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INTERIOR MINISTRY VOWS ONGOING CRACKDOWN ON RESIDENCY VIOLATORS

Kuwait deported 35,000 expats in 2024

Deportation department expedites process for detained expatriates

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: As part of the Ministry of Interior's efforts to apprehend violators of the residency law, informed sources revealed that the Deportation Department, affiliated with the General Department of Correctional Facilities, has completed the deportation procedures for approximately 35,000 male and female expatriates who were referred to it by various depart-

ments of the Ministry of Interior in the past year.

They stressed that the Deportation Department is working diligently to expedite the procedures for expatriates detained for deportation, with the aim of accelerating the deportation process, ensuring humanitarian considerations, and treating the detainees with respect during their detention.

The sources affirmed that the Ministry of Interior, through its security departments, will continue to hold campaigns to arrest violators of the residency law in preparation for their deportation and to take all necessary legal actions.

Others unchanged

Kuwait drops Ultra 98 Octane gasoline price

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Subsidies Study Committee has announced a reduction in the price of Ultra 98 Octane gasoline, effective from January 1 to March 31, 2025, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The new rate is set at 200 fils per liter, down from 205 fils per liter during the previous quarter (October 1 to December 31, 2024).

Prices for other fuel types remain unchanged:

- Premium 91 Octane: 85 fils per liter
- Special 95 Octane: 105 fils per liter
- Diesel and Kerosene: 115 fils per liter

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation reported a rise in the price of Kuwaiti crude oil. Last Friday's trading saw an increase of \$1.34 per barrel, bringing the price to \$76.53, compared to \$75.19 the previous day.

Kuwait's evening shift set to boost customer service

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari, Inaas Awadh, Mohammed Ghanem, Fares Al-Abdan & Mohammed Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: A number of ministries and government agencies have initiated the evening shifts, operating from 3:30 pm to 8:00 pm, in line with the guidelines issued by the Civil Service Commission.

However, several agencies, particularly educational institutions and the Ministry of Higher Education, are still reviewing the outcomes of the vital phase before finalizing their plans.

At the Ministry of Electricity the evening shifts went into effect Saturday, with 20-30 percent of the workforce participating, primarily males in service centers.

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Photo by Samer Shiqer

Kuwait City skyline covered in overcast clouds as the country braces for scattered rain, thunderstorms and fog on Monday, Jan 6.

Department heads turn to paper attendance lists

Tech glitches disrupt health ministry attendance tracking

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Ministry of Health faced significant disruptions during the rollout of its new smartphone-based fingerprint attendance system, creating confusion across various departments and sectors, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The technical issues, which surfaced within the first hours of implementation, left many employees, including technicians and doctors, struggling to confirm their attendance.

According to informed sources, the malfunction impacted 95 percent of the minis-

try's facilities, leaving entire departments in some hospitals unable to register attendance through the smart fingerprint system.

This prompted a scramble for alternative solutions, with department heads turning to paper attendance lists to record the presence of doctors and other staff.

Administrative employees were able to substitute the smart fingerprint system with the traditional entry and exit fingerprint devices, but this option was not viable for doctors, who are not enrolled in the fingerprint attendance system. As a result, doctors had

to rely on manual documentation to verify their attendance.

The situation caused significant congestion, particularly at the Attendance Control Department within the Ministry's General Office.

The rush to address the issue stretched from 6:30 AM to 2:30 PM, with technicians and engineers called in to manage the technical challenges.

Hospital directors, in coordination with department heads, quickly mobilized to mitigate the disruption by preparing paper attendance lists.

These lists served as an interim measure to ensure that work schedules and staff availability could still be monitored despite the system failures.

The chaotic rollout underscores the challenges of transitioning to advanced attendance systems in critical sectors such as healthcare, where disruptions can directly affect patient care.

The Ministry of Health is expected to review the technical glitches and ensure smoother operations as the system is fine-tuned.

Kuwait's 'Ya Hala' shopping fest starts Jan 21 to March 31, offering big prizes

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6, (KUNA): Kuwait's Standing Committee for National Holidays and Occasions announced the launch of the "Ya Hala" shopping festival, set to run from January 21 to March 31. The festival was introduced at a ceremony at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, attended by key officials, including Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and Undersecretaries from the Ministries of Information and Commerce.

