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Strategic talks highlight enduring Kuwait-US relationship spanning over 60 years

Kuwait, US urge Iraq to complete demarcation of maritime borders

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): Kuwait and the United States have renewed their calls for Iraq to complete the demarcation of the maritime border between Kuwait and Iraq beyond Boundary Marker 162, in line with international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982).

This came in a joint statement issued Friday after the conclusion of the Sixth Round of the Kuwait-US Strategic Dialogue which was held virtually during the period December 9-11.

Both countries also stressed the importance of Iraq's ad-

herence to Kuwait's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and respect for international agreements and UN resolutions, particularly UNSC Resolution 833 on border demarcation.

Iraq was called upon to ensure the 2012 Kuwait-Iraq Agreement to regulate maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah remains in force.

They also supported UNSC Resolution 2732 (2024), mandating the UN Secretary-General to facilitate progress on outstanding issues between Kuwait and Iraq, including the repatriation of Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains, and the return of Kuwaiti property and national ar-

chives.

The role of the UN in implementing UNSC Resolution 1284 and addressing unresolved issues under Security Council oversight was emphasized.

The Strategic Dialogue underscored the mutual understanding between the two foreign ministers to enhance the historic and strategic partnership between the two nations.

The bilateral partnership between Kuwait and the United States is rooted in shared interests in regional stability, security, and prosperity. The United States reaffirmed its commitment to Kuwait's security.

The dialogue identified pathways to strengthen cooperation in areas such as defense, cybersecurity, trade and investment, health challenges, climate change, travel facilitation, educational and cultural partnerships, human rights, women's empowerment, and artificial intelligence.

The Strategic Dialogue highlighted the enduring relationship between the two nations, spanning over 60 years, and celebrated the 33rd anniversary of Kuwait's liberation during Operation Desert Storm.

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Teşekkür ederim Türkiye (Thank you Türkiye)

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE shocking truths revealed to the world, especially those uncovered after the fall of the Assad regime, exposed the horrors that took place, particularly in the prisons.

Thousands of oppressed individuals lost their lives and dreams in the dark basements of those prisons, simply because they dared to dream of a dignified homeland. These revelations, at least in part, explain why the Islamic world celebrated the departure of this tyrant.

The reports about detention centers throughout Syria and the brutal methods of torture, such as crushing bodies in locally-made mechanical devices, echoed the atrocities committed in the prisons of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party. It seemed as though this party, with its Iraqi and Syrian branches, had specialized in such horrific forms of torture for silencing any voice that opposed even the simplest matters.

Both regimes used locally-made tools of torture and methods such as dissolving victims' bodies in acid or using presses to crush their bodies and grind their bones.

We are not talking about the infamous prisons of history such as the French Bastille, the Siberian concentration camps during the era of Stalin, or Hitler's ovens, but about the horrific live realities that we are witnessing today.

When approximately 23 million people live under such oppression, cruelty, and brutality, and the citizens find no option but submission, they will inevitably respond to any movement that promises to free them from this hell, even if it means reaching a deal with the devil himself to overthrow the oppressor, who had sought the help of foreign forces to support his brutality.

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58 busted in Salmiya as Kuwait tightens security

2,763 traffic citations issued in latest sweep

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: As part of the ongoing comprehensive security campaigns held by the Ministry of Interior in all governorates, an extensive security campaign was held in Salmiya in the presence and under the direct supervision of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of Defense Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah. The Undersecretary of the Traffic and Operations General Department Major General Yousef Al-Khudah, and the Assistant

Undersecretary for Special Security Affairs Major General Abdullah Safah, as well as some policewomen were also present.

During the campaign, 2,763 traffic citations were issued, 58 wanted individuals were arrested including 30 men and 28 women, and ten vehicles were seized.

In another development, the General Traffic Department issued a total of 43,573 traffic citations in one week, seized 115 vehicles and 50 motorcycles, set up 46 police checkpoints, and caught 21 juveniles driving without licenses.

It also seized 44 vehicles wanted by the judiciary and apprehended 39 wanted individuals, as well as responded to 1,249 traffic accidents involving 265 casualties.



Part of the aid distribution.

Kuwait charity joins initiative to aid 2,000 Palestinian families

Wafaa Capacity Building and Microfinance announced launching "winter warmth" project for 2,000 displaced Palestinian families in north Gaza, supported by Kuwait.

In a press conference on Saturday, head of Wafaa's office in Gaza Strip Ghadeer Shahada said that the project is executed under the supervision of Kuwait's Humanitarian Relief Society, and funded by Kuwait's Sanayi Al-Ma'rouf

Charitable Foundation.

The project includes providing the families with winter clothing and blankets, distributed across shelters and camps in north Gaza, she said.

Since the beginning of the attack on Gaza, Kuwait was one of the top countries in providing humanitarian aid to the strip, by Kuwait Red Crescent Society and other charities. (KUNA)

US pushes ceasefire anew

Kuwait denounces Gaza refugee camp slaughter

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (Agencies): The State of Kuwait has condemned the Israeli occupation Thursday's brutal massacre against Palestinian people in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip.

In a press statement on Friday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted the Israeli massacre resulted in the martyrdom of dozens of innocent people, the injury of many others, and caused massive destruction of infrastructure.

This attack shows that the Israeli occupation is continuing its war crimes against the defenseless Palestinian people, the Kuwaiti Ministry said.

The State of Kuwait renewed its call on the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities to take urgent and strict measures to stop these Israeli ongoing violations against the brotherly Palestinian people and provide them with protection.

It also stressed the importance of activating international accountability mechanisms to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes do not go unpunished.

An Israeli airstrike on Thursday targeting the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip killed 33 Palestinians and injured 84 others, according to official sources, as U.S. President Joe Biden's two top national security officials were in the region making a renewed push for an Israel-Hamas ceasefire.

The strike on a multistory residential building in the Nuseirat refugee camp was just the latest in a series of Israeli attacks throughout Gaza that killed at least 54 Palestinians since late Wednesday night.

Palestinian officials at two of Gaza's remaining medical centers, Al-Awda Hospital in the north and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the center, reported together receiving 25 bodies from the Nuseirat strike - which also wounded 40 people, most of them children.

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Jordan's Crown Prince to visit Kuwait Sunday

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): Jordanian Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, accompanied by an official delegation, is set to arrive in Kuwait on Sunday on an official visit, where he will meet with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and will hold official talks with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

NewsWatch

TEHRAN: Iran's Atomic Energy Organization President Mohammad Esfandiari confirmed on Saturday that Iran has not and will not be an obstacle to the monitoring operations conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Esfandiari stated during his participation in the Iranian Nuclear Achievements Exhibition, "The IAEA has always carried out its monitoring tasks within the framework of the Safeguards Agreement and the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and we have not and will not create an obstacle to its missions, because we also operate within the mentioned agreement and treaty." (KUNA)

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi emphasized on Saturday the utmost importance of preserving the territorial integrity and unity of Syria and the security of its people.

Spokesman for the Egyptian Presidency Ambassador Mohammad Al-Shenawy stated in a statement that this came during a meeting held by President El-Sisi with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and US National Security Council Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, Brett McGurk, in the presence of Foreign Minister Badr Abdelaty, Head of General Intelligence Services Hassan Rashad, and US Ambassador in Cairo Herro Mustafa Garg.

The spokesman clarified that the meeting discussed the latest regional developments and reviewed the efforts of both sides to reach an agreement on a ceasefire and the exchange of prisoners in the Gaza Strip. (KUNA)

Fine can reach up to 200,000 dinars

DGCA warns air operators of severe penalties for smoking ban breaches

By Mohammed Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: In an effort to raise awareness about legal accountability and prevent violations of environmental regulations, the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation has issued a stern warning to licensed air operators about the serious consequences of violating the Environmental Protection Law No. 42/2014 and its amendments, particularly regarding the ban on smoking in public transportation, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The penalty for such violations can reach up to 200,000 dinars.

Informed sources disclosed that the DGCA has sent a formal letter to air operators, reminding them of the law and its implications.

The authority highlighted repeated reports of smoking incidents by aircraft crews and passengers during flights.

This, the sources noted, directly contravenes the first paragraph of Article 56 of the law, which clearly prohibits smoking in all public transportation.

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CBK leads charge against terror financing

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) organized two workshops on December 10 and 12, 2024, to enhance the capabilities of employees in the banking and financial sector regarding the requirements for combating money laundering and terrorist financing, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These workshops are part of the CBK's ongoing efforts to ensure strict compliance with international standards and recommendations set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The workshops were tailored to two key groups: one for employees of local banks and finance companies and the other for employees of exchange com-

panies. They focused on the latest requirements outlined in the instructions for these sectors, particularly those related to compliance with anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CFT) protocols.

Specialists in the fields of AML and CFT presented the workshops, held at the CBK's headquarters, providing in-depth insights into the international standards and ensuring that employees in these sectors are equipped with the necessary knowledge to meet the regulatory expectations.

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3 sectors at risk of laundering

Beneficiary data essential for commercial license approval

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The official spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Harz says the decision to disclose the actual beneficiary in economic and financial transactions is a major requirement for renewing and issuing commercial licenses. Financial penalties for failing to register the actual beneficiary could reach up to KD 500,000, in accordance with the provisions of the Anti-Money Laundering Law No. 106/2013.

In a press statement, Al-Harz revealed that the Law No. 106/2013 stipulates penalties for three sectors subject to money laundering risks - jewelry and gold, real estate, and banking activities.

He stressed that these sectors must disclose the actual beneficiary, or face penalties for non-compliance.

Al-Harz explained that the ministry imposed initial penalties of KD 500 and sent notifications of the non-registration of beneficiaries for activities subject to money laundering regulations. In addition, other activities will not be renewed unless the actual beneficiary is registered, and no new license will be issued without this registration.

The actual beneficiary could be the company manager, all partners, or a consulting entity operating under a power of attorney outside the company's records. This does not prevent the registration of the actual beneficiary,

even if they are not listed in the ministry's official records.

A single commercial license can register more than one actual beneficiary and can also cancel and replace the current beneficiary as needed.

Disclosing the actual beneficiary is necessary for developing the economy, improving the business environment, and enhancing Kuwait's ranking in global and international organizations regarding the fight against money laundering.

Al-Harz revealed that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry began announcing the actual beneficiary in 2023 and launched a six-month campaign during the current year to encourage business owners and commercial projects to disclose the actual beneficiary.

He stressed the importance of this decision for promoting transparency in economic transactions, ensuring the implementation of necessary measures and legal procedures, and providing all relevant information and data to regulatory bodies and supervisory authorities.

Al-Harz highlighted that the ministerial resolution No. 4/2023 organized the process for determining the actual beneficiary and the procedures for registering their identity, adding that the decision also mandates companies and commercial institutions to identify the actual beneficiary before establishing a company or renewing a license.

7 Burgan Bank supports KSH's 9th Vocational Rehabilitation Exhibition

8 ABK to implement Artificial Intelligence technology to enhance customer service



9 KFH drives innovation in digital banking and financial solutions for 2024



10 National Bank of Kuwait hosts 30th Annual Run

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:09	Asr	14:33
Sunrise ..	06:34	Maghrib ..	16:51
Zohr	11:43	Isha	18:13

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather cold with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas northwesterly wind, with speed of 15-40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

By Night: Rather cold to cold

Weather

with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas northwesterly wind, with speed of 12-40 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	22	14
Kuwait Airport	20	13

Abdaly	21	11
Bubyan	23	12
Jahra	20	13
Failaka Island	24	15
Salmiyah	22	16
Ahmadi	20	10
Jal Aliyah	19	11
Nuwaisib	21	12



Kuwaiti Ambassador to Egypt Ghanem Al-Ghanem

KUNA photo

Kuwait condemns Israeli atrocities: envoy

'Arabs must unite to prevent political map change'

CAIRO, Dec 14, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to Egypt Ghanem Al-Ghanem said on Friday that the ongoing regional happenings necessitate a united Arab stance, hoping that the "Arab political map would remain unchanged in the future".

The ambassador made the statement during a symposium organized by the Egyptian Press Syndicate's committee on Arab and foreign affairs late Thursday.

Al-Ghanem added that the State of Kuwait regards the Palestinian cause a "central one", reiterating Kuwait's unwavering and untiring support for the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights.

He underlined his country's continued condemnation of brutalities and atrocities committed by Israeli occupying forces in the Gaza

Strip and the West Bank, particularly premeditated killing, arrests, blocking humanitarian aid, brutal assaults on civilians, hospitals and properties, forced displacement and nonstop attacks on Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem.

On Syria, the Kuwaiti ambassador said: "We respect the choices of the Syrian people and stress Syria's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty and the protection of Syrian civilians from any infighting."

He also condemned Israeli occupation attacks on Syrian territories, calling on this entity to pull out of Syrian territories immediately.

On Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations, the ambassador commended them as being "exemplary" in view of Arab and international relations, citing historical fraternal bonds between both nations. Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi

Arabia, Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad al-Sabah, recently praised the Kuwaiti pavilion at the 16th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) currently held in Riyadh.

The ambassador in a statement to KUNA expressed pride of the distinguished Kuwaiti participation in this significant international event, also lauding the national authorities for promoting the pioneering environmental projects.

The Kuwaiti stand at the convention venue promotes Kuwait's environmental vision and its cooperation with the international community to preserve the environment and make balance between development and safeguarding the natural resources.

Other Voices

Changing modes of leisure time

By Ahmad alsarraf

A typical person spends about 8 hours a day sleeping and an equal amount working. The remaining time is often allocated to various activities -- eating, commuting, socializing with family and friends, dining out or watching TV, following sports and more.

However, the way people use their free time varies greatly across regions, shaped by environmental factors, traditions and religious influences, making it hard to apply a universal framework for measuring how leisure time is spent.

A fascinating and somewhat humorous study traces the evolution of Western societies' interests over the past century, offering insights that, to varying extents, apply globally.

A century ago, family life dominated free time, with most people prioritizing it above all else. Schools were a close second, followed by friends, neighbors, places of worship and coffee shops. Work colleagues occupied the least amount of leisure time. The concept of the Internet, of course, did not exist.

After World War II, the social fabric changed significantly. Friends took precedence over family as the primary focus of leisure activities, followed by school, neighbors, bars, temples and work colleagues. The Internet was still nonexistent.

By the 1980s, friends remained at the top of the list, but family slipped to second place. Work colleagues rose in importance, followed by cafés, schools and neighbors. Places of worship were relegated to the last position, while the Internet began to

make a minor appearance, accounting for just 2 percent of leisure time.

The dawn of the new millennium saw little change in the rankings of friends and family, but the Internet's presence doubled to 4 percent. While still minimal, this marked the beginning of a digital revolution.

By 2011, the Internet had surged to second place, nearly equaling the time spent with friends (24 percent and 23 percent, respectively). Meanwhile, family time plummeted to 9 percent, with neighbors and places of worship dropping to just 4.5 percent each.

In a dramatic shift, the Internet became the primary companion for many, consuming 55 percent of free time. It replaced traditional activities like shopping, reading and even watching entertainment, all of which were now conveniently available online.

Friends dropped to 16 percent and family time diminished further. Neighbors, places of worship and even cafés saw negligible engagement.

A century after the family-centric era, the Internet now accounts for 61 percent of leisure time. Friends have dwindled to 13 percent, work colleagues to 8.5 percent and restaurants and cafés to just 5 percent.

Family time has sunk to alarmingly low levels, trailing behind neighbors, places of worship and schools. The digital world has become not just a source of information and entertainment but also a personal confidant, financial manager and even a livelihood for many.

The laptop and more critically, the smartphone have become indispensable -- friends, companions and keepers of secrets. With such a deep entrenchment in daily life, is there any escape from this digital takeover? Or is this simply the new reality?

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MoE takes bold steps to end exam paper leakage

Students' relatives found working in printing press removed

By Abdulrahman Al-Shimmari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: In a decisive move to reform Kuwait's Ministry of Education and restore confidence in the examination process, Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei announced strict measures to address serious violations related to the management of exams in secret printing presses.

These actions aim to end the long-standing issue of leaked exams and establish a system built on transparency and integrity.

The Ministry revealed shocking findings following a comprehensive review of exam management procedures.

Violations included seven members of the central secret printing press -- responsible for printing secondary school exams -- having children in the same grade levels. Similarly, first-degree kinship ties were discovered in three secret printing presses managing intermediate school exams, raising concerns of conflict of interest.

In response, Minister Al-Tabtabaei implemented an immediate series of measures, including cancelling the appointment of all secret printing

press members and taking legal and administrative action against violators.

■ Discarding all previously printed secondary school exams linked to the violating committees.

■ Reassigning new members to the central secret printing press under strict selection criteria.

■ Printing new exam models for secondary and intermediate grades to replace compromised ones.

■ Preventing supervisors or committee heads with first-degree relatives among students from overseeing exams.

■ Additionally, candidates for positions in the secondary school control system are now required to sign official pledges to ensure integrity and eliminate conflicts of interest.

Minister Al-Tabtabaei emphasized his unwavering commitment to justice, transparency and reform. He pledged to hold violators accountable while addressing deeply rooted issues within the education system.

The Ministry reiterated its focus on modernizing the examination process and building a culture of integrity to rebuild trust in Kuwait's education system.

These decisive measures signal a transformative moment, placing the Ministry of Education on a path to lasting reform.

Independence Day marked

Kenyan-Kuwaiti relations deep-rooted, says official

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs Nayef Al-Mudhaf praised the deep relations between Kenya and Kuwait, highlighting that the oldest Kuwaiti embassy in non-Arab African countries was opened in Kenya in 1965.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the celebration held by the embassy at the Crowne Plaza Hotel to mark the 61st anniversary of Kenya's independence, Al-Mudhaf stressed that Kenya is an important country in the African continent.

He expressed his hope that the relations between the two countries would continue to expand into broader horizons.

Al-Mudhaf explained that there are many signed agreements governing bilateral relations between the two countries. Negotiations are currently underway on a number of agreements in various fields, which will be signed at the earliest opportunity.

The trade exchange between the two countries is "excellent". Arrangements are being made with the embassy to coordinate high-level visits between officials of both nations.

Regarding the recruitment of workers from Kenya, Al-Mudhaf stated that this is part of the future agreements being worked on, noting that Kenyan workers are highly skilled, fluent in English, and well-regarded.

He emphasized that Kuwait is working to diversify its sources of domestic and skilled workers, indicating that Kuwait has signed a memorandum of understanding with Ethiopia regarding recruitment of workers, which will soon take effect.

Agreements

Al-Mudhaf highlighted the ongoing consultations with several other labor-exporting countries, indicating that agreements are expected to be signed in the near future.

He affirmed Kuwait's longstanding interest in the African continent, revealing that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has previously provided over KD 2 billion in aid to African countries, and that Kuwaiti charity organizations have made significant contributions in various African nations.

Meanwhile, the Kenyan Ambassador to Kuwait Halima Mahmood stated that this year marks the 61st anniversary of Kenya's independence, as Kenya gained freedom from colonial rule on December 12, 1963.

She explained that Kenya and Kuwait have enjoyed warm and friendly relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1965, supported by various high-level exchanges, including the recent meeting between President William Ruto and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled during the United Nations General Assembly in September.

The bilateral trade continues to show great potential, with an increasing diversification of Kenyan products exported to the Kuwaiti market, including meat, fruits, vegetables, coffee, tea, and spices.

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development finances major projects in Kenya in sectors like infrastructure, health, and education.

Kenya and Kuwait share similar stances on many international issues, particularly the fight against terrorism.

The ambassador affirmed that both countries currently co-chair the East Africa Working Group within the Global Counterterrorism Forum and are collaborating to mobilize major regional and international efforts in combating terrorism.

Kuwait welcomes Somalia-Ethiopia deal to iron out mutual differences

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday welcomed the agreement recently concluded by Somalia and Ethiopia in the Turkish capital, Ankara, which aims at ironing out their disagreements and launching bilateral technical negotiations.

In a press release, the ministry commended this agreement as a significant step towards strengthening security and stability in the Horn of Africa, voicing appreciation for the distinguished efforts exerted by Turkey under the direction of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to facilitate Somalia-Ethiopia dialogue, leading up to this agreement. It added that this agreement would cul-

minate in promoting development and prosperity efforts and fulfilling the hopes of both countries' peoples for a bright and secure future.

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Friday discussed by phone with UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan the solid and brotherly relations bonding the two countries and the brotherly peoples of Kuwait and the UAE.

The two sides in the phone contact discussed means of promoting the relations in various spheres, latest developments on the regional and international arenas as well as regional issues.



KUNA photo
Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Sameeh Hayat shakes hands with the Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister for Political and Diplomatic Affairs Ambassador Nguyen Minh Hang at the meeting.

Kuwait, Vietnam discuss cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Sameeh Hayat held political consultations with officials of the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry about several bilateral significant issues.

Speaking to KUNA by phone, the Kuwaiti official said bilateral meetings were held in a very positive atmosphere and that both sides shared identical views about the issues and matters that were discussed.

He elaborated that he had held political consultations with Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister for Political and Diplomatic Affairs Ambassador Nguyen Minh Hang and senior officials of the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry, with former ambassadors in Kuwait attending.

Hayat noted that the meetings, which were held at the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry, had tackled bilateral cooperation in politics, economy, trade, investment, cultural, labor, high education, scientific research, civil aviation, oil, renewable energy, industry, food security, health, medical services and much more.

Kuwaiti-Vietnamese political consultations came under the direction of the political leadership to keep making high-level visits between both countries' officials in order to maintain their historical relations, he noted.

They also came in the context of the implementation of previously signed agreements pertinent to cooperation between the foreign ministries of Kuwait and Vietnam, he said.

Furthermore, the Kuwaiti official handed the Vietnamese official a handwritten letter from Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya to Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son regarding bilateral relations and ways of promoting them in various domains.

Kuwaiti Ambassador in Vietnam Yusuf Al-Sabbah, Minister Plenipotentiary Saleh Al-Sarawi, Diplomatic Attache Shareefa Bokhdor of the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry's Asian Affairs Department and Diplomatic Attache Rashed Al-Rasheed of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Vietnam.

