



Hike in cost of living allowance, traffic law revision among Assembly agenda

## Foreigners Residency Law in focus at crucial session

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun has invited the government and MPs to the parliamentary session scheduled for Tuesday to discuss the following:

- Voting on the minutes of the previous session;
- Parliamentary queries;
- Amiri Speech delivered on Oct 31, 2023;
- Reports of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee about the bills on reforming the constituencies, and amending the National Assembly Law and Penal Code number 16/1960;
- Report of the Interior and Defense

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### Diversification key

'Kuwait must expedite its economic reforms'

By Ahmad Fathi  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Jihad Azour, the Director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the International Monetary Fund's Center, emphasized the urgency for Kuwait to expedite its economic reforms and diversify sources of income by expanding various economic sectors.

This strategic move, he said during a recent conference at the International Monetary Fund's Center for Economics and Finance in Kuwait, would not only enhance the business environment but also increase Kuwait's attractiveness to foreign investments.

Azour stressed the importance of opening new horizons and developing sectors related to renewable energy, the environment, and other avenues to achieve economic success.

Furthermore, he underscored the need for Kuwait to enhance its social system, aligning it with crucial challenges in education, health, and housing. Given Kuwait's advanced economic status and efficiency, strengthening its regional role becomes imperative, leveraging ongoing transformations.

Acknowledging the positive impact of the OPEC+ agreement and rising oil prices in 2023 on Kuwait's economy, Azour highlighted the government's efforts to bolster financial reserves and improve the public financial situation. However, he emphasized the necessity for Kuwait to quicken its reform pace, sustaining growth, creating new jobs, and increasing non-oil sector income while reducing reliance on the oil sector.

Azour, expects the performance of the Kuwaiti economy, both oil and non-oil, to improve in 2024, stressing that the country was able during the past year to raise the level of its financial reserves by supporting the stability of oil prices, after three years of decline.

### Reserves

Azour said the Kuwaiti investors are among the best in the region and the world, and they must be utilized to enhance Kuwait's role as a regional center for finance and business, calling at the same time for granting small, medium and emerging companies a greater role in the economy by enhancing their ability to obtain financing, and giving young entrepreneurs an opportunity to lead the transformation process by encouraging them to engage in work in the private sector.

He confirmed that the high levels of cash reserves provide Kuwait with a high degree of financial stability, he pointed out the importance of working on a comprehensive management of assets and debts that allows for reconciliation between financial capabilities and the possibility of borrowing, especially since the solvency and financial strength of the State of Kuwait allows work on both axes together.

He stated that carrying out tax reform is required within the strategy of diversifying sources of income and ensuring the sustainability of public finances is one of the elements of economic stability.

Azour described the Kuwaiti banking sector as "developed and ancient," as it enjoys a high level of solvency, liquidity, and the ability to stabilize in the face of global fluctuations and shocks, and this is what appeared to be the case clearly in 2023 with the rise in interest rates and the turmoil witnessed by some American banks.

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### Day by Day

SHEIKH Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem, the first task must be to open files on the deteriorating condition of the State at a frightening rate. We used to be the pioneers, but today, we are in the last ranks among countries.

Today, the State eats from living flesh. It turned into a country of derelicts after everything became forbidden due to strict laws that are not based on scientific studies. The infrastructure development in Kuwait is zero.

Therefore, no one will invest in a closed country. Even the people of Kuwait are fighting for their livelihood and they have no incentive to motivate them to develop the country.

... Yet tomorrow is another day

Zahed Matar

# Kuwait to adopt direct hiring process for domestic workers

## Kuwait bolsters skilled worker inflow

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has intensified efforts to develop the process of bringing skilled workers into the country in a way that serves the development and economic interests of the State of Kuwait; and at the same time benefits the workers and the countries exporting them, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement on Thursday after his meeting with Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to Kuwait Major General M.D. Ashiq Al-Zaman and the accompanying delegation, acting Director General of PAM Marzouq Al-Otaibi affirmed that the local labor market attracts workers with the specializations it needs. He highlighted the primary role of the Authority in providing legal protection and ensuring the provision of an

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## Bid to cut intermediaries

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has asked Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah to support and facilitate the procedures of Al-Durra Company for Domestic Workers in labor-exporting countries, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Security Media Department in the Interior Ministry disclosed that Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled instructed Al-Durra to quickly launch the service for recruiting domestic workers through its website in order to ease procedures for hiring workers directly without the need for an intermediary office.

On the other hand, the Tripartite Committee of the ministries of Interior and Commerce and the Public Authority for Manpower on Thursday had announced the suspension of 24 domestic labor recruitment offices for violating the Domestic Workers Law and the decisions of the Ministry of Commerce.

In a press statement, the committee disclosed that the suspension happened on the third day of implementing the

ministerial decision on the fees for recruiting domestic workers and the joint statement regarding the commitment to use K-Net devices in the collection of fees.

It added that the recent inspection of domestic labor recruitment offices in Farwaniya and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh resulted in the registration of 15 contract-related violations and suspension of nine domestic labor recruitment offices that have no K-Net devices in violation of the Ministry of Commerce circulars.

The committee then advised the owners of labor recruitment offices to adhere to the law and the relevant ministerial decisions and circulars, so as not to expose themselves to legal accountability. It confirmed that the inspection tours continue daily to uncover violations, indicating 78 violations were uncovered during the inspection campaigns carried out in the last three days.

Earlier, the Public Authority for Manpower and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry jointly called on citizens to make payments to domestic worker recruitment offices through KNET.

In a collective statement, the two entities urged citizens to file complaints against offices that do not adhere to the specified payment method via KNET or fail to comply with the announced prices.

The committee urges labor recruitment office owners to adhere to laws, ministerial decisions, and circulars, emphasizing ongoing daily inspections to identify and address violations.

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### NewsWatch

WASHINGTON: The US Defense Department (Pentagon) said late Wednesday that the State Department approved two potential USD 329 million military equipment sales to Egypt, which includes a lightweight tactical vehicle and its associated equipment, along with a patrol gear.

The State Department approved a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Egypt of Light Tactical Vehicle Chassis and Fleet Build and related equipment for an estimated cost of USD 200 million, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement. (KUNA)

TEHRAN: Iran's intelligence ministry on Thursday identified a top suspect, described as ring-leader and bomb-maker, in the twin suicide bombings last week claimed by the Islamic State group as the death toll from the attack rose to at least 94, state media reported.

The Jan. 3 attack, in which two suicide bombers targeted a commemoration for an Iranian general slain in a 2020 U.S. drone strike in Iraq, was the deadliest in Iran in decades as the wider Middle East remains on edge. (AP)

ISLAMABAD: A magnitude 6.4 earthquake shook parts of Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan on Thursday, sending panicked residents fleeing from their homes and offices and frightening people in remote villages, Pakistani officials and the U.S. Geological Survey said.

The epicenter of the quake was in the Hindu Kush mountain range in Afghanistan, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department. It was the third major earthquake to strike Afghanistan in three months. (AP)



Palestinians wounded in Israeli bombardment, receive treatment at a hospital in Khan Younis refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, Jan. 11, 2024. (AP)

## Call to comply with UN resolutions

# Kuwaiti lawmaker calls for end to Gaza genocide

TEHRAN, Jan 11, (Agencies): Parliaments across the Islamic region should ratchet up efforts aiming to put an end to the "genocide" being committed against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, a Kuwaiti lawmaker has said.

Such efforts include putting in place a definitive ceasefire in Gaza to subsequently allow the delivery of humanitarian aid there, Kuwaiti chief of the parliamentary caucus Dr. Mohammad Al-Mahan told pan-Islamic talks in the Iranian capital.

The Kuwaiti lawmaker slammed Israeli efforts to "forcibly displace" thousands of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, calling for accountability over the "war crimes" perpetrated by senior Israeli leaders, which entails decisive action on the "legal and political" fronts, he underlined.

He cited a statement issued by the Kuwaiti parliament's foreign affairs committee, which calls for the backing of a case of genocide South Africa has filed against Israel before the International Court of Justice, while also recalling a speech by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah before a gathering of Arab leaders, in which he vociferously reiterated unwavering support for the

Palestinian statehood rights.

The Kuwaiti lawmaker went on to urge nations across the wider Arab region to sever diplomatic ties with Israel in a show of support for the Palestinians, saying such a measure was "honorable" in light of the status quo.

Kuwaiti MP Hamad Al-Mutar, undersecretary of the National Assembly's parliamentary caucus, Wednesday called for activating the UN resolutions to put pressure on Israel to comply with UN resolutions.

This came in a speech delivered by Al-Mutar in the first meeting of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly's Palestine Committee (APA) held in Tehran. Al-Mutar stressed the necessity of providing protection to the Palestinian people and ensuring the delivery of humanitarian and relief aid to civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories as well as establishing a sovereign, independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"We are committed to our principled and unwavering position towards the Palestinian issue," he said.

He, at the same time, rejected double standards and positions towards what is happening to Palestin-

ians, referring to Israel's brutal violations of human rights mainly in the Gaza Strip.

The Kuwaiti lawmaker highlighted the martyrdom of more than 23,000 Palestinians and the injury of tens of thousands others in the war launched by Israeli occupation forces as well as the destruction of infrastructure and hospitals.

He called for taking immediate action to halt the current aggression on Gaza which violated all humanitarian norms and values as well as international laws.

Al-Mutar further underlined the important role of regional and international parliaments in offering solutions to the Palestinian cause.

In this context, he pointed to the statement issued by the Kuwaiti National Assembly's foreign affairs committee last Monday calling on the government to join the lawsuit filed by South Africa before the International Criminal Court (ICC) against the occupying Israeli entity.

The meeting is featuring some lawmakers from 26 Asian and Muslim countries, including Kuwait whose delegation contains MPs Dawood Marafie and Shuaib Shaaban, in addition to Al-Mutar.

## 'Historic step'

# Palestine FM hails S. Africa's ICJ move

RAMALLAH, Jan 11, (Agencies): The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said Thursday South Africa's case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israeli occupation's genocide is a historic step in the process of joint Palestinian and South African struggle against crimes and injustice.

Israel would be held accountable for its illegal occupation and authority through all available legal tools, international justice institutions and international law enforcement, the ministry said in a statement, citing this as part of Palestine's legal strategy, and diplomatic and international efforts.

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Kuwaiti MP Hamad Al-Mutar, undersecretary of the National Assembly's parliamentary caucus, delivers a speech at the first meeting of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly's Palestine Committee (APA) held in Tehran.

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## Oil tanker seizure escalates tensions

DUBAI, Jan 11, (AP): Iran's navy seized an oil tanker on Thursday in the Gulf of Oman that once was at the center of a major crisis between Tehran and Washington, officials said, a seizure that further escalates tensions in the Mideast waterways.

The vessel was once known as the Suez Rajan and had been involved in a year-long dispute that ultimately saw the U.S. Justice Department seize 1 million barrels of Iranian crude oil on it.

The seizure also comes after weeks of attacks by Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthis rebels on shipping in the Red Sea, including their largest barrage ever of drones and missiles launched late Tuesday.

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## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:20 Asr ..... 14:49  
 Sunrise .. 06:44 Maghrib .. 17:08  
 Zohr ..... 11:56 Isha ..... 18:30

# Local

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Mild and cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-35 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.

**By Night:** Rather cold to cold with light to moderate northwest-

## Weather

erly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

**Station** **Max Exp** **Min Rec**  
 Kuwait City 23 18

Kuwait Airport 24 15  
 Abdaly 25 15  
 Jahra 25 12  
 Salmiyah 22 18  
 Nuwaisib 24 13  
 Wafra 25 09

BIOMETRIC/FINGERPRINT APPOINTMENT: <https://meta.e.gov.kw/En/>

## Kuwait must keep pace with climate change: experts

# Abnormal weather could lead to environment, health problems



Photo by Samer Shaqair

Young lads enjoying the mild winter weather at a local park in Kuwait in the evening.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Winter is no longer as cold as in previous years due to the rising global temperatures, which could lead to environmental and health problems, reports Al-Qabas daily.

A recent report published by New York Times quoted scientists as saying that the Earth is "burning" due to the unusually high temperatures throughout the world for a long time. It affirmed that the world is getting hotter and 2023 was the warmest in 150 years.

The report confirmed that global temperatures have exceeded record numbers since the middle of 2023 and did not stop until the end of the year. It added that June used to be the warmest month on the planet, then July became the warmest and so on until December. It indicated that temperatures are rising month after month.

According to the European Union climate monitor, the temperature around the world over the past year was 1.48 degrees Celsius or 2.66 Fahrenheit warmer than in the second half of the 19th century, and those numbers are warmer by a large margin than in 2016 and the previous year was hottest.

The report stated: It is not surprising for climate scientists that unlimited emissions of greenhouse gases will lead to global warming, rising to unprecedented levels. Researchers are trying to understand if the year 2023 portends many more years in which this will not happen.

In a press statement, Director of the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service Carlo Buontempo explained that "the extreme events we have observed over the past few months provide dramatic testimony to how far we are now from the climate in which our civilization evolved."

Locally, experts confirmed to the daily that Kuwait is not isolated from this report. They stressed the need for the concerned State authorities to take urgent measures to keep pace with climate change, protect the environment and implement environmental projects that will mitigate the severity of the escalating temperature increase.

They cited the increasing levels of pollution as one of the causes of high temperatures, pointing out that greening is an urgent need to reduce the severity of high temperatures and dust storms.

They added the problem of rising temperatures and the resulting environmental and health repercussions are not individual, and that no country can confront climate change in isolation from international cooperation, especially with neighboring countries. They stated that Kuwait

needs advanced urban planning, which takes into account climate change and the sharp rise in temperatures.

They mentioned a number of reasons behind the increase in the emission of greenhouse gases in Kuwait, including the steady increase in the number of vehicles that drive in a limited urban area and cause exhaust emissions, in addition to the use of air conditioning devices to a much greater extent than global rates.

Meteorologist Issa Ramadan underscored the need to take measures to confront the phenomenon of global warming, indicating that many research and scientific institutions have started to prove that temperatures are significantly higher than they were in past eras.

"Many countries recorded an unprecedented rise in temperatures during the past year, and climate change has become a reality and a fact that cannot be denied.

Therefore, we must lay down plan, strategies and a road map to solve the problem of current and expected high temperatures, which will increase in the coming years. One of the important solutions in Kuwait is to start reducing gas emissions from car exhausts and move towards the use of electric cars, as well as the implementation of transportation projects like mass transportation in the form of electric trains and buses, uses clean fuel or electricity to mitigate these emissions," he added.

Former Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) and Kuwait University Professor Dr Salah Al-Mudhahi warned the study indicating rising temperatures is not the first and will not be the last. He said the 2015 Paris Agreement that countries signed, aims to commit to working to ensure that the rise in temperatures by the year 2050 does not exceed more than 1.5 to two degrees, asserting this number is also high.

He explained that rising temperatures will lead to the disappearance of some islands or even island countries, as it raises ocean levels, especially the open oceans, and rising temperatures also melt ice and this phenomenon has already started.

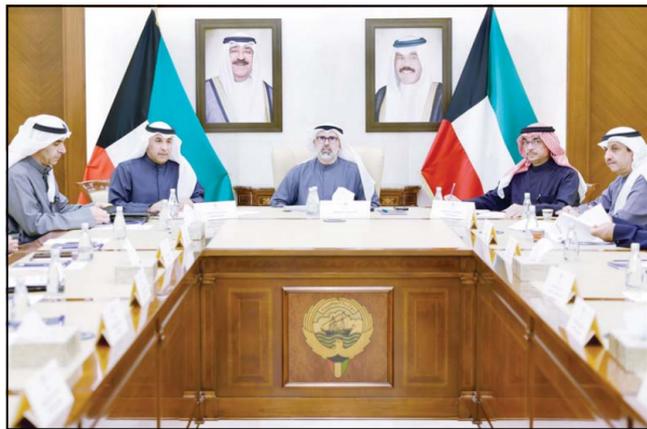
As for Kuwait, Al-Mudhahi believes this would not have a significant impact on the country, considering its location within the Gulf and the presence of a strait.



Dr. Al-Moudhi

## 'Conflicts fuel human peddling'

Organized gangs targeting Kuwait, Gulf people



KUNA photo

Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the meeting.

### Deputy FM meets diplomats

Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired the meeting of Council of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps at the ministry's headquarters on

Thursday.

During the meeting, the foreign minister's assistants and the council's members discussed the topics on the agenda. (KUNA)

### Kuwait military team visits Pakistan

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense announced on Thursday that a Kuwaiti military delegation conducted a visit to Pakistan to discuss military topics of common interests.

The Kuwaiti delegation was headed by Assistant Chief of Staff for Human Resources, Major General Dr. Khaled Al-Kanderi.

In a press release, the ministry said

that the Kuwaiti delegation met with Pakistani Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Sahir Shamsahad Mirza and several other senior officials.

The ministry said that during the meeting both sides discussed topics of common interests, especially in the military field.

It added that the visit will conclude on Friday with the signing of several military MoUs between the two sides.

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Regional representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries Judge Dr Hatem Ali confirmed that Kuwait is keen on confronting human trafficking crimes, reports Al-Anba daily.**

Ali stressed in an interview with the daily that Kuwait and other GCC countries are being targeted by organized criminal gangs due to their economic prosperity and political stability.

He pointed out that Kuwait signed the agreement, issued a law in 2013 to combat human trafficking crimes and established a national committee to coordinate with the relevant authorities to combat the crime and a system for caring for victims, which is the shelter and a specialized administration in the Ministry of Interior and Public Prosecution, where the Capital Prosecution was tasked to investigate crimes of human trafficking and smuggling immigrants.

He explained the unrest that the world is currently witnessing, particularly in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan and other African countries, contributes to the growth of organized crime and the falling of people into the clutches of these crimes like trafficking in drugs, weapons or human beings. He pointed out that organized gangs are desperate to make illegal profits from countries by using technology or electronic attacks on Gulf countries, including Kuwait.

On Kuwait's efforts in the field of combating human trafficking, he affirmed: We reviewed it with all credibility and honesty. According to our objective standards as a general secretariat, Kuwait first joined and ratified the convention, began implementing it, issued a law in 2013 to combat human trafficking crimes, and then established a national coordination committee to fight against these crimes."

He went on to say that the Public Prosecution of Kuwait has allocated a specialized prosecution -- the Capital Prosecution -- to deal with human trafficking cases, while a national referral system has been established for the cooperation of first responders to identify and deal with cases suspected of human trafficking by referring them judicially or by providing the necessary care and protection and dealing with labor violations if they constitute a human trafficking crime.

## Crackdown on illegals intensified nationwide

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The recent inspection campaigns of the Residency Affairs Investigation General Department in the Interior Ministry resulted in the arrest of 290 individuals who violated the Residency and Labor laws, reports Al-Anba daily.

These campaigns are being carried out through the coordinated efforts of the Research and Investigation Department, Control and Coordination Department, Violators Follow-Up Department, Financial and Administrative Services Department and the Tripartite Committee.

A total of 290 individuals of various nationalities were arrested in Fahahel, Mahbouda, Farwaniya, Al-Rai and Hawally for violating the abovementioned laws.

Meanwhile, the security campaign conducted by Kuwait Municipality, Public Authority for Industry, Environment Public Authority and the Environmental Police targeting workshops in Shuwaikh Industrial Area led to the arrest of 28 individuals who violated the Residency Law.

All those arrested were referred to the concerned authorities.

**'Make Kuwait clean':** The Kuwait Municipality said the Public Cleanliness and Road Works Department continues its campaigns in various parts of the country to raise the level of cleanliness, reports Al-Rai daily.

The daily quoting Municipality sources said, yesterday, the team was acting in the Jahra Governorate, as part of its field campaign to raise the level of cleanliness in all governorates of the country.

In a press statement on the sidelines of the campaign, the Public Cleanliness Supervisor at the Jahra Governorate Municipality Branch, Daham Al-Enezi explained the campaign kicked off in Kabb during which rubble was removed and also abandoned and debris and all that obstructs the road and distorts the general view.

## 'Cheating in science subjects rife'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: During the resumption of twelfth-grade exams on Wednesday, officials provided positive feedback on the organization and equipment of the examination committees.

Hessa Al-Mutawa, the acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education, chaired a meeting with the Council of General Directors, where reports from various committees were discussed. Al-Mutawa commended the efforts of school principals, officials, and educators in maintaining a high standard of organization, emphasizing the need to sustain this commitment until the conclusion of the exams, reports Al-Rai daily.

As students tackled subjects like physics, environmental issues and contemporary development, and jurisprudence, Al-Nahedh, the Director of the Hawalli Educational District, highlighted the proactive measures taken to ensure students' comfort during exams. Teams

were formed, meetings were held, and advance plans were prepared to support the smooth conduct of examinations. Al-Daihani, the Director of the Capital Educational District, echoed these sentiments during his inspection of the Saad bin Al-Rabee secondary school committee, emphasizing the calm and conducive educational atmosphere observed during the visit.

Reports from the examination committees revealed 172 cases of cheating, with the majority in the scientific and literary sections. Additionally, 1,774 students were absent, with efforts made to address 434 cases of deprivation and 5,151 cases of absenteeism in total. To stay abreast of developments, the Ministry's leaders continued inspection tours, emphasizing the importance of maintaining integrity in examination procedures.

Al-Daihani stressed the district's commitment to a well-prepared educational environment, ensuring the presence of resident observers to monitor the readiness of committees and the integrity of exam procedures. The collective dedication of educational officials was highlighted as crucial in fostering an environment conducive to successful exams.



Al-Mutawa

### Other Voices

## Trust ... and love for you

By Ahmad alsarraf

In an unprecedented move underscoring the significance of the event, the US State Department issued a statement extending a warm welcome to the appointment of Sheikh Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as the Prime Minister.

The statement expressed the United States' aspirations to deepen its partnership with Kuwait under the leadership of the new Prime Minister, highlighting the unique importance of this appointment and its potential role in strengthening the bilateral relationship.

The US State Department conveyed hope for the successful implementation of the new Prime Minister's reform initiatives, both political and administrative, eagerly anticipated by the people.

Recognizing Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sabah's political experience, open-minded approach, and extensive relationships at all levels, the statement acknowledged him as a fitting leader for this stage and a capable figure to address the mounting challenges faced by Kuwait due to significant administrative errors.

Drawing upon the speaker's modest knowledge of Professor Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sabah, gleaned from several meetings and understanding of his views, the statement expressed confidence in his ability to assemble an effective team.

This is deemed crucial in light of the National Assembly's composition, where a considerable number of members may lack a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies and seriousness of the upcoming phase.

The State Department highlighted

this moment as the last opportunity to lift the nation from its prolonged difficulties, urging all members to prioritize national interests over personal considerations and transcend loyalties.

Expressing hopes for Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sabah's success, the statement suggested that he avoid fatal quotas in his ministerial selections. Instead, it recommended personal interviews with each candidate, steering clear of reliance solely on CVs. The statement emphasized the need to learn from past errors, where ministers selected by others faced legal and personal impediments, coupled with character weaknesses and lack of experience.

The challenges facing the state were categorized into immediate issues requiring swift and well-considered decisions, and more profound concerns that would dissipate with a sense of seriousness, cleanliness, and accountability within the administration.

The statement addressed Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sabah directly, emphasizing the historical opportunity at hand -- one that might not repeat itself. It presented a binary outcome, either pulling the nation out of its challenges under his astute leadership or witnessing a further deterioration of the situation.

The essence of the problem, according to the statement, lies in the absence of law enforcement and decision-making, a hurdle that can only be overcome through hard work, dedication, sleepless nights, heightened effort, and the ability to make tough decisions for the greater good -- a quality attributed to wise leadership.

The statement concluded by expressing confidence in Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sabah, underscoring the unprecedented trust and love he has received from his high position and the people. It extended the hope that he would rise to the occasion and not disappoint the expectations placed upon him.

□ □ □  
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## Gabapentin, Pregabalin sale banned

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11, (KUNA): The Ministry of Health announced Wednesday a total ban on private pharmacies and hospitals' distribution and selling of Gabapentin and Pregabalin drugs.

Health Minister Ahmad Al-Awadhi imposed the ban in response to an unreasonable surge in prescriptions and sales of the two neurological drugs by private pharmacies and hospitals, the MoH clarified in a statement.

It added that the new regulation restricts the prescription and distribution of all drugs containing Gabapentin, Pregabalin to the government hospitals and pharmacies.

The decision is part of the ministry's ongoing effort to control and combat misuse of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.



An abandoned truck parked on state property being confiscated.

Al-Rai photo

# Shuwaikh lawlessness targeted

Massive raid nets illegals; abandoned vehicles lifted



Plainclothes police checking documents of workers in the area.



Environment inspectors writing a citation at the site.

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: In an ongoing effort to enforce municipal laws, the Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the Public Authority for Industry and Manpower, the Public Authority for the Environment, and the Environmental Police, conducted a comprehensive campaign in various sections of the Shuwaikh Industrial Area. This operation, which involved 180 personnel from the participating entities, targeted garages and shops suspected of violating regulations, reports Al-Rai Arabic daily.**

The campaign yielded several violations and warnings, encompassing issues related to hygiene compliance and failure to meet environmental requirements. Additionally, 28 individuals violating residency laws were apprehended and turned over to the relevant authorities.

