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MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2024 / JUMADA AL THANI 1, 1446 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 18764

16 PAGES

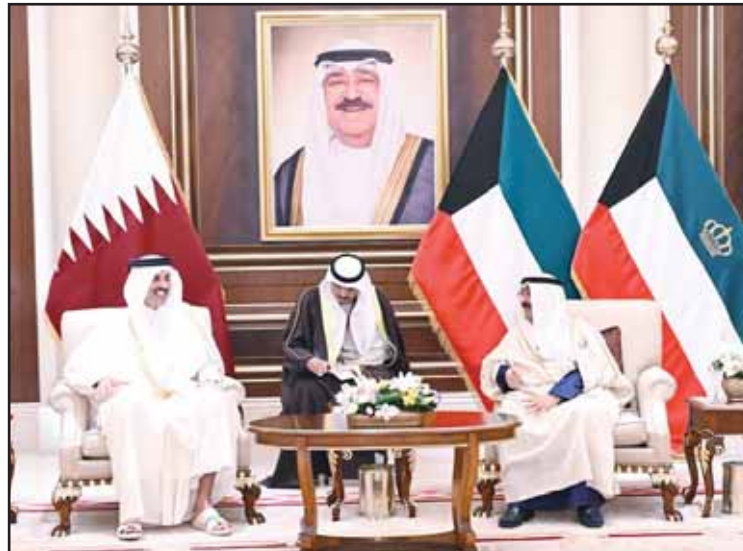
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## G.C.C. LEADERS URGE ACTION TO END WAR ON GAZA, OCCUPATION

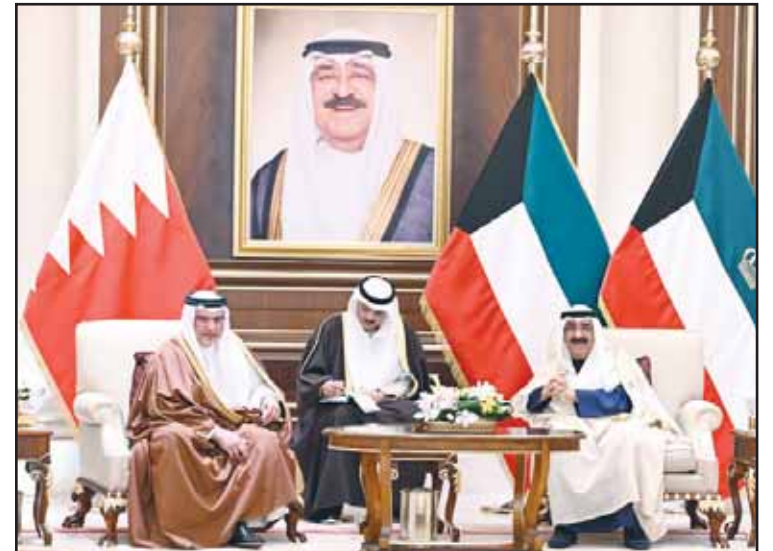
# Summit embodies Gulf unity: Amir



His Highness the Amir at the reception ceremony of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



His Highness the Amir at the reception ceremony for His Highness the Amir of the State of Qatar.



His Highness the Amir during the reception ceremony of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah kicked off the opening session of the 45th Session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Sunday.**

During the opening speech, His Highness welcomed the leaders and distinguished guests, extending his sincere thanks to the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, for his wise leadership and efforts during the previous summit in Doha.

He added that this gathering, hosted by Kuwait, "is a testament to our unity, an embodiment of the strength of our union, and a reflection of our unwavering belief in the necessity of enhancing and unifying GCC joint action."

His Highness added, "Together, we strive to broaden the scope of cooperation to meet the aspirations of our people, ensuring security, prosperity, and stability for our nations."

He said, "This necessitates accelerating our efforts to achieve GCC economic integration through unified policies, diversification of non-traditional income sources, facilitation of trade and investment, and support for local industries." "It is also vital to expand innovation and entrepreneurship, especially in emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), to enhance the competitiveness of our economies regionally and globally."

"Our journey toward building an integrated Gulf economy relies on key pillars, foremost among them education," he indicated, adding, "We aim to nurture the talents of our youth, inspiring them to contribute to the integrated Gulf economy we envision."

"Since the first GCC summit of Abu Dhabi in 1981, established by my late brother Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the GCC has demonstrated that through unity and solidarity, our nations can achieve prosperity for our people and ensure security," he stated.

Continued on Page 5

- Gratitude to Qatar's leadership
- Call for enhanced cooperation
- Focus on innovation
- Education as a key pillar

- Appeal to the UN Security Council
- Support for Palestinian statehood
- Commendation for mediation efforts
- Call to rectify Khor Abdullah agreement

### KUWAIT DECLARATION

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): The GCC leaders and representatives affirmed their strong support for the Palestinian cause, emphasizing the importance of Palestinian sovereignty over all lands occupied since June 1967, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In the Kuwaiti Declaration, issued at end of the 45th GCC Summit, held in Kuwait on December 1, the leaders praised the increasing role of GCC countries in addressing political and economic challenges, both regionally and globally.

They also commended their contributions to resolving issues that threaten peace, security, and stability, while promoting international dialogue and fostering connections among nations.

The leaders called for further efforts to strengthen the region's global position as a hub for business and economy, promote sustainable economic diversification, advance digital transformation, stabilize energy markets, and effectively address climate change.

They condemned Israel's ongoing military actions in Gaza, Lebanon, and the West Bank, as well as violations in occupied Jerusalem's holy sites, calling for an immediate end to violence, urging international intervention to protect civilians and support negotiations for peace.

The declaration highlighted the increasing role of GCC countries in addressing political and economic challenges,

Continued on Page 5



His Highness the Amir during the reception ceremony of His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Court of the United Arab Emirates.



His Highness the Amir during the reception ceremony of His Highness the Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers in the Sultanate of Oman.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses for a group photo during a luncheon honoring the leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council countries at the 45th Gulf Summit.

Amiri Diwan photos

### UN urges ceasefire in Gaza

## Kuwait reaffirms longstanding support for Palestinian cause

CAIRO, Dec 1, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people and firmly supports their cause in the establishment of an independent state within the June fourth, 1967 borders and east Jerusalem as capital, said a Kuwaiti diplomat on Sunday.

In a statement to KUNA during his participation in Arab League's event on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, observed on November 29, Kuwaiti Permanent Representative at the Arab League Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi affirmed that the Palestinian cause was central for the Arab world.

He lauded all international efforts aimed at realizing the two-state solution, which would bring in a just solution to the Palestinian people.

The Kuwaiti diplomat touched on the issue of UNRWA, saying that the agency's work was essential for the Palestinian people.

He noted that Kuwait, alongside Jordan and Slovenia, had launched an initiative to fulfill commitments to the UN agency and fend off accusations and attacks against it.

Continued on Page 5

### Unhealthy eating habits culprit

## 45.3 pct of population in Kuwait are obese: report

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Dermatologist Dr. Mohammad Al-Qasimi highlighted the growing threat of obesity both locally and globally, particularly in light of a recent report by the World Obesity Federation, which warns that half of the world's population, approximately four billion people, could be obese by 2035.

Dr. Al-Qasimi also highlighted the alarming obesity rates in Gulf countries, with Kuwait ranking first in the Gulf and Arab world and tenth globally, as 45.3 percent of its population are obese.

In an interview, Dr. Al-Qasimi attributed these rising rates to unhealthy eating habits, the widespread consumption of fast food, and a lack of physical activity.

Continued on Page 5

### 5 decrees strip citizenship from 3,053

## DNA rule enacted for Kuwaitis born abroad

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: In a significant regulatory development, Ministerial Resolution No. 2628 of 2024 has been issued, outlining new requirements for Kuwaiti citizens who have children outside the country, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Published in the official gazette, Kuwait Alyawm, the

resolution specifies that any Kuwaiti citizen wishing to register a newborn child (born abroad) in their citizenship file must undergo a mandatory DNA fingerprinting process for the child.

Continued on Page 5

### Newswatch

## Kuwait to host cultural forum

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Suwait, Chairman of the Kuwait Libraries and Information Association, announced the launch of the "Third Generation Libraries" cultural training forum and exhibition, set to take place on Dec 3 at the Kuwait National Library.

The event will be held under the patronage of Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs.

The forum aims to explore the future of libraries amid the digital transformation, with a focus on artificial intelligence and modern technologies in fostering knowledge and creativity.

The event will feature participation from governmental and private entities showcasing the latest innovations and solutions in library technology.

## Cybersecurity a fundamental pillar for societal stability: Sheikh Fahad

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah affirmed Saturday that cybersecurity as a field has become a fundamental pillar for the stability in societies and the protection of

data for individuals and institutions.

The remarks came in a speech delivered by Sheikh Fahad during the closing ceremony of the (Kuwait Hackathon 2024) competition

Continued on Page 5



KUNA photo  
First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior during the closing ceremony of the 'Kuwait Hackathon 2024' competition.

8 Burgan Bank sponsors Nexus 2024, Kuwait's biggest technology and innovation event



9 KFH: Unprecedented Human Resources milestones achieved in 2024



10 NBK leading the way, redefining banking experiences to consistently exceed customer expectations



## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:01 Asr ..... 14:30  
 Sunrise .. 06:24 Maghrib .. 16:49  
 Zohr ..... 11:37 Isha ..... 18:11

# Local

## Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:  
**By Day:** Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 10-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.  
**By Night:** Rather cold to cold

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	21	12
Kuwait Airport	20	08
Abdaly	20	06

Bubyan	21	11
Jahra	22	11
Failaka Island	20	14
Salmiyah	20	14
Ahmadi	20	07
Jal Aliyah	20	08
Nuwaisib	23	11

## Seven Secretary-Generals of the GCC since its establishment in 1981



Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah



Nayef Al-Hajraf



Abdullah Bishara



Abdullatif Al-Zayani



Jassem Al-Budaiwi



Fahim Al-Qasimi



Jamil Al-Hejailan

## By Al-Anoud Al-Munawar

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): As attention shifts to the opening session of the 45th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit in Kuwait on Sunday, it is notable that seven individuals have held the position of Secretary-

General since the councils establishment in 1981.

Kuwaiti Abdullah Bishara served as Secretary-General from 1981 to 1993, followed by UAE's Fahim Al-Qasimi (1993-1996), Saudi Jamil Al-Hejailan (1996-2002), Qatar's Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah (2002-2011), Bahrain's Abdullatif Al-Zayani (2011-2020), Kuwaiti Nayef Al-

Hajraf (2020-2023), and the current Secretary-General is Kuwaiti Jassem Al-Budaiwi, who took office in 2023.

The GCC, established according to a proposal by the late Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, seeks to achieve coordination, integration, and cooperation among its member states across various fields, with the

aim of promoting unity and strengthening ties, particularly in the economic, financial, social, health, and media fields.

Headquartered in Riyadh, the GCC is a regional organization focused on political, economic, military, and security cooperation among its six member states, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.

# Kuwait hailed for bringing together countries of Gulf

Diplomats upbeat, say Summit rekindled future hopes

## Interviews by Abdullah Al-Enezi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): Saudi, UAE, Qatari, and Omani Ambassadors praised Kuwait and its important status in the region, commending it for its efforts to bolster joint Gulf cooperation and development.

This came ahead of the 45th GCC Summit scheduled in Kuwait today.

"We recall with pride the developments and innovations that all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have reached, becoming an example to be followed in security, development, flourishing as well as a destination for regional excellence in overall progress," Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud ahead of the 45th summit.

The Saudi Ambassador affirmed that the GCC had carried out its international duties within the frame of the international community, championing wisdom and balance in the regional and international arenas.

The GCC is a beacon of hope in the region and it has worked as a unifier of efforts by all GCC citizens, he added.

Similarly, Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Ali Al-Mahmoud said the Kuwaiti organization of this prestigious renewed regional countries' vows for cooperation towards more development and progress in all possible aspects.

He highlighted the necessity of joint GCC collaboration to face the geopolitical challenges of the region, especially in the Middle East, noting that all Gulf countries must solidify efforts to halt the Israeli occupation's assault on the Gaza Strip and keep the aggressors hands off Lebanon and



Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud

KUNA photos  
Qatar's Ali Al-Mahmoud

other regional countries to safeguard peace and stability.

Economic challenges also must be addressed by the GCC, finding viable solutions and working towards more progress and development, he asserted.

Meanwhile, Omani Ambassador Saleh Al-Kharusi commended the long list of achievements the GCC has accomplished since inception, saying that such accomplishments had drawn attention from the world.

He stressed that previous achievements must be safeguarded and future accomplishments must be worked on to continue the strong legacy of the

GCC.

Bringing the perspective of the UAE, Ambassador Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi said that the current developments in the region made the 45th GCC Summit very important for the member countries.

He commended the achievements of the GCC, saying that it was all due to the keen efforts made by the leaders and people of the Gulf countries.

The Ambassador also showcased excitement towards the GCC pavilion on the sideline of the Summit, which would be held in Abdullah Al-Salem's Cultural Center, noting that it was a golden chance to view all the achievements in the past decades.

## Kuwaiti and British partnership marked at 125th 'versary event



KUNA photo

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya sponsors and attends a celebration on the occasion of the Year of the Kuwaiti-British Partnership and the 125th anniversary of the signing of the Kuwaiti-British Treaty.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): On Saturday evening, a special celebration was held under the patronage of Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya to mark the Kuwaiti-British Partnership Year and the 125th anniversary of the signing of the Kuwaiti-British Treaty.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the event took place at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Cultural Center Theater.

It featured a musical performance titled 'Harmony that unites us', conducted by maestro Dr. Khaled Nouri.

The orchestra performance symbolized the enduring historical ties between the two nations, reflecting their deep-rooted friendship and cooperation.

The event was attended by a distinguished group of diplomats, including ambassadors, heads of diplomatic missions and representatives from regional and international organizations accredited to Kuwait.

Several senior officials and notable figures were also present to commemorate this significant milestone in the longstanding relationship between Kuwait and the United Kingdom.

## Gulf news agencies play active role in covering GCC Summit

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): Gulf news agencies made a notable contribution to covering the 45th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit through the accompanying media center in Kuwait.

Representatives from various GCC news agencies gathered at the media center located in the St. Regis Hotel, which was equipped with the latest technologies to support journalistic coverage and live broadcastings.

The participation of these news agencies ranged from preparing news reports and conducting interviews with officials and participants, to live streaming press conferences and associated events.

This collaboration played a vital role in enhancing the Gulf media cooperation and conveying an accurate and comprehensive picture of the issues on the summit's agenda.

Samah Al-Qaed, a journalist from Bahrain News Agency (BNA), told KUNA that the GCC, since its establishment, has aimed to promote economic, political, and social cooperation among its member states.

She emphasized that the media center at the summit reflects Kuwait's commitment to providing all the necessary resources for high-quality press coverage, ensuring that the leaders of the GCC countries gather in an environment befitting the significance of the 45th GCC Summit.

She also praised Kuwait's renowned hospitality and expressed hope for fruitful outcomes that would contribute to a prosperous future filled with strategic projects and developmental plans for the GCC countries.

Al-Qaed also looked forward to the 45th Gulf Summit achieving results that would further enhance economic, political, cultural cooperation, and development among member states, as well as bolster stability and security in the region.

Mohammad Al-Ali, executive editor at Emirates News Agency (WAM), told KUNA that WAM's participation in the photo exhibition organized by KUNA, in collaboration with all Gulf news agencies at the Avenues Mall, displayed images documenting past summits hosted by the UAE.

Al-Ali pointed out that this participation falls within the framework of ongoing collaboration among Gulf news agencies, which plays a major role in showcasing joint Gulf efforts.

He also commended the significant support provided by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information and other government bodies to facilitate media coverage of the summit, expressing confidence in the success of the 45th GCC Summit under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

KUNA photo  
Journalists interviewing renowned personalities at the GCC Summit gathering.

Noura Al-Hajri, Director of Foreign Media Affairs at Qatar News Agency (QNA), told KUNA that Gulf news agencies play a crucial role in highlighting the achievements of the GCC in various sectors, with a goal of documenting them.

Al-Hajri emphasized the importance of strengthening mutual cooperation among Gulf news agencies, saying that Gulf news agencies are the main platform for showcasing the collaboration among GCC member states.

She also noted the agencies' commitment to covering the 45th Gulf Summit's proceedings and decisions, praising the exceptional services offered by the accompanying media center.

Talal Al-Harbi, an editor at Oman News Agency (ONA), told KUNA he wished success for the summit in Kuwait, and noted that the media center contributed to facilitating the work of journalists and enabling them to accurately and professionally report on the summit's proceedings.

## Kuwait Amir sends appreciation cables to several gov't officials

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA):

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, sent on Sunday cables expressing appreciation to the following officials:

■ His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

■ Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

■ First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Saud Al-Sabah.

■ Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi.

■ Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi.

■ Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdul-

lah Al-Yahya.

■ Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan.

■ Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Dr. Mahmood Bushehri.

■ Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mishari.

■ Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam.

His Highness expressed appreciation to all ministries and government agencies involved in the preparation and organization of the 45th GCC Summit, hosted by Kuwait, praising efforts that contributed to the success of the summit. His Highness wished everyone continued success in serving the country.

## Kuwait's 45th GCC Summit is milestone in Council journey

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): Ambassador of Bahrain to Kuwait Salah Al-Malki stressed on Sunday that 45th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit represented a significant milestone in the journey of the council.

In a statement to KUNA on the occasion of the summit, Al-Malki said, the GCC countries have become a model regionally and globally for cooperation and joint action, gaining an important international position among global strategic alliances.

He added that the GCC must proudly highlight the achievements in various fields that serve the unified GCC countries' citizens.

Representing the Bahraini King Hamad Al-Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, who will head the Bahraini delegation to the 45th GCC Summit, hosted by Kuwait, in response to the invitation of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He concluded, "We look forward to the success of this important summit, which brings benefits and prosperity to all."

KUNA photo  
Salah Al-Malki

## Kuwaitization in full swing; expats fall

## By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Informed sources in the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy have revealed a significant drop in the number of non-Kuwaiti employees since the implementation of Civil Service decision No. 11/2017 regarding the Kuwaitization of government jobs.

According to the sources, the number of non-Kuwaiti employees in the ministry has decreased by 491, from 1,362 employees to 871 during the 2023/2024 fiscal year.

They said the ministry employed a total of 20,440 staff in 2017, with 19,078 Kuwaiti employees (93.3 percent of the total

workforce) and 1,362 non-Kuwaiti employees. By 2023, the number of Kuwaiti employees had grown to 33,705, and the number of non-Kuwaiti employees had dropped to 871, reflecting a shift to 97.5 percent Kuwaiti staff in a total workforce of 43,576.

The sources affirmed the ministry's commitment to the decision of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to nationalize jobs in various sectors.

They explained that this strategy aims to create more opportunities for Kuwaiti graduates in different fields. Annual coordination with CSC is carried out to assess the ministry's workforce needs and to ensure the proper alignment of specialized roles in the ministry's annual budget plans.

## KU seeks to promote protection of intellectual property in GCC

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: As part of the Gulf Weeks activities accompanying the 45th Gulf Summit, Kuwait University (KU) organized a lecture titled "The Role of the GCC Countries in Protecting Intellectual Property" at the College of Social Sciences, in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), reports Al-Jarida daily.

Acting Dean of the college Dr. Ali Al-Zuabi stated to KUNA that this lecture was the final in a series of lectures that were held in various university colleges during Gulf Weeks. These lectures covered a range of topics, with the aim of educating students about the GCC's role in different areas, its significance in people's lives, and its efforts to strengthen relations and cooperation among member countries. The lectures also aimed to inspire students to conduct research on the protection of intellectual property.

In his statement to KUNA, Head of the Intellectual Property Training Center for the GCC States Musaed Al-Kulab expressed the center's desire to expand cooperation with Kuwait University in promoting the dissemination of international intellectual

property laws, affirming this is a key focus for the General Secretariat of the GCC.

Dr. Mishari Al-Mutairi, a lecturer from the Intellectual Property Training Center, outlined the achievements made by GCC countries in the field of intellectual property during the lecture.

These accomplishments, he noted, play an important role in enhancing innovation and economic development in the region.

Dr. Al-Mutairi highlighted seven main achievements: establishing a specialized body for intellectual property, adopting unified protection laws, joining numerous international treaties, enhancing awareness and capacity building, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship, and strengthening regional and international cooperation through technical initiatives.

These achievements reflect the GCC countries' commitment to developing the intellectual property protection systems to support innovation and attract investment.

He highlighted the role of the GCC Patent Office, which facilitates patent registration in all GCC countries, thereby enhancing the protection of innovations.



# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Bickering over trivialities ..., where is the nation heading?

"IN A true state of the rule of law, people live with safety and security, fostering psychological stability and reassurance. They do not fear that circumstances might suddenly turn against them due to the whims or actions of dominant political powers," columnist **Hassan Al-Essa** wrote for *Al-Jarida* daily.

"In such a system, sovereignty is bound by constitutional and statutory laws, forming the foundation of a modern civil state. This framework limits the ruler's authority and ensures oversight by other powers -- legislative and judicial -- while the executive authority itself is also subject to scrutiny. This mutual limitation of powers prevents any single authority from overreaching.



Hassan Al-Essa

"Oversight is not limited to formal institutions, it also extends to informal channels like a truly free press. A press that refuses to indulge in flattery or superficial celebrations, such as splashing society pages with photos of so-called 'dignitaries' at their lavish weddings and events, which hold no relevance for the average citizen.

"However, today's media landscape, including social media, is often dominated by trivialities, the noise of 'electronic flies', and the opportunism of 'mosquitoes', working collectively to dilute independent thought and perpetuate a culture of consumption.

"Meanwhile, we observe dramatic transformations and ambitious programs unfolding in neighboring Gulf states, yet here in Kuwait, public discourse seems mired in topics like revoking or canceling citizenships.

"The entire segments of society live in fear, holding their breath, uncertain if they too will fall into the abyss of identity and statelessness. They live in a fragile, 'temporary' sense of security, with no control over their fate and no avenue to contest the decisions imposed upon them.

"What is happening to us? Where have we progressed with the Kuwait 2035 Vision? What has been achieved, and what remains unfulfilled?

"There are faint glimmers of progress, such as abolishing the residency cap for those over 60, small steps to encourage investment, and minor residency reforms.

"But where is the bold, transformative project that can revive the state, breaking free from economic stagnation and the ossified reality? Where is the vision to inspire new ambitions and genuine change?

"Instead, we see a preoccupation with trivial matters -- citizenship disputes, camp permits, and shallow celebrations.

"What are our officials doing? And what about those cliques of self-proclaimed elites who act as gatekeepers to Kuwait's supposed paradise? Their flattery of the influential is akin to summer flies swarming over the face of the nation. Where is the grand project to lead us forward? Where are we headed?"

### Also:

"I noticed that there are many beautiful interactions with my articles, which touch on the social and psychological aspect, and which I resort to from time to time for the sake of change, and to get away from the concerns of politics and the conditions of society with its interactions and the concerns of the homeland," columnist and former Deputy Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"Expand the circle of knowledge and reduce the circle of trust" is a beautiful saying, but it is even more beautiful to apply it at some stage of our lives, especially after youth.

"This stage is yours to determine its time, its new heroes, and who will decide your new life.

"When does a person reach this stage in his life? When does he believe that his past relationships and communication with all the circles surrounding him, regardless of their closeness or distance, need to be reconsidered?

"Often, through all the experiences we go through in our lives, relationships, and interactions with others, each in his place, according to his connections with us, and according to the type of relationship, we gain experience that qualifies us to reposition these relationships again, due to a change in our priorities on the one hand, or a change in our interests and desires in those we trust, and those we distance ourselves from a little or a lot.

"There is absolutely no harm in expanding and increasing your circle of relationships at any stage of your life, especially in the last third of your life.

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"There is absolutely no harm in expanding and increasing your circle of relationships at any stage of your life, especially in the last third of your life.

"But it is very important that this be accompanied by reducing the circle of trust in parallel, because it is assumed that you have carried out a precise selection process as to who deserves to continue with you in the rest of your life within the framework of the previous trust, or who does not.

"Often, for many years of your life, you will be accompanied by some people whom you considered trustworthy, and they may not be many, but you may be forced, under some circumstances, to return them to their true place in your life, which requires distancing them more and more, and this should not hurt you, but on the contrary, this distance may be more comfortable.

"However, despite the feeling of harshness of this new stage at times, it will be more comfortable in the long run, and this may be a good direction in which you maintain what remains of a relationship, friendship, or love for this party.

"Just as programs and projects need to be reviewed from time to time to ensure their success, so too does the human being need to reprogram his relationships and rearrange them according to the priorities of his psychological, familial, and emotional comfort.

"In our lives, we are nothing but stories and tales that expand in some parts and contract in others. They are exciting and beautiful in some parts and boring and slow in others.

"This is the diversity in life, which gives us the desire to continue with it, but the cleverness is that every time we move from one part to another, we get rid of everything that has affected us negatively, and we cling more and more to everything beautiful and comfortable, so that it sticks to us until the last breath we take to bid farewell to our lives."

□ □ □

"Recent government statements have left the Kuwaiti public feeling disappointed and dissatisfied. There is widespread discontent over reports suggesting that individuals whose citizenship has been revoked will be allowed to retain their jobs and the benefits they received after acquiring citizenship. Also, retirees whose citizenships have been revoked will continue to be treated as Kuwaitis, as our government being compassionate towards them," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"If the government is willing to provide such benefits, many are asking: why revoke their citizenship in the first place? Isn't this seen as a reward for individuals who obtained citizenship unjustly?"

"Revoking citizenship should, in theory, mean that the individual is no longer considered a citizen and that the state no longer bears any responsibility toward them, especially if they have no direct family ties in Kuwait.

"For instance, a widow or divorced woman without children would be better off returning to her country, with all due respect and appreciation.

"On the other hand, ordinary citizens have been pleading for years, desperately calling on the government to address the burden of bank loan interest, which has drained people financially. Yet, no one responds.

