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Amir celebrates visionaries at KFAS awards for 2022-2023



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses with the winners of the KFAS awards, celebrating their outstanding contributions to science and innovation.

Amiri Diwan photo

Foundation champions growth through human potential

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah patronized and attended the award distribution ceremony of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) for 2022-2023 at Bayan Palace's theater on Wednesday.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, senior sheikhs, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and head

of the Court of Cassation judge Dr. Adel Bouresli and senior state officials attended the ceremony.

His Highness the Amir arrived at the venue and was warmly welcomed by KFAS Director-General Dr. Ameenah Farhan and KFAS board members.

The national anthem was played and some Quranic verses recited at the beginning of the event.

Addressing the ceremony, the KFAS Director-General said that the foundation has been in the habit of holding this

award distribution ceremony for four decades now with the aim of honoring Kuwaiti and Arab scientists.

She underlined the KFAS' great goals of developing a pioneering and sustainable research system in order to serve the country's national development in all fields thanks to concerted efforts, farsightedness and shrewd leadership.

She added that the KFAS has taken upon itself to stimulate and spur innovation, based on its mission of supporting innovation programs, spreading various initiatives to enable

Kuwait to address present and future challenges, turn research findings into applied knowledge and technologies and help experts and specialists develop marketable, expandable and developable innovations.

This, she maintained, would put the State of Kuwait, with its leadership, people and scientists, among pioneering countries in view of research and innovation.

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Police officers in custody over bribery, falsified transactions

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Officers from the General Department of Criminal Investigations' Nuwaiseb Investigations Department dealt a major blow to two officers who were involved in completing fictitious transactions related to entry and exit movements in the country in exchange for a bribe of KD 100. The officers have been referred to the competent authorities.

The Security Media Department stated that Nuwaiseb Port Investigations Department of the General Department of Criminal Investigations in the Criminal Security Sector, as part of the Ministry of Interior's ongoing efforts to combat corruption and uphold the rule of law, discovered a bribery case involving two police officers who had been involved in processing fake transactions related to the

entry and exit data for individuals traveling to and from the country in exchange for money.

The security follow-up of the case revealed that an agreement had been reached to offer a bribe in exchange for carrying out fictitious entry and exit movements in and out of the country. Investigations were conducted, after which an arrest warrant was issued against the two police officers, who eventually confessed to their crimes, which included accepting a bribe and falsifying entry and exit data in exchange for KD 100.

The Ministry of Interior confirmed that legal measures have been taken against the officers, who were referred to the competent authorities. It stressed that no one is above the law, and highlighted its commitment to continuing efforts to combat all forms of corruption, ensure justice, and protect the integrity of security operations.

Kuwait rewrites citizenship blueprint, ditches Article 8

15-year residency for non-Kuwaiti wives

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior, has announced significant changes to the nationality law, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Among the reforms is the abolition of Article 8, which previously allowed certain individuals to acquire the Kuwaiti citizenship.

The changes aim to address issues related to what he called 'purchasing loyalties' and preserving the integrity of Kuwait's national identity.

The following are the key highlights of the new reforms: Abolition of Article 8 -- Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef described past naturalizations under Article 8 as rife with 'purchasing loyalties'.

The government intends to revoke citizenship issued under this article while en-

suring the affected individuals retain their full rights.

However, there will be no path to naturalization for these individuals under the new framework.

15-year residency for foreign wives -- The reform introduces a 15-year residency for non-Kuwaiti wives of Kuwaiti citizens, highlighting the government's focus on family stability while safeguarding national identity.

Focus on forged nationalities -- The minister emphasized that there are numerous cases of forged citizenships, which will be addressed through a transparent and systematic process. However, citizenships issued in the 1970s are excluded from scrutiny.

Naturalization delays and processes -- Sheikh Fahad clarified that there is typically a one-year gap between an Amiri decree and the final ministerial decision regarding nationality cases, allowing time for thorough verification and decision-making.

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Kuwaiti investors face rising tides of losses in Syria's tumultuous climate

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: At the end of 2011, as the Syrian revolution began, Kuwaiti investors who had ventured into the country faced growing uncertainty, watching their investments -- and even their properties -- become casualties of the escalating conflict.

Despite being well-versed in the dynamics of any market they entered, Kuwaiti investors couldn't have anticipated the challenges ahead. With

Syria's political landscape changing and opposition forces gaining ground, the fate of these investments was left hanging in the balance.

By the end of 2011, Kuwait had become the third-largest foreign investor in Syria, with official data from the Syrian Investment Authority citing investments totaling \$8 billion.

These investments were primarily in sectors such as banking, real estate, tourism, hotels and contracting, following Turkish and Saudi Arabian investments.

However, as the revolution unfolded, investors lost clarity on the fate of their assets. Over the next decade, questions persisted about the future of these investments, with experts differing on the outlook for Syria's economic recovery.

Experts like Dr. Fouad Al-Omar, a banking and administrative expert, remain cautiously optimistic. He acknowledged that Syria has great potential, especially in agriculture and medium-sized industries.

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Citizenship revocations report endorsed

Kuwait Cabinet briefed on 26th Arabian Gulf Cup preparations

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet was briefed on Tuesday with a visual presentation shown by Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi regarding ongoing preparations for the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup to be hosted by Kuwait from December 21 until January 3.

The meeting was held at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji said in a statement after the meeting.

Al-Mutairi, also head of the supreme committee organizing the event, affirmed

that the political leadership is paying much attention to the championship.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is closely following the preparations regarding making the event in a manner that lives up to Kuwait's position, Al-Mutairi said, stressing readiness of all sports facilities for the tournament.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister directed accelerating the submission of all projects related to developing infrastructure, residential cities and others that would help push for creating investment opportunities and jobs for Kuwaitis.

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Day by Day

ONCE again I would like to stress the importance of expanding the authority granted to governors.

It will be beneficial to study the roles and responsibilities of governors in some advanced countries, where they have significant control over their regions and often compete with one another.

In certain cases, they even have the authority to impose specific fees. Governors in these countries are the primary leaders of their regions and maintain direct communication with the country's head of state, presenting their plans for execution.

Additionally, in some countries, governors are elected through competitive and rigorous elections, further enhancing their accountability and influence.

... Yet, tomorrow is a new day.

Zahed Matar

Kuwait reaffirms commitment to aviation cybersecurity pact

MUSCAT, Dec 11, (KUNA): Chairman of Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah on Wednesday affirmed significance of the "Muscat Ministerial Declaration" that focuses on the aviation cybersecurity and protecting the sector's infrastructure.

Sheikh Humoud was speaking to KUNA on the margins of his participation in the 8th edition of the "security week for the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO 2024)", hosted by the Omani capital. He was there as representative of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister Defense Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah.

He said the declaration, adopted during the meeting, is a crucial

step for setting priorities for international aviation security, in preparation for the 42nd general assembly of ICAO in September 2025.

The gathering witnessed discussion panels on means of attaining balance between security requirements and sustainability goals of the aviation sector.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Humoud held talks with the Omani Minister of Communications and Transport Saeed bin Hamoud Al-Mawali and the Qatari Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Thani. He affirmed during the meetings necessity of coordination with the sister countries on aviation topics.

The ICAO meeting kicked off last Monday. It will proceed until Thursday.



2 Qatar embassy marks National Day in Kuwait with pomp and pageantry

8 NBK's Run kit collection center starts receiving applicants



9 Gulf Bank hosts 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People' workshop led by Fareah Al-Saqaf

10 Burgan Bank sponsors KIPCO Asianet News Education Excellence Award 2024

Interior embraces smart traffic tech

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Ministry of Interior has confirmed its commitment to investing in technological advancements in the field of traffic security across the country's streets and roads, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

On its official account on the X platform, the ministry explained that new technologies play a crucial role in improving adherence to traffic laws and reducing accidents caused by violations, thus enhancing road safety.

These technologies are particularly effective in monitoring infractions such as using a mobile phone while driving and not wearing a seatbelt.

The ministry emphasizes that artificial intelligence is one of the modern and distinctive tools contributing to the improvement of traffic safety.

NewsWatch

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait has reaffirmed its backing to all international efforts aiming to prevent and end conflicts, alleviate human sufferings and enhance global security, stability, prosperity.

Diplomatic Attache of the Kuwait Permanent Mission to the United Nations Rashed Al-Abhouh said this during a special UN General Assembly session on coordinating UN global humanitarian efforts.

The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has tripled over the past five years to reach nearly 40 million people, Al-Abhouh regretted.

He called for financing the UN Central Emergency Response Fund to help it provide humanitarian and relief aid to people in need everywhere in an effective and coordinated manner. (KUNA)

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:07 Asr 14:32
 Sunrise .. 06:32 Maghrib .. 16:50
 Zohr 11:41 Isha 18:12

Local



First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defense Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, and Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Ali bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud during the cake-cutting ceremony.

Qatar embassy marks National Day in Kuwait with pomp and pageantry

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Embassy of Qatar in Kuwait celebrated the National Day of the State of Qatar, also known as the Founder's Day, which marks the assumption of power by the founder of the State of Qatar Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammad bin Thani Al-Thani, in the presence of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defense Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, and several ambassadors and diplomats.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the celebratory event, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad affirmed that the numerous political, sports, and social celebrations in Kuwait this month reflect the country's prominent position among the Gulf states.

Occasions

He said, "All these occasions coinciding this month is a testament to the strength of our relations, and we ask Allah for more of such occasions, celebrations, and stability."

Prince Sultan extended his congratulations to the Qatari people, especially the Ambassador of Qatar to Kuwait Ali Al-Mahmoud and the entire Qatari Embassy in Kuwait, as well as to the Qatari leadership under His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, stating, "Their joy is shared by all."

Regarding the Kuwaiti-Saudi relations, particularly in light of recent receptions and visits, the ambassador said, "I summarized the relations between the two brotherly countries in my speech at the Saudi National Day celebrations in the following manner - Every person must understand the special nature of Saudi-Kuwaiti relations, which stems from the fact that the founder of the Saudi state, King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud, set out from Kuwait. This encapsulates all aspects of our relationship including political, economic, media, security, military, social, personal, and familial. It is a bond that cannot be fully captured in volumes, as our bilateral relationship is exceptional."

Meanwhile, the Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi extended his congratulations and blessings to the State of Qatar, its leadership, government, and people, on the anniversary of the Founder's Day under the leadership of Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani. He prayed to Allah that Qatar continues to progress and thrive within the Gulf system.

Dr. Al-Kharousi also congratulated the Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Ali bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, on this joyful occasion, expressing hope that Qatar continues to develop each year along with other countries in the Gulf region.

Furthermore, the Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Shaltout expressed his happiness at being present for the Qatar Embassy's celebration of the National Day of Qatar.

Relations

In a press statement, he said the Egyptian-Qatari relations are deep-rooted in history.

The ambassador wished Qatar, its leadership, government, and people continued prosperity and progress under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir of Qatar.

Regarding the start of construction on the new Egyptian consulate, Ambassador Shaltout explained that a delegation will soon arrive to review the project, followed by the selection of a consulting firm and a contracting company, adding that the consulate is expected to be completed within 20 months.

Ambassador Shaltout expressed hope for a future link between Egypt's labor platform and Kuwait's labor recruitment system.

Concerning the meeting between the Egyptian Deputy Foreign Minister for Immigration Affairs and several community members in Cairo, he explained that several issues concerning the Egyptian citizens in Kuwait were discussed. These included

matters related to identification documents, such as passport issuance, facilitating access to Egyptian projects, improving transaction completion, and ensuring citizens benefit from these services.

Furthermore, the Ambassador of China to Kuwait Zhang Jinwei extended his congratulations to the State of Qatar, wishing it continued progress and prosperity.

He highlighted the distinguished relations between China and Qatar, and the strong strategic ties not only between the two countries but also between China and all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations.

Ambassador Zhang affirmed that Qatar is a key partner for China, particularly with its inclusion in the Belt and Road Initiative, which has contributed to a huge volume of trade between the two nations.

He indicated that the two countries are working together to enhance cooperation in various sectors.

On the topic of development projects between Kuwait and China, Ambassador Zhang stated that both countries are focused on enhancing growth and development, as the world increasingly needs stability and progress.

He reaffirmed that Kuwait and China share strategic relations, and emphasized the importance of cooperating in all fields.

The ambassador expressed optimism about the future and the ongoing efforts to elevate bilateral ties to the highest level.

Regarding the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, Ambassador Zhang said consultations and coordination are ongoing with the Kuwaiti side to advance the development of the port and other collaborative projects.

He conveyed optimism about the future of cooperation between the two nations, highlighting the significant progress made so far.

Progress

Also, the UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Matar Hamed Al-Neyadi congratulated both the UAE and the people of Qatar on the occasion of Qatar's National Day, wishing further progress and prosperity under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad.

He said the celebration in Qatar is a celebration shared by all Gulf capitals, affirming that the joy and achievements of the day belong to the entire Gulf region.

Ambassador Al-Neyadi also extended his congratulations to the Qatari Ambassador for the excellent organization of the celebration.

In response to a question about the situation in Syria, he stated that the events in Syria are an internal matter, and he expressed hope for stability, security, and safety for the Syrian people.

Ambassador Al-Neyadi highlighted that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, in their recent summit, focused on economic matters and Gulf cohesion, with the aim of benefiting from the available resources within the GCC countries for mutual benefit.

In addition, the Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Al-Safi congratulated the Qatari Ambassador and all embassy staff on the occasion of Qatar's National Day, wishing the Qatari government and people continued progress and prosperity.

He affirmed that Qatari-Iraqi relations are excellent, and highlighted the strong coordination between the two governments on matters of mutual interest.

Regarding the participation of Iraqi fans in the upcoming Gulf 26, which will be hosted by Kuwait, the ambassador explained that a platform has been launched by the Kuwaiti authorities. This platform does not set a specific number of fans or supporters for the Iraqi team, as the event is not a friendly match and is not governed by FIFA or the Asian Football Federation regulations. The number of fans will instead depend on the number of available tickets.

When asked about the issue of demarcating maritime borders between Iraq and Kuwait beyond point 162, Ambassador Al-Safi said meetings related to this matter will commence soon, though he refrained from specifying the location, only indicating that they are just around the corner.



Editor-in Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times Ahmed Al-Jarallah (center) with the Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad (left), and other dignitaries attended the National Day of Qatar ceremony.

Delays led to failure of vital educational projects: Audit

Technical, admin challenges highlighted

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: According to a report issued by the State Audit Bureau (SAB), delays in the implementation of important educational projects overseen by the National Center for Education Development have led to failure in achieving full benefit from them, despite the financial allocations being approved since the 2016/2017 fiscal year.

One such project is the teacher licensing initiative, which was initially scheduled to end in March 2020 but has been extended to March 2026, resulting in an implementation period of ten years. This extension has negatively impacted the achievement of the project's intended goals.

The report cited several reasons for the de-

lay, including inadequate advance planning, delays in issuing administrative licenses, and various legal and administrative obstacles in securing the necessary resources.

Despite the approval of these projects years ago, they were not completed within the originally planned timelines. The teacher licensing project, in particular, was designed to enhance teachers' skills and improve curricula in order to elevate the quality of the educational process.

SAB highlighted that the implementation of the project continues to face both technical and administrative challenges, which prevent it from achieving its intended benefits, despite a budget allocation of KD 776,837 for its execution.

SAB's report affirmed the urgency for resolving all obstacles hindering the progress of these projects. It called for the development of a clear and practical plan to ensure the attainment of the project's goals and to enhance the quality of education in Kuwait.

Furthermore, it stressed the importance of improving coordination between the relevant parties and making the necessary administra-

tive and legal adjustments to guarantee the project's success.

In parallel, educational sources explained that the teacher license project is a pivotal initiative aimed at improving the quality of education in Kuwait. The project seeks to prepare and develop educational staff by providing a clear framework for evaluating teachers' performance. It positions the teacher license as a benchmark for ensuring the efficiency of educators and aligning their qualifications with the demands of modern education.

The sources highlighted that the project plays a vital role in hiring qualified teachers capable of delivering a high standard of education, and motivating educators to enhance their professional performance and adhere to educational quality standards.

They indicated that, with the implementation of the teacher license project, improvements in educational outcomes are expected from the development of students' skills to the achievement of the New Kuwait 2035 vision's goals, which focus on building a sustainable knowledge economy that relies on education as a fundamental pillar.

'Need to boost education values and thinking skills'

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei is continuing to hold open dialogue sessions with professionals in the education field.

He recently held a meeting with directors of intermediate schools from various educational zones to discuss the most prominent issues and challenges affecting the workflow. He also listened to the needs and aspirations of those in charge of these schools.

They affirmed the importance of the intermediate stage in shaping students' personalities and preparing them for the secondary stage. Emphasis was placed on strengthening educational values and enhancing critical thinking skills among students.

Several ideas were proposed to implement modern educational programs aimed at enhancing the student experience during this stage and aligning it with global advancements in education.

The minister listened attentively to the interventions of the school directors, who touched on a range of educational issues, including infrastructure needs, providing technological support in classrooms, and other concerns.

The importance of continuous cooperation between the ministry and school administrations to achieve common goals was emphasized.

During the session, the Director of Othman bin Mazon Intermediate School for Boys Dr. Abdul Mohsen Al-Azmi highlighted the keenness of the Minister of Education to identify challenges and proposals and review potential solutions.

He commended the minister for prioritizing the most important issues that support and improve the quality of education and related matters.

Meanwhile, Dr. Jassim Al-Ali, Director-General of the National Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education, reaffirmed that improving the quality of education in Kuwait's higher education institutions remains a core objective of the Authority, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Dr. Al-Ali shared insights after co-chairing a visual presentation, alongside Ambassador Sadiq Marafi, Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs, to European ambassadors in Kuwait.

The presentation aimed to familiarize them with the Agency's work and its standards for accrediting scientific programs and higher education institutions abroad.

Dr. Al-Ali emphasized that the Authority also works to accredit or add programs and institutions outside Kuwait whose certificates are recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education.



Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives Bangladeshi Ambassador to the country, Sayed Tariq Hussain in his office.

Kuwait, B'desh discuss ties

Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday Bangladeshi Ambassador to the country, Sayed

Tariq Hussain, as they discussed strengthening bilateral ties across all fields, as well as issues of common interest. (KUNA)

MEW strives 24/7 to maintain quality of fresh, usable water

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: According to informed sources at the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, the ministry's Water Exports Development Center conducted 157,501 chemical and bacteriological analyses in 2023 to ensure water quality.

The ministry took 5,896 samples from filling points, and carried out 111 inspections of distillation stations and 115 studies during the same period.

The sources affirmed the ministry's keenness to produce fresh water that meets international health standards for human consumption, with strict supervision provided around the clock by the center's staff.

They explained that samples of fresh water pumped into the network are collected from various points along its journey to the consumers, including tanker filling stations, water towers, mosques, schools, and suburban centers. These samples are then chemically and bacteriologically tested in the laboratories associated with the ministry to ensure the water's quality.

In the same context, the Ministry of Electricity and Water will hold a meeting today with a team of World Bank experts to review the progress of reforms aimed at improving Kuwait's ranking in the Business Environment Improvement Program.

Sources explained that the meeting seeks

to enhance operations and expedite the completion of transactions to facilitate procedures for investors in Kuwait by simplifying internal processes and ensuring the smooth and efficient completion of transactions without disruption or delays.

The meeting will focus on reducing the time required to complete transactions, in collaboration with the Direct Investment Promotion Authority. Discussions will address the regulatory framework and procedures related to water and electricity services in Kuwait, as well as the reliability of electricity and water supplies and the necessary steps for connecting to the service network.

The meeting will address policies related to energy efficiency, in line with the ministry's efforts to improve energy production and ensure its sustainability for the future. This aligns with the state's goals to enhance energy, particularly through renewable energy projects.

The meeting underscores the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy's commitment to strengthening cooperation with international institutions, with the aim of improving Kuwait's business environment and facilitating procedures for both local and international investors.

In addition, the ministry aims to support Kuwait's long-term vision for sustainable development by improving the efficiency of the electricity and water sectors, while providing an investment climate that encourages growth and development in various economic sectors.

Shift allowances for info probation workers put on hold

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: In a move aimed at improving administrative procedures, the Ministry of Information has decided to stop paying shift allowances to new employees during their probationary period, which lasts for six months from their date of appointment.

According to an informed ministry source, the decision aligns with Civil Service Council Resolution No. (12) of 2012, which governs overtime and shift allowances for government employees.

The source explained that new employees will not be assigned to a shift system until they successfully complete their probation period, ensuring that only fully integrated staff members receive such allowances.

The source emphasized that any waiver or cancellation of these allowances by the employee or their department will not result in compensation claims until the following fiscal year.

This initiative, the source noted, is part of efforts to streamline human resource management and avoid potential financial

or administrative complications, ensuring a smooth and efficient workflow.

The Ministry of Information has also reaffirmed its commitment to continuously reviewing and enhancing its administrative policies, always striving to meet the needs of its employees while achieving the broader goals of the organization.

This decision represents another step in the Ministry's ongoing efforts to implement best administrative practices and ensure optimal management of public resources.

'We Arabs, Muslims must help Syria restore its pride & dignity'

"IT WAS a moment that felt almost surreal. The Syrian independence flag, once a forgotten emblem buried beneath the weight of oppression, now soared high above embassy buildings around the world. For the first time in decades, it wasn't just fabric fluttering in the wind -- it was the very symbol of a nation reclaiming its identity, its dignity and its rightful place on the global stage," columnist and Kuwaiti writer **Tariq Idris** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The sight of it stirred something deep within me. As a writer and an observer, I've often chronicled stories of struggle and resilience, but this -- this was a tale of a people who endured the unthinkable and emerged, not unscathed, but undeniably unbroken."



Tariq Idris

"The Syrian people, united by their shared pain and unyielding spirit, had risen against the odds. Their victory wasn't just over a regime; it was a triumph for principles that transcend borders: freedom, justice, equality and dignity."

"This was a new Syria, led by a wise leadership that embraced all its citizens, irrespective of sect or creed. In this Syria, the past was not forgotten -- it couldn't be -- but it no longer defined the future."

"The flag's ascent was a beacon, signaling not just independence but a newfound commitment to Arab unity, proud citizenship and the respect that comes with standing tall on the right side of history."

"Yet, this journey is far from over. Stability is a fragile thread that must be woven with care. The struggles of this proud, patient people demand not just admiration but active support. As I reflect on their journey, I can't help but recall the generosity of the Syrian people, who, even in their darkest hours, extended kindness and hospitality to those who needed it most."

"For seven months, they embraced us, rose above their wounds and supported our just causes. It is now our turn to return that favor."

"Our governments, Gulf, Arab and Islamic alike, must rise to the occasion. The time for symbolic gestures has passed, now is the moment for meaningful action."

"Let us honor Syria's sacrifice by respecting the will of its people and supporting its new leadership with all the tools and resources at our disposal. This is how we repay a debt of solidarity and ensure Syria's place as a beacon of pride and dignity in the Arab world."

"When I think of the dark era that came before -- the decades of persecution, imprisonment and alienation -- I am struck by the resilience of the human spirit."

"Watching documentaries about the prisons and strongholds of the old regime only deepens my empathy for this afflicted nation. The regime that ruled with fear and brutality is gone, swept away by the tide of history, leaving behind only the scars it inflicted. But scars are reminders of survival, not defeat."

"Today, the Syrian flag flies not just over embassies but over the hearts of a people reborn. It folds up the dusty pages of a painful past and opens a chapter bathed in the light of freedom."

"From the Euphrates to the Yarmouk, from the Orontes to the Barada, a new dawn breaks over Syria. It is a morning filled with the promise of peace, prosperity and stability."

"As I write these words, I am filled with hope and gratitude -- gratitude for the resilience of the Syrian people and hope for the bright future that lies ahead."

"This is not just Syria's victory -- it is a victory for all who believe in the enduring power of freedom and justice."

"And for that, I say: Praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds, for the blessing of liberation and salvation. May this new era bring nothing but goodness to Syria and its people."