The inspection included the suspension of 24 offices in line with the recent decision on domestic labor prices. This decisive action underscores the authorities' commitment to maintaining order and adherence to regulations.

Sanitation Supervisor Salah Al-Farhan, commenting on the joint efforts, stated, "Our focus during these campaigns was on the shops and garages along Mohammad bin Al-Qasim Street. The aim was to monitor any violations related to their operations, including infringements against garage owners breaching municipal laws, such as violations related to cleanliness and road occupancy."

Al-Farhan emphasized that these campaigns are part of their daily routine, ensuring that shops and garages, particularly in industrial zones, comply with municipal laws. Numerous violations were documented against shop owners who failed to adhere to municipal requirements and laws.

Director of the Inspection and Control Department at the Environment Public Authority, Nada Al-Dabash, highlighted the authority's participation in the campaign to monitor environmental violations. She explained that the team identified various violations, including the unauthorized use of outdoor spaces and non-compliance with environmental and engineering requirements in facilities.

Al-Dabash outlined the penalties for violations, stating that violating Article 18 of the Environmental Law could result in fines ranging from 5,000 to 50,000 dinars. Additionally, violations falling under Article 53 carry a penalty of up to 30,000 dinars. The severity of the penalty is determined based on the nature of the violation.

She urged everyone to adhere to environmental laws and familiarize themselves with regulations provided by the Environment Public Authority on its official websites to prevent violations.

The campaign also saw the removal of neglected heavy equipment from outdoor yards, emphasizing the authorities' commitment to upholding laws and regulations governing such matters.

## Rulings enforcement eyed

### SMEs owners petition PAHW

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Continuing the plight faced by small and medium-sized enterprises referred to as "subcontractors," recent developments have seen several companies petitioning the "Public Authority for Housing Welfare" for assistance in enforcing judicial rulings involving 25 companies and private contractors, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These entities have secured judgments totaling 2 million dinars in collective dues against a first-class company, recognized by the Central Tenders Committee, which has previously served as the main contractor for numerous projects with the Authority.

According to sources, these companies have approached the PAHW, which typically withholds a portion of the main contractor's dues (as per the tender con-

tract), seeking support in recovering the subcontractors' outstanding payments related to the "labor housing" project in the Al-Shaddadiya area.

This request arises due to the main contractor's prolonged delay in settling these dues to the subcontractors, despite the project being completed over four years ago, and the main contractor having received full payment.

The sources emphasized that some contractors obtained judicial rulings as far back as April 2019, spanning more than four years. Yet, they face challenges in executing these rulings due to the main contractor's avoidance of payment, relocation of its headquarters, and disavowal by employees of the Judicial Judgments Implementation Department.

### Man electrocuted at Mutla'a project

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: An expatriate was electrocuted while working on a housing project in Mutla'a, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily added, the victim born in 1974, was taken to the Jahra Hospital but was declared dead upon arrival.

It is not known if the victim was a professional electrician.

**Coke in pens:** Air Customs officers thwarted an attempt to smuggle cocaine hidden inside pens coming from a European country, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security said the seized items have been referred to the General Department of Narcotics Control for inventory and to identify the person to whom the cocaine was shipped.

### 'Wanted by law'

### Drug addict held in Wafra

By Mansour Al-Sultan  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Personnel from the General Traffic Department, Ahmadi branch, have arrested an unidentified Kuwaiti for possessing a "cocktail" of narcotic substances.

The suspect was taken into custody from Wafra. The man was seen driving against the flow of traffic and as soon as he saw the police vehicle, he tried in vain to escape.

While issuing a citation the police officer discovered the man was behaving abnormal and could hardly speak clearly.

After his name was cross checked with the police authorities, it was discovered he was wanted by law to serve one year imprisonment for drug abuse. He was also wanted by law in three criminal cases, thefts and drugs.

During a precautionary search of his vehicle, police found 151 narcotic pills and two small bags, one contained Shabu and the other contained 'chemicals' and drug paraphernalia.

### Sabah Al-Ahmad sewage crisis overcome: minister

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and the Acting Minister of Public Works, Dr. Jassim Al-Ostad said the ministry has put an end to the sewage crisis in the Sabah Al-Ahmad with a new pumping station operating from Wednesday on an experimental basis to facilitate and alleviate the suffering of citizens living in that area, reports Al-Rai daily.

He pointed out that after operating the station, the environmental impact resulting from the sewage crisis in the Sabah Al-Ahmad region will be studied, and a fact-finding committee will be formed to assess the environmental damage and the shortcomings of the state's infrastructure, in addition to a comprehensive study of the health status of sewage and treated water to ensure the creation of a healthy environment compatible with international health standards.

He stressed the importance of structural change in the sanitary engineering sector in the Ministry, which lacks the required capabilities at the present time, which resulted in the crisis, indicating that the reasons for the delay in the sewage station for the city of South Al-Mutla'a are currently being determined in order to avoid a repetition of the Sabah Al-Ahmad city scenario.

Al-Ostad confirmed that the Umm Al-Hayman sewage station expansion project is one of the most important projects in the country's development plan and one of the pioneering projects in treating and utilizing wastewater.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) during an inspection tour that included the expansion project and the project's "sewage pumping station" in the Sabah Al-Ahmad region he said the project serves the areas of Al-Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorates, which cost the state about 1.5 billion dinars, and has an estimated capacity at 500,000 cubic meters.

He added that the importance of the station lies in benefiting from treated water for use in farms, cosmetic agriculture as well as the Kuwait Oil Company's needs for this water in harmony with the environment, as well as benefiting from the methane gas resulting from the treatment plants to generate energy for the station.

He explained that the project was built in cooperation with the PPP Authority, a German company, and a Kuwaiti company specialized in this field, noting that in the future the way will be opened for citizens to subscribe publicly to the station.

He stated that the state owns 60 percent of the company's shares -- 50 percent for citizens and 10 percent for the government, represented by the Kuwait Investment Authority, while Umm Al-Hayman Water Treatment Company owns 40 percent.

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Wishes alone cannot 'fulfill' demands; cooperation vital

"THE entire community celebrated the appointment of our esteemed colleague, Dr. Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem, as the Prime Minister of Kuwait. Well-wishes encompassed all aspects of life, addressing the delays in Kuwait's developmental, economic, and security processes," columnist Dr. Moudhi Abdulaziz Al-Humoud wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"This warm reception was not arbitrary; rather, it stemmed from our shared experiences with Dr. Muhammad as university colleagues. His close connection with everyone, coupled with the genuine care he showed to his students, fostered a sense of optimism. His leadership in Kuwait's foreign policy was not only observed but also respected by the international community.



Dr Al-Humoud

"Despite the prevailing optimism, it is essential to heed the words of poet Ahmad Shawqi, who emphasized that wishes alone do not fulfill demands.

"Real change requires active and positive participation. Dr. Muhammad's ministerial team must be enriched by individuals committed to making a meaningful contribution. Regrettably, there has been a trend of reluctance in assuming ministerial positions due to fears of defamation and unwarranted parliamentary challenges.

"Kuwait boasts many capable individuals who, given the chance and support, would eagerly contribute. The true participation needed extends to the people, who welcomed Dr. Muhammad's appointment. They must be prepared for the consequences of the reforms sought, particularly in economic restructuring.

"Populist financial proposals and indiscriminate subsidy policies must be reevaluated. Expenditure doors, wasteful practices, and corruption must be addressed to rebuild reserves depleted by previous extravagance.

"The reform agenda is multifaceted, ranging from immediate actions to long-term strategies. A key focus should be on rejuvenating the productive private sector, a historical cornerstone of Kuwait's economic success.

"This sector can diversify income streams and position Kuwait competitively in the region. Success in these endeavors hinges on the strength, commitment, and integrity of the team assembled by the Prime Minister.

"The National Assembly plays a pivotal role as the second arm of governance. Cooperation between the assembly and the government is crucial for steering Kuwait back onto the path of development. Representatives must earnestly work to alter public perceptions of their performance. Let us seize this opportunity to avoid future regrets, praying for divine assistance in serving our beloved country."

Also:

"Approximately three weeks ago, I came across a scanned letter circulating on social media, originating from the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Ms. Anwar Al-Hamdan. The letter was addressed to the As-

sistant Undersecretary for Public Education, instructing all school administrations to cease interactions with systems that transfer student and teacher data to unaccredited entities affiliated with the Ministry. This directive aimed to safeguard the privacy of sensitive information," columnist Dr. Abdul Latif bin Nakhi wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"However, this decision triggered dissatisfaction among some parents who were relying on electronic platforms for various services. These platforms, seemingly created by a Kuwaiti teacher heading the art education department in a ministry school, offered valuable features.

"Discontented parents argue that these electronic platforms significantly improved communication and collaboration between parents and schools, positively impacting student performance. The platform allowed parents real-time access to recommendations, observations, and updated data concerning their children's behavior and academic progress, along with general educational information like exam dates and school holidays.

"While the Undersecretary's commitment to protecting student and teacher data is commendable, there is a notable but intriguing aspect to the letter. On one hand, it encourages schools to reach out to the Ministry's Information Systems Department to identify electronic services not currently available on the approved platforms.

"However, some questioned why the Ministry did not seek guidance from the banned platform or involve the expertise of the Kuwaiti teachers responsible for its development in enhancing the Ministry's official systems.

"Critics also pointed out the absence of an executive timetable for the development of the Ministry's electronic platform in the letter.

"Therefore, a call is made for the Undersecretary to provide school administrations and parents with an estimated timetable for the development of the Ministry's electronic platform. Additionally, a suggestion is made to temporarily lift the ban on the banned electronic platform during the transitional period, with management transferred to the Ministry's Information Systems Department, respecting the intellectual property rights of the platform's owner.

"In conjunction with these proposals, there is a call for the Ministry to issue and update documents on protecting students' privacy and data, outlining policies, defining types of shared information, and specifying authorized individuals. Furthermore, a plea is made for the Ministry to issue and update an "Information Security" document to safeguard stored and circulated data from sabotage, malicious attacks, and unauthorized access.

"As the Kuwaiti teacher behind the banned platform is unknown personally, there is no moral hesitation in urging the Ministry to acknowledge and honor this teacher for their effective initiative. Additionally, a call is made for the Ministry to launch a program, in collaboration with relevant bodies, to sponsor outstanding educational initiatives by teachers."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

## SPIN & WIN

### JANUARY REWARDS

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## 'All articles approved and all the profits ... preserved without change'

## Labor union elated over non-tampering of private oil sector law

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Private Oil Sector Labor Union Saud Al-Enezi revealed to Al-Seyassah the scenario prior to the adoption of the private oil sector law.

He explained that the law consists of 17 articles. There was an intention by some parties to cancel and amend seven articles related to fundamental gains for the benefit of national cadres working in the private oil sector, numbering a total of 14,000 Kuwaitis as per the latest census.

With the insistence, efforts and co-

operation of the members of the Human Resources Committee in the National Assembly and the Private Oil Sector Labor Union, the opportunity was missed for tampering with any article.

Accordingly, all 17 articles were approved and all the profits of private oil sector workers were preserved without

change until this insistence bore fruit on approving the adoption of the private oil sector law by the relevant parliamentary committee and referring it to a vote.

Al-Enezi said he hopes it will be voted on by the National Assembly as soon as possible.

He stressed that the adoption of such

laws is a positive step that benefits Kuwaiti youth working in the private sector, particularly those working in the private oil sector.

Al-Enezi expressed his surprise that the private oil companies that implement projects for government oil companies have not met the requirement of 30-percent Kuwaitiza-

tion.

He expressed gratitude to the representatives of the Human Resources Committee in the National Assembly - Faris Al-Otaibi, Bader Nashmi, Jarrah Al-Fawzan, and Abdullah Al-Anbai - as well as the representatives of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and the Ministry of Oil.

## KPA triumphs as violating firms ordered to pay over KD22 mln

'Decrease seen in 2023 appointment rate in MEW'

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Informed sources revealed a decrease in the rate of appointments in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy in the year 2023 compared to those scheduled to be appointed by about 1,612 employees, which is 63 percent compared to the year 2022.

They explained that the number of employees appointed in 2023 reached 2,729, compared to 4,341 employees in the year 2022.

The total number of employees in the ministry was 34,511 in the past year, including 33,640 Kuwaitis, which is 97.5 percent, while the number of non-Kuwaitis was 871.

The sources attributed the decline

in the number of appointees in the ministry to the lack of job vacancies and the large numbers that were appointed in the last three years, which reached approximately 13,000.

Meanwhile, the ministry intends to register 159,000 items (cables, bulbs, water pipes, meters and other materials in its stores on the Oracle inventory management system in the government finance department. The total financial value of these materials amounts to KD 58.558 million.

## Audit

The sources explained that the data for these materials will be recorded on the aforementioned system through a detailed audit of each item separately, in accordance with the provisions of control over the mechanism for disbursing and following up these materials, as they are public funds that must be preserved and in implementation of article 1 of the general provisions of circular No. 10/2016.

The registration of these materials in the ministry's warehouses was supposed to be registered in 2016 in all the ministry's warehouses, but

the slow documentary cycle and correspondence between the ministry and the Ministry of Finance and the large number of these materials prevented the implementation of this registration procedure.

The implementation of this procedure will remove an important observation from the State Audit Bureau's observations that are taken to the ministry annually and recorded in the annual performance evaluation report, especially since the current status of these materials means that there is a mismatch between all the materials present in the ministry's stores and their number in the annual inventory committee report, which prevents tight control over them.

In another development, Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) has confirmed the issuance of final court rulings obligating companies to pay compensation amounting to more than KD22 million and to put the violating companies on the blacklist; such that they will no longer be allowed to register to operate at Shuwaikh Port and Shuaiba Port, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, the authority revealed this is the result of its serious follow-up on the necessity of confronting all forms of infringement on public funds and preventing the illegal practices of any company, with emphasis on the provision of an attractive environment for investment and improving maritime logistic services in the country.

It also stressed the importance of taking the necessary legal measures to ensure that the State's capabilities are not violated, removing the violating parties through proper lawsuits, and providing the Legal Advice and Legislation Department with all the evidence and documents necessary to file these lawsuits.

It then expressed pride in the Kuwaiti judiciary's announcement of a ruling obligating one of the companies to pay KD20 million compensation to the authority with the 'res judicata' issued by the Court of Cassation; in addition to two companies ordered to pay KD2.7 million -- their registration fees for operating as a container handling contractor in Shuaiba Port from July 2002 to December 2015.



Ms. Mayce El Mostafa during the panel discussion.



Ms. Mayce El Mostafa and Dr. Shihanah AlMutairi.



Dr. Shihanah AlMutairi during the panel discussion.

## 'Commitment unwavering'

## AUK's faculty and staff members lead Climate Action at the COP 28

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The American University of Kuwait (AUK) distinguished itself at the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Dubai, showcasing the unwavering commitment of its staff and faculty to climate leadership.

Dr. Shihanah AlMutairi, vice chair of PRME Middle East and assistant dean of the College of Business and Economics (CBE) at AUK, highlighted AUK's commitment to sustainability. This is through the institution's involvement in the MENA Business Schools Alliance for Sustainability (MEBAS) and the integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) into program learning goals. Through open-source collaboration and initiatives like PRME and MEBAS, AUK aims to nurture a generation that is knowledgeable and proactive in making a sustainable and meaningful difference.

Ms. Mayce El Mostafa, director of campus services at AUK, also played a pivotal role as a panelist and attendee at COP 28.

Alongside influential figures in the industry and academia, Ms. Mayce participated in a panel titled "Climate Leadership & ESG Governance as an enabler of Sustainable Growth." This platform facilitated a rich discussion on the changing business scene, sustainability challenges, and the crucial role of educational institutions in shaping climate-literate leaders.

She also shared insights into AUK's journey towards sustainability, highlighting the University's commitment to implementing sustainability across teaching, research, operations, and community outreach. She further detailed AUK's initiatives, including a focus on urban farming, and reducing food-to-table life cycle effects.

As COP 28 concluded, Ms. Mayce El Mostafa and Dr. Shihanah AlMutairi stood as beacons of change, emphasizing that education and leadership play a critical role in addressing climate challenges. Their contributions at COP 28 reflect AUK's commitment to not only educate but to actively lead the way towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

## UCCS vows to confront any attempt to create food shortage in country

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Head of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (UCCS) Musab Al-Mulla affirmed that the union will confront any attempt to create a shortage crisis of some consumer goods.

He said this in a statement to Al-Seyassah during a dinner party he held on the occasion of his victory of the presidency of the Union of Cooperative Societies the day before yesterday evening.

Al-Mulla explained that the egg crisis was addressed through two approaches, the first through coordination and direct communication with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, which resulted in the issuance of a decision to ban export, which is a first step that addressed part of the problem. The second approach to resolve the crisis was to meet with egg producing companies and discuss the problems they face.

The meeting was positive, and it ended with a consensus on many demands so that what happened in the egg crisis would not reoccur. He stressed that the union will face a shortage of any commodity in the cooperative societies in accordance with the legal frameworks.

Al-Mulla said, "As we can provide any

commodity that citizens need, we do not want there to be any shortage of any commodity. The union's doors are open to all, either companies or suppliers.

"Our concern in the union is to serve citizens and consumers, which is our work motto. There will not be any price increases, as the decision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is clear in this regard. If there is an amendment or mechanism, we will follow this same mechanism. What matters to us is quality and price for the consumer, and we will not give up on that."

He revealed a new direction for developing cooperation products by increasing and developing cooperation products and making sure to provide them in all cooperative societies in a way that is in the interest of the consumer.

Al-Mulla indicated that there will be continuous coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs to discuss amending a number of decisions to reduce the financial burdens on cooperative societies, discuss their demands, and reduce pressure on companies through some decisions so that companies can work without pressure and do not have an excuse to demand a rise in their prices.

He thanked everyone who attended the dinner party on the occasion of his victory as president of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies.

## Major events in Kuwait for 2023

## Kuwaiti figures who passed away:

Jan 31: Renowned Kuwaiti author Fadhil Al-Talji passed away after a rich career in poetry writing, storytelling and literary criticism.

April 8: Actor Faisal Al-Bleyyes passed away following a long struggle with the disease.

May 6: TV presenter Obaid Al-Otaibi passed away at age of 59.

May 12: Singer Abdulkareem Abdulqader passed away at 81. His artistic journey lasted more than six decades.

May 13: Redha Marafi, former player Qadisia SC and National football teams, passed away.

May 25: Actor Ahmad Johar passed away at 65.

July 16: The former Assistant Secretary-General of the Islamic Antiquities Sector at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Litera-

ture (NCCAL) Abdulkareem Al-Ghadban, passed away after a journey full of achievements.

Aug 21: Actor Bader Al-Tayyar passed away after a long journey of contributions to Kuwaiti theater and TV.

Aug 27: The imam and preacher of the Abubaker Al-Siddiq Mosque and the imam of the Grand Mosque, Sheikh Khaled Al-Saeedi, passed away.

Aug 27: Lyricist Yousef Nasser passed away after a life full of giving to the modern Kuwaiti song.

Sept 25: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, former minister of mail and telephone and minister of news and guidance passed away.

Dec 15: Prominent Kuwaiti writer and poet, Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain, passed away. (KUNA)

  
**January**  
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Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
<b>NOW</b>	<b>NOW</b>
<b>BHD 53.361/-net</b>	<b>BHD 119.173/-net</b>
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
<b>NOW</b>	<b>NOW</b>
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## PAHW's dept completes 22,363 transactions in December

## MoH launches first aid training program '4 Minutes to Save a Life'

**By Marwa Al-Bahravi**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff  
and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Medical Emergency Department of the Ministry of Health launched a training program on first aid under the title "4 Minutes to Save a Life" in the presence of more than 150 participants from four sectors over a period of four days.

In a press statement issued Tuesday, Director of the Medical Emer-

gency Department at the Ministry of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti explained that the training program comes within the framework of a systematic initiative to spread the culture of First Aid and other life-saving techniques using cardiopulmonary resuscitation or using simple devices. The program was organized with the cooperation of the educational, military and professional sectors, which hosted Ben Motdjan, a British expert specialized in medical

emergencies. The program aims to achieve common goals to enhance health culture regarding first aid and cardiac resuscitation.



**PAHW transactions in Dec:** Statistics issued by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) revealed that the Citizens Service Department completed 22,363 transactions in December, including 240 new housing applications and 1,207 allocation transactions, reports Al-

Anba daily.

The statistics also confirmed that the department completed 330 distribution transactions, 264 documentation transactions, 66 collection transactions and opened 90 new files related to rented housing.

The Reception Department finalized 200 rental allowance transactions and issued 160 'To Whom It May Concern' certificates; while the Telephone Customer Service unit in the Communications Department received 1,659 direct

calls from citizens, and the Statistics Unit at the Monitoring Department submitted 103 petitions submitted to the Requests and Allocation Sector and the Distribution and Documentation Sector.

The number of transactions submitted through the website reached 14 and the services provided through the Sahl government application totaled 18,030.

Meanwhile, Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promo-

tion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshal Al-Jaber recently issued a decision to renew the registration of 17 offices and companies at the authority, reports Al-Anba daily.

Article One of Ministerial Resolution No. 515/2023 stipulates the renewal of the registration of 17 companies and offices in the register of companies and offices accredited by KDIPA for a period of one year from the date of issuance of the registration certificates.

## Kuwait to adopt

Continued from Page 1

Emphasizing the strictest legal measures against offices violating ministerial decisions and the Domestic Workers Law, the statement aims to safeguard the rights of citizens.

Citizens are encouraged to promptly contact the workforce hotline at (96966595) and the Ministry of Commerce at (135) to submit complaints in case offices do not adhere to the prices outlined in Ministerial Resolution No. (2) of 2024, issued on January 7, 2024.

The resolution, announced by the Minister of Commerce and Industry and the Minister of the State Department for Youth Affairs, Muhammad Al-Aiban, establishes the cost of recruiting domestic workers, inclusive of the travel ticket, based on collaborative efforts with the Public Authority for Manpower and in response to recommendations from Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior.

## Kuwait bolsters

Continued from Page 1

appropriate work environment that guarantees the rights of all workers in various sectors, including Bangladeshis. He confirmed the commitment of both parties to coordinate their efforts regarding the Bangladeshi workers.

He also praised the strong and distinguished historical relations between the two friendly countries, stressing that both countries have always been keen on maintaining this good relationship.

On the other hand, Ambassador Ashiq Al-Zaman expressed his gratitude to Kuwait in general, and to PAM in particular, for exerting tremendous efforts in dealing with issues concerning the Bangladeshis in Kuwait. He emphasized his country's constant endeavor to develop relations between the two countries in the interest of all parties.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the cooperation mechanisms in the field of recruiting and employing Bangladeshis in Kuwait. They also tackled some issues related to Bangladeshi workers and ways to solve their problems.

## 'Kuwait must

Continued from Page 1

Azour also highlighted that where the economic impact of the conflict is acute or risks are elevated, prudent crisis management and precautionary policies will be critical in the near term.

He stressed that MENA countries, especially those with already diminishing policy space and significant structural challenges, should not lose sight of the important reform and resilience agenda, adding that across the MENA region, the combined effects of global headwinds, domestic challenges, and geopolitical risks are weighing on economic momentum.

"Undoubtedly, the crisis will reshape the region's future. This crisis could inaugurate an era of high uncertainty for so many countries if not properly addressed and absent a lasting ceasefire, even if the conflict remains contained," Azour said.

He underlined the strong partnership between the IMF and Arab countries, highlighting IMF's continued efforts to help countries mitigate the impact of adverse shocks and spillovers, stressing that the IMF stands ready to step up needed support through policy advice, technical assistance, and financing to countries in the region.

## Foreigners Residency

Continued from Page 1

Affairs Committee on the proposed amendment of the Foreigners Residency Law;

- Report of the fact-finding committee tasked to investigate the armament deals (Eurofighter and Caracal helicopters);

- Report of the Oil and Energy Committee on the proposal to establish a national shareholding company for advanced petrochemical industries;

- Reports of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee on these proposals -- amend the law on establishing the Public Institution for Social Security in order to grant zero interest loans to retirees, increase the cost of living allowance, transform Kuwait Airways Corporation into a shareholding national company, and exempt the heirs of those who obtained loans from Kuwait Credit Bank from paying the remaining installments in case of the death of the borrowers;

- Reports of the Interior and Defense Affairs Committee on the proposal to amend the Traffic and Police laws;

- Report of the Illegal Residents Affairs Committee about the bills on granting social, civil and career rights to Bedouins;

- Report of the Human Resources Development Committee on the pro-

posed amendment of Civil Service Commission Law number 15/1979,

- Report of the Public Funds Protection Committee on the proposed amendment of the Public Funds Protection Law;

- Report of the Health, Social and Labor Affairs Committee on the proposed amendment of the Cooperative Societies Law;

- Report of the Family, Women and Children Affairs Committee on the proposal to grant rights to the children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis;

- Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on the military cooperation treaty between Kuwait and Turkey;

- Request of several MPs to discuss the strategic alternative to the salary scale with the government;

- Request to discuss the factors leading to price hikes;

- Request to discuss the procedures and criteria adopted to fill up vacant supervisory posts;

- Request to form a fact-finding committee to investigate the Dhaman Hospital issue and violations recorded by the State Audit Bureau.

