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Amir officially launches Arabian Gulf Cup 'Khaleeji Zain 26'



Inset: His Highness the Amir delivers a speech to officially open the Arabian Gulf Cup 'Khaleeji Zain 26'. Main photo: Part of the opening ceremony of the Gulf Cup.

Tributes pour in as Amir marks 1st year in power

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a congratulatory message from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of the Amir's assumption of power. In his heartfelt message, the Crown Prince wished for His Highness to be blessed by Almighty God, remaining a "leader and father of our dear homeland and the faithful people of Kuwait." He praised the development and civil achievements realized during what he called "your blessed era," emphasizing that these accomplishments enable Kuwait to progress steadily toward a prosperous future.

The Crown Prince reaffirmed his loyalty to His Highness the Amir, pledging to actively fulfill responsibilities in service of "our giving

homeland and pride of its generous people." In response, His Highness the Amir expressed deep appreciation for the kind sentiments from the Crown Prince, invoking Almighty God to protect the homeland and grant it enduring security

and prosperity. On Friday, His Highness Sheikh Meshal also received congratulations from His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who commended the progress made under the Amir's wise leadership. Sheikh Nasser acknowledged the Amir's sincere efforts to serve the Kuwaiti people and address their interests, which have led to fulfilling their aspirations for further prosperity. The Amir reciprocated by expressing gratitude for Sheikh Nasser's thoughtful sentiments.

Continued on Page 7

Kuwait Al eyes flag 4,122 traffic offenders in 4 days

Mol calls for rule adherence



By Munif Naif Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: The Security Media Department of the Ministry of Interior announced the issuance of 4,122 traffic citations for violations such as not wearing seat belts and using mobile phones while driving,

Kuwait champions reforms in int'l trading frameworks

VIENNA, Dec 21, (KUNA): Kuwait affirmed on Saturday its commitment towards developing international trading laws and cooperation in legal and economic fields.

This came in a statement to KUNA by head of the Kuwaiti delegation, First Deputy Munira Al-Obaidi from Legal Advice and Legislation Department, following her participation in the work of the sixty-fifth session of UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCIT-RAL), which concluded its work Friday

at the UN headquarters in Vienna.

Al-Obaidi explained the importance of this participation in strengthening the legal system of Kuwait and benefiting from the international expertise provided by UNCITRAL, noting that these meetings are a vital platform for exchanging ideas and experiences between member states, contributing to developing local laws to keep pace with global developments.

Continued on Page 7



Trade, commerce important pillars of bonds with Kuwait: **Indian PM**



IOM Kuwait and Embassy of the Philippines celebrate International **Migrants Day** with social painting event



Gulf Bank launches Kuwait's fastest and most comprehensive rewards program with an enhanced customer experience

Kuwait, Indonesia finalize labor deal

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Indonesian Ambassador to Kuwait Lena Maryana has announced that a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Indonesia and Kuwait focusing on the recruitment of skilled workers, particularly in the health sector, has been finalized and will be signed soon.

In a statement at the embassy's annual 'Winter Market' festival on Saturday, Maryana disclosed that Indonesia is home to many highly skilled and competent workers. She affirmed efforts to strengthen ties between Indonesia and Kuwait, especially at the end of the CO-VID-19 pandemic.

She said there has been a significant increase in the Indonesian community in Kuwait; with the number rising to 7,000 this year, up from 6,000 last year. "Majority of these individuals work in the hospitality and health sectors," she added.

She also revealed that Indonesia is currently exporting various products to Kuwait like vaccines, food and electronics; which are gaining traction in Kuwaiti markets. She pointed out that these are promising areas of cooperation, particularly in the field of food security.

Furthermore, she confirmed that discussions are ongoing to resume direct daily flights between Jakarta and Kuwait, operated by Kuwait Airways, after their suspension in 2015.

Regarding the festival, she stated that the embassy holds the 'Winter Market' annually to bring together members of the Indonesian community in Kuwait. "The event, which also attracts heads of diplomatic missions and many Kuwaiti friends, features traditional Indonesian folk dances and a showcase of renowned Indonesian dishes, some of which have been recognized by UNESCO as part of the country's cultural heritage," she added.

PM Diwan photo

First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior receives Prime Minister of the Republic of India and his accompanying delegation.

Modi spotlights India-Kuwait timeless bond

Indian PM makes history with Kuwait visit

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his accompanying delegation arrived in Kuwait on Saturday on an official visit.

They were received at Kuwait International Airport by First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Chief Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, Advisor at His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan and Chief of the Accompanying Mission of Honor Sheikh Dr. Basel Humoud Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Sameeh Hayat and Kuwaiti Ambassador in India Meshal

Al-Shemal

Earlier, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed on Saturday India-Kuwait relationship, saying New Delhi deeply values the historical connection with the State of Kuwait.

"We deeply value the historical connection with Kuwait that has been nurtured over generations. We are not just strong trade and energy partners, but also have shared interest in peace, security, stability and prosperity in the West Asia region," Modi said in his departure message ahead of his visit to Kuwait.

Continued on Page 7

Kuwait welcomes Kuwait issues strong condemnation **UNGA** resolution

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Saturday welcomed the UN General Assembly resolution requesting a legal opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) about the unprovoked ban on the activities of UN refugee agency, UNRWA.

In a press release, the ministry underlined that this resolution is a significant step that reflects international solidarity with the Palestinian people, and categorical opposition to Israeli measures undermining the UNRWA's role and distorting its humanitarian message.

It reiterated Kuwait's unwavering support for the UNRWA as a core pillar for helping Palestinian refugees, while restating its steadfast and principled stance on the Palestinian cause as well as support for the Palestinian people to end the occupation and establish an independent state on the June 4, 1967 border, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Continued on Page 7

of German Christmas market attack KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Saturday strongly denounced the car ram-

ming incident at a market in the German central city of Magdeburg, which claimed multiple casualties. In a press release, the ministry said that Kuwait reaffirms its rejection of all forms of violence, and calls on the international community to stand united



Citizens place flowers outside St. John's Church near a Christmas Market, where a car drove into a crowd on Friday evening, in Magdeburg, Germany, Saturday, Dec. 21, 2024. (AP)

bring culprits to accountability and wipe out its sources.

It added that the State of Kuwait backs the German government and offers condolence to the government and people of Germany and the victims' families, while wishing a swift recover for the injured.

Saudi Arabia on Saturday condemned the ramming attack in the German city of Magdeburg on Friday, which left several people killed or injured.

In a press release, the Saudi Foreign Ministry restated the kingdom's denunciation of violence, while voicing sympathy with and sincere condolence to the families of the victims and wishing a quick recovery for those injured in the incident

A car rammed into a crowd at a Christmas market in the German central city of Magdeburg on Friday evening, killing at least five people, including a small child, and wounding at least 200 others.

through the automated monitoring enhanced by artificial intelligence technologies.

The department clarified that these violations occurred between December 12 and December 15, a period of just 4 days.

The Ministry urged all road users to comply with traffic regulations, emphasizing the importance of continuous monitoring and awareness campaigns to ensure public safety.

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Newswatch

WASHINGTON: U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said its forces conducted a precision air-strike targeting ISIS leader Abu Yusif aka Mahmud in the Davr az Zawr Province, Syria, resulting in two ISIS operatives killed,

including Abu Yusif. "This airstrike is part of CENTCOMs ongoing commitment, along with partners in the region, to disrupt and degrade efforts by terrorists to plan, organize, and conduct attacks against civilians and military personnel from the U.S., our allies, and our partners throughout the region and beyond," it said in a press re-lease on X. (KUNA)

RIYADH: Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Albudaiwi on Saturday affirmed the GCC states' support for efforts to maintain the unity, sovereignty and security of Syria.

The GCC Secretariat General said Al-Budaiwi was speaking in a phone contract with the UN envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen.

The two sides explored regional and international efforts for preserving Syria's unity, sovereignty and security. (KUNA)

TEHRAN: At least 10 people were killed and 17 others injured on Saturday as a bus plunged into a ravine in the western Iranian province of Lorestan, the semi-official Fars news agency reported.

Just after noon, the provincial emergency medical services (EMS) received the report of the incident, which occurred on an intercity road in Poldokhtar County, Fars said, citing Ali Mohammadi, public relations director of the EMS organization. (Xinhua)

Prayer Timings					
Fajr 05:13 Sunrise 06:38 Zohr 11:46	Asr				



Expected Weather for the Next 24 hrs.

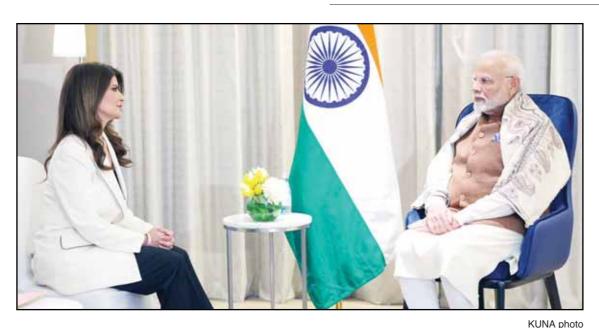
moderate northwesterly wind, with speed

will appear By Day: Rather cold with light to mod-Station erate northwesterly wind, with speed of Kuwait Cit Kuwait Air By Night: Cold to very cold with light to Abdaly

	Weather				
of 08-35 km/h	and some sca	attered clouds	Jahra	19	12
will appear.			Failaka Island	17	15
Station Kuwait City	Max Exp 19	Min Rec 13	Salmiyah	17	16
Kuwait Airport		13	Ahmadi	17	12
Abdaly	18	11	Jal Aliyah	17	11
Bubyan	15	13	Nuwaisib	19	14

Trade, commerce important pillars of bonds with Kuwait – Indian PM

'Kuwait Vision 2035', new infrastructure projects lauded



Kuwait News Agency's Fatma Al-Salem interviews the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Interview by Fatma Al-Salem

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday that trade and commerce have been important pillars of bilateral relationship between Kuwait and India, with two-way trade increasing.

"Trade and commerce have been important pillars of our bilateral relationship. Our bilateral trade has been on an upswing. Our energy partnership adds a unique value to our bilateral trade," the Indian prime minister said in an interview to KUNA.

The Indian prime minister arrived in Kuwait on Saturday in the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Kuwait in over four decades

Products

"We are happy to see 'Made in India' products, particularly in automobile, electrical and mechanical machinery, and telecom segments making new inroads in Kuwait. India today is interest in investing in India now, adding that bilaterally and multilaterally, there has been a good understanding of each other's interests.

Modi boasted that his country is currently amongst the fastest-growing large economies in the world, as in less than a decade it has moved from being the 11th largest to the 5th largest economy in the world, and is poised to become the 3rd largest economy soon.

He believed that this growth creates immense opportunities for investment across a variety of sectors and that the pace of infrastructure development in Îndia is extraordinary, be it expressways, railways, airports, ports, energy grids or digital connectivity. "Over the last decade, we have dou-

bled our airports from 70 in 2014 to over 150 in 2024. In the next five years, 31 Indian cities will be serviced by metro transport systems. The number of education and skill development institutions has also doubled since 2014, reflecting a strong focus on human capital development. This is supported by a favorable demography and a highly skilled workforce," he said.

"Digital economy and services are raising productivity, ushering efficiency and creating new consumer demand. Almost fifty percent of all global digital payments are happening in India.

are in the pipeline." However, he said there is a lot of synergy in both sides' visions which align on many fronts as the tremendous pace of economic activity in both countries open up large opportunities for the two governments and companies to cooperate and collaborate.

He pointed out that Kuwait and India have a much wider partnership in a large number of areas, apart from the traditional energy sector partnership, including education, skilling, technology, and defense cooperation.

"A number of Indian companies are already engaged in execution of infrastructure projects in various sectors in Kuwait. Similarly, we are seeing investments from Kuwaiti companies in India. It is a mutually beneficial partnership in a true sense," he said.

Responding to a question about how India's soft power can influence its global outreach, he said India's civilizational ethos and heritage form the foundation of its soft power that its soft power has grown significantly alongside its expanding global presence, particularly over the last decade.

"In Kuwait and the Gulf, Indian movies stand out as a prime example of this cultural connection. We have seen that people in Kuwait have a special liking for Indian cinema. I am told that







Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah



Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi







Dr. Nader Al-Jallal Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi

Ministers extend congratulations to Amir on first 'versary in office

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi offered sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of assuming office.

Al-Mutairi told KUNA that this anniversary, which falls on Friday, represents a point of pride of His Highness's wise leadership and insightful vision that enhanced development and contributed to achieving goals that best serves Kuwait and its people.

His Highness the Amir's wise directives are a source of inspiration to work with dedication and sincerity to fulfill the national trust and raise the name of Kuwait high in various fields and regional and international forums, added Al-Mutairi praving to Allah Almighty

center of development, while ensuring the improvement of the quality of government services and fulfilling citizens' aspirations in a way that enhances their welfare and serves their interests.

Al-Huwailah added that the Ministry of Social Affairs draws inspiration from His Highness's directives for its work in developing social services and backing initiatives that contribute to achieving sustainable development.

She renewed the ministry's commitment to working in a team spirit to translate the vision of the wise leadership into practical steps that help achieve comprehensive development and advancement of Kuwait.

She wished His Highness the Amir everlasting health and Kuwait further security and stability.

Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-wadhi and the Ministry of Health staff

ward the coming generations affirm that we stand in a single rank behind the sagacious leadership of His Highness the Amir," the minister penned. Minister of Finance and Minister of

State for Economic Affairs and Investments Noora Al-Fassam extended on Saturday her warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of assuming office.

Guidance

Al-Fassam told KUNA that the Ministry of Finance and its affiliated bodies always work under the guidance of His Highness the Amir to achieve Kuwait Vision 2035 goals, and is keen on enhancing transparency and achieving economic and social justice to ensure the sustainability of the welfare of Ku-

2

manufacturing world-class products at the most affordable cost. Diversification to non-oil trade is key to achieving greater bilateral trade," he said.

He added there is considerable potential to expand bilateral cooperation in the pharmaceutical, health, technology, digital, innovation and textile sectors, urging business chambers, entrepreneurs and innovators must engage and interact with each other more.

On his visit to Kuwait, he said: "I am delighted to visit Kuwait. I thank His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his gracious invitation. This visit holds special significance. It marks the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Kuwait in over four decades.'

"I thank His Highness for inviting me to attend the inauguration of the Arabian Gulf Cup. This is an honor for me. I extend my best wishes for successful hosting of the Tournament," he said.

The Indian prime minister went on saying that India and Kuwait share a deep and historic bond and the relationship between both countries has always been one of warmth and friendship and that the crosscurrents of history and exchanges through ideas and commerce have brought people close and together.

"We have traded with each other since times immemorial. The discoveries in Failaka Island speak of our shared past. The Indian Rupee was a legal tender in Kuwait for over a century till 1961. This shows how closely our economies were integrated," Modi said.

He noted that India has been a natural trading partner of Kuwait and continues to be so in contemporary times and that people-to-people linkages over centuries have fostered a special bond of friendship between the two countries

He added: "Overall, the bilateral ties are progressing well and if I could say, scaling new heights. I eagerly look forward to my talks with His Highness the Amir to elevate our ties in various areas including defense, trade, investment, and energy."

"The strong roots of our historical ties must be matched by the fruits of our 21st century partnership - dynamic, robust and multifaceted. There is a lot we have achieved together, but possibilities are limitless for our partnership. I am sure this visit will give new wings to it," Modi stressed.

The Indian prime minister noted that Indians are the largest expatriate community of over a million in Kuwait and India is among the top trading partners of Kuwait and many Indian companies are executing infrastructure projects and offer services in multiple domains in Kuwait.

He said that Kuwait Investment Authority has made substantial investments in India and there is a growing

Technology is changing the face of the Indian economy, from drones to green hydrogen," he added.

"Our political stability, policy predictability and reform-oriented business approach has made India a magnet for global investment, manufacturing and supply chain. The Indian growth story is attracting global manufacturers - from semiconductors, aircraft, drones to e-vehicles - to set up shop in the country." he said.

Dynamic

He noted that India's dynamic economic environment is also characterized by innovation and entrepreneurship, with a remarkable surge in start-ups and the manufacturing sector has seen a significant uptick, driving both domestic growth and export expansion, citing rising consumer demand, fueled by a rapidly expanding middle class, as further underscoring the vibrancy of the Indian economy.

"Across the world, if there is a country which is growing rapidly, is increasing ease of doing business, has stability and transparency for international investors, it is India," he said.

As a result, he maintained, India is one of the most attractive destinations for international investment and it is not a new market for Kuwaiti investors, adding, "There are many Kuwaiti businesses who are deeply entrenched in the Indian business ecosystem and enjoy leadership positions in their respective industries. Our investor-friendly regime and high-growth economy awaits to welcome many more.'

On his government's vision to transform India into a developed country by 2047, he said: "Our vision and that of 1.40 billion Indians, is to see India as a developed country by 2047, when we will be celebrating 100 Years of our Independence. We are striving to accelerate growth in all sectors to improve living standards of our people. We are building an India where the physical and social infrastructure is world class and all citizens have an opportunity to excel.

"We are committed to leapfrog in our development cycle to uplift every Indian into a higher development trajectory. The results are there for all to see. In the last ten years, we have pulled 250 million people out of poverty. We are also ensuring that all our regulations and laws are as per global standards so that investors feel at home," he said.

Modi continued saying: "Simi-larly, I am told that Kuwait Vision 2035 focuses on transformation of the country by making the country an economic and connectivity hub. I also understand that a large number of infrastructure projects from airport terminal to sea-port to rail link. electricity transmission, renewable energy projects, and special economic zones

there are three weekly shows on Kuwait Television on Indian movies and actors," he said.

"Similarly, we share several attributes in our cuisine and culinary traditions. Centuries of people-to-people contact have also resulted in linguistic similarities and shared vocabulary. India's diversity and emphasis on peace, tolerance and coexistence resonate with the values of Kuwait's multicultural society. Recently, a Kuwaiti scholar translated Ramavana and Mahabharata in Arabic," Modi stressed.

The Indian prime minister boasted that the Indian community acts as a living bridge between the two countries. fostering a deep appreciation for Indian philosophy, music and performing arts, expressing pleasure to learn that a weekly Hindi language program has been started by Kuwait national radio titled 'Namaste Kuwait' this year.

India's tourism sector offers another dimension of soft power. With 43 UN-ESCO World Heritage sites, coupled with ongoing efforts to enhance visitor facilities. India provides a unique blend of history, culture, and natural beauty, he noted.

For a society like Kuwait, with which India shares a rich historical connection, India's tourism opportunities are an invitation to explore and deepen the shared cultural ties, he said.

He thanked His Highness the Amir and the Government of the State of Kuwait for their patronage of the Indian community and looking after their welfare and wellbeing.

He added that Indians in Kuwait, who are the largest expatriate group, have contributed immensely to the development of Kuwait as doctors, businessmen, construction workers, engineers, nurses and other professionals.

Elevate

"As we elevate the level of our relationship with Kuwait to a strategic partnership, I believe the role of the Indian community will only grow in importance. I am confident that Kuwaiti authorities recognize the immense contributions of this vibrant community and will continue to provide encouragement and support," he added.

Asked about Kuwaiti-Indian energy relations, the prime minister said energy is an important pillar of the bilateral partnership, estimating that last year, trade exchange crossed USD 10 billion, which reflects the deep trust and mutual benefit underpinning this partnership.

"Both nations have consistently ranked among the top ten trading partners in the energy sector. Indian companies actively engage in importing crude oil, LPG, and petroleum products from Kuwait while also exporting petroleum products to Kuwait. Currently, Kuwait stands as India's 6th largest crude supplier and 4th largest LPG supplier," he said.

to bestow His Highness the Amir with health and further success in leading Kuwait and its people.

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi and all the ministry staff on Friday extended warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of his assumption of power.

Minister Al-Wasmi told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that this dear occasion "reminds us of His Highness's blessed efforts and wise leadership that were reflected in the development and prosperity of the country."

He renewed his commitment and that of all employees of the Ministry of Awqaf to contribute effectively to achieving the aspirations of His Highness the Amir and to serve citizens and preserve Islamic values.

Security

Minister Al-Wasmi wished His Highness the Amir wellness and wished Kuwait further security and prosperity under his wise leadership. Minister of Social Affairs, Family

and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah on Friday extended her warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of his assumption of power.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Huwailah said that His Highness the Amir's directives have put the State of Kuwait on a steady path towards sustainable development in all fields.