Also:

"In 2016, I shared a simple tweet on the X platform (formerly Twitter). It was meant as a message of hope and consolation for our Syrian brothers and sisters in Aleppo, who had just endured unimaginable suffering," columnist **Abdul Aziz Al-Fadhli** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

"After the relentless bombardment of the city by the ousted Syrian regime's forces, the resistance fighters and revolutionaries chose to withdraw alongside the remaining residents, prioritizing the preservation of lives over further bloodshed."

"In my tweet, I wrote: 'We console the people of Aleppo after the last batches of residents and fighters left the city, that your beloved Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, left Makkah, under duress, then returned to it as a conqueror.'"

"My intention was clear: to remind them that despair has no place in the hearts of believers and that history teaches us the cyclical nature of life. Just as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) returned to Makkah as a victorious conqueror after eight years of exile, so too would the people of Aleppo and indeed all of Syria, reclaim their cities from oppression."

"Throughout history, Muslims have faced dire circumstances that seemed insurmountable. One of the darkest chapters was in 1219 AD, when the Tatar army ravaged the heart of the Islamic Caliphate, Baghdad."

"They killed the Caliph, plundered Palestine and the Levant and left a trail of devastation that claimed the lives of over 800,000 Muslims."

"Ibn al-Athir, the great historian of

the time, hesitated to document these events, believing they heralded the end of the world. He lamented, 'Who can easily write the obituary of Islam and Muslims and who can easily mention that? I wish my mother had not given birth to me and I wish I had died before this and been forgotten.'

"Yet, only 40 years later, the tide turned. In 1260 AD, Al-Muzaffar Qutuz led a courageous army into the Battle of Ain Jalut, delivering a crushing defeat to the Tatars. What seemed impossible became a reality through steadfast faith, preparation and perseverance."

"Today, similar struggles continue in Gaza, where our brothers and sisters endure genocide and unimaginable hardships. Yet, history reminds us that no oppressive regime lasts forever."

"Just as the Assad regime faltered after believing in its eternal rule, so too will Netanyahu's dominance crumble. Gaza will emerge victorious and Al-Aqsa Mosque will be liberated."

"Victory, however, is not achieved by faith alone. It requires tireless effort, unity and action. As believers, we are called to never lose hope, even in the darkest circumstances."

"As I reflect on Aleppo and the resilience of its people, I draw parallels to the ongoing struggle for Jerusalem. The pain of displacement, the loss of lives and the destruction of cities are profound, but so too is the unyielding spirit of those who fight for justice and freedom."

"History has shown us that oppression is never permanent and justice eventually prevails. From Aleppo to Gaza, from Baghdad to Jerusalem, the stories of resilience and faith are woven into the fabric of our collective history. It is a reminder that the future belongs to those who believe, strive and place their trust in the Almighty."



"The participation of civil society in fostering societal development -- whether directly or indirectly -- is of paramount importance. Community involvement can bring transformative changes to neighborhoods and provinces, ensuring growth and sustainability," columnist and former Deputy Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The establishment of provincial councils or residential area councils can play a pivotal role in beautifying, developing and managing local affairs."

"While these councils can operate autonomously, it is vital to unify their efforts under a central framework. This ensures that services are consistent, well-coordinated and delivered with high quality across all regions."

"Such initiatives provide a platform for civil society to collaborate with government entities, creating an inclusive environment where collective efforts contribute to the prosperity of the community."

"Why not empower the residents of these areas to play a direct role in their development? Individuals or groups can take the lead in greening, beautifying and maintaining their neighborhoods. Such initiatives could also foster friendly competition between regions, inspiring creativity and pride in community projects."

"I am a girl who competitions that award the most beautiful street, the best-maintained cooperative society, or the most innovative park. These activities can be spearheaded by youth and retirees -- both men and women -- who are eager to contribute."

"Their involvement could include tasks like organizing beautification efforts, ensuring cleanliness and reporting violations to authorities through streamlined, responsive communication channels."

"Residents acting as 'civil eyes' could assist local authorities such as traffic, municipal and other essential services. These vigilant efforts would ensure better upkeep and quick resolutions to issues, while also promoting a culture of accountability and partnership between citizens and government."

"Some remarkable examples already exist. The transformation of the Al-Shamiya Youth Center from a neglected space to a thriving green hub, thanks to the efforts of dedicated Kuwaiti women and supportive authorities, demonstrates what can be achieved."

"This initiative not only revived the space but also provided a vital outlet for psychological and athletic well-being for the area's residents."

"These women didn't stop there -- they extended their vision to local schools and expressed a willingness to collaborate further with government and private entities. Their example is a testament to how community-driven projects can create lasting positive impacts."

"The recent directives to involve citizens in shaping future projects are a commendable step. Such engagement fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, reminding everyone that contributing to the country's progress is a collective duty -- even for a nation as resource-rich as Kuwait."

"Let us celebrate and encourage these initiatives, thanking those who take the lead in making their communities better. Whether it's beautifying streets, creating services for diverse age groups, or transforming neglected spaces, every effort adds value to the nation."

"To all those contributing to such endeavors, thank you -- a thousand thanks -- for your commitment and inspiration."

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes**



KUNA photo

The Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, Major General Pilot Sabah Al-Jaber is briefed on the new academy project.

'New academy to upgrade army standards'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Major General Pilot Sabah Al-Jaber, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, visited the site of the new Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy project Tuesday, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

During the visit, he received a

briefing on the project's various aspects and challenges before conducting a field tour.

He emphasized the importance of adhering to top quality standards during construction to ensure the project stays on schedule and creates a fully integrated educa-

tional environment for future students.

He expressed confidence that the new academy will become a distinguished institution, contributing to the development and qualification of student officers and military personnel at the highest levels.

7 get 7 years in jail, deportation in electronic trading fraud case

'Zero tolerance against financial crimes'

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: In a landmark final verdict the Court of Cassation closed one of the most significant electronic trading fraud cases in the country's history.

Seven defendants were each sentenced to seven years imprisonment with hard labor, followed by deportation. Their crimes included money laundering, fraud and embezzlement of a staggering 157,000 Kuwaiti dinars.

It all began when a Kuwaiti citizen fell victim to a sophisticated scam. A 53-year-old Arab resident and a 26-year-old African lured him with promises of lucrative financial gains via electronic trading platforms.

Through persuasive phone calls, they convinced the man to part with his money, only to disappear with the funds.

Initially hesitant to report the crime, the victim assumed that the perpetrators, believed to be operating from abroad, were beyond the reach of local authorities. However, his eventual decision to file a report set the wheels of justice in motion.

When the authorities apprehended the two defendants, they uncovered a much larger scheme. The duo was part of an international fraud network headquartered in a European country. This network included five additional members, all European nationals, who coordinated their criminal activities from overseas.

The decision issued by the Court of Cassation affirmed the rulings of the lower courts, delivering justice for the victim and reinforcing Kuwait's zero-tolerance stance against financial crimes.

The victim's attorney, Ala'a Al-Saeedi, reflect-

ed on the case as a cautionary tale. She urged anyone facing similar scams to report the crimes immediately, regardless of the perpetrators' location. "My client," she explained, "initially hesitated to file a complaint, thinking the scammers were untouchable abroad."

She also warned the public to remain vigilant by not trusting unsolicited offers of financial gains through electronic platforms; verifying platforms and traders by consulting approved and licensed institutions in Kuwait and carefully reviewing contracts and commercial licenses before committing to any transaction.

The case stands as a stark reminder of the increasing sophistication of cybercrime. Kuwait's legal system has proven its dedication to protecting its citizens and ensuring justice, even when crimes cross international borders.

For the victim, the ruling ended his misery, while for the public, it served as a powerful lesson in the importance of vigilance and trust in official channels.

MPW seeks SAB nod for change order to Mutla'a City's contract

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) recently submitted a change order No. 1/2024 for contract No. 245/2024 to establish roads and intersections serving the future Mutla'a City to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for review, audit, and approval. This submission is in line with SAB's circular No. 6/2024, which outlines the procedures and rules that entities under SAB's oversight must follow for prior approval.

According to informed sources, the

change order, valued at KD 7.213 million, is related to the required protective measures for the existing and new oil pipelines managed by the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC).

The main objective of the contract is to improve traffic flow, reduce accidents, and enhance safety and security on the road connecting Abdali Road to the west, extending to the city of Subiya to the east. The road spans 33 km, with three lanes in each direction, and the potential to add an additional lane in each direction in the future. The contract also includes the construction of five intersections.

Salary on hold for revoked nationality female workers

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Ministry of Social Affairs, represented by the Financial and Administrative Affairs Sector, has stopped paying monthly salaries to its female employees whose citizenships were withdrawn based on the recent decisions and decrees, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

According to informed sources, the ministry has allowed these employees to continue their office work as usual, pending further instructions from the concerned authorities regarding the resumption of their salary payments.

As of yesterday, the ministry had not received any directives regarding whether to continue paying their monthly salaries following their official loss of citizenship.

The number of affected employees is not large, and some have submitted requests for early retirement in order to benefit from financial and end-of-service entitlements, fearing that their names may be included in future lists of individuals whose citizenships are revoked.

Al-Suwaidan acquitted in defamation lawsuit

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Court of Appeal, presided over by Judge Nasser Salem Al-Haid, upheld the acquittal of Dr. Tariq Al-Suwaidan in a State Security case.

The Public Prosecution had accused Dr. Al-Suwaidan of carrying out a hostile act against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the Kingdom of Jordan by misusing telephone communication, and using offensive language via X platform in media campaigns that could harm Kuwait's relations with these countries.

In its ruling, the court stated that the posts in question did not constitute a hostile act but rather represented a form of criticism regarding the events in Gaza, an issue that has been universally recognized as an international concern, especially for Muslims.

The court highlighted that Al-Suwaidan identified himself as a supporter of Palestine and the children of Gaza.

In addition, the same court upheld the acquittal of the former director general of Kuwait Ports Authority and other officials who were accused of seizing public funds through salaries and benefits, as it was proven that no crime had been committed.

Court acquits Al-Alawi: The Criminal Court acquitted Dr. Tariq Al-Alawi of charges of challenging the rights and authority of His Highness the Amir and broadcasting false news that could undermine the prestige of the state via the X platform.

In a separate case, the Criminal Court adjourned to January 8 for the defendant's defense requests, the first session of the trial of former MP Saleh Al-Mulla in a State Security case, following a complaint filed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he had insulted the Palestinian president on the X platform amid the events in Palestine.

Fraudster sent to trial: The Public Prosecution referred the owner of a real estate company to trial on charges of fraud, deception, and money laundering related to a hotel project in Makkah following his arrest. The court has scheduled a session on December 23 to review the case file.

The accused had previously promoted the sale of hotel apartments in Mecca, and sold a fictitious project to several citizens.

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EU, Kuwait strengthen human rights cooperation

Ambassador Koistinen highlights ongoing dialogue and collaboration

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: "What we are witnessing these days in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Ukraine, Sudan, and other parts of the world is a painful reminder that human rights for all individuals are equally important. This includes all rights outlined in the United Nations Charter, which include civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights," says the Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait, Ann Koistinen.

In her speech on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day that was celebrated yesterday under the theme "Our Rights, Our Future", the ambassador affirmed that human rights apply to everyone, everywhere, and at all times, even in times of conflict or crisis, adding that human rights represent the core of the European Union's founding treaties.

Ambassador Koistinen highlighted that human rights remain a priority in the EU's foreign policy, and the EU is committed to building partnerships with other countries, including Kuwait, to defend the United Nations Charter and the international system based on rules and regulations.

Cooperation with Kuwait

Ambassador Koistinen affirmed that human rights are one of the areas of cooperation between the European Union and Kuwait, both at the government and civil society levels.

She highlighted the fifth round of the EU-Kuwait annual human rights dialogue, held last week, which was chaired by the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights Sheikh Jawaher Al-Sabah.



Ambassador Ann Koistinen and key officials gather to mark International Human Rights Day in Kuwait.

Photos by Rezk Tawfiq

Ambassador Koistinen stressed that this dialogue is a vital platform for cooperation to assess the recent developments in human rights, exchange views on respecting these rights, and strengthening collaboration in areas of mutual interest, such as women empowerment.

She acknowledged the support for various initiatives aimed at promoting

human rights in Kuwait in all sectors of society, adding that the Kuwait Society for Human Rights is a prime example of this collaboration.

Ambassador Koistinen said the EU had previously contributed to funding different stages of the "Together" project, which focuses on the rights of migrant workers.

Humanitarian Crises

Head of the United Nations Migration Mission in Kuwait Mazen Abu Al-Hassan affirmed the need to recognize the ongoing and emerging challenges that continue to threaten basic human rights.

He said the ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises have resulted in severe

human rights violations, including displacement, violence, and loss of life.

Systematic Discrimination

Abu Al-Hassan highlighted the rising inequality and systematic discrimination, where economic disparity exacerbates poverty and limits access to basic rights such as healthcare, education, and housing.

He stressed the importance of educating migrants about their rights before departure, ensuring fair contracts upon arrival, and providing decent working and living conditions during their stay.

In this regard, a member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights Ahmed Al-Saleh explained that this meeting marks the culmination of an important phase in the "Together" project, which is a collaboration between the Kuwait Society for Human Rights and the European Union Mission to the State of Kuwait. The goal is to work together to protect human rights in Kuwait, as outlined and guaranteed in the country's Constitution and various laws and legislations.

He said, "We are pleased to celebrate the 76th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and we affirm that human rights empower individuals to build more peaceful, equal, and sustainable societies."

This important phase of the "Together" project will focus on implementing its fourth version, which is a continuation of the project that the Kuwait Society for Human Rights has been running since 2016. The aim is to protect, raise awareness, and educate contracted workers in Kuwait about their rights and duties, and also to advocate for them in labor-related issues.

The project will provide psychological, social, and legal support to workers, as well as study the labor situation in Kuwait by issuing periodic reports that track the government's positive and negative actions in protecting the rights of contracted workers."

Regarding human rights indicators, Al-Saleh confirmed that the society has established many partnerships with both local and international entities to implement the "Together" project during its three previous phases.

He said, "Currently, the society is implementing the fourth phase of the project, after signing an agreement with the Public Authority for Manpower to transform the project into a national initiative that contributes to improving Kuwait's ranking in human rights indicators, with a particular focus on combating human trafficking."

Municipal Council members push for disability access and imams' housing

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Municipal Council member Farah Al-Roumi yesterday submitted a proposal for the establishment of a database to assess the eligibility of existing facilities and buildings for general use by people with disabilities.

The proposal aims to identify the necessary rehabilitation work required to ensure compliance with the Kuwait Code for Accessibility, based on the recently-approved general design, and to determine the standards for the buildings' compatibility with the needs of people with disabilities.

In the preamble to her proposal, Al-Roumi stressed the importance of expediting the implementation of the Kuwait Code for Accessibility to facilitate the adaptation of existing facilities and buildings for general use by people with disabilities.

She highlighted the need for a comprehensive inventory of buildings to

identify the required modifications to meet the code's requirements and achieve the goal of easy integration for people with disabilities.

Meanwhile, the Municipal Council member Alia Al-Farsi submitted an inquiry to the executive body regarding the allocation of family housing for imams and muezzins.

She requested that the municipality provide a detailed description of the standards and criteria used to evaluate requests for family housing allocation for imams and muezzins, both inside and outside the boundaries of mosques.

In her inquiry, Al-Farsi indicated that several transactions had been submitted to the Municipal Council concerning the allocation of spaces for family housing for imams and muezzins, whether inside or outside the mosque's premises.

She stressed that Kuwait has a significant number of mosques compared to its geographical size, according to statistics issued by the Mosques Sector of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.



Photo taken during the specialized training program for administrative supervisors of cooperative societies.

MoSA launches training program for administrative supervisors of coops

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Planning and Administrative Development Sector, represented by the Human Resources Development Center, in collaboration with the Kuwait Lawyers Association, recently launched a specialized training program for administrative supervisors of cooperative societies, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The program, coordinated with the Cooperative Inspection and Monitoring Department, aims to enhance the skills and capabilities needed for overseeing and auditing the work of

cooperative societies.

The Ministry of Social Affairs stated that the launch of this program followed directives from the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood, Dr. Amthal Al-Howaila.

It is part of the Ministry's ongoing efforts to promote transparency, improve the efficiency of cooperative work and ensure the sustainability of the cooperative sector. The initiative also seeks to protect the public welfare and uphold public welfare.



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LOCAL

Kuwait rewrites

Continued from Page 1

Amendments to fill gaps in the law -- A government source revealed that the Council of Ministers is preparing amendments to close loopholes and strengthen Kuwait's nationality law. These changes aim to protect national identity and ensure the integrity of the naturalization process.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Higher Education has instructed affected individuals due to the withdrawal of citizenships to visit the Ministry's headquarters for clearance certificates.

These individuals are required to bring a photocopy of their canceled civil ID and attend in person during the specified hours.

These reforms mark a significant shift in Kuwait's approach to naturalization and citizenship. By addressing issues such as forged identities and loyalty concerns, the government seeks to reinforce national cohesion and identity.

At the same time, the introduction of long-term residency for foreign spouses signals a balanced approach to family integration.

This initiative reflects Kuwait's broader commitment to legal and social reforms, ensuring fairness and integrity while addressing long-standing challenges in nationality policies.

Kuwait Cabinet

Continued from Page 1

The Cabinet tasked all ministers with accelerating following all projects.

In addition, the Cabinet was briefed on a visual presentation submitted by the Ministry of Finance on the report of surveying unused buildings and land, affiliated to government bodies, to exploit them in an optimal manner to preserve public fund.

Out of its keenness on making new opportunities for young cadres to help them contribute to developing action, the Cabinet decided to assign the Civil Service Commission, in coordination with the Public Institution for Social Security, to prepare a study regarding retirement rules at government bodies.

The Cabinet called for giving it, within one month from its date, a report with all measures and sides taken in this regard.

The Council considered the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) a central body concerned with geographical information systems (GIS) on the state level, asking all government agencies to cooperate with the authority and provide all data required.

Furthermore, the Cabinet reviewed some topics on the agenda and approved them.

The Cabinet also endorsed the report of the Supreme Committee to Investigate the Kuwaiti Citizenship that includes the loss and withdrawal of citizenship form some persons, in accordance with the law No. 15 of 1959.

Kuwaiti investors

Continued from Page 1

He stressed, however, that before Syria can attract investment again, the country must stabilize politically and address internal challenges, including the need for comprehensive laws and regulations to support foreign investment.

Real estate expert Abdul Aziz Al-

Daghishm echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that Syria needs time to heal before welcoming foreign investors back.

He expressed hope that the country would eventually recover with the help of its own people, particularly expatriates who may return to rebuild their businesses and projects. However, foreign investments may take longer to materialize.

The war also shifted regional investment patterns. While Lebanon saw an uptick in real estate demand during the Syrian conflict, the situation in Damascus is far more complex. Investors are holding off, awaiting political stability.

Many Kuwaitis, however, have invested in Syrian real estate, purchasing properties in areas close to Turkey or in Damascus, with hopes of future returns once stability is restored.

Meanwhile, the value of Kuwaiti investments in Syria has been severely impacted by the war, with economic activity plunging and assets losing value.

The Syrian pound's collapse -- shifting from 45 pounds to over 20,000 to the dollar -- has exacerbated the problem, making it nearly impossible to exit these investments.

The ongoing conflict has also hindered trade and created strict regulations preventing the transfer of hard currency out of Syria.

Despite these challenges, the Kuwaiti government continues to invest in Syria. The Kuwait United Investment Company, established through joint ministerial committees, has its base in Damascus and invested in various sectors, including banks, industry and investment companies.

Additionally, a financial brokerage company was planned but never materialized due to the worsening conflict.

Kuwaiti private sector investments were also significant, particularly in the banking sector. Kuwaiti investors were among the first to establish private banks in Syria, partnering with local investors.

Plans were also made for an airline named "Pearl of the Levant" and an oil refinery in Deir ez-Zor with a production capacity of 140,000 barrels per day.

However, the airline project was never launched and the refinery was delayed due to the global financial crisis and the worsening situation in Syria.

For many Kuwaiti investors, the future of their assets in Syria remains uncertain. Despite the country's potential, the road to recovery is long and complex, with political stability and new laws needed to pave the way for future investment.

Amir celebrates

Continued from Page 1

In the age of speed and advancement, the foundation has been stepping up its efforts to bolster and cement its competitive edge by means of capitalizing on Kuwait's human capabilities and experts through boosting global competitiveness, creating a future mentality capable of keeping abreast of advancement, linking reality with the future, and preparing for the future.

She pointed out that the foundation has always worked on scientific, professional and research connection between different segments involving academic and research circles, state agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, society in general, and global institutions.

She commended the foundation as a role model in view of knowledge and disseminating it, developing, support-

ing scientific research and promoting science, technology and innovation.

She concluded by thanking and appreciating His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for awarding the winners as proof of appreciation to science and scientists.

Finally, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday honored winners of the Jaber Al-Ahmad Prize for Young Researchers, Kuwait Prize and Al-Sumait Prize for African Development, for the years 2022-2023.

The winners were honored at the award distribution ceremony of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), held at Bayan Palace's theater.

For the 2022 edition of Jaber Al-Ahmad Prize for Young Researchers, Dr. Mohammad Jamal won the award for Medical Sciences and Allied Health Sciences, while Dr. Dhari Al-Huwail was granted the award in field of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

Claiming the Engineering Sciences award was Dr. Yousef Al-Asiri, while Dr. Abdullah Al-Shebli Social took the Sciences and Humanities award and Dr. Abdullah Jawad Sultan the Administration and Economics award.

As for the 2023 edition of the prize, Dr. Zaid Al-Marzouq won the award for Medical Sciences and Allied Health Sciences, Dr. Fatima Al-Rashed for Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and Dr. Amar Bahman the Engineering Sciences award.

As for field of social sciences and humanities, both Dr. Amal Al-Saleh and Dr. Fahad Al-Zumae, were granted the award.

The award was established back in 1988 as an initiative by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to encourage and honor PhD holders.

Kuwait Prize, granted annually to promote research efforts and encourage Arab scientists, was granted to Saudi Arabia's Dr. Fouzan Al-Kuraya for the 2022 edition Basic Sciences field.

As for Moroccan Dr. Khalil bin Al-Haj Amin he was granted the award for Applied Sciences, while Lebanese Dr. Eli Tamer took the award in Economics and Social Sciences.

Moroccan Dr. Saeed Yaktine won the award for Art and literature, and for Emerging interdisciplinary sciences Tunisia's Dr. Mohammad Mattoussi.

The 2023 edition of the award featured Dr. Nashat Nassar of Palestine and Morocco's Mohammad Al-Dowdy for Basic Sciences.

Egypt's Dr. Mohammad Sultan, won the award for field of applied sciences, while Syrian Dr. Dina Al-Qatabi won the award for emerging sciences.

Al-Sumait Prize for African Development, in its 2022 edition was granted to both African Agricultural Technology Foundation, alongside Ugandan Scientist Catherine Nakalembe for their contributions to food security.

As for the 2023 edition, it was given out to CAMFED - Campaign for Female Education for their work in supporting education.

The Al-Sumait Prize for African Development is an initiative by the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in honor of the late Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sumait, who had dedicated his life towards humanitarian and charity work for health, education and food projects in African Nations.

The award aims to recognize the finest studies, scientific projects, applied research and innovative initiatives that have had a significant impact and lasting influence on advancing Africa's economic and social development.

Municipal Council approves Sabah Al-Ahmad expansion

Committee OKs sites for communication towers

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Head of the technical committee in the Municipal Council Munira Al-Amir says the committee, during its meeting yesterday, approved the request of the Public Affairs for Housing Welfare (PAHW) to expand the area east of Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City by 400,000 square meters.

This will bring the total area of the city to 1.6 million square meters. It is aimed at addressing the growing housing needs, particularly for those eligible under law No. 2/2015, i.e., those who sold their homes.

She affirmed that the request of PAHW met all necessary conditions, and the relevant authorities have officially approved the expansion.

In a press statement, Al-Amir revealed that both the Municipal Council and the technical committee give special priority to such requests, as they are carefully reviewed and expedited due to their direct impact on the needs of citizens.

She explained that the technical committee discussed several other requests, including a request to allocate sites for communication towers to serve the state, which was approved.

