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Kuwait's Amir congratulates Saudi King on Founding Day Page 2



## Opinion

# First Deputy Prime Minister's decision will end human trafficking

**Ahmed Al-Jarallah**

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE announcement by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, to regulate "freelance residency," allowing residents to work for a fee without requiring a sponsor, is a positive and timely move.

This measure marks the beginning of a shift away

from the sponsorship system and addresses the issue of human trafficking, which has previously drawn criticism from international organizations regarding Kuwait's human rights record.

The initiative goes further by raising employment standards in Kuwait and reducing the high cost of skilled labor. It encourages competition and limits exploitation, which has previously driven many investors out of the Kuwaiti market.

For years, there has been a call for Kuwait to encourage both local and foreign investment and to open its doors to all.

I have written many times about the urgent need to abolish the sponsorship system, which has caused immense suffering for those who have lived in Ku-

wait for decades and contributed greatly to its society. Today, these workers face exorbitant fees imposed by their sponsors to renew their residency permits.

Everyone knows that domestic workers, drivers, and ordinary laborers often pay their sponsors around KD 400 annually just to renew their permits. Many are left destitute because their sponsors do not provide them with jobs but merely register them under their sponsorship. As a result, these workers are forced to do whatever they can to secure their livelihood.

Thousands have mortgaged their homes or sold their possessions to come to Kuwait, having been promised jobs in their chosen fields, only to be con-

fronted by the harsh reality upon arrival. These are the workers often referred to as "unregistered workers."

In the recent past, a worker's daily wage was no more than KD 5, but today, it has risen to KD 15. Skilled workers, particularly those in construction, earn between KD 35 and KD 40. Citizens building houses or undertaking other projects are forced to pay such high wages.

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First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, speaks to inmates during a visit to correctional facilities.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef promotes tolerance, renewal in Ramadan

## First Deputy PM shares Iftar meal with inmates

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, visited correctional facilities recently, where he met with a number of inmates and shared an Iftar meal with them, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The visit is part of efforts to strengthen human connections and share the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan with the inmates.

During the visit, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef emphasized that Ramadan represents an important spiritual milestone for instilling the values of tolerance.

He encouraged the inmates to use these blessed days to correct their course and reinforce their commitment, thus contributing to their positive reintegration into society after completing their sentences.

Present during Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef's visit was the Head of the Special Security and Correctional Institutions Sector Brigadier General Dakheel Ahmed Al-Dakheel, the Director General of Correctional Institutions Brigadier General Osama Majid



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior during a visit to correctional facilities.

Al-Majed, and several security leaders.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef reviewed the workflow within the institutions and the rehabilitation and reform programs offered to inmates.

He stressed the importance of developing the reform and rehabilitation system in accordance with the best practices, reflecting the humanitarian dimension of the Ministry of Interior's work.

## KUWAIT DECREE REPEALS 1991 MARTYRS LAW

# Clear path set for martyrdom

New protections for fallen heroes' heirs

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: A decree was issued and published in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm" concerning the procedures for honoring martyrs and their families, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

The decree includes the establishment of an office affiliated with the Ministry of Defense and the creation of a clear legal framework for recognizing martyrdom, defining its categories, and specifying the material and moral recognitions to be provided.

Article 1 of the decree stipulates the establishment of an office, affiliated with the Ministry of Defense, for honoring martyrs and their families. The necessary financial allocations for the office will be included in the ministry's budget.

Article 2 mandates the formation of a Committee of

Trustees for the Martyrs' Honors Office, appointed by the Minister of Defense. The committee will be chaired by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense and will include representatives from the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, the National Guard, Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Public Authority for Minors' Affairs (PAMA).

According to Article 3, a committee is formed by a decision of the Minister of Defense to designate a martyr and determine their category, in accordance with the regulations stipulated in Article 5, through the following procedures:

■ For military personnel: The deceased's affiliated entity submits an official request accompanied by the death certificate, investigation reports detailing the circumstances of the incident, witness statements (if any), and a memorandum outlining the opinion on the applicability of martyr status.

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## Palestinian envoy lauds Kuwait's consistent stance

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub said Kuwait fully supports the Palestinian people and it is firm in opposing any efforts to displace them.

In a press statement, Tahboub pointed out that the commitment of Kuwait to allocate \$1 billion over the coming years for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip is a clear proof of its unwavering position on the issue.

He cited the speech of Kuwaiti Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Jarrah Al-Jaber at the Peace Council meeting in

Washington. He commended the minister for reiterating the long-standing and consistent stance of Kuwait on the Palestinian cause. He stressed that this cause is an important aspect of the foreign policy of Kuwait.

He asserted that maintaining peace and stability in the region depends on the establishment of an independent Pal-

estinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and on securing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in line with the international law, United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

He also confirmed the confidence of the Palestinian leadership, government and people in the sisterly State of Kuwait, HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the government and citizens.

He thanked Sheikh Jarrah Al-Jaber for clearly conveying the stance of Kuwait's political leadership in the abovementioned international gathering.

## Kuwait decree amends National Military Service Law

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Decree-Law No. 9/2026, which amends certain provisions of Law No. 20/2015 concerning National Military Service, was published on Sunday in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm", reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to the explanatory memorandum, Law No. 20/2015 introduced a modern framework for the national military service system.

However, practical application revealed the need to amend some provisions, whether by replacement, addition, or repeal, to address gaps and shortcomings that emerged during implementation.

The decree-law consists of five articles, as follows:  
**Article 1:** The texts of Articles 2, Paragraph 1, 3, 6, 10 clause c, 11 clause a, 12 clause a, 17, 26, 27, 33 paragraph 1, 38, 39, 42, and 48 of Law No. 20/2015

are replaced with the following texts:

**Article 2:** Paragraph 1: Every Kuwaiti who has reached the age of eighteen must present himself within one hundred and eighty days from the date he reaches this age to the competent authority for national military service.

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Teachers, parents urged to cooperate

## Kuwait tracks student absences

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs Eng. Hamad Abdullah Al-Hamad issued a set of procedures and instructions to ensure a stable learning environment and the continuation of studies in accordance with the approved plans and the directives of Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaie.

In a press statement, the Education Ministry revealed these measures aim to instill discipline in schools, maintain high attendance rates, and monitor the implementation of educational regulations. It affirmed that these measures were communicated to the educational affairs departments in all educational districts, as well as the General Directorate of Religious Education and the Directorate of Special Education. It added that the goal is to ensure the smooth operation of the educational process.

Following are the measures:

1. Conduct short quizzes and various assessment tools on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, with strict adherence to accurate and transparent grading, and to encourage active student participation.

2. Implement the curricula timeline and use the best teaching methods to encourage positive interaction, attendance and participation of students.

3. Strictly adhere to attendance policies through continuous monitoring of attendance rates and constructive communication with parents whenever nec-

essary, in a way that strengthens partnership and serves the best interests of the student.

4. Only sick leave certificates issued by government hospitals will be accepted during the specified days. Daily statistics on absence rates must be submitted to the educational affairs departments in their respective educational districts no later than the end of the official workday each day to ensure daily monitoring and the implementation of necessary measures.

5. The principle of fairness among students will be upheld by prohibiting the re-administration of short tests for students who miss them. Absences will be handled according to the regulations and procedures in place at the Ministry of Education.

6. The evaluation process for school administrations will be linked to student attendance and absence rates, as these are indicators of excellence in school performance and reflect the efficiency and effectiveness of school administration in promoting discipline.

7. Educational affairs directors will take the necessary measures, in accordance with the established regulations, which may include referral for investigation if any practices are found to be a violation of the regulations governing educational work on student absence.

8. Educational affairs departments will continue to conduct field visits to monitor the regularity of classes at all educational levels.

In this context, the ministry emphasized the importance of adhering to the approved educational calendar, which sets the school days to ensure the completion of the curriculum as per the established timeline.

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### Ramadan Timings

Imsak ..... Monday ..... 05:01  
Iftar ..... Monday ..... 17:43  
Imsak ..... Tuesday ..... 05:00

### NewsWatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** The Higher Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship Investigation issued Decision No. 3/15/2026 for revoking the Kuwaiti citizenship of 120 individuals, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The decision, which was published in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm" on Sunday, was based on Article 11 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959, concerning the Kuwaiti Nationality Law and its amendments, which stipulates that a Kuwaiti citizen loses citizenship if they willingly acquire a foreign nationality.

**KUWAIT CITY:** Kuwait Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Minister **Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah** issued on Sunday a ministerial decision forming a committee to review selected spaces within children's parks and offer them for investment to better regulate public facility use. (KUNA)

## Kuwait calls out US support of Israel's West Bank annexation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait strongly condemned the irresponsible statements made by the United States Ambassador to the Israeli occupation authorities, which included acceptance of the occupation's control over territories belonging to Arab states, including the occupied West Bank.

In a statement on Saturday, the Ministry affirmed Kuwait's categorical rejection of such remarks, stressing that they constitute a clear violation of the principles of international law and international legitimacy resolutions, including Resolution No. 2803.

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## Kuwait protests Iraqi allegations against its maritime sovereignty

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Saturday that it has summoned the Iraqi Charge d'Affaires to the country, following Iraq's submission to the UN of coordinates and a map containing claims regarding Iraqi maritime areas.

In a statement, the Ministry said the deposited coordinates and map include allegations that infringe upon Kuwait's sovereignty over its maritime zones and established and

stable maritime elevations in relation to Iraq, including Fasht Al-Qaid and Fasht Al-Aij, which have not been the subject of any dispute concerning Kuwait's full sovereignty.

The Ministry noted that Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani received Iraqi Charge d'Affaires Zaid Shanshul and handed him an official memorandum of protest regarding the Iraqi claims filed with the UN,

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2 Shaab Palace hosts royals, big number of dignitaries



8 NBK showcases its leadership in responsible content creation & community awareness at the Arab Forum for content creators

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:02 Asr ..... 15:16  
 Sunrise .. 06:21 Maghrib .. 17:42  
 Zohr ..... 12:02 Isha ..... 18:59

# Local

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Warm to rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06-24 km/h.

## Weather

**By Night:** Rather cold with light variable wind, with speed of 06-22 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	30	11

Abdaly	30	12
Jahra	31	14
Salmiyah	28	19
Jalaliyah	30	13
Nuwaisib	29	14
Salmi	31	12



HH the Amir

HH the Crown Prince

HH the Prime Minister

## Kuwait's Amir congratulates Saudi King on Founding Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Saturday cables to King Salman bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia, and Crown Prince and Premier Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud, congratulating them on the occasion of the Kingdom's Founding Day.

In the cables, His Highness the Amir commended the Kingdom's prominent civilizational and developmental achievements covering various domains and fields.

His Highness the Amir also voiced pride in the firm and close fraternal relations between both countries, looking forward to promoting and developing horizons of existing cooperation on all levels.

His Highness the Amir also wished King Salman lasting health and wellness and further progress and prosperity for the Kingdom.

## Crown Prince

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent Saturday cables to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and Crown Prince and Premier Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud, congratulating them on the occasion of the Kingdom's Founding Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince commended the Kingdom's prominent civilizational and development achievements under the wise leadership of King Salman, wishing him lasting health and wellness and further progress and prosperity for the Kingdom.

## Prime Minister

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent Saturday cables to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and Crown Prince and Premier Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud, congratulating them on the occasion of the Kingdom's Founding Day.

## Kuwait Amir receives Crown Prince, PM, 1st Deputy PM

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, at Bayan Palace Sunday morning.

The Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah.

## Crown Prince receives PM, 1st Deputy PM

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Sunday at Bayan Palace, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness also received at Bayan Palace, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.



Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah



Sheikh Fahad Yousef

### 'Three centuries of remarkable development'

## Saudi Arabia basks in glory, marks Founding Day

JEDDAH, Feb 22, (KUNA): Saudi Arabia is commemorating the Founding Day, honoring the historic establishment of the Saudi state by Imam Mohammad bin Saud and his designation of Al-Diriyah as its capital.

The national occasion marks more than three centuries of political, cultural, and social development that have shaped the Kingdom's identity, stability, and future aspirations.

The annual celebration on February 22

was established by royal decree issued in January 2022 by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, designating the day as an official holiday in recognition of the Kingdom's deep-rooted heritage and the enduring bond between its leadership and citizens.

The founding of the First Saudi State in 1727 (1139 AH) -Al-Diriyah as its capital- marked a significant political turning point. Under Imam Mohammad bin Saud, the state pursued unity, education, cultural advancement, security, and economic organization, contributing to regional stability and the protection of pilgrimage and trade routes.

Strategically located along Wadi Hanifah, Al-Diriyah became a major center for caravan trade and intellectual exchange.

During the rule of Imam Mohammad bin Saud and his successors, it evolved into a hub for scholars and learning, fostering cultural and economic growth.

Founding Day celebrations highlight national unity, security, and pride in the Kingdom's historical legacy. Today, Saudi Arabia continues an ambitious development journey, positioning itself as a global model of progress and leadership across multiple sectors.



King Salman



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah arrives.



Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad graces the event.



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah and colleague Saud Al-Farhan at the event with the host.



Farwaniya Governor with royal family members.

## Shaab Palace hosts royals, big number of dignitaries

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Shaab Palace hosted a large gathering of well-wishers, led by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, who offered congratulations on this official occasion.

The huge turnout of ruling family members, senior officials and citizens is a reflection of the lasting tradition of the State in commemorating national events with warmth and affection.

Receiving the attendees were Sheikh Fahad Saad Al-Abdullah, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali

Al-Abdullah, and Sheikh Mubarak Al-Fahad who exchanged greetings with all those present.

The celebration is significant as it coincides with the holy month of Ramadan. This blessed month holds a special place in the hearts of the Kuwaitis, reinforcing its profound spiritual significance, the values of compassion and connection, and the commitment to uphold the tradition of exchanging greetings and strengthening family ties during these auspicious days.



Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali at the event



Father Bigoul Anba Bishoy with the host



Japanese Ambassador and Anne Koistinen with the hosts



Australian and Canadian ambassadors.

Photos by Rizk Taufiq

## Bangladesh's warm wishes to Kuwait on National Days

On behalf of the Government and the people of Bangladesh, and on my own behalf, I extend my warmest congratulations and heartfelt felicitations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and the brotherly people of the State of Kuwait on the joyous occasion of the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day of Kuwait.

These cherished occasions commemorate Kuwait's proud history, sovereignty, and remarkable journey of progress and development. Under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir, Kuwait continues to thrive as a beacon of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

The friendship between Bangladesh and Kuwait is deep-rooted and historic, founded on mutual respect and shared aspirations for the welfare of our peoples. Kuwait's recognition of Bangladesh on November 4, 1973 as the first Gulf country marked the beginning of

excellent bilateral relations, which have since expanded into strong cooperation in human resources, trade, investment, development, energy, defense, and other key sectors.

Military cooperation remains a proud pillar of our partnership. Bilateral defense ties date back to 1990, when Bangladeshi forces joined the coalition to liberate Kuwait. Their contributions in the post-Gulf War period, particularly in landmine clearance, and medical support during the COVID-19 pandemic remain highly valued. Today, Bangladesh Military Contingents continue to serve alongside the Kuwait Armed Forces under Operation Kuwait Punargathan (OKP), contributing to engineering, IT, security, medical and related fields.

I am confident that the close relations between our two friendly countries will continue to grow and expand for the mutual benefit of our peoples. On this auspicious occasion, I pray to the Almighty for the continued good health and happiness of His Highness the Amir and for the lasting peace, progress, and prosperity of the brotherly people of Kuwait.

**Major General Syed Tareq Hussain, OSP, awc, psc**  
 Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait



Maj Gen Hussain

# E-waste grave threat

## Recycling is a necessity: experts

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Owner of the 'Eco Environmental Incubator' Jassem Al-Abouh has warned about the grave threat posed by electronic waste (e-waste) to human health and the environment.**

In an interview with the newspaper, Al-Abouh explained that e-waste includes discarded electrical and electronic devices, and anything with hazardous substances like lead, mercury and cadmium, in addition to valuable materials such as gold, silver and copper, hence, it could be a source of income. He said this necessitates the recycling of e-waste.

Citing recycling statistics, he revealed that the total recycled e-waste reached 2,489,163 kilograms, indicating that the average recycled quantity in 2023 was 135,693 kilograms and the projection for 2025 ranged

between 883,470 kilograms to 1,057,444 kilograms.

Following is an excerpt of the interview:

**Question:** Please shed light on the role played by the Eco Environmental Incubator.

**Answer:** It focuses on the environment and renewable energy sectors to support environmental projects and initiatives. We signed a five-year memorandum of understanding with the Environment Public Authority (EPA). Among the projects proposed by the Incubator is to support the recycling of electronic waste. This community initiative is the first of its kind in Kuwait with the aim of promoting environmental sustainability goals and establishing a circular economy culture within the community.

**Q:** What steps did you take to implement the initiative?  
**A:** Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaie fully supports the initiative. Within two weeks, we obtained his approval and we started working in 12 schools in various governorates.

We also presented the initiative to the private sector, which immediately embraced it and supported it to ensure its success. These private institutions include Boubyan Bank, Zain, Arab Open University and Kuwait Airways.

**Q:** When was the initiative launched? Has it

achieved its goals?

**A:** The initiative was launched last September with the support of Ahmad Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad. It began in October and ran for three months until December last year. In January, the winners were announced, along with the amount of electronic waste collected from the 12 participating schools (six for boys and six for girls). The first-place winners received KD 500 from Boubyan Bank, while the second-place winners received KD 400 for the workshops organized by Zain. Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Mohammad Al-Khalidi presented the awards and honored the winners at the theater of the ministry.

**Q:** How did the schools respond to the initiative, considering it was new and the first of its kind in Kuwait?

**A:** The schools responded very positively, with the support of all the governors. We conducted workshops led by environmental specialists in the schools. Electronic waste containers were distributed to each school to facilitate collection and storage. The initiative resulted in the collection of 5,500 kilograms of electronic waste from the schools. Due to its success, there have been calls to expand its implementation to middle and high school levels starting in September.

Call for accountability

**Textbooks issue lingers as panel probe awaited**

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: With the conclusion of the work of the committee formed by Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaie to conduct an investigation into the observations and violations related to the printing and supply of textbooks for the 2025/2026 academic year, the ministry confirmed in a statement dated Oct 26, 2025, that the committee members are from the Legal Advice and Legislation Department and was in charge of reviewing 115 observations, verifying the contractual and financial procedures, and ensuring that the companies complied fully with the approved technical specifications, but the committee's findings have yet to be announced, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Despite the gravity and sensitivity of the issue — particularly since many students did not receive their textbooks for the first semester until shortly before the end-of-semester examinations, a delay that clearly warrants accountability for those responsible — the ministry has not disclosed the findings of the committee, the conclusions it reached, or whether it identified the underlying causes of the violations cited in its official statement.

It is worth noting that while the ministry often moves quickly to issue decisions on various matters, it has been inactive on this issue, as though the concerns were unrelated to one of the most fundamental pillars of the educational process: textbooks. Without them, teachers are unable to properly deliver lessons, and students are left without the essential tools to follow and complete their studies.

**24 entities stand out in 'Ada'a' output project**

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) announced recently that 24 public entities have successfully met the gold, silver and bronze stage requirements of the "Ada'a" performance project aimed at activating codes of professional conduct in the public sector.

The announcement was made during Nazaha's third "Ada'a" conference, organized to review progress in implementing employee codes of conduct and to honor participating entities advancing to the next phase of the program.

Nazaha Chairman Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim said the conference underscores continued commitment to monitoring application of conduct codes, assessing achievements and building on them to strengthen integrity, combat corruption and reinforce confidence in institutional performance as a cornerstone of state governance.

He noted that the "Ada'a" program stems from the National Strategy for Enhancing Integrity and Combating Corruption and represents a key public sector initiative, urging entities to actively participate and institutionalize professional conduct frameworks.

Kuwait Airways Chairman Captain Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan commended Nazaha's role in promoting awareness and preventive anti-corruption measures, affirming that adherence to professional and ethical values is an integrated approach that enhances institutional trust, elevates performance and aligns with national governance aspirations.

Participating entities, including the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, the Public Authority for Sport and the Ministry of Public Works, delivered presentations outlining the tangible impact of implementing the "Ada'a" project within their institutions.

Citizen acquitted

**Evacuate, pay comp for damages, losses: court**

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Court of Appeals ordered the eviction of a trespasser from a commercial property and obligate him to pay around KD28,000 as compensation for damages and losses resulting from his illegal occupation.

The ruling favored a commercial company after the court determined that the trespasser occupied the property unlawfully.

This necessitated ending the trespassing and returning the property to its rightful owner, thus, protecting legal standing and safeguarding commercial rights.

A report from the General Department of Experts at the Ministry of Justice reinforced this ruling. It concluded with a settlement of accounts between the two parties, determining outstanding amounts — including unpaid rent, electricity and water consumption — and calculating lost profits from the company being deprived of using its premises during the dispute. The report ultimately confirmed the total compensation of about KD28,000.

This ruling conveys a clear message -- the judiciary not only returns the property to the rightful owner, but also holds the trespasser fully responsible for all financial consequences.

Attorney Jarrah Hamid Al-Sharika, who is currently leading the Nasq Law Firm and Legal Consultations, handled the lawsuit and followed up its stages. He described the ruling as "remarkable".

**Citizen acquitted:** The Misdemeanor Court acquitted a citizen who was fined in absentia for the school absence of his son, overturning its earlier ruling.

In its decision, the court expressed doubt regarding the validity of the accusation and the evidence presented against the defendant.

Citing Article 197 of the Criminal Procedures and Trials Law, the court stressed that such doubts are sufficient ground for acquittal.

Lawyer for the citizen, Attorney Awatif Al-Fadhli, argued for the absence of charges, presenting a defense memorandum and supporting documents, including proof of the son's enrollment abroad and a certificate from a North African educational institution confirming his regular attendance.



Firemen tackling another blaze at a warehouse in Shuwaikh. KFF photo

**No casualties in minor fire at Shuwaikh police station**

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: A small fire broke out in the Shuwaikh police station holding cell, but no casualties were registered, reports Al-Anba daily.

The minor fire, likely caused by an electrical short circuit, occurred in the holding cell without affecting any of the detainees or security personnel.

Duty officers at the station responded quickly in evacuating all detainees as a precautionary measure in accordance with established procedures.

Abdul Aziz Al-Omar, the Capital Security Director, arrived at the scene to assess the situation firsthand. The station chief, Ahmed Al-Jassar, oversaw the response to ensure everyone's safety.

Firefighters from the Kuwait Fire Force extinguished the fire completely, and technical measures were taken to prevent reignition. An investigation has been launched to determine the cause of the electrical short circuit and to implement any necessary preventive measures.

**Arab guard turns out to be robber**

Cops to track down buyer

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: An Arab expatriate working as a building guard was referred to the Central Prison after confessing to stealing gold worth approximately KD 750 from a citizen's apartment in Hawally, reports Al-Anba daily.**

According to security sources, the suspect had received a key to the apartment from the owner for cleaning it while the latter's wife was away.

The citizen reported the theft of his wife's gold to the Hawally Police Station, explaining that he had returned from work to discover that the safe in the bedroom had been broken into and that a quantity of gold he had purchased for his wife, valued at KD 750, was missing.

A theft case was registered and referred to the Criminal Investigation Department. The suspect was apprehended and confronted with the evidence, at which point he admitted to stealing the gold and selling it to a friend.

Police attempted to contact the buyer of the gold, but his phone was switched off, leading authorities to suspect he turned it off after learning of the arrest. Investigations revealed that the buyer had not left the country, and his name was then placed on the travel ban list pending legal proceedings.

The building guard has been transferred to the Central Prison while the case continues.

**No sentence in case:** The Fifth Criminal Circuit Court ruled to refrain from issuing a sentence against a young man who was accused of assault resulting in permanent disability, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Public Prosecution had charged the defendant with assaulting the victim with a sharp instrument, causing a permanent disability in the form of a skull fracture, according to the case file.

During the trial, Lawyer Yaqoub Al-Sakran argued that the incident resulted from an exchange of blows between the two parties, asserting that his client had been attacked first and that his actions were in self-defense. He based this argument on the investigations, medical reports, and witness testimonies.

After deliberation, the court decided to refrain from issuing a sentence, with all the legal implications, in light of the circumstances of the case.

**Driving at 210 kph:** Traffic officers apprehended a citizen for speeding, driving at 210 kilometers per hour on King Fahad Road, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to a security source, the necessary legal steps were taken against the citizen and his vehicle was impounded.

In another incident, traffic officers assigned in Jahra detained the driver of a quad bike for reckless driving, endangering not only his life, but also that of other road users. His quad bike was impounded.

**Arrogance led to fall of his realm & inglorious defeat**

"THIS is the story of how a single, humiliating mistake can change the fate of an entire nation. It begins with a deadly display of power and ends in the deaths of millions," Imam and preacher **Mohammad Al-Fawzan** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Ala ad-Din Muhammad, the 13th-century ruler of Khwarazm, governed a vast region of Central Asia, including what is now Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. His wealthy kingdom controlled the Silk Road, and all trade caravans were required to pay taxes for passage.

"The Khwarezmian Empire was vast and formidable, boasting an army of half a million soldiers equipped with the strongest horses and the finest armor.

"Samarkand, the empire's capital, was a center of science, wealth, lush meadows, and magnificent architecture. Yet all this power and prosperity could not guarantee victory in every battle. A single fatal mistake by Ala ad-Din Muhammad set the stage for the destruction and slaughter of Muslims by the Mongols.

"Muhammad ibn Khwarazm Shah was known for his sharp temper, impulsiveness, self-importance, and hasty decision-making, often ignoring the consequences. This personality made his political position isolated and hostile toward the Abbasid Caliphate in Iraq and other Islamic kingdoms.

"He was also at odds with the Turks, the Seljuks, and the Ghurids in India, the most powerful Islamic states of the era. As a result, his kingdom was politically isolated and resented by the rest of the Islamic world. With no allies, he faced the Mongol invasion alone. His arrogance, pride, and reckless decisions ultimately led to catastrophic consequences.

"For example, a group of Muslim merchants traveled to the lands of Genghis Khan without the permission of Sultan Khwarazm Shah. Genghis Khan received them with the utmost hospitality and asked, "Why have you stopped coming to us?"

"The merchants replied, "Sultan Khwarazm Shah forbade merchants from traveling to your lands, and if he had known about us, he would have destroyed us."

"In response, Genghis Khan sent messengers to Khwarazm Shah to restore trade relations between their countries and even dispatched merchants carrying vast riches.

"Khwarazm Shah issued a decree ordering the execution of the merchants and the confiscation of their goods. In response, Genghis Khan sent a message to Khwarazm Shah, asking, "Tell me, was this done with your consent? If not, we demand retribution for their blood." Khwarazm Shah arrogantly replied, "This was done with my knowledge and under my orders. There is nothing between us but the sword." He then went so far as to execute Genghis Khan's messengers.