She pointed out that His Highness the Amir directives place the citizen as the on Friday extended their warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of his assumption of power.

The Minister of Health, in a post on the "X" platform, wished His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad everlasting wellness and prayed to God to guide His Highness' steps in his blessed journey for the good and elevation of Kuwait and its people.

Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal along with the department staff have congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of assuming the leadership post.

The minister in a statement on Friday underscored the multiple achievements already made in the first year of the Amir's leadership.

His Highness the Amir has affirmed his concern for boosting national values and identity "as the fences that protect Kuwait and the Kuwaitis," he penned.

Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Saved Al-Tabtabaei and the ministry staff addressed heartfelt congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of ascending to power.

Al-Tabtabaei, in a statement to KUNA on Friday, affirmed his adher-ence to follow His Highness the Amir's suit, enlightened with his wisdom and unwavering support for promoting education as a basis for building the homeland, creating productive and competitive work force.

"We in the Ministry of Education where we uphold the responsibility to-

waitis in the f

She added that under His Highness the Amir's wise leadership, women have been guaranteed to play a major role in shaping the future of Kuwait in various economic, developmental, political and social fields, appreciating His Highness the Amir's unwavering support in empowering Kuwaiti women who have been and still are an active part of society.

Kuwaiti citizens feel proud under His Highness the Amir's wise rule, noted Al-Fassam, stressing that work will continue to implement His Highness the Amir's vision for a brighter and more comprehensive future.

Minister of Justice (judge) Nasser Al-Sumait on Friday addressed congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of "taking the emirate leadership and the helm of power in the country.'

The minister, in a press statement, prayed to His Almighty to bestow upon His Highness the Amir good health and wellbeing.

The Arab Parliament President Mohammad Al-Yamahi congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir's assumption of power.

In a statement to KUNA on Saturday, Al-Yamahi hailed the development and achievements Kuwait had seen under the wise leadership of His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad.

He wished His Highness the Amir a long healthy life, and more prosperity and development for Kuwait and its people.

Turkish ambassador congratulates Kuwait's Amir on 1st year in power

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: The Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez has extended heartfelt

to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of the first anniversary of His Highness as-

In a press Tuba Nur Sonmez statement, the

ambassador conveyed blessings to His Highness the Amir, and highlighted the

ongoing development of relations between Kuwait and Turkey.

Ambassador Sonmez said, "On behalf of the Turkish Embassy and myself, I would like to extend our congratulations and blessings to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on this special occasion.

The relationship between our two fraternal countries continues to grow stronger under the visionary leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan."

Ambassador Sonmez expressed her pride in witnessing the deepening ties between Turkey and Kuwait.

She highlighted the milestones achieved during His Highness the Amir's visit to Turkey on May 7, such as the signing of several agreements, which led to the establishment of a joint strategic dialogue mechanism.

The ambassador said, "In addition to celebrating the first anniversary of His Highness's leadership, the year also marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Kuwait.

With these thoughts in mind and prayers in our hearts, I wish His Highness continued success in his endeavors and the Kuwaiti people peace and prosperity.

I firmly believe that the fraternal bonds between our countries will only grow stronger, and strengthen our cooperation and solidarity under the wise leadership of our nations.'



LOCAL

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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

When nepotism eats away at nation's body!

"I ONCE believed that a culture of rejecting nepotism could start within families, spreading to schools, and eventually to workplaces, gradually expanding through society. However, I was reminded of a prevailing cultural belief," columnist Youssef Abdul Karim Al-Zankawi wrote for Al-Jarida daily.

"If my eyes love you, time will not harm you.' This mindset has led to the spread of social hypocrisy, which eventually manifested in administrative and professional hypocrisy, where people go to great lengths to please those in power, often at any cost.

"Over time, another proverb emerged: "Whoever hunts it will ruin his children," reinforcing the idea of "mukhamat" -- a concept which, in

simple terms, refers to looting or plundering.

"This principle, rooted in our behavior, suggests that what one acquires through mukhamat is essentially the property of someone else. "As a result, nepotism, likened

to this looting mentality, has taken hold of our administrative and economic systems. "When certain laws include

provisions allowing ministers to exempt cases from stipulated condi-

tions, such clauses are often the starting point for the spread of nepotism in both the public and financial sectors

"If you examine every corruption case that has made headlines, you'll discover that nepotism is often the root cause. It is evident that all our administrative, financial, and social issues -- along with our broader culture -stem from this epidemic.

"Without nepotism, we wouldn't have seen parachute appointments, nor would we have witnessed the seizing of lands, barns, and chalets.

"We wouldn't have had violations regarding government housing, exceptional pensions, forgery, duplication, and other corrupt practices that have flourished in our society, all because of nepotism.

"Personally, I despise nepotism because it undermines the law and devalues the principles of justice and equality.

'Nepotism elevates the ego of those who seek it, making them feel superior to others and giving them a false sense of entitlement to take what doesn't belong to them. Ironically, those who seek nepotism are often the same individuals who demand strict enforcement of laws for others who break them.

"During my time working in banking and as a daily columnist, I met several high-ranking officials, including the late Lieutenant General Mutafad Abdul Hamid Haji Abdul Rahim, Lieutenant General Mustafa Al-Zaabi, Lieutenant General Abdullah Muhanna, and Lieutenant General Thabet Muhanna.

"Despite this, I never asked any of them to assist me in securing special treatment or achieving personal gain. Instead, I would have asked them to expel me from their offices had I requested anything that went against the

law. "I also provided media-related services to the General Traffic Department, which was known to Lieutenant General Abdullah Muhanna, helping to revise and shorten road sign messages in Arabic and English to better serve my country.

"It seems that the rejection of nepotism has been passed down to my children. One of them, a doctor, refuses to accept nepotism even when it comes to assisting his own father. More than nine years ago, "I went to the nuclear medicine department at Mubarak Hospital to schedule a stress test as part of a heart examination.

"The receptionist told me the earliest appointment was in five months, to which I agreed. However, when she saw my name, she asked if I was related to Dr. soand-so.

"Upon confirming that he was my son, she suggested that he should intervene to bring the appointment forward. I responded that he would never break the law to favor me over other patients. I asked her to schedule the appointment as initially offered.

"Suddenly, my son appeared behind me and politely told the receptionist, "Please, do what my father says, even if it means waiting more than five months for the appointment.'

Also:

"The Arabic language is increasingly facing challenges in the field of scientific and academic research, particularly with the growing reliance on foreign journals and publishing in English at academic institutions in Kuwait, such as Kuwait University and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training," Dalal Anwar Al-Sharhan wrote for Al-Anba daily.

"As researchers are increasingly encouraged to publish in prestigious foreign journals as a standard of academic excellence, publishing in Arabic and Arabic scientific journals is becoming marginalized. This raises critical questions about the status of the Arabic language in science and its role in enriching the academic community

"While there is no doubt that English has become the global language of science and an effective tool for reaching a wider audience and promoting knowledge exchange, the overemphasis on publishing in English at the expense of Arabic risks marginalizing the cultural and scientific identity of Arab researchers.

"It also leads to a reduction in the scientific content available in Arabic. This brings forth an important question: Is abandoning publishing in Arabic the best solution to enhance research quality in the Arab world?

"The Arabic language is not just a tool for communication; it is a vessel for the cultural and civilizational identity of the Arab world.

"Taking pride in the Arabic language and enriching it with modern scientific terms and concepts strengthens its status and ensures its continued relevance in the face of scientific developments.

"Promoting scientific research in Arabic should, therefore, be seen as both a moral and cultural responsibility, not just an academic choice.

"Societies that neglect their mother tongue in scientific research risk losing a part of their identity, reducing science and knowledge to a domain reserved for a group of elites fluent in foreign languages.

"While some Arab scientific journals may have lower quality compared to global counterparts, abandoning them is not the solution.

- Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Kuwaiti Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Organizing Committee of Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji 26) Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi receives Iraqi Minister of Youth and Sports Ahmad Al-Mubarka.

Info Min receives Iraqi sports minister

Kuwaiti Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Organizing Committee of Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji 26) Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi received Iraqi Minister of Youth and Sports Ahmad Al-Mubarka, who is in Kuwait to attend the opening ceremony due on Saturday evening under the patronage of His Highness the Amir.

Minister Ăl-Mutairi welcomed the visit of the Iraqi

minister which represents the brotherly bilateral ties, considering such sporting events mark an opportunity to meet and work together to enhance the youth and sports fields between countries of the region.

He welcomed the Iraqi team to Kuwait, who will be participating in Khaleeji 26, considering the championship a brotherly gathering that brings people together from the eight participating countries. (KUNA)

Follow safety guidelines during Cup matches: KFF

Free entry for Mol staff, kids in 2 parks

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) has called on the public to adhere to safety guidelines while attending the 26th Gulf Cup matches, which are set to begin today, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The KFF emphasized the importance of following these instructions to ensure the safety and well-being of all attendees.

Key safety measures include familiarizing yourself with the main emergency exits near your seating area upon entering the stadium.

In case of an emergency, attendees are advised not to use the elevators, but instead follow the signs leading to the nearest emergency exit.

The KFF also urged cooperation with organizers and volunteers inside the stadium to ensure a smooth and safe journey to the assembly areas.

Additionally, the public was reminded to remain calm and avoid pushing or becoming nervous while exiting the stadium, as this could compromise safety for everyone.

KFF tackles three fires: This morning, Hawalli and Salmiya Central Firefighting Teams successfully contained a fire in an apartment building in the Hawalli area, ensuring no significant injuries occurred.

Firefighting teams also managed a factory fire in the Shuaiba area earlier today, again confirming no major injuries,

reports Al-Seyassah daily. On Friday evening, the General Fire Force announced that teams from Jahra, Jahra Crafts, Mishref, Sulaibikhat, and Istiqlal centers had brought a warehouse fire under control.

The blaze, which broke out in a building materials warehouse containing paints, wood and a blacksmith workshop, was extinguished without any significant injuries reported.

Free entry for Mol staff: In celebration of Arab Police Day, the General Department of Security Relations and Media has announced that all members of the Ministry of Interior, including military, civilian and professional personnel, retirees, and their families, are invited to enjoy free entry to Winter Wonderland and South Al-Sabahiya parks on Thursday, Dec 19 and Friday, Dec 20, reports Al-Anba daily.



Al-Zankawi

ARAB TIMES, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2024





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LONG LIVE INDO-KUWAIT RELATIONS

LOCAL



KUNA photo

First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah receives the Italian Minister of Defense Guido Crosseto and his delegation on his visit to Kuwait.

Kuwait, Italy keen on upgrading relations

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): countries. The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah on Friday held talks with the visiting Italian Minister of Defense Guido Crosseto on the evolving cooperation between the two

statement that the discussions were held when Minister Sheikh Fahad received the Italian minister and his accompanying delegation, currently paying an official visit to Kuwait.

The two sides exchanged views on The Ministry of Defense said in a current developments on the regional and international arenas, examined the developing mutual cooperation and the aspiration to elevate it to higher levels. Senior officials from the ministry attended the session.

News in Brief



Clothes distribution

Workers get winter attire

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Naser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah distributed winter clothing to a number of Municipal workers in Farwaniya Governorate, in collaboration with Kuwait Finance House (KFH).

According to a press release, this initiative is part of ongoing humanitarian efforts to support field workers in Kuwait.

Executive Director of Media and Government Relations at KFH Muhammad Al-Fares was present during the event, along with several KFH employees as well as Director of the Cleanliness Department at Farwaniya Municipality Muhammad Al-Jabaa

Director of Public Relations and Citizen Services in Farwaniya Governorate Hamed Al-Dabi highlighted Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser's interest in supporting charity and community initiatives reflects his commitment to reviving the spirit of social solidarity among the members of society.

He highlighted the governor's efforts to support initiatives that assist labor groups and further the humanitarian work for which the people of Kuwait are renowned.

Two die in accidents: Two people lost their lives in separate run-over accidents - one on the Coastal Road in Ahmadi and the other on the Sixth Ring Road opposite Farwaniya, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, when a run-over accident on the Coastal Road opposite Ahmadi was reported, securitymen and paramedics rushed to the location and saw that the motorist - a Kuwaiti citizen - was detained, and the victim - an expatriate - had succumbed to serious injuries. His corpse was transferred to the Forensic Medicine Department.

Also, another run-over accident occurred on the Sixth Ring Road, which resulted in the death of the victim, also an expatriate.

Kuwaiti honored for role in **cementing US-Mideast ties**

Proud to have Fawaz on our team: NUSACC

(KUNA): The National US-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) named on Friday its Associate Director Fawaz Al-Mudhaf, a Kuwaiti, one of the Middle East Policy Council's (MEPC) "40 Under 40"

leaders for his role in



contributions to our Cham- Fawaz Al-Mudhaf

ber, and he is very worthy of this recognition," NUSACC's President and CEO David Hamod said in a press re-

lease. "Our Chamber is deeply committed to capacity-building for young Arab leaders - in the USA and across the Arab world - and we are

WASHINGTON, Dec 21, very proud to have Fawaz on the team. Well done, Fawaz!"

According to the NUSACC, this distinction recognizes emerging leaders who have made significant impacts in strengthening US-Middle East relations.

For his part, Al-Mudhaf expressed pride in this honoring and vowed to continue work to bolster Arab-US commercial relations.

"I am humbled to be part of the Middle East Policy Council '40 Under 40'," he said.

"This accolade underscores the profound significance of strengthening US- Arab relations, a cause I am privileged to champion through my work at the National US-Arab Chamber of Commerce. I remain dedicated to leveraging this momentum to cultivate deeper partnerships and to drive enduring prosperity.'

Al-Mudhaf, based in New York City and Kuwait, serves as a key liaison for NUSACC between the United States and the 22 nations of the Arab world. He provides strategic advice to public and private sector leaders, fostering initiatives designed to stimulate trade and investment.

In his capacity as Associate Director at the National US-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC), Al-Mudhaf facilitates engagement with stakeholders across the United States and the MENA region.

As NUSACC's lead researcher, Al-Mudhaf delivers tailored research for US and Arab governments and companies, including small and medium-sized enterprises and new-to-market exporters and importers.

Ĥis contributions have been instrumental in fortifying commercial ties between the US and the Arab world, helping NUSACC earn the 2024 E Star Award - conferred by the President of the United States the highest honor that a US entity may receive for supporting America's exports.

The NUSACC is the only Chamber of its kind to receive this award since it was created six decades ago.

Al-Mudhaf earned his undergraduate degree from The Elliott School of International Affairs at The George Washington University, specializing in Conflict Resolution with a minor in International Business.

Kuwait, Thai views identical, ties extend 61 yrs

BANGKOK, Dec 21, (KUNA): Kuwait and Thailand held on Friday the first round of political talks on the level of the two sides' foreign ministries, and agreed on fostering a comprehensive strategic partnership in all domains.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia Affairs Ambassador Sameeh Hayat chaired Kuwait's delegation in the talks, while Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand Paisan Rupanichkij headed his country's group.

In a telephone call with KUNA, Hayat said the meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere that showed outstanding historic relations between the two sides extended over 61 years, noting views discussed with the Thai side were identical.

Both sides discussed, during the meeting, growing and distinguished strategic relations, and means of enhancing and developing them in all domains, in addition to sharing opinions on some international and regional issues of common concern.

In addition, they dealt with bilateral issues and means of strengthening technical, trade, investment and economic bonds, along pushing bilateral coordination and collaboration for wider horizons in all fields, it stated. They shared views on the developments in the Middle East region and northeast Asia, mainly coordination and collaboration in international arenas.

The Kuwaiti and Thai sides affirmed keenness on holding periodical coordination and consultation between the two ministries, and agreed on discussing details of establishing an inclusive strategic partnership in trade, investment, health, culture, science, renewable energy, oil, petrochemicals, economy and others, it noted.

They expressed hope for keeping expanding outstanding economic partnership between the two countries, in light of interest in enhancing cooperation in all fields.

Furthermore they agreed on the importance of health sector and main cooperative domains in the two countries that could be expanded as they are essential for development, sharing views, and enhancing growth, sustainability and global competitiveness.

The meeting featured a number of senior officials from both sides, including Kuwait's Minister Plenipotentiary Saleh Al-Sarawi and diplomatic attaché Bader Al-Jassem.



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SHRI. NARENDRA MODI Honourable Prime Minister of India

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Long live Indo-Kuwait friendship



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LOCAL

AI-Huwaila praises HH Amir's support

Empowering Kuwaiti women

By Fares Al-Abdan Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: The Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila stated that the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad's assumption of power is a momentous national occasion,

the inspiring nation with his noble directives aimed at achieving sustainable development and advancing Kuwait. In a press state-

ment, the minister Dr. Al-Huwaila explained that His

Highness's wise vision has set Kuwait on a steady course toward the future, focusing on strengthening national values and supporting sustainable development while advancing Kuwaiti society in all sectors.

The moment she took the oath before His Highness the Amir marked the beginning of a new era, where she assumed a great respon-

sibility to serve both the nation and its citizens. The ministry draws inspiration from His Highness's esteemed directives, and is dedicated to translating them into practical steps that will serve Kuwaiti society and elevate the quality of services provided.

Dr. Al-Huwaila expressed her pride in His Highness the Amir's emphasis on the importance of the upcoming stage, stress-ing that setting priorities, unifying efforts, and harnessing energies to achieve Kuwait's development vision form the core of the ministry's work. She affirmed that the ministry remains committed to working as one cohesive team to fulfill the aspirations of the wise leadership.

curity, stability, and prosperity of Kuwait.

said His Highness the Amir has consistently emphasized the vital role of women in the development and progress of society, adding that he places great importance on enhancing the status of Kuwaiti women and empowering them in various fields, including occupying senior positions.

Dr. Al-Huwaila highlighted that His Highness's wise directives support the achievement of equal opportunities and social justice for empowering women to hold prominent roles in the country, adding that this approach reflects the leadership's deep belief in the vital role women play as major partners in the nation's development and in achieving its national goals.

Dr. Al-Huwaila asked God for His Highness's continued protection and for the se-

Regarding empowerment of women, she



IOM Kuwait and the Embassy of the Philippines unite for a social painting event on International Migrants Day

IOM Kuwait and Embassy of the Philippines celebrate International Migrants Day with social painting event

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: In celebration of International Migrants Day, IOM Kuwait, in partnership with the Embassy of the Philippines, hosted a social painting event under this year's theme, "Every Step." The event brought together individuals from various sectors and walks of life, highlighting the diverse and inclusive spirit of the migrant community in Kuwait.

The theme "Every Step" emphasizes that every step in the migration process is crucial and deserves attention.Participants in the event included community members from the medical, construction, retail, domestic, and other sectors, all contributing to a collective artwork that symbolizes unity and shared progress.

The Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Mr. Jose A. Cabrera III said, "The Embassy greatly appreciates this opportunity to work in partnership with IOM Kuwait to raise awareness of the role and contribution of migrants in the development and prosperity of receiving states.'

'The Embassy also greatly appreciates measures implemented by the Kuwaiti Government that benefit expatriates and workers in Kuwait and therefore seeks to continue dialogue and cooperation, especially for programs and activities that strengthen harmonious and mutually beneficial relations between migrant workers and employers", he added.

Mazen AboulHosn, IOM Chief of Mission in Kuwait said"Today, we celebrate the invaluable contributions of migrants to our societies. This event is a testament to the power of art in bringing people together and fostering understanding. Every step taken by a migrant is a step towards a brighter future for

all. It is our pleasure to partner with the Embassy of the Philippines to mark this important day.'

The social painting event not only celebrated the artistic talents of the migrant community but also served as a platform to raise awareness about the benefits of regular migration pathways. By supporting initiatives like this, IOM Kuwait and its partners aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for migrants, ensuring their rights are protected and their contributions recognized.

Migration is a natural and integral part of the human story, contributing to cultural exchange, economic growth, and innovation. Well-managed migration benefits both migrants and the communities they move to, transforming lives and fostering development.

Yemeni Presidential Council lauds Kuwait's generous support

ADEN, Dec 21, (KUNA): Member of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council Aidarous Al-Zubaidi lauded Kuwait's supportive stances and humanitarian and developmental aid for Yemeni people.

The Yemeni state news agency (Saba) reported that this came during Al-Zubaidi's meeting with the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Yemen Falah Al-Hajraf to discuss bilateral relations between the two countries and developments in the Yemen and the region. Al-Zubaidi expressed gratitude to Kuwait

for its generous aid and continuous support to Yemen to restore stability and achieve sustainable development. He also appreciated Kuwait's its unlimited backing for Yemeni government's efforts to revamp the infrastructures which were destroyed by the war.

