the well-wishers, who exchanged greetings on the blessed month, and reflected on its spiritual significance and profound meanings. The gathering is a manifestation of the solemnity of the occasion and its deep impact in reinforcing the longstanding traditions of the Kuwaiti people.

Those present considered the observance of such religious and national occasions as an opportunity to promote the values of communication, compassion and

social solidarity, thus, embodying the unity that characterizes Kuwaitis and has been preserved across generations.

Amid an atmosphere imbued with the spirit of the occasion, those present prayed to Almighty Allah to return Ramadan to Kuwait, its leadership and its people with goodness, prosperity and blessings, safeguarding the nation from all forms of harm, and to perpetuate the blessings of security and stability for the country.

Kuwait skills in sustainable development hailed

Envoys, diplomats extend Ramadan, National Days greetings

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions in the country expressed their greetings to the political leadership, government and Kuwaiti people on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan and the National Day and Liberation Day.

They commended the achievements of Kuwait in sustainable development under its wise leadership, along with its ambitious vision, which improved its standing on the regional and international stages and reinforced its role in promoting stability and international cooperation.

Russian Ambassador Vladimir Zheltov affirmed that the February celebrations this year are marked by an extraordinary atmosphere of joy and national unity. He said streets are adorned with the colors of the Kuwaiti flag, while

families and friends celebrate the achievements of the nation and commemorate its history.

He added that diwanias, social gatherings and public events are venues where different generations gather to renew bonds, share memories, and reaffirm the enduring values of national unity.

He stated that the special symbolism of this year lies in the fact that the cherished national occasions coincide with the holy month of Ramadan. "During these days of profound significance, I extend my sincerest wishes to the State of Kuwait and its people for continuous progress and prosperity," he concluded.

Polish Ambassador Michal Cholewa described the national occasions as a manifestation of the journey of Kuwait that is rich in contributions and accomplishments.

He highlighted the progress and sustainable development achieved under the wise leadership and an ambitious vision, which solidified the regional and international standing of Kuwait and consolidated its role in supporting stabil-

ity and cooperation at the international level.

He said Poland values its friendly and cooperative relations with the State of Kuwait, emphasizing that these ties are founded on mutual respect, shared interests and constructive coordination in various fields.

He expressed his aspiration to further strengthen this partnership in a manner that serves the interests of both countries and their friendly peoples.

Ambassador of Vietnam Nguyen Duc Thang stated "the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day are important national occasions and a towering symbol of the sovereignty, resilience and remarkable achievements of Kuwait. Vietnam values the strong bonds of friendship and cooperation that unite our two countries. The year 2026 is special for both Vietnam and Kuwait, as we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Over the past half-century, relations between Vietnam and Kuwait have witnessed remarkable progress, evolving from modest beginnings into a deep strategic partnership strengthened by shared values, mutual trust and lasting friendship."

Imports from Iran halted: sheep trader

Livestock prices soar as demand drives market surge

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: As seen every year, sheep markets witnessed a sharp rise in prices during this period due to the halt in imports from Iran and the increased seasonal demand for livestock, which has pushed prices to unprecedented levels in a short time, reports Al-Rai daily.

During a recent field visit to the Shuwaikh sheep market, a significant price increase was observed. The price of a Naemi sheep reached KD 120 to KD 150, with expectations of reaching KD 170 this month.

Meanwhile, the price of a Shifali sheep rose from KD 90 to KD 120, with expectations of exceeding KD 140 in the coming days.

In this regard, sheep trader Abu Daoud Al-Musafir confirmed that "this surge began prior to the start of the holy month of Ramadan, fueled by the halt in imports from Iran. This played a major role in reducing supply, which directly impacted prices, especially with the increased demand ahead of the holy month."

He said, "Seasonal demand puts pressure on the market, particularly since Ramadan is an annual peak season due to the increased need for sacrificial animals for feasts and charitable donations. The quantities currently available in the market are insufficient, and the surge in

demand, combined with the halt of one of the most important import sources, has driven the current price hikes. A shipment recently arrived from Syria, with each sheep sold for KD 130, but it was not enough to balance the market or curb the price increases."

Meanwhile, sheep trader Munawer Al-Wawan said, "Many families still prefer live animals for Ramadan celebrations and feasts, despite their high prices, even though alternatives are available through imported and chilled meat."

Al-Wawan explained that, "There is anticipation and caution that prices will continue to rise before reaching a period of relative stability. The situation depends on the resumption of imports or the arrival of new shipments in sufficient quantities to restore balance between supply and demand."

Meanwhile, in light of the significant increase in livestock prices, chilled and imported meat has emerged as an alternative.

Seller Sufian Al-Halabi said, "Chilled meat ranges in price from KD 25 to KD 85, depending on size and origin, and there is high consumer demand due to the high prices of live animals."

Kuwait embassies marking of National Days continues

WASHINGTON, Feb 21, (KUNA): The Kuwait Embassy in Cuba and the Consulate in the US state of Houston have held two celebrations marking the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day, attended by a number of officials and dignitaries.

In Cuba, Kuwaiti Ambassador Adel Al-Adgham highly congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the Kuwaiti government and people on these two dear occasions.

He prayed to Allah the Almighty to maintain security, safety, and prosperity for Kuwait under the wise leadership.

The ceremony featured senior Cuban of-

ficials, including the water minister, deputy foreign minister, and deputy trade minister, along some accredited diplomatic corps representatives and others.

In Houston, the Kuwait Consulate organized a celebration during which sincere congratulations were extended to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the government and people of Kuwait.

Among the attendees were the Chief of International Affairs at the Mayor's Office of Trade and International Affairs (MOTIA) in Houston, Gigi Lee, as well as several Gulf and other consuls, Kuwaiti nationals, students, and others.

Fair laws ... & preventing disputes from escalating

"IN one of the waiting rooms, a man and a woman, who are strangers to each other, were speaking in hushed tones. Both were going through difficult family situations, and both blamed the laws for their pain," writer on family and psychological affairs **Fahad Al-Rifai** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The man stated that some of the old laws were unfair, while the woman said there was always a fear of losing one's rights."



Fahad Al-Rifai

"Between these two perspectives, one question remains - Where does justice stand when hearts are divided?"

"When the new Personal Status Law was announced in Kuwait, it came as no surprise that public opinion was split between supporters and opponents."

"Laws that affect the family never pass quietly, because they do not deal with cold, hard figures, but with homes, emotions, children, and the future of an entire society."

"Looking deeply at the spirit of the law, rather than the surrounding noise, reveals a serious attempt to restore balance to family relationships."

"Under the previous law, some people interpreted the provisions outside their proper context. The problem was not always with the text itself, but with its manipulation to serve personal interests at the expense of the other partner, or of family stability."

"As disputes accumulated, the courts in many cases shifted from being spaces of justice to arenas of conflict, with children often paying the price."

"The new law, in essence, does not seek to favor one party at the expense of the other. Rather, it aims to regulate the relationship between rights and obligations and to redefine justice as balance, not preference."

"Family justice does not mean that one party 'wins' at the expense of the other's rights. It means preserving the dignity of all and protecting the family from becoming a space of psychological and social strain."

"What sets this approach apart is its focus on the family's interest, not just the individual's."

"When each party feels that the law protects them without giving them tools to harm the other, opportunities for exploitation are reduced, and dialogue becomes a more viable option than conflict."

"This is an important factor in lowering divorce rates, or at least in mitigating their negative effects."

"Fair laws do not eliminate disputes, but they prevent them from escalating."

"Laws do not force people to stay together against their will. Rather, they encourage reflection before separation and provide greater space for understanding and stability. When couples realize that the legal system neither rewards stubbornness nor punishes good faith, the way conflict is managed changes fundamentally."

"More importantly, the new law sends a clear social message - the family is not an arena of conflict, but a unit that must be protected."

"When laws are built on this principle, they strengthen the cohesion and development of society."

"A society with fewer family conflicts is a more psychologically stable society, better equipped for sound upbringing and greater productivity."

"No law is perfect, and there may always be areas that require review or improvement. However, the general trend toward achieving justice and preventing the manipulation of laws for personal gain is a step in the right direction."

"Laws are not static or eternal. They mature and evolve along with the development of society."

"Between supporters and opponents, the real challenge lies in the awareness of how the law is applied and the intentions behind its use."

"When laws are used to protect the family rather than to dismantle it, justice becomes a bridge to cohesion rather than a source of division."

Also:

"I witnessed a scene at a cemetery during a funeral that perfectly illustrated the gap between citizens and officials," columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"A minister was standing in line among the mourners. After offering his condolences, two citizens approached him, gesturing and speaking as if they were in a government office rather than the solemnity of a cemetery, trying to explain a service-related issue."

"The scene, while clearly uncomfortable for both the official and the citizens, raises a fundamental question - why must people chase ministers at social events just to present their problems?"

"Citizens turning to officials in public spaces is not an attempt to inconvenience them; it reflects the absence of effective institutional channels that allow people to feel heard and to see a tangible impact."

"While the Cabinet Secretariat has

competent officials in place, good intentions alone are not enough."

"What we need is the green light from His Highness the Prime Minister to establish a comprehensive system for surveying public opinion on all government services."

"On this occasion, I would like to highlight a successful example during the COVID-19 pandemic."

"At that time, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, served as Prime Minister, and thanks to the efforts of ministers such as the then Minister of Health, Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah, we witnessed a significant leap in technology and government communication. The Government Communications Authority proved that technology can bridge the gap, enabling citizens to participate, make suggestions, and lodge complaints with just a click."

"Today, we see progress in several government applications, such as Sahel."

"Nevertheless, a more comprehensive approach is still needed. While the 'Government Performance Evaluation Authority' exists, its work often focuses primarily on senior administrative oversight rather than the day-to-day concerns of citizens."

"I propose establishing a platform, or an intelligent administrative system, that monitors people's real, on-the-ground problems in all government services, addressing even the simplest and most seemingly minor issues."

"What an official may consider minor can, in the eyes of a citizen, be a real obstacle disrupting daily life."

"Listening to citizens should never be left to chance."

"What is needed today is a system that transforms complaints into data that is analyzed and processed within a rigorous administrative framework that evaluates issues and proposes effective solutions."

"Building bridges of trust begins with an attentive ear and an official who keeps their door open, supported by technology that serves people, not just procedures."



"For over twenty-seven years, I have held the pen, writing what comes to mind and dedicating myself to defending my tolerant Islamic faith, in accordance with the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the path of his pure companions," columnist **Hamad Salem Al-Marri** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The Messenger of God (PBUH) said about them, 'The best of generations is my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them. Then there will come people who will give testimony without being asked, who will make vows but not fulfill them.'"

"I have aimed to defend my homeland, Kuwait, against all who seek to harm it, whether through words or actions, and whether they are Kuwaitis or non-Kuwaitis."

"Unfortunately, some of them hold Kuwaiti citizenship but are loyal to ideological groups or foreign political parties, some of which hide behind religion while following their own Supreme Guide."

"I am trying to shed light on the problems Kuwait faces in all public sectors, issues that negatively impact the country and its people."

"I address administrative corruption, which I consider the main cause of these problems, and I have offered some modest solutions in the hope that an official will read them, adopt them, and build upon them."

"Because every beginning must have an end, because it is the nature of life for a new generation to come and continue the journey of building and development, and because I believe a wise person chooses for themselves when to stop, I have decided that this will be my last article in the press."

"For twenty-seven years, I have written my articles in Kuwait, where freedom of opinion without transgression or defamation is respected. I have witnessed momentous events in Kuwait and the region, and my opinions have always reflected my love for my religion, my country, and my Gulf neighbors."

"Throughout my journalistic career at Al-Watan daily and Al-Seyassah daily, I have always received welcome, support, and guidance from readers. I extend my deepest gratitude to them, especially to the dean of Kuwaiti journalism, the esteemed Ahmed Al-Jarallah, editor-in-chief, who opened the doors of Al-Seyassah daily to me without any obstacles."

"This is not surprising for Al-Jarallah or Al-Seyassah daily, which has nurtured many prominent Kuwaiti journalists at the start of their careers. Al-Seyassah daily is a prestigious institution, and its editor-in-chief is an exceptional and highly capable journalist."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi chairs the meeting.

Jahra Governorate photo

Jahra traffic, infrastructure reforms discussed

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Public Services Committee of the Jahra Governorate Council held its regular meeting recently, chaired by Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi.

According to a press release issued by Jahra Governorate, the meeting covered several agenda items, including initiatives and proposals aimed at developing infrastructure and enhancing the urban landscape throughout the governorate. Traffic proposals were discussed for improving connectivity between areas, increasing road efficiency, and raising traffic safety

standards.

The committee also reviewed a number of regulatory matters related to the removal and reorganization of existing sites in coordination with relevant authorities. Also, it followed up on correspondence from government agencies and reviewed the necessary procedures and decisions.

The committee affirmed its ongoing commitment to monitoring service-related issues and collaborating with relevant entities to improve service levels and create a better urban environment in Jahra Governorate.

Alimony row reveals fraud of generations

Granddad leads nationality forgery

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: In a case that started with an alimony complaint filed by a divorced Gulf woman, the Citizenship Investigation Department uncovered a citizenship forgery that spanned two generations, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

It was revealed that the ex-husband did not, as his wife had believed, hold dual nationality. Instead, he obtained Kuwaiti citizenship fraudulently, and the falsification traced back to his deceased father.

Reliable sources told the daily that the department received a report through its hotline from a female Gulf national who said she got married to a man who held the nationality of her Gulf country. A family dispute later arose between them and ended in divorce. The conflict over alimony escalated, as he avoided fulfilling his financial obligations, relying on his status as a Kuwaiti citizen and the Kuwaiti documents he held. She was unable to compel him to pay alimony in her Gulf country, because he had left.

Sources disclosed that after extensive investigations, it was discovered the man did not hold dual citizenship, contrary to what his wife believed, as he forged his Kuwaiti citizenship. The falsification originated with his father and extended to his grandfather and family.

Sources said the ex-husband's father is deceased, but his DNA sample is already on record with the General Department of Criminal Evidence due to a prior case. The alleged brothers of his father, according to the Kuwaiti identity he claimed, were summoned, and DNA samples were taken from four of them. The results confirmed that the four men were indeed brothers from the same father. However, when the DNA of ex-husband's father was compared to theirs, it proved that he was not their brother. This finding established that his son — the ex-husband — acquired Kuwaiti citizenship through fraud.

Sources indicated that the evidence in the case is comprehensive, including DNA test results, in addition to Gulf documents submitted by the ex-wife to the Citizenship Investigation Department. It was also established that the ex-husband has brothers in a Gulf country, as well as the brothers of his father — his biological uncles.

It was confirmed that the ex-husband held official Gulf documents, and that his deceased father also possessed Gulf documentation.

Sources added that the case involves 16 individuals. The Higher Committee for Citizenship decided to revoke their Kuwaiti citizenship, while the ex-husband is detained and the necessary legal measures have been taken against him.

Meanwhile, the Citizenship Investigation Department is expanding its probe into one of the most intricate cases in its records, involving a Kuwaiti citizen with six wives and 18 individuals with forged citizenship registered under his file, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Four of the sons were found to have falsified their citizenship, resulting in 226 dependents, while investigations are ongoing into two others who are expected to be added to the list of those with forged citizenship soon.

Sources informed the daily that the case is about a Kuwaiti man who has six wives — some still married to him and others divorced. One of the six wives is registered under a fictitious name. Each wife is listed as having one to 10 children. Sources revealed that after the DNA testing of the children, it was confirmed some of them are biological siblings. The Higher Committee previously revoked the citizenship of two sons whose nationalities were proven to be forged, resulting in the cancellation of the citizenship of 131 dependents.

Sources said the Higher Committee is currently reviewing two additional names listed under the same father's file, representing 95 dependents. This raises the total number of dependents whose citizenship was revoked or is in the process of being revoked to 226, in the files of four sons out of the 18 individuals registered.

Court acquits staff in forgery charges

By Jaber Al-Hamoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Misdemeanor Court has acquitted a company employee in charges of forging a document related to a client's subscription contract with the company.

The court explained that the case file lacked conclusive evidence to prove the defendant's guilt, emphasizing that criminal judgments are based on certainty and that any doubt must be interpreted in favor of the accused.

The defendant's counsel Lawyer Ali Al-Hussainan stated that the ruling confirms that a defendant cannot be convicted without conclusive evidence, noting that the court accepted the defense's substantive arguments, which affirms the absence of the elements of the crime and any proof of guilt.

Long-term closure of 2 lanes on 'expressway'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Ministry of Public Works, in cooperation with the General Traffic Department, announced the closure of the fast and middle lanes on King Faisal Expressway towards the airport, from the Fifth Ring Road intersection to the Ibrahim Al-Muzain Street intersection, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Work hours announced: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced the operating hours for food supply distribution branches during Ramadan, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

In a post on its website, the ministry stated that morning hours will be from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm, and evening hours will be from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm. The branches will be open daily, except on Fridays.



Gulf citizen held: Security forces in Jahra Governorate arrested a Gulf national wanted by the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) in the Interior Ministry, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

A security source told the newspaper that the officers stopped the suspect for committing a traffic violation. Upon checking his security records, they discovered he is wanted by the DCGD.

28 female court clerks take post

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Ministry of Justice announced on Thursday the acceptance of 28 female court clerks after completing screening and verification procedures according to the approved regulations. This marks the first time women have been appointed to this position, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

In a press statement, the ministry explained that a training course will be held for them in cooperation with the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies from March 9 to 11 at the institute's headquarters. They will be notified of all details and procedures through the unified government application for electronic services "Sahel".

The ministry urged them to follow the notifications and adhere to the specified dates.

On December 28, 2025, Minister of Justice, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, announced in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) the opening of applications for the female court clerk training course, as part of the ministry's efforts to develop human resources.

Counselor Al-Sumait explained that the application process supports judicial work and promotes equal opportunities between the sexes. It aims to expand the national talent base and benefit from qualified female capabilities, supporting the smooth running of court sessions and enhancing performance efficiency within the courts, in accordance with approved regulations.

Police arrest liquor seller

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: An Asian expatriate was arrested for selling locally made liquor in Jaber Al-Ahmad, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to security sources, the arrest followed a tip-off that the suspect was operating an illegal liquor factory and distributing the product for quick and illicit financial gain. After verifying the information, an undercover agent, under the supervision of security personnel, arranged to purchase a quantity of liquor from the suspect. At the agreed-upon time, the suspect was observed delivering the alcohol to the undercover agent and was apprehended immediately upon receiving the pre-arranged signal.

The seized items included 49 water bottles containing locally produced liquor. The suspect was referred with the seized liquor bottles to the relevant authorities for further legal action.



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Unity and tradition mark occasion

HH Crown Prince leads dignitaries in Ramadan visit to Al-Maseelah Palace

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, along with several members of the ruling family, visited the Al-Maseelah Palace Diwan to express their Ramadan greetings, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The palace welcomed many well-wishers, including officials, diplomats and citizens, who expressed their hope for a blessed and prosperous Ramadan for everyone.

In an ambiance of shared affection and harmony, all those present exchanged greet-

ings, reinforcing the deeply cherished customs and traditions that unite the people of Kuwait at all societal levels.

Prayers were offered to Almighty Allah, asking Him to grant Kuwait, its leadership, its people, the Arab Islamic nations, and all peoples around the world continuous blessings and prosperity.

They also prayed for protection for the nation, its leadership and people from all forms of harm, and that Ramadan returns to them with goodness, prosperity and blessings.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled upon his arrival at Al-Maseelah Palace.



Sheikh Dr. Ibrahim Al-Duaji congratulates Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali.



Sheikh Meshal Al-Jarrah offers his congratulations.



Omani Ambassador Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi and Advisor Mohammed Al-Maamari offer congratulations.



First Deputy PM Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef



Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah offers congratulations.



Australian Ambassador Melissa Kelly offers congratulations.



Father Bigoul congratulates Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem.



Moroccan Ambassador Ali Ben Issa and Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali



His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf and his son Sheikh Nawaf offer congratulations.



Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Totonji offers his congratulations.

Stormwater drainage included in major upgrade

Public Works launches Northwest Jahra infrastructure project tender

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Ministry of Public Works started the tendering process for the project to construct, complete, and maintain roads and stormwater drainage systems in Northwest Jahra.

The ministry submitted a request to the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) during its meeting last Wednesday for approval to issue the tender.

The agency, by a majority vote, approved the request to open the tender to interested companies after completing all procedures in accordance with the Public Tenders Law.

These procedures include the initial announcement of the tender, awarding of the contract, and obtaining the approval of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for the contract, paving the way for the commencement of work.

This is one of the vital road tenders included in the plan of the ministry to modernize and develop the road network nationwide, improve its efficiency, accommodate traffic volume, and enhance safety and security measures, given that roads are the pillar of the infrastructure.

The project aims to provide infrastructure services and an internal road network, connecting it to the main network, in addition to constructing roads capable of accommodating future traffic volumes to serve residents and visitors in light of anticipated urban expansion. This will reduce traffic congestion, ease movement and transportation, and improve road quality and efficiency.

The total length of the road is about 5.366 kilometers, and the project includes sewage and stormwater drainage networks and other utilities like electricity, lighting, telephone and agricultural services.

Furthermore, the ministry obtained conditional approval from SAB to sign a consultancy agreement for the study, design and supervision of the Ministry of Information building at a total cost of KD2.69 million.

Based on this approval, the ministry will sign a contract with the winning consultancy firm to begin work as per the requirements of the beneficiary, including its technical, engineering and administrative needs.

A tender for the construction contract will be issued once the consultancy agreement is finalized.



Father Suleiman Haifawi with the Catholic Church team.

Fasting unites faiths in Kuwait

Holy Family Cathedral observes Ramadan and Lent with charity

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: In the spirit of love and spirituality that characterizes Kuwaiti society, the Catholic Church in Kuwait launched a humanitarian initiative to mark the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan and the beginning of Lent, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Father Suleiman Haifawi, the official spokesperson for the Catholic Church in Kuwait, along with several priests, distributed dates and water to passersby about half an hour before sunset in front of the Holy Family Cathedral.