The event, part of Kuwait's national celebrations, aims to promote domestic tourism, support small businesses, and stimulate the local economy. Dr. Nasser Muhaisen, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, emphasized the committee's focus on collaboration between the public and private sectors, as well as civil society.

Festival CEO Fadel Al-Dosari highlighted the initiative's role in continuing the festive spirit from recent events like the Gulf Cup, positioning Kuwait as a commercial, cultural, and tourism hub. The festival offers discounts, promotions, and weekly draws with prizes exceeding \$8 million, including luxury cars and cash rewards.

The festival's diverse activities, including drone shows and fireworks, will showcase Kuwait's landmarks and provide a lively shopping experience for locals and tourists alike.



KUNA photo

Honoring the Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Chairman of the Standing Committee for the Celebration of National Holidays and Occasions - Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

Registration open until Jan 28

SACGC invites Olympiad sign-ups

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6, (KUNA): Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, invites Kuwaiti students to register for the national qualifying tests for training ahead of the 2025 International Physics Olympiad in France and the International Chemistry Olympiad in

the UAE.

SACGC Director General Neda Al-Daihani said in a press release that registration for the national tests is open until January 28, describing it a "key" step to position Kuwait as a leader in global scientific competition.

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18 contracts inked; completion by 2027

Salmi road first in Kuwait's multi-billion dinar upgrade

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The project for the repair of expressways and internal roads began on November 12, 2024 from Salmi Road as part of the 18 contracts signed by the Ministry of Public Works at a total cost of KD 400 million.

According to informed sources from the Ministry of Public Works, these 18 tenders for the comprehensive maintenance of internal roads and expressways are expected to be completed by the end of 2027.

The sources revealed that the min-

istry has updated its standards and requirements to ensure high quality of the work and the fulfillment of all obligations agreed upon in the contracts signed between the contractors and the Ministry of Public Works.

They affirmed the commitment of the Ministry of Public Works and the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), under the directives of Minister Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, to implement the contracts according to the schedule and to the highest quality standards.

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News watch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences on Monday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz, expressing his sorrow over the passing of the mother of Saudi Prince Waleed bin Talal. He prayed to Allah the Almighty to forgive her, grant her Paradise, and bestow patience upon the royal family.

Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent separate cables of condolences to King Salman, offering prayers for the deceased

and extending their sympathies to the royal family. (KUNA)

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KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences on Monday to King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan over the death of Princess Majda Raad, wife of Jordanian Prince Raad bin Zeid.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir prayed to Almighty Allah to grant the deceased vast mercy and forgiveness, and to grant her entry into paradise, asking Allah Almighty to bestow patience and solace upon the royal family. (KUNA)

8 KFH Capital achieves milestones in Sukuk, Investment Funds, Asset Management, and Digitalization in 2024



9 Gulf Bank concludes 2024 with major achievements in innovation, digital transformation, and community engagement



10 Zain's 2025 calendar: a message of solidarity from Kuwait to Palestine

Prayer Timings

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

Local

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hrs

By Day: Rather cold and cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speed of 10-45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

By Night: Cold and cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening

Weather

at times southeasterly wind to variable wind, with speed of 08-40 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	18	10
Kuwait Airport	20	04

Abdaly	19	04
Bubyan	16	10
Jahra	19	07
Falika Island	19	12
Salmiyah	18	14
Ahmadi	19	08
Jal Aliyah	19	05
Nuwaisib	19	06

Women play crucial role in progress of Kuwait: report

US institute touts major improvement in gender gap

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6, (KUNA): The year 2024 ended with the State of Kuwait giving further boost to women empowerment, driven by instructions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to promote women rights and pay further attention to their potentials.

The State of Kuwait is at the fore of countries believing that no progress could be achieved without contribution of women, which has impacts on development plans and legislative system in the Gulf nation.

George Town Institute for Women Peace and Security said State of Kuwait improved from 123 place to 61st, out of 177 countries, in terms of women empowerment. Kuwait also improved 10 points regarding gender gap.

Kuwait included women in government decision-making and plans in harmony with Article 29 of the Constitution, New Kuwait 2035 Vision, the fifth UN Sustainable Development Goal regarding equality among gender.