In another development, MPs Mubarak Al-Tasha, Adel Al-Damkhi, Hamad Al-Obaid, Abdullah Fahad and Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi have submitted a bill on amending Personal Status Law number 51/1984, particularly Clause A of Article 189, such that the order of granting custody of the children in case of divorce shall be as follows: mother, grandmother (mother of the female spouse), father, aunt (sister of the female spouse), sister of the female spouse's mother, sister of the female spouse's father, grandmother of the father and father's aunt.

The existing law puts the father in seventh place among the relatives who could be granted custody of the children in case of divorce. The lawmakers explained that their bill is aimed at correcting this, considering the essential role of the father in raising the children.

Meanwhile, Secretary of Inter-Parliamentary Group MP Muhammad Al-Mahan has called on the parliaments of Islamic countries to push for ceasefire in Gaza and to stop the genocide being committed by the Zionist entity against the Palestinians. He stressed the need to provide safe passages for the affected as a humanitarian gesture.

Al-Mahan made the statement at the recent meeting of the Permanent Palestinian Committee in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation hosted by the Iranian Parliament; during which he also called for confronting the Israeli attacks and foiling attempts to displace the people in Gaza. He stressed the need to file a case against the Israeli prime minister, and the political and military leaders, as they are war criminals. He stated that Israel and its supporter countries must respect the international legitimacy.

Treasurer of the group MP Hamad Al-Obaid and member MP Fahd bin Jame'e attended the meeting as well.

In addition, Undersecretary of the group MP Hamad Al-Matar, as well as members MPs Dawoud Maarefi and Shuaib Shaaban, will attend the first meeting of the Palestine Committee at the Asian Parliaments Union.

On the other hand, MP Fahd bin Jame'e forwarded queries to acting Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah about the role of the National Council for Cybersecurity in protecting the websites of ministries and other public institutions, and addressing the loopholes that hackers use to infiltrate these websites and access important data.

He wants to know the agreements or contracts that the council signed with local and international companies and individuals concerned with cybersecurity, organizational structure of the council, regulations for the recruitment of officials in the council, number of its employees, their nationalities, qualifications, jobs, salaries and allowances, and if any of them have been appointed without publishing recruitment advertisements since the establishment of the council till date.

He also asked acting Minister of Information, Endowments and Islamic Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi about the number of electronic newspapers and media services that obtained licenses, mechanism for monitoring these entities, measures taken against the electronic media services without licenses, censorship regulations, and number of violations recorded since January 2020 till date.

## Oil tanker

Continued from Page 1

That has raised the risk of possible retaliatory strikes by U.S.-led forces now patrolling the vital waterway, especially after a United Nations Security Council vote on Wednesday condemning the Houthis and as American and British officials warned of potential consequences over the attacks.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged the seizure in a brief report late Thursday afternoon, hours after armed men boarded it. IRNA said the seizure came as the result of a court or-

der, without elaborating.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which provides warnings to sailors in the Middle East, said Thursday's seizure began early in the morning, in the waters between Oman and Iran in an area transited by ships coming in and out of the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Arabian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil traded passes.

The U.K. military-run group described receiving a report from the ship's security manager of hearing "unknown voices over the phone" alongside with the ship's captain. It said that further efforts to contact the ship had failed and that the men who boarded the vessel wore "black military-style uniforms with black masks."

The private security firm Ambrey said that "four to five armed persons" boarded the ship, which it identified as the oil tanker St. Nikolas. It said that the men had covered the surveillance cameras as they boarded.

The tanker had been off the city of Basra, Iraq, loading crude oil bound for Aliaga, Turkey, for the Turkish refinery firm Tupras. Satellite-tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press last showed the Marshall Islands-flagged tanker had turned and headed toward the port of Bandar-e Jask in Iran.

The St. Nikolas was earlier named the Suez Rajan, associated with the Greek shipping company Empire Navigation. In a statement to the AP, Athens-based Empire Navigation acknowledged losing contact with the vessel, which has a crew of 18 Filipinos and one Greek national. The company did not elaborate.

Attention began focusing on the Suez Rajan in February 2022, when the group United Against Nuclear Iran said it suspected the tanker carried oil from Iran's Khargh Island, its main oil distribution terminal in the Persian Gulf. Satellite photos and shipping data analyzed at the time by the AP supported the allegation.

For months, the ship sat in the South China Sea off the northeast coast of Singapore before suddenly sailing for the Texas coast without explanation. The vessel discharged its cargo to another tanker in Houston as part of a Justice Department order.

## Palestine FM

Continued from Page 1

It blamed Israeli occupation's on-going genocide and displacement of the people of Gaza on recurrent international failure to take concrete steps to hold Israel accountable and enforce international laws and consensus.

Reiterating continued coordination and support, the ministry thanked the South African leadership and people for taking this courageous step to mobilize the international community to expose Israel's genocide.

A continent away from the war in Gaza, South Africa accused Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinians there and pleaded with the United Nations' top court on Thursday to order an immediate halt to the country's military operation. Israel has vehemently denied the allegations.

South African lawyers said during the opening arguments that the latest Gaza war is part of a decadeslong oppression of the Palestinians by Israel.

The two-day hearing is the public side of a landmark case, one of the most significant to be heard in an international court and which goes to the heart of one of the world's most intractable conflicts.

South Africa is seeking binding preliminary orders to compel Israel to stop its military campaign in Gaza, in which more than 23,000 people have died, according to the health ministry which is run by Hamas.

"Genocides are never declared in advance, but this court has the benefit of the past 13 weeks of evidence that shows incontrovertibly a pattern of conduct and related intention that justifies as a plausible claim of genocidal acts," South African lawyer Adila Hassim told the judges and audience in the packed, ornate room of the Peace Palace in The Hague.

"Nothing will stop the suffering except an order from this court," she said.

Israel, however, says it is battling a fierce enemy in the Gaza Strip that carried out the deadliest attack on its territory, killing more than 1,200 people, since its creation in 1948. Israel says it is following international law and does its utmost to avoid harm to civilians. It blames Hamas for the high toll, saying its enemy embeds in residential areas.

South Africa turns a deaf ear to such arguments, insisting Israel committed genocide by design.

"The scale of destruction in Gaza, the targeting of family homes and civilians, the war being a war on children, all make clear that genocidal intent is both understood and has been put into practice. The articulated intent is the destruction of Palestinian life," said lawyer Tembeka Ngcukaitobi.

"What state would admit to a genocidal intent? Yet the distinctive feature of this case has not been the silence as such, but the reiteration and repetition of genocidal speech throughout every sphere of the state in Israel," he said.

## 'Awqaf Ministry' signs 5 deals to arrange Kuwait Hajj affairs

3rd Hajj and Umrah Services Confab ends

JEDDAH, Jan 11, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs signed five agreements on Thursday to arrange hajj affairs for the Islamic year 1445, and provide them services along with the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, through participating in the third edition of the Hajj and Umrah Services Conference and Exhibition in Jeddah.

The first and second agreements included determining the numbers of pilgrims, accommodation, setting up tents for Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah, as well as providing food and the necessary supplies.

The third and fourth agreements arranged receiving pilgrims and facilitating their travel procedure, providing transportation during hajj, while the fifth agreement included providing Zamzam water in the pilgrims' residence.

Al-Mutairi affirmed the ministry's keenness to provide the best care and services to Kuwaiti pilgrims, and expressed gratitude for Saudi Arabia's reception and hospitality while receiving Kuwait's participating delegation.

For his part, the Consul General of Kuwait in Jeddah and the permanent representative of Kuwait to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to OIC Mohammad Al-Mutairi affirmed to KUNA the undergoing preparations for arranging Kuwaiti pilgrims' affairs, and facilitate Hajj travel procedures through having



Dr Bader Al-Mutairi

## Insights from 6th Arab Confab

## Kuwait Firefighting Force takes lead in Disaster Risk Reduction

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Director of Kuwait Firefighting Force (KFF) Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Makrad presided over the meeting of the Supreme Committee of the Sixth Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2024, which is being held in Kuwait, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The committee is in charge of taking the necessary steps to achieve the community security goals and follow up the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Chairman of the committee and acting Deputy Director of the Human Resources Development Sector Major General Gamal Nasser reviewed the committee's decision and then informed the members who are from various State institutions about the roadmap for achieving the goals, particularly in terms of reducing disaster risks and ensuring the success of the conference.

National Liaison Officer Colonel Dr Mishari Al-Faras also looked into the progress in implementing the Sendai

Framework in Kuwait, the importance of Kuwait's hosting of the Arab Regional Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, and its role in leading the Arab region in reducing disaster risks.

On the other hand, KFF Director Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Makrad recently met with a delegation from the National Guard tasked to follow up the cooperation protocol and to present and approve the time plan for activating the terms of joint cooperation between KFF and the National Guard for the year 2024.

Al-Makrad praised the active role and coordinated efforts of the two parties in achieving excellence in institutional cooperation and developing joint work among State institutions and agencies by activating such protocols.

The time plan includes setting dates for coordination meetings between the two sides, media campaigns, joint field exercises, periods of coexistence between officers and members of the two sides, and participation in the training courses organized by KFF for members of the National Guard Fire and Rescue Unit. These courses focus on firefighting and marine rescue operations under the supervision of the Fire Force Training Department in the Human Resources Development Sector of KFF.

communications between a team from Kuwait Foreign Affairs Ministry and the concerned authorities in Saudi Arabia.

The Consul General expressed gratitude to Kuwait's leadership for providing care to Kuwaiti pilgrims, and thanked Saudi Arabia for its great efforts to best serve pilgrims from all over the world.

Head of the Kuwaiti delegation, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi represented Kuwait in signing the agreements, while Deputy Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Abdulfatah Mashat represented the Saudi side.

The Kuwaiti delegation partici-

pating in the conference includes, in addition to Undersecretary Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi, the Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments Mohammad Al-Aleem, Director of the Hajj and Umrah Affairs Department Sattam Al-Muzain, and the Superintendent of Hajj and Umrah Affairs Abdullah Al-Baejan.

The conference, which began on January 8 and concluded today, was organized by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in cooperation with the Pilgrims Service Program, and discussed initiatives, products, services, and investment in innovative technologies in the Hajj and Umrah sector.

## Major events in Kuwait during 2023

## Sports:

July 25: Kuwaiti fencing champion Yousef Al-Shamlan defeated his Ukrainian rival in the 2023 World Fencing Championships competitions held in the Italian city of Milan, rising as the first Kuwaiti to rank 32 as one of the 32 best fencers in the world.

July 25: Kuwaiti Hussein Al-Musallam was appointed President of the World Aquatics for the next eight years.

July 27: Kuwait was listed in the first group in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers and the 2027 Asian Cup.

July 30: Kuwaiti champion Mohammad Borabei achieved first place in the professionals' category while his colleague Mohammad Al-Baz achieved second place in the category in the French International Championship of the game.

Aug 3: The Kuwaiti Handball Federation signed Algerian coach Saeed Hegazy to lead the first team.

Aug 23: Former Kuwaiti club Kazma and currently Emirati (Hatta) player Shebib Al-Khalidi won the Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Golden Cup for the best local football player in the 2022-2023 season.

Aug 24: Kuwaiti shooter Khaled Al-Mudhaf qualified to participate in the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

Aug 27: Kuwait Club won the Arab Club Championship for handball after beating Egypt's Zamalek (1-3).

Aug 27: Kuwaiti rally racer Meshari Al-Dhafeeri achieved first place as part of the fifth round of the Baja Rally World Championship.

Sept 2: Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah was elected President of the Asian Shooting Confederation for the next four years, by acclamation.

Sept 5: Kuwait obtained four seats at the permanent committees of the West Asian Diving Federation.

Sept 9: Athlete Al-Zahraa Kamshad became the first Kuwaiti athlete to achieve a global position in the Women's World Weightlifting Championship.

Sept 12: The Kuwait Olympic football team qualified for the Asian Football Cup finals after tying with its Iraqi counterpart with a score of (2-2) in the last matches of the sixth group of the qualifiers.

Sept 13: Kuwaiti Taekwondo team concluded its participation in the fifth annual Beirut Taekwondo Championship with 10 medals, one gold, four silver, and five bronze.

Sept 15: The Asian Football Confederation selected a team of Kuwaiti referees to officiate matches in the finals of the Asian Cup Championship in Qatar.

Sept 17: Kuwaiti racer Rashid Al-Dawas achieved first

place in an international Jet Ski Championship in Sharjah.

Sept 20: The Warriors team was crowned champion of the first Super Cup for Men's Ice Hockey (2023-24), while the team Wildcats won the women's category title in the tournament organized by the Kuwaiti Winter Games Club.

Sept 24: The Kuwaiti kiteboarding team won the best team award in the 14th session of the King of Lagoon championship, hosted by Egypt.

Sept 25: Player Yousef Al-Shamlan brought Kuwait its first medal in the 19th Asian Games held in China after winning a bronze medal in the fencing competition.

Sept 27: Kuwaiti Abdullah Al-Terqi Al-Rashidi won the first gold medal for Kuwait at the 19th Asian Games in China in the skeet shooting competition.

Oct 2: Runner Yaqoub Al-Yoha won a gold medal for the 110 meters race in the 19th Asian games.

Oct 5: Kuwait Handball team achieved bronze medal after triumphing over Japanese counterpart in 19th Asian games.

Oct 7: Karate player Fahad Al-Ajmi won gold medal in 19th Asian games.

Oct 7: Kuwaiti Rashed Al-Dawas came second in annual jet ski competition in Arizona, the United States.

Oct 8: Kuwaiti rally racer Meshari Al-Dhafeeri became champion of Middle East Rally championship.

Oct 8: Kuwait national Karate team was awarded the bronze medal in China-hosted 19th Asian games.

Oct 9: Kuwait Jet Ski team won 10 medals in world championship in Arizona.

Oct 17: The national team won a gold medal and three bronze in part of 13th Arab archery championship in Riyadh.

Oct 23: Kuwaiti referees were chosen by the international ice hockey federation to officiate world games.

Nov 9: Kuwait Karate team won five medals in Asian youth championship.

Dec 1: Qadisiya club player, Abdulaziz Al-Shatti, won Epee fencing competition.

Dec 3: Kuwaiti Olympic Committee elected by acclamation new board of directors for the years (2023-27) headed by Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah.

Dec 15: Equestrian Ali Al-Kharafi took the gold medal in Saudi championship in Riyadh.

Dec 15: Kuwaiti racer Fares Ramadhan from the Kuwait Water Sports Club team won first place in the novice ski stock category in the Jet Ski World Cup, Thailand.

## World News Roundup



In this photo provided by the Office of the President of the Republic of Estonia, Estonia's President Alar Karis, centre, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, centre right, attend a welcoming ceremony, in Tallinn, Estonia, Thursday, Jan. 11, 2024. (AP)

## Ukraine's Zelenskyy rules out a cease-fire with Russia

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday ruled out a cease-fire in his country's war with Russia, saying the Kremlin's forces would use the pause to rearm and regroup before overwhelming Kyiv's troops.

"A pause on the Ukrainian battlefield will not mean a pause in the war," Zelenskyy said during a visit to Estonia.

"A pause would play into (Russia's) hands," he said. "It might crush us afterward." Limited cease-fires have occasionally been proposed since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022 but have never taken hold.

Both sides are scrambling to replenish their weapons after 22 months of fighting and with the prospect of a protracted conflict. With the roughly 1,500-kilometer (630-mile) front

line mostly static during freezing winter weather, they both require artillery shells, missiles and drones that enable long-range strikes.

Zelenskyy noted that Moscow is allegedly buying artillery shells and missiles from North Korea and drones from Iran.

Zelenskyy was in the Estonian capital Tallinn as part of a two-day swing through Baltic countries which have been among Ukraine's staunchest supporters in the war.

The Ukrainian president is pressing allies to provide his country with more support, after already receiving billions of dollars in military aid from its Western allies.

"Ukraine needs more, it needs better weapons," Estonian President Alar Karis said during a joint news conference with Zelenskyy at the Presidential Palace. (AP)

## Europe

## 'Remigration'

## Germany denounces alleged far-right plot

BERLIN, Jan 11, (AP) — German Chancellor **Olaf Scholz** on Thursday sharply condemned alleged plans by members of far-right groups who supposedly met recently at a mansion outside Berlin to devise a plot to deport millions of immigrants, even those with German citizenship, if the groups take power.

The alleged plan, which was published in an article by the investigative journalists' group **Correctiv** on Wednesday, has led to an uproar in the country because it echoes the Nazis' ideology of deporting all people who are not ethnically German.

Scholz said Germany will not allow anyone living in the country to be judged based on whether they have foreign roots or not.

"We protect everyone - regardless of origin, skin color or how uncomfortable someone is for fanatics with assimilation fantasies," the chancellor wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

"Anyone who opposes our free democratic order" is a case for Germany's domestic intelligence office and the judiciary, he said, adding that learning the lessons from Germany's history should not just have been lip service.

Scholz was referring to the Nazis' Third Reich dictatorship in 1933-45, which made race ideology, ostracism and deportation of Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals and many others the cornerstone of its politics.

The Nazis' belief in the superiority of their own "Aryan" race eventually led to the murder of 6 million Jews and other minorities in the Holocaust.

According to the report by **Correctiv**, members of the far-right **Alternative for Germany** party, or **AfD**, and the extremist **Identarian Movement** participated in the meeting in November.

At the meeting, a prominent member of the **Identarian Movement**, Austrian citizen **Martin Sellner**, presented his "remigration" vision for the deportation of immigrants, he confirmed to the German press agency **dpa**.

**Polish opposition frustrated:** Poland's right-wing opposition, frustrated over its recent loss of power, urged its supporters to protest Thursday against moves by the new pro-European Union government to take control of state broadcasters and the state news agency.

The **Law and Justice** party, which governed for eight years before losing October's parliamentary elections, called for a protest by "Free Poles" outside parliament. It portrayed the protest as a defense of democracy and free media, although during its time in power it was criticized for curbing media freedom.

It was unclear what the response would be, but emotions have been riding high over an escalating standoff between the current and the previous government. (AP)

**Vatican unveils plans:** The Vatican on Thursday unveiled plans for a yearlong restoration of the monumental **balduccino**, or canopy, over the main altar of St. Peter's Basilica, pledging to complete the work on Bernini's masterpiece before Pope Francis' big 2025 Jubilee.

The price tag? About 700,000 euros (\$770,000).

The restoration and conservation project, funded entirely by the **Knights of Columbus** and using the expertise of **Vatican Museums'** restorers, marks the first comprehensive work on the 10-story tall **balduccino** in 250 years.

The structure, which is positioned over the basilica's main altar to provide a ceremonial covering for the tomb of St. Peter underneath, dates from the 1620s-1630s, when Pope Urban VIII commissioned Gian Lorenzo Bernini to create a canopy for the apostles' tomb. (AP)

**Cyprus authorities criticized:** A migrants' rights organization on Thursday criticized authorities in Cyprus for failing to speak out against an explosion that damaged its offices following threats against it by what it calls far-right and extremist groups.

**Doros Polycarpou**, who heads the **Movement for Equality, Support, Anti-Racism** nongovernmental organization, said a makeshift explosive device detonated before dawn Jan. 5 just outside his office, causing extensive damage.

Polycarpou said a security camera opposite the spot where the explosive was placed wasn't working because the power was inexplicably cut at the time, even though other establishments adjacent to the offices had electricity. (AP)

## Politics

## Bomb threat at judge's home adds tension

## Trump's trial heads to closing arguments

NEW YORK, Jan 11, (AP) — Donald Trump's New York civil fraud trial is back in session Thursday for closing arguments after authorities responded to a bomb threat at the home of the judge who moved this week to prevent the former president from delivering his own closing statements.

Authorities responded to the threat at Judge Arthur Engoron's home on Long Island, a court official said. The proceedings are not expected to be delayed as a result.

Trump, the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination, has repeatedly disparaged the judge in the case, accusing him in a social media post Wednesday night of working closely with the New York Attorney General "to screw me."

At 5:30 a.m. on Thursday, hours before the trial's final day was set to begin, Nassau County police said they responded to a "swatting incident" at Engoron's Great Neck home. Nothing amiss was found at the location, officials said.

The false report comes days after a fake emergency call reporting a shooting at the home of the judge overseeing Trump's Capitol attack criminal case in Washington, D.C. The two incidents follow a spate of similar false reports at the homes of public officials in recent days.

On Wednesday, Engoron had nixed an unusual plan by Trump to deliver his own closing remarks in the courtroom, in addition to summations from his legal team, after lawyers for the former president would not agree to the judge's demand that he stick to "relevant" matters.

That will leave the last words to the lawyers in a trial over allegations that Trump exaggerated his wealth on financial statements he provided to

banks, insurance companies and others.

New York Attorney General **Letitia James**, a Democrat, wants the judge to impose \$370 million in penalties. Trump says he did nothing wrong, didn't lie about his fortune and is the victim of political persecution.

The former president had hoped to make that argument personally, but the judge - initially open to the idea - said no after a Trump lawyer missed a deadline for agreeing to ground rules. Among them, Engoron warned that Trump couldn't use his closing remarks to "deliver a campaign speech" or use the opportunity to impugn the judge and his staff.

Trump is still expected to be in court as a spectator, despite the death of his mother-in-law, **Amalija Knays**, and the launch of the presidential primary season Monday with the Iowa caucus.

Since the trial began Oct. 2, Trump has gone to court nine times to observe, testify and complain to TV cameras about the case, which he called a "witch hunt and a disgrace."

## Clashed

He clashed with Engoron and state lawyers during 3½ hours on the witness stand in November and remains under a limited gag order after making a disparaging and false social media post about the judge's law clerk.

Thursday's arguments are part of a busy legal and political stretch for Trump.

On Tuesday, he was in court in Washington, D.C., to watch appeals court arguments over whether he is immune from prosecution on charges that he plotted to overturn the 2020 election - one of four criminal cases against him. Trump has pleaded not guilty.

the planned delegation as a form of "official exchange." (AP)

**Biden's son to plead not guilty:** President **Joe Biden's** son will head back to court on Thursday for arraignment in Los Angeles on federal tax charges filed after the collapse of a plea deal that could have spared him the spectacle of a criminal trial during the 2024 campaign.

Hunter Biden is expected to plead not



Biden



Johnson

guilty to nine felony and misdemeanor tax offenses. The charges stem from what federal prosecutors say was a four-year scheme to skip out on paying the \$1.4 million he owed to the IRS and instead use the money to fund an extravagant lifestyle that by his own admission included drugs and alcohol. (AP)

**Speaker Johnson facing pushback:** As Speaker **Mike Johnson** gathered House Republicans behind closed doors Wednesday to sell the spending deal he reached with Democrats, one thing quickly became clear: many GOP lawmakers weren't buying it.

Rep. **Warren Davidson** of Ohio left early, saying he'd had enough.

"I'm not going to sit there and listen to that drivel, because he has no plans to do anything but surrender," Davidson said. In the afternoon, 13 Republicans refused to support a routine procedural vote setting the stage for considering three GOP-led bills. A similar revolt occurred in June when, for the first time in some 20 years, such a routine vote was defeated, essentially grinding the House to a halt. (AP)

## Philippines

## 'Peaceful way'

## Germany ready to help calm tensions in South China Sea

MANILA, Philippines, Jan 11, (AP) — Germany's top diplomat said Thursday that China's actions in the South China Sea (SCS) violate the rights of Asian coastal states like the Philippines and threaten freedom of navigation, but added that territorial disputes have to be resolved peacefully because "the world doesn't need another crisis."

**Annalena Baerbock**, who held talks with Philippine President **Ferdinand Marcos Jr.** and other top officials while visiting Manila, said Germany was ready to help de-escalate growing tensions and added that it was crucial to set up "mechanisms" to resolve the disputes peacefully and foster dialogue.

"There are truly rough winds blowing across the South China Sea and this is happening in the middle of one of the most dynamic economic regions of the world," she told a news conference in Manila, speaking through an interpreter.

"It is now important to set up mechanisms to solve tensions together in a peaceful way," she said without elaborating. "I think we all agree that the world doesn't need another crisis. There are too many crises at once."

In a symbolic gesture of Germany's support for the Philippines, **Baerbock** visited the coast guard headquarters in Manila and boarded a patrol ship, where she briefly flew one of a number of surveillance drones that Germany donated to the Philippines.

Philippine coast guard officials said the drones would help the country defend its territorial interests in the South China Sea, enforce maritime laws and undertake search and rescue missions during accidents at sea. Chinese officials did not immediately issue a reaction.