The meeting reviewed ways to increase Kuwaiti support for the Yemeni people in the areas of development and infrastructure overhauling.

For his part, Ambassador Al-Hajraf affirmed the State of Kuwait's continued support for Yemen at this critical stage and enhancing cooperation with the government in various sectors.





Group photo of ambassadors and guests.

Peru embassy in Kuwait hosts exhibition on Great Inca Road

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): Peru Embassy in Kuwait, in cooperation with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), along with Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Cent-

World Heritage List as one of the international landmarks that require protection and preservation.

He stressed the importance of such exhibitions in enhancing cultural and herit-

6

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er, organized on Thursday an exhibition on the Qhapaq Nan, Great Inca Road (Royal road) of the pre-Colombian South America era.

The exhibition of Qhapaq Nan Inca Road, included 35 historic photographs about the road, which is considered one of the most important human achievements in the 16th century.

NCCAL Secretary-General Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar, said in a press statement on the sidelines of the fair opening at Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center that this exhibition sheds light on one of the greatest trade routes in the world, which extends over a distance of about 40,000 kilometers.

Al-Jassar added that the road, which dates back more than three thousand years, has been included on the UNESCO

age awareness, pointing out the State of Kuwait's interest in registering its heritage sites on the World Heritage List. He added, "We are in the process of

studying how to register Kuwaiti sites in the World Heritage". He underlined that "visiting such exhibitions is an important opportunity to gain knowledge and experience."

Al-Jassar invited the Kuwaiti public and residents to visit the exhibition that tells the story of the "Great Inca Road" and provides a rich experience that highlights the ancient cultural and historical heritage.

Considered one of the most impressive engineering works in history, it stretches into six modern-day countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador, as well as Peru.



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LOCAL

'Al-khaleej diwan' workshops kick off

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): The four-day "Alkhaleej diwan" workshops kicked started on Friday -- an activity coinciding with the Gulf Cup tournament.

The activity is co-organized by the Public Authority for Youth and the non-profiting "Harvard diwan" institution.

The authority acting director general, Abdullah Al-Adwani, said in a statement on behalf the Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, affirmed that the gathering "focuses on culture, arts, tasks by the youth who constitute a soft power." Up to 120 lecturers from Gulf States will address the event, he said.

Meanwhile, Saad Al-Tami, the executive manager of the "diwan" said the activity brings together the GCC citizens under the umbrella of dialogue and cooperation thus depicting the Gulf unity patriotism.'

The 'Harvard diwan' groups experts, academics, decision makers and students from various Arab countries to discuss vital issues in the political and cultural realms, Tami said.

Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) is participating in "Alkhaleej diwan" that opened on Friday under sponsorship of the Minister of Information, Minister of Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

The event features various cultural, social and technological activities and workshops coinciding with Kuwait's hosting of the Gulf Cup tournament.

The "diwan," co-organized by the Public Authority for Youth and "Harvard diwan" is a platform that groups media figures and the intelligentsia from various Arab countries.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait Al

It called on drivers to take responsibility for adhering to traffic rules to create a safer road environment for everyone.

Meanwhile, with the recent rainfall, some areas witnessed a decrease in reckless driving, due to the new measures implemented by the Ministry of Interior. These measures include referring reckless drivers to Central Prison after filing cases for damaging state property and seizing their vehicles. The streets have been notably free of such incidents because of the increased security presence and stricter penalties for reckless driving violations.

Indian PM

He hoped that his meetings with Kuwaiti officials would be an opportunity to chalk out a roadmap for a futuristic partnership for the benefit of the people of India and Kuwait and the region at large.

Modi added his visit will help to strengthen and reinforce the special ties and bonds of friendship between the people of India and Kuwait.

Modi's visit assumes importance as it is coming after 43 years as the last Indian Prime Minister to visit Kuwait was Indira Gandhi in 1981.

India and Kuwait have strong trade, investment, energy and people-topeople relationship and the current visit is to cement the existing ones and explore new avenues of cooperation. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya paid a visit to India on December 4 and held extensive talks with his Indian counterpart S. Jaishankar.

Kuwait welcomes

Similarly, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jassem Albudaiwi applauded on Saturday a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly requesting a consultative opinion from the International Court of Justice regarding Israel's adherence to the UN activities toward the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The GCC secretary general said in a press statement that the adoption of this resolution clearly mirrors international consensus on supporting the Palestinian people in the face of the challenges. It also backs the Palestinian people's legitimate rights to determine their destiny and estabmit's stance on ending the Israeli occupation, supporting sovereignty of the Palestinian people on all the occupied territories, urging states to pursue recognition of the State of Palestine, conducting a collective measure to attain a lasting peace that ensures the independent Palestinian state to the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, according to the Arab Peace Initiative and the international legitimacy resolutions.

Tributes pour

Additionally, His Highness Sheikh Meshal received congratulations from Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The Prime Minister expressed his honor in addressing His Highness on behalf of himself and his fellow ministers, extending heartfelt congratulations on this milestone. He conveyed admiration for the Amir as Kuwait celebrates this important anniversary while welcoming a new year filled with promise. The Prime Minister highlighted His Highness's efforts in promoting comprehensive development and national renaissance, pledging to adhere to the Amir's guidance in fulfilling their national duties.

Moreover, on Friday, His Highness Sheikh Meshal received a congratulatory message from Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In his message, Sheikh Mubarak praised Kuwait's development under the Amir's leadership and acknowledged his significant efforts to serve the nation. He expressed hopes for continued prosperity while wishing His Highness a long and healthy life. The Amir responded with gratitude for Sheikh Mubarak's kind sentiments.

His Highness Sheikh Meshal also received congratulations from Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on this anniversary. In his message, Sheikh Mohammad commended Kuwait's development under His Highness's leadership and recognized his genuine efforts to serve the Kuwaiti people while wishing for continued progress. The Amir reciprocated by expressing appreciation for Sheikh Dr. Mohammad's thoughtful words.

Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Meshal received congratulations from Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on this significant milestone. In his message, Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf reflected on how this occasion symbolizes an era sary. In a statement from the Ministry of Defense, Sheikh Fahad expressed wishes for more prosperity and development for Kuwait under His Highness's leadership while hoping for a long and healthy life for the Amir. He reaffirmed his commitment to serving the country and ensuring its security. Additionally, His Highness Sheikh

Meshal received a congratulatory cable from Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al Said on Friday, celebrating his first year in power. Sultan Haitham expressed hopes for continued prosperity in Kuwait under His Highness's leadership while wishing him a long healthy life. In response, His Highness sent a cable back expressing gratitude for Sultan Haitham's kind sentiments.

His Highness also received a congratulatory cable from Omani Deputy Prime Minister Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said regarding this anniversary. He wished for ongoing prosperity under His Highness's wise leadership along with good health for him. The Amir reciprocated by expressing appreciation for Fahd bin Mahmoud's kind feelings while wishing him a long healthy life as well.

Kuwait champions

She said that the Fifth Working Group held extensive discussions on pivotal issues, including tracking and recovering assets in insolvency procedures and determining the law applicable to those procedures, with a focus on objectives and formulating appropriate legal definitions.

The team also discussed the law of the state of the insolvency court, including the exceptions contained therein, and the implications of its application, added Al-Obaidi, saying the meetings also touched on payment systems, clearing and settlement, and financial markets subject to regulatory regulation.

Discussions also included lock-in compensation under eligible financial contracts, whether inside or outside regulated systems, in addition to recognizing the effects of the law of the state of the insolvency court and other laws applied by foreign courts.

Al-Obaidi stressed that these issues, despite their complexity, are of great importance for enhancing the stability of the legal and economic systems at the local and international levels.

She pointed out that such discussions contribute to reaching international consensus on complex legal issues, which supports the stability of commercial markets and helps meet the challenges of



Minister Al-Mutairi receives Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani, the head of the Qatari Olympic Commitee at Kuwait International Airport.



Minister of Youth receives Deputy Chairman of the General Sports Authority in the Kingdom of Bahrain Sheikh Salman bin Mohammed Al Khalifa.



KUNA photos Minister of State receives Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Minister of Sports and Youth in the State of Qatar.

Al-Mutairi highlights regional unity

Kuwait welcomes Qatari and Bahraini delegates for Khaleeji 26 inauguration

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Organizing Committee of Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji 26) Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi received on Saturday at Kuwait International Airport the head of the Qatari Olympic Commitee Sheikh Joan bin Hamad Al-Thani on the occasion of his visit to attend the tournament inauguration due later today.

In a press statement, Minister Al-Mutairi said that Kuwait's hosting of this Gulf sports event would contribute to boosting joint youth and sports action between Kuwait and the other states of the region. He welcomed Sheikh Joan's gracious visit that embodies the brotherly relations between the two states.

The reception at the airport was attended by the deputy chairperson of the tournament steering committee and Chairman of Kuwait Football Association Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yusuf Al-Sabah, the Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Bashar Abdullah, the Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Ali Abdullah Al-Mahmoud and members of the steering committee.

In another reception on Saturday, Minister Al-Mutairi greeted Sheikh Salman bin Mohammad Al Khalifa, Deputy Chairman of Bahrain's General Sports Authority and head of the Bahraini delegation. Minister Al-Mutairi underscored the championship's role in fostering unity and enhancing joint efforts among Gulf states.

On Friday, the Minister also welcomed Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Qatar's Minister of Sport and Youth, who visited Kuwait to attend the Gulf Cup inauguration. He reiterated that these sports gatherings offer opportunities to build stronger ties and further shared youth and sports objectives across the region.



lish an independent state, Albudaiwi stated.

He indicated at the final declaration of the 45th session of the GCC Supreme Council (the GCC Summit), held in December 2024, regarding the Palestinian cause as the nation's central question.

Albudaiwi noted the GCC sum-

of achievements made possible through His Highness's wise leadership. The Amir replied with gratitude for Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf's kind words.

First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah also extended congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Meshal on this annivereconomic globalization.

Al-Obaidi praised the role played by the Legal Advice and Legislation Department in modernizing national legislation, explaining that Kuwait always seeks to harmonize its laws with international best practices, especially in the areas of bankruptcy, insolvency and regulation of financial markets.



Joint Operations (Saudi Arabian Chevron Inc. / Kuwait Gulf Oil Company), announces the undermentioned Public Tenders for procurement of materials.

Kuwaiti and Saudi Merchants, registered with either Company wishing to participate in any of the under-mentioned Tenders are invited to collect the Tender documents from Purchasing Section, Purchasing & Logistic Division, Administration Building, Ground Floor, Joint Operations, Wafra, during the official working hours from **22 DEC 2024** up to **9 JAN 2025** for a non-refundable fee mentioned against each tender. Tender Fees to be deposited in the National bank of Kuwait (NBK) Account No. 1001132057. Saudi Suppliers can collect the tender documents from Saudi Arabian Chevron office in Al-Khobar Telephone No.: (013) 8645104 - Fax No.: (013) 8985436

The closing date for the following Tenders from S.NO. 1 to S.NO. 11 will be on TUESDAY, 21 JAN 2025 @ 09:00 AM. and for the tender S.NO. 12 will be on TUESDAY, 4 FEB 2025 @ 09:00 AM

S.NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS	FEES(KD)
1	027826-R1	S/F YOKOGAWA SCADA PLC	5
2	027846-R1	S/F ZEECO FLARE SYSTEM	35
3	028876	PRODUCTION MANIFOLD ASSEMBLY	25
4	028950	OIL IMMERSED TRANSFORMER	15
5	028951	PROGRAMMABLE LOGIC CONTROLLER	25
6	029025	OIL ANALYZER	15
7	029026	CHEMICAL INJECTION PACKAGE	35
8	029027	RECIRCULATION VALVE, SCHROEDAHL OR EQUIVALENT	5
9	029275	MISC SPARE PARTS (WEATHERFORD - EPRODUCTION SOLUTIONS)	25
10	029556	PIPES HDPE AND ACCESSORIES	35
11	029866	S/F SULZER PUMP	5
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Notes: Gate Passes are required for Suppliers entering JO-Wafra Administrative Offices to collect the tender document and gate pass processing time is 48 hours. Please fill request for gate pass along with legible copies of Authorization letter, Civil ID, Car Registration, Supplier Registration (KGOC or SAC) to e-mail **HBJH@chevron.com** and **CBMS@chevron.com** at least 48 hours prior to arrival.

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INTERNATIONAL

Three separate requests by investigation team dodged

South Korean investigators seek to quiz reluctant president

SEOUL, Dec 21, (AP): South Korean investigators again sought to question impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol over his Dec. 3 declaration of martial law, summoning him for questioning on Christmas Day despite his repeated refusal to cooperate.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and military authorities into the illconceived power grab that lasted only a few hours, said it plans to question Yoon on charges of abuse of authority and orchestrating a rebellion.

Yoon, whose presidential powers have been suspended since the opposition-controlled National Assembly impeached him on Dec. 14, has so far dodged three separate requests by the joint investigation team and public prosecutors to appear for questioning while also blocking searches of his office.

It's not clear what investigators can do if Yoon continues to reject their demands. Under the country's laws, locations potentially linked to military secrets cannot be seized or searched without the consent of the person in charge, and it's unlikely that Yoon will voluntarily leave his residence if he faces of being compelled to appear.

Yoon is focusing on defending himself at the Constitutional Court, which following his impeachment will decide whether to remove him from office or reinstate his powers.

Yoon's martial law decree and parliamentary impeachment have triggered a political storm, disrupting state affairs, halting high-level diplomacy and sending shockwaves through financial markets at a time when the country was already grappling with a faltering economy.

The country's acting leader, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, and other officials have tried to reassure allies and diplomatic partners that things are returning to normal, but tensions between rival political parties are only escalating as they clash over government policies and the appointments of new justices to the Constitutional



Protesters carry a caricature of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol during a rally demanding his arrest in Seoul, South Korea, Saturday, Dec. 21, 2024. The sign with red letters reads, 'Rebellion leader.' (AP)

Court, which has three vacant spots. ers involved in the attempt to enforce Authorities have already arrested the martial law decree, which harkened

Yoon's defense minister, police chief and several other military command-

back to the days of authoritarian leaders the country hasn't seen since the

Schumer said. The final product was the third attempt from Johnson, the beleaguered House speaker, to achieve one of the basic requirements of the federal government - keeping it open. And it raised stark questions about whether Johnson will be able to keep his job, in the face of angry GOP colleagues, and work alongside Trump and billionaire ally Elon Musk, who called the legislative plays from afar. Trump's last-minute demand was almost an impossible ask, and Johnson had almost no choice but to work around his pressure for a debt ceiling increase. The speaker knew there

Yoon and his military leadership have been accused of attempting to block parliament from voting to end martial law by sending hundreds of heavily armed troops to encircle the National Assembly. Lawmakers who managed to get in unanimously voted 190-0 to lift martial law. Yoon says the troops were there to maintain order.

Kwak Jong-keun, the now arrested commander of the Army Special Warfare Command, testified in parliament that Yoon had asked for his troops to "quickly destroy the door and drag out the lawmakers who are inside" the Assembly's main chamber where the vote occurred. Kwak said he did not carry out Yoon's orders.

Yoon has also been accused of ordering defense intelligence officials to detain key politicians, including opposition leader Lee Jae-myung, National Assembly speaker Woo Won Shik and the ex-leader of his own conservative party, Han Dong-hun, according to a high-ranking intelligence official and Han himself, a reformist who sup-

ported investigations into corruption allegations against first lady Kim Keon Hee

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The joint investigation team also on Friday obtained a court warrant to formally arrest Maj. Gen. Moon Sangho, commander of the Defense Intelligence Command, who was detained this week over suspicions that he sent troops to the National Election Commission in Gwacheon city after Yoon declared martial law.

Yoon defended his decision for troops to be deployed at the election commission as other forces were encircling the National Assembly. He claimed the troop deployment was necessary in order to investigate supposed vulnerabilities to the commission's computer systems potentially affecting credibility of election results.

Yoon's failure to offer any evidence in support of his claims raised concerns that he was endorsing conspiracy theories from right-wing YouTube channels that April's parliamentary elections were rigged.

Death toll rises to 5, more than 200 injured

Germans mourn Christmas market attack



The Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz, center, visits a Christmas Market, where a car drove into a crowd on Friday evening, in Magdeburg, Germany, Saturday, Dec. 21, 2024. (AP)

MAGDEBURG, Germany, Dec 21, (AP): Germans on Saturday mourned both the victims and their shaken sense of security after a Saudi doctor intentionally drove into a Christmas market teeming with holiday shoppers, killing at least five people, including a small child, and wounding at least 200 others.

Authorities arrested a 50-year-old man at the site of the attack in Magdeburg on Friday evening and took him into custody for questioning. He has lived in Germany since 2006, practicing medicine in Bernburg, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Magdeburg. officials said.

The state governor, Reiner Haseloff, told reporters

the victims.

There were still no answers Saturday as to what motivated the man to drive his black BMW into a crowd in the eastern German city.

Describing himself as a former Muslim, the suspect shared dozens of tweets and retweets daily focusing on anti-Islam themes, criticizing the religion and congratulating Muslims who left the faith.

He also accused German authorities of failing to do enough to combat what he said was the "Islamism of Europe." Some described him as an activist who helped Saudi women flee their homeland. He has also voiced support for the far-right and anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. Haseloff said Friday that authorities believed the man acted alone. The violence shocked Germany and the city, bringing its mayor to the verge of tears and marring a festive event that's part of a centuries-old German tradition. It prompted several other German towns to cancel their weekend Christmas markets as a precaution and out of solidarity with Magdeburg's loss. Berlin kept its markets open but has increased its police presence at them. Germany has suffered a string of extremist attacks in recent years, including a knife attack that killed three people and wounded eight at a festival in the western city of Solingen in August.

Debt ceiling debate pushed to 2025

Government funding bill clears Congress, averting a shutdown

WASHINGTON, Dec 21, (AP): Facing a government shutdown deadline, the Senate rushed through final passage early Saturday of a bipartisan plan that would temporarily fund federal operations and disaster aid, dropping President-elect Donald Trump's demands for a debt limit increase into the new year.

House Speaker Mike Johnson had insisted Congress would "meet our obligations" and not allow federal operations to shutter ahead of the Christmas holiday season. But the day's outcome was uncertain after Trump doubled down on his insistence that a debt ceiling increase be included in any deal - if not, he said in an early morning post, let the closures "start now."

The House approved Johnson's new bill overwhelmingly, 366-34. The Senate worked into the night to pass it, 85-11, just after the deadline. At midnight, the White House said it had ceased shutdown preparations.

"This is a good outcome for the country," Johnson said after the House vote, adding he had spoken with Trump and the president-elect "was certainly happy about this outcome, as well."

President Joe Biden, who has played a less public role in the process throughout a turbulent week, was expected to sign the measure into law Saturday "There will be no government shut-

down," Senate Majority Leader Chuck page package would fund the government at current levels through March 14 and add \$100 billion in disaster aid and \$10 billion in agricultural assistance to farmers. debt ceiling, which GOP leaders told lawmakers would be debated as part of their tax and border packages in the new year. Republicans made a socalled handshake agreement to raise



Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, talks to reporters after passing the funding bill to avert the government shutdown at the Capitol in Washington, Friday, Dec. 20, 2024. (AP)

wouldn't be enough support within the GOP majority to pass any funding package, since many Republican 10 years. deficit hawks prefer to slash the federal government and certainly wouldn't al-

low more debt. Instead, the Republicans, who will have full control of the White House, House and Senate next year, with big plans for tax cuts and other priorities, are showing they must routinely rely on Democrats for the votes needed to keep up with the routine operations of governing.

the debt limit at that time while also cutting \$2.5 trillion in spending over

It's essentially the same deal that flopped the night before in a spectacular setback - opposed by most Democrats and some of the most conservative Republicans - minus Trump's debt ceiling demand.

But it's far smaller than the original bipartisan accord Johnson struck with Democratic and Republican leaders - a 1,500-page bill that Trump and Musk rejected, forcing him to start over. It

that the death toll rose to five from a previous figure of two and that more than 200 people in total were injured.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that nearly 40 of them "are so seriously injured that we must be very worried about them.

Several German media outlets identified the suspect as Taleb A., withholding his last name in line with privacy laws, and reported that he was a specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy.