The committee approved the pro-



Photo by Samer Shiqr

Munira Al-Amir, head of the technical committee in the Municipal Council.

posal submitted by member Nasser Al-Jadaan for the establishment of a training center under the name of "Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association".

Al-Amir affirmed that the technical committee, and all its members, are committed to ensuring that all decisions align with the required procedures for each request, and that decisions are taken as quickly as possible.

She highlighted that these requests often have a direct impact on the country's interests and development plans.

The technical committee referred

two of the five items on its agenda back to the executive body:

□ The proposal submitted by member Dr. Hassan Kamal to update the response in coordination with the municipality's Structural Planning Department and to evaluate and update the traffic study for blocks 1, 2, and 3 of Sabah Al-Salem.

□ The proposal submitted by members Fahad Al-Abdul Jader, Saud Al-Kandari, and Ismail Behbehani to add hotels and motels to the list of establishments, with amendments to the building works regulation.

KIB announces winners of Al Dirwaza account's 2024 campaign weekly draw

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the winners of the weekly draw held under the Al Dirwaza account's 2024 campaign, which is distinguished by the highest number of winners throughout the year. The second weekly draw, based on customers' November deposits, recently took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. The KD 1,000 prize was awarded Ahmad Naser Ghazi Aldammak, Mustafa Ali Hassan Qabazard, Suad Abdulsattar Abdulwahab Almoamen, Hamdan Khlaif Thani Alshammari, Jana Emad Mohammad Alansari, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Khaled Salem Abdullah Alajmi, Jaber Salem Hmoud Alsabah, Mostafa Mohammad Abdulsalam Ahmad, Ahmed Hassan Abdelsalam Hassan, Ahmed Assem Mohamed Mahmoud, Aymen Abdulkareem Ameen Alanasari, Suhailah Abdulrazzaq Abdulal Alasousi.

It serves to note that Al Dirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, launched by KIB as one of its bank-



KIB flyer

ing products for individuals. The account is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the customer gets an expected profit of 2% for the first 3 months from the account opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer's account within the first day of the beginning of each month.

Al Dirwaza account holders are eligible to enter the weekly, monthly and annual draws on the condition of maintaining at least KD 100 in their account. For the weekly and monthly draws, each KD 1 that

has completed a full month's cycle in the account will count for one chance, and chances are calculated based on the lowest monthly balance preceding the draw. As for the mega draw, chances are calculated for each KD 1 that completes a two-month cycle in the account -- based on the lowest two monthly balances prior to the draw.

Al Dirwaza account is also in compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia and approved by the KIB's Sharia Supervisory Board. Furthermore, the account comes with a wide range of benefits, including the ease of opening the account, which does not require a salary transfer, and the customer's ability to open it remotely without visiting a branch through KIB Online on the Bank's website or KIB Mobile application on smartphones.

Additionally, Al Dirwaza account automatically grants customers instant issuance of an ATM card, with a KD 2,000 ATM daily withdrawal limit, as well as the ability to issue credit cards against the cash collateral in the account. To open the account and participate in its draws, a minimum of KD 100 is required and can only be withdrawn upon account closure.

Ministry of Commerce and Industry



RECALL INFORMATION



HONDA PILOT (YF5 & YF6)
Model 2018 & 2019 & 2020

RECALL REASON

Defective fuel pump impeller that could lead to engine stalling while driving and prevent the engine from restarting.

REMEDY

Visit Honda AlGhanim service center aftersales department to take necessary action.

CONTACT

Please visit Honda AlGhanim from 22 November 2024 or book an appointment by contacting the customer service center 1822777.

This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42,43,44,45,46,47and48)of no.(27/2015)

issuing the executive by laws no.(39/2014)on Consumer Protection

DGCA, Awqaf ministry ensure safe Hajj trips

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Abdullah Al-Rajhi, Deputy Director General for Aviation Safety, Air Transport, and Aviation Security at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, announced that a meeting with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs focused on ensuring safe and efficient Hajj trips for pilgrims, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The meeting aimed to provide services that meet the needs of Hajj pilgrims at the Kuwait International Airport.

Al-Rajhi explained that discussions included organizing flights by air carriers from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, based on allocated numbers, in coordination with the Ministry of Awqaf and licensed Hajj caravans.

At the top of the agenda was a key topic -- ensuring affordable flight prices for pilgrims.

The two parties agreed to hold a follow-up meeting with air carriers and relevant authorities to finalize the arrangements and ensure smooth operations.

Nama charity sends relief to Sri Lanka amidst flood crisis

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: In its ongoing humanitarian efforts, Nama Charity, affiliated with the Social Reform Association, has sent a relief delegation to Sri Lanka, led by Khaled Al-Shimmari, Director of the Relief Department, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The team aims to provide urgent assistance to families affected by recent floods that have caused significant loss of life and property.

The delegation is distributing hundreds of food baskets and providing essential supplies to the affected families, who are facing shortages of food and clean drinking water.

Al-Shimmari emphasized that this visit is part of an immediate response to alleviate the suffering of the victims, in coordination with local and international partners to ensure the swift delivery of aid.

He also highlighted that Nama's efforts reflect Kuwait's humanitarian values and expressed gratitude to the donors and supporters who make this mission possible.

Al-Shimmari called on philanthropists to continue their support to help as many people in need as possible, affirming that Nama will continue its mission to uphold Kuwait's position as a leader in global humanitarian work.

Ministry of Commerce and Industry



RECALL INFORMATION



HONDA ACCORD (CV1 & CV2)
Model 2017 & 2018 & 2019 & 2020

RECALL REASON

Defective fuel pump impeller that could lead to engine stalling while driving and prevent the engine from restarting.

REMEDY

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Trump approach will often be to challenge people: Canada PM

US President-elect Trump returns to world stage, trolling opportunities

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump's recent dinner with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his visit to Paris for the reopening of the Notre Dame Cathedral were not just exercises in policy and diplomacy.

They were also prime trolling opportunities for Trump.

Throughout his first term in the White House and during his campaign to return, Trump has spun out countless provocative, antagonizing and mocking statements. There were his belittling nicknames for political opponents, his impressions of other political figures and the plentiful memes he shared on social media.

Now that's he's preparing to return to the Oval Office, Trump is back at it, and his trolling is attracting more attention - and eyerolls.

On Sunday, Trump turned a photo of himself seated near a smiling First Lady Jill Biden at the Notre Dame ceremony into a social media promo for his new perfume and cologne line, with the tag line, "A fragrance your enemies can't resist!"

The first lady's office declined to comment.

When Trudeau hastily flew to Florida to meet with Trump last month over the president-elect's threat to impose a 25% tax on all Canadian products entering the US, the Republican tossed out the idea that Canada become the 51st US state.

The Canadians passed off the comment as a joke, but Trump has continued to play up the dig, including in a post Tuesday morning on his social media network referring to the prime minister as "Governor Justin Trudeau of the Great State of Canada."

After decades as an entertainer and tabloid fixture, Trump has a flair for the provocative that is aimed at attracting attention and, in his most recent incarnation as a politician, mobilizing fans. He has long relished poking at his opponents, both to demean and minimize them and to delight supporters who share his irreverent comments and posts widely online and cheer for them in person.

Trump, to the joy of his fans, first publicly needled Canada on his social media network a week ago when he posted an AI-generated image that showed him standing on a mountain with a Canadian flag next to him and the caption "Oh Canada!"



This screenshot from Donald Trump's Truth Social account shows an image of President-elect Donald Trump standing beside a Canadian flag. (AP)

After his latest post, Canadian Immigration Minister Marc Miller said Tuesday: "It sounds like we're living

in an episode of South Park."

Trudeau said earlier this week that when it comes to Trump, "his approach

will often be to challenge people, to destabilize a negotiating partner, to offer uncertainty and even sometimes a bit of chaos into the well established hallways of democracies and institutions and one of the most important things for us to do is not to freak out, not to panic."

Even Thanksgiving dinner isn't a trolling-free zone for Trump's adversaries.

On Thanksgiving Day, Trump posted a movie clip from "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation" with President Joe Biden and other Democrats' faces superimposed on the characters in a spoof of the turkey-carving scene.

The video shows Trump appearing to explode out of the turkey in a swirl of purple sparks, with the former president stiffly dancing to one of his favorite songs, Village People's "Y.M.C.A."

In his most recent presidential campaign, Trump mocked Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, refusing to call his GOP primary opponent by his real name and instead dubbing him "Ron De-Sanctimonious." He added, for good measure, in a post on his Truth Social network: "I will never call Ron De-Sanctimonious 'Meatball' Ron, as the

Fake News is insisting I will."

As he campaigned against Biden, Trump taunted him in online posts and with comments and impressions at his rallies, deriding the president over his intellect, his walk, his golf game and even his beach body.

After Vice President Kamala Harris took over Biden's spot as the Democratic nominee, Trump repeatedly suggested she never worked at McDonalds while in college. Trump, true to form, turned his mocking into a spectacle by appearing at a Pennsylvania McDonalds in October, when he manned the fries station and held an impromptu news conference from the restaurant drive-thru.

Trump's team thinks people should get a sense of humor.

"President Trump is a master at messaging and he's always relatable to the average person, whereas many media members take themselves too seriously and have no concept of anything else other than suffering from Trump Derangement Syndrome," said Steven Cheung, Trump's communications director. "President Trump will Make America Great Again and we are getting back to a sense of optimism after a tumultuous four years."



Motorists negotiate the snow along I-80 during a storm on Nov 20 in Truckee, California. (AP)

Atmospheric river brings chaotic winter weather to E.Coast

The US East Coast was beginning a whiplash-inducing stretch of weather on Wednesday that was rainy, windy and potentially dangerous, due in part to an atmospheric river and developing bomb cyclone.

Places like western Maine could see freezing rain, downpours, unseasonably high temperatures and

damaging winds - all in the span of a day, said Derek Schroeter, a forecaster with the National Weather Service.

The heavy rain and fierce winds will last until Wednesday night in many areas, and flooding is possible in some locales, forecasters said. Utilities were also gearing up for potential power outages from

damage caused by winds that could exceed 60 mph (97 kph) in some areas.

One of the key factors driving the weather is an atmospheric river, which is a long band of water vapor that can transport moisture from the tropics to more northern areas, said Schroeter, who's based in Gray, Maine. (AP)

Biden OKs nat'l security memo aimed at helping Trump on China, N.Korea, Russia

WASHINGTON, Dec 11, (AP) — US President Joe Biden has approved a new national security memorandum that is meant to serve as a roadmap for the incoming Trump administration as it looks to counter growing cooperation among China, Iran, North Korea and Russia, the White House said Wednesday.

Biden administration officials began developing the guidance this summer. It was shaped to be a document that could help the next administration build its approach from day one on how it will go about dealing with the tightening relationships between the United States' most prominent adversaries and competitors, according to two senior administration officials.

The officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said the classified memorandum would not be made public because of the sensitivity of some of its findings.

The document includes four broad recommendations: improving U.S. government interagency cooperation, speeding up the sharing of information with allies about the four adversaries, calibrating the U.S. government's use of sanctions and other economic tools for maximum effectiveness, and bolstering preparation to manage simultaneous crises involving the adversaries.

The U.S. for many years has been concerned about cooperation among the four countries. Coordination has



US President Joe Biden speaks at the 2024 White House Tribal Nations Summit at the Department of the Interior in Washington on Dec 9. (AP)

accelerated between the countries in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The officials noted that as Russia has become more isolated by much of the world, Moscow has turned to Iran for drones and missiles. From North Korea, the Russians have received artillery, missiles and even thousands of troops that have traveled to help the Russians try to repel Ukrainian forces from the Kursk region. China, meanwhile, has supported Russia with dual

use components that help keep its military industrial base afloat.

In return, Russia has sent fighter jets to Iran and assisted Tehran as it looks to bolster its missile defense and space technology.

North Korea has received from Russia much-needed fuel and funding to help build out its manufacturing and military capabilities. The officials added that Russia has "de facto accepted North Korea as a nuclear weapon state."

Negotiations over war in Ukraine could start 'in winter', says Poland's PM Tusk

WARSAW, Poland, Dec 11, (AP) — Poland's prime minister said that negotiations over Russia's war in neighboring Ukraine could start "in the winter," as his country prepares to take over the rotating presidency of the European Union on Jan. 1.

"Our presidency will have, among others, joint responsibility for the shape of the political landscape, for what the situation will look like probably during the negotiations that, perhaps - there are still question marks here - will begin in the winter of this year," Prime Minister Donald Tusk told his Cabinet.

He said he hoped that the "end effect" of Poland's and the EU's efforts will be peace in Ukraine.

He offered no details of the efforts or any time frame. He didn't say who might be involved in the negotiations or where or when they might take place.

Poland has been one of Ukraine's strongest backers against Russia's full-scale invasion, which began on Feb. 24, 2022. Poland will assume the EU presidency just weeks before President-elect Donald Trump takes office in the US.

Trump has been pushing for an end to the war in Ukraine and during his campaign said that he could



Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk speaks to reporters in Dabrowka, Poland, during a visit to Poland's border with Russia on Nov 30. (AP)

settle the matter in a day if he were elected.

In a television interview that aired Sunday, Trump also said he would be open to reducing military aid to Ukraine and pulling the United States out of NATO. Those are two threats that have alarmed Ukraine, NATO allies and many in the US national security community.

Tusk said that he would be holding numerous meetings with political leaders concerning the situation relating to the war in Ukraine.

Later Tuesday, he was meeting with Friedrich Merz, the head of Germany's CDU party, who was returning from talks in Kyiv with the Ukrainian government. Tusk will also speak with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

French President Emmanuel Macron is expected in Warsaw on Thursday, and Tusk said they will talk about meetings Macron recently held in Paris with Trump and Zelenskyy.

Tusk said that Poland was taking the six-month EU presidency during a "very dramatic" situation for the continent. Last week, he pointed to armed conflicts, also in Europe's vicinity, political crises some of Europe's biggest countries are going through and to the change in U.S. leadership.

"I would like it very much for Poland to be the country that will not only mark its presence all the time, but will also set the tone of the decisions that are to bring us security and safeguard Poland's interests," Tusk told a government meeting.



Paramedics carry a body of a civilian killed after a Russian missile hit a private medical clinic in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on Dec 10. (AP)

2 women pulled alive from rubble hours after Russian strike

Rescue crews working through the night pulled two women from rubble more than seven hours after a Russian missile struck a private medical clinic in a southern Ukraine city, killing six people and wounding 22 others, authorities said Wednesday.

The women called rescue services on their cellphones to say they were buried under the rubble after the attack late Tuesday in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine's Emergency Services said.

Deadly Russian strikes on civilian areas have been a feature of the

almost three-year war. Ukraine's Western allies are sending more aid to help it keep fighting Russia's invasion, but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the Zaporizhzhia strike showed that his country still needs more air defense systems. (AP)

Serbia's Vucic says won't flee country

BELGRADE, Serbia, Dec 11, (AP) — Serbia's president accused foreign intelligence services of trying to unseat him in the wake of spreading protests in the Balkan state and said that he wouldn't flee the country like the ousted Syrian leader Bashar Assad.

President Aleksandar Vucic posted a video message on Instagram saying: "I will fight for Serbia and serve only my Serbian people and all other citizens of Serbia. I will never serve foreigners, those who seek to defeat, humiliate, and destroy Serbia," he added.

Opponents of the populist leader compared him to Assad who fled to Moscow following a stunning rebel advance, ending his family's half-century of iron rule.

Vucic's opponents in Serbia have compared him to Assad and other world dictators, predicting that he may also try to flee the country if he loses his firm grip on power amid the protests triggered by a rail station roof collapse in the northern city of Novi Sad that killed 15 people on Nov 1.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, (left), looks on as Aleksandar Vucic, (center), President of Serbia, signs the city's golden book during their meeting in Freiberg, Germany on Dec 10. (AP)

Romania's pro-Western parties agree to form majority government after turmoil

BUCHAREST, Romania, Dec 11, (AP) — Romania's pro-European parties agreed Wednesday to form a majority government made up of groupings that were traditionally on opposite sides and shutting out far-right nationalists who made significant gains in the election on Dec. 1.

Pro-Western parties won the most votes, with the leftist Social Democratic Party, or PSD, topping the polls. The PSD reached agreement late Tuesday to form a grand coalition with the center-right National Liberal Party, or PNL, the reformist Save Romania Union party, USR, and the small ethnic Hungarian UDMR party.

The parliamentary election came hard on the heels of a presidential vote in which the far-right outsider Calin Georgescu won the first round. His surprise success plunged the European Union and NATO member country into turmoil as allegations of electoral violations and Russian interference emerged.

Days before the Dec. 8 presidential



People wave Romanian and European Union flags during a pro-European rally ahead of the country's Dec. 8 runoff presidential elections in Bucharest, Romania on Dec 5. (AP)

runoff, the Constitutional Court made the unprecedented move to annul the presidential race.

A statement from the new coalition

said the parties would potentially support a "common pro-European candidate" in the new presidential elections. It isn't yet clear whether Georgescu will be allowed to run in the new vote.

President Klaus Iohannis, whose second term is set to expire later this month, said a new date for the rerun presidential election would be set once the new government has taken office.

"In the coming days, the four parties and the representatives of the national minorities will work on a joint governing program, focusing on development and reforms, while addressing the priorities of Romanian citizens," the coalition statement said.

Elena Lasconi, the leader of USR who was set to face Georgescu in the annulled presidential runoff, said after the agreement was reached that "Romania is going through a very difficult" period and that cutting state spending and reducing bureaucracy would be part of the governing program.

INTERNATIONAL

Taiwan demands China to end its military activity

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Dec 11, (AP): Taiwan demanded Wednesday that China end its ongoing military activity in nearby waters, which it said is unilaterally undermining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and disrupting international shipping and trade.

The Foreign Ministry, in a statement posted on its website, said it was responding in part to the activities of a "large number" of Chinese naval and coast guard ships in the first-island chain, the Pacific archipelago off the Asian continental mainland that includes Japan, Taiwan and part of the Philippines.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs solemnly demands that the Beijing

authorities immediately stop military intimidation and all irrational activities that endanger regional peace and stability," the statement said.

Taiwan defense officials say they have detected Chinese ships since Monday, both off Taiwan and farther out along the first-island chain. They described the formations as two walls designed to demonstrate that the waters belong to China.

China restricted airspace off its southeast coast from Monday to Wednesday, an indication that it was planning to hold drills, but the country's People's Liberation Army has not confirmed whether it is doing so.



A Taiwan fighter jet prepares to take off at an airbase in Hsinchu, northern Taiwan on Dec 11, as Taiwan's Defense Ministry said it detected Chinese naval ships and military planes engaged in training. (AP)



Li Hongzhong, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and vice chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, meets with a delegation of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led by Maryam Nawaz Sharif, senior vice president of the league and chief minister of Pakistan's eastern Punjab province, in Beijing, capital of China on Dec 10. (Xinhua)

Senior Chinese legislator meets Pakistani guests in Beijing

Li Hongzhong, vice chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, met with a delegation of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led by Maryam Nawaz Sharif, senior vice president of the league and chief minister of Pakistan's eastern Punjab province, in Beijing on Tuesday.

Li, who is also a member of the Political Bureau

of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, said that under the strategic guidance of the leaders of the two countries, bilateral relations have achieved high-level development.

Li said that China is ready to work with Pakistan to implement the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, strengthen exchange between political parties and local-

ties, and accelerate the construction of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

Maryam congratulated China on its continuous progress toward the goals of modernization and national rejuvenation, and said that she will remain committed to deepening Pakistan-China relations. (Xinhua)



US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, left, addresses military personnel from Japan, the United States, and Australia during a visit to Camp Asaka, a Japan Ground Self-Defense Force base, on the outskirts of Tokyo on Dec 11. (AP)

US defense chief confident about greater capability

Austin observes drills with Japan, Australia

CAMP ASAKA, Japan, Dec 11, (AP): US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin expressed confidence about enhanced military capabilities among the United States, Australia and Japan as he observed joint exercises Wednesday showcasing their closer cooperation as tensions grow in the region.

Austin is in Japan to reaffirm the importance of their alliance and Washington's commitment to regional security.

Austin noted as he observed the trilateral Yama Sakura 87 exercises held at the Japanese army's Camp Asaka on the outskirts of Tokyo that the necessary equipment, munitions and people are in place and "these are the things

that will guarantee success if we ever get challenged on the battlefield."

Japan, under a security strategy introduced in 2022, is pursuing a rapid military buildup to increase its deterrence against growing threats from China, North Korea and Russia, and has bolstered defense cooperation, especially with the United States and Australia.

On Tuesday, during talks with Japanese officials, Austin praised the strength of the Japan-US alliance at a time of rapid global political change, including unrest in South Korea and Syria.

He stressed that US cooperation with Tokyo and Seoul is crucial for re-

gional stability.

The scenario-based command post exercises began last Friday and are combined with the US Army's Warfighter command post exercise for the first time, making it the largest since they began in 1982, according to the US Indo-Pacific Command.

More than 7,000 servicemembers from the three countries are participating at multiple locations including Camp Kengun in southwestern Japan to simulate operations on remote islands as well as cross-domain operations including space and cyber defense, according to the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force. The exercises end on Saturday.

Philippine vice president skips hearing over alleged threat to kill president

MANILA, Philippines, Dec 11, (AP): The Philippine vice president on Wednesday skipped the first hearing into threats she made against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., saying she did not believe the investigation will be fair.

Vice President Sara Duterte was subpoenaed to appear before the National Bureau of Investigation but instead sent her lawyer, who submitted a letter saying their client vehemently "denies having made any threat constituting grave threat" under the law.

Duterte has tried to walk back her comments in a Nov. 23 online news conference where she publicly threatened Marcos, his wife and House Speaker Martin Romualdez with death. She later said it was rather an expression of concern for her own safety, claiming to have received death threats.

Marcos and Duterte have fallen out



Philippine Vice President-elect Sara Duterte, daughter of outgoing populist president of the Philippines, delivers her speech during her oath-taking rites in her hometown in Davao city, southern Philippines, on June 19, 2022. (AP)

since winning the 2022 election. The two offices are elected separately in the Philippines, which has resulted in

rivals occupying the country's top political posts.

Duterte is the 46-year-old daughter former President Rodrigo Duterte, who is being investigated by the International Criminal Court over the killings of thousands of suspects during a crackdown on illegal drugs he had ordered.

NBI Director Jaime Santiago told reporters that the preliminary investigation of Sara Duterte will proceed with or without her presence or counter-affidavit, and that his office will submit by early January its report to the Department of Justice. The investigation was supposed to start on Nov. 29 but was rescheduled on Duterte's request.

"I don't think this investigation will be fair," she told reporters Wednesday. "Even if they say there is an investigation, from the very beginning they already decided to file cases."

Haiti's main int'l airport reopens

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Dec 11, (AP): Haiti's main international airport reopened on Wednesday, one month after it closed for the second time this year because of gang violence.

Haitian soldiers and police, bolstered by Kenyan police leading a U.N.-backed mission to quell gang violence, boosted security in the area, and a test flight was successful, Haiti's government said in a statement.

The Toussaint Louverture airport in Port-au-Prince closed in mid-November after gangs opened fire on a Spirit Airlines flight that was preparing to land, striking a flight attendant who suffered minor injuries.



A view of the Toussaint Louverture International Airport, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Nov 12. (AP)

Police search President Yoon's office

S.Korea ex-defense chief tried to kill himself

SEOUL, South Korea, Dec 11, (AP): South Korea's previous defense minister was stopped from attempting suicide while in detention over last week's martial law case, officials said, as police were trying to search President Yoon Suk Yeol's office Wednesday in their intensifying investigation.

The main liberal opposition Democratic Party also plans to submit a new motion to impeach Yoon for his Dec. 3 declaration that imposed martial law in South Korea for the first time in more than four decades. Its first impeachment attempt against Yoon last Saturday failed, with ruling party lawmakers boycotting a floor vote.

Yoon's ill-conceived power grab has paralyzed South Korean politics, frozen its foreign policy and rattled financial markets. On Wednesday, rival North Korea's state media for the first time reported about the South Korean turmoil, but the country hasn't yet showed any suspicious activities.