"This heinous act proved to be a fatal mistake. It enraged Genghis Khan, prompting the Mongol invasion of Khwarazm. Bloodshed, devastation, and destruction spread across the empire. When Ala ad-Din Muhammad (Khwarazm Shah) realized the scale of his defeat, he fled to Khorasan and later to a remote island. He died in 617 AH (1220 CE) while fleeing the Mongol armies on an island near the Caspian Sea."

"People face many situations in life where they might resort to lying or concealing the truth out of shame, fear, or a desire to improve their image in the eyes of others." Kuwaiti writer lawyer **Abdullah Falah Al-Hajri** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"However, there are moments when honesty is not merely a moral choice, but an absolute necessity on which life, freedom, or the future depends. Among all people, two stand out, and you must be completely honest with them. They are your doctor and your lawyer.

"Honesty with your doctor is the first step toward recovery. Doctors do not possess supernatural abilities to know what a patient is hiding. They rely entirely on the information provided by the patient. Symptoms, habits, medications, and even the pains are essential pieces of information on which the doctor bases their diagnosis and treatment plan.

"Concealing even a small fact, such as smoking or taking medication without a prescription, can lead to a misdiagnosis or a dangerous drug interaction. Many health com-

plications could have been avoided if the patient had been honest from the outset. A doctor is not an adversary or a social censor, but a partner in maintaining your health, and their ability to help begins with your honesty.

"Honesty with a lawyer is no less important than honesty with a doctor, because it concerns your rights, freedom, and reputation.

"A lawyer defends you based on the facts, not on fabricated or incomplete accounts. When you conceal information or alter details, you weaken your legal position without realizing it. The truth may later emerge in court, turning the case upside down.

"Honesty with a lawyer, even about matters you consider embarrassing or incriminating, allows them to choose the best defense strategy or provide sound legal advice. The relationship between a client and their lawyer is built on trust, and the lawyer is legally obligated to maintain the confidentiality of everything you share.

"The common denominator between a doctor and a lawyer is that they work for your benefit, not to judge you. Both need the complete truth to perform their duties effectively. Lying or concealing facts may offer temporary relief, but it carries significant risks that can lead to painful consequences later.

"In conclusion, honesty with your doctor protects your body, and honesty with your lawyer protects your future. Telling the truth may sometimes be difficult, but it is far less costly than the consequences of lying. Be honest with those who can save your life and protect your rights, because sometimes honesty is essential."

"Although the crow is a weak creature, by God's will it has taught humankind lessons and wisdom, despite humankind's strength and might," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Scientific studies have proven the intelligence of this bird, as God Almighty informed us 1,400 years ago. A British team took a crow to a laboratory and placed minced meat inside a test tube, along with a piece of wire. They left the crow with these items in the lab and filmed what happened. They found that the crow bent the end of the wire into a hook shape, inserted it into the test tube with its foot, then pulled the minced meat out and ate it.

"The scientists believed it happened by chance, so they repeated the experiment ten times. Each time, the crow successfully retrieved and ate the meat. Scientists also observed a crow collecting bread-crumbs with its claws, placing them on a tree branch, and then dropping them into a lake. When fish gather around the breadcrumbs underwater, the crow swoops down, catches them with its beak, and flies back to its nest.

"Also, the crow community imposes punishments for every crime.

The crime of stealing food from chicks is punished by plucking the offending crow's feathers until it is unable to fly, just like the chicks. The crime of stealing or destroying a nest requires the

crow's court to compel the offending crow to build a new nest for the victim. The punishment for attacking another crow's mate is to be pecked to death by the other crows. The court usually meets in a field or open space where the judges gather at the appointed time. The accused crow is brought in under heavy guard, and the trial begins. The crow lowers its head, tucks its wings, and stops cawing as a sign of guilt.

"Once the death sentence is pronounced, the crows swoop down on the condemned crow, tearing it apart with their sharp beaks until it dies. Then a raven carries the body, digs a grave appropriate to its size, places the bird's remains inside, and covers it with earth out of respect for the sanctity of death. This is how ravens uphold divine justice on Earth, far better than many humans.

"The Quran recounts the story of Cain and Abel - "So his soul prompted him to kill his brother, and he killed him and became among the losers. Then God sent a raven searching the ground to show him how to bury the body of his brother. He said, "Woe to me! Am I not even able to be like this raven and bury the body of my brother?" And he became regretful."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Al-Fawzan



Al-Dawas

# CAPT delays Shaqaya power project pending Finance Ministry greenlight

MEW secures SAB approval for substations

By Mohammad Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has postponed its decision on the request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to award a tender for the supply and installation of 400 kV overhead transmission lines linking the Shaqaya solar power station to Subiya power station, pending receipt of an official letter from the ministry confirming the approval of its Finance counterpart.**

The ministry had earlier contacted CAPT, requesting authorization to award the tender to the lowest bidder that fulfilled all technical requirements at a value of KD48.667 million in line with its strategy to enhance the reliability of the national electrical grid.

The objective is to construct high-voltage overhead transmission lines to connect the Shaqaya station—currently generating around 70 megawatts of electricity from renewable energy sources—to the Subiya power station, thereby, enabling the integration of this production capacity into the grid and strengthening

overall supply stability.

In another development, the Ministry of Public Works obtained conditional approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) to conclude a consultancy contract for the study, design and supervision of the Ministry of Information building at a total cost of KD2.690 million.

Under the terms of the approval, the ministry will enter into an agreement with the winning consultancy firm to commence implementation in line with the beneficiary entity's technical, engineering and administrative requirements. A separate tender for the construction of the building will be floated upon completion of the consultancy contract.

The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has obtained conditional approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) to proceed with the contract for the maintenance and repair of main electrical substations.

The contract, originally valued at KD135.409 million, was approved at a final amount of KD129.492 million after a comprehensive review that resulted in savings of KD5.916 million.

The assessment of the tender documents by SAB led to the identification of several discrepancies, including price schedules that covered maintenance work for substations and equipment still under warranty. The Bureau noticed that the price list included equipment whose spare parts could not be supplied by the con-

tracting company.

The Bureau's queries on Jan 14 prompted a response from the ministry on Jan 21, followed by a letter on Feb 9. These correspondences confirmed amendments to the quantities and pricing of items one, three, five and six in the tender, leading to the reduced contract value.

The ministry submitted the tender to the Bureau at the end of December for the requisite review and approval to facilitate the immediate commencement of work.

This tender is included in the strategic plan of the ministry to modernize and upgrade its facilities and electrical grid infrastructure while enhancing operational efficiency.

The objective is to extend the service life of these assets and ensure full preparedness to meet the expected surge in electricity demand during the summer months.

This rising demand is fueled by the expansion of new residential cities, industrial areas, and various housing developments in the country.

The main substations scheduled for maintenance—including the 132/300/400 kV installations—serve as a cornerstone of the national electrical grid.

The 300 and 400 kV transmission network transfers vast quantities of electricity from power generation plants to major load centers and plays a vital role in maintaining the synchronous interconnection of power generation stations.

## Father Bigoul congratulates Kuwait on National Day and Liberation Day

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Father Bigoul Anba Bishop, a senior priest of St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Kuwait, congratulated the State of Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people on the occasion of its National Day and Liberation Day, and wished the country continued security, stability, progress, and prosperity.**



Fr. Bigoul

In a press statement, Father Bigoul extended his heartfelt congratulations to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (May God protect him), His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaleel Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (May God protect him), His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (May God protect him), the government of the State of Kuwait, and the generous people of Kuwait.

Father Bigoul prayed that God would return these cherished national occasions with Kuwait achieving even greater heights of progress and prosperity.

He also conveyed to the leadership and people of Kuwait the greetings of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark in Egypt and all the lands of the diaspora,

and the greetings of His Grace Bishop Antonios, Metropolitan of Jerusalem, Kuwait, and the Near East, along with their wishes for continued success and prosperity for the State of Kuwait.

Father Bigoul stated that National Day is an occasion to reflect on the values of belonging, loyalty, and development, and on what it represents as part of a firmly established renaissance journey shaped by the wise leadership and contributed to by the people of Kuwait, generation after generation.

He emphasized that this occasion reflects Kuwait's civilized image and its approach based on moderation, coexistence, and respect for humanity.

Father Bigoul explained that Liberation Day embodies the memory of sacrifice, redemption, and resilience, recalling the unity between the leadership and the people, and the spirit of national solidarity that successfully overcame the most difficult circumstances. This lasting memory will remain a testament to the strength of the Kuwaiti will and to Kuwait's standing and significant Arab and international presence.

He noted that these days, which coincide with the holy month of Ramadan, become a unifying occasion where Kuwaitis and residents alike come together around the values of love, loyalty, and belonging, renewing the spirit of one family.

Father Bigoul concluded his greetings with a prayer that God protect Kuwait, its leadership, and its people, and grant them continued security, stability, and prosperity.

## MoSA seeks Cabinet approval to dissolve 6 NGOs

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Ministry of Social Affairs is preparing to submit a memorandum to the Cabinet listing six NGOs for approval of their dissolution, reports Al-Jarida daily.**

The decisions were issued after the associations' founders cited their inability to manage operations due to violations of registration regulations, lack of community benefit, and failure to achieve the objectives for which they were established.

According to informed sources, two of these associations will be dissolved at the request of their founders, while the remaining four will be

dissolved due to regulatory violations. All six associations had exhausted the successive warnings issued by the ministry, receiving four warnings each at two-week intervals, without responding or taking action to correct the violations.

Under the law, associations that remain inactive in the community are considered in violation of Article 27 of Law 24/1962, which governs clubs and public benefit associations. This applies to associations that have failed for years to carry out activities, provide real services to the community, submit estimated budgets or financial reports to the ministry, or whose bank

accounts have been inactive for extended periods.

Regarding the funds in these associations' accounts, the sources indicated that after liquidation, the funds will revert to the ministry, which will then determine the appropriate entity for their transfer, in accordance with Article 25 of the model bylaws.

They confirmed that the ministry continues its auditing process for all registered civil and charitable associations, aiming to identify those that are inactive or fail to comply with regulations, controls, and requirements.

## Charitable societies strengthen 'social solidarity' across Kuwait

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA):** Charitable societies across Kuwait continue to play a pivotal humanitarian and social role in supporting underprivileged and low-income families nationwide.

Various charities are keen to deliver food, financial and in-kind assistance to eligible beneficiaries through well-organized mechanisms that preserve recipients' dignity and address their essential needs, reflecting the deeply rooted values of solidarity and compassion within Kuwaiti society.

Local humanitarian organizations have intensified efforts to expand the scope of domestic charitable work by launching seasonal campaigns, food basket distributions, rent assistance programs and educational support initiatives.

Through coordinated efforts and community engagement, Kuwait's charitable sector remains a cornerstone of social cohesion, embodying the nation's enduring humanitarian mission and commitment to supporting those in need.



The process of transferring aid designated for needy families.

### Other Voices

## Confusing differences in shoe sizes

By Ahmad alsarraf

THERE are several main shoe size systems, with separate versions for men, women, and children. The differences between them arise more from historical, technical, and commercial factors than from actual variations in foot size from one region to another.

Global shoe size systems can be summarized into four main types, each with versions for men, women, and sometimes children:

- The Mondopoint system, adopted as the international standard ISO 9407, measures the actual length of the foot in millimeters (e.g., 260, 265 mm) and often includes the width as well.

- The European system (Paris Point/EU), the most common in our region, uses sizes such as 40, 41, and 42.

- The British system, which uses sizes such as 7, 8, and 9 for both men and women, is based on the barleycorn, or the length of a barleycorn, and is divided into children's and adult sizes.

- The American system, which has been derived from the British system but modified, most notably by separating men's and women's sizes. Men's sizes are 7, 8, 9, and women's sizes are also labeled 7, 8, 9 but follow a different scale. Women's shoes are typically 1.5 to 2 sizes larger than men's shoes for the same foot length.

Although there are subsystems such as Canadian, Australian, and Japanese, they are almost identical to the American and British systems.

The American system was introduced in the 1880s by New York businessman Edwin Simpson as the first detailed shoe sizing system. Its measurements were based on the Brit-

ish "barleycorn" system, where one inch was historically defined as the length of three barley grains placed side by side.

This system was long used for measuring custom-made shoes.

Each full American shoe size is one-third of an inch (one barleycorn) larger than the previous size.

The slight difference between men's and women's sizes is attributed to historical variations in how sizing was determined.

The details of who originally determined these measurements have been lost to history, but the resulting sizing systems are still in use today.

About a decade later, the National Association of Shoe Retailers adopted Simpson's system, providing the first national guidelines for shoe sizes.

By the 1920s, stores across America had implemented standardized measuring devices, such as the Ritz wand and the Brannock sizing system, further unifying shoe measurements.

Another reason for variations is that some systems base the size on the length of the last, while others use the length of the foot plus an added "toe margin."

Some systems adjust the starting point, or zero point, of the sizing scale. As a result, even if the units are the same, the numbers do not match. This is why the UK uses the same system for both men and women.

In America, however, commercial and market considerations led to the development of a separate sizing system for women, offset from the men's scale.

The aim was to market "women's" shoes on a specific scale, accounting for the fact that women's feet are usually narrower but of similar length to men's. The American system also uses letters to indicate foot width - A, B, C, D, E - which adds complexity and has made global standardization more difficult.

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## Kuwait Amir extends greetings to Saint Lucia on Independence Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Sunday, to Governor-General of Saint Lucia Cyril Errol Charles on his country's Independence Day.

His Highness conveyed his sincere congratulations on the occasion, wishing him lasting good health and well-being, Saint Lucia and its people continued progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown

Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Sunday, to Governor-General of Saint Lucia Cyril Errol Charles on his country's Independence Day, wishing him good health and further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Sunday, to Governor-General of Saint Lucia Cyril Errol Charles on his country's Independence Day.

## Sahel app allows quick requests

## PAHW launches new electronic service to pause rent collection

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) launched a new electronic service via the Sahel application that allows beneficiaries to request a suspension of rent payment collection by their employers, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PAHW noted that the service is part of its ongoing efforts to develop digital services and streamline procedures for applicants, ensuring that requests are processed quickly and efficiently without the need for in-person visits.

## Ministry of Health to host 9 world-renowned specialists

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Ministry of Health will host nine world-renowned doctors as part of its Visiting Physicians Program in March 2026, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The initiative is aimed to support specialized medical services and enhance the quality of health-care provided to patients in the country.

## Water outage in Al-Salam, Hiteen

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy announced an emergency outage in one of the main water pipelines located between Al-Salam and Hiteen, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the ministry explained that the pipeline was immediately isolated to begin repair work, but this will result in reduced freshwater pressure and flow in Al-Salam and Hiteen until maintenance work is completed.

## Continued from Page 1

### First Deputy

Conversely, many workers have left Kuwait for neighboring countries where their skills are welcomed. These workers did not face any difficulties, especially since the countries they moved to abolished the sponsorship system.

In Saudi Arabia and the UAE, residents can obtain golden visas or other permits for a fee, allowing them to work in their chosen fields as long as they comply with the law.

In Kuwait, the situation is different. The approach seems aimed at driving out investors without offering any viable alternatives.

In Kuwait, the deportation prison became so overcrowded at one point that it could no longer accommodate new deportees. The state had to detain violators in holding cells of police stations because the law requires sponsors to pay for the deported worker's return ticket. Detaining a worker in a police station costs the public treasury at least KD 3,000 per month, while the price of a plane ticket is only KD 60.

Despite this, sponsors would delay, either to buy time or to wait until the government covered the cost of the ticket. During that period, sponsors often tried to clear their records at the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) when nepotism and influence (wasta) controlled government institutions.

For these reasons, the majority of Kuwaitis support the decision announced by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef.

We hope that the decision will be implemented quickly, as Kuwait needs active economic participation, and this decision will help achieve that goal.

One important point is that the fees paid by residents should not be high, so they do not become a burden on workers, especially given the rising costs of health insurance and other charges, which could undermine the effectiveness of this initiative.

We reiterate our thanks to the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, for this long-awaited corrective step.

This measure is no less significant than the decision to cancel the high fees imposed on expatriates over sixty years of age. We witnessed many positive effects on the national economy when that decision was rescinded.

### Clear path

■ For civilians assigned by official entities: The relevant authority completes the same procedures.

■ In cases of natural disasters or exceptional public incidents: The deceased's family submits a request to the committee after the Cabinet issues a decision declaring the incident a disaster or exceptional event, based on a request from the Board of Trustees. The committee may form a subcommittee to review the requests and submit its recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval, rejection, or a request for additional information.

The Board of Trustees' decision is binding on all relevant public entities.

Article 4 defines a martyr as anyone who loses their life defending the safety and security of the homeland, or as a result of natural disasters or exceptional public events, whether Kuwaiti or non-Kuwaiti, military or civilian.

Article 5 divides martyrs into three categories:

■ **Martyr of Military Operations:** A

military or civilian official who dies as a result of military operations, internal or external security operations, or while in captivity, or due to such operations. This includes cases related to military defense purposes, such as live-fire training, airborne landings, shipwrecks, military aircraft accidents, and mine and explosive ordnance disposal operations.

■ **Martyr of Duty:** A member of the Army, Police, National Guard, or fire department who loses their life while performing official duties, provided the case does not fall under the category of military operations.

■ **Martyr of Natural Disasters and Exceptional Public Events:** Anyone who dies as a result of a natural disaster or exceptional public event, if the Council of Ministers decides to classify the event as such.

Article 6 stipulates that any prisoner of war or missing person whose death is confirmed as a result of the Iraqi invasion shall be considered a martyr, effective from the date of death confirmed by a forensic medical report issued by the General Directorate of Criminal Evidence. Their employment and insurance status shall be settled if they were employed by government agencies, public institutions, or state-owned companies, based on the termination of their service due to death, effective from the confirmed date of death.

Article 7 stipulates that the heirs entitled to inherit from the estate of a person considered a martyr shall be determined based on the date of death confirmed by the forensic medical report.

In cases where the remains are not found, the legal procedures established for proving death, in accordance with Law No. 51/1984, shall be applied.

Article 8 affirms that martyrs and their families shall be honored both materially and morally in various ways that reflect the state's appreciation.

The Board of Trustees is authorized to propose additional forms of honoring and to establish guidelines for their implementation. The term "family of the martyr" refers to first-degree relatives.

Article 9 stipulates the transfer of the financial allocations designated for the Martyr's Bureau within the Amiri Diwan's budget for the fiscal year of 2025/2026 to the Ministry of Defense.

Article 10 repeals Decree No. 38/1991.

### Kuwait decree

Article 3: Appointment to any governmental or non-governmental position, or obtaining a license to practice a liberal profession, requires the submission of a certificate from the National Military Service Authority stating that there is no objection, whether for performing active service, postponing it, being exempted from it, or being granted an exception or exemption from it.

Priority in appointments shall be given to those who have completed active military service.

It is prohibited to refuse the appointment of any person due to their failure to perform military service, or because they are currently serving or have been called up for service, provided they have obtained a certificate of no objection.

Active and reserve military service is considered actual service in accordance with the provisions of Laws No. 15/1979, No. 6/2010, and the Social Insurance Law.

Article 6: After completing training, conscripts are assigned to army units according to the plan and orders issued by the Chief of the General Staff or their

# PAAET rolls out 'Tatbiqi' phase 2

## Real-time attendance upgrades

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Director of the Information Systems Center at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Masouma Boushehri announced the launching of the second phase of the 'Tatbiqi' system -- electronic student attendance**

### tracking.

This is included in the digital transformation strategy of PAAET and in line with its efforts to develop the technological systems that support the educational and administrative processes.

Boushehri explained that this development builds on the accomplishments of the first phase by expanding the scope of the application and upgrading its features to ensure precise attendance recording, user-friendly operation, and greater technical reliability.

She disclosed that the second phase introduces new features for faculty

members and training staff, such as quick access to personal profiles, real-time updates on lecture status and attendance records, attendance reports aligned with class schedules, and the ability to submit absence excuses and send electronic notifications to students.

She added that for students, the updated version offers real-time self-service attendance tracking and updates, display of student identification cards, and streamlined access to personal profiles.

She affirmed that the system was further developed and refined in the

second phase in response to the recommendations and feedback of the faculty and training staff, while complying with the regulations and operational frameworks of PAAET.

She underscored the need for faculty members, training staff and students to update the application in order to benefit from the newly introduced features.

She said the Center continues to coordinate with the relevant departments in the Authority to ensure smooth implementation and to provide technical support in preparation for the full roll-out in accordance with the approved timetable.

## Celebrating 100 years of friendship

# Kuwait marks World Girl Scouts Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): Kuwait joined countries worldwide on Sunday in celebrating girls scouts and guides, known internationally as World Girl Scouts Day, to raise awareness of issues affecting girls and highlight the Girl Guides efforts to empower girls in 146 countries.

This year's celebration is held under the theme "Our Friendship," marking 100 years since the Day was launched in 1926 during the Fourth International Conference of Girl Guides attended by founder Robert Baden-Powell and World Guide Olave Baden-Powell.

February 22 coincides with the birthday of Lord Baden-Powell and represents an occasion to reflect on issues impacting girls, promote messages of peace, and raise funds in support of the global Guiding movement.

Chairwoman of the Kuwait Girl Guides Association Hind Al-Houli told KUNA that the association participates annually in the event as a member of the Olave Baden-Powell Society, supporting voluntary charitable initiatives worldwide.

She said Girl Guides across the globe



KUNA photo

Kuwait joined countries worldwide in celebrating girls scouts and guides, known internationally as World Girl Scouts Day.

mark the day through environmental awareness campaigns, workshops addressing girls' concerns, and programs celebrating international friendship, de-

velopment, and education.

Al-Houli noted that the Guiding movement in Kuwait began in 1957 within the former Department of Education, while the Kuwait Girl Guides Association was officially established on May 25, 1965.

Since its establishment, the movement has achieved steady growth through joining the Arab Region, the World Association, and the GCC Guides Committee.

The Ministry of Education sponsors the movement, with annual registration of units and leaders conducted at the beginning of each academic year in accordance with the World Association and Arab Region requirements to document membership numbers.

Among the association's key objectives are preparing girls as responsible citizens, reinforcing Islamic values, preserving Kuwaiti traditions and virtuous conduct, and instilling love of and loyalty to the homeland.

The association also promotes respect for human rights, peace based on justice and equality, community service for all segments of society, and representation of Kuwait at Gulf, Arab, and international conferences and camps.

With nearly 15,000 members, the association gained full membership in the World Association in 1969 during the 20th World Conference in Finland, and several members have since assumed regional and international positions.

It has received numerous global awards and certificates of recognition, notably the Olave Baden-Powell Award for charitable work, alongside honors for leadership, dedication, and volunteer service.

Al-Houli added that the association organizes an annual peace camp, engages in activities with governmental bodies, conducts charitable and awareness campaigns, and celebrates national occasions. She said curricula for all age groups are currently being developed to align with modern developments, address girls' needs, and contribute to achieving sustainable development goals.

Fatma Jarragh, winner of the 2026 Advocacy Champion title of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, expressed pride in the achievement, the first of its kind at the Gulf level, reflecting Kuwait's support for girls' empowerment.

## Registration opens Feb 22

# PAAET advances student survey to boost academic performance

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Measurement and Evaluation Center at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) announced its student survey plan for the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, with the aim of improving the educational process and the academic and training performance.

The center stated that the plan has structured phases, starting with the registration for the stu-

dent survey. Registration will be open from Feb 22 to March 12. Faculty and training staff at colleges and institutes can register through the website of the center using a designated QR code.

The Authority explained that the student survey plan is part of its ongoing efforts to develop the education and training system, improve the quality of academic outputs, and promote continuous evaluation and upgrading for the benefit of the students and faculty members, while achieving institutional development goals.

## Accredited courses meet standards

# New external programs added to recognized higher education list

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The acting Director General of the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education Dr. Jassim Al-Ali approved a decision to add external graduate programs to the list of recognized higher education institutions, allowing enrollment in these programs in accordance with approved regulations and requirements.

The decision includes the approval of undergraduate and graduate programs in specific fields, such as public health and neuroscience, at the University of Washington

in Seattle, USA. The programs require regular, on-campus attendance.

The inclusion of these programs is part of the review and accreditation process for external programs, ensuring their compliance with approved academic quality standards. This guarantees high-quality educational outcomes, protects students' rights, and enhances confidence in the degrees awarded.

Admission to the accredited programs is subject to several conditions, including the prohibition of combining study with work, as well as adherence to the admission regulations in force at higher education institutions in Kuwait.

## Move aims to boost governance

# Cyber Shield oversight transferred

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: As part of efforts to strengthen the cybersecurity system and improve institutional integration among government entities, the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) has notified all government agencies that management of the "Government Cyber Shield" project will be transferred to the "National Cyber Security Center," reports Al-Rai daily.

This step is part of national efforts to develop digital infrastructure and enhance electronic protection for government entities.

CAIT explained that the decision is based on joint coordination between CAIT and the National Cyber Security Center and builds on discussions from previous working group meetings focused on the "Government Cyber Shield" project. The project is being implemented under the framework agreement between the Government of Kuwait and Google Cloud, aiming to unify

national efforts and adopt best practices and approved security standards for the protection of data and digital systems.

Transferring the project management to the National Cyber Security Center is also aimed at strengthening cyber governance and integrating roles among the relevant entities, thus contributing to higher security readiness and keeping pace with rapid developments in digital security.

CAIT urged government entities to coordinate and follow up on the project's progress by communicating directly with the specialized team at the National Cyber Security Center through the project's dedicated email address.

It emphasized the importance of ongoing cooperation with the team and completing all required procedures in line with the project's objectives to achieve the desired outcomes and enhance the efficiency of the country's cybersecurity system.

We will continue the fight for justice in the courts: Sen Smith

## New Trump administration order could lead to detention of thousands of legal refugees

MINNEAPOLIS, Feb. 22, (AP) — The Trump administration has issued a sweeping new order that could lead to the arrest of tens of thousands of refugees who are lawfully in the United States but do not yet have permanent residency, overturning years of legal and immigration safeguards.

A memo filed by the Department of Homeland Security ahead of a Thursday federal court hearing in Minnesota says refugees applying for green cards must return to federal custody one year after they were admitted to the US for review of their applications.

DHS "may maintain custody for the duration of the inspection and examination process," said the memo, which was filed Wednesday.

Advocacy and resettlement groups slammed the order, which will likely face legal challenges and could sow confusion and fear among the nearly 200,000 refugees who came to the United States during the Biden administration.

The order is the latest in a series of

immigration restrictions by the Trump administration, which has upended longstanding policies toward refugees, including dramatically reducing the number admitted into the country. A memo obtained by The Associated Press late last year said the administration was planning a review of all refugees admitted to the US during the Biden administration, and immediately suspended green card approvals for refugees who arrived during those years.