Article 29 of the Constitution of Kuwait states: "All people are equal in human dignity, and in public rights and duties before the law, without distinction as to race, origin, language or religion."

Current

The current government include three female ministers: Minister of Social Affairs, Labor, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthah Al-Huwailah, Minister of Public Works Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan and Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Nora Al-Fassam.

There are several legislations that support women in the State of Kuwait, including a 2020 law that protect women from family violence, the 1956 law on right of education, a 2010 law on rights of the disabled, a 2015 law on protecting women and men from cyber crimes and blackmailing.

A law approved in 2006 estab-



Women have always been half of society and active contributor in many fields.

lished the supreme council for family affairs, which joins hands with civil society to protect families and children. It builds regional and international partnerships on women empowerment.

Kuwait invested in sport infrastructure for women thus increasing their participation on sport events.

The Public Authority for Sport is working on its 2022-28 strategy to provide courts, fields and gyms for women to boost their capabilities and expertise.

Dr. Reem Al-Shimmari won the Arab cybersecurity woman award in 2024, and the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy selected Dr. Asmaa Al-Kandari as its representative in the Middle East.

The international association for space navigation selected Engineer Lama Al-Uraiman as vice-chairperson of Middle East and Central Asia Committee in recognition of her role in supporting space science and technology, and for winning the association award of young space leaders.

Suad Al-Faqan and Amina Shah were the first Kuwaiti women competing in water sports of the 2024 Paris Olympics. Al-Faqan came third in the rowing event.

The Kuwaiti woman has always been the half of society and has been active contributor to many fields.

support to right of women, making it the first in the Gulf to adopt an initiative to empower women in the private sector, which was in line with a 2010 agreement with the UN Women, the agency dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Kuwait also implemented a regional project, known as "Waraqati", which aims at promote women rights and empower them legally coupled with providing legal protection to ensure their active contributions in all fields.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor sponsored many projects that support families, like helping them setting up their own businesses to provide steady income as well as offering easy loans and organizing permanent and seasonal exhibitions for their products.

Projects

These projects contributed to ending social allowances to 214 beneficiaries because they manage their own businesses and became economically independent.

The private sector also adopts initiatives, which involved more than 40 companies, to support women, including Kuwait platform to empower women economically.

The State ratified international agreements, generally aim at ending all forms of discrimination, trafficking and using women in prostitution, in addition to children rights and fighting all means that use children in prostitution.

Kuwait is closely cooperating with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to develop capabilities of the Kuwaiti women to carry out proactive development role.

Kuwait established, in December 2023, the national committee for woman, peace and security, as well as Kuwait Woman Award, a committee for women and entrepreneurship affiliated with the Council of Ministers in 2021.

In 2015, the Gulf State set May 16 as Kuwait Woman Day. It was in this day in 2005 when the National Assembly, or parliament, passed a bill that granted females political rights, enabling them to vote and run in elections.

Over 5 mln people benefited from schemes: Al-Bader

IICO completed 9,214 projects in 2024, costing over \$73.5 million

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6, (KUNA): The International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) announced on Monday that it implemented 9,214 projects in social, educational, developmental, and cultural fields across 56 countries in 2024, with a total cost exceeding USD 73.5 million, benefiting more than six million people.

IICO's Deputy Director for Institutional Communication **Ibrahim Al-Bader** emphasized that these achievements were made possible through the efforts of the organization's 33 volunteer teams and 711 volunteers, as well as its 15 branches in the country and 11 offices abroad, in collaboration with local and international partners.



Ibrahim Al-Bader

The organization is working under a strategic vision extending until 2026, focusing on human development and empowerment in various fields - education, culture, social welfare, and economics - to improve living conditions in the most communities in need, Al-Bader added.

He explained that IICO successfully implemented 276 social projects last year, totaling over USD 26 million, benefiting more than five million people in 34 countries. These projects included Ramadan iftar meals, sacrificial animals, winter clothing, housing, home repairs, zakat al-fitr, support for disadvantaged families, medical care for the sick and disabled, orphan sponsorship, emergency relief, and building and equipping health centers.