Shin Yong Hae, commissioner general of the Korea Correctional Service, told lawmakers Wednesday that Kim tried to kill himself the previous night at a detention center in Seoul. He said that Kim's suicide attempt failed after center officials stopped him and that he's in stable condition now.

At the same parliamentary committee meeting, Justice Minister Park Sung Jae confirmed Kim's failed suicide attempt.

Kim was arrested early Wednesday after a Seoul court approved a warrant for him on allegations of playing



South Korean cabinet members bow in apology during a plenary session held relating to the martial law declaration, at the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, on Dec 11. (AP)

a key role in a rebellion and committing abuse of power. Kim became the first person formally arrested over the martial law decree.

Kim, one of Yoon's close associates, has been accused of recommending martial law to Yoon and sending troops to the National Assembly to block lawmakers from voting on it. Enough lawmakers eventually managed to enter a parliament chamber and they unanimously rejected Yoon's decree, forcing the Cabinet to lift it before daybreak on Dec. 4.

Kim said in a statement on Tuesday that he "deeply apologizes for caus-

ing significant anxiety" to the public. He said all responsibility for the martial law imposition rests with him and pleaded for leniency for soldiers deployed to enforce it.

Prosecutors have up to 20 days to determine whether to indict Kim.

Later Wednesday, National Police Agency Commissioner General Cho Ji Ho and Kim Bong-sik, head of the metropolitan police agency of the capital, Seoul, were detained over the martial law, police said. They were accused of deploying police forces to the National Assembly to block lawmakers' voting, together with troops.



President Nicolas Maduro, center, raises a replica of Venezuelan independence hero Simon Bolivar's sword during an event marking the 165th anniversary of the Battle of Santa Ines, in Caracas, Venezuela on Dec 10. (AP)

Venezuela opp'n signals flexible timeline toward long-sought govt transition

MADRID, Dec 11, (AP): Venezuela's political opposition on Tuesday signaled a shift toward a flexible timeline for a government transition that it had long insisted would come next month when the new presidential term is set to begin.

The change came as the faction's candidate in the July presidential election, Edmundo González, remained in exile in Spain and its leader Maria Corina Machado continued to hide in Venezuela, both efforts meant to avoid arrest, with only 30 days left before Venezuela's constitutionally mandated swearing-in ceremony.

The move underscores the challenges the opposition coalition faces to deliver on its promise to remove President Nicolás Maduro from office, even as dozens of nations back the faction's claim to victory and denounce the government for electoral fraud.

"On January 10, the one who is against the wall is really Maduro, not us," Machado said via livestream during an event in Madrid, that highlighted the repression ruling party opponents have faced since the July 28 election. "When will that understanding really be reached and trigger the transition? It could be before, it could

be on January 10, it could be after." Machado did not give details of the "terms of a negotiation" which she said the opposition has offered the government. But the faction has repeatedly said that a top priority is the release from prison of hundreds of people detained for being actual or perceived government opponents.

Venezuela's National Electoral Council, which is stacked with Maduro loyalists, declared him the election winner hours after polls closed. But unlike previous presidential elections, electoral authorities did not provide detailed vote counts.

Africa

'Probe ex-governor in Congo': Amnesty International called for an investigation Wednesday into a former governor and two top army officials in Congo for "possible crimes against humanity" during a deadly crackdown on demonstrators last year protesting the U.N. peacekeeping mission in the country.

The human rights group said in a report Congo's security forces killed at least 56 people and injured 80 more,

during a protest in the eastern city of Goma in August 2023. (AP)

Police hurl tear gas at protesters: Police in Kenya's capital hurled tear gas canisters Tuesday at hundreds of protesters angry about gender-based violence and femicide, or the killing of women, and arrested an unknown number of people.

Protesters chanting "Stop femicide" were dispersed by police in a public park in Nairobi where they had gathered and later engaged in running battles along the streets. Several protesters were injured in the confrontation Tuesday.

One activist, Mwikali Mueni, told The Associated Press that she suffered a neck injury from uniformed police officers and was heading to the hospital. (AP)

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
UAE-DFMGI	+0.03	4,795.32	PHILIPPINES-PSEI	-1.22	6,642.71
JAPAN-Nikkei	+0.01	39,372.23	SAUDI-TASI	-0.36	12,149.19
PAKISTAN-KSE 100	+1.74	110,999.50			
EGYPT-EGX	+0.40	30,739.26			

Business

Specialized center opened to assist the registered applicants

NBK's Run kit collection center starts receiving applicants

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) opened a specialized center next to Kuwait Towers to assist the registered applicants in its "NBK Run" and distribute the assigned T-shirts and numbers. The race kit collection will be open for two days starting today Thursday 12 December and Friday, 13 December 2024 from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm.

NBK Run is marked by a variety of fun, entertaining and health awareness-raising activities. All participants in the race will be eligible to enter the grand draw to win a new Nissan X - Trail car from the strategic partner, Al Babtain Group. All participants will get an exclusive chance from Ooredoo to enter

the draw on a KD 5,000 Platinum Line. Touristic Enterprises Company will provide 18,000 entry tickets to its parks and facilities (including Winter Wonderland and South Sabahiyah Park) to all participants. Additionally, Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa will offer prizes from their "Intersport" and "Joe & The Juice" brands to raffle participants. CHIPS Store will also offer two lucky winners Apple devices.

People who registered in NBK Run will be eligible to enter the grand draw and have the chance to win one of these prizes and rewards. The draw will take place under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce.

NBK will award the top 3 winners

(women and men) in the 10 km race with KD 1000, KD 700, KD 500 cash prizes. The top3 winners (women and men) in the 5 km race will win KD 500, KD 400, KD 300 cash prizes.

The event is also marked by a special partnership with EQUATE Petrochemicals, with the paraathletes category, including three groups: wheelchair users, the visually impaired, and those with prosthetics. EQUATE will offer cash prizes to the top five winners in the men's and women's categories for the 5 km race, with awards of KD 500, KD 400, KD 300, and two prizes of KD 100 accordingly.

Strategic partner Ooredoo will also

provide iPhones, Apple Watches, and "Shamel" packages to the top three winners of the Run.

The bib-number for each participant will contain a step-counting chip to identify the winners' places. The results for NBK Run are supervised by the Event Management Company (SUFFIX).

NBK strongly supports sporting events and encourages various sporting activities as means to promote a healthier and more active lifestyle for members of the community. Throughout the years, NBK also organizes several social awareness programs including Educational, Environmental, Health and many other active initiatives.



A flyer of the NBK's Run Kit Collection Centre.

Local investment funds achieve strong returns, boosted by Boursa performance

Al Fajr Fund top performer in the Islamic Investment Funds category

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Local stock investment funds have delivered impressive returns in 2024, with significant positive performance recorded by various Kuwaiti funds by the end of November.

The Boursa Kuwait's strong performance during this period, particularly in market value, which saw gains of over 2 billion dinars, contributed greatly to the success of these funds.

Over the first 11 months of the year, the returns for investment funds ranged from a maximum of 13.2 percent to a minimum of 0.14 percent.

The KAMCO Investment Fund led the traditional Kuwaiti funds, achieving a return of 13.2 percent. Following closely was the National Kuwait Equity Fund, with a return of 10.45 percent. KAMCO's Premier Market Index Fund placed third with a return of 9.2 percent, while the Na-

tional Kuwait Fund secured fourth place with gains of 8.6 percent.

In the Kuwaiti Islamic investment funds category, the top performer was the Al Fajr Fund, managed by Wafra International Investment, with a return of approximately 9.73 percent over 11 months. This fund also posted a solid monthly return of 1.48 percent.

The KAMCO Islamic Fund came in second with a return of 9.35 percent, while the Islamic Center Fund took third place with gains of 8.1 percent.

Among traditional Gulf funds, the Gulf Momentum Fund, managed by the Kuwait Financial Centre, claimed the top spot with a return of 5.6 percent. The second place was held by the Masaref Investment Fund with a return of 1.95 percent, while the Gulf Equity Investment Fund, managed by the National Investment Bank, ranked third with a return of 1.89 percent.

For Gulf Islamic funds, the Al Daraj Investment Fund, managed by National Investments, topped the list with a return of 7.1 percent over the 11-month period. The Noor Islamic Gulf Fund

followed closely with a return of 5.01 percent and the Boubyan Local and Gulf Stocks Fund came in third with a return of 2.78 percent.

In the traditional Arab funds sector, the Markaz Fund for Excellent Returns, managed by the Financial Center, ranked second with a return of 7.3 percent. Meanwhile, the Tharwa Investment Fund took second place in the Arab funds category with a return of 3.64 percent. In the Arab Islamic funds category, the Tharwa Islamic Fund came out on top with a return of 7.46 percent.

Despite the overall positive returns, the decline in fund performance during October raised concerns about market volatility, particularly in light of the uncertain global economic environment.

Experts suggest that geopolitical tensions, the prospect of slower global economic growth and fluctuations in oil prices may have contributed to the downturn.

As a result, fund managers are advised to be cautious, adopt hedging strategies to mitigate short-term risks and explore safer investment opportunities.



Haitham Al-Ghais

OPEC reelects Kuwait's Al-Ghais chief for 3 years

VIENNA, Dec 11, (KUNA): The 198th ministerial meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) convened on Tuesday, renewing Kuwaiti OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais's term for three more years, starting from August 1, 2025.

According to an OPEC statement, the conference reviewed the Secretary General and the Economic Commission Board's (ECB) reports, as well as various internal matters.

It also received an update on the 9th OPEC International Seminar, scheduled for July 9-10, 2025 in Vienna, Austria, noting its merits in addressing the challenges that face the

oil and energy industries.

The conference also appointed Ademola Adeyemi-Bero, Governor of Nigeria for OPEC, as Chairman of the Board of Governors for 2025, and appointed Eng. Adeeb Al-Aama, Governor of Saudi Arabia for OPEC, as Alternate Chairman for 2025.

New ministers were welcomed, among them is Tareq Suleiman Ahmad Al-Roumi, Minister of Oil of Kuwait and Chairman of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

The meeting ended with the announcement of its next session on May 28, 2025, adding that September 2025 will mark two special anniversaries for the organization.

All indices register gains as Boursa Kuwait ends Wednesday's trading session on a positive note

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Wednesday's trading session on a positive note, with all indices registering gains. The general index rose by 7.81 points, or 0.11 percent, closing at 7,325.53 points. Trading volume was robust, with 332.5 million shares changing hands through 17,039 cash transactions, valued at KD 64.5 million (USD 196.7

million).

The main market index increased by 9.69 points, or 0.15 percent, settling at 6,667.37 points. It saw 234.14 million shares traded through 10,968 cash transactions, worth KD 32.7 million (USD 99.7 million). Similarly, the premier market index advanced 7.69 points, or 0.10 percent, to 7,853.71 points, with 98.4 million shares traded

through 6,071 transactions, valued at KD 31.7 million (USD 96.6 million).

The Main 50 index also showed improvement, rising by 13.05 points, or 0.20 percent, to reach 6,555 points. This index saw 107.6 million shares traded through 4,653 cash transactions, with a total value of KWD 17.9 million (approximately USD 54.5 million).

Kuwait leveraging tech to drive economy

KDIPA, TBY host leadership circle session on digital future of Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): The first event of the Thought Leadership Circle events series, co-hosted by Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) and The Business Year (TBY), brought together on Tuesday visionary leaders and innovators at the prestigious Chairman's Club at KIPCO Tower, to explore transformative strategies for Kuwait's digital and economic evolution.

Themed "Accelerating Technology and AI Implementation," the event featured an exceptional lineup of speakers, including Omar Saud Al-Omar, Minister of State for Communication Affairs, who provided a keynote address on driving Kuwait's digital transformation.

Al-Omar stressed the Ministry's efforts into "building a Digital Kuwait, leveraging technology to drive economic growth, improve quality of life, and achieve sustainable development, all in alignment with Kuwait's Vision 2035." During the welcoming remarks, Mohammed Yousef Mulla

Yaqoub, Assistant Director General for Business Development at KDIPA, underscored the significance of collaboration.

He articulated, "KDIPA firmly believes in the transformative power of collaboration to unlock opportunities.

This gathering exemplifies the synergies that can be realized when the public and private sectors unite with a common vision." Sheikh Ahmad Duaij Jaber Al-Sabah, Chairman of Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), noted that despite some challenges, such as regulation and data privacy, Kuwait has made "remarkable strides in adopting AI and Big Data technologies, with various sectors integrating AI into their operations."

Other distinguished speakers included Eng. Abdullah Khaled Al-Ajmi, Acting Chairman of CITRA; Hessa Al-Muzaini, Manager of Information systems and operations at Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK); Nawaf Al-Gharabally, CEO

of Zain Kuwait; Esam Al-Kheshnam, CEO of KNET; Ammar Abdullah Boumijdad, Country Head of Mashreq Bank Kuwait; Mohammed Al-Kharafi, COO of NBK; Shaymaa AlTerkati, Country Manager of Google Cloud; and Sundus Bushahri, Managing Director of SAP Kuwait. Key discussion points included strategies for leveraging digital payments, AI technologies, and innovative tools to drive economic growth, enhance sustainability, and improve workforce readiness.

The dialogue fostered meaningful collaborations between the public and private sectors, emphasizing the need for a secure and inclusive approach to Kuwait's digital transformation.

The event was made possible with the support of partners and sponsors including Zain, KBA, Mashreq, KNET, ITL World, and the Chairman's Club.

This exclusive roundtable marks the beginning of a three-part series, with future events scheduled for January and February 2025.

Kuwait calls for enhanced regional tourism cooperation

CAIRO, Dec 11, (KUNA): Under-Secretary of Kuwait Information Ministry Dr. Nasser Mhaisen stressed Wednesday the keenness of the State of Kuwait to support and encourage the small and medium touristic enterprises.

This came in a statement to KUNA during his participation in the meetings of the 27th session of the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism.

Al-Mhaisen said that tourism sector is one of the tributaries of Arab tourism, stressing Kuwait's support for the joint Arab tourism system, and any development projects in this field, as well as increasing the benefit of tourism organizations in Arab countries.

The ministerial meeting discussed a set of proposals and recommendations that were put forward during the Council's Executive Office meeting held Tuesday, during which Kuwait assumed the position of Vice President of the Executive Office.

The meeting also discussed the digital transformation, technological change and artificial intelligence, and ways to develop these mechanisms in

the tourism system in the Arab countries.

On behalf of the Minister of Information and Culture and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Dr. Al-Mhaisen chaired Kuwait's delegation to the meeting, that included also Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the Arab League, Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi and officials from the office of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information.

Kuwait reiterated its support for all Arab efforts aimed at improving the quality of tourism services and boosting investment opportunities in the tourism sector, considering it a cornerstone of sustainable development.

This was stated in a speech by Dr. Nasser Mhaisen, representative of the Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, during the 27th session of the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism, held at the General Secretariat of the Arab League headquarters.

Dr. Mhaisen noted that the meeting takes place

amid growing global challenges that demand greater cooperation and joint efforts to develop the tourism sector as a cornerstone for achieving sustainable economic and social development.

He emphasized Kuwait's commitment to supporting initiatives and agreements that strengthen Arab collaboration in this vital sector, opening all channels of cooperation to advance tourism.

Mhaisen called for collective efforts to benefit Arab nations by enhancing the tourism industry, devising plans, proposing strategies to strengthen the Arab tourism ecosystem, building trust among Arab tourists, and fostering intra-regional tourism through joint opportunities and initiatives.

He expressed gratitude to Qatar Tourism Chairman Saad Al-Kharji for his exemplary leadership during the 26th session, reflecting Qatar's dedication to advancing regional tourism.

Mhaisen also wished success to Oman's Minister of Heritage and Tourism Salem Al-Mahrouqi, in leading the 27th session to achieve shared goals in tourism development.

Declaration helps industry

OPEC+ marks 8th year of DoC

VIENNA, Dec 11, (KUNA): The Declaration of Cooperation between OPEC Member Countries and non-OPEC oil-producing countries has turned eight today, said the cartel on Tuesday.

"Eight years ago, on this day, OPEC Member Countries and Azerbaijan; the Kingdom of Bahrain; Brunei Darussalam; Equatorial Guinea, which later joined OPEC; Kazakhstan; Malaysia; Mexico; the Sultanate of Oman; the Russian Federation; the Republic of Sudan; and the Republic of South Sudan, met in Vienna, Austria, to discuss the conditions of the global oil market and identify possible means to restore market stability," said an OPEC statement on the occasion.

"These historic, constructive efforts resulted in the establishment of a unique platform to facilitate cooperation and dialogue among its participants; the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC). Notably, other non-OPEC oil producers attended the meeting in support of the initiative.

"The resounding success met on 10 December came about following the achievement of two landmark milestones in the history of the global oil industry: the Algiers Accord, which was signed on 28 September 2016 in Algiers, Algeria, at

the 170th (Extraordinary) Meeting of the OPEC Conference; and the 'Vienna Agreement' adopted on 30 November of the same year in Vienna, Austria, at the 171st (Ordinary) Meeting of the OPEC Conference."

Reflecting on the occasion, Haitham Al-Ghais, Secretary General of OPEC, said: "Eight years ago, a group of leading oil producers, including OPEC Member Countries and some non-OPEC oil-producing nations, decided to join forces to address the instability the global oil market was then facing, marking the beginning of a new chapter in multilateralism, international cooperation and the history of the oil industry.

"These courageous and vital efforts have continued benefiting the industry as a whole, its stakeholders and the global economy, as clearly demonstrated during the market downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the criticism and scepticism by some industry stakeholders," Kuwait's Al-Ghais added.

Since its inception, the DoC framework has aimed at facilitating cooperation and dialogue, including at the technical and research levels, among its participants in the interest of oil market stability.

KPC: Kuwait oil price down 9 cents to USD 72.28 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): The price of Kuwait oil went down by nine cents to USD 72.28 per barrel on Tuesday, compared with USD 72.37 pb the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Wednesday.

At the global level, the Brent crude fell by 32 cents to USD 71.82 pb, the same occurred to the West Texas Intermediate, which went down by 37 cents to USD 68.37 pb.



Workshop reflects the Bank's commitment to supporting employee growth

Gulf Bank hosts 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People' workshop led by Fareah Al-Saqqaf

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Gulf Bank hosted a two-day workshop titled "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" for its employees. Led by Fareah Al-Saqqaf, the Founder, Chairperson, and Managing Director of LOYAC, the workshop reflects the Bank's commitment to supporting employee growth and professional development.

This initiative underscores Gulf Bank's commitment to creating a collaborative, innovative, and sustainable work environment by providing educational and developmental opportunities aimed at enhancing professional performance.

The workshop was designed to offer senior employees comprehensive strategies for both personal and professional growth, divided into two

key phases:

- Personal Victory: Focused on building self-confidence, boosting productivity, and achieving work-life balance.

- Team Victory: Emphasized teamwork, collaboration, and fostering strong interpersonal relationships within the workplace.

Participants explored leadership tools that empower effective decision-making in both personal and professional contexts. Key insights from the workshop included techniques for prioritizing tasks to boost productivity, strategies for enhancing focus and efficiency, and methods for building trust and collaboration within teams. Additionally, practical approaches to achieving work-life balance and fostering



Fareah Al-Saqqaf

strong, cohesive teams were emphasized to support long-term success. Gulf Bank remains dedicated to

delivering exceptional training programs for its employees. These efforts strengthen the Bank's leader-

ship in the banking sector, enhance the skill sets of its workforce, and contribute to the growth of the national economy by building a competitive and knowledgeable labor force.

Furthermore, Gulf Bank has formed a strategic partnership with the LOYAC by sponsoring "The Influencer" program organized by LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA) – an affiliate of the non-profit organization LOYAC. The program provides outstanding training opportunities to empower teenagers aged 15 to 19, equipping them with essential public communication skills and preparing them for future leadership roles.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse

and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

Six selected winners receive sportswear from INTERSPORT to support their training

AAW sponsors the 10th Gulf Bank 642 Marathon



Intersport pavilion at Gulf Bank Marathon.



Intersport pavilion at Gulf Bank Marathon

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW) announced its sponsorship of the 10th edition of the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon, held on November 30, at Souq Sharq, through its brands INTERSPORT, and Joe & The Juice. This sponsorship reflects the company's dedication to supporting events that inspire the community and promote an active lifestyle.

AAW's sponsorship covered both the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon event and its six-week preparatory campaign leading up to the race. The

six selected winners: Shaima Al-Otaibi, Nour AlNaqeeb, Saleh AlAli, Nasser AlRadhan, Jassim AlFaraj, and Manar Atiyeh, received sportswear from INTERSPORT to support their training and ensure they were effectively prepared for the race.

The company's participation at the marathon included an INTERSPORT booth showcasing mannequins wearing ASICS and New Balance apparel and footwear. The booth also featured interactive activities and offered exclusive giveaways. Joe & The Juice fueled runners with

refreshing healthy juices and light food, and provided enthusiastic support along the marathon route.

The Gulf Bank 642 Marathon features four race categories designed to accommodate all fitness abilities: a 5K walk or run, a 10K run, a half marathon (21K), and a full marathon (42K).

AAW has a long-standing commitment to supporting youth, sports, and local initiatives. The company frequently sponsors activities that promote fitness and inspire community members to adopt a healthier lifestyle.



Joe and the Juice pavilion

Bid to improve Kuwait's ranking

MEW-WBank meet focuses on implementing reforms

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy yesterday held a meeting with a team of experts from the World Bank, led by the Head of the Electricity and Water Services Access Index Team and Assistant Undersecretary for Electricity Distribution Networks Eng. Khaled Al-Rashed, and Deputy Head Eng. Abdullah Al-Asimi.

During the meeting, they focused on following up the implementation of the new reforms outlined in the World Bank's 2024 program with the aim of improving Kuwait's ranking in the Business Environment Improvement Program.

The ministry reviewed all electronic systems that utilize advanced technology to manage, operate, and maintain its assets, including the Geographic Information System (GIS), unified communication systems, and outage management. These systems were well-received and praised by the World Bank team and the Direct Investment Promotion Authority. These technologies ensure the reliable delivery of electricity and water services to investors.

Furthermore, the meeting touched on the ministry's future projects in renewable energy, including the initiative to purchase renewable energy produced by others, and the implementation timeline for these projects, all of which aim to enhance the quality of services provided to investors.

The ministry also discussed its developed electronic services system, which serves all customer segments,

including investors. This system ensures easy and quick access to electricity and water services without the need for customers to visit the ministry's headquarters.

It is worth noting that periodic meetings will be held in the near future with World Bank experts, in cooperation with the Direct Investment Promotion Authority, to continue working on achieving the necessary reforms to improve Kuwait's ranking in the Business Environment Improvement Program (Tahseen).

In another development, the ministry has reached an agreement with the Kuwait Oil Company to take responsibility for studying and establishing fuel supply lines to meet the needs of the power and water generation station in Nuwaiseeb. This station, which is planned to be built in two phases, will have a total production capacity of 7,200 megawatts, with 3,600 megawatts in each phase.

According to sources, the fuel lines to be constructed will include the provision of natural gas and oil. It is expected that operational selections for the first phase will begin in the third quarter of 2028.

The ministry completed two projects for natural gas and liquid fuel lines in 2023. These include the supply, implementation, and initial operation of the fuel receiving systems for the Shuwaikh station, as well as a project to establish two fuel lines from the southern Al-Zour refinery through the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC). This project is designed to deliver clean liquid fuel from the Zour refinery to the southern Al-Zour station.

Indian envoy highlights historical trade ties between the two countries

India-Kuwait Startup Synergies Conference: a platform for innovation and collaboration



Dr Swaika addressing the gathering



View of the audience

By Paulo Francisco X. Fernandes Arab Times/Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Embassy of India in Kuwait in collaboration with the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) – Kuwait Chapter, organized the India-Kuwait Startup Synergies Conference, a platform for innovation and collaboration that brought together thought leaders, policymakers and industry professionals from both nations to explore avenues of innovation, investment and entrepreneurship.

In his opening remarks, the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, HE Dr. Adarsh Swaika, highlighted the deep-rooted historical trade links between India and Kuwait and underscored the Embassy's continuous commitment to fostering stronger bilateral relations through mutual investment opportunities and collaboration.