The administration has cited national security and economic concerns for its changed policies. Experts say refugees let into the country already undergo extensive vetting.

The new order came hours before US District Judge John Tunheim heard arguments Thursday on whether he should extend a temporary order that protects Minnesota refugees lawfully in the U.S. from being arrested and deported. Tunheim's order applies only in Minnesota, but the implications of the new national policy was a major part of the discussion anyway.



US Sen Tina Smith, accompanied by refugee rights attorneys and supporters, speaks with reporters outside the federal courthouse in Minneapolis on Feb. 19, following a hearing on whether a federal judge should extend a temporary order that protects Minnesota refugees lawfully in the U.S. from being arrested and deported. (AP)

Justice Department attorney Brantley Mayers said during Thursday's hearing that the government should

have the right to arrest refugees one year after entering the US, but indicated that would not always happen.

"That's a discretion call for DHS to make," he said, a comment met with skepticism by attorneys for the Minnesota refugees.

Tunheim did not rule Thursday, saying he'd issue a written decision on whether the temporary order would be extended.

After the hearing, Democratic US Sen Tina Smith of Minnesota said at a news conference outside the courthouse that the government "failed to offer any coherent argument for their policy in either law or fact." She wasn't in court for the hearing, but said she'd been briefed about it.

"And so we will continue the fight for justice in the courts," Smith said, flanked by attorneys and refugee rights supporters, including U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar.

Immigration advocates quickly pushed back against the new policy, with HIAS, an international Jewish nonprofit serving refugees and asy-

lum-seekers, calling it "a transparent effort to detain and potentially deport thousands of people who are legally present in this country, people the U.S. government itself welcomed."

"They were promised safety and the chance to rebuild their lives. Instead, DHS is now threatening them with arrest and indefinite detention," Beth Oppenheim, the group's CEO, said in a statement.

Tunheim blocked the government from targeting the Minnesota refugees last month, saying the plaintiffs in the case were likely to prevail on their claims "that their arrest and detention, and the policy that purports to justify them, are unlawful." His Jan. 28 temporary restraining order will expire Feb. 25 unless he grants a more permanent preliminary injunction.

The judge previously rejected the government's claim that it had the legal right to arrest and detain refugees who haven't obtained their green cards within a year of arriving in the U.S.

### America

**NYC nursing walkout ends:** Nurses at a big New York hospital system approved a new contract Saturday, voting to end a major nursing strike after more than a month.

More than 4,000 nurses in the privately run NewYork-Presbyterian system went on strike Jan. 12. They are now due to start returning to work in the coming week. The union, called the New York State Nurses Association, said 93% of its members at NewYork-Presbyterian voted to ratify the three-year contract.

Two other big private hospital systems, Montefiore and Mount Sinai, ended their nurses' walkout earlier this month by inking contract agreements with the same union.

"We are so happy with the wins we achieved, and now the fight to enforce these contracts and hold our employers accountable begins," union President Nancy Hagans said in a statement Saturday.

NewYork-Presbyterian said that it looked forward to its nurses' return and that the contract "reflects our respect for our nurses and the critical role they play as part of our exceptional care teams." (AP)

**Crews recover bodies of 9 skiers:** Crews recovered the bodies of nine backcountry skiers who were killed by an avalanche in California's Sierra Nevada, authorities said Saturday, concluding a harrowing operation that was hindered by intense snowfall.

A search team reached the bodies of eight victims and found one other who had been missing and presumed dead since Tuesday's avalanche on Castle Peak near Lake Tahoe. The ninth person who was missing was found "relatively close" to the other victims, according to Nevada County Sheriff's Lt. Dennis Hack, but was impossible to see due to whiteout conditions at that time.

At a news conference, Sheriff Shannon Moon praised the collective efforts of the numerous agencies that helped recover the bodies - from the California Highway Patrol



US Army soldiers exit a Black Hawk at the Truckee Tahoe Airport in Truckee, Calif. on Feb. 21, after aiding in recovery efforts for a group of skiers who went missing during a deadly avalanche. (AP)

to the National Guard to the Pacific Gas & Electric utility company - and 42 volunteers who helped on the last day of the operation. (AP)

**2 killed in Richmond shooting:** Two people were killed and seven others were hurt in a shooting during an apparent fight on a street in an entertainment district, the police chief in Richmond, Virginia, said Saturday.

The fight happened at about 2:45 am. A man and a woman died at the scene, Police Chief Rick Edwards told reporters.

Edwards said a police officer in the area saw "a large commotion" with cars speeding away. The man and woman had suffered multiple gunshot wounds, Edwards said.

Another three men and four women were hospitalized with gunshot wounds, he said. (AP)

## Blizzard warnings send US East Coast scrambling to prepare for heavy snow

NEW YORK, Feb. 22, (AP) — Cities and towns along the East Coast scrambled to prepare for a bout with heavy snow and damaging winds after forecasters issued blizzard alerts for communities from Maryland to Massachusetts.

The National Weather Service warned that once the storm intensifies Sunday it could prove significantly more severe than projections made just a few days ago.

The weather service said 1 to 2 feet (about 30 to 61 centimeters) of snow was possible in many areas as it put out blizzard warnings for New York City and Long Island, Boston and coastal communities in New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Flooding was also possible in parts of New York and New Jersey, it said.

"While we do get plenty of these nor'easters that produce heavy snow and strong impacts, it's been several years since we saw one of this magnitude across this large of a region in this very populated part of the country," said Cody Snell, a meteorologist at the service's Weather Prediction Center.

Snell said the storm would arrive Sunday morning in areas around Washington before stretching toward Philadelphia and New York City and reaching Boston in the evening.

Some of the heaviest snow was pro-



Pedestrians climb over snow banks to try and cross the streets in New York on Jan. 26. (AP)

jected to fall overnight Sunday into Monday.

The weather service said the storm could begin as rainfall in some places before worsening. Some of the heaviest snow is projected to fall overnight Sunday, with as much as 2 inches (5 centimeters) of snow per hour at times in some areas, before tapering off by Monday afternoon.

The weather service warned that the storm, with gusts up to 55 mph (80 kph), could cause whiteout conditions that "will make travel treacherous and potentially life-threatening. The strong winds and weight of snow on tree limbs may down power lines and could cause

sporadic power outages."

Officials scrambled to prepare for a storm that forecasters days ago believed would have a much more limited impact.

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani said the city would expand on efforts it used to deal with a major snowfall weeks ago. But officials held off on deciding whether to open schools Monday for the time being.

"We saw on Friday there was expectation that the likelihood was that we were going to face maybe 3 to 4 inches of snow. Quickly that then changed," Mamdani said. "So we want to make sure that we make a decision based on up-to-date and accurate information."

## Ex-British PM calls on allies to send noncombat troops to Ukraine

LONDON, Feb. 22, (AP) — Former British prime minister Boris Johnson says the UK and its European allies should immediately deploy noncombat troops to Ukraine to show Russian President Vladimir Putin that Western nations are truly committed to the nation's freedom and independence.

Speaking ahead of the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Johnson told the BBC that the troops should be sent to peaceful regions in non-fighting roles. The comments from Johnson, who was one of Ukraine's staunchest supporters as Britain's leader during the first months of the conflict, were contained in excerpts of an interview that will be broadcast on Sunday.

If adopted, the proposal from Johnson would mark a major policy shift for the U.K. and its allies. While the "coalition of the willing" is working on plans to send troops to Ukraine, such a deployment would only take place after an agreement to end the fighting and would be designed to police the ceasefire.

"If we are willing to do it in the context of a ceasefire, which of course puts all the initiative, all the power, in Putin's hands, why not do it now?" Johnson said. "There is no logical reason that I can see why we shouldn't send peaceful ground forces there to show our support, our constitutional support for a free, independent Ukraine."

Western military planners have avoided discussing such a move publicly out of concern that Russia would see it as an escalation of the conflict.

Putin in September rejected Western proposals for a peacekeeping force in Ukraine, saying that any troops deployed to the country would be "legitimate targets."

### Also:

**KYIV, Ukraine:** Russia attacked Ukraine with a barrage of missiles and drones, killing one person in the Kyiv region, Ukraine's Emergency Service said on Sunday.

Another eight people, including a child, were rescued from under the rubble of destroyed buildings, the service said.

The attack caused damage and fires to erupt in five districts in the suburbs of Kyiv. In the village of Putrivka in the Fastiv district, emergency first responders worked on saving people buried under debris.

Russia also struck energy infrastructure in Ukraine's southern Odesa region, resulting in significant fires, which were later extinguished, the emergency service said.



Boris Johnson, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, delivers a speech during the Ketagalan Forum: 2025 Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue in Taipei, Taiwan on Aug. 5, 2025. (AP)



Firefighters put out a fire after a drone hit a residential building during a Russian air attack in Kyiv, Ukraine on Feb. 22, 2026. (AP)



People take part in a march with portraits of the killed student in Lyon, France on Feb. 21, to pay tribute to Quentin Deranque, a 23-year-old nationalist activist who died from a beating after a clash between far-left and far-right supporters. (AP)

### Hundreds march in Lyon to protest far-right activist's killing

About 3,000 people joined a march organized by far-right groups on Saturday after a nationalist activist died from a beating in the French city of Lyon, in an incident that highlighted a climate of deep political tensions ahead of next year's presidential vote.

French President Emmanuel Macron called for calm ahead of the tribute to Quentin Deranque, 23, who died

of brain injuries in a hospital last week. The demonstrations took place under heavy police scrutiny, with no major incidents reported.

"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. (AP)

## Danish army evacuates US submariner off Greenland for urgent medical care

COPENHAGEN, Denmark, Feb. 22, (AP) — Denmark's military says its arctic command forces evacuated a crew member of a US submarine off the coast of Greenland for urgent medical treatment.

The Danish Joint Arctic Command, on its Facebook page, said the crew member was evacuated on Saturday some 7 nautical miles (8 miles; 13 kilometers) off Nuuk - the capital of the vast, ice-covered territory - and transferred to a hospital in the city. The crew member was retrieved by a Danish Seahawk helicopter that had been deployed on an inspection ship.

Also late Saturday, US President Donald Trump announced plans to deploy a hospital ship to the Danish autonomous territory of Greenland, alleging that many people there are sick and not receiving care - prompting a defense of Denmark's healthcare system from Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

"Working with the fantastic Governor of Louisiana, Jeff Landry, we are going to send a great hospital boat to Greenland to take care of the many people who are sick, and not being taken care of there. It's on the way!!!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform, referring to his special envoy for



Servicemen attend the Arctic Basic Training in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland on Feb. 20. (AP)

Greenland.

The historically strong bilateral ties after World War II between NATO allies Denmark and the United States have come under severe strain in recent months as Trump ratcheted up talk of a possible U.S. takeover of the mineral-rich and strategically located Arctic island.

Frederiksen defended Denmark's

health care system on Sunday, writing on Facebook that she was "happy to live in a country where there is free and equal access to health for all. Where it's not insurance and wealth that determine whether you get proper treatment."

"You have the same approach in Greenland," she said, before adding: "Happy Sunday to you all" in front of a blushing, smiling emoji.

### Europe

**5 killed in string of Austria avalanches:** At least five people have been killed in a string of avalanches in western Austria, authorities said Saturday.

The government office of the Tyrol region said intense snowfall over the last week led to accumulations of up to 1.5 meters (5 feet). Combined with windy conditions and weak snowpack below, the conditions were especially susceptible to avalanches, it said.

Tyrol police said five off-piste skiers were caught up in a nearly 450-meter- (about 490 yards) wide avalanche Friday afternoon in the St. Anton am Arlberg area at an altitude of about 2,000 meters (about 6,500 feet).

An American and a Pole were among the five recovered dead after the avalanche, and a 21-year-old Austrian died of injuries after being rushed to hospital, police said.

Dozens of mountain-rescue team members, ambulance and fire department staffers, as well as several dog squads, were deployed for the operation.

Late Friday morning in the Nauders-Bergkastel resort to the southeast, a 42-year-old German man and his 16-year-old son were caught in an avalanche. The teen survived with injuries and called for help, but his father was killed.

In Klösterle in the neighboring Vorarlberg region, a 39-year-old Swiss snowboarder was caught and killed by an avalanche in an off-piste area, regional police said.

"The recent snowfall is currently drawing many people to the mountains - even off-piste," Tyrol governor Anton Mattle said in a statement. "It is painful that we have already had to record several avalanches with injuries and fatalities."

His office said nearly three dozen avalanche incidents were reported on Friday, among more than 200 over the last week. So far, 11 people have lost their lives in avalanches this month, the governor's office said. (AP)

**Spanish police arrest 3 men:** Spanish police announced Saturday they arrested three men on suspicion of shipping dried opium poppy capsules by mail across Spain and abroad, including to the United States.

The three were arrested in January and have remained in custody since then, the Civil Guard said in a statement. They were charged with crimes against public health for drug trafficking.

The investigation began in September 2025 after the interception of four postal shipments containing almost 7 kilograms (15.4 pounds) of plant-based substances at the Alicante-Elche Miguel Hernández Airport, the gateway to Alicante and the Costa Blanca area in southeastern Spain.

Analysis determined that the substance was "Papaver somniferum," also known as opium poppy, a plant directly linked to the production of opium and its derivatives, the statement said. (AP)

## INTERNATIONAL

## Asia

**Voting begins in Laos' parliamentary elections:** Voting began at 7:00 am local time (0000 GMT) on Sunday for the election of members of the Lao National Assembly's 10th legislature and the fifth Provincial People's Councils in Laos.

More than 4.76 million eligible voters nationwide are expected to cast their ballots. A total of 175 members will be elected to the 10th National Assembly, along with 745 members to serve on the fifth Provincial People's Councils. (Xinhua)



**3 bodies found after house fire near Tokyo:** Three bodies were found after a house fire in the east of Tokyo early Sunday, and police were working to confirm their identities, local media reported.

The fire broke out shortly after 3 am local time in Mutsuzawa, Chiba Prefecture, at a house where six family members lived, public broadcaster NHK reported, citing the police and local fire department.

The house was destroyed by the blaze, which was extinguished in about five hours. Two bodies were initially discovered in the ruins, and a third was later found during search efforts.

Following the fire, two elementary school girls and their grandmother in her 60s remained unaccounted for. Authorities believe the three bodies may be those of the missing family members.

The girls' grandfather, in his 70s, and their mother, in her 30s, were injured and taken to hospital. Both were conscious at the time of transport, police said. The father was reportedly out at the time of the fire. (Xinhua)



**US Marine in Japan held for alleged school trespassing:** A US Marine stationed in Japan's Okinawa Prefecture has been arrested by local police on suspicion of trespassing at an elementary school, local media reported.

The 21-year-old, a corporal stationed at Camp Schwab, allegedly entered the school grounds without authorization in northern Okinawa shortly before 1 p.m. local time on Saturday, public broadcaster NHK reported.

Witnesses reported seeing the suspect speaking to a young girl and following her, prompting them to alert the police. Alcohol was detected in his breath at the time of his arrest, the report said.

The suspect initially told officers he "wanted to see the scenery," but later

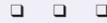


In this photo released by the Royal Thai Army, Thai soldiers inspect an area near the border between Thailand and Cambodia on July 20, 2025, in Ubon Ratchathani province, where the Royal Thai Army said two anti-personnel landmines were found. (AP)

stated during questioning that he did not clearly understand the situation and denied the allegation, according to police.

Authorities said there have been no reports so far of damage to school facilities or theft of property.

Okinawa Prefecture hosts around 70 percent of US military facilities in Japan. For a long time, problems such as illegal and criminal activities, traffic accidents, and noise pollution involving U.S. military personnel have been a major nuisance to residents. (Xinhua)



**Landslides kill 7 in S.Philippines amid heavy rains:** Rain-induced landslides in the provinces of Davao de Oro and Davao Oriental in the southern Philippines have killed at least seven people, authorities said Friday.

The Philippine Red Cross said its team retrieved three bodies from the landslide that struck a village of Monkayo town in Davao de Oro province on Thursday night.

"Authorities continue to assess the area to ensure the safety of residents and responders," Philippine Red Cross Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Richard Gordon said in a social media post.

A landslide also buried a family of four in Mati City, Davao Oriental, on Friday morning, the city's fire station said in a social media post.

Gordon said heavy rainfall from the prevailing shear line triggered flooding and landslides in parts of Mindanao early Friday, affecting communities in Surigao del Sur, Davao de Oro, and Davao Oriental.

He said the Red Cross chapters in the affected provinces were on heightened alert, with continuous monitoring and rapid response operations underway.

In Bislig City, Surigao del Sur province, the Red Cross said flooding reached waist-to-chest-deep levels in several communities, prompting Red Cross teams to conduct evacuations as waters rose. Volunteers assisted families in moving to safer areas. (Xinhua)



**2 Cambodian journo appeal treason convictions:** Two Cambodian journalists have appealed their convictions on treason charges and 14-year prison sentences for posting photographs on Facebook related to border clashes with Thailand last year, the spouse of one and a court official said Friday.

Phorn Sopheap of Battambang Post TV Online and Pheap Pheara of TSP 68 TV Online were arrested in separate locations on July 31 while returning from reporting trips. Authorities say they took photographs in a restricted military zone, and one showed land mines, which appeared to discredit official Cambodian denials of using such weapons.

They were convicted and sentenced by the Siem Reap Provincial Court in December on charges of "supplying a foreign state with information prejudicial to national defense." Treason convictions carry prison sentences of seven to 15 years.

Cambodia ranked 161st out of 180 countries and territories on the 2025 Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index, "placing it among the states where the press freedom situation is considered 'very serious,'" according to the Paris-based organization.

"Cambodian authorities must not challenge Pheap Phara and Phorn Sopheap's appeal against these outrageous convictions and should stop using vague national security laws to criminalize legitimate reporting," Shawn Crispin, the senior Southeast Asia representative for New-York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, said in a statement Friday. (AP)

## Suicide bombing kills soldiers

## Pakistan launches border strikes in Afghanistan, Red Crescent reports 18 killed

KABUL, Afghanistan, Feb 22, (Agencies): Islamabad said it carried out strikes along the border with Afghanistan early Sunday, targeting what it called hideouts of Pakistani militants it blamed for recent attacks inside Pakistan. The Afghan Red Crescent Society said more than a dozen people were killed.

Pakistan didn't specify the locations targeted, but the Afghan defense ministry said in a statement "various civilian areas" in the provinces of Nangarhar and Paktika in eastern Afghanistan were hit, including a religious madrasa and multiple civilian homes.

The statement called the strikes a violation of Afghanistan's airspace and sovereignty.

Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid earlier on X said the attacks "killed and wounded dozens, including women and children."

Mawlawi Fazl Rahman Fayyaz, the provincial director of the Afghan Red Crescent Society in eastern Nangarhar province, said 18 people were killed and several others wounded.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar wrote on X that the military conducted "intelligence-based, selective operations" against seven camps belonging to the Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and its affiliates. He said an

affiliate of the Islamic State group was also targeted.

Tarar said Pakistan "has always strived to maintain peace and stability in the region," but added that the safety and security of Pakistani citizens remained a top priority.

Pakistan has seen a surge in militant violence in recent years, much of it blamed on the TTP and outlawed Baloch separatist groups. The TTP is separate from but closely allied with Afghanistan's Taleban. Islamabad accuses the TTP of operating from inside Afghanistan, a charge both the group and Kabul deny.

Hours before the Pakistani strikes, a suicide bomber targeted a security convoy in the border district of Bannu in Pakistan's northwest, killing two soldiers, including a lieutenant colonel. Pakistan's military warned after the attack that it would not "exercise any restraint" and that operations against those responsible would press on.

Another suicide bomber, backed by gunmen, rammed an explosives-laden vehicle last week into the wall of a security post in Bajaur district in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which borders Afghanistan, killing 11 soldiers and a child. Pakistani authorities later said the attacker was an Afghan national.

Tarar said Pakistan had "conclu-



Local residents stand next to a damaged car at the site of a cross-border Pakistani army strike in the Behsud district of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan on Feb 22. (AP)

sive evidence" that the recent attacks, including a suicide bombing that targeted a Shiite mosque in Islamabad and killed 31 worshippers earlier this month, were carried out by militants acting on the "behest of their Afghanistan-based leadership and handlers."

He said Pakistan had repeatedly urged Afghanistan's Taleban rulers to

take verifiable steps to prevent militant groups from using Afghan territory to launch attacks in Pakistan, but alleged that no substantive action had been taken. Tarar also asked the international community to press Afghanistan's Taliban authorities to uphold their commitments under the Doha agreement not to allow their soil to be used

against other countries.

The Qatari-mediated ceasefire between the two countries came about after deadly border clashes in October, killing dozens of soldiers, civilians and suspected militants. The violence followed explosions in Kabul that Afghan officials blamed on Pakistan. Islamabad, at the time, conducted strikes deep inside Afghanistan to target militant hideouts.

The truce between Islamabad and Kabul has largely held, but several rounds of talks in Istanbul in November failed to produce a formal agreement, and relations remain strained.

## Also:

**ISLAMABAD:** A suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a security convoy in northwest Pakistan bordering Afghanistan on Saturday, killing two soldiers, including a lieutenant colonel, the Pakistani military said.

It said the attack took place in Bannu, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where security forces have battled militants for years.

The military said Pakistan would not "exercise any restraint" and that operations against those responsible for the violence would continue "irrespective of their location," language that appeared to signal rising tensions

between Islamabad and Kabul.

No group claimed responsibility, but suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban who have been blamed for previous such attacks. There was no immediate statement from the Afghan government.

The latest attack came two days after Pakistan's Foreign Ministry summoned a senior Afghan diplomat and lodged a strong protest over a recent deadly attack on a security post that killed 11 Pakistani soldiers and a girl in the Bajaur district near the Afghan border.

Local police have said the man who carried out the attack in Bajaur was an Afghan national.



**ISLAMABAD:** At least one person was killed and four others injured in a gas explosion in Pakistan's southern Sindh province on Sunday morning, Rescue 1122 officials said.

The incident occurred in a residential building in the provincial capital Karachi. According to the statement, the explosion was caused by a gas cylinder and triggered a fire.

Rescue teams quickly brought the fire under control and carried out cooling and search operations. The injured were given initial treatment on site and shifted to a nearby hospital.

## Opposition activists among 1,557 prisoners set for release under Venezuela's amnesty

CARACAS, Venezuela, Feb 22, (AP): At least 1,557 people held in Venezuela for political reasons have submitted their applications under an amnesty bill that was signed into law this week and are expected to be released from prison, authorities said Saturday.

Thursday's measure is expected to benefit opposition members, activists, human rights defenders, journalists and many others detained for months or even years.

Its approval marked a reversal for Venezuelan authorities, who for decades have denied holding any political prisoners. It follows last month's stunning US military raid in the country's capital, Caracas, to capture then-President Nicolás Maduro.

"As of today, 1,152 new applications have been received, for a total of 1,557 that are being addressed immediately, and at this moment hundreds of releases of persons deprived of liberty who are benefiting from the Amnesty Law are already taking place," National Assembly leader Jorge Rodríguez said on Saturday.

Earlier, the president of the special commission overseeing the amnesty law, Jorge Arreaza, said Friday night on state television that 379 amnesty requests had been received and that the applicants' releases would take place



Venezuela acting President Delcy Rodríguez signs an amnesty bill approved by the National Assembly at Miraflores Palace in Caracas, Venezuela on Feb 19. (AP)

between Friday and Saturday. Further releases could be granted within 15 days, he said.

Gonzalo Himiob, vice president of Venezuela-based prisoners' rights group Foro Penal, told The Associated Press on Saturday that so far some

have been released in the state of Barinas, in the southwest of the country, but the process of verifying releases under the amnesty was still ongoing.

The new law excludes those convicted of homicide, drug trafficking, serious human rights violations and military rebellion.

Human rights organizations are calling for the law to be applied to all prisoners held for political reasons, even if they are not listed among the beneficiaries.

"It is discriminatory and unconstitutional to exclude imprisoned military personnel and persecuted political figures," Alfredo Romero, president of Foro Penal, said on X Saturday. Without this, "there can be no talk of national coexistence," he said.

Rodríguez said that thousands of requests are being processed from "individuals who were under alternative measures to the system of deprivation of liberty," and that they are likewise covered by the recently approved Amnesty Law.

Delcy Rodríguez, acting president of Venezuela since Jan. 5, said during the signing of the law that it showed that the country's political leaders were "letting go of a little intolerance and opening new avenues for politics in Venezuela."



Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, (top center), talks with Sudan's delegation head Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who leads the Rapid Support Forces, at the state house in Entebbe, Uganda on Feb 20. (AP)

## Sudan paramilitary RSF claim control of strategic border town with Chad

KHARTOUM, Feb 22, (Agencies): Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) announced on Saturday that they had taken control of the strategic border town of Al-Tina in western Sudan.

The RSF said in a press statement that they had established "full control" over the town, pledging to protect civilians, secure key facilities, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, and restore basic services, particularly in the water and health sectors.

Meanwhile, Türkiye's semi-official Anadolu Agency reported that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and allied joint forces have repelled the RSF's attack.

Al-Tina lies on the Sudan-Chad border and holds particular significance in the conflict between the SAF and the RSF. The town is an important hub for the local Zaghawa people.

Observers say control of Al-Tina could carry significant military and political implications. For decades, the town has served as a corridor and staging ground for military movements in the region. It is also a bustling marketplace and a key commercial hub between Sudan, Chad, and Libya.

Abdul-Rahim Al-Sunni, a Sudanese political analyst, told Xinhua that the RSF's operation to take Al-Tina "could mark a turning point in the course of operations," suggesting it may allow them to redeploy some of their forces

to other fronts.

The collision between the SAF and the RSF has killed tens of thousands of people and forced millions to flee their homes.

Meanwhile, an aid convoy was hit by drone strikes, killing three people and wounding four aid workers as it traveled to cities in central Sudan's Kordofan region, the epicenter of fighting between the army and its rival paramilitary forces, a local doctors group said.

Sudan Doctors Network, a group that monitors violence in Sudan, said on X late Thursday that the trucks were carrying food and humanitarian supplies to the city of Kadugli and the town of Dilling in South Kordofan when they were struck in the Kartala area by drones it said belonged to the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF. It was not immediately clear which aid organization the convoy was affiliated with.

The war between the RSF and the Sudanese military erupted into a full-blown war across the country in April 2023. So far, at least 40,000 people have been killed and 12 million displaced, according to the World Health Organization. Aid groups say the true war death toll could be many times higher, as the fighting in vast and remote areas impedes access.

Most recently, the fight has been centered in Kordofan, where aid

groups and analysts report an increase in drone strikes that hampered aid operations and took a toll on civilians, despite the army saying it seized control and broke the siege of Kadugli and Dilling. At least 77 people were killed in various attacks in Kordofan due to drone warfare in February.