The initiative carried a profound symbolic message - fasting, despite its diverse traditions, is fundamentally united by the values of repentance, prayer, mercy, and service to humanity.

It also affirmed that Kuwait remains a model of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among people of different faiths. Father Haifawi emphasized that the convergence of the two fasts this year holds special spiritual significance, representing a shared call to return to God, purify hearts, and strengthen acts of charity.



Father Suleiman Haifawi hands out bottled water.

He noted that believers in the One God are called to walk together on the path of repentance and prayer and to be witnesses to love and peace in society.

Father Haifawi offered prayers for the State of Kuwait, asking God to protect His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and to perpetuate the blessings of security and stability upon Kuwait, so that it may remain a land of tolerance, freedom of worship, and fraternal unity.



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Amiri Diwan extends thanks to Ramadan well-wishers

Kuwaitis, residents exchange greetings to His Highness the Amir and the ruling family

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21, (KUNA): The Amiri Diwan extended sincere appreciation to nationals and residents who came to exchange Ramadan greetings with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the ruling the

family.

The Diwan expressed congratulations on this blessed occasion, wishing all many happy returns, and the state of Kuwait further safety and security under the wise leadership of their highnesses.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as members of the ruling family received greetings from citizens and

expatriates on the holy month of Ramadan.

The event, hosted at Al-Sabah Diwan in Bayan Palace for the second consecutive day on Thursday evening, materialized the traditional bonds of amity and fraternity characterizing the Kuwaiti society, read an Amiri Diwan statement.

Bulk of the greeters were from the judicial and diplomatic corps, as well as top brass.



His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness the Crown Prince, and the esteemed Al Sabah family received well-wishers on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan for the second day in a row.

Amiri Diwan photos

NBAQ marks national occasions with staff tribute

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: In a patriotic atmosphere aligned with the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations, the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (NBAQ), held a ceremony honoring its employees for 2025, marking a year of notable achievements and transformative developments that strengthened the higher education system.

Present at the ceremony were Director General of the Bureau Dr. Jassim Al-Ali, senior officials, and partners from educational and governmental institutions. The event highlighted the teamwork and institutional integration that characterized the work of the Bureau throughout the past year.

In an exclusive interview with the newspaper, Al-Ali pointed out that honoring this group of employ-

ees is considered a tribute to a year of dedication and sustained effort. He emphasized that the accomplishments of the Bureau were made possible through close collaboration with higher education institutions and various State entities.

He said 2025 witnessed the completion of the first phase of institutional accreditation for three leading academic institutions -- Kuwait University, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), and Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences. He added that the latter is the first military security institution to undergo the accreditation process, which has now advanced to the next stages.

He indicated that the Bureau updated the lists of distinguished universities worldwide -- including institutions in the United States of America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. He disclosed that these lists serve as reference for student scholarship pro-

grams, in addition to the completion of the first phase of the general ranking of higher education institutions in the country.

He asserted that digital transformation is the main pillar of development, with the Bureau now operating entirely through electronic systems, including official correspondence, its website and digital governance platforms. He affirmed that this transition is in line with the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035 in promoting educational advancement and digital sustainability.

He went on to say that the approved lists of the Bureau consist of 766 universities in the United States alone and more than 16,000 academic programs, as well as hundreds of universities and programs in European, Asian, Arab and Gulf countries. He stressed that institutional accreditation will lead to a qualitative leap in the outputs and overall quality of higher education in Kuwait.

Continued from Page 1

Partial commercial

In terms of pending cases, the Capital Governorate ranked first with 62.6 percent, followed by Farwaniya (11.4 percent), Hawally and Ahmadi at 10.7 percent each, Jahra (4.3 percent), and the Financial Markets Court (0.3 percent).

As for resolved cases, the Capital Governorate again led with 61.7 percent, followed by Ahmadi (11.7 percent), Farwaniya (10.9 percent), Hawally (10.6 percent), Jahra (5.0 percent), and the Financial Markets Court (0.2 percent).

Jahra Court recorded the highest completion rate at 49.6 percent, followed by Ahmadi (46.8 percent), then the Capital Governorate and Hawally at 42 percent each, and Farwaniya (40.8 percent), while the Financial Markets Court posted the lowest completion rate at 21.2 percent.

Regarding criminal cases, a total of 20,511 cases were received. Misdemeanor cases got the largest share at 71.4 percent, followed by appealed misdemeanors at 26.2 percent and felonies at 2.5 percent.

A total of 55,929 pending criminal cases were recorded, with misdemeanors again accounting for the largest portion at 81.9 percent, followed by appealed misdemeanors (15.6 percent) and felonies (2.5

percent).

As for adjudicated criminal cases, 26,314 were resolved. Misdemeanors topped the list at 77.5 percent, followed by appealed misdemeanors (19.9 percent) and felonies (2.6 percent).

The overall completion rate for criminal cases reached 47.0 percent, with appealed misdemeanor cases achieving the highest completion rate at 60.0 percent, followed by felonies (48.3 percent) and misdemeanors (44.5 percent).

Regarding electronic notices at the Court of First Instance's Notice Department, a total of 30,907 notices were received and 26,197 of which were processed, a completion rate of 84.8 percent.

The Capital Governorate Court recorded the highest completion rate at 96.6 percent, followed by Jahra (91.0 percent), Farwaniya (81.1 percent), Ahmadi (72.0 percent) and Hawally (60.1 percent).

Kuwait injects

"Egypt and Jordan are likewise providing very, very substantial help, troops, training and support for a very trustworthy Palestinian police force. We think we're getting some very good people on that police force."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio

voiced his hope on Thursday that the newly launched Board of Peace would act as a model for other complex and difficult situations to be resolved in the same way.

Rubio made the remarks while addressing the first meeting of the Board of Peace, which was held under the chairmanship of US President Donald Trump.

"We hope that this can serve as a model for other complex and difficult situations so they can be solved in the same way, but right now the focus is on this one," he remarked.

"We have to get this right. There is no Plan B for Gaza. Plan B is going back to war. No one here wants that," the US secretary added.

"This was a very unique crisis in Gaza, one that the existing international institutions could not solve or figure out. It needed a very specific type solution that required the partnership of all the nations that are here," he noted.

Rubio underlined that Plan A, the only path forward, is one that rebuilds Gaza in a way of enduring and sustainable peace, where everyone can live there side by side with one another and never worry again about returning to conflict, to war, to human suffering, and to destruction.

Earlier in the day, Trump thanked Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, UAE, Morocco, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia,

Uzbekistan and Kuwait for having all contributed more than USD 7 billion toward the relief package.

Kuwait revokes

The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) was assigned to complete the relevant legal procedures. The Department of Inspection of Private Pharmacies was tasked with monitoring the implementation of these decisions and coordinating with the relevant government agencies to ensure full enforcement, within an institutional framework that promotes effective governance and oversight.

In other news, the Ministry of Health has launched a new service to measure radiation doses in the eyes and extremities, with the aim of enhancing occupational safety for healthcare workers.

This initiative is in response to the growing use of interventional procedures and nuclear medicine, and implements the principle of maintaining the "lowest possible dose" to protect medical personnel. The service targets those most exposed to radiation, including catheterization surgeons, interventional radiologists, radiology technicians, nurses, and nuclear medicine staff. It also supports the use of protective equipment, staff training, and the improvement of safety standards.

Strengthening financial awareness

Central Bank and KU organize seminar on banknote security

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Kuwait University, in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait, recently organized an awareness seminar on the security features of Kuwaiti banknotes and the proper methods for ensuring their authenticity.

The seminar, coordinated by the Public Relations Department at Kuwait University, was held at Sabah Al-Salem University City and conducted by Central Bank specialists -- Head of the Currency Security and Development Department Fatima Al-Najm, and Currency Security and Development Specialist Mohammad Al-Bahar.

The speakers reviewed the security features of the sixth issue of the Kuwaiti currency, equipping attendees with essential techniques to distinguish genuine banknotes from counterfeit ones.

A practical demonstration was

conducted on basic inspection methods, including visual examination, tactile verification, and holding the banknote against the light.

They also outlined the types of damage that render banknotes unfit for circulation, such as tears, cuts, burns, writing or adhesive residue.

In addition to currency security, the seminar underscored the importance of enhancing financial literacy among individuals. The specialists stressed the importance of saving and good financial planning as the fundamentals of achieving long-term financial stability.

They also affirmed the vital role played by the Central Bank in maintaining the stability of the national currency and supervising the banking system.

The event concluded with an engaging question-and-answer session, allowing students and participants to present their queries and deepen their understanding of the topics discussed.



Kuwait University photo
Central Bank specialists lead a seminar at Kuwait University, educating students on the security features of Kuwaiti banknotes and ways to detect counterfeits.

INTERNATIONAL



This photo provided by the US Department of Defense shows a North American Aerospace Defense Command F-16 fighter aircraft intercepting Russian Tu-95 and Su-35 military aircraft near the Bering Strait, west of Alaska, on Feb 19. (AP)

NORAD intercepts 5 Russian aircraft near Alaska

Military jets were launched to intercept five Russian aircraft that were flying in international airspace off Alaska's western coast, but military officials said Friday the Russian aircraft were not seen as provocative.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command said it detected and tracked two Russian Tu-95s, two Su-35s and one A-50 operating near the Bering Strait on Thursday.

In response, NORAD launched two F-16s, two F-35s, one E-3 and four KC-135 refueling tankers to intercept, identify and escort the Rus-

sian aircraft until they departed the area, according to a release from the command.

"The Russian military aircraft remained in international airspace and did not enter American or Canadian sovereign airspace," according to the NORAD statement. It also noted this kind of activity "occurs regularly and is not seen as a threat."

The Russian aircraft were operating in an area near the Bering Strait, a narrow body of water about 50 miles (80 kilometers) wide separating the Pacific and Arctic

oceans, called the Alaskan Air Defense Identification Zone.

Such zones begin where sovereign airspace ends. While it's international airspace, all aircraft are required to identify themselves when entering zones in the interest of national security, NORAD said.

The command used satellites, ground and airborne radars and aircraft to detect and track aircraft

NORAD is headquartered at Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado, but has its Alaska operations based at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage. (AP)

Vegas police probe terrorism event after vehicle rammed into power substation

LAS VEGAS, Feb 21, (AP): Las Vegas police say they're investigating a car that rammed into a power substation as a "terrorism-related event."

There's no ongoing threat to the public, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Sheriff Kevin McMahon said during a news conference Friday.

Police received a 911 call at 10 a.m. Thursday reporting a vehicle crash through a secured gate at the substation in Boulder City, located approximately 25 miles (40 kilometers) southeast of Las Vegas, McMahon said.

The driver of the vehicle was 23-year-old Dawson Maloney from Albany, New York, who was reported missing and died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, McMahon said.

The man had communicated with family before the crash, referencing self-harm, and said he was going to commit an act that would place him on the news. He referred to himself as a terrorist in a message sent to his mother, according to police.

Authorities found explosive materials and multiple books "related to extremist ideologies" in Maloney's hotel room, McMahon said. The books included ones about right- and left-wing extremism, environmental extremism, white supremacy and anti-government ideology, he said.

"These findings significantly elevate the seriousness of this incident," McMahon said.

Maloney is listed as a student at Albany Law School in the class of 2027. He was also an honors student for multiple semesters at Siena University, located in New York.



This photo provided by KTNV shows damage to a fence outside a power substation, where authorities say they are investigating a car collision, on Feb 19, in Boulder City, Nevada. (AP)

Two shotguns, an assault rifle-style pistol, and flame throwers were found in his rental car, McMahon said. Maloney was wearing what police described as "soft-body armor."

Authorities recovered a 3D printer and several gun components needed to assemble a firearm from an Albany residence. Maloney had driven a rental car from Albany to Boulder City, according to Christopher Delzano, the FBI's Las Vegas special agent-in-charge.

Boulder City is a historic town and home to the Hoover Dam, which is considered one of the country's modern civil engineering wonders. The

dam provides water to millions of people and generates an average of 4 billion kilowatt-hours of hydroelectric power each year for Nevada, Arizona and California.

The power substation that was rammed is owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. The facility works closely with Hoover Dam and transfers power to the Los Angeles basin, McMahon said. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power said in a statement to The Associated Press that it is aware of the incident, and there were no impacts or disruptions to its operations.

Census Bureau urged to drop plans to use American Community Survey form

Citizenship question could derail census test, deter immigrants from participating: Dems

WASHINGTON, Feb 21, (AP): US Census Bureau plans to use a questionnaire with a citizenship question as part of its practice test for the 2030 census could jeopardize the once-a-decade head count and scare away immigrants from participating, congressional Democrats warned.

Democrats on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform urged the Census Bureau to drop plans to use the American Community Survey form, which includes the citizenship question, and instead use a traditional census questionnaire that omits it. The on-the-ground tests in Huntsville, Alabama, and Spartanburg, SC, start next month.

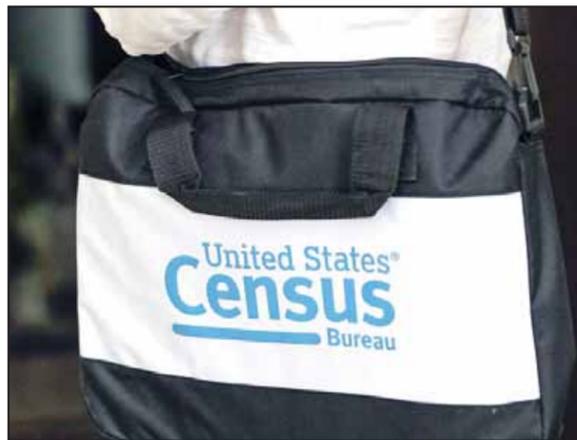
"The Trump Administration is risking millions of taxpayer dollars to pursue policies which could fatally compromise the 2030 count before it even begins," they wrote in a letter to acting Census Bureau Director George Cook and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, whose department oversees the statistical agency.

The Census Bureau and Commerce Department didn't immediately respond to emails seeking comment.

The field test gives the statistical agency the chance to learn how to better tally populations that were undercounted during the last census. The head count determines how many congressional seats and Electoral College votes each state gets, as well as how \$2.8 trillion in federal funding is distributed annually. Among the new methods being tested is the use of US Postal Service workers to conduct tasks previously done by census workers.

In recent weeks, the Census Bureau made public plans for the 2026 test that would use the American Community Survey form, which asks a wide range of questions about participants, and eliminated four other planned locations - Colorado Springs, Colorado, western North Carolina, western Texas and tribal lands in Arizona.

The Democrats raised concerns that the citizenship question on the American



A briefcase of a census taker is seen as she knocks on the door of a residence on Aug 11, 2020, in Winter Park, Fla. (AP)

Community Survey form being used would lead to an undercount by deterring immigrants, including legal residents, from participating.

"Many immigrants or citizens in mixed-status families, including green card holders and other legal permanent residents, face fear, chaos, and uncertainty over who the Trump Administration will target next for denaturalization and deportation," they said in their letter.

In his first term, US President Donald Trump unsuccessfully tried to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census form. The Republican president also signed orders that would have excluded people who are in the US illegally from the figures used to divvy up congressional seats among the states and mandated the collection of citizenship data.

The attempt to add the citizenship question was blocked by the US Supreme Court, and both orders were rescinded when Democrat Joe Biden took office in January 2021, before the 2020 census figures were released.

The Constitution's 14th Amendment says "the whole number of persons in each state" should be counted for the numbers used for apportionment, the process of divvying up congressional seats, and Electoral College votes among the states. The Census Bureau has interpreted that to mean anybody living in the US, regardless of legal status.

Meanwhile, in a federal lawsuit in Louisiana, the Department of Commerce said Thursday that its soon-to-be-released criteria on who should be counted in the 2030 census could lead to the dismissal of a year-old lawsuit brought by four Republican state attorneys general.

That court challenge was seeking to exclude people who are in the United States illegally from being counted in the numbers for redrawing congressional districts.

The federal government attorneys asked that a hold on the case remain in place while the bureau determines "the matter at the heart of this case - whether and how to count citizens of foreign countries in the United States for the 2030 Census."

Diplomacy still only viable path to peace in Ukraine, says UN refugee chief Salih

KYIV, Ukraine, Feb 21, (AP): There are many obstacles to a peace deal in Ukraine, but a diplomatic solution remains the only viable option, the newly appointed head of the U.N. refugee agency said Friday, warning that humanitarian operations are increasingly overstretched because of multiple global crises.

Barham Salih, Iraq's former president who was elected UNHCR high commissioner in December, made his first visit to Ukraine since taking office.

After traveling to Ukraine's front-line cities, including Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia, he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and discussed the latest in efforts to secure a peace deal. He also discussed the future of UNHCR operations as Ukraine endures Russian attacks on its energy grid during a harsh winter.

"You have to be hopeful, but I do understand the difficulties in the situation, and it's clear, of course, there are many, many impediments along the way, but at the end of the day, there is no military solution. There needs to be peace, a durable and just peace so that people can go back to their lives," he said, speaking to The Associated Press in an interview in Kyiv.



UNHCR High Commissioner Barham Salih talks during an interview with the Associated Press in Kyiv, Ukraine on Feb 20. (AP)

"Things are not necessarily easy, definitely not easy, but let's redouble the effort to make sure that diplomacy has a chance and really bring about a

durable and just peace to this war that has been going on for far too long," he added.

Of the agency's \$470 million appeal for Ukraine, only \$150 million has been pledged. The shortfall reflects deep cuts across the humanitarian sector, making it increasingly difficult to deliver aid across multiple crises.

There are 3.7 million Ukrainians displaced within the country and nearly 6 million Ukrainians outside the country who have become refugees in Europe and elsewhere, he said.

"This tells you the gap between what is needed and what is available," he said. "My appeal to the international community is, really, this is not the moment to walk away, this is not a moment to look the other way round. These vulnerable populations need support. We should deliver this help to them."

The U.N. agency in Ukraine predicts 10.8 million Ukrainians will require humanitarian assistance in 2026, according to a report from the agency. The most critical needs are concentrated along the war's front lines in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, as well as in the northern border region. Intensified hostilities produce fresh waves of displacement.



Migrants rescued south of Crete walk after their arrival at the port of Lavrio, Greece, on July 10, 2025. (AP)

Greece working with 4 European nations to set up migrant deportation hubs outside EU

ATHENS, Greece, Feb 21, (AP): Greece is working with four other European countries to set up deportation centers in third countries, most likely in Africa, for migrants whose asylum applications are rejected, Greece's migration minister said Wednesday.

Thanos Plevris said on Greek state broadcaster ERT television that Greece was working with Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Denmark for the creation of so-called return hubs, "preferably in Africa." Ministers from the five countries had already met to discuss the issue, and technical teams would be meeting next week, he said.

"We are not speaking theoretically any more, we are speaking practically," Plevris said. He didn't specify which countries were being considered to host the return hubs, and said the choice of the African continent was "not binding." It was the larger European countries that were speaking directly with the countries where the return hubs could be located, "but we are participating too," he added.

The use of return hubs would be for people whose asylum applications are rejected and whose countries of origin

will not take them back, the minister explained. He said their existence would act as a deterrent to prospective migrants who are unlikely to be granted asylum. The minister said the aim was for an initial plan to be in place in the next few months, although it wasn't clear when any such return centers could be up and running.

Located on the southeastern fringe of Europe, Greece for decades has been one of the main entry points into the EU for people fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Tens of thousands make it into the country each year, the vast majority on dangerous sea journeys either from the Turkish coast to nearby Greek islands in the Aegean, or making the much longer Mediterranean crossing from north Africa to the southern Greek islands of Gavdos and Crete.

Athens has taken an increasingly hard line in dealing with migration, and its coast guard has often been accused of carrying out so-called pushbacks: summary deportations of new arrivals without allowing them to apply for asylum. The government strenuously denies it carries out such practices.

Plevris said there had been a 21% reduction in people arriving in the country illegally in 2025 compared to 2024, or 13,000 fewer arrivals last year compared to the previous year, and a 40% reduction over the last five months.

Last week, European lawmakers voted to approve new immigration policies allowing nations to deny asylum and deport migrants because they either hail from a country designated safe or could apply for asylum in a country outside the 27-nation bloc.

Plevris said the government was now focusing on returns of those whose asylum applications are rejected. The country already carries out around 5,000-7,000 returns per year, but with around 40,000-50,000 new arrivals each year, roughly half of whose asylum applications are rejected, Plevris said the current rate of return was not enough.

The Greek minister said he would be travelling to Rome next week for meetings with his Italian and Spanish counterparts. He said they would also meet with "the equivalent minister" from Pakistan as part of talks with countries of origin for greater cooperation on returns.

French prez orders review of violent activist groups

LYON, France, Feb 21, (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron will hold meetings next week to review violent activist groups, after a far-right student died from a beating in Lyon in an incident that highlighted a climate of deep political tensions ahead of next year's presidential vote.

Speaking at the Paris agriculture fair, Macron called on "everyone to remain calm" ahead of Saturday's tributes organized by far-right groups to Quentin Deranque, a 23-year-old who died of brain injuries in a hospital last week. The demonstrations will take place under heavy police scrutiny.

"This is a moment of remembrance and respect for this young compatriot who was killed, for his family and loved ones. That must come first. And then it is a moment of firmness and responsibility," Macron said.

Seven people have been handed preliminary charges. The Lyon public prosecutor's office requested that each of them be charged with intentional homicide, aggravated violence and criminal conspiracy. Six of the accused were charged on all three counts. The seventh was charged with complicity in intentional homicide, aggravated violence and criminal conspiracy.

Deranque was attacked during a fight that erupted between far-left and far-right supporters on the margins of a student meeting where a far-left lawmaker, Rima Hassan, was a keynote speaker.



A woman holds a placard reading 'Justice for Quentin' as she pays tribute to far-right student, Quentin Deranque, 23, who died in Lyon from a street beating during clashes between far-left and far-right militants, in Lille, northern France on Feb 18. (AP)

Leader now appears less isolated and more confident

Kim lauds North Korea's economy and regional standing as major party meeting opens

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 21, (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un lauded his nation's improving economy and regional standing as he opened the country's most important political event, where he is expected to set his domestic and foreign policy agenda for the next five years and further entrench his family's authoritarian rule.