He took this opportunity to highlight the India-Kuwait investment conferences organized by the Embassy in 2023 and 2024, which featured participation from key Indian economic organizations such as Invest India, the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF), the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), and the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) – GIFT City.

These conferences, he said, offered vital insights into the Indian investment landscape, providing perspectives on the evolving market ecosystem.

The Indian envoy further elaborated on India's remarkable achievements in the startup sector, with the country currently being the world's third largest startup ecosystem.

India is home to over 140,000 registered startups and boasts 118 unicorns, valued collectively at \$350 billion as of October 2024. These startups have generated 1.55 million direct jobs and contribute approximately 15 percent to India's GDP, with the IT sector leading the way, followed by healthcare & life sciences and education.

The Ambassador also acknowledged Kuwait's entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is emerging as a vibrant innovation hub in the Middle East. With its youthful population, strong government initiatives, and significant funding opportunities, Kuwait's business environment offers tremendous potential for collaboration with Indian entrepreneurs and investors.

The India-Kuwait Startup Synergies Conference was conceptualized to serve as a knowledge-sharing platform for speakers and thought leaders from both nations' startup ecosystems. The conference aimed to provide a collaborative space for participants to share success stories, innovative insights, and strategies for

fostering cross-border partnerships.

The prominent speakers during the conference were Rahul Bothra, CFO at Swiggy, one of India's leading multimillion-dollar e-commerce platforms; Anil Singhvi, Managing Editor of Zee Business; Vinay Bansal, Co-Founder and CEO of Inflection Point Venture and Partner at Physix Capital.

Kuwait was represented by Eng. Abdul Wahab Al Zaidan, Consultant with the Kuwait Digital Startup Campus and the Youth Public Authority and Abdulrahman AlDuaij, Founder & Managing Partner of HOLISTIC, a leading Kuwaiti developmental and consultancy firm.

Together, these speakers offered a rich mix of insights from both nations, focusing on recent successes and strategic lessons learned from startup initiatives in both markets.

The conference served as an invaluable platform to encourage synergistic learning, sharing success stories, and exploring pathways to innovation.

The attendees engaged in thought-provoking discussions, examining

how startups in India and Kuwait are revolutionizing their respective industries.

Key presentations highlighted case studies of emerging disruptors from both countries, inspiring the audience with examples of innovation and entrepreneurial success.

The event featured a lively Q&A session, which allowed participants to engage directly with speakers, followed by an Open Networking opportunity. These interactions provided attendees with a unique chance to connect with peers, policymakers, and industry leaders and to explore potential avenues for collaboration.

The conference was attended by a diverse group of participants, including prominent Kuwaiti business leaders, industry professionals and students enrolled in GUST's MBA program. Indian professionals holding senior positions in Kuwaiti industries also participated, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the business communities in both countries.

The conference aligns with the Embassy of India's broader vision of fostering collaboration and deepening trade and investment ties between Kuwait and India. Through events like this, the Embassy aims to strengthen professional and economic partnerships, supporting both countries' shared vision of mutual growth and development.

The conference bridged insights, experiences and opportunities between two dynamic economies. By creating pathways for collaboration and innovation, the conference reinforced the potential for strategic partnerships, technological advancements, and mutual investment growth.

Events like these are critical to sustaining and enhancing the longstanding bilateral ties between India and Kuwait, driving shared prosperity in the years ahead.

Kuwait-India Joint Working Group on Hydrocarbons meets in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, Dec 11, (KUNA): The seventh meeting of Kuwait-India Joint Working Group on Hydrocarbons was held in the Indian capital New Delhi on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The Kuwait Embassy in New Delhi said in a statement to KUNA that a high-level delegation from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Oil headed by Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil for Technical Affairs Khaled Waleed Al-Deyain participated in the meeting, which is accompanied by a workshop.

Kuwait Ambassador Meshal Al-Shemali stressed the importance of the meeting and the accompanying workshop, as the two sides discussed ways to enhance cooperation between Kuwait and India in the fields of renewable energy, recycling and establishing joint projects in the field of

petrochemicals.

The Ambassador also pointed out that Kuwait plays an important role in energy security in India, as it is considered India's sixth largest partner in the field of energy, noting that it has high efficiency and expertise in this sector, while India provides great opportunities for investment in the field of renewable energy, especially in the fields of oil and gas.

Ambassador Al-Shemali underscored that Kuwait and India recently signed a MoU to establish a joint committee for bilateral cooperation at the level of foreign ministries to discuss issues of common interest, including energy and oil, which reflects the two countries' determination to push bilateral relations to higher and more comprehensive levels.

Outcomes of last meet reviewed

Saudi-Kuwaiti coordination committee meet in Riyadh



KUNA photo

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil and Undersecretary for the Ministry of Energy for international cooperation and relations during the signing of memorandum of understanding.

RIYADH, Dec 11, (KUNA): The Saudi-Kuwaiti coordination committee on energy, economy, commerce, and industry held its second meeting in Riyadh.

The committee reviewed outcomes of the last meeting that was held on May 25, 2023, discussing 14 initiatives within the aforementioned fields, in addition to Memorandums of Understanding and other docu-

ments. The meeting is in line with both countries' efforts to boost cooperation and coordination.

Oil Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Nimr Fahad Al-Malik Al-Sabah chaired the Kuwaiti side, while Undersecretary for the Ministry of Energy for international cooperation and relations Dr. Nasser Al-Dosari headed the Saudi side.



Participants in the conference pose for a photo

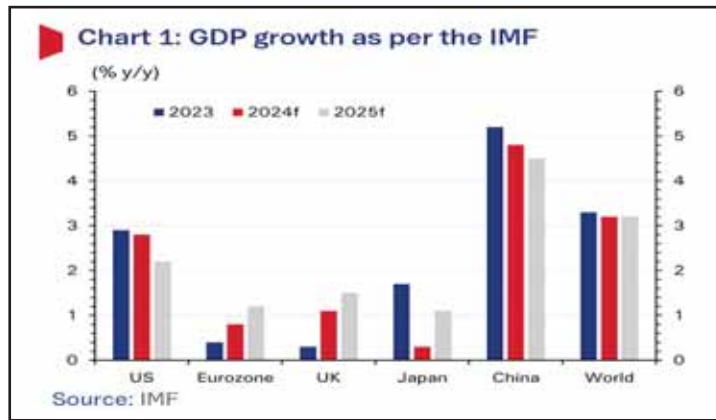
Global economy at pivotal juncture as monetary easing continues

By National Bank of Kuwait

Global monetary easing is continuing despite a bumpy path back down to 2% inflation. And while global GDP growth for 2025 is forecast to be broadly unchanged from 2023-2024 at 3.2%, the world economy seems at a pivotal juncture, given the re-election of Trump as US president. That election has already contributed to shifting the US interest rate outlook, with markets now expecting the Fed funds rate will be 75-100 bps higher, by end-2025, than when the Fed started cutting rates in September. In the Eurozone, the ECB is set to deliver a fourth rate cut this month given a weakening outlook and increased trade uncertainties. In the UK, the economy has lost momentum, but the expansionary budget should lift growth and inflation next year. In Japan, the BoJ is finally set to resume its monetary policy normalization by hiking rates in December or January, after pausing for two meetings. Finally, China's macro-economic outlook has become even more uncertain, but the likelihood of a sizable fiscal policy support in 2025 has increased.

US economy remains strong, but is at a crossroads given Trump's election

Even with the Fed's prior aggressive monetary tightening, the US economy continued to record strong growth, standing at 2.8% (annualized) in Q3, slightly below 3% in Q2. A resilient consumer amid robust wage growth (more than 4% y/y for the past three years), and supportive wealth effects from record-high stock and housing prices, has been a key driver of this momentum as seen in ongoing solid growth in private consumption (3.5% in Q3). GDP looks on track to record further robust 2%+ growth in Q4, and the IMF forecasts decent 2.2% growth in 2025. And while headline PCE inflation continued to broadly decelerate, the core



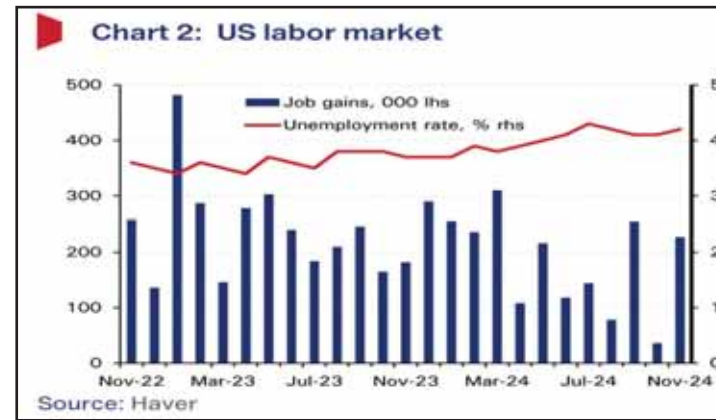
rate has been stuck at around 2.6%-2.8% y/y for the past six months, with projections that both rates will inch up in the coming months, complicating the Fed's job. Meanwhile, the major worry about a rapidly deteriorating labor market that surfaced following July's employment situation report proved overblown and was short-lived. Monthly job gains averaged 173K in the three months to November, only slightly weaker than the January-August average, with the unemployment rate increasing to a still-low 4.2% in November from 3.7% at end-2023, indicating that the labor market continues to cool but remains robust, and not signaling any imminent economic downturn.

With the election of Donald Trump as president, along with the Republican Party's sweep of Congress, the US economy is at a crossroads. Trump's plan to focus on deregulation, increase oil production, and, most importantly, cut taxes may boost GDP in the short term, but along with his plans to enact sweeping tariff hikes and conduct extensive illegal immigrant deportations can possibly lead to higher interest rates/inflation, a big rise in debt (which is already on an unsustainable path), and pressure on GDP growth over the medium term. In fact, Trump's elec-

tion has contributed, along with the recent inflation and growth trends, to a major change in the interest rate outlook with markets currently expecting only a 75 to 100 cumulative cut by end-2025, bringing down the Fed funds rate (upper limit) to 3.75%-4%, up from 3% when the Fed first cut rates by an outsized 50 bps in mid-September.

The Eurozone facing increased headwinds as the ECB is set to deliver a fourth rate cut this month

The Eurozone economy grew by a higher-than-expected 0.4% q/q in Q3, up from 0.2% in Q2, the strongest expansion in two years with growth in retail sales in August through October above 2% y/y, more than a two-year high. However, this momentum seems to be fading in Q4 with the composite PMI dropping to a 10-month low of 48.3 in November while the services PMI (49.5) fell below the 50-threshold for the first time since January. Given this weakness, the euro has been under pressure, touching two-year lows recently and is down by around 6% versus the USD since the end of September. Against this backdrop, the ECB still seems adamant in prioritizing growth over further disinflation and is almost certain to cut rates by 25 bps in its 12 December meeting,



the fourth cut since monetary easing commenced in June. This is despite core inflation remaining stuck at 2.7% y/y for three months, services inflation still elevated at 3.9% y/y in November, and wage growth remaining higher-than-wished at 4.5% y/y in Q2. After hitting a trough of 1.7% y/y in September, headline inflation reaccelerated to 2.3% in November driven by energy-related base effects, but is seen falling back to the 2% target in the course of 2025. Looking ahead, the trade-dependent and currently sluggish Eurozone economy faces increased headwinds given the possibility of 10%-20% blanket tariff enacted by the Trump administration, which if materializes, will be at a time of already fractious relations and trade with China, noting that US/China are the Eurozone's two largest trading partners. Furthermore, the outlook for the block's two largest economies, Germany and France, is increasingly uncertain given the former's snap election set for February and the latter's recent government fall following the budget debacle.

UK economy loses momentum but the expansionary budget to lift growth and inflation next year

The UK economy has weakened lately, with GDP growth in Q3 slowing to a near-standstill

of 0.1% q/q from 0.5% in Q2 and 0.7% in Q1. The Autumn budget's painful measures likely contributed to the composite PMI falling to a 13-month low of just above 50 in November (50.5). After the Labor party's landslide election victory in July, and given the relatively poor fiscal situation, Chancellor Reeves announced in the budget several revenue-raising measures (an additional £40 billion/year), but also a greater increase in outlays (by around £70 billion/year), resulting in higher projected budget deficits (4.5% of GDP in FY24 and FY25) than previously expected. The bond market initially sold-off, but then stabilized with yields on 10-year government paper currently not far from their pre-budget levels. The Bank of England (BoE), in its updated forecasts released in November, and given the expansionary budget, upgraded the GDP growth forecast for 2025 to 1.5% from 1% earlier, but lowered this year's to around 1% from 1.2%. Meanwhile, with headline inflation having steadily come down to near the 2% target, the BoE delivered a second 25 bps rate cut in its November meeting. However, the measures for core inflation, services inflation, and wage growth all remain

elevated while headline inflation is seen re-accelerating until Q3 2025, partly driven by the expansionary budget as well as household energy costs, and then gradually falling, hitting target again only in 2027. Given that, along with a better economic outlook next year, the BoE will likely follow a cautious approach in terms of monetary easing, with the futures market currently expecting only three more 25 bps rate cuts by the end of 2025.

vGDP growth slowed to 0.3% q/q in Q3 from 0.5% in Q2, driven by declining investment spending and net exports while private consumption growth improved slightly to 0.7% q/q (0.6% in Q2) benefiting from the robust increase in wages and the tax cut program that started in June. PMI figures for October/November indicate likely further deceleration in economic activities in Q4. Meanwhile, headline inflation softened to 2.3% y/y in October (from a recent high of 3% in August) helped by the temporary resumption of utility subsidies, but a measure of core inflation (excluding fresh food and energy) increased for the third straight month to stand at 2.3% y/y in October. And while the BoJ's projection for core inflation for the next fiscal year stands at a lower 1.9%, the upcoming (April) wage increase negotiations could stoke further inflationary pressures. Against this backdrop, the prime minister approved a new stimulus package worth JPY21.9 trillion (\$142 billion, 3.6% of GDP) to boost growth and ease price pressures on households. According to official estimates, the package is projected, over the next three years, to raise annual GDP growth by more than 1 percentage point. The moderating economic activity and the market turbulence following the interest rate hike at the end of July have pushed the BoJ to pause in its last two meetings, holding the key rate at "around 0.25%".



In this photo obtained from the Indian Reserve Bank of India, or RBI page on X, formerly known as Twitter, shows new RBI Gov. Sanjay Malhotra, center, welcomed by his colleagues at an office in Mumbai India Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2024. (AP)

Malhotra aims for stability

India's growth pains await new central bank governor

NEW DELHI, Dec 11, (AP) — India got a new central bank governor on Wednesday as the country's economic growth slows and inflation surges.

Sanjay Malhotra, a career civil servant, was appointed to a three-year term as head of the Reserve Bank of India, succeeding Shaktikanta Das, who retired as central bank governor after an extended six-year term.

India's economy grew at a 5.4% annual pace in the last quarter, the weakest pace in nearly two years, while inflation rose to 6.2% in October, well above the RBI's target of 4%, due to rapid increases in vegetable prices.

"Malhotra takes over at a time when there is a growing clamor for the RBI to ease policy rates in order to support growth. His challenge will be to steer the central bank through a period of global and domestic uncertainty," the Indian Express newspaper said in an editorial.

In a brief statement Wednesday, Malhotra, who used to be a revenue secretary, said his focus would be on stability, quick implementation of poli-

cies, and economic growth.

"Stable policies are very important, whether it's taxation, fiscal, or monetary policy," he said.

He also said remaining "alert and agile" to meet the changes the world witnesses today, whether geopolitical tensions, the impact of climate change or political uncertainty, was a must.

"People need continuity and stability rather than a day-to-day kind of policy," he said.

Malhotra, 56, had earlier worked in India's Ministry of Power and headed a public sector company that provided finance for rural electrification projects.

In his previous role as India's revenue secretary, he was vocal about tax overreach. Speaking at a federal event in New Delhi last week, Malhotra said that state officials had to work to improve the entire economy and not simply get more revenue via taxation.

"Revenue comes in only when there is some income. Therefore, we have to be very cautious so that we do not, as they say, kill the golden goose," he said.

Myanmar's economy to contract as floods, fighting take heavy toll

BANGKOK, Dec 11, (AP) — Myanmar's economy is forecast to contract this year, the World Bank said Wednesday, as flooding and fighting take a severe toll nearly four years after the military ousted its elected government headed by Aung San Suu Kyi.

In an update issued Wednesday, the bank said about a fifth of all built structures and a tenth of Myanmar's roads had been damaged by widespread flooding during heavy monsoon rains and a typhoon that swept through the country in September. About 2 million people were left homeless, the report said.

Meanwhile, fighting between the military and opposition forces remains fierce in some parts of the country, disrupting farming and manufacturing.

"The level and intensity of armed conflict remains high, severely affecting lives and livelihoods, disrupting production and supply chains, and heightening uncertainty around the

economic outlook," it said.

Overall, the report said the economy will likely contract 1% in annual terms in the April-March fiscal year.

Pro-democracy guerrillas and ethnic minority armed forces seeking autonomy have been battling the Myanmar army after it took power in early 2021, when generals ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

The United Nations estimates that 3.5 million people, or about 6% of the population, have been displaced from their homes, more than half the country's townships are embroiled in conflict and construction of major projects has been delayed, the report said.

The U.N. special envoy for Myanmar recently warned that the Southeast Asian nation is in crisis, with conflict escalating, criminal networks "out of control" and human suffering at unprecedented levels.

Julie Bishop, a former Australian foreign minister, warned that Myanmar risks becoming a "forgotten crisis."

In line with its comprehensive social responsibility program

Burgan Bank sponsors KIPCO Asianet News Education Excellence Award 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Expanding on its impactful role as an engaged corporate citizen, Burgan Bank sponsored the KIPCO Asianet News Education Excellence Awards 2024 – Kuwait Edition, honoring the outstanding educational professionals and institutions that continue to devote their careers to empowering the future generations of Kuwait. This comes as part of Burgan's comprehensive social responsibility program, which aims to advance the most vital sectors in Kuwait and recognize the exceptional talents whose dedication is pivotal to realizing the national 2035 Vision.

"We are honored to be part of this important event among some of Kuwait's best educators who continue to build the foundations for a better and brighter future," said Mrs. Kholoud AlFeel, Deputy General Manager – Corporate Communications at Burgan Bank. "On our mission to contribute to realizing Kuwait's 2035 Vision, it is essential that we recognize, honor, and support all individuals and institutions revolutionizing education, adapting to the young generations' interests, and encouraging students to remain thirsty for knowledge outside the classroom."

"On behalf of Burgan Bank, I would like to thank Asianet News, Al-Rayan Holding Co., KIPCO, and Metro Medical Center for bringing this ceremony to life and for dedicating a platform to recognizing and honoring the devoted educators who continue to guide our youths through their foundation years, inspiring them to realize their full potential and believe in themselves. I also wish to extend my sincerest gratitude to all the awardees for their exceptional hard work and dedication to being an inspiration, mentor, and friend to students who are yet to discover just how special and capable they



Kholoud AlFeel

are," added AlFeel.

The ceremony, which took place at Fahheel Al Watanieh Indian Private School (DPS), saw the participation of 22 of Kuwait's esteemed schools and was attended by honorable dignitaries including Mr. Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Former Union Cabinet Minister of India; His Excellency Dr. Adarsh Swaika, Indian Ambassador to Kuwait; and Dr. Ram Shankar Yadav, Regional Director of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

It serves to note that Burgan Bank consistently contributes to educational facilities' growth on academic and extracurricular fronts alike. Previous sponsorships include American United School's (AUS) annual Art's Night event as well as the National and Liberation Days carnival. The Bank also participated in the beautification of Sabah Al-Ahmad schools, as part of the "My Governorate is the Most Beautiful" campaign.



Mrs. Kholoud AlFeel, Deputy General Manager – Corporate Communications at Burgan Bank representing the Bank and Mrs. Eman Al-Awadhi, Group SVP – Corporate Communications & IR at KIPCO at the awards ceremony.

Moderate inflation boost may not halt Fed easing

Consumer prices jump 2.7% in November

WASHINGTON, Dec 11, (AP) — Annual inflation in the United States may have ticked up last month in a sign that price increases remain elevated even though they have plummeted from their painful levels two years ago.

Consumer prices are thought to have increased 2.7% in November from 12 months earlier, according to a survey of economists by the data provider FactSet, up from an annual figure of 2.6% in October. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, so-called core prices are expected to have risen 3.3% from

a year earlier, the same as in the previous month.

The latest inflation figures are the final major piece of data that Federal Reserve officials will consider before they meet next week to decide on interest rates. A relatively mild increase won't likely be enough to discourage the officials from cutting their key rate by a quarter-point.

The government will issue the November consumer price index at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time Wednesday.

The Fed slashed its benchmark rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, by a half-point in September and by an additional quarter-point in November. Those cuts lowered the central bank's key rate to 4.6%, down from a four-decade high of 5.3%.

Though inflation is now way below its peak of 9.1% in June 2022, average

prices are still much higher than they were four years ago - a major source of public discontent that helped drive President-elect Donald Trump's victory over Vice President Kamala Harris in November. Still, most economists expect inflation to decline further next year toward the Fed's 2% target.

Measured month to month, prices are believed to have risen 0.3% from October to November. That would be the biggest such increase since April. Core prices are expected to have increased 0.3%, too, for a fourth straight month. Among individual items, airline fares, used car prices and auto insurance costs are all thought to have accelerated in November.

Fed officials have made clear that they expect inflation to fluctuate along a bumpy path even as it gradually cools toward their target level.

In speeches last week, several of the central bank's policymakers stressed their belief that with inflation having already fallen so far, it was no longer necessary to keep their benchmark rate quite as high.

Typically, the Fed cuts rates to try to stimulate the economy enough to maximize employment yet not so much as to drive inflation high.

But the U.S. economy appears to be in solid shape. It grew at a brisk 2.8% annual pace in the July-September quarter, bolstered by healthy consumer spending.

That has led some Wall Street analysts to suggest that the Fed doesn't actually need to cut its key rate further.

But Chair Jerome Powell has said that the central bank is seeking to "re-calibrate" its rate to a lower setting, one more in line with tamer inflation.

Obituary

'The Princess of Black Poetry'

Nikki Giovanni, poet and literary celebrity, has died at 81

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (AP): Nikki Giovanni, the poet, author, educator and public speaker who went from borrowing money to release her first book to spending decades as a literary celebrity who shared blunt and conversational takes on everything from racism and love to space travel and mortality, has died. She was 81.

Giovanni, subject of the prize-winning 2023 documentary "Going to Mars," died Monday with her lifelong partner, Virginia "Ginney" Fowler, by her side, according to a statement from friend and author Renée Watson.

"We will forever feel blessed to have shared a legacy and love with our dear cousin," said Allison (Pat) Ragan, Giovanni's cousin, in a statement on behalf of the family.

The author of more than 25 books, Giovanni was a born confessor and performer whom fans came to know well from her work, readings and other live appearances and her years on the faculty of Virginia Tech, among other schools. Poetry collections such as "Black Judgement" and "Black Feel-



Virginia Tech English Professor, Nikki Giovanni speaks closing remarks at a convocation to honor the victims of a shooting rampage at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., on April 17, 2007. (AP)

ing Black Talk" sold thousands of copies, led to invitations from "The

Tonight Show" and other television programs and made her popular enough to fill a 3,000-seat concert hall at Lincoln Center for a celebration of her 30th birthday.

In poetry, prose and the spoken word, she told her story. She looked back on her childhood in Tennessee and Ohio, championed the Black Power movement, addressed her battles with lung cancer, paid tribute to heroes from Nina Simone to Angela Davis and reflected on such personal passions as food, romance, family and rocketing into space - a journey she believed Black women uniquely qualified for, if only because of how much they had already survived. She also edited a groundbreaking anthology of Black women poets, "Night Comes Softly," and helped found a publishing cooperative that promoted works by Gwendolyn Brooks and Margaret Walker among others.

For a time, she was called "The Princess of Black Poetry."

