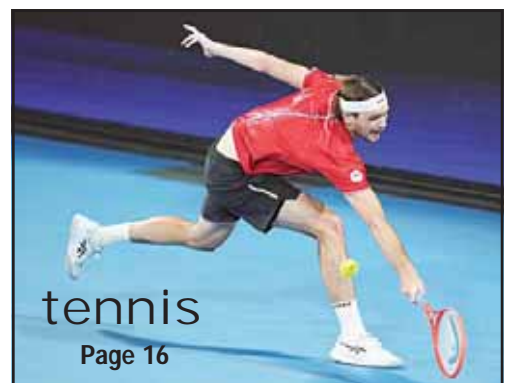




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tennis  
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Amiri Diwan photos

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace Sunday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

## HH Amir receives accolades for Khaleeji Zain 26 success

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday received a letter of congratulations from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the success of the Arabian Gulf Cup – Khaleeji Zain 26.

His Highness the Crown Prince underlined that this success came thanks to His Highness the Amir's wise directives and valuable advice, which contributed to the fruitful cooperation, team spirit and concerted effort of the organizers, reflecting a special competitive championship that embodied brotherhood and historical relations between Gulf countries, and manifested the nation's civilized and bright image.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled seized the opportunity to reiterate everyone's loyalty to the dear homeland and fervent endeavor to further promote the country's status in various fields and at all levels under the wise direction of His Highness the Amir, and to fulfill His Highness the Amir's numerous expectations.

In reply, His Highness the Amir sent a letter to His Highness the Crown Prince, voicing thanks and appreciation for his sincere sentiments and commending the great efforts of state bodies in organizing the Arabian Gulf Cup.

President of the Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah extended his sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and

Continued on Page 5

### Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

## The responsibility of the ruler in our Islamic religion

WHEN truth is obscured by misleading and unjust propaganda, the perception of people's heritage often changes. As a result, some may label this heritage as backward, while others distort it for personal gain. Some even seek to erase it altogether, as seen with the values established by certain Arab and Muslim caliphs.

One such forgotten truth, particularly among Arabs and Muslims, is that the concept of retirement, or what is known today as the social insurance system in Kuwait, was first established by the Rightly Guided Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him).

According to various historical sources, it is narrated that one day while walking through the streets of Madinah, Caliph Umar saw an elderly man begging.

He asked him, "What is the matter, old man?"

The man replied, "I am a Jew, and I am begging to pay the jizya (tax) and to feed my children."

Umar responded, "By Allah, we have not been just with you. We took your youth and now we are abandoning you in your old age. I swear, I will give you from the funds of the Muslims."

Caliph Umar then ordered a salary to be provided to the man, which would continue until his death.

In another example of the solidarity exhibited by the Rightly Guided Caliphs, Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (Al-Farouq), accompanied by his servant Aslam, once went out at night to check on the conditions of the people. As they passed by a tent near the city, they heard the sound of groaning. Caliph Umar called out to the people inside the tent and found a frail and exhausted woman. He asked her about the groaning sound, and she replied, without knowing who he was, that it was the sound of her children crying.

She then explained that she was a widow with several children and had nothing to give them, so she would pretend that she was cooking until they fell asleep while waiting.

Continued on Page 5

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# Fake booze charges land sergeant in jail

Expats framed in bribery-fueled deportation

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: The Court of Appeals, headed by Counselor Nasr Salem Al-Haid, along with Counselors Saud Al-Sanea and Tariq Metwally, upheld the five-year prison term and KD1,000 fine imposed on a sergeant for fabricating alcohol trafficking charges to deport Asians.

The defendant was found guilty of accepting a KD500 bribe from an undercover agent to arrest and deport an Asian under false charges.

The accused, a sergeant in the Ministry of Interior, unlawfully detained the individual for approximately 30 minutes at Salwa Police Station, fabricating the charge of alcohol trafficking to justify the deportation.

Continued on Page 5



KUNA photo

Students gather and prepare before entering the halls for their exams on Sunday, Jan 5.

— See Page 4

PACI to roll out new civil IDs by end of Jan

## Citizenship law changes ensure decent living for foreign wives of Kuwaitis: 1st Deputy PM

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah reaffirmed on Sunday that Decree Law (158/2024) of amending Article 16 of Amiri Decree (15/1959) on Kuwaiti citizenship law, guarantees a decent life for foreign wives of Kuwaitis in accordance with Article 8 of the Kuwaiti Citizenship Law whose citizenship were revoked.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef's aforementioned statement came during his chairing a meeting at Al-Seif Palace with concerned government agencies, to follow up on the measures taken by those agencies to deal with the file.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, also Defense Minister and Interior

Continued on Page 5



KUNA photo

First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah chairing the meeting.

'Kuwait a shining example of tolerance, brotherhood'

## Archbishop Bigol extends New Year wishes and announces Christmas reception dates

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Patron of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Kuwait Archbishop Anba Bishoy Bigol expressed his heartfelt congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, on the occasion of the New Year. He wished the leadership, government, and people of Kuwait continued prosperity and success, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Archbishop Bigol also extended his congratulations to His Highness the Amir on the first anniversary of his assumption of power, and prayed for His Highness's continued guidance and care as he leads Kuwait toward progress and fulfillment of its people's aspirations.

In addition, Archbishop Bigol announced that St. Mark's Cathedral in Kuwait will hold the Christmas Mass on the evening of Monday, January 6.

Well-wishers are invited to attend part of the Mass at 9:00 pm. The cathedral will also receive well-wishers on the morning of Tuesday, January 7, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Continued on Page 5

## CITRA urges faster fix for Kuwait's internet outage

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (KUNA): Kuwait's internet services were disrupted on Saturday due to a fault in one of the seven international cables connecting the country to global internet networks, the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) reported on Sunday.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), CITRA explained that it was closely coordinating with the affected telecommunications company to repair the damaged cable and restore normal service as quickly as possible. The authority also indicated it was investigating the incident to ensure the company implements necessary measures, such as relying on alternative cables, to prevent similar disruptions in the future.

CITRA reiterated its commitment to monitoring the performance of telecommunications companies to ensure high-quality service for all users.

14 tenders launched

## MoH sets new prices for supplements, medicines

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi issued a decision to set the prices of 12 nutritional supplements, which will be added to the list of approved nutritional supplement prices under Ministerial Resolution No. 75/2023.

In addition, Al-Awadhi approved the prices of 289 medicines and pharmaceutical products. Article Two of this decision includes amendments to the names of 15 medicines and formulas, which will be added to the list under Ministerial Resolution No. 74/2023.

Furthermore, the Medical Engineering Department at the Ministry of Health has announced the launching of 14 tenders for supplying equipment and accessories to the Council of Children and Premature Children departments at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital and Jahra Hospital. These tenders include medical laboratory services for the Chest Diseases Hospital and Sabah Hospital.

The Medical Engineering Department said all bids must be submitted through its tender box. Bids will remain valid for 90 days from the closing date. Companies wishing to participate must be registered with the Biomedical Engineering Department and entities specialized in the relevant field. Companies must pay the prescribed fees for purchasing tender documents and submit a certificate of support for national labor when participating in the tender process.

## Kuwait strikes 2,876 citizenship revocations with latest decrees

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Kuwait has issued two decrees and two decisions to revoke the citizenship of 2,876 individuals -- 13 men and 2,863 women -- in accordance with the Kuwaiti Nationality Law and its amendments, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This action follows the proposal of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, with the approval of the Council of Ministers.

Decree No. 221 of 2024 revoked the citizenship of one individual and those who had acquired it through dependency.

Meanwhile, Decree No. 222 of

2024 involved the withdrawal of citizenship from 2,861 women and their dependents.

Resolution No. 1512 of 2024 revoked the Kuwaiti citizenship certificates of 9 individuals, including 7 men and 2 women, in line with Article (21 bis A) of the Nationality Law.

Additionally, Resolution No. 1537 of 2024 rescinded the citizenship of 5 individuals, including any who may have acquired it through dependency, due to fraud, false statements, and incorrect certificates as outlined in Article 21 bis A of the law.

### NewsWatch

GAZA: Israeli occupying forces committed several renewed massacres against Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, killing at least 88 Palestinians and injuring 208 others, according to Gaza health authorities. "The Israeli occupation committed five massacres against families in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, with 88 martyrs and 208 injured others having been taken to hospitals," health authorities said in a press release on Sunday. (KUNA)

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani is scheduled to pay an official visit to Iran on Wednesday for talks on bilateral relations and meetings with senior Iranian officials, said the Prime Minister's Media Office on Sunday. The visit will include discussions on bilateral relations between the two countries and ways to strengthen them, building on the progress made during the visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Baghdad in September of last year, as well as addressing the latest regional developments, it said in a press statement. (KUNA)



9 KFH CSR initiatives for 2024 reinforced leadership



15 Khaleeji Zain 26 ... a remarkable edition of the region's premier sporting event



## Prayer Timings

Fajr .....	05:19	Asr .....	14:46
Sunrise ..	06:43	Maghrib ..	17:04
Zohr .....	11:54	Isha .....	18:26

# Local

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Rather cold and cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speed of 10-40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on.

**By Night:** Cold and cloudy to

## Weather

partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speed of 10-42 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	17	10

Kuwait Airport	20	07
Abdaly	20	07
Bubyan	16	11
Jahra	20	07
Faiiaka Island	19	11
Salmiyah	15	11
Ahmadi	19	11
Jal Aliyah	19	09



Crown Prince Diwan photo  
His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

## Crown Prince meets PM, 1st Deputy PM

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace Sunday His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah.

## Tourney ends without security 'hiccups': Mol

### Al-Mutairi expresses huge pride for 'Gulf Zain 26' success

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (Agencies): Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee for the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Championship (Gulf Zain 26), expressed immense pride in Kuwait's successful organization of this prestigious sports event, held under the high patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad.

In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) following the tournament's conclusion, Minister Al-Mutairi emphasized the significance of this Gulf sports gathering, which united young athletes from sister countries on Kuwaiti soil.

He credited the exceptional organizational success to the generous support of His Highness the Amir, whose patronage and inaugural attendance symbolized Kuwait's warm hospitality and welcome to the participating delegations and teams.

The Minister extended his deepest gratitude to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled for gracing the closing ceremony and presenting the championship cup to the winning team as a representative of the event's patron.

He also acknowledged the crucial support of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah, which was instrumental in hosting



Al-Mutairi



Bouslaib

this significant sporting event.

Minister Al-Mutairi highlighted the vibrant atmosphere of the tournament, noting its success on public, technical and organizational levels.

He praised the collaborative efforts of the working committees, government agencies, the Kuwait Football Association, the Gulf Football Association and the dedicated volunteers who ensured the event's success. Their contributions were pivotal in presenting the championship in a manner that reflects honor and pride.

Minister Al-Mutairi also underscored the enduring significance of the Gulf Cup Championships since their inception in 1970, highlighting their role in fostering fraternal ties among Gulf nations.

He noted that the championship serves not only as a sports competition but also as a platform for strengthening brotherhood and cooperation among Gulf youth.

Meanwhile, the Director General of the General Department of Security Relations and Media at the Ministry of Interior, Brigadier Nasser Bouslaib, announced the successful completion of the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Championship (Gulf Zain 26), with no security reports or incidents recorded throughout the tournament.

This reflects the effectiveness of the security plan and its seamless execution.

Brigadier Bouslaib reaffirmed the Ministry of Interior's commitment to securing future events with the same dedication, ensuring that they are conducted in a manner that honors Kuwait and strengthens Gulf relations.

He highlighted directives from First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, emphasizing a balanced approach—treating the public respectfully while being firm against violations.

Praising the fans' cooperation and adherence to guidelines, Bouslaib noted their contribution to the event's success and the smooth organization at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium and Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Stadium, especially during the highly attended final match.

# 313,000 football fans provided medical help during Gulf Cup

BP, diabetes, angina and other ailments detected: Al-Shatti

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Director of the Emergency Medical Services Department at the Ministry of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti revealed that the department provided medical support to more than 313,000 football fans at Jaber Stadium during the Khaleeji Zain 26 Cup, which took place over 13 days from December 21 to January 4.**

In a press statement issued yesterday, Dr. Al-Shatti explained that the department handled approximately 517 medical cases at both Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium and Jaber Al-

Mubarak International Stadium. Of these, 76 percent (394 cases) were males, and 24 percent (123 cases) were females. Also 94 percent of the cases (487) were treated on-site, and 7.5 percent (39 cases) were transferred to specialized hospitals.

The medical cases varied widely, including severe blood pressure disorders, diabetes, chest pain, angina, and musculoskeletal injuries such as shoulder dislocations, ankle sprains, knee injuries, kidney colic, and digestive system disorders.

Dr. Al-Shatti extended his congratulations to Kuwait, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, and Minister of Youth and Sports Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, on the successful

hosting of the Khaleeji Zain Cup.

He praised the efforts exerted by the Ministry of Health, under the leadership of Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Undersecretary Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and the relevant assistant undersecretaries.

Dr. Al-Shatti also expressed special appreciation for the medical emergency heroes who played an important role during the event.

He explained that between 70 and 100 technicians were deployed at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium, and 120 to 400 technicians were stationed at Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium. Also, ambulances were provided, with three to ten of them stationed at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium, and 20 to 50 at Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium. The department also used golf carts and four-wheel drive bikes to efficiently transport patients and the injured within and around the stadiums.

## Amir condoles with US Pres. over terrorist attack victims

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Sunday a cable of condolences to US President Joe Biden on the victims of the terrorist vehicle ramming incident in New Orleans, which killed and injured scores of people.

His Highness the Amir wished the families of the victims solace and the injured a speedy recovery.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable of condolenc-

es to US President Joe Biden on the victims of the terrorist vehicle ramming incident in New Orleans, which killed and injured scores of people.

His Highness the Crown Prince wished the injured a speedy recovery.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah then sent a cable of condolences to US President Joe Biden on the victims of the terrorist vehicle ramming incident in New Orleans, which killed and injured scores of people.

## Japan embassy, NCCAL to hold exhibition on Hiroshima A-bomb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: The Embassy of Japan in the State of Kuwait is collaborating with National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL), Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation and the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Japan in organizing "Hiroshima Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Exhibition" which will be held at the Funoon Hall in Ahmad Al-Adwani Art Gallery, Abdullah Al-Salem Area from January 10 to 20, 2025, says a press release issued by the Japanese Embassy.

The opening ceremony will be held on January 9, at 7:00 pm, and is open to the public. The purpose of the exhibition is to spread the facts of the atomic bomb damage and to raise peace consciousness.

The exhibition welcomes everyone and we hope that it will inspire visitors to aspire to a world of peace and nuclear-weapon-free.

The following are the details of the exhibition:

■ Opening Ceremony: January 9, 2025 (7:00 pm)

■ Location: The Funoon Hall in Ahmad Al-Adwani Art Gallery, Abdullah Al-Salem Area.

■ Exhibition Duration: January 10 to 20, 2025

■ Exhibition Timings: Morning: 8:00 am - 2:00 pm - Evening: 4:00 pm - 9:00 pm

The exhibition will remain closed on Fridays, and on Saturdays in the evening period only.

## Deportations, revocations likely to alter count

### Kuwait ushers in 2025 with population of nearly 5 million

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Kuwait has entered the year 2025 with an estimated population of around five million people, reports Al-Nahar daily.

According to official statistics, the total population, including citizens and residents, stood at 4,918,570 as of mid-2024.

However, these official population density figures may no longer fully reflect the current reality, especially after the deportation of tens of thousands of expatriates of various nationalities for violating residency laws between 2023 and 2024. In addition, the revocation and withdrawal of citizenship from thousands of individuals who previously held Kuwaiti nationality further impacted the population count at the

time the statistics were announced.

According to the latest official government reports, the number of Kuwaiti citizens reached 1,559,925, with 765,944 males, constituting 49 percent of the Kuwaiti population, and 793,981 females, constituting 51 percent.

Ahmadi Governorate ranked first in population density, with 347,870 citizens. Hawalli Governorate followed in second place, with 247,487 citizens, and the Capital Governorate ranked third with 291,926 Kuwaiti citizens. Farwaniya Governorate came in fourth with 260,171 citizens, Jahra Governorate ranked fifth with 222,198 citizens, and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate had the lowest population density, with a total of 190,089 citizens.

The statistics revealed that the total number of non-Kuwaitis residing in the country reached 3,358,645 people of various nationalities. Of this total, 66 percent were males, and females made up 34 percent of the expatriate population. Consequently, the total population of Kuwait, including both citizens and residents, stood at 4,918,570 people, according to an official report issued at the end of June 2024.

In the past six months, the population may have surpassed the five million mark.

It is noteworthy that the percentage of males in the total population of Kuwait (citizens and residents) reached 61 percent, while females made up 39 percent.

## 'Early warning system can help counter flash floods'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: A recent study has introduced new solutions for predicting flash floods, and emphasized the role of dust storms and heavy rains as major environmental crises that impact infrastructure, economy, and public health, reports Al-Anba daily.

The study also highlights the need for an integrated system to support decision-making, develop early warning mechanisms, and enhance sustainable urban development within Kuwait's smart cities.

The research, conducted by the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), stresses the importance of a comprehensive database that combines geographical, geological, and environmental information to better manage these environmental challenges. It emphasizes the negative effects of such crises on infrastructure, economic progress, construction projects, and public health in the State of Kuwait.

Eng. Dana Al-Enezi, the study's author, shared insights about the findings of the study titled "Crisis Management and Decision Support for Sustainable Smart Cities."

The study, which is part of the Environment and Life Sciences Research Center's Environment and Climate Change Program, was presented at the International Conference on Smart Management and Innovation for Sustainable Cities organized by the Arab Open University in November. The study aims to develop a robust system to support decision-making and early warning efforts to minimize the impact of geological risks and promote sustainable urban development within Kuwait's smart cities.

## Local newspaper license revoked due to inactivity

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: The Ministry of Information has issued a decision to revoke the license of a local newspaper in accordance with Article 14, Clause 1 of the Press and Publications Law.

According to the administrative decision, the revocation was because the newspaper stopped publication for a period exceeding three months for a daily newspaper and six months for other types, without a valid excuse accepted by the competent ministry.



KUNA photo  
Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, senior government officials at the opening of Darwaza Abdul Razzak.

## Traffic flow to ease: Sheikh Abdullah

### Capital governor opens 'Darwaza'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (KUNA): Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah affirmed on Sunday that the State of Kuwait will spare no effort in supporting and following up on development and service projects for citizens. He also mentioned that there are many future projects expected to be completed in the coming period.

This came in a press statement issued by the Capital Governorate following the patronage and attendance of Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali at the full opening of the Abdul Razzak Gateway intersection, after addressing all engineering problems and maintaining the project in an integrated manner during the previous period.

Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali explained that the full opening of the Abdul Razzak Gateway intersection has been completed for traffic, and work is underway to ensure the intersection's readiness in the required manner according to the highest quality and safety standards. This will contribute to improving the flow of traffic in the area, which will positively reflect on citizens and residents.

He added, "Despite some obstacles that the project faced during the previous period, the state was able, through the combined efforts of all relevant government agencies, to carry out maintenance and complete the rehabilitation of the project, which has effectively contributed to facilitating traffic movement."

## Other Voices

### Role of Christians overlooked

By Ahmad alsarraf

One of the aspects often overlooked in Arab countries is the vital role that Christians have historically played and continue to play in our societies. Despite their significant political, cultural, educational and national contributions — especially in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt — there is a persistent effort to marginalize them.

In the aftermath of the unexpected earthquake and the abrupt disappearance of Assad's regime in Syria — an event that felt like a dream to many — Syrians began to cautiously hope for a brighter future.

However, the uncertainty surrounding the new leadership has left many, particularly Christians who make up 10 percent of the population, apprehensive. This unease was poignantly expressed by Patriarch John X during his New Year's Mass, where he eloquently addressed the significance of Christian heritage in the region.

His speech highlighted the deep roots of Christianity in the Levant, evoking images of Antioch, where disciples were first called Christians; the snow-covered peaks of Lebanon; the River Jordan, where Christ was baptized; and Damascus, where Paul encountered his transformative vision.

He spoke of the enduring Christian presence across the region — from the cedars of Lebanon to the olive trees of Idlib, from the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon to the iconic landmarks of Baalbek and the Bekaa Valley.

Patriarch John X emphasized that Christians in this region are not merely inhabitants but integral contributors.

They are the 'wheat of Christ', rooted in this land, producing its bread of thanksgiving and wine of glorification. They are an inseparable part of the cultural and spiritual fabric, bound by shared histories and futures with their Muslim brethren.

The Patriarch's message also underscored the necessity for a new social contract based on citizenship, equality and mutual respect, free from the constraints of sectarianism. He called for a modern constitution that upholds the values of inclusion and pluralism, one that reflects the openness of Levantine Islam and the antiquity of its Christianity.

Reflecting on the Church's history, Patriarch John X recalled the contributions of figures like Patriarch Elias IV Moawad, who, at the Islamic Summit in Lahore in 1974, represented Arab Christians and Muslims with a unified voice for Jerusalem. This legacy of unity, he argued, is a testament to the shared life and solidarity between Muslims and Christians in the region.

In conclusion, the Patriarch extended a call for collaboration to the new Syrian leadership under Mr. Ahmad Al-Sharaa. He reaffirmed the readiness of Christians to work toward rebuilding Syria but expressed disappointment at the lack of official outreach from the new administration.

Despite this, he welcomed them to continue the tradition of visiting the Patriarchal House of the Mariamites of Damascus, a symbol of the enduring bond between the Church and the Syrian state.

May this new chapter in Syria's history be one of hope, justice and harmony for all its people.

Does anyone hear this voice of reason and wisdom? When will our sectarian, tribal, religious and racist conflicts stop? Is there an end to this backwardness?

✉✉✉

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## Cautious optimism as Syrian wall of silence nears collapse

"APPROXIMATELY one million Syrian workers reside in Lebanon, the majority of whom were present before the Syrian revolution in 2011. They entered the country legally, holding work permits issued at the Lebanese Masnaa border crossing, rather than as refugees," columnist **Dr. Hamed Al Hamoud** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"These workers can be found in various sectors, including construction sites, restaurants, gas stations, fields and even municipal jobs in villages and towns.

"The Lebanese employers favor Syrian workers not out of bias but because they accept lower wages than their Lebanese counterparts. Without Syrian workers, Lebanese businesses would struggle to offer competitive services.

"Their prevalence varies by the type of establishment; for instance, they are commonly employed in restaurants where waitstaff aren't required to speak French or English but are less visible in high-end venues catering to affluent clientele, where tips make it financially viable to hire Lebanese staff.

"Many Syrian workers, some of whom live with their families in Lebanon, fled compulsory military service, economic collapse and regime terror in Syria. They maintain a low profile, fearing both the Syrian regime's brutality and violations of Lebanon's residency laws. On construction sites, their presence is often marked only by the sound of work.

"When approached, they speak cautiously, identifying themselves as being from rural areas like Aleppo, Hama, or Sweida. Despite their widespread presence, the trauma and fear they have endured have rendered them silent.

"In towns like Bhamdoun, Hammana, Shaniya, or Qabi' their presence is more noticeable during Friday prayers, where sermons -- often led by Syrians -- are deliberately devoid of political or controversial content to avoid attention from both Lebanese and Syrian authorities.

"This silence among Syrian workers has been powerfully captured by Lebanese novelist and writer **Mohammad Abi Samra** in his 2012 book, *The Syrian Death of Eternity: Testimonies from the Generation of Silence and Revolution*. Initially, Abi Samra anticipated that the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon in 2005 would embolden Syrian workers to share their experiences of suffering under the Assad regime.