The Workers' Party congress, which will likely run for days in Pyongyang, comes as Kim carves out a more forceful regional presence, leveraging an advancing nuclear arsenal and a growing alignment with Moscow that have deepened his standoffs with Washington and Seoul.

The meeting will likely provide the stage for Kim to unveil his key political and military objectives and further consolidate his authoritarian grip before thousands of ruling party delegates. Some analysts say Kim could also use the congress to position his teenage daughter - believed to be named Kim Ju Ae and about 13 - as a potential successor, formalizing the

regime's fourth-generation succession.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency reported Friday the meeting began the previous day. It did not immediately report any direct comments from Kim on his standoffs with the United States and South Korea or his nuclear weapons program.

Entering his 15th year in power, Kim is in a much stronger position than when he last convened the congress in 2021, when North Korea was experiencing a crippled economy worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and the wreckage of his failed diplomacy with US President Donald Trump.

Kim then made a rare admission of economic failures and issued a five-year development plan through 2025, urging economic self-reliance through mass mobilization. He doubled down on his nuclear ambitions and issued a long wish list of sophisticated weapons systems.

Kim now appears less isolated and more confident, buoyed by stronger ties with Russia and China, an exten-



This photo provided on Feb 20, 2026, by the North Korean government, shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un delivering a speech during the ruling Workers' Party Congress in Pyongyang on Feb 19. (AP)

sive nuclear arsenal and what the outside world sees as a gradually improving economy.

In Thursday's speech, Kim claimed the North has made significant pro-

gress since 2021, citing economic gains and a firmer regional footing that he said marked an "irreversible" strengthening of the state's status.

Kim has capitalized on geopolitical turmoil, using Russia's war in Ukraine as a window to accelerate weapons development and deepen ties with Moscow, providing thousands of troops and large munitions shipments to support President Vladimir Putin's war effort, possibly in exchange for aid and military technology.

He's cozying up to China, joining Putin at a World War II ceremony in Beijing last September and holding his first summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in six years - events that backed his efforts to portray the North as part of a united front against Washington.

Kim's strict information blockade obscures the full picture of North Korea's economy, which remains in a largely impoverished state after decades of policy failures and sanctions.

Still, Lee Jong-kyu, an analyst at South Korea's Korea Development Institute, estimates the North's economy grew roughly 10% over the last five years, benefiting from a post-pandemic rebound in trade with China and arms exports to Russia.

"The past five years might be the most productive period for North Korean leadership since the 1950s and 1960s," said Koh Yu-hwan, former president of Seoul's Institute for National Unification. Reflecting Kim's confidence, the new congress is unlikely to introduce major shifts in domestic policy and will continue to stress internal unity and self-reliance under another five-year economic plan, Koh said.

North Korea has developed or tested much of the weapons Kim demanded in 2021, including solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles and tactical nuclear systems. The country launched its first military satellite in 2023 and has recently claimed progress in building a nuclear-propelled submarine.

After prioritizing nuclear weapons and missiles, Kim is now putting more focus on conventional systems, launching new warships, anti-air weapons and attack drones, while outlining broader plans to integrate nuclear and conventional forces.

HK govt offers to buy apartment ownerships from fire victims

HONG KONG, Feb 21, (AP) — Hong Kong officials on Saturday unveiled resettlement plans for thousands of people who were displaced by the deadliest blaze in decades last November, proposing to buy back the homeownership rights from the fire victims.

Almost three months after the massive blaze spread across seven apartment buildings in Wang Fuk Court, its former occupants have been living in uncertainty about when they would find somewhere they could call home again.

Many of them are adjusting to new lives in their temporary homes scattered across various districts, with the government offering rental grants to help homeowners pay for the short-term accommodation.

Officials said in a news conference on Saturday that homeowners of the seven buildings can sell their ownership rights for cash to secure accommodation of their choice or buy an apartment under a designated government policy. Residents who prefer not to deal with a large amount of cash can directly exchange an apartment under the policy.

The government estimated that buying back the rights of some 1,700 units would cost about 6.8 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$870 million), with about 4 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$512 million) of that sum to be from public funds and the rest to be covered by a relief fund.



A general view of the fire-ravaged residential towers of the Wang Fuk Court apartment complex, in the Tai Po district of Hong Kong on Feb. 6, 2026. (AP)

Michael Wong, the city's Deputy Financial Secretary, said the administration was inclined to dismantle the seven buildings and would not redevelop residential homes on the fire site. It could be transformed into a park or community facilities instead.

Wong said there's no reasonable or cost-effective way to repair the damaged buildings, and if the government doesn't intervene, it will be hard for homeowners to find buyers in the market.

"In other words, the funds they have invested in these units over the

years could turn to nothing," he said. The government aims to contact the homeowners in March and hopes to pay the owners in the third quarter of this year, he said.

The proposals came after affected residents were surveyed about their preferences. Wong said 74% of the respondents were willing to consider selling their ownership rights to the government. Some 9% of those who answered the survey said they would only accept redevelopment at the fire site, which the government expected to take about a decade, he said.

Ex-S.Korean president remains defiant following life sentence for rebellion

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 21, (AP) — Ousted South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Friday remained defiant in his first reaction to a life sentence for rebellion handed down by a Seoul court the previous day.

In a statement released by his lawyers, Yoon maintained that his abrupt and short-lived declaration of martial law in December 2024 was done "solely for the sake of the nation and our people," and dismissed the Seoul Central District Court as biased against him.

Yoon, who was removed from office amid a political crisis set off by his unsuccessful power grab, has long rejected the eight criminal cases brought against him for what prosecutors described as a coup attempt and other allegations.

He barricaded himself in the presidential residence for weeks, stonewalled investigators following his arrest, and skipped court dates, while clashing with witnesses when he did appear.

In handing down his verdict on rebellion charges on Thursday, Judge Jee Kui-youn of the Seoul court said that Yoon has shown "no sign of apology for the staggering social costs incurred by the emergency martial law" and that he "refused to appear in court without any justifiable reason" several times.

Conservative supporters of the former president, who rallied near the court for hours ahead of the verdict,



Former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, (center), arrives at a court to attend a hearing to review his arrest warrant requested by special prosecutors in Seoul, South Korea on July 9, 2025. (AP)

expressed disappointment and anger after it was announced, while his opponents cheered in nearby streets, the two groups separated by hundreds of police officers. There were no major clashes.

Yoon's statement rejected the verdict as illegitimate.

"In a situation where the independence of the judiciary cannot be guaranteed and a verdict based on law and conscience is difficult to expect, I feel deep skepticism whether it would be meaningful to continue a legal battle through an appeal," said Yoon, 65, who has been jailed since last July.

Yoo Jeong-hwa, one of Yoon's lawyers, said Yoon was "merely expressing his current state of mind" and was not indicating an intention to waive his right to appeal. Yoon has seven days to appeal Thursday's sentence.

In his statement, Yoon expressed sympathy to the families of soldiers, police officials and public servants facing investigations or indictment in connection with his martial law decree, saying he feels responsible for their suffering. But he also assured his supporters "our fight is not over."

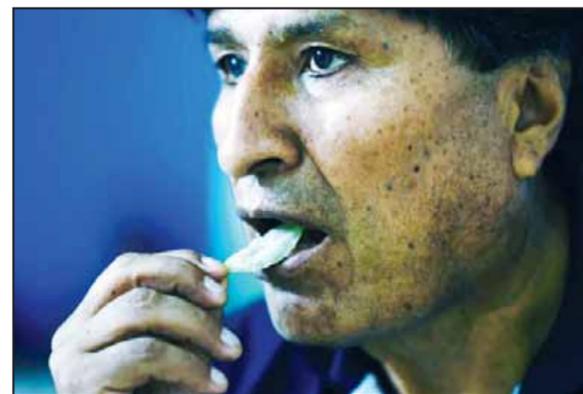
Bolivia ex-prez Morales reappears after nearly 7 weeks absence

LA PAZ, Bolivia, Feb 21, (AP) — Bolivia's long-serving socialist former leader, Evo Morales, reappeared Thursday in his political stronghold of the tropics after almost seven weeks of unexplained absence, endorsing candidates for upcoming regional elections and quieting rumors he had fled the country in the wake of the U.S. seizure of his ally, Venezuela's ex-President Nicolás Maduro.

The weeks of hand-wringing over Morales' fate showed how little the Andean country knows about what's happening in the remote Chapare region, where the former president has spent the past year evading an arrest warrant on human trafficking charges, and how vulnerable it is to fears about U.S. President Donald Trump's potential future foreign escapades.

The media outlet of Morales' coca-growing union, Radio Kawsachun Coca, released footage of Morales smiling in dark sunglasses as he arrived via tractor at a stadium in the central Bolivian town of Chimoré to address his supporters.

Morales, Bolivia's first Indigenous president who served from 2006 until his fraught 2019 ouster and subsequent self-exile, explained that he had come down with chikungunya, a mosquito-borne ailment with no treatment that



Bolivia's former President Evo Morales chews coca in Lauca N, Chapare region, Bolivia on Nov 3, 2024, amid an ongoing political conflict with the government of President Luis Arce. (AP)

causes fever and severe joint pain, and suffered complications that "caught me by surprise."

"Take care of yourselves against chikungunya - it is serious," the 66-year-old Morales said, appearing markedly more frail than in past appearances.

He dismissed rumors fueled by local

politicians and fanned by social media that he would try to flee the country, vowing to remain in Bolivia despite the threat of arrest under conservative President Rodrigo Paz, whose election last October ended nearly two decades of rule by Morales' Movement Toward Socialism party.

Venezuela's new amnesty law gets chilly response from opp'n, detainees' families

CARACAS, Venezuela, Feb 21, (AP) — Members of Venezuela's opposition, prisoners' rights groups and relatives of people long detained for political reasons gave a lukewarm reception Friday to an amnesty measure expected to free hundreds of people, including political activists and human rights defenders.

Some viewed the law as a small but significant victory for the thousands targeted during the ruling party's 27-year tenure. Others considered it a mockery of the pain of families and people behind bars - particularly members of the military, who were excluded from the measure.

Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez on Thursday signed the amnesty measure into law, signaling a major shift in policy following last month's stunning U.S. military raid in the capital, Caracas, to capture then-President Nicolás Maduro.

Venezuelan authorities for decades denied holding any political prisoners. But Rodríguez said during the signing ceremony that the law showed leaders were "letting go of a little intolerance and opening new avenues for politics in Venezuela."

Venezuela-based prisoners' rights group Foro Penal estimates that more than 600 people are in custody for political reasons.

Under the new law, trial courts must approve each amnesty request within 15 days. However, the requirement for



People who consider their detained family members to be political prisoners call for their releases outside the United Nations office in Caracas, Venezuela on Feb 18. (AP)

judicial oversight has fueled skepticism about how applications will be handled.

"The law benefits a significant group of people, but the essence of the problem Venezuela is experiencing regarding political persecution remains," Alfredo Romero, president of Foro Penal, told reporters Friday. "The same judges and prosecutors who have unjustly or arbitrarily accused people are the same judges whom the law itself designates

to interpret the law in order to grant benefits."

Romero underscored that the new law is not a prerequisite for the government to free prisoners, like it has done since Jan. 8, when Rodríguez's government announced it would release "a significant number." Foro Penal has counted 448 releases since then.

The law grants eligible people "a general and full amnesty for crimes or offenses committed" during specific periods since 1999 that were marked by politically driven conflicts in Venezuela, including "acts of politically motivated violence" in the context of the 2024 presidential election and 2025 legislative and regional elections.

Foro Penal's vice president, Gonzalo Himiob, on Friday said 2,742 people detained in the context of those elections are eligible for amnesty under the new law. Of those, he said, 321 remain in custody, while 2,186 were released but must comply with court conditions such as regular check-ins.

The amnesty excludes those convicted of human rights violations, war crimes, murder, drug trafficking or corruption. It also denies relief to people "who are being prosecuted or may be prosecuted or convicted of promoting, instigating, soliciting, invoking, favoring, facilitating, financing, or participating in armed or forceful actions against" Venezuela "by foreign states, corporations or individuals."

Africa

Mugabe's son arrested in South Africa: A son of former Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe was arrested in South Africa along with another man over the shooting of a man at a house in Johannesburg, police and a family lawyer said.

Lawyer Ashley Mugiya told The Associated Press that **Bellarmine Chatunga Mugabe** was one of two men detained and taken in for questioning. Police said both were later placed under arrest and would face charges of attempted murder.

Mugabe is the youngest son of Zimbabwe's former leader, who died in 2019, and his second wife, Grace Mugabe.

South African national broadcaster SABC said the shooting occurred at the younger Mugabe's home in a plush Johannesburg suburb and that he was seen in handcuffs in the driveway after police arrived.

South African police said that an employee at the house had sustained a single gunshot wound and was in a critical condition, though it wasn't clear how many shots in total were fired. (AP)

'5 trapped miners presumed dead': Five miners trapped underground at a diamond mine in South Africa's Northern Cape Province are now presumed dead, said Mineral and Pe-

trolem Resources Minister Gwede Mantashe on Friday.

The miners were trapped following a mud rush incident that occurred in the early hours of Tuesday at the Ekapa Mine in Kimberley, the provincial capital.

Mantashe, during his oversight visit to the mine, said recovery efforts are ongoing but are expected to take longer due to water and drilling challenges.

"We hope that we can find those bodies, rather than keeping a hope that they are alive," Mantashe told reporters at the site. "If you are away from the 17th (February) to today in a mud rush, as a mineworker, I can tell you that I would easily do what I call presumption of death and assume that they are dead."

The minister said authorities will engage with the affected families. (Xinhua)

'Armed group killed 33 in Nigeria attacks': At least 33 people have been killed after Islamic militants launched simultaneous attacks on a district in northwest Nigeria, according to the police.

The attack took place on Wednesday in the Bui community of Kebbi state, police spokesman Bashir Usman said in a statement late Thursday night.

The assailants crossed from Sokoto state, parts of which are occupied by the Lakurawa insurgent group, Usman said. "Preliminary investigations confirm that armed Lakurawa militants entered the area to rustle cattle," he said, adding that security personnel have been deployed to restore calm and maintain order.

The Lakurawa group operates in parts of northwestern Nigeria, particularly around communities in the northwestern state of Sokoto. The armed group is known to engage in cattle rustling, raids on villages and kidnappings for ransom. (Xinhua)



Mugabe

Kuwait oil price surges to \$69.07 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti crude oil rose up 53 cents to USD 69.07 per barrel (pb) on Friday, compared to USD 68.54 pb the previous day, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) on Saturday.

In global markets, Brent crude futures increased 10 cents to USD 71.76 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude went down four cents to USD 66.39 pb.

Other Voices

War threats shake global oil stability

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

Soon after oil prices began to settle at a satisfactory level below \$70 a barrel, threats of a U.S. attack on Iran pushed prices above \$70, creating uncertainty about the direction of oil prices.

Despite a global availability of nearly 4 million barrels ready to be shipped, the threat of closing the Arabian Gulf, which could stop over 30 million barrels per day, caused panic in the oil markets and drove prices to unforeseen levels.

We know that war is unlikely, and the world would not allow the closure of the Gulf, which would cause chaos in the oil markets. This raises the question of why such threats are made, causing oil prices to jump.

The current U.S. administration has been calling for lower oil prices, urging OPEC countries not to reduce production so that oil remains available without restrictions. Yet, the same administration is threatening action against Iran, creating panic in the oil market and pushing prices to unforeseen levels.

Oil markets had been stable and quiet over the last month, providing consumers with consistent supply and smooth global movement.

Any threat to oil-producing countries in the Gulf will inevitably cause panic and push oil prices to \$70 or higher. Such a hike is unnecessary and creates concern for oil consumers.

OPEC+ is meeting next month to decide on further increases in oil supply to the markets. Under the current circumstances, let us hope that war will not occur, allowing OPEC+ to meet in a stable environment without threats or disruptions to oil supply.

At the same time, U.S. threats

against any party dealing with Russian oil are causing concerns for India and China. India is now forced to halt imports of Russian oil, while China is increasing its imports to 2.3 million barrels per day, benefiting from substantial discounts of \$9 to \$11 per barrel. The question arises as to how India will be compensated for the discounts it had been enjoying while importing over one million barrels per day of Russian oil at similar rates as China. India had been importing around 1.16 million barrels per day.

The question is how India will be compensated and where it will import the lost volume from. Most likely, the source will be Arabian Gulf producers, but it is uncertain whether India will be allowed the same discounts that were offered by Russia under various barter deals.

Now is not the time to switch from one oil supplier to another. Aside from quality mix and refining configurations, it is always better to stick with a consistent supplier and type of crude to maintain a steady supply of the same refined products, ensuring no quality issues for end consumers who are accustomed to a fixed standard.

We hope the ongoing discussions and negotiations between Iran and the USA will end peacefully, averting any war or military escalation in the region. The Gulf must remain free of conflict for the sake of global oil supply.

The world depends on oil supplied by Arabian countries, transported through the Gulf as crude oil, refined petroleum products, and gas. The Gulf is the main route for oil to the rest of the world and must remain safe and free from any threats or war to keep oil prices stable and reasonable for global consumers.

Global consumers have become accustomed to stable oil prices below \$70 per barrel. The question is whether this stability can be maintained.



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Initiative lowers barriers

Jazeera Airways unveils 'Fly Now and Pay Later' option

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost carrier, is the first Kuwaiti airline to launch deema, Kuwait's first licensed "Buy Now, Pay Later" (BNPL) payment solution. Marking the fastest ever airline integration with deema, this initiative under Jazeera's digital transformation project provides passengers with unprecedented financial flexibility through interest-free installments.

Integrated seamlessly into the digital booking journey, deema allows customers to split the cost of their flights into two to four manageable installments. The solution offers instant eligibility checks at checkout, ensuring a friction-free experience for value-conscious travelers.

Barathan Pasupathi, CEO of Jazeera Airways, said:

"At Jazeera Airways, we are committed to lowering the barriers to travel through agile digital innovation. By achieving our fastest ever payment integration with deema, we are not just adding a payment method; we are providing a seamless, Kuwaiti homegrown financial solution. This partnership empowers our passengers to 'Fly Now and Pay Later' with absolute ease, reinforcing our mission to make travel accessible to everyone."

deema currently supports transactions in Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD).

While passengers enjoy the flexibility of deferred payments, the system ensures merchants receive the full booking value upfront, with deema managing the end-to-end customer collection process.

This launch is a significant pillar of Jazeera's broader digital ecosystem strategy. By partnering with a local powerhouse like deema, Jazeera ties speed of execution with Kuwaiti fintech expertise.

Bader Al-Ghanim, Head of Innovation and Partnerships at deema highlighted:

"We are very excited to partner with Jazeera Airways as the first airline in Kuwait to introduce the deema solution. This was one of the quickest integrations achieved - thanks to the fast moving and talented team at Jazeera Airways."

This project truly demonstrates the airline's ability to rapidly deploy customer-centric solutions to meet the evolving needs of its tech-savvy travelers."

With the new product offering, Jazeera Airways' underscores an ongoing commitment to enhancing its digital transformation roadmap, while supporting the growth of its local digital economy. "Fly Now, Pay Later" is just one of many upcoming innovations designed to improve the customer experience across its expanding global network.

Redefining diversification in modern portfolio construction strategies beyond the 60/40 era

By NBK Wealth

Diversification is one of the most enduring principles in investment management. At its core, it is the practice of spreading risk across assets, strategies, and return-drivers to build portfolios that can remain resilient across a wide range of economic and market environments. For high-net-worth individuals and their advisors, diversification is not an abstract academic concept; it is central to the long-term preservation and growth of capital.

As Harry Markowitz, the Nobel laureate and father of Modern Portfolio Theory, famously observed, "Diversification is the only free lunch." While it cannot eliminate risk, diversification can minimize risks that are not compensated for by higher expected returns. In doing so, it allows investors to pursue long-term objectives with greater confidence and emotional discipline, particularly during periods of market stress.

The Mechanics of Diversification

Effective diversification depends on combining assets that are driven by different economic forces and that respond differently to changes in growth, inflation, interest rates, and market sentiment. Assets with prices that move independently of each other provide the greatest diversification benefits when combined in a portfolio. By contrast, assets with prices that often fall together when protection is most needed are not adding much diversification to a portfolio. Diversification also requires behavioral resilience as a well-diversified portfolio will always include some assets that are underperforming at any given

time, which can feel uncomfortable during strong bull markets. Over full market cycles, however, diversification helps smooth returns, reduce drawdowns, and limit the risk of permanent loss of capital.

Historical Context: The Rise of the 60/40 Portfolio

For much of the past four decades, diversification has largely been synonymous with the traditional 60/40 portfolio, combining equities and bonds. This framework was well suited to an environment characterized by disinflation, globalization, and accommodative monetary policy. During periods of economic stress, equities typically declined while government bonds rallied as central banks cut interest rates, making bonds an effective hedge as well as a source of income. From the early 1980s through the post-Global Financial Crisis period, this relationship proved remarkably reliable.

2022 Exposing the Limits of the 60/40 Approach

The year 2022 exposed the limits of the 60/40 approach. A sharp surge in inflation, driven by pandemic-related supply disruptions, expansive fiscal policy, and energy shocks, forced central banks into aggressive monetary tightening. Interest rates rose rapidly, and both equities and bonds experienced significant and simultaneous drawdowns. For many investors, the failure of bonds to provide protection came as a shock and challenged long-held assumptions about portfolio con-



struction.

This episode reflected more than a cyclical setback; it highlighted a shift in the broader macroeconomic regime. Geopolitical fragmentation, de-globalization, increased protectionism, and structural labor shortages have created an environment where the risk of inflation shocks and growth shocks is more balanced. In such an environment, central banks may be less able, or less willing, to respond to every downturn with aggressive easing. Relying on a single source of diversification is therefore no longer enough.

This does not mean that bonds have lost their relevance. High-quality bonds continue to play an important role, particularly as yields have reset to more attractive levels. Bonds can still provide income, liquidity, and downside protection in recessionary scenarios. However, diversification today must be broader and more intentional, incorporating structurally different sources of return.