21% staff employed in Sabah Zone

12,000 doctors, 23,000 nurses working for Ministry of Health

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: According to a recent report from the Ministry of Health, the Sabah Specialized Medical Zone accounts for approximately 21 percent of the total health-care personnel working in the ministry. These personnel are distributed throughout the Sabah General Hospital and other specialized centers and hospitals in the zone, which includes 14 centers and specialized hospitals, reports Al-Jarida daily.

It revealed that the total number of physicians working in the ministry exceeds 12,000, and the number of nurses, both male and female, is around 23,000.

In a related development, Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi said the health and well-being of children and newborns is a top priority for the ministry, stressing that the ministry is constantly

working to enhance health services for children through various initiatives.

In a speech delivered by the Assistant Undersecretary of Health for Supportive Medical Services Dr. Abdullah Al-Fars on his behalf at the opening of the 8th Kuwait Conference on Pediatric Neurology, which will run for two days, he highlighted initiatives such as the establishment of specialized health facilities and efforts to increase awareness of children's diseases.

He explained that these initiatives include raising awareness about children's neurological diseases and ways to combat them. The ministry is focused on supporting modern medical research, attracting qualified medical professionals in the field of pediatrics, and providing the latest diagnostic and treatment technologies, such as epilepsy monitoring devices.

He affirmed the ministry's commitment to developing pediatric neurology in various hospitals by equipping them with the latest medical devices and supplies, all under the supervision of a distinguished group of qualified Kuwaiti professionals.



Dr. Al-Awadhi



Photo by Rizk Tawfiq/Samer Shaqir

A haze of dust prevailed in Kuwait throughout the day, yesterday, reducing visibility on roads and in open areas. Dip in temperature witnessed after strong north-westerly winds causing dust to accumulate on roads leading to remote areas.



Will the new setup in Kuwait grease the wheels of progress?

"IN A world filled with promises and grand ideas, modern democracy emerged as the beacon of hope. It was hailed by countless theorists, advisors and constitutional experts, who believed they had crafted the perfect system for governance," columnist Dr Abdulrahman Al-Jeeran wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"Yet, despite their efforts, democracy faltered. Reform programs introduced by powerful nations like Russia and America, intended as the cure for the world's ailments, crumbled.

"In the Arab world, these reforms were embraced with boundless enthusiasm. People from all walks of life celebrated, believing these ideas to be the long-sought elixir of happiness. But as the poet Qais ibn al-Mulawwah once said, the heartache of unfulfilled love often matches the joy of its anticipation. And so, the Arabs' joy turned to sorrow as reality set in.

"The nationalists had promised unity, their slogan boldly declaring, 'Unity is the solution.' Yet, their efforts lacked proof and instead of bringing people together, they sowed division.

"The socialists, with their rallying cry of 'Work and workers,' filled their days with strikes, protests and sit-ins. But even as their voices grew louder, the workers toiled on, their lives unchanged.

"The liberals, too, made their mark, their dreams tied to the ideals of democracy. Yet, their vision faltered spectacularly, symbolized by figures like Kamala Harris, whose promises of change failed to deliver. The Arab Spring, which had ignited so much hope, left only despair in its wake.

"Then came the Islamists, declaring, 'Islam is the solution.' But they themselves could not agree on what their slogan truly meant. How could they unite a world when they could not even unite among themselves? Other movements -- the Nasserites, Baathists and modernists -- joined the fray, but none of them achieved their lofty dreams.

"If only they had returned to the essence of true Islam," thought some. Not the politicized version, but the original spirit that unites rather than divides, builds rather than destroys.

"A path guided by this understanding might have led to a shared vision for the nation, one that prioritized the interests of its people over fleeting slogans. But intellectual laziness, blind imitation and the allure of empty promises prevailed instead.

"During this time, self-proclaimed intellectuals filled the airwaves, delighting audiences with their eloquence and populist laws. They offered dreams to the oppressed, yet their words lacked substance, leaving little behind but shattered hopes.

"The tear has widened beyond repair," whispered the people, their voices heavy with the weight of disillusionment. They had been victims of these parties and their hollow slogans.

"The fiery debates, the loud proclamations -- none had brought about true change. Instead of genuine research and analysis, the focus had been on superficial arguments and paid political narratives.

In Kuwait, this disillusionment was especially stark.

"For six decades, the constitution had promised progress, yet the country's intellectual development remained stagnant. Political leaders continued to speak of the 'good old days,' lamenting the passage of time but offering no real solutions.

"The root of the problem, many realized, was the reliance on individuals rather than institutions. These parties built their success on the charisma of their leaders, but as those leaders aged or disappeared, so too did the influence of their movements. External factors, shifting global powers and changing public priorities only deepened the decline.

"And so, Kuwait made a choice. It placed these parties where they belonged -- in the corner, leaving them as relics of a bygone era. In their place, the people began to dream of something new, something unburdened by the failures of the past."

Also:

"A gossip-monger can destroy in an hour what a sorcerer cannot in a year. For this reason, Imam Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab, may Allah have mercy on him, included gossiping (namimah) under the chapters of sorcery in his book Kitab Al-Tawheed (The Book of Monotheism), as both gossip and sorcery share the trait of causing division among people," columnist **Mohammad Al-Owaisi** wrote for Al-Anba daily.

"The story goes that a man once bought a servant from the slave market. The seller warned him, 'This servant is a gossip-monger,' but the buyer paid no heed. After some time, the servant approached the man's wife and said, 'Your husband doesn't love you and plans to marry someone else. If you want him to love you alone, bring me a few hairs from his beard while he's asleep.'

"The servant then went to the husband and said, 'Your wife has a lover and they plan to marry after killing you. Pretend to sleep tonight and see for yourself.'

"That night, as the wife approached her husband with a razor to take hairs from his beard, the husband grabbed her hand and killed her with the razor.

"When the wife's family found out, they retaliated by killing the husband and this escalated into a bloody feud between the two families.

"Imam Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab spoke the truth when he wrote in Kitab Al-Tawheed: 'A gossip-monger can destroy in an hour what a sorcerer cannot in a year.' The servant in this story succeeded in separating a man and his wife through gossip.

"Gossipers exist everywhere -- at work, in schools, homes, social gatherings, companies, organizations, sports clubs, and cooperatives and even, sadly, in our mosques.

"Our beloved Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned us against gossip and forbade it. Gossip is the act of relaying others' words with the intent to sow discord. 'Hudhayfah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: 'The gossip-monger will not enter Paradise.' (Reported by Bukhari and Muslim).

"Therefore, dear Muslim brothers and sisters, beware of gossip. It divides, destroys and brings no good. Avoid it, for it ruins relationships and sows enmity where there should be harmony."

□ □ □

"In the United States, the newly-elected President Donald Trump announced his first major initiative after assuming office - the proposal to abolish birthright citizenship. This policy, which grants American citizenship to anyone born on U.S. soil, is commonly referred to as the 'right of soil'. This bold move is happening in America, often regarded as the birthplace of democracy and a vast nation with a population in the millions. Its size is such that each state could be compared to the total area of all the Gulf states combined," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The U.S. government has recognized the growing concern over the demographic shift caused by an influx of new citizens, prompting a push to protect the interests of the native population. With this shift, America seeks to preserve its demographic structure and ensure that the decision-making process remains under the control of native-born citizens, especially as the number of naturalized citizens from diverse backgrounds continues to rise.

"Efforts are now underway at full speed to revise what some have deemed a 'flawed' law. The new president is seriously considering measures to deport immigrants to their countries, including those who are already American citizens.

"In Great Britain, the situation is no different. Yesterday, the British Foreign Office announced that Asma al-Assad, the wife of Bashar al-Assad, would be banned from entering the country despite holding British citizenship, and they are even considering revoking her citizenship.

This is the response of major powers when they perceive a real threat.

"What can we say, then, for a small country in the midst of a turbulent world, surrounded by dangers on all sides, whose true strength lies in the unity of its internal front to repel any aggression, particularly when we observe a major and dangerous breach in our demographic structure, along with a clear weakness in our internal front due to the alarming numbers of naturalized citizens who may have gained citizenship illegally?"

"It is naive to underestimate the future impact of this issue on Kuwait's decision-making, especially when citizenship is granted to those who may not be deserving. This includes groups of forgers and fraudsters, individuals who have obtained citizenship based on false information, or those who falsely claim familial ties - sons who are not their sons, brothers who are not their brothers, and mothers who are not their mothers.

"The demographic structure has been severely disrupted by the inclusion of wives of Kuwaitis, children of Kuwaiti women, illegal residents, and others, causing confusion and uncertainty. As a result, the situation has become so tangled that it is no longer clear where the true threat lies.

"Today, changing the nationality law has become an absolute necessity, essential for preserving our national identity. Safeguarding that identity is crucial to ensuring the continuity of the Kuwaiti entity.

"Revolving nationalities and opening corruption cases related to citizenship, with a thorough review of all files, amending the law, and canceling certain articles, has become imperative. This need for reform is clear after witnessing extensive manipulation. No genuine Kuwaiti citizen should feel disheartened by the withdrawal of nationality from a forger, an exempted wife, or entire families with forged nationalities. There is no need to question the reasons behind these actions, as the responsible authorities should take the necessary steps to cleanse these corruption files."

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



Dr. Al-Jeeran



Al-Saeed

Governor, patrol officers ponder way out Bid to get rid of traffic congestion in Farwaniya

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received in his office at the general diwan of the governorate recently the Assistant Director of Farwaniya Traffic Department Colonel Abdullah Monis Al-Otaibi, Assistant Director of the Farwaniya Rescue Patrols Department Colonel Mishari Shujaa Ghazi, Head of the Farwaniya Rescue Patrols Department Colonel Fahd Nayef Al-Mutairi, and Lieutenant Colonel Hamad Mutlaq.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser affirmed the importance of joint efforts to ensure the success of traffic management in the governorate.

They discussed ways to enhance cooperation among the various security agencies in Farwaniya Governorate, and outlined future plans aimed at maintaining security and stability, particularly with the upcoming Gulf Cup Zain 26 Championship.

The governor stressed that security is the foundation of the nation, and the presence and deployment of security forces have a profound positive impact on both citizens and residents.

He called on all personnel to continue their hard work and dedication, and apply the law on everyone without exception.

The attendees expressed their appreciation for the governor's hospitality and support.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with traffic patrol officers.

Senior officials under probe for violating citizens privacy rights

No tolerance for violations: Justice Ministry

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: In violation of the objective of Law No. 20/2014, known as the Electronic Inquiry law, which aims to regulate the privacy of individuals and prevent unauthorized access or publication of their information, the legislation, now implemented for ten years, has resulted in the referral of many supervisors, department heads, and employees in the Ministry of Justice to criminal courts. This is based on evidence that they accessed the electronic files of many citizens to inquire about personal information related to them from other ministries, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to judicial sources, the law is designed to prevent the violation of individuals' privacy, which has occurred in some cases where employees have revealed confidential information for personal

or material reasons. Examples include inquiries into the behavior of individuals applying for marriage, probing whether they have a criminal history or engaging in questionable behavior, checking the background of tenants to confirm any outstanding judgments for unpaid rent, or investigating personal matters within marital relationships, such as criminal activity or repeated issues related to travel, which could be used in family court proceedings.

They explained that the Ministry of Justice is committed to upholding the privacy of individuals and will not tolerate violations.

Several managers and department heads have already been referred to criminal courts for accessing litigants' personal data under the guise of performing their regular duties. The ministry clarified that these officials violated the privacy of citizens' data by using the information sector, with employees and department heads accessing personal details without any evidence of direct contact with the opposing parties or a connection to the individuals in question. Both employees are now facing charges in family lawsuits.

Court acquits Kuwaiti citizen of driving car after using narcotics

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Criminal Court acquitted a Kuwaiti citizen of charges related to drug use and driving under the influence, on the basis of the fact that security forces are not permitted to arrest or search individuals and their vehicles based solely on suspicion.

The citizen's defense counsel Lawyer Ali Al-Ali explained after the ruling that there were procedural errors made by the security forces. They were required to obtain permission from the concerned authority before carrying out the arrest and search. Without this authorization, the entire case would be invalid, even if illegal items were seized.

Earlier, the Public Prosecution had charged the accused with possession of hashish with the intent to use it without proof of legal authorization, possession of the psychotropic substance methamphetamine with the intent to use it without legal authorization, and driving a motor vehicle under the influence of narcotics.

According to the case file, the officer in charge explained that he noticed an individual inside a vehicle in Jabriya at 2:40 am and as soon as the man saw him, he attempted to flee, which prompted the officer to stop him. The second witness then approached him

and asked to see his identification. It was immediately apparent that the man was in an abnormal state, with red eyes, a strong odor emanating from him, and slurred speech. The officer noticed a 500 ml bottle in the vehicle's cup holder containing a red liquid, suspected to be alcoholic.

When the accused was detained, he resisted the second witness, and tried to escape, so the officer exited the patrol car to assist in restraining him.

During a precautionary search, a cigarette paper was found in his pocket. Upon further search of the vehicle, the officer discovered the aforementioned bottle, a transparent plastic tube used for drug consumption, a dark-colored piece wrapped in a nylon bag, and a small sachet containing a white substance. The items were seized, and the accused's intent to use them for drugs was confirmed.

Further investigation revealed that the accused had several prior criminal records.



Ali Al-Ali



A traffic policewoman seen verifying the documents of a motorist during a campaign in Salmiya area.

Mol lauds policewomen's role, eyes gender equality

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Ministry of Interior emphasized the significance of raising community awareness about the critical role women play in maintaining security, while also underscoring the need to provide adequate support for them to fully perform their duties, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In line with this, the General Department of Police Force Affairs organized a symposium on December 13, titled "Rights and Duties of Female Police," which saw participation from various sectors and departments within the Ministry of Interior.

The event reflects the Ministry's ongoing commitment to promoting gender equality in the security forces and ensuring that female police officers have the resources and support needed to excel in their roles, ultimately contributing to the overall safety and stability of the community.

A brief statement from the ministry highlighted that the symposium covered several key topics, particularly the challenges women face in police work.

The discussions also explored ways to create a safer and more supportive work environment for female officers.

One of the central themes was the empowerment of women in leadership roles within the security sector, emphasizing their significant contribution to strengthening community security.

'Beware fraud in Cup tickets sale'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): Ministry of Interior security media and public relations department warned fans from purchasing 26th Arabian Gulf Cup (Gulf Zain 26) tickets from suspicious websites and social media accounts.

In a press statement on Thursday, the ministry stated that all tickets are available

on the official "Hyakom" app, and called on fans to avoid dealing with fake accounts.

The tournament's organization committee announced on December 9th that match ticket for the events, hosted by Kuwait from December 21 to January 3rd, will be available through the "Hyakom" app.

Interior minister launches spring activities for imprisoned women

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, inaugurated a spring camp on Friday for female inmates in correctional facilities. This initiative is part of the Ministry of Interior's ongoing efforts to enhance rehabilitation and recreational programs for female inmates.

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Interior, Sheikh Fahad emphasized that such initiatives reflect the ministry's commitment to upholding international human rights standards. He noted that

the programs aim to preserve the dignity of female inmates while fostering a correctional environment that safeguards their rights and supports their rehabilitation, enabling them to reintegrate into society as active and productive individuals.

According to the ministry, the spring camp is designed to create a positive and supportive atmosphere, helping improve the psychological well-being of female inmates. It also seeks to prepare them for a smoother transition back into society through innovative activities and comprehensive rehabilitation programs.

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MEW sets new criteria for supervisory posts

CSC rejects shift system proposal

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Informed sources from the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy revealed the criteria set by the ministry for the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to be met by employees eligible for supervisory positions in the ministry's various sectors. These positions, totaling more than 225, include roles such as department director, supervisor, and department head.

The sources explained that the ministry has formally addressed CSC with the conditions that must be met by employees who are seeking to occupy vacant supervisory positions in the ministry.

After CSC approves the criteria, an interview committee will be formed, and the announcement of vacant

supervisory positions will begin. This process aims to fill the positions in succession, and achieve progress and job stability, especially in preparation for the upcoming summer season.

In another development, CSC has once again rejected the ministry's proposal regarding the current work shifts, which consist of 12 hours of work followed by 24 hours of rest, then 12 hours of work followed by 48 hours of rest.

According to sources, CSC has instructed the ministry to select one of the shift systems in accordance with Civil Service Council's resolution No. 12/2012 and its amendments, which govern compensation for overtime work and shift scheduling.

The ministry officials had repeatedly appealed to CSC to maintain the current shift system, but the request was ultimately rejected by the Civil Service Council.

The ministry intends to formally request an exemption from the penalty for absence for employees working under the current shift system, as the new shift system was expected to be implemented at the beginning of this year.

\$5 mln project aids earthquake victims

KRCS to set up blood bank in Turkiye

ANKARA, Dec 14, (KUNA): Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has begun a project to set up a blood bank in Adana in southern Turkiye and delivered vehicles for rescue and blood transfusion at various donation centers.

Dr. Nasser Al-Tanak, the society deputy chairman, said in a statement to KUNA on Friday that the project is part of the efforts to relieve victims of the 2023 earthquake, adding that the blood bank would be situated in a five-story building.

He explained that the center construction would last for two years, adding that the venture was launched with donations from Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in collaboration with the Turkish Red Crescent, under supervision of the KRCS.

The Kuwaiti Red Crescent has also delivered vehicles for research and rescue AND blood transfusion, Dr. Al-Tanak said, revealing the whole value of the project is estimated at USD five million.

He also mentioned that earlier today, five vehicles laden with food were delivered to relieve those in need in the Turkish region.



Group photo during the blood bank project.



Delivery of vehicles for search and rescue and blood transfusion.

KUNA photos

Students showcase creativity in language and tech

MoE marks World Arabic Language, AI Day

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): The Ministry of Education, represented by the General Technical Guidance of the Arabic Language, celebrated World Arabic Language and Artificial Intelligence Day on Wednesday, under the patronage of Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei. The event was attended by Acting Assistant Undersecretary for General Education Mansour Al-Dhafiri and Acting General Technical Supervisor of the Arabic Language Tariq Al-Enezi.

In his speech during the ceremony,

Acting Assistant Undersecretary Mansour Al-Dhafiri emphasized that the Arabic language is the language of the Holy Quran and stressed the ministry's commitment to motivating students to preserve this language, in which the Holy Book was revealed.

Al-Dhafiri praised the efforts made by the Ministry of Education, represented by the General Guidance of the Arabic Language, in celebrating and caring for such events.

For his part, Acting General

Technical Supervisor Tariq Al-Enezi stated that the world celebrates World Arabic Language Day on December 18 each year. He noted that the exhibition held by the ministry on this occasion involved participation from all educational regions and private schools.

Al-Enezi highlighted the creativity of the participating students, who showcased the beauty and linguistic richness of the Arabic language. He explained that the Arabic language curricula have been linked to artificial intelligence and technologi-

cal challenges, addressing how the language can keep pace with these challenges and difficulties.

He further mentioned that there is a comprehensive plan to develop curricula to align with augmented reality technologies such as (gram) and to integrate the Internet and artificial intelligence, ensuring broad inclusion in school books.

The celebration was attended by members of the teaching staff and students who participated in the art exhibition held at the Ministry's General Diwan.



Ministry students celebrate World Arabic Language and Artificial Intelligence Day.

KUNA photo



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'Great booster' for scientific excellence

Kuwaiti scientist wins Mideast regional young talents award

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): Winning international awards and getting recognition for it is a great booster for scientific excellence in all countries including in Kuwait, said a Kuwaiti academic on Friday.

Speaking to KUNA, Dr. Entessar Al-Hetlani, one of the winners of the 2024 LOreal-UNESCO for Women in Science Middle East Regional Young Talents Program, affirmed that her achievement reflected the strength of scientific pursuit in Kuwait and also was an accomplishment for Kuwait University (KU) and the country.

The LOreal-UNESCO for Women in Science is offered to scientists from six global regions including Africa, the Middle East, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe.

Dr. Al-Hetlani -- a chemistry professor

at KUs College of Science -- indicated that she headed the forensic science Masters Degree program at KU, adding that she worked with several teams within her field whether in research or samples analysis to boost the role of chemistry in the security domain.

Taking part in scientific competitions and collaborations with scientists, institutes, and organizations from around the globe and specifically the Middle East aided in scientific progress, she affirmed.

She also touted national competitions for scientific excellence in which she won the 2020 Jaber Al-Ahmad Prize for Young Researchers offered by the Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Science (KFAD).

The academic called for more support on both local and international levels for scientists, saying that funding and encouragement were key in this regard.

Al-Hetlani hoped to achieve her dream in establishing a fully equipped forensic science laboratory in Kuwait to bring in specialists from abroad and help in developing Kuwait's scientific output.



Dr. Al-Hetlani



Photo taken during the forum.

KU organizes 'One Language' forum

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Department of Physiotherapy at the Faculty of Allied Medical Sciences at Kuwait University organized a forum titled "One Language" with the aim of enhancing cooperation among medical specialties.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait University, representatives of various local, Gulf, and international academic institutions, including Dr. Mansour Al-Otaibi from Northern Border University in Saudi Arabia and Dr. Yasmine Muzail from McMaster University in Canada, participated in the forum.

Dr. Sherifa Al-Mutairi, a faculty member in the Department of Physiotherapy, explained that interprofessional education is a valuable experience for universities, as it equips future healthcare professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary for delivering high-quality, patient-centered care. By prioritizing interprofessional education, universities can contribute to a more collaborative and effective healthcare system.

Meanwhile, Dr. Anwar Al-Mutairi delivered a lecture titled "Interprofessional Education at Kuwait University", highlighting the main activities organized by the Interprofessional Education Committee at the Medical Sciences Center. One of these activities was a treasure hunt for students at

the Medical Sciences Center, organized in collaboration with the Faculty of Pharmacy and the Faculty of Allied Medical Sciences, involving its four different departments.

Dr. Ahmed Al-Hashemi also gave a lecture titled "Evaluation Strategies to Ensure Interprofessional Education", in which he discussed the latest evaluation methods for clinical training students in hospitals using multiple specialties simultaneously.