"They also requested the Public Institution of Social Security to offer a reasonable loan to ease their hardship and improve their situation, knowing full well that the loan would be deducted from their retirement pension, with no loss to the institution. However, the institution refuses to listen or act.

"Meanwhile, those whose citizenships have been revoked will continue to receive the benefits they unfairly accumulated over the years even though they never truly deserved them!

"What kind of policy is this? The government takes away citizenship with one hand but gives away benefits without hesitation with the other. They told us that revoking citizenship would create jobs for Kuwaitis, but how can that happen when such contradictions persist?"

"Everyone whose citizenship has been revoked retains their job, and we were told this would ease the pressure on hospitals. But how is that possible when they are still treated as Kuwaitis? Only God knows what the Ministry of State for Housing Affairs' plan is for those whose citizenships have been revoked. It is becoming increasingly clear that we have neither clear policies nor effective solutions.

"With honesty and sincerity, we express the deep disappointment of the Kuwaiti public, frustrated by these decisions. If we had known this was the plan, it would have been better not to hear about it at all."

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes/ Mahmoud Attiyeh**



KUNA photo

Undersecretary of the National Guard, Lieutenant General Engineer Hashim Al-Rifai inspects readiness of Kuwait Task Force.

## Al-Rifai praises Force's efforts

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1, (KUNA): Kuwait Undersecretary of the National Guard, Lieutenant General Engineer Hashim Al-Rifai, Saturday, inspected the readiness of Kuwait Task Force (Khaleej) to secure the summit of the 45th Session of the GCC Supreme Council.

The National Guard said in a press statement that Al-Rifai and Assistant of Operations and Training Major General Dr. Faleh Shujaa took an inspection tour at the (Khaleej) force's stationing sites in the vicinity of the Sheraton St. Regis and Four Points Hotels.

He added that the National Guard personnel are proud to be a part of Khaleej Task Force to ensure the safety of the guests of His Highness the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Al-Rifai praised the Force's efforts, readiness, deployment, and ability to cover all security sites, stressing the importance of representing Kuwait in an honorable manner befitting the National Guard while hosting the guests.

## Major visa peddling gang of four busted

Fake companies established

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Under the guidance of the acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, the Ministry of Interior's Residency and Nationality Sector and the General Department of Residency Investigations arrested the stepbrother of a former MP and three of his Syrian partners on charges of establishing fictitious companies and forging official documents to obtain residencies for expatriate workers in exchange for money, reports *Al-Jarida* daily.

It was revealed that the MP's brother had been sentenced to six months in prison, which is yet to be enforced, and was wanted for 13 cases of fraud and issuance of dud cheques, though he had evaded arrest in those cases.

According to security sources, confidential information obtained by the General Department of Residency Investigations indicated that a citizen and three expatriates were involved in selling residencies by creating fake companies and institutions to obtain false work permits. The citizen, who owned the companies, was also said to have influence in various government agencies.

Upon further investigation, it was discovered that the individual was the brother of a former MP in the Fourth

Constituency. A review of his security records revealed that he was wanted in 13 fraud cases and had an outstanding prison sentence. Detectives began tracking the MP's brother and uncovering his involvement in fraud, human trafficking, and residency trafficking.

The investigation also identified three Syrian nationals who were his accomplices in the illegal operation. They were all found to have forged official documents to facilitate the issuance of residencies for workers in exchange for payments ranging between KD 300 and KD 500 per worker. The suspects operated by transferring workers to fake companies and falsifying documents in several government departments.

Several workers registered under these fictitious companies were arrested after they confessed to paying money to have their residencies transferred.

After gathering all necessary evidence, detectives arrested the former MP's brother and his Syrian partners, and they confessed in detail to the crimes of fraud, deception, and human trafficking.

The MP's brother explained that his criminal activities were facilitated by his status as the brother of a former MP, as officials and leaders in government agencies were aware of this connection and expedited his transactions without proper scrutiny.

Following the suspects' confessions, the General Department of Residency Investigations, based on Minister Sheikh Fahad's directives, referred the case to the Public Prosecution.

The Ministry of Interior reaffirmed its commitment to strictly enforce the law and ensure that all violators are held accountable, without exception.

10-year jail overturned

## Detective acquitted in expat kidnap charges

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Othman, overturned a verdict which sentenced a police detective from the General Department for Residency Affairs to ten-year imprisonment for kidnapping, molesting and robbing an expatriate. The court instead acquitted him of all charges.

The Public Prosecution had accused the police detective of kidnapping, molesting, photographing the victim and then stealing his money.

The Criminal Court had ruled to imprison the police detective for ten years with hard labor, but Lawyer Dr. Khaled Al-Kafifa appealed the ruling before the Court of Appeal, and highlighted the maliciousness of the accusation.

He explained that the victim is actually the accused, as he had been cooperating with the authorities as a secret source. However, he misled the detectives by concealing his own criminal activities, including managing prostitution networks and gambling apartments in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. After his illegal actions were uncovered and cases were filed against him, he retaliated by filing a false and malicious complaint against his client.



KFF photo

The car belonging to the victims.

## 2 Syrians dead in 2-car 'crash' on Subiya Road

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Two vehicles collided on Subiya Road, resulting in the death of two Syrian expatriates and serious injuries to another.

According to sources, when the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior received information about the accident, securitymen, paramedics, and firefighters from Kazma Fire Station rushed to the location. Upon arrival, they discovered that two Syrian expatriates succumbed to the injuries they sustained in the accident, while another was seriously injured and barely alive. Paramedics immediately referred him to Jahra Hospital for treatment.

A case has been opened regarding the accident.

## Video clip leads to arrest of many reckless drivers

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Following the directives of the acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, the Traffic and Operations Sector arrested a number of reckless drivers who were seen in a video that went viral on social media engaging in dangerous behaviors that posed a threat to public safety. The drivers were arrested and referred to the Central Prison, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to a press statement issued by the Ministry of Interior, intensive investigations were launched immediately after the video surfaced, which led to the identification and arrest of the individuals involved, and the seizure of the vehicles used in these unlawful actions.

### 'Arabic must on invoices'

## 82 shops shut in Capital during 2-day campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: According to informed sources, a joint committee from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Kuwait Municipality, Kuwait Fire Force, and the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy carried out an intensive two-day inspection campaign in the Capital Governorate, which resulted in the closure of 82 shops for violating safety regulations, most notably the lack of fire licenses, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The sources explained that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued citations against six other shops for failing to display the country of origin on products. These shops also limited invoices to English only, but the law mandates that invoices be in Arabic as the primary language, with English as a secondary option.

The campaign is part of ongoing efforts by the relevant authorities to ensure compliance with laws and regulations, safeguarding consumer rights and improving safety standards in shops.

The sources added that inspection campaigns will continue in the coming days, with a focus on violations related to consumer safety, particularly those concerning fire safety and the accuracy of product information.

They also emphasized that requiring invoices to include Arabic is part of the ministry's efforts to strengthen national identity and ensure consumers can easily understand the information on invoices. While this requirement is not new, it is being more strictly enforced recently.

□ □ □

**DGCA, ACI hold meeting:** The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) held a meeting with Airports Council International (ACI), reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

Abdullah Al Rajhi, Deputy Director-General for Aviation Safety, Air Transport and Aviation Security and Raed Al Taher, Air Transport Controller for Flight Operations represented the DGCA. Aadeb Mohammad, from ACT's Asia Office, also attended the meeting.

During the session, ACI delivered a visual presentation focusing on technical aspects and strategies for enhancing collaboration between the two parties.

The discussion highlighted ways to improve airport systems, ensure safe and efficient air transport and develop services aimed at elevating the quality of services at Kuwait International Airport.



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## KFF ends 'Safe Home' awareness drive

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: The Public Relations and Media Department of the Kuwait Fire Force has concluded its "Safe Home" awareness campaign, which began on November 10 at universities and educational institutions, in collaboration with Equate Petrochemical Company, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The campaign aimed to raise awareness about the risks and causes of fires and other accidents in homes and residential areas. It also emphasized the importance of acquiring fire protection and prevention tools and how to use them effectively.

Additionally, the Fire Force concluded its annual blood donation campaign in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, represented by the Blood Transfusion Services Department.

The campaign, which started on Monday, November 25th, at the Fire Force Headquarters, lasted for four days.

The initiative aimed to support the strategic reserves of the Central Blood Bank with various blood types, driven by a sense of social responsibility and humanitarian and national duty, ultimately contributing to saving lives.





The introductory training program for Kuwaiti diplomats' activities of the Arab League sectors.

KUNA photo

# Diplomatic training and capacity building important, says Kuwait

Al-Mutairi highlights strengthened Kuwait-Arab League co-op

**CAIRO, Dec 1, (KUNA):** Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the Arab League Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi stressed on Sunday the importance of cooperation between Kuwait and the Arab League in the field of training and capacity building of diplomatic cadres.

This came in an opening speech of the introductory training program for Kuwaiti diplomats' activities of the Arab League sectors, with the presence of Assistant Secretary General and Head of the Administrative and Financial Affairs Sector at the League, Ambassador Mo-

hammad Al-Ajery.

Ambassador Al-Mutairi welcomed the delegation of the Kuwaiti Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute visiting the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Arab League, noting that this visit comes to inform them of the League's work and its role in resolving regional and international issues, and supporting joint Arab action in various fields.

He stressed that the Arab League plays a prominent role in unifying the positions of Arab countries in international forums, expressing his happiness at strengthening cooperation between Kuwait and the League in the field of training.

He tackled the Kuwaiti role in supporting the Arab work system, which has extended for six decades, adding that Kuwait attaches

importance to regional issues and gives them the required attention.

On his part, Ambassador Al-Ajery welcomed the diplomatic delegation and appreciated the keenness of the country to provide opportunities for Arab youth, especially diplomats to get to know closely the league, which considered the oldest among the other institutions of modern era.

He pointed to the distinguished historical and current role played by Kuwait in the work of the Arab League and its continuous contributions in all political, economic, cultural and financial aspects, as well as providing the League with distinguished functional cadres that contribute fundamentally to support the General Secretariat work.

Ambassador Al-Ajery praised

the role of Kuwait in improving the humanitarian conditions in areas that are exposed to humanitarian crises, stressing that it has never stopped or delayed in providing support.

He stressed that the Arab League has been able to achieve many accomplishments since its inception on all levels politically, economically, developmentally, socially and media-wise.

The training program, which will continue until December 5, includes a number of introductory lectures on the Arab League, its inception and an overview of efforts in economic and Arab affairs, Arab national and social security, combating terrorism, legal treaties and agreements, in addition to efforts in the field of refugees and migration.

## 'All historic documents clear evidence'

# Official stresses Kuwait's firm support for Palestine's issue

AMMAN, Dec 1, (KUNA): Assistant Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Saad Al-Enzi affirmed on Tuesday Kuwait's firm historic position toward backing the Palestinian cause, even before the first Nakba in 1948.

Delivering a speech during Jordan-Arab Media Festival held in Amman, Al-Enzi said all historic documents and sources are clear evidence of Kuwait's support for Palestine's cause since the 1920s.

Since the start of Palestinian resistance to face Israeli occupation, Kuwait's official and popular stances toward backing Palestine's cause have been unchanged, he noted.

He referred to the key role of media in support of Palestine's issue, highlighting chal-

lenges facing Palestinian journalists and media persons who sacrifice their lives for the issue.

Up to 108 journalists, along with other media persons and workers, have been killed in defense of the Palestinian issue, he noted.

Al-Enzi said some media institutions were not neutral, fair, or even professional in terms of covering the events and delivering a true picture of the war against Palestine, portraying the Israeli occupation as victims.

He called for reviving the Arab media charter towards the first central Arab issue, the Palestinian issue, to ensure professional coverage.

Al-Enzi commending Jordan's role in establishing this festival for Palestine that kicked off Friday evening.



KUNA photo

Some of the visitors at the 47th Kuwait International Book Fair.

## Kuwait Int'l Book Fair concludes 47th session

The 47th Kuwait International Book Fair concluded on Saturday after attracting around 393,000 visitors and showcasing over 244,000 titles from 587 publishing houses from 31 countries.

Held under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the fair featured 400 publishing houses participating actually and 187 through agents; these include 38 participants for the first time.

Exhibition director Khalifa Al-Rabah

reported the addition of 165,000 new titles and around 90 activities, including workshops and lectures, in collaboration with cultural institutions.

Emphasizing children's literature, roughly 197,000 students from 685 schools participated.

Themed "The World in a Book," this session of the annual event highlighted the role of literature in cultural exchanges.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghunaim was named personality of the year, and Jordan was honored as the guest of honor. (KUNA)

## Other Voices

# Sustainability – Global Reporting Initiatives (GRI)

**Dr. Jaber Eid Al-Wandah**

International Consultant, Sustainable Development  
Deputy General Manager – Al-Najat Charity

We continue our discussion on sustainability in the humanitarian sector, and we have reached the point about the standards followed in the reports issued by humanitarian institutions regarding sustainability.

To keep it brief, dear reader, there are many frameworks for preparing and issuing sustainability reports. Among them is the International Standard for Environmental Management Systems (ISO 14001), which focuses on environmental aspects. There is also the Climate Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB), a non-profit organization that provides material information for investors and financial markets. Additionally, the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) is an independent organization that sets standards and encourages the disclosure of sustainability information. The International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) provides a framework for preparing integrated reports. And lastly, there is the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), which has issued sustainability reporting standards in collaboration with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and these standards, adopted by the United Nations (UN), are updated regularly.

At Najat Charity Society, we have adopted this initiative and issue our sustainability reports in line with it, as we consider it one of the most important and

user-friendly frameworks, and one of the most suitable for the charitable sector.

The objective of this initiative is to "provide transparency regarding how an organization contributes or aims to contribute to sustainable growth." It enables organizations to "publicly disclose their most significant impacts on the economy, the environment, and people". This, in turn, "enhances the transparency of an organization's impacts and increases organizational accountability."

This initiative is designed as an interconnected system consisting of three series: The first series is for GRI Global Standards, the second is for Sector Standards, and the third is for Topic Standards. The first series sets out the rules, limits, and disclosures required in the report. The second series addresses the standards relevant to the sector in which the organization operates (e.g., agriculture, oil, gas, coal, clothing, etc.). The third series defines standards for specific topics with economic, social, or environmental dimensions.

The first series of global standards is GRI 1-2021, which covers the basics of reporting and the purpose of the GRI Standards System. The second part of the first series, GRI 2-2021, focuses on general disclosures that the report must cover. The third part, GRI 3-2021, addresses how to determine material topics and how the organization manages its impacts on the environment, society, people, and the economy.

The second series of this initiative relates to Sector Standards (such as gas, oil, coal, agriculture, mining, clothing, financial services, etc.), while the third series, Topic Standards, includes disclosures regarding an organization's impact on specific issues like customer privacy, non-discrimination, and anti-corruption.

The requirements for preparing a report according to this initiative will be the main focus of our next article, as Allah is willing...

To be continued



Dr Al-Wandah



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## PAET chief highlights AI in education

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAET), represented by Director General Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam, participated in the 19th Conference of Ministers and Officials Responsible for Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Arab World, which was held in Abu Dhabi.

Dr. Al-Fajjam was accompanied by the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education Lamia Al-Malhem, and a representative of Kuwait University Dr. Osama Al-Yousef.

The event was organized by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) under the theme "A Flexible Higher Education System Keeping Up with Rapid and Steady Global Changes".

Dr. Al-Fajjam explained that the timing of this conference is crucial, given the rapid advancements in both technological and research aspects of educational systems. It provides a valuable opportunity to discuss methods for developing education and training and

for strengthening cooperation between educational institutions in the Arab world.

He stated that the conference aims to exchange ideas and experiences, and review the latest trends in technical and vocational education. This will help raise the efficiency and quality of educational programs.

Dr. Al-Fajjam stressed the importance of aligning efforts to develop a future vision that meets the needs of the labor market and adapts to the rapid changes in technology and innovation.

He highlighted that PAET has introduced an initiative focused on the use of artificial intelligence in education. This initiative aims to benefit from the rapidly evolving AI technologies to improve education quality, analyze student performance, and develop more effective educational programs.

Dr. Al-Fajjam expressed his hope that the conference's recommendations will play a pivotal role in strengthening the position of higher education institutions and universities in the Arab world.

He conveyed his appreciation to the United Arab Emirates for hosting the conference and for their warm reception and hospitality.



KSE organizes event

## Kuwait Society of Engineers discusses regional cooperation and standards

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: The Kuwait Society of Engineers (KSE) held an event titled "Gulf Engineering Projects and Cooperation" recently, as part of the Gulf Week activities ahead of the 45th Gulf Summit in Kuwait.

The event was organized under the patronage and in the presence of the Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Eng. Abdulatif Al-Mishari, in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council.



Al-Mishari

The workshop began with a speech by the President of KSE Eng. Faisal Duwaih Al-Otal, who welcomed the guests from the General GCC Secretariat and acknowledged their initiative and dedication to cooperating with civil society organizations to highlight the secretariat's efforts and projects in various fields.

Eng. Al-Otal presented an initiative for the establishment of the society, within the framework of the Gulf Engineering Union, to propose a project aimed at unifying the standards for practicing the engineering profession across the GCC countries.

He highlighted that the goal is to contribute to harmonizing the Gulf engineering market, creating wider opportunities for citizens of GCC countries, and alleviating the pressures of employment in the general labor market, which is a common challenge faced by member states.

Eng. Al-Otal praised the efforts of the ministries and engineers in the State of Kuwait for their role in implementing major projects, noting that Kuwait is now witnessing the successful achievement of projects that the country can take pride

in. Meanwhile, the Head of the Human and Environmental Affairs Sector at the General GCC Secretariat Eng. Abdullah Al-Rubaie provided an overview of GCC's work and progress.

He highlighted the huge success achieved through the electrical interconnection between the GCC countries, as well as the ongoing efforts to extend this connection to several Arab countries, with future plans to link it to a number of European countries.

Al-Rubaie explained that approximately 470 committees and work groups operate in various sectors under the umbrella of the ministerial committees in the General GCC Secretariat. These committees are working on overcoming challenges such as the housing issue, insufficient human development, reliance on oil and gas as the primary source of income, and the unstable conditions in the region.

In addition, Director of the Municipalities and Housing Department at the General GCC Secretariat Eng. Mohammed Al-Dablan discussed the progress made in the development of the Gulf Building Code, the Contractors Classification System, the Unified Rules for Owners of Joint Properties, and the Gulf Engineering Offices Classification Project.

He said the secretariat is working on around 20 guidelines for launching joint projects that will contribute to unifying the engineering work environment and its requirements in all GCC countries.

At the conclusion of the workshop, the Kuwait Society of Engineers presented an initiative to develop a draft system that unifies the foundations for practicing the engineering profession based on the latest standards and criteria. This system will also allow greater freedom of movement and licensing for Gulf engineers.

The General Secretariat of the GCC exchanged honors with Minister Al-Mishari and Al-Otal, with the Kuwaiti engineers reciprocating the gesture.

# MoH rolls out trial phase of smart fingerprint system for employees

MEW appoints over 3,100 new employees in 2023

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi, Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, has approved the implementation of a smart fingerprint attendance system for all ministry employees, including doctors, nurses, administrators, pharmacists and engineers.**

The circular copy obtained by Al-Seyassah daily outlines that the system will undergo a trial phase from December 4, 2024 to January 4, 2025, with full implementation starting on January 5, 2025.

This initiative aims to streamline attendance

monitoring and enhance administrative efficiency across the ministry.



**3,105 appointments in 2023:** Informed sources within the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy revealed that the ministry has appointed a total of 3,105 male and female employees in its technical and administrative sectors during the year 2023.

The sources pointed out that the ministry's total workforce increased from 27,130 employees in 2022 to 34,576 employees in 2023.

However, despite this rise in the number of employees, the overall percentage of appointments in 2023 decreased to 9.9 percent, down from 16 percent in 2022.

This suggests a moderation in the pace of hiring, despite the ministry's expanded workforce.



**893 nominated for jobs:** In line with the deci-

sion of the Civil Service Council and the implementation of the comprehensive employment plan, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has announced the nomination of 893 Kuwaiti men and women, who were registered in the government employment system, for positions in government agencies, reports Al-Anba daily.

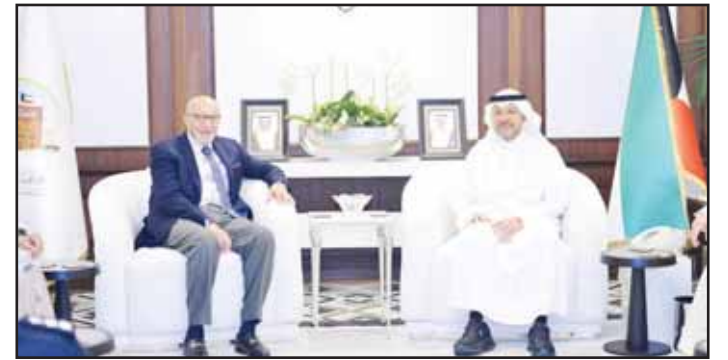
The new batch includes all citizens who are eligible for first-time nomination in the central employment system, as well as those who were previously rejected by government agencies but have not turned down any job opportunities before.

The qualifications of the nominees range from PhDs, Master's degrees, and Bachelor's degrees to diplomas, post-intermediate training courses, vocational qualification diplomas, and parallel education.

In addition, this batch includes only those with intermediate and secondary qualifications who successfully passed the qualifying course for hotel support services.



Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser with the top officials.



Farwaniya Governorate photos

## Governor of Farwaniya receives Sidra Hospital's top officials

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received in his office at Farwaniya Governorate recently the CEO of Sidra Hospital Professor Saeed Abdul Hakeem Rateb, Administrative Director and Government Relations Officer at Sidra Hospital Abdullah Taleb Al-Bakhit, and former mayor of

Andalous Mutab Al-Fajji. According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Sheikh Athbi warmly welcomed the distinguished guests.

During the meeting, they discussed ways to enhance cooperation to serve the people of Farwaniya Governorate through effective community partnerships. They emphasized the importance

of collaboration between the public and private sectors, as it brings a unique quality that significantly enhances the level of healthcare.

In addition, Professor Rateb expressed his appreciation for the efforts exerted by Sheikh Athbi and his dedicated follow-up and support of the health sector in the governorate.

## Summit embodies

Continued from Page 1

He urged, "The international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to fulfill its responsibilities by ensuring the implementation of relevant resolutions, halting the violence, providing international protection for innocent civilians, and securing safe corridors for urgent humanitarian aid."

"We reiterate our unwavering support to Palestine and to end the Israeli occupation, attain all their political rights, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international resolutions," he stressed.

"We also commend Qatar, Egypt, and the US for their mediation efforts in achieving a ceasefire in Gaza and welcome the ceasefire in Lebanon as a step toward de-escalation," His Highness the Amir said.

"We commend the positive steps expressed by Iran towards the GCC and look forward to resolving outstanding issues and enhancing cooperation in accordance with the UN Charter and international law," he added.

His Highness concluded, "We reaffirm our commitment to advancing joint Gulf action, meeting the aspirations of our people, and building a bright future of prosperity and stability."

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stressed during the opening session of the 45th GCC Summit that in line with the principle of good neighborliness, dialogue is fundamental in overcoming challenges.

"We reaffirm our call to Iraq to rectify the legal status of the agreement regulating maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah, resume the meetings of the technical teams associated with it, and return to work in accordance with the 2008 Security Exchange Protocol," he said.

"Additionally, we urge the resumption of meetings of the joint legal technical teams to complete the demarcation of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi maritime borders beyond boundary point No. 162 in accordance with international law and UNs Convention on 1982 Law of the Sea," he also added.

His Highness the Amir added, "we would also like to emphasize our hope that the support of the leaders will ensure the continued follow-up by the Security Council, exclusively, on the issues of prisoners, missing persons, and Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, after the expiration of the mandate of the UNs Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Following the opening session, the GCC leaders and representatives then started the closed session to explore cases and project on the Summit's agenda to issue the concluding statement and the Kuwait Declaration.

His Highness the Amir's inaugural speech welcomed GCC leaders and representatives, emphasizing that this summit is being held under highly complex circumstances.

The opening session also featured speeches by the GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi, and the Head of the Omani delegation Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sayyid Fahad bin Mahmoud Al-Said.

As part of the summit proceedings, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held a luncheon on Sunday in honor of GCC leaders and representatives during the 45th session of the GCC Supreme Council, hosted by Kuwait.

Earlier, the Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman and the accompanying delegation arrived in Kuwait on Sunday to participate in the

45th GCC Summit to be held later on today.

Upon arrival at the Amiri Terminal the Saudi Crown Prince was received by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He was also received by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi and other senior officials.

Heading the honorary delegation is the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Saud Al-Sabah.

The Saudi official delegation includes Minister of State and Member of the Council of Ministers Prince Turki bin Mohammed, Minister of Sports Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki, Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Minister of State, Member of the Council of Ministers and National Security Advisor Dr. Musaid Al-Aiban, Minister of Finance Mohammad Al-Jadaan, Minister of Transport Saleh Al-Jasser and other senior officials.

The Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa and the accompanying delegation arrived in Kuwait on Sunday to participate in the 45th GCC Summit to be held later on today.

Upon arrival at the Amiri Terminal Al-Khalifa was received by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He was also received by the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi and other senior officials.

Heading the honorary delegation is the Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

The Bahraini official delegation includes Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Abdulatif Al-Zayani, Minister of Finance and National Economy Sheikh Salman Al-Khalifa, Minister of Legal Affairs Yousef Khalaf, Minister of Health Dr. Jalela Hassan, Minister of Cabinet Affairs Hamad Al-Malki, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning Amna Al-Rumaihi, Minister of Industry and Commerce Abdullah Fakhro and other senior officials.

Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain, Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, expressed his pride in the advanced levels of Kuwaiti-Bahraini relations, and their joint keenness on developing them across a multitude of fields.