"However, he found that their silence persisted, rooted in fear of regime informants and the memory of relatives and friends who had been arrested, tortured, or killed. The culture of surveillance and mistrust, perpetuated by the Assad regime, kept them muted even in relative safety.

"Abi Samra's reflections extend beyond Syrian workers to analyze the oppressive dynamics of the Assad regime. In an article published in *An-Nahar* on January 19, 2013, he described how Syria's governance devolved into mafia-like tribal rule.

"He highlighted the dynastic nature of the Assad family's grip on power, reflected in public chants that affirmed loyalty not only to Bashar al-Assad but also to his lineage. Abi Samra compared this enforced silence to the climates of fear under Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya.

"The silence stems from two core reasons. First, membership in so-called 'progressive' regimes often does not correlate with education or moral integrity, as revealed by figures like George Tarabishi.

"Initially a supporter of the Baath Party, Tarabishi later abandoned it, disillusioned by the tribal and sectarian mindset of his supposed 'progressive' comrades. He devoted his life to intellectual pursuits, enriching Arab thought through his writings and translations.

"The second reason lies in the paranoia that defines leaders who seize power through conspiracies or coups. Such leaders remain in constant fear of betrayal, creating a network of spies and informants.

"This atmosphere of terror extends even to Syrians abroad, where returning workers risk arrest by intelligence agencies like the Syrian Air Force Intelligence. Historical parallels, such as Saddam Hussein's and Hafez al-Assad's brutal elimination of close associates, illustrate the deep-seated paranoia that defines such regimes.

"Despite these grim realities, there is reason to be cautiously optimistic about Syria's future. The regime's collapse seems increasingly inevitable, driven by its own internal decay rather than external military campaigns.

"Recent observations, like those of journalist **Carlotta Gall** in *The New York Times*, reveal the regime's deteriorating infrastructure and demoralized soldiers surviving on meager

salaries.

"For Syria to truly move forward, violence must be rejected as a tool for change. Secularists and Islamists must learn to coexist and respect the democratic will of the people. Sectarian and ethnic diversity, rather than being a source of division, should be embraced as strength.

"Reflecting on these changes, I find myself unexpectedly optimistic about Syria's future. Even as I cautioned a friend in Lebanon against openly sharing Abi Samra's book just months ago, I now believe that a freer Syria is within reach. The journey will not be without challenges, but the resilience of the Syrian people offers hope for a brighter tomorrow."

**Also:**

"Over the past two weeks, newspapers have published critical news that serve as warnings for those concerned with public affairs, even though the issues are not new. Last Wednesday, **Al-Jarida** reported that '45,000 students will take their high school exams on Sunday'. This implies that a similar number of jobs must be created annually," columnist **Ahmad Yaqoub Baqer** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"On Thursday, **Al-Rai** highlighted that 'two-thirds of entrepreneurs are not consistent in paying their installments,' suggesting that most small business owners may soon join the ranks of job seekers.

"Additionally, newspapers reported that the Civil Service Bureau employed 41,327 individuals in the past year alone.

"This figure will inevitably swell as graduates from public and private universities, as well as those studying abroad, enter the workforce. This paints a stark picture of the mounting number of job seekers today and in the foreseeable future.

"The government alone cannot absorb these numbers, particularly with a persistent budget deficit, which could lead to significant financial and social challenges.

"These problems are compounded by the fact that many graduates hold specializations that are not in demand in the labor market. Meanwhile, ministries are already overstaffed with employees who lack meaningful roles or productivity.

"To address this escalating issue, newspapers have published statements from officials proposing various measures. On Monday, **Al-Rai** reported that 'the Civil Service Bureau requested all government agencies to review and list all financial and in-kind benefits, allowances, bonuses and compensations for employees,' signaling attempts to cut costs.

"Additionally, a Cabinet decision published on Wednesday instructed the Social Insurance Institution to provide the Civil Service Bureau with lists of employees eligible for retirement pensions. This includes women aged 50 and men aged 55 with a maximum of 30 years of service.

"While these measures aim to address the problem, they fall short of offering a sustainable solution. Moreover, some of these measures may violate the Constitution. Article 20 emphasizes fair cooperation between public and private sectors as the foundation of the national economy.

"The explanatory memorandum further clarifies that neither sector should dominate the other. However, the current situation shows public activity overshadowing all other economic aspects. Similarly, Article 41 of the Constitution does not oblige the state to provide work for every individual beyond its capabilities.

"Encouraging early retirement may open limited job opportunities for new employees but will not suffice to address the influx of job seekers. Additionally, it will exacerbate the actuarial deficit in social insurance. To prevent this crisis from worsening, the government must focus on creating real, productive opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

"This requires immediate economic reforms and decisive administrative actions. Employment and education systems must be aligned with labor market demands. Moreover, land must be allocated for economic, commercial, service and industrial activities.

"It is unfortunate that previous opportunities to stimulate domestic production were missed. For instance, there was an attempt to purchase over 20 factories from Dow in various countries, creating thousands of jobs abroad.

"Yet no similar effort was made to establish factories in Kuwait, despite having the land, raw materials and a pressing need for job opportunities for graduates. It is time for a paradigm shift toward sustainable economic reform."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Dr. Al-Hamoud



Ahmad Baqer

3 hurt in restaurant fire

## Qibla church blaze among many incidents tackled by fire-fighters

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (Agencies): Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) declared on Saturday that fire squads from four stations doused a fire at a church in Al-Qibla, the capital's center. The firefighters scrambled to the scene immediately after receiving the notification about the blaze at the church. They controlled the fire, no injuries were reported.

Meanwhile, Saturday evening, fire brigades from Farwaniya and Sabhan controlled a fire that broke out in a restaurant in the suburb of Farwaniya, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily. The firefighting teams promptly intervened to extinguish the blaze and prevent further damage.

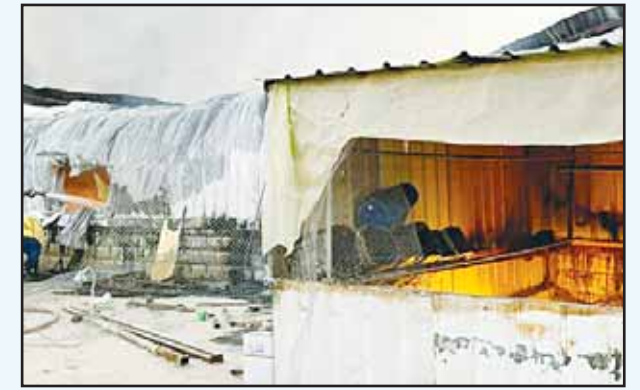
The incident resulted in injuries to three individuals, who were immediately handed over to the appropriate authorities for medical attention.

Similarly, fire broke out in a warehouse that contained agricultural materials inside a farm in Wafra on Friday evening.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), when the Control Room of KFF received information about the warehouse on fire, firefighters from Wafra and Nuwaiseeb fire stations rushed to the location and successfully controlled the fire without any reported injuries. Investigations are ongoing to determine the cause of the fire.

In another fire, several vehicles and trees were burnt in front of a house in Rumaitiyya, but no casualties were reported.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), firefighters from Al-Bidaa and Salmiya fire stations rushed to the location after receiving information about the fire, and discovered that the flames had spread and caused damage to the front of the house. They extinguished the fire within a short time before it spread further.



Fire in Wafra warehouse.

KFF photo



A ladder is deployed to put out the church fire.

KUNA photo

# Police nets criminals, illegals in nationwide one week raids

Thief jailed for stealing 'costly' watches

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Statistics issued by the General Department of Rescue Police, led by Brigadier Fares Al-Qahtani, for the period between Dec 22 and Dec 28 revealed that a large number of individuals were arrested for offenses related to drugs, alcohol, and public disturbances during the week, reports Al-Anba daily.**



Al-Qahtani

It explained that the rescue police and their security teams, during their campaigns, arrested 86 individuals involved in drug possession, alcohol-related offenses, or public intoxication, issued 8,072 citations for various violations, and broke up 34 fights and arrested the individuals involved. Among the arrests, 26 individuals were detained for pos-

sessing narcotic substances or pills and were referred to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD).

Furthermore, 12 individuals were arrested for possessing both local and imported intoxicants, and 38 were referred to police stations to face charges for being caught drunk. The arrested individuals included some who were driving their vehicles in an "abnormal" state. These drivers were also arrested, and traffic citations were issued for driving under the influence, which could result in the revocation of their driving licenses for several months.

In addition, ten individuals were arrested with active sentences, and 42 expatriates were found in violation of residency laws. Also, 71 vehicles wanted by the judiciary were identified, and 34 quarrels were resolved, with the parties involved arrested. The emergency teams issued a total of 8,072 citations, and nine vehicles were referred to the impound garage.

**'Watch thief' jailed:** The Misdemeanor Court has sentenced a 'thief of valuable watches' to two-year imprisonment with hard labor and referred the civil lawsuit against him to the civil court, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to the case file, the thief had gained

notoriety for stealing valuable watches under the pretense of offering them in an online auction. More than 40 cases have been filed against him so far.

The victim's legal counsel lawyer **Hawra Al-Habib** demanded the court imprison the defendant after he stole a valuable watch worth KD 60,000 from her client.

She stressed that the defendant believed he was skilled in crime due to lack of direct evidence against him. However, lawyer **Al-Habib** presented the correspondence between the defendant and her client, which confirmed that the defendant had sold the watch. This means he actually received the watch and sold it without returning its value to the client.

In addition, the lawyer warned of the increasing prevalence of fraud and deception, and urged caution.

She highlighted various types of scams, including real estate fraud, investment fraud, and even ticket fraud related to the current Gulf Cup tournament.

**Al-Habib** said fraudsters often claim to have tickets and exploit the public's eagerness to attend events, only to disappear after receiving payments.

She stressed the importance of verifying the legitimacy of transactions and protecting one's rights.

Van driver abducted, beaten up for having no money

## Expatriate robbed, run over for dialing police number

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Officers from the Ahmadi Investigation Department have launched a search for an unknown individual who robbed an expatriate of KD 68 and then ran him over when the victim attempted to contact the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room, after which the suspect fled the scene, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The victim explained that he was walking home in an area of Ahmadi Governorate when a man stopped him, claiming to be a detective, and asked to see his civil ID. When he took out his wallet, the suspect forcibly grabbed it and took KD 68 from it. The victim attempted to resist and then told the

suspect to wait for the police. As he was calling the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room, the perpetrator ran him over and fled the scene.

He was referred to Adan Hospital for treatment of the fractures sustained from the deliberate run-over. A case was filed as a felony, categorized under theft by violence and intentional run-over.

In a separate incident, following the instructions of the Deputy Attorney General, a kidnapping case was registered against the driver of a van, and classified as a felony at the Sulaibikhat Police Station.

An expatriate, who works as a tow truck driv-

er for a major transportation company, reported an encounter with a blue American van in Sulaibikhat. The driver of the van became angry after the tow truck driver accidentally collided with his vehicle. He forced him to get into the van, and then demanded that he withdraw money from an ATM to cover the cost of repairs. They went together to an ATM in the same area, but when the machine failed to dispense money, likely due to insufficient funds, the van driver became violent and severely assaulted him. A case has been registered under No. 90/2024 for felonies.

21 boys caught driving

## Kuwaiti among trio jailed in fraud citizenship case

By **Jaber Al-Hamoud/Munif Naif**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: The Criminal Court sentenced a former Syrian corporal from the Ministry of Defense, his father, and a Kuwaiti citizen to seven-year imprisonment and a fine of KD 517,000 on charges of fraudulently adding a young man to the Kuwaiti citizen's nationality file in exchange for KD 15,000.

The Public Prosecution charged the first defendant, who is the Kuwaiti citizen, with forging an official document, specifically, the birth certificate of the second defendant, the young man, by falsifying records and submitting the forged birth certificate to the employee at the Ministry of Health's Births and Deaths Department. The first defendant falsely claimed that the second defendant was born outside Kuwait on October 6, 1993, and presented the forged birth certificate as proof.

The employee then recorded the false information in official records, allowing the second defendant to obtain a birth certificate, a civil ID, and Kuwaiti nationality. The third defendant, the father of the second defendant, received the bribe of KD 15,000 for his involvement in the scheme.

**35,126 citations issued:** The General Traffic Department (GTD) continued to hold traffic campaigns in all governorates during the past week, which resulted in the issuance of 35,126 traffic citations, the seizure of 106 vehicles and 59 motorcycles, and the referral of 21 juveniles to Juvenile Prosecution.

According to statistics provided by the department, traffic officers successfully seized 25 vehicles wanted by the judiciary, detained 23 individuals for violating residency laws, and apprehended one person in an abnormal condition. They also responded to 1,009 traffic accidents that had resulted in 262 casualties.

According to a security source, these traffic campaigns will continue throughout the governorates to apprehend violators and take appropriate legal action.



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# Adan Hospital to host 1st internal medicine conference on Jan 10-11

Global experts to share cutting-edge medical advancements

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Head of the Internal Medicine Department at Adan Hospital Dr. Khalil Al-Shuwaiker announced that the first conference on internal medicine will be held on January 10-11 under the patronage of the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi.**

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Shuwaiker explained that the conference aims to serve as a vital scientific platform for exchanging knowledge and discussing the latest advancements in internal medicine. It will foster cooperation among specialists to improve the quality of health care provided to patients.

The conference will cover the latest research, diagnostic tools, and therapeutic strategies. It will also provide an opportunity to build professional relationships with doctors and specialists from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Portugal. It will feature

scientific lectures on a wide range of topics, including obesity treatment, heart diseases, kidney diseases, neurological disorders, blood diseases, endocrine disorders, respiratory system issues, digestive system health, infectious diseases, geriatrics, and women's medicine. Interactive workshops will also be organized on thyroid functions, acid-base balance, lung function tests, and scientific sessions dedicated to research posters.



Dr. Al-Awadhi

Dr. Al-Shuwaiker highlighted the achievements of the Internal Medicine Department at Adan Hospital, such as the establishment of a clinical hematology unit and the enhancement of blood transfusion and bone marrow biopsy services.

He said specialized units have also been developed for treating Parkinson's disease and stroke within the Neurology Unit.

He stressed that the department opened the first internal obesity and weight diseases clinic in Kuwait and contributed to the national campaign for early detection of colon cancer, adding that it also organized workshops in cooperation with international experts.

Regarding the Salman Al-Dabbous Heart Center, Dr. Al-Shuwaiker emphasized that it is one of the most prominent medical centers in Kuwait that serves nearly one million people, with a special focus on the residents of the Ahmadi area.

He explained that the center provides comprehensive services, including regular and complex catheterization, structural catheterization, cardiac electrophysiology, treatment for chronic heart muscle weakness, and cardiac surgery. It is distinguished by the presence of all of these specialties under one roof, which enhances patient care and provides innovative services, such as primary catheterization for acute heart attacks and catheter aortic valve implantation for the first time in Kuwait. The center also successfully conducted two heart transplants for the first time in the country.



MoSA photo  
Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, conducted an unannounced inspection of the Rehabilitation Center for People with Disabilities in South Al-Sabahiya.

## Minister calls for improved care

### Dr Al-Huwailah pays surprise visit to South Al-Sabahiya rehab center

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5:** In a proactive move to ensure the quality of care for individuals with disabilities, the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, conducted an unannounced inspection visit today to the Rehabilitation Center for People with Disabilities in South Al-Sabahiya, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During her visit, Dr. Al-Huwailah reviewed the center's operations, assessing the efficiency of services provided to beneficiaries and evaluating the adherence of employees to their assigned work shifts.

She also inspected the center's facilities and infrastructure, identifying areas for potential improvement.

Minister Al-Huwailah underscored the importance of enhancing rehabilitation services to meet the aspirations of the beneficiaries and elevate the standard of care.

She emphasized the necessity of creating a supportive and inclusive environment to empower individuals with disabilities.

Highlighting the center's pivotal role in community integration and sustainable development, the Minister called for continuous improvements to ensure that the center fulfills its mission of fostering inclusivity and enabling beneficiaries to thrive within society.

The surprise visit reflects the Ministry's commitment to upholding high standards in service delivery and ensuring that centers catering to individuals with disabilities remain responsive to their needs.

By focusing on both operational efficiency and long-term development, the Ministry aims to support vulnerable groups and enhance their integration into the community.

## Evening shifts in government agencies kick off

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5:** In a first-of-its-kind experiment for government agencies, the initial phase of implementing the evening shift has officially started on January 5, 2025.

According to informed sources, the official evening work system, which will involve no more than 30 percent of government agency employees, will undergo a review period during the first week to evaluate the list of candidates from government agencies for evening shift work. The entire system will then be subject to a seven-month trial period to assess its pros and cons.

The sources also noted "high-level directives" to the head and leaders of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) regarding the importance of ensuring the success of this experiment. The goal is to benefit from the many positive aspects of the initiative, particularly

in terms of expediting the completion of transactions, improving their quality, and enhancing Kuwait's standing in global competitive rankings.

They said, "It has been planned to organize both scheduled and surprise inspection tours to various work sites".

The sources affirmed that CSC welcomes any feedback from citizens to address and resolve any issues that may arise.

According to a statement from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sherida Al-Muoshherji and a circular issued by the CSC, the evening shift proposal will be implemented in three phases.

Employees will have the flexibility to choose between morning or evening shifts, depending on their personal circumstances, provided that their choice aligns with the work requirements and the number of positions allocated for each shift. Also, the actual working hours will not exceed 4.5 hours.

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## Re-enrollment at PAAET to kick off Jan 9

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5:** The Deanship of Admission and Registration at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training has announced the opening of re-enrollment applications for students dismissed from training institutes and private training courses due to failure or absence, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Applications for re-enrollment for the second training semester of the 2024-2025 academic year will be accepted

from January 9 to 26 through the Authority's website.

In addition, the Deanship revealed that students can apply for transfers between training institutes, subject to transfer conditions, or cancel transfer requests for the second semester.

The transfer applications will remain open until February 2, and students can submit their requests via the Authority's website.



KUNA photo  
Students prepare before entering the examination halls to take the first final exam of the first semester.

## Ministry ensures a smooth exam process

### Over 43K grade 12 students begin final exams amid full preparations

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5:** The Ministry of Education announced that all necessary preparations have been completed to receive grade 12 students in the scientific and literary sections, who are scheduled to begin their final exams for the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year from today.

The ministry encouraged students to work diligently, make effective use of their time, and review their study materials thoroughly to achieve the best results. It also emphasized the importance of adhering to the rules and guidelines that govern the exams.

The ministry reiterated its commitment to providing an environment that would enable students to take their exams with focus and reassurance, in accordance with the applicable regulations and systems, and overcoming any difficulties and obstacles they may face.

It explained that 43,905 grade 12 students are taking the first semester exams in public and private education sectors, as well as the religious and special education sectors. This includes 29,180 students in the scientific section and 13,955 in the literary section. Also,

770 students in religious education began their exams last Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Teachers Society submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education to suspend the reshuffling of secondary school principals during the 12th grade exams.

In a letter addressed to the Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, the Chairman of the Kuwait Teachers Society Hamad Al-Houli affirmed the importance of strengthening the ongoing cooperation between the two parties to develop the educational process.

He commended the successful implementation of the national monitoring system in schools during the exam period, which served as an effective supervisory mechanism for the exam process.

Al-Houli praised its role in ensuring the proper implementation of regulations and laws, as well as in combating cheating, all under the direct supervision of the Minister of Education and the ministry's Inspection and Audit Office.

He called for the continuation of this system, while taking into account the feedback from those working in the educational field to further develop it in line with practical realities.



## Crown Prince and PM congratulate Switzerland's Keller-Sutter on election victory

# Kuwait's Amir extends congratulations to newly-elected Swiss President

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to the President of the Swiss Confederation, Karin Keller-Sutter, on her election victory. In

the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his heartfelt congratulations and wished President Keller-Sutter good health and well-being, along with continued progress and prosperity for Switzerland and its people.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Sunday to the President of the Swiss Confederation, Karin Keller-Sutter, on her election victory, wishing her the best of luck.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdul-lah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Sunday to the President of the Swiss Confederation, Karin Keller-Sutter, on her election victory.

## Reforms streamline appointment procedures

# New decree-law issued to amend public university leadership selection process

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: A new decree-law has been issued to amend certain provisions of Kuwait's Law No. 76 of 2019 regarding public universities, particularly concerning the appointment of university directors and their deputies, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Published in Al-Kuwait Al-Yaum on January 5, 2025, Decree-Law No. 156 of 2024 introduces key changes to the procedures for selecting senior personnel within state universities. The decree replaces Clause No. 5 of Article 9 and Article 12 of the existing law.

According to the new provisions Article 9, Clause 5 now tasks the university with setting conditions for the nomination of deans, heads

of academic departments, and similar positions.

Article 12 stipulates that each university must have a full-time director appointed by decree for a period of four years, renewable once.

The director must be a professor from within the university's academic staff, possessing both scientific and administrative expertise.

For newly established universities, the director may be selected from among professors, even if they are not part of the new institution's academic staff.

Additionally, several clauses from the previous law have been canceled. Clause No 12 of Article 9, Clause No 33 of Article 11 and the

second paragraph of Article 14 have been removed, aligning the law with the new method of appointing university directors through the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The changes emphasize a streamlined selection process and a focus on ensuring that candidates for university leadership positions have the necessary qualifications.

The explanatory memorandum accompanying the decree-law explains the importance of the university president's role and outlines the rationale for the reforms, including the desire to simplify the selection process and ensure leaders are equipped to handle the responsibilities of the position.

# MoH starts implementing smart fingerprint system

## Evening work shift in preparatory stages

### Al-Seyassah Special Report

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: The Ministry of Health (MoH) begins implementing the smart fingerprint attendance system for approximately 70,000 employees across technical and administrative sectors, including doctors, technicians, administrators and pharmacists.**

This rollout coincides with the planned introduction of the evening work shift system's first phase.

According to informed health sources, the evening shift system is still in its preparatory stages. Administra-

tive sectors within the ministry are addressing relevant authorities to nominate employees for the evening shifts as per the Civil Service Bureau's circular, targeting about 30 percent of the workforce.

The Ministry clarified that while most state ministries follow flexible working hours, the MOH operates under unique conditions, with centers and hospitals maintaining 24-hour shifts.

Some administrative departments, like the Health Promotion Department, already conduct limited "extra" evening work due to their smaller staff sizes. Despite comprehensive training sessions and preparations for the smart fingerprint system, sources highlighted technical issues, particularly with varying smartphone compatibility depending on the device model and its release year.

KD 2 million grand prize winner to be revealed on February 13, 2025

# Gulf Bank announces 10 winners of Al-Danah monthly draw

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: As part of its commitment to rewarding customers, Gulf Bank announced the 10 winners of the December 2024 monthly draw, each receiving a prize of KD 1,000. The winners are:

1. Khaznah Eid Saeed Alalati
  2. Haajr Hussain Fathalla Ashkanani
  3. Nour Alhuda Ahmed Habib Alsamak
  4. Zaki Mohammad Abdulfattah Nseebah
  5. Mohammed Abdulla Ali Alwazan
  6. Huda Ali Haidar Ashkanani
  7. Wati Bet Sumadi Raban
  8. Waleed Khaled Saleh Alsaeed
  9. Sanarya Abdulaziz Abdulkareem Zankawi
  - Minor
  10. Abdulaziz Abduredha Abdullah Alqattan
- This draw follows a special event held on

October 17, 2024, where 100 winners were selected, each receiving KD 1,000. This was the first time the bank organized such a draw, following its decision to distribute the quarterly prize fund of KD 100,000 among 100 winners, rather than awarding the entire amount to a single winner.