In addition, a faculty member in the Department of Physiotherapy Dr. Latifa Al-Anzi hosted a discussion session for faculty members from various specialties regarding their experiences with interdisciplinary education for students, including collaboration between medical specialties in both clinical and research settings.

She highlighted the main practical challenges at the university, and offered suggestions to facilitate the implementation of interdisciplinary education at Kuwait University.

Dr. Al-Anzi stressed that the primary obstacle to implementing this approach is the lack of resources, particularly time and infrastructure.

She concluded by noting that the forum and workshop discussions were summarized to guide future efforts.

Celebration of unity: 'Together We Sing to the Child of the Manger'

Churches in Kuwait share joy, harmony at Christmas celebration

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: All churches in the State of Kuwait held a special evening under the title "Together We Sing to the Child of the Manger", which was hosted by the Catholic Church, Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia in Holy Family Co-Cathedral in celebration of Christmas and the beginning of a new year, where the Catholic Church shone with its beautiful lights and decorations, creating a warm and touching atmosphere. The evening was attended by a group of ambassadors, a number of social figures, and representatives of embassies and diplomatic missions. Among the most prominent attendees was the representative of Dr. Mohammad Al-Jasar the Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Assistant Secretary for the Arts Sector, Mr. Musaed Al-Zamel.

On the sidelines of the event, the Legal Advisor and Public Relations Officer of the Catholic Church, Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, Mr. Naim Habib, described it as a joyful, beautiful and special day for all churches in the State of Kuwait to meet under the roof of the Catholic Church, Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, at the special invitation of his excellency Bishop Aldo Berardi, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia, noting, "Today we were pleased to have the Assistant Secretary-General for the Arts Sector, Mr. Musaed Al-Zamel, and all segments of Kuwaiti society, honor us with their presence at the event." He stated that the celebration was exceptional and distinctive this year with the participation of all churches in Kuwait, as each church presented Christmas hymns that express the joy of these Christian rites and communities in the State of Kuwait in welcoming a new year.

At the end of his statement, Habib wished "all the best to the State of Kuwait, its leadership and people, as it is our second country that contains us, and contains all cultures and religions, as Kuwait is a hospitable and humane country," adding that this celebration is a message of peace, love, and harmony between all segments of society and the whole world.

As for the administration advisor, Mr. Michel Chaccour, he expressed his happiness with the celebration as it brought together all churches under one roof, in a loving and hospitable country (Kuwait), wishing that peace would prevail in the world, especially in the Middle East.



Ambassadors, diplomats, and diverse communities join for a touching Christmas evening at the Catholic Church.

Farwaniya Governor pledges to aid Fazaa's volunteer initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received in his office at the governorate's diwan Thursday morning the Head of the Fazaa Volunteer Team Sarah Kmeikh Al-Azmi, and team member Iqbal Al-Jeeran.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the governor was briefed on the activities carried out by the Fazaa Volunteer Team, which include promoting tourist sites, human development, social communication, and the role of national volunteer work, as well as the environmental programs that serve the community.

Sheikh Athbi said, "Volunteer work represents human values and strengthens the spirit of solidarity, assistance, and cooperation among members of society. It is a major factor in building advanced societies."

At the end of the meeting, Sarah



Farwaniya Governor meets with Fazaa volunteer team.

Kmeikh Al-Azmi expressed her gratitude to Sheikh Athbi for his warm reception and his continued support for

volunteer teams, as well as his efforts to overcome challenges faced by the people of Farwaniya Governorate.

Teşekkür ederim

Continued from Page 1

What makes the situation even more bitter is the fact that these foreign forces had no connection to the Arab environment or culture. They were simply aiming to change religious beliefs in many cases.

That is why the first Friday prayer, held just days ago in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus after the fall of the brutal regime, symbolized a moment akin to the fall of Khosrow II in the seventh century AD. It served as a reminder that no matter how arrogant or proud an oppressor may be, there will always come a day when they fall. History will inevitably repeat itself.

In contrast, the Iranian regime has long been confident in its full control over four Arab capitals, which was evident in 2015 when the Iranian Minister of Intelligence tried to poison the honey by promoting the export of the Iranian revolution as an Islamic issue. He described exporting the revolution as "a revolutionary issue in harmony with the Iranian constitution."

At the time, some Arabs recognized the gravity of this statement, particularly since it came from a former Minister of Intelligence who had insider knowledge of the regime's plans. Unfortunately, no action was taken in response.

If the reports of a 2014 meeting between Bashar Al-Assad and Qassem Soleimani are accurate, and in case it is true that Soleimani stated the need to create Islamic forces parallel to the Syrian army, then this explains the regime's descent into inciting sectarian strife, especially with his talk about the fears of Syrian minorities.

In the last few days, all the slogans propagated by the Iranian regime and its Lebanese arm, particularly those about "the captivity of Zainab (may Allah be pleased with her) twice" to justify their intervention in the Levant, have been thoroughly debunked.

At the same time, this confirms the plan for the region, not just for Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. The oppressor sought help from even darker forces to maintain his rule. In response, the revolution had no choice but to seek a supporter, regardless of their background. However, the supporter of the Syrian revolution was a Muslim with extensive experience in dealing with the Iranian regime and fully aware of its ambitions.

Sadly, some Arab countries attempted to flatter the Syrian Baath regime, as if they had not learned from their experience with Saddam Hussein. Instead of confronting the regime, they tried to steer Bashar Al-Assad toward the right path, even as he persisted in repression and became more deeply involved in the Persian plan. This is why the Syrian revolution ultimately gained momentum and bore fruit after 14 years of struggle, with its primary base in Turkey.

From the very beginning, Ankara realized that the fire in Syria would engulf the entire Arab world, and not stop at its borders. This is why Turkey quickly moved to support the revolution. It came from a Muslim ally who understood the grave consequences for the region if the conflict spread to neighboring countries.

We hence say today "Teşekkür ederim Türkiye" (Thank you, Türkiye). We do not exaggerate, as it was the only country capable of believing in the justice of the Syrian revolution.

We must also commend the opposition factions and Ahmed Al-Sharaa, all of whom believed that iron can only be cut by iron, and that Damascus, which is the oldest capital in the world, cannot become a Trojan horse to divide the Arab world.

Kuwait, US

Continued from Page 1

Over the three-day dialogue, representatives from both governments convened virtually with the participation of numerous experts, reflecting the

depth of bilateral relations and opportunities for cooperation.

Both sides called for exploring additional areas of collaboration and formalizing cooperation through new agreements and arrangements, complementing the extensive array of existing agreements and frameworks.

The United States and Kuwait discussed shared international and regional priorities, including Kuwait's presidency of the GCC Supreme Council, and bilateral development cooperation through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and USAID.

Both sides commended the technical discussions on joint development projects in Yemen and the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network.

The two nations reaffirmed their commitment to resolving Palestinian issues based on a two-state solution, advocating for an independent, viable Palestinian state along the 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, in accordance with internationally recognized standards.

They called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the release of detainees and hostages, increased humanitarian aid to Gaza, and support for all international and regional efforts to achieve these goals.

Kuwait expressed its deep appreciation for US efforts that led to halting hostilities in Lebanon, expressing hope that these efforts would pave the way for a ceasefire in Gaza and peace in the region.

Regarding Iran, both countries stressed the importance of de-escalation in the region, and called on Iran to cease its proliferation of weapons to non-state actors, and to uphold principles of good neighborliness, conflict resolution through dialogue and peaceful means, respect for sovereignty, and non-interference in the internal affairs of regional states.

Jahra Council set to address key development proposals

Industry and roads lead agenda

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Jahra Committee of the Municipal Council will hold its fourth meeting of the third term, chaired by Abdullah Al-Enezi, on Wednesday to discuss several key agenda items.

These items include:

■ A letter from the Public Authority

for Industry requesting the inclusion of the eastern side of plot No. 2A in Block 1 of Sulaibiya Industrial.

■ A letter from the Public Authority for Industry regarding the allocation of land for an industrial complex for iron and steel products in the northern part of the country.

■ A letter from the Ministry of Defense concerning a proposal submitted by some members of the Municipal Council to allocate a camping area north of Kuwait to be developed into a park for desert-goers.

In addition, the committee will review items related to the advisory

agreement for the study, design, supervision, and maintenance of the road network in Kabd. This includes the extension of roads from the Seventh Ring Road to the north, the Seventh Ring Road extension to the south, the Seventh Ring Road extension to the east, and the Salmi Road to the west.

The project will involve the creation of several internal and main roads, the extension of the 6.5 Ring Road with all necessary services, the construction of four overhead vehicle bridges, and the establishment of 63 roundabouts with entry and exit curve radii ranging from 25m to 50m.

credible civilian justification.

Both sides expressed appreciation for their bilateral defense partnership, including Kuwait's hosting of US forces.

They lauded the 15th meeting of the US-Kuwait Joint Military Committee, held in Kuwait from May 20-21, 2024, and looked forward to regular meetings of this committee to further defense collaboration.

The dialogue reaffirmed ongoing efforts to enhance cybersecurity, combat terrorism, and promote human rights. Both countries discussed mutual investments in renewable energy, health security, and climate change mitigation.

The two nations look forward to the seventh round of the Strategic Dialogue in 2025 in the United States.

Kuwait denounces

Continued from Page 1

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the deadly strike. Israel is trying to eliminate Hamas, which led the attack on southern Israel in October 2023 that sparked the war in Gaza. The Israeli military says Hamas militants hide among Gaza's civilian population.

The U.N. General Assembly's member nations approved a new resolution this week demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding, although they do reflect world opinion - the vote Wednesday was 158-9, with 13 abstentions.

Photos from the scene in Nuseirat sent to journalists showed a completely collapsed building with people walking through its mangled and charred remains, smoke rising from piles of belongings strewn over the rubble. Palestinian rescuers were searching for more bodies trapped beneath the rubble.

The strikes Thursday evening came as Palestinian medics were still surveying

the morning's deadly toll of fierce Israeli attacks, including on Nuseirat camp. Palestinian medical officials had reported at least 28 people killed earlier in the day, including seven children and a woman. One of the strikes flattened a house in Nuseirat, according to Al-Aqsa Hospital in the nearby city of Deir al-Balah, where the bodies were taken.

Two other strikes killed 15 men who were part of local aid coordination committees set up by displaced Palestinians and the Hamas-run Interior Ministry, according to health officials at Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis. Eight of the men were killed in an attack near the southern border town of Rafah and the remaining seven were killed by a strike in Khan Younis.

The committees aim to establish secure aid convoys, which often face challenges such as looting, hoarding and profiteering in their efforts to deliver humanitarian supplies to Palestinians facing the risk of famine.

Israel says it allows enough aid to enter and blames U.N. agencies for not distributing it. The U.N. says Israeli restrictions, and the breakdown of law and order after Israel repeatedly targeted the Hamas-run police force, make it extremely difficult to operate in the territory.

In Gaza's isolated and devastated north, Awda Hospital said an orthopedic doctor, Saeed Jouda, was shot in the head and killed Thursday morning. The Health Ministry said the doctor was killed by an armed quadcopter drone as he was traveling from Kamal Adwan Hospital to treat patients at Awda Hospital.

The two medical facilities are in northern towns where Israel has waged a blistering offensive against Hamas militants since early October, allowing in almost no humanitarian aid and ordering tens of thousands to flee to nearby Gaza City. Experts have warned that the north may be experiencing famine.

The latest bombardment came as

Jake Sullivan, the White House national security adviser, was holding official meetings in Israel as signs emerge that long-stalled negotiations between Israel and Hamas could regain momentum. On Thursday, Sullivan revived hopes for a deal, telling reporters in Jerusalem that Israel's ceasefire in Lebanon has helped clear the way for another deal to end the war in Gaza.

DGCA warns

Continued from Page 1

According to Article 138 of the law, violators face hefty fines, ranging from a minimum of 50,000 dinars to a maximum of 200,000 dinars, along with stringent legal consequences.

The Civil Aviation Authority has urged air operators to take immediate and decisive action to ensure full compliance with the smoking ban.

This includes instructing aircraft crew members to refrain from smoking entirely and educating passengers during flights about the importance of adhering to the law.

The authority emphasized the necessity of including smoking-related penalties in safety guidelines as part of broader efforts to ensure passenger safety and reinforce the commitment to environmental protection.

CBK leads

Continued from Page 1

The CBK emphasized its commitment to continuous communication and training, aiming to further develop the expertise of workers in the banking and financial sectors and strengthen their ability to combat financial crimes effectively.

This initiative reflects the CBK's supervisory role in maintaining the integrity and security of Kuwait's financial system.

Authorities probe rebellion allegations over controversial martial law decree

South Korea's parliament votes to impeach President Yoon

SEOUL, Dec 14, (AP) — South Korea's parliament voted Saturday to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol as authorities investigate allegations of rebellion over his controversial Dec. 3 martial law decree that has caused huge political turmoil in the country.

The National Assembly passed the motion 204-85 in a floor vote. Yoon's presidential powers and duties will be suspended after the copies of a document on the impeachment are delivered to him and to the Constitutional Court.

The court has up to 180 days to determine whether to dismiss Yoon as president or restore his powers. If he's thrown out of office, a national election to choose his successor must be held within 60 days.

It was the second National Assembly vote on Yoon's impeachment motion. Last Saturday, Yoon survived an impeachment vote after most ruling party lawmakers boycotted the floor vote. Some People Power Party lawmakers had since announced their intentions to vote for Yoon's impeachment in a second vote, as public protests against Yoon intensified and his approval rating plummeted.

Tens of thousands of people have braved the bitter cold and poured onto the streets of the capital, Seoul, every night for the past two weeks, calling for Yoon's ouster and arrest. They shouted slogans, sang, danced and waved K-pop light sticks. Smaller groups of Yoon's conservative supporters - still in the thousands - have also been rallying in Seoul, denouncing attempts to impeach the president. Both rallies have largely been peaceful.

Yoon's martial law imposition, the first of its kind in more than four decades in South Korea, lasted only six hours, but has caused massive political tumult, halted diplomatic activities and rattled financial markets. Yoon was forced to lift his decree after parliament unanimously voted to overturn it. After declaring martial law, Yoon



Participants celebrate after hearing the news that South Korea's parliament voted to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol outside the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, Saturday, Dec. 14, 2024. (AP)

sent hundreds of troops and police officers to the parliament to try to impede its vote on the decree before they withdrew after the parliament rejected it. No major violence occurred.

Opposition parties and many experts accuse Yoon of rebellion, citing a law

clause that categorizes as rebellion the staging of a riot against established state authorities to undermine the constitution. They also say that by law a president in South Korea is allowed to declare martial law only during wartime or similar emergencies and has no

rights to suspend parliament's operations even under martial law.

The impeachment motion alleged that Yoon "committed rebellion that hurts peace on the Republic of Korea by staging a series of riots." It said Yoon's mobilization of military and

police forces threatened the National Assembly and the public and that his martial law decree was aimed at disturbing the Constitution.

In a fiery speech on Thursday, Yoon rejected the rebellion charges, calling his martial law order an act of govern-

ance. The conservative Yoon said he aimed to issue a warning to the main liberal opposition Democratic Party, calling it "a monster" and "anti-state forces" that he argued has flexed its legislative muscle to impeach top officials and undermined the government's budget bill for next year.

"I will fight to the end to prevent the forces and criminal groups that have been responsible for paralyzing the country's government and disrupting the nation's constitutional order from threatening the future of the Republic of Korea," Yoon said.

Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung called Yoon's speech a "mad declaration of war" against his own people.

The Democratic Party and five other opposition parties control the 300-member unicameral parliament with a combined 192 seats, but they were eight seats shy of the two-thirds majority needed to pass Yoon's impeachment motion and needed support from ruling party lawmakers.

Yoon has been banned from leaving South Korea, as law enforcement authorities are investigating whether he and others involved in the martial law declaration committed rebellion, abuse of power and other crimes. If convicted, the leader of a rebellion plot can face the death penalty or life imprisonment.

Yoon has the presidential privilege of immunity from criminal prosecution but that doesn't extend to allegations of rebellion or treason. Subsequently, Yoon could be investigated, detained, arrested or indicted over his martial law decree, but many observers doubt that authorities will forcefully detain him because of the potential for clashes with his presidential security service.

Yoon's defense minister, police chief and the head of Seoul's metropolitan police agency have been arrested over their roles in the martial law case. Other senior military and government officials also face investigations.

Trump extends unprecedented invites to Chinese president, other world leaders for his inauguration

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla., Dec 14, (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump has invited Chinese President Xi Jinping and other world leaders to his inauguration next month - an unorthodox move that would fold U.S. allies and adversaries into a very American political tradition.

Trump said Thursday during an appearance at the New York Stock Exchange, where he was ringing the opening bell to kick off trading for the day, that he's been "thinking about inviting certain people to the inauguration" without referring to any specific individuals.

"And some people said, 'Wow, that's a little risky, isn't it?'" Trump said. "And I said, 'Maybe it is. We'll see. We'll see what happens.' But we like to take little chances."

His comments came soon after his incoming White House press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, confirmed during a Thursday morning appearance on "Fox & Friends" that Trump had invited Xi and other world leaders to attend his inauguration. No head of state has previously made an official visit to the U.S. for the inauguration, according to State Department historical records.

The unprecedented invitations come at a moment when much of the world is bracing for what comes next when Trump and his "America First" worldview return to the White House.

The president-elect has vowed to levy massive tariffs against the United States' chief economic competitor, China, as well as neighbors Canada and Mexico unless those countries do more to reduce illegal immigration and the flow of illegal drugs such as fentanyl into the United States.

Trump's also pledged to move quickly to end Russia's nearly three-year war in Ukraine and press NATO allies who are spending less than 2% of their GDP on defense to step up or risk the United States not coming to their defense, as required by the transatlantic alliance's treaty, should they come under attack.

"We've been talking and discussing with President Xi some things, and others, other world leaders, and I think we're going to do very well all around," Trump said. "We've been abused as a country. We've been badly abused from an economic standpoint, I think, and even militarily, you know, we put up all the money, they put up nothing, and then they abuse us on the economy. And we just can't let that happen."

Xi is likely to see the invitation as



President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a Time magazine Person of the Year event at the New York Stock Exchange, Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024, in New York. (AP)

too risky to accept, and the gesture from Trump may have little bearing on the increasingly competitive ties between the two nations as the White House changes hands, experts say.

Danny Russel, vice president for international security and diplomacy at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said Xi would not allow himself to "be reduced to the status of a mere guest celebrating the triumph of a foreign leader - the U.S. president, no less."

Still, Leavitt saw it as a plus. "This is an example of President Trump creating an open dialogue with leaders of countries that are not just our allies, but our adversaries and our competitors, too," she said on "Fox & Friends." "We saw this in his first term. He got a lot of criticism for it, but it led to peace around this world. He is willing to talk to anyone, and he will always put America's interest first."

Asked at a Chinese Foreign Ministry briefing Thursday about Trump's invitation, spokesperson Mao Ning responded, "I have nothing to share at present."

Leavitt did not detail which leaders beyond Xi have been invited.

But Trump's decision to invite Xi, in particular, squares with his belief that foreign policy - much like a business negotiation - should be carried out with carrots and sticks to get the United States' opponents to operate closer to his administration's preferred terms.

Jim Bendat, a historian and author of "Democracy's Big Day: The Inaugura-

tion of Our President," said he was not aware of a previous U.S. inauguration attended by a foreign head of state.

"It's not necessarily a bad thing to invite foreign leaders to attend," Bendat said. "But it sure would make more sense to invite an ally before an adversary."

Edward Frantz, a presidential historian at the University of Indianapolis, said the invitation helps Trump burnish his "dealmaker and savvy businessman" brand.

"I could see why he might like the optics," Frantz said. "But from the standpoint of American values, it seems shockingly cavalier."

White House officials said it was up to Trump to decide whom he invites to the inauguration.

"I would just say, without doubt, it's the single most consequential bilateral relationship that the United States has in the world," White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said. "It is a relationship both fraught with peril and responsibility."

It's unclear which leaders, if any, might show.

A top aide to Hungarian President Viktor Orban, one of Trump's most vocal supporters on the world stage, said Thursday that Orban isn't slated to attend the inauguration.

"There is no such plan, at least for the time being," said Gergely Gulyás, Orban's chief of staff.

The nationalist Hungarian leader is embraced by Trump but has faced isolation in Europe as he's sought to undermine the European Union's support

for Ukraine, and routinely blocked, delayed or watered down the bloc's efforts to provide weapons and funding and to sanction Moscow for its invasion. Orban recently met with Trump at Mar-a-Lago.

Every country's chief of mission to the United States will also be invited, according to a Trump Inaugural Committee official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. Such invitations to diplomats stationed in Washington has been customary during past inaugurations.

Xi, during a meeting with President Joe Biden last month in Peru, urged the United States not to start a trade war.

"Make the wise choice," Xi cautioned. "Keep exploring the right way for two major countries to get along well with each other."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has also pushed back on Trump's threats, warning that such tariffs would be perilous for the U.S. economy as well.

Trudeau earlier this week said Americans "are beginning to wake up to the real reality that tariffs on everything from Canada would make life a lot more expensive" and said he will retaliate if Trump goes ahead with them.

Trump responded by calling Canada a state and Trudeau the governor.

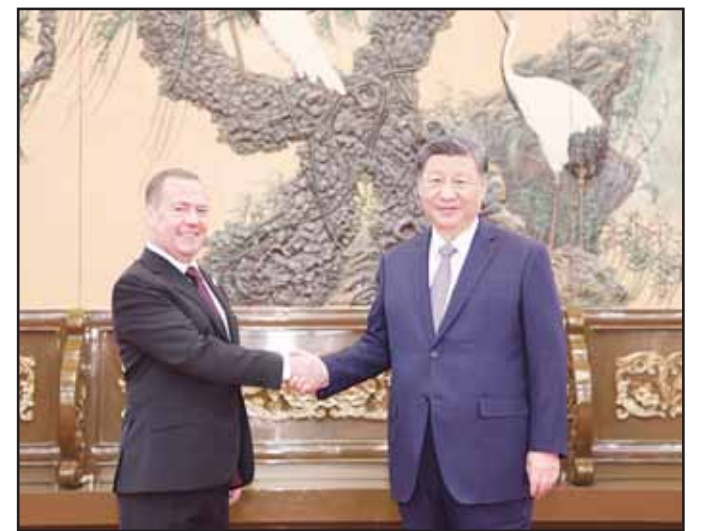
In addition to the tariff dispute, U.S.-China relations are strained over other issues, including what U.S. officials see as Beijing's indirect support of Russia's war on Ukraine.