"All I know is the she is the most cowardly, bravest, least understanding,

most sensitive, slowest to anger, most quixotic, lyingest, most honest woman I know," her friend Barbara Crosby wrote in the introduction to "The Prosaic Soul of Nikki Giovanni," an anthology of nonfiction prose published in 2003. "To love her is to love contradiction and conflict. To know her is to never understand but to be sure that all is life."

Giovanni's admirers ranged from James Baldwin to Teena Marie, who name-checked her on the dance hit "Square Biz," to Oprah Winfrey, who invited the poet to her "Living Legends" summit in 2005, when other guests of honor included Rosa Parks and Toni Morrison. Giovanni was a National Book Award finalist in 1973 for a prose work about her life, "Gemini." She also received a Grammy nomination for the spoken word album "The Nikki Giovanni Poetry Collection."

In January 2009, at the request of NPR, she wrote a poem about the incoming president, Barack Obama: "I'll walk the streets

And knock on doors
Share with the folks:
Not my dreams but yours
I'll talk with the people
I'll listen and learn
I'll make the butter
Then clean the churn"

Giovanni had a son, Thomas Watson Giovanni, in 1969. She never married the father, because, she told Ebony magazine, "I didn't want to get married, and I could afford not to get married." Over the latter part of her life she lived with her partner, Fowler, a fellow faculty member at Virginia Tech.

She was born Yolande Cornelia Giovanni Jr. in Knoxville, Tennessee, and was soon called "Nikki" by her older sister. She was 4 when her family moved to Ohio and eventually settled in the Black community of Lincoln Heights, outside Cincinnati. She would travel often between Tennessee and Ohio, bound to her parents and to her maternal grandparents in her "spiritual home" in Knoxville.

As a girl, she read everything from

history books to Ayn Rand and was accepted to Fisk University, the historically Black school in Nashville, after her junior year of high school. College was a time for achievement, and for trouble. Her grades were strong, she edited the Fisk literary magazine and helped start the campus branch of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. But she rebelled against school curfews and other rules and was kicked out for a time because her "attitudes did not fit those of a Fisk woman," she later wrote. After the school changed the dean of women, Giovanni returned and graduated with honors in history in 1967.

Giovanni relied on support from friends to publish her debut collection, "Black Poetry Black Talk," which came out in 1968, and in the same year she self-published "Black Judgement." The radical Black Arts Movement was at its height and early Giovanni poems such as "A Short Essay of Affirmation Explaining Why," "Of Liberation" and "A Litany for Peppe" were militant calls to overthrow white power.

Re-release draws crowds

Nolan on 'Interstellar's' epic success 10 yrs later

LOS ANGELES, Dec 11, (AP): The hardest movie ticket to get this weekend was for a film audiences have been able to watch at home for years: Christopher Nolan's "Interstellar."

The science fiction epic starring Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway earned \$4.5 million from only 166 screens in the US and Canada. Its 70mm IMAX film presentations sold out in minutes, leaving theaters scrambling to add more and people paying up to \$300 on the re-sale market. Those 10 film screens alone had a staggering \$70,000 per theater average, one of the highest of the year and usually the bragging rights of acclaimed art-house movies playing on only four screens.



Nolan

Ten years after "Interstellar" was given a film release as a special exception at time when its studio, Paramount, was committing to a digital future, film is not only back but driving audiences to theaters.

"I was just so gratified by the response," Nolan said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press. "It's really thrilling when people respond to your work at any point. But 10 years later, to have new audiences coming and experiencing it in the way that we'd originally intended it on the big IMAX screens and in particular on those IMAX film prints? It's really rewarding to see that it continues to have a life."

Change

"Interstellar" had been a labor of love, with Nolan fighting against the tides of a changing industry to use film, certain of its value. Like McConaughey's Cooper, an astronaut clinging to skills that were all but obsolete in his dust bowl reality, "Interstellar" was made by a celluloid-loving filmmaker when the format was least valued.

"Celluloid film was very threatened. Digital was taking over everything," Nolan said. "We put an enormous amount of work and effort into the IMAX 70mm film format release at the time feeling like we didn't know how much longer we'd be able to do that."

During its time, "Interstellar" was received warmly and an unambiguous success, but it also had its detractors. Its five Oscar nominations and win were all for crafts. And yet in the decade since, "Interstellar" has become beloved, a true classic. Nolan observed that it was the film that people kept wanting to talk about,

telling him what it meant to them and asking if it was ever going to be re-released. Those grand emotions and sentimental themes of love, family and exploration that were a liability with some are now its most cherished qualities.

"A lot of these people were younger people who, it was clear to me, had seen the film in the home and hadn't had the chance to see it on the big screen," Nolan said.

While there have been "Interstellar" rereleases internationally, in China and at the Science Museum in London, Nolan saw an opportunity and spoke to IMAX and Paramount, now under a new regime, about a proper North American re-release for its 10th anniversary. The prints, Nolan said, hadn't aged a day.

IMAX hardly needed convincing: They've had the anniversary date circled on the calendar. For years, "Interstellar" was by far the biggest request on their social channels.

Expectations

"We saw this coming from the beginning," IMAX CEO Rich Gelfond said. "It reminded us in a small way of the frenzy around 'Oppenheimer.' But the result is far beyond our expectations."

"Interstellar" is now the ninth highest-grossing IMAX release of all time and is closing in on eight (currently occupied by "The Last Jedi.") The company is currently exploring options for re-releases in different territories.

The "Oppenheimer" effect was real in redeeming film's value for the business.

IMAX screens accounted for some 20% of the nearly \$1 billion this year's Oscar best picture winner made globally (it ranks at No. 5 for IMAX). While filmmakers have long cherished film stock, "Oppenheimer" had studios, distributors and theaters taking note of the demand. Earlier this year the film showings of "Dune: Part Two" were sold out for four weeks. And there's more to come: Ryan Coogler's new film "Sinners," opening in March 2025, was shot with IMAX cameras.

The "Interstellar" release was fairly "low key" when it came to promotion, but it also didn't need much - fans made sure of that. Before IMAX had even announced that tickets were on sale, some noticed that AMC had made them available. News spread on socials and overnight every 70mm IMAX showing at the Lincoln Square location in New York had sold out. It wasn't just the "primetime" slots either: The 1 AM showtimes were at capacity too.

After the weekend's turnout surpassed expectations, they added more 70mm IMAX screenings through the week which also filled up quickly.



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Matthew McConaughey in a scene from the film 'Interstellar.' (AP)

Film



Selena Gomez attends the Academy Women's Luncheon on Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024, at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. (AP)

'Amplify women's voices'

Gomez highlights mental health at Academy event

LOS ANGELES, Dec 11, (AP): While surveying a room packed with Hollywood's most influential figures, "Emilia Pérez" star Selena Gomez took center stage to spotlight a critical issue: Prioritizing mental health and supporting underserved communities often left behind in the conversation.

"It's about taking action to ensure that underserved communities have access to mental health resources," Gomez said Tuesday at the Academy Women's Luncheon. The singer-actor has been public about her mental health struggles, revealing she had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

In 2020, Gomez started the Rare Impact Fund and her Rare Beauty line of cosmetics, pledging to donate 1% of all sales to the fund to help expand mental health services and education for young people.

"It's about showing them that when we come together, we can make a real difference," said Gomez, a Grammy and Emmy-nominated performer who became a Golden Globes double nominee Monday for her roles on "Emilia Pérez" and "Only Murders in the Building."

"I know firsthand how isolation can make you feel at times," she said. "But moments like this and talking to all these amazing women, it just reminds me that I'm not alone. We share. And when we stand together, we create a ripple effect that stretches far beyond our own lives."

Gomez was the keynote speaker at the event held at

the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures with attendees including Ariana Grande, Olivia Wilde, Amy Adams, Pamela Anderson, Sarah Paulson, Regina King, Rita Wilson, Ava DuVernay and Awkwafina.

Gomez talked about the importance of amplifying women's voice and being proud while working on "Emilia Pérez," which she says featured "extraordinary" women from in front and behind the camera. She said the film's director, Jacques Audiard, fostered the idea that "every single voice is heard and valued."

"It reminded me of the power of community, supporting and lifting up each other - whether in film, music or life itself," she said.

Many actors in attendance dressed in Chanel clothing, jewelry, shoes, makeup and accessories. The luxury fashion brand, which sponsored the event, has had a long association with film and women creatives since founder Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel saw an opportunity to put her designs in the movies and empower women in film.

Tuesday's event was held to bring together women from all facets of the filmmaking community. It was also a celebration of the Academy Gold Fellowship for Women, a program that supports emerging women filmmakers.

Gomez paid homage to the event for highlighting women filmmakers and the efforts behind creating resources for those in the fellowship.

Variety

HOUSTON: High-profile legal battles are nothing new for Texas attorney Tony Buzbee, with his latest being a lawsuit he's filed against Jay-Z, accusing the iconic rapper as well as Sean "Diddy" Combs of sexually assaulting a minor at an awards show after-party in 2000.

The lawsuit against Jay-Z is part of a series of civil cases the Houston-based Buzbee has filed against Combs, who remains jailed in New York as he awaits trial on federal charges that he coerced and abused women for years.

In his legal career, Buzbee has represented a variety of clients. He helped acquit Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton at his impeachment trial in the Texas Senate last year. He represented more than two dozen women who accused Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson of sexual misconduct and assault. Buzbee has also made a couple of unsuccessful runs at elected office, including a bid to be Houston's mayor.



Jay-Z

His critics say he's full of bluster and bombast. Jay-Z said the lawsuit against him is part of an extortion attempt. Buzbee's law firm has said he's worked to amplify the voices of the marginalized and to "pursue justice against powerful figures."

"We're a society where we typically don't believe the accuser. We blame the victim and by proxy we blame her lawyers," Buzbee said during a March 2021 news conference.

Here's what to know about Buzbee, his involvement in the lawsuits against Combs and what other cases he's handled.

Buzbee is a well-known name in Texas courtrooms who has won billions of dollars in settlements for his clients.

He grew up in northeast Texas, the son of a butcher and a high school cafeteria worker. After graduating from Texas A&M University, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps. Buzbee later went to law school and founded his own firm.

His style is "characterized by his aggressive legal tactics, his ability to command media attention and his knack for turning complex legal battles into public narratives that resonate with juries and the public alike," according to his law firm's website.

Buzbee has said his firm is representing more than 150 people, both men and women, who allege sexual abuse and exploitation at the hands of Combs.

Buzbee's firm, which has set up a 1-800 number for accusers, has filed a wave of suits against the hip-hop mogul. Buzbee's lawsuits allege that many of the people he represents were abused at parties in New York, California and Florida where individuals were given drinks that were laced with drugs. (AP)

BERLIN: Frieder Reimold, a former Berlin bureau chief of The Associated Press German-language service who wrote the iconic 1989 bulletin that East Germany had opened its borders, has died. He was 80.

Reimold died Thursday in Berlin of complications related to cancer, his daughter Nancy Stephan told the AP.

He began working for AP as a political correspondent in Bonn in the late 1970s after entering journalism on a German newspaper.

After months of overtime writing about upheaval and protests in East Germany, Reimold, who had by then become the Berlin bureau chief of AP's German-language service, settled in on Nov. 9, 1989, to watch a televised evening briefing by Günter Schabowski, a member of the communist country's Politburo.

History didn't give Reimold a break that night. About an hour into the rambling news conference, Schabowski mentioned that East Germany was lifting all restrictions on travel across its border into West Germany. Pressed on when the new regulations would take effect, he looked at his notes and stammered, "As far as I know, this enters into force ... this is immediately, without delay." (AP)



Nobel laureate in literature Han Kang speaks during the Nobel Banquet in City Hall in Stockholm, Sweden, Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024. (AP)

Events



Elle Fanning arrives at the premiere of 'A Complete Unknown' on Tuesday, Dec. 10, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Filmmaker Denis Villeneuve speaks after receiving Irving M. Levin Award for Film Direction during SFFilm Awards Night at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco on Monday, Dec 9, 2024. (AP)



As Zac Posen looks on, Demi Moore holds her dog, Pilaf, during SFFilm Awards Night at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco on Monday, Dec 9, 2024. Moore is the 2024 recipient of the Maria Manetti Shrem Award for Acting. (AP)

'Year in search'

What did you Google in 2024?

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (AP) - Remember what you searched for in 2024? Google does.

Google released its annual "Year in Search" on Tuesday, rounding up the top trending queries entered into its name-sake search engine in 2024. The results show terms that saw the highest spike in traffic compared to last year - ranging from key news events, notably global elections, to the most popular songs, athletes and unforgettable pop-culture moments that people looked up worldwide.

Sports - particularly soccer and cricket - dominated Google's overall trending searches in 2024. Copa America topped those search trends globally, followed by the UEFA European Championship and ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Meanwhile, the US election led news-specific searches worldwide. Queries about excessive heat and this year's Olympic Games followed.

US President-elect Donald Trump topped searches in Google's people category this year - followed by Catherine, Princess of Wales, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris and Algerian boxer Imane Khelif, who also led athlete-specific searches. Meanwhile, the late Liam Payne, Toby Keith and O.J. Simpson led

search trends among notable individuals who died in 2024.

In the world of entertainment, Disney and Pixar's "Inside Out 2" was the top trending movie of the year, while Netflix's "Baby Reindeer" led TV show trends. And Kendrick Lamar's "Not Like Us" dominated song trends.

That's just the tip of the iceberg. Queries for the Olympic village's chocolate muffin, made famous by Norwegian swimmer Henrik Christiansen over the summer games, led Google's global recipe trends this year. The New York Times' "Connections" puzzle topped game searches. And in the U.S., country-specific data shows, many people asked Google about online trends like the word "demure" and "mob wife aesthetic."

You can find more country-specific lists, and trends from years past, through Google's "Year in Search" data published online. The California company said it collected 2024 search results from Jan. 1 through Nov. 23 of this year.

Google isn't the only one to publish an annual recap or top trends as 2024 draws to a close. Spotify Wrapped, for example, as well as Collins Dictionary and Merriam-Webster's words of the year, have offered additional reflections for 2024.

Nihon Hidankyo receives Nobel Peace Prize

Atomic bomb survivor recalls horrors in Nobel speech

OSLO, Norway, Dec 11, (AP) - A 92-year-old Japanese man who lived through the American atomic bombing of Nagasaki described on Tuesday the agony he witnessed in 1945, including the charred corpses of his loved ones and the ruins of his city, as he accepted this year's Nobel Peace Prize on his organization's behalf.

The prize was awarded to Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots movement of Japanese atomic bombing survivors who have worked for nearly 70 years to maintain a taboo around the use of nuclear weapons. The weapons have grown exponentially in power and number since being used for the first and only time in warfare by the United States on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945.

The bombings pushed Japan to surrender to the Allies. They killed some 210,000 people by the end of 1945, but the full death toll from radiation is certainly higher.

As the survivors reach the twilight of their lives, they are grappling with the fear that the taboo against using the weapons appears to be weakening. It was a concern expressed by the 92-year-old survivor, Terumi Tanaka, who delivered the acceptance lecture in Oslo's City Hall to an audience that included Norway's royal family.

"The nuclear superpower Russia threatens to use nuclear weapons in its war against Ukraine, and a cabi-

net member of Israel, in the midst of its unrelenting attacks on Gaza in Palestine, even spoke of the possible use of nuclear arms," Tanaka said. "I am infinitely saddened and angered that the nuclear taboo threatens to be broken."

That concern drove the Norwegian Nobel Committee to award this year's prize to the Japanese organization, though it had honored other nuclear non-proliferation work in the past.

Jørgen Watne Frydnes, the chair of the committee, said in introducing the laureates that it was important to learn from their testimony as the nuclear dangers grow.

"None of the nine countries that possess nuclear weapons - the United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea - appear interested in nuclear disarmament and arms control at present," he said. "On the contrary, they are modernizing and building up their nuclear arsenals."

He said the Norwegian Nobel Committee was calling upon the five nuclear weapon states that have signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - the U.S., Russia, China, France and the U.K. - to take seriously their obligations under the treaty, and said others must ratify it.

"It is naive to believe our civilization can survive a world order in



Terumi Tanaka, a representative of this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner Nihon Hidankyo, or the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations, speaks during the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony at the City Hall in Oslo, Norway, Tuesday, Dec. 10. (AP)

which global security depends on nuclear weapons," Frydnes said. "The world is not meant to be a prison in which we await collective annihilation."

In his speech, Tanaka described the attack on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945,

three days after the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

He recalled the buzzing sound of a bomber jet followed by a "bright, white light," and then an intense shock wave. Three days later, he and his mother sought out loved ones who lived near the hypocenter.

"Many people who were badly injured or burned, but still alive, were left unattended, with no help whatsoever. I became almost devoid of emotion, somehow closing off my sense of humanity, and simply headed intently for my destination," he said.

He found the charred body of an aunt, the body of her grandson, his grandfather on the brink of death with severe burns and another aunt who had been severely burned and died just before he arrived. In all, five family members were killed.

He described the efforts of survivors to use their experiences to try to abolish nuclear weapons for the sake of humanity, and to try to receive compensation from the Japanese state, which started the war, for their suffering.

"I hope that the belief that nuclear weapons cannot - and must not - coexist with humanity will take firm hold among citizens of the nuclear weapon states and their allies, and that this will become a force for change in the nuclear policies of their governments," he said.

Television

Standout shows: From rom-coms to thrillers

10 new 2024 TV shows to catch before 2025

LOS ANGELES, Dec 11, (AP) - It could be argued that 2024 wasn't the best year for television.

Highly anticipated shows like the final season of "Stranger Things," "The Last of Us" and "The White Lotus" didn't even make it on the calendar and will instead return in 2025. Streamers and networks tightened their budgets by saying yes to less.

Writing off this year's selection, however, seems unfair. There were new standout comedies, dramas, reality TV and remakes of old favorites that caught the attention of viewers, awards voters and the zeitgeist.

In no particular order, here are 10 new shows from 2024 to check out before the new year.

"Nobody Wants This"

In 2024, pop culture experienced a Brodyscence when Netflix's "Nobody Wants This" reminded many why they had a crush on Adam Brody in the early aughts when he was on "The O.C." In this rom-com created by Erin Foster, Brody plays a rabbi named Noah who begins dating a gentile named Joanne (the always entertaining Kristen Bell) and their courtship as thirtysomethings unfolds. Before reaching their happily ever after, a number of obstacles - like religious differences, family pressures and career goals - need to be addressed. Hope is not lost, however, and throughout it all Noah and Joanne remain a good match. The supporting cast, by the way, is also a delight.

"Supacell"

The British series "Supacell" introduced a smart spin on the superhero template. Created and written by Rapman, the show centers on a group of Black, working class people in London who discover they have superpowers. At first, it seems the powerful are linked by just the color of their skin but their real connection is a family history of sickle cell disease. The show addresses themes like the medical exploitation of the Black community, poverty and how the media often overlooks cases of missing people of color.

"The Penguin"

Another fresh take on the world of superheroes and their villains is "The Penguin," on Max. The story picks up after the 2022 film "The Batman" starring Robert Pattinson but here, Batman is more a background character to the gangster story of Oz Cobb. Colin Farrell played the criminal kingpin in the Pattinson film and reprises that role here. Cristin Milioti has also gotten positive reviews - and a Golden Globe nomination - for her portrayal of villain Sofia Falcone.

"Matlock"

When CBS first announced a new "Matlock" with Kathy Bates in the lead role, it seemed like just a gender-flipped remake. Au contraire. Bates plays Madeline Kingston, a wealthy lawyer who comes out of retirement under the alias Mattie Matlock (with a similar folksy demeanor as Andy Griffith's). Her reason for returning to work is that she



This image released by FX shows Eita Okuno as Saeki Nobutatsu, (from left), Anna Sawai as Toda Mariko, Hiromoto Ida as Kiyama Ukon Sadanaga in a scene from 'Shogun.' (AP)



This image released by Netflix shows Nadine Mills in a scene from 'Supacell.' (AP)



This image released by FX shows Brian Jordan Alvarez in a scene from 'English Teacher.' (AP)

needs money but, in reality, she's out for revenge. It's also fun to see how the series addresses older people being often overlooked and underestimated, which Madeline sometimes leans into for her own benefit. It streams on Paramount+. (Bates also snagged a Globe nomination.)

"The Valley"

When "Vanderpump Rules" spinoff "The Valley" debuted on Bravo in spring, some fans rolled their eyes. It

follows three former "Vanderpump" castmates - Jax Taylor, Brittany Cartwright and Kristen Doute - now living more settled lives amid a new circle of friends. Taylor and Doute knew the assignment - or just quickly fell into old habits of saying too much and stirring the pot. The new cast also impressed. Janet Caperna positioned herself as both above the drama and very much living for it. Jesse Lally showed vul-

nerability over the demise of his marriage to castmate Michelle Sanaï, while also being an unapologetic snob.

"Mr. & Mrs. Smith"

Another adaptation with a twist is Prime Video's "Mr. & Mrs. Smith," starring Donald Glover and Maya Erskine. It shares a title with the film starring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, but differs dramatically: Glover and Erskine play spies assigned to pose as a married couple named John and Jane Smith. They quickly go from strangers to co-workers to lovers. Each episode sees John and Jane on a new assignment, with notable guest stars like Alexander Skarsgård, Michaela Coel and Sharon Horgan.

"Ripley"

Andrew Scott stars in "Ripley," a neo-noir Netflix adaptation about the con artist and serial killer created by Patricia Highsmith. Like the 1999 movie starring Matt Damon, Gwyneth Paltrow and Jude Law, this limited series is based on the Highsmith's "The Talented Mr. Ripley." Tom Ripley is hired by a wealthy businessman to travel to Italy and encourage his son, Dickie, who is living a life of leisure, to return to the States. Ripley ends up becoming enamored with Dickie's lifestyle and the ruse turns deadly.

"English Teacher"

Brian Jordan Alvarez created and stars in FX's "English Teacher" as Evan, a high school teacher in Texas, juggling the normal demands of the job amid societal changes. In one episode, Evan must show sensitivity to a student who has self-diagnosed herself with a made-up disease. In another, he successfully gets the school's gun safety program shut down but then is told all faculty must receive firearm training. As the adults on the show often struggle with getting it right, it's the students who seem less bothered with labels.

"Shogun"

"Shogun" had a triumphant first season on FX, winning a historic 18 awards at this year's Emmys - including best drama series and best actor and actress in a drama for Hiroyuki Sanada and Anna Sawai. It's set during the power struggles in feudal Japan and is based on a 1975 James Clavell novel. FX didn't skimp on the production value, netting comparisons to "Game of Thrones." It was originally planned as a limited series, but now two more seasons are planned. Episodes stream on Hulu.

"Presumed Innocent"

Jake Gyllenhaal starred in his first TV series, "Presumed Innocent," for Apple TV+. Gyllenhaal is Rusty Sabich, a Chicago prosecutor accused of killing a colleague. Gyllenhaal's real brother-in-law, Peter Sarsgaard, plays Rusty's adversary, another lawyer trying to prove his guilt. The story comes from a Scott Turow novel that was made into a Harrison Ford film in 1990 but doesn't follow either to the letter. It was the streamer's most watched drama series so far and a second season has been ordered, with Gyllenhaal staying on as an executive producer.

Variety

NEW YORK: Ang Lee, the protean filmmaker of "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and "Brokeback Mountain," will receive the Directors Guild of America's lifetime achievement award.

The guild announced Tuesday that Lee, 70, will be given the award at the 77th DGA Awards on Feb. 8. The DGA, which considers the award its highest honor, has given it to 36 filmmakers over its 88-year history. The last director to receive it was Spike Lee in 2022.

"Ang Lee is truly a master filmmaker," said Leslie Linka Glatter, DGA president, in a statement. "For over 30 years, he has directed a dynamic body of work that boldly cuts across genres - from period drama to comedy, adven-

ture to western, superhero to martial arts - always fearlessly taking on new challenges, never repeating himself, and consistently achieving cinematic excellence."

"I am honored to be recognized in such an incredible way by my beloved guild," said Lee. "To be given the DGA Lifetime Achievement Award is a momentous achievement for me personally, and an opportunity to reflect on what my work has meant to this amazing community of my fellow filmmakers."