In addition, the bank increased the value of its annual grand prize from KD 1.5 million to KD 2 million, which has since been recognized by the Guinness World Records as the largest cash prize tied to a bank account globally. The grand prize winner will be announced on February 13, 2025.

There have been updates to the Al-Danah Millionaire Account, which has been active since 1998 and is now in its 26th year. The ac-



Al-Danah monthly draw flyer

count now features two major annual draws: a grand prize of KD 2 million and a semi-annual prize of KD 1 million. Additionally, there are monthly draws awarding KD 1,000 to 10 win-

ners, and a quarterly draw offering a prize of KD 100,000.

The Al-Danah account is one of the top savings accounts in Kuwait, offering regular draws with valuable prizes and numerous benefits for account holders. In addition to the monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual draws, the account offers the unique benefit of carrying over chances to win from one year to the next, giving loyal customers more opportunities to win.

To increase their chances of winning, customers must maintain a minimum deposit of KD 200 in the account or increase their balance to improve their odds of winning in the monthly, quarterly, and annual draws.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank,

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

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

## Continued from Page 1

### The responsibility

Deeply moved by her situation, Umar immediately went to the state treasury, and carried supplies and a bag of flour on his own back. When Aslam offered to carry the supplies for him, Umar refused, saying, "Will you bear my sin on my behalf on the Day of Judgment?"

Umar spent the night personally serving the woman and her children, cooking the food and ensuring that she had enough supplies to meet their needs.

This story illustrates why Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) famously said, "If a camel, sheep, or lamb were to perish on the banks of the Euphrates, I would fear that Allah would question me about why I did not make the way for it." This reflects the immense responsibility a ruler bears to ensure the welfare of the people under their care.

Since that time, the concept of social security or insurance has been an integral part of Muslim governance. It represents the true essence of their religion and the solidarity between people. As a result, the legacies of these caliphs have remained deeply ingrained in the memories of the people and preserved in history. Among these revered figures is the fifth Rightly Guided Caliph, Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz, whose legacy continues to inspire today.

Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz once ordered, "Sprinkle wheat on the tops of the mountains so that it will not be said that a bird in the lands of Muslims has gone hungry."

This phrase was not merely a slogan but it reflected the extent of mercy and fairness exhibited by that Caliph, who saw himself as the guardian of the Muslims' welfare. He spoke these words after ensuring that every individual in his realm lived with dignity and that no one was in need.

This is an example of rulers immortalized by history, as they lived close to their people rather than in isolated palaces, unlike some caliphs who distanced themselves from the masses, which ultimately led to the decline of their empires.

When an official, regardless of their position, remains among the people, they are more attuned to the affairs of the country. This proximity protects the nation from potential sources of destruction.

Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) did not inquire about the Jew's race or identity but treated him as a fellow human being. As Allah Almighty states in the Holy Quran, "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea, and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference." This administration was built on honesty, ethics, and justice. The Caliph was entrusted with the nation and sought to ensure its well-being so that his conscience would remain at ease.

How valuable it is to draw lessons from history to guide us toward a better future.

There are countries that were established and then perished, yet some of their leaders have remained as everlasting icons, and continue to live on in the memories of the people.

In modern times, there are examples of rulers, even those who are not Muslim, who have led with integrity and dedication. We often mention such figures, like Lee Kuan Yew and the leaders of Rwanda. In the mid-nineties, Rwanda was tragically known for its genocide, but today it has transformed into an example of development and prosperity, thanks to the efforts of its honest leaders.

### Fake booze

Testimony from the investigating officer revealed that the sergeant regularly accepted bribes, targeting Asians with fabricated charges.

Following an investigation authorized by the Public Prosecution, which included wiretapping the defendant's telephone and setting up an operation involving a vehicle transporting alcoholic beverages, the sergeant was apprehended near Salwa

Police Station. When confronted, he confessed to all the charges.

The Criminal Court initially sentenced the defendant to five years in prison, along with KD1,000 fine. The Court of Appeals upheld this verdict and dismissed the defendant's appeal.

The Ministry of Interior issued an official statement highlighting the role of the Criminal Investigation General Department and Licensing Department in apprehending the sergeant involved in a bribery scheme.

The ministry affirmed its commitment to uphold the law and ensure that no one, regardless of their position, is above accountability. It reiterated that it will continue to take strict action against any individual who threatens national security.

### HH Amir

to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, on the successful conclusion of the 26th Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 26) football tournament.

In a press statement Sunday, Sheikh Fahad expressed appreciation for this exceptional edition of the Gulf Cup, which was hosted by Kuwait from December 21 to January 4.

He commended the significant role played by the Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and the efforts of the organizing committees, which contributed greatly to the tournament's remarkable organizational success, earning widespread acclaim.

Sheikh Fahad also congratulated the Bahrain national football team for winning and claiming the title of the 26th Gulf Cup, emphasizing that all participating teams are winners in this gathering, which strengthens the ties.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) President and FIFA First Vice-President Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa praised on Sunday, praised the great success of Kuwait in organizing and hosting Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 26).

In a press statement issued by AFC in Bahrain, Sheikh Salman said that the joint efforts of the local organizing committee and the Kuwaiti and Gulf Football Associations positively presented the Gulf event, noting the large audience attendance at the matches.

He congratulated Bahrain National Team on winning the Cup, saying this achievement reflects the growing development in Bahraini football and enhances its position on both regional and continental levels.

Sheikh Salman Al Khalifa also praised the honorable performance of the Omani National Team in all its matches, adding that it succeeded in leaving a good impression on Omani football through its performances in the matches, making the team a strong opponent for the title.

Khaleeji Zain 26 competition was a great experience for the Gulf teams before resuming their journey in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers, scheduled for next March, he noted.

– See Also Page 16

### Archbishop Bigol

He expressed hope that Kuwait would continue to serve as a shining example of tolerance and brotherhood for the world to witness.

Archbishop Bigol thanked the media for the coverage of events that highlight the spirit of unity and harmony in the country.

In a press statement, he conveyed the greetings of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II and His Grace Bishop Antonios, Bishop of Jerusalem, Kuwait, and the Near East.

He shared their heartfelt wishes for a joyful New Year for Kuwait, all Arab nations, and humanity at large, and hoped for peace to prevail in all regions and for clear progress in development, so that people everywhere can experience sufficiency and hap-

piness.

Archbishop Bigol expressed gratitude to God for the spirit of tolerance and brotherhood that thrives in the beloved State of Kuwait.

He said, "If the world wants to witness a model of tolerance and acceptance, it should look to Kuwait and salute it for that."

Archbishop Bigol affirmed that people in Kuwait live together in mutual affection and peace, and offer prayers to the one God in an atmosphere of freedom and harmonious coexistence.

He stated, "As we begin a new year in the journey of humanity, we pray for safety, peace, and stability in all the troubled regions of the world."

Archbishop Bigol also expressed gratitude for having overcome the challenging period of the pandemic, adding, "Even as the years pass, we continue to thank God for His blessings and mercy, for there is no gift greater than that which is given with sincere thanks."

Meanwhile, he said, "In our prayers, as in all our prayers, we ask God to grant success and guidance to our national leaders. The Bible instructs us to pray for kings and presidents in authority and people in leadership positions."

Archbishop Bigol extended his best wishes to Egypt, Kuwait, and their people, expressing hope for prosperity and progress under the wise leadership of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, praying for God's protection and care over them all.

He also expressed his deep appreciation to the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, as well as to the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf, and all the leaders, officers, and personnel of the Ministry of Interior, Public Security, Traffic, and Rescue services for their dedicated efforts in ensuring the security of the celebrations.

Archbishop Bigol also thanked the Hawalli Governor Ali Salem Al-Asfar, Director of Hawalli Security Directorate Brigadier Saleh Al-Azmi, and the Hawalli Security personnel, along with all other sectors of the state and media agencies.

He expressed his immense pride in the outpouring of love and friendship from those who offer their congratulations, and carry with them the authenticity and nobility of humanity.

Archbishop Bigol highlighted the shared spirit that creates a sound, safe, and prosperous future for all.

### Citizenship law

Minister, noted that the amendment allowed the rights and privileges the wives of Kuwaitis enjoyed before the decree was issued to be maintained, according to what it deems to be in the public interest.

For his part, Acting Deputy Director General for Insurance Affairs at the Public Institution for Social Security Salama bin Salama affirmed that the institution will continue disbursing retirement pensions and shares to foreign wives of Kuwaitis whose citizenship were revoked, as of January 9, retroactively from the date of stopping them.

For his part, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Ziad Al-Najem said that disbursement of food rations to the same category will continue and will not be cancelled.

He added that the commercial licenses and company ownership for that category will not be affected as well, taking into consideration that in the event of a new company or institution being established, the maximum ownership will be 49 percent. In turn, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Civil Information Jaber Al-Kandari explained that the authority will soon activate the My Identity application for the category, indicating that their new civil IDs will be issued at the end of this month.

## Kuwait Central Bank tightens security measures on payments without 'OTP'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: The Central Bank of Kuwait has issued a circular to all local banks regarding financial limits on bank cards and payment operations, reports Al-Anba daily.

In the circular, the Central Bank urged local banks to control financial transactions conducted through websites using bank cards, particularly those that do not require the entry of a one-time password (OTP), by setting a conservative daily limit on both the total value and the number of such transactions.

The Central Bank has also instructed banks to establish a mechanism, either through branches or electronic banking services, that allows customers to select and adjust the payment limits on their bank cards. This mechanism should be tailored to each customer's profile at their bank, and the customer should be notified of any changes made. Also, banks are required to seek approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait for these adjustments.

The Central Bank stated in its circular

that these instructions are part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen regulatory controls, enhance internal control systems within banks, and improve security measures related to payment operations using all bank cards, including ATM cards, credit cards, and prepaid cards. Banks are required to implement conservative controls on payment operations to ensure security.

The Central Bank affirmed the importance of adhering to regulations governing electronic money payment operations. These include developing the necessary policies, procedures, systems, and controls to detect fraud, as well as establishing mechanisms for addressing fraudulent activities and reporting them to the relevant authorities. Banks are expected to provide continuous updates on fraud cases as specified by the Central Bank.

The Central Bank has made it mandatory for banks to comply with the instructions outlined in the circular, and has requested that they submit a detailed timeline for meeting these new requirements.

**Ministry of Commerce and Industry**

وزارة التجارة والصناعة

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## Six-day tribute to a global humanitarian

## Carter's funeral begins by tracing 100 years from rural Georgia to world stage

ATLANTA, Jan. 5, (AP) — Jimmy Carter's extended public farewell began Saturday in Georgia, with the 39th U.S. president's flag-draped casket tracing his long arc from the Depression-era South and family farming business to the pinnacle of American political power and decades as a global humanitarian.

Those chapters shone throughout the opening stanza of a six-day state funeral intended to blend personalized memorials with the ceremonial pomp afforded to former presidents. The longest-lived U.S. executive, Carter died on Dec. 29 at the age of 100.

"He was an amazing man. He was held up and propped up and soothed by an amazing woman," son James Earl "Chip" Carter III, told mourners at The Carter Center late Saturday afternoon, referring also to his mother, former first lady Rosalynn Carter, who died in 2023. "The two of them together changed the world. And it was an amazing thing to watch so close."

Grandson Jason Carter, who now chairs the center's governing board, said, "It's amazing what you can cram into a hundred years."

Carter's children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren accompanied their patriarch as his hearse rode first Saturday through his hometown of Plains, which at about 700 residents is not much bigger than when Carter was born there Oct. 1, 1924. The procession stopped at the farm where the future president toiled alongside the Black sharecroppers who worked for his father. The motorcade continued to Atlanta, stopping in front of the Georgia Capitol where Carter served as a state senator and reformist governor.

Finally, he arrived for his last visit to the Carter Presidential Center, which houses his presidential library and The Carter Center where he based his post-White House advocacy for public health, democracy and human rights, setting a new standard for what former presidents can accomplish after they yield power.

"His spirit fills this place," Jason Carter told the assembly that included some of the center's 3,000 employees worldwide. "You continue the vibrant living legacy of what is my grandfather's life work," he added.

Pallbearers on Saturday came from the Secret Service that protected the Carters for almost a half-century and a military honor guard that included Navy servicemembers for the only U.S. Naval Academy graduate to reach the Oval Office. A military band played "Hail to the Chief" and the hymn "Be Thou My Vision" for the commander in chief who also was a devout Baptist.

His longtime personal pastor, the Rev. Tony Lowden, remembered not a president but the frail man who spent the last 22 months in hospice care, "wrapped in a blanket" that included the words of Psalm 23.

Chip Carter recalled "the boss" he had to make an appointment to see in the Oval Office, but also the father who spent an entire Christmas break learning Latin and teaching his 8th-grade son who had failed a test. When he took that test again, the younger Carter said, he aced it: "I



Former and current U.S. Secret Service agents assigned to the Carter detail, carry the flag-draped casket of former President Jimmy Carter, at Phoebe Sumter Medical Center in Americus, Ga., Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025. Carter died Dec. 29 at the age of 100. (AP)



A person holds signs as the hearse containing the casket of former President Jimmy Carter, pauses at the Jimmy Carter Boyhood Farm in Archery, Ga., Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025. (AP)

owed it to my father, who spent that kind of time with me." Jimmy Carter will lie in repose at the Carter Presidential Center from 7 p.m. Saturday through 6 a.m. Tuesday, with



A military body bearer team carries the casket of former President Jimmy Carter into the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum to lie in repose in Atlanta, Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025. (AP)

the public able to pay respects around the clock. Scott Lyle, an engineer who grew up in Georgia but now lives in New York, was among the first mourners to

pay his respects. Lyle said he joined Carter to build homes with Habitat for Humanity for the first time in LaGrange, Georgia, in 2003. Since then, he has traveled around the world to build houses with the group.

"I got to see, what some people don't get to see, close. He was an amazing man, and he cared about others. He walked the walk," said Lyle, who was wearing Carter-themed Habitat gear. "And I can't think of anyone else that I would want to stand in line to pay my respects for."

National rites will continue in Washington and conclude Thursday with a funeral at Washington National Cathedral, followed by a return to Plains. There, the former president will be buried next to his wife of 77 years near the home they built before his first state Senate campaign in 1962.

The Carters lived nearly all their lives in Plains, with the exception of his Naval service, four years in the Governor's Mansion and four years in the White House. As his hearse rolled through the town, mourners lined the main street, some holding bouquets of flowers and wearing pins bearing images of the former president and his signature smile.

Willie Browner, 75, described Carter as hailing from a bygone era of American politics.

"This man, he thought of more than just himself," said Browner, who grew up in the town of Parrott, about 15 miles (24 kilometers) from Plains. Browner said it meant "a great deal" to have a president come from a small Southern town like his — something he worries isn't likely to happen again.

Indeed, Carter helped plan his own funeral to emphasize that his remarkable rise to the world stage was because of — not despite — his deep rural roots.

Over the course of a few blocks in Plains, the motorcade passed near where the Carters ran the family peanut warehouse, and the small home where his mother, a nurse, had delivered the future first lady in 1927. The hearse passed the old train depot that served as Carter's 1976 presidential campaign headquarters — a barebones effort that depended on public financing, dwarfed by the billion-dollar U.S. presidential campaigns of the 21st century.

At the Carter farm, a few dozen National Park Service rangers stood in formation in front of the home, which did not have running water or electricity when Carter was a boy. The old farm bell rang 39 times to honor Carter's place as the 39th president.

Beside the house, there remains the tennis court that Carter's father, James Earl Carter Sr., built for the family — a nod to the blend of privilege and hard rural life that defined the future president's upbringing. Carter worked the land throughout the Great Depression, but it was owned by the elder Carter, who employed the surrounding Black tenant farmers during the era of Jim Crow segregation.

Carter wrote and spoke extensively on those formative years and how the abject poverty and institutional racism he saw influenced his policies in government and human rights work.

## Vigil blends grief with city's resilient spirit

## New Orleans mourns victims of truck attack with tearful vigil and celebration of life

NEW ORLEANS, Jan. 5, (AP) — New Orleans mourned, wept and danced at a vigil Saturday evening along the famous thoroughfare where a man rammed a pickup truck into a crowd, killing and injuring revelers who were there to celebrate the new year.

A makeshift memorial of crosses and pictures of the 14 deceased victims amassed with candles, flowers and teddy bears. Victims' relatives held each other, some crying. But as a brass band began playing, the sorrow transformed into a celebration of life as the crowd snapped fingers, swayed and followed the music down Bourbon Street.

The coroner's office listed the cause of death for all 14 victims as "blunt force injuries." Beyond the deaths, authorities say about 30 other people suffered injuries in the attack early Wednesday by Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a former U.S. Army soldier who proclaimed his support for the Islamic State militant group in online videos posted hours before he struck.

Police fatally shot Jabbar, 42, during a firefight at the scene of the deadly crash on Bourbon Street, famous worldwide for its festive vibes in New Orleans' historic French Quarter.

University Medical Center New Orleans spokesperson Carolina Giepert said 13 people remained hospitalized, with eight people in intensive care.

Cathy Tenedorio, who lost her 25-year-old son Matthew, said she was moved by the flood of condolences and kindness at Saturday's vigil.

"This is the most overwhelming response of love, an outpouring of love. I'm floating through it all," she said.

New Orleans native Autrelle Felix, 28, left a handwritten card beside a memorial for his friend Nicole Perez, a single mother who was killed.

"It means a lot, to see that our city comes together when there's a real tragedy," Felix said. "We all become one."

Others who crowded around the brass band said the best way to honor the victims was with a party.

"Because that's what they were down here to do, they were having a



Friends of Kareem Badawi, a victim of the deadly truck attack on New Year's Day in New Orleans, pray at a memorial for victims after attending his funeral, Friday, Jan. 3, 2025. (AP)

good time," life-long New Orleans resident Kari Mitten said.

President Joe Biden planned to travel to New Orleans with first lady Jill Biden on Monday to "grieve with the families and community members impacted by the tragic attack."

Federal authorities searching Jabbar's Houston home found a workbench in the garage and hazardous materials believed to have been used to make explosive devices, according to law enforcement officials familiar with the search.

Jabbar had suspected bomb-making materials at his home and reserved the vehicle used in the attack more than six weeks earlier, law enforcement officials told The Associated Press. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak publicly about the inquiry.

Jabbar purchased a cooler in Vidon, Texas, hours before the attack and gun oil from a store in Sulphur, Louisiana. He also booked his truck rental on Nov. 14, suggesting he may have been plotting the attack for more than six weeks, authorities said.

Authorities found crude bombs that had been planted in the neighborhood in an apparent attempt to cause more carnage. Two improvised explosive devices left in coolers several blocks apart were rendered safe at the scene. Other devices were determined to be nonfunctional, officials said.

Investigators searching Jabbar's rental truck found a transmitter intended to trigger the two bombs, the FBI said in a statement Friday, adding that there were bomb-making materials at the New Orleans home Jabbar rented prior to the attack. Jabbar tried to burn

down the house by setting a small fire in a hallway and placing accelerants to help spread it, the FBI said. The flames burned out before firefighters arrived.

Authorities on Friday were still investigating Jabbar's motives and how he carried out the attack. They say he exited the crashed truck wearing a ballistic vest and helmet and fired at police, wounding at least two officers before he was fatally shot by officers returning fire.

New Orleans police declined to say Friday how many shots were fired by Jabbar and police or whether any bystanders may have been hit, citing the active investigation.

Stella Cziment, who heads the city's civilian-run Office of the Independent Police Monitor, said investigators are working to account for "every single bullet that was fired" and whether any of them struck bystanders.

## Biden set to travel to Rome

## Trump appears with Italian Prime Minister Meloni at his Florida club

PALM BEACH, Florida, Jan. 5, (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump made an appearance Saturday with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who was visiting his Mar-a-Lago club.

Meloni follows Argentina President Javier Milei, who became the first world leader to meet with Trump at Mar-a-Lago after his Election Day victory in November. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary also traveled to Florida to meet with the president-elect.

Trump appeared at a screening of a documentary detailing challenges some conservative lawyers report facing in the legal system. He entered the grand ballroom around 7 p.m. and then returned around two hours later after having dinner.

Trump told the crowd of Meloni: "This is very exciting."

"I'm here with a fantastic woman, the prime minister of Italy. She's re-

ally taken Europe by storm, and everyone else, and we're just having dinner tonight," Trump said.

The president-elect watched a screening of the documentary with Meloni and with his pick for the incoming administration's secretary of state, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, as well as Florida Rep. Mike Waltz, Trump's choice for national security adviser and his choice to head the Treasury Department, Scott Bessent.

Meloni's visit comes after Italian journalist Cecilia Sala was detained by Iranian police while reporting in Tehran late last month.

Sala's case has heightened tensions between Italy and Iran, which is demanding Italian authorities release an Iranian businessman who was arrested recently in Milan on a U.S. warrant in connection with a drone attack in Jordan last year that killed three American troops.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden is set to travel to Rome to meet with Meloni, as well as Pope Francis, beginning Thursday. The White House says the Meloni meeting will "highlight the strength of the U.S.-Italy relationship" and feature Biden thanking the prime minister "for her strong leadership of the G7 over the past year."



Meloni



Melania Trump looks on as President-elect Donald Trump speaks to reporters before a New Year's Eve party at Mar-a-Lago, on Dec. 31, 2024, in Palm Beach, Fla. (AP)

## America

**Jill Biden gets priciest gift:** President Joe Biden and his family were given tens of thousands of dollars in gifts from foreign leaders in 2023, according to an annual accounting published by the State Department on Thursday, with first lady Jill Biden receiving the single most expensive present: a \$20,000 diamond from India's leader.

The 7.5-carat diamond from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was easily the most costly gift presented to any member of the first family in 2023, although she also received a brooch valued at \$14,063 from the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States and a bracelet, brooch and photograph album worth \$4,510 from the president and first lady of Egypt.

The U.S. president himself received a number of expensive presents, including a commemorative photo album valued at \$7,100 from South Korea's recently impeached President Suk Yeol Yoon, a \$3,495 statue of Mongolian warriors from the Mongolian prime minister, a \$3,300 silver bowl from the sultan of Brunei, a \$3,160 sterling silver tray from the president of Israel, and a collage worth \$2,400 from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. (AP)

**Governor seeks resignation:** New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has asked for the immediate resig-

nation of regents at Western New Mexico State University after revelations of wasteful spending and failures in financial oversight, according to documents released Thursday.

In a year-end letter to the five-member board of regents, Lujan Grisham said new leadership is needed in the "spirit of a clean slate" to ensure the Silver City-based university can regain its "equilibrium and once again serve its students first and foremost." The board's chairwoman resigned Tuesday.

The purge follows the announced resignation of Joseph Shepard as university president after an investigation by the state auditor's office found top university officials and regents had failed to uphold their fiduciary responsibilities. (AP)

**Soldier shot self in head:** The highly decorated U.S. Army soldier inside the Tesla Cybertruck that burst into flames outside President-elect Donald Trump's Las Vegas hotel shot himself in the head before the explosion and likely planned to cause more damage but the steel-sided vehicle absorbed much of the force from the rudimentary explosive, officials said Thursday.

Clark County Sheriff Kevin McMahon said at a news conference that a handgun was found at the feet of the man in the driver's seat, who officials believe is Matthew Livelsberger, 37, of Colorado. The shot appeared to be self-inflicted, officials said. (AP)

## Europe

**Russian journalist killed:** A Russian war correspondent was killed and four other media workers injured in a Ukrainian drone strike in the Donetsk region, Russia's RIA Novosti news agency reported Saturday.

The drone struck a car carrying Russian journalists on the Donetsk-Gorlovka highway, killing Alexander Martemyanov, a stringer for the Russian newspaper Izvestia, the report said.