The decades-long territorial dispute escalated last year between Beijing and Manila, sparking fears it could degenerate into a major conflict that could involve the United States, a longtime treaty ally of the Philippines.

Chinese coast guard ships and accompanying vessels used military-grade laser and water cannons against Philippine coast guard and supply vessels and undertook dangerous maneuvers near disputed shoals, prompting the Philippines to file a large number of diplomatic protests against China, Philippine officials said.

The U.S. has repeatedly warned it is obligated to defend the Philippines if its forces, aircraft and ships come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. China has warned the U.S. and its allies not to meddle with what it says is a purely Asian dispute and build up its forces in the region, warning of unspecified consequences.

## America

## Unofficial delegation set for Taiwan:

The Biden administration will send an unofficial delegation comprised of former senior officials to Taiwan shortly after the self-governed island holds an election for a new president this weekend, a move that could upset Beijing in an already-fragile bilateral relationship.

A senior administration official confirmed the plan on Wednesday without offering more details, but said such a face-to-face meeting was the "most effective way" to engage the new Taiwanese government and convey U.S. policy in the region.

The official, briefing reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive plans, said the administration believed the move would contribute to peace and stability in the region.

Beijing, which claims that Taiwan is part of China and vows to unify with it eventually, said Thursday that it firmly opposes any official exchange between the U.S. and Taiwan. Foreign Ministry spokesperson **Mao Ning** didn't say whether China regards

## Taiwan

## Coercive measures

## China seen as aiming to sway Taiwan's elections

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Jan 11, (AP): Using military threats, diplomatic pressure, fake news and financial inducements for politicians, China is being accused of deploying a broad strategy to influence voters in Taiwan's elections to pick candidates who favor unification.

China's ultimate goal is to take control of the self-governing island democracy, whose high-tech economy supplies key components for computers, cell-phones and other electronic devices and ships much of the world's goods out from the Taiwan Strait. Beijing has long insisted Taiwan is part of China and must be regained, by military force if necessary, regardless of the views of the island's people.

Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu says China's "global objective is that they want to use Taiwan as a test ground. If they are able to successfully shape the results of the Taiwan elections, they will try to apply their tactics on other countries."

China has been sending warships and fighter jets near Taiwan on a near-daily basis in recent years, hoping to intimidate the island's 23 million people and wear down its military, which relies heavily on support from the United States. China has described Saturday's elections as a choice between war and peace.

While the numbers of such missions have dropped off slightly in recent days, Taiwan has reported a number of suspicious balloons traveling over the island from China. The Defense Ministry also sent out an air raid alert via cell phones about a Chinese rocket launch Tuesday that it later amended to describe as the placement of a satellite into space but on an "abnormal trajectory." It said the alert was justified by the potential threat to civilians on the ground in Taiwan.

Previous efforts to intimidate Taiwanese voters with missile launches and direct threats were largely seen as backfiring after the election of China critics in 1996 and 2000.

China has also restricted imports from Taiwan and invited local leaders on all-expenses-paid visits aimed at persuading them to press colleagues to support pro-China candidates in the elections for the island's president and 113-member legislature. Cases have been opened against dozens of ward officials for accepting such gifts in violation of Taiwanese law.

China in general refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of Taiwan's political institutions in keeping with the Communist Party's insistence that the democracy does not exist.

In line with that policy, China has not commented on Taiwan's upcoming elections. However, the head of the Chinese Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs office, Song Tao, said on Jan. 2 that China would continue to "unswervingly oppose" Taiwan's independence while also working to "safeguard peace, expand exchanges, enhance cooperation, deepen integration and advance reunification to ensure that cross-strait relations move in the right direction of peaceful development," according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

## Survey

Surveys show most Taiwanese embrace their current de facto independence - including compulsory military service for all men, the ability to travel worldwide on Taiwanese passports, and the right to choose their leaders in democratic elections at all levels.

While the race remains tight, support is strong for the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, even though China has refused to engage with the government since President Tsai Ing-wen was elected in 2016. She is unable to run again due to term limits.

The DPP favors closer ties with the United States as a way to preserve Taiwan's separate status and has refused to agree that Taiwan falls under the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China, which has never exercised political control over the island or its outlying territories. The DPP's presidential candidate, current Vice President William Lai, leads most pre-election surveys.

The main opposition Nationalist Party candidate, Hou Yu-ih, is appealing to voters who fear a military conflict with China that could draw in the U.S. and disrupt the global economy. Hou opposes Taiwanese independence and agrees with Beijing's view that Taiwan is part of China, although under separate governments.

A third candidate, Ko Wen-je of the Taiwan People's Party, has sought to straddle the differences by appealing to young voters turned off by the rivalry between the Nationalists, also known as the KMT, and the DPP.

However, Taiwanese elections are often decided on the basis of local issues such as housing, employment, education and healthcare that are separate from relations with China.

Taiwan, long a melting pot of Asian and European cultures, was a Japanese colony for 50 years until 1945, when it was handed over to Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist government at the end of World War II. The Nationalists relocated their government and military to the island in 1949 after the Communists under Mao Zedong took power on the mainland amid a civil war in which millions were killed and which has yet to be formally resolved.

China accuses the U.S. of encouraging Taiwan to raise tensions between the sides by supplying it with military weapons.

"Any attempt to use Taiwan to contain China is doomed to failure," Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Col. Wu Qian said at a briefing in Beijing last week. "Seeking independence by military force is a dead end."

China's armed forces would "as always take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard our national sovereignty and territorial integrity," he added.

The non-profit Taiwan Fact Check Center says fake news linked to the elections has been traced to China and the pressure is increasing. Online postings described as deep fakes have depicted Tsai and Lai as doing and saying things that were entirely fabricated.

"The creators of false information have their own motives," said the center's CEO, Eve Chiu. "They are all false accusations related to politics."

Beijing-sponsored visits to China by district wardens, equivalent to city and county representatives in the U.S., have also raised concerns in Taiwan. Several officials are being investigated on suspicion they accepted free accommodations, travel and entertainment in return for promoting pro-China candidates. That would violate Taiwanese law, which was carefully written to end a legacy of vote buying and voter coercion.



Wu



This aerial photo shows Shika nuclear power plant in Shikamachi, Ishikawa prefecture, Japan, on Jan. 2, 2024. Japan's nuclear safety regulators have told the operator of a nuclear power plant in the area hit by a powerful New Year's Day quake to study its potential impact. The Nuclear Regulation Authority asked

for further investigation even though initial assessments showed its cooling systems and ability to contain radiation remained intact. Inset: Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi attends a press conference at the prime minister's official office in Tokyo, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024. (AP)

## Japanese nuclear safety agency requires power plant study on Jan 1 quake impact

Japan's nuclear safety regulators have told the operator of a nuclear power plant in the area hit by a powerful New Year's Day quake to study its potential impact.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority, or NRA, asked for further investigation even though initial assessments showed the Shika nuclear power plant's cooling systems and ability to contain radiation remained intact.

The order reflects Japan's greater vigilance about safety risks after meltdowns in 2011 at a plant in Fukushima, on the northeastern Pacific coast, following a magnitude 9 quake and a massive tsunami.

The Jan. 1 magnitude 7.6 quake and dozens of

strong aftershocks have left 206 people dead and dozens more unaccounted for. It also caused a small tsunami. But Hokuriku Electric Power Co., the plant's operator, reported it had successfully dealt with damage to transformers, temporary outages and turbulence in the spent fuel cooling pools that followed the quakes.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi has repeatedly emphasized that the plant was safe. Eighteen of 116 radiation monitoring posts installed in Ishikawa prefecture, where Shika is located, and in neighboring Toyama briefly failed after the quake. All but two have since been repaired and none showed any abnormality, he said.

Shika is a town on the western coast of the Noto peninsula, where the quake did the most damage, leaving roads gaping, toppling and collapsing buildings and triggering landslides.

Hokuriku Electric Power Co., reported that water had spilled from the spent fuel pools in both reactors. Transformers in both reactors were damaged and leaked oil, causing a temporary loss of power in one of the cooling pools. Company officials reported no further safety problems at the Nuclear Regulation Authority's weekly meeting Wednesday.

But NRA officials said the utility should consider a possibility of fresh damage to transformers and other key equipment as aftershocks continue. (AP)

## Japan

## Japan grapples with earthquake aftermath

## Evacuation center deaths raise concerns

TOKYO, Jan 11, (AP): The 7.6 magnitude earthquake that hit the western coastline of Japan on New Year's has killed 213 people as of Thursday. Eight of the deaths were at evacuation centers, where rescued people died from injuries and sickness.

Such deaths weren't directly caused by the quakes, fires and mudslides. They happened in alleged safety.

"The pressures and stress of living in a place you aren't used to lead to such deaths," said Shigeru Nishimori, a disaster official in Ishikawa prefecture, the hardest-hit region.

Some 26,000 people whose homes were destroyed or deemed unsafe are staying at schools and other makeshift facilities. Even minor rain and snow can set off landslides where the ground is loose from the more than 1,000 aftershocks that rattled the region for more than a week. Half-collapsed homes might flatten.

Shinichi Kuriyama, director at the International Research Institute of Disaster Science, who has studied the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster that hit northeastern Japan in 2011, warned that the chances for death double among populations undergoing a disaster.

He said the number of deaths in Ishikawa evacuation centers surprised him.

"I'm really shocked," he said. "Communication is key and it appears to be sorely lacking."

Kuriyama said the most vulnerable can be overlooked, missing food that's being distributed, for instance, because they are unaware or can't reach it. He added that Japanese tend to "suffer in silence," which can make things worse.

Deaths from the New Year's temblor centered on Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa have climbed daily, as rescue teams pull more bodies from the rubble. Of the deaths, 98 were in Suzu city, 83 in Wajima and 20 in Anamizu, with the rest in smaller numbers among four other towns. The number of missing people declined in recent days and now stands at 52.

## Destroyed

Those injured totaled 567, and 1,830 homes were destroyed or seriously damaged, according to Ishikawa officials. More than 14,000 homes were without electricity, and nearly 59,000 homes had no running water.

A tsunami reaching as high as about 3 meters (10 feet) spewed into coastal homes after last week's biggest quake. A fire destroyed part of Wajima city. A search began Tuesday into the remains of the fire for bodies.

Authorities warned about the raised risk of infectious diseases breaking out among people crammed into shelters. Food and drinking water supplies were short, especially initially.

People slept on cold floors, some without blankets, amid dropping temperatures and harsh winds. Sheets were hung for partitions to provide privacy and in an effort to curtail the spread of disease.

A week after the disaster hit Ishikawa, camping tents were set up at a big hall to accommodate 500 people - a change that could prevent further post-disaster deaths. People who are pregnant, sick or old get priority for the revamped accommodations.

Soon, they'll be able to move to the 110 hotels and inns that volunteered to accept 3,000 people from the quake-damaged region. Nearby prefectures were also offering to open up their hotels.

With schools shuttered, people worried about the children, although some classes were moved to other campuses.

As criticism grew about the government's disaster response, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's administration earmarked 4.7 billion yen (\$33 million) for the disaster to provide food, water, blankets, milk and clothing. The spending was expected to grow.



In this photo released from Myanmar Military True News Information Team, Min Aung Hlaing, right, the head of ruling military council, shakes hand with Alounkeo Kittikhoun, left, special envoy of ASEAN Chairman, during their meeting Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Naypyitaw, Myanmar. A veteran Laotian diplomat recently appointed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' special envoy to Myanmar, has arrived on his first mission to the strife-torn nation. (AP)



Modi



Muizzu

## Subcontinent

**Modi's beach visit rakes up storm:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted a series of photos on social media last week showing him snorkeling, strolling on a white-sand beach and lounging in a chair next to turquoise waters in Lakshadweep, an island chain in the Indian Ocean.

It was an "exhilarating experience," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter, as he peppered with praise the pristine lesser-known and remote Indian archipelago his government believes has untapped potential for tourism. The images were met with awe by Indians on social media, particularly Modi's supporters.

But some 70 nautical miles south, his beach photos raked up a storm.

In the tiny archipelago nation of Maldives, some saw the tourism campaign as an attempt to draw visitors away from their country. Three senior Maldives officials reacted to Modi's post over the weekend calling him a "clown," a "terrorist" and a "puppet of Israel." Many other Maldivians insulted Indian tourists on social media.

In India, the response was swift.

Government officials, Bollywood stars and cricketers began urging people to turn to Lakshadweep, in a push to promote local holiday destinations. Many holiday-makers posted screenshots on X with the hashtag #BoycottMaldives to show they had canceled their trips to the island nation. On Monday, an Indian travel portal, EaseMyTrip, joined in by suspending bookings for flights to the Maldives, saying the move was made "in solidarity with our nation."

The Maldives officials later deleted their posts and were suspended by the country's president for posting "derogatory" comments against India, in a bid to control the fallout with New Delhi.

The incident highlighted the fragile nature of the relationship between India and the Maldives and its susceptibility to a breakdown at a time when Beijing and New Delhi are both vying for influence in the island nation.

It also showcased a conundrum faced by

the Maldives - where successive governments have either been pro-India or pro-China - and the high stakes in a nation where tourism is a major part of its economy.

Indian tourists were the largest group by nationality that visited the Maldives last year, comprising nearly 11% of its tourism market, according to the official Maldives tourism website. Many of them are high-spending visitors who love its luxury shores.

India is also a strategic ally of the Mal-

dives, with military personnel stationed on the islands. But relations between Male and New Delhi have deteriorated since Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, who is seen as pro-Chinese, was elected in November after campaigning on an "India Out" platform calling to remove the personnel, saying they posed a threat to his country's sovereignty. (AP)

**Attack kills election candidate:** At least three people, including an independent election candidate, were killed in an attack on the latter's vehicle in a tribal district of Pakistan's northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province bordering Afghanistan, said police on Wednesday.

District Police Officer Rohan Zeb told media that independent candidate Kaleemullah Khan, contesting for the upcoming general elections from North Waziristan District, was on his way back home from Miranshah area when his convoy was attacked by unknown assailants in the Tappi area. "Two of his bodyguards were also killed in the firing," the official added.

Moreover, in a separate incident, former Senator belonging to Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz, Aslam Buledi was injured in firing in Turbat district of Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province. He has been moved to the government run District Headquarters Hospital.

The attacks come at a time when the country is preparing for upcoming general elections scheduled to be held on February 8. Last week, the Senate of Pakistan passed a resolution demanding a delay in the polls due to security concerns and weather situation in KPK and Balochistan provinces. (KUNA)



This image made from video shows a protest in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea on Jan. 10, 2024. The Papua New Guinea government worked to restore order Thursday after multiple people were reportedly killed during rioting and looting that left the country's two biggest cities in flames. (AP)

## Kuwait oil price up

The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by USD 1.13 to USD 80.09 per barrel on Wednesday as opposed to USD 78.96 the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Thursday.

In international markets, the prices of the Brent Crude and the West Texas Intermediate both fell by 79 cents and 87 cents, settling each at USD 76.80 and USD 71.73 per barrel respectively. (KUNA)

## AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad Draw

Ahli United Bank (AUB) Congratulates the Winners of Al-Hassad Weekly Draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account, which was held on 10 January, 2024 at the bank's head office in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as a representative from Deloitte as the external auditor to oversee the draws as per the instructions of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in this regard.

The Bank Announced 10 Winners Of KD 1,000 As Follows: Rosy Joseph D'Souza, Abdulrazzaq M J H Al-Rashid,

Adel Ismael Ahmad Al-Thwaib, Abdulrauf Radhi E Bomouzah, Badreya Naser Salman Al-Rashdan, Kholoud M H Al-Mutairi, Marim Mohamed Soheeb Kimbal, Badriah M H Al-Sowleh, Adeebah Abdullah Mohammad Habeeb and Ahmad Hussain Ashkanani.

In its new package, Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Account presents a broader variety of rewards. Customers could now participate in the draw to win a monthly KD 100,000 prize, in addition to 10 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 each.

Al-Hassad  
More draws and annual returns

10,000 weekly, 250,000 quarterly, 100,000 monthly

ahli united bank

Al Hassad draw promotion visual.

## Market Movements

11-01-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
JAPAN - Nikkei	+1.77	35,049.86	UAE - DFM	-0.29	4,117.98
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+1.19	64,673.60	SAUDI - Tadawul	-0.17	12,116.09
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+1.03	6,613.73			
EGYPT - EGX 30	+0.21	25,519.25			

# Business

## First issue under KFH Sukuk program

# Kuwait Finance House issues \$1 bln 5-year Sukuk

# Arab GDP up by 1.8% to reach USD 3.4 trl in '23

## Overall outlook of economy positive for 2024

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11:** The Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation "Dhamaan" revealed that Arab GDP grew by 1.8% to reach about \$3.4 trillion in 2023, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates in October 2023, in conjunction with the growth of the global economy by 3% in 2023.

The Director General of "Dhamaan", Mr. Abdullah Ahmad Al-Sabeeh, explained in the editorial of the fourth quarterly bulletin for 2023 that the overall outlooks of the Arab economy came positive for 2024, with an expected growth rate of 3.6%, buoyed by the potential growth of 9 oil exporters that account for 78% of the Arab GDP, which could make up the downturn of other economies.

Al-Sabeeh attributed the decline in the performance of most Arab economic indicators in 2023 to several reasons, including the decrease of oil production by 5.2% and global crude oil prices by 16.5%, the negative effects of tightening monetary policies and lending criteria and the escalation of the geopolitical situation, the debt crisis and climate change, as follows:

- The average GDP per capita in Arab countries dropped by 4.7% to reach



Abdullah A. Al Sabeeh

\$7,482, with estimations to increase by 1.2% to hit an average of \$7,573 in 2024. While the average GDP per capita according to the purchasing power parity (PPP) rose by 3.2% to reach \$18.1 thousand in 2023, with continued significant disparity between oil exporters and other lower-income countries.

- The Arab population grew by 2% to exceed 456 million in 2023, and the

average of the unemployment rate increased to 9.4% in the same year.

- The average rate of consumer prices inflation in the Arab region rose to 12.1% in 2023, with expectations that it will decline to 11.7% in 2024.

- The combined default surplus for Arab government fiscal balance fell to reach \$3.3 billion in 2023, with expectations to turn into a deficit of \$26.9

billion in 2024 to represent 0.8% of the Arab GDP.

- The Arab debt indicators improved, as the government debt ratio stabilized at 47% of the Arab GDP, with estimates to decrease to 46.1% in 2024. In addition, the external debt ratio declined to 50.8% of the Arab GDP in 2023, and it is expected to reach 49.6% of the Arab GDP in 2024.

- Arab foreign trade in goods and services dropped by 5.7% to less than \$3 trillion in 2023, due to the decrease of Arab exports by 9.7% and imports by 0.4%. Thus, the trade balance surplus declined by 39% to reach \$262 billion in the same year.

- The current account surplus of Arab countries decreased by 52.3% in 2023 to reach \$180 billion, representing 5.3% of the Arab GDP, with forecasts to reach \$157 billion in 2024, representing 4.4% of the Arab GDP.

- Arab gross official reserves surpassed \$1 trillion, enough to cover Arab imports of goods and services for 8.6 months, with predictions to exceed \$1.1 trillion in 2024.

Al-Sabeeh said that despite the optimistic outlooks of the IMF regarding the Arab economy, this optimism depends on the scenarios of the war on Gaza and its impacts on the global oil prices and on the economic and political situations of the neighboring countries, along with the effects of the important presidential and legislative elections scheduled to take place in about 40 countries during 2024, especially with the possible change in the USA and UK, besides the repercussions of the political, economic and climate developments on the region situation.

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the successful issuance of a 5-year Senior Unsecured Sukuk of US\$1 bn. The Tier 1 Sukuk will be listed on the London Stock Exchange. This is the first issue under KFH US\$ 4 bn Sukuk Program.

KFH Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood said that the Sukuk were priced at 105 basis points above the US Treasury Bonds, with a yield of 5.011% per annum.

He added KFH's Sukuk issuance attracted orders exceeding US\$ 3.45 bn and it was oversubscribed by more than 3 times. The issuance received demand from regional and global investors (the Middle East, Europe and Asia), most of them banks, financial institutions, and investment funds.

In a press release, Al Rushood pointed out that the successful issuance, which was oversubscribed in one day, confirms the confidence investors placed in KFH, its capabilities, strategy, and reputation. In addition, it reflects the prestigious position it enjoys among financial institutions and capital markets, as well as its efficient operations and reliable and outstanding performance.

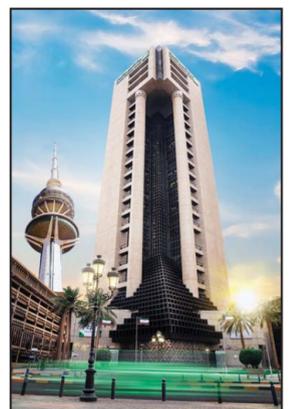
He explained that the aim of this issuance is to expand KFH's capital base, finance its operations and diversify its financing sources. Additionally, the new issuance gives KFH the opportunity to increase its financing and investment capabilities, support the infrastructure projects and the local economic sectors, as well as help customers with their expansion plans regionally and globally.

Given Sukuk's particular significance as a financing instrument in the global markets, Al Rushood emphasized that the Sukuk market enjoys high demand from investors and plays a role in enhancing the global capital markets, and helps issuers implement their future expansion and growth plans. He further highlighted the role of Islamic financing instruments in expanding the global financial markets.

"Acted as the sole global coordinator for the Sukuk issuance, KFH



Abdulwahab AlRushood



KFH headquarters

Capital has succeeded in strengthening its role in arranging such issuances regionally and globally," Al Rushood said.

Lead managers of the issuance are: KFH Capital, HSBC, Dubai Islamic Bank, First Abu Dhabi Bank, Boubyan Bank, Standard Chartered, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, SMBC Nikko, Al Rajhi Capital, Arab Banking Corporation and Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD). Wafra International Investment Company participated as a co-manager for the issuance.

Al Rushood thanked the investors for their trust and extended his gratitude to lead managers, coordinators, partners, and stakeholders for the successful completion of the issuance in record time.

## So far, so good

# US consumer inflation pressures may have eased further in Dec

**WASHINGTON, Jan 11, (AP):** The Federal Reserve, tentatively pleased with progress it's made in fighting inflation, has declared what amounts to a ceasefire: The Fed stopped raising interest rates in July, after imposing an aggressive 11 hikes since March 2022, to take time to see how the economy would respond.

So far, so good.

Inflation has kept slowing, and the economy has withstood the strain of the accumulated higher borrowing costs. Hope is growing that the central bank can achieve a rare "soft landing" by cooling the economy just enough to tame inflation without causing a recession. The financial markets, in fact, seem increasingly optimistic that the Fed can soon begin cutting rates, which would lighten borrowing costs for consumers and businesses.

On Thursday, the Labor Department was expected to report that underlying inflationary pressures eased further in December. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, "core" prices likely rose 0.2% from November, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet, down from a 0.3% rise the previous month. And compared with 12 months earlier, core prices are thought to have risen 3.8% in December, down from a 4% year-over-year increase in November.

Economists pay particular attention to core prices because, by excluding costs that typically fluctuate sharply from month to month, they are a better guide to the likely path of inflation. But the war against inflation isn't won just yet.

Overall inflation is thought to have edged higher last month, putting it further above the Fed's 2% target. According to the FactSet survey, economists think the broadest measure of consumer prices rose 0.2% from November to December and 3.2% from 12 months earlier. Both figures would mark a modest acceleration from the 0.1% October-November increase and the 3.1% year-over-year rise in November.

Those upticks wouldn't likely cause concern. The index of overall inflation tends to bounce around from month to month.

Still, it helps explain why, despite steady economic growth, low unemployment and healthy hiring, polls show many Americans are dissatisfied

with the economy. That disconnect, a likely issue in the 2024 elections, has puzzled economists and political analysts. One thing has become increasingly clear, though: The public is exasperated with prices that are still 17% higher than they were when the inflation surge began in early 2021.

Overall, the progress against inflation has been significant. A year ago, the 12-month rise in the consumer price index was 6.5% - way down from a four-decade high of 9.1% in June 2022 but still painfully high. Now, it's just above 3%. And wage gains have outpaced inflation in recent months, meaning that Americans' average after-inflation take-home pay is up.

There are solid reasons for optimism that inflationary pressure will continue to recede in the coming months.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York reported this week, for example, that consumers now expect inflation to come in at just 3% over the next year, the lowest one-year forecast since January 2021. That's important because consumer expectations are themselves considered a telltale sign of future inflation: When Americans fear that prices will keep accelerating, they will typically rush to buy things sooner rather than later. That surge of spending tends to fuel more inflation.

But that nasty cycle does not appear to be happening. And when Fed officials discussed the inflation outlook at their most recent meeting last month, they noted some hopeful signs: An end to the supply chain backlogs that had caused parts shortages and inflation pressures and a drop in rent costs, which is beginning to spread through the economy.