A UN convoy reached Dilling and Kadugli with aid for more than 130,000 people, the first major delivery in three months, United Nations agencies said Wednesday. However, aid workers are concerned about escalating violence.

## Also:

**WASHINGTON:** The United States on sanctioned three commanders of paramilitary Rapid Support Forces for committing atrocities against civilians in Sudan.

In a press release, the US Department of State identified the sanctioned commanders as **Elfateh Abdullah Idris Adam**, **Gedo Hamdan Ahmed Mohamed**, and **Tijani Ibrahim Moussa Mohamed**.

"The RSF has perpetrated atrocities during the almost three-year conflict in Sudan," reads the release.

"The RSF and allied militias engaged in a campaign of widespread killings, torture, and sexual violence in **El Fasher**, the capital of **North Darfur**, during the months-long siege and subsequent capture of the city in October 2025, targeting civilians based on their ethnicity and tribal identity."

## Lat/Am

**Argentina hit by 24-hour general strike:** Argentina's main labor unions started a nationwide 24-hour strike on Thursday in protest against a labor reform bill under debate in the Chamber of Deputies, after it was approved by the Senate on Feb. 12.

The strike, led by the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and joined by transport, commercial, public sector and aviation unions, began at midnight local time.

Aerolíneas Argentinas announced the cancellation of 255 flights, affecting some 31,000 passengers.

Labor unions argue that the proposed labor modernization bill is regressive and will undermine workers' rights and increase job insecurity. Key concerns include potential changes to severance pay calculations and new rules for salary payments during medical leave.

The strike marks the fourth national strike organized by the CGT against the government of Argentine President **Javier Milei** since he took office in December 2023. (Xinhua)



**Chile truck explosion kills 6:** The death toll from a truck explosion on a highway in Chile's capital San-

tiago has risen to six, Chilean health authorities said on Saturday.

The two latest victims died in hospital from severe burns despite medical efforts, the authorities said, adding that 15 people remain hospitalized with serious injuries, 14 of whom are in critical condition.

The explosion occurred on Thursday due to a suspected gas leak from the truck. The fire triggered by the explosion spread to other vehicles on the highway and in a nearby parking lot. The blast caused a large fireball and smoke visible from various parts of the capital.

Further investigation is underway. (Xinhua)



**Brazil road deaths rise during '26 holiday:** Brazil recorded 130 deaths and 1,481 injuries in 1,241 traffic accidents on federal highways during the 2026 Carnival holiday from Feb. 13 to 18, the Federal Highway Police (PRF) said. The provisional figures exceed those from the 2025 Carnival, with 85 deaths and 1,433 injuries in 1,190 accidents. The PRF noted that even with preliminary data, this year's Carnival is already the deadliest on federal roads since 2020, with the number of serious accidents up by 8.54 percent.

Most victims were traveling by car or motorcycle, said the PRF, adding that despite enhanced patrols, some of the most severe crashes involving multiple fatalities took place in areas not classified as high-risk.

During the holiday operation, officers inspected 326,548 individuals and vehicles, administering 118,321 breathalyzer tests. Preliminary results showed that 2,400 drivers were fined for driving under the influence or refusing testing, with 108 arrests made for related offenses. (Xinhua)



Milei

## Bank withdrawals to resume after Eid Al-Fitr

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Kuwait Banking Association confirmed that bank withdrawals will resume after obtaining approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait and license from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

In a press statement on Sunday, the Association announced that the processing of postponed

and upcoming withdrawal requests will start after the Eid Al-Fitr holiday. Each bank will proceed according to its own schedule.

It added that banks will only start accepting new withdrawal requests once they complete all outstanding requests from the preceding period.

# Business

As part of its participation in a panel discussion on the evolution of digital content

## NBK showcases its leadership in responsible content creation & community awareness at the Arab Forum for content creators

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: As part of its participation in the activities of the Arab Content Creators Forum 2026 hosted by the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, National Bank of Kuwait highlighted the importance of responsible content on social media in shaping community awareness, and the role of institutions, brands and content creators in promoting this role.

The panel discussion, which included Farah Bastaki, Assistant Vice President - Social Media, Digital Communications at NBK, and Saud Al-Askar, Senior Officer - Social Media, Digital Communications, featured a specialized talk on the mechanisms for developing responsible digital content and its contribution to supporting community issues and building trust between the public and institutions, in addition to showcasing the Bank's pioneering experiences in this field.

During the session, Bastaki delved into NBK's vision and its growing role in the field of digital influence both locally and regionally levels, stressing that digital content has become one of the most effective channels for spreading knowledge, empowering society and raising awareness, especially in light of the current intensive use of more than half of the world's population of social media platforms, including more than 70% of Kuwaitis, which makes these platforms highly influential in spreading awareness.

Bastaki also pointed out that NBK has one of the largest follower bases in Kuwait and the region, with more than 2.4 million followers, while its platforms recorded 3.31 million interactions during the past year, explaining that about 90% of the Bank's social media followers are from within Kuwait, which highlights its strong local influence, in addition to a reach that extends beyond borders through 10% of followers.

Moreover, Bastaki said that NBK is the most digitally present and interactive banking body in Kuwait, which has enabled it to take a proactive approach to content management by launching innovative initiatives instead of merely reacting, further noting that NBK's entry into the TikTok platform was an example of this proactive approach, for it dealt with it as an important cultural space for young people and not just an entertainment platform.

On financial literacy, Bastaki explained that NBK places this file among the priorities of its awareness content projects, as it promotes financial awareness, banking inclusion and the protection of society through its digital platforms, indicating that studies confirm that individuals who have good financial literacy are twice as likely to save compared to others.

Bastaki also added that fraud awareness campaigns via digital channels



Farah Bastaki and Saud Al-Askar during their participation in the dialogue session.

### Bastaki:

- NBK is the most active and engaged bank on social media platforms in Kuwait.

### Al-Askar:

- Sustainability is an integral part of NBK's digital content strategy

have proven their ability to reduce losses by between 30% and 40%, while the specialized educational content published by the Bank records interaction rates that exceed promotional content by three to four times, which reflects the public's confidence in the Bank's awareness messages and its desire to acquire reliable and valuable financial knowledge.

NBK, Bastaki pointed out, has presented pioneering initiatives in this

field, most notably the "Bankee" program, which is the largest financial literacy program in primary schools in Kuwait, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha", indicating that the program aims to introduce students to the basics of earning, saving, spending and financial responsibilities, and to instill the values of honesty, integrity and teamwork.

She commented: "The Bank also continues to support the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association, which is the largest banking awareness campaign in the region, aiming to raise banking and financial awareness among bank customers. It adopts highly important awareness topics, most notably the steps to be taken to avoid being exposed to fraud, the best ways to benefit from banking services and promote a culture of saving and investment, among other important topics".

Furthermore, Bastaki noted that customers today prefer fast digital interaction, with 70-80% of them seeing digital channels as their first choice for communication, while 60% believe that speed of response directly affects trust, pointing out also that institutions that interact faster through digital channels record an increase in trust and reputation levels ranging between 20% and 30% compared to inactive institutions.

Finally, Bastaki concluded by saying that NBK's content strategy has contributed to transforming its image from a traditional bank to a human-centered brand that is close to the people through simple language, showcasing real employees, and highlighting the work values within its environment, which has strengthened the public's connection with the Bank and made it a regional reference in developing banking content both locally and regionally.

From his part, Al-Askar talked about the role of digital content in supporting the Bank's social responsibility programs in the fields of education, health, sports and culture, noting that the NBK Run, in which more than 7,000 racers participate annually, is a model of the effectiveness of digital coverage in promoting a culture of healthy living.

On sustainability, Al-Askar stressed that the bank has doubled its efforts over the past five years, making sustainability an integral part of its digital content strategy, by employing platforms to raise public awareness of the Bank's role in sustainable finance and environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives, and to promote national awareness of the importance of moving towards a more responsible economy.

## 'Nuqsat AlKhaleej' initiative continues to strengthen client partnerships & creating meaningful customer experiences



Part of the distribution activities.



High demand from Gulf Bank customers.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: As part of its annual Ramadan program, Gulf Bank continues to implement its "Nuqsat Al-Khaleej" initiative, reinforcing its commitment to supporting its corporate clients while enhancing customer engagement. Through this initiative, the Bank partners with selected Gulf Bank corporate clients from the food and hospitality sector, purchasing a range of traditional dessert dishes and distributing them as complimentary gifts to its customers throughout the holy month of Ramadan.

The initiative reflects Gulf Bank's long-standing approach of building sustainable partnerships with local businesses. By directly sourcing products from its corporate clients, the Bank contributes to their commercial growth, strengthens long-term relationships, and supports the development of small and medium-sized enterprises within Kuwait's economy.

The name "Nuqsat Al-Khaleej" is inspired by the Arabic word "Nuqsa," which refers to a

homemade dish traditionally shared with family, friends, and neighbors as an expression of generosity and care. This cultural tradition represents the spirit of giving that characterizes Ramadan. By adopting this concept, Gulf Bank translates an authentic social practice into a modern corporate initiative that embodies its values and heritage.

Through "Nuqsat Al-Khaleej," the Bank aims to create moments of delight and meaningful engagement with its customers, while simultaneously enabling its corporate clients to expand their reach and visibility. This integrated approach ensures mutual value creation, where business support, cultural preservation, and customer appreciation converge into a single, impactful program.

Gulf Bank remains committed to developing initiatives that combine commercial sustainability with social responsibility, in line with its broader vision of fostering inclusive growth, strengthening stakeholder relationships, and

delivering distinctive customer experiences during Ramadan and beyond.

The Bank affirms its commitment to continuing its efforts to promote sustainability across social, economic, and environmental dimensions through carefully selected initiatives that generate mutual value for both the Bank and the community. These efforts are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Kuwait Vision 2035.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading bank in Kuwait by fostering an inclusive and diverse work environment that enables employees to deliver outstanding customer service, while maintaining a strong and sustainable commitment to community development. Leveraging its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the Bank empowers customers with the flexibility to complete their banking transactions anytime and anywhere, while enjoying a seamless and efficient banking experience.

Middle East tensions boost gold

## Gold rises above \$5,100 amid global uncertainty

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22, (KUNA): Gold prices closed last week sharply higher, climbing above USD 5,100 per ounce to settle near USD 5,107, posting daily gains of more than 1.5 percent amid heightened global market uncertainty.

In a report released Sunday, Kuwait's Dar Al-Sabaik said the rally was fueled by major legal, political, and economic developments in the United States. Chief among them was a US Supreme Court ruling overturning reciprocal tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump under national emergency legislation.

Markets initially showed improved risk appetite, but sentiment quickly shifted after Trump signaled plans to introduce a new 10 percent global tariff in addition to existing national security-related duties. The move reignited fears of renewed global trade tensions, prompting investors to seek safe-haven assets.

Economic data further supported gold's advance. Final US GDP figures showed growth slowing to 1.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2025, while the core Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) index — the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure — rose above 3 percent. The combination of moderating growth and persistent inflation revived concerns over possible stagflation.

Despite a rise in 10-year US Treas-

ury yields to around 4 percent, gold maintained upward momentum, supported by expectations of two potential interest rate cuts this year and a weaker US dollar index hovering near 97.70.

Geopolitical tensions in the Middle East also continued to underpin demand. Ongoing discussions in Washington regarding policy options toward Iran — ranging from diplomacy to limited military action — have heightened market sensitivity and reinforced gold's appeal as a hedge.

Technically, the outlook turned positive after prices reclaimed the \$5,000 psychological support level. Sustained trading above \$5,100 could pave the way toward testing \$5,200, followed by the January 30 peak of \$5,451 and the record high near \$5,598 per ounce. Conversely, a drop below \$5,000 may lead to a retest of \$4,841 and the 50-day moving average around \$4,681.

Locally, the global rally was mirrored in Kuwait. The price of 24-karat gold reached approximately KD 50.690 per gram (about \$155), while 22-karat gold stood at KD 46.470 per gram (around \$142). Silver stabilized at KD 936 per kilogram (roughly \$3,050), amid sustained local demand for precious metals for savings and investment purposes.

The ounce, also known as the troy ounce in precious metals markets, equals 31.103 grams.

Oman non-oil exports grow 7.5%

## GCC GDP hits \$2.3 trillion

MUSCAT, Feb 22, (KUNA): The Gulf Cooperation Council Statistical Center on Saturday affirmed that GCC countries continue to achieve real growth in gross domestic product, driven by economic diversification programs and ongoing fiscal reforms across member states.

In a press statement marking the release of its report Cooperation Council in Figures, the center said the GCC system recorded steady economic, developmental, and social expansion during 2024, achieving notable qualitative advances in competitiveness, energy, trade, and digital transformation.

It added that 2024 was characterized by growth led by non-oil sectors, improved quality of life, enhanced digital infrastructure, and stronger regional and international economic presence, in line with macroeconomic indicators cited in the report.

The center noted that total GCC GDP reached USD 2.3 trillion, ranking ninth globally, with an annual growth rate of 2.2 percent, reflecting the resilience and diversification of Gulf economies.

It also highlighted improved global economic indicators, including competitiveness and flexibility, noting that GCC countries ranked first worldwide in proven oil reserves, third in natural gas production, and second in natural gas reserves.

The center further said GCC states ranked tenth globally in total exports and trade exchange, eleventh in imports, and between 15th and 52nd glob-

ally on the Human Development Index within the "very high" category.

Data released Saturday by the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed that Oman's non-oil exports grew by 7.5 percent in 2025, while re-export activities rose 20.3 percent, reflecting efforts to boost ports and industrial exports.

Non-oil exports reached about OMR 6.7 billion (around USD 17.4 billion) in 2025, up from OMR 6.2 billion (USD 16.1 billion) in 2024, while re-exports increased from OMR 1.7 billion (USD 4.4 billion) to OMR 2 billion (USD 5.2 billion) over the same period.

Key non-oil exports included chemical products and related industries, metals and metal products, plastics, machinery, and electrical equipment, while oil exports fell 15.2 percent due to the average Oman crude oil price dropping to USD 71 per barrel, down from USD 80.8 in 2024.

Total oil exports reached 307.9 million barrels in 2025, compared to 308.4 million barrels in 2024, with average daily production rising from 992,600 barrels to over one million barrels per day, while Oman's total trade exchange amounted to OMR 40.4 billion (around USD 105 billion).

Regarding trade partners for non-oil exports, the UAE led with OMR 1.311 billion (USD 3.4 billion), followed by Saudi Arabia, India, South Korea, and the United States, while in re-exports the UAE also led with OMR 2 billion (USD 5.2 billion), accounting for 35.2 percent of total Omani re-export trade.

Bank sponsors children's conference, sports day, & Amir Cup final

## ABK promotes 'Let's Be Aware' campaign at major events

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) continues to promote the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign and raise awareness of its various themes through its participation in sponsoring several events held across Kuwait throughout the year. This comes as part of the Bank's full commitment to supporting the efforts of the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association in ensuring the success of the campaign and achieving financial inclusion among all segments of Kuwaiti society.

To this end, the Bank introduced participants at the Children's Conference organized by the Lawyers Association, the Sports Day event in the Shaab Health District, and during the final match of HH the Amir Cup football tournament to the campaign's key topics. The initiative aimed to enhance participants' banking and financial literacy, particularly regarding their rights and respon-



Promoting the campaign at the Amir Cup football final.

sibilities when conducting banking transactions.

The Bank's team also introduced participants to the various banking services and solutions it offers, explaining different types of banking cards and accounts, as well as the

digital services available through its mobile application, in addition to highlighting key saving methods.

ABK employees also advised attendees of all age groups not to share their personal banking information



with any third party, emphasizing that the Bank never requests personal customer information via text messages or phone calls.

The team further stressed the importance of contacting the Bank directly if customers suspect any suspicious transaction on their accounts, in order to immediately block their cards if necessary.

All of these topics form part of the ongoing 'Let's Be Aware' campaign, which continues into a new year, as ABK remains committed to contributing to the campaign's objectives in line with its leading role in the local banking sector.

Trump vows 15% import tax despite court ruling

# Supreme Court strikes down Trump's global tariffs

WASHINGTON, Feb 22, (AP): For a few hours on Friday, congressional Republicans seemed to get some relief from one of the largest points of friction they have had with the Trump administration. It didn't last.

The Supreme Court struck down a significant portion of President Donald Trump's global tariff regime, ruling that the power to impose taxes lies with Congress. Many Republicans greeted the Friday morning decision with measured statements, some even praising it, and party leaders said they would work with Trump on tariffs going forward.

But by the afternoon, Trump made clear he had no intention of working with Congress and would instead go it alone by imposing a new global 10% import tax. On Saturday morning, he went further by saying he would raise that new tariff to 15%.

He's doing so under a law that restricts the tariffs to 150 days and has never been invoked this way before. His decision could not only have major implications for the global economy, but also ensure that Republicans will have to keep answering for Trump's tariffs for months to come, especially as the midterm elections near.

"I have the right to do tariffs, and I've always had the right to do tariffs," Trump said at a news conference, adding that he doesn't need Congress.

Tariffs have been one of the only areas where the Republican-controlled Congress has broken with Trump. Both the House and Senate at various points have passed resolutions intended to rebuke the tariffs being imposed on trade partners like Canada.

It's the rare issue where Republican lawmakers who came of age in a party that largely championed free trade have voiced criticism of Trump's economic policies.

"The empty merits of sweeping trade wars with America's friends were evident long before today's decision," Sen. Mitch McConnell, the former longtime Senate Republican leader, said in a statement, adding that tariffs raise the prices of houses and disrupt other industries important to his home state of Kentucky.

At least one Republican congressman who last week voted against Trump's tariffs on Canada is now facing political consequences. Trump on Saturday posted on his Truth Social platform that he was rescinding his endorsement of Colorado Rep. Jeff Hurd for reelection over his lack of support for tariffs and instead supporting Hurd's Republican primary competitor, Hope Schepelman.



A steel worker walks beside steel coils during a visit of EU Commissioner for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy Stéphane Sejourne at the Thyssenkrupp steelworks in Duisburg, Germany, after the EU Steel Action plan was presented, Thursday, March 20, 2025. (AP)

"Congressman Hurd is one of a small number of Legislators who have let me and our Country down," Trump wrote. "He is more interested in protecting Foreign Countries that have been ripping us off for decades than he is the United States of America."

Democrats, looking to win back control of Congress, intend to make McConnell's point their own. At a news conference Friday, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said Trump's new tariffs "will still raise people's costs and they will hurt the American people as much as his old tariffs did."

Schumer challenged Republicans to stop Trump from imposing his new global tariff. Democrats on Friday also called for refunds to be sent to U.S. consumers for the tariffs struck down by the Supreme Court.

"The American people paid for these tariffs and the American people should get their money back," Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., said on social media.

It all played into one of the Democrats' central messages for the midterm campaign: that Trump has failed to make the cost of living more affordable and has inflated prices with tariffs.

Midsized U.S. businesses have had to absorb the import taxes by passing them along to customers in the form of higher prices, employing fewer workers or accepting lower profits, according to an analysis by the JPMorgan Chase Institute.

The Supreme Court decision on Friday made it clear that a majority of justices believe that Congress alone is granted authority under the Constitution to levy tariffs. Yet Trump quickly signed an executive order citing the Trade Act of 1974, which grants the president the power to impose temporary import taxes when there are "large and serious United States balance-of-payments deficits" or other international payment problems. The authority has never been used and therefore never tested in court.

Republicans at times have warned Trump about the potential economic fallout of his tariff plans. Yet before Trump's "Liberation Day" of global tariffs in April last year, Republican leaders declined to directly defy the president.

Some GOP lawmakers cheered on the new tariff policy, highlighting a generational divide among Republicans, with a mostly younger group of Republicans fiercely backing Trump's strategy. Rather than adhering to traditional free trade doctrine, they advocate for "America First" protectionism, hoping it will revive U.S. manufacturing.

Republican Sen. Bernie Moreno, an Ohio freshman, slammed the Supreme Court's ruling on Friday and called for GOP lawmakers to "codify the tariffs that had made our country the hottest country on earth!"

A few Republican opponents of the tariffs, meanwhile, openly cheered the Supreme Court's decision. Rep. Don Bacon, a critic of the administration who is not seeking reelection, said on social media that "Congress must stand on its own two feet, take tough votes and defend its authorities."

Bacon predicted there would be more Republican pushback coming. He and a handful of other GOP members were instrumental earlier this month in forcing a House vote on Trump's tariffs on Canada. As that measure passed, Trump vowed political retribution for any Republican who voted to oppose his tariff plans.

## EU sanctions need unanimity

### Hungary pledges to block EU's 20th Russia sanctions package

BUDAPEST, Feb 22, (AP): Budapest threatened to block a new package of European Union sanctions against Russia and to stall efforts to help Ukraine until Russian oil deliveries to Hungary resume.

The EU's foreign ministers are set to meet in Brussels on Monday to discuss the bloc's 20th round of sanctions against Moscow, a measure they hope will be approved in time to coincide with the fourth anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Tuesday.

In a video posted to social media Sunday, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said he would block the sanctions package, accusing Ukraine of deliberately holding back Russian oil deliveries through the Druzhba pipeline.

"We will not consent to the adoption of the 20th package of sanctions, because we have previously made it clear that until the Ukrainians resume oil shipments to Hungary, we will not allow decisions that are important to them to be approved," Szijjártó said.

For the sanctions to pass, the 27-nation bloc needs to reach a unanimous decision.

Russian oil shipments to Hungary and Slovakia have been interrupted since Jan. 27 after what Ukrainian officials say were Russian drone attacks that damaged the Druzhba pipeline, which carries Russian crude across Ukrainian territory and into Central Europe, leading to rising tensions between Budapest and Kyiv.

Nearly every country in Europe has significantly reduced or entirely ceased Russian energy imports since Moscow launched its war in Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Yet Hungary and Slovakia, both EU and NATO members, have maintained and even increased supplies of Russian oil and gas, and received a temporary exemption from an EU policy prohibiting imports of Russian oil.

Szijjártó also said Saturday Hun-

gary will block a major 90-billion-euro (\$106-billion) EU loan to Ukraine meant to help Kyiv meet its military and economic needs for the next two years.

Earlier in the week, Hungary and Slovakia announced they would both cease diesel shipments to Ukraine over oil interruptions, and Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico on Saturday said his country would cut off emergency electricity supplies to its embattled neighbor if oil deliveries were not restored by Monday.

Russian missiles and drones in recent months have pounded Ukraine's energy grid, plunging people into frozen darkness in one of the country's coldest winters on record.

In a statement on Saturday, Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said it "rejects and condemns the ultimatums and blackmail" by Hungary and Slovakia, and that the two countries were "playing into the hands of the aggressor."

"Such actions, in the context of massive and targeted Russian strikes on Ukraine's energy infrastructure and Moscow's attempts to deprive Ukrainians of electricity, heating, and gas during extreme cold weather, are provocative, irresponsible, and threaten the energy security of the entire region," the ministry wrote.

Hungary's nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who maintains the closest relationship with the Kremlin of any EU leader, has long argued Russian fossil fuels are indispensable for his economy, and that switching to energy sourced from elsewhere would cause an immediate economic collapse - an argument some experts dispute.

Orbán has frequently threatened to scuttle the bloc's efforts to sanction Moscow over its invasion, and has blasted attempts to hit Russia's energy revenues that help finance the war. He has also vetoed EU efforts to provide military and financial assistance to Ukraine.

## China eyes negotiation edge ahead of Beijing Summit

### Ruling against Trump's tariffs creates new uncertainty in US trade relations with China

WASHINGTON, Feb 22, (AP): The Supreme Court decision striking down President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs has added a wrinkle to already complicated U.S.-China relations, with both countries navigating shifting ground to avoid an all-out trade war that would disrupt the global economy while still jostling for a position of strength in negotiations.

Friday's court ruling would seem to strengthen China's hand, but analysts predict that Beijing will be cautious in exploiting the advantage, knowing that Trump has other ways of levying taxes. Both sides also want to maintain a fragile trade truce and stabilize ties ahead of Trump's highly anticipated trip to Beijing.

"It will give China a moral boost in their negotiations with Trump's team ahead of the summit, but they are prepared for the scenario that nothing actually changes in reality," said Sun Yun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center, a Washington-based think tank.

Furious about the defeat, Trump said first he was imposing a temporary 10% global tariff before raising it to 15% as well as pursuing alternative paths for import duties. He made the case for tariffs by pointing to China, which poses the biggest challenge to U.S. economic, technological and military dominance.

"China had hundreds of billions of dollars in surpluses with the United States. They rebuilt China. They rebuilt the army. We built China's army by allowing that to happen," Trump told reporters Friday. "I have a great relationship with President Xi, but he respects our country now."

The White House has confirmed that Trump will travel to China on March 31 through April 2 to meet President Xi Jinping.

Xi is unlikely to "flaunt or brandish" the Supreme Court ruling forcefully when meeting Trump, likely



A U.S. flag flies at the Port of Long Beach Friday, Feb. 20, 2026, in Long Beach, Calif. (AP)

choosing instead to try to strengthen his rapport with the U.S. president, said Ali Wyne, a senior research and advocacy adviser focused on U.S. policy toward China at the International Crisis Group.

The more that Xi can do that, "the more likely it is that the fragile trade truce between the United States and China will take hold in earnest and that Trump will be amenable to security concessions that give China greater freedom of maneuver in Asia," Wyne said.

Asked for comment on the implications of the court ruling, Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu said only that tariff and trade wars serve neither country's interest. He called for Beijing and Washington to work together to "provide greater certainty and stability for China-U.S. economic and trade cooperation and the global economy."

The court decision also creates new uncertainty for other U.S. trading partners, in Asia and elsewhere, especially those that have reached trade

deals to calm the initial turmoil from Trump's tariffs.

"I would expect most Asian partners to proceed cautiously, with existing agreements largely holding as both sides work through the implications in the coming weeks," said Dan Kritenbrink, a partner at The Asia Group who served as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs in the Biden administration.

He said he would be watching the impact on Japan ahead of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's planned visit to Washington in March. Japan, a staunch U.S. ally, has seen its relations with Beijing deteriorate in recent months.

Shortly after Trump returned to the White House early last year, he invoked an emergency powers law and slapped 20% tariffs on Chinese goods over what he said was Beijing's failure to stem the flow of chemicals that can be used to make fentanyl.

Trump later invoked the same emergency authority to impose

sweeping reciprocal tariffs on many countries, including 34% on China. Beijing retaliated, and the tariffs temporarily soared to triple digits before both sides climbed down.

After several rounds of trade talks and a summit between Trump and Xi in South Korea in October, the two countries agreed to a one-year truce with a 10% baseline tariff. Trump also slashed the so-called fentanyl tariff to 10%, while Beijing resumed its cooperation in restricting the export of more substances that could be used to make the opioid.