"After filming the aftermath of the shelling in Gorlovka, we were returning to Donetsk. On the highway, a kamikaze drone struck our car," said RIA Novosti correspondent Maxim Romanenko, who was among the injured.

Denis Pushilin, head of the Donetsk region, said on Telegram that all injured journalists are receiving medical treatment.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said those attacks against Russian journalists will face "deserved and inevitable punishment." (Xinhua)

**Austrian chancellor to resign:** Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said Saturday that he would step down in the coming days after coalition talks between his Peo-

ple's Party and the Social Democrats collapsed earlier that day.

He will also resign as the leader of the People's Party. Nehammer said on X that his party has ended the negotiations with the Social Democratic Party to form a new government due to disagreement over key issues.

His surprise move came just one day after the NEOS party pulled out of the coalition negotiations to form an unprecedented three-party government. Following the NEOS' withdrawal, the People's Party and the Social Democratic Party confirmed late on Friday to continue their two-party coalition talks. (Xinhua)

**Russia intercepts 4 drones:** Four drones were shot down in Russia's Leningrad Oblast, regional Governor Alexander Drozdenko said Saturday.

"The night and morning of Jan. 4 saw a record number of UAVs destroyed. Four aircraft were downed over the Leningrad Oblast with the use of electronic warfare and small arms," Drozdenko wrote in a post on social media Telegram.

He said there were no casualties or damages and the drone threat warning has been cancelled.

Pulkovo Airport in St. Petersburg imposed temporary flight restrictions twice overnight and in the morning for safety concerns. (Xinhua)



Presidential security service chief says it has legal obligations to protect incumbent president

## S.Korean protesters brave cold to demand Yoon's ouster as detention deadline looms

SEOUL, Jan 5, (AP): Hundreds of South Koreans, bundled up against freezing temperatures and snow, rallied overnight into Sunday near the residence of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, calling for his ouster and arrest, as authorities prepared to renew their efforts to detain him over his short-lived martial law decree.

Dozens of anti-corruption agency investigators and police attempted to execute a detention warrant against Yoon on Friday but retreated from his residence in Seoul after a tense standoff with the presidential security service that lasted more than five hours.

The one-week warrant for his detention is valid through Monday. There were no immediate indications that anti-corruption authorities were ready to send investigators back to the residence as of Sunday afternoon. Staff from the presidential security service were seen installing barbed wire near the gate and along the hills leading up to Yoon's residence over the weekend, possibly in preparation for another detention attempt.

Last Tuesday, a Seoul court issued a warrant to detain Yoon and a separate warrant to search his residence after the embattled president defied authorities by refusing to appear for questioning and obstructing searches of his office. But enforcing them is complicated as long as Yoon remains in his official residence.

Investigators from the country's anti-corruption agency are weighing charges of rebellion after the conservative president, apparently frustrated that his policies were blocked by a legislature dominated by the liberal opposition, declared martial law on Dec. 3 and dispatched troops to surround the National Assembly.

The Assembly overturned the declaration within hours in a unanimous vote and impeached Yoon on Dec. 14, accusing him of rebellion, while South Korean anti-corruption authorities and public prosecutors opened separate investigations into the events.

If the anti-corruption agency manages to detain Yoon, it will likely ask a court for permission to make a formal arrest. Otherwise, Yoon will be released after 48 hours.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and military investigators, says detaining Yoon would be "virtually impossible" as long as he is protected by the presidential security service. The agency has urged the country's acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, to instruct the service to comply with their execution of the detention warrant, but Choi has yet to publicly comment on the issue.

In a video statement, Park Jong-joon, chief of the presidential security service, hit back against criticism that his organization has become Yoon's private army,



Protesters stage a rally demanding the arrest of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol near the presidential residence in Seoul, South Korea, Sunday, January 5. The letters read "Arrest Yoon Suk Yeol." (AP)

saying it has legal obligations to protect the incumbent president. Park said he instructed his members not to use violence during their standoff with investigators and called for the anti-corruption agency and police to change their approach.

Park and the deputy chief of the presidential security service defied summonses on Saturday from police, who planned to question them over the suspected obstruction of official duty following Friday's events.

Yoon's legal team said it will file complaints against the anti-corruption agency's chief prosecutor, Oh Dong-woon, and approximately 150 investigators and police officers involved in Friday's detention attempt, which they claim was unlawful. The team said it will also file complaints with public prosecutors against the country's acting defense minister and police chief for ignoring the presidential security service's request to provide additional forces to block the detention attempt.

Yoon's lawyers had submitted an objection to the warrants against the president on Thursday, but the

Seoul Western District Court dismissed the challenge on Sunday.

Park Chan-dae, floor leader of the main opposition Democratic Party, called for the anti-corruption agency to move quickly to detain Yoon, saying it was deeply disappointing to see the agency "hesitating and letting time slip away."

Hundreds of anti-Yoon protesters rallied for hours near the gates of the presidential residence from Saturday evening to Sunday, voicing frustration over the failed detention attempt and demanding stronger efforts to bring Yoon into custody. Separated by police barricades and buses, pro-Yoon protesters were gathering in nearby streets, denouncing his impeachment and vowing to block any efforts to detain him.

"With barely a day left before the execution deadline for Yoon Seok Yeol's detention warrant, the presidential security service continues to hide a criminal and the Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials cannot be more relaxed," Kim Eun-jeong, an

activist, said on a stage during the anti-Yoon rally. "Angry citizens have already spent two freezing nights demanding his immediate detention. Are their voices not being heard?"

Yoon's lawyers have challenged the detention and search warrants against the president, saying they cannot be enforced at his residence due to a law that protects locations potentially linked to military secrets from search without the consent of the person in charge — which would be Yoon. They also argue the anti-corruption office lacks the legal authority to investigate rebellion charges and that police officers don't have the legal authority to assist in detaining Yoon.

While the presidential security act mandates protection for Yoon, it does not authorize the presidential security service to block court-ordered detentions. The service's attempts to block the execution of the warrant may amount to an obstruction of official duty, according to Park Sung-bae, an attorney specializing in criminal law. While the president mostly has immunity from prosecution while in office, the protection does not extend to allegations of rebellion or treason.

The agency said its outnumbered investigators had several scuffles with presidential security forces that threatened their safety and expressed "serious regret" that Yoon was not complying with the legal process.

After getting around a military unit guarding the residence's grounds, the agency's investigators and police were able to approach within 200 meters (about 218 yards) of Yoon's residential building but were stopped by a barricade comprising around 10 vehicles and approximately 200 members of the presidential security forces and troops. The agency said it wasn't able to visually confirm whether Yoon was inside the residence.

The Defense Ministry says the troops at Yoon's official residence are under the control of the presidential security service. Kim Seon-ho, the acting defense minister, conveyed his concern to the presidential security service, saying that deploying military personnel to block the execution of the detention warrant would be "inappropriate" and requesting that the troops aren't placed in a position where they might confront police, according to the ministry.

Yoon's defense minister, police chief and several top military commanders have already been arrested over their roles in the period of martial law.

Yoon's presidential powers have been suspended since the National Assembly voted to impeach him on Dec. 14. Yoon's fate now lies with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberations on whether to uphold the impeachment and formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him.

## Myanmar releases thousands of prisoners to mark 77th anniversary of independence

BANGKOK, Jan 5, (AP): Myanmar's military government has released more than 6,000 prisoners and has reduced other inmates' sentences as part of a mass amnesty marking the 77th anniversary of independence from Britain on Saturday.

They included just a small proportion of hundreds of political detainees jailed for opposing army rule since the military seized power in February 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. That takeover was met with massive nonviolent resistance, which has since become a widespread armed struggle.

State-run MRTV television reported that Senior

Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the military government, granted amnesties covering 5,864 prisoners from Myanmar, as well as 180 foreigners who will be deported. Mass prisoner releases are common on holidays and other significant occasions in Myanmar.

The terms of release warn that if the freed detainees violate the law again, they will have to serve the remainder of their original sentences in addition to any new sentence.

The report also said that all other prisoners will have their sentences reduced by one sixth, except those convicted under the Explosive Substances

Act, the Unlawful Associations Act, the Arms Act and the Counterterrorism Law, all laws which are often used against opponents of military rule.

Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, the spokesperson for the military government, said in an audio note to journalists that those being released included about 600 prisoners who were prosecuted under Section 505(A) of Myanmar's penal code, which makes it a crime to spread comments that create public unrest or fear or spread false news.

He said Khet Aung, a former chief minister of the southern Kachin state, was among those freed. Khet Aung was arrested soon after the army takeover and was sentenced in April 2022 to 12 years in prison on corruption charges.

Zaw Min Tun also said most of the freed foreigners are Thais who were arrested for gambling in the border town of Tachileik in eastern Myanmar. He said Indonesians who were arrested for fishing in Myanmar's territorial waters were also among those freed.

He did not mention whether four Thai fishermen, who were arrested by Myanmar's navy in late November after patrol boats opened fire on Thai fishing vessels in waters close to their maritime border in the Andaman Sea, were among the released. Thailand's prime minister had said she expects the four to be released on Independence Day.

Prisoner releases began on Saturday but can take a few days to be completed. In the country's largest city, Yangon, buses took prisoners out of Insein Prison, where friends and families of detainees had waited since morning for the announced releases, at around 11:30 a.m.

There was no sign that the prisoner release would include Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been held virtually incommunicado by the military since its seizure of power.

The 79-year-old Suu Kyi is serving a 27-year sentence after being convicted in a series of politically tinged prosecutions brought by the military.



Police officials clear the way for the vehicle carrying Krishna Das Prabhu, a jailed Hindu leader, after a court rejected his plea for bail, in Chattogram, Bangladesh, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025. (AP)

### Bangladesh court rejects bail for Hindu leader

A court in southeastern Bangladesh rejected a plea for bail by a jailed Hindu leader who led large rallies in the Muslim-majority country demanding better security for minority groups.

Krishna Das Prabhu, 39, faces sedition charges after he led huge rallies in the southeastern city of Chattogram. Hindu groups say there have been thousands of attacks against Hindus since early August, when the secular government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was overthrown.

Prabhu didn't appear at the hearing, during which Chattogram Metropolitan Sessions Judge Saiful Islam rejected the bail plea, according to Public Prosecutor

Mofizul Haque Bhuiyan. Security was tight, with police and soldiers guarding the court.

"He faces serious charges like sedition and others involving the security and sovereignty of our country," Bhuiyan told The Associated Press by phone. "We argued in the court that if he gets bail it could create anarchy as we saw in the past that he triggered violence on the court premises by calling thousands of his supporters to protest."

"So, we moved against his bail plea as we believed that he could misuse his bail."

Apurba Kumar Bhattacharjee, a lawyer representing Prabhu, said that they would appeal the decision. (AP)



Released prisoners, in a bus, are welcomed by family members and colleagues after they left Insein Prison, Saturday, Jan 4, in Yangon, Myanmar. (AP)

## Ghana's 'Come Home' message inspires Black American migration

ACCRA, Ghana, Jan 5, (AP): Flipping through a family album, Keachia Bowers paused on a photo of her as a baby on her father's lap as he held the 1978 album "Africa Stand Alone" by the Jamaican reggae band Culture.

"When I was 10 years old, I was supposed to come to Ghana with him," she said. A day earlier, she had marked 10 years since her father's death. Though he was a Pan-Africanist who dreamed of visiting Ghana, he never made it here.

Bowers and her husband, Damon Smith, however, are among the 524 diaspora members, mostly Black Americans, who were granted Ghanaian citizenship in a ceremony in November.

Bowers and Smith moved to Ghana from Florida in 2023 after visiting the region several times between them since the '90s. They now run a tour business that caters to Black people who want to visit Ghana or elsewhere in West Africa, or like them have come to consider a permanent move.

The November group was the largest one granted citizenship since Ghana launched the "Year of the Return" program, aimed at attracting the Black diaspora, in 2019. It marked 400 years since the first African slaves arrived in Virginia in 1619.

Ghana's Tourism Authority and the Office of Diaspora Affairs have extended the program into "Beyond the Return," which fosters the relationship with diasporans. Hundreds have been granted citizenship, including people from Canada, the U.K. and Jamaica.

Bowers said moving to Ghana gave her family a certain feeling of ease they didn't have in the U.S.

"When we see Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, all these stories of people being murdered just in their home, living in their home and being murdered at the hands of police brutality, hearing about it creates trauma," she said.

She also worried about her son Tsadik, 14.

Tsadik towers over loved ones in the way that lanky teenage boys often do. He is shy but opens up around his younger sister Tselah, 11, and the family's dog, Apollo. "In America, being a Black male with locs who's very tall for his age, he is treated like a threat," Bowers said.



Keachia Bowers holds a photograph of her with her late father in their home in Accra, Ghana, Friday, Dec 6, 2024. Bowers' family of four relocated to Ghana from Florida and has obtained Ghanaian citizenship. (AP)

Americans face few obstacles to living in Ghana, with most people paying an annual residency fee. But Bowers said getting citizenship signified more than simply living in Ghana.

"I didn't need (citizenship) to tell me that I'm African. Anywhere that I go in the world and someone looks at me, I'm melanated," she said.

"But my ancestors who wanted to return and come back home, those ancestors who never made it back," she said, "that passport, for me, is for them."

Between 10 to 15 million people were forcibly taken from Africa to the Americas during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the majority from West and Central Africa.

**Ministry of Commerce and Industry**

وزارة التجارة والصناعة

**RECALL INFORMATION**



**Mazda CX-60 (M.Y. From 2023 to 2024)**

**RECALL REASON**

The hybrid system may display multiple warning messages during engine start-up, illuminate engine warning lights, and malfunction with the PHEV high-voltage battery cooling system. The defroster, seat belt warning, and 360° view monitor functions may also not function as intended.

**REMEDY**

Reprogram the Dash-ESU with improved software, with the Mazda Modular Diagnostic System (M-MDS), using Mazda Diagnostic and Repair Software (MDARS).

**CONTACT**

Kuwait Automotive Imports Co.  
Mazda Service Center - Shuwaikh  
Hotline: 2226 2426 | www.mazda.com.kw

This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42,43,44,45,46,47and 48)of no.(27/2015) issuing the executive by laws no.(39/2014)on Consumer Protection



Change Closing pts Saudi - Tadawul -32.73 12,069.82



# Business

## General index gains 53.84 points

### Boursa Kuwait rises 0.73%

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Sunday's session with its general index gaining 53.84 points (0.73%) to close at 7,416.38 points. Trading volume reached 203.4 million shares through 11,935 transactions, valued at KD 46.2 million (approx. \$141 million). The Main Market Index advanced 84.66 points (1.23%) to 6,991.91 points, with 119.3 million shares exchanged across 6,681 transactions worth KD 19.7 million (\$60 million). Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index rose by 48.27 points (0.62%) to 7,887.03 points, with 84 million shares traded in 5,254 transactions totaling KD 26.5 million (\$80.8 million). The Main 50 Index also surged 110.72 points (1.63%) to 6,917.38 points, recording 82.15 million shares traded in 4,401 transactions, valued at KD 14.7 million (\$44.8 million).

## CMA kicks off mandatory Electronic Disclosure System-2 on Jan 5, 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: In line with its ongoing efforts to enhance the financial market environment, the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) has announced the official launch of the mandatory implementation phase of its new Electronic Disclosures System, known as "Disclosure System-2," using the XBRL language, reports Al-Jarida daily. Effective January 5, 2025, this initiative marks a significant step in improving transparency and disclosure standards within the capital market. The new system, designed to modernize financial and non-financial disclosures, aligns with international best practices and aims to increase the accuracy and reliability of data, while streamlining communication among stakeholders. From today, all entities under CMA supervision are required to use this new system for submitting their disclosures, replacing traditional methods such as public registry submissions and emails. A new sub-site dedicated to electronic disclosures using XBRL will be launched by Boursa Kuwait on the same date, ensuring a smooth transition until March 31, 2025. During this

period, companies will continue submitting reports to the stock exchange via the CIP system. The scope of the new system applies to a wide range of market participants, including listed companies, licensed persons, auditors, and regulatory bodies. It includes four distinct reporting domains: Financial Reporting, Capital Adequacy Reporting, General Assembly Reporting, and Market Disclosures Reporting. Prior to today's mandatory phase, a trial period was launched in July 2024, offering extensive technical support and training to ensure system stability and stakeholder readiness. During this phase, over 99 percent of relevant entities registered in the system. The new system, based on the XBRL standard, is expected to enhance Kuwait's capital market infrastructure, improving market efficiency, data exchange, and competitiveness at regional and international levels. As part of its commitment to transparency, the CMA has created an awareness section on its website, providing guides, explanatory materials, and videos to help stakeholders navigate the system.

## Vegetable oil & dairy prices decline

### Global food prices decreased 0.5 percent in December 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported a slight decline in global food prices for December 2024, driven by falling sugar and dairy prices, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The FAO's Global Food Price Index decreased by 0.5 percent month-on-month, reaching 127 points in December. Despite the monthly drop, the index remains 6.7 percent higher than the same month in 2023 and 2.1 percent lower for the entire year compared to 2023. **Key trends highlighted in the FAO's report include:** Vegetable oil prices -- The Vegetable Oil Price Index saw a 0.5 percent decrease in December, as prices for soy, rapeseed and sunflower oils fell. However, this decline was offset by a modest rise in palm oil prices. Dairy prices -- The Dairy Price Index dropped by 0.7 percent, reaching 138.9 points. This marks the first decrease after seven consecutive months of increases. The dip in prices was primarily driven by a fall in butter prices, which resulted from weak global demand and an accumulation of stocks. Meat prices -- Meat prices rose by 0.4 percent, largely due to an increase in beef prices. Strong global demand, paired with weaker production due to routine end-of-year maintenance shutdowns in exporting countries, contributed to this rise. While December saw some relief with the decline in vegetable oil and dairy prices, meat prices continued their upward trajectory. The FAO's data indicates continued volatility in food prices, with fluctuations in key commodities impacting the overall trend. Despite the monthly decline, global food prices remain higher than the previous year, reflecting ongoing pressures in global food markets.

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## KIA manages \$969 billion

### Arab Sovereign Wealth Funds managed \$4.76T by end of '24

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: The 10 largest Arab sovereign wealth funds collectively managed approximately \$4.76 trillion by the end of 2024, according to a recent report by Global SWF, reports Al-Seyassah daily. These funds have become significant players in global finance, with the assets of the leading funds showing impressive growth and strategic investments across a variety of sectors. The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) topped the list of Arab sovereign wealth funds, with assets surpassing the trillion-dollar mark. Close behind was the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), managing around \$969 billion, a difference of just \$44 billion from ADIA. The Public Investment Fund (PIF) of Saudi Arabia rounded out the top three with assets under management of approximately \$925 billion. Among the most active sovereign wealth funds globally, Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Investment Company stood out, being the most active fund in 2024. Mubadala ramped up its investments in areas such as private credit and artificial intelligence, with a substantial \$29.2 billion in deals, marking a 67 percent increase over the previous year. This growth outpaced the broader global investment trend, where sovereign funds as a whole saw a 7 percent rise in investments. For the second consecutive year, Middle Eastern sovereign wealth funds were among the most active globally in deal-making. Besides Mubadala, the list included other prominent funds such as ADIA, the Abu Dhabi Developmental Group (ADQ), Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund and the Qatar Investment Authority. These five funds alone contributed a remarkable \$82 billion

in investments during 2024, with Abu Dhabi's sovereign wealth funds making up a significant portion of this, totaling over \$57.6 billion. The Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia, which has been highly active in 2023, focused its spending primarily on domestic investments, contributing to the kingdom's economic diversification. In 2023, PIF was expected to invest \$31.6 billion, either directly or through its subsidiaries, a notable increase from \$20 billion in 2022. The surge in investment by Middle Eastern funds can be attributed to the strong budget surpluses of Gulf governments, largely driven by the high energy prices in 2022. As a result, sovereign wealth funds from the region became a crucial source of financing for international deals, particularly in industries like technology and infrastructure. Globally, funds from other regions, such as Singapore's GIC and Temasek, saw a decrease in activity in 2024 compared to the previous year, with both cutting their spending by around 50 percent due to a more cautious investment approach. Despite this, the overall global sovereign wealth fund investment grew to \$136.1 billion in 2024, up from \$127 billion in 2023. As of the end of 2024, the total assets managed by sovereign wealth funds worldwide reached \$13 trillion, with the bulk of this wealth concentrated in the oil-rich Middle East. This trend highlights the continuing influence of sovereign wealth funds from the Arab world, which remain central players in the global investment landscape, driving major international deals and fostering economic growth within their home countries.

# Kuwait bank financing to trade sector dips 16.8% in November

Annual trade financing grows 1.7%

By Mahmoud Shandi  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Local banks in Kuwait provided financing to the trade sector amounting to 346.2 million dinars in November 2024, reflecting a decrease of 70 million dinars or 16.8 percent from 416.2 million dinars in October 2024.

However, on an annual basis, financing showed positive growth, increasing by 1.7 percent, which equates to 61 million dinars compared to 285.2 million dinars in November 2023. This decrease in trade sector financing for November contrasts with the strong performance over the year, as the total financing for the sector in the first 11 months of 2024 reached approximately 3 billion dinars. According to the Central Bank of Kuwait's monthly statistics, the accumulated balance of commercial financing also showed a slight monthly decline of 0.5 percent, decreasing by 42 million dinars from 3.797 billion dinars in October 2024 to 3.775 billion dinars in November. However, compared to the same period in 2023, commercial financing experienced a 5 percent increase, up by 180 million dinars from 3.595 billion

dinars in November 2023. In a broader context, new syndicated financing extended by local banks to the trade sector witnessed notable growth in 2023. The financing surged 33.5 percent, increasing by 766 million dinars from 2.282 billion in 2022 to 3.048 billion dinars in 2023. Syndicated financing is a popular method used by banks to provide large-scale loans for domestic and international trade activities. This method includes financing through commercial transactions, letters of credit and guarantees, providing security to sellers and ensuring payment once specific terms and conditions are met.

#### Import financing

Import financing, a key element of the trade sector's performance, recorded 6.62 billion dinars during the first 10 months of 2024. In terms of monthly performance, however, import financing experienced a 9.2 percent drop from September to October, decreasing by 79.4 million dinars to 779.4 million dinars by the end of October. Despite this, the annual comparison showed an 11.7 percent increase in financing, up by 81.9 million dinars from 697.5 million dinars in October 2023. The import financing data for 2024 shows that September was the highest month, with 858.8 mil-

lion dinars in financing, followed by July at 786.4 million dinars. October ranked third, while earlier months such as May and February saw lower figures of 592.1 million and 456 million dinars, respectively. The total financing for imports during 2024 has been largely denominated in US dollars, which accounted for 80.4 percent of the total value at 5.32 billion dinars. Other currencies, such as the euro, accounted for 5.6 percent and 8.63 percent, respectively, of the total financing. Despite a monthly dip in financing activity, the overall financial landscape for local banks showed growth. At the end of November 2024, total assets of local banks and their branches in Kuwait amounted to 91.41 billion dinars, marking a 4.84 percent increase from 87.19 billion dinars recorded in the same month of 2023. This increase also represented a 1.4 billion dinar rise from the previous month. Key contributors to this annual growth included a 12.67 percent increase in foreign assets, reaching 27.53 billion dinars and a 4.07 percent growth in claims on the private sector, which rose to 47.07 billion dinars. Overall, the data indicates that despite a slight monthly dip in trade sector financing, local banks in Kuwait continue to show resilience and positive annual growth, with trade and import financing remaining crucial to the country's economic activity.