Still, John Min, chief economist at the foreign exchange firm Monex USA, suggested that "the easy part" was slowing inflation from 9% to around 3%. Going "the last mile" to reach the Fed's 2% target could prove the hardest stretch.

The December U.S. jobs report that was issued last week contained some cautionary news for the Fed: Average hourly wages rose 4.1% from a year earlier, up slightly from 4% in November. And 676,000 people left the workforce, reducing the proportion of adults who either have a job or are looking for one to 62.5%, the lowest level since February.

## Tender aims to provide consultancy services

# Kuwait explores opportunities in renewable energy projects, invites bids from international companies

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11:** The Kuwait National Petroleum Company has invited major engineering consulting companies to bid for a contract to conduct preliminary feasibility studies to determine how renewable energy and its alternatives can add value to the company portfolio and the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to "MEED" magazine, the request was issued by the Supreme Procurement Committee at the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and the invitations have been sent to -- Amick Foster Wheeler Group, United Kingdom; Kellogg Brown & Root - United States; Worley Engineering - Australia and Technip Energy of France. The companies have until February 1 to submit contract proposals.

Sources told the daily that the tender aims to provide consulting studies on bio-energy projects and carbon dioxide capture, in addition to various types of renewable energy projects and indicated that the advisory studies will survey the capabilities available at the KNPC and KIPIC, the feasibility of their use of renewable energy, and search for the best investment opportunities in this field, ensuring the best returns.

The sources indicated that the two companies are working to encourage

# Al-Adwani represents Kuwait at Arab Mineral Resources Ministers meeting

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11:** Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Industry Eng Eid Al-Adwani led the Kuwaiti delegation to the third international ministerial meeting on mining affairs in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Participating in the event were more than 77 countries -- 45 ministers and high-level government representatives. International organizations and NGOs, including UNIDO, Gulf Cooperation Council, World Bank, OECD, and International Finance Corporation also took part in the meeting.

Key discussions centered around and invest in the renewable energy industry, and the transition to clean fuels, especially through solar and wind energy projects, and hydrogen production and that Kuwait is moving towards reducing its dependence on fossil fuels and strengthening the renewable energy sector through the implementation of several projects and

translating discussions into practical initiatives on the ground through four main initiatives identified in the previous ministerial meeting which hosted over 15,000 participants from 145 countries, featuring more than 200 speakers, including CEOs of major mining and related companies, financial sector representatives, and over 150 sponsors.

Eng. Al-Adwani also headed the Kuwaiti delegation at the ninth consultative meeting of Arab ministers on mineral wealth affairs, on January 9, 2024.

The meeting centered around co-

operation among Arab countries in mining, covering topics such as the Arab Organization for Industrial Development, Standardization, and Mining's achievements and the initiative to rehabilitate old mines and quarries.

The meeting also marked the launch of the Arab Platform for Future Minerals, seeking to boost bilateral cooperation and investment.

In another development, a Kuwaiti industrial delegation engaged with Major General Mukhtar Abdel Latif, head of the Egyptian Arab Organization for Industrialization, in Cairo.

companies that wish to implement renewable energy projects

In 2022, Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah had said the country aims to reach net-zero carbon emissions in 2060, and is committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions in the oil and biogas sector a decade earlier, by 2050.

# Google lays off hundreds of workers amid cost-cutting drive

**WASHINGTON, Jan 11, (AP)** Google has laid off hundreds of employees working on its hardware, voice assistance and engineering teams as part of cost-cutting measures.

The cuts come as Google looks towards "responsibly investing in our company's biggest priorities and the significant opportunities ahead," the company said in a statement.

"Some teams are continuing to make these kinds of organizational changes,

which include some role eliminations globally," it said.

Google earlier said it was eliminating a few hundred roles, with most of the impact on its augmented reality hardware team.

The cuts follow pledges by executives of Google and its parent company Alphabet to reduce costs. A year ago, Google said it would lay off 12,000 employees or around 6% of its workforce.

Google is not the only technology company cutting back. In the past year, Meta -- the parent company of Facebook -- has slashed more than 20,000 jobs to reassure investors. Meta's stock price gained about 178% in 2023.

Earlier this week, Amazon laid off hundreds of employees in its Prime Video and studios units. It also will lay off about 500 employees who work on its livestreaming platform Twitch.

Google is currently locked in a fierce rivalry with Microsoft as both firms strive to lead in the artificial intelligence domain.

Microsoft has stepped up its artificial intelligence offerings to rival Google's and in September introduced a Copilot feature that incorporates artificial intelligence into products like search engine Bing, browser Edge as well as Windows for its corporate customers.

## BUSINESS

## Tokyo stocks hit 34-yr high

Tokyo stocks extended their winning streak for a fourth straight session on Thursday, with a key index ending above the 35,000-mark for the first time in nearly 34 years.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 Stock Average on the Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE) gained 608.14 points, or 1.77 percent, from Wednesday to 35,049.86, its highest close since February 1990.

The broader Tokyo Stock Price Index, which includes all shares on the market's First Section on the TSE, was also up 38.39 points, or 1.57 percent to 2,482.87, the highest finish since March 1990. (KUNA)

## Al Habtoor Group issues a notice of an investment dispute against Lebanon

Emirati conglomerate Al Habtoor Group served a notice of an Investment Treaty Dispute against the Lebanese Republic in connection with Lebanon's breaches of the Bilateral Investment Treaty between the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon.

The dispute is related to the Al Habtoor Group's investments in Lebanon. Al Habtoor Group has invested in the Lebanese Republic close to USD 1 billion to date. Among which, the Group placed funds within the Lebanese banking system, and invested in luxury hotels branded under Hilton Hotels & Resorts, a shopping mall, a 100,000 sqm entertainment & leisure destination named Habtoor Land and other real estate

investments across the country.

Under the UAE-Lebanon Treaty that entered into force in 1999, Lebanon undertook to protect Emirati investments in its territory.

Lebanon has breached its obligations under the Treaty towards Al Habtoor Group. In particular, Lebanon and its Central Bank have imposed restrictions preventing Al Habtoor Group from freely transferring its funds amounting to over USD 44 million from the Lebanese banks. Lebanon has also failed to secure a safe and sound environment for Al Habtoor Group's businesses and investments. As a result of Lebanon's actions, Al Habtoor Group has incurred and continues

to incur significant losses and damages.

Al Habtoor Group, represented by the international law firm White & Case LLP, intends to pursue its rights vigorously, locally and internationally.

By sending a formal notice of the dispute to the Lebanese various Government bodies in early January 2024, Al Habtoor Group triggered the six-month cooling-off period under the UAE-Lebanon Treaty. If the dispute is not resolved within six months and the Al Habtoor Group claims are not settled, it will be open to Al Habtoor Group to commence appropriate local and international legal proceedings against the Lebanese Republic in accordance with the Treaty.

## Generative AI chatbots raise concerns of widespread synthetic content manipulation

## AI-fueled misinformation as immediate threat to global economy

LONDON, Jan 11, (AP) - False and misleading information supercharged with cutting-edge artificial intelligence that threatens to erode democracy and polarize society is the top immediate risk to the global economy, the World Economic Forum said in a report Wednesday.

In its latest Global Risks Report, the organization also said an array of environmental risks pose the biggest threats in the longer term. The report was released ahead of the annual elite gathering of CEOs and world leaders in the Swiss ski resort town of Davos and is based on a survey of nearly 1,500 experts, industry leaders and policymakers.

The report listed misinformation and disinformation as the most severe risk over the next two years, highlighting how rapid advances in technology also are creating new problems or making existing ones worse.

The authors worry that the boom in generative AI chatbots like ChatGPT means that creating sophisticated synthetic content that can be used to manipulate groups of people won't be limited any longer to those with specialized skills.

AI is set to be a hot topic next week at the Davos meetings, which are expected to be attended by tech company bosses including OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and AI industry players like Meta's

chief AI scientist, Yann LeCun.

AI-powered misinformation and disinformation is emerging as a risk just as a billions of people in a slew of countries, including large economies like the United States, Britain, Indonesia, India, Mexico, and Pakistan, are set to head to the polls this year and next, the report said.

"You can leverage AI to do deep-fakes and to really impact large groups, which really drives misinformation," said Carolina Klint, a risk management leader at Marsh, whose parent company Marsh McLennan co-authored the report with Zurich Insurance Group.

## Polarized

"Societies could become further polarized" as people find it harder to verify facts, she said. Fake information also could be used to fuel questions about the legitimacy of elected governments, "which means that democratic processes could be eroded, and it would also drive societal polarization even further," Klint said.

The rise of AI brings a host of other risks, she said. It can empower "malicious actors" by making it easier to carry out cyberattacks, such as by automating phishing attempts or creating advanced malware.

With AI, "you don't need to be the sharpest tool in the shed to be a malicious actor," Klint said.

It can even poison data that is scraped



A ChatGPT logo is seen on a smartphone in West Chester, Pa., Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023. Catalyzing a year of AI fanfare was ChatGPT. The World Economic Forum says false and misleading information supercharged with cutting-edge artificial intelligence is the top immediate risk to the global economy. In its latest Global Risks Report, the organization says misinformation and disinformation as the most severe risk over the next two years. (AP)

off the internet to train other AI systems, which is "incredibly difficult to reverse" and could result in further embedding biases into AI models, she said.

The other big global concern for respondents of the risk survey centered around climate change.

Following disinformation and misinformation, extreme weather is the second-most pressing short-term risk.

In the long term - defined as 10

years - extreme weather was described as the No. 1 threat, followed by four other environmental-related risks: critical change to Earth systems; biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse; and natural resource shortages.

"We could be pushed past that irreversible climate change tipping point" over the next decade as the Earth's systems undergo long-term changes, Klint said.

## Amazon's Twitch lays off more than 500 employees

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 11, (AP) - Twitch, the video game streaming platform acquired by Amazon a decade ago for close to \$1 billion, is laying off more than 500 employees as the company tries to turn the tremendously expensive division profitable.

Twitch CEO Dan Clancy in an email to employees said that even with cost cuts and growing efficiency, the platform "is still meaningfully larger than it needs to be given the size of our business."

"For some time now the organization has been sized based upon where we optimistically expect our business to be in 3 or more years, not where we're at today," Clancy wrote.

Amazon purchased Twitch Interactive in 2014 for \$970 million as it looked for a way to take part in video gaming's growth as an online spectator sport.

Twitch is a multi-channel online network built for a generation of people raised with video games and like to watch some of the best gamers in the world as many people watch profes-

sional sports.

Last month Twitch, based in San Francisco, said that it was withdrawing from the South Korean market due to expensive network fees. Clancy said at the time that the network fees the company has been paying to South Korean internet operators were 10 times more than in most other markets. He did not provide specific numbers to back such claims.

## Rightsize

"As you all know, we have worked hard over the last year to run our business as sustainably as possible," Clancy wrote. "Unfortunately, we still have work to do to rightsize our company and I regret having to share that we are taking the painful step to reduce our headcount by just over 500 people across Twitch."

Amazon has cut thousands of jobs after a hiring surge during the pandemic. In March, Amazon announced that it planned to lay off 9,000 employees. That was on top of the 18,000 employees the tech giant said that it would lay off in January 2023.



New cars for export waiting for transportation on a vehicles carrier vessel at a dockyard in Yantai in east China's Shandong province on Nov. 2, 2023. China's auto exports surged 63.7% in 2023 while sales at home, boosted by year-end incentives, rose 4.2%, an industry association said Thursday, Jan. 11. (AP)

## Automakers expanded overseas

## Chinese auto exports surged 64% with strong push by EVs

BEIJING, Jan 11, (AP) - China's auto exports surged 63.7% in 2023 while domestic sales, boosted by year-end incentives, rose 4.2%, an industry association said Thursday.

Chinese automakers have aggressively expanded exports in search of growth missing at home as China's economy slows. They have also pushed into electric vehicles as government subsidies transformed China into the world's largest EV market, even as car sales have stagnated overall.

Auto sales in China totaled 21.9 million cars last year while exports jumped to 4.1 million, the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers reported. Domestic sales are down from a peak of about 24 million in 2017.

## Surge

The surge in exports may propel China past Japan as the world's number one exporter of cars. Japan exported 3.6 million cars in the first 11 months of the year, with a final tally expected on Jan. 31.

An explosion in sales to Russia helped drive up China's exports in 2023, as European and Japanese makers pulled back because of the war in Ukraine. China exported 840,000 vehicles to Russia in the first 11 months of last year, including trucks and buses as well as cars.

The China Passenger Car Association said earlier this week that demand in Russia and neighboring countries is slowing and future export growth will depend on an expansion of EV sales overseas. Chinese EV makers have targeted markets in Southeast Asia, Europe and Australia, among others.

The manufacturers' association does not provide a breakdown for electric vehicles, but data released by the passenger car association showed that electric vehicles accounted for 24% of new car sales in China in 2023, up from 12% in 2021. Including hybrids, the share of new-energy vehicles in total sales reached 36% last year.

The Tesla Model Y was the best-selling electric vehicle in China last year, with 646,800 units sold, followed by the BYD Song sedan at 428,600 units, according to the passenger car group.

The Model Y retails for 266,400 to 363,900 yuan (\$37,500 to \$51,200), according to the Tesla website, and the BYD Song for 129,800 to 159,800 yuan (\$18,300 to \$22,500).

Bill Russo, founder of the Automotive consultancy in Shanghai, said Chinese firms have democratized the electric vehicle by driving down its price. The next challenge will be to convince buyers that an EV can meet their driving needs. But the first step is to make it available at a price that will get them to consider one, Russo said.

"That's the paradigm that the Chinese have broken, that you can make an EV affordable," he said in a recent interview. "What China is doing with the EV is it's using its domestic market to generate economies of scale that it can then take internationally."

Fitch Ratings said in a report last month that it expects the share of new energy vehicles including hybrids in China's total sales to rise to 42%-45% in 2024. It also projected that exports would grow 20% to 30% this year.

The European Union, concerned about rising imports from China, opened a trade investigation last year into Chinese subsidies for electric vehicles. The investigation is ongoing.

The Chinese manufacturer's association said the total sales of all vehicles, at home and abroad and including trucks and buses, reached the 30-million-unit milestone in 2023, a 12% rise over the previous year. It forecast growth would slow to about 3% this year.

## NEW YORK, Jan 11, (AP): A barrage of high-profile lawsuits in a New York federal court will test the future of ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence products that wouldn't be so eloquent had they not ingested huge troves of copyrighted human works.

But are AI chatbots - in this case, widely commercialized products made by OpenAI and its business partner Microsoft - breaking copyright and fair competition laws? Professional writers and media outlets will face a difficult fight to win that argument in court.

## Optimistic

"I would like to be optimistic on behalf of the authors, but I'm not. I just think they have an uphill battle here," said copyright attorney Ashima Aggarwal, who used to work for academic publishing giant John Wiley & Sons.

One lawsuit comes from The New York Times. Another from a group of well-known novelists such as John Grisham, Jodi Picoult and George R.R. Martin. A third from bestselling nonfiction writers, including an author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography on which the hit movie "Oppenheimer" was based.

Each of the lawsuits makes different allegations, but they all center on the San Francisco-based company OpenAI "building this product on the back of other peoples' intellectual property," said attorney Justin Nelson, who is representing the nonfiction writers and whose law firm is also representing The Times.

"What OpenAI is saying is that they have a free ride to take anybody else's intellectual property really since the dawn of time, as long as it's been on the internet," Nelson said.

The Times sued in December, arguing that ChatGPT and Microsoft's Copilot are competing with the same outlets they are trained on and diverting web traffic away from the newspaper and other copyright holders who depend on advertising

## Fair use of copyrighted works



The OpenAI logo is seen on a mobile phone in front of a computer screen displaying output from ChatGPT, March 21, 2023, in Boston. A barrage of high-profile lawsuits in a New York federal court, including one by the New York Times, will test the future of ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence products. (AP)

## German software giant SAP fined more than \$220mn

BERLIN, Jan 11, (AP) - German software giant SAP will pay more than \$220 million in fines to resolve U.S. bribery allegations involving payments to foreign government officials, the Justice Department said Wednesday.

According to court documents cited by the Justice Department, SAP and unnamed co-conspirators provided bribes and other valuable enticements

to South African and Indonesian foreign officials. The company delivered gifts to officials in the form of cash payments, political contributions, electronic transfers, and luxury goods purchased during shopping trips.

The payments and gifts were offered "to obtain valuable government business," Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole Argentinetti said in a statement.

revenue generated from their sites to keep producing their journalism. It also provided evidence of the chatbots spitting out Times articles word-for-word. At other times the chatbots falsely attributed misinformation to the paper in a way it said damaged its reputation.

One senior federal judge is so far presiding over all three cases, as well

as a fourth from two more nonfiction authors who filed another lawsuit last week. U.S. District Judge Sidney H. Stein has been at the Manhattan-based court since 1995 when he was nominated by then-President Bill Clinton.

OpenAI and Microsoft haven't yet filed formal counter-arguments on the New York cases, but OpenAI made a

The Securities and Exchange Commission also cited SAP "bribery schemes" in Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana and Azerbaijan.

The Justice Department's statement commended SAP for cooperating with the department's investigation, taking steps to uncover the root causes of the bribery, and boosting resources for a restructured ethics and compliance office.

public statement this week describing The Times lawsuit as "without merit" and saying that the chatbot's ability to regurgitate some articles verbatim was a "rare bug."

"Training AI models using publicly available internet materials is fair use, as supported by long-standing and widely accepted precedents," said a Monday blog post from the company. It went on to suggest that The Times "either instructed the model to regurgitate or cherry-picked their examples from many attempts."

OpenAI cited licensing agreements made last year with The Associated Press, the German media company Axel Springer and other organizations as offering a glimpse into how the company is trying to support a healthy news ecosystem.

OpenAI is paying an undisclosed fee to license AP's archive of news stories. The New York Times was engaged in similar talks before deciding to sue.

OpenAI said earlier this year that access to AP's "high-quality, factual text archive" would improve the capabilities of its AI systems.

## Govt expands price controls to baby formula

## Greece accuses multinationals of 'greedflation'

ATHENS, Greece, Jan 11, (AP) - Greece's center-right government announced price controls on baby formula Wednesday, accusing multinational suppliers of imposing unjustifiably high prices on the country's consumers.

A 7% profit cap on formula will take effect in March and follows a series of similar initiatives over the past two years for basic items.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis accused

major supermarket suppliers of taking advantage of high inflation to further hike prices.

"The battle to tame high prices and to impose more competition rules in favor of the consumer is a constant battle," Mitsotakis told his ministers in a televised address.

"We are constantly deploying new policy tools until everyone - especially the multinational companies - understands that Greece is not a banana republic and that 'greedflation'

cannot be tolerated."

Inflation in countries using the shared euro currency increased to 2.9% in December after a seven-month decline, according to an official estimate, with the Greek rate swinging higher to 3.7%.

Greek authorities in recent months have imposed fines of up to 1 million euros on major international companies they said had violated government-imposed caps on profits.

From quirky to revolutionary

# Latest tech wonders shine at CES 2024

LAS VEGAS, Jan. 11. (AP): Welcome to CES 2024. This multi-day trade event put on by the Consumer Technology Association is expected to bring some 130,000 attendees and more than 4,000 exhibitors to Las Vegas. The latest advances and gadgets across personal tech, transportation, health care, sustainability and more will be on display, with burgeoning uses of artificial intelligence almost everywhere you look.

The Associated Press will keep a running report of everything we find interesting from the floor of CES, from the latest announcements to most quirky smart gadgets.

Roberta Wilson-Garrett used to be a morning person who would leap out of bed at dawn. Until, that is, she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease six years ago.

Now her hands twist and tremor, making the morning, when her medicine is wearing off, especially difficult. It takes hours for her to get ready for the day. All her coffee mugs have lids on them now.

Boston-based GyroGear, a medical tech startup, debuted a hand-stabilizing glove at CES 2024 that it hopes will help people like Wilson-Garrett regain control of their lives.

"It makes life normal for me again. The things that you take for granted, I don't take for granted anymore," Wilson-Garrett told AP on the show floor as her right hand shook. "It gives me back a piece of my old life when I have the glove on."

When Wilson-Garrett slipped on the black glove, her right hand relaxed, and she was able to hold a pen and write her name.

The GyroGlove is now available for \$5,899.

Can generative AI tell your future? A fortune teller showcased by South Korean manufacturing and IT services giant SK Group at CES this week gives us a glimpse.

SK's AI Fortune Teller, which is powered by high-bandwidth memory technology, claims that it can tell users their fortune by reading their emotions. The machine snaps a photo of your face and, naturally, asks you to select a card from an on-screen deck. Within moments, the AI analyzes facial characteristics and produces an AI Tarot card-like print with a short, future-looking message or piece of advice.

This AI fortune teller isn't available to consumers outside of CES, but it's featured in the Las Vegas show to help display SK's latest tech and sustainability advances. Other attractions advertised at the "SK Wonderland" interactive exhibit include a fully-electric dancing car and train that's capable of being powered by hydrogen energy.

A new flying taxi concept, dubbed the S-A2 by Hyundai, made its debut at CES 2024.

The South Korean vehicle manufacturer envisions the electric vertical takeoff and landing vehicle as a commuter solution for urban areas with heavy traffic.

Hyundai claims the vehicle will be able to cruise at 120 mph (190 kph) at a 1,500-foot (460-meter) altitude while operating as quietly as a dishwasher.

The S-A2 builds on Hyundai's S-A1 concept, which made its debut at CES in 2020. Company officials say they are working to get the vehicle ready to meet flight standards set by nations around the world.

GE Appliances is looking to change the way you smoke food with its new \$1,000 indoor smoker.

About the size of a toaster oven or microwave, the GE Profile Smart Indoor Smoker can fit a full brisket cut in half, 40 chicken wings or three racks of ribs. It still uses wood pellets to achieve a smokey flavor, but its technology traps the smoke inside, making it "perfect for people who live in urban environments," like high-rise apartments, said Whitney Welch, a spokesperson for GE Appliances.

A focus on accessibility in the gaming industry is on the rise. Just this October, Sony launched the Access controller for Playstation.

To talk about the wins so far and the road ahead, CES 2024 featured a panel of four players for "The Evolution of Accessible Gaming."

For Paul Amadeus Lane, an accessibility consultant and broadcaster who moderated the panel, gaming is a lifelong passion, but when he got in a car accident that left him unable to use his fingers, he first thought his gaming days were over.

"It was like I lost a good friend. But then that good friend got reunited when I found out about all these accessibility features," Lane said during the panel.

Mark Barlet, founder of AbleGamers, said people with disabilities are 56% more likely to be socially isolated, and combatting that is what drives his organization. Further, he says it's smart business.

"Twenty percent of the population has some sort of disability and you start looking at game companies competing for eyeballs - all of a sudden, talking about, 'Hey, would you like to sell more games?' becomes a really powerful conversation."

When asked what advice they'd give to game developers, panelists Liz Schmidlin, user research lead at PlayStation, and Michele Zorrilla, senior user experience researcher at Insomniac Games, echoed a similar statement: Start working accessibility conversations in early on in the



The Yo-Kai Express robot chef machine, made in partnership with Pulmuone, is displayed during the CES tech show, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



A person stands at an AI Fortune Teller at the SK booth during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



An attendee tests out the GyroGear, a wearable glove that is intended to help stabilize the hands of those with tremors, during the CES tech show Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



An exhibitor provides a demonstration of Baracoda's BMind smart mirror during the CES tech show, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. The mirror is intended to help users with mental health and can be interacted with using voice commands, gestures, and 'intent detection'. (AP)



An attendee uses the MSI Claw portable gaming console during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



A Mercedes-Benz Concept CLA Class car is displayed at the Mercedes-Benz booth during the CES tech show, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



People look at the Kia PV7 electric vehicle concept at the Kia booth during the CES tech show, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



A person wears Xreal Air augmented reality glasses while taking an augmented reality driving demonstration at the BMW booth during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



A DroneSoccer model is displayed during the CES tech show Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



A barista robot designed by Richtech Robotics performs during the CES tech show Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



A person looks at the Supernal S-A2 passenger electric VOTL aircraft at the Supernal booth during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. Supernal is a part of the Hyundai Motor Group. (AP)



The Goat GX automated lawn mower by Ecovac Robotics is displayed during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



An attendee rides a Gyroor electric scooter during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



Joel Campbell, Ecovacs Robotics, displays the Winbot W2 Omni automated window cleaning robot during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



The Unitree B2 robot is displayed during the CES tech show Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



Hydrogen gas fuel tanks designed by Motul in conjunction with GCK Battery are seen in the back of a vehicle retrofitted with a hydrogen combustion engine during the CES tech show Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



An attendee touches the Rise Roma hydroponic garden by Rise Gardens during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)



An attendee receives a massage from the iYU AI-assisted massage robot, by Capsix Robotics during the CES tech show Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)

design process. Barlet added, "Good accessibility is good design." Artificial intelligence has been seen powering smart home hubs, cars, TVs, medical devices and even fingernail printers at CES 2024. Now it's giving massages. Created by French company Capsix Robotics, iYU uses artificial intel-

ligence to perform a real-time body scan and recommend the best kind of experience for the user. A robotic arm then performs a variety of massage techniques. It's a new product but the functionality might ring familiar - Clicks Technologies' iPhone keyboard is making a splash at CES 2024. According to co-founder Johnathan

Young, the smartphone accessory is aimed at three core audiences: iPhone users with dexterity or accessibility issues, the younger generation looking to stand out, and people who miss their previous smartphone keyboards. Prices range from \$139 to \$159. Dutch startup Whispp aims to use AI to help millions of people suffering from vocal impairments speak again in

their natural voices. While many current technologies focus on speech-to-text or text-to-speech, Whispp is using audio-to-audio-based AI, resulting in almost real-time speech conversion. Users can recreate their distinct voice by providing recordings of their current or past voice, adding a personalized touch to their own com-

munication. At CES 2024, Whispp launched an AI-powered assistive speech and phone-calling app. On Tuesday, businesswoman and media personality Martha Stewart took to the kitchen stage at the Samsung CES booth to craft her "Martha-tini" and smashed potatoes using the company's SmartThings technology.