Lee's films also include 1995's "Sense and Sensibility," 1997's "The Ice Storm," 2003's "Hulk" and 2012's "Life of Pi." The Taiwan-born filmmaker has twice won the Oscar for best director, for "Brokeback Mountain" and for "Life of Pi." His last film was 2019's "Gemini Man," a Will Smith-starring action film shot at 120 frames per second. (AP)

NEW YORK: Taylor Swift's Eras Tour brought in \$2.2 billion in its nearly two-year run, making it the highest-grossing tour of all time for a second year in a row, Pollstar estimates from data collected across 149 shows.

The new numbers were provided to The Associated Press on Monday, the morning after Swift wrapped the Eras tour with its final show in Vancouver, Canada. Last year, Swift's landmark

tour became the first to cross the billion-dollar mark.

In North America, Swift's tour earned an estimated \$1.04 billion over its run. Globally, that number jumps to an estimated \$2.2 billion.

"We are witnessing history in the making. What Taylor Swift and The Eras Tour accomplished in 21 months across five continents before 10 million fans is extraordinary and unprecedented. The tour's \$2.2 billion estimated gross is the highest of all time and nearly doubles the second biggest tour," said Andy Genieser, editor-in-chief of Pollstar & VenuesNow, in a statement. "It's also an example of the limits this industry continues to push far past while bringing music, community and peak life experiences to legions across the globe." (AP)

HEALTH

Self-test for HPV may reduce cancer rates

US health authorities add self-testing option for cervical cancer screening

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (AP): Women should have the option of taking their own test samples for cervical cancer screening, an influential health panel said Tuesday.

Draft recommendations from the US Preventive Services Task Force are aimed at getting more people screened and spreading the word that women can take their own vaginal samples to check for cancer-causing HPV.

Women in their 20s should still get a Pap test every three years. But after that — from age 30 to 65 — women can get an HPV test every five years, the panel said.

And those HPV tests can be done with samples collected either by a doctor or by the patient herself in a mobile clinic or medical office. Women ages 30 to 65 can still opt for a Pap test done by a doctor every three years, or a Pap plus an HPV test every five years.

"I'm very hopeful that self-collection will help even more women get screened and help us reduce even further the burden of cervical cancer among women," said task force chair Dr. John Wong of Tufts University School of Medicine.

Earlier this year, U.S. regulators expanded the use of two HPV test kits to include self-collection. Studies show women and doctors take samples with



This image provided by BD (Beckton, Dickinson and Company) in Dec. 2024 shows the company's HPV test for cervical cancer screening. (AP)

similar accuracy.

For now, the tests are only for use in health care settings; home testing may be on the horizon.

HPV, or human papillomavirus, is very common and is spread through sex. Most HPV infections clear up on their own, but persistent infection can lead to cancer of the cervix. Most cervical cancers occur in women who are inadequately screened, diagnosed or treated.

To collect a sample, a swab or brush from the kit is inserted into the vagina

and rotated. It is put in a tube and processed at a lab.

The HPV tests detect high-risk types of the virus. In contrast, a Pap test looks for abnormal cells in the cervix. Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden already use self-collection for cervical cancer screening.

Deaths from cervical cancers have declined in the US in the past decade, and there is an HPV vaccine recommended for preteens that is preventing cancer in women and men. Still, nearly 14,000 new cases of cervical cancer were diagnosed in the U.S. this year and there were an estimated 4,360 deaths.

Black women, Native American women and Hispanic women still have higher death rates compared to white women. Women living in isolated areas also have higher than average death rates. For many women, transgender men and nonbinary people, collecting their own sample could be more comfortable than the stirrups and speculum used by a doctor.

The draft advice remains largely the same as the group's previous recommendations from 2018. For example, women younger than 21 don't need to be screened for cervical cancer. Neither do women older than 65 who've had regular screenings with normal results. And women of any age who've had a total hysterectomy don't need to be screened.

Limit sugars, sodium and saturated fat

More beans, less red meat: Experts weigh in on US dietary guidelines

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (AP): Americans should eat more beans, peas and lentils and cut back on red and processed meats and starchy vegetables, all while continuing to limit added sugars, sodium and saturated fat.

That's the advice released Tuesday by an expert panel of nutritionists charged with counseling the US government about the 2025 edition of the dietary guidelines that will form the cornerstone of federal food programs and policy.

But the 20-member panel didn't weigh in on the growing role of ultraprocessed foods that have been linked to health problems, saying there's not enough evidence to tell people to avoid them. And the group steered clear of updating controversial guidance on alcohol consumption, leaving that analysis to two outside reports expected to be released soon.

Overall, the recommendations for the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans sound familiar, said Marion Nestle, a food policy expert.

"This looks like every other set of dietary guidelines since 1980: eat your veggies and reduce consumption of foods high in salt, sugar and saturated fat," Nestle said in an email. "This particular statement says nothing about balancing calories, when overconsumption of calories, especially from ultra-processed foods, is the biggest challenge to the health of Americans."

The nutrition panel concluded that a healthy diet for people aged 2 years and older is higher in vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, whole grains, fish and vegetable oils that are higher in unsaturated fat.

It is lower in red and processed meats, sugar-sweetened foods and beverages, refined grains and saturated fat. It may also include fat-free or low-fat dairy and foods lower in sodium and may include plant-based foods.

The panel, which met for nearly two years, was the first to focus on the dietary needs of Americans through what they called a "health equity lens," said Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, an obesity expert at Massachusetts General Hospital who



In this Nov. 2, 2013 file photo, various cuts of beef are displayed for sale in the meat department at a discount market in Arlington, Va. (AP)

was part of the group. That meant considering factors such as household income, race, ethnicity and culture when recommending healthy diets. It will help ensure that the guidance "reflects and includes various population groups," she said in an email.

Ultraprocessed foods include the snacks, sugary cereals and frozen meals that make up about 60% of the American diet.

Overweight

The panel considered more than 40 studies, including several that showed links between ultraprocessed foods and becoming overweight or developing obesity. But the nutrition experts had concerns with the quality of the research, leaving them to conclude that the evidence was too limited to make recommendations.

That decision is likely to bump up against the views of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., the nominee to lead the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, who has questioned potential conflicts of interest among members of the dietary guidelines panel and vowed to crack down on ultraprocessed foods that contribute to chronic disease.

The panel also didn't revise recommendations that suggest limiting alcohol intake to two drinks or less a day for men and one drink or less a day for women.

In 2020, the last time the guidance was updated, the government rejected the advice of scientific advisers to recommend less alcohol consumption.

Two groups - the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine and a committee of the government agency that oversees substance abuse - are expected to release reports in the coming months on the effects of moderate alcohol use to inform the guidelines.

The advisory panel acknowledged that the diets of most Americans don't meet the current guidelines. More than half of all US adults have one or more diet-related chronic health conditions and 18 million US households have insecure sources of food, according to the report.

"Nutrition-related chronic health conditions and their precursors continue to threaten health through the lifespan," the report concludes. "Which does not bode well for the future of health in the United States." The scientific report informs the dietary guidelines, which are updated every five years. Tuesday's recommendations now go to HHS and the Agriculture Department, where officials will draft the final guidance set for release next year.

Starting Wednesday, the public will have 60 days to comment on the guidance. HHS and USDA officials will hold a public meeting Jan. 16 to discuss the recommendations.

The new guidance, which will be finalized by the incoming Trump administration, is consistent with decades of federal efforts to reduce diet-related disease in the U.S., said Dr. Peter Lurie, president of the advocacy group Center for Science in the Public Interest.



A section of audience at the symposium on obstructive sleep apnea at Dasman Diabetes Institute.

Experts discuss advanced treatments for OSA

KFAS organizes symposium on obstructive sleep apnea at Dasman Diabetes Institute

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) recently organized a scientific symposium at the Dasman Diabetes Institute, focusing on "Identifying Biomarkers of Obstructive Sleep Apnea," reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The event, part of the Foundation's Science Month activities, brought together doctors from the Ministry of Health and private sector hospitals, researchers from the Kuwait University, the Kuwait Institute of Medical Specialties, the Kuwait Medical Association and medical students.

The symposium highlighted the findings of a research project funded by KFAS, titled "Advanced treatments for sleep apnea and their impact on obesity," which was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Abdul Mohsen Al-Turki, with contributions from researchers at the Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI).

The research explored vital signs related to obstructive sleep apnea and examined whether treating the disorder could improve cardiovascular and metabolic health.

Professor Nico DeVries, a renowned researcher in ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgery at OLVG West Hospital in the Netherlands, delivered a presentation on the latest research



Experts speak during sleep apnea symposium.

KUNA photos

and recommendations regarding sleep apnea. Patients also shared their personal experiences and challenges in managing the condition.

Dr. Al-Turki praised the support from KFAS and the DDI in raising awareness about the often-overlooked disease. He emphasized the importance of continued research into sleep apnea to enhance diagnostic methods

and treatment options, both surgical and non-surgical.

In conclusion, the symposium featured the distribution of the fourteenth issue of Al-Arabi magazine, published in January 1960, which included a scientific article on sleep, reflecting the magazine's early interest in health and societal issues.

US bans 2 cancer-causing chemicals

AI can boost cancer detection: study

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec 11, (Xinhua): A US breast-screening program claims to demonstrate the potential benefits of using artificial intelligence (AI) in mammography screening, with women who paid for AI-enhanced scans 21 percent more likely to have cancer detected, according to a report by TechCrunch released on Monday.

DeepHealth, an AI firm owned by radiology giant RadNet, presented its findings at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), detailing 747,604 women who underwent mammography screening over a 12-month period.

Overall cancer detection rates were 43 percent higher for those enrolled in the program compared to those who weren't. Some of the women also opted to have "U.S. Food and Drug Administration-compliant AI software" applied to their mammograms, serving as a "second set of eyes" to help radiologists spot anomalies in mammogra-

phy screenings.

The findings suggest that 22 percent of the overall cancer detection increase was due to the fact that higher-risk patients were more likely to enroll in the program to begin with, implying selection bias. However, its analysis concluded that the remaining 21 percent was due to the use of AI in driving recall rates for additional imaging.

The researchers said they are now seeking to "better quantify" the benefits of AI in this context through randomized controlled trials.

Chemicals: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on Monday banned two chemicals found in everyday products that can cause cancer and other serious diseases. The two chemicals are trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchloroethylene (PCE).

"It's simply unacceptable to continue to allow cancer-causing chemicals to be used for things like glue,

dry cleaning or stain removers when safer alternatives exist," said Assistant Administrator for the EPA Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention Michal Freedhoff.

"These rules are grounded in the best-available science that demonstrates the harmful impacts of PCE and TCE. EPA continues to deliver on actions that protect people, including workers and children, under the nation's premier bipartisan chemical safety law," Freedhoff said. PCE and TCE are both nonflammable chlorinated solvents that are volatile organic compounds. PCE can biodegrade into TCE, and PCE may contain trace amounts of TCE as an impurity or a contaminant.

TCE is an extremely toxic chemical known to cause liver cancer, kidney cancer, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. TCE also causes damage to the central nervous system, liver, kidneys, immune system, reproductive organs, and fetal heart defects, according to EPA.

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'A dream comeback'

Linde leads South Africa to thrilling win over Pakistan

DURBAN, South Africa, Dec 11, (AP): Allrounder George Linde felt he owed South Africa a little extra.

He missed the team bus going to Kingsmead for the Twenty20 against Pakistan and needed a police escort to catch up.

"It was a little embarrassing," Linde said. "I felt like I had to deliver for the team today and glad I did."

He delivered career-best T20 performances with bat and ball by whacking a 24-ball 48 and taking 4-21 to lead the Proteas to a thrilling 11-run win.

After his first T20 since 2021, Linde said, "A dream comeback."

South Africa put up 183-9 and Pakistan took the chase to the last over but finished on 172-8.

Pakistan appeared to be saving wickets for a madcap finish. Opener Mohammad Rizwan's steady

but slow innings put pressure on his partners to swing hard.

They mainly did. Saim Ayub hit 31 runs off 15 balls, and Tayyab Tahir 18 off 18.

When Tahir left, five overs remained, and Rizwan woke up. In the 17th over, he clubbed Kwena Maphaka for sixes over long-on and long-off.

But in the 18th, left-arm spinner Linde took out three Pakistanis in four balls and thought he finished the over with a hat trick. But Haris Rauf's review showed the ball missing leg stump.

Rizwan hit three boundaries in the 19th over and had bolted from 36 off 44 to 74 off 61. Pakistan reached the last over needing 19 runs.

He was out second ball, miscuing a pull at Maphaka to backward point, and Pakistan hopes died with him.

The Proteas chose to bat and were 104-5 in the 12th over. They would have been worse off without a classic innings from David Miller. He came in when they were two down after nine balls. In the next 12 overs, Miller whacked 82 off 40 balls, including eight sixes and four boundaries.

A six on one knee off Sufiyan Muqem went over midwicket and the roof. Miller also hit three consecutive maximums off leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed, the middle one over extra cover bringing up his fifty off 28 balls.

Linde's flourish included three sixes in the last over. He was dismissed off the last ball but had blown away his previous best score of 29.

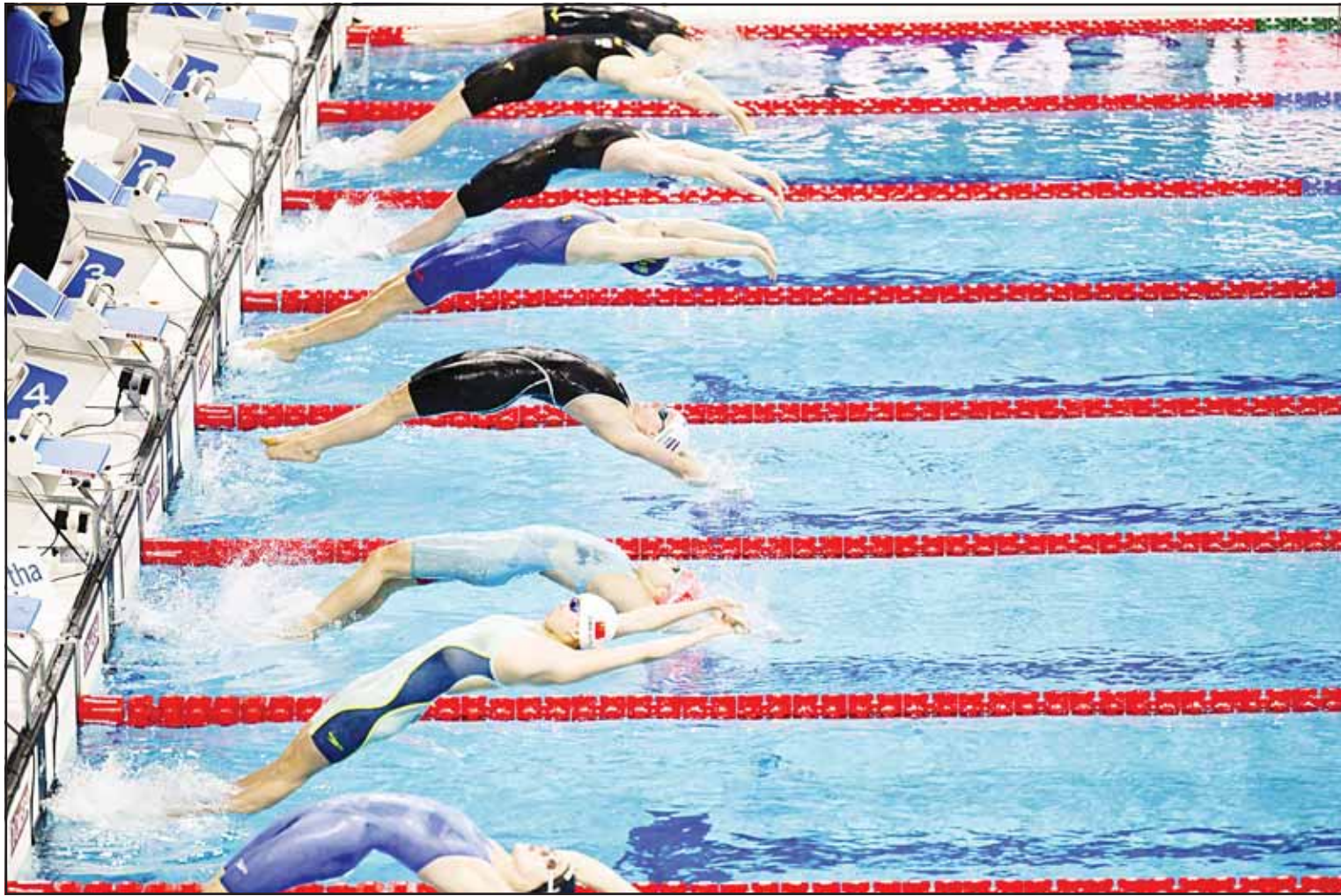
Shaheen Shah Afridi led Pakistan with 3-22.

The second of three T20s is on Thursday at Centurion.



South Africa's George Linde plays a shot during the first T20 cricket match between South Africa and Pakistan at the Kingsmead stadium in Durban, South Africa. (AP)

World records shattered seven times on Day 1 of short course swimming worlds



Athletes compete during the Women's 100m Backstroke on day one of the World Short Course Swimming Championships in Budapest, Hungary. (AP)

Tunisia's Jaouadi clinches men's 1,500m freestyle gold

BUDAPEST, Dec 11, (Xinhua): Short course world records were broken seven times on Tuesday as the World Aquatics Swimming Championships (25m) kicked off in Budapest.

Paris Olympic gold medalist Gretchen Walsh of the United States became the first woman ever to swim the 50m butterfly under 24 seconds, setting a new world record at 23.94 in the semifinals, following her previous record of 24.02 in the heats.

Canada's Olympic champion Summer McIntosh claimed the women's 400m freestyle gold with a world record of 3:50.25.

Swiss swimmer Noe Ponti blazed to a new world record in the men's 50m butterfly semifinals with a time of 21.43.

In the women's 200m individual medley, Kate Douglass of the United States set a new world record with a winning time of 2:01.63.

Walsh and Douglass were also part of the U.S. team shining in the women's 4x100m freestyle relay, setting a world record of 3:25.01 to



From the left, second-placed Lani Pallister of Australia, first-placed Canada's Summer McIntosh, and third-placed Canada's Mary-Sophie Harvey during the World Short Course Swimming Championships in Budapest, Hungary. (AP)

secure gold along with Katharine Berkoff and Alex Shackell.

In the men's 4x100m freestyle relay, the U.S. team, featuring Jack Alexy, Luke Hobson, Kieran Smith and Chris Guiliano, followed suit, smashing the world record with a

time of 3:01.66 to capture gold.

The men's 200m individual medley saw Shaine Casas of the United States secure gold with a championship record of 1:49.51, while Italy's Alberto Razzetti and Canada's Finlay Knox rounded off the podium.

In the men's 1,500m freestyle, Tunisia's Ahmed Jaouadi took gold with a time of 14:16.40.

The 2024 World Aquatics Swimming Championships (25m) are being held from Dec. 10 to 15 at Budapest's Duna Arena.

Guardiola eyes a national team after Man City

MANCHESTER, England, Dec 11, (AP): Pep Guardiola has given a clear indication of his plans after Manchester City, saying he would not want to start again at another club.

The Catalan has just signed a two-year extension to his City contract through to 2027 and said international management is a possibility when he leaves the four-time defending Premier League champion.

"I'm not going to manage another team. I'm not talking about the long-term future, but what I'm not going to do is leave Man



Manchester City's head coach Pep Guardiola reacts during the English Premier League soccer match between Crystal Palace and Manchester City at Selhurst Park in London. (AP)

City, go to another country, and do the same thing as now," Guardiola told celebrity chef Dani Garcia in an interview broadcast this week.

"I wouldn't have the energy. The thought of starting somewhere else, all the process of training and so on. No, no, no! Maybe a national team, but that's different."

Guardiola is widely considered one of the greatest soccer coaches of all time after a trophy-laden career with Barcelona, Bayern Munich and City.

He has won 15 major trophies

with City, including six league titles in seven years and the Champions League.

By the time his contract expires, he will have spent 11 years at the Etihad Stadium.

He has won 32 major trophies during his coaching career, including league titles in Spain and Germany and a total of three Champions League trophies.

He has not ruled out leaving coaching entirely when his time at City is up.

"I want to leave it and go and play golf but I can't. I think stopping would do me good," he said.

'Hope to finish 3-0 now'

West Indies wins series against Bangladesh with game to spare

BASSETTERRE, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Dec 11, (AP): The West Indies won a one-day international series against Bangladesh for the first time in 10 years.

The West Indies shot out Bangladesh for 227 in 46 overs and strolled to 230-3 in 37 overs.

The host won the series with a game to spare.

"It's great to see the bowlers bounce back the way they did," captain Shai Hope said. "Gotta tick boxes and keep improving. We were clinical. We've been struggling to win series at home (so) hope to finish 3-0 now."

On the same pitch where the West Indies won by five wickets on Sunday, the par score was 300. But fast bowler Jayden Seales undercut Bangladesh with three wickets in the first powerplay. Seales returned to bag Mahmudullah for 62 in the 45th over and finish with a match-deciding 4-22 in nine overs.

The chase was almost a formality. Brandon King and Evin Lewis opened with a 109-run partnership in 21 overs. King led with 82 and Lewis and Keacy Carty were out just short of half-centuries.

Bangladesh was 115-7 in the

26th over when Tanzim Hasan Sakib joined Mahmudullah and they rescued the innings.

While they were batting with increasing ambition, Bangladesh could dream of 270-280.

Mahmudullah reached a fifty off 84 balls, and Tanzim was closing on his when he was off spinner Roston Chase. Tanzim had 45 off 62 and the partnership reached 92 runs from 106 balls.

Mahmudullah was out in the next over for 62 off 92.

In the chase, Lewis was slower to get in a groove than King and was dropped on 28.

King and Lewis were both hit on the body in the 40s while attempting pulls at Nahid Rana.

King's eighth boundary brought up his fifty off 52 balls but Lewis was out for 49, to a tame caught and bowled by Rishad Hossain.

King's best shot was a six when he came down the track at Tanzim and sent the ball back over the medium-pacer's head and rebounding off the roof.

He was eventually yorkered by Rana, out for 82 off 76 balls, including eight boundaries and three sixes.

He'd combined for 66 in eight overs with Carty, who would fall for 45 off 47 with victory just 31 more runs away.

The teams stay in Basseterre for the last ODI on Thursday.



Hope

Best of the Rest

Two-game ban for Flick: FC Barcelona coach Hansi Flick has been handed a two-game touchline ban by the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) Disciplinary Committee for his sending off in the 2-2 draw away to Real Betis on Saturday.

Flick was sent off in the 67th minute for protesting against a penalty awarded against Frenkie de Jong after a VAR intervention, with Betis' Giovanni Lo Celso converting the spot-kick to make it 1-1.

Referee Muniz Ruiz put in his report that he had sent Flick off for "leaving his technical area, shouting and gesticulating, and protesting one of my decisions."

The German will now be unable to direct his team in the forthcoming home matches against Leganes this weekend, and the key game against third-placed Atletico Madrid on December 21.

Flick's assistant Marcus Sorg will stand in, although the club has announced it will appeal the decision in an attempt to have the former Bayern Munich coach in the dugout against Atletico at least. (Xinhua)

Ex-CFA official sentenced: A court in central China's Hubei Province on Wednesday handed down an 11-year prison sentence to Liu Yi, former secretary general of the Chinese Football Association (CFA), after convicting him of bribery.

Liu, also former deputy head of the preparatory group for the CFA's leadership reshuffle, was fined 3.6 million yuan (about 500,000 U.S. dollars), according to the ruling by the Intermediate People's Court of Xianning City.

All assets obtained illegally linked to the bribery charges will be confiscated and turned over to the state treasury, the court ruled, adding that any shortfall will continue to be pursued.

The verdict follows a public trial and is part of broader efforts to root out corruption in Chinese football, which has been under heightened scrutiny in recent years. (Xinhua)

Flamengo eyeing Guedes: Brazilian striker Roger Guedes could leave Al-Rayyan in January 2025 to join Rio de Janeiro giant Flamengo, according to media reports in the South American country.