## Major currencies depreciate against US dollar

### US dollar index hits two-year high as new year begins

By National Bank of Kuwait

**Market Commentary**  
In the week ending on the 5th of January, global markets witnessed a limited amount of data following the holidays. In the U.S. unemployment claims ticked slightly lower from the previous figure at 211,000 claims, while the Chicago PMI fell to 36.9. The U.S. dollar strengthened, with the DXY reaching a high of 109.43, supported by optimism from the new Trump administration. Meanwhile, major currencies like EUR and GBP witnessed contrasting moves, with the Euro reaching a low of 1.022. Treasury yields traded somewhat sideways, with the 10Y yield at 4.60%. Equities sold off, as the S&P 500 witnessed a 3.0% monthly drop, the Nasdaq dropped 1.0% over the month. Meanwhile on the commodities side, gold reached around \$2,660 per ounce, while Brent crude rose to \$76 per barrel.

#### United States

**Pending Home Sales Beat Expectations with a 2.2% Growth**  
Pending home sales in the U.S. rose 2.2% in November 2024, surpassing the expected 0.9% gain and following a revised 1.8% increase in October. Regional variations were noted: the Midwest, South, and West saw monthly gains, while the Northeast declined. Year-over-year, contract signings grew across all regions, led by the West. Consumers have adjusted expectations regarding mortgage rates and are capitalizing on available inventory instead of waiting for rate decreases.

**Unemployment Claims Decline, Signaling Labor Market Stability**  
Seasonally adjusted initial unemployment claims were 211,000 in the last week of December, a decrease of 9,000 from the prior week's revised figure of 220,000. The 4-week moving average declined by 3,500 to 223,250, reflecting a slight improvement. The insured unemployment rate for the week ending December 21 was 1.2%, down 0.1 percentage points from the previous week. Insured unemployment claims totaled 1,844,000, a drop of 52,000 from the preceding week. These trends indicate modest declines in unemployment claims, suggesting stable labor market conditions.

**Chicago PMI Drops to Low of 36.9**  
In December 2024, the Chicago Business Barometer fell to 36.9, down from 40.2 in Novem-

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0264	1.0257	1.0309	1.0308	1.0270	1.0400	1.0354
GBP	1.2372	1.2372	1.2433	1.2420	1.2380	1.2540	1.2413
JPY	157.53	156.87	157.56	157.27	156.65	157.85	155.64
CHF	0.9124	0.9078	0.9125	0.9082	0.9000	0.9140	0.8991

#### Key Highlights

- US Dollar Index Surges to 109.43, While Major Currencies Depreciate.
- US Pending Home Sales rose 2.2% m/m vs 1.8% in October.
- US Unemployment Claims at 211,000.
- US Chicago PMI at 36.9.
- Spain CPI at 2.8% y/y.
- China Manufacturing Index fell to 50.5 down from 51.5.

ber, well below market forecasts of 42.7 and marking the 13th consecutive month of contraction. New orders fell sharply to 13.5, the second lowest level since May 2020. Decreases were also seen in production, while increases were seen in employment, supplier deliveries, and order backlogs. The US Dollar index closed the week at 108.95.

#### Europe

**Spanish Inflation Rises Amid Persistent Cost Pressures**  
In December 2024, the annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to 2.8%, a 0.4% increase compared to November (2.4%). This was primarily driven by higher fuel prices, with notable contributions from increases in leisure and cultural expenses. The underlying inflation rate (excluding energy and fresh food) increased slightly to 2.6% (+0.2% m/m). The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.0308.

#### Asia-Pacific

**China Manufacturing PMI Slips as Confi-**

#### dence Weakens

The Caixin China General Manufacturing PMI fell slightly to 50.5 in December 2024, down from November's five-month high of 51.5, missing market expectations of 51.7. Despite marking the third consecutive month of factory growth, both output and new orders expanded at slower rates, while foreign orders declined after significant growth in the prior month. Employment dropped for the fourth straight month, contributing to backlog accumulation. Buying levels rose for the third month as firms-bought safety stocks, and vendor performance improved slightly. Selling prices declined for the first time since September, contrasting with rising input costs. Business confidence weakened, reaching a three-month low due to concerns about growth, trade outlooks, and the impact of potential U.S. tariffs.

**China Non-Manufacturing PMI Increases to 52.2 in December**

China's Non-Manufacturing PMI increased to 52.2 in December 2024, up from 50.0 in November, exceeding forecasts of 50.2 and marking the highest level since March. This improvement reflects the impact of recent government and central bank stimulus measures, although economic headwinds remain. Export orders stabilized after prior contraction, while new orders and employment experienced mild declines. Input prices rose, reversing a prior decrease, and confidence levels hit a nine-month high. However, selling prices continued to fall, mirroring November's decline. The USD/CNY currency pair closed the week at 7.3199.

#### Kuwait

**Kuwaiti Dinar**  
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30810.

## Kuwait law targets tax evasion by multinational companies

### Al-Shall report calls for urgent economic diversification in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Kuwait has enacted Law No. 157 of 2024, introducing a tax on multinational entities with revenues above €750 million (approximately \$770 million), reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This initiative, based on the OECD's framework, aims to curb tax evasion by multinational companies that often register in low-tax countries despite generating profits elsewhere. While this law represents a positive step towards reforming Kuwait's tax system, it needs to be implemented effectively. Al-Shall noted that Kuwait should have already started identifying the number of entities subject to this tax and estimated the potential income from it. Although the tax will help finance the public treasury, its real impact will depend on how efficiently it is enforced.

Kuwait's oil revenues have seen a slight increase compared to the budgeted price for oil in 2024. The average price of Kuwaiti oil for December 2024 stood at \$73.7 per barrel, 5.3 percent higher than the budgeted price of \$70.

Despite this, the average oil price is 12.6 percent lower than the previous fiscal year's price of \$84.4 per barrel.

The oil revenues in December reached 1.411 billion dinars, contributing to total projected oil revenues of 18.388 billion dinars for the fiscal year. However, non-oil revenues are expected to bring in 2.684 billion dinars, resulting in total budget revenues of 21.073 billion dinars.

This is still lower than the projected expenditure of 24.555 billion dinars, which is likely to result in a budget deficit of 3.48 billion dinars. The future of the country's financial health heavily depends on fluctuations in oil revenues.

Kuwait's GDP Decline: Kuwait's GDP showed concerning trends for Q3 2024, with a 7.5 percent contraction at current prices, down to 11.955 billion dinars from 13.100 billion dinars in Q3 2023.

At constant prices, the GDP shrank by 3.9 percent, from 10.126 billion dinars to 9.730 billion dinars; while the oil sector's performance, which dropped by 15.6 percent, was the primary contributor to this decline. This highlights the ongoing issue of Kuwait's reliance on oil, which makes the economy vulnerable to oil price fluctuations. The Al-Shall report stresses the urgent need for Kuwait to diversify its economy to ensure long-term sustainability and reduce reliance on oil.

**US Companies Dominate Global Market:** The latest EY report on global market capitalization shows that US companies dominate the top 100 list, with Apple, Nvidia and Microsoft as the top three companies globally, each valued at over \$3 trillion.

The report reveals that 62 of the top 100 companies by market cap are US-based, with no European companies in the top ten. The largest European companies in the top 100 are Siemens, SAP and Deutsche Telekom from Germany, underscoring the dominance of US tech firms in the global market.

These economic trends suggest that Kuwait faces significant challenges in diversifying its economy and addressing its fiscal deficit.

The country must continue to focus on reforms, particularly in its tax system and economic structure, to ensure financial stability and reduce its reliance on oil.

Meanwhile, global markets show that US companies remain the dominant force in technology and global investment, contributing to the ongoing reshaping of the global economic landscape.





Hamad Al Marzouq at the signing of the contract for the implementation of the Mubarakiya Market reconstruction project.



Al-Rashood, Al-Dardari and Khaled Al-Shamian with officials from Baytak and the United Nations Development Program.



Yousef Al-Ruwaieh, Tariq Al-Ajil and Nada Al-Daihani in the middle.



Fahd Al-Saad and Mohammed Al-Sanousi renew strategic partnership with the Scientific Center for Environment and Sustainability Support.



Mohammed Al-Fares and Al-Foudari with the Baytak jet ski team.



Ziad Al-Omar with trainees of the special needs program.

Al-Ruwaieh: Bank won Corporate Social Responsibility award from EMEA Finance

# KFH CSR initiatives for 2024 reinforced leadership

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) reinforced its CSR leadership by successfully launching impactful social initiatives that positively contribute to the community. These initiatives aim to support and advance the goals and pillars of sustainable development across all sectors. This encompasses fostering progress in health, education, sports, youth empowerment, student support, scientific research, innovation, digital transformation, the inclusion of individuals with special needs, and environmental preservation. KFH's CSR efforts also covered volunteering activities, awareness programs, and fostered partnerships with public entities to support community development.

KFH Deputy General Manager Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH plays a significant societal role and continues to strengthen its role as a benchmark for corporate social responsibility among private sector institutions. This commitment reaffirms its position as Kuwait's largest bank by market capitalization, and the world's second-largest Islamic bank, aligning with its social responsibility and sustainability strategy.

### Kuwait Hackathon

As part of KFH's pioneering role in community development, youth empowerment, and promoting innovation, Al-Ruwaieh emphasized KFH's success in supporting the largest cybersecurity competition in Kuwait, Kuwait Hackathon, for the second consecutive year. This initiative aims to enhance the digital skills of Kuwaiti youth.

### Promoting Innovation

He added: "Among KFH's initiatives aimed at fostering innovation and technological advancement are the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity to support creativity and innovation initiatives in society. These endeavors also include renewing KFH's strategic partnership with the "Kuwait Codes" initiative, fostering technological knowledge, and nurturing young talent, in addition to participating in the 5th Gulf Conference and Exhibition for Cybersecurity Challenges titled "A Secure Digital Environment."

KFH also participated in NEXUS 2024, a premier technology and innovation event in Kuwait. This participation highlights the bank's commitment to and support for initiatives and events that foster technological advancement and innovation. This also reflects KFH's emphasis on technological advancement, digitization, and cybersecurity, acknowledging the critical role of technology and digital content creation in contemporary society. NEXUS - Kuwait convened leading technology experts from both the public and private sectors to share insights and explore best technological practices.

### Supporting Students and Education



Yousef Al-Ruwaieh and Ahmed Marafi at the signing of the strategic partnership to support the Kuwait Hackathon competition.

Al-Ruwaieh emphasized that KFH continued its pioneering role in supporting the educational aspect and transferring knowledge to youth through its participation in the second edition of the National Leadership Conference 2024, titled "Breaking Barriers II: A Strong Mind. Strong Body. Strong Leader".

He also mentioned that KFH honored 150 high school top achievers for the 2023/2024 academic year. The bank also visited numerous schools and organized a series of lectures and workshops for university students. These initiatives aimed to prepare students for the job market and guide them in planning their career paths. KFH is a major and significant supporter of graduation projects at the College of Engineering and Petroleum in 2024. This support underscores KFH's strong belief in education as a cornerstone for societal advancement and prosperity.

### A national role

Al-Ruwaieh confirmed that KFH has commenced the implementation of the Al Mubarakiya Reconstruction Project. This initiative underscores KFH's leading role in contributing to society and the nation alongside other private institutions.

### Sustainability and (Keep it green) campaign

Al-Ruwaieh commended KFH's exceptional efforts in the Keep It Green campaign, which serves as an umbrella for all other programs and projects focused on environmental protection and awareness, sustainability, and green initiatives. He also highlighted KFH's success in launching pioneering reports, including the Carbon Footprint and Sustainability reports.

Speaking about KFH's efforts in preserving the environment, Al-Ruwaieh highlighted the successful implementation of several initiatives in cooperation with the Scientific Center, which included interactive events and activities. These include beach and island cleaning, a series of workshops on the environment, and many more.

### COP16 Conference

As part of its continuous efforts in promoting sustainability, KFH par-



Yousef Al-Ruwaieh

ticipated in the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), held in Riyadh.

**Global Takaful Alliance Agreement**  
KFH signed the first-of-its-kind Global Takaful Alliance agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as part of the Bank's collaborative partnership with UNDP and its ESG strategy.

**Immersive Ramadan program**  
Al-Ruwaieh highlighted the unprecedented success of the immersive Ramadan program "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan", which promoted values of giving and volunteering while fostering solidarity within the community.

He added that the program included a variety of activities namely Iftar meals, distribution of Ramadan food baskets and Eid clothing to families in need, in cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society. The campaign also included hospitality service in mosques and featured a variety of sports activities including competitions with valuable prizes such as the virtual walking challenge (V-Fit) held in collaboration with the V-Thru application, encouraging a healthy lifestyle through walking. The campaign also included health tips through awareness



Ziad Al-Omar and Yousef Al-Ruwaieh with PR Academy trainees.



videos created in collaboration with doctors and nutritionists. KFH further partnered with the Ministries of Interior to broadcast awareness messages and shared iftar meals with various organizations that work during Iftar time.

### KD 1 million contribution to Kuwait Food Bank

In a significant community initiative, Al-Ruwaieh pointed out that KFH partnered with the Kuwait Food Bank in a collaborative agreement, pledging KD 1 million to support underprivileged families in Kuwait.

### PR Academy Program

Al-Ruwaieh commended the outstanding success of the first-of-its-kind PR Academy. Launched by KFH in 2024, the program is designed to educate undergraduate students and recent graduates on the foundational principles of public relations and media in general, as well as their practical application within KFH departments, offering them valuable hands-on experiences.

### Competitions

Speaking about the cultural and societal initiatives, Al-Ruwaieh mentioned the launch of the Mishkat Al-Nubuwwa Hadith Memorization Competition, the largest of its kind in Kuwait. Additionally, KFH also launched the 11th annual Holy Quran recitation competi-

tion, "Qurra' Baitek", which was professionally assessed by expert judges.

KFH further organized and participated in environmental competitions for university students. These initiatives aimed to foster interest in environmental sustainability, enhance knowledge, raise awareness, and encourage the adoption of environmentally conscious practices. These efforts ultimately contribute to a more sustainable and prosperous society.

### Strategic Partnerships initiative

Given the significance of initiatives in motivating youth to succeed in major events and championships, Al-Ruwaieh stated that KFH renewed its strategic partnership with the Kuwait Sea Sport Club (KSSC) to support the Kuwaiti national jet ski team's participation in the World Championship held in the United States. KFH is the most prominent annual strategic partner, consistently providing support and attention to the team each year. It continues to play a crucial role in supporting members of KFH's strategic partnerships initiative. Furthermore, KFH has consistently provided sponsorship and support to young individuals who excel in major international competitions and championships, achieving advanced positions.

### Health initiatives

Al-Ruwaieh emphasized that health programs spearhead KFH's CSR agenda. He praised the success of KFH's Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign titled "You are Stronger" which spanned the month of October 2024 and included various awareness activities and educational seminars.

He also commended the KFH comprehensive health campaign launched in November to mark World Diabetes Day, in addition to the success of its November campaign to raise awareness of men's health and encourage preventive measures throughout November.

Al-Ruwaieh emphasized that KFH has a demonstrated track record of supporting initiatives in the healthcare field. This support encompasses numerous initiatives, including first aid courses, blood donation campaigns,

and the sponsorship of numerous seminars and health awareness campaigns.

### People with special needs

He pointed out that KFH is the first bank in Kuwait to launch a comprehensive program to integrate people with special needs, in partnership with the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA). He highlighted the Bank's strategic partnerships, including its collaboration with the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped to provide training and development opportunities. He also reaffirmed KFH's commitment to the national initiative "Partners in Employing them".

### Diraya Campaign

Al-Ruwaieh pointed out that KFH is one of the most active banks in supporting the Diraya campaign through contents aimed at enhancing financial literacy among customers and the public and shedding light on fraud transactions to raise their awareness.

### Winter Wonderland and Supporting Kuwaiti Businesses

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH decision to renew its strategic partnership with the Touristic Enterprises Company and continue supporting the Winter Wonderland project aligns with KFH's commitment to fulfilling its social responsibility strategy effectively. He noted that KFH is prominently represented within Winter Wonderland through the exclusive KFH Zone, where it diligently organizes a wide range of events, contests, and activities, and generously offers gifts and surprises to both its valued customers and the public.

As part of its strategy to support youth-driven projects in Kuwait and foster a thriving local business environment, he explained that KFH is a strong supporter of Kuwaiti businesses participating in the Winter Wonderland festivities.

### Social Media Channels

Al-Ruwaieh pointed out that KFH employs its channels on social media to serve customers and the public by publishing awareness campaigns and educational materials, while responding to all customer inquiries in record time.

### Global Recognitions

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH's efforts in social responsibility and sustainability have earned the Bank various international recognitions such as the "Corporate Social Responsibility - Middle East" award from EMEA Finance Magazine, Kuwait's Best Bank for ESG award from Euromoney, Kuwait's Best Bank for Sustainable Finance by Global Finance Magazine. Moreover, KFH was awarded an "A" rating by MSCI for its performance in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices and was included in the FTSE4Good Index for its excellence in sustainability.



Group photo at the renewal of partnership with the Scientific Center.



Group photo after signing the partnership with Sabah Al-Ahmad Center.



KFH Holy Quran recitation competition



Baytak team visits a number of schools on the occasion of the new school year.



Sharing breakfast with the employees of the Helicopter Department of the General Department of Central Operations at the Ministry of Interior.



Group photo of the Baytak team distributing Iftar meals.



Abdulwahab Al-Rashood and Abdullah Al-Dardari at the signing of the Global Solidarity Alliance agreement with the United Nations Development Program.



KFH honors high school toppers in the presence of Khaled Al Shamlan.



Offering financing benefits for Toyota and Lexus vehicles in Kuwait

# KIB continues competitive financing offer with AlSayer

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the continuation of its most competitive financing offer, in partnership with Mohammed Naser AlSayer & Sons, the exclusive dealer for Toyota and Lexus in Kuwait. This exceptional offer allows customers to purchase their favorite vehicles with exclusive benefits, including no salary transfer requirement, profit-free financing for up to five years, complimentary car insurance from Al-Dawli Takaful Insurance Company (KIB Takaful), and free maintenance service packages.

Commenting on the occasion, Abdulaziz Al-Shammari, Head of Central Sales at KIB, said: "Our previous financing offer was met with great enthusiasm from customers,

motivating us to reintroduce it in collaboration with AlSayer, a valued strategic partner of the Bank. We are committed to delivering financing solutions that meet our customers' needs and aspirations, while continually enhancing their banking experience with exceptional benefits."

Al-Shammari added: "This offer is tailored to provide flexible and comprehensive solutions for customers looking to purchase Toyota and Lexus vehicles—two of the most popular and highly sought-after brands in both local and global markets. We are proud to be part of this partnership, which delivers added value to our customers and reinforces their trust in our banking services."



KIB's Abdulaziz Al-Shammari

KIB's financing offer stands out for its flexibility, offering custom-

ers profit-free financing for up to five years and tailored options to meet their financial needs, including financing with fixed profit rates for the first three years of a five-year term. The offer also includes complimentary maintenance services and Takaful insurance coverage provided by the Bank, ensuring a more convenient and seamless purchasing experience for customers.

It is worth noting that this offer is part of the strategic agreement recently signed by KIB with Mohammed Naser AlSayer & Sons, reaffirming the Bank's commitment to delivering innovative solutions that align with its customers' aspirations. KIB continues to solidify its position among the leading banks in the local

market, catering to customer needs with exceptional banking services and market-leading offers.

### About KIB

Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is a bank that operates according to the Islamic Shari'ah, based in the State of Kuwait. Incorporated in 1973, and originally known as Kuwait Real Estate Bank, KIB made the transition to its current Islamic operating model in 2007. In 2018, KIB embarked on a new phase of its journey full of innovation and development. As part of its new strategic direction, the Bank focuses on offering a next-level customer experience under the slogan: "Bank for Life".

Through a network of branches spread across the State of

Kuwait, KIB offers a broad range of banking products and services, as well as innovative digital banking solutions in line with international best standards. As part of its duty towards the community, the Bank also encompasses a leading social responsibility program that aims at positively impacting all members of the community through a wide range of impactful initiatives and activities.

Today, KIB has taken concrete steps in implementing its new strategic objectives. The Bank has cemented its role as a key player in the local banking industry and has continued to maintain its strong financial performance; enabling it to be globally recognized for its strong credit rating and financial position.

### Silver edges up to \$29.59

## Gold prices near 3-week high as 'dollar weakens'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Gold prices rose on Friday, approaching a three-week high, as the dollar weakened and investors sought safe-haven assets amid geopolitical tensions and uncertainty surrounding US economic policy, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The spot gold was steady at \$2,655.38 per ounce by 0756 GMT, after earlier hitting its highest level since December 13. Gold has gained approximately 1.3 percent this week; US gold futures increased by 0.1 percent to \$2,670.70 per ounce.

The dollar index fell by 0.3 percent, making gold more affordable for holders of other currencies. Tim Waterer, chief market analyst at KCM Trade, noted that the rise in safe-haven demand has bolstered gold prices and any further decline in the dollar could drive prices higher.

The upcoming inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump on January 20 is adding to the market's

uncertainty, with proposed tariffs and protectionist policies expected to fuel inflation and trade tensions.

On the geopolitical front, escalating conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine have also contributed to the demand for safer investments. At least 68 Palestinians were reported killed in Israeli airstrikes on Gaza, while a Russian drone attack on Kyiv resulted in casualties.

Market participants are closely watching US economic data due next week, including the non-farm payrolls report and the Federal Reserve's meeting minutes, which may provide clarity on the Fed's future interest rate decisions, particularly after recent signals of reduced expectations for rate cuts in 2025.

Other precious metals also saw movement, with silver rising by 0.1 percent to \$29.59 per ounce, platinum holding steady at \$923.10 and palladium increasing by 0.1 percent to \$911.90.

### Stronger 12% jump for 2025

## Wall St forecasts 9.4% profit growth for S&P 500 in 2024

NEW YORK, Jan 5, (AP): Wall Street expects corporate profits to have surged in 2024 and forecasts an even stronger jump for 2025.

Companies still face a long list of uncertainties in the year ahead, including economic policy shifts, reheated inflation and shifts in the jobs market and consumer spending.

Earnings for companies within the S&P 500 are expected to have grown by about 9.4% in 2024, according to FactSet. Companies will start reporting their final quarterly financial results for that year in the next few weeks. It will mark a sharp gain from 1.4% growth in 2023.

Profit growth for companies followed the rising economic tide. The labor market remained strong, helping support consumer spending for goods and services. Prices remain high on many items and services, but the rate of inflation has eased significantly, helping companies lower costs in some cases and relieving some pressure on consumers.

Wall Street's 2025 forecast for over 12% profit growth relies largely on those conditions continuing to prevail. Earnings will be closely-watched as a key measure to justify the broader markets gains.

"With the market looking expensive versus history, it wouldn't be surprising if earnings growth were a greater driver of market performance than in recent years, making companies' ability to deliver on profitability estimates all the more critical in 2025," said Ross Mayfield, investment strategist at Baird Private Wealth Management, in a research note.

The Federal Reserve's path ahead for interest rates also remains a factor

for companies and consumers looking for less pressure on borrowing costs. The central bank cut its benchmark interest rate three times in 2024.