The Biden administration says China has supported Russia with a surge in sales of dual-use components that help keep its military industrial base afloat.

U.S. officials also have expressed frustration with Beijing for not doing more to rein in North Korea's support for the Russian war. China accounts for the vast majority of North Korea's trade.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has dispatched thousands of troops to Russia to help repel Ukrainian forces from the Kursk border region. The North Koreans also have provided Russia with artillery and other munitions, according to U.S. and South Korean intelligence officials.

Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration is set to take place a day after the U.S. deadline for ByteDance, the Chinese parent company of social media giant TikTok, to sell the social media app or face a ban in the United States.



Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, meets with Chairman of the United Russia party Dmitry Medvedev at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. (Xinhua)

Call for greater cooperation

Xi meets United Russia party leader Medvedev

BEIJING, Dec 14, (Xinhua) — Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, met here Thursday with Chairman of the United Russia party Dmitry Medvedev.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 75 years ago, China and Russia have blazed a new path featuring mutual respect, harmonious coexistence and win-win cooperation between major and neighboring countries, setting an example of new-type international relations as well as relations between major neighboring countries, Xi said.

He said China is willing to work with Russia to strengthen the synergy of development strategies, tap the intrinsic momentum of bilateral cooperation, and continuously bring benefits to the two countries and peoples.

China and Russia should strengthen communication and coordination within such multilateral frameworks as the United Nations (UN), the BRICS cooperation mechanism and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, firmly uphold the international system with the UN at its core, and practice true multilateralism so as to make the international order more just and equitable and jointly safe-

guard global strategic stability and international fairness and justice, Xi said.

Xi pointed out that since the establishment of relations between the CPC and the United Russia party more than 20 years ago, the two sides have conducted high-level and constructive interactions, strengthened exchanges and mutual learning on party and state governance, continuously enriched the content of institutionalized exchanges between the two parties, and helped consolidate political and strategic mutual trust between China and Russia.

As important forces promoting human progress, the two parties should further coordinate and cooperate closely, lead the global governance in the right direction, and pool the consensus of friendly political parties in countries around the world, especially in the Global South countries, to push the world forward in the right direction, Xi said.

On the Ukraine crisis, China has repeatedly emphasized the need to uphold the three principles of no expansion of the battlefield, no escalation of fighting and no provocation by any party, to promote the easing of the situation as soon as possible, Xi said.

Africa

Zambia-China ties boost sought: Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema has met with a senior Chinese political advisor, with both sides calling for deeper bilateral cooperation and closer ties between the two countries.

Shao Hong, vice chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, conveyed warm greetings from Chinese President Xi Jinping to President Hichilema on Thursday.

As this year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Zambia, the friendly cooperation between the two countries has been flourishing and is at its historical best, Shao said.

He noted that China is willing to work with Zambia to implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state and the outcomes of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). (Xinhua)

Citizenship for slave descendants: When Nadege Anelka first came to the West African country of Benin from her home island of Martinique, a French overseas territory in the Caribbean, the 57-year-old travel agent said she had a feeling of déjà vu.

"A lot of the people reminded me of my grandparents, the way they wore their headscarves, their mannerisms, their mentality," she said.

Feeling at home in Benin, Anelka decided to settle there last July and open a travel



Nate Debos, known by his stage name NaTRILL Dizaster, left, who said he would apply for Benin citizenship, poses with Ay.Yon Michaels, right, of the rap duo Ayakashi Krewe inside an old school bus in New Orleans, Thursday, Dec. 5, 2024. (AP)

agency. She hopes to become a citizen by taking advantage of a law passed in September that grants citizenship to those who can trace their lineage to the slave trade.

The new law is part of a broader effort by Benin to reckon with its own historical role in the slave trade.

The law is open to all over 18 who do not already hold other African citizenship and can provide proof that an ancestor was deported via the slave trade from anywhere in sub-Saharan Africa. Beninese authorities accept DNA tests, authenticated testimonies and family records.

Anelka used "Anchoukaj" ("Affiliation" in Antillean Creole), a website recognized by Benin to trace her heritage, proving that her ancestors were slaves in Martinique. If her application is successful, she will receive a provisional certificate of nationality valid for three years. To get citizenship, she'll be required to stay at least once in Benin during that period. (AP)

US lauds Ethiopia-Somalia deal: The United States welcomed Thursday agreement reached by Ethiopia and Somalia in Ankara late Wednesday on respecting each country's territorial integrity and advancing cooperation on shared interests.

"We look forward to technical negotiations to permit Ethiopia to enjoy reliable, secure, and sustainable access to the sea for mutual economic benefit while respecting Somalia's territorial integrity," the US Department of State said in a press statement.

It commended the leadership of Türkiye in facilitating this agreement. It added that the ongoing dialogue and engagement are essential for a stable and prosperous future for Ethiopia and Somalia. (KUNA)

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+0.25	114,659.10	PHILIPPINES - PSEI	-0.37	6,616.51
			JAPAN - NIKKEI 225	-0.95	39,470.44

Business

Event under the auspices, presence of H.E. Governor of Al Ahmadi

Burgan Bank supports KSH's 9th Vocational Rehabilitation Exhibition



H.E. Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Governor of Al Ahmadi inaugurating the exhibition.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: As part of its annual partnership with Al Ahmadi Governorate, Burgan Bank extended its support for the 9th Vocational Rehabilitation Exhibition, organized by the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped's (KSH) affiliate Day Care Center in South Sabahiya under the patronage and presence of H.E. Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Governor of Al Ahmadi. The sponsorship is part of Burgan's comprehensive social responsibility program and its commitment to social sustainability and adopting the highest

environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards.

On this occasion, H.E. Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Governor of Al Ahmadi, said: "Advancing as a society, as an economy, and as a nation is a shared responsibility that we carry together, individuals and institutions alike. With the unwavering support of proactive corporate citizens, such as Burgan Bank, we are able to extend our uncompromising support to charity organizations, enabling them to provide the best possible care for members of our

community with disabilities. This support is vital as it enables them to utilize their talents professionally and in turn become financially independent citizens and contributors to their own and our society's growth." He added: "We thank Burgan Bank for its com-



Kholoud Al-Feeli

mitted support for valuable events and we look forward to upholding our partnership with the different bodies and institutions, in a bid to reinforce social solidarity and achieve sustainable development."



H.E. Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Governor of Al Ahmadi and Mrs. Kholoud Al-Feeli, Deputy General Manager – Corporate Communications at Burgan Bank with participants.

mitted support for valuable events and we look forward to upholding our partnership with the different bodies and institutions, in a bid to reinforce social solidarity and achieve sustainable development."

On her part, Mrs. Kholoud Al-Feeli, Deputy General Manager – Corporate Communications at Burgan Bank, said: "Events such as KSH's Vocational Rehabilitation Exhibition are a sign of our society's healthy cohesion and collective commitment to looking after one another, especially those among us who require special care.

As part of our yearlong comprehensive social responsibility program, we are honored to partner with Kuwait's leading change makers, such as Al Ahmadi Governorate and KSH to ensure the seamless integration of our society's different groups and addressing their unique needs for a fulfilled life."

It serves to note that Burgan Bank continues to support KSH in expanding its vocational rehabilitation program – which aims to develop several professional skills, including workshops on computer science, carpentry, tap-

stry, pottery, sewing, agriculture, and more. Furthermore, the Bank extends its support to the KSH community by celebrating their handicrafts, confirming the need for committing to their rehabilitation and advancing their skills, as well as supplying them with all the necessary tools to guarantee their success. Burgan Bank seeks to continue cooperating with different institutions and supporting social events, activities, and initiatives that shed light on Kuwait's handicapped community and their development needs.

Recognized by WUAB for its unwavering commitment to advancing financial technology and innovation

KIB awarded 'Excellence in FinTech Innovation & Digital Leadership in Kuwait for 2024'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) has been recognized by the World Union of Arab Bankers (WUAB) with the prestigious "Excellence in FinTech Innovation & Digital Leadership in Kuwait for the Year 2024" Award. Presented to the Bank during the 10th Arab Banks Awards and Commendations of Excellence 2024 ceremony held in Cairo by the union's Banking Executive Magazine, this accolade reflects KIB's unwavering commitment to advancing financial technology and driving digital innovation across the Kuwaiti banking sector.

The rigorous selection process conducted by the Awards Committee was based on comprehensive criteria and data spanning 2023 and 2024. The criteria included commitment to fintech innovation, AI and machine learning integration, focus on cybersecurity and data privacy, digital inclusion and financial literacy ini-

tiatives, and commitment to sustainability through digital practices. This evaluation highlighted KIB's ability to align with global standards, foster innovation, and prioritize customer-centric digital solutions.

Commenting on this achievement, Mohamed El-Shareef, General Manager of the Digital Innovation and Data Intelligence Department at KIB, said: "We are honored to receive this esteemed award from the World Union of Arab Bankers. The recognition affirms our Bank's dedication to embracing the future of banking through technological excellence. We are proud to be a driving force in transforming the way banking services are delivered in Kuwait, while remaining focused on enhancing the customer experience and fostering a digitally inclusive financial ecosystem."

El-Shareef added: "Innovation is at the heart of everything we do at



Mohamed El-Shareef

KIB, and it plays a vital role in driving our sustainable business practices. Our focus on advancing digital banking solutions, from enhanced mobile banking features to AI-powered, data-driven solutions and tools, reflects our dedication to offering



Excellence in FinTech Innovation & Digital Leadership in Kuwait for the Year 2024 Award

seamless and engaging banking experiences for our customers."

Pointing out KIB's commit-

ment to cybersecurity and privacy, El-Shareef said: "Digital trust is non-negotiable in today's banking landscape. At KIB, we have prioritized advanced cybersecurity systems and stringent data privacy measures to ensure our customers' information remains safeguarded at every step."

El-Shareef also highlighted KIB's dedication to financial literacy and digital inclusion, saying: "KIB never takes its eyes off the mission to empower all members of society, promoting financial literacy and offering accessible digital platforms. Through initiatives such as those supporting the 'Let's Be Aware' (Diraya) campaign, which was launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) in cooperation with local banks, we are helping individuals and businesses alike navigate the digital age with confidence."

It is important to mention that the World Union of Arab Bankers, headquartered in the Lebanese capital Beirut, comprises more than 500 members from the Arab banking sector. The organization publishes The Banking Executive Magazine, which began organizing the Arab Banks Awards and Commendations of Excellence in 2015. It has since become one of the most prominent events in the Arab banking industry, presenting annual awards to more than 50 Arab banks.

It also serves to note that KIB remains dedicated to contributing to shaping the future of banking in Kuwait through a blend of technological innovation and strategic foresight. The Bank constantly strives to bring a seamless, modern, and safe banking experience to all segments of society, stemming from its main slogan 'Bank for Life'.

Companies rush to complete exits, deals before year-end amid regulatory hurdles

Banks, investment groups are particularly focused on liquidating some assets

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: As the year draws to a close, many companies are expediting exits and transactions to record results in the final quarter, aiming to improve profits and enhance their annual outcomes. In parallel, these efforts are being made to seize new operational opportunities, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The banks and investment groups are particularly focused on liquidating assets that no longer align with their core activities and strategies.

Despite signed agreements for some asset sales, progress has been hindered by slow approval procedures from various regulatory bodies, with each agency striving to expedite deals.

One key player in this process is the Competition Protection Authority, which must grant approval for acquisitions.

This approval is essential for multiple stakeholders such as the banks, which act as financing entities for many deals; sellers, who stand to gain liquidity and profits for their shareholders, potentially using the funds for cash distributions or

new acquisitions and buyers, who often have plans to develop acquired assets, thereby stimulating market activity and liquidity.

This situation, which could bring significant benefits to the financial market, requires more flexibility and quicker procedures, especially as time is a critical factor in investment decisions.

The investment sources suggest that certain transactions may be delayed until next year due to approval bottlenecks. However, private deals and some acquisitions are proceeding at a faster pace and are expected to be completed by year-end.

Moreover, within the restructuring strategies of investment groups, there is a strong focus on divesting shares and properties that were initially acquired for investment purposes but have underperformed or ceased generating returns.

Many companies are holding large amounts of liquidity, some of which were freed up by reducing large ownership stakes, thus enabling them to maintain control while improving financial flexibility.

The demand for purchasing listed licenses and assets remains high among major groups. However, the regulatory process remains a major challenge, as prior approvals from multiple agencies continue to delay the closure of some deals.

GCC economies navigate global challenges and regional conflicts with resilience: report

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have demonstrated strong adaptability in addressing global challenges and regional conflicts, according to the Institute of International Finance (IIF), reports Al-Rai daily.

Kuwait is expected to maintain substantial current account surpluses through 2025, bolstered by its economic strategies.

While Kuwait's large budget and current account surpluses have historically shielded it from economic shocks, declining oil revenues and rising import costs tied to diversification efforts are narrowing these buffers. Growth is forecasted to rebound from 0.9 percent in 2024 to 3.5 percent in 2025 as oil production cuts

gradually ease by the second quarter of 2025.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which account for 75 percent of the GCC's GDP, continue to lead in improving business climates and reducing reliance on oil. Advances in digitization and artificial intelligence are key drivers of economic diversification across the region.

The report underscores potential geopolitical and economic impacts of a Trump administration's return, with possible effects on oil prices, interest rates, and regional investments. Additionally, a peaceful resolution to conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa would significantly benefit the GCC states.

With oil prices anticipated to average \$70 per barrel in 2025, GCC countries' collective current ac-

count surplus could shrink from \$99 billion in 2024 to \$38 billion in 2025. Nonetheless, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE are projected to retain robust surpluses, while Saudi Arabia may face a modest fiscal deficit of 2.5 percent of GDP, supported by its financial reserves.

The GCC remains a low-risk region for sovereign default, supported by strong credit ratings and substantial foreign capital inflows, expected to reach \$136 billion in 2025.

Despite shrinking surpluses, the region's sovereign wealth funds and foreign assets are poised to exceed \$4 trillion by 2025, representing 150 percent of GDP.

Other Voices

Equilibrium oil price for a balanced budget

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

Equilibrium oil price is the oil price level that most oil producers are seeking and hoping to achieve, as it is necessary for their primary source of income. Without it would be bad news for the annual budget. To clarify, the oil price in Kuwait must be in the range of \$90 per barrel to achieve a balanced budget.

Currently, most Gulf states, specifically Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, and Iraq, are facing budget deficits. This has been the case for the past four to five years. In contrast, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar are still experiencing budget surpluses.

With oil prices hovering around \$70 per barrel and with no expectations of any improvement in the oil prices in the next few years, concerns are rising. Global oil availability is high, with more oil being kept underground or ready to export, which may lead to weaker prices. Storing the oil incurs financing costs with no guarantee of recouping them. As such, it may take some time before oil prices rise to \$80, \$90, or higher.

As a result, countries like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain may need to borrow or dip into their reserves. If these options fail, they may need to turn to external borrowing, potentially for years. Austerity measures may also be required

in Gulf countries.

The outlook for oil prices next year remains uncertain, with weak demand and no significant growth expected. Global oil demand is likely to stay low at around 1.1 million barrels per day, well below the forecasted two million barrels per day in 2025.

Despite this bleak outlook for oil in the coming few years, ExxonMobil is increasing its investment in fossil oil production. The company plans to produce over five million barrels per day by 2026-2030, with spending of \$33 billion to \$35 billion during this period. This represents the largest commitment by any oil company, despite concerns about the future of fossil fuels.

The question arises - Is there a market for this volume? While OPEC+ continues to expand its oil investments, this could create surpluses in global markets, leading to further weakening of oil prices, as is the case today. However, unlike OPEC+, ExxonMobil is not bound by production quotas and can freely sell its oil. Its main goal is to generate cash and provide dividends to shareholders.

OPEC+ seeks price equilibrium to balance its state budgets and must rely on specific production quotas. In contrast, independent international companies face the pressure from their owners and shareholders with one objective: "Show us the returns on our investments."

While both have similar goals, the financial outcomes differ. OPEC+ focuses on achieving a price equilibrium to manage the state budget, which is often difficult to fulfill.

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'We are setting the standard for excellence in financial services'

ABK to implement Artificial Intelligence technology to enhance customer service

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is proud to announce its implementation of cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) technology, aimed at significantly enhancing customer service capabilities. This groundbreaking initiative is underscored by a newly deployed machine learning model, developed entirely in-house by ABK's dedicated technology team.

The innovative AI solution is designed to analyze customer banking patterns to predict behavior and enhance service delivery, illustrating ABK's robust internal capabilities, and its unwavering commitment to innovation and simpler banking.

The newly introduced in-house machine learning model will empower the Bank to predict and address customer needs as well as simplify decision-

making processes through data-driven insights.

Commenting on this achievement, Mohammad Al Qattan, Chief Consumer Officer at ABK, stated, "Our implementation of AI technology is set to revolutionize customers' banking experience. By analyzing banking patterns, we can provide personalized insights and recommendations, ensuring a service tailored specifically to customers' needs while ensuring data security and protection." He elaborated that this means quicker response times and accuracy in predicting financial requirements.

Al Qattan added, "Imagine receiving tailored service that matches your needs without having to ask. Through our analysis, we are able to deliver the desired banking experience to ensure satisfaction at all times. With these en-



Mohammad Al Qattan

hancements, banking becomes not just a transaction but a seamless, intuitive experience that supports us to empower customers to enjoy peace of mind."

He continued to discuss ABK's de-

Mohammad Al Qattan:

- Data is fundamental in ABK's forward momentum and how we leverage it to provide value for our customers

velopment to fostering innovation and integrating cutting-edge technology into its operations. Al Qattan emphasized, "By adopting AI to enhance customer service, we are not just keeping pace with industry advancements—we are setting the standard for excellence in financial services. This strategic initiative showcases our commitment to improving our capabilities and competencies, ultimately driving growth and

efficiency."

The AI-powered insights will enable ABK to better understand market trends and customer needs, leading to informed decision-making and effective risk management. Al Qattan emphasized that the Bank is working to increase customer satisfaction rates and enhance its competitive capability in the banking sector.

He stated, "This initiative reflects ABK's ongoing commitment to providing added value to its clients by proactively identifying any needs they may have and striving to meet them directly, thereby increasing their trust in the Bank's role as their ideal banking partner at various levels."

This initiative will therefore not only strengthen the Bank's market position but also contribute positively to long-term shareholder value by en-

hancing customer retention and operational efficiency.

This development comes at a pivotal moment, as the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) actively encourages the adoption of innovative banking technologies and AI solutions throughout the financial sector. By becoming an early adopter of AI technology, ABK reaffirms its commitment to CBK's vision of fostering a more technologically advanced banking sector. Through its strong support for digital transformation initiatives, it provides a clear regulatory framework that enables ABK to implement these innovations successfully.

Concluding his statement, Al Qattan said, "The successful internal development of this AI model marks a significant milestone in ABK's digital transformation journey – and this is only the beginning."

Saudi, UK agree to strengthen ties, increase trade exchange to USD 37.5 billion by 2030

Sides agree to tackle global challenges

RIYADH, Dec 14, (KUNA): Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom have emphasized the importance of strengthening their economic partnership, and reaffirmed commitment to increasing bilateral trade to USD 37.5 billion by 2030.

This was stated in the joint statement issued at the conclusion of the visit of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Keir Starmer to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The two sides stressed the importance of the role played by the Saudi-UK Strategic Partnership Council in enhancing joint cooperation between the two countries. They also expressed their aspiration to hold the next session of the council when they meet next in the United Kingdom.

The two sides reviewed the extensive progress made in modernising and diversifying the bilateral relationship and agreeing an ambitious programme of cooperation to enhance mutual prosperity, to strengthen shared security and to tackle global challenges.

They acknowledged the vital importance of strengthening the economic partnership between the two Kingdoms and reaffirmed their commitment to grow total trade to 37.5 billion by 2030 and to increase investment into both Kingdoms.

Through Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the United Kingdom's Industrial Strategy, both countries are investing in industries of tomorrow that will drive future global competitiveness; deliver jobs and prosperity for our citizens; and deliver sustainable growth.

The two sides welcomed significant progress made on the GCC-UK Free Trade Agreement. Officials will continue intense negotiations to finalise the agreement as soon as possible.

They affirmed their commitment to enhancing cooperation in the fields of clean technology, energy innovation, and sustainability, contributing to sustainable economic growth and the development of commercial partnerships between the two countries.

Both sides expressed their aspiration to develop long-term strategic partnerships that serve mutual interests. They agreed to work together to establish a consortium for Clean Hydrogen between Saudi and British universities led by Newcastle University and King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals.

The two sides underscored the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation in the financial services sector, including banking, fintech, asset management, green finance, and insurance.

The two sides stressed the centrality of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agree-

ment, acknowledging the outcomes of COP29 and the importance of working in a constructive spirit to achieve an ambitious and balanced result at COP30 next year.

The United Kingdom welcomed Saudi Arabia's ambition and leadership through the Saudi Green Initiative and Middle East Green Initiative and its presidency of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification 16th session of the Conference of the Parties COP16 and expressed support for Saudi Arabia's efforts in the fields of environment and climate change through the implementation of the Circular Carbon Economy approach, which was launched by the Kingdom and endorsed by G20 leaders.

Building on decades of bilateral defence and security co-operation, the two sides committed to a more ambitious, future facing strategic Defence partnership.

The two sides agreed to deepen security co-operation to address issues such as countering terrorism and extremism and strengthening cybersecurity.