This came in the Crown Prince's statement upon arrival to Kuwait on behalf of Bahrain's King, Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, to head the Bahraini delegation participating in the 45th GCC Summit in Kuwait on Sunday.

The Crown Prince hailed the sturdy and long-lasting bilateral relations, and reiterated Bahrain's appreciation to efforts of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in boosting joint Gulf work, wishing the Kuwaiti people further progress and prosperity.

He also affirmed that the 45th Summit reflected the commitment of GCC member states in furthering joint Gulf work and stimulating efforts to achieve joint aspirations.

The UAE Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidential Court Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and the accompanying delegation arrived in Kuwait on Sunday to participate in the 45th GCC Summit to be held later on today.

Upon arrival at the Amiri Terminal Al-Nahyan was received by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He was also received by the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi and other senior officials.

Heading the honorary delegation is the Governor of Al-Farwaniya District Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah.

The UAE official delegation includes Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Minister of State for Financial Affairs Mohammad Al-Hussaini, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Suhail Al-Mazrouei, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology Dr. Sultan Al-Jaber, Minister of Justice Abdullah Al-Nuaimi, Minister of Investment Mohammad Al-Suwaidi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment Dr. Amna Al-Dahak Al-Shamsi, Minister of State Khalifa Al-Marar and other senior officials.

The Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and the accompanying delegation arrived in Kuwait on Sunday to partake in the 45th GCC Summit to be held later on today.

Upon arrival at Kuwait Amiri Airport, Sheikh Tamim was received by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He was also received by the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi and other senior officials.

Heading the honorary delegation is Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The Qatari official delegation includes Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammad Al-Khulafai, Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmad Al-Kuwari, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, and other senior officials.

The Sultanate of Oman's Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers Sayyed Fahad bin Mahmoud Al-Said and his accompanying delegation arrived to Kuwait on Sunday to attend the 45th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit.

Upon arrival at Kuwait Amiri Airport, Al-Said was received by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He was also received by the Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi and other senior officials.

The honorary mission accompanying Al-Said was formed under the Governor of Al-Assima District Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah.

The Omani official delegation includes the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sayyed Al-Busaidi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs Dr. Abdullah Al-Saeedi, Minister of Economy Dr. Said Al-Saqari, and other Omani senior officials.

## KUWAIT DECLARATION

Continued from Page 1

both regionally and globally, as well as acknowledged their contributions to resolving issues threatening peace, stability, and security, and to promoting international dialogue.

The summit expressed support for the outcomes of the extraordinary Arab-Islamic summit held in Saudi Arabia on November 11, 2024, which sought to halt the war in Gaza and advance the two-state solution.

The leaders also praised Qatar's efforts to mediate a ceasefire and facilitate detainee exchanges.

Regarding Lebanon, the GCC leaders condemned Israeli aggression and warned of its potential to escalate into a broader regional conflict.

They welcomed the temporary ceasefire agreement in Lebanon and called for Israel occupation's withdrawal, the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, and the return of displaced persons.

They also expressed solidarity with the Lebanese people and called for a political solution to Lebanon's internal divisions, emphasizing the country's role in Arab security and culture.

In Yemen, the GCC leaders commended the efforts of Saudi Arabia and Oman to revive the political process among Yemeni parties.

The leaders reiterated the GCC's commitment to peaceful diplomacy in resolving regional and global disputes, respecting state sovereignty, and adhering to international law.

They praised the GCC's growing influence in addressing regional and global challenges, promoting international dialogue, and building strategic partnerships.

They emphasized the need for ongoing implementation of summit decisions to maximize their practical benefits.

The leaders of the GCC countries emphasized the need to intensify efforts to strengthen the region's role as a global hub for business and economic activity.

They also underscored the importance of sustainable economic diversification, energy market stability, and effective responses to climate change.

They reaffirmed their commitment to empowering Gulf women across various fields and enhancing the role of youth.

The leaders highlighted the importance of universities, research institutions in preserving Gulf identity, Arab culture, Islamic values, and principles of good leadership, emphasizing the role of GCC institutions in achieving these objectives.

They recognized the digital economy as an opportunity for economic growth and regional integration, commending the region's advanced and adaptable dig-

ital infrastructure, including investments in fast communication technologies.

These investments have positioned the GCC as a global hub for the digital economy, encourage innovation, supporting emerging technologies, and attracting digital investments.

The leaders highlighted the importance of strategic investments in areas including artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity.

These technologies, they noted, have placed the GCC in a leading position to capitalize on the global digital transformation, with applications in renewable energy, healthcare, education, transportation, and financial services.

The leaders also called for enhanced cooperation among GCC countries to develop joint digital strategies, facilitate e-commerce, advance digital payment systems, and strengthen cybersecurity.

They emphasized the need to establish unified digital markets to boost regional economic integration and global competitiveness.

Recognizing their diverse resources, skilled workforce, and advanced technologies, the leaders noted the growing contribution of GCC countries to the global economy.

They emphasized that the region's digital initiatives aim not only to achieve national objectives but also to drive global innovation and economic growth, solidifying the GCC's status as a key player in the digital economy.

The leaders stressed the ongoing development of digital infrastructure and the adoption of emerging technologies, alongside building a technically skilled workforce capable of leading the digital transformation.

They underscored the importance of balancing innovation and economic growth with environmental and social sustainability.

The leaders affirmed that these collective efforts demonstrate the GCC's commitment to keeping up with global advancements, improving citizen's quality of life, and establishing the region as a global digital economy hub, ensuring sustainable prosperity for both the region and the world.

## Kuwait reaffirms

Continued from Page 1

The United Nations stressed on Sunday the need to work on a ceasefire in Gaza Strip, releasing hostages and ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and establishing an Independent Palestinian State.

This came in the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Egypt Elena Panova, during the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People Event that was launched Sunday at the Arab League's General Secretariat in Cairo.

Panova said that the UN is keen on celebrating International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People annually, standing in solidarity with Palestinians and their rights, adding that this year's celebration coincides with an unfortunate situation, as there was no justification of the collective punishment policy against Palestinians.

She continued that one year later and Gaza is still under rubble, there are more than tens of thousands of Palestinians who fell victim to that war, and the vast majority of whom are women and children.

She pointed to the Israeli occupation's military operations, settlement expansion, evictions, and acts of violence and threats that add to the pain and injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people, stressing the need to provide them with humanitarian aid through UNRWA.

## DNA rule

Continued from Page 1

According to the resolution, parents are required to visit the General Administration of Nationality and Travel Documents and the General Administration of Criminal Evidence immediately after returning to Kuwait to complete this procedure.

Certain individuals are exempted from this new requirement.

These include members of the diplomatic corps, citizens studying abroad under government sponsorship, those attending government-delegated external courses, government employees stationed abroad and citizens undergoing government-approved medical treatment abroad.

Despite these exemptions, the General Directorate of Nationality reserves the right to request genetic fingerprinting for any individual in these categories if deemed necessary.

This resolution aims to bolster the accuracy and security of Kuwait's nationality records, reflecting the government's commitment to modernizing its administrative processes.

Meanwhile, five decrees have been issued to revoke Kuwaiti citizenship and citizenship certificates from 3,053 individuals, including 3,025 women, as well as those who may have acquired citizenship through dependency. This marks the largest number of citizenship revocations in a single day since the Supreme Committee for the Investigation of Kuwaiti Citizenship began its work, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

## 45.3 pct

Continued from Page 1

He pointed to statistics on obesity among children in Kuwait, explaining that in 2023, the obesity rates among school children aged 9-13 ranged from 34.4 percent to 40.6 percent for boys, and from 28.3 percent to 26.6 percent for girls.

### Definition of Obesity

Dr. Al-Qasimi emphasized that obesity is a chronic disease affecting approximately two billion people worldwide.

He explained that it is a major contributor to various other chronic health conditions. Obesity involves an imbalance in the body's adipose tissue, which serves as both a basic energy storage organ and a hormonal organ. Adipose tissue secretes hormones and signals that influence cell function, one of which is leptin.

## Cybersecurity a

Continued from Page 1

organized by the National Cybersecurity Center in cooperation with (CODED) Company and in the presence of Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Al-Omar and Acting Head of the National Cybersecurity Center Dima Al-Sumait.

Sheikh Fahad said that the aim of this competition is to enhance the spirit of competition and creativity among our ambitious youth in the field of cybersecurity, which contributes to developing their digital capabilities and enabling them to protect Kuwait cyberspace, stressing that such events are not just competitions, but rather engines for creative thinking and innovation.



## 'Nomination expected to cause shockwaves'

# US President-elect Trump taps long time ally Kash Patel to be next FBI director

WASHINGTON, Dec 1, (AP): US President-elect Donald Trump says he will nominate Kash Patel to serve as FBI director, turning to a fierce ally to upend America's premier law enforcement agency and rid the government of perceived "conspirators." It's the latest bombshell Trump has thrown at the Washington establishment and a test for how far Senate Republicans will go in confirming his nominees.

The selection is in keeping with Trump's view that the government's law enforcement and intelligence agencies require a radical transformation and his stated desire for retribution against supposed adversaries. It shows how Trump, still fuming over years of federal investigations that shadowed his first administration and later led to his indictment, is moving to place atop the FBI and Justice Department close allies he believes will protect rather than scrutinize him.

Patel "played a pivotal role in uncovering the Russia, Russia, Russia Hoax, standing as an advocate for truth, accountability, and the Constitution," Trump wrote Saturday night in a social media post.

The announcement means current FBI director Christopher Wray must either resign or be fired after Trump takes office on Jan. 20. Wray had previously been named by Trump and began the 10-year term - a length meant to insulate the agency from the political influence of changing administrations - in 2017, after Trump fired his predecessor, James Comey.

The decision sets up what's likely to be an explosive confirmation battle in the Senate not long after Trump's first pick to lead the Justice Department, Matt Gaetz, withdrew his nomination amid intense scrutiny over sex trafficking allegations. Patel is a lesser-known figure, but his nomination was still expected to cause shockwaves. He's embraced Trump's rhetoric about a "deep state," called for a "comprehensive housecleaning" of government workers who are disloyal to Trump and has referred to journalists as traitors, promising to try to prosecute some reporters.

Trump's nominees will have allies in what will be a Republican-controlled Senate next year, but his picks are not certain of confirmation. With a slim majority, Republicans can only



Kash Patel, former chief of staff to Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller, speaks at a rally in Minden, Nevada on Oct 8, 2022. (AP)

lose a few defectors in the face of expected unified Democratic opposition - though as vice president, JD Vance would be able to break any tie votes.

But the president-elect had also raised the prospect of pushing his selections through without Senate ap-

proval using a congressional loophole that allows him to make appointments when the Senate is not in session.

Wray fell out of favor with the president and his allies. His removal isn't unexpected given Trump's long-running public criticism of him and the FBI,

particularly in the aftermath of federal investigations - and an FBI search of his Mar-a-Lago estate for classified documents two years ago - that resulted in indictments that have evaporated.

In his final months in office, Trump unsuccessfully pushed the idea of installing Patel as the deputy director at either the FBI or CIA in an effort to strengthen the president's control of the intelligence community. William Barr, Trump's attorney general, wrote in his memoir that he told then-chief of staff Mark Meadows that an appointment to Patel as deputy FBI director would happen "over my dead body."

"Patel had virtually no experience that would qualify him to serve at the highest level of the world's preeminent law enforcement agency," Barr wrote.

Patel's past proposals, if carried out, would lead to convulsive change for an agency tasked not only with investigating violations of federal law but also protecting the country from terrorist attacks, foreign espionage and other threats.

He's called for dramatically reducing the agency's footprint, a perspective that sets him apart from earlier

directors who have sought additional resources for the bureau, and has suggested closing down the bureau's headquarters in Washington and "reopen it the next day as a museum of the deep state" - Trump's pejorative catch-all for the federal bureaucracy.

And though the Justice Department in 2021 halted the practice of secretly seizing reporters' phone records during leak investigations, Patel has said he intends to aggressively hunt down government officials who leak information to reporters and change the law to make it easier to sue journalists.

During an interview with Steve Bannon last December, Patel said he and others "will go out and find the conspirators not just in government but in the media."

"We're going to come after the people in the media who lied about American citizens who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections," Patel said, referring to the 2020 presidential election in which Biden, the Democratic challenger, defeated Trump. "We're going to come after you, whether it's criminally or civilly. We'll figure that out. But yeah, we're putting you all on notice."

## Biden Thanksgiving holiday part of longer farewell as Trump's return to WH nears



US President Joe Biden greets people during a Christmas tree lighting ceremony in downtown Nantucket, Mass. on Nov 29. (AP)

NANTUCKET, Mass., Dec 1, (AP): Joe Biden is wrapping up his final Thanksgiving holiday as president on Nantucket, a family tradition that this year seems to be part of a broader farewell to his time in the White House.

The Democrat's four years as president will be bookended by Republican Donald Trump, whose Cabinet nominations, tariff threats and glitzy evenings at Mar-a-Lago, his Florida club, have captured the public's attention since the November election. Biden dropped out of the presidential contest in July and was replaced on the ticket by Vice President Kamala Harris, who lost to Trump.

During his five days on the Massachusetts island, with its picturesque wood shingle homes and sea-shelled beaches, the 82-year-old Biden was still dealing with questions of his legacy. He returned to Washington late Saturday and will leave for Angola the next day for his only visit to Africa as president.

On Friday, as Biden and his family walked along the quaint brick sidewalks and cobblestone streets that have made Nantucket a wealthy and desirable summer vacation spot, passersby shouted "We love you, Joe." The Biden contingent included the president's daughter, Ashley, and son, Hunter, as well as Hunter's 4-year-old son, Beau.

Over the past year, Biden has called Trump's falsehoods about the government's hurricane relief "un-American" and repeatedly warned that the incoming president could undermine U.S. democracy and foreign alliances.

But when asked by reporters on Thanksgiving Day what he was thankful for, Biden said: "I'm thankful for a peaceful transition of the presidency."

Biden also said he was thankful for his family, the new cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon and the potential for more progress in the Middle East. The president, who has largely avoided reporters' questions lately, engaged on a number of matters related to Trump and policy.

He suggested that "razor-thin" margins of power for

Republicans in the next Congress will mean that Trump will have to accept "some real compromise" as he pushes his agenda.

"I think there may be a little bit of internal reckoning," Biden said.

Biden also said he hoped Trump would "rethink" his tariff threats against Mexico and Canada, leading American trading partners.

"We're surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and two allies: Mexico and Canada," Biden said. "And the last thing we need to do is begin to screw up those relationships. I think we've got them in a good place."

Days earlier, Trump had pledged on his social media site, Truth Social, to impose 25% tariffs on both countries until they stopped illegal immigration and blocked the flow of drugs across their border with the United States. The threat caused Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum to engage Trump in a phone call and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to fly to Florida on Friday to meet with him.

After that phone call, Trump claimed in a post to be "effectively closing our Southern Border," a statement that Sheinbaum disputed even as she expressed confidence the tariffs would be averted. Mexico has already taken steps to address the issues raised by Trump - a point also raised by Biden.

Trudeau left Florida on Saturday without a commitment by Trump to avoid tariffs. Trump called the meeting "productive."

Trump has also threatened an additional 10% tariff on China unless it stops exporting materials used to make the drug fentanyl.

Biden told reporters that Chinese President Xi Jinping understood the value of avoiding any missteps in relations with the United States.

"The one thing I'm confident about Xi is he doesn't want to make a mistake," Biden said. "And I'm not saying that he is our best buddy, but he -- he understands what's at stake."

## Top EU officials visit Kyiv

# Putin signs off record defense spending

KYIV, Ukraine, Dec 1, (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin approved budget plans, raising 2025 military spending to record levels as Moscow seeks to prevail in the war in Ukraine.

Around 32.5% of the budget posted on a government website Sunday has been allocated for national defense, amounting to 13.5 trillion rubles (over \$145 billion), up from a reported 28.3% this year.

Lawmakers in both houses of the

Russian parliament, the State Duma and Federation Council, had already approved the plans in the past 10 days.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine since February 2022 is Europe's biggest conflict since World War II and has drained the resources of both sides. Kyiv has been getting billions of dollars in help from its Western allies, but Russia's forces are bigger and better equipped, and in recent months the Russian army has gradu-

ally been pushing Ukrainian troops backward in eastern areas.

New European Council President Antonio Costa and EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas arrived in Kyiv on Sunday, marking their first day in office with a strong message of support for Ukraine. Their visit comes as doubts are deepening over what Kyiv can expect from a new U.S. administration led by Donald Trump.

"From day one of the war, the EU has stood by the side of Ukraine," Costa posted on X, together with a photo of himself, Kallas and EU enlargement chief Marta Kos. "From day one of our mandate, we are reaffirming our unwavering support to the Ukrainian people."

On the ground in Ukraine, three people died in the southern city of Kherson when a Russian drone struck a minibus on Sunday morning, regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said. Seven others were wounded in the attack.

Meanwhile, the number of wounded in Saturday's missile strike in Dnipro in central Ukraine rose to 24, with seven in serious condition, Dnipropetrovsk Gov. Serhiy Lysak said. Four people were killed in the attack.

Moscow sent 78 drones into Ukraine overnight into Sunday, Ukrainian officials said. According to Ukraine's air force, 32 drones were destroyed and a further 45 drones were lost, likely having been electronically jammed.

## Trump, GOP in Congress eye ambitious 100-day agenda, starting with tax cuts

WASHINGTON, Dec 1, (AP): A tax break for millionaires, and almost everyone else.

An end to the COVID-19-era government subsidies that some Americans have used to purchase health insurance.

Limits to food stamps, including for women and children, and other safety net programs. Rollbacks to Biden-era green energy programs. Mass deportations. Government job cuts to "drain the swamp."

Having won the election and sweeping to power, Republicans are planning an ambitious 100-day agenda with President-elect Donald Trump in the White House and GOP lawmakers in a congressional majority to accomplish their policy goals.

Atop the list is the plan to renew some \$4 trillion in expiring GOP tax cuts, a signature domestic achievement of Trump's first term and an issue that may define his return to the White House.

"What we're focused on right now is being ready, Day 1," said House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La., after meeting recently with GOP colleagues to map out the road ahead.

The policies emerging will revive long-running debates about America's priorities, its gaping income inequities and the proper size and scope of its government, especially in the face of mounting federal deficits now approaching \$2 trillion a year.

The discussions will test whether Trump and his Republican allies can achieve the kinds of real-world outcomes wanted, needed or supported



US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, (center), speaks as House Majority Whip Tom Emmer, (left), and Majority Leader Steve Scalise, (right), listen during a press conference on the steps of the US Capitol in Washington on Nov 12, in Washington. (AP)

when voters gave the party control of Congress and the White House.

"The past is really prologue here," said Lindsay Owens, executive director of the Groundwork Collaborative, recalling the 2017 tax debate.

Trump's first term became defined by those tax cuts, which were approved by Republicans in Congress and signed into law only after their initial campaign promise to "repeal and replace" Democratic President Barack Obama's health care law sputtered, failing with the famous thumbs-down vote by then-Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.

The GOP majority in Congress quickly pivoted to tax cuts, assembling and approving the multitrillion-dollar package by year's end.

In the time since Trump signed those cuts into law, the big benefits have accrued to higher-income households. The top 1 percent - those making nearly \$1 million and above - received about a \$60,000 income tax cut, while those with lower incomes got as little as a few hundred dollars, according to the Tax Policy Center and other groups. Some people ended up paying about the same.

## Turmoil in presidential race grips nation

# Romanians vote in parliamentary election

BUCHAREST, Romania, Dec 1, (AP): Romanians are casting ballots in a parliamentary election on Sunday sandwiched between a two-round presidential race, the first round of which has plunged the European Union and NATO member country into unprecedented turmoil following allegations of electoral violations and Russian interference.

Sunday's vote will elect a new government and prime minister and determine the formation of the country's 466-seat legislature. Romanians who are abroad have been able to vote since Saturday. By 11 am, 2.2 million people - about 12.5% of eligible voters - had cast ballots, according to the Central Election Bureau.

The legislative vote comes a week after the first round of a presidential race that saw a controversial far-right populist who was polling in single digits win the most votes. Calin Georgescu, 62, is due to face reformist Elena Lasconi of the Save Romania Union party, orUSR, in a Dec 8 runoff.

Georgescu's success, which many have attributed to his rapid rise in popularity on the social media platform TikTok, has triggered nightly protests throughout Romania by those who oppose his past remarks praising Romanian fascist leaders and Russian President Vladimir Putin and view him as a threat to democracy.

Many observers believe the presidential outcome indicates a sharp shift from Romania's mainstream parties to more populist anti-establishment parties, whose voices have found fertile ground amid high inflation, high cost of living and a sluggish economy.



Calin Georgescu, an independent candidate for president who came first after the first round of presidential election, casts his vote in the country's parliamentary election in Mogosoaia, Romania on Dec 1. (AP)

Alexandru Rizeanu, a 24-year-old medical student, says he was surprised by the result in the first-round presidential ballot and that it's an "obvious sign" Europe at large is shifting toward far-right populism.

"Most of us are sick of these big parties, but now we have to think about the ... lesser evil," he said. "If Georgescu becomes president, with a favorable parliament, it's going to be wild."

According to a report by Expert Forum, a Bucharest-based think tank, Georgescu's TikTok account before last week's vote saw an explosion of engagement, which it said appeared "sudden and artificial, similar to his polling results."

Without naming Georgescu, who declared zero campaign spending, Romania's top defense body said Thursday that "a presidential candidate benefited from massive exposure due to preferential treatment" granted by TikTok. Romania has become a "priority target for hostile actions" by Russia, it added. The Kremlin denies it is meddling.

The same day, the Constitutional Court requested a recount of all 9.4 million votes after a presidential candidate who obtained 1% filed a complaint alleging the USR had violated electoral laws against campaign activities on polling day.

## Europe

### Spaniards march in Valencia:

Tens of thousands of Spaniards marched on Saturday in the streets of Valencia a month after devastating floods to demand the resignation of the regional officials who bungled the emergency response.

The protest was the second major march of its kind asking for Valencia regional president Carlos Mazón to step down. He has refused to do so while making changes to his Cabinet and appointing a retired general to lead the cleanup effort.

Many citizens and flood survivors are angry for what they consider the negligent or inept handling of the flash floods that created major flood-

ing on Oct. 29-30. At least 230 people died, while thousands of homes and vehicles were destroyed or ruined.



Mazon

ing the shrill alert they received on their phones in unison. (AP)

### Social Dems gain in election:

Voters in Iceland appeared to have

rejected incumbent parties in a parliamentary election, partial results showed Sunday, with a center-left party leading the contest in the North Atlantic island nation.

With more than half of votes counted, the Social Democratic Alliance had won 15 seats in the 63-seat parliament, the Althingi, and secured more than 21% of votes, according to national broadcaster RUV. The conservative Independence Party had 14 seats and just under 20% of votes, and the centrist Liberal Reform Party 11 seats and 16% of votes.

Icelanders voted Saturday after disagreements over immigration, energy policy and the economy forced Prime Minister Bjarni Benediktsson to pull the plug on his coalition government and call an early election. (AP)



Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, speaks with the governor of Kirov region Alexander Sokolov during their meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia on Nov 29. (AP)



## China slams visit

## Taiwan's Lai arrives in Hawaii for 2-day stop in US as part of South Pacific visit

HONOLULU, Dec 1, (AP): Taiwan's president Lai Ching-te arrived Saturday in Hawaii to begin a two-day transit in the US as part of a trip to the South Pacific, his first since assuming office.

The stopover in Hawaii and one planned for the territory of Guam have drawn fierce criticism from Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its own territory and objects to official exchanges between the self-ruled democracy and the US, the island's biggest backer and military provider.

There were no high-ranking US or Hawaii state officials to greet Lai at the Honolulu hotel where supporters cheered in Mandarin, some waving Taiwanese flags. He visited Hawaii's leading museum of natural history and Native Hawaiian culture, Bishop Museum. Later, he was expected to attend a banquet with supporters.

Lai is on a weeklong trip to visit the

Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau - three diplomatic allies of the self-governed island in the Pacific. Though Taiwan retains strong contacts with dozens of other nations, it has only 12 formal diplomatic allies.

Bishop Museum CEO Dee Jay Mailer presented Lai with a red lei hulu, or feather garland, made by master featherwork artist Kawika Lum-Nelmida. Lai gave Mailer a headdress, made by Paiwan Indigenous people of Taiwan, and neck and shoulder decorative pieces made by Atayal Indigenous people, also of Taiwan.

Lai's visit shows that Taiwan and the United States have a very strong relationship, said Arthur Chen, the president of the Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce of North America. He flew to Hawaii from his home near Dallas to welcome the president to the US.

Chen said he understood the US has its own foreign policy but he said Lai



Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, (center), arrives at the Bishop Museum on Nov 30 in Honolulu. (AP)

should be treated as a head of state during his stay.

Taiwan and the US share common values like a belief in democracy and human rights, Chen said. "So we should help each other," he said.

Lai didn't make any public remarks at his initial engagements in Hawaii, but spoke before his departure from Taiwan.

"I want to use the values of democracy, peace, and prosperity to continue to expand our cooperation with our allies, to deepen our partnership and let the world see Taiwan not just as a model of democracy, but a vital power in promoting the world's peace and stability, and prosperous development," he said at Taoyuan International Airport.

It is unclear whether Lai will meet with any members of the incoming US administration during his transit.

President-elect Donald Trump said

in an interview with Bloomberg in July that Taiwan should pay for its defense. The island has purchased billions of dollars of defense weaponry from the US.

Trump evaded answering whether he would defend the island from Chinese military action. On Friday, the US State Department said it approved the sale of \$385 million in spare parts and equipment for a fleet of F-16s, as well as support for tactical communication system to Taiwan.

While the US is obligated to help the island defend itself under the Taiwan Relations Act, it has maintained a position of strategic ambiguity over whether it would ever get involved if Taiwan were to be invaded by China.

A second Trump administration is expected to test US-China relations even more than the Republican's first term, when the US imposed tariffs on more than \$360 billion in Chinese products.