Wendy Cutler, vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute, said she suspected the Trump administration could roll out a Plan B quickly. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative has an active investigation into China's compliance with a previous trade agreement and that could be the administration's backup plan, she said. If China is found not to be fulfilling its obligations under the agreement, the U.S. government is allowed under a trade law to impose tariffs.

Rep. Ro Khanna, the top Democrat on the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, urged the administration to come up with a new, tougher strategy that "holds China accountable for its unfair trade practices and leverages the collective power of our allies and partners."

Gabriel Wildau, a managing director focused on political risk analysis in China at the consultancy Teneo, said Trump has already shown his willingness to use other legal authorities to impose tariffs on China, as he did during his first term, and Beijing probably assumes that the tariffs could be maintained or re-created "with only modest difficulty."

"But Beijing also holds out hope that they can persuade Trump to lower this tariff in exchange for purchase guarantees or other concessions," Wildau said.

## Supreme Court rules against Trump's emergency tariffs – but leaves key questions unanswered

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

By Kent Jones  
Babson College

President Donald Trump's economic agenda took a major hit when the Supreme Court struck down many of his most sweeping tariffs. While Trump has options to restore some of the tariffs, he's losing his most powerful tool to impose them almost at will as a bargaining chip with other countries.

In a 6-3 decision on Feb. 20, 2026, the court ruled that Trump's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977 to unilaterally impose tariffs on other countries was unconstitutional. Since January 2025, Trump has used the act to impose tariffs on nearly every other country.

As a trade economist, I wasn't particularly surprised by the ruling. In the oral arguments, several justices were openly skeptical about the president's ability to claim virtually unlimited powers to set tariffs without specific congressional language to authorize them. While the ruling answers some questions about the legality of Trump's tariffs, it leaves many others unanswered.

The tariffs that the court ruled are illegal include the "reciprocal" tariffs Trump imposed to match the value of trade barriers set by other countries. They ranged from 34% on China to a baseline of 10% for the rest of the world.

They also include a 25% tariff on some goods from Canada, China and Mexico over those countries' supposed failure to curb the flow of fentanyl into the U.S.

By striking down these tariffs, the Supreme Court will presumably force U.S. tariff schedules to revert to the status quo before they were imposed on April 2, 2025, or "liberation day," as Trump called it.

Most of the tariffs Trump has imposed used the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to provide legal justification. While the law allows the president to respond to economic emergencies with

measures such as embargoes and asset seizures, it does not specifically authorize the use of tariffs imposed unilaterally.

This was a major point made in the Supreme Court decision. In every other statute available to the president to use tariffs, there is specific language stating the way in which tariffs can be imposed, language that is absent in the International Emergency Economic Powers Act statute.

The majority decision, in which the court's liberal justices were joined by three of its conservatives, determined that the president overreached his powers to set tariffs, based on Article 1, Section 8, of the U.S. Constitution. Any delegation of tariff-making powers in an emergency to the president must be consistent with this provision.

It is also noteworthy that Trump openly declared that one of the benefits of the tariffs was how much revenue they bring in. But the majority decision noted that this represented an unauthorized presidential power to tax, which is also governed by the Article 1, Section 8, provision that assigns this power exclusively to Congress.

Trump used the International Emergency Economic Powers Act tariffs as leverage to negotiate numerous bilateral deals with U.S. trading partners. Now that the tariffs have been declared unconstitutional, many countries may demand that the deals be renegotiated.

The decision does not cover all of the administration's tariffs, including national security tariffs imposed under Section 232 for specific industries such as autos, steel and aluminum, and Section 301, a statute that allows the president to impose tariffs against individual countries if they have imposed unfair or discriminatory trade actions against the U.S. This covers some of the tariffs on imports from China.

Trump has often used or threatened to use International Emergency Economic Powers Act tariffs for political reasons, including against Brazil over its prosecution of a former president, Mexico over immigration and Canada over its plans to sign a trade deal with China, and other reasons.

The Supreme Court decision will make it more difficult for Trump to use tariffs and tariff threats in that way. One outcome is that constitu-

tional limits the justices set on presidential tariff-making powers should constrain the justification of tariffs for political reasons.

The main avenues for new tariffs in response to the Supreme Court decision are sections 232 and 301. The president could potentially try to get Congress to pass new legislation expanding his tariff powers, but that seems unlikely in an election year.

However, it is important to understand that he chose to use the International Emergency Economic Powers Act as the mainspring of his trade policy because he interpreted it as providing him with full discretion in the unlimited power to impose tariffs without further congressional constraints.

In order to impose similar tariffs under Section 232, for example, each tariff order must be focused on a single industry, and the Commerce Department must issue a report documenting the emergency as it applies to that industry. Presumably, Trump will be preparing to use Section 232 for a large number of industries in addition to those currently covered by that statute.

For at least some of the countries with which Trump has already negotiated bilateral trade deals, many of their exports would not be covered by Section 232 tariffs, hence the likelihood that those countries will demand a renegotiation.

The Supreme Court decision appears not to address the question of tariff rebates, but many companies have already indicated that they will demand them.

In principle, any U.S. company in possession of tariff receipts documenting their payment of tariffs would be eligible for a refund if the Supreme Court approves this remedy.

Since public opinion about Trump's tariffs is already negative, the president will have to deal with a likely backlash against any attempts to replace the rejected tariffs with new ones.

It will be interesting to see how Republicans in Congress react to Trump's tariff strategy in view of the upcoming midterm elections. For example, Republicans from states that border Canada may push back against further efforts to curb trade with their northern neighbor.

This may impose a further constraint on Trump's tariff policy. (AP)

# What's On

## SPOTLIGHT



Got a birthday or event?

Share your story and snapshots with Arab Times!  
Email your write-up and photos to  
arabtimes@arabtimesonline.com  
We'll feature it on our What's On page!

Initiative returns in its 19th year in partnership with Ministry of Social Affairs

## Zain brings fasting individuals together at its Iftar Hall



Nawaf Al-Gharabally and Fayez Al-Daihani with Zain and Ministry officials.



Sheikh Omar Al-Damkhi and Hamad Al-Musaibeeh with the Zain FUN team.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: With the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan, Zain kicked-off its annual Iftar Hall initiative at Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, held in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs as part of the company's Zain Alshuhoor Ramadan campaign. The initiative returns in its 19th year, welcoming fasting individuals daily throughout the holy month to reaffirm Zain's ongoing commitment to promoting the values of giving during Ramadan.

The initiative's launch was joined by Zain Kuwait CEO, Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Director of the Women, Childhood, and Community Development Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Fayez Al-Daihani, and Imam of the Grand Mosque, Sheikh Omar Al-Damkhi, underscoring the strength of public-private partnership in delivering impactful initiatives that directly serve the community's needs during the holy month.

ing the holy month.

This year, Zain will provide nearly 30,000 Iftar meals throughout Ramadan through the Iftar Hall in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, in addition to meal distribution across various areas of Kuwait in cooperation with its strategic partner, the Kuwait Food Bank, through daily food trucks serving multiple locations across the country.

Zain's team directly supervises the day-to-day operation of the initiative, with the participation of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team that consists of employees from across the company's departments. This reflects the strong spirit of teamwork within the Zain family and its commitment to meaningful community participation during Ramadan.

The initiative also includes active participation from the Zain FUN part-time

university student team, reflecting Zain's commitment to engaging the next generation in its community initiatives, enabling them to gain hands-on experience and strengthen values of responsibility and giving, while helping prepare them to lead the future.

The initiative is part of the broader series of programs and activities under Zain Alshuhoor, through which Zain creates sustainable community impact and reinforces the values of compassion, solidarity, and social cohesion that define Kuwaiti society during the holy month. The initiative also embodies Zain's purpose of Better Lives, Lasting Connections, as the company continues to translate its presence in the community into tangible impact that responds to people's needs and strengthens the spirit of unity during Ramadan.

### Fasting builds discipline, patience, and compassion

## Spandanam Association organizes Iftar gathering



Photo during the event.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Spandanam Association & Cultural Organization Kuwait organized an Iftar gathering at the Mangaf Dreams Hall. The event was presided over by Association President Biju Bhavans.

The chief guest, Loka Kerala Sabha Member Sathar Kunnil, spoke about the spiritual significance of Ramadan and the importance of fasting. He highlighted that fasting nurtures self-discipline, patience, self-reflection, and a spirit of sharing, while helping individuals understand the value of hunger and food.

Founder member of GKPA and social activist Mubarak Kambrath emphasized the need to preserve social harmony and urged expatriates to register for welfare pension schemes under NORKA.

General Secretary Reji Kumar welcomed the gathering. Greetings were extended by Menish-Vaas (former Secretary of Wayanad Association), Shanavas Basheer (KL Kuwait Media Reporter),

Organization Chairman John Mathew, as well as Uthaman, Sajini, Vasanthakumari, and Thulasi-rani. Susan Jose delivered the vote of thanks.



Photo during the event.

### Reflecting unity and spiritual readiness

## IMA organizes 'Welcome Ramadan 2026' public events across Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait, under the distinguished patronage of the Ministry of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs – Foreign Relations Department, organized a series of impactful 'Welcome Ramadan 2026' public events across multiple locations in Kuwait, uniting communities in preparation for the blessed month of Ramadan. Conducted under different IMA units, the programs centered on two transformative themes: 'Zakat and Social Justice: An Islamic Economic Vision' and 'Preparing Yourself for Ramadan with Body, Mind & Soul'. Each gathering reflected the spirit of collective responsibility, moral refinement, and service to humanity.

On 12th February (Thursday) after Isha Prayer, simultaneous programs were held across Kuwait:

■ Fahaheel & Mangaf Unit hosted Mr Syed Mohiuddin Shakir, a visiting Scholar from India, along with Maulana Irfan Nadvani, at Urdu Khutba Masjid, Fahaheel, where the audience was inspired by a powerful discourse on Islamic economic justice and the transformative role of Zakat.

■ Abu Halifa Unit organized the program at Maryam Masjid, Mahboula, addressed by Maulana Waleed Umari and Mr Khursheed Khan, emphasizing Ramadan as a season of moral awakening and structured social responsibility.

■ Khaitan Unit conducted its session at Masjid Al-Mailem, Khaitan, featuring Mr Shamvel Pravez and Maulana Samoil Falahi, who highlighted the urgency of collective Zakat Systems in combating Poverty and Inequality.

■ Abbasiya & City Unit arranged the event at Masjid Bilqas, Abbasiya, delivered by Maulana Mohammad Umar Falahi,

■ Farwaniya Unit held its program in Farwaniya, where Mr Dawood Absani and Mr Arshad Habib eloquently spoke on purifying Wealth, refining Character & embracing Ramadan as a catalyst for community Upliftment.

■ City & Al-Riqqaq Unit hosted Maulana Waleed Umari on the same evening after Isha Prayer, delivering a compelling reminder on integrating Spiritual discipline with Social thics.

■ Salmiya & English Unit organized a special session on 16th February at Masjid Hayya Ibrahim, Salmiya, addressed by Maulana Mohammad Umar Falahi and Mr Imran Jasnaik.

#### Scholarly Addresses

The First Keynote Theme highlighted Zakat as a transformative Economic Institution designed to establish Social Justice and restore dignity to the vulnerable. Drawing from Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic teachings, the Speakers emphasized that Zakat is not optional Charity but a structured, rights-based System aimed at

preventing the concentration of wealth and ensuring equitable distribution in Society. Islam envisions wealth as a trust from Allah, with the affluent acting as Custodians responsible for uplifting the Poor, Indebted and Marginalized. Historical Examples from the Era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs illustrated how a collective and organized Zakat System—through institutions such as Bait-ul-Mal—once nearly eliminated Poverty and generated Sustainable Economic Empowerment. The address stressed that in today's world of widening Inequality, reviving a structured and transparent Zakat Framework could serve as a Moral and practical Solution to Economic Imbalance, fostering Dignity instead of Dependency and Unity instead of Class Division.

The Second Theme centered on Holistic preparation for Ramadan as a month of Comprehensive Transformation. Ramadan, as emphasized in the sessions, is not merely abstinence from food and drink but a disciplined journey of Spiritual Elevation, Moral Refinement & Social Consciousness. Participants were encouraged to prepare Physically through Balanced Routines and Voluntary Fasting, mentally by setting clear Spiritual Goals and reducing distractions & Spiritually through Sincere Repentance, increased Worship, Reconciliation & renewed Intentions. The Speakers reminded attendees that Fasting without Ethical Conduct defeats its Purpose: True Success lies in cultivating Taqwa (God-consciousness), Integrity, Compassion & Self-restraint. Ramadan was described as an Annual Spiritual Reset—an opportunity to realign One's Relationship with the Creator while strengthening bonds with Fellow Human Beings.

All the above programs drew a large number of audiences including Families, Youth & Professionals. The Events were concluded with the distribution of dinner packets to all attendees. All Programs were followed by an engaging Q&A session that allowed participants to deepen their understanding of Ramadan preparation and Social Accountability.

IMA Kuwait extends its gratitude to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Kuwait, for its patronage and constant support in organizing these impactful events.

IMA Kuwait is an Indian socio-religious organization that operates under the patronage of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Kuwait. IMA always focusses to provide platform for enhancement of expatriates living in Kuwait for their spiritual & social aspect through various programs & social gatherings. It looks forward to organizing various beneficial programs in future, considering the occasions and requirements of expatriates in general and specifically Indian community.

### Vice Principal Dr. Mary Isaac felicitates young graduates

## ICSK Amman celebrates Kindergarten Graduation Day



KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Indian Community School Kuwait, Amman, celebrated its Kindergarten Graduation Day on Thursday, 12th February 2026, with great pomp and festivity. The school was abuzz with excitement as children, dressed in adorable ladybug costumes, welcomed proud parents and families of the young graduates. The function began with a dazzling performance by the ladybugs who enthusiastically welcomed the gathering.

The ceremony featured a cultural touch with the lighting of the lamp by Principal, Mr. Rajesh Nair. C, accompanied by Vice Principal, Dr. Mary Isaac and Kindergarten Academic Supervisor, Dr. Jeyadevi Ramachandran. The welcome address rendered by UKG children in their graduation attire was heart-warming. The Principal, welcomed the gathering and emphasized the role of parents in shaping the young graduates' futures, advising them to stay connected with their kids' academic performances, behaviour, and character. He added that as the graduates move to primary from pre-primary, the syllabus and approach will be completely different, so parents should stay focused.

The event showcased glimpses of the academic year 2025-26, with photos and videos of kindergarten events. The highlight of the event was the graduation ceremony, where young grads happily received their certificates from Principal. The Vice Principal, delivered the felicitation speech, congratulating the graduates and parents. The event also featured energetic dance performances, a stunning fashion show followed by a vote of thanks by the UKG kids. The Kindergarten Academic Supervisor presented the closing vote of thanks, appreciating the efforts of all involved in making the event a grand success.



Photos during the event.

## Indian School of Excellence holds Grade 10 Blessing Ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Indian School of Excellence marked a proud milestone by conducting Blessing Ceremony on 28th January 2026 for the school's first batch of Grade 10 students. The ceremony was honoured by the presence of the Chief Guest, Fr. James Tuscano SDB, Principal – Indian English Academy, who shared his heartfelt wishes and motivating words, encouraging students to remain focused, confident, and value-driven as they prepare for their board examinations and future academic journey.

The programme commenced with a warm and inspiring welcome address by the Dr. Sherry Dennis, Director, Indian School of Excellence, who extended her greetings to the Chief Guest, parents, and students. She also delivered a meaningful blessing message, encouraging the Grade 10 students to move forward with determination, integrity, and confidence.

A deeply touching highlight of the ceremony

was the Ceremonial Light of Blessings, symbolizing hope, guidance, and the light of knowledge as students step into an important phase of their lives. Dr. Sherry Dennis, School Director, the Chief Guest, parents, teachers together bestowed sincere blessings and best wishes upon the students, making the occasion memorable and emotional.

Grade 10 students shared their reflections, expressing gratitude to their teachers, parents, and school for shaping their learning journey and personal growth. Their reflections revived cherished memories and highlighted the strong bond within the school community.

The ceremony was further enriched with vibrant cultural performances and interactive games, creating a joyful and celebratory atmosphere, thoughtfully organized by the Grade 9 students. As a token of love and recognition, students were presented with mementos and ceremonial sashes, symbolizing achievement, pride, and the school's blessings for their bright future. The Blessing Ceremony stood as a meaningful and memorable occasion, motivating the students as they prepare to embark on the next chapter of their academic and life journey.



Photo during the event.

## China becomes global box office champion so far in 2026

# Year of the Horse sees movie-inspired tourism surge in China

BEIJING/SHANGHAI, Feb 22, (Xinhua): Blockbusters are doing more than leading the holiday box office at the beginning of the Year of the Horse in China -- they are reshaping holiday travel patterns, fueling a nationwide boom in movie-inspired tourism.

According to online ticketing platforms, the total Spring Festival box office revenue (including pre-sales) has surpassed 4 billion yuan (about 576 million US dollars) by Saturday, with the racing-comedy "Pegasus 3" topping the charts.

Notably, the momentum of "Pegasus 3" extends well beyond cinemas. Data from travel platform Qunar showed that hotel bookings in Garze, southwest China's Sichuan Province -- one of the film's primary shooting locations -- surged 40 percent compared to last year's Spring Festival holiday, while bookings in another shooting site, Delingha, Qinghai Province, jumped 71 percent.

"As soon as I finished watching

"Pegasus 3," I rushed to plan a family spring trip to Garze to check in the racetrack featured in the film," said Shanghai car enthusiast Xia Lin. She has been a devoted fan since the "Pegasus" franchise was launched in 2019.

The film has also sparked a new wave of themed city tours in Shanghai, where the metro line, bridge, park and city landmarks appearing in the film have become fan-favorite check-in spots.

"During this year's Spring Festival season, the driving effect of films on culture and tourism has come earlier than usual," said Yang Han, a researcher at Qunar's Big Data Research Institute.

Thanks to the popularity of the previous two installments, fans of the "Pegasus" franchise have held high expectations for its storyline and visuals. A considerable number of them planned their trips before the release of the latest installment, he said.

The comic-adapted film "Blades of the Guardians," directed by renowned action choreographer Yuen Woo-ping and featuring martial arts stars Jet Li and Wu Jing, has also sparked strong interest in the dramatic but less-traveled desert landscapes of northwest China's Xinjiang. Data from Qunar showed that searches for desert sightseeing and desert highway tours climbed 60 percent ahead of the film's release.

Beyond the appeal of creativity in the film industry, the convergence of film and tourism during this Spring Festival holiday appears more systematic and policy-driven.

The China Film Administration has launched a series of initiatives in 2026, including campaigns such as "Travel with Films," "Taste Cuisine with Films," and "Shopping with Films." Local governments also responded with consumption vouchers, themed routes and cross-sector promotions.

In Guangdong Province, the release

of prominent director Zhang Yimou's spy thriller "Scare Out" has catalyzed a province-wide travel-with-films campaign. The province unveiled 60 film-themed travel routes spanning 21 cities, integrating screenings with dining, retail and cultural promotions.

In Shanghai's Hongkou District, 11 cinemas partnered with dozens of commercial and cultural venues to create immersive "New Year in the Movies" experiences, offering ticket-stub discounts and interactive installations. In Sichuan, movie consumption vouchers worth more than 4 million yuan were distributed from Feb. 8 to 19, combining film discounts with dining and tourism subsidies.

Experts noted that this "film+" model reflects a maturation of China's holiday consumption structure. Spring Festival moviegoing -- once primarily entertainment -- has evolved into a ritualized cultural activity intertwined with family reunions and experiential travel.

"A film's value lies not only in its box office performance, but also in the ripple effects it generates across tourism, catering and other sectors," said Hou Keming, a professor at the Beijing Film Academy. "The economic and cultural impact now extends far beyond the screen."

### Also:

**BEIJING:** China has overtaken North America as the world's top-grossing film market for the time being, with its 2026 box office revenue (including pre-sales) surpassing 7 billion yuan (about 970 million US dollars) as of Saturday, slightly higher than North America's 938 million U.S. dollars, according to online ticketing platforms.

The country's strong box office performance has largely been driven by its ongoing Spring Festival holiday, which began on Feb. 15. So far, China's holiday ticketing revenue has exceeded 4.4 billion yuan, contributing over half of its total earnings this year.

During the nine-day holiday, a wide range of blockbuster films across different genres and themes premiered in theaters all over China, providing the perfect backdrop for family reunions and festive fun.

Topping the Spring Festival sales chart was "Pegasus 3," the third installment in director Han Han's racing-comedy franchise starring Shen Teng, one of China's most bankable comedic actors. The film has amassed more than two billion yuan since its debut.

The first two films in the series were released during the 2019 and 2024 Spring Festival seasons, grossing a combined 5 billion yuan.

Spy thriller "Scare Out," directed by Zhang Yimou, secured the second spot on the chart, with a box office revenue of 701 million yuan. It was immediately followed by "Blades of the Guardians: Wind Rises in the Desert," an action film featuring Chinese martial arts, with 577 million yuan.

## Music

### 'Witty, and glittery'

## Hilary Duff is pop star reincarnate on 'Luck'

LOS ANGELES, Feb 22, (AP): Hilary Duff is a pop star once more. That is, if a pop star ever really stops being a pop star.

Over 10 years since her last record - 2015's "Breathe In, Breathe Out." - Duff is back with "Luck... or Something," a witty, and glittery, set of 11 pop songs that track the years that have passed since her teenage stardom. That brings existential questions, haunting what-ifs, some self-deprecating reflection and a healthy dose of cringe and nostalgia.

Once a Disney Channel darling known best for playing the sometimes-illustrated middle schooler Lizzie McGuire, Duff is now 38 and married with four kids. There's been a perspective shift since she was making shimmering dance-pop and angst breakup tunes in the early 2000s (think: "What Dreams Are Made Of," "Come Clean," "So Yesterday"). "Mature," the album's lead single, makes that clear with cutting lyrics that recall an unfortunately familiar dynamic, between a young woman and an older man: "Bet she loves when she hears you say / You're so mature for your age, babe." As present-day Duff reminisces, she's making it clear to the listener that she is older and wiser - but also forgiving of her younger self.

That's because nostalgia is still key here, and Duff is well aware of that. Her return to the pop stage was launched with a mini-tour that saw her preview some of these new songs alongside those old hits to the delight of fans in Toronto, London, New York, Los Angeles and Las Vegas. Her promotional videos have featured old costumes, props and flip phones. For the cover of this month's Glamour magazine, Duff peered over her shoulder from the back of a moped - an image fans were quick to connect to 2003's Italy-set "The Lizzie McGuire Movie."

The album, like her overall relaunch, attempts to balance this nostalgia with that perspective. Matthew Koma, Duff's husband and a songwriter and producer who's worked with pop artists including Pink, Carly Rae Jepsen and Britney Spears, produces and writes across the project, which employs engaging but synth-heavy beats across the tracks.

### Lyrics

On album opener "Weather For Tennis," Duff contemplates arguments. The lyrics, simple but multisyllabic tongue-twisters like, "You calling me bats--- / The fastest antibiotic for thinking / You're different this time," don't feel far off, spiritually, from the zingers of her earlier radio hits. Muffled drums give "Holiday Party," about a partner's imagined affair, a darker clubby beat, while booming drums and claps make "Future Tripping," about needing a partner's grounding abilities, bubbly. Laughs and dialogue layered into the track put the listener in the room with Duff, to a charming effect. But "Tell Me That Won't Happen" has a too-similar conceit, the pace steady while the lyrics spiral through more worries: "Are we 80 years proof? Are we really immune? Will I want something new? Will you want something new?"

Still, the tracks are accessible and catchy, the lyrics reliant on simple vocabulary that makes them feel like gossip or worries shared among friends (see Duff's ode to chosen family, "Growing Up"). That closeness, built by fans' nostalgia and Duff's accessible, laid-back, adult persona, is her not-so-secret weapon. Onstage this winter, Duff mimicked a dance that went viral after a 2007 performance of her song "With Love," pulling fans up to dance with her. Winking at that past, probably more self-conscious version of her pop star self, she acknowledges that she's grown - without distancing the fans that grew up with her. That self-awareness can make even the cheesiest of lyrics - "Your kinda freak matched my kinda freak" or "Do I nail you to a cross on some bogus s---" - endearing.

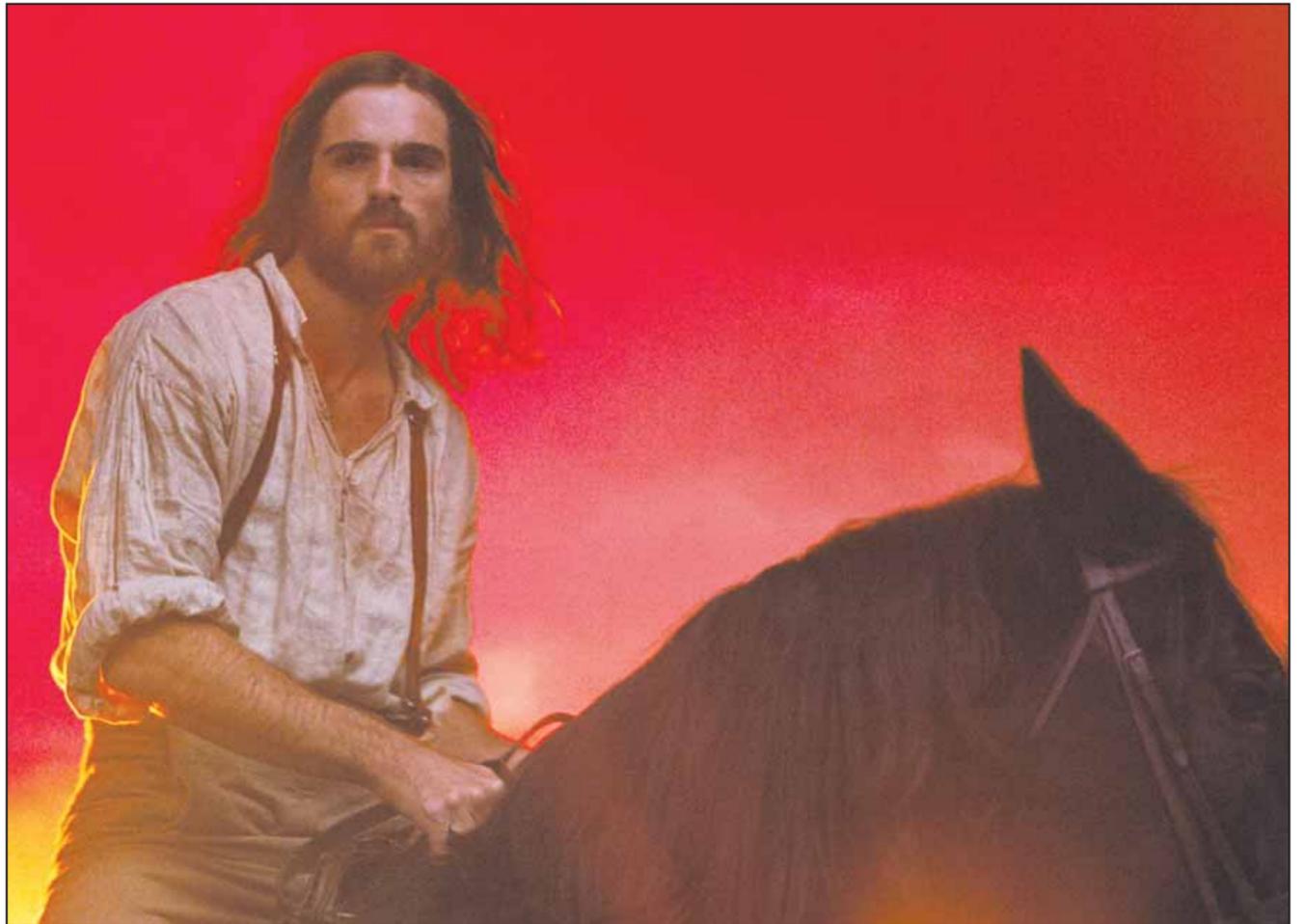
"The Optimist" takes a turn sonically, describing Duff's relationship with her father. Duff sings in a higher and softer register, while a lap steel adds a country lilt to the track. It's a needed tonal change on the record - and a reminder that Duff is still chameleonic, like Disney and her earliest record deals trained her to be - but the sound and lyrical vocabulary feels copy-pasted from the likes of Kacey Musgraves, instead of singularly Duff.