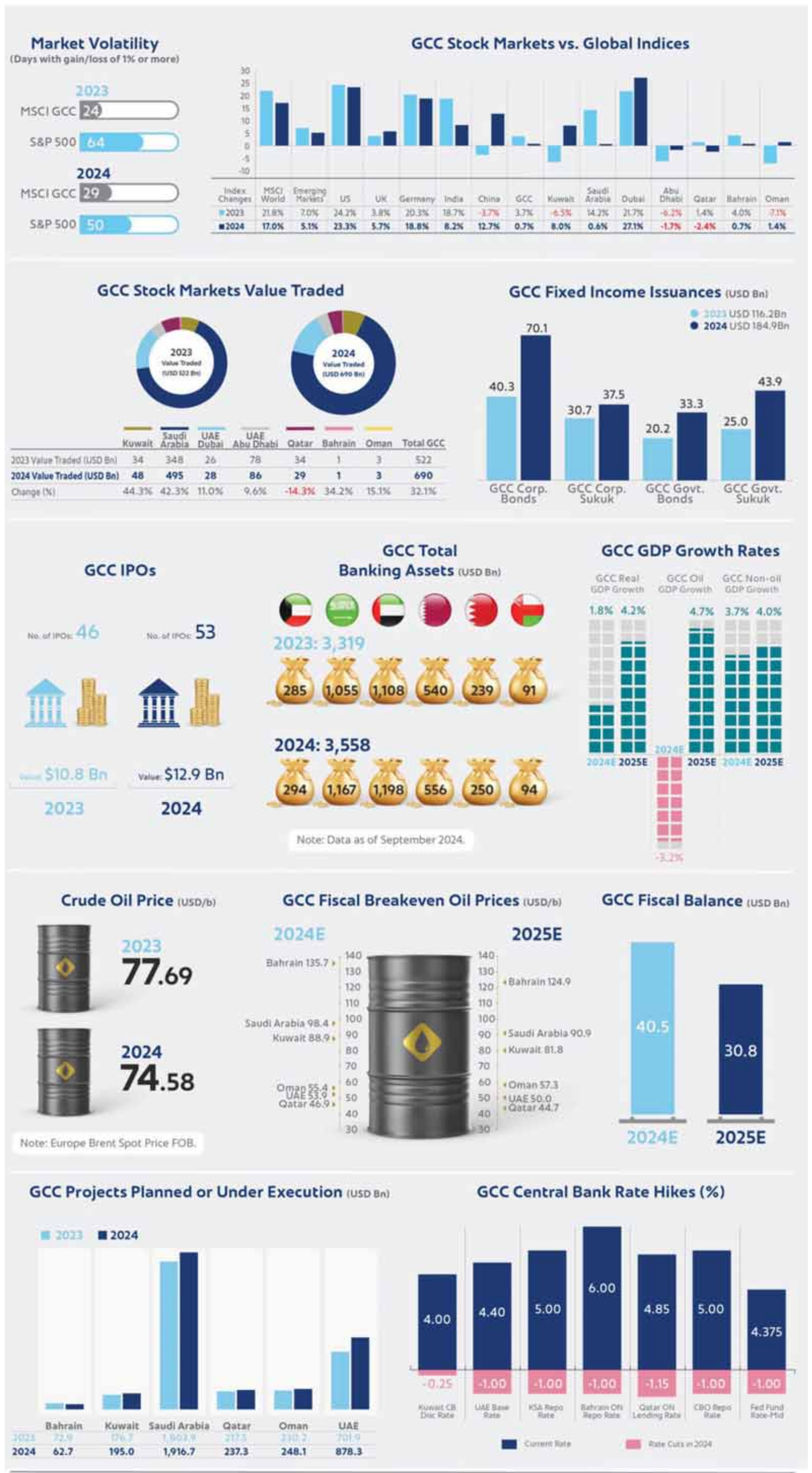
Expectations for further cuts have been tempered by worries over stubborn inflation. The rate of inflation had eased but remains stuck just above the Fed's target rate of 2%. Recent months have shown signs that it even edged higher.

The Fed has signaled more caution because of inflation worries. Tariff threats from incoming President Donald Trump have fueled those worries on Wall Street. Trump has threatened blanket tariffs on all goods coming into the U.S., which in itself would raise prices for imported goods and raw materials for companies, which typically pass those costs along to consumers. Other nations would likely respond with retaliatory tariffs, which would almost certainly add to pressure on prices for businesses and consumers.

The incoming administration is expected to have a more permissive regulatory attitude for businesses. That could help ease costs for businesses and potentially result in a boost to mergers and acquisitions if there is less antitrust oversight. But, stricter immigration measures could jolt the labor market by producing labor shortages and raising labor costs for employers, adding to inflation.

"The effects of tariffs, immigration restrictions, deregulation, and tax cuts on inflation and broader economic performance vary significantly depending on when and how those policies are implemented," said Sung Won Sohn, president of SS Economics, in a research note.

## GCC: 2024 - The Year That Was...



## US mortgage rates hit 6-month high as costs rise

WASHINGTON, Jan 5, (AP): U.S. mortgage rates rose this week to the highest level since July.

The benchmark 30-year fixed rate loan rate rose to 6.91% from 6.85% last week, according to mortgage giant Freddie Mac. It was at 6.62% a year ago.

The uptick in the cost of home loans reflects a rise in the bond yields that lenders use as a guide to price mortgages. The increase is occurring with the price of homes rising steadily.

The average rate on a 15-year fixed-rate mortgage, popular with homeowners seeking to refinance, climbed to 6.13%, up from 6% and also the highest since July. It was at 5.89% a year ago.

"Inching up to just shy of 7%, mortgage rates reached their highest point in nearly six months," said Freddie Mac chief economist

Sam Khater. "Compared to this time last year, rates are elevated and the market's affordability headwinds persist. However, buyers appear to be more inclined to get off the sidelines as pending home sales rise."

Interest rates have been climbing since the Federal Reserve signaled last month that it expects to raise its benchmark rate just twice this year, down from the four cuts it forecast in September.

The reason the Fed is tapping the brakes is that inflation remains stubbornly above the central bank's 2% target, even though it's fallen from the heights it reached in mid-2022. Economists also worry that President-elect Donald Trump's economic policies, notably his plan to vastly increase tariffs on imports, could fuel inflation.

Source: Bloomberg, IMF, EIA, GCC Stock Exchanges, Central Banks, Asteco, PWC, MEED Projects, Kamco Invest Research



Sequels, family films shape the comeback story

## What 2024's box office can teach Hollywood

LOS ANGELES, Jan 5, (AP): Movie ticket sales took a bit of a hit in 2024. The annual domestic box office is expected to end up at around \$8.75 billion, down more than 3% from 2023, according to estimates from Comscore.

It's not as dire as it was in the pandemic years, but it's also not even close to the pre-pandemic norm when the annual box office regularly surpassed \$11 billion.

This is the year the business felt the effects of the Hollywood strikes of 2023, the labor standoff that delayed productions and releases and led to a depleted calendar for exhibitors and moviegoers. And yet it's not as bad as it could have been, or at least as bad as analysts projected at the start of the year.

"This has been a really incredible comeback story for the industry," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "Just a couple of months ago it was a question of whether we would even hit \$8 billion for the year."

Hollywood continues to learn lessons about what moviegoers really want, what works and what doesn't. Here are the biggest takeaways from 2024.

The Hollywood strikes might have ended in 2023, putting productions back into full swing and sending stars out on the promotional circuit again - but the ripple effect of the work stoppages and contract standoffs showed their real effects on the 2024 release calendar.

The first two quarters were hit hardest, with tentpoles pushed later in the year ("Deadpool & Wolverine," for one) or even into 2025 (like "Mission: Impossible 8"). With no Marvel movie kicking off the summer moviegoing season, the box office was down a devastating 27.5% from 2023 right before "Inside Out 2" opened in June.

"It's an unpredictable business but it thrives on stability," Dergarabedian said. "When the release calendar is thrown off, the momentum stops."

### Franchises

Sequels and franchises dominated the top 10 movies of the year, as has often been the case in the past 15 years. But this year, films carrying a PG rating did especially well, starting with the biggest movie of 2024: "Inside Out 2," which also became the biggest animated movie of all time, not accounting for inflation.

Family films with a PG rating - including "Despicable Me 4," "Moana 2," "Wicked," "Kung Fu Panda 4," "Sonic the Hedgehog 3," "Mufasa" and "The Wild Robot" - grossed over \$2.9 billion this year, accounting for around 33% of the annual box office, according to Comscore. Movies rated PG-13, by contrast, made up about 30% of ticket sales.

After a quieter 2023 and several years without a film at the very top of the charts, the Walt Disney Co. came back roaring in 2024 with three of the top five movies of the year: "Inside Out 2," "Deadpool & Wolverine" and "Moana 2." In mid-December, it crossed the \$2 billion domestic mark, the second time any



This image provided by The Walt Disney Studios shows the characters Deadpool, played by Ryan Reynolds, (left), and Wolverine, played by Hugh Jackman, in a scene from the film 'Deadpool & Wolverine.' (AP)



This image released by The Walt Disney Studios shows the character Moana, voiced by Auli'i Cravalho, in a scene from 'Moana 2.' (AP)

studio has done so since 2019 (that was also Disney, in 2022). Its 20th Century division also played an important part with "Alien: Romulus" and "Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes."

"It's a different industry when Disney commits to theatrical releases," said Daniel Loria, an executive at the movie data and analyt-

ics trade The Boxoffice Company.

Every year has high-profile flops and disappointments, and this was no exception. Sony had a rough go with its "Spider-Man" adjacent titles like "Madame Web" and "Kraven the Hunter" (but this also seems to be the fate lately for anyone not named "Deadpool"). Universal had higher hopes for "The

Fall Guy," as did Warner Bros. for "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga" and "Joker: Folie à Deux."

Then there were the filmmaker-driven (and financed) passion projects that failed to take off like Kevin Costner's "Horizon: An American Saga - Chapter 1" and Francis Ford Coppola's "Megalopolis."

"It's a reductive way of think-

ing about those passion projects," Loria said. "Those movies didn't come out with huge expectations, meaning theaters didn't clear out the house and give them three auditoriums per site in hopes for money to come in."

This was, however, part of the problem with "Joker 2," which was expected to be more in line with the

first which made over \$1 billion. But even that has a caveat, Loria thinks.

"It wasn't just that 'Joker' didn't perform, it's that there was nothing coming in behind it to make up that momentum," Loria said. "That's more the fault of a release schedule where one movie is supposed to carry a month. That model doesn't work anymore."

What does work, Loria said, is a diverse lineup, with the Thanksgiving and Christmas successes being the perfect example. At Thanksgiving, there was "Wicked," "Gladiator II" and "Moana 2." Christmas had "Mufasa," "Sonic 3," and a lot of adult offerings too, including "Nosferatu," "A Complete Unknown" and "Babygirl."

Horror is often the safest bet for theatrical, but this year had even veterans pleasantly surprised by just how enthusiastic that audience can be, with hits like "Longlegs," "Nosferatu," "Terrifier 3" and "Smile 2" getting people out of the house.

### Thrillers

The Blake Lively drama "It Ends With Us," which had its share of ongoing off-screen drama as well, also became an event. Audiences turned out for smart thrillers, like "Conclave" as well as unexpected originals including "Anora," "The Substance" and "The Brutalist."

Re-releases of movies in theaters that are also widely available in the home thrived this year. Some of the biggest successes included Christopher Nolan's "Interstellar,"

"Coraline" and "The Phantom Menace."

"It just shows our industry once again that audiences truly understand the difference between a communal, big screen theatrical experience that they crave even on films that they've had the opportunities to see in the home," Nolan said in December. "That theatrical experience that we all know and love is so powerful and so exciting. It's a very clear demonstration of it."

As silly as it sounds, this is the year the novelty popcorn bucket became a star. It started with the accidentally suggestive "Dune: Part 2" creation, which "Deadpool & Wolverine" latched onto in a less accidental way. More recently, the "Nosferatu" coffin buckets have been fetching high resale prices.

For Loria, it's all part of a trend that theaters have been noticing since reopening during the pandemic: Moviegoers aren't back in pre-pandemic numbers, but those who did come back were spending more on concessions and premium tickets (like IMAX and other large format screens) than ever before.

Everyone is optimistic for the film business in 2025, and the offerings for moviegoers - which include at least 110 films projected to open on over 2,000 screens - according to the National Association of Theatre Owners. And the momentum is there.

"There's been a huge amount of box office generated in the last six weeks of the year," Dergarabedian said. "This is the best opening act 2025 could have."

### Film

#### Restored dark crime thriller keeps its rugged charm

## David Fincher revives 'Seven' for 30th anniversary in 4K UHD

LOS ANGELES, Jan 5, (AP): For David Fincher, seeing "Seven" in 4K was an experience he can only describe as harrowing. That or a high school reunion.

"There are definitely moments that you go, 'What was I thinking?' Or 'Why did I let this person have that hairdo?'" Fincher said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

He's OK with the film being a product of its time in most respects. But some things just could not stand in high-definition resolution.

"It was a little decrepit, to be honest," said Fincher. "We needed to resuscitate it. There are things you can see in 4K HDR that you cannot see on a film print."

Ever the perfectionist, he and a team got to work on a new restoration of the film for its 30th anniversary re-release. This weekend the restored "Seven" will play on IMAX screens for the first time in the US and Canada, and on Jan. 7, the 4K UHD home video version will be available as well.

The dark crime thriller written by Andrew Kevin Walker and starring Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman as a pair of detectives looking for a serial killer was somewhat of a career-reviver for Fincher, whose directorial debut "Alien 3" had not gone well. "Seven" was not a sure thing: It was made for only \$34 million (and only got that when Fincher managed to persuade studio execs to give up \$3 million more). But it went on to earn more than \$327 million, not accounting for inflation, and continues to influence the genre.

Fincher has over the years overseen several restorations of the film (including one for laser disc) but



This image released by Warner Bros. shows Brad Pitt, (left), and Morgan Freeman in a scene from 'Seven.' (AP)

decided this needed to be the last. It's why he insisted on an 8K scan that they could derive the 4K from. He wanted to ensure that it wouldn't have to be repeated when screens get more advanced.

"I don't want to do this again," Fincher said. "What we've essentially gotten to with this is that this is the new negative. This will be the new archival storage element."

For casual viewers, the tweaks should not be ter-

ribly noticeable. Fincher didn't go in and add characters or give Gwyneth Paltrow a happy ending.

"I'm very against the idea of changing any of the content," Fincher said. "There's literally zero opportunity for toys in 'Seven' so we won't be introducing any of that."

But take the opening scene where Pitt's character selects a pre-tied tie and looks out a window. In the original version, Fincher used a tried and true

filmmaking technique where you bounce soft light off a white card outside the window to give the appearance of depth and natural light coming in. He called them the "Being There" windows, referring to what cinematographer Caleb Deschanel did on that film.

"There's no expectation by the audience that you see the buildings beyond the window. They're just overexposed. The inside is dark enough that your eyes don't adjust. And so outside it's very bright," he explained. "In 4K, it's no good. You could see the sheen of the white card."

The fix was to add a cityscape and some rain drizzle.

"We're not showing off that now you can see the city," he said. "We're just finally kind of bringing the bottom end of the expectation up a little bit so that it feels like it was intended to because now we have the ability to resolve that stuff."

There were some exposure issues, some cinch marks, some places where the splices came loose or where the perforations of the print changed the properties. Fincher also removed some of the camera jiggles at the end of the film, explaining that because it was an omniscient camera it was distracting. But he didn't want to do too much and have it lose its essence.

"It's a document of its time and I believe that movies should be that," Fincher said. "For all the primitive nonsense of the equipment that went into making 'The French Connection,' it informs that movie. There is a kind of rugged primitivism in it. And I didn't want that baked out."



From shy dreamer to breakthrough entertainer of 2024

## Adria Arjona's confidence only keeps growing

LOS ANGELES, Jan 5, (AP): Adria Arjona's mother is her biggest fan - and her fans' biggest supporter.

While in town for Paris Fashion Week this year, Arjona recalls the moment her mother stood outside their hotel, tearfully thanking a crowd of fans who were armed with "Andor" and "Father of the Bride" posters and screaming "Adria!"

"She didn't stop crying for 40 minutes," Arjona recounts. "She was like, 'Remember when you started? That's all you wanted was to be in a movie. All you wanted was to tell the story, and here you are.'"

Arjona, 32, has transformed from the reserved girl for whom performing wasn't a sure bet while growing up across Latin America to the captivating actor booking multiple scene-stealing roles.

"I always thought I was going to be too shy to actually do it, but once I did it, something switched ... and then I became obsessed," Arjona says.

Arjona has been named one of The Associated Press' Breakthrough Entertainers of 2024, but her television debut came a decade ago, with a couple spots on network procedurals. Since then, she's secured notable roles in projects like "Narcos," "True Detective," and "Andor," crescendoing into a wildly productive 2024 with leading roles alongside A-list colleagues.



Adria Arjona poses for a portrait on Nov 16, 2024, in Los Angeles. Arjona has been named one of the Associated Press' Breakthrough Entertainers of 2024. (AP)

"The best actors understand the importance of patience and the journey within a film, and Adria embodies that," Glen Powell, Arjona's "Hit Man" co-star, wrote in an email.

Beside the Richard Linklater movie, this year alone she starred in "The Absence of Eden," alongside Zoe Saldana, and was cast in Zoë Kravitz's directorial debut "Blink Twice"

and the upcoming "Los Frikis" from directors Michael Schwartz and Tyler Nilson.

Growing up, she describes herself as "very hyper, but quiet and a little shy." "I wanted to learn to do so many things that my dad was like, 'I think you might be an actress,'" she said.

Arjona would perform for her family members, but it was in her adolescent years that art classes gave her confidence in her craft. Still, the actor of Puerto Rican and Guatemalan descent constantly tried to prove herself as an artist and an actor. Arjona doesn't take it lightly that she is one of the few Latina actors cast in multidimensional roles.

"I always put this pressure on myself of making a difference for Latin Americans in cinema, just playing different roles and trying not to get re-typed ... it took me a long time," she said.

Her long-term dream is to see more varied Latin American stories on screen. That's what drew her to "Los Frikis," the coming-of-age story about a punk rock group set in early 1990s Cuba that she co-stars in and executive produces.

"I just hope that it gets less and less complicated and that the opportunities of playing real dimensional characters just doesn't stop," she said.

She quickly learned to advocate for herself in Hollywood and credits col-

laborators like Linklater for believing in her and presenting her the opportunity to flex her writing skills. While working on "Hit Man," Arjona contributed to the second part of the comedy's script - something Powell also noted.

"She's also incredibly generous as an actor; her off-camera takes were just as electric as her on-camera moments," he wrote.

Arjona is at a pivotal moment in her career. With multiple projects on the horizon, like "Splitsville" and A24's "Onslaught," she is enjoying acting and producing and says she's open to writing and directing if presented with the right opportunity.

She attributes her openness to some early advice from her father, Grammy-winning recording artist Ricardo Arjona, who reminded her to never stop learning.

"You can't pretend that you know what you're doing," he told her. "That's the biggest mistake you can do. Always ask for help and ask questions and you'll learn faster that way instead of pretending."

She's taken her father's advice, soaking in every moment on set and continuously falling in love with the process. She still gets butterflies on her first day. "I still feel nervous," she said. "I hope I always stay nervous. I think it's a sign that I really care, and I still really enjoy what I'm doing."

## Entertainment

A new era of global crossover in entertainment

## Asian stars find new part to global fame

LOS ANGELES, Jan 5, (AP): Twenty years after he was a young, struggling actor in Toronto, Thomas Lo is now the one giving young Asian actors their big breaks. He just had to go to Hong Kong to do it.

The Chinese Canadian has been the creative director of one of the island city's biggest TV broadcasting companies for only a few years, but is already making original English-language content to reach viewers around the world.

"It was a bit of a full-circle moment for me," Lo told The Associated Press. "You see more Asians but you're still seeing the same Asians on screen, right? We're looking for more opportunities on a grander scale and it's not just in front of the camera. It's behind the camera as well."

It's vastly different to work as an Asian actor in North American hubs — Toronto, Los Angeles, New York — than in those in Asia — such as Hong Kong or Taipei. Actors in Asia don't as often have to deal with auditioning for stereotypical characters, being the only Asian on a set or getting tokenized. Historically, many Asian American and Canadian actors have even relocated from the West to countries in Asia to find better opportunities in entertainment.

## Dynamics

A few film and TV producers on both sides of the Pacific, however, are looking to shake up those dynamics by crisscrossing their show biz ecosystems. The hope is a win-win with fledgling talent in the Asian diaspora gaining global exposure — and Asia-based productions getting wider audiences. For example the Hulu series "Shogun," which won 18 Emmys, demonstrated a successful collaboration between Japanese and Western cast and crew — which included Japanese Americans.

At the helm of Hong Kong's Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), Lo led its first collaboration with an American company — on an original TV drama with scenes in both English and Cantonese. Two crews on two different continents filmed "Cross My Mind," a series about a Chinese American aspiring music producer in Los Angeles (Nathan Ing) who becomes telepathically connected to a Hong Kong advertising executive (Contopop singer Jocelyn Chan).

Chan, 30, was born in Hong Kong but spent ages 3-11 in Vancouver, British Columbia. She returned to Hong Kong for her music career partly because of concern about succeeding in North America.

"A lot of people probably had similar sentiments to me where it's



This photo provided by Jocelyn Chan shows her in Hong Kong in April 2022. (AP)

more possible if we came back to this home," Chan said of finding success in the entertainment industry in Asia. "We all feel like we have two homes."

Her role in "Cross My Mind" is powerful, assertive and far from Western stereotypes of Asian women as meek.

The partnership between Los Angeles-based Wong Fu Productions and TVB started with one sliding into the other's DMs on Instagram.

"It'd be cool if we can kind of tap into their audience of what they built because that's who we're trying to speak with," Lo said, about reaching Asian American viewers.

Wong Fu, which started in 2003, is now a thriving YouTube channel of Asian American-centered skits and other content. Simu Liu was among its then-emerging actors.

"Now we have actors that want to

work with us for free and are just like 'Put us in whatever,' knowing that it's a way to connect with Asian Americans first," said Wesley Chan, Wong Fu co-founder and creative director. "Then that can also be a way to propel them."

Wesley Chan, no relation to Jocelyn, was intrigued by the challenge of shepherding a story that incorporates Asian and Asian American protagonists. He and his team wrote six episodes of "Cross My Mind" in six months to film in 2022.

"We knew that they wanted to make a story that could kind of show the cultural differences between an American and someone in Hong Kong," he said. "I thought that was really cool because to even know that there is a difference — or to share that there's a difference — I think is a nuance that is not seen very often."

Meshing work styles was no small feat. Wesley Chan noticed crews in Los Angeles and Hong Kong — where there are no unions — worked differently. It in some ways paralleled the bicultural nature of the show itself.

The show premiered in April 2023 on myTV Super, TVB's streaming platform that has 9 million subscribers. It debuted the following December in the U.S. on two new streaming platforms that have since merged into GoldenTV, which focuses on English language content for Asian American viewers.

"There's two different audiences on both sides of the world, but it's still content that I think has eyeballs," said Takashi Cheng, GoldenTV's founder. "The fact that they need English-language programming tells you that American or English content is not dead. It's in fact very much attractive in foreign countries."

**NEW YORK:** Aaron Brown, a veteran television news anchor whose steady hand helped guide CNN viewers through the unfolding tragedy of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, has died.

Brown died Sunday of pneumonia in Washington, D.C., where he lived, family spokesperson Molly Levinson said. He was 76.

Brown began his career in Minneapolis as a radio talk show host. His career in TV began in Seattle before he was named the founding anchor of ABC's "World News Now." He also anchored "ABC's World News Tonight Saturday," and was a reporter for "World News Tonight with Peter Jennings," "Nightline," and other ABC news programs.

But it was at CNN where he made a lasting mark - even before he was supposed to be on the air.