# Music leaders launch push to protect artists against AI

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Jan 11, (AP) - Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee has unveiled new legislation designed to protect songwriters, performers and other music industry professionals against the potential dangers of artificial intelligence.

Lee made the announcement while standing in the middle of Nashville's famed RCA Studio A, a location where legends such as Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson and Charley Pride have all recorded. Packed inside were top music industry leaders, songwriters and lawmakers, all eager to praise the state's rich musical history while also sounding the alarm about the threats AI poses.

"Tennessee will be the first state in the country to protect artists' voices with this legislation," Lee said. "And we hope it will be a blueprint for the country."

The legislation comes as states across the country and federal lawmakers wrestle with the challenge of curbing the dangers of AI. The bill hasn't been formally introduced inside the Tennessee Legislature and the text of the proposal has yet to be publicly distributed.

Lee said he wants to ensure that AI tools cannot replicate an artist's voice without the artist's consent. That involves turning to one of the state's most iconic residents: Elvis Presley.

The death of Presley in 1977 sparked a contentious and lengthy legal battle over the unauthorized use of his name and likeness, as many argued that once a celebrity died, their name and image entered into

the public domain.

However, by 1984 the Tennessee Legislature passed the Personal Rights Protection Act, which ensured that personality rights do not stop at death and can be passed down to others. It states that "the individual rights ... constitute property rights and are freely assignable and licensable, and do not expire upon the death of the individual so protected."

The move was largely seen as critical in protecting Presley's estate, but has since been praised as protecting the names, photographs and likenesses of all of Tennessee's public figures in the decades since.

## Protections

It also was monumental in preserving name, photographs and likeness as a property right rather than a right of publicity. To date, only two other states - New York and California - have similar protections, making it easier to seek damages in court.

But no state currently has enacted protections against vocal likeness. And with AI posing a threat to almost every industry, artists and other creatives are increasingly calling for stronger protections against new AI tools that produce imagery, music, video and text.

"If a machine is able to take something from someone's lifetime and experience and re-create it without permission, or take someone's voice and use it without permission, let's just call it what it is: It's wrong," said four-time Grammy-nominated songwriter Jamie Moore.

Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that AI tools are not scraping and using an artist's song or voice in order to learn how to spit out a song itself without the artist's permission, said Bart Herbison, executive director of the Nashville Songwriters Association International. Another key aspect is fighting for proper payment.

Herbison said he watched generative AI tools advance from writing awkward songs in February of last year to spitting out moving and emotional pieces by October.

"What it can do now is freaky scary. It's all people can talk about in the writer's rooms," he said.

Other AI legislation is expected to pop up across the country as many statehouses resume work this month. Already in California, a lawmaker has proposed a measure requiring the state to establish safety, privacy, and nondiscrimination standards around generative-AI tools and services. Those standards would eventually be used as qualifications in future state contracts. Another proposal has been introduced to create a state-run research center to further study the technology.

On the federal level, the US Copyright Office is weighing whether to enact copyright reforms in response to generative AI. Meanwhile, a bipartisan group of U.S. senators has introduced legislation called the No Artificial Intelligence Fake Replicas And Unauthorized Duplications Act of 2024. Supporters say the measure will combat AI deepfakes, voice clones and other harmful digital human impersonations.

Music

## Variety



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Renee Rapp in a scene from 'Mean Girls.' (AP)

## Film

Still trying to make 'fetch' happen, now in song

# 'Mean Girls' gets a musical update

By Jocelyn Noveck

The first "Mean Girls," that compulsively watchable high-school based satire by Tina Fey, came out in 2004. The Broadway musical opened in 2018. Now it's 2024, and we have a screen adaptation of the theater adaptation. How long will this reconfiguring go on? Is there a limit? Or ... does the limit not exist?

Forgive us that utterly blatant setup for one of the original's most famous lines. It's just that some of them are so darned memorable. Like, "You can't sit here!" - screamed. Or when Regina, the haughtiest queen bee ever to carry a cafeteria tray, scathingly tells her minion Gretchen, who's trying out her new word "fetch," to "Stop trying to make 'fetch' happen. It's NOT going to happen!!"

But even in "Mean Girls 17," should it come to that, someone will still be trying to make "fetch" happen. And it's actually not a bad word to describe the experience of watching the new "Mean Girls" - a slick, fizzy bit of entertainment that's occasionally delightful and usually fun, even if the translation to 2024 definitely has its rough spots.

If you've recently re-watched the first film, you may be surprised here at how many lines remain, word for word. What's impressive is how many still work - unlike some social comedies that felt right 20 years ago but have scenes that fall with a thud now (see "Love Actually").

There are exceptions, though. I'll confess to feeling queasy throughout about the "dumb girl" character who remains in the Plastics, Regina's social group. There is, thankfully, no more reference to a coach sleeping with a student, which would not have been funny, even with Jon Hamm as the coach. Shaming has been conspicuously toned down - the insult in Regina's famous Burn Book is now "cow".

On the other hand, fat-shaming? That's still

there, as when the camera zooms in rudely on the rear end of a character who's gained a few pounds.

As for the casting, some of it works wonderfully, particularly the duo who introduce the film, which is again written by Fey, with music by Jeff Richmond (her husband), and lyrics by Nell Benjamin. Damian, the beloved character described affectionately by Janis as "almost too gay to function" (but that's only OK when she says it), and Janis, his best friend, a talented artist whose fall-out with Regina left her in the dirt socially, function almost as quasi-narrators. Jaquel Spivey, of Broadway's "A Strange Loop," is hilarious and also moving as Damian - you wait for each new line, and he wastes none of them. And Auli'i Cravalho as Janis has a gorgeous voice and charismatic screen presence.

## Vocals

Angourie Rice is the new Cady, the Lindsay Lohan role, a home-schooled math whiz who arrives in suburban Chicago straight from Kenya, where her mother was doing zoological research, into the snake pit of high school. Rice is a sweet presence but not as convincing in the "bad Cady" moments as Lohan. As for the Plastics, singer Renee Rapp, formerly Regina on Broadway, imbues the role with powerhouse vocals and an angrier edge than the excellent Rachel McAdams did - when she's enraged, boy, you feel it.

Once again, Cady begins her first school day in math class with Ms. Norbury, once played by Fey - and again by Fey! Tim Meadows is also back as the principal; both look older but certainly not two decades.

Cady has a rough entry and ends up eating lunch in a bathroom stall, but is rescued by Janis and Damian. In the cafeteria, she has her first encounter with Queen Bee Regina. "My name is Regina George," sings Rapp, in some of the show's best

lyrics, "I am a massive deal. I don't care who you are, I don't care how you feel."

The Plastics - Regina, needy Gretchen (Bebe Woods) and intellectually challenged Karen (Avantika) - adopt Cady and teach her the rules: Wear pink on Wednesdays. No tank tops two days in a row. A ponytail? Once a week. Also: You can't date someone's ex-boyfriend, because those are "the rules of feminism." At such moments, one can literally hear Fey writing the line.

Things go south quickly when Cady falls for Regina's ex, Aaron, who sits in front of her in AP Calculus (leading to the excellent lyric "Calculus." Regina isn't going to give up Aaron without a dirty fight. So Cady, aided by Damian and Janis, plots to bring Regina down from inside, pretending to be a loyal Plastic.

But at what point does Cady stop pretending and BECOME a Plastic? (Ask Janis.)

Directors Samantha Jayne and Arturo Perez Jr. keep the action moving briskly. A key visual difference is technology. In the 2004 film, friends spoke to each other on the telephone, in split screens. Now, of course, gossip and bullying take place via social media. In some ways this makes it all seem more vicious. When Regina takes an embarrassing tumble onstage at the Christmas performance, we witness a social media shaming that is much crueeler than anything that happened in the 2004 version.

And yet, it's believable, of course. One comes away from this latest "Mean Girls" thinking that in some ways things may have gotten better for high schoolers than they were in 2004 - but in other ways, things have only gotten meaner.

"Mean Girls: The Musical," a Paramount Pictures release, has been rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association "for sexual material, strong language, and teen drinking." Running time: 112 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four. (AP)

# Features

ARABO TIMES

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, JANUARY 12-13, 2024

**LOS ANGELES:** The rapper G Herbo could face just over a year in jail after pleading guilty to his role in a scheme that used stolen credit card information to pay for an opulent lifestyle including private jets and designer puppies.

Under a deal with prosecutors reached last year, the 28-year-old Chicago rapper, whose real name is Herbert Wright III, entered a guilty plea in federal court in Springfield, Massachusetts, to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and making false statements. In exchange, prosecutors dismissed several counts of aggravated identity theft.

G Herbo is set to be sentenced Thursday.

Prosecutors, in their sentencing memo, argue that he should be jailed for a year and day and get 36 months of supervised release. They also want him to pay a \$55,000 fine, enter a restitution order of nearly \$140,000 and a forfeiture judgement of nearly \$140,000.

Those fines would be on top of the \$140,000 he agreed to forfeit, the amount he benefited from what prosecutors have said was a \$1.5 million scheme that involved several other people.

Prosecutors argue the recommended sentence considers "the nature and circumstances of the offense and the history and characteristics of the defendant" and adequately reflects "the seriousness of the offense."

Defense attorneys are calling for probation, noting G Herbo has expressed regret for his crimes. They also highlighted his contributions to the community as well as the fact he has matured "as a human being, as a family man and as a father."

"Under the circumstances of this case, a sentence of probation will reflect the seriousness of the charge and protect the public," according to G Herbo's sentencing memo. (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** Listened to more music last year? You're not alone.

The global music industry surpassed 4 trillion streams in 2023, a new single-year record, Luminate's 2023 Year-End Report found.

Global streams were also up 34% from last year, reflective of an increasingly international music marketplace.

Statewide, three genres saw the biggest growth in 2023: country (23.7%), Latin (which encompasses all Latin musical genres, up 24.1%) and world (a catchall that includes J-pop, K-pop and Afrobeats, up 26.2%).

It seems that more Americans are listening to non-English music. By the end of 2023, Luminate found that Spanish-language mu-



G Herbo



Swift

sic's share of the top 10,000 songs streamed in the US grew 3.8%, and English-language music's share dropped 3.8%.

Under the Latin umbrella, regional Mexican music saw massive growth. The genre term - which encompasses mariachi, banda, corridos, norteño, siereño and other styles - grew 60% in US on-demand audio streams,

accounting for 21.9 billion. Four of the six Latin artists to break 1 billion audio streams in the US were Mexican acts: **Peso Pluma**, **Eslabon Armado**, **Junior H**, and **Fuerza Regida**, who also placed in the top 125 artists streamed.

Armado and Peso Pluma's "Ella Baila Sola" surpassed a billion streams on Spotify in less than a year and became the first regional

Mexican Top 10 hit on Billboard's all-genre Hot 100, peaking at No. 4 - later, Bad Bunny's collaboration with Grupo Frontera, "Un x100to," hit No. 5.

As for the **Taylor Swift** of it all: Time's 2023 Person of the Year made up 1.79% of the US market, Luminate found, accounting for 1 in every 78 US on-demand audio streams. (AP)

## People &amp; Places

## In Memoriam

## Year in review

## Influential people who died in 2023

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 11, (AP): **Bobby Charlton**, 86. An English soccer icon who survived a plane crash that decimated a Manchester United team destined for greatness to become the heartbeat of his country's 1966 World Cup triumph. Oct. 21.

**Bishan Bedi**, 77. The India cricket great whose dazzling left-arm spin claimed 266 test wickets. Oct. 23.

**Richard Roundtree**, 81. The trailblazing actor who starred as the ultra-smooth private detective in several "Shaft" films beginning in the early 1970s. Oct. 24.

**Richard Moll**, 80. A character actor who found lasting fame as an eccentric but gentle giant bailiff on the original "Night Court" sitcom. Oct. 26.

**Wu Zunyou**, 60. An epidemiologist who helped drive the country's strict zero-COVID measures in China that suspended access to cities and confined millions to their homes. Oct. 27.

**Matthew Perry**, 54. The Emmy-nominated "Friends" actor whose sarcastic, but lovable Chandler Bing was among television's most famous and quotable characters. Oct. 28.

**Ken Mattingly**, 87. An astronaut who is best remembered for his efforts on the ground that helped bring the damaged Apollo 13 spacecraft safely back to Earth. Oct. 31.



Perry

## November

**Frank Borman**, 95. The astronaut who commanded Apollo 8's historic Christmas 1968 flight that circled the moon 10 times and paved the way for the lunar landing the next year. Nov. 7.

**Daisaku Ikeda**, 95. He headed Soka Gakkai, a Japanese Buddhist organization, that includes famed musician Herbie Hancock and other celebrities in its fold. Nov. 15.

**George "Funky" Brown**, 74. The co-founder and longtime drummer of Kool & The Gang who helped write such hits as "Too Hot," "Ladies Night," "Joanna" and the party favorite "Celebration." Nov. 16.

**Rosalynn Carter**, 96. The former first lady was the closest adviser to Jimmy Carter during his one term as US president and their four decades thereafter as global humanitarians. Nov. 19.

**Marty Krofft**, 86. A TV producer known for imaginative children's shows such as "H.R. Pufnstuf" and primetime hits including "Donny & Marie" in the 1970s. Nov. 25.

**Terry Venables**, 80. A charismatic and tactically innovative English soccer coach who led his national team to the European Championship semifinals in 1996 after winning trophies at club level with Barcelona and Tottenham. Nov. 25.

**Tim Dorsey**, 62. A former police and courts newspaper reporter who found lasting fame as the creator of the crime-comedy novel series starring Serge A. Storms, an energetic fan of Florida history and an ingenious serial killer. Nov. 26.

**Frances Sternhagen**, 93. The veteran character actor who won two Tony Awards and became a familiar maternal face to TV viewers later in life in such shows as "Cheers," "ER," "Sex and the City" and "The Closer." Nov. 27.

**Henry Kissinger**, 100. The former secretary of state exerted uncommon influence on global affairs under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, earning both vilification and the Nobel Peace Prize. Nov. 29.

**Shane MacGowan**, 65. The singer-songwriter and frontman of "Celtic Punk" band The Pogues, best known for the Christmas ballad "Fairytale of New York." Nov. 30.

## December

**Sandra Day O'Connor**, 93. The former U.S. Supreme Court justice was an unwavering voice of moderate conservatism and the first woman to serve on the nation's highest court. Dec. 1.

**Norman Lear**, 101. The writer, director and producer who revolutionized prime-time television with "All in the Family," "The Jeffersons" and "Maude," propelling political and social turmoil into the once insulated world of TV sitcoms. Dec. 5.

**Benjamin Zephaniah**, 65. A British poet, political activist and actor who drew huge inspiration from his Caribbean roots. Dec. 7.

**Ryan O'Neal**, 82. The heartthrob actor who went from a TV soap opera to an Oscar-nominated role in "Love Story" and delivered a wry performance opposite his charismatic 9-year-old daughter Tatum in "Paper Moon." Dec. 8.

**Andre Braugher**, 61. The Emmy-winning actor who would master gritty drama for seven seasons on "Homicide: Life on the Street" and modern comedy for eight on "Brooklyn 99." Dec. 11.

**Zahara**, 36. She rose from an impoverished rural background to find rapid fame with multi-platinum selling albums and delivered her unique version of wistful Afro-soul in her country's isiXhosa language and in English. Dec. 11.

**Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah**, 86. As Kuwait's ruling Amir, he spent a three-year, low-key reign focused on trying to resolve the tiny, oil-rich nation's internal political disputes. Dec. 16.

**Mike Nussbaum**, 99. Reputed as the oldest professional actor in America with a prolific stage career and roles in films including "Field of Dreams" and "Men in Black." Dec. 23.

**Kamar de los Reyes**, 56. A television, movie and voice actor best known for playing a gang member-turned-cop in the soap "One Life to Live" and a villain in the video game "Call of Duty: Black Ops II." Dec. 24.

**Tom Smothers**, 86. He was half of the Smothers Brothers and the co-host of one of the most socially conscious and groundbreaking television shows in the history of the medium. Dec. 26.

**Wolfgang Schauble**, 81. He helped negotiate German reunification in 1990 and as finance minister was a central figure in the austerity-heavy effort to drag Europe out of its debt crisis two decades later. Dec. 26.

**Lee Sun-kyun**, 48. A popular South Korean actor best known for his role in the Oscar-winning movie "Parasite." Dec. 27.

**Mbongeni Ngema**, 68. A renowned South African playwright, producer and composer who was the creator of the Broadway hit "Sarafina!" that was adapted into a musical drama starring Whoopi Goldberg. Dec. 27.

**Tom Wilkinson**, 75. The Oscar-nominated British actor known for his roles in "The Full Monty," "Michael Clayton" and "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel." Dec. 28.

**Eddie Bernice Johnson**, 88. Trailblazing longtime US representative from Texas who helped bring hundreds of millions of federal dollars to the Dallas area as the region's most powerful Democrat. Dec. 31.



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Cillian Murphy in a scene from 'Oppenheimer.' 'Oppenheimer' and 'Barbie' lead the SAG Awards nominations with four each. (AP)

## Awards

## DiCaprio, 'Poor Things' face surprise snub

## 'Barbenheimer' dominates SAG nods

## Full list of SAG nominees

NEW YORK, Jan. 11, (AP): The 30th Screen Actors Guild Awards on Wednesday heaped nominations on "Oppenheimer," "Barbie" and "American Fiction," while snubbing Leonardo DiCaprio for best male actor.

As they were at the Golden Globes, Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" and Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" were again the lead nominees. Each film picked up four nods including best ensemble. Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling were nominated for their performances in "Barbie," while Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt received nods for "Oppenheimer."

Barbenheimer continues to rule Hollywood's awards season, just as it did the summer box office.

Cord Jefferson's "American Fiction" got the biggest momentum boost, landing three nods: best ensemble, Jeffrey Wright for best male actor and Sterling K. Brown for supporting male actor.

## Nominated

Along with those three films, Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon" and Blitz Bazawule's "The Color Purple" were nominated for best ensemble, the guild's top award.

Most notably left out of that group was Yorgos Lanthimos' "Poor Things," which on Sunday won best comedy/musical at the Golden Globes. The film's star, Emma Stone, was nominated for best female actor while Willem Dafoe (but not Mark Ruffalo) was nominated for best supporting male actor.

But those were far from the only snubs in the nominations announced by Issa Rae, a co-star in both "Barbie" and "American Fiction," and Kumail Nanjiani on Instagram Live.

Nominated for best actor were Bradley Cooper ("Maestro"), Colman Domingo ("Rustin"), Paul Giamatti ("The Holdovers"), Murphy and Wright. DiCaprio had long been seen as a presumed nominee for his performance in Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon." Lily Gladstone, who is poised to potentially make history at the Oscars, was among the best female actor nominees, while Robert De Niro was nominated for best supporting male actor.

Todd Hayne's "May December" was completely shut out, as was Celine Song's tender love story, "Past Lives." Charles Melton, co-star of "May December," was expected to be among the supporting male actors. And neither Sandra Hüller ("Anatomy of a Fall") nor Fantasia Barrino ("The Color Purple") scored individual nominations.

Along with Gladstone and Stone, the nominees for best female actor are Carey Mulligan ("Maestro") and Annette Bening ("Nyad"). Bening's co-star, Jodie Foster, joined the supporting female actor category which

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 11, (AP): Nominations for the 30th annual Screen Actors Guild Awards, which will be handed out on Feb. 24 in Los Angeles and shown live on Netflix:

## Film

■ **Movie ensemble:** "American Fiction"; "Barbie"; "The Color Purple"; "Killers of the Flower Moon"; "Oppenheimer"

■ **Female actor in a leading role:** Annette Bening, "Nyad"; Lily Gladstone, "Killers of the Flower Moon"; Carey Mulligan, "Maestro"; Margot Robbie, "Barbie"; Emma Stone, "Poor Things"

■ **Male actor in a leading role:** Bradley Cooper, "Maestro"; Colman Domingo, "Rustin"; Paul Giamatti, "The Holdovers"; Cillian Murphy, "Oppenheimer"; Jeffrey Wright, "American Fiction"

■ **Female actor in a supporting role:** Emily Blunt, "Oppenheimer"; Danielle Brooks, "The Color Purple"; Penélope Cruz, "Ferrari"; Jodie Foster, "Nyad"; Da'Vine Joy Randolph, "The Holdovers"

■ **Male actor in a supporting role:** Sterling K. Brown, "American Fiction"; Willem Dafoe, "Poor Things"; Robert De Niro, "Killers of the Flower Moon"; Robert Downey Jr., "Oppenheimer"; Ryan Gosling, "Barbie"

■ **Stunt ensemble:** "Barbie"; "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3"; "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny"; "John Wick: Chapter 4"; "Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning - Part I"

## Television

■ **Drama ensemble:** "The Crown"; "The Gilded Age"; "The Last of Us"; "The Morning Show"; "Succession"

■ **Comedy ensemble:** "Abbott Elementary"; "Barry"; "The Bear"; "Only Murders in the Building"; "Ted Lasso"

■ **Female actor in a drama series:** Jennifer Aniston, "The Morning Show"; Elizabeth Debicki, "The Crown"; Bella Ramsey, "The Last of Us"; Keri Russell, "The Diplomat"; Sarah Snook, "Succession"

■ **Male actor in a drama series:** Brian Cox, "Succession"; Billy Crudup, "The Morning Show"; Kieran Culkin, "Succession"; Matthew Macfadyen, "Succession"; Pedro Pascal, "The Last of Us"

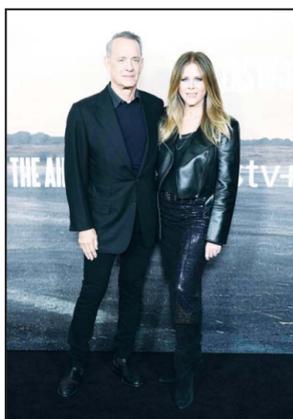
■ **Female actor in a comedy series:** Alex Borstein, "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"; Rachel Brosnahan, "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"; Quinta Brunson, "Abbott Elementary"; Ayo Edebiri, "The Bear"; Hannah Waddingham, "Ted Lasso"

■ **Male actor in a drama series:** Brett Goldstein, "Ted Lasso"; Bill Hader, "Barry"; Ebon Moss-Bachrach, "The Bear"; Jason Sudeikis, "Ted Lasso"; Jeremy Allen White, "The Bear"

■ **Female actor in a limited TV series or movie:** Uzo Aduba, "Painkiller"; Kathryn Hahn, "Tiny Beautiful Things"; Brie Larson, "Lessons in Chemistry"; Bel Powley, "A Small Light"; Ali Wong, "Beef"

■ **Male actor in a limited TV series or movie:** Matt Bomer, "Fellow Travelers"; Jon Hamm, "Fargo"; David Oyelowo, "Lawmen: Bass Reeves"; Tony Shalhoub, "Mr. Monk's Last Case: A Monk Movie"; Steven Yeun, "Beef"

■ **Stunt ensemble:** "Ahsoka"; "Barry"; "Beef"; "The Last of Us"; "The Mandalorian"



Tom Hanks, (left), executive producer of 'Masters of the Air,' poses with his wife Rita Wilson at the world premiere of the Apple TV+ miniseries, Wednesday, Jan. 10, at the Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

## Variety

NEW YORK: Christopher Nolan, Greta Gerwig and Martin Scorsese have been nominated by the Directors Guild for its top award.

The nominations to the 76th DGA Awards, which followed those by the Screen Actors Guild earlier Wednesday, went as expected. The other two nominees for the guild's top award, for outstanding directorial achievement, are Alexander Payne for "The Holdovers" and Yorgos Lanthimos for "Poor Things."

Nolan's nomination, for "Oppenheimer," is his fifth DGA nod though he's never won before. Gerwig, nominated for "Barbie," was previously nominated for 2017's "Lady Bird." Scorsese's nomination for "Killers of the Flower Moon" is his 13th DGA nod; he has previously won for 2006's "The Departed" and for the series "Boardwalk Empire."