The two sides placed significant importance on the need for regional de-escalation and stressed the importance of adherence to international norms and the United Nations Charter.

They reaffirmed the conflict in Gaza must come to an immediate end and hostages be released, in line with UN Security Council Resolutions 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024), and 2735 (2024).

They stressed the urgent need for Israel to protect civil-

ians and civilian infrastructure to deliver humanitarian and relief assistance to the Palestinian people, and to enable international and humanitarian organization to do their work including the United Nations organizations, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA).

They discussed how the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia could work together to achieve the Two-State Solution that creates a lasting peace and allows both Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side within their secure and recognized borders.

On Syria, the two sides welcomed any steps that ensure the safety of the Syrian people, stop the bloodshed, and preserve the institutions and capabilities of the Syrian state.

They called on the international community to stand by and cooperate with the Syrian people. They also called for supporting Syria at this pivotal phase to help it overcome the endured suffering of the Syrian people, which has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and forced the displacement of millions.

On Lebanon, they stressed the importance of the ceasefire agreement in Lebanon holding, and a political settlement consistent with the principles of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. They agreed on the need for Lebanon to overcome its political impasse and elect a President who can deliver on Lebanon's urgent need for reform.

Power cuts disrupting people's lives and businesses

Rolling blackouts plague Iran and some suspect bitcoin mining may have a role in the outages

TEHRAN, Iran, Dec 14, (AP): Iran's capital and outlying provinces have faced rolling power blackouts for weeks in October and November, with electricity cuts disrupting people's lives and businesses. And while several factors are likely involved, some suspect cryptocurrency mining has played a role in the outages.

Iran economy has been hobbled for years by international sanctions over its advancing nuclear program. The country's fuel reserves have plummeted, with the government selling off more to cover budget shortfalls as wars rage in the Middle East and Tehran grapples with mismanagement.

The demand on the grid has not let up, however - even as Iranians stopped using air conditioners as the weather cooled in the fall and before winter months set in, when people fire up their gas heaters.

Meanwhile, bitcoin's value has rocketed to all-time highs after the U.S. election was clinched by Donald Trump. It hit the \$100,000 mark for the first time last week, just hours after the president-elect said he intends to nominate cryptocurrency advocate Paul Atkins to be the next chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The surge has led some to suspect that organized cryptocurrency mining - sucking away huge amounts of power - has played a part in the outages in Iran.

"Unfortunately, some opportunistic and exploitative individuals use subsidized electricity, public networks and other resources for cryptocurrency mining without authorization," Mostafa Rajabi, the CEO of Iran's government-owned power company, said back in August.



The reactor building of Iran's nuclear power plant and electricity poles are seen, at Bushehr, Iran, 750 miles (1,245 kilometers) south of the capital Tehran, Iran, Feb. 27, 2005. (AP)

Iran's state energy company did not respond to a request for comment.

Power outages have come and gone in the past in Iran, which struggles with aging equipment at many of its plants. Over the summer, sustained blackouts struck industrial parks near Tehran and other cities. Then in October and November, rolling power cuts across Tehran's neighborhoods became the norm in daylight hours.

Climate change has been blamed in part, with persisting droughts and less water running through Iranian hydroelectric dams.

Iran's reformist President Masoud

Pezeshkian ordered several power plants to stop burning mazut, a high-polluting heavy fuel common in the former Soviet Union countries. Tehran has used it in the past to make up the difference in electricity generation.

Fuel reserves, both in diesel and natural gas, also remain low even though Iran is an OPEC member and home to one of the world's second-largest reserves of natural gas, behind only Russia. There's been no explanation for the decision to keep those reserves low, though critics have suggested Iran likely sold the fuel to cover budget shortfalls.

For his part, Pezeshkian has said

that he must "honestly tell the public about the energy situation."

"We have no choice but to consume energy economically, especially gas, in the current conditions and the cold weather," he said in mid-November. "I myself use warm clothes at home; others can do the same."

Still, winter heating isn't in full swing quite yet in Tehran - raising questions where the power is going.

In many poor and densely populated neighborhoods across the country, people have access to free, unmetered electricity. Mosques, schools, hospitals and other sites also receive free power.

Economists' 2025 housing market forecasts largely call for mortgage rates to stay above 6% next year

LOS ANGELES, Dec 14, (AP): Home shoppers hoping for more attractive mortgage rates next year may be disappointed.

That's the takeaway from several economists' 2025 housing forecasts, most released over the past couple of weeks.

Most of the eight forecasts call for the average rate on a 30-year mortgage to remain above 6% next year, with some including an upper range as high as 6.8%.

That range would be largely in line with where rates have hovered this year. The average rate has gone as low as 6.08% in September - a 2-year low - and as high as 7.22% in May, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac. The average rate was 6.6% this week.

"Even by the end of next year it's hard to see sub 6% mortgage rates," said Mark Fleming, chief economist at

First American, which predicts the average rate on a 30-year mortgage will range between 6% and 6.5% next year.

The biggest wildcard for mortgage rates next year is whether President-elect Donald Trump's major policy initiatives will end up driving inflation and the national debt higher, which could keep mortgage rates elevated. That's because what happens with inflation, the U.S. deficit and the economy can influence moves in the U.S. 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to price home loans.

Trump says he wants to impose tariffs on foreign goods, lower tax rates and lighten regulations, policies that could rev up the economy, but also fuel inflation and increase U.S. government debt.

Economists at Redfin project that the average rate on a 30-year mortgage will

hover around 6.8% next year, citing expectations that Trump's proposed tax cuts would increase the U.S. deficit and his tariffs plan could stoke inflation, ultimately pushing mortgage rates higher.

However, mortgage rates could drop to the low-6% range if the economy weakens or if plans for tariffs and tax cuts are dialed back, according to the forecast.

A couple of forecasts are more optimistic about how low the average rate on a 30-year mortgage will go in 2025. Fitch Ratings sees it ranging from 5.8% to 6.4%, while TD Economics predicts the average rate will drop to 5.8% by the end of the year.

The average rate is still below its historical average of 7% going back to 1971. But that's little consolation to home shoppers now because over the last 10 years home prices have risen

much more quickly than incomes.

"So it's kind of having this double whammy on affordability that someone 30 years ago with a 6% rate wasn't having to deal with," said Lisa Sturtevant, chief economist at Bright MLS. Rates in the 6% range would mean most homeowners with a mortgage would have to take on a higher rate than they currently have if they elected to sell their home and finance another. More than four in five homeowners with a mortgage have an existing rate below 6%, according to Realtor.com.

Economists see some bright spots for homebuyers next year. Those who can afford to buy regardless of where rates are, or who can bypass them altogether by tapping into home equity gains, should benefit from a continued increase in homes for sale and modest pace of home price growth.

Al Shall Index up

Bursa records notable activity last week: report

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Bursa Kuwait experienced significant activity during the past week, marked by a rise in the Al-Shall Index (value index) and the general index, according to a report by Al-Shall Consulting issued today, reports Al-Rai daily.

However, the volume of traded shares and the number of concluded deals declined.

The report highlighted that the Al-Shall Index closed at 629 points last Thursday, reflecting a weekly increase of 0.3% (2.0 points) and an annual rise of 4.5% (27.3 points) compared to its close at the end of 2023.

The Bursa Kuwait's general index increased by 5.48 points (0.07%) to reach 7331.01 points at the end of last week.

Total trading volume amounted to 386.9 million shares executed in 19,798 transactions, with a total value

of 71.8 million Kuwaiti dinars (approximately \$220 million).

Stock performance showed mixed results - 14 companies recorded price increases, compared to 15 in the prior week; seven companies saw price declines, consistent with the previous week and eight companies maintained stable prices, compared to 7 a week earlier.

Since its establishment in April 2014, Bursa Kuwait has played a pivotal role in advancing the country's financial market. The company has worked to enhance communication, growth and innovation in the stock market while providing support to the Capital Markets Authority, issuers, and investors.

Aligned with Kuwait's Vision 2035, the Kuwait Stock Exchange continues to contribute to the diversification of the national economy and the development of a robust financial ecosystem.

KPC: Kuwait oil price down 21 cents

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 21 cents to USD 74.06 per barrel (pb) on Friday, compared with USD 74.27 pb the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Saturday.

At the global level, the Brent crude rose by US 1.08 to USD 74.49 pb, and the West Texas Intermediate also went up by US 1.27 to USD 71.29 pb.

Key agenda items highlighted

Kuwait hosts 113th OAPC Council of Ministers meeting

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPC) is set to hold its 113th Council of Ministers meeting in Kuwait Sunday, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Oil and energy ministers from member states will participate, with Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs, Saad Al-Kaabi, presiding as the current chair of the 2024 session.

OAPC Secretary General Jamal Al-Loughani has highlighted key agenda items, including the 2025 draft budget, organizational restructuring, and activity development to address modern energy challenges.

The council will review the final report on the first phase of organizational reforms and discuss proposals to enhance the Scientific Research Award,

starting with the 2024 session.

The meeting will also address broader energy topics such as the global petroleum market, liquefied natural gas, hydrogen industries, and the Green Middle East Initiative.

Further discussions will focus on adopting the circular carbon economy concept, environmental issues, climate change, and updates on the organization's information systems.

In preparation for the ministerial meeting, the 172nd Executive Office meeting will be held today, chaired by Sheikh Meshal Al Thani of Qatar. Al-Loughani commended Kuwait for hosting OAPC's headquarters for over 50 years and thanked member states for their continued support in achieving the organization's objectives.

Egyptian PM inaugurates solar energy station

CAIRO, Dec 14, (KUNA): Egyptian Prime Minister Dr. Mustafa Madbouli on Saturday inaugurated "the Abydos 1" solar energy station in Komb Ombo in Aswan in southern Egypt with UAE investments valued at USD half a billion and productivity amounting to 500 megawatts.

Madbouli, addressing the inauguration ceremony, lauded the efforts that had been exerted to execute the state power and energy schemes, particularly the new and renewable energy to cope with the power crisis suffered by the nation since last summer.

KFH drives innovation in digital banking and financial solutions for 2024



Haytham Alterkait



Tariq Al-Ajeel



Meshal Alobaid

Alterkait: KFH successfully integrated systems for the merger project, ensuring a smooth Operational Day One

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Deputy Group CEO Transformation, Technology and Operations, Haytham Alterkait has said that the Information Technology Sector at KFH has made significant progress in 2024, moving towards the development of an integrated system of high-quality digital services.

He added that KFH has undertaken a significant strategic shift, resulting in notable enhancements in project completion rates. This primarily involves expanding digital services, upgrading technological infrastructure, and implementing mechanisms to deliver digital services across KFH platforms, branches, and self-service devices. These efforts have elevated the quality of services and products, improved usability rates, and enhanced overall quality levels.

Alterkait explained that KFH is actively keeping pace with rapid developments in the fields of innovation and fintech. The Bank focuses on digital product design according to the highest quality, e-governance, and cybersecurity frameworks. These measures have maximized resource utilization and production efficiency, while reducing delivery times for services, enhancing customer satisfaction, forecasting business opportunities, addressing challenges accurately, and streamlining costs. These achievements underscore KFH's digital transformation excellence in the banking sector according to global standards and significant competitiveness.

The integration of systems

Alterkait highlighted the crucial role of the KFH IT team in successfully completing the merger project with (formerly) Ahli United Bank - Kuwait, ensuring a smooth and successful transition on Operational Day One. "The team successfully integrated the accounts and products of over 280,000 former AUBK customers and unified more than 80 systems across all bank departments," he commented. "This achievement, completed in record time with high efficiency, marks a significant milestone, paving the way for a new era of success, achievement, and industry leadership for KFH."

Corporate Banking

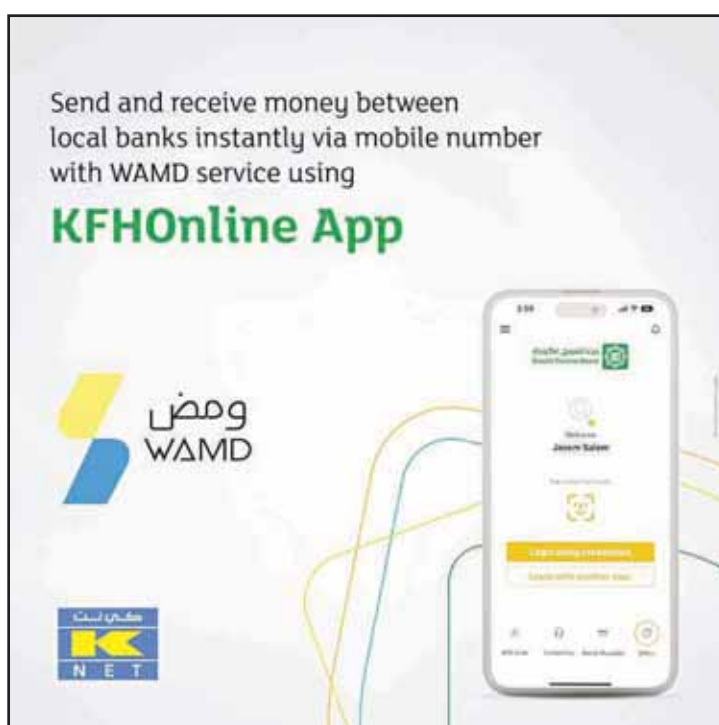
In terms of Corporate Banking, Alterkait said that KFH developed and migrated a new system with eCorp, leading to various benefits. These include enabling the customer to receive live rates, minimizing physical communication with the account agent and ensuring quick transactions. In addition, KFH introduced the final digital solutions of the CreditLense program in which Moody's company consolidated all the digital solutions, making them accessible on CreditLense platform tailored for KFH. The array of digital solutions includes virtual ESG form, new virtual form for the High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs) category, new virtual form for projects category, updating customer's date-entry fields, updating external rating maps and Early Warning Signs (EWS) reports. The components of the solutions package are now active for use by the business and risk teams.

Risk systems

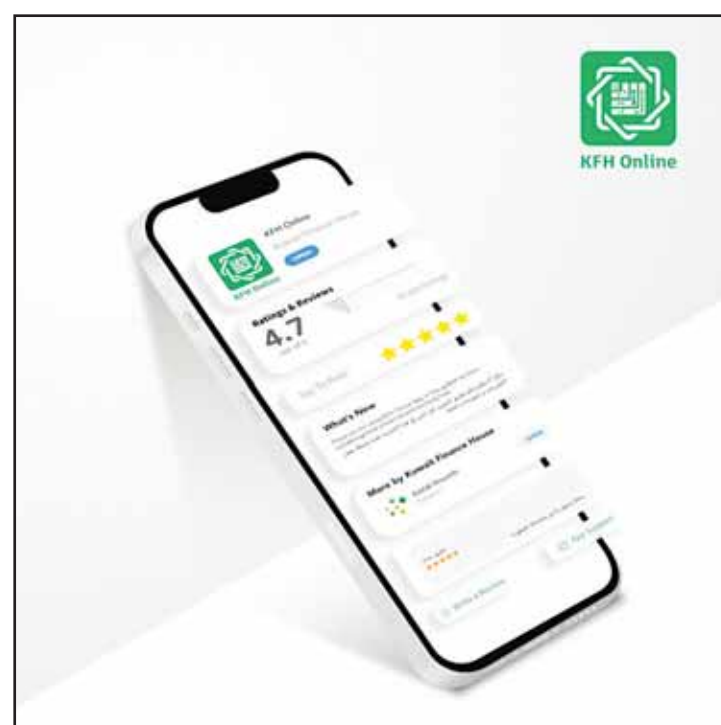
Alterkait highlighted the role of Risk management and their vital role at the Group level, saying that several system recovery simulation exercises were conducted successfully. These exercises were tested on different systems based on the set plans, ensuring the solutions are effective and applicable.

Digital Transformation and Innovation

KFH Deputy General Manager Digital Transformation, Eng. Tariq Al-Ajeel said that KFH continued its innovative streak in 2024, developing digital financial solutions tailored to the needs and aspirations of its customers. In this regard, the IT sector at KFH implemented numerous projects across banking, financial services, and products, enhancing the technological infra-



Instagram



KFH mobile app



KFH go



Print Your Card



D-POS Device



Instant Card Reissuance



Al-Nuwait



KFH mobile application and online banking services

numbers, allowing the customer to create a group online and send recurring payment order. Customers can also view the status of each

relationships with corporate clients in Kuwait.

tam Bank

Al-Ajeel emphasized that tam Bank is Kuwait's only fully digital bank compliant with Islamic Sharia principles. It offers a unique, modern banking experience tailored to customer needs, blending traditional banking services with innovative features like social media channels. This approach enhances customer engagement and strengthens communication.

The bank has also introduced the tam Rewards Program, allowing customers to earn points on transactions and promotions, fostering customer loyalty. Additionally, the program offers a 100% cashback feature, making it a top choice for customers seeking a value-added banking experience.

Prestigious Awards

The distinguished achievements of tam digital Bank resulted in winning numerous awards, reflecting the Bank's commitment to innovation and customer experience. Key accolades include Transformation Awards MEA, Gold Winner: Best Visual Identity in Financial Services, Silver Winner: Best New Brand Development, Silver Winner: Best Naming Strategy, Incentive Awards 2024 - Best Use of Technology in a Program, and Euromoney's "Best Digital Bank in Kuwait" award.

Meanwhile, KFH Executive Manager Digital and Alternative Channels, Meshal Alobaid highlighted the unique range of innovative products, many of which were launched by KFH in the Kuwaiti market. These products are geared towards enhancing KFH's extensive banking expertise, its commitment to customers and its keenness to provide the best banking experience in the Kuwaiti market thanks to KFH's excellence in banking services.

Online Banking

Alobaid added that KFH has offered its corporate and retail customers with banking services, products and channels that meet their needs easily and with the highest levels of security. Through its mobile application, KFH introduced various banking services, including WAMD, in collaboration with K-Net. This service allows users to send or request money instantly from other customers at another local bank. Other pioneering services offered through KFH Online App include Western Union international money transfer services, updating civil IDs through Kuwait Mobile ID, enhanced cards and money transfer services, push notifications service, GCC cross-border payment system (AFAQ), and KFH Pay service. Moreover, KFH delivers other diverse services through its ATMs distributed across the largest network in Kuwait covering over 500 devices.

Exceptional Solutions

As part of its successful digital transformation strategy, KFH has introduced numerous innovative banking products, services and solutions. The efforts continued to build innovative financial solutions and growth strategies that align with the evolving needs and expectations of customers. Together with Retail Banking, the IT sector launched several exclusive digital services in the banking sector in Kuwait, including instant credit and prepaid card printing service, the first of its kind in Kuwait, the D-POS portable device facilitating instant account opening across all branches through direct sales employees.

These achievements, services, and initiatives reaffirm KFH's leadership in digital transformation and in rolling out digital services and high-quality digital financial solutions. These efforts align with KFH's commitment to advancing efforts in developing a robust technological infrastructure, and the tools for delivering innovative services to customers through its various platforms. This approach solidifies KFH role in leading digital transformation within the Islamic banking sector and across the banking industry.



Mr. Isam Al-Sager during the start of the race for the disabled category.



A fierce competition from the moment of the start.



The moment of awarding the winner, Issa Haidar, the key to the 2024 X-Trail car.



Shaikha Al-Bahar, Khaled Al-Mutawa, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, and Mohammed Al-Salem with the winners in the 10 km category.



Isam Al-Sager, Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali, Saleh Al-Babtain, Sudhir Shenoy, and Pradeep Handa with one of the winners from the visually impaired category.

NBK Run 2024 crowns 12 winners

National Bank of Kuwait hosts 30th Annual Run

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: National Bank of Kuwait organized on Saturday, December 14, 2024, NBK Run that featured a wide range of activities and a remarkable closing ceremony. The 30th edition of the Run saw a massive turnout with more than 7,000 competitors, reaffirming NBK's success in organizing events that consistently receive great public participation and trust from the community.

The final ceremony crowned 12 winners in the top three positions for the 10 km and 5 km races for both men and women. The event was attended by NBK Vice Chairman and Group CEO, Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Capital Governor, Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, NBK Group Deputy CEO, Ms. Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK-Kuwait Deputy CEO, Mr. Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, along with a number of executive management team. In addition to CEO of Al-Babtain Group, Mr. Saleh Al-Babtain, CEO of Ooredoo-Kuwait, Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, Vice President of EQUATE, Mr. Sudhir Shenoy, AAW Deputy CEO, Mr. Khalid Faisal Al Mutawa, CEO at Chayah Group, Mr. Mohammad Alsalem, while the Touristic Enterprises Company was represented by Mr. Abdullah Al Omani, Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications.

Manal Al-Mattar, Deputy General Manager and Head of Corporate Communications at NBK, emphasized the importance of this event, which NBK has been organizing for three decades. She highlighted that it is the largest family-oriented entertainment event with developmental goals aligned with sustainable development in health, sports, and innovation. Al-Mattar also praised the efforts of various partners, organizations, and institutions, including the Emergency Medical Services, the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait Municipality, Touristic



Isam Al-Sager, Governor of the Capital Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Sudhir Chinoy, and Saleh Al-Babtain with one of the winners from the disability category.



The artist Dafi entertained the race attendees with his performance.

Enterprises Company, along with the event organizer, Suffix and Prismic the Run's media partner. She noted that the goal is to continue organizing this race to maintain the high public trust that is renewed every year.

She added: "Health and sports awareness are essential to building a healthy society, and real develop-

ment starts with changing behaviors. The bank will continue to adopt and support various events that encourage active and impactful change, with this sporting event being one of our most significant and largest community initiatives."

Al-Mattar also acknowledged the support of companies and in-



Shaikha Al-Bahar presents a prize to one of the winners in the presence of Khaled Al-Mutawa and Abdulaziz Al-Babtain.



The winners in the 5 km category.

stitutions that believe in the goals of this sporting festival, including Al-Babtain, Equate, Ooredoo, Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Company, Chips from Chayah Group, and the Touristic Enterprises Company.