Mourners lit candles and placed flowers outside a church near the market on the cold and gloomy day. Several people stopped and cried. A Berlin church choir whose members witnessed a previous Christmas market attack in 2016 sang Amazing Grace, a hymn about God's mercy, offering their prayers and solidarity with

Macron tours devastation

"So is this a Republican bill or a Democrat bill?" scoffed Musk on social media ahead of the vote. The drastically slimmed-down 118-

Gone is Trump's demand to lift the

was stuffed with a long list of other bills - including much-derided pay raises for lawmakers - but also other measures with broad bipartisan support that now have a tougher path to becoming law.

House Democrats were cool to the latest effort after Johnson reneged on the hard-fought bipartisan compromise.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, said it looked like Musk, the wealthiest man in the world, was calling the shots for Trump and Republicans.

Move could shake up UK politics

Elon Musk considers funding **Crowds in Mayotte vent frustration with cyclone response** Nigel Farage's populist party MIRERENI, Mayotte, Dec 21, (AP):

LONDON, Dec 21, (AP): It's a photo that sent a tremor through British politics: Elon Musk flanked by British politician Nigel Farage and a wealthy backer, in front of a gilt-framed paint-ing of a young Donald Trump.

Taken this week at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, the image suggested that Musk, a key player in the incoming U.S. administration, could soon turn his disruptive attention to the U.K.

Farage, Trump's highest-profile British champion, confirmed talks are underway about Musk making a hefty donation to Farage's party Reform U.K. The Times of London reported it could be as much as \$100 million, which would be far and away the largest political donation in U.K. history. The reports have sparked calls for Britain's rules on political donations to be tightened - quickly.

"We did discuss money," Farage told broadcaster GB News after the meeting with Musk. "That's a negotiation we will go back and have again. He is not against giving us money. He hasn't fully decided whether he will.'

Britain has strict limits on how much political parties can spend on elections, but they can accept unlimited donations, as long as the donors are U.K. voters or companies registered in Britain. Musk's social network X has a British arm, Twitter U.K. Ltd., with a registered address in London.

Critics say that is a loophole that allows foreign influence in U.K. politics. The voting watchdog, the Electoral Commission, is calling for changes including limiting the amount a company can donate, so that it can't put in more money than it earns in Britain.

"It's crucial that U.K. voters have trust in the financing of our political system," the commission's chief



Reform UK leader Nigel Farage speaks during the New York Young Republican Člub's annual gala at Cipriani Wall Street, on Dec. 15, 2024, in New York. (AP)

executive Vijay Rangarajan told The Guardian. "The system needs strengthening, and we have been calling for changes to the law since 2013, to protect the electoral system from foreign interference.'

Britain's center-left Labour Party pledged during the summer election campaign to tighten the rules on political donations, though legislation is not scheduled in the coming year. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's spokesman Dave Pares said Wednesday that work is already underway to "reinforce existing safeguards" against "impermissible proxy donations.'

Both the Labour government and the right-of-center opposition Conservatives are trying to figure out how to deal with Musk, who has taken a keen interest in the U.K. - and seemingly formed a strong dislike for Starmer.

Crowds in Mayotte vented their frustration at French President Emmanuel Macron, with some booing, as he toured destruction wrought by the strongest cyclone to hit the French territory in nearly a century.

Particularly tense scenes on Thursday underscored the discontent that many residents of the archipelago in the Indian Ocean feel toward their government, based about 8,000 kilometers (5,000 miles) away in Paris.

The people of Mayotte, the poorest department in France, have previously said they suffer from underinvestment and neglect by the government. Now, they are expressing disappointment with the response to Cyclone Chido, which hit Saturday.

The storm has devastated entire neighborhoods and caused an unknown number of deaths, as many people ignored warnings, thinking the



A drone view of the Barakani, Mayotte, informal settlement, Saturday, Dec. 21, 2024. (AP)

storm wouldn't be so extreme. Authorities have said hundreds or possibly thousands may be dead, but the official toll rose to 35 on Friday

In the morning, Macron visited a neighborhood in Tsingoni on Mayotte's main island, where people remain without access to drinking water or phone service nearly a week after the storm

As he walked through the area, some shouted: "We want water, we want water." Others, however, offered him a warmer welcome, posing for selfies with the French leader and showing him their children.

But the night before, Macron was met with boos from dozens of residents in Pamandzi on another nearby island.

As people expressed frustration at the slow pace of aid efforts, Macron grabbed a microphone and became angry

Moving towards the crowd, he said: "I have nothing to do with the cyclone, you can blame me, it wasn't me!"

Macron, who is known for his appetite for debate and for confronting people who are angry at him, vacillated between acknowledging the hardship and pushing back against criticism.

Philippine president's approval, trust ratings dip



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is seen on an electronic board as he speaks during the 89th anniversary of the Armed Forces of the Philippines at military headquarters Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, Philippines on Friday, Dec. 20, 2024. (AP)

MANILA, Dec 21, (Agencies): The approval and trust ratings of Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos and Vice President Sara Duterte dropped in November, according to the latest national survey released Saturday.

An independent survey by Pulse Asia Inc., conducted from Nov. 26 to Dec. 3 this year with 2,400 people aged 18 and above, found that 48 percent of the respondents approved of Marcos' performance, down from the 50 rating he earned in the September survey. Marcos' trust rating also dipped to 47 percent in November from 50 in September.

Duterte's approval rating was 50 percent in November, lower than the 60 percent rating she received in September. Her trust rating fell to 49 percent from 61 in September.

Meanwhile, China urged the Philippines on Friday to immediately halt "provocative acts" on the heels of a Philippine aircraft's breach of the air space over the island of Huangyan in the South China Sea.

Spokesperson of the Chinese Coast Guards, Liu Dejun, said in a statement that the C-208 plane "illegally ventured" into the island airspace, and that the Chinese Coast Guards closely monitored its movements in the skies.

This island is a Chinese territory since a long time ago, he said, accusing Manila of violating China's sovereignty, warning that such an incident may lead to unpredictable developments

Jitters have been high between the two regional nations over rights in the South China Sea.



Demonstrated a high level of readiness

KFH concludes crisis management simulation exercise

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Kuwait Finance House (KFH), through the Business Continuity Management Team in the Group's Risk Sector, concluded one of the largest simulation exercises within its annual activities schedule, which discussed many important scenarios related to the geopolitical situation that the region is going through, the role of the crisis team and ways to deal with these circumstances in cooperation and coordination with KFH's vital departments.

With the support of the executive management, the exercise was carried out, which is based on the experience of simulating exposure to exceptional circumstances as a

result of geopolitical repercussions and developments at the regional and global levels, and the adoption of mechanisms and means to deal quickly and deal positively with them, while identifying and mobilizing all capabilities, material and human, which ultimately results in success in facing emergencies, overcoming crises, achieving continuity for the bank's vital business, in addition to enhancing the operational flexibility of KFH.

The exercise provided an opportunity to emphasize the readiness of the plans developed on a professional basis and the high-value operational considerations of the work system, and to emphasize adherence



Part of the meeting.

to clear controls and instructions ac- in the harshest circumstances and cording to regulatory determinants regarding various developments.

Therefore, experts in this type of exercise are considered one of the most important means of enhancing the ability to recover, in addition to being the most prominent tool to confirm compliance with the requirements of the Central Bank of Kuwait, which in turn supports banks' preparations to deal with crises.

KFH builds its business and activities at the group level on the basis of its precautionary policy, taking into account various economic and geopolitical developments and developments, and dealing with them in order to reduce any possible negative effects on the business, in a way that also ensures improving the qual-

ity of assets and preserving their values, rationalizing expenses, and careful study of markets and targeted activities from all aspects to reduce any risks, with the exit from areas that require high allocations, or may be exposed to severe fluctuations from the repercussions of potential crises.

Constant risk assessment and scenarios to deal with them will enhance efficiency, innovation and growth, provide a safe and scalable environment, monitor market movements, support the ability to always establish quality performance, and develop action plans to develop a strict credit policy with improved asset management.

Burgan Bank receives CBK's 'approval' to acquire 100% stake in Bahrain's UGB

Transaction expected to be completed by Q1'25

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Burgan Bank announced that it has obtained the final approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) to acquire 100% stake in United Gulf Bank (UGB), a licensed conventional wholesale bank headquartered in Bahrain. The execution of this transaction remains subject to closing formalities that are expected to be completed by the first quarter of 2025 (Q1'25).

The purchase price of this transaction has been settled at USD 190 million, which roughly translates to 1.0x of UGB's current shareholders' equity or book value. This acquisition is expected to



Tony Daher - Group Chief Executive Officer at Burgan Bank

have an impact of 60 to 70 basis points on Burgan Bank's regulatory capital ratios, predominantly due to the consolidation of UGB's assets. The final impact would be determined at the closing of shares' transfer. It is worth mentioning that UGB has a 60% stake in Kamco Investment Company (Kamco Invest).

Mr. Tony Daher, Group Chief Executive Officer at Burgan Bank, said: "The 100% acquisition of UGB aligns with the Bank's new asset reallocation strategy and efforts to build newand diversified revenue streams. This transactionwould benefit Burgan by provid-ing access to KAMCO Invest's platform to further drive its noninterest income. Additionally, it will help expand the Bank's footprint across the GCC region while contributing to bolstering potential revenues and synergies through UGB's banking license.'

Mr. Daher emphasized that the Bank's ongoing efforts to achieve sustainable growth and implement expansion plans are guided mainly by its vision to become the most modern and progressive bank in Kuwait. This vision is driven by a focus on key strategic pillars, including asset reallocation, embracing digital transformation, investing in human capital development, and adhering to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards in order to deliver an outstanding banking experience that lives up to customers' aspirations and meets their needs.

It serves to note thatin June 2024, Burgan Bank announced that it had received CBK's initial approval to engage with Bahrain's regulatory authorities regarding the acquisition of a100% stake in UGB. Shortly thereafter, the Bank secured a no-objection from the Central Bank of Bahrain in August 2024, followed by final approval from CBK. The transaction is expected to be finalized during the first three months of 2025.

Other Voices US: Europe, buy more gas or else ...

By Kamel Al-Harami Independent Oil Analyst

A SIMPLE but clear message is coming from the new U.S. administration that is set to take power soon: Europe must buy more American gas, or face the threat of increased tariffs on European goods and ser-

vices. This is happening despite Europe being the largest buyer of U.S. oil and gas, with even greater opportunities emerging after the European Al-Harami

Union's boycott of Russian energy. However, the U.S. is pushing for even more, even though it cannot significantly increase crude production at the moment and is dealing with its own tight supply issues in the gas market.

The EU is desperate to avoid a trade war and the imposition of tariffs, which would be devastating, especially considering the U.S. is the world's biggest economic force. There is no doubt that the coming U.S. administration is playing tough with its closest ally.

The EU has no choice but to

the largest supplier of LNG and oil to the European Union, providing about 49 percent of total European imports in the first half of this year, and 16 percent from Russia, the pressure is mounting. In the third quarter of this year, the U.S. supplied around 20 percent of the EU's oil.

EU officials are deeply concerned and are scrambling to import more of their gas and oil needs, with the reduction in Russian supplies, which will likely be further reduced. The U.S. gas supply is currently tight and difficult to increase, but it is expected to rise in the future. Meanwhile, oil supply from the U.S. is poised to increase, with the country set to deliver an additional 15 to 20 million barrels to Europe within the next five years.

This is a concerning figure that should set the alarm for all oil-producing nations and OPEC in the coming years.

Once again, the threat of imposing up to a 20 percent tariff on all non-Chinese U.S. imports is a major concern for the European Union. The EU must exert efforts to increase its imports from the U.S., including agricultural products, to satisfy the new U.S. administration and maintain its strongest ally.

The European Union must prepare for the upcoming U.S. admination as there i no room fo compromise if it hopes to avoid high tariffs. The EU is ready to take all necessary measures to navigate this challenge. Email: naftikuwaiti@yahoo.com

Al-Shall Index closed at 625.4 points on Thursday

C . Boursa Kuwait sees mixed week of trading

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): Kuwait's stock market experienced a mixed week of trading, according to a report released Saturday by Al-Shall Consulting. While the value and volume of traded shares increased, the number of deals and the general index value declined.

The Al-Shall Index, a key indicator of market performance, closed at 625.4 points on Thursday, dropping 3.6 points or 0.6%from the previous week. However, the index remains 3.9% higher than at the end of 2023.

Market activity showed varied results among listed companies. Ten companies saw price increases, down from 14 in the previous week. Conversely, 14 companies experienced price decreases, up from seven in the prior week. Five companies maintained stable prices, compared to eight in the previous week.

Overall, Boursa Kuwait ended the week slightly lower, closing down 0.06% at 7,278.70 points. Trading volume reached 332 million shares through 16,166 transactions, with a total value of 71.16 million Kuwaiti dinars (approximately \$217 million USD).

Established in April 2014,

Boursa Kuwait has been instrumental in advancing the country's stock market operations. Since 2016, it has focused on fostering communication, growth, and innovation in the financial sector. The exchange continues to support various stakeholders and contribute to Kuwait's economic diversification efforts, aligning with the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

buy more natural gas or agricultural products to close the growing trade gap with the USA. This is a real threat, coming from a toughtalking new U.S. president. Despite the fact that the U.S. is

Kuwait oil price down 21 cents to \$73.24 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 21 cents to USD 73.24 per barrel (pb) on Friday, compared with USD 73.45 pb the previous day, said

strategies to align with individual

goals and risk tolerances, particu-

larly for high-net-worth individu-

als (HNWIs), who often require

more complex asset allocation

strategies. They take into account

various factors, such as market

conditions, tax implications, and

future income needs, to create

a comprehensive financial plan.

Regular portfolio rebalancing is

crucial to ensure alignment with

retirement objectives. This pro-

cess involves adjusting the invest-

ment mix periodically to maintain

the desired risk level and capi-

talize on market opportunities.

Advisors aim to enhance returns

while also helping to mitigate

risks associated with significant

market fluctuations. Additionally,

ongoing communication between

advisors and clients ensures that

strategies remain relevant as life

Key Considerations for Re-

Plan for Unanticipated Ex-

penses including Critical Illness

Coverage: retirees often face sub-

stantial and unexpected costs, par-

ticularly those related to health-

care. An emergency financial

buffer is essential for a resilient

Begin saving for retirement as

early as possible to take advantage

of compounding interest. Maxi-

Start Saving Early :

circumstances change.

tirement Planning

retirement plan.

the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Saturday.

At the global level, the Brent crude rose by six cents to USD 72.94 pb, and the West Texas Intermediate also went up by eight cents to USD 69.46 pb.

Effective retirement planning vital for ensuring financial security

Preparing for life in retirement: Strategies for a secure financial future

By National Bank of Kuwait

Effective retirement planning is vital for ensuring financial security. A key component is understanding asset allocation, which helps align investments with changing risk tolerance and financial goals. Good asset allocation involves diversifying investments across various asset classes, such as stocks, bonds, and alternatives, to balance risk and potential returns.

As individuals approach retirement, their risk tolerance typically changes due to a decreased ability to recover from market downturns and a greater focus on capital preservation. Regular reviews of asset allocation support achieving retirement objectives while managing risks. Periodically reassessing investments and making adjustments based on market conditions and personal circumstances allows retirees to better position themselves for a comfortable and sustainable retirement. This proactive approach can create growth opportunities, even in retirement, promoting overall financial stability.

The Role of Time

The earlier individuals start saving, the more their savings can benefit from compounded interest. Starting savings at a young age allows investments to grow exponentially over time, because compound inter-



NBKW logo

est generates returns on previously earned interest. This is particularly advantageous for younger investors, who can better weather market volatility. Since they have a longer time horizon before needing to access their funds, they can handle the market volatility by taking advantage of gains during good times and reducing the effects of bad times. Additionally, starting early instills a habit of saving and investing that can lead to greater financial stability in the long run.

Investment Strategies by Demographics

As investors move through various stages of life, their investment strategies and risk tolerance shift. Therefore, it's important to periodically rebalance their portfolio to ensure it aligns with their retirement objectives.



NBKW disclaimer

■ Younger investors (30 years and below): Typically, they adopt an aggressive risk profile, focusing on equities and growth-oriented assets to capitalize on longterm growth potential.

older): Approaching retirement, investors generally shift to more conservative strategies, prioritizing capital preservation and in-

Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) and Dollar Cost Averaging SIP is an effective retirement

planning method that involves investing a fixed amount of money



NBKW cover

at regular intervals, regardless of market changes. Investing fixed amounts regularly, a strategy known as dollar-cost averaging, helps mitigate market volatility. Committing a consistent amount at set intervals allows investors to smooth out their purchasing process, acquiring more shares when prices are low and fewer when prices are high. This method also promotes disciplined saving, making it a routine aspect of budgeting. Over time, the impact of compounding can enhance wealth accumulation, making this approach effective for individuals across all age groups. Whether for young adults, middleaged individuals, or seniors, this strategy fosters long-term financial stability and growth.

The Importance of Financial Advisors

mizing contributions during your Financial advisors help tailor working years is crucial for longterm financial success.

■ Diversify Income Sources and Rebalance Regularly : A balanced investment strategy lead to better retirement outcomes. Periodic adjustments based on market conditions are necessary to align with your financial objectives and risk tolerance.

■ Plan For a Long Life: With potential retirement lasting up to 35 years in retirement, it is important to ensure your investments continue growing to keep pace with inflation and preserve purchasing power. Consider maintaining exposure to growth-oriented assets.

Key Takeaways

Customized Strategies: Retirement planning must be tailored to individual needs, goals, and risk tolerance.

■ Importance of Asset Allocation: Regularly adjusting asset allocation is essential to align investments with changing financial objectives.

Leverage Time for Growth: Early savings take advantage of compound interest, particularly benefiting younger investors.

Disciplined Investing: Methods like Dollar Cost Averaging help mitigate market volatility and promote consistent contributions.

■ Value of Financial Advisors: Advisors provide crucial guidance in developing personalized retirement strategies, especially for high-net-worth individuals.

■ Middle-Aged Investors (30 to 50 Years): This group stabilize their risk tolerance and may adjust investment strategies based on life milestones, such as purchasing homes or funding children's education.

■ Pre-Retirees (50 years and come-generating investments.

BUSINESS

Offering broader redemption choices for travel, shopping, cashback, and points transfer

Gulf Bank launches Kuwait's fastest and most comprehensive rewards program with an enhanced customer experience





Bader Al-Ali and Visa representative Ghadir Sarab during the signing of the Points Program cooperation agreement.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Gulf Bank has officially launched its enhanced Gulf Points Program, setting a new benchmark for loyalty rewards in Kuwait. Renowned as Kuwait's fastest and most rewarding loyalty program, the enhanced Gulf Points now offers customers unparalleled benefits, including cashback, seamless airline and hotel bookings, and a cutting-edge digital shopping store - the first of its kind in the banking sector.

The announcement was made during a press conference attended by Mr. Bader Al-Ali, Acting General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, Mrs. Najla Aleisa, Chief Marketing Officer at Gulf Bank, and [Visa Representative's Name], [Ti-

Revamped Program Features

Mr. Bader Al-Ali shared his excitement about the program, stating:"The enhanced Gulf Points program is designed to transform everyday banking into extraordinary experiences. It reflects Gulf Bank's commitment to providing innovative solutions tailored to customer preferences.

Key Features:

Earn Points: Customers earn points on every transaction made using Gulf Bank credit cards.

■ Instantly redeem for cashback: Gulf Points can be redeemed for cash. transferred directly to the customer's credit card.

Share Rewards: Gulf Points can be



Najla Aleisa gives a presentation on the points program.



Explanation of the many options of the points program.

■ Travel Benefits: Redeem points for flights, hotel stays, and car rentals globally.

Online Store: A pioneering online store, integrated into Gulf Bank's app, enables customers to shop directly using Gulf Points.

Mr. Al-Ali emphasized:"These features are designed to meet the evolving needs of our customers, reflecting Gulf Bank's dedication to delivering innovative services rooted in customer feedback.

Driving a Culture of Saving

Mrs. Najla Aleisa highlighted the program's broader impact:"The enhanced Gulf Points program encourages the use of credit cards over debit cards, empowering customers to accumulate Gulf Points on daily purchases while fostering a culture of saving and innovative financial



Bader Al-Ali and Najla Aleisa during the press conference.

She further noted:

Credit card usage in Kuwait accounts for only 10% of total consumer spending, compared to 27% in Saudi Årabia and 87% in the UAE, signaling substantial room for growth.