On "You, From The Honeymoon," Duff remembers being 23: "At 23 in Rockaway Beach / Too young to be too existential." Fifteen years later, existential pop is in. And despite the anxieties, fraught memories and tested relationships she's writing about, Duff is clearly having fun making it.



This album cover image released by Atlantic Records shows 'Luck... or Something' by Hilary Duff. (AP)

## Film



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

## Fennell's adaptation praised for working on its own terms

# Scholars back liberties in 'Wuthering Heights' film

NEW YORK, Feb 22, (AP): If you're looking for someone to debate the new "Wuthering Heights" movie with, you might want to start with Lucasta Miller. She's a British author, editor and critic who has published an acclaimed study of the Brontë sisters and wrote the preface for the Penguin Classics edition of "Wuthering Heights."

When she had the chance to see Emerald Fennell's adaptation of the Emily Brontë novel last week, she was well aware of the liberties taken by the director, but was otherwise unbothered.

"It would be meaningless to criticize it for that, just as it would be to criticize a grand opera that plays fast and loose with the plot," Miller says. "I wasn't asking for a faithful adaptation of 'Wuthering Heights,' but whether it works on its own terms. And my sense is that it does."

Fennell's "Wuthering Heights" was the box office leader last weekend, bringing in more than \$34 million in North America alone, despite mostly negative reviews that found the movie both overdone and unsatisfying. Even before its release, Brontë obsessives questioned some of Fennell's choices: casting Jacob Elordi as Heathcliff instead of a dark-skinned actor closer to how Brontë described the character; making explicit the sexual attraction between Heathcliff and Cathy that is suppressed in the book; having the famously dark-haired Cathy, her coloring a literary signpost for danger and allure, played by the blond Margot Robbie.

"All adaptations choices in terms of casting that don't always fit character or character descriptions - and this film has certainly been in the spotlight for that reason," says Brontë scholar Claire O'Callaghan, a senior lecturer

at Loughborough University in Leicestershire, England. "In terms of Cathy, I was skeptical initially, but having seen the film, it is a good performance, and Margot Robbie really brings out Cathy's spoiled and selfish nature in ways that other adaptations have paid less attention to."

Authors have long lamented the fates of their books once filmmakers acquire rights. But countless adaptations have served as showcases for artful crystallization, or innovative license. "The Godfather" movies are widely regarded as superior to the original Mario Puzo novel, and differ notably from the book, even with Puzo assisting on the screenplays. Billy Wilder's film version of the James M. Cain thriller "Double Indemnity" had the main protagonist, played by Fred MacMurray, tell his story through a dictation machine, a twist that Cain himself thought so ingenious he wished he had used it in the book.

Among current Oscar contenders, Paul Thomas Anderson's "One Battle After Another" is the loosest of takes on Thomas Pynchon's "Vineland," while Chloë Zhao's "Hamnet" departs from the Maggie O'Farrell novel of the same name in various ways common to adaptations, from compressing characters to altering the narrative structure. O'Farrell, who helped write the screenplay, has said her collaboration with Zhao was an education in how to condense a story for film.

"You know, the book is mine, it's my baby, but the film is Chloë's adaptation," she told The Associated Press in December. "And the film feels not like my child, more like a kind of niece or nephew. And that's exactly as it should be." "Wuthering Heights" fans are likely to care much

more about fidelity to the novel than would the average reader of "The Godfather." But as O'Callaghan and other Brontë experts note, you'd need a multi-hour streaming series to faithfully replicate the 1847 book, which runs some 400 pages and has a timeline extending beyond the lives of Cathy and Heathcliff. The best known versions, including Fennell's and the 1939 movie starring Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon, essentially eliminate the second half of the book.

"Some TV versions have attempted to capture the whole book, as have some films, like the 1992 adaptation (starring Ralph Fiennes and Juliette Binoche)," O'Callaghan says. "But what film and TV can't do is maintain the ambiguity in Emily's novel - the fact that her book is both a tragic love story and a revenge novel and a tragedy. Film and TV tend to focus on one of those for clarity and to focus dramatic tension."

Fennell told the AP during a recent interview that she was inspired by her early memories of the novel, how she responded to it as a teenager: "There are things I have added for my own needs, because I loved the book so much and I always desperately needed some kind of sense for it to go a little further," she said.

Miller likened the movie to a fairy tale, "stylized and extravagant," and thought Fennell "quite insightful about using the language of fairy tales." O'Callaghan found it "quite Tim Burton-esque in its surreal perspective."

"It radically departs from the book, but I still found it entertaining even if I'm unsure if I'd claim to like it," she says.

**LOS ANGELES:** The Oscars are reuniting last year's acting winners for next month's ceremony.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced Thursday that best actor winners Adrien Brody and Mikey Madison and supporting actor winners Kieran Culkin and Zoe Saldana will present trophies at the 98th annual Academy Awards.

The actors are the first presenters announced for the March 15 ceremony, which will be hosted by Conan O'Brien. The show will air live on ABC beginning at 7 p.m. Eastern/4 p.m. Pacific.

Last year's show saw Saldana, Madison and Culkin become first-time Oscar winners. Brody won his second best actor trophy, for his role in "The Brutalist."

"Sinners" is this year's leading nominee, breaking the record for most nominations by a single film with 16.

The Oscars frequently have the previous year's winners present Oscar trophies in the acting categories.

This year's nominees for best actress are Jessie Buckley for "Hamnet," Rose Byrne for "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You," Renate Reinsve for "Sentimental Value," Emma Stone for "Bugonia" and Kate Hudson for "Song Sung Blue." (AP)

## Variety

**LOS ANGELES:** Authorities in Ohio have arrested a former contestant on "American Idol" and charged him with shooting and killing his wife and staging the crime scene to mislead investigators.

Caleb Flynn, 39, pleaded not guilty Friday to charges of murder, assault and tampering with evidence.

"I just want to take care of my daughters. I'm not a risk," he told Judge Samuel Huffman in a video of his arraignment on jail.

The judge set his bond at \$2 million.

Ashley Flynn, 37, was found dead Monday after officers received a report of a burglary and shooting at a Tipp City home, according to a news release by Tipp City Police. Her husband and two children were inside the home when officers arrived.



Flynn

In a 911 call released by authorities, a frantic Caleb Flynn tells a dispatcher someone broke into his home and killed his wife. He says she was shot multiple times in the head and he doesn't know whether the intruder was still there.

"There's blood everywhere, oh my god, oh my god, oh my god," he says.

His attorney, Patrick Mulligan, said in a statement on Saturday he and Flynn were "disappointed and concerned about the short timeline and seeming rush to judgment in this case." Police arrested Flynn on Thursday.

"When the government runs out of leads or can't develop leads and looks at a surviving spouse in cases such as these, the chance of a wrongful conviction increases," the statement said.

Tipp City Police Chief Greg Adkins defended the investigation, saying in an email on Saturday that it had "not moved fast."

"Rather, it has progressed at a pace dictated by a thorough and deliberate investigative process," he said.

Ashley Flynn was a middle school volleyball coach and substitute teacher, Tipp City Schools said on its Facebook page. (AP)

## Indian PM highlights MANAV framework for ethical AI governance

## AI Impact Summit 2026: Shaping a human-centric future for AI

By Narendra Modi  
Prime Minister of India



Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

At a defining moment in human history, the world gathered at the AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi. For us in India, it was a moment of immense pride and joy to welcome Heads of State, Heads of Government, delegates and innovators from across the world.

India brings scale and energy to everything it does and this Summit was no exception. Representatives from over 100 nations came together. Innovators showcased cutting-edge AI products and services. Thousands of young people could be seen in the exhibition halls, asking questions and imagining possibilities. Their curiosity made this the largest and most democratized AI summit in the world. I see this as an important moment in India's development journey, because a mass movement for AI innovation and adoption has truly taken off.

Human history has witnessed many technological shifts that changed the course of civilisation. Artificial Intelligence belongs in the same league as fire, writing, electricity and the internet. But with AI, changes that once took decades can unfold within weeks and impact the entire planet.

AI is making machines intelligent, but it is even more a force multiplier for human intent. Making AI human-centric instead of machine-centric is vital. At this Summit, we placed human well-being at the heart of the global AI conversation, with the principle of 'Sarvajana Hitaya, Sarvajana Sukhaya' (Welfare for All, Happiness for All).

I have always believed that technology must serve people, not the other way around. Whether it is digital payments through UPI or COVID vaccination, we have ensured that Digital Public Infrastructure reaches every-

one, leaving none behind. I could see the same spirit in the Summit, in the work of our innovators in domains like agriculture, security, assistance for Divyangjan and tools for multilingual populations.

There are already examples of the empowering potential of AI in India. Recently, 'Sarlaben', an AI powered digital assistant launched by Indian dairy cooperative AMUL, is providing real-time guidance to 3.6 million dairy farmers, mostly women, about cattle health and productivity in their own language. Similarly, an AI-based platform called Bharat VISTAAR gives multilingual inputs to farmers, empowering them with information about everything from weather to market prices.

Humans must never become mere data points or raw material for machines. Instead, AI must become a tool for global good, opening new doors of progress for the Global South. To translate this vision into action, India presented the MANAV framework for human-centric AI governance.

M – Moral and Ethical Systems: AI should be based on ethical guidelines.

A – Accountable Governance: Transparent rules and robust oversight.

N – National Sovereignty: Respect for national rights over data.

A – Accessible and Inclusive: AI should not be a monopoly.

V – Valid and Legitimate: AI must adhere to laws and be verifiable.

MANAV, which means 'human', offers principles that anchor AI in human values in the 21st century.

Trust is the foundation upon which AI's future rests. As generative systems flood the world with content, democratic societies face risks from deepfakes and disinformation. Just as food carries nutrition labels, digital content must carry authenticity labels. I urge the global community to come together to create shared standards for watermarking and source verification. India has already taken a step in this direction by legally requiring clear labelling of synthetically generated content.

The welfare of our children is a matter close to our hearts. AI systems must be built with safeguards that encourage responsible, family-guided engagement, reflecting the same care we bring to education systems worldwide.

Technology yields its greatest benefit when shared, rather than guarded as a strategic asset. Open platforms can help millions of youth contribute to making technology

safer and more human-centric. This collective intelligence is humanity's greatest strength. AI must evolve as a global common good.

We are entering an era where humans and intelligent systems will co-create, co-work and co-evolve. Entirely new professions will emerge. When the internet began, no one could imagine the possibilities. It ended up creating a huge number of new opportunities and so will AI.

I am confident that our empowered youth will be the true drivers of the AI age. We are encouraging skilling, reskilling and lifelong learning by running some of the largest and most diverse skilling programmes in the world.

India is home to one of the world's largest youth populations and technology talent. With our energy capacity and policy clarity, we are uniquely positioned to harness AI's full potential. At this Summit, I was proud to see Indian companies launch indigenous AI models and applications, reflecting the technological depth of our young innovation community.

To fuel the growth of our AI ecosystem, we are building a robust infrastructure foundation. Under the India AI Mission, we have deployed thousands of GPUs and are set to deploy more soon. By accessing world-class computing power at highly affordable rates, even the smallest startups can become global players. Further, we have established a national AI Repository, democratising access to datasets and AI models. From semiconductors and data infrastructure to vibrant startups and applied research, we are focusing on the complete value chain.

India's diversity, democracy and demographic dynamism provide the right atmosphere for inclusive innovation. Solutions that succeed in India can serve humanity everywhere. That is why our invitation to the world is: Design and develop in India. Deliver to the world. Deliver to humanity.

## Stage

Ukrainian veterans find healing through theater

## Wounded veterans turn war scars into art

KYIV, Ukraine, Feb 22, (AP): Sitting in a circle the day before opening night, Ukrainian war veterans and drama students took turns reading their lines from a script that traveled centuries to reach them.

At the center was Olha Semioshina, directing the group through her adaptation of "Eneida" by Ivan Kotliarevskyi - an 18th-century Ukrainian reimagining of Virgil's "Aeneid." This production, though, had a modern-day message about resilience in the face of the war that's nearing its fourth year since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The actors - men and women in their 20s to 60s - included Ukrainian military veterans who had returned from the front with amputations, severe burns and sight loss. Others had endured war on the homefront. Many had never set foot on a stage before this play. It took more than a year to prepare for Thursday's premiere at Kyiv's National Academic Molodoy Theatre.

"We knew the guys had just come back from rehabilitation, and we had to start from the very beginning," Semioshina said.

"We spent about four months simply learning to communicate, to fall, to group, to roll, to get together," she said. "Then we began developing the body, taking off prosthetics and learning to exist without them."

The 51-year-old director's concept was simple: "Every man on stage is Aeneas. Every woman on stage is Dido."

In Virgil's epic, Aeneas wanders after the fall of Troy, searching for a new homeland. In Kotliarevskyi's satirical adaptation, the Trojan hero becomes a Cossack, rowdy and earthy.

On Kyiv's stage, Aeneas wears prosthetic limbs and bears scars from the war that began with Russia's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine.

"Aeneas is a hero who goes through a lot in search for his land," Semioshina said. "He preserves humor, passion, he falls, he goes through horrors, drinks and parties. But he is a human, and he has a goal - to find his place and preserve his family."

She draws parallels between the veterans who endured combat and the character they play on stage. "Aeneas is the one who went to war. Yes, he returned mutilated, broken," she said, but the actors bringing this adaptation to life "are learning to live" again.

During rehearsal, Yehor Babenko, a veteran of Ukraine's Border Service who suffered severe burns early in the Russian invasion, delivered a line with a grin: "Feeling burned out at work? We have a lot in common."

Later in the play, his monologue also hit close to home as he spoke about fire taking his hands, ears and nose. "I won't be able to show children a trick with a missing finger," he says. "Maybe the one when all 10 fingers



Ukrainian war veterans, many of whom sustained severe injuries in combat during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, perform during a premiere on Thursday, Feb. 19, in Kyiv, Ukraine. (AP)



Left: Ukrainian war veterans perform. Right: Andrii Onopriienko, who lost his eyesight in combat during Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine, performs during the premiere of an adaptation of Ivan Kotliarevskyi's "Eneida," a Ukrainian reimagining of Virgil's "Aeneid," in Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday, Feb. 19. (AP)

disappear."

The opportunity to perform onstage, Babenko said, has been a healing journey.

"For me, theater is both psychological and physical rehabilitation. I've noticed I feel my body better, feel more confident in public, express my thoughts better."

For Babenko, the story of Aeneas resonates beyond the stage. "It's about searching for your land," he said. "And for our country, that's very relevant now."

The play's final act departed from epic poetry altogether as the actors stepped forward to tell their own stories - about combat injuries, lost brothers in arms, displacement and life under occupation.

One veteran described losing his leg in a drone strike and using a machine gun as a crutch to reach cover. A female actor recounted living under Russian occupation with her two daughters.

Another, who volunteered as a medic, first in 2014 when Russia illegally annexed Crimea and pro-Russian forces captured parts of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and again after the 2022 Russian invasion, spoke of returning to war in her 60s.

Andrii Onopriienko, who lost his sight in a Russian artillery strike near Avdiivka, in the Donetsk region, in 2023, narrated much of the performance in a deep, resonant voice. At one point he sang: "Let our enemies dig up holes, install crosses, and lie

down on their own," as the rest of the cast joined in.

Onopriienko initially refused to join the project. "I didn't understand what I would do on stage blind," he said. He later was persuaded that there would be a role for him.

"It's positivity, laughter, support," he said of rehearsals. "No matter what mood you come in, you leave with a big smile; Here you distract yourself from the present. You enter another world."

Onstage, prosthetic legs and arms were removed and put back on as part of the play's visual language. Long metal rods doubled as swords, oars and crutches - used as both an artistic instrument and a tool to help actors with amputations keep balance.

## Technology

Tech tools help you unplug

## Even adults get caught in the social media trap

NEW YORK, Feb 22, (AP): Social media addiction has been compared to casinos, opioids and cigarettes.

While there's some debate among experts about the line between overuse and addiction, and whether social media can cause the latter, there is no doubt that many people feel like they can't escape the pull of Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and other platforms.

The companies that designed your favorite apps have an incentive to keep you glued to them so they can serve up ads that make them billions of dollars in revenue. Resisting the pull of the endless scroll, the dopamine hits from short-form videos and the ego boost and validation that come from likes and positive interactions, can seem like an unfair fight. For some people, "rage-bait," gloomy news and arguing with internet strangers also have an irresistible draw.

Much of the concern around social media addiction has focused on children. But adults are also susceptible to using social media so much that it starts affecting their day-to-day lives.

Dr. Anna Lembke, a psychiatrist and the medical director of addiction medicine at Stanford University's School of Medicine, defines addiction as "the continued compulsive use of a substance or behavior despite harm to self or others."

During her testimony at a landmark social media harms trial in Los Angeles, Lembke said that what makes social media platforms so addictive is the "24/7, really limitless, frictionless access" people have to them.

Some researchers question whether addiction is the appropriate term to describe heavy use of social media, arguing that a person must be experiencing identifiable symptoms. These include strong, sometimes uncontrollable urges and withdrawal to qualify as addiction.

## Addiction

Social media addiction is not recognized as an official disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, which is the standard reference psychiatrists and other mental health practitioners use to assess and treat patients. That's partly because there is no widespread consensus on what constitutes social media addiction and whether underlying mental health issues contribute to problematic use.

But just because there is no official agreement on the issue doesn't mean excessive social media use can't be harmful, some experts say.

"For me, the biggest signpost is how does the person feel about the 'amount,' and how viewing it makes them feel," said Dr. Laurel Williams, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Baylor College of Medicine. "If what they discover is they view it so much that they are missing out on other things they may enjoy or things that they need to attend to, this is problematic use. Additionally, if you leave feeling overwhelmed, drained, sad, anxious, angry regularly, this use is not good for you."

In other words, is your use of social media affecting other parts of your life? Are you putting off chores, work, hobbies or time with friends and family? Have you tried to cut back your time but realized you were unable to? Do you feel bad about your social media use?

Ofir Turel, a professor of infor-

mation systems management at the University of Melbourne who has studied social media use for years, said there was "no agreement" over the term social media addiction, and he doesn't "expect agreement soon."

"It's obvious that we have an issue," Turel said. "You don't have to call it an addiction, but there is an issue and we need, as a society, to start thinking about it."

Before setting limits on scrolling, it's helpful to understand how social media feeds and advertising work to draw in users, Williams said.

"Think of social media as a company trying to get you to stay with them and buy something - have the mindset that this is information that I don't need to act on and may not be true," she added. "Get alternate sources of information. Always understand the more you see something, anyone can start to believe it is true."

## Notifications

Ian A. Anderson, a postdoctoral scholar at California Institute of Technology, suggests making small, meaningful changes to stop you from opening your social media app of choice. Moving the app's place on your phone or turning off notifications are "light touch interventions," but more involved options, like not bringing your phone into the bedroom or other places where you tend to use it, could also help, Anderson said.

Tech tools can also help to cut back on tech overuse. Both iPhones and Android devices have onboard controls to help regulate screen time. Apple's Screen Time controls are found in the iPhone's settings menu. Users can set overall Downtime, which shuts off all phone activity during a set period of their choice.

The controls also let users put a blanket restriction on certain categories of apps, such as social, games or entertainment or zero in on a specific app, by limiting the time that can be spent on it.

The downside is that the limits aren't hard to get around. It's more of a nudge than a red line that you can't cross. If you try to open an app with a limit, you'll get a screen menu offering one more minute, a reminder after 15 minutes, or to completely ignore it.

If a light touch isn't working, more drastic steps might be necessary. Some users swear by turning their phones to gray-scale to make it less appealing to dopamine-seeking brains. On iPhones, adjust the color filter in your settings. For Android, turn on Bedtime Mode or tweak the color correction setting. Downgrading to a simpler phone, such as an old-school flip phone, could also help curb social media compulsions.

Some startups, figuring that people might prefer a tangible barrier, offer hardware solutions that introduce physical friction between you and an app. Unplug, for instance, is a yellow tag that you have to hold up to your phone in order to access blocked apps. Brick and Blok are two different products that work along the same lines - they're squarish pieces of plastic that you have to tap or scan with your phone to unlock an app.

If that's not enough of an obstacle, you could stash away your phone entirely. There are various phone lockboxes and cases available, some of them designed so parents can lock up their teenagers' phones when they're supposed to be sleeping, but there's no rule that says only teenagers can use them.

## A voice of New York's Latin sound

## Willie Colón, architect of urban salsa music, dies at 75

LOS ANGELES, Feb 22, (AP): Willie Colón, the Grammy-nominated architect of urban salsa music and social activist, died Saturday. He was 75.

Over his decades-long career, the trombonist, composer, arranger and singer produced more than 40 albums that sold more than 30 million copies worldwide. He collaborated with a wide range of artists, including the Fania All Stars, David Byrne and Celia Cruz.

His celebrated collaboration with Rubén Blades, "Siembra," became one of the bestselling salsa albums of all time, and the pair were known for addressing social issues through the genre.

Colón's family and manager confirmed his death through social media posts.

"Willie didn't just change salsa; he expanded it, politicized it, clothed it in urban chronicles, and took it to stages where it hadn't been heard before," manager Pietro Carlos wrote. "His trombone was the voice of the people, an echo of the Caribbean in New York, a bridge between two cultures."



Singer and musician Willie Colon performs at The Climate Rally, an Earth Day concert, on the National Mall in Washington, April 25, 2010. (AP)

Colón, who was nominated for 10 Grammys and one Latin Grammy, made famous songs such as "El gran varón," "Sin poderte hablar," "Casanova," "Amor verdad" and "Oh, qué será."

Blades said on the social platform X that he confirmed "what I was reluctant to believe" and offered his condolences to Colón's family.

Born in New York's Bronx borough, Colón was raised by his grandmother and aunt, who from a young age nurtured him with traditional Puerto Rican music and the typical rhythms of the Latin American repertoire, including Cuban son and tango.

At age 11 he ventured into the world of music, first with flute, then bugle, trumpet and finally trombone, with which he stood out in the then-nascent genre of salsa.

His interest in trombone arose after hearing Barry Rogers playing it on "Dolores," Mon Rivera's song with Joe Cotto.

"It sounded like an elephant, a lion ... an animal. Something so different that, as soon as I heard it, I said to myself: 'I want to play that instrument,'" he recalled in an interview published in the Colombian newspaper El Tiempo in 2011.

## Earliest Artemis II moon flight now set for April

## NASA delays astronaut moon mission again after new rocket problem

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Feb. 22, (AP) — In the latest setback to return astronauts to the moon, NASA delayed the highly anticipated flight yet again after a new problem cropped up with the rocket Saturday.

April is now the earliest that the four Artemis II astronauts could fly to the moon.

NASA revealed the latest problem just one day after targeting March 6 for Artemis II, humanity's first flight to the moon in more than half a century. Overnight, the flow of helium to the rocket's upper stage was interrupted, officials said. Solid helium flow is essential for purging the engines and pressurizing the fuel tanks.

This helium issue has nothing to



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

do with the hydrogen fuel leaks that marred a countdown dress rehearsal of the Space Launch System rocket earlier this month and forced a repeat test.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said a bad filter, valve or connection plate could be to blame for the stalled helium flow. Regardless of the cause, he said, the only way to access the area and fix the problem is to return the 322-foot (98-meter) rocket to its hangar for repairs.

"We will begin preparations for rollback, and this will take the March launch window out of consideration," Isaacman said via X. NASA's next opportunities would be at the beginning or end of April.

"I understand people are disap-

pointed by this development," he added. "That disappointment is felt most by the team at NASA, who have been working tirelessly to prepare for this great endeavor."

Earlier in the day, NASA said it was preparing to move the rocket back to the Vehicle Assembly Building at Kennedy Space Center while raising the possibility of the work being done at the pad.

The situation is dynamic, said spokeswoman Cheryl Warner. Whether the fixes are at the pad or in the hangar, the rollback preparations alone rule out any chance of making a March launch, she said.

Hydrogen fuel leaks had already delayed the Artemis II lunar fly-

around by a month. A second fueling test on Thursday revealed hardly any leaks, giving managers the confidence to aim for a March liftoff. The four astronauts went into their two-week quarantine Friday evening, mandatory for avoiding germs.

Everything worked fine with the rocket's helium system during both dress rehearsals, Isaacman said. The "unexpected development" cropped up later in routine testing that kept engineers up all night assessing the situation.

The interrupted helium flow is confined to the SLS rocket's interim cryogenic propulsion stage. This upper stage is essential for placing the Orion crew capsule into the proper

high-altitude orbit around Earth for checkout, following liftoff. After that, it's supposed to separate from Orion and serve as a target for the astronauts inside the capsule, allowing them to practice docking techniques for future moon missions.

During NASA's Apollo program, 24 astronauts flew to the moon from 1968 through 1972. The new Artemis program has completed only one flight so far, a lunar-orbiting mission without a crew in 2022. That first test flight was also plagued by hydrogen fuel leaks before blasting off, as well as a helium issue similar to the one that arose Saturday. The first moon landing with a crew under Artemis is still at least a few years away.

## Jordan sees 5% rise in inbound patients

## Jordan cements role as regional hub in medical, natural therapy tourism

AMMAN, Feb. 22, (Xinhua) — Jordan is reinforcing its standing as a leading destination for medical and natural therapeutic tourism in the Middle East, attracting more patients from across the region with advanced healthcare services and unique natural healing resources.