Rethinking Diversification - Beyond Equities and Bonds

Broadening the traditional 60/40 framework to include alternative investments can improve portfolio diversification, with infrastructure and hedge funds serving as relevant exam-

ples of this expanded toolkit. Core infrastructure assets, such as regulated utilities, power distribution networks, and transportation assets, tend to generate stable and predictable cash flows supported by long-term contracts or regulatory frameworks. Demand for essential services is typically resilient, and revenues are often linked to inflation, providing a degree of real return protection. From a portfolio perspective, the performance of infrastructure has historically been independent of both equities and fixed income performance. Hedge funds can also offer meaningful diversification by focusing on specific strategies that do not depend on the direction of equity markets.

Key Takeaways

■ The 60/40 portfolio is too simplistic to provide investors with adequate diversification.

■ Investors should not abandon bonds as they still have an important role to play.

■ Diversification should be expanded thoughtfully, with a clear understanding of what each allocation is intended to achieve.

■ Combining equities, high quality fixed income, real assets such as infrastructure and carefully selected hedge fund strategies, can result in portfolios that are better equipped to navigate a wide range of economic outcomes.

■ In an environment of greater uncertainty, regime shifts and geopolitical risk, diversification remains the only free lunch, but it must be earned through broader thinking and disciplined portfolio construction.

■ Preserving wealth in the new era demands a truly multi-asset framework capable of weathering shifting global macro conditions.

Concludes participation in AI Hackathon by INJAZ Kuwait and BP

Gulf Bank showcases its experience in digital marketing and the use of artificial intelligence

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: As part of its ongoing strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, Gulf Bank concluded its sponsorship and participation in the Artificial Intelligence Hackathon organized by INJAZ in collaboration with BP. The two day event was held at Mövenpick Hotel Al Bida'a and brought together university students from various higher education institutions across the State of Kuwait.

This participation reflects the longstanding partnership between Gulf Bank and INJAZ, which is centered on empowering Kuwaiti youth, enhancing their practical capabilities, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation. Through educational and training programs aligned with the evolving needs of the labor market and the digital economy, the partnership aims to equip young people with future ready skills and knowledge.

On the first day of the hackathon, Mr. Mahdi Sulaiman, Executive Manager in Marketing at Gulf Bank, took part in a specialized session titled "Digital Marketing and the Use of Artificial Intelligence." The session focused on designing modern marketing and promotional strategies through advanced artificial intelligence technologies and included a practical component that enabled participants to apply the acquired concepts within collaborative team settings.

At the conclusion of the hackathon, which aimed to train students on building startup models using artificial intelligence tools, Mr. Dari



Dari AlBader is on the judging panel, alongside Laila Al-Mutairi.



Mahdi Sulaiman receives an honorary shield from INJAZ Business Development Manager Jaber Ashkanani.

AlBader, General Manager Corporate Affairs at Gulf Bank, participated as a member of the judging panel responsible for evaluating projects and selecting the winning teams on the second day of the competition.

Gulf Bank's participation in the hackathon underscores its continued support for INJAZ's youth empowerment programs and initiatives, as well as its commitment to investing in national human capital. This is achieved by providing young people with knowledge sharing opportunities and hands on experience that enhance their readiness for the future and support the State of Kuwait's transition toward a knowledge based economy and comprehensive digital transformation.

The hackathon represents a tangible outcome of the strategic partnership between Gulf Bank and INJAZ, as both parties remain keen to launch high impact initiatives that prepare a generation of empowered youth capable of innovation, initiative taking, and transforming ideas into viable and scalable projects.

Gulf Bank places particular emphasis on supporting and empowering youth across educational, professional, and technological domains, recognizing their pivotal role in shaping a sustainable future. In this context, the Bank actively launches and participates in innovative initiatives that advance digital and technological skills among young people, including its annual Datathon, which encourages youth to leverage modern technologies, data analytics, and artificial intelligence.

Mahmoud Totonji appointed General Manager of Riyadh RHQ

Moody's establishes regional headquarters in Saudi Arabia, deepening presence in the region

NEW YORK, Feb 21, (BUSINESS WIRE): Moody's Corporation (NYSE: MCO) announced today that it has established a regional headquarters (RHQ) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, reflecting Moody's ongoing commitment to support the development of the Kingdom's capital markets and economy. This investment aligns to the Kingdom's Vision 2030 initiative, and underscores its dynamism and growth.

The new RHQ marks an expansion of Moody's presence in Saudi Arabia, where the company first opened an office in 2018, and reflects its longstanding commitment to the Middle East. The headquarters will strengthen Moody's en-

gagement with Saudi institutions and enable broader access to Moody's decision-grade data, analytics and insights.

"Our decision to establish a regional headquarters in Riyadh reflects our confidence in Saudi Arabia's strong economic momentum, as well as our commitment to helping domestic and international investors unlock opportunities with our expertise and insights," said. "We are well positioned to provide the analytical capabilities and market intelligence that investors and institutions need to navigate evolving markets across the Middle East."

Mahmoud Totonji will lead the RHQ as General Manager. Mr. Totonji brings extensive ex-

perience in establishing and growing financial institutions across the Gulf Cooperation Council region, including his previous work establishing Moody's Ratings in Saudi Arabia.

In a world shaped by increasingly interconnected risks, Moody's (NYSE: MCO) data, insights, and innovative technologies help customers develop a holistic view of their world and unlock opportunities. With a rich history in global markets and a diverse workforce of approximately 16,000 across more than 40 countries, Moody's gives customers the comprehensive perspective needed to act with confidence and thrive. Learn more at moody's.com.



J9 Aircraft - A320neo

BUSINESS

ABK and ABK Wealth Management win four prestigious awards at the International Finance Annual Awards 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) and ABK Wealth Management, the Group's investment arm, have won four prestigious awards from the leading global magazine International Finance for 2025. ABK received the awards for "Best New Mobile Banking App" and "Best Investor Relationship Bank", while ABK Wealth Management won "Fastest Growing Wealth Management Solution Provider" and "Most Innovative Investment Advisory Company" in Kuwait.

This achievement reflects the Group's continued success in advancing digital transformation and enhancing transparency and trust with the investment community, reinforcing its position as one of the most innovative and transparent financial and banking institutions in the Kuwaiti market.

The awards were presented during International Finance magazine's ceremony in Dubai, attended by Dr. Abdulaziz Jawad, Chief Strategy Officer at ABK and Chairman of ABK Wealth Management, Mohammad Al Qattan, Chief Consumer Officer at ABK, and a number of senior representatives from leading regional banks.

ABK's application was selected for the award based on its innovative user interface, integration of advanced technologies to personalize services, rapid responsiveness, and the provision of more than 20 fully integrated digital services that eliminate the need to visit a branch.

ABK was also named "Best Investor Relations Bank" in recognition of its excellence in financial disclosure, organizing regular investor meetings, ensuring easy access to financial data through its digital platforms, holding periodic analyst conferences on quarterly financial results, and announcing its plans and any operational developments through the stock exchange website, its own web-



site, and direct communication with investors to respond to their various inquiries, among other criteria.

Meanwhile, the "Fastest Growing Wealth Management Solutions Provider" award reflects the strong confidence investors place in ABK Wealth Management, driven by growth in assets under management and the expansion of financial services and products. The "Most Innovative Investment Advisor" award underscores the company's leadership in integrating digital solutions and advanced analytics to design flexible investment portfolios aimed at achieving optimal returns for clients.

Precision in Execution

On this occasion, Jawad stated, "These awards confirm the precise execution of the strategic plans we set years ago. We take pride in this global recognition from an international institution such as International Finance, which stands as a testament to the dedication of our team and the consistency of our vision. It confirms our success in delivering unconventional advisory solutions that exceed our customers' expectations."

He added that this success serves as motivation to continue delivering sustainable added value to customers amid a global economic landscape full of challenges and opportunities, while maintaining a balance between growth and adherence to the highest standards of governance and transparency in the market.

Jawad further noted, "We place transparency with our shareholders as a top priority within our methodology. We are committed to holding quarterly analyst conferences on financial



Dr. Abdulaziz Jawad



Mohammad Al Qattan



Dr. Abdulaziz Jawad and Mohammad Al Qattan during the awards ceremony.



New achievements in the record of the Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait Group.

results to disclose our achievements and future plans. We participate in numerous conferences to engage with investors and will continue to strengthen commu-

nication channels and apply the highest governance standards."

He emphasized that ABK Wealth Management's receipt of these awards translates the com-



pany's dedicated efforts to integrate advanced technological solutions and digital analytics tools to design investment portfolios capable of transforming economic challenges into real growth opportunities, enabling clients to access new investment horizons with clarity and confidence.

"These titles are the result of the deep trust we have built with our partners through years of commitment to transparency and governance. We do not merely manage assets; we build a legacy for future generations. We will continue to expand our operations to remain the most trusted partner in building and growing wealth and in providing banking solutions aligned with developments in the banking industry, offering an exceptional experience characterized by transparency, speed, and absolute security," Jawad continued.

He concluded, "These awards reflect the great efforts, high expertise, and team spirit of all members of the Group, contributing to an ideal environment for innovating banking and investment solutions and services that earn the satisfaction and trust of our customers and all stakeholders."

Investment in Technology

Farn his part, Al Qattan said, "Winning these awards is the result of our intensive investment in technology and our commitment to keeping pace with technological advancements to deliver a smart, fast, and secure user experience that meets the expectations of all our customer segments."

He added that the awards prove the Bank's leadership in setting standards for an exceptional banking experience in the

market. They reflect the significant progress achieved in delivering digital services, engaging with customers, providing appropriate advisory services, and maintaining the highest security standards.

He noted that the ABK mobile application offers more than 20 digital services that can be completed without visiting branches and in accordance with the highest security standards, enhancing customer trust, saving time and effort, and enabling them to conduct financial transactions quickly and around the clock.

Al Qattan affirmed ABK's commitment to continuously developing its application and providing additional digital services for all customer segments. He highlighted its user-friendly interface and ability to customize services for specific segments such as elite clients, stressing the Bank's dedication to continuing its digital transformation strategy to strengthen its competitive position within the local banking sector.

In conclusion, Al Qattan stated, "These titles reflect a culture of innovation and serve as international recognition of the high-quality standards adopted by ABK and our success in turning challenges into opportunities to enhance customer experience and strengthen their confidence in conducting banking and financial transactions through diverse solutions."

The new awards add to a series of achievements that ABK continues to accomplish, reflecting its distinguished performance across various areas of the banking sector, including governance, digital services, and contact center operations. This demonstrates the confidence of specialized evaluation institutions in the level of service provided to all customer segments and the Bank's ongoing commitment to innovating banking solutions and services that meet their evolving expectations.

Reaffirms its support of national talent and the development of their financial skills

Boursa Kuwait concludes its sponsorship of the CFA Research Challenge

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Boursa Kuwait concluded its sponsorship of the CFA Institute Research Challenge for the second consecutive year. Organized by the CFA Institute and CFA Society Kuwait, the competition reflects the company's continued commitment to developing human capital and promoting financial literacy as the bourse aims to contribute to the growth of the Kuwaiti capital market and strengthen its standards of professionalism and transparency.

The CFA Research Challenge serves as a hands-on educational platform for university students to develop their financial analysis skills, assess investment opportunities and strengthen their ability to prepare research and make investment decisions in line with professional frameworks and recognized ethical standards in capital markets.

Boursa Kuwait's sponsors hip falls under the company's "The Bell" initiative, which aims to enhance financial awareness and equip the youth with the technical and analytical skills required to contribute effectively to the financial sector and support the efficacy and sustainability of the Kuwaiti capital market.

This year's edition saw the participation of two teams from Kuwait University as well as one team each from the American University of the Middle East (AUM) and the American University of Kuwait (AUK). Participants prepared research reports on "Premier" Market company Mabane, delivering in-depth financial analyses and investment recommendations based on recognized professional standards before a judging panel comprised of:

■ Mr. Tareq Al-Saleh – Acting Chief Investment Officer, InvestGB

■ Mr. Asif Khan – Chief Investment Officer, Action Energy Company

■ Ms. Sara Dashti – Vice President, Equities and Fixed Income Investments Department, Kamco Invest



Boursa Kuwait concludes sponsorship of CFA Research Challenge for second year.

■ Mr. Nitin Pal – Partner, Provititi

The competition saw a high level of academic and analytical performance, with the Kuwait University team composed of Alaa Hamdan, Abdulaziz AlObaid, Mohammad Al-Kandari, Sultan AlShehab and Mohammad AlZoubi securing first place. The winning team was advised by Dr. Sulaiman AlBader, Assistant Professor of Finance and Financial Institutions at the College of Business Administration.

In addition to overseeing the student selection process, Dr. AlBader served as the primary liaison with the CFA Society. He also reviewed the research reports and presentations, as well as providing guidance and feed-

back to students without influencing their decisions or written materials.

Addressing the competition's participants, Senior Director of Marketing and Corporate Communications at Boursa Kuwait, Mr. Nasser Mishari Al-Sanousi, said: "The conclusion of the CFA Research Challenge marks an important milestone in your academic and professional journey, successfully bridging theory and practice and offering you the opportunity to develop your financial analysis skills and adhere to the highest standards of professional practice, preparing you for the real-world demands of the investment sector and capital markets."

"Boursa Kuwait is proud to be the first official sponsor and stra-

tegic partner of this competition in Kuwait. We also value our ongoing partnership with the CFA Institute and the CFA Society Kuwait, which stems from our firm belief in the importance of supporting educational initiatives that enhance financial knowledge and develop qualified national talent capable of supporting the growth and stability of the financial sector. We commend all participating teams for the advanced level they demonstrated and congratulate the winning team on this well-deserved achievement," he added.

Al-Sanousi concluded his remarks by reaffirming Boursa Kuwait's aspiration that the competition's participants will contribute to the continued development of the Kuwaiti capi-

tal market and increase its competitiveness on the regional and international stage. He also expressed his appreciation to the CFA Institute and CFA Society Kuwait for their role in promoting financial literacy and investing in young talent.

Boursa Kuwait signed a Memorandum of Understanding with CFA Society Kuwait in October 2018, followed by an agreement of understanding with the CFA Institute in October 2025. Both agreements aim to strengthen educational collaboration and provide investment fundamentals content through Boursa Kuwait's educational portal, Boursa Academy, in addition to offering preferential access to a range of the Institute's programs and certifications.

This collaboration seeks to enhance investment awareness and deepen understanding of financial instruments, supporting market efficiency and reinforcing investor confidence. It also includes the implementation of awareness initiatives under the "The Bell" initiative to promote financial literacy, as well as women's empowerment initiatives held to commemorate International Women's Day.

"The CFA Research Challenge provides a practical experience that closely reflects the realities of working in the investment sector and capital markets, allowing students to apply their knowledge within a professional and competitive environment," said CFA Society Kuwait Chairman Mr. Talal Al-Khamis.

"The level of commitment to research and analysis demonstrated by the students reflects a high degree of dedication and ambition, qualities we strive to cultivate through such impactful initiatives. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for their valued partnership and continued support in developing young talent and strengthening their technical capabilities and look forward to seeing these students achieve distinguished accomplishments throughout their future professional careers," he added.

The strategic partnership between Boursa Kuwait, CFA Society Kuwait and the CFA Institute is part of the company's broader efforts to create a positive, sustainable impact on the community, in line with its corporate sustainability strategy and commitment to developing human capital and advancing financial awareness and knowledge. It is also aligned with Goal 4 - Quality Education - and Goal 17 - Partnerships for the Goals - of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. These efforts reinforce Boursa Kuwait's role as a pioneering national institution that strengthens confidence in the Kuwaiti capital market and supports Kuwait's economic development.

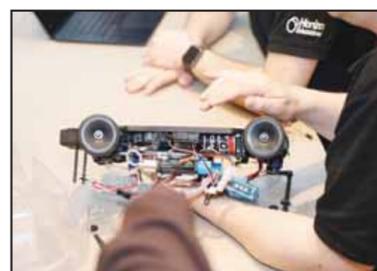
Mohammed Naser Al-Sayer highlights skills in resilience and teamwork

ALSAYER Group launches practice hydrogen car race for students

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: ALSAYER Group, in partnership with Kuwait University's College of Science and Horizon Educational, has successfully advanced to the third stage of the Horizon Educational Hydrogen Vehicle Racing Championship program. On February 14, 2026, student teams gathered at Kuwait University to participate RC car inspections and in the experimental race trials, marking a pivotal milestone in their preparation for the upcoming national championship.

This stage builds on the earlier phases of training and technical workshops, where students gained knowledge in clean energy, hydrogen fuel cell technologies, and engineering design. Now, the focus has shifted to hands-on practice racing, giving teams the opportunity to test their vehicles under competition-like conditions.

Assistant Professor of Computer Science Dr. Nora Al-Jeri added that the trials embody the College of Science's mission to connect academic



Photos during the event.

learning with practical innovation, preparing students to excel in both national and international forums.

Mr. Mohammed Naser Al-Sayer, Executive Board

Member and Chairman of the Sustainability Committee, expressed pride in seeing

students transition from classroom training to live racing, highlighting that this

stage develops resilience, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. He also emphasized that the mock races are essential for students to experience the dynamics of real competition, from vehicle performance to teamwork under pressure.

Eng. Nehad AlHaj Ali, Group Manager of Corporate Excellence at ALSAYER Group, explained that the mock races allow students to refine their designs and strategies, ensuring stronger performance in the championship. He also noted that this practice competition is a crucial step in the championship system, bridging the gap between technical preparation and full-scale racing.

The experimental race trials not only strengthen educational outcomes but also reinforce ALSAYER Group's commitment to sustainability and innovation. By immersing students in a simulated competition environment, the program ensures they are fully prepared for the national championship in April 2026.

US economic growth slows to 1.4% in Q4

Consumer spending rises 2.4%

WASHINGTON, Feb 21, (AP): U.S. economic growth slowed in the final three months of last year, dragged down by the six-week shutdown of the federal government and a pullback in consumer spending.

The nation's gross domestic product - the total output of goods and services - increased at a 1.4% annual rate in the fourth quarter, the Commerce Department reported Friday, down from 4.4% in the July-September quarter and 3.8% in the quarter before that.

The figures point to what could be a more modest pace of growth in the coming quarters, as consumers have taken on more debt and saved less to maintain their spending, a process that may be difficult to sustain. Business investment, other than data centers and equipment dedicated to artificial intelligence, grew at only a moderate pace.

Still, a measure of underlying growth that focuses on consumer and business spending was mostly healthy at 2.4%, economists said. The sharp slowdown in government outlays because of the shutdown shaved a full percentage point from growth.

Consumers and companies spent at a "reasonably solid" pace, said Martha Gimbel, executive director of the Budget Lab at Yale and former economist in the Biden White House. "This is not a disastrous report."

Also Friday, the Supreme Court struck down many of President Donald Trump's tariffs, which have lifted inflation slightly and likely discouraged many companies from hiring by raising their costs. At a news conference, Trump quickly promised to reimpose the tariffs under different laws than the one the court invalidated.

Consumer spending also rose 2.4% in the fourth quarter, a solid increase but notably below the third quarter's healthy 3.5% gain. Federal government outlays plunged nearly 17% amid the shutdown. That decline should mostly reverse in the coming quarters, however.

The outside growth last summer and fall - when the economy expanded at about a 4% annual pace - partly reflected sharply lower imports. Companies ramped up imports in the first quarter of last year to get ahead of President Donald Trump's tariffs. After boosting growth in the second and third quarters, trade had little impact at the end of last year.

Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG, said the report reflected a "one-legged" economy boosted mostly by artificial intelligence, which is fueling business spending and has also lifted wealth for those households that own stocks and have benefited from rising share prices.

Many households, however, have had to take on more debt to fuel their spending. The saving rate dropped to just 3.6% in the fourth quarter, the second-lowest figure since August 2008, when the economy was mired

in the Great Recession.

"The economy looks golden on paper, but beneath the surface is lead," Swonk said.

Early Friday, before the figures were released, Trump attacked congressional Democrats for shutting down the government last fall. He also reiterated his criticism of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell for not cutting interest rates more quickly.

"The Democrat Shutdown cost the U.S.A. at least two points in GDP," Trump posted on his social media site. "That's why they are doing it, in mini form, again. No Shutdowns! Also, LOWER INTEREST RATES. 'Two Late' Powell is the WORST!!!"

A separate report Friday showed that inflation, according to the Fed's preferred measure, accelerated in December, as the cost of goods such as furniture, clothes, and groceries picked up. That makes it less likely the Fed will reduce its key interest rate in the coming months.

Earlier this month, Trump predicted a blowout gain in GDP of more than 5% even if the government shutdown was factored into the figures. Trump has been trying to claim that the economy is at its strongest point in history, even though the new data shows that growth slowed, compared with 2024, following his return to the White House.

The data arrives before Trump delivers the State of the Union address on Tuesday, where he is expected to say that the economy is booming.

The report also underscores an odd aspect of the U.S. economy: It is growing steadily, but without creating many jobs. Growth was a solid 2.2% in 2025, yet a government report last week showed that employers added less than 200,000 jobs last year - the fewest since COVID struck in 2020.

Economists point to several possible reasons for the gap: The Trump administration's crackdown on immigration has sharply slowed population growth, reducing the number of people available to take jobs. It's one reason that the unemployment rate rose only slightly - to 4.3% from 4% - last year, even with the nearly non-existent hiring.

Some businesses may also be holding back on adding jobs out of uncertainty about whether artificial intelligence will enable them to produce more without finding new employees. And the cost of tariffs has reduced many companies' profits, possibly leading them to cut back on hiring.

The economy is also unusual right now because growth is solid, inflation has slowed a bit, and unemployment is low, but surveys show that Americans are generally gloomy about the economy. In January, a measure of consumer confidence fell to its lowest level since 2014, yet consumers have kept spending, propelling growth.

Some of that spending may be disproportionately driven by upper-income consumers, in a phenomenon known as the "K-shaped" economy. Yet data from many large banks suggests lower-income consumers are still raising their spending, even if by not as much.

NEW YORK, Feb 21, (AP): Businesses face a new wave of uncertainty after the Supreme Court struck down tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump under an emergency powers law and Trump vowed to work around the ruling to keep his tariffs in place.