## Japan's popular Princess Aiko turns 23 with her future as a royal in doubt



Japan's Princess Aiko, the daughter of Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, arrives to mark the 110th anniversary of the death of the wife of former emperor Meiji at Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, on April 10. (AP)

TOKYO, Dec 1, (AP): Japan's popular Princess Aiko turned 23 on Sunday, as she takes on more official duties even while her future in the imperial family remains in doubt.

Aiko, the only child of Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, graduated from university earlier this year and has since been participating in official duties and palace rituals while working at the Red Cross Society, according to the Imperial Household Agency.

But Japanese law requires her to renounce her royal status and leave the family if she marries outside the imperial family.

The vast majority of Japan's public supports changing the law to allow her to remain a royal and become emperor, but conservatives in the governing party insist on keeping male-only succession. Japan's rapidly dwindling imperial family has only 16 members, including four men.

Aiko was to mark her birthday with her parents at the imperial palace in Tokyo. The IHA also released several photos of Aiko, including one of her standing by a persimmon tree at a palace gar-

den. Another showed her holding pieces of traditional hand-crafted washi paper that she made at a workshop during her first solo official trip in October to the National Sports Festival in Japan's southwestern prefecture of Saga.

The 1947 Imperial House Law, which largely preserves conservative prewar family values, allows only males to take the throne and forces female royals who marry outside the family to give up their status. With only one young male member, that puts the survival of the 2,000-year-old monarchy in jeopardy.

The youngest male member of the imperial family, Prince Hisahito - Aiko's 18-year-old cousin - is currently the last heir apparent, posing a major problem for the system.

The government is looking for a way to keep the succession stable without relying on women, such as allowing the family to adopt new male members from former noble families that lost their status after World War II.

Aiko's own views on the topic are unknown. She's only had one full news conference, when she reached adulthood.

Last month, the United Nations women's rights committee in Geneva issued a report that called for the Japanese government to allow a female emperor, among other issues hindering gender equality in the country.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi dismissed the report "regrettable" and "inappropriate." He said the imperial succession is a matter of fundamental national identity and that it is not covered by constitutional basic rights.

Crown Prince Akishino, Aiko's uncle, was asked about the succession debate at a news conference marking his 59th birthday Saturday, and replied that members of the royal family are "living humans" and that the palace officials who support their daily lives should know how it affects them.

At her work at the Japanese Red Cross Society, Aiko is assigned to volunteer training program, the IHA said. On weekends, it said, the princess enjoys taking walks with her parents and playing volleyball, tennis and badminton with palace officials.

## Mexican authorities have broken up two migrant caravans heading to US: activists

TAPACHULA, Mexico, Dec 1, (AP): Mexican immigration authorities have broken up two small migrant caravans headed to the US border, activists said Saturday.

Some migrants were bused to cities in southern Mexico, and others were offered transit papers.

The action comes a week after US President-elect Donald Trump threatened to slap 25% tariffs on Mexican products unless the country does more to stem the flow of migrants to the US border.

On Wednesday, Trump wrote that Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum had agreed to stop unauthorized migration across the border into the United States. Sheinbaum wrote on her social media accounts the same day that "migrants and caravans are taken care of before they reach the border."

Migrant rights activist Luis García Villagrán said the breaking-up of the two caravans appeared to be part of "an agreement between the president of Mexico and the president of the United States."

The first of the caravans started out from the southern Mexico city of Tapachula, near the border with Guatemala, on Nov. 5, the day Trump was elected. At its height it had about 2,500 people. In almost four weeks of walking, it had gone about 270 miles (430 kilometers) to Tehuantepec in the state of Oaxaca.

In Tehuantepec, Mexican immigration officials offered



Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum gives a media briefing from the National Palace in Mexico City on Oct 2. (AP)

the tired migrants free bus rides to other cities in southern or central Mexico.

"They took some of us to Acapulco, others to Morelia, and others from our group to Oaxaca city," said Bárbara Rodríguez, an opposition supporter who left her native Venezuela after that country's contested presidential elections earlier this year.

Rodríguez said by telephone she later caught a bus on her own to Mexico City.

In a statement Saturday, the National Immigration Institute said the migrants voluntarily accepted bus rides "to various areas where there is medical assistance and where their migratory status will be reviewed," and said "upon accepting (the rides), they said they no longer wanted to face the risks along their way."

The second caravan of about 1,500 migrants set out on Nov. 20 and made it about 140 miles (225 kilometers) to the town of Tonala, in Chiapas state. There,

authorities offered a sort of transit visa that allows travel across Mexico for 20 days.

Sheinbaum has said she is confident that a tariff war with the United States can be averted. But her statement - the day after she held a phone call with Trump - did not make clear who had offered what.

Apart from the much larger first caravans in 2018 and 2019 - which were provided buses to ride part of the way north - no caravan has ever reached the U.S. border walking or hitchhiking in any cohesive way, though some individual members have made it.

## East African summit urges peace in eastern Congo

ARUSHA, Tanzania, Dec 1, (AP): East African heads of state made another push for peace in eastern Congo on Saturday but its prospects remained bleak following a regional summit that was marked by the Congolese president's absence and an early departure of his Rwandan counterpart.

A communique read at the end of the closed-door meeting of the East African Community in Arusha, Tanzania, only stated the need to combine regional and broader peace initiatives for sustainable peace in eastern Congo.

Violence has reemerged in one of the world's most protracted conflicts in eastern Congo, where Congo's government accused the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group of "ethnic cleansing" in mineral-rich areas close to Rwanda's border.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame left shortly after the closed-door meeting in Arusha. There was no official explanation for Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi's absence at the summit.

Congo alleges that Rwanda has been involved in war crimes in the east, and U.S. and U.N. experts accuse it of giving military backing to M23. Rwanda denies the claim, but in February admitted that it has troops and missile systems in eastern Congo to safeguard its security, pointing to a buildup of Congolese forces near the border. U.N. experts estimate there are up to 4,000 Rwandan forces in Congo.

A July truce brokered by the United States and Angola



M23 rebels stand with their weapons in Kibumba, in the eastern of Democratic Republic of Congo on Dec 23, 2022. (AP)

has reduced the fighting between Rwandan and Congolese forces, but fighting between M23 and other militias continues.

Other leaders at the summit were Presidents Salva Kiir of South Sudan, Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania, William Ruto of Kenya, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia. Burundi was represented by its vice president.

Ruto was elected as the new chairperson of the EAC Summit, succeeding Kiir.

## Subcontinent

**124 killed in Pakistan:** The death toll of sectarian violence in Kurram district of Pakistan's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province rose to 124, local administration said on Saturday.

An official from the local administration of the district said the death toll rose after 16 more people died in armed clashes during the last 24 hours, adding that over 170 others were also injured. Pakistan's Prime Minister is **Shebaz Sharif**.

The majority of the injured are admitted to different hospitals including those who are in critical condition, added the official. (Xinhua)

**India police kills 7 rebels:** Indian police said on Sunday that seven Maoist rebels were gunned down during an encounter with the police in the southern Indian state of Telangana.

The Press Trust of India said, quoting the police, that during a combing operation in the forest area of Eturnagaram in Mulugu district, a gun fight broke out between the elite anti-Maoist force of Telangana Police and the Maoists, killing seven rebels.

Maoist rebels are active in various Indian states including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar and Maharashtra. (KUNA)

## Senegal demands answers as W.African country commemorates French colonial massacre

THIAROYE-SUR-MER, Senegal, Dec 1, (AP): Biram Senghor regularly goes to pay his respects at a military cemetery in Thiaryoye, a fishing village near Senegal's capital Dakar, bowing in front of a different grave each time.

The 86-year-old has no way of knowing which grave belongs to his father, M'Bap Senghor, one of likely hundreds of West African riflemen who fought for France during World War II but were killed on Dec 1, 1944 by the French army after demanding unpaid wages.

In this cemetery where they are supposedly buried, all the graves are anonymous and the exact location of the remains is unknown, as is the number of victims. The true scale and circumstances of the killings remain unclear as Senegal commemorates the 80th anniversary of the massacre on Sunday, threatening to reignite smoldering tensions between France and the former colony.

"I have been fighting to get answers for over 80 years," says Biram Senghor. "(French President Emmanuel) Macron cannot do what the other French presidents before him did; France has to repent."

The West Africans were members of the unit called "Tirailleurs Sénégalais," a corps of colonial infantry in the French Army that fought in both World Wars. According to historians, there were disputes over unpaid wages in the days before the massacre



A student points at a poster marking the 80th anniversary of the Thiaryoye massacre in Thiaryoye, Senegal on Nov 28. (AP)

and on Dec. 1, French troops turned on the unarmed African soldiers and shot them dead.

For decades, French authorities tried to minimize what had happened in Thiaryoye. Reports by the French military shortly after the massacre determined that 35 West African soldiers were killed in response to a "mutiny." Other reports by the French army mention 70 deaths.

But today, many French and Senegalese historians agree the true death toll is likely in the hundreds, with some speaking of almost 400 soldiers killed, based on estimates of the num-

ber of riflemen present at the camp on the day of the massacre.

On Thursday, Macron officially recognized the events of Thiaryoye as a massacre for the first time in a letter to Senegal's President Diomaye Faye, which was seen by The Associated Press.

"France must recognize that on that day, the confrontation between soldiers and riflemen who demanded their full legitimate wages be paid, triggered a chain of events that resulted in a massacre," read Macron's letter.

But many historians dispute the

idea of a confrontation between the French soldiers and the riflemen.

"What happened on December 1st was the execution of unarmed soldiers," says Martin Mourre, a French historian and author of Thiaryoye 1944, History and Memory of a Colonial Massacre.

He points to the fact that no weapons were mentioned during the trial of the African riflemen accused of mutiny and the absence of any injuries among the French soldiers as evidence that no confrontation took place.

In his letter to the Senegalese president, Macron did not mention the number of soldiers killed.

The controversies and unknowns about the massacre are in part due to a lack of transparency by French authorities regarding the military reports and testimonies.

In 2014, French President Francois Hollande handed over the European nation's archives on Thiaryoye to Macky Sall, then-president of Senegal.

But historians say that key documents, including ones indicating the site of the mass graves and the number of West African soldiers present at the camp on the day of the massacre, are still missing. It is unclear if France holds such archives or if they even exist.

Macron's office and the French foreign ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Additionally, very little was done

## Asia

**116 refugees rescued:** Indonesian fishermen on Saturday rescued 116 Rohingya refugees, mostly hungry and weak women and children, after their rickety boat sank, officials said.

The group had sailed from the Cox Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh hoping to reach to Indonesia or Malaysia in search of a better life,

when it became stranded on an island in Indonesia's northern province of Aceh, said local police chief **Nova Suryandaru**.

"Residents helped them as they look very weak from hunger and dehydration," he said, adding however that many locals were opposed to their long-term stay. (AP)

**China slams US:** China, on Sunday, vehemently deplored and opposed the recent US approval of a USD 385 million arms sale to Taiwan, saying that it officially protested this move to the American side.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry mentioned that this breached "One China" principle, and the he three China-US joint communique, as it also violates China's sovereignty and security as well as international law. (KUNA)



	Change	Closing pts	Change	Closing pts
EGYPT	-	EGX 30	+0.84	30,497.13
SAUDI	-	TASI	+0.86	11,741.74

# Business

## Economic climate improves though geopolitical factors weigh on outlook

By National Bank of Kuwait

### Continuation

#### Inflation easing to a possible 24% by December

Inflation has so far met our expectations, continuing to trend lower and we think it is on track to end the year at 24% or below. It averaged 25.9% y/y in Q1 FY24/25, down from 29.4% in Q4 FY23/24 as the impact of the devaluation fades, and price dynamics now only reflecting subsidy cuts and regular economic activities.

Inflation's broadly downward trend occurred even as fuel and electricity prices were hiked during the summer (these two account for 4% of the CPI basket). For full year FY24/25, we expect inflation to end the year at 19% from 34% in FY23/24. We continue to wait for the central bank to amend the inflation target timeline to Q4 2025 from Q4 2024; a target of around 10% would be met based on current dynamics, in our view.

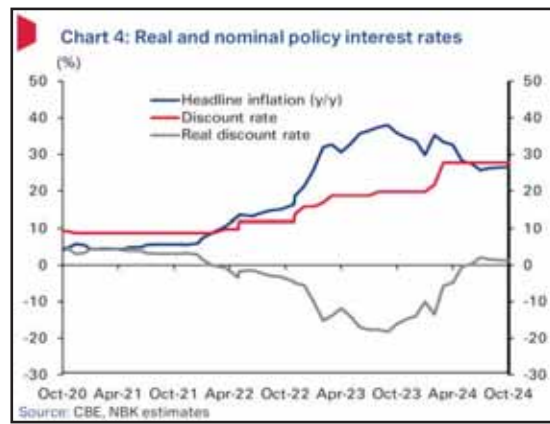
#### Countdown to interest rate cuts has started

The CBE kept policy rates unchanged in Q1 FY24/25 at 27.75% for the discount rate. (Chart 4.) However, we sense a change in tone that could signal monetary easing. In its latest statement, the CBE mentioned that inflation will remain at the current level (26%) until year-end before dropping significantly in Q1 CY25 helped by favorable base effects. This is in line with our own view.

With the fall in inflation, real policy interest rates turned positive in June and have remained so since. They are currently at 1.5%. We think there is a chance that rates could be cut by the MPC at its December meeting.

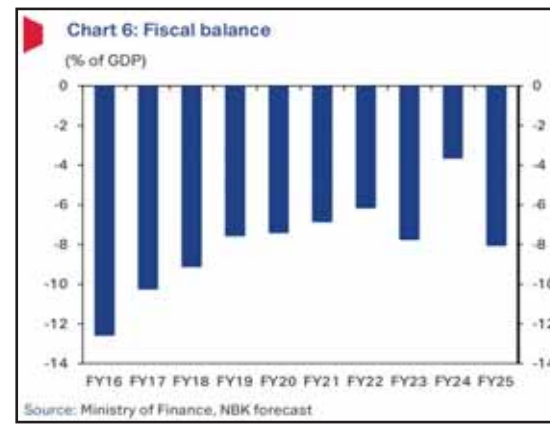
#### Credit continues to grow even as inflation cools

Bank credit to private businesses expanded by a robust 30% y/y in June-August (+29% in the previous



3 months). (Chart 5.) Similarly rapid was household credit growth that a largely unchanged 23.7% y/y over the same period. In inflation-adjusted terms, corporate credit was up 3.8% y/y (4.0% for April-June) and improving significantly from -14% for the period Dec 23-Feb 24. As for household credit, it also improved, to -2.5% from -7.2% for the previous period. This data, recorded several months after the March devaluation, better reflects the current, improving state of economic activity.

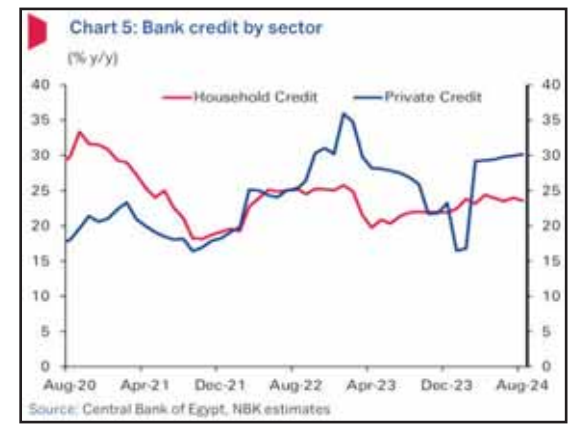
We continue to see strong nominal and real credit growth even as inflation cools down as a clear sign that businesses are starting to recover, which reiterates our view that interest rate cuts will further boost growth. This should also help in kick starting a new and potentially stronger capex cycle. We expect credit to grow by 25% in FY24/25 (year-end) in nominal terms, which, while lower than the 32% recorded in FY23/24, will at least be up 6% or more in real terms, compared to the



previous -2%.

Fiscal deficit normalized, but likely to widen this year. The final public finance accounts for FY23/24 revealed a deficit of EGP505 billion (3.6% of GDP), the lowest on record and well down on the previous fiscal year's EGP610 billion (7.7% of GDP). (Chart 6.) The primary balance (i.e. excluding debt interest) saw a huge improvement as well, posting a surplus of EGP857 billion (6.0% of GDP) on the realization of 50% of the fresh proceeds from the Ras El Hekma deal, totaling about \$12 billion.

Nevertheless, we expect the deficit to widen in the current fiscal year, to around 8.0% of GDP, which would be above the government's target of 7.3% but contained relative to previous years. Part of the underlying (ex Ras El Hekma) widening will be linked to loss of revenues, especially corporate taxes from Suez Canal operations. These account for around 33% of corporate tax revenues and 7.8% of total tax revenues but have declined by 50%



y/y due to the disruptions to Red Sea shipping. The negative impact on the public finances could be offset by lower interest rates if the CBE eases monetary policy in the months ahead. Interest payments accounted for 49% of all government expenditures in FY23/24. Lower interest rates could also indirectly boost corporate tax revenues if they help facilitate faster economic growth.

On the expenditures side, the government has rolled out key measures to reduce the subsidy bill, including raising petrol prices (these were up 10-15% in July and by similar amount again in October) and electricity prices (up by around 20-50% since September). The government, while cognizant of the need to contain the deficit, also wants to keep key public entities, such as the state petroleum company EGPC, in good financial health and is allocating EGP154 billion (likely to end up higher at around EGP210bn) in energy subsidies in each quarter in FY24/25 to that end. These extra subsidies could add EGP60 billion (0.6% to the fiscal deficit.

## Kuwait oil revenues up, market liquidity uneven

Al-Shall report highlights economic contrasts

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1:** In its latest weekly report, Al-Shall Consulting provided an analysis of Kuwait's fiscal and stock market performance up to November 2024, highlighting key insights into oil revenues and stock market liquidity, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

As of November 2024, the average price of Kuwaiti oil reached \$73.7 per barrel, exceeding the budget's hypothetical price of \$70 by 5.3 percent.

However, it remains 12.7 percent lower than the average price of \$84.4 achieved in the 2023/2024 fiscal year and \$16.1 below the breakeven price of \$89.8 set for the current fiscal year.

The oil revenues for November are estimated at 1.363 billion dinars, with projected total oil revenues for the fiscal year reaching 18.575 billion dinars, surpassing the budgeted estimate of 16.234 billion dinars.

Including non-oil revenues of 2.684 billion dinars, total revenues are expected to reach 21.260 billion dinars, resulting in a projected deficit of 3.295 billion dinars against expenditure appropriations of 24.555 billion dinars.

The report also analyzed liquidity trends in the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) over the first 11 months of 2024. Total liquidity amounted to 13.5 billion dinars (\$43.9 billion), with an average daily trading value of 59.8 million



Kuwait's skyline and fiscal prospects.

Al-Seyassah photo

dinars (\$194.5 million) -- a 41.7 percent increase compared to the same period in 2023.

Despite the overall positive performance, liquidity distribution remains uneven -- half of listed companies accounted for only 4.4 percent of total liquidity, including 50 companies with just 1.3 percent and one company with no trades.

A group of 12 smaller companies captured 22.4 percent of total liquidity, despite representing only 3.3 percent of the market's total value.

The November trading month reflected mixed trends -- the Premier Market Index increased by 1.2 percent, with this segment capturing 52.5 percent of liquidity for the month.

However, liquidity concentration remained high, as half of its companies accounted for 84.3 percent of its

trading volume.

The Main Market Index rose by 1.3 percent, receiving 47.5 percent of liquidity, though 20 percent of its companies dominated 78.8 percent of its trades, leaving the remaining 80 percent with a mere 21.2 percent share.

November's absolute stock market liquidity stood at 1.6 billion dinars (USD 5.2 billion), a 6.6 percent decrease from October's liquidity of 1.7 billion dinars (USD 5.5 billion).

Al-Shall's report underscores the challenges posed by uneven liquidity distribution within the KSE and a lower-than-expected average oil price for the fiscal year. Nonetheless, the projections show resilience in oil revenue generation, which, combined with non-oil revenues, mitigates the fiscal deficit to some extent.

### Dubai rises, Saudi and Kuwait fall

## GCC markets mixed as Nov ends

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1:** The financial market indices across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries showed mixed results during the last week of November, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Three indices recorded gains, while four declined, with losses being relatively more significant.

Dubai Financial Market Index: The biggest gainer of the week, rising by 2.62 percent, or 123.70 points, to close at 4,847.34 points, its highest level in 10 years.

Qatar Index: Saw a modest gain of 0.22 percent, or 23 points, to finish at 10,417.82 points.

Abu Dhabi Market Index: Closed with a slight increase of 0.03 percent, or 3.15 points, at 9,234.80 points.

Meanwhile, the Saudi market index was the biggest loser, falling by 1.68 percent, or 199.21 points, to close at

11,641.31 points.

The Kuwait Stock Exchange lost 1 percent, or 73.33 points, closing at 7,245.99 points, ending a four-week growth streak. The Omani market index and Bahrain market index followed with losses of 0.99 percent and 0.22 percent, respectively.

Oil prices faced a 3 percent loss due to geopolitical factors, including the truce between Lebanon and Israel, and tensions between Russia and Ukraine. Additionally, a new conflict between armed militias and the Syrian army added to the uncertainties.

On the other hand, the US financial markets gained momentum, buoyed by new appointments to President Trump's economic leadership team, which supported large weekly and monthly gains, particularly as the markets closed early due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

One of the key events influencing the markets was the Morgan Stanley review of Gulf stocks in its emerging markets indices.

The Amman Stock Exchange Index also experienced a 0.99 percent decline, marking its fifth consecutive week of losses, while the Bahrain market closed with a modest loss of 0.22 percent.

The performance of the Gulf financial markets in the final week of November was impacted by global events, oil price fluctuations, and the weight adjustments in the Morgan Stanley emerging market indices.

While Dubai showed strong growth, other markets, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, saw declines influenced by external factors and the stock review process. The Gulf market's overall performance remains mixed as the year draws to a close.

### Milestone in oil market stability

## OPEC marks 8th anniversary of Vienna agreement

**VIENNA, Dec 1, (KUNA):** The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries hailed on Saturday the contributions to the stability of the global oil market by the landmark Vienna Agreement reached at the 171st Meeting of the OPEC Conference on November 30, 2016.

Celebrating the eighth anniversary of the deal, the OPEC Secretariat said the historic agreement built on the landmark 'Algiers Accord,' which was endorsed at the 170th (Extraordinary) Meeting of the OPEC Conference on September 28, 2016, in Algiers, Algeria.

The Algiers Accord "paved the way for adopting the historic 'Declaration of Cooperation' (DoC) between OPEC Member Countries and several non-OPEC oil-producing nations in Vienna on December 10, 2016, to support oil market stability," reads a statement from the Secretariat.

"The Vienna Agreement constitutes a significant milestone in the history of the oil industry, as its adoption facilitated es-



OPEC headquarters in Vienna.

KUNA photo

ablishing a robust, multilateral platform for collaboration and dialogue with the objective to support stability in the global oil market - the Declaration of Cooperation," OPEC Secretary-General Haitham Al-Ghais said.

"Eight years later, these efforts continue to prove to be effective and valuable, as they have helped overcoming several market instabilities, including the downturn that resulted from the outbreak of COVID-19," Al-Ghais added.

Commitment to advancing digital transformation and supporting national SMEs

## Burgan Bank sponsors Nexus 2024, Kuwait's biggest technology and innovation event

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1:** Burgan Bank announced its participation in Kuwait's biggest technology and innovation event, Nexus 2024, as a platinum sponsor. The event is scheduled to take place on 5-7 December at The Arena Kuwait under the patronage of H.E. the Minister of State for Communication Affairs Omar Al-Omar, with an expected turnout of 30,000 visitors and 60 leading companies from diverse sectors. Burgan Bank's sponsorship is an extension of its efforts to share the latest developments in its digital transformation and innovation journey with the market's most impactful institutions, in addition to showcasing its digital initiatives' alignment with the Kuwait Vision 2035.

"We are very proud to sponsor an event as future-focused as Nexus, which aims to catalyze technological advancement in Kuwait through industry-wide



Fadel Abdullah

conversations and sharing of expertise," commented Mr. Fadel Mahmoud Abdullah, CEO of Burgan Bank - Kuwait. "For several years, digital transformation has been a primary pillar of our business success and institution-

al growth, and we believe that innovative tech solutions have the capacity to thrust our national economy forward, solidifying Kuwait's position among the leading countries in technology on the regional level."

This first-of-its-kind event in Kuwait offers its participants a comprehensive, multi-layer technology and innovation experience, including an exhibition space where leading domestic and regional companies will showcase their forward-looking tech solutions and products. Meanwhile, the startup hub will gather 100 emerging startups competing for six mega prizes that amount to KD 30,000 awarded to the most innovative and groundbreaking ideas, including the grand prize of KD 10,000. In addition, a number of tech talks and workshops will be delivered by industry gurus, covering a wide spectrum of timely topics about the future of sustainable

and inclusive technology, from artificial intelligence (AI) to the internet of things (IoT), cybersecurity, the role of women in the tech industry, fintech, gaming, and so much more.

As the Bank continues leveraging tech in the digital transformation era, Burgan will be delivering several workshops about the latest technology trends in banking, data protection, and the future of digital banking as part of its contribution to the success of Nexus.

Burgan Bank remains steadfast in its digital transformation journey, offering innovative digital solutions and products while investing in advanced cybersecurity technologies. Burgan Bank's earnest dedication to digital and technology transformation further echoes its commitment to adopting the highest standards of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards in banking.

## Kuwaiti borrowing costs drop amid high liquidity

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1:** Due to abundant liquidity and intense competition among banks, companies have seen a reduction in their borrowing costs. Some businesses are securing large loans at margins between 0.5 percent and 1 percent above the Central Bank's discount rate, with loan terms starting from 5 years and beyond, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The recent report highlights several developments in the financing and liquidity environment in Kuwait, showing a shift in market dynamics.