12 Champions

At the end of the race, NBK

crowns 12 winners, the top finishers in the men's and women's categories, with cash prizes of 1000, 700, and 500 Kuwaiti Dinars for the top three in the 10 km race, and 500, 400, and 300 Kuwaiti Dinars for the top three in the 5 km race. NBK Group Deputy CEO, Ms. Shaikha Al-Bahar, CEO of Ooredoo-

Kuwait, Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, AAW Deputy CEO, Mr. Khalid Faisal Al Mutawa, CEO at Chayah Group, Mr. Mohammad Alsalem, and NBK General Manager, Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance, Mr. Pradeep Handa, presented the winners with their prizes.

Grand Prize: Nissan X-Trail by Al-Babtain Group

A new Nissan X-Trail, provided by Al-Babtain Group, was awarded to the winner in the grand prize draw at the end of the race under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The winner was selected from thousands of participants who had registered online for the race. CEO of Al-Babtain Group, Mr. Saleh Al-Babtain and NBK Group CEO, Mr. Isam Al-Sager presented the winner Eisa Haider with his prize.

Equate Honors 30 Disabled Winners

As part of its exceptional partnership with Equate Petrochemical Company in the NBK Run, Equate sponsored the disabled participants in three categories: "Wheelchairs, Visually Impaired, and Leg amputee." The company presented cash prizes of 500, 400, 300, 100, and 100 Kuwaiti Dinars for the first five winners in each category (both male and female) for their 2.5 km race. NBK Vice Chairman and Group CEO, Mr. Isam Al-Sager and Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, CEO of Al-Babtain Group, Mr. Saleh Al-Babtain, NBK General Manager, Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance, Mr. Pradeep Handa, and Vice President of EQUATE, Mr. Sudhir Shenoy presented the winners with their prizes.

Exclusive Prizes from Ooredoo

Ooredoo, the strategic partner, offered numerous prizes and surprises during the race, including exclusive prizes for the top finishers, such as iPhones, Apple Watches, and subscriptions to their "Shamil" packages.

Continued on Page 11

A record 7,000+ runners join in 30th anniversary celebration

NBK Run celebrates health, sports and community

Continued from Page 10

Additionally, Ooredoo awarded a winner in the grand prize draw a Platinum Line worth KD 5,000, with the draw supervised by the Ministry of Commerce. CEO of Ooredoo-Kuwait, Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Babtain and NBK-Kuwait Deputy CEO, Mr. Sulaiman Al-Marzouq presented the winner Faisal Al Rashaidi with his/her prize.

Tourism Projects Surprises

Tourism Projects Company provided 18,000 tickets to its facilities including the Winter Wonderland project and the South Sabahiya Park, which were given to all the participants in the NBK Run this year.

AAW Prizes

Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Company, through its brands "Intersport" and "Joe & The Juice" also presented prizes to the 12 winners in the race and four winners in the final draw Arwa Alansari, Tarek Khalifa, Dina Esteteya and Rakan Alkanderi. The prizes were handed out by AAW Deputy CEO, Mr. Khalid Faisal Al Mutawa and NBK-Kuwait Deputy CEO, Mr. Sulaiman Al-Marzouq.

Chayah Group - Chips Prizes

Chips presented Apple packages to two winners Dalal Alfadalah and Varun Babu. The prizes were handed out by CEO at Chayah Group, Mr. Mohammad AlSalem and NBK-Kuwait Deputy CEO, Mr. Sulaiman Al-Marzouq.

Governor of the Capital praised the NBK Run

Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Governor of the Capital, emphasized the significance of raising awareness about the importance of exercise and actively promoting public health during his attendance at the NBK Run 2024, which saw the participation of various organizations.

The Governor expressed his appreciation for the outstanding efforts of NBK's leadership and team, who, in collaboration with various partners, organized and sponsored this inspiring sporting event. He highlighted how the race encourages individuals to engage in physical activities, such as running or walking, while also promoting the importance of maintaining good health.

The Governor expressed his immense satisfaction with the diverse participation in the race, which included individuals of all age groups — seniors, youth, and women. He emphasized that this strong turnout highlights the importance of hosting additional events of this nature, which have a profound impact on enhancing the health and well-being of community members, promoting healthy behaviors, and combating chronic diseases.

Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali emphasized that, in line with its societal role, the Governorate actively supports, contributes to, and participates in efforts to raise awareness about the importance of physical activity. He further highlighted that the Governorate is committed to extending its support to all initiatives and campaigns that foster community awareness.

Massive Public Participation on Gulf Road

Thousands of runners completed the 10 km or 5 km race. The participants gathered along the start and finish lines at Kuwait Towers, under the watchful eyes of NBK volunteers, medical emergency responders, and Ministry of Interior personnel to ensure the organization and safety of all participants. Water stations were provided along the race route on Gulf Road. At the finish line, volunteers and organizers were present to welcome participants and distribute water and refreshments.

The 10 km race began at Kuwait Towers, heading towards Souq Sharq, turning, and running along Gulf Road until 200 meters before the Green Island intersection, before returning to Kuwait Towers. The 5 km race began at Kuwait Towers, heading towards Souq Sharq, turning, and continuing until the Officers' Club, before returning to Kuwait Towers.

Interactive Atmosphere

Before the starting whistle, NBK organized an exciting program featuring performance teams from different capitals around the world, along with fitness coaches Salah Al-Shatti and Mohammad Darwish, whose participation added an enthusiastic atmosphere to encourage participants to compete and get ready for the race.

Start Line Preparations

Participants were divided into the 5 km and 10 km starting points in a lively atmosphere, with preparations for the stage extending all the way to the finish line, where the final ceremony featured celebrations, joy, and various entertainment segments.

NBK Volunteers

NBK volunteers were stationed at strategic points along the race route, preparing for the starting whistle at 8:30 AM. Necessary health and safety measures were taken to ensure the safety of participants, in collaboration with paramedics and emergency teams from the Ministry of Health.

Participant Safety is a Priority

NBK prioritizes the safety of participants and, in coordination with the Ministries of Interior and Health, ensures the safety and well-being of runners during the race. Medical emergency teams are stationed along



Mrs. Shaikha Al-Bahar



Mr. Sulaiman Al-Marzouq and Mohamed Al-Salem during the presentation of the Chips awards.



One of the competitors reaches the race finish line.



Some participants in the disability category.



Music band



One of the activities during the closing ceremony.

the route to assist with any urgent situations, and water stations are provided along the race route, as in previous years.

Special Thanks

Special thanks were extended to the Ministry of Interior and Emergency Medical Services, as well as Kuwait Municipality and

the Touristic Enterprises Company for their support in facilitating the final ceremony at Kuwait Towers. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry supervised the race's draws, and Moj provided water bottles for all participants and attendees. The Ministry of Interior deployed patrols along the race route to en-

sure the smooth flow of the event, and the Emergency Medical Services was on standby to handle any emergency situations.

LOYAC Volunteers

Volunteers from the LOYAC organization joined to assist the participants at the finish line, where they cheered them on with applause,

handed out commemorative race medals, and provided water bottles.

The Award Ceremony Stage

The closing ceremony of the race featured a special touch reflecting NBK's commitment to always meet the trust of its community and clients. An impressive and modern stage was designed, and the event

was hosted by Salman Al-Najadi and Omar Al-Sharhan, contributing to a lively and enthusiastic atmosphere with the audience.

Commemorative Medals

NBK volunteers presented commemorative medals to participants at the finish line as recognition for their efforts in completing the race. An emergency team was also on standby, ensuring participants' safety before they proceeded to the stage for the award ceremony.

Race Results

The organizing company monitored and tracked participants using chips equipped with race numbers to ensure transparency in determining the winning positions.

Our Responsibility

NBK continues its commitment to social responsibility alongside its contributions to social development. The running race stands as one of the most impactful contributions related to health, sports, and social awareness, alongside its great popularity.

Live Broadcast

A large number of websites, 360 Fm and television channels covered the event from the early hours of the morning. Additionally, NBK's communication team provided full coverage across all of the bank's social media channels, from the start of the race until the final award ceremony.

Plastic Bottle Recycling

In collaboration with Omnia Project Management Company for Plastic Collection, and as part of NBK's commitment to social responsibility, dedicated bins were placed along the race route and at the finish line to collect plastic water bottles. NBK continues its commitment as an environmentally friendly bank by encouraging such responsible actions.

Additionally, Omnia launched its first recycled water bottles to distribute among participants. This initiative aims to raise awareness about reducing plastic consumption and emphasize the need for collective social responsibility in reducing plastic use, promoting proper recycling practices and advancing sustainability efforts.

Physiotherapy sessions to support Runners after the race

At the end of the Race line, a team of physiotherapists from Wara Hospital were present to provide essential recovery sessions for participants. This initiative to ensure the wellbeing of all runners.

NBK Village

More than 50 sports, entertainment, medical, and food organizations participated in the race, showcasing their products at the finish line. This allowed attendees to learn about the latest services, especially in the medical and sports sectors.



The start of the 10 km category.



An atmosphere of fun and excitement.



National volunteers in a group photo.

Saudi talent shines in a new era of film after 35-year ban

Red Sea festival reflects Saudi cinema's rise

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, Dec 14, (AP): "My Driver and I" was supposed to be made in 2016, but was scuttled amid Saudi Arabia's decades-long cinema ban. Eight years later, the landscape for film in the kingdom looks much different - and the star of "My Driver and I" now has an award.

Roula Dakheelallah was named the winner of the Chopard Emerging Saudi Talent award at the Red Sea International Film Festival on Thursday. The award - and the glitzy festival itself - is a sign of Saudi Arabia's commitment to shaping a new film industry.

"My heart is attached to cinema and art; I have always dreamed of a moment like this," Dakheelallah, who still works a 9-5 job, told The Associated Press before the awards ceremony. "I used to work in voluntary films and help my friends in the field, but this is my first big role in a film."

Support

The reopening of cinemas in 2018 marked a cultural turning point for Saudi Arabia, an absolute monarchy that had instituted the ban 35 years before, under the influence of ultraconservative religious authorities. It has since invested heavily in a native film industry by building theaters and launching programs to support local filmmakers through grants and training.

The Red Sea International Film Festival was launched just a year later, part of an attempt to expand Saudi influence into films, gaming, sports and other cultural fields. Activists have decried the investments as whitewashing the kingdom's human rights record as it tightly controls speech and remains one of the world's top executioners. With FIFA awarding the 2034 World Cup to Saudi Arabia this week, Lina al-Hathloul, a Saudi activist with the London-based rights group ALQST, said Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman "has really managed to create this bubble where people only see entertainment and they don't see



Roula Dakheelallah and Mustafa Shehata pose for a photo during an interview with The Associated Press at the Red Sea International Film Festival in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Dec. 7, 2024. (AP)

the reality on the ground."

These efforts are part of Vision 2030, an ambitious reform plan unveiled in 2016 to ease the economy's dependence on oil. As part of it, Saudi Arabia plans to construct 350 cinemas with over 2,500 movie screens - by this past April, across 22 cities, it already had 66 cinemas showing movies from the local film industry, as well as Hollywood and Bollywood. (The Red Sea International Film Festival attracts a host of talent from the latter industries, with Viola Davis and Priyanka Chopra Jonas also picking up awards Thursday.)

The country's General Entertainment Authority last month opened Al Hisn Studios on the outskirts of Riyadh. As one of the largest such production hubs in the Middle East, it not only includes several film studios but also a production village with workshops for carpentry, blacksmithing and fashion tailoring.

"These facilities, when they exist, will stimulate filmmakers," said

Saudi actor Mohammed Elshehri. "Today, no writer or director has an excuse to imagine and say, 'I cannot implement my imagination.'"

The facilities are one part of the equation - the content itself is another. One of the major players in transforming Saudi filmmaking has been Telfaz11, a media company founded in 2011 that began as a YouTube channel and quickly became a trailblazer. Producing high-quality digital content such as short films, comedy sketches and series, Telfaz11 offered fresh perspectives on Saudi and regional issues.

Produce

In 2020, Telfaz11 signed a partnership with Netflix to produce original content for the streaming giant. The result has been movies that demonstrate an evolution on the storytelling level, tackling topics that were once off-limits and sensitive to the public like secret nightlife in "Mandoob" ("Night Courier") and

changing social norms in "Naga." "I think we tell our stories in a very simple way, and that's what reaches the world," Elshehri says of the changing shift. "When you tell your story in a natural way without any affectation, it will reach every person."

But the films were not without their critics, drawing mixed reaction. Social media discourse ranged from pleasure that Saudi film was tackling such topics to anger over how the films reflected conservative society.

As Hana Al-Omair, a Saudi writer and director, points out, there are still many stories left untold.

"We certainly have a long time ahead of us before we can tell the Saudi narrative as it should be," she said, acknowledging that there are still barriers and rampant censorship. "The Goat Life," a Malayalam-language movie about an Indian man forced to work without pay in Saudi Arabia, is not available on Netflix's platform in the country. Movies that explore political topics or LGBTQ+ stories are essentially out of the question.

Even "My Driver and I," featured at the Red Sea festival alongside 11 other Saudi feature-length films, was initially too controversial. It centers on a Sudanese man in Jeddah, living away from his own daughter, who feels responsible for the girl he drives as her parents are absent. It was initially blocked from being made because of the relationship between the girl and the driver, filmmaker Ahd Kamel has said, even though it's not a romantic relationship.

Now in 2024, the film is a success story - a symbol of the Saudi film industry's evolution as well as the growing role of women like Kamel behind the camera and Dakheelallah in front of it.

"I see the change in Saudi cinema, a very beautiful change and it is moving at a wonderful speed. In my opinion, we do not need to rush," Dakheelallah said. "We need to guide the truth of the artistic movement that is happening in Saudi Arabia."



Kuwaiti playwright Suleiman Al-Bassam

Kuwaiti play 'samt' takes part in Baghdad Theater Festival

BAGHDAD, Dec 14, (KUNA): The play "samt" (silence) by Kuwaiti playwright Suleiman Al-Bassam was on stage in the fifth round of Baghdad International Theater Festival that kicked off on Tuesday.

Al-Bassam, in remarks to KUNA on Friday, said he was delighted with the Iraqi audience

interaction with the work, displayed at Al-Mansour theater in the Iraqi capital.

Affirming significance of such Kuwaiti participation, Al-Bassam said culture, arts and theater are "tools for dialogue and communications and exchanging views among nations of the globe."

'Rare Time accolade'

Trump's 'Person of the Year' interview gets a fact-check

NEW YORK, Dec 14, (AP): Time magazine gave Donald Trump something it has never done for a Person of the Year designee: a lengthy fact-check of claims he made in an accompanying interview.

The fact-check accompanies a transcript of what the president-elect told the newsmagazine's journalists. Described as a "12 minute read," it calls into question 15 separate statements that Trump made.



Trump

It was the second time Trump earned the Time accolade; he also won in 2016, the first year he was elected president. Time editors said it wasn't a particularly hard choice over other finalists Kamala Harris, Elon Musk, Benjamin Netanyahu and Kate Middleton.

Time said Friday that no other Person of the Year has been fact-checked in the near-century that the magazine has annually written about the figure that has had the greatest impact on the news. But it has done

the same for past interviews with the likes of Joe Biden, Netanyahu and Trump.

Such corrections have been a sticking point for Trump and his team in the past, most notably when ABC News did it during his only debate with Democrat Kamala Harris this fall. There was no immediate response to a request for comment on Friday.

In the piece, Time called into question statements Trump made about border security, autism and the size of a crowd at one of his rallies. When the president-elect talked about the "massive" mandate he had received from voters, Time pointed out that former President Barack Obama won more electoral votes the two times he had run for president.

The magazine also questioned Trump's claim that he would do interviews with anyone who asked during the campaign, if he had the time. The candidate rejected a request to speak to CBS' "60 Minutes," the magazine said.

"In the final months of his campaign, Trump prioritized interviews with podcasts over mainstream media," reporters Simone Shah and Leslie Dickstein wrote.

'Pushpa' film death

Indian actor Arjun freed on bail after stampede arrest

NEW DELHI, Dec 14, (AP): A popular actor in southern India was released from jail on bail on Saturday, a day after he was arrested by police in connection with a stampede that led to the death of a woman at the premiere of his movie earlier this month.

A 35-year-old woman died and her 8-year-old son was critically injured in the stampede, which occurred during the screening of Allu Arjun's release for "Pushpa 2: The Rule" in southern Telangana state's Hyderabad city on Dec. 4.

Arjun was arrested after the woman's husband filed a case against him, his security team and the theater's management for not informing police of the actor's plan to attend the screening, which resulted in a larger-than-expected crowd. Police charged the actor, his security team and the theater's management staff with culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

Police have already arrested the theater's owner and two of his employees in connection with the case.

A local court on Friday ordered the actor to spend 14 days in jail,

but within hours the Telangana High Court granted him bail. However, the actor had to spend the night in jail because prison authorities did not receive a copy of the bail until late Friday, the Press Trust of India reported.

The accident happened after the 41-year-old actor made a surprise appearance at a local theater where the movie was being screened. As his fans surged toward the venue, the theater's main gate collapsed, resulting in the stampede.

The actor did not comment on the police charges or his arrest. But shortly after the accident, Arjun wrote on the social platform X that he was "heartbroken by the tragic incident." He later announced financial assistance of \$29,000 for the woman's family and promised to take care of the medical expenses for her injured son.

Deadly stampedes are relatively common in India, where large crowds gather in small areas with shoddy infrastructure and few crowd safety measures.



Indian film actor Allu Arjun, center, greets his fans in Hyderabad, India, Friday, Dec. 13, as he leaves a hospital where he was taken for medical checkup by policemen before arresting him after his appearance at a film screening allegedly led to a crush of fans in which a woman died. (AP)

Film



Monica Barbaro attends the premiere of 'A Complete Unknown' at the SVA Theatre on Friday, Dec. 13, 2024, in New York. (AP)

Variety

CAIRO: Egypt has recovered ancient relics from the Irish Cork University in the aftermath of a visit by President AbdelFattah El-Sisi to Dublin on December 11.

The Egyptian Tourism and Relics Ministry said in a statement, on Friday, that retaking the historic treasures from Ireland was part of the state efforts to restore the nation's heritage, indicating that Cairo had sought for a year and a half to regain possession of these antiquities.

Minister of Tourism and Relics Sherif Fathi in a statement praised

the broad cooperation between the competent authorities in and outside Egypt, namely the Egyptian embassy in Dublin and the Irish embassy in Cairo as well as the Irish university that had expressed desire to hand over the treasures to Egypt.

For his part, Secretary General of the Supreme Antiquities Council Dr. Mohammad Ismail said the priceless pieces had been taken back according to a recently signed

agreement between the council and the Irish university. (KUNA)

LOS ANGELES: Taylor Swift has made a surprise stop at a Kansas City children's hospital, shocking parents and patients alike as she laughed with them, posed for photos and exchanged gifts.

All parent Cassie Thomas was told beforehand was that she might want to brush her hair and teeth because there was going to be a special visitor. But she was stunned when Swift, fresh off her Eras Tour and one day before her 35th birthday, walked into her son's room on Thursday at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. (AP)



El-Sisi

Jay-Z, Combs suit

Accuser admits inconsistencies

LOS ANGELES, Dec 14, (AP): A woman who accused rappers Jay-Z and Sean "Diddy" Combs of sexually assaulting her when she was 13 at an awards show after-party has acknowledged certain inconsistencies in her story, while her lawyer said he will continue to vet her claims.

The unnamed woman described being driven from Rochester, New York, to New York City for the MTV Video Music Awards in 2000 and then Combs' limo driver offering her a ride to an after-party, NBC News reported on Friday. She claimed she spoke with musicians Benji Madden and his brother at the party, and her father picked her up after the alleged assault.

But a representative of the Maddens confirmed to NBC that they were on tour in the Midwest during the VMAs, while her father said he doesn't remember the drive home of more than five hours. The woman's friend who reportedly drove her to the awards has since died, NBC reported.

Allegation

The woman had first sued Combs, alleging she was raped at an after-party, and then amended the lawsuit Sunday to include a new allegation that Jay-Z, whose legal name is Shawn Carter, also was at the party and participated in the sexual assault.

Jay-Z said in a statement that the article proves Tony Buzbee, a personal injury lawyer in Houston, filed a false complaint against him for money and fame.

"This incident didn't happen and yet he filed it in court and doubled down in the press," he said. "True Justice is coming. We fight FROM victory, not FOR victory. This was over before it began. This 1-800 lawyer doesn't realize it yet, but, soon."

Buzbee told The Associated in an email that if someone raises a new issue which didn't previously exist, her legal team's job is to continue collecting facts and evidence.

Jay-Z's attorney, Alex Spiro, asked the court to dismiss the case, saying in a statement, "It is stunning that a lawyer would not only file such a serious complaint without proper vetting, but would make things worse by further peddling this false story in the press."



Jay-Z

Active monitoring may replace surgery for some cases

Some breast cancer patients can avoid certain surgeries: studies

NEW YORK, Dec 14, (AP) — Some early breast cancer patients can safely avoid specific surgeries, according to two studies exploring ways to lessen treatment burdens.

One new study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, examines whether removing lymph nodes is always necessary in early breast cancer. Another in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggests a new approach to a type of breast cancer called ductal carcinoma in situ, or DCIS.

The research was discussed Thursday at the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium.

Every year, about 50,000 women

in the US are diagnosed with ductal carcinoma in situ, or DCIS, where the cells that line milk ducts become cancerous, but the nearby breast tissue remains healthy. Many choose to have surgery, although it's unclear whether they could instead take a "wait-and-see" approach with more frequent monitoring.

The new study, based on two years of data, suggests that such active monitoring is a safe alternative to surgery for many of these women, though some doctors will want to see if the results hold up over time.

"This is an option that patients should consider for their DCIS," said Dr. Virginia Kaklamani of the University of

Texas Health Science Center San Antonio, who was not involved in the research. "For a long time, we've had the feeling that we're overtreating some patients with DCIS. This is a confirmation of what we suspected is happening."

Taking a more cautious view, Dr. Monica Morrow of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, who was not involved in the study, said a two-year study isn't long enough to draw conclusions.