The Trump administration says its tariffs help boost American manufacturers and reduce the trade gap. But many U.S. businesses have had to raise prices and adjust in other ways to offset higher costs spurred by the tariffs.

It remains to be seen how much relief businesses and consumers will actually get from Friday's ruling. Within hours of the court's decision, Trump pledged to use a different law to impose a 10% tariff on all imports that would last 150 days, and to explore other ways to impose additional tariffs on countries he says engage in unfair trade practices.

"Any boost to the economy from lowering tariffs in the near-term is likely to be partly offset by a prolonged period of uncertainty," said Michael Pearce, an economist at Oxford Economics. "With the administration likely to rebuild tariffs through other, more durable, means, the overall tariffs rate may yet end up settling close to current levels."

Efforts to claw back the estimated \$133 billion to \$175 billion of previously collected tariffs now deemed illegal are bound to be complicated, and will likely favor larger companies with more resources. Consumers hoping for a refund are unlikely to be compensated.

With Trump's unyielding position on tariffs, many businesses are braced for years of court battles.

Basic Fun, a Florida-based maker of toys such as Lincoln Logs and Tonka trucks, last week joined a slew of other businesses in a lawsuit seeking to claw back tariffs paid to the government.

While company CEO Jay Foreman is concerned about any new tariffs Trump may impose, he doesn't think they will affect toys. Still, he said, "I do worry about some type of perpetual fight over this, at least for the next three years."

The new 10% tariff Trump announced Friday immediately raised questions for Daniel Posner, the owner of Grapes The Wine Co., in White Plains, New York. Since wine shipments take about two weeks to cross the Atlantic, he wonders if a shipment arriving Monday will be affected.

"We're reactive to what's become a very unstable

situation," Posner said.

Ron Kurnik owns Superior Coffee Roasting Co. in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, across the border from Canada. In addition to U.S. tariffs, Kurnik faced retaliatory tariffs from Canada for much of last year when he exported his coffee.

"It's like a nightmare we just want to wake up from," said Kurnik, whose company has raised prices by 6% twice since the tariffs went into effect. While he's pleased with the Supreme Court's ruling, he doesn't think he will ever see a refund.

A wide array of industries, including retail, tech and the agricultural sector, used the Supreme Court ruling as an opportunity to remind Trump of how his trade policies have affected their businesses.

The Business Roundtable, a group that lobbies on behalf of more than 200 U.S. companies, released a statement encouraging the administration to limit the focus of tariffs going forward to specific unfair trade practices and national security concerns.

In the retail industry, stores of all stripes have embraced different ways to offset the effects of tariffs - from absorbing some of the costs themselves, to cutting expenses and diversifying their supply network. Still, they have had to pass on some price increases at a time when shoppers have been particularly sensitive to inflationary pressures.

Dave French, executive vice president of government relations for The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail industry trade group, said he hoped lower courts would ensure "a seamless process" to refund tariffs. That issue wasn't addressed in Friday's ruling.

For the technology sector, Trump's tariffs caused major headaches. Many of its products are either built overseas or depend on imports of key components. The Computer & Communications Industry Association, which represents a spectrum of technology companies employing more than 1.6 million people, expressed hope that the decision will ease the trade tensions.

"With this decision behind us, we look forward to bringing more stability to trade policy," said Jonathan McHale, the association's vice president for digital trade.

Farmers, who have been stung by higher prices for equipment and fertilizer since the tariffs went into effect, and reduced demand for their exports, also spoke out. "We strongly encourage the president to avoid us-

Businesses brace for tariff uncertainty

Trump vows new 10% import tariffs despite court setback

ing any other available authorities to impose tariffs on agricultural inputs that would further increase costs," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall.

The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act did not give the president authority to tax imports, a power that belongs to Congress. But the decision only affects tariffs imposed under that law, so some industries will see no relief at all.

The decision leaves in effect tariffs on steel, upholstered furniture, kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities, according to the Home Furnishings Association, which represents 15,000 furniture stores in North America.

At Revolution Brewing in Chicago, the aluminum they use for cans costs as much as the ingredients that go inside them because of tariffs Trump has placed on metals that are not affected by the Supreme Court ruling. While the cans are made in Chicago, the aluminum comes from Canada, said Josh Deth, managing partner at the brewery.

Tariffs have been just one challenge for his business, which is also affected by volatile barley prices and a slowdown in demand for craft beer.

"Everything kind of adds up," he said. "The beverage industry needs relief here. We're getting crushed by the prices of aluminum."

Italian winemakers hard-hit by the tariffs greeted the Supreme Court decision with skepticism, warning that the decision may just deepen uncertainty around trade with the U.S.

The U.S. is Italy's largest wine market, with sales having tripled in value over the past 20 years. New tariffs on the EU, which the Trump administration initially threatened would be 200%, had sent fear throughout the industry, which remained even after the U.S. reduced, delayed and negotiated down.

"There is a more than likely risk that tariffs will be reimposed through alternative legal channels, compounded by the uncertainty this ruling may generate in commercial relations between Europe and the United States," said Lamberto Frescobaldi, president of UIV, a trade association that represents more than 800 winemakers.

Elsewhere in Europe, initial reaction focused on renewed upheaval and confusion regarding costs facing businesses exporting to the U.S.

Importers eye billions in potential refunds after tariff ruling

Supreme Court strikes down Trump's signature tariffs

WASHINGTON, Feb 21, (AP): The Supreme Court on Friday struck down President Donald Trump's biggest and boldest tariffs. But the justices left a \$133 billion question unanswered: What's going to happen to the money the government has already collected in import taxes now declared unlawful?

Companies have been lining up for refunds. But the way forward could prove chaotic.

When the smoke clears, trade lawyers say, importers are likely to get money back - eventually. "It's going to be a bumpy ride for awhile," said trade lawyer Joyce Adetutu, a partner at the Vinson & Elkins law firm.

The refund process is likely to be hashed out by a mix of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency, the specialized Court of International Trade in New York and other lower courts, according to a note to clients by lawyers at the legal firm Clark Hill.

"The amount of money is substantial," Adetutu said. "The courts are going to have a hard time. Importers are going to have a hard time."

Still, she added, "it's going to be really difficult not to have some sort of refund option" given how decisively the Supreme Court repudiated Trump's tariffs.

In its 6-3 opinion on Friday, the court ruled Trump's attempt to use an emergency powers law to enact the levies was not valid. Two of the three justices appointed by Trump joined the majority in striking down the first major piece of his second-term agenda to come before them.

At issue are double-digit tariffs Trump imposed on almost every country in the world last year by invoking the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). The Supreme Court ruled that the law did not give the president authority to tax imports, a power that belongs to Congress.

The U.S. customs agency has already collected \$133 billion in IEEPA tariffs as of mid-December. But consumers hoping for a refund are unlikely to be compensated for the higher prices they paid when companies passed along the cost of the tariffs; that's more likely to go to the companies themselves.

In a dissenting opinion, Justice Brett Kavanaugh

dinged his colleagues for dodging the refund issue: "The Court says nothing today about whether, and if so how, the Government should go about returning the billions of dollars that it has collected from importers."

Borrowing a word that Justice Amy Coney Barrett - who sided with the majority - used during the court's November hearing on the case, Kavanaugh warned that "the refund process is likely to be a 'mess.'"

"I guess it has to get litigated for the next two years," Trump told reporters at a press conference Friday, in which he decried the court's decision and said he was "absolutely ashamed" of some justices who ruled against his tariffs. "We'll end up being in court for the next five years."

The end of the IEEPA tariffs could help the economy by easing inflationary pressures. The tariff refunds - like other tax refunds - could stimulate spending and growth. But the impacts are likely to be modest.

Most countries still face steep tariffs from the U.S. on specific sectors, and Trump intends to replace the IEEPA levies using other options. The refunds that do get issued will take time to roll out - 12 to 18 months, estimates TD Securities.

The U.S. customs agency does have a process for refunding duties when importers can show there's been some kind of error. The agency might try to build on the existing system to refund Trump's IEEPA tariffs, said trade lawyer Dave Townsend, a partner with the law firm Dorsey & Whitney.

And there has been a precedent for courts making arrangements to give companies their money back in trade cases. In the 1990s, the courts struck down as unconstitutional a harbor maintenance fee on exports and set up a system for exporters to apply for refunds.

But the courts and U.S. customs have never had to deal with anything like this - thousands of importers and tens of billions of dollars at once.

"Just because the process is difficult to administer doesn't mean the government has the right to hold on to fees that were collected unlawfully," said trade lawyer Alexis Early, partner at the law firm Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner.

Ryan Majerus, a partner at King & Spalding and a former U.S. trade official, said it's hard to know how the government will deal with the massive demand for refunds. It might try to streamline the process, perhaps setting up a special website where importers can claim their refunds.

But Adetutu warns that "the government is well-positioned to make this as difficult as possible for importers. I can see a world where they push as much responsibility as possible onto the importer" - maybe forcing them to go to court to seek the refunds.

Many companies, including Costco, Revlon and canned seafood and chicken producer Bumble Bee Foods, filed lawsuits claiming refunds even before the Supreme Court ruled, essentially seeking to be at the head of line if the tariffs were struck down.

There are likely to be more legal battles ahead. Manufacturers might, for example, sue for a share of any refunds given to suppliers that jacked up the price of raw materials to cover the tariffs.

"We may see years of ongoing litigation in multiple jurisdictions," Early said.

Consumers, though, are unlikely to enjoy a refund windfall. The higher prices they've had to pay would likely be hard to attribute to a specific tariff. Should they pursue refunds anyway? Early wouldn't advise wasting money on legal fees, but said: "In America, we have the ability to file a lawsuit for anything we want."

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, a Democrat and Trump antagonist, is demanding a refund on behalf of his state's 5.11 million households. In a letter addressed to Trump and released by Pritzker's gubernatorial campaign, the governor said the tariffs had cost each Illinois household \$1,700 - or \$8.7 billion. Pritzker said failure to pay will elicit "further action."

Nevada Treasurer Zach Conine submitted a payment request to the federal government for \$2.1 billion to recoup the costs of the tariffs, his office announced Friday.

"As Nevada's chief investment officer, I have a responsibility to try to recoup every single dollar that the Trump Administration takes from Nevada families," Conine said in a statement.

'I think when the lights go out, it's over'

Netflix releases Dane interview 'Famous Last Words' after his death

LOS ANGELES, Feb 21, (AP): Eric Dane did not believe in an afterlife.

"I think when the lights go out, it's over," he said in an interview for "Famous Last Words," a Netflix series that's available now. "I do believe that once we go to sleep or however it is we - we go, once we're gone, we're gone."

He also hoped in the interview that his two daughters, Billie and Georgia, would remember how he was present in their lives. He went to beach volleyball games and dance recitals, adding that he'd seen "The Nutcracker" many times and his review was, "That thing drones on, man."

The "Grey's Anatomy" and "Euphoria" actor died Thursday less than one year after he announced he was diagnosed with ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease, which is a fatal nerve system disease.

"Famous Last Words" is based on a show that originated in Denmark. The premise is that a person is interviewed - executive producer Brad Falchuk does the questioning in the Netflix show - and it will not be released until their death.

Dane's interview is the second epi-



This image released by Netflix shows actor Eric Dane, (left), and Brad Falchuk in an episode of, 'Famous Last Words.' (AP)

sode. The first was with primatologist and conservationist Jane Goodall, who died last October. Falchuk tells The Associated Press he's recorded five conversations already with plans for more.

No one else was present on set for the taping last November and even the camera operators were in a different room.

"The guest needs to be totally safe to speak honestly and say whatever they want and know that they're leaving something for people to experience with them not here," Falchuk said on Friday. Only a small number of people work on the production of the show afterward. "Very, very few people have seen it and very, very few people even know whose done it," explained Fal-

chuk.

"Famous people don't often get an opportunity to speak honestly about themselves and about what they think in the world," said Falchuk who is married to Oscar winner Gwyneth Paltrow. "They have to be very protective, especially nowadays. They say things and it goes everywhere and it gets misinterpreted and they also want to keep working or keep you know doing what they do, so this is an opportunity for them not to have to be guarded."

After his ALS diagnosis, Dane became an advocate to raise awareness and money to fight the disease. After his death, the organization I AM ALS released clips of him recorded for an upcoming documentary.

"It's a tough thing to respond to, it's a tough thing to live with, yeah. But it's really hard for the people around me too. And it's almost like - in a weird way, it's to some benefit, because I spend a lot of my time consoling others," he said in a clip released Friday.

Filmmaker Chris Burke also captured Dane on a trip to Washington D.C. where he lobbied politicians for

a bill that would help accelerate research, expand access to treatment and secure one billion dollars in federal funding for ALS patients.

"He understood that ALS is not just a diagnosis; it is a call to action for families, for answers, and for change," the organization said in a statement after Dane's death.

In the Netflix show, Dane also reflected on the lifelong impact of losing his father at age 7 and subsequent struggles with addiction to drugs and alcohol. He said he immediately knew he would marry Rebecca Gayheart when he met her and shared a memory of a family vacation to France where he spent a car ride speaking with a "spot on" French accent that made everyone laugh.

The most poignant part of the taping was at the end - when Falchuk left the room for Dane to look into the camera and deliver a final message which he dedicated to his daughters. Dane shared that his diagnosis with ALS taught him to be present. He also hoped the girls would "fall in love," whether it be with a person or something that would make them want to wake up each morning.

"I hope you won't just listen to me. I hope you'll hear me," he said.

Falchuk said this final message is something each guest has the opportunity to do. "People do all different kinds of stuff. Some people write it. Jane improvised hers. Eric wrote his," said Falchuk, who was visibly emotional at the idea of Dane's daughters watching his message.

"It's hard to think about that," he said. "They're grieving and he loved them so much. They loved him so much and they're just a beautiful family. I don't know. Maybe they'll watch it. Maybe they'll never watch it, whatever it may be."

Falchuk and Dane had dinner prior to filming and they didn't know each other well, but a new friendship had developed from the experience.

"I'm grieving Eric a lot right now. It's very hard. I was not expecting this to happen this soon. And I miss him," said Falchuk. "It's hard when they die. It is hard."

The exchange seemed to also have an impact on Dane, who told Falchuk, "This is probably the most revealing and in-depth conversation I've had with just about anybody."

Obituary

Belgian opera legend

Award-winning singer José van Dam dies

BELGIUM, Feb 21, (AP): José van Dam, an award-winning Belgian bass-baritone opera singer who created the title role in Olivier Messiaen's "Saint François d'Assise," has died at age 85, a Belgian conservatory announced Thursday.

Van Dam died Tuesday in Croatia, said Natsumi Krischer of the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel in Belgium. Van Dam founded its voice section in 2004 and was a master in residence there.



Van Dam

Born Joseph van Damme in Brussels on Aug. 25, 1940, van Dam attended the Brussels Royal Conservatory and adopted José van Dam as his stage name when he made his opera debut in 1960 as Don Basilio in Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" at the Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège.

He sang at the Paris Opera for the first time two years later as Priam and the Voice of Mercury in Berlioz's "Les Troyens." His profile rose in the late 1960s and early 1970s at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, where Lorin Maazel was chief conductor, and with 1971 performances at the Salzburg Easter Festival as Don Pizarro in Beethoven's "Fidelio" with conductor Herbert von Karajan.

Van Dam performed Escamillo in Bizet's "Carmen" for his debuts at Milan's Teatro alla Scala in 1972, London's Royal Opera in 1973 and New York's Metropolitan Opera in 1975, then sang the title role in Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro" on tour with the Paris Opera at the Met in 1976.

He was particularly acclaimed for the title roles of Verdi's "Falstaff" and "Simon Boccanegra," Mozart's "Don Giovanni," Berg's "Wozzeck" and Musorgsky's "Boris Godunov" along with Philipp II in Verdi's "Don Carlo," Hans Sachs in Wagner's "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg" and Amfortas in Wagner's "Parsifal."

"Before taking on a new role that has interested me, I always looked carefully at the tessitura," van Dam said during an interview with Opera magazine published in 2010. "At age 20, I was more of a bass; with the help of careful exercises, the voice stretched further at both ends, and especially at the top, I've never had any particular vocal difficulties with a role, but I've always been careful."

Known for elegant interpretations, van Dam expressed a preference for concerts over operas during a 1981 interview.

"When I'm on the stage and I'm acting, I'm singing Figaro or Giovanni or Amfortas," he said. "I'm not José van Dam!"

He was in the initial cast of "Saint François" at Paris in 1983 and against at the Salzburg Festival in 1988.



Nicole 'Snooki' Polizzi arrives at the MTV Video Music Awards, Sept. 11, 2024, at UBS Arena in Elmont, N.Y. (AP)

Former 'Jersey Shore' star Snooki says she has cancer

FLORHAM PARK, N.J., Feb 21, (AP): Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi said Friday that she has cervical cancer.

The former "Jersey Shore" star said in a video posted to TikTok that a biopsy had revealed the stage one cancer.

"Obviously not the news that I was hoping for," she said, sitting in her car between medical appointments. "But also not the worst news, just because they caught it so early, thank God."

She urged her followers to get Pap smears, and said she is likely to have a hysterectomy after her initial treatment.

"So 2026 is not panning out how I wanted it to," she said.

Polizzi became one of the breakout stars of "Jersey Shore" from its debut on MTV in 2009. She was on the reality show for six seasons and appeared in the later spinoffs "Snooki & JWoww" and "Jersey Shore: Family Vacation."

Now 38, she still lives in New Jersey, has been married for 11 years and has three children.

Obituary

'Euphoria' actor advocated ALS awareness after diagnosis

Eric Dane, 'Grey's Anatomy' star, dies at 53

LOS ANGELES, Feb 21, (AP): Eric Dane, the celebrated actor best known for his roles on "Grey's Anatomy" and "Euphoria" and who later in life became an advocate for ALS awareness, died Thursday. He was 53.

His representatives said Dane died from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, known also as Lou Gehrig's disease, less than a year after he announced his diagnosis.

"He spent his final days surrounded by dear friends, his devoted wife, and his two beautiful daughters, Billie and Georgia, who were the center of his world," said a statement that requested privacy for his family. "Throughout his journey with ALS, Eric became a passionate advocate for awareness and research, determined to make a difference for others facing the same fight. He will be deeply missed, and lovingly remembered always. Eric adored his fans and is forever grateful for the outpouring of love and support he's received."

Dane developed a devoted fanbase when his big break arrived in the mid-2000s: He was cast as Dr. Mark Sloan, aka McSteamy, on the ABC medical drama "Grey's Anatomy," a role he would play from 2006 until 2012 and reprise in 2021.

Although his character was killed off on the show after a plane crash, Dane's character left an indelible mark on the still-running show: Seattle Grace Hospital became Grey Sloan Memorial Hospital.

In 2019, he did a complete 180 from the charming McSteamy and became the troubled Cal Jacobs in HBO's provocative drama "Euphoria," a role he continued in up until his death.

Dane also starred as Tom Chandler, the captain of a US Navy destroyer at sea after a global catastrophe wiped out most of the world's population, in the TNT drama "The Last Ship." In 2017, production was halted as Dane battled depression.

In April 2025, Dane announced he had been diagnosed with ALS, a progressive disease that attacks nerve cells controlling muscles throughout the body.

Connections

ALS gradually destroys the nerve cells and connections needed to walk, talk, speak and breathe. Most patients die within three to five years of a diagnosis.

Dane became an advocate for ALS awareness, speaking a news conference in Washington on health insurance prior authorization. "Some of you may know me from TV shows, such as 'Grey's Anatomy,' which I play a doctor. But I am here today to speak briefly as a patient battling ALS," he said in June 2025. In September of that year, the ALS Network named Dane the recipient of their advocate of the year award, recognizing his commitment to raising awareness and support for people living with ALS.

Dane was born on Nov. 9, 1972, and raised in Northern California. His father, who the actor said was a Navy veteran and an architect, died of a gunshot wound when Dane was 7. After high school, he moved to Los Angeles to pursue acting, landing guest roles on shows like "Saved by the Bell," "Married...With Children," "Charmed" and "X-Men: The Last Stand," and one season of the short-lived medical drama "Gideon's Crossing."

A memoir by Dane is scheduled to be published in late 2026. "Book of Days: A Memoir in Moments" will be released by Maria Shriver's The Open Field, a Penguin Random House imprint. According to Open Field, Dane's memoir covers key moments in his life, from his first day at work on "Grey's Anatomy" to the births of his two daughters and learning that he had ALS.

"I want to capture the moments that shaped me - the beautiful days, the hard ones, the ones I never took for granted - so that if nothing else, people who read it will remember what it means to live with heart," Dane said in a statement about the book. "If sharing this helps someone find meaning in their own days, then my story is worth telling."

Dane is survived by his wife, actor Rebecca Gayheart, and their two teen daughters, Billie Beatrice and Georgia Geraldine. Gayheart and Dane wed in 2004 and separated in September 2017. Gayheart filed for divorce in 2018, but later filed to dismiss the petition. In a December essay for New York magazine's The Cut reflecting on Dane's diagnosis, Gayheart called their dynamic "a very complicated relationship, one that's confusing for people." She said they never got a divorce, but dated other people and lived separately.

"Our love may not be romantic, but it's a familial love," she said. "Eric knows that I am always going to want the best for him. That I'm going to do my best to do right by him. And I know he would do the same for me. So whatever I can do or however I can show up to make this journey better for him or easier for him, I want to do that."

Friends and co-stars across Hollywood are mourning Eric Dane, the actor known for his iconic role as Dr. Mark Sloan - aka McSteamy - on ABC's "Grey's Anatomy." Dane, who announced his ALS diagnosis less than a year ago, died Thursday at 53.

Variety

CAIRO: An Egyptian-Chinese archaeological mission had uncovered a limestone structure believed to be part of the temple of King Apries from Egypt's 26th Dynasty (664-525 BC) at the Tel Aziz site east of the Mit Rahina area in Giza, Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities said in a statement on Thursday.

The joint mission, formed by Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, China's Peking University and the Shandong Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, made the discovery during excavation work at the site, where parts of the temple had been uncovered in earlier excavation seasons.