Regarding educational projects, he stated that IICO carried out 102 projects in 21 countries, with an investment exceeding USD 27 million, benefiting 46,929 students, teachers, and administrative staff. These initiatives included building and equipping schools, covering tuition fees, student and teacher sponsorships, and providing school buses.

In the cultural field, the organiza-

tion completed 177 projects valued at USD 11.81 million, benefiting 58,102 people in 43 countries. These included building mosques, Islamic centers, scientific conferences, supporting religious scholars, and promoting Quranic initiatives.

Al-Bader also highlighted the organization's focus on development and economic empowerment projects, which play a crucial role in lifting vulnerable groups out of aid dependency into productive work.

Last year, IICO executed 8,659 development projects at a cost of USD 7.44 million in 29 countries, benefiting 695,623 people. These projects covered water, energy, agriculture and small-scale business initiatives.

He also mentioned a unique project completed in December: a program tackling learning difficulties among Syrian refugee and displaced students in Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon.

This initiative aimed to mitigate educational losses caused by displacement through remedial programs and specialized curricula, benefiting over 15,000 students and 2,000 teachers, he said.

It was the first of its kind, providing detailed methodologies for diagnosing and treating learning difficulties, developed by 22 academic and technical teams, including 164 experts from 12 Arab universities, he pointed out.

IICO launched the "Sanad" initiative to enhance humanitarian interventions and early recovery in Gaza, coordinated with UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and announced at the ninth Effective Partnership Conference, with nearly USD 2 billion in funding for shelter, health, education, and economic empowerment, supported by 147 organizations from 48 countries, he said.

Al-Bader concluded by acknowledging the support of the country's leadership, the generosity of donors, and the dedication of IICO's staff and volunteers, as well as the contribution of local and international partners in turning the organization's goals into reality.



Kuwait's Namaa Charity distributing blankets and winter clothing to more than 1,000 individuals in Yemen's Marib and Ibb governorates.

Kuwait charity gives out winter clothing and blankets in Yemen

ADEN, Jan 6, (KUNA): Kuwait's Namaa Charity, part of the Social Reform Society, has distributed blankets and winter clothing to more than 1,000 individuals in Yemen's Marib and Ibb governorates.

In a press statement, Jamal Al-Faqih, Director of the Heteen Foundation, which executed the project, expressed his gratitude to Kuwait's leadership, government, and people, as well as to Namaa Charity, for their humanitarian initiative.

The campaign aims to alleviate the harsh winter conditions faced by hun-

dreds of Yemeni families, particularly children and the elderly, by providing essential winter supplies to ensure warmth and protection.

Al-Faqih highlighted Kuwait's long-standing commitment to supporting Yemen, noting that the country has consistently set an example in humanitarian and relief efforts worldwide.

Last week, Namaa Charity also distributed winter essentials to around 5,000 individuals across various Yemeni governorates as part of their ongoing campaign, which has been running for 10 years.

Minister pledges all-out help for students

Leadership support hailed for shaping education future

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei has confirmed that the unwavering support of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for the educational sector is a fundamental pillar in shaping the future of the sector.

In a statement during an inspection tour of several committees in Jahra Educational District and Salman Al-Farsi Secondary School in Farwaniya; Al-Tabtabaei explained this support reflects the leaders' commitment to develop

the educational system and its outcomes, contributing to the preparation of a distinguished generation capable of overcoming challenges and playing a key role in building an advanced nation that meets the demands of the modern era.

He affirmed the Education Ministry's commitment to provide all the necessary resources and equipment to ensure that students take the first semester exams for the 2024/2025 academic year in an environment conducive for success.

He said the aim of the tour was to closely monitor the progress of the exams, identify potential challenges, and ascertain that all students receive their full rights by ensuring fair and thorough evaluation of their answers. He also confirmed the

ministry's dedication to guarantee transparency and integrity throughout the exam process, while focusing on providing equal opportunities and guaranteeing fairness for all students.

He stressed the importance of the role played by national supervisors in overseeing the exams, submitting periodic reports, and ensuring the smooth flow of the exam process. He called for vigilance in reporting violations in and outside exam committees, if any, in order to uphold the integrity of the process.