In the past, stable interest rates led to higher financing costs for companies. However, following recent rate cuts by the Central Bank, companies have increasingly sought new financing, and banks have been more willing to lend in order to make up for the reduced margins.

This situation benefits both banks and companies, as each party reaches a break-even point that balances the cost of money with the possibility of achieving a reasonable profit margin.

Liquidity levels are high in the market, with an influx of institutional funds, particularly through portfolios and funds. These large institutional amounts are contributing to the increased competition and liquidity in the financial market.

The 6-month term deposit rate is at 4.064 percent, while the 12-month term deposit rate is slightly higher at

4.214 percent, reflecting the ample liquidity in the system.

Interest rates on Kuwaiti dinar interbank deposits have fallen significantly, from 4.750 percent in January to 4.315 percent in October. This decline in interbank rates is indicative of the overall easing of borrowing costs across the financial system.

The current asking rate for interbank deposits stands at 4.065 percent, marking the lowest rate the market has seen in recent times.

The competitive financing costs and the decline in deposit returns are beneficial for companies and major borrowers.

They are also favorable for the financial market, which has been performing well due to improved results from many companies, the injection of new investments, and the influx of liquidity from major owners seeking to increase their ownership stakes or engage in new partnerships.

The liquidity that flows from demand accounts and savings accounts into the financial market is further fueling the market's growth, suggesting a positive environment for investments and financial activities.

Despite the increased flows into the financial market, there is no notable competition in the deposit market. Banks appear to have ample liquidity, and fluctuations between deposits and the financial market are seen as part of the natural market cycle.



AlOmar: Leveraging modern trends to boost competitive advantage

# KFH: Unprecedented Human Resources milestones achieved in 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Kuwait Finance House's (KFH) Human Resources and Transformation Department has successfully achieved its strategic goals and initiatives, contributing to various areas. The department has also supported other departments and encouraged employee career development by providing diverse training opportunities and fostering a positive work environment. This aligns with KFH's goals and strategy, which prioritizes employees as the most valuable asset, the cornerstone of success, and the primary driver of enhancing services and products.

KFH Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer, Zeyad Abdullah AlOmar said that in 2024, the focus was on enhancing employee efficiency and performance quality, increasing competitive advantage, fostering expertise and skills among KFH staff, and providing opportunities for distinguished employees to assume leadership positions and actively contribute to KFH's successful journey. This would strengthen KFH's leadership position as the largest bank in Kuwait by market capitalization and the world's second-largest Islamic bank.

**Largest merger transaction**  
AlOmar added that the Group Human Resources and Transformation Department played a significant role in the successful completion of the KFH-AUBK merger, the largest in Kuwaiti banking history. The department facilitated a smooth transition for (formerly) Ahli United Bank - Kuwait employees, integrating them into KFH's payroll system and unifying security across (formerly) AUBK's locations. A large, cross-functional team completed over 250 stages, including more than 2,000 tasks.

**Talent acquisition**  
AlOmar highlighted KFH's ongoing commitment to supporting national cadres, recruiting top talent, empowering women, and advancing its digital strategy. As a result of these efforts, Kuwaitization reached 84% and women's representation increased to 25% at KFH in 2024.

He expressed pride in KFH's 2,838 national employees, the largest number of Kuwaitis among local banks and in the private sector. He added that KFH's high performance in all HR indicators confirms its excellence in human capital management.

**Regional recognition**  
KFH was honored by the Council of Ministers of Labor and Social Affairs in GCC States for its outstanding performance in implementing manpower nationalization and qualification programs within the private sector in Kuwait. The recognition was bestowed during a special ceremony held in Doha, Qatar, under the patronage of the Ministers of Labor and Social Affairs in the GCC.

**Global awards**  
AlOmar said that KFH received 13 prestigious global awards in Human Resources for 2024 from the renowned Brandon Hall Group, a company specializing in evaluating and assessing the performance of institutions worldwide. He highlighted that this number of awards is the highest locally and regionally, indicating that KFH is adopting and keeping pace with the best international practices to develop and provide cutting-edge solutions for its employees.

**Happiness of employees**  
AlOmar explained that health insurance coverage benefits for employees and their families have been enhanced. Additionally, the KFH Happiness Team has organized various sports, social, and recreational activities for employees.

In recognition of its distinguished employees, KFH has honored 180 individuals so far in 2024 through its Qadha program, a globally recognized initiative by Brandon Hall. Furthermore, the Group's Human Resources and Transformation department prioritizes employee well-being, extending appreciation to the outstanding high school students of KFH employees. Additionally, the Arabic language initiative, now in its third year, has been organized for the children of employees, with approximately 140 participants.

**15,000 training hours**  
AlOmar explained that KFH remains committed to significantly investing in the professional development of its human capital. He added that KFH's efforts to develop talent stem from its belief in the importance of human resources as essential assets and the true driving force behind the bank's success, increased performance, and continued growth. In this regard, KFH has successfully provided over 115,000 training hours to approximately 4,000 employees.

**Leaders' programs**  
AlOmar noted that the dynamic business landscape necessitates a growing demand for inspiring, innovative, and efficient leaders. To meet this need, it's crucial to equip employees with a diverse range of personal and professional experiences, challenging opportunities, and skill-building initiatives. These opportunities will help refine leadership qualities and broaden horizons.

As part of KFH's leadership development initiative, 26 managers participated in the Building Leadership Excellence program this year. In partnership with Headspring, a joint venture between IE Business School and the Financial Times, this program aims to enhance the efficiency and performance of managers and executives within the



Zeyad AlOmar



Recognition of Excellence



13 awards



Recognition of a graduate of the Leadership Excellence Program in Madrid.



Zeyad AlOmar and Muhammad Al-Musallam with graduates of the Harvard Business Development Program.



Talent Development Organization Conference: Zeyad AlOmar speaking during the panel discussion.



Zeyad AlOmar, Najat Al-Yousef, and Abdullah Al-Khamis with trainees of the Fieldwork Program for the Workforce.



Honoring the distinguished at the Qadha ceremony.



Zeyad AlOmar, Baitak Team, and Sama Team honor the trainees of the Arabic My Language program.



Zeyad AlOmar, Baitak Team, and Sama Team honor the trainees of the Arabic My Language program.



Zeyad AlOmar and Muhammad Al-Musallam with participants of the Leadership Excellence Program.



Field trip for Forssah trainees.



Zeyad AlOmar and HR officials at Baitak with a group of Furssah business graduates.



Zeyad AlOmar and officials from the Institute of Banking Studies with Graduates of the New Kuwaiti Graduates Qualification Program.

**KFH Group.**

To solidify KFH's global leadership position, AlOmar emphasized the critical role of the Leadership Excellence Program in realizing the KFH Group's strategic vision of becoming one of the world's top 100 banks. This program is not a standalone initiative but a continuous journey towards leadership excellence.

**Forssah program**  
AlOmar said that KFH consistently supports its human capital and leverages all capabilities to develop them. He highlighted the Forssah program, comprising Forssah Tech and Forssah Business, as a crucial training initiative that adds value to both trainees and the bank. The program has successfully graduated 39 employees. "As part of its commitment to training and developing Kuwaiti human capital, KFH organized a business trip under the program, allowing trainee employees to visit major international companies. This trip aimed to expose them to the latest systems, work methodologies, and gain valuable experience," he added.

**Scholarships**  
AlOmar revealed that a remarkable 19 employees were accepted un-

der full sponsorship from KFH in the scholarship program. This is an exceptional number since the program's inception in 2014, during which dozens of employees seeking to complete their specialized and higher studies at Kuwait's top universities have been awarded scholarships.

**Harvard Business School**  
AlOmar stated that KFH celebrated the graduation of several executive leaders who had successfully completed the Harvard Business School program. This program was designed to support and develop leaders in the banking and financial sector under the Kaifa initiative launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait.

**National Leadership Institute (NLI)**  
A significant number of KFH employees participated in the Breaking Barriers conference, hosted by the National Leadership Institute. This event offered employees a valuable opportunity to network, learn, grow, and further their leadership development. The event featured international speakers from diverse sectors and industry experts.

**Digitization**  
AlOmar stated that KFH is continually striving to enhance its workforce's digital capabilities and deliver

specialized, high-quality programs through the KFH Digital Academy. Moreover, the bank is offering remote training programs focused on digital transformation. To streamline processes and efficiently address employee needs, the HR Help Desk platform has been developed. This platform organizes the process of receiving and fulfilling employee requests, with over 2,500 requests already processed.

**Sustainability**  
AlOmar emphasized KFH's substantial progress in promoting sustainability within its human resources. This is accomplished by fostering transparency, refining professional work policies, and aligning with ESG standards. These efforts aim to enhance employee culture and solidify work principles.

He explained that KFH remains committed to increasing women's representation in all departments. The bank also contributes to the market by providing exceptional banking and financing expertise from highly professional Kuwaiti women. These efforts not only add value to the national economy but also benefit Kuwaiti society.

KFH further demonstrated its commitment to social responsibility

and women's empowerment by signing agreements with the United Nations Entity for the Empowerment of Women as part of the UN Global Compact. To provide a comfortable work environment for employees, many locations have been renovated to align with the latest developments and international standards.

"As part of its efforts to advance diversity and inclusion in the workplace, KFH has effectively created various employment opportunities for individuals with special needs and successfully integrated them into the workforce," AlOmar said.

**Career fairs**  
AlOmar said that KFH participated in many career fairs in various colleges and universities with the aim of attracting national youth talents.

**Agreements**  
KFH signed several cooperation and partnership agreements with both public and private universities and academic institutions. These agreements aim to support and develop young national talent, attract top talent, enhance training and education programs, exchange information and expertise, and stimulate scientific research between the two parties.

**Workshops and lectures**  
In line with its commitment to

supporting students, education, and youth, KFH organized a series of lectures and workshops for university students, aimed at preparing them for the job market and guiding them in planning their career paths.

**Talent management**  
AlOmar emphasized that KFH continues its strategy of focus on attracting and developing talents and equipping leaders with exceptional capabilities to keep pace with the growth and prosperity of KFH Group through integrated training and development programs in cooperation with international universities and educational institutions such as Harvard Business School, INSEAD, IMD, and IE School for business administration.

He highlighted that Talent Development team at KFH is keen on continuing efforts to enhance the development trajectory and updating its strategy with the latest insights and expand knowledge of the bank's staff. KFH is proud to invest in its talents by allocating the largest budget to developing and training employees.

**Social responsibility**  
In collaboration with Kuwait Society for the Handicapped, KFH launched its fourth edition of a tailored training program designed for students with special needs to develop their skills and enhance their expertise.

Additionally, a podcast was produced, and workshops, seminars, and sessions were organized at universities and colleges to offer career guidance and advice to students.

KFH also signed a collaboration and partnership agreement with Kuwait Technical College (K-Tech). The agreement is part of KFH's commitment to support education, youth, and society.

Additionally, KFH signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC), a center affiliated to Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). The center is dedicated to facilitating the integration of creativity, technology and innovation. This MoU is the first of its kind in the banking sector, demonstrating KFH's commitment to supporting social development through innovation and creativity.

**KFH PR Academy**  
AlOmar said that KFH successfully concluded its inaugural PR Academy program. Designed to educate undergraduate students and recent graduates, the program focused on the foundational principles of public relations and media, as well as their practical application within KFH departments. This initiative aligns with KFH's commitment to training and developing young people's skills.

**KFH Real Estate Evaluation Program**

He noted the launch of KFH's Real Estate Evaluation Program, a first-of-its-kind initiative in Kuwait, in cooperation with GUST. The program is open to all those working or interested in the real estate sector in Kuwait, providing specialized training on the latest technical and professional methods of real estate appraisal.

**Internship program**  
As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting initiatives that develop national talent and enhance the capabilities of Kuwaiti youth, KFH completed its annual internship program with the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM). This program underscores KFH's dedication to nurturing Kuwaiti talent, both among young graduates and experienced professionals.

- Milestones in numbers**
- 84% Kuwaitization ratio
  - More than 15,000 training hours for approximately 4000 employees
  - Graduation of 26 KFH Group Leaders
  - 19 employees joined KFH scholarships program
  - 13 prestigious group-level awards from Brandon Hall
  - 39 employees graduated from 2024 Forssah program



# NBK leading the way, redefining banking experiences to consistently exceed customer expectations

In 2024, the bank persistently introduced innovative services and products while enhancing its existing offerings

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: In 2024, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) maintained its pioneering position by delivering an unparalleled banking experience tailored to its customers' evolving needs. Through continuous innovation of new services and enhancements to existing products, the Bank consistently exceeded expectations, reaffirming its role as a leader in redefining banking excellence.

**Mr. Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO, Consumer and Digital Banking Group at NBK, stated:**

"The latest figures and indicators reaffirm NBK's leadership in surpassing local peers and setting benchmarks in delivering world-class digital banking products and services. As we advance our digital transformation strategy, we remain committed to adapting to the evolving needs of our customers, ensuring a comprehensive and seamless banking experience that aligns with their aspirations and diverse lifestyles."

"Remaining at the forefront and consistently launching pioneering products and services, the first of their kind in Kuwait, is not just a goal but a steadfast approach for us. This vision drives NBK's personal and digital banking teams to work tirelessly in maintaining the bank's leadership position. Our significant lead over competitors is not a reason for complacency but a challenge to continually surpass our own achievements, setting higher benchmarks and widening the gap with the competition. By thinking outside the box, we aim to address our customers' needs and deliver beyond their expectations, ensuring a banking experience that remains unmatched," Al-Othman emphasized.

He further highlighted that NBK consistently maintains a strong customer satisfaction rate of 93% for its services and products. He emphasized the bank's leadership in digital innovation, underscoring its commitment to offering a carefully curated suite of digital services and products designed to meet the evolving needs of its customers, reaffirming NBK's position at the forefront of financial institutions in Kuwait.

Al-Othman highlighted the notable increase in demand for NBK's Mobile Banking Service, and explained that the turnout for Weyay Bank, Kuwait's first digital bank, surpassed expectations by four times the target prior to its launch in 2021. This highlights the significant customer interest and demand for fully digital banking services, reinforcing Weyay Bank's pivotal role in shaping the future of banking in Kuwait.

Al-Othman emphasized that NBK's continuous path of development and innovation is integral to strengthening its leadership both locally and regionally. This commitment is driven by the bank's dedication to delivering innovative financial solutions and exceptional experiences tailored to meet the diverse needs of its customers. He also highlighted the importance of seamlessly integrating digital services and products with the offerings available through traditional branches, ensuring that NBK provides its customers with an unparalleled banking experience across all channels.

He explained that the bank's achievements serve as a testament to its unwavering commitment to not only meeting but exceeding customer expectations. By integrating cutting-edge technology with a profound understanding of its customers' needs, NBK has reinforced its market leadership and set new benchmarks for innovation and excellence in consumer banking. Looking forward, the bank remains dedicated to delivering unparalleled value and continuing its journey of enhancing customer experiences.

He added that Consumer Banking Group continues to make substantial investments in technology, talent development, and customer-centric strategies to sustain its momentum and deliver lasting value for both customers and shareholders.

## NBK Mobile Banking App Enhances Users' Experience With Over 90 New Features

Since the fourth quarter of last year, NBK has significantly enhanced NBK Mobile Banking App by adding and improving more than 90 features. These enhancements aim to deliver a more efficient and seamless digital banking experience for customers.

These updates include, among other improvements, the integration of the Civil ID renewal process through the Public Authority for Civil Information. The app has also streamlined the electronic Know Your Customer (eKYC) form, now excluding the need for users to input their parents' or children's names to complete the update. Additionally, customers can now easily view their relationship manager's name and contact details, schedule appointments, and



Mohammed Al-Othman receives the award for the most innovative bank in the world from Global Finance magazine.



## Key Figures and Performance Indicators for NBK in 2024:

- NBK achieved a remarkable 93% customer satisfaction rate, reflecting the Bank's consistent commitment to delivering exceptional services and products
- The customer turnout rate for Weyay Bank exceeded projections by an impressive fourfold before its official launch, highlighting its strong appeal among the target audience

benefit from the enhanced 3D secure payment service—providing an extra layer of protection against fraud when using their bank cards for transactions.

The enhanced features on the NBK Mobile Banking App now allow users to access transfer receipts immediately after completing transfers—whether between private accounts or for local and international transfers—available 24/7. Additionally, the app has improved the user experience by enabling easier access to key transaction features directly from the main page. These include quick payment, bill splitting, loading accounts, quick send, and the ability to add a beneficiary's International Bank Account Number (IBAN) and phone number for streamlined transactions.

NBK customers now have the ability to pay for their purchases in installments of up to 12 months through the NBK Mobile Banking App, along with the added flexibility of using NBK FlexiPay. Additionally, customers can open NBK Flexi Deposit accounts and choose from a range of interest payment options—whether in advance, monthly, quarterly, or annually—offering more convenience and control over their financial planning.

## Pioneering the Launch of "WAMD" Services

NBK was among the pioneering banks in Kuwait to launch the "WAMD" service in collaboration with the automated banking company "Knet," under the supervision of the Central Bank of Kuwait. This service, available through the NBK Mobile Banking App, enables seamless, easy, and convenient money transfers using only the recipient's mobile number, eliminating the need for additional banking details.

## NBK Unveils New Branch Concept Aligned with International Standards

As part of its commitment to providing customer-centric services, NBK expanded its presence by opening its 72nd branch in Kuwait,

located in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City in 2024. This move aims to further strengthen NBK's position as the leader in Kuwait's banking sector with the largest network of branches.

In line with global banking trends, NBK has transformed the concept of its branches, incorporating modern design and cutting-edge technology. The new Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City branch reflects these changes, offering interactive services and advanced banking solutions that align with international standards, ensuring a more efficient and seamless banking experience for customers.

## Introducing Fully Digital Prepaid Cards

In its continued commitment to innovation, NBK has launched fully digital prepaid cards, setting a new benchmark in the Kuwaiti market. These include the NBK Visa Signature Prepaid Card, in collaboration with Qatar Airways and British Airways, marking the first of its kind in the MENA region. Furthermore, the new 247 Cashback Visa Platinum Prepaid Card offers customers up to 24% cashback on their daily purchases.

NBK has also launched the revamped UEFA Champions League Platinum MasterCard, the first of its kind in Kuwait to implement the Double Profit concept. This card offers exclusive benefits and rewards for its holders.

Available to the entire family, starting from the age of 7, it stands as the first prepaid cashback card of its kind in Kuwait, allowing both parents and their children to benefit from its unique features.

## Exclusive Offers and Exceptional Discounts

In 2024, NBK continued to provide exclusive offers and exceptional discounts to its diverse customer base, partnering with leading companies across various sectors.

A key collaboration was with Safat Home, a subsidiary of Alghanim Industries. This part-

nership saw Safat Home joining NBK's "NBK Rewards Program," enabling NBK customers to earn 5% in NBK Rewards Points on all purchases made at Safat Home when using any NBK credit or prepaid cards.

NBK has also entered into an exclusive partnership with X-cite Electronics, offering NBK Visa Infinite Credit Cardholders a variety of benefits. This collaboration enables customers to earn 10% in NBK KWT Points when using their card for purchases at X-cite Electronics' physical stores, online platform, or mobile App. In addition, cardholders enjoy an instant 2% discount on select products.

## Raising Al Jawhara Prizes to KD 5 million Annually

Since the beginning of 2024, NBK has enhanced the offerings of Al-Jawhara Account by increasing its total prize pool to KD 5 million annually. This includes a grand prize of KD 1 million, awarded three times a year. Additionally, there are weekly prizes of KD 20,000 and monthly prizes of KD 125,000.

In a bid to engage younger customers, NBK has introduced special Al-Jawhara draws for customers under 21. The monthly draw for this category includes seven winners, with KD 1,000 awarded to three winners and KD 500 to four other lucky individuals. Furthermore, one winner is awarded KD 10,000 in each grand prize draw. Customers under 21 are eligible to participate in both the regular Al-Jawhara draws and the new Al-Jawhara Junior draws.

This year, NBK launched Al-Jawhara Savings Account, offering customers an added benefit of up to 1.5% interest for the first year. Customers who maintain a balance of KD 5,000 or more are also eligible for monthly draws as well as the grand prize draw.

## Global, Regional and Local Recognition

In recognition of NBK's exceptional achievements in innovation, digital transformation, and its commitment to providing top-tier banking solutions that align with evolving customer needs and the rapid pace of technological advances, the bank has been honored with several prestigious awards. Notably, it received the 2024 Global Finance award for the Best in Innovation Global Winner, in both conventional and Islamic banking categories. Additionally, NBK was recognized as the Best in Innovation in the Middle East and Kuwait, alongside winning awards for Best Bank Online Product Offering at the regional and local levels.

These accolades highlight the bank's leadership in revolutionizing banking experiences and its continuous efforts to stay ahead in the fast-changing financial sector.

NBK was also honored with several key awards from Global Finance, reinforcing its dominance in the local market. These accolades included the Best Bill Payment and Presentment, the Best Mobile Banking App, and the Best in Lending.

NBK's outstanding achievements in 2024 were further recognized with a series of prestigious awards from MEED magazine at the MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2024. The bank was honored with the Best Retail Bank in Kuwait award, in addition to naming Mohammed Al-Othman the best Retail Banker in the MENA region for the third consecutive year.

Furthermore, NBK was celebrated for its leadership in digital payments, receiving the "Market Leader in Digital Payment Acceptance" award from MasterCard during the MasterCard EDGE Forum 2024 in Dubai.

## Weyay Stays Ahead in Driving Digital Banking Innovation in Kuwait

In 2024, Weyay Bank reinforced its commitment to digital banking excellence by launching a series of innovative products and services. Among the highlights was the introduction of the first digital prepaid card tailored specifically for student customers. This card offers exclusive SELECT membership benefits, cashback offers, and immediate discounts with top brands and popular delivery apps in Kuwait. Additionally, Weyay introduced an exclusive cashback campaign for Student Allowance customers.

The bank also enhanced the Jeel card, a groundbreaking product designed for children aged 8 to 14. This card incorporates innovative features such as "Quick Pay Request" and "Request Payment via Link" services, allowing young customers and their families to experience a seamless and secure way of managing money while fostering digital financial independence.

In 2024, Weyay Bank expanded its range of



Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO, Consumer and Digital Banking Group at NBK

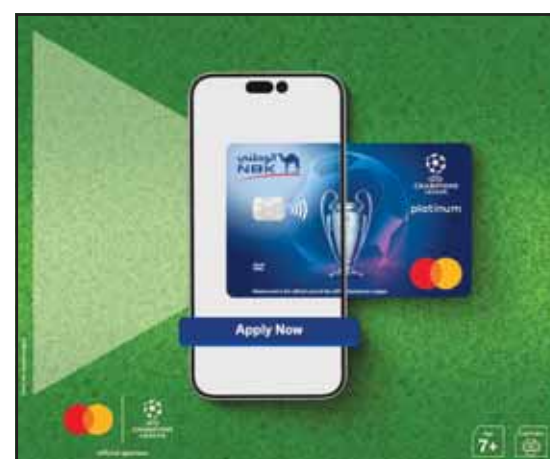
## Al-Othman:

- For NBK, maintaining leadership is not a choice but a mindset, driving us to continuously push boundaries in banking excellence
- The Bank is spearheading a transformation in redefining quality banking standards in Kuwait
- NBK's unmatched position in personal and digital banking inspires us to constantly outdo ourselves, setting new records and raising the bar
- We consistently think beyond conventional solutions, striving to fulfill our customers' needs and surpass their aspirations
- Our journey of innovation and development remains relentless, ensuring NBK's enduring leadership on both local and regional fronts
- With strategic investments in cutting-edge technology and a deep commitment to understanding customer needs, we have elevated our standards of innovation and excellence
- NBK continues to prioritize technology, talent development, and customer-focused strategies, strengthening its competitive edge
- Our 2024 accomplishments underscore our unwavering dedication to exceeding expectations and setting benchmarks for the industry

innovative products by launching a new multi-currency prepaid card, designed to provide customers with a seamless experience for both travel purchases and online transactions in various currencies.

In an effort to promote a culture of savings among all societal segments, particularly the youth, Weyay introduced the saving pot "Pro". This product offers an attractive annual interest rate of up to 1%, helping customers boost their savings with a simple, user-friendly platform.

Recognizing these efforts, Weyay Bank earned several prestigious accolades in 2024. The bank was named the Best Digital Bank in Kuwait by MEED Magazine and received the Best Digital Bank in Information Security and Fraud Management in Kuwait award by Global Finance. Furthermore, Weyay's commitment to innovation was acknowledged with the "Most Innovative App for Young People" award at the Global Finance's Innovators Awards 2024.





US Consumer Confidence rises to 111.7, highest in sixteen months

Global inflation data ahead of year end central bank decisions

By National Bank of Kuwait  
United States & Canada

CB Consumer Confidence

In November 2024, the Consumer Confidence Index rose to 111.7, its highest level in 16 months, driven by improved perceptions of the labor market, lower inflation expectations, and renewed optimism about future economic conditions. The Present Situation Index increased to 140.9, reflecting a strong current outlook, while the Expectations Index climbed to 92.3, signaling a brighter short-term forecast. This uptick suggests consumers may boost spending, though actual economic impact will depend on whether optimism translates into action.

FOMC Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the Federal Reserve's November 6-7 meeting revealed optimism about easing inflation and a resilient labor market, supporting the potential for gradual interest rate cuts. Officials emphasized that future decisions depend on economic trends and warned against premature rate reductions. They noted challenges in policymaking due to data volatility and uncertainty about the neutral interest rate's effects. While some participants favored maintaining restrictive rates if inflation persisted, others suggested faster cuts if labor market conditions weakened. The meeting avoided discussing the economic impact of Donald Trump's election victory but stressed the importance of flexibility in policy.