The Directors Guild nominees often closely align with those of the Academy Awards. Over the past two decades, the winner of the DGA award has nearly always also triumphed at the Oscars. Last year, Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert won both awards for "Everything Everywhere All at Once."

The DGA's nominees for first-time feature filmmaker went to Cord Jefferson for "American Fiction," Manuela Martelli for "Chile '76," Noora Niasari for "Shayda," A.V. Rockwell for "A Thousand and One" and Celine Song for "Past Lives."

The guild earlier on Tuesday announced other categories. The DGA nominations for best documentary are: "20 Days in Mariupol," "Bobi Wine: The People's President," "Beyond Utopia," "Kokomo City" and "Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie." HBO's "Succession" led the TV nominations, with four out of five nominations for direction.

76th annual DGA Awards will be held Feb. 10. (AP)

LAS VEGAS: A Nevada judge set bail Tuesday at \$750,000 for a former Los Angeles-area gang leader charged with orchestrating the killing of hip-hop legend Tupac Shakur in 1996, saying he can serve house arrest with electronic monitoring ahead of trial on a murder charge.

Court-appointed attorneys for Duane "Keffe D" Davis told The Associated Press after the judge's decision that they believe Davis can post that amount. They had asked for bail of not more than \$100,000 and noted for the judge that the demands of preparing a defense based on two decades of evidence may require a postponement of the current June trial date.

Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson told reporters that he expects Clark County District Judge Carli Kierny will hold a "source hearing" to determine whether money posted for bail is legally obtained. The judge did not set a new trial date but called for a status check Feb. 20.

Prosecutors Binu Palal and Marc DiGiacomo argued Tuesday that Davis has never left gang life, that his 15 years of admissions about his role in Shakur's kill-

ing show he is guilty of murder, and that a jailhouse phone call in October suggested he poses a threat to witnesses.

"There is one constant," Palal told the judge. "Mr. Davis has consistently admitted to being architect of the murder."

DiGiacomo called Davis "a very, very high danger to the community."

The judge, in her ruling, acknowledged that Davis "made a living talking about his past life as a leader of the South Side



Gerwig



Scorsese

artificial intelligence were top issues. In the television categories, the trio that nearly swept the Golden Globes - "Succession," "The Bear" and "Beef" - were again among the lead nominees.

"Succession" led all series with five nods (though Jeremy Strong was passed over), while "The Last of Us," "Ted Lasso" and "The Bear" all collected four nominations.

The SAG Awards will take place Feb. 24 at the Shine Auditorium & Expo Hall in Los Angeles. Netflix will live stream the ceremony for the first time. Last year's awards were streamed on Netflix's YouTube account.

The show will mark one of Netflix's most notable forays into live programming. The streamer, which has for years been an awards season force, will first to play host, too, in the runup to the Academy Awards in March.

Crips," a street gang in his hometown of Compton, California, "and also the killing of Mr. Shakur in graphic detail."

Robert Arroyo and co-counsel Charles Cano argued that police and prosecutors could have arrested Davis 15 years ago but didn't, and that the prosecutors were wrong with their interpretation of the jail telephone call and a list of names provided to Davis' family. The defense lawyers said it is Davis and his family who are at risk. (AP)

## The Conversation

Expert stresses overall health amid rise of obesity-fighting drugs

## Don't make weight loss the only goal, warns expert

By Mandy Conrad

Mississippi State University

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

If the buzz surrounding a medication could elevate it to celebrity status, then Zepbound is reaching Taylor Swift rank.

Zepbound is the newest addition to the weight loss drug arena. In November 2023, it joined the list of obesity-fighting drugs - administered as an injection - to be approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

The key to Zepbound's weight loss potential is its active ingredient, tirzepatide. This is the same active ingredient found in the drug Mounjaro, which is approved to treat Type 2 diabetes.

The relationship between Zepbound and Mounjaro is similar to two other popular drugs making headlines, Wegovy and Ozempic. Both Wegovy and Ozempic contain the active ingredient semaglutide, with Wegovy approved for the treatment of Type 2 diabetes and Ozempic approved for the treatment of obesity.

Tirzepatide and semaglutide both mimic the digestive hormone GLP-1, which is released by the intestines when we eat to stimulate insulin production and help regulate blood sugar. GLP-1 also suppresses appetite while promoting a sensation of fullness.

Weight loss medications are intended to be used in conjunction with lifestyle changes, such as exercise and a healthy diet. But too often, people view them as a silver bullet for weight loss. And the high price tag and variable insurance coverage for these popular weight loss drugs create a barrier for many people.

I am a registered dietitian and dietetics educator. Whether I am counseling patients, teaching students or working in my community to address food access challenges and healthy eating, I focus on overall well-being. I am passionate about helping people make informed and realistic health decisions based on their circumstances and helping them see opportunities to overcome the barriers they may encounter.

The potential impact of these drugs is staggering, since more than 2 in 5 American adults are obese, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Obesity is not just an American issue, nor is it going away. The World Obesity Federation estimates that by 2030, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men will be living with obesity worldwide.

## Cancers

Many serious health conditions are associated with obesity, including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, certain cancers and osteoarthritis. By treating obesity, a person can reduce or reverse obesity-related disease and improve both their health and quality of life.

However, long-term weight management depends on a number of complex factors. Meal timing and types of foods eaten can affect energy levels, satisfaction and hunger levels. A person's typical schedule, culture and preferences, activity level and health history must be taken into consideration as well. No single "best strategy" for weight management has been identified, and research indicates that strategies for weight loss and maintenance need to be individualized.

In addition, it is critical to note that research on the long-term effects of these newer weight loss drugs is limited. The available research has focused specifically on weight loss, heart health and metabolism and has found that ongoing use of these new medications is necessary to maintain improvements in weight and related health benefits.

Common side effects and the emotional toll experienced by those who regain weight once they stop taking the drugs are trade-offs that need to be considered. More research is needed to better understand the long-term impact of both direct and indirect health consequences of taking drugs for weight loss.

Throughout my years working as a registered dietitian, I have counseled numerous people about their weight loss goals. I often see a hy-

perfocus on weight loss, with much less attention being placed on the right nutrients to eat.

Societal standards and weight stigma in the health care setting can negatively affect patients' health and can lead them to obsess about the number on a scale rather than on the health outcome.

Weight loss may be necessary to reduce risks and promote health. But weight loss alone should not be the end goal: Rather, the focus should be on overall health. Tactics to reduce intake and suppress appetite require intention to ensure that the body receives the nutrients it needs to support health.

Additionally, I remind people that long-term results require attention to diet and lifestyle. When a person stops taking a medication, the condition it's meant to treat can often return. If you stop taking your high blood pressure pills without altering your diet and lifestyle, your blood pressure goes back up. The same effects can happen with medications used to treat cholesterol and obesity.

Despite the prevalence of obesity and the emergence of newer drugs to treat it, 95% of the world's population doesn't get enough of at least one nutrient. According to one study, nearly one-third of Americans have been found to be at risk of at least one nutrient deficiency. Additional research indicates that those actively trying to lose weight are more prone to nutrient deficiencies and inadequate intake.

For instance, a decline in iron intake can lead to iron deficiency anemia, which can cause fatigue as well as an increased risk of many conditions. Adequate intake of calcium and Vitamin D reduce the risk of bone fractures, yet many people get less than the recommended amounts of these nutrients.

## Concerns

It is true that a healthy body weight is associated with reduced health risks and conditions. But if a person loses weight in a manner that does not provide their body with adequate nourishment, then they may develop new health concerns. For example, when a person follows a diet that severely restricts carbohydrates, such as the ketogenic diet, intake of many vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals - or biologically active compounds found in plants - and fiber are reduced. This can increase risk of nutrient deficiencies and impair the health of bacteria in our gut that are important for nutrient absorption and immune function.

Nutrition recommendations set by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans provide guidance and resources to help meet nutrient needs to promote health and prevent disease, regardless of the strategy used to lose weight.

There is no doubt that striving for a healthy body weight can reduce certain health risks and prevent chronic disease. Whether a person strives to maintain a healthy body weight through diet alone or with medications to treat obesity, the following tips can help optimize health while attempting to lose weight.

Adopt an individualized approach to healthy behaviors that promote weight loss while considering personal preferences, environmental challenges, health conditions and nutrient needs.

Focus on nutrient-dense foods to ensure the body is getting required nutrients for disease prevention and optimal function. If medications reduce your appetite, it is crucial to maximize the amount of nutrients in the foods you do consume.

Include exercise in your program. Weight loss as a result of reduced calorie intake can decrease both fat and lean body mass, or muscle. An exercise routine that includes strength training will help improve muscle strength and preserve muscle during weight loss.

Seek professional help. If you are uncertain about how to adopt an individualized approach while ensuring adequate intake of essential nutrients, talk to a registered dietitian. They can learn about your individual needs based on preferences, health conditions and goals to make dietary recommendations that support health. (AP)

Early treatment and fertility preservation help

## HPV vaccines, regular screenings offer hope for a cervical cancer-free future



A sign for flu and covid vaccinations is displayed at a pharmacy store in Palatine, Ill., Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023. The flu season in the US is getting worse but it's too soon to tell how much holiday gatherings contributed to a likely spike in illnesses. New government data posted Friday, Jan. 5, 2024 for the previous week - the holiday week between Christmas and New Year's - show 38 states with high or very high levels for respiratory illnesses with fever, cough and other symptoms. That's up from 31 states the week before. (AP)

## WHO urges vigilance

Nearly 10,000 COVID-19 deaths last month amid holiday spread

GENEVA, Jan 11, (AP) - The head of the UN health agency said Wednesday holiday gatherings and the spread of the most prominent variant globally led to increased transmission of COVID-19 last month.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said nearly 10,000 deaths were reported in December, while hospital admissions during the month jumped 42% in nearly 50 countries - mostly in Europe and the Americas - that shared such trend information.

"Although 10,000 deaths a month is far less than the peak of the pandemic, this level of preventable deaths is not acceptable," the World Health Organization director-general told reporters from its headquarters in Geneva.

He said it was "certain" that cases were on the rise in other places that haven't been reporting, calling on governments to keep up surveillance and provide continued access to treatments and vaccines.

## Pathogens

Tedros said the JN.1 variant was now the most prominent in the world. It is an omicron variant, so current vaccines should still provide some protection.

Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead at WHO for COVID-19, cited an increase in respiratory diseases across the globe due to the coronavirus but also flu, rhinovirus and pneumonia.

"We expect those trends to continue into January through the winter months in the northern hemisphere," she said, while noting increases in COVID-19 in the southern hemisphere - where it's now summer.

While bouts of coughs, sniffing, fever and fatigue in the winter are nothing new, Van Kerkhove said this year in particular, "we are seeing co-circulation of many different types of pathogens."

WHO officials recommend that people get vaccinated when possible, wear masks, and make sure indoor areas are well ventilated. "The vaccines may not stop you being infected, but the vaccines are certainly reducing significantly your chance of being hospitalized or dying," said Dr. Michael Ryan, head of emergencies at WHO.

Meanwhile, the flu season in the US is getting worse but it's too soon to tell how much holiday gatherings contributed to a likely spike in illnesses.

New government data posted recently - the holiday week between Christmas and New Year's - show 38 states with high or very high levels for respiratory illnesses with fever, cough and other symptoms. That's up from 31 states the week before.

The measure likely includes people with COVID-19, RSV and other winter viruses, and not just flu. But flu seems to be increasing most dramatically, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

LONDON, Jan 11: With the availability of vaccines against human papillomavirus (HPV) and the ability to remove abnormal cells before cancerous lesions develop, cervical cancer could become a disease of the past for future generations, says an expert from global health system Cleveland Clinic, speaking during the Cervical Cancer Awareness Month of January.

Cervical Cancer is the fourth-most common cancer among women worldwide and is caused mainly by persistent infection with high-risk types of HPV, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). In its recent publications, the WHO estimates there were 604,000 new cases and 342,000 deaths from cervical cancer in 2020.

"The good news is that cervical cancer is preventable, and also highly treatable, especially if caught early," says consultant gynaecological-oncology surgeon Owen Heath MBBS MRCOG PhD, who practises at Cleveland Clinic London.

According to Dr. Heath, a combination of HPV vaccines and regular screening are needed to eliminate cervical cancer.

"While studies in the UK and Australia have highlighted the effectiveness of HPV vaccine programs in reducing the incidence of cervical cancers and pre-cancers, more research is needed," he says.

"Regular screenings remain vital as some people may elect not to have the vaccine, or in some countries the vaccine might not cover all of the high-risk HPV types. In extremely rare cases, a cervical cancer could develop that is not directly linked to HPV."

The vaccines are normally administered to school children and in adults up to the age of 45, after which the likelihood of developing cancer from HPV is lower, although regular cervical cancer screenings should continue.

## Symptoms

Dr. Heath points out that the vaccines are not just for women, in addition to transmitting the disease, men are also at risk of other health issues caused by strains of the HPV such as head and neck cancers.

Dr. Heath says cervical cancer can develop slowly with pre-cancerous cells becoming cancerous over a period of many years, so regular screening is important.

While guidelines vary from country to country, he recommends women visit a doctor to ask about the screening frequency needed based on their individual risk profile. According to Dr. Heath, women above the age 65 can discontinue screening if this has been previously normal, but since cervical cancer can develop at any age, it is important to see an expert if there are any gynaecological symptoms.

The most common screening test now combines HPV testing with a pap smear. A cervical sample is analysed for the presence of high-risk HPV subtypes, if high-risk HPV subtypes are detected the cells in the sample are then looked at for any abnormalities, Dr. Heath adds.

If a high-risk form of HPV is found in a woman, she will need to be monitored carefully, typically through annual screening.

"In the majority of cases, the body's own immune system can clear the infection, but if it persists it can cause abnormalities in the cells of the cervix that left untreated can develop into a cervical cancer."

"If there is evidence of persistence of HPV infection or cytological abnormalities, a detailed examination of the cervix called a colposcopy should be undertaken."

"This is a quick and effective means to achieve a diagnosis. Treatment of pre-cancerous areas on the cervix can be undertaken at the same time, by removing or ablating these cells," says Dr. Heath.

If a patient is diagnosed with cervical cancer, surgical removal of the cancerous tissue is very successful if the cancer is detected at an early stage, says Dr. Heath.

He adds that fertility-preserving procedures could be offered at this stage, for example, a trachelectomy, where the cervix is removed but the womb remains. Later-stage cancers are treated with the combination of radiation and chemotherapy.



Dr Heath

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## Ski star excels at Wengen

## Odermatt finally gets a first World Cup downhill win

WENGEN, Switzerland, Jan 11, (AP) — Marco Odermatt finally won a World Cup downhill Thursday in his 36th attempt, following eight previous second-place finishes.

The Swiss star, who has 29 World Cup wins in giant slalom and super-G, was close to flawless in ideal racing conditions on his home nation's signature downhill track to be 0.58 seconds faster than Cyprien Sarrazin. Aleksander Aamodt Kilde was third, trailing 0.81 behind his long-time rival.

"It's a dream, finally, my first win

in downhill and here at home," Odermatt told Swiss broadcaster RTS. "I was very motivated for today. I skied with lots of risk."

## SKIING

Odermatt took gold in downhill at the world championships last season yet had eight runner-up results - including twice at Wengen - without a win in the marquee discipline on the World Cup circuit.

His 30th career World Cup race

win, and his sixth this season, followed 18 in giant slalom and 11 in super-G. He also won Olympic gold in giant slalom in Beijing in 2022.

The result was unofficial as lower-ranked racers prepared to start after foggy clouds rolled across the storied Lauberhorn hill.

Odermatt was set to earn 100 World Cup points which would extend the two-time defending overall champion's lead in the standings to 372 points ahead of Marco Schwarz, whose season was ended

by a crash in downhill last month at Bormio, Italy. Kilde, the 2020 overall champion, is third.

The top three placings Thursday mirrored the season-long downhill standings, which Kilde won for the past two seasons.

The extra downhill race beneath the Eiger and Jungfrau mountains at Wengen replaced a race canceled because of poor weather last month at Beaver Creek, Colorado.

It used a shortened 2.95-kilometer (1.83-mile) course starting just above the signature Hundschopf jump that

launched racers up to 40 meters (45 yards) through the air.

The top-ranked racers went down in sunshine and temperatures of about minus-4 C (25 F) with clear blue skies above the clouds at a finish-area altitude of about 1,300 meters (4,250 feet).

Odermatt excelled by being fast through the tricky S-shaped bends midway through the course where racer speeds dip to about 70 kph (44 mph).

Odermatt's top speed on the later Hanneggschuss straight was close

to 142 kph (89mph). Fifth-placed Dominik Paris topped 145 kph (90 mph) on the section where Johan Clarey set a World Cup speed record in 2013 of 161.9 kph (100.6 mph).

The extended four-race weekend at Wengen continues Friday with a super-G before the classic Lauberhorn downhill on Saturday that is the longest race on the World Cup circuit. The full distance of about 4.4 kilometers (2 3/4 miles) takes close to 2 1/2 minutes to complete.

## North Carolina routs rival NC State

## UCF erases 16-point deficit to defeat Kansas

ORLANDO, Jan 11, (AP) — Jaylin Seller scored 18 points, Darius Johnson added 17 and UCF erased a 16-point deficit to beat No. 3 Kansas 65-60 on Wednesday night.

Ibrahima Diallo broke a 57-57 tie with less than three minutes left with a hook shot over Jayhawks (13-2, 1-1 Big 12) star Hunter Dickinson. He then blocked a KJ Adams Jr. shot with 50 seconds left to help the Knights (10-4, 1-1) preserve the lead and score the program's first Big 12 conference win.

Diallo had 13 points, five rebounds and a block to help anchor a UCF defense that forced eight turnovers and blocked four shots in the second half alone.

Kevin McCullar Jr. scored 16 points to lead Kansas. Dickinson had only 12 points and played 28 minutes because of foul trouble.

## UConn 80, Xavier 75

In Cincinnati, Cam Spencer scored 19 points and Tristen Newton had 16 as UConn held off Xavier to win its fourth straight game.

Alex Karaban added 14 points and Newton finished with 11 assists for the Huskies (14-2, 4-1 Big East). Freshman guard Stephon Castle had 12 points, eight assists and six rebounds for Connecticut. Hassan Diarra scored 11 off the bench.

Quincy Olivari scored 24 points and Desmond Claude added 15 for the Musketeers (7-8, 1-3).

Mississippi State 77, Tennessee 72  
In Starkville, Tolu Smith scored 23 points, including a 3-point play with 14.7 seconds remaining, to lead Mississippi State to a win over Tennessee.

The win marked Mississippi State's first win over a Top 5 team since defeating Oklahoma in December 2002. The Vols are the fourth top five team to lose in the past 24 hours as No. 1 Purdue, No. 2 Houston and No. 3 Kansas also were beaten.

## North Carolina 67, NC State 54

In Raleigh, RJ Davis scored 16 points

and Harrison Ingram had a career-best 19 rebounds to help North Carolina take over in the second half and beat rival North Carolina State.

Freshman guard Elliott Cadeau added 11 points and six assists for the Tar Heels (12-3, 4-0 Atlantic Coast Conference), who grinded through a tough shooting night for both teams by finally stretching out a lead midway through the second half. UNC won despite shooting 38%.

## TCU 80, Oklahoma 71

In Fort Worth, Emanuel Miller scored a season-high 27 points and had nine rebounds as TCU beat Oklahoma, making the Sooners the fifth Top 10 team over two nights to lose to an un-



ranked opponent.  
Oklahoma (13-2, 1-1 Big 12) quickly erased a six-point halftime deficit when Javian McCollum hit two 3-pointers in the first 32 seconds after the break - the tying shot coming off a TCU turnover.

## BASKETBALL

Butler 69, Marquette 62  
In Milwaukee, Pierre Brooks and Landon Moore each scored 14 points, leading Butler to a surprising victory over Marquette.

Jalen Thomas had 10 points and 14 rebounds for the Bulldogs (11-5, 2-3 Big East), who had lost three straight. Posh Alexander added 10 points, seven assists and five steals.

## Memphis 107, UTSA 101, OT

In Memphis, Jahvon Quinerly scored 25 points, including nine in overtime, as Memphis survived another close call defeating UTSA.

David Jones led the Tigers with 26 points and 11 rebounds, while Nick Jourdain finished with 18 points and 12 rebounds as Memphis (14-2, 3-0 American Athletic Conference) won its ninth straight.

## Wisconsin 71, Ohio State 60

In Columbus, Max Klesmit scored all of his 18 points in the second half as Wisconsin won their fifth straight, rallying to beat Ohio State.

AJ Storr had 15 of his 17 points in the first half for the Badgers (12-3, 4-0 Big Ten).

## Virginia Tech 87, Clemson 72

In Blacksburg, Sean Pedulla scored a career-high 32 points, including six 3-pointers, to lead Virginia Tech over Clemson, which has lost three consecutive games.

Ian Schieffelin led Clemson (11-4, 1-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) with 15 points.

## East-leading Celtics edge West best T-wolves, improve to 18-0 at home



Toronto Raptors forward Thaddeus Young, right, shoots as Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard, left, and center Ivica Zubac defend during the second half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

## Leonard signs extension as Clippers rally to beat Raptors

**BOSTON, Jan 11, (AP) — Jayson Tatum scored 45 points, 14 of them in the fourth quarter and another 12 in overtime as the Boston Celtics beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 127-120 in a matchup of the two conference leaders Wednesday night to remain perfect at home.**

Jaylen Brown had 35 points and 11 rebounds for the Celtics, who are 18-0 at home for the first time in franchise history. Jrue Holiday scored 12, including a corner 3-pointer off an offensive rebound by Derrick White to cap a 14-3 run that gave Boston a 111-109 lead with 26 seconds left in regulation.

With Timberwolves co-owner and Boston nemesis Alex Rodriguez sitting courtside, Anthony Edwards hit a pair of free throws to tie it. Tatum missed an off-balance shot at the buzzer that could have won the game in regulation.

Edwards had 29 points and Karl Anthony-Towns scored 25 with 13 rebounds for Minnesota (26-11), which has the best record in the Western Conference and trails only Boston (29-8) overall.

## Spurs 130, Pistons 108

In Detroit, Victor Wembanyama had 16 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his first triple-double in the NBA, leading San Antonio over Detroit.

Wembanyama, the No. 1 pick in the draft, pulled off the feat in just 21 minutes playing against the franchise that was hoping to land him. Detroit had the league's worst record last season, but didn't get the first pick in the draft lottery.

Wembanyama was 6 of 16 from the field, missing all four of his 3-point attempts. The 7-foot-3 French phenom showed his playmaking skills on the break and in the post, setting teammates with slick passes to surpass his previous season high of seven assists.

The Spurs (6-30) entered the game with the second-worst record in the NBA, with only the lowly Pistons behind them, and a five-game losing streak. Detroit (3-35) has lost six consecutive games since breaking its NBA record-tying 28-game losing streak.

## Thunder 128, Heat 120

In Miami, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 28 points, Chet Holmgren added 23 and Oklahoma City used two big second-half runs to beat Miami.

Jalen Williams finished with 19 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds, and Lu Dort scored 14 points and Isaiah Joe added 11. Oklahoma City beat Miami for the second time in the last 10 meetings.

Bam Adebayo led Miami with 25 points, 11 rebounds and six assists. Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 21 points and Haywood Highsmith had a career-best 19.

Tyler Herro scored 17 points, Nikola Jovic added 15 and Kevin Love had 12 for the Heat. Miami used a late 10-0 run to get within six with 1:08 remaining, but wouldn't score again.

## Pelicans 141, Warriors 105

In San Francisco, Jonas Valanciunas had 21 points, nine rebounds and a pair of steals, helping New Orleans jump to a big lead on the way to beating Golden State.

## BASKETBALL

Stephen Curry had 15 points and six assists for Golden State coming off a game in which he shot 2 for 14 and missed all nine of his 3-point tries to score nine points, after he'd gone for 25 points or more in the previous four games.

Zion Williamson started for the Pelicans and contributed 19 points, seven assists and five rebounds playing 30 minutes after he began the day questionable because of a bruised right quadriceps.

Moses Moody came off the bench to score 21 points for the struggling Warriors while Klay Thompson finished with 13. Draymond Green's return following a 12-game league suspension can't come soon enough to energize the 2022 champions.

## Clippers 126, Raptors 120

In Los Angeles, Kawhi Leonard scored 29 points after agreeing to a three-year contract extension earlier in the day. Paul George added 29, including 15 in the fourth quarter, and Los Angeles rallied for a victory over Toronto.

With the Los Angeles Clippers compiling one of their best rosters ever, Leonard wanted to make sure the focus was on the quest for a first NBA Finals appearance in franchise history rather than his future.

So Leonard signed a three-year contract extension worth \$152.3 million on Wednesday.

Immanuel Quickley paced the Raptors with 25 points, RJ

Barrett added 24 and Dennis Schroder had 22 as Toronto fell in Crypto.com Arena for the second straight night after a one-point loss to the Lakers on Tuesday.