Official data showed that Jordan received more than 235,000 inbound patients in 2025, up 5 percent year-on-year, which demonstrates rising regional confidence in Jordan's healthcare sector.

Ali Farhan Mohammed, an Iraqi patient from Baghdad province, told Xinhua that his family's connection with Jordan's medical sector began in 2009, when his nephew was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

"Several doctors in Baghdad advised us to consult a specialist in Amman," Mohammed said. "We found high efficiency, expertise and strong patient care in Jordan, and my nephew fully recovered."

The family returned to Jordan years later when Mohammed's sister was diagnosed with a serious illness and underwent surgery and chemotherapy in the kingdom, with what Mohammed described as "positive and reassuring" results.

About a month and a half ago, Mohammed developed a kidney problem and once again chose Jordan for treatment. He spent around 20 days in the country receiving medical care.

Mohammed said Jordan's high medical standards provided psychological comfort throughout the treatment process.

Similar confidence was expressed by Wijdan Adel Al Shaibani, a Libyan doctor accompanying a cancer patient. After conducting extensive research into specialized treatment destinations, she said Jordan stood out for its medical

excellence and advanced regional reputation.

She described the medical follow-up as comprehensive, covering both therapeutic and humanitarian aspects, with positive treatment outcomes.

Fawzi Al-Hammouri, chairman of the Private Hospitals Association in Jordan, said the country holds a leading position in the Middle East and North Africa as a medical tourism destination, supported by advanced healthcare infrastructure and competitive pricing.

He noted that the majority of inbound patients visiting Jordan for treatment are from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Yemen and Libya.

Jordan offers complex procedures including adult and pediatric cardiac surgeries, cancer treatment, organ transplants and robotic surgery in line with international standards, Al-Hammouri said.

"Patients do not face long waiting periods for diagnosis or surgery, enabling faster access to care," he added.

Jordan currently has 71 private hospitals with a total capacity of around 6,000 beds. Direct investment in the private hospital sector exceeds 4 billion Jordanian dinars (about 5.6 billion U.S. dollars), employing around 40,000 people directly and nearly 60,000 in supporting sectors, Al-Hammouri said.

Medical tourism has become a key pillar of Jordan's economy, generating over 1.4 billion dollars annually and contributing approximately 3.5 percent to its gross domestic product, he added, noting that in June 2023, the World Tourism Organization officially recognized and designated Jordan as a regional hub for medical and wellness tourism.

## Authorities hope new HIV drug slows infections

## A long-acting HIV drug arrives in Zimbabwe for some at highest risk

HARARE, Zimbabwe, Feb. 22, (AP) — Young women, mothers holding babies and some men lined up in a dusty field on the outskirts of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. They came for injections of a new HIV prevention drug launched in the country on Thursday, one that only needs to be administered twice a year.

Zimbabwe, where HIV has led to tens of thousands of deaths over the past two decades, is one of the first countries to roll out lenacapavir, a long-acting drug that authorities hope will slow new infections.

With clinical studies demonstrating near-total protection, the drug has been described by some health officials as a turning point for high-risk groups. Others warn that turning scientific promise into broad impact will require overcoming funding constraints, infrastructure gaps and the challenge of keeping patients engaged.

At the Zimbabwe launch, Constance Mukoloka stepped out of a mobile clinic, beaming with relief after receiving one of the first doses.

"I am safe. I can work with confidence now," said the 27-year-old sex worker, describing how daily preventive preexposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, pills often created tension with clients and proved difficult to take consistently - putting her and others at risk.

Mukoloka is among the first beneficiaries of a donor-supported rollout of lenacapavir across 10 African countries. Health officials and advocates say the drug could reshape HIV prevention strategies if governments can navigate barriers of cost and fragile health systems.

Developed by California-based Gilead Sciences, lenacapavir's introduction in selected high-risk countries is being supported through the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, in partnership with the Global Fund.

The injection is offered for free in



A nurse holds a vial of lenacapavir, a new HIV prevention drug, in Harare, Zimbabwe, Thursday, Feb. 19. (AP)

Zimbabwe to high-risk people such as sex workers, adolescent girls and young women, gay men and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

For Mukoloka, the drug represents more than convenience.

"When I took tablets, customers would see a container of pills and leave. They would never return due to fear," she said. "They couldn't tell the difference between PrEP and treatment drugs. With the work we do, that stigma costs you money."

Daily oral PrEP has long been available in Zimbabwe alongside condoms, vaginal rings and shorter-acting injectables. Yet adherence has remained a challenge, particularly for people facing stigma or unpredictable schedules.

"I work in beer halls looking for clients. Sometimes I would get drunk and forget to take my drugs," Mukoloka said. "Sometimes I would work all night and not have time. Some clients refuse protection. They say ... 'Why

should I use protection when I have paid?'"

Health authorities see lenacapavir's discreetness and extended duration as a critical advantage for key populations such as sex workers and therefore a boost in fighting the spread of HIV.

"Prevention must fit into real life. If a health solution is too complicated, too demanding, or too visible, people simply won't use it," Douglas Mombeshora, Zimbabwe's health minister, said at Thursday's launch. "Lenacapavir represents a new way of doing things."

The drug has been rolled out in other southern African nations like Zambia and Eswatini.

Zimbabwe, Eswatini and Zambia, once global HIV epicenters, have emerged in recent years as among the world's most successful models in controlling the epidemic, achieving World Health Organization testing, treatment and viral suppression targets.

## Bird flu

## Cyprus clamps down on FMD

NICOSIA, Feb. 22, (Xinhua) — Authorities in southeastern Cyprus have imposed strict quarantine across parts of Larnaca district to contain a foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak, the Cyprus Mail reported on Saturday.

The outbreak is centered in the village of Oroklini, about 6 km northeast of Larnaca city, with linked cases reported in nearby Livadia. Veterinary authorities in the government-controlled areas of Cyprus confirmed on Friday the first case of FMD at a cow-breeding unit in Livadia.

The veterinary services confirmed two large sheep and goat units in Oroklini as the epicenter, indicating that the virus has been present for at least two weeks. Around 300 livestock at the Livadia farm are being culled under sanitary protocols, and farm products, including milk and meat, have been seized. Any new positive case within the three-kilometre protection zone would trigger culling of all animals on the affected premises.

Twenty-three livestock holdings in the containment area are under daily inspection. Authorities have tightly controlled animal movements, blocked roads, disinfected vehicles, and strengthened police patrols.

Authorities are mobilizing veterinarians from other districts and the private sectors while investigating possible transmission routes, including animal feed. Restrictions could be lifted after 21 days if no new cases emerge.

Meanwhile, Namibia's government will continue to provide the policy, veterinary and regulatory support needed to secure the recovery of the red meat industry, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform Inge Zaamwani said on Friday.

The minister signaled a cautious optimism for the nation's red meat industry, citing measurable progress in the financial stability and governance of the ministry's strategic export partner, the Meat Corporation of Namibia (Meatco).

Meatco recently reported a profit of 106 million Namibian dollars (about 6.5 million US dollars) for the year ended Jan. 31, 2025, following five consecutive years of losses from 2020 to 2024.

**Bird flu:** The prefectural government of Iwate, northeastern Japan, has confirmed an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza at a poultry farm, local media reported Saturday.

The farm in the town of Kanegasaki reported to a livestock hygiene service center on Friday morning that an unusual increase in bird deaths had been observed, Jiji Press reported, citing local authorities.

A simple test returned positive results, and subsequent genetic examinations later confirmed the infection, the report said.

About 560,000 egg-laying hens at the affected farm will be culled to prevent further spread of the virus, it added. This is this season's 20th outbreak of avian influenza at a poultry farm nationwide and the first confirmed case in Iwate.

## Safer RA treatment

## Novel drug shows promise against sepsis and arthritis

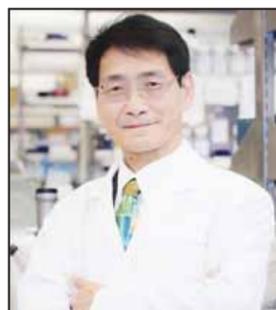
MANHASSET, New York, Feb. 22, (AP) — Scientists at Northwell Health's Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research have unveiled a novel drug discovery strategy that transforms a previously identified "detrimental" immune element into a potent therapeutic for both sepsis and rheumatoid arthritis (RA). The research, published recently in Military Medical Research and led by Haichao Wang, PhD, professor in the Institute of Translational Research at the Feinstein Institutes, demonstrates that a peptide called P2-1, derived from an antibody epitope, effectively targets a critical inflammatory pathway common to both serious and potentially life-threatening conditions.

Sepsis and RA are two distinct, but related inflammatory conditions commonly driven by the body's dysregulated, overactive immune responses and excessive cytokine/chemokine production. Sepsis, a life-threatening condition where the body's dysregulated response to infection damages its own tissues, accounts for nearly 20 percent of global deaths. Similarly, RA is a chronic autoimmune disease characterized by relentless inflammation and joint destruction. Despite extensive research, effective therapies for sepsis remain elusive, and existing RA treatments have limited efficacy and significant side effects.

Challenging conventional wisdom, the researchers pursued a counterintuitive hypothesis: that a specific epitope — the part of an antigen that the host's immune system sees as foreign, thereby prompting an immune and inflammatory response — derived from an anti-tetranectin antibody previously linked to worsening sepsis outcomes, could be reengineered into a targeted therapeutic for both conditions.

"Despite the significant challenges in translating sepsis research, our motivation is energized by its proven potential to drive therapeutic options for other inflammatory disorders like RA," said Dr. Wang. "This work is the culmination of over two decades of collaborative research, aiming to translate fundamental scientific insights into impactful clinical applications for these diseases, and others."

The research team's new strategy is based on what they learned from anti-TNF drugs. These are powerful medicines that block the activities of certain inflammatory proteins — what often



Dr. Haichao Wang leading the study. (AP)

cause painful swelling and inflammation in the body. While anti-TNF drugs don't work for severe blood infections like sepsis, they are a primary treatment for RA and ultimately help by changing how the disease causes inflammation, whether it's all over the body or just in specific spots.

The team discovered that a specific epitope can be developed to create a treatment that precisely targets only the bad, overactive inflammatory pathways, while leaving the body's helpful immune signals alone. This new treatment is "activated by disease," meaning it only starts working where the problem is. This characteristic makes it much safer than other medicines that broadly weaken the body's entire immune system.

"For decades Dr. Wang has been a leader in identifying molecular mediators of sepsis and systemic inflammation," said Kevin J. Tracey, MD, president and CEO of the Feinstein Institutes and Karches Family Distinguished Chair in Medical Research and co-author of the paper. "Historically, early insights into sepsis have fostered the development of new therapies for inflammation, something now that this new work may well accomplish."

Over the past decade, Dr. Wang, Dr. Tracey and Ping Wang, MD, chief scientific officer of the Feinstein Institutes and co-author of the paper, were each awarded the Scientific Achievement Award by the Shock Society, a leading organization of basic science and medical professionals dedicated to advancing the understanding of trauma, shock and sepsis.

## 'Emissions harm brain development, raise heart risk'

## US eases coal plant mercury limits

LOUISVILLE, Ky., Feb. 22, (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency on Friday weakened limits on mercury and other toxic emissions from coal-fired power plants, the Trump administration's latest effort to boost the fossil fuel industry by paring back clean air and water rules.

Toxic emissions from coal- and oil-fired plants can harm the brain development of young children and contribute to heart attacks and other problems in adults. The plants are also a major source of greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change. The EPA announced the repeal of the tightened Mercury and Air Toxics Standards rule, or MATS, at a massive coal plant next to the Ohio River in Louisville, Kentucky.

"EPA's actions today rights the wrongs of the last administration's rule and will return the industry to the highly effective original MATS standards that helped pave the way for American energy dominance," said EPA Deputy Administrator David Foutouhi. The agency said the change should save hundreds of millions of dollars.

The final rule reverts the industry to standards first established in 2012 by the Obama administration that have reduced mercury emissions by nearly 90%. The Biden administration had sought to tighten those standards even further after the first Trump administration had moved to undermine them.

Operators of the Mill Creek Generating Station gave agency officials a tour of the coal plant before hosting the announcement inside.

Coal-fired power plants are the largest single human source of mercury



The Jeffrey Energy Center coal-fired power plant operates near Emmett, Kan., Jan. 25, 2025. (AP)

pollutants. Power plants release the mercury into the atmosphere, which then falls in rain or simply by gravity, entering the food chain through fish and other items that people consume.

Environmental groups said the tightened rules have saved lives and made communities that live near coal-fired power plants healthier. But industry groups argued that the tougher standards, along with other rules that limited emissions from coal plants, made operating them too expensive.

They accused the Biden administration of piling on so many requirements that it would drive a rush of plant retirements.

"For too long, the entire coal supply chain has been the target of bad and onerous environmental regulations," said Michelle Bloodworth, CEO of America's Power, a coal industry group. "Repealing the 2024 MATS rule and today's actions are an important step for maintaining a reliable and affordable supply of electricity and ensuring that coal-based generation can continue supporting the nation's economy and the electric grid."

The coal industry's outlook has changed dramatically in the last year.

In March, the EPA promoted the "biggest deregulatory action in U.S. history," announcing their intention to peel back dozens of environmental protections. The Biden administration's focus on climate change was over - EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said the actions marked "the death of the 'green scam.'" Fossil fuel rules were big targets, including major efforts to reduce carbon emissions from coal plants and mandate greenhouse gas reporting. The Trump administration has also extended deadlines for dozens of coal-fired power plants to comply with certain Clean Air Act rules.

Beyond fewer environmental protections, the Trump administration has issued emergency orders halting the planned shutdown of several coal plants. Officials say the plants produce consistent power during major storms or at other times when need is high. Removing coal would reduce the grid's reliability, especially at time when a rush of new data centers is demanding more than ever from the grid, they say. Officials have dismissed concerns about higher customer costs from keeping coal plants operating, their plentiful emissions and their significant contribution to climate change.

And earlier this month, the EPA revoked a finding that climate change is a threat to public health, which has long been the basis for U.S. action to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Recently, President Donald Trump hosted a group of coal miners who honored him as the "Undisputed Champion of Beautiful, Clean Coal."

## Chinese researchers develop AI model to push deep-space exploration

BEIJING, Feb. 22, (Xinhua) — Chinese researchers have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) model for astronomical imaging that significantly enhances scientists' ability to peer into the deepest reaches of the cosmos.

A cross-disciplinary research team from Tsinghua University developed the model, named ASTERIS (Astronomical Spatiotemporal Enhancement and Reconstruction for Image Synthesis), using computational optics and AI algorithms.

According to the findings published on Friday in the journal Science, the model can help extract ex-

tremely faint astronomical signals, identify galaxies more than 13 billion light years away and generate the deepest deep-space images ever produced.

Exploring distant, faint celestial objects is crucial to understanding the origin and evolution of the universe. Yet astronomers face a major challenge. Weak signals from remote celestial objects are often obscured by background sky noise and thermal radiation from telescopes.

The study shows that applying the model's "self-supervised spatiotemporal denoising" technique to data from the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)

extends observational coverage from visible light at around 500 nanometers to the mid-infrared at 5 micrometers. It also increases the detection depth by 1.0 magnitude, effectively enabling the telescope to detect objects 2.5 times fainter than previously possible. Using the model, the team identified more than 160 candidate high-redshift galaxies from the "Cosmic Dawn" period, roughly 200 million to 500 million years after the Big Bang, tripling the number of discoveries using previous methods, according to Cai Zheng, associate professor at Tsinghua's Department of Astronomy and a member of the

research team.

Researchers said the AI model can decode massive volumes of space telescope data and is compatible with multiple observational platforms, giving it the potential to become a universal deep-space data enhancement platform.

Traditional noise-reduction techniques rely on stacking multiple exposures and assume noise is uniform or correlated. In reality, deep-space noise varies across both time and space. ASTERIS addresses this by reconstructing deep-space images as a 3D spatiotemporal volume.

## SPORTS

## Ireland stuns England to revive hopes

## Scotland rallies from 20-5 down to top Wales in dramatic Six Nations escape

CARDIFF, Wales, Feb 22, (AP): Scotland was spared embarrassment when it came from 20-5 down and scraped past Wales 26-23 in Six Nations rugby on Saturday.

Wales looked set for its first Six Nations victory in two years. But a riveting game turned on a schoolboy error by Wales, when it was caught napping by a quick Finn Russell restart and replacement winger Darcy Graham accepted a kind bounce to score. That cut Wales' lead to 23-19 in the 58th minute. "That was a big moment in the game and credit goes to Finn for seeing that space and Darcy being alive to it," Scotland coach Gregor Townsend told the BBC.

Scotland finally led for the first time in the 74th after replacement hooker George Turner scored their bonus-point fourth try from a lineout maul.

Russell's third conversion capped Scotland's fourth straight win over Wales for the first time in 99 years.

"That was some game," Townsend said. "We left it late but ... we're still in the championship. That's all that counts."

Scotland started as a 20-point favorite, albeit nervously. The Scots were coming off thrashing England at Murrayfield last weekend and they have not previously handled the emotional and physical toll of that well; they followed their eight previous England wins with six losses.

Wales was up for an ambush, masterminded by coach Steve Tandy, who was in charge of Scotland's defense for Townsend for six years until last September.

They felt a great opportunity was missed to end a Six Nations losing streak that has grown to 14 matches. After consecutive hidings from New Zealand, South Africa, England and France - the world's top four teams - Scotland was closer to their level and a rebuilding Wales responded to deserve a rare halftime lead of 17-5.

"We could have and should have won," Tandy told the BBC. "The thing we've talked about is better performances. If you take the result it's bitterly disappointing



Scotland's Kyle Steyn is tackled by Wales' Taine Plumtree during the Six Nations rugby union match between Wales and Scotland in Cardiff, Wales. (AP)

but ultimately we feel like we are getting to where we need to be."

Scotland prevailed with grit and, after two out of three wins, was the closest challenger to unbeaten France. They meet at Murrayfield in two weeks.

Wales got its game going thanks to bossing the gain line through forwards Rhys Carre, captain Dewi Lake, Aaron Wainwright and center Eddie James who, with Joe Hawkins, shut down Scotland midfielders Sione Tuipulotu and Huw Jones.

Despite Hawkins leaving on a yellow card for head contact on Gregor Brown, Wales scored the first try through Carre from a tapped penalty. But Hawkins' absence was exposed by Scotland when winger Kyle Steyn scored off Blair Kinghorn's pass.

With Hawkins back, Wales engineered a Josh Adams try followed by a Sam Costelow penalty for 17-5.

Wales was humming and Townsend reacted by pulling prop Nathan McBeth and lock Max Williamson.

In the second half, Wales replaced a tired Carre and Lake, and flyhalf Costelow, managing the game expertly in his first start under Tandy, limped off after his fourth straight goalkick.

Scotland desperation raised the intensity. After 27 phases, Russell scored and converted.

The rumors of Ireland's demise have been exaggerated.

Ireland revived its Six Nations title hopes and killed off England's after a shocking 42-21 blowout win at Twickenham.

The script was expected to go the other way. England had not lost at home since autumn 2024, and a fiery retort after losing to Scotland at Murrayfield last weekend was expected to celebrate captain Maro Itoje's 100th England cap. But England was flat and sloppy while Ireland harked back to the No. 1-ranked team from 2023; energetic, efficient and fearless. Having slipped to No. 5, the Irish beat a team ranked higher than themselves for the first time since July 2024.

And it was historic: Ireland's greatest win by score and margin at Twickenham with a bonus point from scoring five tries to three. All-time, England conceded its second most points at home.

## Russell retains crown

## Garcia beats Barrios by unanimous decision to win WBC welterweight title

LAS VEGAS, Feb 22, (AP): Ryan Garcia is an immensely talented boxer who has gone through his share of personal and professional turmoil in his young career, but at some point, his skills figured to put him on top.

That finally happened Saturday night in a clinic of a performance.

Garcia dominated Mario Barrios to win by unanimous decision and capture the WBC welterweight championship. The judges scored the fight 119-108, 120-107 and 118-109 for Garcia (25-2, 20 knockouts) of Victorville, California. The Associated Press had it 119-109.

"It feels good to finally be a world champion," Garcia said. "It's something I've been dreaming of since I was 7 years old."

Garcia already has begun to turn to his future, looking at WBO super lightweight champion Shakur Stevenson and saying he wanted him next.

This was the second underwhelming bout in a row for Barrios (29-3-2, 18 KOs) of San Antonio, who was fortunate to escape with a majority draw victory over Manny Pacquiao last July.

In the co-main event, Gary Antuane Russell (19-1, 17 KOs) of Capitol Heights, Maryland, retained his WBA super lightweight title with a unanimous decision over Japan's Andy Hiraoka (24-1, 19 KOs). The judges scored the fight 117-110, 116-111 and 116-111. Hiraoka was penalized a point in the 10th round for delivering a punch below the belt that caused a short stoppage.

Richardson Hitchens (20-0, 8 KOs) of New York was scheduled to defend his IBF super lightweight belt against Oscar Duarte (30-2-1, 23 KOs) of Mexico, but pulled out of the fight citing an illness. That bout was supposed to be the co-main event. There was no immediate word on whether Hitchens would forfeit his title for the late cancellation.

Garcia, a -250 favorite at BetMGM Sportsbook, went to work right away, knocking down Barrios with an overhand right just 30 seconds into the bout. He didn't recklessly try to finish off Barrios, however, patiently using combination to the champion's head. One such combo late in the third round briefly staggered Barrios.

"I was caught early with a punch I didn't see," Barrios said. "Other than that, he had the better game plan. He

fought very smart, very explosive, very intelligent. It was his night."

As Garcia kept picking his spots, the 30-year-old Barrios had no real answers to counter the attack. Barrios occasionally landed a right, but nothing seemed to slow down Garcia, who relied heavily on his right hand.

"I was working on my right hand pretty much the whole camp," Garcia said. "I literally didn't throw left hooks because I knew they were going to be preparing for the left hook. So it was common sense to kind of just keep firing that right hand."

Perhaps sensing his opponent might be in trouble, Garcia went hard after Barrios in the fifth round, attacking him from the opening bell. He delivered multiple shots to Barrios' head, but unlike that first-round knockdown, nothing sent him to the canvass. There was little doubt, though, which fighter was in charge.

Garcia even looked over at Barrios' corner in the 10th round, and the new champ acknowledged after the fight that he kept glancing at his former trainer, Joe Goossen.

Henry Garcia, the fighter's dad, returned as his trainer after Garcia worked under some others.

"I'm dedicated this fight to my father," Garcia said. "That was the beginning of this journey. My dad's been there since I was 7 years old."

Likely knowing he was well ahead on the scorecards, Garcia was more conservative over the final rounds. The largely pro-Garcia crowd went to its feet over the final 30 seconds to cheer on their favorite boxer.

This has been quite a three-year stretch for Garcia, suspended for a year and fined \$1 million by the New York State Athletic Commission for allegedly using performance-enhancing drugs in a win over Devin Haney. The WBC also expelled Garcia for a few months for using racial and ethnic slurs, and he also had his share of legal issues.

Beyond that, the 27-year-old Garcia also needed to bounce back from his most recent fight, a unanimous-decision loss to Rolando Romero in New York's Times Square.

"I made a lot of mistakes, but I made a 360 turn," Garcia said. "I committed myself to be the best champion I could be."



Ryan Garcia, right, fights Mario Barrios in a WBC welterweight title boxing match in Las Vegas. (AP)

## Green shakes off rough night with 3 at buzzer, Suns edge Magic in 2 OT



New York Knicks guard Jalen Brunson (11) drives past Houston Rockets forward Tari Eason (17) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in New York. (AP)

## Knicks overcome 18-point deficit in 4th quarter to beat Rockets

## PHOENIX, Feb 22, (AP): Jalen Green hit a 3-pointer from the right corner at the buzzer to give the Phoenix Suns a 113-110 double-overtime victory over the Orlando Magic.

After Jalen Carter tied it for Orlando with 1.1 seconds left with a corner 3, Green hit all net from the corner as the horn sounded. Green struggled all game until that final shot, making only 6 for 26 from the field and 2 of 6 free throws. His winning basket was just his second successful 3 in 11 attempts.

Grayson Allen led Phoenix with 27 points after after missing four games because of a sprained right ankle. He scored all seven of the Suns' points in the first overtime. Collin Gillespie added 19 points, and Green had 16.

Desmond Bane had 34 points for Orlando on 12-of-18 shooting before fouling out in the first minute of overtime. Paolo Banchero added 26 points and 14 rebounds. The Magic had won four of five.

The Suns played without Devin Booker, who is out for at least a week with a right hip strain.

**Knicks 108, Rockets 106**

In New York, Karl-Anthony Towns scored 25 points, Jalen Brunson had 20 and the New York Knicks overcame an 18-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat the Houston Rockets.

OG Anunoby added 20 points, and Mikal Bridges had 11 for New York. The Knicks bounced back two nights after a disappointing loss to Eastern Conference-leading Detroit.

Kevin Durant scored 30 points for Houston. Jabari Smith Jr. had 21, Alperen Sengun added 16, and Amen Thompson had 12 points and 10 rebounds. The Rockets had won five a row.

The Knicks, who led by 13 points in the first half, began their comeback with an 8-1 run in the opening minutes of the fourth before Smith hit a 3-pointer in front of the Houston bench.

**Spurs 139, Kings 122**

In Austin, Victor Wembanyama had 28 points and 15 rebounds, and the San Antonio Spurs beat the Sacramento Kings for their eighth straight win and a sweep of their two games in Austin.

Sacramento lost a franchise record 16th straight game, the last two after center Domantas Sabonis and guard Zach LaVine had season-ending surgery.

De'Aaron Fox, Stephon Castle and Keldon Johnson each scored 18 for the Spurs, while Wembanyama added six assists and four blocks.

Keegan Murray and DeMar DeRozan led Sacramento with 20 points apiece. Malik Monk scored 19 while Maxime Raynaud - a rookie from Stanford and a friend of Wembanyama from France - had 16 points and 12 rebounds.

San Antonio, playing in a city the organization considers part of a megaregion that they've cultivated for several years, scored the first 11 points of the game, setting an aggressive tone that included three blocks by Wembanyama in the first 90 seconds.

**Pistons 126, Bulls 110**

In Chicago, Jalen Duren had 26 points and 13 rebounds in his return from a suspension to help the Detroit Pistons take charge in the second half and roll to a 126-110 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

Cade Cunningham added 18 points, 13 assists and nine rebounds to narrowly miss his 15th career triple-double as the Pistons won their fifth straight game. Tobias Harris also had 18 points and Duncan Robinson added 17 for league-leading Detroit (42-13), which dealt Chicago its season-high eighth straight loss.

Duren helped establish Detroit's dominance after sitting out two games for his role in a fight at Charlotte on Feb. 9. He got a technical foul in this one for casually dropping the ball on the face of Chicago's Nick Richards in the third quarter while Richards was down on the floor.