Core PCE price index unchanged

Inflation in the US ticked up in Oc-

tober, with the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index rising 0.2% for the month and 2.3% annually, in line with forecasts but higher than September's 2.1%. Core inflation, excluding food and energy, showed stronger increases of 0.3% monthly and 2.8% annually. Services prices drove most of the inflation, rising 0.4%, while goods fell 0.1%. Food prices were stable, and energy prices dipped 0.1%. The Federal Reserve, which targets 2% inflation, has been combating elevated inflation since March 2021, peaking at 7.2% in mid-2022. Despite progress, inflation remains a challenge for households and a political issue. Traders anticipate a potential rate cut in December, with a 66% chance of a 25 bps reduction as of Friday.

The US Dollar index closed the week at 105.74.

Canada Gross Domestic Product

Canada's economy grew 1.0% annualized in Q3 2024, matching forecasts but slowing from 2.1% in Q2. Growth was driven by higher household and government spending, though inventory accumulation slowed. GDP rose 0.1% in September, with a similar gain estimated for October. The data highlights a cooling economy, fueling expectations for a potential Bank of Canada rate cut in December.

The USD/CAD currency pair closed the week at 1.4002.

Eurozone

Germany's Ifo Business Climate indicator fell to 85.7 in November 2024,

- US Consumer confidence rises to 111.7, highest in sixteen months
- US PCE index y/y at 2.3%, core PCE y/y at 2.8%
- Euro Area inflation rose to 2.3% up from 2.0% previously
- Reserve Bank of New Zealand cuts interest rates by 50 bps
- Inflation in Australia unchanged in October at 2.1% y/y
- Tokyo core inflation rises 2.2% y/y
- Canada's GDP grew 1.0% annualized in Q3 of 2024, rising 0.1% on a monthly basis

down from 86.5 in October and below expectations of 86.1. The decline is attributed to political instability following the government's collapse and concerns about potential tariffs from the incoming Trump administration. The sub-index for current conditions dropped to 84.3, while business expectations slightly decreased to 87.2. Ifo president Clemens Fuest noted that the German economy is showing weakness, with companies increasingly cautious about the future. In manufacturing, sentiment worsened, though companies were marginally more satisfied with the present situation. The services sector saw a sharp decline in the business climate index, reflecting a more negative view of the current situation and outlook. In contrast, the retail sector showed some improvement, though overall optimism remains low.

Euro Area Annual Inflation

Euro area annual inflation rose to 2.3%, up from 2.0% in October. This increase was driven by a smaller decline in energy prices (-1.9%, compared to -4.6% in October) and steady

inflation in services (3.9%) and food, alcohol, & tobacco (2.7%). Non-energy industrial goods inflation also edged up to 0.7%. These trends highlight persistent inflationary pressures despite energy deflation, raising concerns for the European Central Bank's policy approach. Meanwhile, markets are expecting an 82% probability of a rate cut in the next ECB Meeting.

The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.0575.

Asia-Pacific

Reserve Bank of New Zealand Cuts Interest Rates

New Zealand's central bank cut its cash rate by 50 basis points to 4.25% on Wednesday, marking the third reduction in four months, as inflation neared the bank's target. Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ) Governor Adrian Orr indicated that further easing is likely. Orr emphasized that even with the latest reduction, monetary policy remains restrictive due to significant spare capacity in the economy. The RBNZ aims to

reach a neutral rate—estimated at 2.5% to 3.5%—by the end of 2025. While markets broadly anticipate at least a 25-basis-point cut in February, the central bank's forward guidance suggests more substantial easing may be needed.

The NZD/USD currency pair closed the week at 0.5915.

Inflation in Australia Unchanged in October

Australia's Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 2.1% year-on-year in October 2024, unchanged from September but below the 2.3% forecast. This marks the lowest reading since July 2021 and the third consecutive month within the Reserve Bank of Australia's target range of 2-3%, aided by the Energy Bill Relief Fund rebate. Electricity prices recorded a record drop (-35.6% vs -24.1% in September), and automotive fuel prices continued to decline (-11.5% vs -14.0%). However, prices for food (3.3%), alcohol and tobacco (6.0%), health (3.9%), education (6.3%), and recreation & culture (4.3%) remained elevated. Excluding volatile items and travel, core CPI rose by 2.4%, down from 2.7% in September,

marking the slowest growth since November 2021.

The AUD/USD currency pair closed the week at 0.6510.

Tokyo Core Inflation y/y

Tokyo's core consumer price index (CPI), excluding fresh food, rose by 2.2% year-on-year, surpassing expectations and remaining above the Bank of Japan's (BOJ) 2% target. This uptick was driven by increased prices in both food and services, partly due to the phase-out of utility subsidies and rising service-sector costs, indicating potential wage-driven inflation. Consequently, market speculation has intensified regarding a possible BOJ interest rate hike in December, with traders now assigning a 56% probability to such a move. The yen strengthened against the U.S. dollar, reflecting these expectations.

The USD/JPY currency pair closed the week at 149.75.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30755. Rates - 1st December 2024

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0426	1.0424	1.0597	1.0575	1.0510	1.0675	1.0620
GBP	1.2537	1.2503	1.2749	1.2737	1.2640	1.2830	1.2735
JPY	154.29	149.46	154.72	149.75	148.85	152.20	148.08
CHF	0.8921	0.8793	0.8927	0.8809	0.8745	0.8880	0.8719

US economy grows at 2.8% pace in 3rd quarter on consumer spending

Figure unchanged from first estimate

WASHINGTON, Dec 1, (AP): The American economy expanded at a healthy 2.8% annual pace from July through September on strong consumer spending and a surge in exports, the government said Wednesday, leaving unchanged its initial estimate of third-quarter growth.

U.S. gross domestic product - the economy's output of goods and services - slowed from the April-July rate of 3%, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday.

But the GDP report still showed that the American economy - the world's largest - is proving surprisingly durable. Growth has topped 2% for eight of the last nine quarters.

Within the GDP data, a category that measures the economy's underlying strength rose at a solid 3.2% annual rate from July through September, up from 2.7% in the April-June quarter. This category includes consumer spending and private investment but excludes volatile items like exports, inventories and government spending.



In this image taken with a drone, Jason Kwapi operates a combine, at left, during soybean harvesting on the Voss farm near Palo, Iowa, Oct. 2, 2024. (AP)

Still, American voters - exasperated by high prices - were unimpressed by the steady growth and chose this month to return Donald Trump to the White House to overhaul the nation's economic policies. He will be supported by Republican majorities in the House and Senate.

Consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of U.S. economic activity, accelerated to a 3.5% annual pace last quarter, up from 2.8% in the April-June period and fastest growth since

the fourth quarter of 2023. Exports also contributed to the third quarter's growth, increasing at a 7.5% rate, most in two years. Still, the third-quarter growth in both consumer spending and exports was lower than the Commerce Department initially estimated.

But growth in business investment slowed sharply on a drop in investment in housing and in nonresidential buildings such as offices and warehouses. By contrast, spending on equipment surged.

When he takes office next month,

President-elect Trump will inherit an economy that looks broadly healthy.

Growth is steady. Unemployment is low at 4.1%. Inflation, which hit a four-decade high 9.1% in June 2022, has fallen to 2.6%. That is still above the Federal Reserve's 2% target, but the central bank felt satisfied enough with the progress against inflation to cut its benchmark interest rate in September and again this month. Most Wall Street traders expect the Fed to cut rates again in December.

US market alone went up 8%

Salesforce says 33.6 bln USD spent online globally on Thanksgiving Day

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec 1, (Xinhua): The Thanksgiving Day on Thursday generated 33.6 billion U.S. dollars in sales online globally, an increase of 6 percent from a year ago, Salesforce said Friday, adding the U.S. market alone went up 8 percent to 8.1 billion dollars, and Europe was also a stand-out with a growth of 10 percent.

Thanksgiving weekend has long been seen as the traditional start of the most important sales period for retailers. This indicates a strong holiday season for e-commerce, the San Francisco-based leading customer relationship management platform said.

Salesforce said its 2024 figures are based on shopping data from 1.5 billion consumers captured across its customers and other data feeds in its

Commerce Cloud, Marketing Cloud, and Service Cloud.

Last year saw a sluggish Thanksgiving when it came to online shopping. Salesforce said the full day raked in online sales of 31.7 billion dollars, with the U.S. seeing sales of 7.5 billion dollars in 2023. Each was up only 1 percent from a year earlier. Adobe's figures last year showed growth of 5.5 percent.

Salesforce said 72 percent of all orders made on Thursday were on mobile devices, up 3 percent on 2023. Mobile accounted 80 percent of all online traffic, roughly the same as last year.

The company counted Tuesday of this week as the start of Cyber Week, and it said that sales were up 7 percent and 14 percent globally and in the United States, respectively.

Wall Street macro traders head for worst year since pandemic: reports

NEW YORK, Dec 1, (Xinhua): The world's banks are on track to report the lowest revenue from foreign-exchange and rates trading since the COVID-19 pandemic, hit by tighter margins and a challenging macro-economic backdrop, according to Bloomberg News.

"Over 250 firms including Goldman Sachs Group Inc., JPMorgan Chase & Co., Citigroup Inc. and Morgan Stanley are forecast to make a total of 32 billion U.S. dollars from trading of Group-of-10 rates and 16.7 billion dol-

lars from currencies, according to data collected by Coalition Greenwich. That's about 17 percent and 9 percent less than last year, respectively," said the report on Thursday.

Investor confidence in making big macro calls dwindled this year as economic data surprises whiplashed bets on interest-rate cuts from the world's major central banks. A seemingly too-close-to-call U.S. presidential election and the unwind of once-popular yen-funded carry trades also rattled markets, according to the report.

Inflation rose to 2.3% in Europe but that won't stop the central bank from cutting interest rates

FRANKFURT, Germany, Dec 1, (AP): Inflation in the 20 countries that use the euro currency rose in November - but that likely won't stop the European Central Bank from cutting interest rates as the prospect of new U.S. tariffs from the incoming Trump administration adds to the gloom over weak growth.

The European Union's harmonized index of consumer prices stood up 2.3% in the year to November, up from 2.0% in October, the EU statistics agency Eurostat reported Friday.

Energy prices fell 1.9% from a year ago, but that was offset by price increases of 3.9% in the services sector, a broad category including haircuts, medical treatment, hotels and restaurants, and sports and entertainment.

Inflation has come down a long way from the peak of 10.6% in October 2022 as the ECB quickly

raised rates to cool off price rises. It then started cutting them in June as worries about growth came into sharper focus.

High central bank benchmark rates combat inflation by influencing borrowing costs throughout the economy. Higher rates make buying things on credit - whether a car, a house or a new factory - more expensive and thus reduce demand for goods and take pressure off prices. However, higher rates can also dampen growth.

Growth worries got new emphasis after surveys of purchasing managers compiled by S&P Global showed the eurozone economy was contracting in October. On top of that come concerns about how U.S. trade policy under incoming President Donald Trump, including possible new tariffs, or import taxes on imported goods, might affect Europe's export-dependent economy. Trump takes office Jan. 20.

The eurozone's economic output is expected to grow 0.8% for all of this year and 1.3% next year, according to the European Commission's most recent forecast.

All that has meant the discussion about the Dec. 12 ECB meeting has focused not on whether the Frankfurt-based bank's rate council will cut rates, but by how much. Market discussion has included the possibility of a larger than usual half-point cut in the benchmark rate, currently 3.25%.

Inflation in Germany, the eurozone's largest economy, held steady at 2.4%. That "will strengthen opposition against a 50 basis point cut," said Carsten Brzeski, global chief of macro at ING bank, using financial jargon for a half-percentage-point cut.

The ECB sets interest rate policy for the European Union member countries that have joined the euro currency.

Together, we have showcased the power of strategic alliances' WIC28 in Riyadh concludes with calls for int'l collaboration, innovation, and sustainability

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Dec 1: International collaboration, innovation and sustainability were the key themes of the 28th World Investment Conference (WIC28), hosted by Invest Saudi and the World Association of International Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) that concluded in Riyadh this week.

Commenting on the success of the event, H.E. Khalid A. Al-Falih, Saudi Minister of Investment said, "This event was held under the auspicious patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to whom we extend our deepest gratitude for his visionary leadership and unwavering support.

"Over the past three days, we discussed the critical challenges facing global investment and reviewed the boundless opportunities that investment offers. From the robust discussions on harnessing digital transformation and sustainable growth to the landmark agreements announced under Saudi Arabia's Global Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, WIC28 has reaffirmed our collective commitment to shaping a future defined by collaboration, innovation, and resilience.

"Guided by the principles of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has emerged as a global economic growth leader, fostering partnerships that transcend borders and sectors. Together, we have showcased the power of strategic alliances, localized value chains, and cutting-edge technologies to drive meaningful economic impact.

"I extend my thanks to the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies for partnering with us in hosting this event and I am confident that the insights, connections, and agreements forged here will resonate far beyond this event, inspiring transformative investments and sustainable growth across the globe."

Across three days, WIC28, under the theme of "Harnessing Digi-



A photo from the event.

tal Transformation and Sustainable Growth", addressed challenges and opportunities that included digital transformation, sustainability, and localized value chains. The conference highlighted Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 as a transformative framework for aligning global partnerships, technological innovation, and sustainable development.

H.E. Bandar Ibrahim Alkhorayef, Saudi Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, speaking on the 'Strategic Alliances: Leveraging Partnerships for Investment Success' panel on Day 3 underscored the Kingdom's commitment to fostering global partnerships, stating: "It has been part of how we design most of the activities that we plan and are executing today."

He told his panel: "The question about international collaboration is not whether to do it but how to do it, and where to find the right attractive concepts that make it interesting for different parties to collaborate and connect."

Saudi Arabia's incentives, he noted, include its advanced infrastructure - both digital and physical

- focused on manufacturing, supply chain, and logistics, which enable investors to reduce costs significantly. "And we have approved three economic zones, offering additional benefits for those targeting not only the local market but also the global market," he added.

Other sessions at the event included the 'Bridging Borders' discussion, which focused on transparent collaboration and regulatory cohesion, while 'To Finish First, First You Have to Finish' examined operational excellence in Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs), emphasizing governance, efficiency, and leveraging technology to enhance investor experiences. Meanwhile, 'Ready, Set, Go' delved into Saudi Arabia's efforts to attract investments in specialized industries, particularly advanced manufacturing and renewable energy, by showcasing the Kingdom's competitive advantages.

The event was held 25-27 November in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It is yet to be decided where the next edition will be held.

GCC-China Free Trade Agreement nears finalization

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: The Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jassim Al-Budaiwi, announced that negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) between the GCC countries and China are in their final stage.

Speaking to reporters in Kuwait, Al-Budaiwi expressed optimism that the agreement could be finalized by December or shortly thereafter.

The proposed FTA is expected to bolster trade and investment relations between the GCC countries and China, a major global economic power.

Al-Budaiwi described the rela-

tionship between the two as 'excellent,' emphasizing ongoing coordination on numerous issues. He stated that the FTA would enhance market access, benefiting all parties involved and fostering greater economic integration.

The announcement follows the 2022 summit in Riyadh, where GCC leaders met with Chinese President Xi Jinping to discuss advancing economic and strategic partnerships.

The FTA is seen as a continuation of efforts to deepen cooperation between the GCC and China, reflecting their shared vision for mutual growth and prosperity.

The FTA is expected to open new markets for GCC exports, particularly in energy, petrochemicals, and manufactured goods; enhance China's access to GCC markets for its technology, machinery, and consumer goods and facilitate investments and joint ventures, leveraging the GCC's strategic location as a gateway between Asia, Europe, and Africa.

The GCC-China Free Trade Agreement represents a significant milestone in the evolving relationship between the Gulf states and China, marking a step toward enhanced economic cooperation and mutual benefit in a rapidly changing global landscape.



'This music is the soundtrack to our lives'

## Yacht rock gets celebrated – smoothly – in new docu

NEW YORK, Dec 1, (AP): The stress of Thanksgiving is over. Now it's time to heat up leftovers, relax on the couch and enjoy the smooth sounds of a wrongly mocked music genre: yacht rock.

The late-'70s songs of Steely Dan, Michael McDonald and Christopher Cross take center stage Friday in the well-crafted Max documentary "Music Box: Yacht Rock: A DOCKumentary."

Director Garret Price marries interviews with yacht rock artists, current musicians who are fans and the creators of the parody web series who coined the genre's name in 2005.

"This music is the soundtrack to our lives, whether we want it or not. It's playing in grocery stores, pharmacies, doctor's offices, elevators, our parents' cars our whole life," says Price. "I kind of took it for granted because it's just there. I think a lot of people have abandoned this music and I'm hoping those people rediscover it."

So who exactly made yacht rock? The experts in the film argue it is Toto, McDonald, Kenny Loggins, the Doobie Brothers, Cross and Steely Dan - described as "the primordial ooze from which yacht rock sprang." Think songs like "Ride Like the Wind" by Cross, "Reelin' In the Years" by Steely Dan and "Rosanna" by Toto.

What's not yacht rock - at least according to the filmmakers - is the Eagles, Hall & Oates, Jimmy Buffett or Fleetwood Mac, who don't perfectly fit the definition: elevated pop music infused with jazz and R&B.

Cross, McDonald, Loggins and Toto's David Paich and Steve Porcaro discuss the music and how they han-



Christopher Cross performs during the Fire Relief, The Concert For Central Texas at the Frank Erwin Center in Austin, Texas, Monday, Oct. 17, 2011. (AP)

dled the label. Donald Fagen of Steely Dan only had a short phone call with Price, but allowed the band's music to be used.

"I had this film basically done except for the Steely

Dan music syncs and it was sitting idle for months and was like, 'I don't know how to tell this story unless I get this music.' Lo and behold, we finally hear from Donald Fagen," says Price. "We have this moment that I don't even know if I could beat if I had a sit-down interview with him."

Giving context are musician-comedian Fred Armisen, musician-author Questlove, musicians Thundercat, Brian Robert Jones and Brenda Russell, producer Prince Paul and rock critics and session players.

Questlove opens the door to a less restricted definition of yacht rock, adding artists like Al Jarreau, the Pointer Sisters and George Benson, arguing that the genre isn't limited to white artists.

"When you're dealing with a completely arbitrary genre like this that got made up completely, that's kind of the beauty of it - the debates of what is or isn't," says Price.

Yacht rock enjoyed a brief window on the charts in the late 1970s and the documentary argues that MTV largely contributed to its demise. Yacht rockers weren't able or willing to transition into a visual space.

Once that window closed, yacht rock became derided - mocked in everything from "30 Rock" to "Family Guy." In "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," a character tortures her electronics store co-workers by playing McDonald on a constant loop.

"I feel like these artists have always been kind of punchlines in pop culture," says Price. "I went in saying, 'I want to make a fun film but not make fun of anybody.'"

The label "yacht rock" came much later thanks to a comedy series of short films by J.D. Ryznar and Steve Huey, who currently lead The Yacht or Nyacht Podcast. They were hoping to win a contest with their short films and the name took off.

"This is kind of a private in-joke that sort of went global all of a sudden," says Huey. "The underlying intent is we love this music. We poke some fun at it, but we also want people to hear it for what it is, which is really, really good, solid, well-crafted music."

Ryznar says the label was inspired by the cover and name of "Full Sail" - an album from Loggins and Jim Messina - Cross' hit single "Sailing" and the captain-hat wearing half of Captain & Tennille.

"We just noticed this '70s motif and it seemed to describe the music that was so well-produced so perfectly," Ryznar says. "It's not called yacht rock because it sounds good on a boat, though it does. It's called yacht rock because it's well crafted, like the finest yacht."

Price, an editor on "Daisy Jones & The Six" who also directed the dark "Woodstock 99: Peace, Love, and Rage," says his latest work arrives at a great time in the year.

"It's the perfect post-Thanksgiving film to watch with your family after what may be a more contentious Thanksgiving this year than others," says Price. "We can all just chill out, vibe out, listen to this smooth, polished music and just smile."

### Variety

**RIYADH:** The second Saudi International Handicrafts Week concluded here on Saturday at the Roshn Exhibition and Convention Center, gathering over 500 artisans, cultural representatives, and entrepreneurs from more than 20 countries.

The event, hosted by the Heritage Commission of the Saudi Ministry of Culture and starting on Nov. 23, aimed to promote international cultural exchanges and cooperation and has attracted more than 500,000 visitors.

Apart from the exhibition of key Saudi intangible cultural heritage techniques, such as Al-Qatt Al-Asiri and Sadu weaving, interactive workshops like date palm leaf weaving and pottery making also allowed visitors to engage with Saudi traditions.

Immersive experience areas, including a children's ceramics workshop, were designed to engage the audience, especially young visitors.

China made its debut through an exhibition curated by Suzhou Ourui Group that featured 11 national intangible cultural heritage skills, with paper cutting and sugar painting becoming a crowd favorite. (Xinhua)



**LONDON:** Former "Harry Potter" film actor **Rupert Grint** faces a 1.8 million-pound (\$2.3 million) bill after he lost a legal battle with the tax authorities.

Grint, who played Ron Weasley in the magical film franchise, was ordered to pay the money in 2019 after H.M. Revenue and Customs, the UK tax agency, investigated his tax return from seven years earlier.

The agency said Grint had wrongly classed 4.5 million pounds in residuals from the movies - money from DVD sales, TV syndication, streaming rights and other sources - as a capital asset rather than income, which is subject to a much higher tax rate.

Lawyers for Grint appealed, but after years of wrangling a tribunal judge ruled against the actor this week. Judge Harriet Morgan said the money "derived substantially the whole of its value from the activities of Mr. Grint" and "is taxable as income."

Grint, 36, starred in all eight Harry Potter films between 2001 and 2011 as the boy wizard's best friend, and is calculated to have earned around 24 million pounds from the role.

He previously lost a separate court battle over a 1 million pound tax refund in 2019. (AP)



**LOS ANGELES:** More than 3,000 fake Gibson electric guitars shipped from Asia were seized by US Customs and Border Protection agents at the Los Angeles-Long Beach Seaport, authorities said.

Had the guitars been authentic, they would have been worth \$18 million. U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a statement. The agency said Gibson confirmed the guitars that were intercepted were counterfeit.

Gibson, founded in 1894 and based in Nashville, Tennessee, has the top market share in premium electric guitars and all its guitars are handcrafted in Nashville and Bozeman, Montana.

"These fraudulent guitars may look and feel legitimate for unsuspecting consumers buying them from third party online sources, street markets, unauthorized retailers, and person-to-person transactions," said Cheryl M. Davies, CBP director of field operations in Los Angeles. "As we approach the busy Holiday shopping season, consumers should pay attention on where they are buying these goods and how much they are paying, and if it is too good to be true it probably is."

Gibson guitars have been such a fixture in music history that rock-and-roll visionary Chuck Berry was laid to rest with his instrument, blues musician B.B. King affectionately named his "Lucille," and rock guitarist Eric Clapton borrowed one from George Harrison to play the solo on the Beatles' song "While My Guitar Gently Weeps."

"This is really emotional and personal for us not only because of the protection of our players, but because of our Gibson team at large, including the artisans at our craftories in Nashville, TN and Bozeman, MT, who are generations of American families that have dedicated their entire lives to handcrafting Gibson instruments," Beth Heidt, chief marketing officer at Gibson, said in a statement. (AP)

### Film

Actress back in full movie-star mode

## To play Callas, Jolie had to learn to breathe again

NEW YORK, Dec 1, (AP): Angelina Jolie never expected to hit all the notes. But finding the breath of Maria Callas was enough to bring things out of Jolie that she didn't even know were in her.

"All of us, we really don't realize where things land in our body over a lifetime of different experiences and where we hold it to protect ourselves," Jolie said in a recent interview. "We hold it in our stomachs. We hold it in our chest. We breathe from a different place when we're nervous or we're sad."

"The first few weeks were the hardest because my body had to open and I had to breathe again," she adds. "And that was a discovery of how much I wasn't."

In Pablo Larraín's "Maria," which Netflix released in theaters before it begins streaming on Dec. 11, Jolie gives, if not the performance of her career, then certainly of her last decade. Beginning with 2010's "In the Land of Blood and Honey," Jolie has spent recent years directing films while prioritizing raising her six children.

"So my choices for quite a few years were whatever was smart financially and short. I worked very little the last eight years," says Jolie. "And I was kind of drained. I couldn't for a while."

But her youngest kids are now 16. And for the first time in years, Jolie is back in the spotlight, in full movie-star mode. Her commanding performance in "Maria" seems assured of bringing Jolie her third Oscar nomination. (She won supporting actress in 2000 for "Girl, Interrupted.") For an actress whose filmography might lack a signature movie, "Maria" may be Jolie's defining role. Jolie's oldest children, Maddox and Pax, worked on the set of the film. There, they saw a version of their mother they hadn't seen before.

#### Moment

"They had certainly seen me sad in my life. But I don't cry in front of my children like that," Jolie says of the emotion Callas dredged up in her. "That was a moment in realizing they were going to be with me, side by side, in this process of really understanding the depth of some of the pain I carry."

Jolie, who met a reporter earlier this fall at the Carlyle Hotel, didn't speak in any detail of that pain. But it was hard not to sense some it had to do with her lengthy and ongoing divorce from Brad Pitt, with whom she had six children.

Just prior to meeting, a judge allowed Pitt's remaining claim against Jolie, over the French winery Château Miraval, to proceed. On Monday, a judge ruled that Pitt must disclose documents Jolie's legal team have sought that they allege include "communications concerning abuse." Pitt has denied ever being abusive.

The result of the U.S. presidential election was also just days old, though Jolie - special envoy for the United Nations Refugee Agency from 2012 to 2022 - wasn't inclined to talk politics. Asked about Donald Trump's win, she responded, "Global storytelling is essential," before adding: "That's what I'm focusing on. Listening. Listening to the voices of people in my country and around the world."

Balancing such things - reports concerning her private life, questions that accompany someone of her fame - is a big reason why Jolie is so suited to the part of Callas. The film takes place during the American-born soprano's final days. (She died of a heart attack at 53 in 1977.) Spending much of her time in her grand Paris apartment, Callas hasn't sung publicly in years; she's lost her voice. Imprisoned by the myth she's created, Callas is redefining herself and her voice. An instructor tells her he wants to hear "Callas, not Maria." The movie, of course, is more concerned with Maria.