The Raptors were missing Pascal Siakam due to back spasms. Toronto has split its six games since acquiring Barrett and Quickley from the New York Knicks.

James Harden (14 points, 11 assists) and Ivica Zubac (12 points, 11 rebounds) both had double-doubles as the Clippers improved to an NBA-best 16-3 since Dec. 1.

## Jazz 124, Nuggets 111

In Salt Lake City, Jordan Clarkson had 27 points and nine assists to send the Utah past Denver for its ninth victory in 11 games.

After beating Philadelphia and Milwaukee on the road, Utah earned its third win in five days over an elite team by taking down the defending NBA champions.

Lauri Markkanen added 26 points and 12 rebounds, Collin Sexton scored 22 and John Collins had 15 points for the Jazz (19-20), who shot 55% from the field and finished with 18 fast-break points.

Nikola Jokic scored 27 points and was nearly perfect shooting 8 for 9 from the floor and 10 of 12 at the foul line but didn't get a lot of help. Denver had won six straight road games since a Dec. 6 defeat at the Los Angeles Clippers.

## Hawks 139, 76ers 132, OT

In Atlanta, Jalen Johnson hit two tying free throws in overtime and then added a go-ahead 3-pointer with 39 seconds remaining, sending Atlanta over Tyrese Maxey and Philadelphia.

Johnson, who had 25 points and 16 rebounds, added two more free throws with 13 seconds remaining to help close it out.

Maxey had 35 points, nine assists, eight rebounds and four steals. Tobias Harris added 32 points for the 76ers, who played without Joel Embiid and suffered their third straight loss.

## Kings 123, Hornets 98

In Charlotte, Keegan Murray scored 25 points, Domantas Sabonis had 24 points and 10 rebounds and Sacramento beat Charlotte for its second straight victory.

Former Hornets first-rounder Malik Monk added 20 points for Sacramento. De'Aaron Fox scored 19 points, and Sabonis also had seven assists. The Kings improved to 23-14, getting revenge for a 111-104 home loss to Charlotte last week.

Miles Bridges led the Hornets with 24 points. Terry Rozier added 22, Brandon Miller had 15 and Nick Smith, Jr. 11. Charlotte, at 8-27, has lost 157 man-games because of injury or illness, including starters LaMelo Ball (20), Mark Williams (16), Rozier (11), Gordon Hayward (10).

## Bulls 124, Rockets 119, OT

In Chicago, Coby White scored 30 points and Zach LaVine made a big 3-pointer with 1:46 left in overtime, helping Chicago top Houston.

LaVine finished with 25 points, 13 rebounds, seven assists and three steals in Chicago's third consecutive win. DeMar DeRozan scored 19 points on 5-for-19 shooting, and Nikola Vucevic had 18 points and 15 rebounds.

LaVine and Vucevic were back in the starting lineup and without minute restrictions for their third game back after being sidelined by injuries.

## Pacers 112, Wizards 104

In Indianapolis, Myles Turner had 18 points and 13 rebounds and Indiana overcame star guard Tyrese Haliburton's absence to beat Washington for its eighth win in nine games.

Haliburton, the NBA assists leader and Indiana scoring leader, strained his left hamstring Monday night in a 133-131 home victory over Boston. He will be re-evaluated in two weeks.

Bruce Brown and Benedict Mathurin each added 16 points for the Pacers. Obi Toppin added 15 points, and Brown also had nine rebounds and six assists.

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Shotgun shooting referees pose for a group photo at the end of the course.

## International shotgun referees course concludes on high note

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The international shotgun referees course, reached its culmination at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Ranges Complex. The course was led by Qatari international referee Abdullah Ali Al-Hammadi, who also serves as the technical delegate of the International and Asian Federations, and his Kuwaiti deputy, Mohammed Al-Fahd, the vice-chairman of the shotgun referees committee. This event coincided with Kuwait's hosting of the Asian Championship activities.

Expressing gratitude, Al-Hammadi extended thanks to the Kuwaiti Shooting Federation and the Secretary-General of the Kuwaiti and Arab Federations, Obaid Al-Osaimi, for their nominations of participants. He

commended the successful and interactive nature of the course, which commenced the previous Sunday and concluded with a comprehensive two-hour test for all attendees.

### SHOOTING

Al-Hammadi highlighted the Asian Confederation's anticipation of organizing similar tournaments in an intensive manner to maximize the benefits for all involved. The course encompassed various aspects of shotgun refereeing, including skeet, dirt, mex shooting, and the Olympic Games. Notably, 11 referees actively participated in the tournament, contributing to its overall success.



Kuwaiti players preparing for their friendly encounter against Libya.

## Kuwait face Libya in friendly game

CAIRO, Jan 11: The Kuwaiti national soccer team is set to face the Libyan national team in a friendly match at Cairo International Stadium today at 6:00 pm as part of its training camp in Egypt.

### SOCCER

Kuwait conducted two training sessions in Cairo in preparation for the match against the Libya. Additionally, a second match is scheduled against

Uganda on January 19.

In another development, the Libyan Al-Jamahir newspaper disclosed that "Kuwait covered the expenses of the Libyan national team in Egypt, causing discontent among many."

Meanwhile, Emilio Peixe, the Portuguese coach of the Kuwaiti Olympic team, has called up five players during the team's training camp in Thailand. The summoned players include Saleh Al-Mahtab, Omar Al-Salim, Jarrah Al-Hilali (Kazima), Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi (Salmiya), and Talal Al-Hajraf (Jahra).

## The new arena of Sahari Resort 'hosts' equestrian tournament

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Sahari Resort Equestrian Championship kicks off this afternoon, featuring riders from local clubs competing at the Subhan equestrian track.

Dalal Al-Obaid, the General Manager of Equestrianism at Sahari Resort, highlighted the significance of the competition taking place in the new arena recently imported from the Netherlands. A specialized Dutch team oversaw the setup, and the tournament consists of 6 rounds at various altitudes.

Ensuring inclusivity, Al-Obaid emphasized, "We ensured that the obstacle heights are suitable for all participants, minimizing exertion. These competitions play a crucial role in preparing horses for upcoming international events."



Horsewoman Dalal Al-Obaid, General Manager of Equestrianism at Sahari Resort.

Expressing enthusiasm, Al-Obaid stated, "This championship marks the inaugural show jumping competition in the new Sahara Health arena. Our goal is to provide optimal facilities for riders, ultimately elevating the standard of equestrianism in Kuwait. The championship serves as valuable preparation for riders gearing up for international competitions scheduled in Kuwait next February."

The referees' committee for the tournament is led by international referee Nadhar Al-Mustafa, with Dalal Al-Obaid, Lama Abdel-Al, and Sarah Al-Mohammed, an arena referee. The center's design is credited to Abdulaziz Al-Ajeel, with assistance from Mohamed Al-Saeed, Faisal Al-Rifai, and Mohamed Behbehani.

# Kuwait 'eye' strong start at Asian Handball Championship

Blues aim to break 24-year World Cup absence

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MANAMA, Jan 11: The Kuwait team has set to kick off its journey in the 21st Asian Handball Championship, also known as the "2025 World Cup Qualifiers," as it faces Oman at 5:00 pm.

### HANDBALL

The match will take place at the Khalifa Sports Hall in the Bahraini capital, Manama, marking the beginning of the first group matches.

In the same group, Qatar will compete against China Taipei at 1:00 in the afternoon. Meanwhile, in the second group, the New Zealand team will go head-to-head with its Iranian counterpart at 3:00 in the afternoon. In the same group, China is scheduled to play against Korea at 7:00 in the evening.

The tournament, which commenced yesterday, will see the top four ranked teams qualify for the 2025 World Cup finals. The finals are scheduled to take place in Croatia, Denmark, and Norway from



A file photo of Kuwaiti player preparing to shoot.

January 14 to February 2 of the following year.

In preparation for the championship, Kuwait engaged in an external

## Sven-Goran Eriksson 'says' he has cancer

STOCKHOLM, Jan 11, (AP): Swedish soccer coach Sven-Goran Eriksson said he has cancer and might have less than a year to live.

The former England coach told Swedish Radio P1 he discovered he had cancer after collapsing suddenly. He said in February last year that he was reducing his public appearances because of health issues.

"Everyone understands that I have a disease that is not good, and everyone guesses that it is cancer and it is," Eriksson said in an interview published Thursday.

Eriksson said he has pancreatic cancer and that it is inoperable.

"At best I have maybe a year, at worst maybe a little less," he said.

The 75-year-old said he is trying to think positively.

"I could go and think about it all the time and sit at home and be grumpy and think I'm unlucky and so on," he said. "I think that is easily done, that you end up there."

"No, look at things positively and don't wallow in adversity. Because this is, of course, the biggest setback."

Eriksson was England's first ever foreign-born coach from 2001-06 after making his name winning league titles at club level with Lazio in Italy, Benfica in Portugal and IFK Gothenburg in his native Sweden.

camp in Slovenia and Croatia, featuring four trial matches, including two against the Slovenia Olympic team, and one each against the Saudi national team and the Georgia national team.

Led by coach Saeed Hegazy, the technical staff of the Kuwaiti national team includes Mohamed Masoudane, physical trainer Issam Lahiani, physiotherapist Mohamed Mahdi, and goalkeeper coach Ayman Al-Sheikh.

With an ambition to secure a spot in the semi-finals and qualify for the World Cup, the Kuwaiti team aims to break a 24-year absence from the prestigious tournament.

The last participation of the in the World Cup dates back to 2009 in Croatia.

The technical staff relies on the players' accumulated experience gained through their involvement with the national team, as well as their contributions to Kuwait Club and Al-Qadisiya Club in foreign competitions.

In September, the "Blue Hand" clinched the third-place position and a bronze medal in the Asian Games in China. Additionally, they participated in the qualifiers for the Paris 2024 Olympics in Qatar.

It is noteworthy that the Kuwaiti national handball team has qualified for the World Cup eight times, in 1982, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009.

## Misha to lead Al Salmiya

# Dr. Al-Mashaan succeeds Ibrahim at Al-Qadisiya

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Al Salmiya has reached an agreement with Croatian coach Ante Misha to take charge of the team for the remainder of the current season's competitions.

Despite initially considering negotiations with Serbian coach Boris Bunjak, the majority of the club's board members rejected him due to his lack of success with other Kuwaiti clubs. Consequently, the club has opted for Ante Misha.

The contract with Misha comes as a replacement for the former coach, Dr. Muhammad Al-Mashaan, who has joined Al-Qadisiya to lead the team, succeeding Muhammad Ibrahim, who stepped down for health reasons.

Misha is set to lead Al-Samawi's training in the next two days, gearing up for the Emir's Cup competitions scheduled to begin on January 26.

In a related development, the Al-Qadisiya Club delegation is embarking on a 10-day training camp in Manama, Bahrain, in preparation for their Amir Cup preliminary round clash against Yarmouk on January 27. Two friendly matches with Bahraini clubs are also on the agenda during the camp.

### SOCCER

Al-Mashaan, previously an assistant to coach Dalibor at Al-Qadisiya, has an impressive track record, winning the Crown Prince Cup title in the 2017-2018 season. He has also coached Al-Jahra and Al-Nasr clubs and worked within the technical staff of Kuwait in previous periods.

Al-Mashaan visited coach Ibrahim, who expressed support for him as his successor in leading the team. It is anticipated that star player Badr Al-Mutawa will miss the camp due to work commitments, continuing his training at the club. Meanwhile, former international goalkeeper Khaled Al-Rashidi has resumed training with the team after returning from his treatment trip in Germany.



Players in action during ministries, agencies, and government institutions soccer league.

## National Guard qualifies for semifinals



Al-Salmiya new coach Ante Misha.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The National Guard team secured a spot in the semi-finals of the football league for ministries, agencies, and government institutions, completing the preliminary rounds with 10 points. This qualification came before the conclusion of the final round, following a 2-1 victory over the Ministry of Information.

### SOCCER

The last set of matches in the preliminary rounds holds crucial importance for three teams. Al-Kahraba, currently in third place with 7 points, is set to face the leading Guard. The final showdown will feature Al-Diffa, the runner-up with 8 points, against Al-Sahaha, holding the fourth spot with 6 points, and still nurturing hopes of advancing. The quarter-finals will witness clashes between the second and third teams from the two groups.

## Best of the Rest

### Sancho returns to Dortmund:

Jadon Sancho is looking forward to playing "with a smile" again at his old club Borussia Dortmund.

The England forward's unhappy stay at Manchester United is over, at least for now, after he returned to Dortmund on loan for the rest of the season.

The deal does not come with an option for Dortmund to buy Sancho, who could play his first game for Dortmund on Saturday against Darmstadt. Dortmund is set to pay an initial 3.5 million euros (\$3.8 million) for the loan but the eventual cost depends heavily on bonuses. (AP)

### Leroy Sané banned:

Bayern Munich forward Leroy Sané has been banned from Germany's next three international friendly games for shoving an opponent, the latest blow to the host nation's preparations for the European Championship.

Sané was sent off for pushing Austria's Philipp Mwene to the ground in a 2-0 friendly loss in November which ended a disappointing year for Germany. (AP)

### Brazil confirm Júnior hiring:

Brazil has hired Dorival Júnior as its new national soccer team coach.

The Brazilian soccer confederation said Júnior will be introduced at a news conference on Thursday. He had been expected to take up the post after leaving his role as Sao Paulo coach on Sunday.

Júnior will replace Fernando Diniz, who was fired last week amid poor results and a political crisis at Brazil's soccer body. (AP)



Flags of participating countries are displayed between the high-rise buildings ahead of the 18th Asian Cup soccer tournament, in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

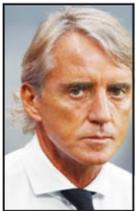
# Sports

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## Qatar gears up for Asian Cup kickoff

Excitement builds

**DOHA, Jan 11, (Agencies):** The upcoming AFC Asian Cup 2023 is set to commence in Doha, Qatar, on Friday, January 12, featuring the participation of 24 Asian teams. Divided into six groups, the tournament will see the top two teams from each group, along with the four best-ranked third-placed teams, advancing to the knockout stage.



Mancini

Taking place across nine stadiums, including Lusail Stadium, Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Al Bayt Stadium, Al Janoub Stadium, Education City Stadium, Khalifa International Stadium, and Al Thumama Stadium, the opening match will see hosts Qatar facing Lebanon at Lusail Stadium in Lusail City.

The groupings are as follows: Group A - Qatar, Lebanon, China, and Tajikistan; Group B - Australia, Uzbekistan, Syria, and India; Group C - Iran, UAE, Hong Kong, and Palestine; Group D - Japan, Indonesia, Iraq, and Vietnam; Group E - South Korea, Malaysia, Jordan, and Bahrain; and Group F - Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Kyrgyzstan, and Oman.

The group stage will run until January 25, followed by the round of 16 starting on January 28 and concluding on January 31. The quarterfinals are scheduled for February 1 and 2, with the semifinals taking place on February 6 and 7. The tournament will culminate with the final at Lusail on February 11.

The financial strength and spending of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

and Qatar has changed the soccer landscape in Asia but long-time eastern powerhouses Japan and South Korea are determined to redress the continental balance on field.

Japan, Asia's top team in FIFA's global rankings, has won its last 10 games and is favorite to clinch the Asian title for a fifth time.

Three-time winner Saudi Arabia has European Championship winning coach Roberto Mancini at the helm.

And there's more pressure than usual on the 'Green Falcons' this tournament because of the heightened attention on the Saudi domestic club scene since the signings of Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar and Karim Benzema.

### SOCCER

The imported stars have helped the development of national team players for Saudi. For the likes of Japan and South Korea, being able to recall players from big European clubs is an advantage in continental championships, and it helps breed confidence.

"I've been saying we'll look to win the Asian Cup after setting our short- and mid-term targets, as well as the long-term target that is the 2026 World Cup," Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said.

Moriyasu was in charge when Japan lost the final of the 2019 tournament against Qatar which stepped in to stage this edition after China relinquished hosting duties in 2022.

"There are no easy opponents nor is it an easy tournament, so no changes there from the last to this one," he added. "The difference is I have lingering frustration from missing the title last time out."

South Korea and Tottenham captain Son Heung-min arrives in Qatar in great form, scoring 12 goals so far this English Premier League season, just two more than compatriot Hwang Hee-chan at Wolverhampton Wanderers. Bayern Munich's Kim Min-jae became the first Asian defender to be nominated for the FIFA Ballon D'Or in 2023.



Winners celebrate on the podium with officials.

KUNA photo

## Kuwaiti swimmers shine with four medals on Day One

**DOHA, Jan 11, (KUNA):** On the inaugural day of the Arab Age Group Championships at Aspire Dome in Doha, Kuwaiti swimmers made a remarkable splash, clinching a total of four medals – one gold, one silver, and two bronze. Faisal Abualhassan, a member of the board of directors of the Kuwaiti Aquatics Federation and head of the delegation, announced

the achievements.

Hassan Al-Sualeek brought home the gold medal in the 50m boys butterfly race for the 13-14 age group. Swimmer Hamad Al-Gheith secured the silver medal in the 200m freestyle race in the same age category, while Saud Al-Enezi claimed the bronze in the 50m butterfly race. Additionally, a Kuwaiti team, consist-

ing of the trio along with swimmer Hasan Rajab, earned a bronze medal in the 200m freestyle relay race for

### SWIMMING

the same age group.

Abualhassan expressed confidence that Kuwait's swimmers will continue

to exhibit exceptional performances in the upcoming days of the tournament, aiming for more victories. The Arab Aquatics Age Group Championships serve as a platform for over 300 young talents from 17 Arab countries to compete in swimming, water polo, and open water swimming across three age groups (13-14, 15-16 and 17-18) over a span of six days.

Sheikh Salman commends organizing committee

## ISF president 'optimistic' about success at Kuwait Asian Shooting Championship

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11:** The Kuwait Asian Shooting Championship is set to kick off on Saturday, and will run until January 22nd, featuring the active participation of 26 teams. On the inaugural day, a technical meeting and informal training sessions for the participating teams will take place, culminating in the opening ceremony at 6:00pm.

Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah, the President of the Asian Shooting Federation, highlighted the formidable reputation of Asian shooting on the global stage. He acknowledged the significant achievements of champions and the pivotal role of Asian countries in hosting major tournaments. Sheikh Salman



Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah receives ISF president.

KUNA photo

### SHOOTING

commended the outstanding efforts of the Kuwaiti organizing committee in preparing for the tournament's commencement.

Underlining the tournament's significance, Sheikh Salman emphasized the support from Luciano Rossi, the President of the International Shooting Federation, who is personally attending the Asian Championship in Kuwait. This gesture reflects the substantial backing Rossi provides to the Asian and Kuwaiti shooting sports.

Engineer Duajj Al-Otaibi, the President of the Arab and Kuwaiti Shooting Federations, emphasized the tournament's importance as a qualifier for the upcoming Olympic Games in Paris. He expressed gratitude for the support from the Presidents of the International and Asian Federations, underscoring the successful organizational capabilities of the Kuwaiti Federation. Al-Otaibi extended thanks to the General Sports Authority, ministries, and state institutions for overcoming challenges to ensure the success of hosting the major continental sports forum.

Luciano Rossi, President of the Italian International Shooting Federation, lauded the impressive development of Asian shooting, with accomplished shooters earning notable titles in global championships and Olympic tournaments. Rossi, expressing confidence in the tournament's organizational success, pointed to the high level of Asian shooters vying for eight qualifying spots for the Olympics.

## Basil Al-Sabah Racing Club joins the Street King Roller Race Champ'ship

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11:** the Basil Al-Sabah Car and Bike Racing Club enthusiastically joins the Street King Roller Race Championship at Kuwait Motor Sports City.

During the press conference held the day before yesterday, Saif Al-Mutairi, the club's director, and Salem Al-Rujab, the general manager of Street King, addressed the audience. Al-Mutairi highlighted that the race will feature six car categories and three motorcycle categories, marking the second edition of this championship.

Emphasizing the club's commitment

to ensuring the safety and security of all participants and spectators, Al-Mutairi stressed the importance of organizing these tournaments with strict adherence to safety procedures. The event promises not only thrilling races but also engaging activities for the audience, along with the presence of various small projects.

Al-Mutairi expressed gratitude to the Ministries of Information and Interior, the General Sports Authority, and the General Center for Fire and Medical Services, as well as all supporters contributing to the success of the club's tournaments.



Saif Al-Mutairi Basil Al-Sabah Car and Bike Racing Club Director.

'A back-and-forth match'

## Real outlast Atletico to reach Super Cup final

**RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Jan 11 (AP):** After own-goals, goalkeeping blunders and a milestone by Antoine Griezmann, Real Madrid outlasted Atletico Madrid in thrilling extra time victory in the semifinal of Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday.

Two late goals gave Madrid a 5-3 win over its rival in a match in which Griezmann surpassed Luis Aragonés as Atletico's all-time top scorer with 174 goals.

"It was a back-and-forth match," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "They did well in the first half and in the second we were able to improve. Both teams played very well. It was a spectacular match, we won because we had a bit more energy in the end."

Atletico took the lead with a header by Mario Hermoso after a cross by Griezmann six minutes into the match, but Madrid went ahead with Antonio Rüdiger scoring in the 20th and Ferland Mendy in the 29th.

Griezmann scored his milestone goal with a right-footed low shot from outside the area after using a nifty move to change directions and get past defenders in the 37th. The France

### SOCCER

forward had gone scoreless in three straight games since tying Aragonés with a pair of goals against Getafe in the Spanish league in December.

An own-goal by Rüdiger in the 78th put Atletico ahead again before Dani Carvajal equalized in the 85th to send the game into extra time. Rüdiger's own-goal came after a mistake by Madrid goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga while going for a ball crossed into the area. Kepa couldn't hold on to the ball and it ricocheted off Rüdiger and went backward into the net.

Madrid took the lead late in extra time after Atletico defender Stefan Savic found his own net while trying to intercept a cross by Carvajal in the 116th, and Brahim Díaz sealed Madrid's win in stoppage time by hitting the open net after Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak had left his area to try to help the attack the other way. Díaz sped past Oblak near midfield to get to the ball and send it into the open net.

Díaz was shown the game's only yellow card for taking his shirt off during the celebration. No Madrid derby has gone without a yellow card since 1974.

It was the first of three matches in



Real Madrid's Rodrygo (right), jumps for the ball with Atletico Madrid's Saul during the Spanish Super Cup semi final soccer match between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid at Al Awal Park Stadium in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

less than a month between the Madrid rivals. They will also meet in the Copa del Rey next week at Atletico's Metropolitan Stadium, and in the Spanish league in February at Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Madrid had won its last five games in all competitions and is enjoying an unbeaten run of 20 consecutive matches. The team's only loss this season came against Atletico in the Spanish league in September.

Diego Simeone's team went on a strong run after that home win against Madrid, advancing to the knockout round of the Champions League and getting near the top of the Spanish league, but it has won only two of its last six matches in all competitions and dropped out of the Champions League places in the Spanish league.

Atletico and Madrid also met in the 2020 Super Cup final, with Madrid winning on penalties in what marked the first time the competition was taken to Saudi Arabia in a lucrative multi-year deal for the clubs and the Spanish soccer federation.

It was a mostly quiet crowd during Wednesday match, and there seemed to be jeers during the moment of silence in honor of German great Franz Beckenbauer, who died this week.

Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos, who has criticized the decision by top players to play in Saudi Arabia, also was booed by the Saudi crowd.

The Super Cup's new "final four" format pits together the top two teams in the Spanish league last season and the last two Copa del Rey finalists.

## Mbappé's future remains unclear

**PARIS, Jan 11, (AP):** What will do Kylian Mbappé when his contract with Paris Saint-Germain expires in June?

PSG would like to know, Real Madrid would like to know, and so would legions of fans at other big European clubs dreaming of seeing the France striker play in their colors. But Mbappé remains tight-lipped as the saga surrounding his possible transfer continues and PSG pushes to keep hold of its star asset.

"He's made it very clear that he has an agreement with me," PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi told L'Equipe newspaper this week, without being more specific on the nature of the deal.

"We have a great relationship, he's the best player in the world. I'm not going to hide the fact that I want to keep him," Al-Khelaifi said. "I'm confident because the best place for him is Paris, as a French player, as captain of the national team, vice-captain of PSG, having been there for seven years. He has the ambition to do great things with Paris."

Details of the supposed deal reached between Mbappé and PSG have not been revealed. According to reports in French media, Mbappé agreed to forgo several financial bonuses if he joins another club, meaning he won't leave PSG for free.

Mbappé has been in a similar position before, making PSG wait until the end of his then-contract before signing a new one in May 2022 when Madrid was aggressively pursuing him.

He has said he doesn't know when he will be ready to announce his decision this time.

Asked whether Mbappé has explained why it takes him so long to make a decision, Al-Khelaifi brushed off concerns.

"We're calm. I have 200% confidence in him. He's a good lad. He gave me his word and he's a man of his word. I believe in him," the PSG president said. "I can only say that I'm not stressed. Financially and about Kylian."