Eric Dane poses backstage at the TNT and TBS Network 2014 Upfront Presentations at Madison Square Garden, May 14, 2014, in New York. (AP)

"The Franklin strip fanatics fantasy football league will miss Mr. Eric Dane. We know you'll be watching from the booth. Miss you, buddy. Let's keep fighting the fight to solve ALS," - the actor and "Valentine's Day" costar, on X.

"He was warm, generous, prepared, and so passionate about what he did. He led with kindness and made everyone on our set feel seen. ... May his memory inspire more research, awareness and progress toward a cure," - the actor and "Redeeming Love" co-star, on Instagram.

Perfect

"Eric was a light. You'd see it effortlessly shine from him on the set of 'Grey's' as well as when he was with Rebecca and the girls. During filming he'd get this twinkle in his eye and with a mischievous look, he would deliver with perfect comedic timing, a line of dialogue that would floor you! You will be missed," - the actor and "Grey's Anatomy" co-star, on Instagram.

"Rest in Peace Buddy," - the actor and "Grey's Anatomy" co-star, on Instagram, accompanied by a photo of Dane in surgical scrubs as Dr. Mark Sloan.

"I love you. And yours," - the actor on Instagram, accompanied by video of a scene together from the sitcom "Zoe, Duncan, Jack and Jane."

"I learned so much from Eric. He was a great man. I'm sad to see him go in this way. I'm sending love to his family."

Thanks for the memories my friend," - the actor and "The Last Ship" co-star, on Instagram

"I can't stop seeing that spark in Eric's eye right before he'd say something that would either make you spit out your drink or rethink your entire perspective. He had a razor-sharp sense of humor. He loved the absurdity of things. He loved catching people off guard."

And when it came to his daughters and Rebecca, everything in him softened. He carried them with him even in rooms where they weren't present. You could see it in the way his voice changed when he said their names. A breathtakingly beautiful family.

The spark. The mischief. The tenderness he kept guarded but never totally hidden. He convinced me to get my pixie cut and my nose 'piercing. He also was with me on the walk when we found Lucy, my beloved rescue chihuahua. He called me 'Milano,' as if it was the only part of my name that mattered. - the actor and "Charmed" co-star, on Instagram.

"We tried to book gigs, we tried to laugh at the pain and we tried to stay sober. I'm glad we got to play together in Americana. I love you, man. I wish we had more time. Enjoy the arms of Father God. I'll see you again," - the actor and "Americana" co-star, on Instagram.

— See Also Page 13

Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Sherif Fathy described the discovery as an important addition to ongoing archaeological research in Mit Rahina, noting that it shed further light on one of the most significant historical sites linked to the ancient city of Memphis. (Xinhua)

ISTANBUL: Türkiye recently unveiled a new incentive program to bolster the global reach of its television dramas, offering as much as 100,000 US dollars to the producers for each episode broadcast abroad.

Announcing the plan at a news conference in Istanbul, Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, the minister of culture and tourism, said the initiative is intended to expand the country's drama exports while reinforcing its international tourism campaign.

Turkish series, which the minister said now draw nearly

1 billion viewers in roughly 170 countries, will assume a more prominent role in the nation's global branding strategy. Türkiye ranks among the world's top three television exporters by sales volume, he said, with export revenues exceeding 1 billion US dollars in 2025. (Xinhua)

ROME: Italian police are investigating how one of Rome's most beloved monuments, the elephant sculpture designed by Baroque sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, lost the tip of its left tusk - again.

Police found the 11-centimeter (4-inch) marble fragment near the statue over the weekend. They said on Wednesday that they had determined it wasn't original to Bernini's work but was added during restoration work in 1977. (AP)

Traditional attire proves fashion can last generations

Japan's kimonos are being repurposed in creative, sustainable ways

TOKYO, Feb 21, (AP): The kimono, that elaborate, delicate wrap-around garment worn by geisha and samurai from centuries back, is getting a vibrant remake, appreciated these days for a virtue that's more relevant than ever: sustainability.

A genuine silk kimono, which literally means "worn thing," lasts a hundred years or more. In a Japanese family, it's handed down over generations like heirloom jewelry, artworks and military medals.

It never goes out of style.

The design of the kimono and accompanying "obi" sash has remained basically the same since the 17th century Edo period depicted in Akira Kurosawa samurai movies.

But today, some people are taking a different creative approach, refashioning the traditional kimono, and also taking apart and resewing them as jackets, dresses and pants.

"I noticed that a lot of beautiful kimono is just sleeping in people's closets. That's such a waste," said Mari Kubo, who heads a kimono-remake business called K'Forward, pronounced "K dash forward."

Hers is among a recent surge in such services, which also turn old kimono into tote bags and dolls.

The most popular among Kubo's products are "tomesode," a type of formal kimono that is black with colorful, embroidered flowers, birds or foliage at the bottom.

She also creates matching sets, or what she calls "set-ups." A tomesode is turned into a jacket with its long, flowing sleeves intact, and its intricate patterns placed at the center in the back. She then takes a kimono with a matching pattern to create a skirt or pants to go with the top. Sometimes, an obi is used at the collar to add a pop of color.

Kubo said many of her customers are young people who want to enjoy a kimono without the fuss.

A remade kimono at K'Forward can cost as much as 160,000 yen (\$1,000)



Nao Shimizu, Representative Director of Kimono Sunao Co., Ltd., (left), demonstrates various ways of tying an obi on dressing assistant Emiko Terai during a kimono presentation in Tokyo on Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2025. (AP)

for a "furusode," a colorful kimono with long sleeves meant for young unmarried women, while a black tomesode goes for about 25,000 yen (\$160).

What Tomoko Ohkata loves most about the products she designs using old kimonos is that she doesn't have to live with a guilty conscience, and instead feels she is helping solve an ecological problem.

"I feel the answer was right there, being handed down from our ancestors," she said.

Recycling venues in Japan get thousands of old kimonos a day as people find them stashed away in closets by parents and grandparents. These days, Japanese generally wear kimonos just for special occasions like weddings. Many women prefer to wear a Western-style white wedding dress rather than the kimono, or they wear both.

Many of Ohkata's clientele are people who have found a kimono at home and want to give it new life. They care about the story behind the kimono, she added.

Her small store in downtown Tokyo displays various dolls, including a figure of an emperor paired with his wife, who are traditionally brought out for display in Japanese homes for the Girls' Day festival every March 3. Her dolls, however, are exquisitely dressed in recycled kimonos, tailored in tiny sizes to fit the dolls. They sell for 245,000 yen (\$1,600) a pair.

The original old-style kimono is also getting rediscovered.

"Unlike the dress, you can arrange it," says Nao Shimizu, who heads a school in Japan's ancient capital of Kyoto that teaches people how to wear a kimono and how to carry oneself while wearing it.

"In half a year, you can learn how to do it all by yourself," she said, briskly demonstrating several ways to tie the obi to express different moods, from playful to understated. Besides its durability, said Shimizu, that versatility also makes the kimono sustainable.

Younger Japanese are taking a more relaxed view, wearing a kimono with boots, for instance, she laughed. Traditionally, kimono is worn with sandals called "zori."

Although it requires some skill to put on a kimono in the traditional way, one can take lessons from teachers like Shimizu, like learning a musical instrument. Professional help is also available at beauty parlors, hotels and some shops.

Most Japanese might wear a kimono just a few times in their lives. But wearing one is a memorable experience.

Music

First live gigs

Bad Bunny now charms Brazil

SAO PAULO, Feb 21, (AP): While **Bad Bunny** has dominated global charts, the superstar has not had quite the same success in Brazil, a country notoriously hard for foreign stars to win over due to a devotion to national artists.

But a shift that began with his Grammy-winning album "DeBí Tirar Más Fotos" may accelerate further after his first-ever gigs in Brazil on Friday and Saturday in Sao Paulo.

Bad Bunny has come to Brazil at the peak of his career so far, following the phenomenal hype around his performance at the Super Bowl halftime show.

"It's the best time to try and unlock a country like Brazil, at a time when he's managed to dominate practically the entire world," said Felipe Maia, an ethnomusicologist who is pursuing a doctoral degree on popular music and digital technologies at Paris Nanterre University.

For years, the Puerto Rican artist born Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio has been one of the most-streamed artists on the planet.

But neither the singer, nor his album, nor his songs were among the most played last year in Brazil, according to Spotify. The most streamed artists in the country on the platform in 2025 were all Brazilian.

Consumption

In the land of samba, funk, bossa nova, choro, sertanejo, forró and pagode, among other Brazilian music genres, 75% of streaming consumption in Brazil focuses on national artists, according to the 2025 midyear music report of Luminate, a company specializing in entertainment industry data. Brazil is the country that most listens to its own music, it said.

Still, particularly since "DeBí Tirar Más Fotos," the fever around Bad Bunny has made headway in Brazil. Only one performance was initially scheduled at the Allianz Parque arena, but it sold out so quickly the artist added an extra date, which also sold out.

By mid-afternoon on Friday, long queues had formed. Brazilian fans mixed with people from El Salvador, Colombia and Venezuela. Many came wearing straw hats - used by Bad Bunny and traditionally worn by jíbaros, rural Puerto Rican farmers.

Tickets on Ticketmaster, the official vendor, ranged from \$50 to \$210, but resellers on Friday were selling tickets for that same night for more than \$830 - more than 2.5 times the minimum monthly wage in Brazil.

Flávia Durante, a Sao Paulo-based DJ who specializes in Latin American music, said that some Brazilians have a tendency to see Spanish-language music as corny due to the association with Mexican telenovelas, but that Bad Bunny pierced a bubble with his latest album.

"Nowadays everyone knows all the songs, they sing along and really get into it. I normally play him at the peak of the night. People request him, even at rock or 80s pop themed parties," Durante said.

Heritage



Kuwait Towers ... a symbol of national identity and a majestic icon in contemporary Arab heritage.

Symbolic design rooted in Kuwaiti heritage

Kuwait Towers: National landmark, icon of Arab heritage

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21, (KUNA): Kuwait Towers, inaugurated in 1979 overlooking the Arabian Gulf, were initially constructed as a water storage project. Over time, they have become a prominent national landmark and an icon of contemporary Arab heritage.

The concept was the idea of late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 1963, Minister of Finance at the time.

The project was built with the objective of building large water reservoirs, but subsequently developed into a cultural symbol, a tourist destination and a recognizable feature representing Kuwait internationally.

The complex consists of three towers of varying heights. The tallest stands at 187 meters with a base diameter of 20 meters and is designed to store one million cubic gallons of water.

The second tower rises 147 meters with a base diameter of 18 meters and shares the water storage function. The third tower, at 113 meters with a base diameter of 12 meters, plays a supporting infrastructural role by supplying electricity to the surrounding area and providing external lighting for the complex through 100 floodlights installed on it.

The towers' design draws inspiration from Kuwaiti heritage. The main tower symbolizes the incense burner (mabkhara), the middle tower represents the sprinkler (marash), and the smallest tower symbolizes the kohl container (mekhala). The complex received the Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture in 1980.

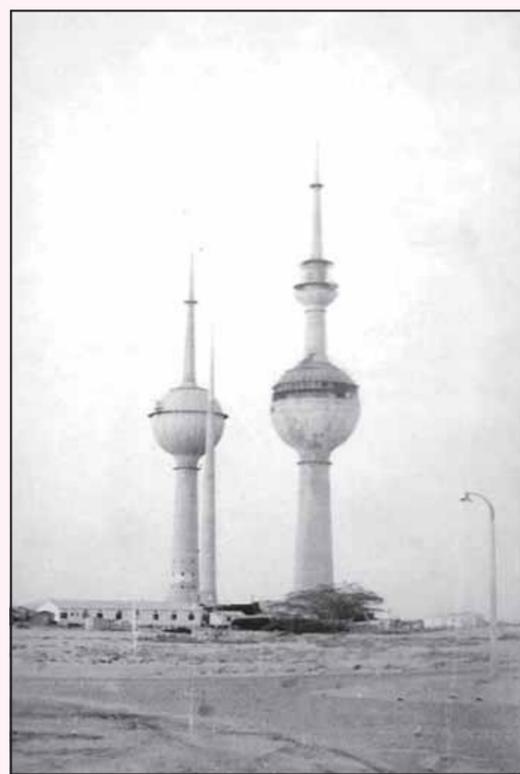
During the Iraqi invasion in 1990, the towers sustained significant damage. Restoration efforts led to their reopening in December 1992 following comprehensive national reconstruction work.

In July 2025, the Arab Architectural and Urban Heritage Observatory officially included the Kuwait Towers on the Arab Heritage List under the category of Modern Architecture.

Each February, during Kuwait's National Days celebrations, the towers are illuminated in the colors of the national flag, marking the occasion and reflecting national pride.



Standing tall since 1979, Kuwait Towers define the skyline.



Kuwait Towers shine as emblem of national identity.

The Kuwait Towers' design draws inspiration from Kuwaiti heritage. The main tower symbolizes the incense burner (mabkhara), the middle tower represents the sprinkler (marash), and the smallest tower symbolizes the kohl container (mekhala). The complex received the Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture in 1980.



KUNA photos
Kuwait Towers lighting up the night skies.

Variety

YINCHUAN: At the foot of the Helan Mountain in Yinchuan, capital city of northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, a corridor within the Xixia Imperial Tombs Museum has been transformed into a bustling street scene from a millennium ago during the Spring Festival holiday.

Actors clad in traditional costumes of the Song (960-1279) and Xixia (1038-1227) dynasties greeted tourists, while images of "Flying Apsaras" -- celestial figures from ancient murals -- danced

amidst lighting and mist.

The immersive performance, titled "Xixia Musical Gathering," is the centerpiece of the museum's New Year celebrations.

By turning a 300-meter passage into a moving stage, the event recreates vivid scenes of multi-ethnic coexistence and cultural fusion in China around 1,000 years ago, offering visitors a unique "walk-and-watch" experience.

"It felt like a true time-travel experience," said Wang Fei, a tourist from north China's Shanxi Province who visited with his family.

Wang noted that his children were thrilled to interact with performers portraying historical char-

acters and try traditional games like "pitch-pot" and archery.

"With technology and cultural activities empowering the museum, history has become vivid and accessible. It allows the younger generation to truly understand fine traditional culture while having fun," Wang said, adding that the experience made the Spring Festival more meaningful.

Chen Xiaoxu, head of marketing at Xixia Imperial Tombs Cultural Tourism Development Co., Ltd., said the performance features over 50 professional actors, with costumes and market settings recreated from museum artifacts and historical documents.

"We aim to change the stereotype that the Xixia Imperial Tombs are merely 'earthen mounds' and instead, we use immersive experiences to convey the value of the World Heritage site," Chen said, noting a significant increase in visitor numbers due to the performance.

The tourist enthusiasm in Ningxia mirrors a nationwide trend as museum tourism has emerged as a new way for many to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

Across the country, museums are moving beyond static exhibitions, adopting interactive and immersive activities to attract holiday crowds. (Xinhua)

HEALTH/SCIENCE

Rare but often deadly within a few years of diagnosis

What is ALS, the nerve disease that killed actor Eric Dane?

NEW YORK, Feb 21, (AP): Eric Dane, known for his roles on "Grey's Anatomy" and "Euphoria," died this week from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis at age 53.

The fatal nervous system disease, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, killed Dane less than a year after he announced his diagnosis.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ALS is rare. In 2022, there were nearly 33,000 estimated cases, say researchers, who project that cases will rise to more than 36,000 by 2030.

The disease is slightly more common in men than in women and tends to strike in midlife, between the ages of 40 and 60.

Here's what to know. It affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, causing loss of muscle control and getting worse over time.

ALS causes nerve cells in the upper and lower parts of the body to stop working and die. Nerves no longer trigger specific muscles, eventually leading to paralysis. People with ALS may develop problems with mobility, speaking, swallowing and breathing.

The exact cause of the disease is unknown, and Mayo



Eric Dane arrives at a promotional event for the series 'Euphoria,' in Los Angeles, April 20, 2022. (AP)

Clinic experts said a small number of cases are inherited. It's called Lou Gehrig's disease after the Hall of Fame New York Yankees player. Gehrig was diagnosed with ALS in 1939 on his 36th birthday, died in 1941 and was the face

of ALS for decades.

Experts say the first symptoms are often subtle. The disease may begin with muscle twitching and weakness in an arm or leg.

Over time, muscles stop acting and reacting correctly, said experts at University of California San Francisco Health. People may lose strength and coordination in their arms and legs; feet and ankles may become weak; and muscles in the arms, shoulders and tongue may cramp or twitch. Swallowing and speaking may become difficult and fatigue may set in.

The ability to think, see, hear, smell, taste and touch are usually not affected, UCSF experts said.

Eventually, muscles used for breathing may become paralyzed. Patients may be unable to swallow and inhale food or saliva. Most people with ALS die of respiratory failure.

The disease is difficult to diagnose because there's no test or procedure to confirm it. Generally, doctors will perform a physical exam, lab tests and imaging of the brain and spinal cord.

A doctor may interpret certain things as signs of ALS, in-

cluding an unusual flexing of the toes, diminished fine motor coordination, painful muscle cramps, twitching and spasticity, a type of stiffness causing jerky movements.

There's no known cure for ALS, but the drug riluzole has been approved for treatment. According to the Mayo Clinic, it may extend survival in the early stages of the disease or extend the time until a breathing tube is needed.

Another much-debated drug, Relyvrio, was pulled from the US market by Amlyx Pharmaceuticals in 2024. Its development had been financed, in part, by the ALS Association, the major beneficiary of the 2014 "ice bucket challenge" viral phenomenon.

Other medications are sometimes prescribed to help control symptoms.

Choking is common as ALS progresses, so patients may need feeding tubes. People may also use braces, wheelchairs, speech synthesizers or computer-based communication systems.

After the onset of the disease, experts say patients may survive from two years to a decade. Most people live from two to five years after symptoms develop, and about a fifth live more than five years after they are diagnosed.

New tool to help detect severe liver disease early

Chinese team develops AI-powered diagnostic system for rare diseases

SHANGHAI, Feb 21, (Xinhua): A Chinese research team has developed an AI-powered rare disease diagnostic system called DeepRare, setting a new record for diagnostic accuracy, according to a study published Thursday in the journal Nature.

The diagnosis and treatment of rare diseases have long faced challenges in confirming cases without genetic testing, particularly in regions with limited access to such services. Meanwhile, traditional medical AI diagnostic systems often encounter trust issues due to their non-traceable reasoning processes.

The evidence-based DeepRare was developed by a team from Xinhua Hospital, affiliated with the Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) School of Medicine and SJTU School of Artificial Intelligence. Since its online diagnostic platform was launched last July, it has registered over 1,000 professional users across more than 600 medical and research institutions worldwide.

Test data show that when only patients' clinical phenotypic information was provided without genetic data, DeepRare achieved a first-attempt accuracy of 57.18 percent in phenotypic diagnosis, an improvement of nearly 24 percentage points over the previous global model. When genetic data were incorporated, its diagnostic accuracy exceeded 70 percent.

According to the study, DeepRare integrates real-time access to a vast repository of medical literature knowledge and real-world clinical case data. In terms of diagnostic reasoning, it employs an iterative cycle of hypothesis, verification and self-reflection to evaluate diagnostic clues and correct logical gaps.

Regarding the reasoning process, each diagnostic conclusion comes with a complete chain of evidence, allowing doctors not only to see the diagnosis but also to understand the underlying basis.

Sun Kun, one of the corresponding authors of the paper from Xinhua Hospital, said that the research team is prepar-

ing to initiate a global AI alliance for rare disease diagnosis and treatment.

They plan to complete real-world validation of 20,000 rare disease cases within the next six months, he added.



Researchers in Australia have developed a new diagnostic tool that could help doctors detect serious liver disease earlier and more accurately, potentially transforming care for millions at risk.

The new diagnostic tool, called the Fibroblast Activation Protein (FAP)-Index, could significantly improve how doctors identify people at risk of serious liver damage caused by metabolic fatty liver disease, said a statement from Australia's Centenary Institute on Thursday.

Metabolic fatty liver disease often shows no early symptoms but can progress to liver scarring, namely fibrosis, and eventually to liver cirrhosis and liver failure. Affecting one in three Australians, with cases projected to exceed 7 million by 2030, identifying high-risk patients remains a major clinical challenge, it said.

The FAP-Index combines a simple blood test measuring FAP with routinely collected clinical information to generate a more precise assessment of a patient's risk of liver scarring, they said.

FAP is a biomarker directly involved in the biological process that drives fibrosis, said the study published in the Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology.

The team found that adding the FAP-Index to existing first-line blood test risk scores reduced uncertain results by up to 70 percent compared with current screening tools alone, improving diagnostic precision while cutting unnecessary specialist referrals and costly follow-up investigations.

Launch teams made 'major progress'

NASA eyes March for first Artemis crew moon mission after fueling test success

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Feb. 21, (AP): NASA aims to send astronauts to the moon in March after acing the latest rocket fueling test.

Officials announced the decision Friday, two weeks ahead of the first targeted launch opportunity on March 6.

"This is really getting real, and it's time to get serious and start getting excited," said Lori Glaze, NASA's exploration systems development chief.

Administrator Jared Isaacman noted that launch teams made "major progress" between the first countdown rehearsal, which was disrupted by hydrogen leaks earlier this month, and the second test, which was completed with exceptionally low seepage Thursday night.

The test was "a big step toward America's return to the lunar environment," Isaacman said on the social media platform X. Astronauts last ventured to the moon more than half a century ago.

While more work remains at the pad, officials expressed confidence in being ready to launch four astronauts on the Artemis II lunar fly-around as soon as March 6 from Florida's Kennedy Space Center. To keep their options open, the three Americans and one Canadian prepared to go into the



This image provided by NASA shows NASA's moon rocket sits on the pad at Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Thursday, Feb. 19. (AP)

mandatory two-week health quarantine Friday night in Houston.

The space agency has only five days in March to launch the crew aboard the

Space Launch System rocket, before standing down until the end of April. February's opportunities evaporated after dangerous amounts of liquid hydrogen leaked during the first fueling demonstration.

Technicians replaced two seals, leading to Thursday's successful return. The countdown clocks went all the way down to the desired 29-second mark.