#### Portrait

It's Larraín's third portrait of 20th century female icon, following "Jackie" (with Natalie Portman as Jacqueline Kennedy) and "Spencer" (with Kristen Stewart as Princess Diana). As Callas, Jolie is wonderfully regal - a self-possessed diva who deliciously, in lines penned by screenwriter Steven Knight, spouts lines like: "I took liberties all my life and the world took liberties with me."

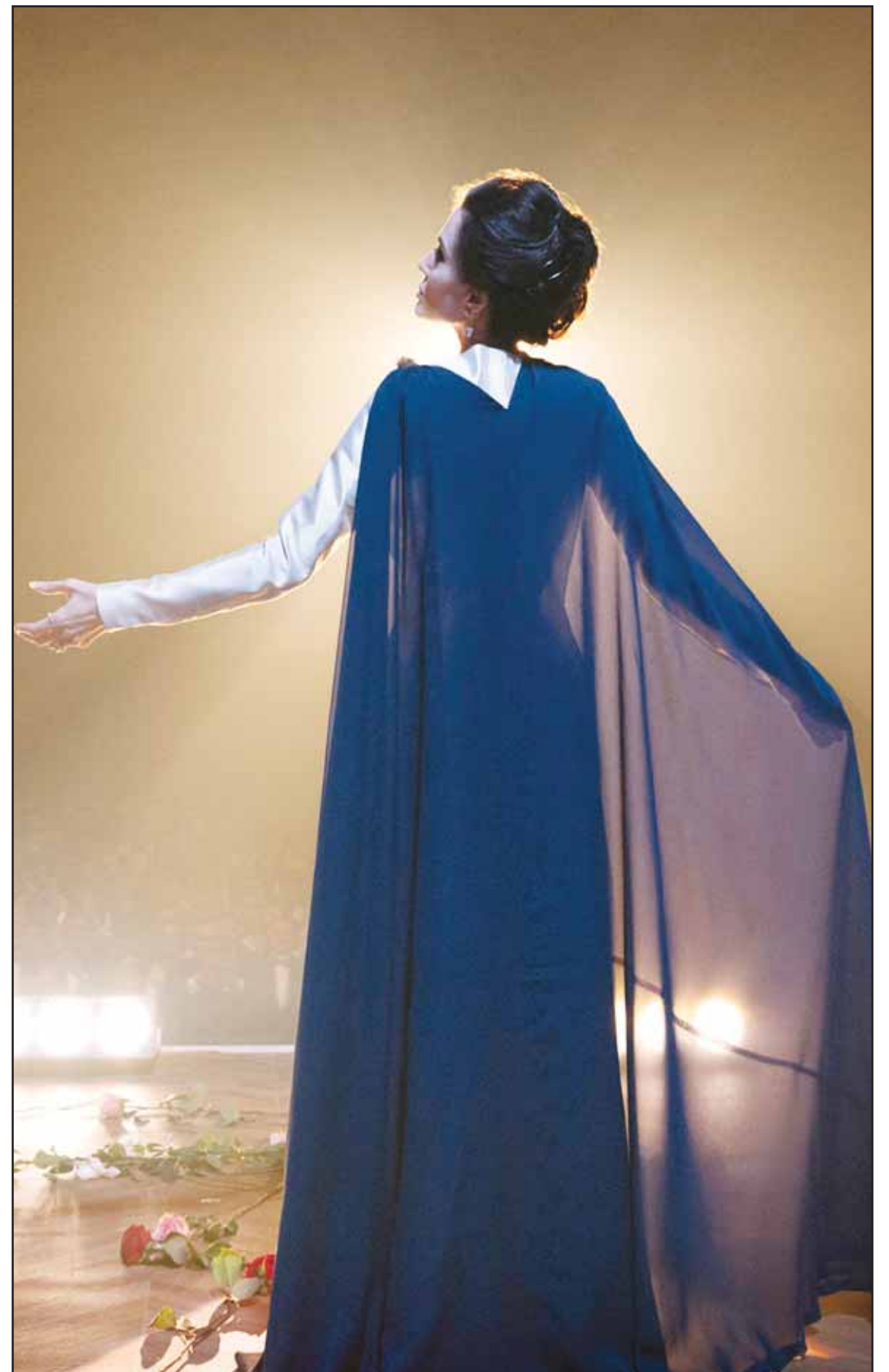
Asked if she identified with that line, Jolie answered, "Yeah, yeah." Then she took a long pause.

"I'm sure people will read a lot into this and there's probably a lot I could say but don't want to feed into," Jolie eventually continues. "I know she was a public person because she loved her work. And I'm a public person because I love my work, not because I like being public. I think some people are more comfortable with a public life, and I've never been fully comfortable with it."

When Larraín first approached Jolie about the role, he screened "Spencer" for her. That film, like "Jackie" and "Maria," eschews a biopic approach to instead intimately focus on a specific moment of crisis. Larraín was convinced Jolie was meant for the role.

"I felt she could have that magnetism," Larraín says. "The enigmatic diva that's come to a point in her life where she has to take control of her life again. But the weight of her experience, of her music, of her singing, everything, is on her back. And she carries that. It's someone who's already loaded with a life that's been intense."

"There's a loneliness that we both share," Jolie says. "That's not necessarily a bad thing. I think people can be alone and



This image released by Netflix shows Angelina Jolie as Maria Callas in a scene from 'Maria.' (AP)

lonely sometimes, and that can be part of who they are."

Larraín, the Chilean filmmaker, grew up in Santiago going to the opera, and he has long yearned to bring its full power and majesty to a movie. In Callas, he heard something that transfixed him.

"I hear something near perfection, but at the same time, it's something that's about to be destroyed," Larraín says. "So it's as fragile and as strong as possible. It lives in both extremes. That's why it's so moving. I hear a voice that's about to be broken, but it doesn't."

#### Perfect

In Callas' less perfect moments singing in the film, Larraín fuses archival recordings of Callas with Jolie's own voice. Some mix of the two runs throughout "Maria." "Early in the process," Jolie says, "I discovered that you can't fake-sing opera."

Jolie has said she never sang before, not even karaoke. But the experience has left her with a newfound appreciation of

opera and its healing properties. "I wonder if it's something you lean into as you get older," Jolie says.

"Maybe your depth of pain is bigger, your depth of loss is bigger, and that sound in opera meets that, the enormity of it."

If Larraín's approach to "Maria" is predicated on an unknowingness, he's inclined to say something similar about his star.

"Because of media and social media, some people might think that they know a lot about Angelina," he says. "Maria, I read nine biographies of her. I saw everything. I read every interview. I made this movie. But I don't think I would be capable of telling you who she was or so. So if there's an element in common, it's that. They carry an enormous amount of mystery. Even if you think that you know them, you don't."

Whether "Maria" means more acting in the future for Jolie, she's not sure. "There's not a clear map," she says. Besides, Jolie isn't quite ready to shake Callas.



Singer Lainey Wilson performs during half time of an NFL football game between the New York Giants and the Dallas Cowboys in Arlington, Texas, Nov. 28, 2024. (AP)





Dr. Al-Munther Al-Hasawi with Waleed Al-Khashti, Dr. Mona Al-Khawari, and Zain's team.



Zain's booth at the event was dedicated to promoting the Child Protection Helpline 147.

Firm supports Child Protection Office's event at the Avenues

Zain doubles efforts to raise awareness on children's rights

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Zain sponsored the awareness event - Our Children's Safety, organized by the Child Protection Office at the Avenues. This two-day event aimed to educate children, parents, and community members about children's rights, while encouraging collective efforts to promote the safety and wellbeing of children.

Zain joined the event's opening ceremony, attended by the Ministry of Health's Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs, Dr. Al-Munther Al-Hasawi; Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, Waleed Al-Khashti; and Head of the Child Protection Office at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Mona Al-Khawari.

Zain's support for this initiative comes under its strategic partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Child

Protection Office. It is an extension of the collaboration announced in May, where a nationwide awareness campaign was kicked-off to promote the Child Protection Helpline 147. Since 2016, Zain has dedicated this helpline to the Child Protection Office, providing a direct and confidential point of contact for reporting all cases of violence and abuse against children in Kuwait.

The event featured various educational and interactive activities specifically aimed at children and parents, as well as the broader community. These activities focused on raising awareness about the Child Rights law in Kuwait, answering questions related to the psychological, physical, and mental wellbeing of children, and emphasizing online safety and the responsible use of digital platforms.

The exhibition also included a booth dedicated to the Child Protection Helpline (147) from Zain, highlighting its mission, objectives, and the confidential reporting process for cases of violence and abuse. In addition, there were sections for emergency medical services, nutrition, vaccinations, fitness exercises, and educational activities for children.

Zain provided the 147 hotline for the Ministry of Health's Child Protection Office in 2016. It was officially transferred to the ministry recently and is internationally recognized as part of the global child helpline network. The helpline operates 24/7 to receive reports of violence, abuse, and child maltreatment of all forms, ensuring confidentiality and protecting the privacy of the informant in accordance with the law.

Reports are handled by a specialized team from the Child Protection Office, consisting of certified social workers and psychological counselors trained to receive and assess reports, determine their urgency, and notify the relevant authorities for immediate intervention. They also provide psychological support, counseling, and social guidance as needed.

Notably, Zain Group recently commemorated World Children's Day with its recent ranking as a regional leader for the second consecutive year in the final scores of Global Child Forum's 'The State of Children's Rights and Business 2024' benchmark report. The ranking reaffirms Zain's commitment to protect and empower children's rights across its markets.

630,000 AIDS deaths in 2023, a record low

A twice-yearly shot could help end AIDS, but will it be accessible for all?

MEXICO CITY, Dec 1, (AP): It's been called the closest the world has ever come to a vaccine against the AIDS virus.

The twice-yearly shot was 100% effective in preventing HIV infections in a study of women, and results published Wednesday show it worked nearly as well in men.

Drugmaker Gilead said it will allow cheap, generic versions to be sold in 120 poor countries with high HIV rates - mostly in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean. But it has excluded nearly all of Latin America, where rates are far lower but increasing, sparking concern the world is missing a critical opportunity to stop the disease.

"This is so far superior to any other prevention method we have, that it's unprecedented," said Winnie Byanyima, executive director of UNAIDS. She credited Gilead for developing the drug, but said the world's ability to stop AIDS hinges on its use in at-risk countries.

In a report issued to mark World AIDS Day on Sunday, UNAIDS said that the number of AIDS death last year - an estimated 630,000 - was at its lowest since peaking in 2004, suggesting the world is now at "a historic crossroads" and has a chance to end the epidemic.

The drug called lenacapavir is already sold under the brand name Sunlenca to treat HIV infections in the US, Canada, Europe and elsewhere. The company plans to seek authorization soon for Sunlenca to be used for HIV prevention.

While there are other ways to guard against infection, like condoms, daily pills, vaginal rings and bi-monthly shots, experts say the Gilead twice-yearly shots would be particularly useful for marginalized people often fear-



People and members of a Non Government Organization (NGO) hold candles around a symbol of 'red ribbon', the universal symbol of awareness and support for those living with HIV, during a tribute to whom who lost their life due to HIV/AIDS on the eve of World AIDS Day, in Ahmedabad, India, Saturday, Nov. 30, 2024. (AP)

ful of seeking care, including gay men, sex workers and young women.

"It would be a miracle for these groups because it means they just have to show up twice a year at a clinic and then they're protected," said UNAIDS' Byanyima.

Such was the case for Luis Ruvalcaba, a 32-year-old man in Guadalajara, Mexico, who participated in the latest published study. He said he was afraid to ask for the daily prevention pills provided by the government, fearing he would be discriminated against as a gay man. Because he took part in the study, he'll continue to receive the shots for at least another year.

"In Latin American countries, there is still a lot of stigma, patients are ashamed to ask for the pills," said Dr.

Alma Minerva Pérez, who recruited and enrolled a dozen study volunteers at a private research center in Guadalajara.

How widely available the shots will be in Mexico through the country's health care system isn't yet known. Health officials declined to comment on any plans to buy Sunlenca for its citizens; daily pills to prevent HIV were made freely available via the country's public health system in 2021.

"If the possibility of using generics has opened, I have faith that Mexico can join," said Pérez.

Byanyima said other countries besides Mexico that took part in the research were also excluded from the generics deal, including Brazil, Peru and Argentina. "To now deny them that drug is unconscionable," she said.

'Abstaining from smoking safest option'

Study links e-cigarettes to immediate blood vessel damage, dementia risk

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: A new study has revealed that e-cigarettes can negatively impact blood vessels almost immediately, even when nicotine is absent, according to Radiological Society of North America in Chicago.

The research, which involved 31 participants aged 21 to 49, found that just a few puffs from e-cigarettes led to a significant drop in the flow of oxygenated blood to vital organs such as the heart. This reduction in blood flow increases the risk of serious health issues like strokes, blood clots, and vascular diseases, including dementia.

The study compared these participants with 10 people who did not use e-cigarettes or regular cigarettes. MRI scans and devices measuring blood flow in the femoral artery, which sup-

plies oxygenated blood to the lower body, were used to assess the effects of smoking on blood vessels.

Both e-cigarette and regular cigarette users experienced a notable decrease in blood flow, with the most significant effects seen in those using nicotine-containing e-cigarettes. However, even nicotine-free e-cigarettes caused similar issues.

Dr. Marian Nabbout, lead author of the study and a resident at the University of Arkansas Department of Radiology, emphasized that while e-cigarettes have been marketed as a safer alternative to regular cigarettes, they still pose risks. "Even nicotine-free e-cigarettes may contain harmful components that negatively impact blood vessels," she stated.

Dr. Nabbout also cautioned that the

immediate effects on blood vessels could suggest that chronic use of e-cigarettes may lead to long-term vascular diseases, including vascular dementia, a condition where brain blood vessels are damaged, reducing oxygen and nutrient flow to the brain. The findings also point to an increased risk of stroke, blood clots, and coronary artery disease.

E-cigarettes, often marketed with attractive flavors and bright colors, may also contribute to addiction, particularly among young people who have never smoked tobacco products before. Dr. Nabbout concluded, "The message we want to get across is that e-cigarettes may not be as harmless as they are thought to be. Abstaining from smoking, whether electronic or regular, is the safest option."

Prevents chronic diseases, combats infections

Curry leaves offer surprising health benefits

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Curry leaves, also known as Murraya koenigii, are a tropical and subtropical tree native to Asia, belonging to the Rutaceae family, which includes rue, citrus and satinwood.

According to the Times of India, these aromatic leaves are commonly used in various dishes across the Indian subcontinent, but their health benefits go far beyond their culinary uses.

The following are nine amazing health benefits of consuming curry leaves:

**Promotes digestion:** Curry leaves help improve digestion and can alleviate common digestive issues such as bloating and constipation, thanks to their natural laxative properties.

**Aids in weight loss:** Rich in fiber, curry leaves can support weight loss

by enhancing metabolism and reducing fat accumulation in the body.

**Improves hair health:** Known for strengthening hair roots, curry leaves are effective in reducing hair loss and preventing premature graying when applied in hair treatments.

**Controls blood sugar levels:** Curry leaves play a role in managing blood sugar by influencing insulin activity, making them beneficial for individuals with diabetes.

**Protects the liver:** The compounds in curry leaves help protect the liver from oxidative stress and harmful toxins, contributing to better liver health.

**Combats infections:** With their antibacterial and antifungal properties, curry leaves help fight infections

and boost immunity, keeping the body strong and resilient.

**Rich in Antioxidants:** Curry leaves are loaded with antioxidants that help protect the body from free radicals, reducing the risk of chronic diseases.

**Promotes heart health:** By lowering cholesterol levels and preventing fat oxidation in the body, curry leaves contribute to overall heart health.

**Enhances eye health:** Packed with Vitamin A, curry leaves support better eyesight and can help protect against vision problems such as night blindness.

Incorporating curry leaves into the diet offers numerous health benefits, making these leaves a valuable addition to both the kitchen and wellness routine.

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# Botafogo wins first Copa Libertadores title

'We made history and that won't ever be erased'

**BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, Dec 1, (AP):** Botafogo overcame playing with 10 men to win its first Copa Libertadores title after beating fellow Brazilian side Atletico Mineiro 3-1 in the final at Monumental Stadium on Saturday.

After just 30 seconds, midfielder Gregore, one of Botafogo's best players, hit the head of Fausto Vera with his foot and was given a straight red card.

"It was so hard to have one less so early in a final. It was an unfortunate move," Botafogo defender Alexander Barboza said. "But Gregore deserves this title as much as we do. We made history and that won't ever be erased."

Winger Luiz Henrique scored first in the 35th minute from close range, and was fouled for the penalty shot converted by Alex Telles in the 44th.

Eduardo Vargas headed Mineiro's only goal in the 46th while Junior Santos, the top scorer in the Copa Libertadores with 10 goals, capped Botafogo's historic night with the third in injury time.

Brazil was assured of a sixth consecutive Copa Libertadores title and its 24th in history, just one less than Argentina.

It was also the third straight title for Rio de Janeiro clubs, after Fluminense in 2023 and Flamengo in 2022.

Botafogo, the last of the four big Rio clubs to win the Copa Libertadores, earned prize money of \$23 million and a spot in the Club World Cup in the United States next year.

Despite sensationally losing Gregore, Botafogo reset and Luiz Henrique scored the opener. Henrique surged on the right flank and crossed



Players of Brazil's Botafogo hold up the trophy as they celebrate after winning the Copa Libertadores final soccer match against Brazil's Atletico Mineiro at Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (AP)

to Marlon Freitas, who took a shot that was deflected. Henrique was in the right place to strike through the legs of goalkeeper Ederson.

Henrique and Ederson met again near the end of the first half when the striker surprised the keeper on the edge of the box. A penalty was given after a video review and left back Telles

calmly slotted the ball home.

Mineiro came back with a more aggressive formation in the second half and was rewarded when veteran Hulk took a corner kick and Vargas, who replaced midfielder Gustavo Scarpa during the break, didn't even need to jump to score with his head.

Mineiro had more chances to equal-

ize through Deyverson in the 53rd, Hulk in the 56th, and Vargas in the 86th and 88th, all from close range.

But it was Botafogo's Junior Santos, who was sidelined by injury during the Copa, who scored the last goal.

"We just failed at getting some advantage at having one more player than them," tearful Mineiro defender Rod-

rigo Battaglia said. "It was a very hard day for all of us."

Botafogo coach Arthur Jorge joined Portuguese compatriots Jorge Jesus (Flamengo, 2019) and Abel Ferreira (Palmeiras, 2020 and 2021) as European coaches with a Copa Libertadores title.

Mineiro's Gabriel Milito missed the

chance to be the first Argentine to win the tournament with a Brazilian club.

Botafogo also gave American owner John Textor his biggest trophy yet. Textor has been subject to criticism after unproven allegations about match-fixing when Botafogo squandered a 13-point lead last year and missed out on the league title.

## Shin wins women's event

## Johnston claims historic title the Australian Open

**MELBOURNE, Australia, Dec 1, (AP):** Unheralded American Rygg Johnston has won his first professional title by claiming the Australian Open by three strokes, while South Korea's Jiyai Shin claimed her second Women's Australian Open which was played concurrently at two courses on the famed Melbourne sand belt.

Johnston shot a 68 on Sunday to finish at 18-under 269 and three clear of Australian Curtis Luck (68), who had briefly taken the lead on the final stretch at Kingston Heath.

The 24-year-old Montana native, with a world ranking of 953rd, is the first American to win the Stonehaven Cup since PGA Tour star Jordan Spieth won it for a second time in 2016.

Marc Leishman (69), who plays on the LIV Tour, and fellow Australian Jasper Stubbs (70) were tied for the third at 14-under 273.

After leading, or having a share of the lead after the first three rounds, Australian Lucas Herbert had a testing day on the greens as he shot a 74 to slide to 12-under and a tie for fifth.

The day started brightly though for Johnston with an eagle at the first. But he followed that with two birdies traded with three bogeys as he made the turn with a 35.

The former Arizona State University player showed more composure in the final stretch, making three more birdies, for no bogeys, as he closed out the biggest win of his young career with par at the final hole at Kingston Heath, which will host the 2028 Presidents Cup.

Defending men's champion Joaquin Niemann couldn't repeat his 64 from

Saturday which saw him storm back into contention and could only manage an even par final round of 72 for a 12-under 275 total and a tie for sixth.

The 2022 British Open champion Cameron Smith shot 71 Sunday to finish at 3-under 285 and in a tie for 39th to end his four-tournament stint back home winless.

In the Women's Australian Open, Shin withstood a late challenge from a fast-finishing Ashleigh Buhai to claim her second Australia Open title.

Shin shot a 70 on Sunday for a 17-under-par 274 total to win by two shots from the twice defending champion Buhai (68).

The former world No.1 had led by as many as seven shots in the final round but Buhai's five birdies, with one bogey, on the final stretch made Shin's victory far less certain.

The 36-year-old South Korean didn't falter and sunk a seven-foot putt at the last to close out her 65th professional title and a second Australian Open since winning in 2013.

"Now I can breathe," Shin said. "I only had one Australian Open trophy so I am really excited for this next one, especially at this golf course at Kingston Heath. "I lost in 2008 to Karrie Webb so now I feel much better."

Buhai was bidding to become the first triple consecutive winner at the Australian Open and had a 12-foot birdie attempt at the last to narrow Shin's margin to one shot, but it skirted by the cup.

The 17-year-old amateur Hyojin Yang finished third at seven under, 10 shots behind compatriot Shin, after a final round 72.



Men's champion, Rygg Johnston of the United States and women's champion Jiyai Shin of Korea pose with their trophies following the Australian Open golf championship at the Kingston Heath Golf Club in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

**CHARLOTTE, N.C., Dec 1, (AP):** Jalen Johnson had 20 points and nine assists, De'Andre Hunter added 18 points and the Atlanta Hawks handed the Charlotte Hornets their fifth straight loss 107-104 on Saturday night.

Onyeka Okongwu added 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Hawks, who have won three straight. Trae Young and No. 1 overall draft pick Zaccharie Risacher each had 14 points.

Brandon Miller finished with 32 points for the Hornets and Josh Green added 17.

Miller's 3-pointer cut Atlanta's lead to one, but Hunter answered with two free throws with 9.7 seconds left. Charlotte had a chance to tie but Miller missed an off-balance 3 and Okongwu grabbed the rebound and made two free throws to seal the game.

### 76ers 111, Pistons 96

In Detroit, Tyrese Maxey scored 28 points and Philadelphia won their fourth game of the season by beating Detroit.

Jared McCain added 19 points and Ricky Council IV scored 17 for Philadelphia, which had lost seven of its previous eight games.

Malik Beasley had 19 points for the Pistons. Jaden Ivey had 15 points and Marcus Sasser scored 12. Simone Fontecchio had 11 rebounds for Detroit - the only player on either team to reach double figures in assists or rebounds.

### Bucks 124, Wizards 114

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 42 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists in his return to Milwaukee's lineup and the Bucks won their sixth in a row by beating struggling Washington.

Antetokounmpo had missed the Bucks' 106-103 NBA Cup victory at Miami on Tuesday due to swelling in his left knee.

The two-time MVP has three triple-doubles in the last six games he has played.



Milwaukee Bucks' Damian Lillard, right, dribbles against Washington Wizards' Bilal Coulibaly, left, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Milwaukee. (AP)

Antetokounmpo had 22 points, 15 rebounds and 12 assists in a 115-114 loss at Charlotte on Nov. 16. He had 37 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds in a 129-117 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Nov. 22.

Damian Lillard added 25 points and 10 assists while Brook Lopez scored 18 points on Saturday.

### Suns 113, Warriors 105

In Phoenix, Devin Booker scored 27 points, Kevin Durant added 21 and Phoenix beat Golden State.

Tyus Jones added 19 points and nine assists, making 7 of 9 shots,

including 4 of 5 3-pointers. Grayson Allen added 17. The Suns made 18 of 35 (51.4%) shots from 3-point range.

Golden State has lost four in a row. Stephen Curry led the Warriors with 23 points but shot just 8 of 20 from the field. Andrew Wiggins added 18 points while Draymond Green had 13 points.

The Warriors trailed by 17 at half-time but cut the margin to 85-78 by the start of the fourth quarter after Curry poured in 15 points. Golden State went on a 9-0 run late in the fourth quarter to pull within 105-99



Dallas Mavericks guard Spencer Dinwiddie (left) wrestles the ball loose from Utah Jazz forward John Collins (20) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Salt Lake City. (AP)

but Durant made a 3-pointer with 1:42 left to turn back the rally.

### Mavericks 106, Jazz 94

In Salt Lake City, Kyrie Irving scored 30 points and Quentin Grimes had 24 points to power short-handed Dallas over Utah.

Dallas led the entire game despite playing without Luka Doncic (right wrist), Klay Thompson (left foot) and Dante Exum (right wrist). Naji Marshall left in the second quarter and didn't return because of illness.

P.J. Washington had 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Mavericks, who have won four of five games - all without Doncic.

The Jazz have lost seven of their last eight games. Lauri Markkanen scored 19 points and Walker Kessler had 18 points, 10 rebounds and five blocks for Utah.

The Mavericks led by as many as 20 in the first quarter, thanks to Grimes' quick start with four 3s in the quarter.

## Best of the Rest

**Frostad, Ledoux win:** Tormod Frostad of Norway and French skier Tess Ledoux claimed victory in the men's and women's freeski big air at the FIS World Cup here on Sunday.

22-year-old Frostad collected 183.00 points to seal the win, while Italian Miro Tabanelli finished second with 0.75 behind. Canadian Dylan Deschamps ranked third with 181.00.

In the women's event, Beijing Winter Olympics silver medalist Tess topped the podium with 168.25 points, followed by Switzerland's Sarah Hoefflin with 163.00, while 17-year-old Flora Tabanelli of Italy was in the third place.