Josh Giddey had 27 points on 10 for 16 shooting - including five 3-pointers - but the Bulls couldn't keep pace with the Pistons after trailing only 53-50 at the half. Matas Buzelis, Jalen Smith and Isaac Okoro each added 15 as the Bulls committed 23 turnovers leading to 28 Detroit points.

**Pelicans 126, 76ers 111**

In New Orleans, Jordan Poole highlighted a 23-point performance with five 3-pointers, and the New Orleans Pelicans outscored Philadelphia 60-35 during the final 21 minutes to beat the 76ers.

Zion Williamson added 21 points, Saddiq Bey had 20, and 17-year veteran center DeAndre Jordan grabbed 15 rebounds and blocked four shots.

Jordan entered the night having appeared in just two games this season, and had not played since Oct. 29. He made his presence felt defensively during 32 minutes on the court against the 76ers.

Tyrese Maxey scored 27 points and Kelly Oubre Jr. 25 for the 76ers. They lost their fourth straight game but remained in the sixth spot in the Eastern Conference standings.

## Top-ranked Thitikul wins home tournament for first time

CHONBURI, Thailand, Feb 22, (AP): World No. 1 Jeeno Thitikul justified her top billing in emphatic fashion after edging Japan's Chizzy Iwai by one stroke to capture and claim her home LPGA Thailand tournament for the first time.

Buoyed by raucous home support, the Thai star kept her composure under sweltering conditions and intense pressure to card a closing 4-under-par 68, finishing on 24-under-par 264.

The victory marked her eighth LPGA Tour title and her first triumph on home soil.

"I would rate it A triple-plus," said the 23-year-old. "I know it's not as big as the majors, but winning in my home country means so much to me - sometimes even more than a major."

Thitikul became the third Thai winner of the tournament, following Ariya Jutanugarn in 2021 and Patty Tavatanakit in 2024.

The win was made even more special with her mother watching in person after the Thai had made eight previous attempts at the event.

"My mom came up to me after I finished 18 and she cried a lot," Thitikul said. "I told her I finally won in front of you. She

was emotional, and that made me emotional too."

World No.19 Iwai mounted a strong challenge, drawing level briefly after rolling in her second eagle of the day on the par-5 10th.

However, the Japanese added no further birdies and signed for a 66 to finish runner-up on 23-under-par 265.

Korea's Kim Hyo joo, the world No.9, posted a 68 to take third at 22-under-par 266, while compatriot Lee Somi, the opening-round leader, finished fourth on 21-under-par 267.

Former world No.1 Lydia Ko carded a 68 to tie for fifth alongside Denmark's Nanna Koerstz Madsen, who produced the lowest round of the day with a scintillating 63 as both ended the week on 20-under-par 268.

Defending champion Angel Yin shot 70 and was in a tie for 48th at 5-under 283.

The tournament about 125 kilometers (75 miles) east of Bangkok was the first of three events in Asia in consecutive weeks, to be followed by those in Singapore and China in the so-called early Asian swing on the LPGA Tour.



Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand holds the trophy after winning the final round of the LPGA Honda Thailand golf tournament in Pattaya, Thailand. (AP)

## SPORTS

## Mid-table Toulouse draws with promoted Paris FC

## PSG returns to top of French league with a little help from Monaco

PARIS, Feb 22, (AP): Paris Saint Germain returned to the top of the French league thanks to a favor from Champions League playoff opponent Monaco.

Désiré Doue, Bradley Barcola and Goncalo Ramos scored for PSG to defeat last-place Metz 3-0 and capitalize on Monaco's earlier 3-2 win over previous leader Lens.

PSG moved two points clear of Lens with 11 rounds to play. Argentine teenager Julián Vignolo scored late as a substitute for mid-table Toulouse to draw 1-1 with promoted Paris FC.

Lens had moved top the previous weekend with a 5-0 rout of promoted Paris FC while PSG lost 3-1 at Rennes.

But Lens' hopes of a prolonged stay at the summit were dealt a bitter blow after it

squandered a comfortable two-goal lead and conceded three goals to Metz after the hour-mark.

Odsonne Édouard scored early with a volley for Lens and Florian Thauvin converted the rebound after Monaco goalkeeper Philipp Köhn could only parry a deflected shot early in the second half.

That was as good as it got for the home team.

United States forward Folarin Balogun scored against the run of play in the 62nd, Denis Zakaria equalized in the 70th and Ansu Fati pounced on another defensive blunder to make it 3-2 two minutes after that.

It was quite the reversal for Monaco, which led PSG 2-0 in the first leg of their Champions League playoff on Tuesday after two goals from Balogun, only to lose 3-2.

Lens' evening was summed up when Saud Abdulhamid was booked for diving instead of getting a penalty that he felt he deserved.

Metz must have feared a rout when Doue scored after just two minutes of play after Warren Zaire-Emery played a long ball in behind the high line of Metz defenders.

Ramos played the ball across goal for Barcola to head the second before the break.

The home team played it safe after it, when it failed to register a shot on target until Ramos got the third in the 77th.

PSG could arguably have scored more but seemed more intent on conserving energy for Wednesday's rendezvous with Monaco for the second leg of their Champions League playoff in Paris. The winner will go on to face Barcelona or Chelsea in the round of 16.



PSG's Dro Fernandez, right, and Metz's Alpha Toure challenge for the ball during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Metz in Paris, France. (AP)

## Bouanga steals the spotlight, LAFC routs Messi's Inter Miami in opener



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi (10) dribbles the ball against Los Angeles FC midfielder Mathieu Choinière, left, during the second half of an MLS soccer match in Los Angeles, Calif. (AP)

## San Jose rattles Sporting KC 3-0

LOS ANGELES, Feb 22, (AP): Lionel Messi and Inter Miami got off to a rough start in their MLS Cup title defense when David Martínez, Denis Bouanga and Nathan Ordaz scored in Los Angeles FC's 3-0 victory.

Son Heung-min set up Martínez's opening goal for LAFC, which emphasized its status as a primary threat to Miami's crown during a lively MLS season opener between two of the league's marquee clubs.

"This game is always special because Messi played, and we have some (desire) to want to beat Miami because Messi is there," Bouanga said. "Every player, the mentality is so high for this game. It's high for all games, but maybe this game is more high than another mentality."

The matchup drew 75,673 fans - the second-largest crowd in MLS history - to the historic Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, which is next-door to LAFC's home BMO Stadium. The huge crowd celebrated a convincing win for the home team and still enjoyed a good look at Messi, who played the full match despite dealing with a strained hamstring this month.

Bouanga exchanged jerseys with Messi after the match because the LAFC star's son demanded it, he said with a grin.

Messi's every move was greeted with cheers and boos by the California fans, but he didn't manage a shot on target. The superstar is clearly working out his dynamic with his new teammates after the Herons lost Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba to retirement.

Daniel Munie scored two goals and Preston Judd added another and the San Jose Earthquakes beat Sporting Kansas City 3-0.

Munie and Preston Judd each scored four minutes apart just before halftime.

Off Niko Tsakiris' corner kick from the right, Judd's header was deflected by keeper John Pulskamp before Munie's left-footed tap at the 42nd minute gave San Jose its first goal of the season.

In stoppage time at the 46th minute of the first half, Judd scored with the left boot from the center of the box with Jamar Ricketts and Tsakiris credited with assists.

Amahl Pellegrino had a goal and two assists on Saturday night to help San Diego FC beat CF Montreal 5-0.

Eighteen-year-old Duran Ferree made his MLS debut and finished with two saves for San Diego.

Tomas Aviles was shown a straight red card in the 50th minute and Montreal played a man down the rest of the way.

Christopher McVey, Onni Valakari, Marcus Ingvartsen and 18-year-old Bryan each added a goal for San Diego. Valakari, Ingvartsen and Zambé made their MLS debuts.

Teenager Julian Hall scored two goals in the first half and Ethan Horvath made them stand up as the New York Red Bulls beat Orlando City 2-1, winning the season opener in the debut of head coach Michael Bradley.

Bradley took over the reins from Sandro Schwarz after the Red Bulls saw a 15-year run of playoff appearances end last season - one year after losing to the Los Angeles Galaxy in the MLS Cup final.

Guilherme Santos scored two goals in the second half of his MLS debut to rally the Houston Dynamo to a 2-1 victory over the Chicago Fire in a season opener.

Santos found the net for the first time in the 67th minute - with assists from Jack McGlynn and Ezequiel Ponce - to tie it 1-1. He scored the winner unassisted 11 minutes later off a deflection.

Sam Surridge scored two goals Saturday night,

Warren Madrigal added a goal and two assists, and Nashville SC beat the New England Revolution 4-1 in the season opener for both teams.

Surridge opened the scoring in the sixth minute and scored on the counter-attack in the 16th to make it 2-0.

Brian Schwake made his MLS debut. The 24-year-old goalkeeper did not record a save.

Petar Musa scored two goals, Logan Farrington added a goal and an assist, and FC Dallas beat Toronto FC 3-2 in the season opener for both teams.

Toronto's Djordje Mihailovic and Derrick Etienne Jr. each scored a goal.

Teenager Julian Hall scored two goals in the first half and 30-year-old rookie goalkeeper Kevin Horvath made them stand up as the New York Red Bulls beat Orlando City 2-1.

Aziel Jackson scored a goal in his debut for Vancouver and the Whitecaps beat Real Salt Lake 1-0.

Yohei Takaoka had two saves for Vancouver. Jackson opened the scoring in the 57th minute.

Tate Johnson played a cross from the left side that deflected off defender DeAndre Yedlin to Jackson for a volley from the center of the area.

Kévin Denkey and Nick Hagglund scored late goals to lead FC Cincinnati to a 2-0 win over Atlanta United FC in an MLS regular season opener for both teams.

In the 80th minute, Denkey received an assist from Ender Echenique, faking out goalkeeper Lucas Hoyos before finishing with his left foot between a pair of defenders.

Ariel Lassiter had the only goal of the second half and Portland beat the Columbus Crew 3-2, topping off a record-setting night for the Timbers' Diego Chará.

Marcel Hartel scored in the 60th minute and Pep Biel equalized in the 73rd as St. Louis City SC and Charlotte FC opened the MLS season with a 1-1 draw.

## Qadsia 'adds' American Dukes to lead title charge this season

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Al-Qadsia has signed American professional Khalil Dukes to boost its first basketball team for the remainder of the season. Dukes joins Brandon Garrett and DeQuan Jones as the third American player on the "team's" roster, following the departure of Jomaro Brown.

A skilled point guard, Dukes is known for his precise shooting and ability to run the team's offense. The American, who began his career in the U.S. college league, has played professionally in Kosovo, Turkey, and Russia. Qadsia aims to use his experience to strengthen its lineup and mount a serious title challenge this season.

In today's Round 16 action, two matches are scheduled at the Basketball Federation Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex. Kuwait Club faces Al-Sahel at 11:00 pm, while Qadsia takes on Al-Nasr SC at 8:00 pm.

The league is played in three rounds, after which the top four teams qualify for the semifinals in a best-of-three playoff format. Kuwait Club, Qadsia, Kazma, and Al-Qurain are currently well positioned to secure semifinal spots, comfortably ahead of fifth-placed Al-Sulaibikhat, which has



In this file photo, Kuwait Club forward Saad Al-Abdullah shoots as Qadsia player defends.

22 points.

Kuwait Club leads the standings with 28 points from 14 consecutive wins, while Al-Sahel sits last with 15 points. Qadsia, second with 25 points — level with Kazma and Al-Qurain — is expected to have the upper hand against Al-Nasr given the difference in team quality.

## Best of the Rest

**Mayweather says he will return:** Floyd Mayweather says he is ending his nine-year retirement and returning to competitive boxing this summer.

Mayweather, who turns 49 on Tuesday, hasn't fought in a real boxing match since 2017, when he beat Conor McGregor. Following that big-money bout against a mixed martial artist, Mayweather (50-0, 27 KOs) declared himself retired for the third time in his career.

The former five-division world champion has still been in the ring regularly throughout his 40s with a series of lucrative exhibition bouts against the likes of online influencer Logan Paul, YouTuber Mikuri Asakura and John Gotti III, the grandson of the infamous mafia boss.

Mayweather already has announced yet another exhibition coming up this spring against 59-year-old Mike Tyson, although no location or television partner has been confirmed.

But Mayweather says he is also returning to real ring competition this year under a promotional deal with CSI Sports/Fight Sports.

"I still have what it takes to set more records in the sport of boxing," Mayweather said in a statement. "From my upcoming Mike Tyson event to my next professional fight afterwards, no one will generate a bigger gate, have a larger global broadcast audience and generate more money with each event (than) my events."

Mayweather spent more than a decade as arguably the biggest American star in boxing, and he beat Manny Pacquiao in 2015 in the richest fight in boxing history at the time. His superb defensive skills and quick hands were his ring strengths, but his stardom and wealth proliferated largely because of his "Money May" antihero persona.

Mayweather has flaunted his extravagant lifestyle online practically since the invention of social media, but he filed a lawsuit earlier this year against Showtime Networks and Stephen Espinoza, the former president of Showtime Sports, alleging he is owed more than \$300 million. Mayweather's intricate suit appears to fault the network for not protecting the boxer from the business practices of his longtime financial advisor, Al Haymon.

Mayweather has also been sued this year over his alleged failure to pay rent at a Manhattan apartment, and he is in financial disputes with at least two prominent jewelers.

Mayweather is returning to pro boxing one year after the now-47-year-old Pacquiao resumed his own career. Pacquiao is slated to take on Ruslan Provodnikov in Las Vegas on April 18 in the second fight of his comeback. (AP)

## Inter Milan blanks Lecce

## Juventus in crisis after another defeat

LECCE, Italy, Feb 22, (AP): Juventus' damaging week continued with a 2-0 loss at home to Como in Serie A that dents the Italian power's hopes of Champions League qualification.

The defeat comes days after the Bianconeri's 5-2 loss at Galatasaray in the first leg of the play-offs in this season's Champions League. Juventus welcomes the Turkish team for the second leg on Wednesday.

Mërgim Vojvoda scored early for Como with a shot that Michele Di Gregorio should have saved after getting his arm to ball. The chance came about after Juventus' Weston McKennie lost the ball in midfield.

There were whistles from frustrated Juve fans at the break, and it didn't get any better for their team after the restart.

Lucas da Cunha broke through to set up Maxence Caqueret for Como's second in the 61st.

It's Juventus' third straight defeat across all competitions and its fifth game in a row without a win.

"We made too many mistakes today. There were a number of moments where we created the problems for ourselves, and the pressure kicked in and affected us. The qualities we've shown haven't disappeared, but now we can't recognize them," Juve coach Luciano Spalletti said. "We're



Como's Anastasios Douvikas, left, fights for the ball with Juventus' Lloyd Kelly during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Juventus and Como in Turin, Italy. (AP)

lacking a bit of cohesion, a bit of tenacity. We need to take the initiative."

Spalletti's team remained fifth, a point behind Roma before the capital club hosts Cremonese on Sunday. Como stayed sixth, a point behind Juve. Only the top four qualify for Europe's premier competition.

Cagliari drew 0-0 with mid-table rival Lazio in the late game. Cagliari defender Yerry Mina was sent off late with his second yellow card for a tactical foul just outside the penalty area.

Substitutes Henrikh Mkhitaryan and Manuel Akanji scored late for Inter Milan in an unimpressive 2-0 win at Lecce.

Both players were sent on for the last half hour. Mkhitaryan was left unmarked at the far post to score from Federico Dimarco's corner in the 75th minute, and Akanji headed in from another corner in the 82nd.

"We knew they would drop off physically in the second half, and we did well to keep pushing," Mkhitaryan said.

Dimarco thought he'd scored after the break but the goal was ruled out after a VAR check found Marcus Thuram was offside. Dimarco later had another effort to seal the win cleared off the line before he took the corner for Akanji's goal.

Inter was without star players Lautaro Martínez and Hakan Çalhanoğlu.

"Sometimes we produce our best in big matches, other times we don't," Akanji said. "But there aren't two different versions of Inter. Yes, we lost to Bodø/Glimt last time out in the Champions League, but we're still the same team capable of great things."

Inter lost 3-1 to Bodø/Glimt in the first leg of their Champions League playoff. The Norwegian tournament upstart visits Milan for the second leg on

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Spain's Carlos Alcaraz holds the trophy after beating Arthur Fils of France during the final of Qatar Open tennis in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

# Sports

Race for second heats up

## Al-Arabi looks to bounce back as Qadsia seeks revenge against Kazma in Zain Premier League

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: Al-Arabi travels to Thamer Stadium to face Al-Salmiya at 9:30 PM today, Monday, in Round 14 of the Zain Premier League. At the same time, Qadsia will host Kazma at Al-Sadaqa wal-Salam Stadium.

The league race is heating up, with clubs vying for second place while keeping a slim chance of catching leader Kuwait Club. Al-Arabi sits second with 24 points, Qadsia is third with 22 points, Kazma has 21, and Al-Salmiya holds 20 points.

Al-Arabi aims to return to winning ways after failing to secure a victory in the last three rounds, losing to Kuwait Club and Kazma (both 0-1) and drawing with Al-Fahaheel. These results widened the gap with Kuwait Club to nine points while bringing Qadsia, Kazma, and Al-Salmiya closer in the fight for second. A defeat today could see Al-Arabi drop further in the standings, potentially falling to fifth

with a third consecutive loss.

Al-Salmiya hopes to take advantage of its players' strong morale after remaining unbeaten in the last five leagues matches (two wins, three draws). The team also seeks revenge after a 3-1 first-round defeat to Al-Arabi.

Meanwhile, third-placed Qadsia aims to build on its momentum following a key victory over UAE side Al-Ain last Wednesday in the Gulf Club Champions League, which secured it a semifinal spot. Since January, Qadsia has captured the Super Cup and maintained strong league form, winning two, drawing two, and losing one in the last five rounds. It also hopes to avenge its 1-0 first-round loss to Kazma.

Kazma, on the other hand, looks to recover from its Amir Cup exit, where Khaiteen eliminated them 3-1 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in the preliminary round. The team aims to climb the league table to secure a place in an international tournament.



Kazma and Qadsia players vie for the ball.



Al-Sulaibikhat Club Management welcomes the minister.

### Minister of Youth and Sports visits Al-Sulaibikhat Club

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: In line with his ongoing efforts to monitor the performance of sports institutions and identify their needs, the Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs, Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, paid a visit to Al-Sulaibikhat Club on Saturday evening. The visit forms part of a broader strategy aimed at advancing Kuwaiti sports and enhancing its standards across all levels.

Dr. Al-Jalahma was welcomed by Club President Saad Anad Al-

Enezi, Secretary-General Nasser Mansi Al-Enezi, and members of the board of directors.

The visit underscores the minister's commitment to maintaining direct communication with sports clubs, listening to their proposals and challenges, and supporting initiatives that contribute to strengthening the sports sector and fulfilling the ambitions of athletes in Kuwait.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary-General Nasser Mansi

expressed appreciation for the minister's visit, noting that such engagements positively impact sports organizations and help develop both administrative and athletic performance, ultimately benefiting Kuwait's youth.

He added that the meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere, during which discussions covered various issues related to sports in general and the needs and aspirations of Al-Sulaibikhat Club in particular.



Players fighting for the ball.

### Thrilling showdown between Kazma and Burgan

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 22: The Sheikh Sadd Al-Abdullah Sports Complex will host an exciting Handball Premier League clash tonight, Monday, as Kazma takes on Burgan at 10:00 PM in the final match of Round 13. Earlier at 8:00 PM, Kuwait Club will face Al-Arabi.

The "Whites" lead the league table with 23 points, followed by Burgan with 16, Kazma with 14, Al-Arabi and Qadsia with 12 each, Al-Salmiya with 10, Al-Sulaibikhat with 7, and Al-Nasr with 2 points.

Kazma aims to bounce back and restore its confidence after recent setbacks, while Al-Arabi looks to recover from last round's defeat to Burgan and secure the best possible

result despite the challenge.

Kuwait Club will field a combination of local talent, including Abdullah Al-Khamis and Saif Al-Adwani, alongside professional players Qatari Francis, Portuguese Victor, and Montenegrin Vladan. Al-Arabi will rely on Mohamed Jawad, Abdullah Mustafa, and their professionals — Tunisian Osama Jaziri and Estonian Diner.

The Kazma vs. Burgan match promises to be just as intense. Kazma seeks to regain form after three consecutive losses to Al-Salmiya and Qadsia, and a surprising draw against Kuwait. A victory would allow Kazma to catch up to Burgan in the standings. Burgan, meanwhile, aims to continue its winning streak and maintain its position, while also seeking revenge after Kazma edged it 32-31 in the first round.

## Canada clinches men's curling gold amid cheating allegations

Nolte grabs Olympic bobsled gold, Humphries Armbruster wins 6th medal

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy, Feb 22, (AP): The Canadian men brushed aside earlier accusations of cheating and beat Britain for Olympic gold in curling on Saturday at the Milan Cortina Games.

Brad Jacobs' team defeated Bruce Mouat's all-Scottish squad 9-6 inside Cortina's historic ice arena to give curling powerhouse Canada its only gold of these Olympics in the sport.

"When some things went down this week and people were using some pretty outrageous words like 'cheating' associated now with our team," Jacobs said, "I'll guarantee you that that only motivated us further."

The Canadians last week were the subject of a controversy and a profanity-laced rant that got attention far beyond the ice when several players were accused of double-touching the rock, a rules violation.

The sport was sent into turmoil during the round-robin phase when Oskar Eriksson of Sweden accused Canada vice skip Marc Kennedy of breaking the rules by touching the rock again after initially releasing it down the sheet of ice. Kennedy responded with an outburst full of expletives.

Several other accusations of double-touching followed, and Canada lost its next match against Switzerland before steadying itself to go all the way.

"For anyone who called us cheaters, for anyone who said negative things



Team Sweden celebrates defeating Switzerland to win a women's curling gold medal match, at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. (AP)

about Marc Kennedy, about us, about Canada, about our families," Jacobs said, "I hope that the image of us standing on top of the podium, embracing one another, smiling ear to ear with our gold medals is burned into your brain forever."

It's Canada's first gold in men's curling since the 2014 Sochi Games, when they also beat Britain in the final with Jacobs as the skip. This is his first Olympics since - he lost in the Canadian Olympic trials for 2018 and 2022.

Germany's Laura Nolte didn't let this lead get away. She's golden, again. And Kaillie Humphries Armbruster of the U.S. has a new favorite number - six, as in the number of Olympic bobsled medals now in her collection.

Nolte is now the back-to-back two-

woman Olympic bobsled champion, holding off teammate Lisa Buckwitz to grab gold.

Nolte - the winner of the last four World Cup two-woman titles - cemented her status as the sport's current queen, teaming with Deborah Levi to win her second consecutive two-woman gold medal by finishing four runs in 3 minutes, 48.46 seconds. Levi was in her sled for the golden ride in 2022 as well.

"It means a lot, and even to defend it together as a team again is so cool," Nolte said. "It was such a fun race and we had to keep our nerves together until the very last corner, until the very last run, but it was amazing."

Buckwitz, with Neele Schuten in her sled, was second in 3:48.99. Humphries Armbruster and Jasmine Jones - two mothers in the same sled for the U.S. - finished third in 3:49.21. It was the sixth Olympic medal for Humphries Armbruster, tying monobob gold medalist Elana Meyers Taylor for the most by any woman in the sport's history.

"Just knowing Jasmine was behind me, knowing what this meant for us as a team, I really wanted it for her more than for myself," Humphries Armbruster said. "She gave everything she did and entrusted me to do the same. That's what teamwork's really about. I couldn't have done this with anybody else, and I didn't want to do it with anybody else."

Humphries Armbruster hasn't made any decisions on her sliding future. Meyers Taylor seems a whole lot closer to making her choice.

"It's been a hell of a journey. I can't even put into words what it's meant to be able to do this for so long," a teary Meyers Taylor said. "To be able to represent my country and be able to slide ... I don't know if this is the end. It kind of feels like it is."

Also for the U.S., Kaysha Love - who has been dealing with a hamstring issue for much of the season and had it flare up again in Italy - and Azaria Hill finished fifth in 3:49.71.

Finland won the bronze medal in men's hockey at the Olympics for a third consecutive time with NHL players participating, beating Slovakia 6-1.

Erik Haula scored two goals and Joel Armia had a goal and two assists for Finland, which also got bronze in Sochi in 2014 and in Vancouver in 2010, and left Turin in 2006 with silver.

### Real Betis loses ground

Vinicius scores again but cannot prevent Real falling to Osasuna

MADRID, Feb 22, (AP): Vinicius Junior was back on the score sheet for Real Madrid, but the Brazilian was not able to prevent the Spanish league leader from falling to a surprise 2-1 loss to Osasuna.

In a week when the Brazilian accused an opponent of racially insulting him in a Champions League match, he showed that the fallout from the incident has not impacted his form with his fifth goal in four games.

But defeat for Madrid delivered a blow to its title pursuit.

UEFA is investigating after Vinicius accused Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni of calling him "monkey" following his outstanding goal in Madrid's 1-0 win against Benfica in the Champions League playoffs on Tuesday. The forward was on target again and looked to have at least salvaged a point for Madrid with his goal in the 73rd at Osasuna, leveling the game after Ante Budimir's first-half penalty had given the home team the lead.

But any thoughts of a Madrid comeback were ended by Raul Garcia's 90th-minute winner.

Garcia showed quick feet to turn in the box and sweep a shot past Thibaut Courtois from a tight angle.

Madrid is two points clear of second-place Barca, having played a game more.

Real Sociedad drew 3-3 with last-place Real Oviedo after a wild finish at Estadio Municipal de Anoeta.

Oviedo took control of the match with two quick goals after halftime from Federico Vinas, who scored with headers in the 50th and 52nd minutes.

Orri Oskarsson started the fightback for Sociedad with a powerful header in the 64th and Duje Caleta-Car headed in another to level in the 87th.

Oskarsson scored his second of the match with a clinical finish to give the home side the lead in the 90th - but the drama wasn't done.



Real Madrid's Eduardo Camavinga, right, heads for the ball with Osasuna's Victor Munoz during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Osasuna and Real Madrid in Pamplona, Spain. (AP)

In the second minute of added time Eric Bailly leveled the game again to rescue a point for Oviedo.

Even then there was still time for Goncalo Guedes to hit the post in 99th. Fifth-place Real Betis could lose ground in the race for Champions League qualification after a 1-1 draw with Rayo Vallecano.

Isi Palazon's goal in the 42nd cancelled out Cedric Bakambu's opener for Betis.

Ademola Lookman scored his fourth goal in six games since his January move to Atletico Madrid in a 4-2 win against Espanyol.

Fourth place Atletico moved six clear of Betis in the race for Champions League qualification and level with third place Villarreal.

Alexander Sorloth scored two to take his season's tally to 12.