Gulf Bank's leadership in digital innovation is underscored by its highest-rated banking app on Apple's App Store and Google Play. Gulf Bank's credit cards are among the most widely integrated with digital wallets, reinforcing its role as a market leader. Adding that Gulf Points exemplifies Gulf Bank's focus on innovation and delivering beyond expectations.

Boosting Economic Growth

The program's launch aligns with

age, which grew by 12.6% in 2024, reaching KD 3.4 billion in the first nine months alone. Growth sectors such as tourism and travel have been key contributors to this trend.Adding that The contest will encourage customers to explore the program's full potential and maximize their benefits.

Stay tuned for more details about this initiative aimed at boosting customer engagement and credit card adoption.

The enhanced Gulf Points program reaffirms Gulf Bank's position as a pioneer in delivering innovative banking experiences, catering to customer needs while supporting Kuwait's growing economy. Download the Gulf Bank app today to explore the en-

Fed's preferred inflation gauge shows **US price pressures eased last month**

Report shows prices rose just 0.1% from Oct to Nov

WASHINGTON, Dec 21, (AP): An inflation gauge that is closely watched by the Federal Reserve barely rose last month in a sign that price pressures cooled after two months of sharp gains.

Friday's report from the Commerce Department showed that prices rose just 0.1% from October to November. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, prices also ticked up just 0.1%, after two months of outsize 0.3% gains.

The milder inflation figures arrive two days after Federal Reserve officials, led by Chair Jerome Powell, rocked financial markets by revealing that they now expect to cut their key interest rate just two times in 2025, down from four in their previous estimate. Stickier inflation, Powell said, "might be the single biggest factor" causing the central bank to reduce the number of rate cuts it envisions. Fewer Fed rate cuts would likely mean that mortgage rates and other consumer borrowing costs would remain elevated

Friday's data did contain one sign of still-persistent inflation: Year-over-year inflation edged up to 2.4% in November from 2.3% in October and above the Fed's 2% inflation target. But year-over-year "core" prices, which exclude volatile food and energy costs, were unchanged at 2.8%. The Fed pays closer attention to the core figures, which are regarded as a better sign of where inflation is likely headed.

The modest monthly inflation figures in Friday's report point to one likely reason why the Fed was willing to cut its benchmark interest rate Wednesday: Its preferred inflation gauge, known as the personal consumption expenditures price index, is coming in lower - and closer to the Fed's target - than the higher-profile consumer price index. The core CPI, for example, was 3.3% in November.

Friday's report also showed that consumers increased their spending by a solid 0.4% from October to November, a sign that households continue to propel the economy. On Thursday, the government reported that the U.S. economy grew at a healthy 3.1% annual rate last quarter, largely thanks to consumer demand. "We can break for the holidays with the comfort that the economy's growth engine is humming along," Oren Klachkin, an economist at Nationwide Financial, wrote in a client note. "The Fed would like to continue lowering interest rates, but it feels it can't do so amid what increasingly looks like an elevated inflation and resilient growth environment.

Incomes also rose 0.3% last month, faster than prices - a trend which, if it continues over time, should help Americans adjust to higher costs.

Powell had said Wednesday that even if Friday's inflation figures came in unusually low, it would have only a limited effect on the Fed's outlook.

"Our position shouldn't change based on two or three points of good or bad data," he said at a news conference. "We have a long string now of inflation coming down gradually over time. ... We still have some work to do."

Inflation, according to the measure released Friday - the personal consumption expenditures price index - has plummeted from a peak of 7.2% in June 2022 to 2.1% in September. The Fed's tool for fighting inflation is to steadily raise borrowing costs across the economy, which tends to cool spending and growth.

10 Kuwaitis graduate from Germany's RENAC

BERLIN, Dec 21, (KUNA): New 10 Kuwaiti trainees have graduated from Germany's renewable energy academy (RENAC), as part of its program of developing photoelectric cell systems.

The Berlin-based academy held a graduation ceremony, which featured Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Reem Al-Khaled and head of the academy Berthold Breid.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement on Saturday, Al-Khaled said she is proud of Kuwaiti trainees who took part in this session, which came as part of collaboration between the RENAC and Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity & Water & Renewable Energy.

She congratulated Kuwaitis on this progress, and stressed the initiative constituted a key step toward achieving Kuwait's ambitious vision regarding enhancing innovation and sustainability in energy.

The program metalizes His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision, and it is based on the pillars of Kuwait Vison 2023 which eyes a paradigm shift in diversifying national economy, she said.

It also shows the deep-rooted outstanding partnership between Kuwait and Germany through sharing expertise and building national capabilities in vital sectors in a manner that boosts sustainable development, Al-Khaled elaborated.

She further commended the outstanding efforts made by the academy, in collaboration with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science.

Meanwhile, Breid stressed the importance of boosting cooperation with Kuwait extended over 16 years.

The training session aimed to create appropriate conditions for trainees to be able to develop photoelectric cells in the future, Breid told KUNA in a statement.

Representing the Kuwaiti delegation, Hajar Al-Hamlan told KUNA in a similar statement that participation was part of Kuwait's plan aiming to achieve His Highness the Amir's vision by securing 15 percent of the state's needs of renewable energy.

Lending to companies had tightened more than expected

Russia's cbank holds off on interest rate hike amid friction between inflation, war spending

MOSCOW, Dec 21, (AP): Russia's central bank has left its benchmark interest rate at a record 21%, holding off on further increases despite high consumer inflation fueled by the Kremlin's war against Ukraine

The decision Friday comes amid criticism from influential business figures, including tycoons close to the Kremlin, that high rates are putting the brakes on business activity and the economy

And it underlines the ongoing friction in the economy between military spending and stable prices for consumers

Central Bank of Russia Gov. Elvira Nabiullina said that lending to companies had tightened more than expected due to the October rate hike that brought the benchmark to its current record level. The central bank held open the possibility of an increase at its next meeting and said inflation was expected to fall to an annual 4% next year from its current 9.5%

Factories are running three shifts making every-

thing from vehicles to clothing for the military, while a labor shortage is driving up wages and fat enlistment bonuses are putting more rubles in people's bank accounts to spend. All that is driving up prices.

On top of that, the weakening Russian ruble raises the prices of imported goods like cars and consumer electronics from China, which has become Russia's biggest trade partner since Western sanctions disrupted economic relations with Europe and the U.S.

Russia's military spending is enabled by oil exports, which have shifted from Europe to new customers in India and China who aren't observing sanctions such as a \$60 per barrel price cap on Russian oil sales.

High interest rates can dampen inflation but also make it more expensive for businesses to get the credit they need to operate and invest.

Critics of the central bank rates and of Nabiullina have included Sergei Chemezov, the head of statecontrolled defense and technology conglomerate Rostec, and steel magnate Alexei Mordashov.

Russian President Vladimir Putin opened his annual news conference on Thursday by saying the economy is on track to grow by nearly 4% this year and that while inflation is "an alarming sign," wages have risen at the same rate and that "on the whole, this situation is stable and secure.

Putin acknowledged there had been criticism of the central bank, saying that "some experts believe that the Central Bank could have been more effective and could have started using certain instruments earlier." Asked what decision the Central Bank was going to make on the rate, Putin said that Nabiullina didn't tell him what the rate will be. "She may not know it herself yet as they discuss it during the board meeting and make the final decision during discussion," he said. "I hope that the decision will be wellbalanced and conform to today's needs.'

GCCSC projects 3.7% GDP growth by 2024

MUSCAT, Dec 21, (KUNA): The GCC Statistical Center (GCCSC) expected on Saturday a 3.7 percent GDP growth, with constant prices, in member states by 2024.

In its report, the GCCSC revealed a higher pace of continued growth in 2025 reaching 4.5 percent and 3.5 percent in 2026.

This forecast growth in 2024, 2025 and 2026 would happen due to a rise in GCC member states' oil production, the report stated.

The accelerated pace of economic recovery in the sectors related to tourism, transportation and infrastructure projects was one of

the reasons behind growth in GCC states, it noted.

GCC states' non-oil sector is expected to grow by 4.5 percent by 2024, and 7.8 and 8.6 percent in 2025 and 2026 respectively, it added.

GCC states' GDP (with constant prices) reached about USD 1.7 trillion in 2023, a five-percent growth compared with 2022, it said.

Inflation rates in GCC states are projected to reach 2.4, 2.6 and 2.1 percent from 2024 to 2026.

GCC states' consumer price index (inflation) hit 2.2 percent in 2023, a drop of .09 percent com-pared with 2022, it pointed out.

What's On



Yusuff Ali MA - Chairman of Lulu Group International

'A historic day in Indo-Kuwait ties'

"This is indeed a very historic day in the Indo-Kuwait bilateral relationship which spans decades.

For years now, Kuwait has been home to millions of Indians (today more than 1 million Indians reside in Kuwait) who have lived very peacefully and earn their livelihood with utmost respect and dignity in a very culturally & economically advanced country.

Kuwait under the wise and visionary leadership of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah is today one of the most prosperous and wealthiest economies in the world with a very high standard of living for its residents.

As the Honorable Indian Prime Minister makes his first ever official visit to Kuwait, I am very positive that it will further boost the long-standing socio-economic and trade ties between both the countries and bring in a new era of peace and prosperity."

> Yusuff Ali MA Chairman of Lulu Group International



Photos from the event.

Season to play, game, and save big at LuLu Hypermarket

A world of wonder and joy awaits kids and adults alike at Lulu Hypermarket's Toy Fest 2024, the ultimate holiday treat. From 18 December to 4 January, children and families are invited to explore a magical wonderland filled with toys, games, and exciting surprises that will light

up every little one's holiday season. The Toy Fest kicked off at LuLu Hypermarket Egaila outlet on 19th December with an exciting inauguration by renowned gamer Ahmadalrakla, in the presence of top management of LuLu Kuwait. The event drew enthusiastic crowds as families flocked to witness the beginning of this kid-friendly festival.

Toy Fest 2024 features jaw-dropping deals, including discounts of up to 60% on top-branded toys, and attractive offers on gaming accessories

making it the perfect opportunity to stock up on gifts and games for the little ones.

Shoppers can also explore the Toy Expo, a showcase of the latest and most popular toys, along with live spot games, where children can participate, win freebies, and enjoy a lineup of fun-filled end-of-year surprises that will make their holiday season ever more magical.

World Kindness Day celebrated with charitable art exhibition

Four Seasons Hotel teams up with KACCH & BACCH for Heartful II

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: In celebration of World Kindness Day, Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya proudly partnered with the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital and Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice (KACCH & BACCH) for their annual charitable art exhibition Heartful. This heartwarming event featured artwork from 32 talented artists and The Art Bazaar with creations of 13 additional talented contributors.

Building on the strong partnership established last year through various impactful initiatives, the Four Seasons For Good team actively supported the occasion. The Hotel's Restaurants & Beverages team contributed by preparing an array of drinks and canapés for attendees, enhancing the vibrant atmosphere of the exhibition. This collaboration highlights Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait's ongoing commitment to fostering community well-being and supporting cultural initiatives.

"Our collaboration with KACCH & BACCH for Heartful II reflects our ethos of responsible hospitality



A group photo from the event.

and giving back to the community," said Kapriel Kalenderian, Director of PR and Communications of

Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait. "We are honored to support this remarkable cause and contribute to its suc-

cess." This initiative complements the Hotel's larger commitment to sustainabil-

ity and community engagement. Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait has received recognition as a leader in responsible hospitality, being the first and only hotel in the country to achieve LEED Platinum certification, along with Responsible Hospitality VERIFIED[™] sustainability status by Forbes Travel Guide.

From on-site water bottling to AI-driven waste management, the elimination of single-use plastics, and community events like Heartful II, the Hotel continues to set a benchmark for luxury hospitality that harmonizes with social and environmental responsibility.

About Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya

Since opening its doors in 2017, Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya has redefined luxury in Kuwait with its sleek, avant-garde design and thoughtful sustainability practices.

As part of the world's leading operator of luxury hotels, Four Seasons is dedicated to creating a positive impact through innovative sustainability initiatives and meaningful community partnerships.

For more information, please visitwww.press.fourseasons.com/kuwait.





Photos from the event.

Director Kronmer hosted by Miseenscene Club

'Lamy's Poem' screened at CAP

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: As part of the activities of the "Miseenscene" Cinema Club on the Contemporary Art Platform "CAP" in Kuwait, a special discussion was held for the film Lamy's Poem on the evening of Saturday, December 14th. Director Alexander Kronmer participated in the discussion via Zoom from Washington. The event was moderated by film critic Hala Samy, who provided insightful analysis of the film's artistic aspects. She facilitated the conversation smoothly, ensuring a clear exchange between the director and the audience. Hala also guided the dialogue with thoughtful questions that helped clarify the film's themes, creating an engaging and informative atmosphere for all participants.

Plot summary:

In Lamy's Poem, Kronmer weaves a poignant narrative through three interconnected paths. The first follows 12-year-old Syrian refugee Lamy, whose story reflects the struggles of many displaced children affected by war. The second path links Lamy's journey to that of the 13th-century poet and philosopher Jalal ad-Din Rumi, who also suffered from displacement and the ravages of war. The third path merges these two timelines through Rumi's poetry book, which serves as a "magical gateway" that connects Lamy to Rumi's spiritual world. His profound wisdom inspires and empowers Lamy to overcome her own challenges, blending past and present to deliver a powerful message of resilience and hope.

The director also spoke about the symbolic depth in the film, noting that it reflects the intersection of different cultural and historical experiences, making it a universal story of overcoming adversity. Audience Reaction:

The audience was deeply engaged with the film, appreciating the director's unique approach and the emotional depth of the story. Many attendees, including a group of curious children, expressed interest in learning more about the human stories behind the film, particularly regarding refugees and the powerful role of dreams in connecting different eras. Attendees praised the film's narrative strength, the depth of its characters, and the beauty of its messages, noting how it resonated on both a personal and universal level. There was a strong desire for more such creative and thoughtprovoking films, underscoring the importance of such events in fostering a deeper appreciation of cinema.

The conversation also included insights from the director's wife, Lubna Ismail, who shared behind-the-scenes details of the film's production, particularly the challenges of creating the film during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lubna, an Egyptian-American, added a touch of warmth and humor to the session, giving the audience a glimpse into the personal and professional dynamics that shaped the making of the film. She spoke about the creativity and resilience required to bring the film to life during such challenging times, and her lively presence made the discussion even more engaging.

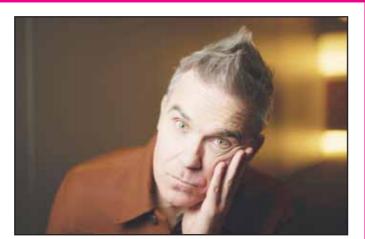
At the end of the event, the attendees extended their heartfelt thanks to the Contemporary Art Platform "CAP" and the organizers of the Miseenscene Film Club for providing such a valuable opportunity. Special appreciation was directed towards writers and critics Ibrahim Farghaly, Walid Al-Zuhairy, and Hala Samy, whose roles were pivotal in organizing and facilitating the session.

This event highlights the Miseenscene Film Club's ongoing efforts to provide a rich cinematic experience to the Kuwaiti community, promoting dialogue between creators and the audience, and contributing to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the art of cinema.

The club's activities are held every Saturday at 7 PM, and the invitation is open to the public. You can follow their social media accounts for updates and more information.

Features





Robbie Williams poses for a portrait to promote the film 'Better Man' on Nov. 13, 2024, in New York. (AP)

'I've always been a monkey'

In 'Better Man,' Williams faces dark side of fame

NEW YORK, Dec 21, (AP): It was after one particularly emotional premiere of the new biopic about his life that Robbie Williams resolved he couldn't be "the crying

guy" at every screening. "Better Man," which chronicles the life of Williams, the British pop star and former Take That singer, can hit him differently at different times. Jet lag is a factor. So is who's in the building. One screening with his band, he says, was "healing." But he's self-conscious enough about all the emotion that he can be defensive about

"In real life I don't cry that much," Williams says and then smiles. "You have a (expletive) biography about you and have the world go, 'I've seen you and heard you' and come tell me how you deal with it.'

One twist? The Williams heard in "Better Man" is Williams, himself. But the Williams seen in the movie is a computer-generated chimpanzee. Michael Gracey, who directed the 2017 musical hit "The Greatest Showman," had the novel idea that Williams should get the big-screen biopic treatment, but with a monkey. Relying on Weta's motion capture technology, the actor Jonno Davies stands in for Williams.

In "Better Man," which will open in limited theaters Dec. 25 and expand nationwide Jan. 10, that makes for a compelling spin on the music biopic, partly be-cause it's still a quite R-rated journey through the ups and downs of mega pop stardom.

Williams, who met a reporter last month on a stopover in New York, also hopes it will expand his footprint in America, where he's famously less famous than he is in Europe.

"If I want to phone Macron, I phone Macron. If I want to phone

the other side and you're talking about something in the past. Everybody loves a story of redemp-tion. The redemption is: I was this guy who experienced this thing but I've endured and overcome it. You throw in a word like "endure," and I can already hear British people going "(Expletive) you! What did you endure? Knickers being thrown at you." Dude, I was mentally ill. I still am, but I'm in a good place. I couldn't derive joy from anything because I was mentally ill. I won a sprinting race with two broken legs.

AP: It was that bad?

Williams: Yeah. My story's not unusual. There's a boy band documentary that's going to be on tele in Britain that I've taken part in, and everyone's story is the same. They've got the bends. They experienced this thing that warped them and gave them mental breakdowns.

I can't apologize for the truth, and the truth is there's something about this matrix-bending, washing-machine fame that's deeply unhealthy. No matter what job you have or what path you choose in life, you spend the second 20 years of your life sorting out the first 20 years. It just so happens I did it in public and told people exactly what was going as it was going on. And still do.

AP: When One Direction singer Liam Payne died, you seemed to understand what he might have been going through.

Williams: Here's the thing: I'm always astonished - may he rest in peace, bless him, beautiful boy - that the entertainment industry isn't littered with those types of cases, that we can't point to 30 of them.

AP: Fame, as you describe it, would seem clearly unhealthy. But does some part of you need it?

Williams: It's different now.

From prison to tradition: The story behind Australia's 'Gravy Day'

How Kelly's song became an Aussie tradition

NEW YORK, Dec 21, (AP): To many Australians, Saturday is more than just Dec. 21. It's "Gravy Day," all because of a lyric in one of the most unlikely Christmas songs ever written.

"How to Make Gravy," written by singer **Paul Kelly**, has become a holiday classic in Australia over the past few decades. It was cited this week by the nation's prime minister, Anthony Albanese, as he announced a decision to release five drug smugglers from prison, and is the subject of a new movie that creates a story behind the song.

"It has become our most-loved Christmas song," Jeff Jenkins, of the Australian publication The Music, wrote this week.

The story is set in a prison, the lyrics coming from a letter an inmate writes to his brother to pass along a recipe for the family's Christmas dinner. The song is about much more, though, as "Joe" expresses regret, longing, fear, paranoia, some humor and the nearuniversal holiday emotion of someone who wishes to be somewhere else. The prisoner is writing, as the song says in its second line, on the 21st of December, "and now they're ringing the last bells."

Kelly wrote "How to Make Gravy" in 1996 after being asked to contribute to a holiday album being put together for charity. He wanted to record a cover of the Band's "Christmas Must Be Tonight," but someone else had already claimed it. So Kelly tried putting words to a melody he had kicking around.

Inspiration came from one of his favorite holi-day albums, "A Christmas Gift for You from Phil Spector," and Darlene Love's recording of the clas-sic "White Christmas." Love includes writer Irving Berlin's often-bypassed first verse, where the singer talks of being in Los Angeles while wishing to be somewhere snowy and cold. "There's a clue," Kelly said in a TED talk explain-

ing the song's origins, and off he went.

In the song, "Joe" imagines the family gathering without him. "Who's going to make the gravy now?" he said. "I bet it won't taste the same." He passes along a recipe, one Kelly got in real life from a former father-in-law.

The narrator asks his brother to kiss the sleeping children, and to "give my love to Angus, and to Frank and Dolly. Tell 'em all I'm sorry I screwed up this time."

He gossips about Mary and her new boyfriend. "Do you remember the last one? What was his name again? What was his problem? He never did get Nina Simone." In performance, Kelly has occasionally replaced Simone with Joey Ramone or "a little too much cologne."