The finding is based on following more than 950 US patients randomly assigned to surgery or active monitoring. All had low-risk DCIS with no sign of invasive cancer. They had the type of DCIS that responds to hor-

mone-blocking drugs and many in the study took those drugs as part of their treatment.

After two years, the rates of invasive cancer were low and did not differ significantly between the groups, with about 6% in the surgery group and about 4% in the monitoring group diagnosed with invasive cancer.

Among patients in the monitoring group, changes spotted on a mammogram would prompt a biopsy. They also could opt for surgery at any time for any reason.

Some study participants didn't stick with the treatment they were randomly assigned. So in a separate analysis looking at those who actually had sur-

gery or not, the rates of invasive cancer were about 9% for the surgery group and 3% for the monitoring group.

The researchers will continue to follow the patients to see if the finding holds up over a decade.

Tina Clark, 63, of Buxton, Maine, joined the study after being diagnosed with DCIS in 2019. Randomly assigned to the monitoring-only group, she was able to avoid surgery and radiation during a time when she was raising a teenage nephew and going through the illness and death of her husband.

"I feel just so grateful and fortunate that I found this study when I did," Clark said.

She has mammograms every six months to keep watch on the DCIS in her right breast, which has not advanced. The mammograms spotted a small cancer in her other breast in 2023, unrelated to the DCIS. She had a lumpectomy to remove it.

"If you're diagnosed with low-risk DCIS, you have time to understand more about your disease and understand what your options are," said study author Dr. Shelley Hwang of Duke University School of Medicine.

Women having surgery for breast cancer often also have what's called a sentinel lymph node biopsy where a few lymph nodes in the armpit are removed to check for spreading cancer.

Experts find ways to treat chronic fatigue

Brain inflammation tied to muscle fatigue after infection and injury

By Diego E. Rincon-Limas, University of Florida and Aaron N. Johnson, Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis

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



Infectious or chronic diseases such as long COVID, Alzheimer's disease and traumatic brain injury can cause inflammation in the brain, or neuroinflammation, that weakens muscles. While scientists are aware of this link between inflammation and muscle weakness, the molecules and processes involved have been unclear.

In our research, our team of neuroscientists and biologists uncovered the hidden conversation between the brain and muscles that triggers muscle fatigue, and potential ways to treat it.

Neuroinflammation results when your central nervous system - the brain and spine - activates its own immune system to protect itself against infection, toxins, neurodegeneration and traumatic injury. Neuroinflammatory reactions primarily occur in the brain. But for unknown reasons, patients also experience many symptoms outside the central nervous system, such as debilitating fatigue and muscle pain.

To solve this puzzle, we studied brain inflammation in the context of three different diseases: bacterial infection in *E. coli*-induced meningitis; viral infection in COVID-19; and neurodegeneration in Alzheimer's disease. Then, we analyzed how these immune changes affect muscle performance.

We measured immune changes in the brains of fruit flies and mice infected with live bacteria, viral proteins or neurotoxic proteins. After the initial accumulation of toxic molecules in the brain that commonly increase in response to stresses such as infection, the brain produces high levels of cytokines - chemicals that activate the immune system - that are released into the body. When these cytokines travel to muscles, they activate a series of chemical reactions that disrupts the ability of the powerhouse of cells - mitochondria - to produce energy.

Though the result of these immune changes doesn't seem to damage muscle fibers, it does cause fatigue. When we measured the muscle performance of these animals after giving them treatments to offset the effects of immune activation, we found that both flies and mice moved significantly less in response to manual or mechanical stimuli compared with those that were not infected. This indicated that the animals had reduced endurance.

Our findings suggest that the muscle fatigue that results from infection or chronic illness is caused by a brain-to-muscle communication pathway that depletes energy in muscles without disrupting their structure or integrity. Unlike traditional explanations for muscle dysfunction that focus on causes outside the brain, such as damage to the muscle fibers, this pathway

directly causes fatigue.

Since the key cytokine involved in brain-to-muscle communication has been preserved throughout evolution across different species, we believe this signaling pathway could represent a universal mechanism the brain uses to claim and reallocate energy to fight against infection.

Since we studied the brain-muscle axis only in the context of simplified models, we don't know whether it applies to more complex conditions such as fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome. We also don't know how impaired energy production in muscles correlates with impaired energy production in the brain.

Furthermore, the brain-muscle axis works through a series of interconnected steps. But the precise mechanism of this communication and the potential involvement of other cytokines are unknown.

Muscle weakness and fatigue are common symptoms in multiple diseases, ranging from bacterial and viral infections to chronic disorders and neurodegenerative conditions. These symptoms are distressing and reduce the quality of life of millions of people worldwide.

For instance, most of the 65 million people around the world struggling with long COVID experience disabling fatigue lasting from months to years.

Similarly, reduced muscle strength is a common symptom of early stage Alzheimer's disease, a condition that affects at least 50 million people globally.

Better understanding of how neuroinflammation causes muscle fatigue can lead to potential treatments that improve muscle function.

Our work suggests that targeting the brain-muscle axis could offer new treatment strategies for muscle fatigue.

Currently, we are testing neutralizing antibodies - proteins that bind to and inhibit the function of cytokines - in mice with neuroinflammation. These FDA-approved treatments specifically target cytokines secreted by the brain and prevent signaling to muscle. We are interested in identifying which neutralizing antibodies, or combinations of antibodies, prevent muscle fatigue in mice.

We are also planning a long COVID clinical trial to profile cytokine levels in patients. It is unclear whether other COVID-19 proteins can also trigger neuroinflammation and muscle fatigue. Recent evidence suggests that long COVID may be linked to lingering viral particles in several organs, including the brain, even months after infection. However, it is uncertain whether and how this might be connected with the high levels of cytokines seen in long COVID.

With further development, targeting the brain-muscle axis could be a useful treatment for people suffering with long COVID and other diseases that cause brain inflammation. (AP)

Healthcare bills push 150M into poverty

NAIROBI, Dec 14, (Xinhua) — Hefty medical expenses are pushing over 150 million people in Africa into poverty, denying them quality and productive lives, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned.

Out-of-pocket payments continue to place a heavy financial burden on over 200 million people in the continent, the WHO said in a report, titled "Towards Universal Health Coverage in the WHO Africa Region: Tracking Financial Protection."

The report was launched Thursday on the occasion of Universal Health Coverage Day.

Matshidiso Moeti, WHO regional director for Africa,

said that paying for essential drugs and other healthcare costs out of their own pockets is worsening financial hardship and poor health outcomes for the continent's vulnerable citizens.

"Such payments force many people to spend less on other basic needs such as food, housing and utilities, which in turn may worsen their conditions," Moeti said.

The report, which analyzed the period between 2000 and 2019, said the number of people on the continent spending over 10 percent of their household budget on medicines and other healthcare costs rose annually by 2.5 million people, from 52 million in 2000 to 95 million in 2019.

City plans face environmental pushback

How SpaceX plans to make Starbase a city

McALLEN, Texas, Dec 14, (AP) — In the decade since SpaceX arrived on the Texas coast, billionaire Elon Musk's company has created thousands of jobs near the Mexico border, launched rockets and sprung up new homes - all around an area dubbed Starbase.

Now SpaceX wants to make Starbase a recognized city.

Nearby residents are asking for an election to incorporate the area, which sits on the southern tip of Texas at Boca Chica Beach. Musk posted on his social platform X on Thursday that "SpaceX HQ will now officially be in the city of Starbase, Texas!"

But turning Starbase into a new Texas city with its own government won't happen overnight, and questions remain, including what SpaceX and residents would stand to gain. Already, the idea is drawing pushback from local activists who have raised concerns about SpaceX's environmental impact.

SpaceX's operations are in Cameron County, which has roughly 426,000 residents. Judge Eddie Treviño Jr., the county's top elected official, said SpaceX's petition delivered this week formally starts the process for becoming a city.

"Our legal and elections administration will review the petition, see whether or not it complied with all of the statutory requirements and then we'll go from there," Treviño said.

He did not offer a timetable. But if the process moves forward, Treviño said the county elections department would next create the jurisdiction to decide who gets to vote and then plan a vote.

Neither SpaceX nor local officials have said how many people live in the area who would become Starbase residents. More than 3,400 full-time SpaceX employees and contractors work at the Starbase site, according to a local impact study issued by Treviño earlier this year.

Robert Greer, an associate professor at the Bush School of Government



SpaceX's mega rocket Starship prepares for a test flight from Starbase in Boca Chica, Texas, Monday, Nov. 18, 2024. (AP)

and Public Service at Texas A&M University, has studied how cities incorporate. He said a city would need to create its own charter, provide services, create local ordinances and levy taxes. It could also shift the tax burden on residences or businesses.

"If you create your own city, and it's a relatively small area now, you have kind of control over that area," Greer said.

SpaceX officials have said making Starbase a city is necessary to continue growing the area's workforce and the company's development.

"Incorporating Starbase will streamline the processes required to build the amenities necessary to make the area a world class place to live-for the hundreds already calling it home, as well as for prospective workers eager to help build humanity's future in space," Kathryn Lueders, Starbase's general manager, wrote in a letter to the county this week.

SpaceX has faced local opposition to its impact in the area. Most recently,

they faced a lawsuit from Save RGV, a regional nonprofit group which alleged SpaceX was dumping polluted water into the nearby bay. SpaceX said in response that a state review found no environmental risks and called the lawsuit "frivolous."

"Some of the questions that we have is what this will mean in terms of regulation and oversight by the county," said Jim Chapman, a Save RGV board member.

Musk has long been planting business roots in Texas and has spread them far and wide across the Lone Star State. The billionaire moved to Texas in 2020 and relocated to or expanded a number of his companies in the state, citing the state's business friendly climate.

Tesla's massive, 10-million square foot (930,000 square meter) Gigafactory, where the company makes its Cybertrucks, opened near Austin in 2022 and will also serve as the company headquarters.

Hope for heart patients

Gene therapy shows promising results in reversing heart failure effects: study

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: A groundbreaking gene therapy has demonstrated unprecedented success in reversing the effects of heart failure during an animal study, say researchers from the University of Utah.

The innovative approach has brought hope for tackling heart failure, a condition often considered irreversible using conventional treatments.

The research team focused on cBIN1, a protein critical for proper heart function. By using a harmless virus as a delivery mechanism, the scientists injected the cBIN1 gene

into the bloodstream of pigs with heart failure, allowing the gene to reach heart cells.

Key findings from the six-month study include:

■ **Survival rates:** Pigs treated with gene therapy survived heart failure that would have otherwise been fatal.

■ **Heart function:** The therapy improved heart pumping efficiency by 30 percent, a significant leap compared to the 5-10 percent improvement seen with traditional treatments.

■ **Reverse remodeling:** Hearts that were previously dilated and thin re-

gained a structure closer to normal, signifying a reversal of damage.

"This is an unprecedented recovery of heart function," said Dr. Tingting Hong, an assistant professor at the University of Utah, emphasizing how the therapy enabled "reverse remodeling" of the heart.

Dr. Robin Shaw, co-director of the Nora Eccles Harrison Cardiac Research and Training Institute, called the study a breakthrough, highlighting the therapy's potential to treat heart failure and other complex diseases once deemed untreatable.

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Freiburg survives late onslaught in thriller

Valladolid moves off the bottom

FREIBURG, Germany, Dec 14, (AP): Freiburg survived a late comeback to beat Wolfsburg 3-2 and move into fifth place in the Bundesliga.

The sides started the day equal on points and Wolfsburg had won its last five games in the league and cup.

But Lukas Kübler scored an opportunist opener three minutes before the break and added a second with his head six minutes into the second half to put Freiburg in the driving seat. Michael Gregoritsch added the third in the 62nd.

Jonas Wind came off the bench to score his third goal in two games and Mattias Svanberg cut the deficit seven minutes from time as Wolfsburg desperately looked for a way into the game.

But it was too late, and Freiburg moved above Wolfsburg to fifth place on the table and equal on points with Leipzig, which has a game in hand.

The match was an important one for two teams vying for a Champions League place next year. Although

Also:

MADRID: Real Valladolid beat Valencia 1-0 and rose off the bottom of La Liga.

Moroccan forward **Anuar** scored with a solo effort after 19 minutes.

"It's a sense of relief because we needed the three points," Anuar said on broadcaster DAZN. "It was like a final, and fortunately, we managed to come out on top."

Valladolid's **Juanmi Latasa** was sent off 12 minutes from time after a video review showed he used an elbow, but the home side managed to hold on for the win against a toothless rival.

It was a welcome three points for caretaker coach **Álvaro Rubio** and his first since replacing **Paulo Pezzolano**, who was fired at the start of December.

Valencia replaced Valladolid on the bottom of the table. Valencia has only two wins in 15 league games, but two games in hand.



Wolfsburg's Patrick Wimmer, left, and Freiburg's Maximilian Eggstein in action during the Bundesliga soccer match between SC Freiburg and VfL Wolfsburg at Europa-Park Stadium in Freiburg, Germany. (AP)

Swiss ties US racer Ligety for 24 career wins

Odermatt wins weather-affected GS

VAL D'ISERE, France, Dec 14, (AP): Olympic champion Marco Odermatt won a weather-affected men's World Cup giant slalom Saturday to earn his first points in the discipline this season.

Tough conditions with dense snowfall and flat light on the challenging Face de Bellevard course worsened near the end of the race, causing Odermatt to lose more than three seconds on the fastest racer in the final run.

Still, the Swiss standout managed to just hold on to his first-run advantage and won the race by a small margin.

Austrian skiers Patrick Feurstein and Stefan Brennsteiner completed the podium, trailing Odermatt by 0.08 and 0.12 seconds, respectively. It was the first career top-three result for Feurstein.

"It was obviously one of the biggest fights we've ever had, I guess," Odermatt said.

"I love this atmosphere, when it's getting dark and snowy, like winter should be," he added. "This is exactly for me, I really liked the tough conditions."

The three-time overall champion won the first nine of 10 giant slalom races last season, but then had failed to finish the final event in March and the first two races of the new season.

"I never lost my confidence, I knew I'm still fast and I still can win races," said Odermatt, who screamed in celebration and hit his chest with his fist several times after finishing.

"For sure, after not finishing the last races, I really wanted to do a good result today," he said.

With the win, Odermatt matched the career tally of Ted Ligety, the American GS specialist who won 24 World Cup races in the discipline between 2006 and 2015.

Only two racers in World Cup history have won more giant slaloms - Marcel Hirscher with 31, and Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark with 46.

Hirscher, the record eight-time overall champion from Austria who returned to the circuit for the Netherlands after his initial retirement five years ago, ended his comeback season last week after tearing his left ACL during a training run.

Several lower-ranked skiers benefited from the changing conditions,



Switzerland's Marco Odermatt celebrates on podium after winning an alpine ski, men's World Cup giant slalom in Val d'Isere, France. (AP)

most notably Luca Aerni.

Odermatt's Swiss teammate was the last starter in the 62-skier field, just qualified for the second run in 30th position, and then posted the fastest time in the final leg to finish fourth, 0.11 seconds off the podium.

Lucas Pinheiro Braathen, who earned Brazil's first-ever World Cup podium in Alpine skiing and had moved atop the GS season standings last week, struggled on the steep middle section in the first run and finished 2.35 seconds off the lead, before he failed to finish his second and didn't score points.

Henrik Kristoffersen dropped from second after the first run to fifth and overtook Pinheiro Braathen in the discipline standings. The Norwegian also tops the overall standings with 290 points, 10 ahead of Odermatt.

Thomas Tumler, who won last week's race in Beaver Creek, Colorado, placed 25th and was 1.80 behind his teammate Odermatt.

The winner of the season-opening GS in October, Alexander Steen

Olsen, sat out the race because of a persistent knee issue. He traveled back to Norway for treatment but was expected to return for a GS in Alta Badia, Italy next week.

Olympic slalom champion Clement Noel slid off the course and into

the safety netting. The Frenchman got up but remained on the hill and was attended by a team doctor.

The mishap put Noel's start in Sunday's slalom on the same hill in doubt. He won the first two races in that discipline this season.



Austria's Stefan Brennsteiner gets to the finish area after completing an alpine ski, men's World Cup giant slalom in Val d'Isere, France. (AP)

gave Lucas Stassin his first goal for the club.

However, Saint-Etienne's lead lasted only a minute.

Almost straight from the kickoff, Toulouse pushed forward and Shavy Babicka stooped to head home a cross from the left. (AP)

□ □ □

Stan receives wild-card entry: Three-time major champion Stan Wawrinka was among nine wild-card entries awarded Friday for the Australian Open in January.

Tennis Australia said Wawrinka would be joined at Melbourne Park - where the main draw begins on Jan. 12 - by Australians Tristan Schoolkate, Li Tu, James McCabe, Daria Saville, Ajla Tomljanovic, Emerson Jones, Talia Gibson and Maya Joint.

It said more main draw wild cards and wild-card entries to the qualifying tournament will be announced soon.

Series level at 1-1

Rain ruins first day of the third Australia-India test in Brisbane

BRISBANE, Australia, Dec 14, (AP): Australian openers Usman Khawaja and Nathan McSweeney safely negotiated a stop-and-start first session of the third cricket test against India at a rainy and soggy Gabba on Saturday.

It turned out to be the only session of the day after rain washed out the remainder of play. With more rain showing on the weather radar, umpires made the decision to call off play for the day about an hour before scheduled stumps.

At one point the Gabba outfield was almost entirely submerged in water as Brisbane was pelted with rain. But even as the outfield drained the rain never stopped for long enough for more play to be considered.

The series is level at 1-1. India won the first test by 295 runs at Perth, Western Australia while Australia came back to win the second day-night test in Adelaide by 10 wickets.

After India won the toss and sent Australia in to bat, rain first halted play for about 30 minutes in the sixth over. The showers returned about a half-hour later and until the scheduled lunch break.

Khawaja was on 19 and McSweeney 4 and Australia was 28-0 after 13.2 overs, the only action of the day.

At the toss, India made two changes - Ravindra Jadeja and Akash Deep were back in the side, replacing Harshit Rana and Ravichandran Ashwin.

Australia earlier said Josh Hazlewood would return to the starting XI for the Brisbane test after missing Adelaide with a side strain. Fellow fast bowler Scott Boland was the man dropped in the only change for Australia.

□ □ □

New Zealand steadily squandered a good start, slumping from 172-2 to 231-7 before rallying to 315-9 at stumps Saturday on the first day of the third test against England.

Mitchell Santner hit the last ball of the day for six to reach his fourth test half century and was 50 not out while Will O'Rourke had yet to score. The New Zealand tail added 76 runs in the last eight overs of the day to bring some balance back into the game after the failure of the middle order.

After a 105-run opening partnership between Tom Latham and Will Young, New Zealand enjoyed the rare experience of holding the upper hand over England in a series which so far has been one-sided in favor of the tourists.

England holds an unassailable 2-0 lead, winning the first test in four days by eight wickets and the second in three days by 323 runs. In those seven days, New Zealand only occasionally had a dominant session.

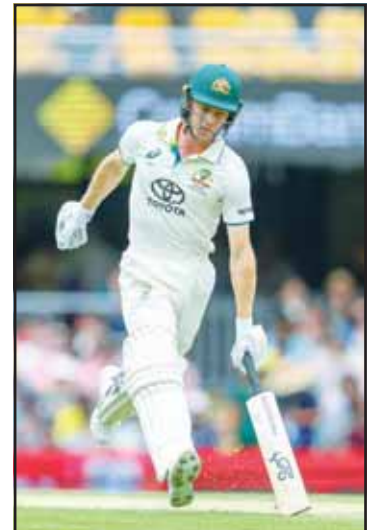
But England won the toss and chose to bowl and by lunch New Zealand was 93-0.

At that point it appeared England captain Ben Stokes might have misread or over-estimated the conditions when he decided to send New Zealand in. The pitch at Seddon Park had a slight green hue and warm conditions and puffy clouds seemed to offer the promise the ball would swing.

Instead, there was a firm brown surface under a thin cover of grass and the day warmed quickly, burning off the overcast so that the ball neither seamed or swung to any great extent.

Latham and Young set a sound platform for the New Zealand innings when they put on 105 for the first wicket, the Kiwis' best opening partnership in 28 tests.

Young was selected in place of Dev-



Australia's Nathan McSweeney completes a run during play on day one of the third cricket test between India and Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane, Australia. (AP)

on Conway whose wife has just given birth to their first child. There already was a clamor for his selection as Conway had made only 21 runs in four innings in the first two tests of this series and Young was Player of the Series and averaged almost 50 when New Zealand swept India 3-0 at home in October and early November.

Young played with boldness from the start Saturday and was 42 not out at lunch including 40 runs from boundaries. At 42 he surpassed 1,000 runs in test cricket and became the first New Zealander since Stephen Fleming to achieve that milestone without making a test century.

Rachin Ravindra made 18 with four well-hit boundaries and seemed set when he played loosely at a wide ball from Brydon Carse and was caught by Ben Duckett in the gully. There was an anxious pause when the television umpire checked for a no ball but there was no reprieve for Ravindra and this time no bad news for Carse who bowled Williamson with a no-ball in the second test.

Kane Williamson reached 44 with every sign of authority on his home pitch on which he averages 94. Then he clamped down on a ball from Matthew Potts which bounced back onto his stumps and he tried vainly to kick it away.

Potts marked his return in place of the rested Chris Woakes with figures of 3-75 and the prized wicket of Williamson.

"I didn't have a great view of it. I was a bit confused but then I saw a ball drop down by his feet and it was pure elation after that," Potts said.

"It was a massive wicket at that point in the innings. It's less about personal milestones and achievements of getting good players out but, at that key point in time, Kane could have taken the game away from us."

In quick succession New Zealand lost Daryl Mitchell (14), Glenn Phillips (5) and second test century-maker Tom Blundell (21), all to unwise shots.

Santner and Matt Henry put on 41 for the eighth wicket before Henry (8) was brilliantly caught by Harry Brook off Stokes. Brook first caught the ball standing on the boundary rope at fine leg, threw it up in the air and stepped over the boundary, then caught it again as he stepped back into the field of play.