He praised the contributions of school administrations, supervisors, observers and control members for their efforts in providing an organized and supportive exam environment that meets the students' needs and helps achieve the best pos-

sible outcomes. He encouraged students to focus on their studies with dedication and perseverance, recognizing the significance of this educational stage as a crucial step in their academic journey.

He reiterated that Kuwait's educated youths represent the nation's greatest asset and future, while emphasizing the need for students to work diligently to realize their dreams and contribute to the nation's progress.

He underscored the importance of a strong partnership between families and schools in nurturing future generations capable of contributing to societal development, indicating that the role of parents is as significant as that of the teachers in shaping the students' success.

Biggest rotation in ministry's history

Awqaf reshuffles 27 dept heads

By **Mohammad Al-Enezi**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: In a significant move aimed at enhancing efficiency and revitalizing operations, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi announced the transfer and rotation of 27 department directors across various sectors of the ministry.

This reshuffle marks the largest reorganization at the ministry level in recent years.

The following are the key transfers and appointments:

Fahd Al-Jarman -- Transferred from Director of the Department of Islamic Studies and Holy Quran Sciences for Farwaniya and Jahra Governorates to the same department for Capital and Hawalli Governorates.

Salah Abu Al-Khail -- Moved from the Cultural Communication Department to the Community Guidance Department.

Nawaf Al-Amiri -- Reassigned from the Islamic Manuscripts and Libraries Department to the Public Relations Department,

completing a secondment year as per the Civil Service Council's directives.

Meanwhile, according to the ministry, the following are other notable transfers:

Abdul Hamid Al-Mutairi -- transferred to the Administrative Affairs Department; Ibrahim Al-Enezi -- assigned to the Engineering Affairs Department; Saud Al-Mutairi -- moved to the Grand Mosque Department and Aman Abdullah -- reassigned to the Financial Affairs Department.

The extensive reshuffle is part of the ministry's strategy to inject new energy into key departments and align leadership with organizational priorities.

By optimizing the distribution of talent, the ministry seeks to improve operational efficiency, foster innovation and enhance its service delivery to the public.

The restructuring aligns with Dr. Al-Wasmi's vision of reforming the Ministry of Awqaf to better address the evolving needs of the community.

Kuwait, China MoU on port project gets okay

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: Decree Law No. 155 of 2024 has been issued, approving the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the governments of Kuwait and China, focusing on cooperation in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port Project, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The law, which went into effect from its publication in the Official Gazette yesterday, calls on all ministers to implement its provisions.

The MoU outlines the shared goal of enhancing trade and commercial exchange between the East and the West by developing Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port as a key "early harvest project" within the Belt and Road Initiative.

The agreement, which includes an attached protocol amending paragraph 5 of the MoU, aims to deepen practical cooperation between both nations.

The key provisions include mutual consultations on development, construction, and operational plans for the port, providing support to companies, and sharing relevant laws and regulations.

A joint working group will be established for coordination, alongside the organization of technical visits and the exchange of information related to the project.



Tea on constant boil on charcoal. Camping season in Kuwait desert is at full swing these days. Cold temperatures getting soggy at times gives the real taste of adventure. SUVs, dune buggies, trail bikes increase the pleasure derived by campers.

Palestinian cause mocks global pledge to end injustice, chaos

"THE pursuit of global unity in confronting injustice remains an elusive ideal. History has consistently shown that achieving a universal stance against wrongdoing is impossible. This is a reality underscored by the experiences of humanity since the dawn of civilization," columnist, former permanent envoy of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations (UN), the former Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) secretary general **Abdullah Bishara** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The absence of consensus on rejecting the reprehensible is a fundamental rule of life, repeatedly highlighted in the expressions of regret found at the conclusion of global summits and meetings.



Bishara

"Double standards in addressing injustice are not a recent phenomenon; they are deeply embedded in human history. These contradictions have been evident since the emergence of nation-states, which prioritize their survival by establishing mechanisms to protect their sovereignty and independence.

"Limited resources often necessitate alliances, driven by shared interests, geography, religion, or culture. This reality gave rise to alliances and systems such as the United Nations, born from the devastation of two world wars, to create a framework for respecting borders and identities. Yet, the global order remains marred by selective enforcement and hypocrisy.