Guedes is seen as an ideal replacement for Gabriel Barbosa, who announced his desire to leave Flamengo earlier this month, according to news outlet Lance.

It added that Flamengo had already contacted Al-Rayyan with a view to signing Guedes on a permanent deal.

The 28-year-old has scored 33 goals in 48 appearances for Al-Rayyan since his 2023 move from Corinthians. He is contracted to the Qatari club until June 2027.

Flamengo finished the 2024 Brazilian Serie A season in third place, behind champion Botafogo and runner-up Palmeiras. (Xinhua)

Palacios set for Boca move: Carlos Palacios is set to leave Chilean champion Colo-Colo to join Argentina's Boca Juniors, the Buenos Aires side said on Tuesday.

The clubs have agreed in principle to a deal that will reportedly tie the 24-year-old Chile international forward to Boca until 2027.

"Carlos Palacios will arrive in the country on Wednesday night and undergo a medical on Thursday. If everything goes well, he will become a Boca player," read a statement on the club's website.

Palacios has made 77 appearances for Colo-Colo and scored 26 goals since his arrival from Vasco da Gama in 2023.

Boca is currently sixth in Argentina's 28-team Primera Division standings with one match remaining in the season. (Xinhua)

Two layers of ticket checks will be in place to ensure a smooth process for fans

Finishing touches to stadiums with 10 days to go until Khaleeji Zain 26

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The 10-day countdown is underway to one of the most eagerly anticipated editions of the Khaleeji Zain, the Arabian Gulf's most prestigious biennial football tournament.

While the eight national teams of the Arabian Gulf prepare for the two-week festival of football in Kuwait from December 21-January 3, the finishing touches are being applied to the two magnificent stadiums that will welcome hundreds of thousands of fans for the 15 group-stage and knockout matches.

Matches will be played at both the 57,000-capacity Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium and the 15,000-seater Jaber Al-Mubarak International Stadium, which are being fitted with the latest cutting-edge fan management system.

With the onus on creating a memorable spectator experience for all attending games, two layers of ticket checks will be in place to ensure a smooth process for fans to reach their seats.

Tickets are now on sale through the 'Hayakom' application, with each one having a unique QR code that can only be scanned once at the stadium to avoid fake or duplicated tickets.

The first check will take place at the exterior boundaries of the stadiums with trained staff and volunteers using hand held devices to authenticate the ticket. There will be 130 devices at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium and 50 used at the smaller Jaber Al-Mubarak International Stadium.

Stadium.

Once the ticket is scanned and cleared, fans will then proceed towards a second check before they can advance into the stadium bowl itself.

At Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, 50 double full height turnstiles with 100 QR code readers are being installed, while this second tier of checks at Jaber Al-Mubarak International Stadium will consist of 58 readers on 36 'tripod' turnstiles.

The spectator-management system will allow for a steady flow of fans into the stadium and to avoid overcrowding at the gates. It is a similar system used at major football tournaments such as the FIFA World Cup.

All fans will also need to pass through security checks on their way into the stadium with hundreds of trained spectator service volunteers on duty to provide any assistance.

Fans are advised to reach the stadiums early, with the gates set to open three hours before kick-off when entertainment will also begin inside the venues to ensure a fun-filled fan experience.

The Khaleeji Zain 26 will see hosts Kuwait joined by Oman, UAE and Qatar in Group A, with the reigning champions Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia contesting Group B.

The top two from each group will go through to the semi-finals before the final is played at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium on January 3.



One of the stadiums hosting the matches.

Al-Qadsiya secures semifinals spot in Federation Volleyball Championship

Al-Arabi qualification hopes ended

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Al-Qadsiya advanced to the semi-finals of the Federation Volleyball Championship after a 3-1 victory over Al-Arabi in its eighth-round match. The same round also saw Al-Sulaibikhat secure a 3-0 win against Al-Nasr.

With this win, Al-Qadsiya moved to 18 points, securing second place ahead of Kazma, who also has 18 points but trails in set points. Kuwait tops the standings with 21 points, while Al-Arabi remains in sixth place with 9 points, officially ending its chances of qualifying for the semi-finals. Al-Arabi's loss confirmed Burgan, with 14 points in fourth place, as the final team to secure a spot in the "golden square."

Heading into the final round of the preliminary stage, Kuwait Club, Al-Qadsiya, Kazma, and Burgan have all clinched their places in the semi-finals. However, the last-round matches, starting today, will determine the final standings of the top four. In the semi-finals, the first-



Al-Qadsiya achieves a deserved victory over Al-Arabi.

ranked team will face the fourth, while the second will meet the third. The winners will advance to the championship final.

Today's matches include Kuwait Club versus Kazma at 7:00 pm, and Al-Sulaibikhat against Al-Yarmouk

at 5:00 pm, both taking place at Union Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Halls Complex.

In the Al-Qadsiya vs. Al-Arabi clash, the victory didn't come easy for Al-Qadsiya. They took the first set 25-20, but Al-Arabi bounced back to

dominate the second set 25-14. The third set was tightly contested, with Al-Qadsiya narrowly winning 26-24. This gave it the momentum to claim the fourth set 25-18, earning the full three points and securing their semifinal spot.

Al-Qadsiya suffers first loss in WASL Championship



Players fighting for the ball.

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Al-Qadsiya suffered its first loss in the West Asia Basketball Super League (WASL) Championship for the Gulf region, falling 88-81 to the host team, Al-Arabi of Qatar, in a match held the evening before yesterday at Al-Gharafa Club Hall in Doha.

Al-Qadsiya topped Group 2 with 5 points, ahead of Al-Qadsiya, which placed second. Manama of Bahrain secured third place after defeating Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad 67-66.

Al-Qadsiya led the game in the first quarter (25-19) and maintained a slim advantage at half-time (47-43). However, Al-Arabi

made a strong comeback, scoring 24 points in the third quarter to tie the game at 67-all by its conclusion.

The turning point came in the final quarter when Al-Qadsiya's pivot player, Shinmelu Elon, suffered an ankle injury and was forced to leave the court. This allowed Al-Arabi to dominate, scoring 21 points in the quarter, enough to secure the win. In contrast, Al-Qadsiya managed just 14 points in the final stretch.

Under the tournament's system, the leader of each group advances directly to the semi-finals, while the second and third-place teams will play in play-off matches to determine the remaining qualifiers.

Thunder eliminate Mavericks

Bucks return to the NBA Cup semifinals in Las Vegas

MILWAUKEE, Dec 11, (AP): Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 37 points, Damian Lillard had nine of his 28 in the final minute and the Milwaukee Bucks returned to the NBA Cup semifinals in Las Vegas by beating the Orlando Magic 114-109 on Tuesday night.

Milwaukee reached the semifinals of the in-season tournament in Las Vegas last December and will be the only returning team in Year 2. They will play Saturday against the winner of Wednesday's quarterfinal between the New York Knicks and Atlanta Hawks.

Jalen Suggs led a short-handed Orlando team with 32 points but missed a potential go-ahead 3-pointer with 12 seconds left. Lillard was fouled and sank two free throws with 9.1 seconds remaining and Suggs missed a potential tying 3.

Antetokounmpo then made both free throws with 5 seconds left and the Bucks held on.

The Magic were missing forwards Paolo Banchero (torn right oblique), Jonathan Isaac (right hamstring strain) and Franz Wagner, who suffered a torn right oblique on Friday against Philadelphia; along with guard Gary Harris



Orlando Magic's Wendell Carter Jr. shoots during the first half of an Emirates NBA Cup tournament quarterfinals basketball game against the Milwaukee Bucks in Milwaukee. (AP)

(left hamstring strain).

Orlando's bench scored 28 points in the first half, including 13 by Moritz Wagner and 10 from Anthony Black. But Wagner did not score in the second half.

Bobby Portis helped the Bucks erase an early 11-point deficit as he hit his first seven shots and scored 16 points in the first half. He finished with 22 points and 10 rebounds.

Bucks forward Khris Middleton registered three consecutive assists - the first two on passes to Antetokounmpo and the third to set up a 3-pointer by Gary Trent Jr. - as the Bucks took a 78-70 lead as part of an 11-0 Milwaukee run. Middleton did not score but had eight assists.

Antetokounmpo extended his streak to 22 straight games with 20 or more points on 50% shooting, the longest streak to open a season in league history and the third-longest at any point in a season (Shaquille O'Neal and Zion Williamson, both 25 games). Antetokounmpo was 15 of 24 from the field.

The Magic will play New York or Atlanta on Sunday.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 39 points, and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Dallas Mavericks 118-104 in an NBA Cup quarterfinal.

Jalen Williams scored 18 points and Isaiah Hartenstein added 10 points and 13 rebounds for the Thunder, who will

play Wednesday's Golden State-Houston winner in a semifinal on Saturday in Las Vegas.

Oklahoma City's largest lead was 20 points in a rematch of last season's Western Conference semifinals series that Dallas won 4-2.

The Thunder and their collection of elite perimeter defenders held Luka Doncic to 16 points on 5-for-15 shooting. Lu Dort led the effort, with Alex Caruso and Cason Wallace among the primary helpers.

Naji Marshall and Klay Thompson each scored 19 points and Kyrie Irving added 17 for the Mavericks.

P.J. Washington, a thorn in Oklahoma City's side during the playoffs last season and in Dallas' victory last month, missed the game with an illness.

Oklahoma City led 57-54 at halftime behind 18 points from Gilgeous-Alexander. Doncic had two points on 1-for-7 shooting at the break.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 16 points on 7-for-8 shooting in the third quarter to help the Thunder take control. Isaiah Joe's deep 3-pointer at the buzzer gave Oklahoma City a 90-73 lead heading into the fourth.

Messila Equestrian Club: A legacy of excellence since '04

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Chairman of Messila Equestrian Club, Bader Al-Mailem, highlighted the club's significant role in shaping Kuwaiti equestrianism since its establishment in 2004. Over the past two decades, the club has nurtured generations of skilled riders under the guidance of distinguished Arab and European trainers. Many of these riders continue to excel and are recognized as prominent figures in Kuwait's equestrian community, contributing to the club's enduring success alongside other equestrian institutions in the country.

Al-Mailem noted that the club supports a diverse group of male and female riders across beginner and intermediate levels, backed by a team of experienced riders. This structure facilitates the development of future generations who will carry forward the legacy of equestrianism in Kuwait.

He emphasized that the numerous local and international championships hosted in Kuwait play a vital role in enhancing riders' technical skills and sustaining their passion for the sport. Al-Mailem praised the country's abundance of equestrian clubs and training centers, which have inspired many to embrace equestrianism, particularly



Bader Al-Mailem

show jumping. He added that Kuwait is home to champions who have achieved international acclaim, winning medals and bringing honor to the nation.

The primary mission of Messila Club, Al-Mailem explained, is to teach children the art of equestrianism while preserving this noble sport, which offers numerous physical and mental benefits to its participants.

Best of the Rest

Coach Rodriguez leaves Wuhan: Wuhan Three Towns announced on Wednesday that Ricardo Rodriguez has departed as head coach of the Chinese Super League side.

"According to the mutual agreement reached after friendly consultation, Mr Ricardo no longer serves as the head coach and the sporting director of Wuhan Three Towns FC," the Wuhan club said in a brief statement.

"The club fully acknowledges the efforts Ricardo made during the period he managed the team," the Wuhan club said. The Spaniard had been appointed head coach of Wuhan in January this year.

Under his guidance, Wuhan Three Towns, who had been tipped for relegation, successfully kept their CSL status after finishing 11th in the 2024 season. (Xinhua)

Scolari heaps praise on Estevao: Brazil World Cup-winning manager Luiz Felipe Scolari has lavished praise on Palmeiras forward Estevao, predicting a bright future for the Chelsea-bound teenager.

Estevao, who will join the English Premier League club in July 2025, has enjoyed a breakout season at Palmeiras with 19 goals and nine assists in 50 matches across all competitions.

Scolari, who guided Brazil to World Cup glory in 2002, said he had spoken with current national team manager Dorival Junior about the 17-year-old's progress.

"One of the things he [Dorival] tells me is that this boy

attracts attention," Scolari said. "It's because of the way he behaves as a player and as a person. We would just like him to continue doing what he does at Palmeiras and for Chelsea. That he continues like this, with boldness, dribbling."

Estevao was rewarded for his impressive form with a first Brazil call-up in August, and he has since earned four caps for the five-time world champion. (Xinhua)

Gomez on his way to Brighton: Brighton has agreed to sign 21-year-old Diego Gomez from Inter Miami, the Premier League club said Tuesday with the Paraguayan midfielder set to complete his move on Jan. 1.

Brighton did not disclose the fee or length of contract for Gomez, who joined Miami in 2023 and helped the MLS club qualify for the playoffs this season.

"He's a dynamic midfielder player who can contribute goals and assists and we believe his physical profile will be important as he adjusts to the challenge of the Premier League," Brighton technical director David Weir said.

Gomez represented Paraguay in the Paris Olympics this summer.

"He has already made a real impression both at club and international level," Brighton head coach Fabian Hurtzler said. "Like all young players who come to us from abroad he will need a period of adjustment to the Premier League, but I feel he can make a big contribution and I'm looking forward to working with him."

Brighton is seventh in the Premier League standings and challenging for Champions League qualification next season. (AP)



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Cason Wallace (22) drives against Dallas Mavericks guard Kyrie Irving (11) during the first half of an Emirates NBA Cup basketball game, Tuesday, Dec. 3, 2024, in Oklahoma City. (AP)



A general view shows the King Abdullah sports city stadium, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Saturday, Jan. 11, 2020, on the eve of the Spanish Super Cup Final soccer match between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid. (AP)

Sports

FIFA names Saudi Arabia as 2034 World Cup host

Spain, Portugal and Morocco to co-host 2030 edition

ZURICH, Dec 11, (AP): Saudi Arabia has been officially confirmed by FIFA as host of the 2034 World Cup in men's soccer, giving the oil-rich kingdom its biggest prize yet for massive spending on global sports driven by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The Saudi bid was the only candidate and was acclaimed by the applause of more than 200 FIFA member federations. They took part remotely in an online meeting hosted in Zurich on Wednesday by the soccer body's president Gianni Infantino.

"The vote of the congress is loud and clear," said Infantino, who had asked officials on a bank of screens to clap their hands at head level to show their support.

The decision was combined with approving the only candidate to host the 2030 World Cup. Spain, Portugal and



In this file photo, Saudi Arabia fans cheer as they hold pictures of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia before their 2014 FIFA World Cup Asia qualifying soccer match against Australia at the Prince Muhammad bin Fahd Stadium in the eastern port city of Dammam, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

Morocco will co-host in a six-nation project, with Argentina, Paraguay and

Uruguay each getting one of the 104 games.

The South American connection will mark the centenary of Uruguay

hosting the first World Cup in 1930.

The decisions complete a mostly opaque 15-month bid process which Infantino helped steer toward.

FIFA and Saudi officials have said hosting the 2034 tournament can accelerate change, including more freedoms and rights for women.

A fast-track path to victory was cleared last year by FIFA accepting the three-continent hosting plan for the 2030 World Cup. It meant only soccer federations in Asia and Oceania were eligible for the 2034 contest, and FIFA gave them less than four weeks to declare. Only Saudi Arabia did.

One of the stadiums is planned to be 350 meters (yards) above the ground in Neom - a futuristic city that does not yet exist - and another named for the crown prince is designed to be atop a 200-meter cliff near Riyadh.

The kingdom plans to spend tens of billion of dollars on projects related to the World Cup as part of the crown prince's sweeping Vision 2030 project that aims to modernize Saudi society and economy. At its core is spending on sports by the \$900 billion sovereign wealth op-

eration, the Public Investment Fund, which he oversees.

The prince, known as MBS, has built close working ties to Infantino since 2017 - aligning with the organizer of sport's most-watched event rather than directly confronting the established system as it did with the disruptive LIV Golf project.

The result for Saudi Arabia and FIFA has been smooth progress toward the win Wednesday with limited pushback from soccer officials, though some from women international players.

The steady flow of Saudi cash into international soccer is set to increase.

FIFA created a new and higher World Cup sponsor category for state oil firm Aramco, and Saudi funding is set to underwrite the 2025 Club World Cup in the United States that is a pet project for Infantino.

North American soccer body CONCACAF signed a multi-year deal with PIF, Saudi stadiums host Super Cup games for Italy and Spain, and nearly 50 FIFA member federations have signed working agreements with Saudi counterparts.

Qatar announces squad for Khaleeji Zain 26

Kuwait to test players and fine-tune tactics in friendly against Lebanon

DOHA, Dec 11: Kuwait will play its second friendly match during its training camp in Doha, Qatar, tonight at 6:00 pm against Lebanon at Al-Ahli Club Stadium as part of the team's preparation for the "Khaleeji Zain 26", which Kuwait will host from December 21 to January 3.

In the first friendly match, held last Monday, Al-Azraq drew 1-1 with Yemen. The team will conclude its friendlies with another match against Lebanon this Sunday.

The technical staff aims to address errors observed in the previous match and plans to test players who have been absent from recent games. This approach is intended to optimize performance ahead of the regional tournament.

In related news, the Qatari national team has undergone a significant coaching change, dismissing Spanish coach Marquez Lopez and appointing his compatriot Luis Garcia.



Kuwait 'tests' itself against Lebanon on Wednesday.

Despite extending his contract until 2026 following Qatar's Asian

Cup triumph, Lopez was relieved of his duties after a heavy 5-0 de-

feat to the UAE in last month's World Cup qualifiers.

The newly appointed Garcia has revealed Qatar's squad for the Gulf Championship, which includes:

Goalkeepers: Meshaal Barsham, Marwan Sharif, Salah Zakaria, Saad Al-Sheeb

Defenders: Lucas Mendez, Tariq Salman, Jassim Jaber, Sultan Al-Breik, Mohammed Ayash, Bahaa Al-Leithi, Al-Hashemi Al-Husseini, Hazem Ahmed

Midfielders: Hammam Al-Amin, Abdullah Youssef, Ahmed Fathi, Ibrahim Al-Hassan, Naif Al-Hadrami, Abdullah Al-Ahrak, Mustafa Tariq, Asim Madibo

Forwards: Akram Afif, Al-Moez Ali, Youssef Abdul Razaq, Abdul Rahman Mustafa, Rashid Al-Abdullah, Rabeh Boussaf, Mohammed Muntari, Mohammed Khaled, Ahmed Al-Rawi

This lineup represents Qatar's commitment to competing strongly in the upcoming Gulf Championship.

Zubaid breaks Kuwaiti record



Mohamed Zubaid

BUDAPEST, Dec 11: Mohamed Zubaid set a new Kuwaiti record at the World Swimming Championships in Budapest, Hungary, completing the 100-meter backstroke in an impressive time of 55.08 seconds. This achievement surpassed the previous national record of 55.71 seconds set by Abdullah Al-Thuwaini.

Expressing his joy, Zubaid celebrated this milestone, emphasizing the significance of representing Kuwait in a championship marked by extensive international participation.

Zubaid affirmed his commitment to striving for further accomplishments on both continental and global stages. He also extended his gratitude to the Kuwait Water Sports Federation's Board of Directors, led by Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr, for their unwavering support. Zubaid highlighted their efforts in removing barriers and providing the necessary resources to advance water sports in Kuwait.

Salah 50th Champions League goal maintains Liverpool perfect record

Real Madrid revives faltering title defense

BERGAMO, Italy, Dec 11, (AP): Real Madrid's big stars turned on the style to revive the Spanish giant's faltering Champions League title defense.

Galacticos Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius Junior and Jude Bellingham all scored in a thrilling 3-2 win at Italian league leader Atalanta. But Madrid still had to ride its luck as Mateo Retegu fired over from in front of goal in stoppage time when handed a golden chance to level the game.

It was only Madrid's third win in the competition's revamped league phase and leaves the 15-time champion in the unseeded playoff positions in 18th place.

"It's a very important win. Not everyone wins here. We suffered and competed. In the Champions League, you have to suffer," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "It's still difficult to finish in the top eight, but we have two games left to earn points."

Six-time champion Liverpool leads the way after maintaining its perfect record in Europe this season with a 1-0 win against Girona.

Like Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain also picked up a much-needed win, beating Salzburg 3-0 to sit in the last playoff spot in 24th place.

Bayer Leverkusen is second after a 1-0 win over Inter Milan, while Aston Villa beat Leipzig 3-2 and is third.

The top eight teams advance directly to the round of 16. Positions nine to 24 face a playoff to reach the next phase.

After three losses in its opening five games of the league phase, the pressure was mounting on Madrid.

Questions were also being asked of Mbappe after his uncertain start since

his off-season move from PSG. But he produced a moment of class to fire Madrid 1-0 up after 10 minutes at Gewiss Stadium - controlling the ball with his left foot and then finishing low with his right.

It was the 25-year-old Mbappe's 50th Champions League goal. Lionel Messi is the only player to have reached that number at a younger age.

Mbappe was substituted off before halftime with an apparent physical issue and Charles De Ketelaere leveled the game before the break from the penalty spot. But two goals inside three second-half minutes from Vinicius Junior and Bellingham put Madrid in control.

Ademola Lookman's goal made it 3-2, but Madrid survived Retegu's late



Leipzig's Christoph Baumgartner, left, against Aston Villa's Diego Carlos battle for the ball during a UEFA Champions League soccer match against Aston Villa at the Red Bull Arena, Leipzig, Germany. (AP)

effort and held on.

Mohamed Salah's 50th Champions League goal maintained Liverpool's perfect record in the competition this season.

The Egypt forward struck a 63rd minute penalty to seal the win in Spain that kept Liverpool atop the 36-team league.

But even after a sixth straight win for the Merseyside club, head coach Arne Slot was critical of his players in a game that saw goalkeeper Alisson pull off several saves to keep Girona out.

"If you ask me about all the six games, I'm really pleased with all the results, I am really pleased with the five (other) games with the way we played. I'm far from pleased about the perfor-

mance tonight," he said.

Salah's goal was his 16th in 22 appearances overall this season.

Girona was 30th with just one win from six games.

"I almost feel sorry for them because they deserved so much more in this Champions League campaign than the three points they have until now. But we have an incredible goalkeeper," said Slot, whose team also leads the Premier League.

Liverpool's two remaining games are against Lille at home and PSV Eindhoven away in January.

U.S. international Christian Pulisic is the only player to have scored against Liverpool in this season's Champions League in a 3-1 loss for Milan in September.

Bayern Munich routed Shakhtar Donetsk 5-1 to move into the automatic qualifying positions for the round of 16.

Michael Olise scored a wonderful solo goal by dribbling past a host of players for his first of two in the game. Bayern's win came after going 1-0 down inside five minutes to a goal from Brazilian winger Kevin.

PSG is not done yet. A miserable start to the league phase saw the French giant pick up just four points from five games as it adjusted to life without stars like Mbappe, Messi and Neymar, who have all departed in the past two seasons.

But victory at Salzburg moved PSG up into the playoff positions.

Goncalo Ramos, Nuno Mendes and Desire Doue all scored. Leverkusen is back on a roll after struggling to repeat the success of last season's stunning German league and cup double.

Kuwait launches training camps ahead of Asian Winter Games

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Winter Games Club announced its approval of establishing both external and internal training camps for national team players across five sports, as part of their preparations for the Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China, scheduled for February.

Sheikh Jaber Bandar Al-Sabah, the club's honorary president, stated to KUNA that the camps aim to enhance the technical skills of the players and prepare them for one of the largest continental winter sports competitions.

He highlighted that Kuwait is fielding its largest-ever delegation in the games, competing in ice hockey, figure skating, ice skating, speed skating, and curling.

Sheikh Jaber revealed that the external training camp will commence on January 10 in Turkey and will run for 15 days. In the meantime, players continue to train at the club's facilities and participate in the local league matches, which feature five competing teams.

He emphasized that the preparation plan, developed under the leadership of the club's board of directors headed by Fahid Al-Ajmi, reflects their commitment to ensuring optimal readiness for



Sheikh Jaber Bandar Al-Sabah

the competition. Sheikh Jaber also extended his gratitude to the Kuwait Olympic Committee and the Public Authority for Sports for their ongoing support.