Best of the Rest

Canada dominates: Canadian skaters delivered a commanding performance at the Short Track Speed Skating World Cup here on Saturday, capturing three golds across men's and women's events.

Steven Dubois dominated in the men's 500m, claiming gold with a time of 41.681 seconds, while his compatriot Jordan Pierre-Gilles finished just behind for silver in 41.759. Latvia's Roberts Kruzbergs rounded out the podium with bronze in 41.800.

In the men's 1,500m, William Dandjinou clinched another gold for Canada, finishing in 2:14.313. A penalty for Dubois after the race gave South Korea's Park Ji-won the silver medal, while the bronze went to Jens van't Wout of the Netherlands.

Canada's dominance also extended to the wom-

en's 3,000m relay, where they secured gold in 4:11.634, finishing ahead of Italy and South Korea.

South Korea's Kim Gil-li stole the spotlight in the women's 1,000m, winning in 1:30.884. Canada's Danae Blais earned silver in 1:31.010, and Kim's compatriot Choi Min-jeong claimed bronze in 1:31.053.

On Sunday, the tournament's final day, five gold medals will be awarded, including the mixed team relay, men's 5,000m relay, men's 1,000m, women's 500m and women's 1,500m. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Toulouse beats Saint-Etienne: Toulouse came from behind at home to beat Saint-Etienne 2-1 in a scrappy match that left the visitor stuck in the Ligue 1 relegation zone.

Saint-Etienne has struggled in its first season back in the top tier but it took the lead with a nicely worked opener.

Dennis Appiah's inviting cross after 53 minutes

Pannholzer, Janjic help Marshall beat Ohio State in semis

CARY, N.C., Dec 14, (AP): Tarik Pannholzer scored in the opening minutes, Aleksa Janjic finished with five saves and an assist and Marshall beat No. 1 seed Ohio State 1-0 in the semifinals at the 2024 College Cup.

No. 13 seed Marshall (15-1-7) will play un-seeded Vermont - which beat Denver on penalty kicks in the other semifinal - in the championship game on Monday.

Pannholzer slipped behind the defense on the counter-attack and ran onto a long goal kick played

by Janjic. Ohio State goalkeeper Max Trejo came off his line, collided with teammate Sigi Magnusson at the edge of the penalty area and Pannholzer walked it into the goal for a 1-0 lead in the seventh minute.

David Ajagbe's header off a corner kick ricocheted off the crossbar for Ohio State (16-2-4) in the opening minutes.

Nathan Demian was the victim of a shooting with an errant bullet early Sunday morning in Columbus, Ohio, just hours after helping the Buckeyes to a 3-0 win over Wake Forest in the quarterfinals. Police said he is re-

covering from his injuries and his family is with him.

Marshall has made six consecutive NCAA Tournaments - it's only appearances in program history - including a 2020 national championship.

Marshall's Takahiro Fujita was taken off the field on a stretcher in the second half and was replaced by Aleksandar Vukovic.

Ohio State's Donovan Williams came off with an apparent leg injury about five minutes into the game and was replaced by Nick McHenry.

Max Murray scored the decisive goal in a 4-3

shootout after Vermont and Denver played to a 1-1 draw at the end of extra time, and the Catamounts beat the No. 3 seed Pioneers on Friday night to advance to their first men's College Cup final in program history.

Vermont (16-2-5), making its first-ever appearance in the College Cup, became just the third team in the last decade to beat two top-four seeds in one tournament after also taking down No. 2 Pittsburgh last weekend. The Catamounts have won 10 NCAA Tournament games over the last three years, the most of any program in the NCAA.

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SPORTS

Sheikh Khaled congratulates Saudi Arabia and Morocco for winning World Cup bids

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: President of the Kuwait and Asian Water Sports Federations Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr Al-Sabah congratulated Saudi Arabia and Morocco on winning the FIFA World Cup bids.

In a press release, Sheikh Khaled expressed great happiness over Saudi Arabia's successful bid to host the 2035 FIFA World Cup.

He explained that this achievement is a clear confirmation from international sports organizations of Saudi Arabia's advanced capabilities and its ability to organize major sporting events, as well as the remarkable development it achieved in multiple sectors, which positioned it as one of the leading nations to host such a prestigious competition.

Sheikh Khaled also congratulated Morocco on securing the 2030 World Cup, which will be hosted in partnership with Spain and Portugal.

On the sidelines of his visit to Hungary to attend the World Swimming

Championships, Sheikh Khaled met with the Vice President of the Saudi Olympic Committee Prince Fahad bin Jalawi to discuss many topics related to sports affairs at the regional and global levels.

Sheikh Khaled confirmed that his meeting with His Highness Prince Fahad bin Jalawi was productive, as they discussed ways to enhance cooperation and exchange ideas between the Asian Aquatics Federation and the Saudi Olympic Committee in order to advance and improve aquatics, in line with the keenness of Prince Fahad for Saudi Arabia to continue with its sports renaissance in all disciplines, under the guidance of the wise political leadership.

In addition, Sheikh Khaled met with the President of the International Greco-Roman Wrestling Federation Serbian Nenad Ovech, and later with the Mexican Minister of Sports and Youth.



Sheikh Khaled and Prince Fahad bin Jalawi with the President of the International Aquatics Federation Hussein Al-Musallam, and President of the International Greco-Roman Wrestling Federation Nenad Ovech

Qadsiya, Al-Arabi sweep rivals

Kuwait Club stays top

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Al-Qadsiya Club's first volleyball team secured a dominant victory over Burqan, winning in straight sets with scores of 25-23, 25-16, and 25-21. The match took place at the Union Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, marking the conclusion of the first round of the Union Championship. In another match, Al-Arabi also achieved a straight-sets victory over Al-Nasr, with scores of 25-15, 25-16, and 25-17.

The ninth and final round of the first phase of the championship began last Thursday with two other matches. Kuwait Club defeated Kazma 3-1, while Al-Sulaibikhat swept Al-Yarmouk 3-0.

As a result of these outcomes, Kuwait Club retained its position at the top of the standings with 24 points. Al-Qadsiya followed in second place with 21 points, while Kazma secured third place with 18 points. Burqan claimed the fourth spot with 14 points. These four teams advanced to the semi-finals, where Kuwait will face Burqan and Al-Qadsiya will compete against Kazma on Monday.

In the rest of the rankings, Al-Arabi finished fifth with 12 points, followed by Al-Shabab in sixth place with 10 points. Al-Sulaibikhat secured seventh place with six points, Al-Yarmouk came in eighth with three points, and Al-Nasr finished at the bottom without earning any points.



Al-Qadsiya player spikes the ball as Burqan players defend.

'All administrative and technical arrangements in place'

Dr. Al-Shaibani confirms all set for 'Khaleeji Zain 26' kickoff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Dr. Hamed Al-Shaibani, head of the competitions committee for the "Khaleeji Zain 26", confirmed that all preparations were completed well in advance of the arrival of the competing teams. He stated that the committee had ensured all administrative and technical arrangements were in place ahead of the final phase of the teams' preparations.

Al-Shaibani highlighted that the committee had closely monitored the logistical preparations for the tournament in recent weeks. This included preparing and maintaining the two main stadiums, Jaber International and Jaber Al-Mubarak, as well as ensuring that eight additional training venues were ready for the participating teams.

He further emphasized that the committee, in collaboration with the Gulf Federation, was fully committed to the tournament regulations approved by the Arabian Gulf Cup Federation's Board of Directors. The participating Gulf federations were provided with the necessary guidelines and tournament regulations.

Al-Shaibani extended his gratitude to the Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, for his constant oversight and dedication to meeting all the tournament's needs. He also acknowledged the vital role of the Vice Chairman of the Organizing Committee and Chairman of the Football Association, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, for his significant contributions to the organization and success of the Gulf Cup.

Al-Shaibani expressed his best wishes to all the participating teams and stated his hopes for the tournament to meet the high expectations of Gulf football fans. He emphasized that the "Khaleeji Zain 26" tournament would be an unforgettable event, with everyone emerging victorious in this celebration of unity and brotherhood in Kuwait, the land of love.

The "Khaleeji Zain 26" tournament will be held at Jaber International Stadium, which will host both the opening ceremony and the final match. Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium will host its first event today with a friendly match between Kuwait and Al-Sulaibikhat clubs at 5:15 PM. This stadium, which can accommodate around 15,000 spectators, was officially opened last Wednesday in the presence of Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

Al-Sulaibikhat Club will host seven matches, starting with the opening match



Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium at Sulaibikhat Club



Dr. Hamed Al-Shaibani

between Qatar and the UAE on the tournament's first day, and concluding with one of the semi-finals on Dec 31.

Saad Anad, Chairman of Al-Sulaibikhat Club, expressed immense pride in hosting the stadium for the "Gulf Zain 26" matches, calling it a significant milestone for the club and Ku-

wait's sports community. Anad welcomed the new stadium as a valuable asset for young athletes and an ideal venue for Gulf brothers to gather and celebrate football. He also recognized the importance of the match between Kuwait and Al-Sulaibikhat clubs as a technical rehearsal ahead of the official tournament matches.



Saad Anad

Anad expressed sincere gratitude to Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi for his efforts to ensure the stadium's readiness and thanked the Public Authority for Sports for their ongoing support in preparing the venue to host the Gulf Cup matches.

Kuwait targets double win in Padel Arabian Gulf Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The third edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup for men's and women's padel teams, which began last Wednesday at the Regency Hotel, is set to conclude this evening.

The final match for the men's competition, as well as the third-place playoff, will take place today. The Kuwaiti national men's team advanced to the semi-finals after defeating Bahrain 2-1 at the end of the group stage on Saturday night. The UAE team also secured a 2-1 victory over Qatar.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti national women's team is aiming for the gold medal as it faces Oman today. Both teams triumphed over Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the first two rounds, setting up a decisive showdown for first place in the competition's final round.

The match between Kuwait and Oman is expected to be highly competitive. Oman, the defending champion from the first two editions of the Gulf Cup, boasts considerable experience in international events. However, the impressive performances



A Kuwaiti goes for a shot.

from Kuwait's national team suggest a strong desire to claim gold, with a large crowd anticipated to support them in the stands.

FFF president wins new term

PARIS, Dec 14, (AP): Philippe Diallo has been elected to a new four-year term at the helm of the French soccer federation (FFF).

Diallo won 55% of the first-round voting, the federation said Saturday, to defeat challenger Pierre Samsonoff.

Diallo served as interim president after Noël Le Graët stepped down and was first elected in June 2023.

"Professional soccer is in crisis," Diallo said. "We need to put the pieces in place to help it bounce back. The FFF must provide the impetus. We want to ensure that French football is stronger in four years' time, and that our projects become reality."

French professional clubs are suffering from a loss in TV rights revenues. Following the collapse of its record-breaking TV rights contract with Spanish-based broadcaster Mediapro four years ago, the league hoped it could get up to 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) per year from the sale of broadcasting rights for 2024-29 but had to lower its target. In the end, the league settled for 500 million euros per year after sealing a late deal with British streaming platform DAZN and BeIN Sports.

Diallo also said that increasing the subsidies directed to amateur soccer is among his top priorities. He has set a target of 150 million euros in annual support.

Al-Qadsiya aims to continue good run as Kazma seeks redemption

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Two matches are set to take place in the Basketball Merge League at the Union Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. The action begins at 5:00 pm with an evenly matched game between Al-Sulaibikhat and Al-Arabi. Later, at 7:00 pm, a heavyweight clash between Al-Qadsiya and Kazma promises to be the highlight of the evening.

The encounter between Al-Qadsiya and Kazma stands out as the most anticipated match. Al-Qadsiya currently leads with six points, thanks to three consecutive victories over Al-Tadamon, Al-Yarmouk, and Al-Qurain. Meanwhile, Kazma has accumulated five points, with wins against Al-Arabi and Al-Nasr, but suffered a setback against Al-Sulaibikhat in their league opener.

Al-Qadsiya's American coach, Anthony Stephen, is determined to secure the league title in his third season,

adding a prestigious accomplishment to his tenure. Stephen is well-prepared for the challenge, having faced Kazma multiple times last season, including their victory in the Federation Cup final with a 97-92 scoreline. His squad features key players such as Abdulraziz Al-Humaidi, Mohammed Ashkanani, Abdul Mohsen Al-Moussawi, and Rashed Al-Rabah, supported by foreign professionals David Elono and Tomislav Sobjec.

On the other hand, Kazma aims to bounce back from their loss to Al-Sulaibikhat with a crucial win over one of their main title rivals. Montenegrin coach Igor Gjovic will rely on the leadership of captain Ahmed Al-Balushi, the versatility of Youssef Burahma, and the contributions of Abdulrahman and Saho Al-Saho. It is further bolstered by its international stars, American Juan Johnson and Canadian Johnny Brahmenskel, who will be pivotal in its quest for victory.



The confrontation is renewed between Al-Qadsiya and Kazma.

China secures women's singles title at BWF World Tour Finals

HANGZHOU, China, Dec 14, (Xinhua): China is assured of the women's singles title, while world No. 1 Shi Yuqi stormed into the men's singles final at the 2024 Badminton World Federation (BWF) World Tour Finals here on Saturday.

In the men's singles semifinals, home favorite Shi withstood a fightback from Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien-chen in the second game and clinched a 21-14,

21-18 victory.

"At the beginning of game I was feeling fatigued. Thanks to my opponent's performance, I was able to find my rhythm back to win," said Shi, who will meet Denmark's Anders Antonsen in the final.

In the women's singles semifinals, China's Wang Zhiyi overcame 2024 Olympic champion An Se-young of South Korea 21-17, 21-14, setting up a fi-

nal clash against her teammate Han Yue. The latter notched a 21-17, 21-13 victory against Japan's Aya Ogori in the other semifinal.

Elsewhere, mixed doubles Olympic champions Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong won 21-11, 21-18 against Jiang Zhenbang and Wei Yaxin in an all-Chinese derby, and will fight for gold against Malaysian duo Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei on Sunday.



Jingyao Yu of China competes during the Women's 50m Breaststroke Heats on day five of the World Short Course Swimming Championships in Budapest, Hungary. (AP)

Sports

Kuwait faces Lebanon in final test before Khaleeji Zain 26

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, Dec 14: Kuwait will conclude its friendly matches in Doha, Qatar, with a final encounter against the Lebanese national team at 6:00 pm at the Qatar Club Stadium.

The Kuwaiti delegation is set to return from Doha tomorrow before beginning an internal camp on Wednesday to prepare for the upcoming "Khaleeji Zain 26" Championship, which will be hosted by Kuwait from December 21 to January 3.

During their camp in Qatar, the Kuwaiti team previously played against Yemen, ending in a 1-1 draw, followed by a 2-1 loss to Lebanon last Thursday at Al-Ahli Stadium in Qatar.

In Thursday's match, Kuwait led 1-0 at halftime thanks to a goal from Bandar Borsli. However, the Lebanese team dominated the second half, with Qassim Al-Zain scoring the

equalizer in the 75th minute. In the final moments of the match, Sami Marhej scored the winning goal for Lebanon in the 90th minute.

Kuwait's Argentine coach, Juan Pizzi, is expected to field the players he intends to rely on for the opening match of the "Gulf Zain 26" Championship, which will take place on Saturday against Oman.

Pizzi has made a point of including as many players as possible in the previous two friendlies, giving each of them the chance to prove themselves before finalizing the squad for the Gulf Championship. He has also focused on preparing the team thoroughly and ensuring the recovery of players who have faced injuries in recent months.

The draw for the "Gulf Cup Zain 26" placed Kuwait in Group A alongside Qatar, the UAE, and Oman, while Group B consists of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Yemen.



Bandar challenges Lebanese defenders for the ball.



The Kuwaiti delegation.



Kuwaiti gymnastics team earns four medals at Mediterranean Union Championship.

Al-Khrafai wins gold at Mediterranean Champ'ship

Four medals secured in various events

TUNIS, Dec 14, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti rhythmic gymnastics team achieved impressive success at the Mediterranean Union Championship held in Tunis, securing four medals in various events.

Nabila Al-Khrafai claimed the gold medal in the ball performance competition, while her teammate Sarah Al-Bannai earned the silver in the hoop event. Layan Behbahani brought home the bronze in the club event, and Raya Al-Qassar secured another bronze in the ribbon event.

Fahad Al-Sawlah, President of the Arab and Kuwaiti Gymnastics Federations, expressed his immense satisfaction with this achievement, highlighting the progress of rhythmic gymnastics in Kuwait. In a statement to KUNA, Al-Sawlah emphasized that these results were the product of the athletes' dedication and the efforts of the coaching staff, led by Ukrainian coaches Irina Kovaltchuk and Victoria Fesiouk, who meticulously prepared the team.

He also acknowledged the continuous support from the Kuwaiti Gymnastics Federation's Board of

Directors, the General Authority for Sports, and the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee, which provided the necessary conditions for success and helped the team overcome challenges.

Al-Sawlah congratulated the athletes on their outstanding achievement, noting that they succeeded "despite tough competition from both European and Arab teams with extensive experience in this sport."

The boys team departed yesterday morning for Tunisia to compete in the Mediterranean Championship, which will be held in the Tunisian capital until

December 19.

The team includes four athletes—Musa Al-Sahaf, Saud Al-Radini, Ali Abdulhadi, and Khaled Al-Dhaham—alongside administrator Muhammad Ali Al-Daihani, supervisor Khalid Al-Madhen, referees Salah Askar and Badr Hassan, and Ukrainian coach Vitaly Arsenov.

The team kicks off its participation today in this prestigious event, aiming to make a strong impression and secure achievements that will add to the legacy of Kuwaiti gymnastics.

Arab Handball Cup returns in Jeddah after 20-year hiatus

JEDDAH, Dec 14: Fadel Al-Nimr, President of the Arab Handball Federation, has announced the revival of the Arab Cup Championship for men's teams, set to take place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in May 2025. The tournament, returning after a hiatus of more than 20 years, will run during the International Handball Federation Week from May 4 to 12, ensuring full participation from the top Arab teams as domestic leagues pause for the international schedule.

Saudi Arabia, home to the Arab Handball Federation since its establishment, has welcomed the opportunity to host the championship, which will feature some of the strongest Arab national teams. Al-Nimr expressed his delight at reviving the tournament and extended a warm welcome to all Arab teams and their delegations. He praised the Kingdom's sports leadership, particularly Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki, Minister of Sports, for the ongoing support of Arab sports federations.

Al-Nimr also expressed gratitude



Fadel Al-Nimr

to Saudi Arabia for hosting the Arab Handball Federation headquarters for 50 years. He confirmed that federations from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, the UAE, Qatar, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq, and Jordan have shown interest in participating.

The Arab Cup for national teams has been held nine times before, with its inaugural edition in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1977. Jordan has hosted the event three times, with other editions taking place twice in Egypt and Syria, and once each in Kuwait and Morocco.

Walsh takes her swimming world records tally to 7

BUDAPEST, Hungary, Dec 14, (AP): American swimmer Gretchen Walsh set three more world records at the world short course championships.

She lowered the 100-meter individual medley time to 55.11 seconds in the final, and the 100 butterfly record time.

In the morning heats, Walsh broke Canadian Margaret Mac Neil's mark of 54.05 from 2022 to 53.24. Then she dropped it again in the evening

semifinals to 52.87.

Walsh has seven world records in Duna Arena this week.

The U.S. men's 4x200 relay team achieved two world records in the same final.

The team clocked a winning 6:40.51, slashing nearly four seconds off its own record from the last championships in 2022 in Melbourne, Australia.

Also, Luke Hobson on the lead-off

leg set the individual 200 freestyle world record that Peter Biedermann of Germany held since 2009.

Americans also claimed the day's other world records: Regan Smith won the women's 50 backstroke final in a world record time of 25.23, and Kate Douglass improved her own world record in the 200 breaststroke from October to 2:12.50.

The 25-meter pool is half the length of an Olympic pool.

Nuggets rout Clippers despite quiet night from Jokic

DENVER, Dec 14, (AP): Jamal Murray scored a game-high 20 points and the Denver Nuggets beat the Los Angeles Clippers 120-98 on Friday night despite a quiet game from Nikola Jokic.

Jokic, who scored 56 and 48 points in the last two games, had a season-low two assists and tied season lows with 16 points and seven rebounds.

James Harden had 15 points and nine turnovers for Los Angeles, which has dropped two straight.

The Clippers scored 18 straight points in the second quarter to turn a 12-point deficit into a five-point lead. Denver missed eight shots and had 10 turnovers in nearly six minutes when Los Angeles went on its run.

The Nuggets answered that with a 23-5 run in the third quarter to take control of the game. Michael Porter Jr. scored 10 of his 17 points in the third quarter.

Darius Garland scored 24 points and Jarrett Allen had 21 points and 11 rebounds as the NBA-leading Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Washington 115-105 on Friday night, sending the Wizards to their 18th loss in 19 games.

Donovan Mitchell scored 20 points and Garland added eight assists for Cleveland, which is 22-4 and holds a 1 1/2-game lead over Boston for the top record in the league. The Cavaliers, who lead the NBA in field-goal percentage,

shot a season-low 39.6%.

Caris LeVert had 14 points and six assists and Isaac Okoro scored 13 points. Cleveland went 15 of 51 on 3-pointers.

Anthony Edwards scored 23 points and the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Los Angeles Lakers 97-87.

Julius Randle added 21 points and Jaden McDaniels scored 18 for Minnesota, which won for the fifth time in six games. Rudy Gobert had a game-high 13 rebounds to go with 12 points.

The Timberwolves are 14-2 against the Lakers at home since the 2015-16 season, including four

straight wins.

Anthony Davis led Los Angeles with 23 points and 11 rebounds, but the Lakers lost for the eighth time in 11 games. Austin Reaves scored 18 points in his first game back after missing five games with a left pelvic contusion, and Max Christie added 15.

Los Angeles had 21 turnovers. LeBron James missed his second straight game for the Lakers with left foot soreness and was also away from the team this week due to "personal reasons." Coach JJ Redick said pregame he has no sense of when James will return.



Utah Jazz center Walker Kessler (24) defends against Phoenix Suns forward Royce O'Neale (00) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Salt Lake City. (AP)