The removed Teflon seals had some light scratches but nothing else noticeable that could have caused such heavy leakage, officials said.

A bit of moisture also was found in the area that could have contributed to the problem. The fixes worked, with barely any leakage detected, said launch director Charlie Blackwell-Thompson.

Commander Reid Wiseman and two of his crew monitored Thursday's operation alongside launch controllers. The astronauts will be the first to fly to the moon since Apollo 17 closed out NASA's first chapter in moon exploration in 1972.

Still ahead is the flight readiness review, scheduled for late next week. If that goes well, the astronauts will fly back to Kennedy around the beginning of March for a real countdown.

Batteries impact the environment at every life stage

Give old batteries a new life by recycling them

NEW YORK, Feb 21, (AP): When household batteries die, it's hard to know what to do with them. So they get shoved into a junk drawer or sheepishly thrown into the trash.

But dead batteries aren't quite finished. They can leak heavy metals like cadmium and nickel into soil and water once they reach the landfill. Some of them can also overheat and cause fires in garbage trucks and recycling centers.

The good news is, safely disposing of your batteries takes just a few steps. They'll get shipped to recycling centers that break down their contents to make new things.

Battery recycling processes could use some fine-tuning, but it's still a simple and responsible way to get rid of them. Recycling old batteries "keeps you safe, keeps the waste industry safe, keeps the first responders safe and responsibly sees that battery reach a proper end of life," said Michael Hoffman, president of the National Waste and Recycling Association.

Batteries keep things running in our homes, powering everything from alarm clocks and TV remotes to gaming controllers. Millions are bought and used every year in the U.S., according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

They leave their stamp on the environment at nearly every stage of their life span.

Many of the materials used to make batteries - elements like lithium and nickel - are mined. Over half the world's cobalt reserves are in Congo.

Once mined, those materials are shipped around to be refined, fashioned into a battery and packaged for sale. All the ships, trucks and planes moving them add to batteries' carbon footprint. Making the batteries can release carbon emissions and pollution into the air and atmosphere, too.

Though household batteries are far smaller than the big ones that power EVs and electric bicycles,



Batteries are displayed in a box Wednesday, Feb. 11, in Cincinnati. (AP)

there are a lot more of them and it's worth figuring out how to get rid of them.

"One person's single battery is not necessarily a lot," said environmental scientist Jennifer Sun with Harvard University. "But everyone uses many batteries."

To begin, wrangle your old batteries and figure out what kind they are. Batteries "come in all shapes and sizes, but what's inside differs," said materials scientist Matthew Bergschneider of the University of Texas at Dallas.

Alkaline and zinc-carbon batteries are generally single-use and come in AA, AAA and more. These can be safely thrown in the household trash in most places, but the EPA still recommends recycling them so that their materials can be made into something new.

Lithium-ion batteries - commonly found in things like power tools and cordless vacuums - are a risk to cause fires and leak toxic gases in garbage trucks and landfills. A lot of rechargeable batteries are lithium-ion, but more single-use batteries are being made this

way too.

Be sure to look up battery disposal laws for your area: Places like New York, Vermont and Washington, D.C. have special rules about throwing away household or rechargeable batteries.

Once you've corralled your batteries, tape their ends or put them in plastic bags to avoid the possibility of sparking. Then, take them to a drop-off location. How easy or hard this is depends on where you live.

Many hardware and office supplies stores accept old batteries. Look into city and state drop-off programs or search by ZIP code using The Battery Network, a nonprofit geared toward safe battery recycling.

Have a location in your home to collect the batteries over time and then "at some point, hopefully among all the other things that we all have in our lives, you can find a convenient drop-off location," said Todd Ellis of The Battery Network.

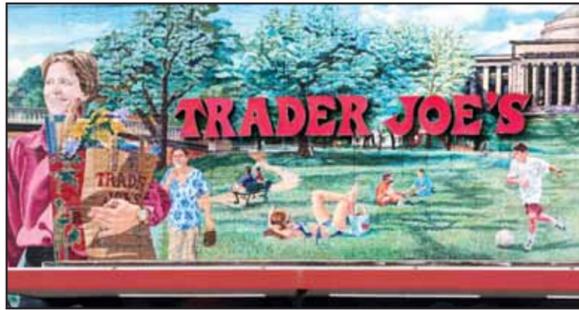
If your batteries look swollen, cracked or are leaking, don't drop them off. You'll need to get in touch with your local hazardous waste removal agency to figure out how to turn them in.

Once batteries are dropped off at a collection site, they're sorted by type and taken to a recycling facility where they're broken down into their essential components - like cobalt, nickel or aluminum. Some bits can be used to make new batteries or other things.

Nickel, for example, can be used to make stainless steel products and alkaline batteries can be turned into sunscreen.

Safely recycling a battery doesn't cancel out the environmental cost of making it. But it does give the battery's components their best chance at becoming something new.

"You continue to recycle and you don't have to go back to the Earth to mine," said public health expert Oladele Ogunseitan, who studies electronic waste at the University of California, Irvine.



The Trader Joe's logo hangs on a mural, Aug. 13, 2019, in Cambridge, Mass. (AP)

Recalled US chicken fried rice products may contain glass

PORTLAND, Ore., Feb 21, (AP): A Portland, Oregon, company is recalling nearly 3.4 million pounds of frozen chicken fried rice products sold at Trader Joe's stores and in Canada because they may contain pieces of glass, US Agriculture Department officials reported.

Ajinomoto Foods North America Inc. pulled Trader Joe's Chicken Fried Rice from stores nationwide. The frozen product - containing fried rice, vegetables, chicken meat and eggs - is sold in 20-ounce plastic bags. The affected packages have best-by dates of Sept. 8 through Nov. 17, 2026. The products are stamped with the establishment number P-18356 inside the USDA mark of inspection.

The company also recalled cardboard packages containing six bags of frozen Ajinomoto Yakitori Chicken with Japanese-Style Rice with best by dates of Sept. 9 to Nov. 12, 2026. Those products were sold only in Canada.

The problem was detected after four consumers complained of finding glass. No injuries have been reported. Consumers should avoid eating the product and throw it away or return it to the store where it was purchased.

Farm sealed

Cyprus confirms FMD case

NICOSIA, Feb. 21, (Xinhua): Veterinary authorities in the government-controlled areas of Cyprus confirmed on Friday the first case of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) at a cow-breeding unit in Livadia, a village in the Larnaca district in south-eastern Cyprus. Five cows at the farm tested positive for the virus, according to the Cyprus News Agency.

Christodoulos Pipis, head of the Veterinary Services, said Friday that all 260 cattle at the affected farm will be culled under standard disease control protocols. The farm and all livestock units within a three-kilometer radius have been placed under a 21-day lockdown, with a ban on the movement of animals and animal products without official authorization.

Government teams are conducting epidemiological investigations to determine the source of the infection and are carrying out targeted inspections at nearby farms. Biosecurity and disinfection measures have also been reinforced along the Green Line and at key crossing points.

This marks a significant development as the government-controlled areas had remained free of the disease until now, despite recent outbreaks in areas under Turkish Cypriot administration, reported by the Cyprus Mail.

The European Commission has sup-

ported containment efforts in those areas, including the provision of 500,000 vaccine doses earlier this year.



Cholera: Mozambique has recorded 5,661 cumulative cholera cases and 71 deaths since Oct. 3, 2025, as the country faces a cholera epidemic, according to Mozambique's National Director of Public Health Quinhas Fernandes.

Speaking at a press conference in Maputo on the country's epidemiological situation on Thursday, Fernandes said 22 districts across Cabo Delgado, Nampula, Zambezia, Tete, Manica, Gaza and Maputo City have reported cases.

Nampula and Tete provinces account for 81 percent of total cases, with 2,445 cases (43 percent) reported in Nampula and 2,141 (38 percent) in Tete.

Of the 71 deaths recorded, 52 occurred in communities and 19 in health facilities or cholera treatment centers. The overall case fatality rate stands at 1.3 percent, while the in-hospital fatality rate is 0.4 percent, Fernandes said.

As part of response measures, a cholera vaccination campaign was conducted from Feb. 4 to 8 in five locations, including Lago District in Niassa Province; Pemba and Metuge in Cabo Delgado; Quelimane in Zambezia; and Beira in Sofala Province.

Afghanistan faces severe hunger crisis amid aid cuts

KABUL, Afghanistan, Feb 21, (Agencies): The toddler cries as an oxygen mask is fitted to his face, its green elastic band stretched across his sunken cheeks. When he was first hospitalized a month ago, the 2 1/2-year-old was fighting for his life.

Severely malnourished, Abu Bakar weighed just 6 kilograms (13 pounds), about half what he should. And yet, he is one of the lucky ones: His family got him to Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital in Kabul, where doctors are providing life-saving care.

But for every malnourished child receiving treatment, there are many more who cannot get help.

"We have a catastrophic nutritional crisis on our hands with two-thirds of the country in a very serious or crisis level for acute malnutrition," said John Aylieff, Afghanistan Country Director for the United Nations' World Food Program. "This is the highest surge in malnutrition ever recorded in the country. And the lives of 4 million children are hanging in the balance."

Devastated by four decades of conflict, Afghanistan has long relied on foreign aid. But the Taliban takeover in 2021 saw direct foreign aid halted almost overnight, driving millions into poverty and hunger. The situation is compounded by a moribund economy, a severe drought, two devastating earthquakes in late 2025 and the return of 5.3 million Afghans expelled mainly from neighboring Pakistan and Iran.

Now, funding cuts to humanitarian organizations, including the halting of U.S. aid to programs such as



Samir, a 6-month-old from the far northeastern province of Badakhshan who is suffering from a heart condition and severe pneumonia compounded by malnutrition, lies in a hospital bed at Ataturk National Children's Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan, Sunday, Feb. 15. (AP)

the WFP's food distribution, have severed a lifeline for millions.

"The aid cuts have been devastating," Aylieff told The Associated Press. Of the 4 million acutely malnourished children, "we are forced now to turn away three out of four of them because we simply don't have the money."

This, he said, "is unprecedented and I've never

seen this in my more than 30-year-old career as a humanitarian."

Of the 17.4 million people facing acute hunger, the organization can now only reach 2 million. And even for them, it is forced to provide less food.

Donor countries' budgets are spread thin among humanitarian emergencies around the world, including famine in Sudan and the wars in Gaza and Ukraine. In 2024, the WFP's budget in Afghanistan was \$600 million after "very generous" donor contributions, Aylieff said.

Last year, the amount fell by half and the organization expects to receive even less - about \$200 million - this year. It's not enough to tackle a hunger problem that "is spiraling out of control," he added.

Abu Bakar's family was among those who saw aid dry up. "We once received assistance from an organization that helped us a lot with food," said his mother, Latifa, 36, who, like many Afghans, goes by one name. But that stopped three years ago. Since then, there's been nothing.

Her husband, a construction worker, has been unemployed for a year. Now, at times, she has nothing at all to feed her five sons.

"I am trying to provide food for my kids," Latifa said, cradling her emaciated toddler in her arms. She doesn't care if she doesn't eat, she says. "I can control my hunger. I will handle it. But my child can't."

SPORTS

Lakers hold off Clippers to split season series

Nuggets rout Trail Blazers for most points on the road in franchise history

LOS ANGELES, Feb 21, (AP): Luka Doncic had 38 points and 11 assists, Austin Reaves added 29 points and the Los Angeles Lakers held off the Los Angeles Clippers down the stretch for a 125-122 victory.

LeBron James had 13 points and 11 assists for the Lakers in their return from the All-Star break. They blew a 15-point lead in the second half, but Doncic scored 12 points in the fourth quarter as the Lakers split the four-game season series with their crosstown rivals.

Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points before missing the final 5:10 with an apparent ankle injury for the Clippers (27-29), who fell just short of getting back to .500 in incredible fashion after their 6-21 start to the season.

Benedict Mathurin had 26 points and seven rebounds in his second straight outstanding game for his new team before fouling out with 1:49 to play. The athletic guard acquired from Indiana for center Ivica Zubac dropped a career-high-tying 38 against Denver on Thursday.

Nuggets 157, Trail Blazers 103

In Portland, Nikola Jokic had 32 points, nine rebounds and seven assists in 29 1/2 minutes and the Denver Nuggets routed the Portland Trail Blazers for the most points on the road in franchise history and the most in an NBA game this season.

Jamal Murray added 25 points a night after missing the third of three free throws with 0.9 seconds left in a 115-114 loss to the Clippers in Los Angeles. Julian Strawther and Tim Hardaway Jr. each had 19 points.

Denver led 82-53 at the half, going 13 for 22 from the 3-point range. The Nuggets pushed the lead to 55 in the second half.

Thunder 105, Nets 86

In Oklahoma City, Jared McCain scored a season-high 21 points and the short-handed Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Brooklyn Nets.

McCain, the former Philadelphia 76er the Thunder acquired in a trade this month, posted his highest points



Los Angeles Lakers guard Luka Doncic (77) drives against Los Angeles Clippers center Yanic Konan Niederhauser during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)

total in five games with Oklahoma City. He made 7 of 12 field goals and 3 of 6 3-pointers in a reserve role.

The Thunder have several players dealing with injuries, including reigning MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (abdominal strain) and 2025 All-Star Jalen Williams (strained right hamstring). Both are to be re-evaluated in the coming weeks.

Oklahoma City compensated with balanced scoring. Chet Holmgren scored 15 points, Isaiah Joe had 11 and Isaiah Hartenstein and Lu Dort each

added 10.

Bucks 139, Pelicans 118

In New Orleans, Ryan Rollins made a career-high seven 3-pointers and scored 27 points to help the Milwaukee Bucks beat the New Orleans Pelicans 139-118 on Friday night for their third straight victory and sixth in seven games.

Playing without injured star Giannis Antetokounmpo, the Bucks pulled away in the fourth quarter to improve to 24-30. Antetokounmpo has been sidelined four weeks by a strained

right calf.

Bucks newcomer Cam Thomas, a former LSU star, had 27 points in 21 minutes off the bench, and Kevin Porter added 25 points. Rollins was 7 of 10 on 3s and had six assists, four steals and two blocks. The Bucks were coming off a victory at defending champion Oklahoma City before the All-Star break.

Timberwolves 122, Mavericks 111

In Minneapolis, Anthony Edwards returned to Minnesota with his All-Star Game MVP award and scored 40 points to help the Timberwolves hold

off Dallas, the 10th straight loss for the Mavericks.

Rudy Gobert had 22 points, 17 rebounds and three blocks and Naz Reid added 21 points for the Timberwolves, who squandered a 17-point first-half lead before Edwards took over down the stretch.

Heat 128, Hawks 97

In Atlanta, Tyler Herro scored 24 points in his return from a rib injury and the Miami Heat never trailed in a 128-97 victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Bam Adebayo had 17 points, eight rebounds and five assists for Miami, and Norman Powell added 15 points in his first game since participating in his first All-Star game. Kel'el Ware had 14 points and 12 rebounds.

Jalen Johnson had 16 points, 16 rebounds and 11 assists for Atlanta for his 11th triple-double of the season. It is the most in franchise history for a single season and leads the Eastern Conference.

Cavaliers 118, Hornets 113

In Charlotte, Donovan Mitchell scored 13 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter and the streaking Cleveland Cavaliers held off the Charlotte Hornets for their seventh straight victory and 12th win in 13 games.

Jared Allen had 25 points and 14 rebounds and James Harden added 18 points and eight assists for the Cavaliers.

Charlotte's Kon Knueppel finished with 33 points on seven 3-pointers, giving him 193 made 3s for the season - the second most in NBA history by a rookie. Keegan Murray holds the record with 206 set in the 2022-23 season.

Wizards 131, Pacers 118

In Washington, Alondes Williams had career highs with 25 points and 10 rebounds in his 11th NBA game and the Washington Wizards swept a back-to-back set with the Indiana Pacers.

Sharife Cooper matched his career high with 18 points for Washington, which moved two games above Indiana at the bottom of the Eastern Conference standings and a half-game in front of Brooklyn, which played later at Oklahoma City.

Jay Huff scored 22 points and tied a career best with five 3-pointers for Indiana. The Pacers finished 2-4 on a six-game trip.

Grizzlies 123, Jazz 114

In Memphis, Olivier-Maxence Prosper scored 23 points, GG Jackson added 20, and the Memphis Grizzlies put together a second-half rally to beat the Utah Jazz.

The Grizzlies trailed by 14 in the first half, but a strong third quarter led to a 21-6 run and a 10-point Memphis advantage early in the fourth. The lead reached 16 on Jackson's 3-pointer with 4:31 left.

'Britain is a proud, tolerant and diverse country'

Ratcliffe reminded of responsibilities but no FA charge for 'colonized' claim

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 21, (AP): Manchester United co-owner Jim Ratcliffe has been reminded of his "responsibilities as a participant in English football" after he triggered a storm of criticism for claiming Britain had been "colonized" by immigrants.

But England's Football Association will not be charging Ratcliffe over his comments, which were widely condemned by political figures, including British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, and the club's supporters.

The governing body issued Ratcliffe with a reminder of his responsibilities

when taking part in media interviews, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Friday. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

British billionaire Ratcliffe, who owns petrochemicals giant INEOS, made the comments during an interview with Sky News, which aired last week.

"You can't have an economy with 9 million people on benefits and huge levels of immigrants coming in," he said. "I mean, the U.K.'s been colo-

nized."

Ratcliffe's comments touched a nerve in Britain, where immigration is a divisive issue. He later said he was sorry his choice of language had "offended some people."

Starmer had earlier called for him to apologize, saying "Britain is a proud, tolerant and diverse country."

United fans, who are proud of the diversity within the team and its supporter base, also condemned his words.

The Manchester United Supporters Trust said the "senior leadership should make inclusion easier, not harder."

Critics accused Ratcliffe of "hypocrisy," saying he has chosen to make his home in Monaco to reduce his U.K. tax bill.

United's head coach, Michael Carrick, said earlier Friday that the Premier League club was proud of its culture of equality and diversity.

Carrick, who was recently hired as coach until the end of the season, faced the media for the first time since Ratcliffe's remarks and he was asked for his response.

"Sir Jim has made a statement, and then the club's made a statement on the back of it so for me to add to that is not my place," he said. "What I can say, as I've been around this club many, many years, we always make a huge impact globally."

"We're really proud of the environment and the culture that we've got at the club, and equality and diversity and respect for each other is something that we look to carry through every day."



In this file photo, Manchester United co-owner Jim Ratcliffe stands in front of the former manager Alex Ferguson during the Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Manchester United in Manchester, England. (AP)

Detroit Mercy knocks off Milwaukee

Miami (Ohio) remains lone unbeaten in Division I

OXFORD, Ohio, Feb 21, (AP): Luke Skaljac scored a career-high 22 points, Eian Elmer had 21 and No. 22 Miami University remained the lone unbeaten team in Division I with a 91-77 victory over Bowling Green.

The RedHawks (27-0, 14-0 Mid-American Conference) got 10 points each from Peter Suder and Antwon Woolfolk to help ex-

tend their home winning streak to 30, tying Duke for the nation's longest.

Javontae Campbell led Bowling Green (16-12, 7-8) with 24 points. Josiah Shackelford and Mayor Wol each had 12. Cleveland Browns star Myles Garrett was among the sellout crowd 10,127 at Millett Hall.

The RedHawks have had some close calls dur-

ing their record streak with six games decided by five or fewer points and three overtime wins. Bowling Green kept Friday's game relatively close for a while.

Bowling Green led 21-19 in the first half, but the RedHawks responded with a 10-0 run.

Skaljac scored 16 of his points in the first half and went 3 of 5 from three-point range helping Miami build a 45-30 halftime lead.

Miami led by 18 points early in the second half, but Wol's 3-pointer got the Falcons within eight with 13:06 left. The RedHawks committed 12 turnovers helping the Falcons keep it close.

Skaljac's fifth 3-pointer increased Miami's lead to 66-51 with nine minutes left. His previous career-best for points was 19 at Buffalo on Feb. 3.

Elmer hit back to back 3-pointers to make it 85-64 with 2:56 left. Elmer made

5 of 8 3-point attempts. The RedHawks went 13 of 30 from 3-point range. It was the 155th meeting between the two schools. Miami leads the series 94-61, including a 93-83 win on Dec. 30.

TJ Nadeau scored 25 points as Detroit Mercy beat Milwaukee 91-86.

Nadeau shot 8 for 14 (6 for 10 from 3-point range) and 3 of 4 from the free-throw line for the Titans (13-13, 10-7 Horizon League). Orlando Lovejoy scored 24 points while shooting 7 of 13 from the field and 10 for 10 from the line. Legend Geeter had 19 points and shot 7 of 9 from the field, including 2 for 3 from 3-point range, and went 3 for 5 from the line.

Stevie Elam finished with 22 points and seven rebounds for the Panthers (11-18, 7-11). Chandler Jackson added 13 points and Amar Augillard also had 12 points.

Greenwood misses penalty as Marseille loses to Brest

Berardi at the double as Sassuolo deepen Verona's relegation woes



Hamburg's Jordan Torunarigha, left, and Mainz's Phillip Tietz vie for a head ball during the Bundesliga soccer match between Mainz 05 and Hamburger SV in Mainz, Germany. (AP)

SASSUOLO, Italy, Feb 21, (AP): Sassuolo scored twice in the five minutes before halftime to pave the way to a 3-0 victory that deepened Verona's already considerable relegation woes in Serie A.

Verona was without a win in 11 league games and in last place, equal on points with Pisa.

Both clubs were nine points from safety, and Pisa faces a crunch match on Monday against Fiorentina, the team six points above them both in the third relegation spot.

Andrea Pinamonti got Sassuolo's opener with a deflected strike then four minutes later Domenico Berardi added a second. Although the Verona goalkeeper stopped his penalty kick, Berardi was quickest to the follow up and buried the rebound.

Berardi completed the scoring 17 minutes into the second half when he finished off a rapid counterattack.

Completing Verona's misery, Al Musrati was sent off for a second bookable offense five minutes from time.

The result extended Sassuolo's recent good run; it has taken 12 points from its last 15. It jumped two places to eighth.