Imagination

He asks Dan to look after his wife Rita, and pictures the dancing after dinner. "Just don't hold her too close, oh brother please don't stab me in the back," he sings, quickly catching himself to note the idle time in prison that "turns imagination into fact." The conclusion is a promise: "I'm gonna pay 'em

all back.' Kelly's love for Shakespeare, the bard's mix of com-

edy and drama, is also evident in the composition. One of Kelly's first clues that he had tapped into something was a call from his real-life brother. He'd been driving and heard the song for the first time over the radio, and had to pull to the side of the road in tears.

It's a holiday song without mistletoe or holly. Structurally, it doesn't have a catchy chorus, or any chorus at all. Yet as years went by, his fans would request the song in concert all year, not just the holidays. Some of them began marking Dec. 21 by leaving a can of gravy on their front porches.

"I can't predict what songs will become popular or speak to my audience," Kelly said this fall in an interview with The Associated Press, and "Gravy" is

a prime example.

The evocation of family is the song's most important ingredient. Kelly's own large family gathers each Christmas Eve to sing carols. Bella O'Grady, a 27-year-old woman who moved to New York and attended a Kelly concert in New York this fall for

a taste of home, said "How to Make Gravy" always evokes warm feelings of holiday celebrations.

Sometimes very warm. While many of the song's emotions are universal, a reference in the lyrics to expected heat on Christmas Day - "I hear it's going to be 100 degrees" - places the setting clearly in Australia. Down under, the holiday is at the beginning of

Kelly

Prime Minister Albanese alluded to "Gravy Day" in his decision this week to release the five men who were convicted in 2005 of smuggling heroin from Indonesia to Australia.

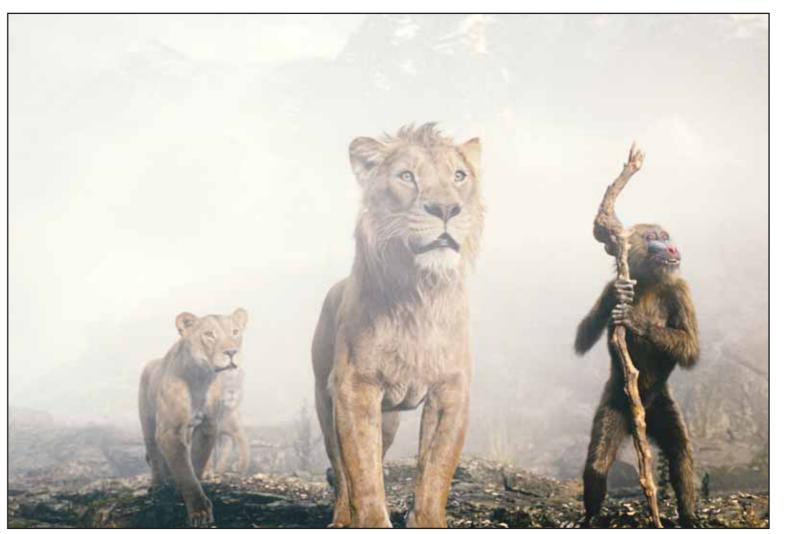
summer.

"Australians speak about what it's like to have someone who's a loved one - they sing the great Paul Kelly song - in jail over Christmas," Albanese said, according to The Nightly. "Who's going to make the gravy? Well, these families had their loved ones in jail for 20 Christmases, and that was enough."

Using the characters in Kelly's song and building a story around it, filmmaker Nick Waterman made a movie of "How to Make Gravy" this year that is airing on the Australian streaming service Binge. It is being shown in some movie theaters free on "Gravy Day" weekend.

So what's in that gravy recipe, anyway? "Just add flour, salt, a little red wine and don't forget a dollop of tomato sauce for sweetness and that extra tang. It's all in the song.







Keir Starmer, I phone Keir Starmer. If I want to phone Trump, he's not taking my call," Williams says with a laugh. "Maybe he would, I don't know.

"Maybe this film moves the needle for me," Williams, 50, adds. "Or if it doesn't, I'll do something else.'

What both a conversation with Williams and "Better Man" have in common is a frankness about the experience of fame. More than it's a litany of chart-topping successes, "Better Man" is a chronicle of fame-induced trauma, complete with drug addiction and mental breakdown.

Williams, now, though, is a reformed bad boy - a family man with four kids with all kinds of plans, like building hotels and buying sports teams. "At the moment," he says, "I

have the wide-optimism of a new artist.

AP: Did your identification with monkeys predate "Better Man"?

Williams: Well, let me know, in the biography of your life, what animal would play you?

AP. I don't know. A chipmunk? Williams: I asked my friend this morning, Joey McIntyre, from New Kids on the Block, and he said, "an owl." And I agreed with him. An owl would be good for him. Did this predate? I guess so, subconsciously. My MO has been cheeky. What's more cheeky than a cheeky monkey? I've been a cheeky monkey all my life. There's no more cheekier monkey than the coke-snorting, sex-addict monkey that we find in the movie.

AP: I've never seen a monkey do so much coke.

Williams: Yeah, we've seen a bear do a lot of coke but never a monkey.

AP: Do you think it's easier for audiences to empathize with a monkey than for you?

Williams: We care for animals more than we care for humans, most of us. I guess there is a removal, as well. It's very much a human story but if you're watching it and someone's playing Robbie Williams, you're thinking: Does he look like him? Does he act like him? Does he talk like him?

AP: As someone who's been open about difficulties in life, you're not new to the idea that people don't have a lot of sympathy for wealthy pop stars. You were probably suffering very human things at a time when people didn't see vou as human.

Williams: I think they have sympathy once you come through

I (expletive) love it. I wouldn't trade it for the world. I'm 50 and I'm incredibly grateful for fame. It facilitates everything that I need and want to do with my life. I was just too young to receive it, and I wasn't surrounded by good people. And I wasn't good people. But now I can't speak highly enough of it. (Laughs)

AP: Part of your appeal has always been your candor. In your experience, though, does show business work against remaining authentic?

Williams: It depends who you are. Most people I meet in the industry, they're nice folk. But a lot of the people that I meet also are narcissists and they understand on some level that it's best to cover up their true nature. So they do. Now there's cancellation, so you've got a lot of people terrified of saying the wrong thing.

The interesting that I've carved out for me, by mistake, is that the only villain in my story when I talk is me. None of my opinions are political. None of my opinions are cancellable. The only person that can cancel me is me.

AP: So how did you turn your life around? You've often credited your wife

Williams: Ayda was credited with saving my life before she saved my life. I was like, "You (expletive)." I was like: I've done a lot of work on myself here. Don't give her all the credit. But now I can give her way more credit than I was giving her because I've realize how much she's done.

Without that grounding, my life would be a lot different. I probably wouldn't be here. Because I have somebody in my life that's worth me being the best version of myself 24 hours out of the day, I'm better. And because there's four young souls that need looking after, my purpose is a lot different. I suppose my purpose at one time, due to finding hedonism incredibly intoxicating, was to be the most (expletive) person in the room. But now I want to be the most well person in the room. I intend to be the wellest person in the mother-(expletive) room. (Laughs)

AP: When you go on a worldwide tour next year, do you do things differently to help you stay sane'

Williams: Yeah and no. The no bit is: It's OK. I've come to realize, I didn't die. There's a bit more wisdom now. The lunatic that was in the car is still in the car, but he doesn't drive anymore.

This image released by Disney shows characters Sarabi, voiced by Tiffany Boone, (left), Mufasa, voiced by Aaron Pierre, center, and Rafiki, voiced by Kagiso Lediga in a scene from 'Mufasa: The Lion King.' (AP)

'Lion King' prequel brings fresh storytelling

Jenkins brings fresh energy to 'Mufasa'

LOS ANGELES, Dec 21, (AP): "Mufasa: The Lion King" has one very important thing going for it: an original story.

That may seem like faint praise or at least a very, very low bar in the grand scheme of things. But in a landscape where Disney continues to remake its animated catalogue in slightly different, and usually less interesting, forms whether "live action" or "photorealistic" that usually only serves to remind how good the 2D animation was, originality is not to be undervalued.

And this story isn't simply checking off fan service boxes and overexplaining origins that never needed them: It's actually good. A prequel to "The Lion King," opened in theaters Thursday, it's a tale of found family, betrayal and destiny, one that begins to explain the estrangement between brothers Scar and Mufasa that we all know will end in murder, how Mufasa (Aaron Pierre) ends up as king of the pride lands and, perhaps most importantly, why only one has an English accent.

In this telling, Scar was once Taka (Kelvin Harrison Jr.), destined to be king of his pride, and Mufasa was a lost cub, separated from his parents in a dramatic flood. Taka saves Mufasa and brings him into his family. His mother (Thandiwe Newton) embraces the newcomer; his father (Lennie James) rejects him as nothing but a stray. Not that it matters much to the cubs; both are thrilled to have a brother. They play

and protect one another and grow up together. But fissures start to appear in this foundation as Mufasa emerges as the exceptional one and Taka as the coward. And then a lioness enters the picture in Sarabi (Tiffany Boone). We've all seen enough movies to know what happens with that.

The screenplay comes from veteran screenwriter Jeff Nathanson, whose credits include the 2019 "Lion King," this year's lovely "Young Woman and the Sea" and "Catch Me If You Can."

Mandate

He clearly took a corporate mandate (give us more "Lion King") and made the absolute least cynical version of that. There are still questionable corporatefeeling choices, like straining to tie it to a current and future "Lion King" by having Rafiki (John Kani) tell the story to Simba (Donald Glover) and Nala's (Beyoncé) daughter Kiara (Blue Ivy Carter), Pumbaa (Seth Rogen) and Timon (Billy Eichner). These comedic breaks, and Lin-Manuel Miranda's songs peppered throughout, aren't additive. They really only serve to break up the momentum of the compelling main story.

But the biggest issue remains the form itself. The photo-realistic computer-generated animals may have technically improved since the 2019 "Lion King," but they still aren't movie stars like their 2D animation counterparts. Impressive though it may be intellectually, the reality of watching these animals for two hours is a somewhat numbing and dull experience despite the best efforts of director Barry Jenkins. The Oscar-winning filmmaker of "Moonlight" did an admirable job adding visual interest and color into the landscapes, bringing it closer to the vibrancy of animation than ever before, and making it as cinematic as possible. The original story also helps here in that he was never going to have to recreate iconic sequences in a less stimulating form. There are just inherent limitations that filmmakers have not yet figured out, including how odd it looks for these animals? mouths to be moving and speaking English words. It's strangest when they're singing, mouths agape to hold the long notes in a way that no lion's mouth should ever appear.

If this is one future for filmmaking there's still a lot of room for improvement and experimentation. That doesn't mean it shouldn't be embraced while the kinks are worked out. But it also doesn't mean the moviegoing public has to get excited about every rehash. "Mufasa: The Lion King" is better than the ones that came before it, but that doesn't mean it's great.

"Mufasa: The Lion King," a Walt Disney Studios release in theaters Thursday, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for "peril, action/violence and some thematic elements." Running time: 118 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Variety

NEW YORK: Who works harder than Questlove? The Academy Award winner has teamed up with Emmy winner Oz Rodriguez and NBC for a new film, "Ladies & Gentlemen... 50 Years of SNL Music," celebrating 50 years of the program and spotlighting its memorable live music performances.

The three-hour special will feature sketches, performances and over 50 interview subjects, including Bad Bunny, Miley Cyrus, Billie Eilish, Mick Jagger, Dua Lipa, Darryl DMC McDaniels, Tom Morello, Kacey Musgraves, Olivia Rodrigo, Paul Simon, Chris Stapleton and Justin Timberlake.

"Everyone knows the most famous 'SNL' appearances, whether it's Elvis Costello, Prince or the Beastie Boys, but they're the tip of a huge iceberg,' Questlove wrote in a statement. "The process of going back through the incredible archival footage was like being in a time machine, DeLorean or other. I'm so happy I went on the trip and now get to share it

with everyone." Last week it was announced that Ahmir "Quest-

love" Thompson's latest documentary, "SLY LIVES!

(aka The Burden of Black Genius)," which examines the legacy of Sly & The Family Stone, will be featured at next year's Sundance Film Festival. His directorial debut, "Summer of Soul," a documentary spotlighting the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, earned him an Oscar. The leader of The Roots who appears on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" also published in 2024 the book "Hip-Hop Is His-

tory." "Ladies & Gentlemen ... 50 Years of SNL Music, will broadcast live on NBC Jan. 27 at 8 p.m. ET/PT. It will become available to stream on Peacock the next day. (AP)

LONDON: Thousands of tourists, pagans, druids and people simply yearning for the promise of spring marked the dawn of the shortest day of the year at the ancient Stonehenge monument on Saturday.

Revelers cheered and beat drums as the sun rose at 8:09 a.m. (0809 GMT) over the giant standing stones on the winter solstice - the shortest day and the longest night in the Northern Hemisphere. No one could see the sun through the low winter cloud, but that did not deter a flurry of drumming, chanting and singing as dawn broke.

There will be less than eight hours of daylight in England on Saturday - but after that, the days get longer until the summer solstice in June.

The solstices are the only occasions when visitors can go right up to the stones at Stonehenge, and thousands are willing to rise before dawn to soak up the atmosphere.

The stone circle, whose giant pillars each took ,000 people to move, was erected starting about years ago by a sun-worshiping Neolithic cul-5.000 ture. Its full purpose is still debated: Was it a temple, a solar calculator, a cemetery, or some combination of all three?



patient

nology.

technology.

was physically present alongside the

He highlighted the importance of re-

mote robotic surgeries, noting that they facilitate the exchange of expertise,

enable the performance of complex

procedures in collaboration with in-

ternational centers, and provide valu-

able training opportunities for national medical teams to use robotic technol-

Dr. Al-Dosari also acknowledged the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the

Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled

Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, emphasizing that

this achievement aligns Kuwait with

countries that prioritize adopting the

latest advancements in surgical tech-

He extended heartfelt gratitude to

the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed

Al-Awadhi, for his unwavering sup-

port of such cutting-edge initiatives,

describing this accomplishment as a

qualitative leap in the field of health

ogy from any location.

HEALTH/SCIENCE



Thaís Pansani holds a giant sloth rib bone from central Brazil dated to about 13,000 to 15,000 years ago, which is thought to be burned by human-made fire, in the Smithsonian's National Taphonomy Reference Collection in Washington, on July 11, 2024. (AP)

Early Americas history

Humans and giant sloths 'coexisted' for millennia

SAO PAULO, Dec 21, (AP): Sloths weren't always slow-moving, furry tree-dwellers. Their prehistoric ancestors were huge - up to 4 tons (3.6 metric tons) - and when startled, they brandished immense claws.

For a long time, scientists believed the first humans to arrive in the Americas soon killed off these giant ground sloths through hunting, along with many other massive animals like mastodons, saber-toothed cats and dire wolves that once roamed North and South America.

But new research from several sites is starting to suggest that people came to the Americas earlier - perhaps far earlier - than once thought. These findings hint at a remarkably different life for these early Americans, one in which they may have spent millennia sharing prehistoric savannas and wetlands with enormous beasts.

"There was this idea that humans arrived and killed everything off very quickly - what's called 'Pleistocene overkill," said Daniel Odess, an archaeologist at White Sands National Park in New Mexico. But new discoveries suggest that "humans were existing alongside these animals for at least 10,000 years, without making them go extinct."

Some of the most tantalizing clues come from an archaeological site in central Brazil, called Santa Elina, where bones of giant ground sloths show signs of being manipulated by humans. Sloths like these once lived from Alaska to Argentina, and some species had bony structures on their backs, called osteoderms - a bit like the plates of modern armadillos - that may have been used to make decorations.

Fossil

In a lab at the University of Sao Paulo, researcher Mírian Pacheco holds in her palm a round, penny-sized sloth fossil. She notes that its surface is surprisingly smooth, the edges appear to have been deliberately polished, and there's a tiny hole near one edge.

"We believe it was intentionally altered and used by ancient people as

"There's still a big debate," Pacheco said.

Scientists know that the first humans emerged in Africa, then moved into Europe and Asia-Pacific, before finally making their way to the last continental frontier, the Americas. But questions remain about the final chapter of the human origins story.

Pacheco was taught in high school the theory that most archaeologists held throughout the 20th century. "What I learned in school was that Clovis was first," she said.

Clovis is a site in New Mexico, where archaeologists in the 1920s and 1930s found distinctive projectile points and other artifacts dated to between 11,000 and 13,000 years ago.

Ice Age

This date happens to coincide with the end of the last Ice Age, a time when an ice-free corridor likely emerged in North America - giving rise to an idea about how early humans moved into the continent after crossing the Bering land bridge from Asia.

And because the fossil record shows the widespread decline of American megafauna starting around the same time - with North America losing 70% of its large mammals, and South America losing more than 80% - many researchers surmised that humans' arrival led to mass extinctions.

"It was a nice story for a while, when all the timing lined up," said paleoanthropologist Briana Pobiner at the Smithsonian Institution's Human Origins Program. "But it doesn't really work so well anymore.'

In the past 30 years, new research methods - including ancient DNA analysis and new laboratory techniques coupled with the examination of additional archaeological sites and inclusion of more diverse scholars across the Americas, have upended the old narrative and raised new questions, especially about timing.

"Anything older than about 15,000 years still draws intense scrutiny," said Richard Fariña, a paleontologist at the

Kuwaiti doctor conducts robotic surgery from China

Kuwait performs 1st remote robotic prostate surgery

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Sabah Al-Ahmad Kidney and Urology Center has successfully performed the first radical prostatectomy in the Middle East using the Medbot Toumai remote robot. The groundbreaking procedure was conducted on a Kuwaiti patient diagnosed with cancer, positioning Kuwait as one of the first countries globally to execute such complex and advanced surgeries.

Dr. Saad Al-Dosari, the head of the center and the surgeon who performed the operation remotely from China, highlighted the achievement in a phone interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Friday. He emphasized that this milestone represents a significant addition to Kuwait's record of health achievements and marks a unique medical accomplishment in the Middle East, showcasing the evolving capabilities of robotic surgery in the

region. Dr. Al-Dosari explained that the re-markable aspect of this procedure was the distance of approximately 7,000 kilometers between the patient in Ku-

FDA order

'Pull fake Lilly obesity drug'

WASHINGTON, Dec 21, (AP): Specialty pharmacies and online companies that have been selling off-brand copies of two block-buster drugs for obesity and dia-betes will need to phase out their versions next year under a federal decision issued Thursday.

The Food and Drug Administration said that a nationwide shortage of Eli Lilly's Zepbound and Mounjaro has been resolved, eliminating the need for copycat versions of the drugs that have become wildly popular with Americans trying to lose weight.

The decision is a win for Lilly which had been pressing the FDA to take the step for months - and is expected to impact how patients access the drugs, including how much they pay.

Zepbound is FDA-approved to treat obesity and Mounjaro is approved for diabetes. They use the same active ingredient, tirzepatide.

The FDA said Thursday that "Lilly's supply is currently meeting or exceeding demand," after two years of shortages.

Both drugs are part of the GLP-1 class that has shown unprecedented results for helping people shed weight by decreasing appetite and boosting feelings of fullness. Wegovy and Ozempic - competing drugs from Novo Nordisk - remain on the FDA's shortage list.

With demand for GLP-1 drugs booming, compounding pharmacies and telehealth companies like Hims and Ro have jumped into the market, selling cheaper versions online. People can usually get a month's supply for several hundred dollars.



Comprehensive measures implemented in the operating room.

wait and the surgeon in China. "The operation was performed as if I were physically present in Kuwait," he noted. While robotic surgeries have been conducted at the center since 2014, this "remote" robotic surgery, also known as telesurgery, is the first of its kind in the Arabian Gulf and the Middle East.

Ensuring patient safety remained the top priority. A complete team from Sabah Al-Ahmad Center, including surgeons, anesthesiologists, and nurses, was present in the operating room in Kuwait to intervene if needed. Dr. Al-Dosari stressed that the surgery was carried out with precision, as though the surgical team

New food labels aim to curb chronic diseases

US updates 'healthy' foods definition

NEW YORK, Dec 21, (AP): Packaged foods in the US will have to follow new rules in order to call themselves "healthy," according to changes finalized by the Food and Drug Administration.

It's an update of the agency's definition originally devised 30 years ago. The move is aimed at helping Americans navigate food labels at the grocery store and make choices that are aligned with federal dietary guidelines - in hopes of reducing rates of diet-related chronic disease, the FDA said.

Under the rule, products that claim to be "healthy" must contain a cer-tain amount of food from one or more food groups such as fruit, vegetables, grains, dairy and protein. And for the first time, the rule sets certain limits for added sugars. Foods must also limit sodium and saturated fat at levels that depend on the type of product, the FDA said.