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Brown started his career at the network earlier than expected, anchoring from a Manhattan rooftop as the attacks were happening. When the second tower fell that morning, Brown responded with the horror most viewers no doubt felt. (AP)

## Film



Walter Salles, (left), director of the film 'I'm Still Here,' and cast member Fernanda Torres pose for a portrait to promote the film, Nov. 13, 2024, in West Hollywood, Calif. (AP)

Dictatorship trauma

## 'I'm Still Here' confronts painful history of Brazil

SAO PAULO, Jan 5, (AP): Brazilian-made dramas rarely last long in local cinemas. But, nearly two months after its release, "I'm Still Here," a film about a family torn apart by the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil for more than two decades, has drawn millions of moviegoers across the South American country.

The film's domestic box office success - with nearly 3 million tickets sold, it secured the fifth spot at the 2024 box office by mid-December - is rooted in its exploration of a long-neglected national trauma, but it is particularly timely, especially as Brazil confronts a recent near-miss with democratic rupture.

Set in the 1970s and based on true events, "I'm Still Here" tells the story of the Paivas, an upper-class family in Rio de Janeiro shattered by the dictatorship. Rubens Paiva, a former leftist congressman, was taken into custody by the military in 1971 and was never seen again. The narrative centers on his wife, Eunice Paiva, and her lifelong pursuit of justice.

The film was nominated for a Golden Globe for best foreign language film and shortlisted for the Oscars in the same category.

"Comedies and other topics are more likely to become mega-successes, but this (the dictatorship) is a very taboo subject for us," said Brazilian psychoanalyst and writer Vera Iaconelli, adding that she felt a "sense of urgency" after watching the movie last month, even though the dictatorship ended almost four decades ago.

As the movie was being shown across Brazil, the Federal Police unsealed a report detailing a 2022 plot by military officers to stage a coup to prevent President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva from taking office, and to keep far-right former army captain Jair Bolsonaro in power. Bolsonaro and his allies have denied any involvement in participating or inciting a coup.

"Even if (director) Walter Salles wanted to plan the timing of the release this precisely, he wouldn't have gotten it so right," said Lucas Pedretti, a historian and sociologist whose works address memory and reparations after the military dictatorship.

"The film plays a very important role in telling us: 'Look, this is what would happen if the coup that was planned by Bolsonaro and his military officers had succeeded.'"

## Established

Unlike countries like Argentina and Chile, which established truth commissions and prosecuted former dictators and their henchmen, Brazil's transition back to democracy was marked by a sweeping amnesty to military officials.

For years, said Pedretti, Brazil's military promoted the notion that government silence was the best way to bury the past.

It was not until 2011 that Brazil's then-President Dilma Rousseff - a former guerrilla who was tortured during the dictatorship - established a national truth commission to investigate its abuses.

The commission's 2014 report detailed harrowing accounts of torture and named perpetrators of human rights violations - none ever imprisoned. But just as a reckoning of the dictatorship began, calls for a return to military rule emerged in street protests against corruption revelations.

It was then that Marcelo Rubens Paiva, one of Rubens' sons, decided to share his family's story in his 2015 book "I'm Still Here." The book introduced Eunice Paiva to a larger audience, chronicling her journey from a housewife to a relentless advocate for her disappeared husband, and how she raised five children by herself, while also pursuing a law degree.

In the years that followed, far-right, anti-establishment forces increasingly gained traction. Bolsonaro - who has long celebrated the coup and praised dictatorship-era torturers - would go on to ride that wave to a presidential victory in 2018.

Observing the surge of the far-right in Brazil, filmmaker Salles realized the country's memory of its dictatorship was very fragile.

He said he saw a need for his country to confront its trauma in order to prevent history from repeating itself.

"I'm Still Here" isn't the first Brazilian movie to explore the memory of the dictatorship, but it is the most popular. Unlike other films on the subject that tend to focus on dissidents and armed resistance, Salles chose to frame his as a family drama and how the disappearance of the family patriarch upended their day-to-day lives.

Its climax - spoiler alert! - arrives 25 years after Rubens' disappearance, when Eunice finally receives his death certificate.

In December, a month after the film's premiere, the Brazilian government allowed families of dictatorship-era victims to obtain reissued death certificates acknowledging state-sponsored killings.

"It is very symbolic that this is happening amid the international repercussion of 'I'm Still Here' ... so younger people can understand a bit of what that period was like," Brazil's Human Rights Minister Macacé Evaristo said during the announcement, calling it an important step in the "healing process for Brazilian society."

## Sabotage

The healing process remains incomplete, as some forces - once again - seek to prevent those who allegedly sought to sabotage democracy from being held to account.

On Nov. 29, Bolsonaro urged Lula and the Supreme Court to grant amnesty for those involved in the 2022 alleged coup plot and, alongside his allies, pushed for legislation to pardon participants in the 2023 anti-democratic riot that aimed to oust Lula and marked an echo of the Capitol insurrection in the US.

"The coup is still here. It's still in people's minds, it's still in the minds of the military," said Paulo Sergio Almeida, a filmmaker and founder of Filme B, a company that tracks Brazil's national cinema. "We thought this was a thing of the past, but it's not. The past is still present in Brazil."

This time around, many Brazilians are calling for the prosecution of those responsible for the attempted coup, believing that justice is essential for national reconciliation and future progress.

On Dec. 14, police arrested Bolsonaro's 2022 running mate and former defense minister in connection with investigations into the alleged coup plot, becoming the first four-star general arrested by civilians since the end of the dictatorship in 1985.

"It's a sign that we are making progress as a constitutional democracy," leftist Sen. Randolfe Rodrigues wrote on X that day. "Brazil still has a long way to go as a Republic, but today is a HISTORIC day on this journey."

Brazilians have also embraced the "No amnesty!" rallying cry, which originated at street protests in the aftermath of the capital's 2023 riot and can still be heard.

Earlier this month, a Supreme Court justice cited "I'm Still Here" while arguing that the 1979 amnesty law shouldn't apply to the crime of concealing bodies.

"The disappearance of Rubens Paiva, whose body was never found or buried, highlights the enduring pain of thousands of families," Justice Flávio Dino said.

Striking a chord in Brazil was precisely Marcelo Rubens Paiva's intent when adapting his book into a film.

"The movie is sparking this debate, and it arrived at the right moment for people to recognize that living under a dictatorship is no longer acceptable," he said.

On a recent evening in Sao Paulo, 46-year-old Juliana Patricia and her 16-year-old daughter, Ana Júlia, left a movie theater in tears, touched by "I'm Still Here."

"We saw all the suffering that Eunice endured, with Rubens being killed and taken from his family in such a brutal way," Patricia said. "It made us even more certain that democracy needs to be respected and that, as Brazilians, we must fight harder to ensure that this never happens in our country again."

## Variety

**LOS ANGELES:** Writer-director Jeff Baena, whose darkly comedic independent films included "The Little Hours" and who was married to his frequent creative collaborator Aubrey Plaza, has died. He was 47.

Baena was found dead Friday morning at a Los Angeles home, according to the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner's Office. The circumstances of his death remained unclear Saturday, and the office said it was investigating and a full report would not be available until the case is closed.

Baena co-wrote David O. Russell's 2004 film "I Heart Huckabees" and wrote and directed five of his own films, four of which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

He had been dating Plaza for three years before she starred in his 2014 directorial debut, the zombie comedy "Life After Beth." His next film, 2016's "Joshy," featured Thomas Middleditch as a man who gets together with friends months after his fiancée commits suicide.

The son of an attorney and teacher,

Baena grew up in Miami and attended film school at New York University. He told podcaster Marc Maron in a 2017 interview that his interest in cinema was sparked after watching Stanley Kubrick's "A Clockwork Orange" and Federico Fellini's "8 1/2" as a child. (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** Actor Blake Lively sued "It Ends With Us" director Justin Baldoni and several others tied to the romantic drama last week, alleging harassment and a coordinated campaign to attack her reputation for coming forward about her treatment on the set.

The federal lawsuit was filed in New York just hours after Baldoni and many of the other defendants in Lively's suit sued The New York Times for libel for its story on her al-



Lively



Researchers share insights

# Will AI transform drug development?

By Duxin Sun and Christian Macedonia  
University of Michigan

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

The potential of using artificial intelligence in drug discovery and development has sparked both excitement and skepticism among scientists, investors and the general public.

"Artificial intelligence is taking over drug development," claim some companies and researchers. Over the past few years, interest in using AI to design drugs and optimize clinical trials has driven a surge in research and investment. AI-driven platforms like AlphaFold, which won the 2024 Nobel Prize for its ability to predict the structure of proteins and design new ones, showcase AI's potential to accelerate drug development.

AI in drug discovery is "nonsense," warn some industry veterans. They urge that "AI's potential to accelerate drug discovery needs a reality check," as AI-generated drugs have yet to demonstrate an ability to address the 90% failure rate of new drugs in clinical trials. Unlike the success of AI in image analysis, its effect on drug development remains unclear.

### Development

We have been following the use of AI in drug development in our work as a pharmaceutical scientist in both academia and the pharmaceutical industry and as a former program manager in the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA. We argue that AI in drug development is not yet a game-changer, nor is it complete nonsense. AI is not a black box that can turn any idea into gold. Rather, we see it as a tool that, when used wisely and competently, could help address the root causes of drug failure and streamline the process.

Most work using AI in drug development intends to reduce the time and money it takes to bring one drug to market - currently 10 to 15 years and US\$1 billion to \$2 billion. But can AI truly revolutionize drug development and improve success rates?

Researchers have applied AI and

machine learning to every stage of the drug development process. This includes identifying targets in the body, screening potential candidates, designing drug molecules, predicting toxicity and selecting patients who might respond best to the drugs in clinical trials, among others.

Between 2010 and 2022, 20 AI-focused startups discovered 158 drug candidates, 15 of which advanced to clinical trials. Some of these drug candidates were able to complete preclinical testing in the lab and enter human trials in just 30 months, compared with the typical 3 to 6 years. This accomplishment demonstrates AI's potential to accelerate drug development.

### Compounds

On the other hand, while AI platforms may rapidly identify compounds that work on cells in a Petri dish or in animal models, the success of these candidates in clinical trials - where the majority of drug failures occur - remains highly uncertain.

Unlike other fields that have large, high-quality datasets available to train AI models, such as image analysis and language processing, the AI in drug development is constrained by small, low-quality datasets. It is difficult to generate drug-related datasets on cells, animals or humans for millions to billions of compounds. While AlphaFold is a breakthrough in predicting protein structures, how precise it can be for drug design remains uncertain. Minor changes to a drug's structure can greatly affect its activity in the body and thus how effective it is in treating disease.

Like AI, past innovations in drug development like computer-aided drug design, the Human Genome Project and high-throughput screening have improved individual steps of the process in the past 40 years, yet drug failure rates haven't improved.

Most AI researchers can tackle specific tasks in the drug development process when provided with high-quality data and particular questions to answer. But they are often unfamiliar with the full scope of drug development, reducing challenges into pattern recognition problems and refinement of individual steps of the process. Meanwhile, many scientists with expertise in drug development lack training in AI and machine learning. These communication barriers can hinder scientists from moving

beyond the mechanics of current development processes and identifying the root causes of drug failures.

Current approaches to drug development, including those using AI, may have fallen into a survivorship bias trap, overly focusing on less critical aspects of the process while overlooking major problems that contribute most to failure. This is analogous to repairing damage to the wings of aircraft returning from the battle fields in World War II while neglecting the fatal vulnerabilities in engines or cockpits of the planes that never made it back. Researchers often overly focus on how to improve a drug's individual properties rather than the root causes of failure.

The current drug development process operates like an assembly line, relying on a checkbox approach with extensive testing at each step of the process. While AI may be able to reduce the time and cost of the lab-based preclinical stages of this assembly line, it is unlikely to boost success rates in the more costly clinical stages that involve testing in people. The persistent 90% failure rate of drugs in clinical trials, despite 40 years of process improvements, underscores this limitation.

### Trials

Drug failures in clinical trials are not solely due to how these studies are designed; selecting the wrong drug candidates to test in clinical trials is also a major factor. New AI-guided strategies could help address both of these challenges.

Currently, three interdependent factors drive most drug failures: dosage, safety and efficacy. Some drugs fail because they're too toxic, or unsafe. Other drugs fail because they're deemed ineffective, often because the dose can't be increased any further without causing harm.

We and our colleagues propose a machine learning system to help select drug candidates by predicting dosage, safety and efficacy based on five previously overlooked features of drugs. Specifically, researchers could use AI models to determine how specifically and potently the drug binds to known and unknown targets, the level of these targets in the body, how concentrated the drug becomes in healthy and diseased tissues, and the drug's structural properties. (AP)

Key insights on the virus from Dr. Rajesh Rajan

# Unpacking surge in HMPV cases in China: Risks, symptoms, prevention

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: In an exclusive interview with Dr. Rajesh Rajan, a senior cardiologist, insightful directions were shared regarding the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) outbreak in China. Dr. Rajan highlighted the potential risks associated with this outbreak.

The recent increase in HMPV cases in China is concerning but not considered an unprecedented threat. The virus's seasonal behavior, coupled with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, has likely heightened susceptibility among populations that experienced reduced exposure to respiratory viruses during lockdowns. Health authorities are actively monitoring the situation, emphasizing the need for public awareness and adherence to preventive measures.

The surge in HMPV cases in China underscores the ongoing necessity for rigorous respiratory virus surveillance and public health readiness. While the situation demands attention, it is vital for individuals to stay informed about the symptoms, transmission dynamics, and preventive strategies surrounding HMPV to minimize infection risks and safeguard vulnerable populations.

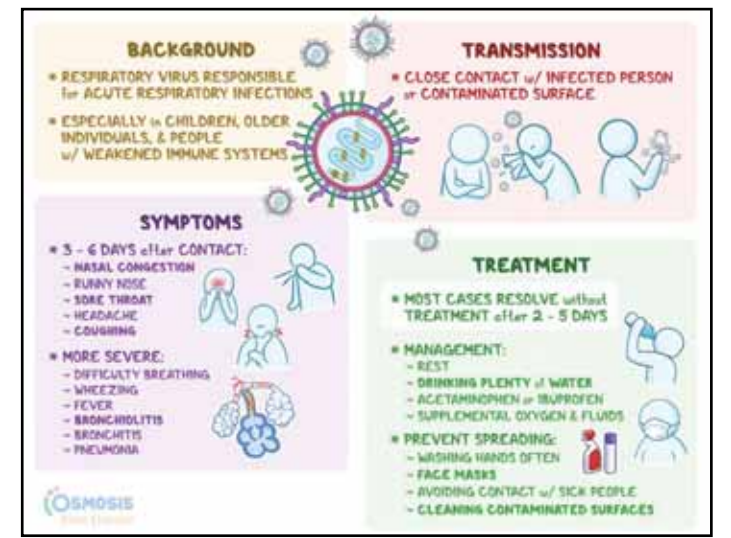
The rise in human metapneumovirus (HMPV) cases in China has sparked notable public health discussions. First identified in 2001, HMPV belongs to the Pneumoviridae family and is recognized for causing respiratory infections that closely resemble those caused by other common viruses.

Since its discovery over twenty years ago, human metapneumovirus (HMPV) has emerged as an important pathogen associated with respiratory illnesses. With a noticeable uptick in cases across China, especially among children and other vulnerable populations, it becomes crucial to thoroughly examine the features and public health ramifications of HMPV.

HMPV predominantly affects individuals of all ages, but young children, the elderly, and immunocompromised individuals are at an elevated risk. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HMPV typically manifests with symptoms similar to those of the common cold or influenza, exhibiting a seasonal pattern with increased prevalence in late winter and spring months.

**Clinical manifestations:** Patients infected with HMPV may experience a range of symptoms, including cough, nasal congestion, fever, sore throat, and, in more severe instances, wheezing or difficulty breathing. The infection can escalate to conditions such as bronchitis or pneumonia, adversely affecting those with existing respiratory issues like asthma.

**Risk factors:**



The groups most susceptible to severe HMPV infections include children under five, particularly infants, older adults (especially those aged 65 and above), and individuals suffering from chronic respiratory diseases or compromised immune systems.

### Transmission dynamics:

HMPV is mainly transmitted through respiratory droplets generated during coughing or sneezing, as well as through close contact and contaminated surfaces. The virus follows a seasonal circulation pattern, a factor that is vital for effective public health surveillance and intervention.

### Prevention strategies:

To curb the spread of HMPV, the CDC suggests implementing several preventive measures, including regular handwashing, refraining



Dr. Rajan

frequently touched surfaces can help mitigate transmission risks.

### Diagnosis of HMPV:

Diagnosing HMPV typically involves advanced molecular techniques such as nucleic acid amplification tests (NAAT) to detect the viral genome directly, as well as immunological tests for viral antigens found in respiratory samples. Routine testing is generally reserved for severe cases or during outbreak scenarios.

### Management and treatment:

At present, there is no specific antiviral treatment or vaccine targeting HMPV. Management strategies primarily focus on symptomatic

relief, which includes maintaining hydration, ensuring adequate rest, and utilizing over-the-counter medications to alleviate pain and fever. Hospitalization may be necessary for severe cases requiring oxygen therapy or intravenous fluids.

### When to seek medical attention:

Patients should seek medical care if symptoms worsen after several days, if they experience breathing difficulties or cyanosis, or if they have pre-existing health conditions. Early intervention is crucial for improving outcomes, especially in at-risk groups.

In conclusion, comprehending human metapneumovirus and its implications for public health is vital, particularly given its current prevalence in China and potential repercussions for global health.

□ □ □

Dr. Rajesh Rajan is a renowned Indian Cardiologist at Amiri Hospital in Kuwait and holds prestigious positions as the current President of the Association of MD Physicians, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Indian Association of Clinical Cardiologists, and the Managing Editor of the esteemed Annals of Clinical Cardiology Journal by Wolters Kluwer. His contributions to the medical community are highly regarded, and he has been honored with Fellowships from esteemed institutions such as the Royal College of London, Edinburgh, Ireland, and Glasgow. Dr. Rajan's expertise and commitment to cardiovascular health are evident through his groundbreaking research and recognition as a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology, the European Society of Cardiology, the American Society of Echocardiography, and the American Heart Association.

NY launches paid leave for prenatal care

# Japanese woman, world's oldest dies at 116

TOKYO, Jan 5, (AP): Tomiko Itooka, a Japanese woman who was the world's oldest person according to Guinness World Records, has died, an Ashiya city official said Saturday. She was 116.

Yoshitsugu Nagata, an official in charge of elderly policies, said Itooka died on Dec. 29 at a care home in Ashiya, Hyogo Prefecture, central Japan.

Itooka, who loved bananas and a yogurt-flavored Japanese drink called Calpis, was born on May 23, 1908. She became the oldest person last year following the death of 117-year-old Maria Branyas, according to the Gerontology Research Group.

When she was told she was at the top of the World Supercentenarian Rankings List, she simply replied, "Thank you."

When Itooka celebrated her birthday last year, she received flowers, a cake and a card from the mayor.

Born in Osaka, Itooka was a volleyball player in high school, and long had a reputation for a sprightly spirit, Nagata said. She climbed the 3,067-meter (10,062-foot) Mount Ontake twice.

She married at 20, and had two daughters and two sons, according to Guinness.

Itooka managed the office of her husband's textile factory during World



This photo provided by Ashiya City shows Tomiko Itooka, being celebrated for the 116th birthday at the nursing home she lives in Ashiya, western Japan on May 23, 2024. (AP)

War II. She lived alone in Nara after her husband died in 1979.

She is survived by one son and one daughter, and five grandchildren. A funeral service was held with family and friends, according to Nagata.

According to the Gerontology Research Group, the world's oldest person is now 116-year-old Brazilian nun Inah Canabarro Lucas, who was born 16 days after Itooka.

Pregnancy: Pregnant New Yorkers will be entitled to at least 20 hours of paid leave to attend prenatal medical appointments under a law that took effect Wednesday.

Gov. Kathy Hochul said the policy makes New York the first state in the country to offer paid leave for prenatal care.

All pregnant workers in the private sector are eligible for the paid time off. Workers can schedule the paid leave for pregnancy-related medical appointments such as physical examinations, end of pregnancy care and fertility treatments, among other things.

Hochul pushed for the measure in the state's last legislative session as a way to help reduce maternal and infant deaths in New York.

"No pregnant woman in New York should be forced to choose between a paycheck and a check-up - and that's why I pushed to create the nation's first paid prenatal leave policy," Hochul said in a statement last month.

Employers are forbidden from requesting medical information when a worker requests the prenatal paid leave. The policy is separate from any other paid sick leave offered by an employer. Spouses of pregnant women are not eligible for the prenatal leave.

# Milk fat doesn't impact lipids or weight

BEIJING, Jan 5, (Xinhua): Long-term consumption of whole milk and milk fat does not significantly increase body weight or blood lipid burdens in mice, according to a new study by Chinese researchers.

The study, conducted by researchers from a food and nutrition institute under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Tsinghua University, and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), was recently published in the journal iMeta.

Milk is a dietary staple for more than 6 billion people globally, making

it one of the most widely consumed foods.

According to the study, earlier research suggested that diets high in saturated fats could increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. However, more recent findings indicate that dairy fats may not contribute to this risk, leaving the long-term effects of milk fat consumption on lipid metabolism still unclear.

To explore this further, researchers conducted a seven-week experiment on mice, dividing them into two groups: one group was fed a normal diet, while the other was given a high-fat diet.

Both groups received daily doses of either 15 milliliters of whole milk or 0.5 milliliters of milk fat -- an amount equivalent to a human consuming over 2 kilograms of milk or 100 grams of milk fat daily for five years.

The results showed that neither whole milk nor milk fat significantly affected body weight or blood lipid burdens in the mice, regardless of their diet type.

The study also found that whole milk and milk fat improved gut microbiota diversity and increased the presence of key bacteria and metabolites linked to lipid regulation.

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## SPORTS

# Powell scores 20, Leonard has 12 points in return as Clippers cruise past Hawks

Warriors hold off Grizzlies, Nuggets spoil Wemba's 21st birthday

**INGLEWOOD, Calif., Jan 5, (AP):** Norman Powell scored 20 points, Kawhi Leonard added 12 in his first game of the season and the Los Angeles Clippers rolled to a 131-105 victory over the Atlanta Hawks on Saturday night.

Leonard, who missed the Clippers' first 34 games with what the team described as right knee injury recovery, played 19 minutes. He was 4 of 11 from the floor, including three 3-pointers, along with three rebounds and one assist.

Ivica Zubac had 18 points and 18 rebounds as the Clippers snapped a two-game losing streak. Amir Coffey had 17 points.

Trae Young led Atlanta with 20 points and 14 assists. De'Andre Hunter had 18 points for the Hawks who have dropped their last three after winning four straight.

The Clippers had a 36-35 advantage early in the second quarter before breaking it open with a 27-4 run, with Coffey scoring nine of his 15 points in the period.

**Warriors 121, Grizzlies 113**  
In San Francisco, Andrew Wiggins scored 24 points, Dennis Schroder added 17 and the undermanned Golden State Warriors held off the Memphis Grizzlies in the latest testy matchup between the rivals.

Lindy Waters III scored 16 with four 3-pointers off the bench on a night the Warriors missed Stephen Curry along with fellow guards Brandin Podziemski and Gary Payton II.

Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 23 points and Desmond Bane had 22 points and 10 assists as Memphis wrapped up a five-game road trip.

Physical play is always the norm with these teams and it became heated 36 seconds into the fourth quarter. Draymond Green was issued a flagrant 1 foul against Zach Edey, then Green received his ninth technical of the season at the 10:51 mark.

Grizzlies star rookie Jaylen Wells was held to eight points a night after scoring 30 with eight 3-pointers in a victory over the Kings.