In Brest, Habib Beye's reign as Marseille coach got off to a losing start as Ligue 1's top goal-scorer Mason Greenwood missed a penalty in Brest's 2-0 win.

Beye replaced Roberto De Zerbi last week after a miserable run that saw Marseille exit the Champions League and lose to archrival Paris Saint-Germain 5-0.

But the former Newcastle and Aston Villa defender could not stop the rot that threatens Marseille's hopes of a European spot next year.

Two first-half headers from Ludovic Ajorque put Brest in the driving seat and he could have had a third had a fierce shot not rattled the bar.

Marseille came into the match more in the second half but Greenwood missed a golden chance to pull it back into the game seven minutes from time.

He was brought down by Daouda Guindo but his spot kick was well saved by Brest goalkeeper Gregoire Couderc.

The result left Marseille winless in four Ligue 1 games. In Mainz, Nadiem Amiri scored his seventh goal in seven games for Mainz while a deflected second half goal from Hamburg's Fabio Vieira ensured they drew 1-1 in the Bundesliga.

Mainz was looking to get back to winning ways after a 4-0 defeat by Borussia Dortmund last week. It took the lead through Amiri's crisp volley three minutes before halftime.

However, 19 minutes into the second period Vieira's free kick took a nick off the Mainz wall, giving goalkeeper Daniel Batz no chance.

The point helped Mainz climb one place to 13th.

Hamburg was unbeaten in six games.



Sassuolo's Domenico Berardi and Verona's Martin Frise, left, during the Serie A soccer match between Sassuolo and Verona in Reggio Emilia, Italy. (AP)

Change Name

I, HUZefa PATEL S/o ZAKIR HUSSAIN PATEL, Resident of C-98, Shastri Colony, Badal Mahal Road, Durgapur, Rajasthan - 314001 India, have changed my name from HUZefa to HUZefa PATEL. Henceforth, I shall be known as HUZefa PATEL for all purposes.

Change of Name

I, SUBBARAYUDU (old name) S/O Subbaiah, Passport no: R8107286, D.no 2/707-A, Akula street, Rajampet, Annamayya dist-516115, Andhra Pradesh, India, do hereby change my name to MARRI CHANDRA SEKHAR s/o MARRI SUBBAIAH (new name) (surname: MARRI). Henceforth I will be called as MARRI CHANDRA SEKHAR (new name)

Outstanding medal tally

IBAK team from Kuwait creates history at the Open Masters Games Abu Dhabi 2026



ABU DHABI, Feb 21: The IBAK (Indian Badminton Association Kuwait) team from Kuwait delivered an extraordinary performance at the prestigious Open Masters Games Abu Dhabi 2026, securing multiple gold, silver, and bronze medals across various categories and creating a historic milestone for the organization.

The Open Masters Games is recognized as a premier international multi-sport event that brings together seasoned and veteran athletes from various countries to compete in a professionally organized, highly competitive environment. The week-long tournament promotes lifelong fitness, healthy competition, and international camaraderie among masters-level athletes.

The IBAK delegation travelled from Kuwait to Abu Dhabi to participate in the week-long tournament, competing against talented athletes from various regions. Throughout the event, the team demonstrated exceptional skill, determination, and sportsmanship.

Under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Manimara Chozhan, IBAK players achieved remarkable success across several events. Dr. Mani not only served as team leader but also inspired the delegation through his personal performance and dedication to excellence. Known for his commitment to promoting sports within the community, he has been instrumental in encouraging senior athletes to remain active and competitive at international levels.



Top and above: Photos from the tournament.

Dr. Manimara Chozhan led from the front with outstanding personal

achievements:

- Gold Medal in 55+ Singles
- Bronze Medal in 40+ Mixed Doubles alongside Ms. Ainur Duma
- The team's impressive medal tally includes:
 - Mr. Mohan Menon – Gold in 70+ Men's Doubles, bronze in 70+ singles
 - Mr. Hisham Ezzi – Silver in 40+ Men's Singles and Silver in 40+ Mixed Doubles alongside Ms. Fazeela
 - Mr. Prathap – Gold in 45+ Men's Singles, Bronze in 45+ Men's Doubles
 - Ms. Ainur Duma Jubail – Gold in 40+ Women's Doubles, Bronze in 40+ Mixed doubles
 - Ms. Maricel Lovitos – Gold in 40+ Women's Doubles



• Ms. Fazeela – Silver in 40+ Mixed doubles, 2 Silver Medals in Chess 9 Rapid & Blitz, Gold in 1500 mtrs Race for women

In addition to their individual successes, the IBAK SMASHERS TEAM also proudly participated in the Volleyball Tournament, and won the Gold Medal further showcasing their versatility, teamwork, and competitive spirit.

Speaking about the team's historic achievement, Dr. Manimara Chozhan said, "Travelling from Kuwait to Abu Dhabi to compete in this prestigious tournament was a proud moment for all of us. Our players demonstrated not only exceptional skill but also unity, discipline, and true sportsmanship." He further added, "This victory is not just about medals. It reflects the

dedication, preparation, and strong team spirit within IBAK. Every participant gave their best, and together we have created history. I am incredibly proud of our team's performance and commitment." It is commendable to note that all the participants won medals.

This historic achievement reflects IBAK's commitment to excellence, unity, and the promotion of active lifestyles across age categories. The team's exceptional performance at the Open Masters Games stands as a testament to their dedication, preparation, and strong leadership. The accomplishments of the IBAK team not only bring pride to the organization and the community in Kuwait but also set a new benchmark for future international participation.

Kuwait Club edges Kazma as Al-Qurain seals Final 4 spot

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Kuwait Club claimed a hard-fought 87-82 victory over Kazma in their postponed second-round league fixture at the Kuwait Basketball Association Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex. In another Round 15 encounter, Al-Qurain defeated Al-Sulaibikhat 89-73 to confirm its place in the Final Four.

The win keeps Kuwait Club firmly on top of the standings with 28 points from 14 consecutive victories, maintaining its unbeaten record. Qadsia, Kazma, and Al-Qurain trail with 25 points each, while Al-Sulaibikhat remains on 22 points and is officially out of contention for qualification. Al-Nasr and Al-Arabi follow with 17 points apiece, and Al-Sahel sit last with 15.

As a result, Kuwait Club, Qadsia, Kazma, and Al-Qurain have all secured qualification to the Final Four. The league is contested over three rounds, with the top four teams advancing to a best-of-three playoff stage to determine the champion.

The showdown between Kuwait Club and Kazma lived up to expectations, featuring high intensity and competitiveness from the opening tip-off. Kazma's strong display highlighted its potential



Kazma player shoots over an opponent during a league match between Kuwait Club and Kazma.

to challenge in the decisive stages. Kuwait Club's French standout Lofren led his side with 19 points, while Kazma's Serbian scorer Mitkovic topped the game with 22 points.

Meanwhile, Al-Qurain reinforced its credentials by completing a double over Al-Sulaibikhat, cruising to a 16-point victory that officially booked their semifinal berth and ended their opponents' playoff hopes.

Australia leaves WC after crushing Oman

PALLEKELE, Sri Lanka, Feb 21, (AP) Australia crushed Oman by 10 wickets in a dead rubber at the T20 World Cup, reaching its winning total with more than 10 overs remaining.

Defeats against Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka had already led to the shocked Australians exiting the tournament at the first stage.

Adam Zampa, who went wicketless against Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka, picked up 4-21 as Australia bowled out Oman for 104 in 16.2 overs after captain Mitchell Marsh won the toss and chose to field.

Marsh then blazed a 26-ball half century inside the power play and motored Australia to 108-1 in only 9.4 overs for a consolation win. Marsh smashed seven fours and four sixes in his 33-ball unbeaten 64 and Travis Head scored 32 off 19 deliveries before he skied a catch when Australia needed 12 runs for victory.

Australia finished third in Group B while Oman rounded off its campaign with four defeats in four games and was last in the five-team group.

The indifferent form of Marsh's men had encouraged Oman skipper Jatinder Singh to declare "it is the best time to crush" Australia on the eve of the game. Instead, Australian bowlers dominated.

Xavier Bartlett (2-27) crashed the leg stump of Aamir Kaleem off the very first ball and Singh also got clean bowled by Bartlett inside the power play after hitting three boundaries in his knock off 17.

Zampa and Glenn Maxwell (2-13) struck regularly in the middle overs before Wasim Ali scored 32 off 33 balls and helped Oman reach the 100-run mark. Zampa grabbed his fourth four-wicket haul at T20 World Cups by claiming the last two wickets off successive deliveries.

Egyptian-bred Arabian horses take spotlight with Mubarak sponsorship



Mohammad Al-Mubarak

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Mohammad Mubarak Al-Mubarak, owner of Mubarak Stud, reaffirmed his commitment to supporting Egyptian-bred Arabian horse races held weekly at the Hunting and Equestrian Club, highlighting his dedication to promoting this distinguished equestrian tradition.

Speaking ahead of sponsoring the club's 17th race scheduled for next Monday, which features a round for Egyptian-bred horses, Al-Mubarak described the initiative as a trailblazing step in the region.

He noted that the idea was first introduced by Alaa Hamad Al-Roumi, owner of Al-Rayah Stud, and received

immediate approval and backing from Mubarak Stud, making them among the earliest supporters.

He emphasized that races dedicated to Egyptian bloodlines represent a new and valuable concept locally, benefiting breeders, producers, and owners alike.

"We stand behind any initiative that serves this noble animal and advances the sport," he said.

Al-Mubarak added that while Mubarak Stud had previously supported Arabian horse beauty championships, it is now extending its backing to speed races and plans to continue supporting such competitions in the seasons ahead.

Vital game for Barcelona after consecutive defeats, defensive lapses

Tottenham to test Arsenal's nerve in London derby

LONDON, Feb 21, (Agencies): Arsenal faces a test of nerve in the Premier League on Sunday with a short trip to play Tottenham Hotspur in the north London derby.

The 2-2 draw away to Wolverhampton Wanderers on Wednesday night has again raised the specter of Mikel Arteta's side losing its healthy lead at the top of the table, and much focus will be on whether Arteta's men can hold their nerve in a hostile atmosphere.

Tottenham has Igor Tudor in temporary charge with the job of avoiding relegation, and the Croatian has a reputation for producing impressive short-term reactions in his sides.

Sunday also sees Liverpool visit Nottingham Forest with the home side boosted by a 3-0 win away to Fenerbahce on Thursday in the first leg of its Europa League play-off.

Liverpool's main problems are at right back, where Conor Bradley, Jeremie Frimpong and Wataru Endo are all out.

There are big question marks over the future of Oliver Glasner at Crystal Palace after his side's poor recent form was highlighted by a 1-1 draw away to Zrinjski Mostar in the Conference League on Thursday.

Glasner has already said he is leaving Selhurst Park at the end of the season and failure to beat Wolves would extend a run of just one win in 15 games in all competitions, which includes a painful FA Cup exit to Macclesfield.

Sunday's remaining game sees Sunderland entertain Fulham. The home side goes into the match after consecutive league defeats, while Fulham has lost its last three Premier League matches.

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FC Barcelona faces a vital game on Sunday afternoon when Levante visits the Camp Nou Stadium with serious questions over Barcelona's recent form.

Barcelona surrendered the lead of La Liga on Monday with a 2-1 defeat away to Girona, which came just four days after a painful 4-0 de-

feat to Atletico Madrid in the first leg of their Copa del Rey semifinal.

The two defeats highlighted problems in the Barcelona defense, which was picked apart by both Girona and Atletico Madrid, although coach Hansi Flick has highlighted the root of the issue as failures in the club's high press that has allowed rivals to play the ball and find space.

Injuries to Raphinha and Marcus Rashford have clearly been part of the problem, with Rashford still sidelined and Raphinha working his way to full fitness, while their absences have also left the team looking unbalanced down the left.

Raphinha will start on Sunday, but Rashford is still out, although there was good news during the week when midfielders Pedri and Gavi both returned to training with the group. Pedri has been out for

a month with a hamstring injury, while Gavi has been sidelined for several months after a knee operation and neither is likely to start.

Eric Garcia is also a slight doubt for Sunday with a thigh problem, although a week without a midweek match will have allowed Flick to recover tired legs among his players.

Levante travels to Barcelona in deep trouble after consecutive home defeats to Valencia and Villarreal has left Luis Castro's team second from bottom with just 18 points from 24 games - seven from safety.

A second half double from Gorka Guruzeta gave Athletic Bilbao a 2-1 win over Elche in an action-packed La Liga encounter.

It was a third consecutive league win for the Basque club and the first time it has put together three straight league wins since August.

It was also the second time in three games that Guruzeta has scored a brace, following his double in the 4-2 win over Levante on Feb. 8.

His first at San Mames Stadium was a fine finish to convert a low cross from Yuri Berchiche and his second came from the penalty spot after a controversial award in the 89th minute.

In between, André Silva converted a penalty for Elche after being forced to retake his spot kick due to a double touch.

"Little by little things are starting to go our way," said Guruzeta, who missed the only other penalty he took for Athletic.

It was another agonizing reverse for Elche, which has gone eight games without a win. The result left it in 16th place, just one point above the relegation zone.



Arsenal's Viktor Gyokeres, right, and Wolverhampton Wanderers' Yerson Mosquera, challenge for the ball during the Premier League soccer match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Arsenal in Wolverhampton, England. (AP)

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NEWS



Milwaukee Bucks guard-forward Kevin Porter Jr., left, runs the ball against New Orleans Pelicans guard Jeremiah Fears, right, in the second half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans. (AP)

Sports

Kuwait Shooting Club celebrates Sheikh Fahad Nasser on appointment



Officials of the Kuwait Shooting Club organized a special ceremony to honor Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Under the patronage of Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, President of the Asian Shooting Confederation, the Kuwait Shooting Club organized a special ceremony honoring Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, President of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, following his appointment as Vice President of the Olympic Council of Asia for West Asia.

The event was held at the club's headquarters and was attended by several members of the Al-Sabah family, along with board members of the Kuwait Shooting

Club.

During the ceremony, the club's chairman and board members congratulated Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser, stressing that he is well-qualified for this prominent sporting role. They described the appointment as a proud milestone for Kuwait, expressing confidence that he will play an influential part, alongside fellow OCA members, in advancing sports across Asia and strengthening the continent's presence in regional and international competitions across various disciplines.

Salmiya halts Kazma's momentum as the Super Cup tips off Thursday

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Al-Salmiya's handball side halted Kazma's momentum with a 32-29 victory in Round 12 of the Handball Premier League, handing it a fourth defeat of the campaign and dropping it to third in the table.

In the round's other fixture, Kuwait Club powered past Al-Sulaibikhat 40-34.

Kuwait Club remains top with 23 points, ahead of Burgan in second on 16. Kazma sits third with 14 points, followed by Al-Arabi in fourth and Qadsia in fifth, both on 12. Al-Salmiya is sixth with 10 points, Al-Sulaibikhat seventh with seven, and Al-Nasr eighth with two.

Round 13 actions begins today, with Al-Salmiya meeting Qadsia at 8:00 pm before Al-Sulaibikhat faces Al-Nasr at 10:00 pm. The round wraps up tomorrow as Kuwait Club takes on Al-Arabi, while Kazma clashes with Burgan.

In the First Division, Al-Yarmouk defeated Al-Sahel 35-29, and Al-Qurain shared the spoils with Al-Fahaheel in a 38-38 draw in Round 9. Khaitan lead the standings with 14 points, followed by Al-Yarmouk and Al-Qurain on 11 points, with Al-Yarmouk ahead on goal difference. The Youth National Team



Salmiya player makes a goal attempt against Kazma.

and Al-Fahaheel have five points each, while Al-Sahel remains without points.

The 2025-2026 Men's Handball Super Cup gets underway next Thursday at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex. Four teams — Kuwait Club, Al-Salmiya, Qadsia, and Burgan — will battle for the title. In the semifinals, Kuwait Club faces Al-Salmiya at 8:00 pm, followed by Qadsia against Burgan at 10:00 pm. The winners will advance to Friday's final, while the defeated teams will contest third place.

Klaebo makes history as Norway sweeps mass start

Italian freeskiers grab another gold and silver

TESERO, Italy, Feb 21, (AP): Norway's Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo completed his historic gold medal sweep of the men's cross-country skiing events on Saturday by winning his sixth race and setting the record for the most golds by one athlete in a single Winter Olympics.

Klaebo's victory in the 50-kilometer mass start race shattered the nearly 50-year record set by American speed skater Eric Heiden, who won five golds in the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics.

All of Heiden's wins were in individual races and two of Klaebo's have come in team events, so Heiden's record for individual wins still stands.

Klaebo said he was overwhelmed with emotions crossing the finish line and couldn't describe how he felt after repeating the feat he accomplished at last year's world championships in Trondheim, Norway, when he won all six events.

"It's unbelievable," he said. "It still feels really good to race, and

I'm always looking forward to going out there and fighting for the medal."

Klaebo's teammates, Martin Loewstroem Nyenget, took silver, and Emil Iversen, won bronze in a Norwegian sweep.

"I'm starting to believe maybe he is a machine," Nyenget said of Klaebo, who sprinted uphill past him at the end to win in his trademark fashion. "It's close to impossible to beat him in the finish."

The three Norwegians broke out to an early lead and then continued to build the gap on their chasers.

In the final lap, Nyenget and Klaebo pushed uphill and dropped Iversen. Klaebo stayed in second waiting to launch his winning move.

As the two reached the final hill, Klaebo literally ran away from Nyenget and was bound for glory.

As he glided toward the finish, he pointed his fingers toward the sky, took one stride across the line, toppled over on his right hip and rolled onto his back.

France's Theo Schely finished fourth, nearly three minutes back and Savelli Korostelev, a Russian competing as an individual neutral athlete, finished fifth at 3:38.3 back.

The highest-placed U.S. skier

was Gus Schumacher, who won a silver in a team relay, in 13th place.

The win extends Klaebo's record for most career Winter Olympic gold medals to 11 over three Games. The previous record had been eight, which Klaebo broke Feb. 15.

Klaebo has the second-most Olympic golds overall. U.S. swimming great Michael Phelps has 23.

The win gave Norway a record 18th gold medal and further increased their lead in the total medal count in these games to 40 overall.

The country set the record Friday for the most gold medals won by a nation at a single Winter Olympics when biathlete Johannes Dale-Skjedval won the 15-kilometer mass start race.

Italian freeskiers Simone Dero-medis and Federico Tomasoni won gold and silver for the Winter Olympic hosts after dominating the men's skicross final held under snowy conditions.

Dero-medis, the 2023 world champion, took an early lead and stayed well in front of his other three racers over the banks, rollers and jumps of the course in Livigno. These were the 25-year-old's second Games.

Tomasoni made it an Italian one-two by stretching to the finish line



Silver medalist Martin Loewstroem Nyenget, gold medalist Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo and bronze medalist Emil Iversen, all three of Norway, pose after the cross country skiing men's 50km mass start Classic at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Tesero, Italy. (AP)

to beat out Switzerland's Alex Fiva in a photo finish.

The 40-year-old Fiva added the bronze medal to his silver from Beijing 2022.

Satoshi Furuno of Japan missed the podium finishing fourth.

Defending gold medalist Ryan

Regez was eliminated in the semifinals after he was yellow carded for impeding another skier.

On Friday, Daniela Maier of Germany won gold in women's skicross ahead of Swiss freeskier Fanny Smith.

American freeskier Alex Ferrei-

ra won the men's halfpipe final to complete his collection of Olympic medals. The 31-year-old Ferreira won with a third and final run worth 93.75 points at the Livigno Snow Park, adding the gold medal to his silver in 2018 and bronze in 2022.

'A huge mistake.' Kompany hits out at Mourinho for Vinícius Júnior comments

MUNICH, Feb 21, (AP): Bayern Munich coach Vincent Kompany has criticized José Mourinho for attacking the character of Vinícius Júnior after the Real Madrid star accused an opponent of racially insulting him during a Champions League match.

Benfica coach Mourinho suggested that Brazil forward Vinícius had incited Benfica's players with his celebrations after scoring the only goal in Tuesday's playoff match.

Vinícius accused Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni of calling him "monkey" during a confrontation after his goal.

Mourinho also questioned why Vinícius, who is Black and has been subjected to repeated racist insults in Spain, was so frequently targeted.

"There is something wrong because it happens in every stadium," Mourinho said. "The stadium where Vinícius played something happened. Always."

Speaking on Friday, Kompany condemned Mourinho's comments.

"So after the game you have the leader of an organization, José Mourinho, who attacks the character of Vinícius Júnior by bringing in the type of celebration to discredit what Vinícius is doing in this moment," Kompany said. "And for me in terms of leadership, it's a huge mistake and it's something that we should not accept."

UEFA appointed a special investigator on Wednesday to gather evidence about what happened in Lisbon in Ma-



Benfica head coach José Mourinho leaves the pitch after receiving a red card from referee François Letexier during a Champions League playoff soccer match between Benfica and Real Madrid in Lisbon, Portugal. (AP)

drid's 1-0 win in the first leg of the Champions League playoffs. Madrid said it had sent "all available evidence" of the alleged incident to European soccer's governing body.

Referring to Vinícius' celebrations after curling a shot into the top corner, Mourinho said he should "celebrate in a respectful way."

Kompany pointed out Mourinho's own history of exuberant celebrations - such as when he ran down the sideline to cheer when his Porto team beat Manchester United in the Champions League.

Kompany said Mourinho's former players "love him" and added "I know he's a good person."

"I don't need to judge him as a person, but I know what I've heard. I understand maybe what he's done, but he's made a mistake and it's something that hopefully in the future won't happen like this again," he said.

Prestianni denied racially insulting Vinícius. Benfica said the Argentine player was the victim of a "defamation campaign."

Kompany said Vinícius' reaction "cannot be faked."

"You can see it - his reaction is an emotional reaction. I don't see any benefit for him to go to the referee and put all this misery on his shoulders," he said. "There is absolutely no reason for Vini Junior to go and do this."

"I think in his mind he's doing it more because it's the right thing to do in that moment."

Kompany added: "You have a player who's complaining. You have a player who says he didn't do it. And I think unless the player himself comes forward, it's difficult. It's a difficult case."