The change banishes foods such as sugary cereals, highly sweetened yo-gurts, white bread and some granola bars from bearing a "healthy" label, while allowing foods such as avocados, olive oil, salmon, eggs and some trail mix to use it. Even water can now be labeled as healthy, the agency said.

"It's critical for the future of the country that food be a vehicle for well-ness," FDA Commissioner Robert Califf said in a statement. "Improving



Canadian certified organic farm-raised King Salmon filets are placed on a tray in a store in Fairfax, Va., April 10, 2015. (AP)

> is a much-needed update to "horribly outdated" guidance, said Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian, director of the Food is Medicine Institute at Tufts University.

"Big picture, this is a huge improvement from a 30-year-old outdated defi-nition based on 40-year-old science," he said.

The new rule acknowledges that dietary and nutrition knowledge has progressed over three decades and that the previous definition didn't jibe with dietary guidelines that are the cornerstone of federal programs and policies.

No new cases reported

access to nutrition information is an im-

portant public health effort the FDA can

undertake to help people build healthy

two months and food manufacturers

will have until February 2028 to com-

ply. A label that designates certain foods as healthy is still being devel-

oped, FDA officials said. Under the pre-

vious rule, about 15% of products were

eligible for the healthy designation, but

First proposed in 2022, the change

only 5% made the claim.

The new rule will take effect within

eating patterns.

Rwanda, WHO declare end of Marburg outbreak

KIGALI, Rwanda, Dec 21, (AP): The World Health Organization and the

An outbreak is considered over after believed to originate in fruit bats and 42 days - two 21-day incubation cycles spreads between people through close contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals or with surfaces, such as contaminated bed sheets. "I thank the government of Rwanda its leadership and Rwandans in general for the strong response to achieve this success but the battle continues," said the WHO representative in Rwanda, Dr. Brain Chirombo. Marburg outbreaks and individual cases have in the past been recorded in Tanzania, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Congo, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Ghana. The virus was first identified in 1967 after it caused simultaneous outbreaks of disease in laboratories in the German city of Marburg and in Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia. Seven people died after being exposed to the virus while conducting research on monkeys.

13

jewelry or adornment," she said. Three similar "pendant" fossils are visibly different from unworked osteoderms on a table - those are rough-surfaced and without any holes.

These artifacts from Santa Elina are roughly 27,000 years old - more than 10,000 years before scientists once thought that humans arrived in the Americas

Originally researchers wondered if the craftsmen were working on already old fossils. But Pacheco's research strongly suggests that ancient people were carving "fresh bones" shortly af-ter the animals died.

Her findings, together with other recent discoveries, could help rewrite the tale of when humans first arrived in the Americas - and the effect they had on the environment they found.

University of the Republic in Montevideo, Uruguay. "But really compelling evidence from more and more older sites keeps coming to light."

In Sao Paulo and at the Federal University of Sao Carlos, Pacheco studies the chemical changes that occur when a bone becomes a fossil. This allows her team to analyze when the sloth osteoderms were likely modified.

"We found that the osteoderms were carved before the fossilization process" in "fresh bones" - meaning anywhere from a few days to a few years after the sloths died, but not thousands of years later.

Her team also tested and ruled out several natural processes, like erosion and animal gnawing. The research was published last year in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

Thursday's decision gives businesses between 60 and 90 days, depending on their size, to phase out their products.

The FDA permits compounded versions of brand name drugs when they are in shortage, and the shift back to Lilly's medications could improve safety for consumers. The FDA warned patients last year about problems with the ingredients and formulations of some GLP-1 drugs sold online. The agency has limited oversight of compounding pharmacies, which are primarily overseen by state authorities.

Rwandan government on Friday declared the outbreak in Rwanda of the Ebola-like Marburg fever over after no new cases were registered in recent weeks.

The country first declared the outbreak on Sept. 27 and reported a total of 15 deaths and 66 cases, with the majority of those affected healthcare workers who handled the first patients.

Without treatment, Marburg can be fatal in up to 88% of people who fall ill with the disease. Symptoms include fever, muscle pains, diarrhea, vomiting and, in some cases, death through extreme blood loss.

There is no authorized vaccine or treatment for Marburg, though Rwanda received hundreds of doses of a vaccine under trial in October.

of the virus - elapsed without registering new cases and all existing cases test negative.

Rwanda discharged the last Marburg patient on Nov. 8 and had reported no new confirmed cases since Oct. 30.

However, WHO officials and Rwanda's Health Minister Dr. Sabin Nzanzimana on Friday said risks remain and that people should stay vigilant.

"We believe it's not completely over because we still face risks, especially from bats. We are continuing to build new strategies, form new health teams, and deploy advanced technologies to track their movements, understand their behavior, and monitor who is interacting with them," the minister announced during a press conference in the capital, Kigali.

Like Ebola, the Marburg virus is







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SPORTS

Cavs roll over Bucks, improve to 15-1 at home

Oklahoma City remains red-hot by topping Miami

CLEVELAND, Dec 21, (AP): Donovan Mitchell scored 27 points, Darius Garland added 16 and the Cleveland Cavaliers moved to 15-1 at home with a 124-101 win on Friday night over the Milwaukee Bucks, who played for the first time since winning the NBA Cup.

Cleveland is 3-0 this season against Milwaukee, which was without All-Star guard Damian Lillard because of a strained calf.

Evan Mobley scored 15 and Cleveland made 20 3-pointers while pushing its league-best record to 24-4.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 33 points and 14 rebounds for the Bucks, who may need a couple more days to shake off their collective hangover after winning the Cup on Tuesday in Las Vegas.

With Lillard sidelined, the Bucks were missing their second-best player and 25.7 points per game. Milwaukee's starting guards - Andre Jackson Jr. and AJ Green - shot a combined 0 of 9.

Doc Rivers doesn't believe Lillard's injury is "severe" and the team is being cautious. ... Rivers said it was "weird" winning a tournament and resuming play. The turnaround didn't give Mil-



Miami Heat guard Terry Rozier (2) drives to the basket as Okla-homa City Thunder guard Aaron Wiggins (21) defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Miami. (AP)

waukee's players much time to recover. Rivers hopes the league addresses the tight window in the future.

Max Strus made his season debut after being sidelined with an ankle injury. He finished with nine points in 19 minutes.

After Strus made a 3-pointer, Caris LeVert dropped a layup and then poked away Milwaukee's inbound pass. The ball got to Mitchell, who buried a 3-pointer with 1.1 seconds left in the third quarter to put the Cavs up 27.

Jalen Williams scored a seasonhigh 33 points, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 25 and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Miami Heat 104-97 for their seventh straight victory.

Lu Dort scored 14 points and Isaiah Hartenstein had 13 points and 18 rebounds for the Thunder, who improved to 22-5 - the second-best record in the NBA and tops in the Western Conference.

Oklahoma City's winning streak is alive because the NBA Cup final a loss Tuesday night to Milwaukee in Las Vegas - doesn't count as a regular-season game.

Tyler Herro had 28 points and 12 rebounds for Miami, which got 17 points and 10 rebounds from Bam Adebayo.

The Heat lost Jimmy Butler to illness in the first quarter and briefly lost Adebayo in the third quarter when he got elbowed over an eye by teammate Jaime Jaquez Jr. Adebayo needed seven stitches but returned.

Joel Embiid had 34 points and nine assists after missing a game because of a sinus fracture, helping the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Charlotte Hornets 108-98.

Wearing a protective "Phantom of the Opera" mask, Embiid was introduced to a roaring ovation.

Embiid scored 22 points in the first three quarters to lead the 76ers to their fourth win in five games. Philadelphia is still well under .500 at 9-16 but a recent hot streak has it at least within striking distance of a play-in tournament berth.

Embiid has been ravaged by injuries this season and has only played in seven games, mostly due to knee soreness.

Philadelphia 76ers' Ricky Council IV, right, tries to go up for a dunk against Charlotte Hornets' DaQuan Jeffries during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

Players say they are at breaking point

Top players have had enough, FIFA new super-sized tournament sparks a revolt

MANCHESTER, England, Dec 21, (AP): One of the most striking moments of soccer in 2024 was when Rodri hobbled onto a stage in Paris on crutches to receive the prestigious Ballon d'Or for best male player of the year.

The Manchester City and Spain midfielder had been one of the most outspoken critics against the increasingly congested soccer calendar, warning that the lack of downtime was detrimental to players' perjust a month before the Oct. 28 award ceremony, he tore his ACL during a seemingly routine run in a Premier League game against Arsenal. Though such injuries have occurred throughout the history of the sport and aren't necessarily linked to overplaying, Rodri's season-ending injury became a visual representation of the physical toll of modern soccer at a time when the busy match schedule is facing legal challenges and the possibility of strike action. Top footballers are now routinely playing more than 60 games per season for club and country, while the game is getting faster and more intense. Injuries are on the rise. Already pushed to their limits, some players say FIFA's newly expanded Club World Cup, to be held in the United States next year, is the last straw. Players say they are "at breaking point, that they are at the limit, that it's actually too much," Alexander Bielefeld, from global players' union FIFPRO, told The Associated Press. The new Club World Cup is a supersized version of what used to be a short tournament with only seven teams. The new edition includes 32 teams from around the world and will be held every four years, starting next summer in the United States from June 14 to July 13. As its name suggests, it's envisioned to be club version of the World Cup for national teams. That means top players will have a monthlong tournament on top of their domestic league season three



tinely play 60-70 matches a season. The union's recommended limit is 55.

Last season Julian Alvarez played 75 games for for-mer club Manchester City and Argentina in 10 different competitions spanning the Premier League, Champions League, Copa America and Olympics.

The season before, Manchester United midfielder Bruno Fernandes played 70 times, including a run of 20 consecutive games.

The Men's European Footall Injury Index, an annual report by global insurance broker Howden, found there were 4,123 injuries in the top divisions of England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France last season. It said the number of injuries had risen year-onvear since the index was first published in 2021 and that "it would be fair to expect a continuation of this upwards trajectory."

Huetter silences Swiss crowd

Odermatt finally wins in Gardena as he dominates downhill

SELVA DI VAL GARDENA, Italy, Dec 21, (AP): Marco Odermatt finally conquered the Saslong.

The three-time overall World Cup champion dominated on Saturday to win a downhill in Val Gardena, beating Swiss teammate Franjo von Allmen by 0.45 seconds.

It was Odermatt's first victory at the resort in the Italian Dolomites. The 27-year-old had had four podium finishes there - including in Saturday's super-G - but had never been better than second.

It had also been a less than stellar start to the season for Odermatt - by his lofty standards - and the Swiss standout yelled out in joy several times after crossing the line, before taking off his skis and raising them up and letting out another long yell.

Before Odermatt came down it had been an incredibly tight race,



Switzerland's Marco Odermatt celebrates at the finish area of an alpine ski, men's World Cup downhill, in Val Gardena, Italy. (AP)

Change Name

I, POLI RAMA SUBBAREDDY S/O. NARAYANA REDDY, R/O. S/O. NAKA IANA KEDDI, NO. D.NO. 4/40, THALLEMVARI PALLI (V), OBULAVARIPALII (M), ANNAMAYYA (DT), A.P., 516108, MY SON PASSPORT BEARING NO. V5168816. HEREBY CHANGED HIS NAME AS FROM JAGADEEP POLI (OLD NAME) TO JAGADEEP REDDY POLI (NEW NAME). HERE AFTER IN ALL HIS DEALINGS AND DOCUMENTS, HE WILL BE KNOWN BY THE NAME OF JAGADEEP REDDY POLI.

In this file photo, Argentina's Julian Alvarez controls the ball during a qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup 2026 against Paraguay in Asuncion, Para-guay. (AP)



In this file photo, Spain's Rodri celebrates after a quarterfinal match between Germany and Spain at the Euro 2024 soccer tournament in Stuttgart, Germany. (AP)

ers' physical and mental

not being heard?" asked the

31-year-old Varane, who

retired from the national

team two years ago and

from playing altogether in

September this year follow-

In July, England and Real

"It's difficult on the body

- mentally and physically

you are exhausted," he said

after England was runner-

up at the European Cham-

FIFPRO says a signifi-

cant number of players rou-

Madrid midfielder Jude

Bellingham described the

schedule as "crazy."

"Why are our opinions

well-being at risk.

ing an injury.

pionship.

out of every four years. With more games also added to the

Champions League in Europe this season as well as the next World Cup in 2026, the soccer calendar is filling up quickly.

"It's something that worries us because we are the guys who suffer," Rodri said in September, just days before he was injured. He said players may have no choice but to refuse to play if the trend continues.

He's not the only one feeling frustrated.

In a post on X last year, Raphael Varane, a member of France's World Cup winning squad in 2018, said the schedule was putting play-

Tony Strudwick, medical director for West Bromwich Albion and former head of performance for Manchester United, said injuries are on the rise despite advancements in sports science and medicine

"That to me looks like there's a mismatch between what the players can physically tolerate and what they've been exposed to," he told The AP. "During the last eight seasons, incidents of hamstring injuries, in particular, have increased."

Strudwick said the risk of too many games was ultimately injury and burnout. But he said players are unlikely to raise the issue with their clubs or national teams.

"Players are very reluctant to say they don't want to play and they're very, very tired. It takes a relatively brave person to do that," he said.

Manchester City played 61 games in the 2022-23 campaign when it won a trophy treble of the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup.

This season that number could rise to 71 because of an expanded group stage and potential playoff in the Champions League and the Club World Cup

A heavy workload is also an issue in women's soccer, FIFPRO said earlier this week, though it noted that while some top players have a packed schedule, others don't get to play enough.

If successful, the Club World Cup could rival the Premier League and Champions League as one of the most lucrative and watched tournaments in club soccer. It has been backed by clubs and next year's event is set to feature many of the biggest names in the sport, including Lionel Messi, Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Jr.

with the top three separated by just 0.02. In the end, American skier Ryan Cochran-Siegle finished third, with Nils Allègre of France missing out on what would have been only his second ever podium finish by one hundredth of a second.

It was Odermatt's 40th World Cup victory but only his third in downhill.

Odermatt won the downhill World Cup title last season, as well as the super-G, giant slalom and overall crystal globes.

The only previous downhill this season was in Beaver Creek, where Odermatt finished second to teammate Justin Murisier.

Odermatt moved 60 points above

Best of the Rest

George Eastham dies at 88: Former England midfielder George Eastham, a member of the country's 1966 World Cup winning squad who was better known for his social activism, has died. He was 88.

Soccer club Stoke City announced Eastham's death late Friday, saying it was "immensely saddened" to lose a "club legend." It did not specify a cause of death.

Eastham made 19 appearances for England, following the path set by his father, George Eastham senior, though the last of those games was before the 1966 World Cup. He did not feature at the tournament itself, where he was the only Arsenal player in the ultimately successful England squad.

Eastham had to wait for a World Cup winner's medal until 2007, when FIFA ruled that medals should be awarded retrospectively to non-playing squad members of previous finals. (AP)

Palmeiras signs Torres: Palmeiras has completed the signing of Uruguay international winger Facundo Torres from Orlando City, the Brazilian Serie A side said on Friday

The 24-year-old ended weeks of speculation by agreeing to personal terms of a deal that ties him to the Sao Paulo-based club until 2029.

"I believe that the greatness of Palmeiras speaks for itself," Torres told Palmeiras' official website. "That is why I am here. I've come because I want to win trophies." (Xinhua)

Atlanta Utd brings back Deila: Atlanta United hired Ronny Deila as its new coach on Friday, bringing him back to Major League Soccer three years after he guided New York City FC to a championship.

The 49-year-old Norwegian manager agreed to a three-year deal to replace Rob Valentino, who served as interim coach after Gonzalo Pineda was fired in early June

The hiring of Deila completes a overhaul of Atlanta United's leadership team. Chris Henderson was brought in Monday as chief soccer officer and sporting director. (AP)

Pereira on Boca radar: Boca Juniors is preparing a bid to sign Flamengo defender Leo Pereira, according to media reports in Argentina.

Murisier in the downhill standings and 50 points above Henrik Kristoffersen in the overall.

The circuit moves to nearby Alta Badia where there is a giant slalom on Sunday and a slalom the following day.

Austrian skier Cornelia Huetter silenced the Swiss crowd when she finished ahead of home favorite Lara Gut-Behrami to win a World Cup super-G on Saturday.

The race also marked the return of Lindsey Vonn after nearly six years of retirement, with the American standout crossing in 14th.

It was Huetter's second win in two weekends, having also claimed a downhill in Beaver Creek, Colorado, a week ago.

Huetter trailed Olympic champion Gut-Behrami at every checkpoint but made up time on the bottom section of the Corvaglia course to finish 0.18 seconds ahead.

No Austrian had won a super-G in St. Moritz since Michaela Dorfmeister in 2006.

Sofia Goggia finished third, 0.33 behind, while Vonn was 1.18 back.

It was Huetter's eighth World Cup win and fifth in super-G. Last season, Huetter won the season-long World Cup downhill title.

Another super-G is scheduled for St. Moritz on Sunday.

Boca manager Fernando Gago sees the center-back as an ideal addition to a squad that was hit by injuries this year, TyC Sports reported.

It added that Flamengo had set an asking price of around 9 million U.S. dollars for the 28-year-old, who is tied to the Rio de Janeiro club until December 2027.

Pereira has made 217 appearances and scored 11 goals across all competitions for Flamengo, whom he joined in 2020 from Athletico Paranaense.

Boca finished sixth in Argentina's Primera Division this year, nine points behind champion Velez Sarsfield. (Xinhua)

Savelev accepts suspension: Russian tennis player Daniil Savelev has accepted a two-year suspension for doping, the International Tennis Integrity Agency said.

The ITIA said that Savelev tested positive for the prohibited substance meldonium in July 2024. He has been provisionally suspended since August of this year. That means his suspension will end in August 2026.

Savelev had reached a career-high world doubles ranking of 1,486 in August 2022.

The ITIA said that it believed that Savelev had not intentionally taken the banned substance, saying that 'Savelev admitted to ingesting meldonium tablets, confusing family medication for supplements of a similar appearance.

The doping watchdog said that Savelev agreed to accept the suspension since he did "not take any steps to mitigate" the rules violation. (AP)

Williams traded to Reign: The Seattle Reign have acquired Olympic gold medalist Lynn Williams in a trade with Gotham FC.

The Reign also received goalkeeper Cassie Miller in the trade announced Friday. Gotham received midfielder Jaelin Howell, an international roster spot and \$70,000 in allocation money.

Williams, the National Women's Soccer League's alltime leading scorer with 80 goals, joined the league in 2015 as the sixth overall draft pick by the now-defunct Western New York Flash.

Over the course of her NWSL career, Williams has won four league championships and three NWSL Shields. She was the league's Most Valuable Player and the Golden Boot winner for most goals in 2016.

Williams has appeared in 75 games for the U.S., scoring 25 goals and 13 assists. She earned a bronze medal with the team at the Tokyo Olympics, and a gold in the Paris Games this summer. (AP)

SPORTS

Qatar is a likely frontrunner in Group 1

Dr. Noura Al-Marzouqi: A pioneer in soccer technical analysis

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Dr. Noura Al-Marzouqi has made history as the first Arab and Gulf woman to venture into the male-dominated field of technical analysis in football. Breaking barriers, she became a technical analyst with expertise in match analysis, earning her a role with Kuwait TV during the Khaleeji Zain 26 to provide insights on the tournament's games.

Al-Marzouqi holds a diploma in football analysis and a master's degree in sports management, specializing in football public relations. She is also an affiliate student at the prestigious Barcelona Academy, further cementing her credentials in the field.

In an exclusive interview with Al-Seyassah, Al-Marzouqi shared that her journey into football analysis began unexpectedly after a 30-year career in Emirati media. Owning a company that manages football-re-



Dr. Noura Al-Marzougi

lated websites fueled her passion for the sport, leading her to explore match analysis. Encouraged by peers, she took the bold step into sports analysis.

Al-Marzouqi lauded the exceptional organization of the Khaleeji Zain 26 main media center at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, commending the media committee's efforts to support Gulf journalists and media professionals. She also expressed admiration for the tournament's innovative "Hayakom" app, which streamlines media operations by providing daily updates, match tickets, hotel bookings, and flights. She described the app as a game-changer for Gulf sports media.

She remarked: "The media committee and all organizers of the Khaleeji Zain 26 have been incredibly cooperative with Gulf, Arab, and international media. This level of professionalism is no surprise coming from Kuwait, a nation renowned for excellence.'