**Nuggets 122, Spurs 111, OT**  
In San Antonio, Nikola Jokic had 46 points and 10 rebounds and the Denver Nuggets spoiled Victor Wembanyama's 21st birthday, beat-



Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard steals the ball from Atlanta Hawks guard Trae Young. (AP)

ing the San Antonio Spurs in overtime.

Wembanyama finished with 20 points and 23 rebounds for San Antonio, but was scoreless and without a rebound in OT. Wembanyama has 57 double-doubles in 101 career games.

The teams split the home-and-home series on consecutive nights. The Spurs won Friday's game 113-110 when Wembanyama stole the ball from Jokic with four seconds remaining and Vassell scored on a fastbreak layup.

Jokic made sure there were no such heroics Saturday, scoring nine points in the extra period.

Michael Porter Jr. added 28 points and 10 rebounds for Denver.

Harrison Barnes scored 22 points and Devin Vassell 19 for San Antonio, which had won two straight.

Vassell missed a contested layup, but tipped in the rebound, to tie the game at 108 with 14 seconds remaining in regulation. Jokic missed a 19-footer over Wembanyama with two seconds remaining to close regulation.

Zach Collins and Russell Westbrook each received a technical foul in the first quarter after taunting one another, with Westbrook doing so from the bench.

**Pacers 126, Suns 108**  
In Indianapolis, Tyrese Haliburton scored 27 points and Myles Turner added 20 points, six rebounds and three blocks, leading the Indiana Pacers past the Phoenix Suns.

Haliburton also had eight assists

and, for the second straight game, did not commit a turnover. Indiana has won three of its last four to even its overall record at 18-18. The Pacers also swept the two-game season series from Phoenix.

Kevin Durant led the Suns with 25 points, seven rebounds and seven assists, while Devin Booker had 20 points in the same venue he scored an arena-record 62 in his last trip to Gainbridge Fieldhouse in January 2024. Booker also had nine rebounds and nine assists.

The Pacers swung the game by breaking a 56-all halftime tie with the first five points of the second half and used a pivotal 40-point third quarter — their third-best quarter all season — to seize control. Indiana never trailed in the second half.

**Jazz 136, Heat 100**

In Miami, Brice Sensabaugh scored a career-high 34 points, John Collins finished with 24, and the Utah Jazz snapped a five-game losing streak with a rout of the Miami Heat.

Walker Kessler had 14 points and 16 rebounds while Jazz starters Collin Sexton (17 points) Lauri Markkanen (15) and Keyonte George (11) all finished in double figures.

Nikola Jovic scored 17 points and Duncan Robinson finished with 16 for the Heat, who played without suspended star forward Jimmy Butler. Butler was suspended for seven games on Friday over what the club calls conduct detrimental to the team after saying "probably not" when asked if he thought he could find on-

court joy again in Miami.

**Trail Blazers 105, Bucks 102**

In Milwaukee, Anfernee Simons scored 28 points and Deni Avdija 19 as the Portland Trail Blazers beat the Milwaukee Bucks.

Giannis Antetokounmpo hit two free throws to give the Bucks a 102-100 lead. Simons was fouled on a scoring drive and completed the three-point play, giving Portland a 103-102 lead with 23.5 seconds remaining.

Milwaukee turned it over on its next possession without getting a shot, giving Portland possession with 8.4 seconds remaining.

**Pistons 119, Timberwolves 105**

In Detroit, Cade Cunningham scored a season-high 40 points and the Detroit Pistons overcame Anthony Edwards' career-high 53 points to beat the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Cunningham, who also had nine assists, set his previous season high of 35 points against Milwaukee on Nov. 13.

**76ers 123, Nets 94**

In New York, Joel Embiid had 28 points and 12 rebounds, and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Brooklyn Nets 123-94.

Tyrese Maxey added 18 points and Paul George and Caleb Martin each had 17 for the 76ers, who snapped a two-game losing streak.

Ziaire Williams had 19 points and Keon Johnson chipped in 15 for the short-handed Nets, who have lost 12 out of their last 16 games.

**Bulls 139, Knicks 126**

In Chicago, Coby White made a career-high nine 3-pointers and scored 33 points, Zach LaVine also had 33 and the Chicago Bulls beat the New York Knicks after honoring former MVP Derrick Rose on Saturday night.

White hit 9 of 11 from beyond the arc. LaVine delivered his third 30-point outing in the past four games.

Nikola Vucevic added 22 points and 12 rebounds. Josh Giddey had 15 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists, helping the Bulls cap off a feel-good day on a winning note.

The team honored Rose, the Chicago product, at halftime after announcing in the morning that he will join Michael Jordan (23), Scottie Pippen (33), Jerry Sloan (4) and Bob Love (10) as the only players whose numbers have been retired by the franchise sometime next season.



Al-Arabi seeks victory to continue chasing the leader Kuwait Club.

## Al-Arabi aims to close the gap on Kuwait Club in Al-Nasr showdown

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Al-Arabi will visit Al-Nasr at 5:30 pm at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium in a rescheduled match from the eighth round of the Zain Premier League.

The fixture was postponed by the Football Association due to Al-Arabi's participation in the Asian Challenge Cup, where the "Green" secured a spot in the semi-finals of the West Asia region.

Al-Arabi currently sits second in the league standings with 21 points, trailing the leader, Kuwait Club, by six points and holding a five-point lead over third-placed Al-Qadsia. Under the guidance of coach Nasser Al-Shatti, Al-Arabi aims to close the gap on Kuwait Club before the league's second half kicks off later this week.

However, the team will be without Hassan Hamdan and Youssef Majed, who sustained injuries while representing the national team in the Khaleeji Zain 26. Hamdan is sidelined for two weeks with an ankle injury, while Majed underwent shoulder surgery and is expected to be out for approximately three months.

To bolster its squad, Al-Arabi has signed Nigerian Christopher John, replacing Algerian Ahmed Khaldi. The team also features Nigerian Anayo Iwala, Algerian Sofiane Bouchar, Moroccan Hamza Khaba, and Mauritanian Abdullah Mahmood.

On the opposing side, Al-Nasr occupies ninth place with just 4 points. Tunisian coach, Jamil Belkacem, is seeking his first win since taking over from Dhaher Al-Adwani, who stepped down after five rounds of the competition.

The second half of the Zain Premier League is set to begin later this week, following a pause for Kuwait's participation in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers and the recently concluded Khaleeji Zain 26.



A file photo of players preparing for action.

## Al-Qadsia aims for back-to-back victories over Al-Manama in SL

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Al-Qadsia will face off against Bahraini side Al-Manama at 7:30 pm today in Manama, as part of the fourth round of Group Two in the West Asian League Basketball Championship for the Gulf region "Super League."

Al-Qadsia, currently in second place with 5 points — tied with Qatari team Al-Arabi — will look to repeat its victory over Al-Manama, having previously won 90-84 in October in Kuwait. A win today would bring them closer to qualifying for the second round. Meanwhile, Al-Manama, ranked third with 4 points, has a chance to surpass Al-Qadsia and temporarily move to the top of the group.

Under the tournament's structure, the top two teams from each group qualify for the semi-finals. In the semi-finals, the first-place team faces the fourth, while the second-place team plays against the third,

with the matchups being decided in a "play-off" format over three games. The winner of two out of three games advances to the final, where the series is played in a best-of-five format, and the team that wins three matches will be crowned champion.

Coach Anthony Stebbing of Al-Qadsia will rely on a strong lineup, including key players such as Abdulaziz Al-Humaidi, Mohamed Ashkanani, Abdul Mohsen Al-Moussawi, Nawaf Al-Enezi, Rashed Al-Rabah, and Abdullah Al-Saeed, as well as foreign professionals David Elono and Tomislav Sobjic. On the other hand, Manama's coach, Cypriot Linos Gavriel, will look to motivate his team to bounce back from losses to Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi of Qatar. He will count on a balanced squad of local players, including Hassan Norouz, Amjad Hassan, Hassan Kazma, and Americans Clint Chapman, Tony Carr, and Avillon Locke.



Phoenix Suns forward Kevin Durant (35) makes a move along the baseline while being defended by Indiana Pacers forward Pascal Siakam. (AP)

## Former leader Federica Brignone falls

# Olympic champ Sara Hector wins World Cup giant slalom

KRANJSKA GORA, Slovenia, Jan 5, (AP): Olympic champion Sara Hector won her second women's World Cup giant slalom of the season as Italian skier Federica Brignone fell in the first run.

Hector, who was fastest in the first run, finished 1.42 seconds ahead of the 18-year-old Lara Colturi of Albania, to move atop both the GS and overall standings.

The 34-year-old Brignone's hopes of extending her lead in the GS standings ended when she fell in her first

race since extending her record as the oldest race winner in women's World Cup history at

Semmering in Austria last weekend.

Hector, who won the second race of the season

in Killington in November, was second in Semmering. She leads the GS standings with 296 points after four races, 96 ahead of Brignone, while she moved top of the overall leaderboard on 407 points, 24 ahead of Switzerland's Camille Rast.

And she did it despite a seasonal cough.

"It's really amazing," Hector said. "But I was resting a lot this week, so maybe it helped a little bit. When I've been training a lot, resting is a good recipe."

Colturi celebrated her second World Cup podi-



Second placed Switzerland's Wendy Holdener celebrates with her team after an alpine ski, women's World Cup slalom race, in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia. (AP)

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# Khaleeji Zain 26 ... a remarkable edition of the region's premier sporting event



H.H. the Crown Prince receives a commemorative gift from Bader Al-Kharafi.

## Zain successfully wraps up partnership with 26th Arabian Gulf Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5: Zain has successfully concluded its title partnership with the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 26) on a remarkable note, congratulating Bahrain's national team on clinching its second-ever championship title after a thrilling final against Oman, which secured the runner-up position for the second consecutive time.

The final match was held at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium under the esteemed patronage of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with the attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

Also in attendance were His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth of Oman; His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa of Bahrain; and His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Minister of Sports and Youth of Qatar.

On the sidelines of the final match, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received a commemorative gift from Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi.

His Highness also honored Gulf football legends, including Kuwait's Jassem Yaqoub, Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Abduljawad, Qatar's Mubarak Mustafa, UAE's Ismail Matar, Bahrain's Talal Youssef, Iraq's Hussein Saeed, Oman's Ali Al-Habsi, and Yemen's Anwar Al-Soroori.

Since announcing its partnership in September 2024, Zain has dedicated its resources and national capabilities to ensuring the success of this major regional tournament. The company expressed pride in its collaboration with the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation, organizing a series of events and contributions throughout the tournament to deliver a memorable championship that befits Kuwait's sports legacy.

In this report, Zain details its efforts and contributions to ensure the success of this Gulf celebration:

### Partnership announcement and visual identity

In September, Zain unveiled its partnership with the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup, branded Khaleeji Zain for the second consecutive edition, during a visual presentation at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center in the presence of senior state officials.

The event showcased preparations for Khaleeji Zain 26, including the tournament's visual identity and the logo designed by Zain, followed by the official signing of the partnership agreement with the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation.

The Khaleeji Zain 26 logo was inspired by elements from Gulf nations, depicted abstractly, including sand dunes, a Kuwaiti dhow sail, a camel, palm fronds, the Arabic letter "Alif," a falcon's wing, and a traditional head-dress (Agal). Together, these elements form the Arabian Gulf Cup. The blue



Bahrain's national team celebrates the Khaleeji Zain 26 title.



Bader Al-Kharafi and Jassem Al-Rumaihi sign the partnership agreement between Zain and AGCFF.

color, symbolizing Kuwait's national flag, was prominently featured, with The Future is Gulf chosen as the slogan to reflect unity and solidarity among Gulf nations.

### Draw event and mascot reveal

In November, Zain continued its support at the tournament's draw event, held at the Waldorf Astoria Kuwait. Attendees included senior state officials, Gulf federation representatives, team delegations, media, and Gulf football legends.

The draw revealed exciting match-

ups among the eight participating teams and introduced the tournament's mascot, Haydo, a camel symbolizing Gulf heritage and culture. Haydo served as a dynamic touchpoint for fans, especially families and younger audiences.

The draw highlighted classic encounters, including the opening match between Kuwait's national team and Oman at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, part of Group A, which also featured Qatar and the UAE. Group B comprised Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Yemen.



From the tournament's closing ceremony.



Kuwait successfully hosted an exceptional edition of the tournament.

### 'Ya Hala Bil-Zain': a warm welcome

To celebrate Khaleeji Zain 26 and

welcome visitors to Kuwait, Zain launched its TV commercial, Hala Wallah, featuring Kuwaiti talents Humoud Al-Khudur, Khaled Al-

Mudhafar, and Luwla Al-Mulla. The vibrant commercial encapsulated the shared enthusiasm and pride for this cherished tournament.

The TVC showcased a lively village representing Gulf communities and concluded at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, symbolizing unity through shared passion. The commercial was presented by the Agency Joy Productions, music composition & lyrics by Saif Fadel, music arrangement by Barrak Al-Mutawa, mix & master by Montather Al-Zayer, direction by Mahi Secoud, and Production House Big Films.

### Partnership with Kuwait Airways

In November, Zain welcomed Kuwait Airways as the official carrier of Khaleeji Zain 26, reflecting public-private sector collaboration to ensure the tournament's success. Under this partnership, the visual identity of Khaleeji Zain 26 was integrated into Kuwait Airways' operations, including on aircraft flying to and from participating countries, the Terminal 4 building that is dedicated to welcoming visitors and guests, and cabin crew uniforms. Special and exclusive offers were also made available for guests, delivering a delightful and comfortable travel experience from Kuwait Airways, paired with an enriching and innovative digital experience from Zain.

### Trophy tour

In December, as the tournament countdown began, Zain hosted the official trophy and match ball at its headquarters in Shuwaikh, marking the start of the trophy tour in Kuwait. The event allowed Zain employees, customers, and tournament fans to capture memories with the trophy. The tour also included stops at Kuwait International Airport, partner and sponsor locations, Zain Fan Zones in Murouj, The Walk mall, and other destinations.

### Daily fan engagement

From the first whistle, Zain engaged fans daily with activities, entertainment, and competitions. The company welcomed Gulf delegations and fans with special phone lines, free minutes, and internet to enrich their stay in Kuwait.

Fans enjoyed prizes, including smart devices, gaming consoles, match tickets, and signed jerseys from Kuwait's national team. Social media contests and interactive events added to the excitement. Zain also collaborated with Kuwait Times to produce a special edition featuring tournament details, team profiles, and match schedules, which was available at fan zones.

### Zain's fan zones

Zain elevated the Gulf Zain 26 experience with fan zones across Kuwait, including Murouj and Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium. These zones featured live match screenings, competitions, traditional Gulf performances, and sports-themed children's activities. Additional zones at Souq Sharq, The Walk, and The Avenues Mall offered unique entertainment and activities, enhancing the festive atmosphere throughout the tournament.



The tournament's visual identity on a Kuwait Airways aircraft.



Zain's fan zones welcomed fans daily.



Souq Al-Mubarakiya featuring the Khaleeji Zain 26 brand.





Ipswich Town's Dara O'Shea, right, catches Fulham's Rodrigo Muniz with a high tackle, which lead to a yellow card, during the English Premier League soccer match between Fulham and Ipswich Town at Craven Cottage stadium, London. (AP)

# Sports

## Amir, Crown Prince congratulate Bahrain on winning Cup

Marhoun named best player

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, congratulating him on winning the Arabian Gulf Cup trophy.**

Kuwait hosted the Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 26) tourney.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir extolled Bahrain's brilliant performance, and sportsmanship all participating teams as well as fans' high turnout that embodied fraternal bonds among GCC States.

His Highness the Amir wished everlasting good health to the King of Bahrain, and further progress and prosperity to Bahrain under the King's wise leadership.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a cable to Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, congratulating him on winning the Arabian Gulf Cup.

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progress and prosperity to Bahrain under the King's wise leadership

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable to Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, congratulating him on winning the Arabian Gulf Cup.

Bahrain's Mohammad Marhoun and Ibrahim Lotfallah were chosen by the technical committee, affiliated to the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation, as the best player and goalie respectively in the closing ceremony of the Arabian Gulf Cup.

Marhoun also won the scorer of the tournament award with three goals.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Mohammad Dahham won the best player award of the championship by fans' vote, and was honored as well.

While the Khaleeji Zain 26 has been heralded as an overwhelming success in Kuwait, a large slice of the credit goes to the volunteers who have provided unwavering support over the past two weeks.

Thousands of Kuwaiti citizens and residents answered the call to help make their nation proud, and they were on duty again last night to ensure the final between Bahrain and Oman was another memorable occasion.

Each volunteer was put through a training programme of both practical and theoretical sessions to ensure they were ready to welcome more than 450,000 fans who packed the two stadiums for the 15 matches held.

They were soundly praised by the visitors who poured in from across the Gulf as well as their countrymen and women who showed tremendous support to the tournament.

The legacy is a trained army now ready to step in and support Kuwait when the call for volunteers is made again in the future for any major event.



Bahrain celebrates after winning the Khaleeji Zain 26 title.

### Kuwaiti rider Ali Al Kharafi settles for second

## Al Rajhi wins Kuwait International Equestrian Championship

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5:** Saudi Arabia's Abdulrahman Al Rajhi, claimed the title of Kuwait International Champion in Show Jumping, a World Cup-qualifying event, held on Saturday at the Kuwait Equestrian Center. The competition featured riders from Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Britain, and Italy.

In the 150 cm Grand Prix round, which serves as a qualifier for the World Cup, Al Rajhi secured first place with an impressive time of 54.1 seconds and no penalty points in the jump-off. Kuwaiti rider Ali Al Kharafi followed in second place with a time of 56.5 seconds, while Yara Al Hunaidi claimed third. Riders Abdullah Al Awadhi, Fawaz Rashid, and Hamad Al Hajri rounded out the top six positions.

The winners were honored by Masoud Jawhar Hayat, President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, alongside General Secretary Ghazi Al Jariwi, Jassim Al Kharafi, and Khalifa Al Kharafi.

Masoud Jawhar Hayat expressed his pride in Kuwait's successful organization of its first international championship of the current sports season, emphasizing the fierce competition among participants aiming for the top spot. He extended his congratulations to all winners and highlighted that the season will include several significant international championships.

Secretary-General Ghazi Al Jariwi lauded the event as a landmark in the season, with multiple two-star and



Winners celebrate on the podium with officials.

three-star international competitions on the calendar. He noted the large crowds at the Kuwait Equestrian Center throughout the event, reflect-

ing the strength of the competition and the growing popularity of equestrian sports in Kuwait. Al Jariwi reiterated the federation's

commitment to a clear strategy aimed at advancing equestrian sports and providing comprehensive support for its development.

### Sabalenka, Lehecka win Brisbane International titles

## Gauff, Fritz lead US to United Cup title

**SYDNEY, Jan 5, (Xinhua):** Coco Gauff overpowered Iga Swiatek on Sunday to help the United States retain the mixed teams United Cup title by beating Poland in the final.

World number four Taylor Fritz sealed the United States' second title in the 18-team competition after edging Hubert Hurkacz 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (4) in the men's singles at Sydney's Ken Rosewall Arena.

The Americans added to their triumph in the inaugural tournament in 2023, while Poland fell agonizingly short for the second straight year.

All eyes were on the blockbuster women's singles match, with Gauff and Swiatek having enjoyed unblemished records through to the final.

World number three Gauff had only won two of her previous 13 matches against Swiatek, but did claim a confidence boosting victory at the season-ending WTA Finals. They traded early breaks in a high-octane start marked by powerful groundstrokes and athleticism from both players. But Gauff's consistency wore down world number two Swiatek in a physical contest.

In her return from a one-month suspension for doping, Swiatek has had a heavy burden in the tournament and it seemingly took its toll when she required medical attention in the second set.

The five-time grand slam champion left the court briefly after the eighth game in the second set, but Gauff put one hand on the trophy for the Americans with a 6-4, 6-4 victory in one hour and 52 minutes.

Gauff's strong form will be an ominous warning for rivals ahead of the upcoming Australian Open,

where she reached the semifinals in 2023.

"I have the belief that I'm one of the best players in the world and when I play good tennis I'm hard to beat," said Gauff, who won the 2023 US Open.

"Today I think I played some great tennis. I'm glad I was able to get a point for Team USA. It was tough today." Fritz, last year's US Open finalist, had to battle past 16th ranked Hurkacz in a see-saw contest that had the fans at Ken Rosewall Arena on the edge of their seats.

The 27-year-old American's serve and powerful forehand helped him claim the first set before being pushed to the limit by a fighting Hurkacz.

It came down to a third set tiebreak with Fritz stepping up on the decisive points and he clinched his country's triumph with a forehand winner to trigger jubilation for the Americans.

Aryna Sabalenka and Jiri Lehecka got their 2025 seasons off to the perfect start by winning the singles titles at the Brisbane International tennis tournament on Sunday night.

Sabalenka, the world number one, dropped her first set at the key Australian Open warm-up tournament against 107th-ranked Polina Kudermetova, but recovered to win the match 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 in one hour and 47 minutes.

It extends Sabalenka's winning streak in Australia to 12 matches and means she has won four of the last five tournaments she has entered in the country, including the Australian Open in 2023 and 2024.

Of her 18 career titles, 16 have been won on hard courts.

"I felt all of the support from the very beginning of the week until the very last point. I really appreciate it and that's why I love playing in Australia and in Brisbane," she said after the match.

Sabalenka raced into a 3-1 lead in the first set but Kudermetova, playing in her first career final and her eighth match in Brisbane after coming through qualifying, kept her composure and leveled things at 3-3, before breaking serve again and winning the set.

Kudermetova had another chance to break serve leading 2-1 in the second set but could not capitalize, allowing Sabalenka to level and eventually run away with the match.

The run to the final means the 21-year-old will climb into the top 60 in the rankings.

Both will now head to Melbourne where Sabalenka is aiming to become the first woman since Martina Hingis in the 1990s to win three consecutive Australian Open finals.

In the men's final, world No. 28 Lehecka won his second career title when Reilly Opelka was forced to retire from the men's final due to a back injury when trailing 4-1 after just 13 minutes of play.

"It is never easy to finish a match this way. I know how you feel, Reilly," Lehecka said. "It has been an honor to see you back playing and if your body can take it you will be there for many more years." It was Lehecka's second straight walkover win, after second seed Grigor Dimitrov had withdrawn from their semifinal on Saturday.

The Czech will rise to 24th in the rankings ahead of the Australian Open.



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef

## Kuwait FA thanks HH the Amir for patronage of Khaleeji Zain 26

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 5:** The Chairman of the Kuwait Football Association, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, along with the Board of Directors, expressed their heartfelt thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for his generous patronage of the "Khaleeji Zain 26". They also extended their gratitude to His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, for honoring the final match with his presence. The championship concluded on Saturday evening at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, featuring an exciting face-off between the Bahraini and Omani national teams.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef and the Board congratulated the Bahraini national team on securing the Championship title with a 2-1 victory over Oman in a thrilling final match. He also commended the outstanding performances of both teams, highlighting the high

level of competition displayed on the field.

The Chairman extended his gratitude to all entities that contributed to the success of this Gulf football event. He acknowledged the invaluable support of the government, which played a significant role in the championship's exceptional organization, earning widespread admiration and appreciation from all participating delegations.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef also praised the fans for their remarkable attendance and cooperation with the organizing committee. He emphasized the spirit of camaraderie and sportsmanship displayed by the supporters, noting that their enthusiasm created a competitive yet brotherly atmosphere throughout the championship. He concluded by underscoring that in such events, there are no true winners or losers, as the competition reflects the unity and shared spirit of the Gulf nations.



The U.S. team poses for a photo with their trophy after defeating Poland in the finals at the United Cup tennis tournament in Sydney, Australia. (AP)