China's Liu Mengting and Yang Ruiyi ranked sixth and seventh, respectively, in the women's

freeski big air.

The men's and women's snowboard big air events will take place on Sunday evening. (Xinhua)

**Usmanov re-elected FIE president:** Russian billionaire Alisher Usmanov has been elected to a new term as president of the International Fencing Federation while he faces ongoing sanctions.

The federation, known as the FIE, said in an emailed statement that Usmanov won 120 votes for a majority at the congress on Saturday in Uzbekistan, where he was born.

Usmanov was first elected FIE president in 2008 and his funding was key to fencing's growth.

Usmanov said in March 2022 he would step

aside from his duties as FIE president "until justice is restored" after he was placed under sanctions by the European Union following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Greek official Emmanuel Katsiadakis served as interim president since then.

Usmanov thanked his supporters on Saturday and said he would work for a "bright future" for fencing.

"As is well known, I am still subject to unjustified restrictions, which I am currently challenging in court," Usmanov said in a statement. "In this regard, I declare that I have always acted in the best interests of the FIE and will continue to take all necessary measures to prevent the legally unfounded restrictions imposed on me being extended to the FIE and its activities." (AP)

## Nate Bittle's putback with 4.4 seconds left gives Oregon win over Alabama

**LAS VEGAS, Dec 1, (AP):** Nate Bittle scored the winning shot on a putback dunk with 4.4 seconds left to lead undefeated Oregon to an 83-81 win over No. 9 Alabama in the championship game of the Players Era Festival.

Keeshawn Barthelemy scored 22 points off the bench to lead the Ducks (8-0), and Bittle had 19 on the night.

Alabama's Aden Holloway made a 3-pointer to cut the lead to 81-78 with 26 seconds left. The Ducks turned it over, and Mark Sears made a free throw to pull within

two. Sears missed the second free throw, but Mouhamed Dioubate grabbed the offensive rebound, was fouled and tied the game at 81 with two free throws.

On the ensuing possession, Barthelemy missed a layup, and Bittle followed with the jam.

Labaron Philon led Alabama (6-2) with 15 points, while Sears, Holloway and Jarin Stevenson each scored 11.

VonCameron Davis had 16 points in Kent State's 67-

60 win over Kennesaw State on Saturday night.

Davis had six rebounds for the Golden Flashes (6-2). Morgan Safford added 13 points while going 2 of 8 from the floor, including 1 for 5 from 3-point range, and 8 for 10 from the line while he also had seven rebounds. Marquis Barnett shot 3 for 11 (2 for 7 from 3-point range) and 5 of 6 from the free-throw line to finish with 13 points.

Simeon Cottle led the way for the Owls (6-3) with 17 points and four assists. Braedan Lue added 13 points for

Kennesaw State. Adrian Wooley also put up nine points and four assists.

Kent State took a 13-9 lead in the first half with an 11-0 run. Led by nine first-half points from Barnett, Kent State carried a 35-29 lead into the break. Kent State turned a one-point second-half lead into an eight-point advantage with an 8-1 run to make it a 66-58 lead with 36 seconds left in the half. Davis scored 12 second-half points in the win.



Fans anticipating one of the most open and hotly contested tournaments

## Kuwait's Khaleeji Zain 26 ushers in a golden age for Gulf soccer

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: As the Arabian Gulf enters the final countdown towards what promises to be a memorable Khaleeji Zain 26 in Kuwait, soccer fans are anticipating one of the most open and hotly contested tournaments in its prestigious 54-year history. After 25 glorious tournaments since its inauguration in 1970, the eight national teams of hosts Kuwait, reigning champions Iraq, along with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Yemen and Oman, are all expecting to make an impact from December 21-January 3.

Host Kuwait has won the tournament an incredible 10 times, but has not lifted the coveted trophy since 1990, a statistic it will be hoping to put right when the 26th chapter gets

underway at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium in three weeks.

Formerly known as the Arabian Gulf Cup, it was renamed the Khaleeji Zain 26 following a sponsorship agreement signed with the leading technology and digital lifestyle company, Zain, prior to the 25th edition held in Basra two years ago.

The tournament was initially the idea of the late Saudi Prince Khaled Al-Faisal when it was presented as an official tournament to the then FIFA President, Sir Stanley Rous.

The first tournament featured four teams - Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the eventual champion Kuwait, and, with the event is organized every two years, four more teams

were added over the decades with the UAE in 1972, Oman in 1974, Iraq in 1976, and, finally, Yemen in 2003.

Only Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar have featured at every edition of the tournament since inception, with the trio making their 26th appearances in Kuwait from December 21 to January 3.

The tournament's format has evolved to its current two-group/semi-final/final format. Early editions were held as a league, with everyone playing each other, but as more countries signed up, it moved towards the current format with the top two from the group stage playing in the semi-finals, and the winners going through to the final on January 3 at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

The host country (Kuwait) always joins Group A, with the reigning champion (Iraq) going into Group B.

While Kuwait's 10 titles place it well ahead as the most successful nation, Iraq has won it on four occasions, while Saudi Arabia and Qatar have won it three times each. The UAE and Oman have won it twice; Bahrain has one trophy to its name while Yemen is aiming to make it out of the group stage for the first time in Kuwait this year.

Kuwait has hosted the Khaleeji Zain on four previous occasions, the last time coming in 2017/18, and they have won it twice as hosts in 1974 and 1990, the last time they lifted the trophy.

The tournament is organized by the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) in co-ordination with the host nation with a total of 15 matches to be held across the impressive 60,000-capacity Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium and the 15,000-capacity Jaber Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Stadium.

Some of the best Arab players of all time have featured at the tournament, with the all-time top scorer being Kuwait's legend Jassem Yaqoub who has scored 18 goals, closely followed by Saudi Arabia's Majed Abdullah and Iraq's Hussein Saeed who have scored 17 goals each. Saeed scored an incredible 10 goals at the 1979 tournament, the most by a golden boot winner.



A file photo of players challenging for the ball.



Bayern's Jamal Musiala heads to score his side's goal during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich at the Signal-Iduna Park in Dortmund, Germany. (AP)

### Wirtz again makes the difference for Leverkusen

## Musiala saves Bayern from Klassiker defeat

BERLIN, Dec 1, (AP): Jamal Musiala scored late to save Bayern Munich from its first Bundesliga loss of the season with a 1-1 draw at Borussia Dortmund in "der Klassiker".

Musiala - Bayern's best attacking threat after Harry Kane went off with a first-half injury - headed the equalizer in the 85th minute after a Bayern free kick. Leroy Sané fired the ball into the Dortmund wall of defenders and Michael Olise sent the loose ball back in for the unmarked Musiala.

Jamie Gittens provided the highlight of the first half when he left Konrad Laimer in his wake and raced clear before blasting the ball past Manuel

Neuer in the Bayern goal in the 27th.

It was the first goal Bayern conceded in eight games across all competitions.

Kane went off with an apparent right hamstring injury shortly afterward.

Bayern mounted unrelenting pressure after the break with the Dortmund defenders increasingly content just to kick the ball away. The visitors kept pushing until Musiala duly scored.

Florian Wirtz again made the difference for Bayer Leverkusen in a 2-1 win at Union Berlin in the Bundesliga.

Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso initially rested his star player, but sent Wirtz on for the last half-hour with the score 1-1. Wirtz duly whipped in

a brilliant cross for Patrik Schick to score the winner with his chest in the 71st minute.

It was the third straight game that Wirtz has set up a goal in the Bundesliga.

Leipzig, already five games without a win across all competitions, was humiliated 5-1 at home by Wolfsburg, a defeat that left coach Marco Rose in a tenuous position at the energy drink-backed club.

Wolfsburg piled on the pressure with two goals in two minutes by the fifth minute, before Algerian forward Mohammed Amoura got his second in the 16th.

There were whistles from the home

fans after the goals, and again at the break after their team failed to muster a response.

It got worse after the break with Joakim Maehle heading Wolfsburg's fourth.

Leipzig captain Willi Orban urged his teammates to fight when he pulled one back in the 82nd, but Wolfsburg substitute Kevin Behrens had the final say in stoppage time.

Ermedin Demirović equalized twice for Stuttgart to draw at Werder Bremen 2-2, Freiburg won against visiting Borussia Mönchengladbach 3-1, and Augsburg defeated last-placed Bochum 1-0 at home.

## Galaxy, Red Bulls advance to final

Joveljic continues scoring form in the playoffs

CARSON, Calif., Dec 1, (AP): Dejan Joveljic scored his fifth goal of the playoffs in the 86th minute and the LA Galaxy advanced to the MLS Cup final for the first time since 2014 with a 1-0 victory over the Seattle Sounders in the Western Conference final.

The Galaxy will host the New York Red Bulls in next Saturday's MLS Cup final. The Red Bulls became the lowest-seeded to play for the title with a 1-0 victory over Orlando City in the Eastern Conference final.

The Red Bulls were the No. 7 seed in the Eastern Conference.

It will be a record 10th MLS Cup appearance for the Galaxy, who have won five titles. The Red Bulls are making their second trip after losing to the Columbus Crew in 2008.

"I'm super excited for these guys to lift a trophy but the objective is one week away. As one game ends, the anxiety for the next game emerges," Galaxy coach Greg Vanney said.

Joveljic's goal was set up when the Galaxy intercepted the pass near the sideline. Mark Delgado got the ball and passed to Riqui Puig, who fed it to Joveljic at the top of the box. Joveljic



New York Red Bulls forward Cameron Harper (17) and Orlando City midfielder Martin Ojeda, left, go for the ball during the second half of an MLS Eastern Conference final soccer match in Orlando, Fla. (AP)

then beat Sounders goalkeeper Stefan Frei with a shot to the near left post.

It was Puig's seventh goal contribution this postseason (four goals, three assists).

John McCarthy made four saves for his eighth shutout this season across all competitions. Frei also stopped four shots. The Galaxy had a 13-8 advantage in shots.

The Galaxy were the second seed in the Western Conference after not

making the playoffs last year. They beat Colorado in two games in the first round and defeated Minnesota 6-2 last Sunday.

The Galaxy and Red Bulls did not face each other during the regular season.

This will be Vanney's sixth trip to an MLS Cup final. He made three with the Galaxy as a player and led Toronto FC to two as a coach, including a win over Seattle in the 2017 final.

Andres Reyes scored two minutes

into the second half and Carlos Coronel made it stand up for first-year coach Sandro Schwarz as the New York Red Bulls beat Orlando City 1-0 in an Eastern Conference final on at Inter&Co Stadium to advance to their second MLS Cup final.

The Red Bulls are the first No. 7 seed to play for the championship after joining the 1998 Chicago Fire as the only teams to win three straight playoff matches on the road.

Schwarz, who left Germany's Hertha BSC to coach the Red Bulls, led his team past second-seeded and defending-champion Columbus in the first round, winning the rubber match on the road. The Red Bulls beat No. 6 seed New York City FC 2-0 at Citi Field in a semifinal.

Coronel saved three shots in his ninth playoff appearance - all with the Red Bulls. Coronel has all three of his postseason clean sheets this season.

The Red Bulls grabbed the lead in the 47th minute when Reyes scored with a header off a free kick by fellow defender John Tolkin. It was Reyes' first goal in his ninth postseason appearance. Tolkin's assist was his third in nine playoff appearances with after notching his first two and his only goal last season.

Pedro Gallese finished without a save in his 11th career playoff start - all with Orlando City. He allowed one goal in four starts this postseason entering play.



Al-Qadsia is looking for a fifth victory.

## Qadsia & Kazma set for thrilling showdown in the Championship

By Hassan Mosa  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: The Union Hall at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Halls Complex will host an exciting "summit" clash between Qadsia and Kazma at 7:00 pm in the sixth round of the Union Volleyball Championship. Earlier in the evening, the same venue will feature another encounter between Borgan and Al-Shabab at 5:00 pm.

Qadsia enters the match ranked second with 12 points, equal to Kazma, which holds third place due to a goal difference. Both teams have won all four of their matches in the championship so far, setting the stage for a highly competitive showdown.

Qadsia, delivering standout performances under Bahraini coach Redha Ali, is a strong contender for the title. The team relies on key players such as Nasser Dashti, Rashid Anbar, Nasser Abdul Samad, along with Iranian professional Mohammad Reza Beyk and Dutch star Thijs Ter Horst.

Kazma, on the other hand, is led by Brazilian coach Kakarato and boasts a robust lineup including Mishaal Al-Omar, Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa, Abdulwahab Al-Jiran, Mubarak Abdulhadi, and international talents like Cuban professional Abraham Alfonso and Frenchman Samuel Genie.

In the earlier match, Borgan, currently fourth with 11 points, aims to maintain its strong form against fifth-placed Al-Shabab, who have 7 points. Borgan has been performing impressively and is vying for a spot in the semi-finals, but it faces a tough challenge from Al-Shabab, a team capable of halting its winning streak.

The tournament follows a single-round league system, with the top four teams advancing to the semi-finals. The first-ranked team will face the fourth, while the second plays the third, and the winners will progress to the final showdown.

## Kuwait is making great progress in dressage: Den Heyer

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 1: Dutch jockey and trainer Amber den Heyer praised Kuwait's significant progress in dressage, highlighting the growing number of talented and dedicated riders in the country. She noted that more individuals are participating in equestrian competitions, investing in quality horses, and bringing in experienced trainers to elevate the sport.

"There is a noticeable shift in mindset towards equestrian sports," den Heyer said. "We now see excellent show jumping riders who have achieved remarkable improvements in their horses through proper training and focused efforts."

Expressing her gratitude, den Heyer added, "I deeply appreciate the efforts of the dedicated equestrian committee within the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, which is working tirelessly to advance this sport. I look forward to seeing more competitions and opportunities in the future."

According to den Heyer, accomplishments take many forms for me, each bringing its own sense of fulfillment. Training a young horse to reach the highest levels is just as rewarding as building harmony with a more challenging horse. However, some moments stand out, like being honored as Talent of the Year in 2012, achieving multiple national titles, and winning



Dutch jockey and trainer Amber den Heyer.

the European KFPS Championship in 2019, which marked an unforgettable conclusion to her competitive journey.

Den Heyer started riding at the age of 7, and by 12, she was competing seriously in advanced classes, setting the foundation for her passion and dedication to equestrian sports.



Los Angeles Galaxy players celebrate on the podium after a win over the Seattle Sounders in an MLS Western Conference final soccer match in Carson, Calif. (AP)

## Stolz extends winning streak with four gold medals in Beijing

BEIJING, Dec 1, (Xinhua): American prodigy Jordan Stolz repeated his feat of winning four individual gold medals as the ISU Speed Skating World Cup concluded at the National Speed Skating Oval here on Sunday.

Stolz, having won three gold medals after the men's 500m, 1,000m and 1,500m competitions in the first two competition days, clocked 34.39 seconds in the second 500m race to win his fourth in the "Ice Ribbon". Jennings de Boo of the Netherlands, runner-up from the first race on Friday, added another silver to his collection, 0.08 seconds behind, followed by Kim Jun-ho of South Korea in 34.67.

"I was pretty happy to be able to win this one too and keep the winning streak going for the first two World Cups," said 20-year-old Stolz, who also took

four gold medals from the season-opening World Cup in Nagano, Japan last weekend.

Sunday's win extended his World Cup unbeaten record to 12 victories in a row dating back to last season, and the American was still looking for more.

"I'll continue to get a little bit faster, hopefully in the next couple of World Cups I can try and win more. But if I lose one or two, it's alright," he said.

Speaking of his goal this season, the six-time world champion, winning three golds each from back-to-back world championships in 2023 and 2024, sets his eyes on making it a triple of triple.

"I'd like to defend the three titles that I won for the last two times. Hopefully I can do it a third time and I've never won the overall World Cup points, so I

would like to be able to win that," Stolz noted.

Chinese skaters won two bronze medals on Sunday as Yang Binyu finished behind Marijke Groenewoud of the Netherlands and Valerie Maltais of Canada in women's mass start before Liu Bin, Lian Ziwen and Ning Zhongyan joined efforts to add another later in men's team sprint.

These brought China's medal count to one silver and three bronze medals on home ice, following Ning's silver in 1,500m and bronze in 1,000m.

"After the Beijing Winter Olympics I feel I have become more mature, especially mentally. Next I'll try to learn from all these experience and build up my stamina, to get better prepared for the Milan Winter Olympics," Ning said.





Players attend a training session in Doha.

# Sports

Nasser continues recovery program in Dubai

## Injured Kuwaiti players rejoin training ahead of Khaleeji Zain 26

DOHA, Dec 1: The trio Suleiman Abdul Ghafoor, Mahdi Dashti, and Reda Hani have rejoined the Blues' training sessions during their camp in Doha, as part of preparations for the "Khaleeji Zain 26", which Kuwait will host from December 21 to January 3.

The three players had been sidelined due to muscle injuries, preventing them from participating in group training since the start of the preparation period last week.

They followed a rehabilitation program under the supervision of Dr. Abdul Majeed Al-Bannai, head of the Football Association's medical committee.

Meanwhile, Youssef Nasser continues his recovery program in Dubai and is expected to join the Blues camp by the end of the week. Around the same time, players from Qadsia and Kuwait Club will also join after completing their commitments in the Gulf Champions League

and AFC Champions League 2, respectively.

The Blues are conducting their Doha training camp with sessions twice a day: strength training in the morning at the team's residence and evening practice on Qatar University fields, under the guidance of Argentine head coach Juan Pizzi and assistant Ahmed Abdel Karim.

As part of its preparations, the team will play three friendly matches in Doha: the first against Syria on December 9, followed by a match against Lebanon on December 12, and concluding with a game against Yemen on December 15.

The Blues delegation will return to Kuwait on December 16 for an internal camp leading up to the "Khaleeji Zain 26". Kuwait has been drawn into Group A alongside Qatar, the UAE, and Oman, while Group B includes Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Yemen.

## Man U serenaded by fans after rout of Everton

Chelsea too strong for Villa

**LONDON, Dec 1, (AP): Ruben Amorim has got Manchester United fans smiling again after a 4-0 win against Everton on Sunday.**

The Old Trafford crowd serenaded United's players with "ole" late in Amorim's first Premier League game at Old Trafford.

It marks a big change from the boos that rang around the stadium toward the end of former manager Erik ten Hag's reign.

In Amorim's third game in charge, United produced its best performance under him, with Marcus Rashford and Joshua Zirkzee scoring two goals each.

Amorim is undefeated since taking over last month and United is ninth - four points off the top four.

Third-place Chelsea beat Aston Villa 3-0 and Tottenham drew 1-1 with Fulham a week after thrashing

Manchester City 4-0.

Inspired by Bukayo Saka, Arsenal scored five goals in a wild first half at West Ham before settling for a 5-2 win in its bid to chase down Liverpool.

Saka was one of five different scorers for Arsenal at the Olympic Stadium on Saturday and also had a hand in three goals, by Gabriel, Leandro Trossard and Martin Odegaard. Kai Havertz netted the other goal for Arsenal in its biggest league victory this season.

Since returning from the international break, Arsenal has beaten Nottingham Forest 3-0 in the Premier League, Sporting Lisbon 5-1 in the Champions League and put another five goals past West Ham. The prolific run has coincided with the return to fitness of Odegaard, Arsenal's playmaker and captain who missed two months with an ankle injury.

Saka, especially, is benefitting from Odegaard's presence. The England winger already has 10 assists for the campaign - having played 12 of Arsenal's 13 games - along with five goals.

All of the goals in the match were in the first half. It's just the fourth time since the Premier League began in 1992 that seven goals were scored in a game before halftime.

A day after being hired as Leicester manager, Ruud van Nistelrooy witnessed at first hand the scale of his task to keep the team in the Premier League.

Leicester was beaten at Brentford 4-1 on Saturday, with Van Nistelrooy sitting in the stands rather than in the dugout. He officially takes over as coach on Sunday after arriving as the replacement for the fired Steve Cooper.

Kevin Schade scored a hat trick and Yoane Wissa also netted for Brentford, which had to come from behind after Facunda Buonanotte's 21st-minute opener.

Van Nistelrooy, the former Manchester United and Real Madrid striker, will begin his first full-time managerial role in English soccer with Leicester in 16th place in the 20-team league and just one point above the relegation zone.



Manchester United's Marcus Rashford, left, and Everton's Vitaliy Mykolenko vie for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Everton at the Old Trafford Stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

## Benzema stars in return from injury as Al-Ittihad dominates

DAMMAM, Saudi Arabia, Dec 1, (AP): Karim Benzema starred on his return from injury with a goal and two assists as Saudi Pro League leader won at Ettifaq 4-0.

The former Real Madrid striker missed the previous four games with a muscle problem but back in action he was too much to handle for struggling Ettifaq, coached by former Liverpool and England star Steven Gerrard.

Benzema, in Jeddah since June 2023, netted after 27 minutes following a fine pass from N'Golo Kante but was adjudged by VAR to have been offside. He returned the favor eight minutes later, passing for Kante to open the scoring from just inside the area.

Early in the second half, Benzema extended Ittihad's lead, pouncing on a loose ball at close range to score his ninth league goal of the season, level with Cristiano Ronaldo of Al-Nassr and three behind Aleksandar Mitrovic of Al-Hilal.

Houssein Aouar made it 3-0 after 66 minutes and, soon after, Benzema's perfect through pass released Steven Bergwin to add a fourth.

Ettifaq has not won its last nine games and was just three points above the relegation zone, increasing the pressure on Gerrard, who was appointed in July 2023.

Last month, the club released Dean Holden, Gerrard's assistant coach, admitting in a statement that results had been unsatisfactory.

"This conference is not the place to talk about dismissing the assistant coach," Gerrard said on Saturday. "These decisions are the decisions of the board of directors."

While Ettifaq was in 13th place, Ittihad stayed on top, two points clear of Al-Hilal, which came back from a goal down to beat Al-Shabab 2-1.

Abderrazak Hamdallah put Shabab ahead after six minutes of the Riyadh derby. Sergej Milinkovic-Savic leveled for Hilal eight minutes later but the champion's former Chelsea defender Kalidou Koulibaly was sent off just before the break.

Nader Al-Sharari was booked twice early in the second half as Al-Shabab was also reduced to 10 men. After 62 minutes, Milinkovic-Savic curled a free kick into the top corner for the clincher.



Benzema celebrates after scoring a goal for Al-Ittihad.

## Carse takes first 10 wicket haul as England beats New Zealand by 8 wickets in 1st test

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, Dec 1, (AP): New Zealand battled to delay the inevitable but England eventually eased to an eight wicket win in the first test on Sunday and a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Resuming on the fourth day with only a four run lead and four wickets in hand, New Zealand managed to bat through all the first session thanks to Daryl Mitchell who made 84 as a lone rearguard and was the last man out.

Playing in just his third test, Brydon Carse took 6-42 for match figures of 10-196 as New Zealand was bowled out for 252 in its second innings, leaving England needing only 104 runs to win.

New Zealand managed to claim the wicket of Zak Crawley (1) in the second over of England's innings, then Ben Duckett when the tourists were was 55-2 to create a little suspense before the end.

But Jacob Bethell who made an unbeaten 50 from 37 balls, his first half century in his debut test, and Joe Root, who scored 23 after a first innings duck, saw England to 104-2 in only 12.4 overs at a run rate of over eight runs per over. The victory came with more than a day and a half to spare.

England's win was made possible by Harry Brook whose innings of 171 in partnerships of 151 with Ollie Pope (77) and 159 with Ben Stokes (88) propelled England to 499 in its first innings in reply to New Zealand's 348, a lead of 151.

Carse had three wickets by the end of the third day and took three more Sunday to become the first Englishman since Monty Panesar in 2012 to take 10 wickets in a test



England's Brydon Carse gestures to the crowd after taking six wickets during play on the fourth day of the first cricket test between England and New Zealand at Hagley Oval in Christchurch, New Zealand. (AP)

overseas.

"Of course I'm very proud of the outcome today and to be able to win as a team is very satisfying," Carse said. "I think we were thrown different challenges throughout the game but I think as a group we stuck to certain plans and we got our rewards during the game."

In a moment of concern for England, captain Ben Stokes completed 6.3 overs during New Zealand's second innings and was unable to continue, calling on Gus Atkinson to complete his seventh over. Stokes remained on the field for the remainder of the innings and showed no obvious sign of injury, though he recently had to overcome a hamstring strain.

"We're very happy with the way we performed through the whole week," Stokes said. "We got put under pressure on day two. We were 40-3 and to go on and get a big first innings score and a pretty likeable lead was very nice."

"I thought our bowlers were pretty relentless the whole time."

England was in a strong position from the first day when, after winning the toss, it had New Zealand 319-5 at stumps on a pitch at Hagley Oval which offered pace and bounce on all four days.

Kane Williamson held the New Zealand innings together with 93 while Tom Latham (47) and Rachin Ravindra made solid starts but didn't go on. Young off-spinner

Shoaib Bashir took 4-69, bowling 20 overs in an unusually heavy workload for a spinner on the first day at Hagley Park.

On day two, Glenn Phillips completed a half century and finished 58 not out as New Zealand reached 348.

New Zealand removed Zak Crawley early but Ben Duckett made 46 at a brisk pace to set the tone for England's first innings which was driven by Brook's 171, his seventh test century.

England also was helped to its commanding position by New Zealand's poor catching. It dropped seven catches, including Brook on five occasions, at 17, 41, 70, 112 and 132.

"If we isolate the first two innings, being put in on that sort of surface and to be in the position we were, we were happy with that," New Zealand captain Tom Latham said. "The position we had them in, we had our opportunities. If catches go to hand things could have been different."

Using Bazball principles, England added 180 in 33 overs on the third day at almost six per over.

New Zealand then slumped to 64-3 early in its second innings, losing Devon Conway, Latham and Ravindra cheaply. Williamson made 61, compiling half centuries in both innings for the 10th time in his career.

But New Zealand was 155-6 at stumps on day three and while Mitchell's gallant effort on the last day was impressive, it ultimately came in a lost cause.

The second test begins at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on Friday.