Discussing the tournament atmosphere, Al-Marzouqi praised the vibrant preparations and enthusiastic fan turnout, describing the event as a testament to the Gulf region's passion for football.

Group One: Qatar is a likely frontrunner for the first qualifying spot, while the second spot will be a battle between the UAE, Kuwait, and Oman, with Oman potentially emerging as the "dark horse."

Group Two: Iraq is a favorite for the first ticket to the semifinals, with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain contending for the second.

Regarding the UAE national team, Al-Marzouqi noted that coach Jorge Luis Pinto is still experimenting with lineups, which has led to a lack of stability. She highlighted gaps in certain positions and acknowledged the UAE football community's aspirations for better performances, given the abundance of talent in the UAE league.

Al-Marzouqi's trailblazing role in football analysis and her insights on Khaleeji Zain 26 underscore her expertise and dedication to advancing the region's sports media landscape.

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain open campaign with high ambitions

Talajic targets strong Khaleeji Zain 26 start

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Hervé Renard affirmed that Saudi Arabia's national team is determined to compete for the Khaleeji Zain 26 title, emphasizing the importance of the tournament as a standalone objective rather than a preparation phase for upcoming World Cup qualifiers. Speaking at a press conference, Renard expressed gratitude to Kuwait for its warm hospitality and wished all participating teams' success.

'We begin the tournament today with a challenging match against Bahrain," Renard stated. "Our ambition is to win the title, and a strong start is essential."

Reflecting on his absence from the Saudi team in recent months, Renard stressed his focus on the tournament and called on Saudi fans to attend and support their team. "Their presence motivates the players to perform at their best," he added. Renard also praised his squad, expressing confidence in their ability to delight Saudi supporters. He highlighted the need to strengthen team spirit, given the current circumstances differ significantly from previous ones.

Renard extended special thanks to uured player Salem Al-Dawsari foi joining the national team and supporting his teammates, wishing him a speedy recovery. Addressing the absence of Saudi player's active in foreign leagues, he acknowledged their importance but expressed confidence in the remaining squad's potential to deliver high-level performances. Abdul-Ilah Al-Malki, a key player for Saudi Arabia, reiterated the team's collective goal of clinching the title. "Facing Bahrain in our opening Group Two match won't be easy," he admitted, "but the ambition and determination of the players to reach the final and secure the precious cup will drive us forward in every match.



Renard and Al-Maliki addressing the media.

face Saudi Arabia in today's (Sunday) opening round of the championship. Speaking during the pre-match press conference, Talajic noted, "This tournament is entirely different from the

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World Cup qualifiers. It's a combined competition, and we need to approach every match with the aim to win." He praised Renard's capabilities,

acknowledging the French coach's

ability to guide Saudi Arabia to deliver strong performances. Talajic also reflected on Bahrain's triumph in the Gulf 24 Cup in 2019, highlighting the uniqueness of the current tournament.

"This is a new challenge, and we aim to showcase beautiful football and make a strong opening statement. Talajic said. He also confirmed the absence of player Ali Haram due to injury but expressed hope for his quick return.

Qatar's Afif likely to miss the entire Khaleeji Zain 26

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Media reports have suggested that Akram Afif's absence could extend throughout the entire Gulf Cup football tournament.

According to Asharq Al-Awsat, Qatar's national team coach, Luis Garcia, announced that the 2023 Asian Player of the Year would miss the opening match against the UAE in the first round of the Khaleeji Zain 26. Sources later indicated that Afif might not participate in any matches during the tournament.

Former Qatar national team star Adel Khamis shared insights on the matter during the Diwan Al-Khaleej program on Kuwait Sports Channel. Khamis stated, "I have not received definitive confirmation,



Akram Afif

but I have been informed that there is a possibility Akram will not play in the tournament."

He further clarified that Afif's absence is due to personal circumstances and not related to injury or any technical or administrative disputes with coach Garcia. Khamis added that Afif might still join the squad if his personal matters are resolved.

Al-Qadsiya challenges nullification

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: Al-Qadsiya Club has announced its intention to escalate its grievance to the International Volleyball Federation following the Kuwaiti Vollevball Federation's decision to nullify the results of the club's first team in the Federation Championship. The tournament, which concluded last Thursday, saw Kazma crowned champions after a 3-0 victory over Kuwait SC in the final. This decision barred Al-Qadsiya from participating in the final, despite qualifying for it

alongside Kuwait Club.

As a result, the federation nullified all matches in which Beyk participated, awarding a 0-3 forfeit loss to Al-Qadsiya and imposing a fine of 400 Kuwaiti dinars per match.

In its protest letter, Al-Qadsiya Club emphasized the legitimacy of Beyk's registration, stating that the procedures were completed and approved by the federation before the registration deadline on November 17. The club further noted that the player's registration card had been issued, signifying compliance with all requirements.

The club also highlighted its proactive communication with the federation following Kazma's protest. Al-Qadsiya submitted the player s international transfer certificate for verification a second time to reaffirm the accuracy of Beyk's registration data. Al-Qadsiya Club expressed its disappointment with the decision, asserting that it undermines the integrity of the championship. The club reiterated its commitment to defending its legal position and ensuring fair play in the competition. This dispute highlights ongoing challenges in player registration processes and underscores the need for clear and consistent regulations to uphold the credibility of sports tournaments.

Bahrain's head coach, Croatian Dragan Talajic, expressed readiness to



Bahrain coach Talajic and Marhoon hold a press conference.

Bahrain's star player Mohammed Marhoon emphasized the Gulf Cup's significance as a prestigious combined tournament. "We aim to represent Bahrain with distinction," he said, extending gratitude to Kuwait Club for their support. "I hope to be an exemplary ambassador for Bahraini football here in Kuwait."

As the Khaleeji Zain 26 kicks off, both teams gear up for an intense competition, showcasing their determination to start strong and secure their place as top contenders.

Al-Qadsiya submitted a formal protest to the local volleyball federation, demanding the reversal of what it called an unjust decision and the restoration of its right to defend its position. The club asserted its willingness to escalate the matter to the International Volleyball Federation if necessary.

The controversy stems from the federation's claim of an administrative error in registering Al-Qadsiya's Iranian professional player, Mohammad Reza Bevk. According to the federation, Beyk was officially registered a day after the professional registration window closed, constituting a breach of regulations.

Bayern puts five past dismal Leipzig

Bundesliga sees quickfire scoring record



Munich's Harry Kane, right, vies for the ball against Leipzig's Christoph Baumgartner during the Bundesliga soccer match between Bayern Munich and RB Leipzig at the Allianz Arena, Munich, Germany. (AP)

MUNICH, Dec 21, (AP): Bayern Munich crushed Leipzig 5-1 and broke a long-standing Bundesliga record for quickfire goals.

Two teams had never scored in the opening two minutes of a Bundesliga match until Jamal Musiala gave Bayern the lead after 28 seconds and Benjamin Šeško equalized barely 60 seconds later.

The pace slowed after that frenetic start but not for long. Konrad Laimer put Bayern ahead against his old club in the 25th. Michael Olise found space on the right side and Laimer gave Péter Gulácsi no chance with a crisp volley.

Nine minutes later, Joshua Kimmich lashed home from almost 30 meters to make it 3-1.

Leroy Sané added the fourth with 15 minutes remaining and Alphonso Davies got his first league goal of the season to complete the rout three minutes later.

Harry Kane returned and looked rusty after missing two games with a hamstring injury but played 87 minutes of a match that helped Bayern get back on track after a rocky run.

After winning eight games in a row from late October to late November, the Bavarian giant lost two and drew one of its next five, including a 2-1 defeat to Mainz last week, its first loss in the Bundesliga.

Museveni thanks Motsepe: Ugandan president Yoweri Kaguta Museveni has thanked the head of Confederation of African Football (CAF) for his efforts in promoting football in East Africa. CAF president Patrice Motsepe met Museveni at

the Statehouse in Kampala.

Motsepe was on his final visit to East African nations Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, who will collectively host the CAF African Nations Championships (CHAN) in February next year.

Museveni thanked Motsepe for his work in growing African football and assured him of his commitment to making CHAN, and the preparations for the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations, a success. (Xinhua)

Milan back to winning ways with slender win over Verona

VERONA, Italy, Dec 21, (AP): Tijjani Reijnders got the only goal and Milan got a muchneeded three points in a 1-0 win away at lowly Verona in Serie A on Friday.

The Dutch striker finished superbly after a Youssouf Fofana pass opened the Verona defense early in the second half.

The win was Milan's eighth consecutive league win against Verona and got it back to winning ways after losing to Atalanta and drawing with Genova.

It should ease some pressure on under-fire coach Paulo Fonseca. His side was up to seventh place in Serie A.

Verona sat a point above the relegation zone.

Girona beat Valladolid 3-0 and snapped an unhappy run of six games without a win in La Liga.

The result lifted Girona two places to eighth while Valladolid stayed second from bottom with just three wins in 18 games.

Valladolid has conceded more goals than any other team but it could do nothing about the opener after 31 minutes. David López's shot from outside the box took a deflection and wrongfooted goalkeeper Karl Hein.

Hein's misery continued eight minutes later when he got a hand



AC Milan's Tammy Abraham, left, and Verona's Daniele Ghilardi battle for the ball during an Italian Serie A soccer match in Verona, Italy. (AP)

on Abel Ruiz's header but could not stop him from doubling Girona's lead.

Danjuma made it 3-0 for Girona after 80 minutes with a closerange snapshot.

The result came at the end of a turbulent week for Valladolid. The club's Brazilian owner Ronaldo Nazário said he would sell the club and run for president of the Brazilian Football Confederation.

Valladolid's former mayor criticized Ronaldo and said he "had made promises he didn't keep."

Fans have protested the Brazilian's stewardship of the club.

Best of the Rest

Somalia into semifinals: Somalia beat Sudan 1-0 to book a place in the semifinals of the CAF Under-17 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) Central-East zone qualifiers.

The reigning zonal champions defeated Sudan in their Group B encounter in Kampala, Uganda on Saturday

Sakariye Mohamed netted the game's only goal two minutes into added time to send the Somalia fans into raptures. After a mix-up in Sudan's defense, Mohamed controlled the ball well and fired past goalkeeper Mamadu Mohamed Musa Ali.

The two teams had missed glaring opportunities in each half, but Somalia's win sends them up to second in Group B behind leaders South Sudan, who had beaten them 3-0 in the qualifying tournament's opening match.

Somalia assistant coach Muqtar Ali was full of praise for his players. "We are very happy that we kept strong and pushed on until we scored the vital goal," said Ali.

Sudan head coach Mohamed Abdulkhadir Sheikhdon rued his side's failure to take the win. "We created some scoring chances, but failed to take them,' he said. (Xinhua)



Dancers perform during the Khaleeji Zain 26 opening ceremony.

HH Amir inaugurates Khaleeji Zain 26

Dazzling artistic show reflecting Gulf past, future; Amir receives FIFA president

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21, (KUNA): The Arabian Gulf Football Cup, "Khaleeji Zain 26," officially kicked off on Saturday evening with a grand opening ceremony at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

The ceremony featured mesmerizing artistic performances that celebrated Gulf heritage while highlighting a shared vision for the future.

The event began with an inspiring speech by the tournament's sponsor, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, followed by Kuwait's national anthem.

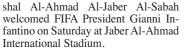
A vivid depiction of Gulf life unfolded during the ceremony, spotlighting Kuwait's and neighboring countries' historical ties to the sea, a vital source of livelihood for past generations. Additionally, the desert lifestyle, symbolized by the camel, was beautifully portrayed, aligning with the tournament's slogan: "The Future is Gulf."

Stunning artistic displays showcased the rich cultural heritage of the Arabian Gulf, seamlessly blending traditional elements with modern artistic interpretations. Gulf boats, representing both the region's history and its aspirations for the future, were prominently featured.

The ceremony masterfully combined traditional Gulf folk arts with advanced technology to present a compelling narrative of a unified Gulf identity.

Renowned Kuwaiti artist Bashar Al-Shatti and Saudi artist Ayed performed an emotive operetta set against vibrant visuals, including symbols like the championship cup, coffee pot, and incense burner. These displays reinforced themes of unity and the shared destiny connecting Gulf nations under one banner.

The event culminated in a breathtaking fireworks display, leaving the audience captivated and setting an electrifying tone for the tournament ahead. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Me-



The meeting was attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with GCC ministers of sports and youth, and the heads of sports federations participating in the Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 26).

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior is demonstrating tireless commitment and unwavering determination to ensure the success of the Arabian Gulf Cup, "Khaleeji Zain 26," which officially kicks off today, Saturday.

For weeks, ministry personnel have worked diligently to prepare and provide logistical support across all sectors involved in this significant event, running until January 3.

The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defense, Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah, alongside the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Sabah, and other security leaders, are closely overseeing the implementation of a comprehensive secu-

Fireworks erupt during the opening ceremony of the Khaleeji Zain 26 in Kuwait. of the Arabian Gulf ain 26," which offition of the tournament.

In collaboration with the Kuwait National Guard and the Kuwait Fire Force, the Ministry's plan defines and distributes duties, missions, and responsibilities to ensure the safety and security of all attendees and guests. These coordinated efforts encompass various security, traffic, and logistical operations to guarantee a seamless event.

Speaking exclusively to KUNA, the Ministry of Interior emphasized that their approach draws from previous experiences in organizing major

Hussein expresses readiness for Khaleeji Zain 26

Iraq begins title defense against Yemen

championships. This includes raising awareness among security personnel and equipping them with specialized training to manage large-scale events effectively.

Sports

The traffic management plan includes facilitating audience entry to stadiums, streamlining gate access, and ensuring smooth organizational flow. Efforts also involve providing adequate parking and transportation services, with personnel stationed at all event venues to ensure efficient operations.

The Ministry stressed the importance of audience cooperation with

secure victories for Iraq.

security instructions to enhance safety and ensure an enjoyable experience for all attendees.

Sheikh Fahad has issued clear directives to finalize all technical, traffic, and security preparations in line with the leadership's vision of showcasing the Gulf's strong unity through the success of this prestigious event.

The Ministry reiterated its commitment to implementing every aspect of the plan to deliver a secure and exceptional championship, urging attendees to adhere to guidelines and work collaboratively with security teams.



Manchester City's Bernardo Silva, left, duels for the ball with Aston Villa's Morgan Rogers during the English Premier League soccer match between Aston Villa and Manchester City, at Villa Park in Birmingham, England. (AP)

Cityzens lose to Aston Villa

City stunning slump continues

LONDON, Dec 21, (AP): Manchester City's stunning slump continued Saturday with a 2-1 loss to Aston Villa in the Premier League.

Goals from Jhon Duran and Morgan Rogers at Villa Park consigned the four-time defending champion to a ninth defeat in 12 games. Pep Guardiola's team has won just once during that run.

Phil Foden pulled a goal back for City in stoppage time, but it wasn't enough to spark a late comeback.

City dropped to sixth in the standings - nine points below leader Liverpool, having played two games more.

Villa climbed to fifth.

City's remarkable fall shows little sign of stopping, with Guardiola admitting last week that he had not been good enough to turn his team's form around.

Defeat meant his once dominant team is without a win in any of its last eight away games in all competitions. While its title defense is unravelling, a place in the top four and Champions League qualification could also be in jeopardy.

A sixth league defeat is City's worst record since the 2020-21 season.

Villa dominated the game with Duran scoring his sixth goal in as many starts in the 16th minute from Rogers' assist.

Villa had a goal disallowed for offside in the second half and Rogers hit the post before doubling the home side's lead in the 65th.

Foden gave City a slim hope of salvaging something with his goal in the third minute of added time.

Manchester City's troubled season was dealt another blow with confirmation that defender Ruben Dias will be out for up to four weeks because of a muscle injury.

Manager Pep Guardiola has cited injuries to key players such as Rodri as a factor in his team's troubles and the loss of Dias compounds his problems.

Guardiola said Dias' injury occurred during Sunday's 2-1 loss to Manchester United.

"After 75 minutes against United he felt something. He's strong and wanted to stay on the pitch, but now he's injured," Guardiola told a news conference.

Mason Mount faces "several weeks" out of action because of a latest injury, Manchester United head coach Ruben Amorim said.

The midfielder was substituted after 14 minutes of the 2-1 win over Manchester City on Sunday due to a muscle problem and was consoled by teammates as he left the field. Kuwait until January 3, kicked off today. The defending champion, Iraq, will face Yemen at 5:25 pm at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium, while Saudi Arabia takes on Bahrain at 8:30 pm at Jaber International Stadium.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 21: The second group of the "Khaleeji Zain 26", hosted by

Iraq's head coach, Spaniard Jesús Casas, expressed confidence in his team's readiness despite challenges, including injuries. Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Casas emphasized the importance of the Gulf Championship while also prioritizing the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

Casas highlighted the team's collective goal of bringing joy to Iraqi fans by striving for another Gulf title. Reflecting on the team's journey, he noted the difficulty of predicting a winner due to the competitiveness of the tournament.

Addressing player selection, Casas stressed the significance of the ongoing Iraqi League in preparing for future competitions. He praised the federation's strategy of involving players from various clubs, which he believes will help discover emerging talents.

On today's match against Yemen, Casas commended the opponent's quality, noting their skilled players and potential to contend for the title.

Iraqi striker Ayman Hussein expressed the team's readiness for the tournament, emphasizing their group-oriented approach rather than reliance on individual



Algerian coach Noureddine Ould Ali, leading the Yemeni national team, shared insights into his team's preparations. Over the past three months, the team engaged in multiple training phases and friendly matches with Gulf teams to build cohesion among its predominantly local players.

stars. He assured fans of his commitment to giving his best performance to help

Ould Ali described facing Iraq as a significant motivator, emphasizing that his team aims to deliver strong performances within its available resources. He acknowledged the supportive roles of the Iraqi and Bahraini federations in enabling Yemeni players' participation, which helped elevate the team's level.

While dismissing title aspirations for now, Ould Ali stated his primary goal is to showcase a commendable performance against Iraq and build confidence for the future.

Abdul-Wasie Al-Matari, the captain of the Yemeni national team, acknowledged the strength of Iraq's squad, singling out striker Ayman Hussein as a key player. He expressed confidence in his team's preparation and revealed that insights from Yemeni players in the Iraqi league would aid their game plan.

The stage is set for an exciting second-group kickoff, with both teams eager to make a strong impression in the Khaleeji Zain 26.



Yemeni coach Noureddine Ould Ali.

Casas and Ayman Hussein address the press.

Allen claims victory at Riyadh Season Snooker Championship

RIYADH, Dec 21, (Xinhua): The 2024 Riyadh Season Snooker Championship concluded on Friday at the Boulevard City, Riyadh. Northern Ireland's Mark Allen secured the title with a commanding 5-1 victory over Belgium's Luca Brecel in the final, earning winnings of 250,000 pounds.

This year's championship brought together the world's top 10 snooker players, including current world No. 1 Judd Trump, seven-time world champion Ronnie O'Sullivan, China's top player Ding Junhui and rising star Zhang Anda.

Over three days of intense competition, Allen demonstrated remarkable form and consistency, advancing through each stage and ultimately claiming the prestigious trophy.

The tournament, which commenced on December 18, adopted a best-of-seven format for earlier rounds and a best-of-nine format for the final. Several high-stakes matches captured attention.

In the semifinals, Brecel defeated Mark Williams 4-2, while Allen eliminated defending champion O'Sullivan by the same scoreline. In the final, Allen main-

tained his dominance, dropping only one frame against Brecel to clinch the victory, marking another significant milestone in his career.

Chinese players also delivered commendable performances. Ding Junhui triumphed 4-0 over local player Abdulraouf Saigh in the first round but was defeated 4-0 by O'Sullivan in the quarterfinals. Meanwhile, Zhang Anda overcame Ahmed Aseeri 4-0 in the opening round but fell to Brecel in the second round.

In an exclusive interview with Xinhua, Ding expressed optimism about the future of young Chinese snooker players, emphasizing their dedication to rigorous training and their growing presence on the international stage.

He also praised Saudi Arabia for its efforts in introducing diverse sports and creating an excellent platform for high-level competitions, which he said will significantly benefit the development of snooker in the region.

"I'm also deeply grateful for the support of Chinese fans here in Saudi Arabia," Ding added. "Their encouragement gives me great motivation, whether in victory or challenging moments, and it means a lot to me during the competition."

ARAB 🕈 TIMES

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