"The Arab-Islamic summit in Saudi Arabia serves as a poignant reminder of these double standards, which permeate the global political landscape.

"The international system established after World War II institutionalized inequalities, granting sovereignty to some while relegating others to subordinate roles. For example, the Soviet Union's domination of Eastern Europe and the subsequent creation of the Warsaw Pact demonstrated the selective application of principles like self-determination.

"My decade-long experience within the United Nations revealed the pervasive nature of these inconsistencies. The organization, intended to uphold justice, often reflects the competing interests of its member states.

"Geography and strategic interests outweigh moral considerations, leaving the United Nations as a stage for theatrical political maneuvers rather than a beacon of fairness. The Palestinian cause, among many others, continues to suffer from the global community's inability to rise above these biases.

"The Arab world, too, has failed to prioritize values over interests. During Kuwait's invasion, we learned painful lessons about the fragility of Arab solidarity and the dominance of political and economic calculations. The lofty ideals of justice and conscience often faltered in the face of competing priorities.

"Double standards have been most glaring in the actions of Eastern and Western blocs during the Cold War. Socialist countries aligned unquestioningly with Moscow, while the United States and its allies pursued policies that prioritized their strategic dominance, often disregarding the concerns of others.

"Even issues like apartheid in South Africa revealed global hypocrisy. Despite widespread condemnation, many nations continued to trade with and arm the apartheid regime, undermining collective efforts to enforce sanctions.

"As chair of the Security Council committee to boycott South Africa, I witnessed firsthand the failure to enforce arms embargoes. Socialist and capitalist nations alike disregarded their commitments, highlighting the pervasive influence of self-interest over moral principles.

"The world will continue to grapple with these contradictions. No nation or organization can claim moral perfection. Hypocrisy, whether overt or subtle, remains a defining feature of international relations.

"The relentless pursuit of national interests ensures the persistence of these divides, perpetuating the gap between the powerful and the vulnerable.

"Attempts to cleanse the world of moral pollution are unlikely to succeed. Human ambition and the prioritization of interests will always shape global governance. The clergy, scholars and moral leaders, while influential, cannot fundamentally alter these dynamics.

"As long as human nature governs the global order, double standards will remain an enduring reality, shaping the paths of nations and individuals alike."

Also:

"The curtain has come down on the Gulf Zain 26 Championship, which was organized by Kuwait from Dec 21 to Jan 4 this year, with Bahrain crowned the winner. This tournament transformed Kuwait into a golden celebration bride, showcasing an exemplary spirit of love and brotherhood between players, fans and the Kuwaiti people," columnist **Dr Hind Al-Shoumer** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"It also boosted tourism revenue by increasing demand for accommodation, dining and shopping services, while creating both temporary and permanent job opportunities in hospitality, security and transportation sectors.

"The championship was a special period for Kuwait, featuring the par-

icipation of eight Arab national teams. The Gulf Cup Federation allocated a substantial budget for the tournament's prizes, including rewards for the champion and runner-up, as well as financial incentives for the best player, top scorer and best goalkeeper.

"The event's success was evident in its grand opening and closing ceremonies, as well as its impressive organization, which received widespread acclaim. Efficient crowd management and extensive media coverage by Gulf, Arab and international channels further highlighted the professionalism of the event.

"Players, fans and technical staff engaged in televised interviews within designated media zones, reflecting the comprehensive nature of the coverage. Throughout the championship, Kuwaitis displayed boundless love and hospitality toward all teams and their supporters, offering assistance and accommodations generously.

"This tournament proved to be a significant driver of economic growth. The tourism and entertainment sectors experienced a notable increase in revenues, local markets were revitalized and demand for goods and services surged.

"More than just a sporting event, the championship acted as a pivotal economic stimulus, showcasing Kuwait's ability to leverage regional events for economic development. It paves the way for promising future investments in the sports and tourism sectors, both locally and internationally.

"The championship also boosted hotel revenues and demonstrated Kuwait's capacity to welcome visitors from across the globe, presenting a positive image of the nation on regional and international stages. Successive Gulf Cup tournaments have contributed to the development of football in the Gulf region and strengthened ties among players and fans.

"These tournaments enjoy the attention and support of Gulf Cooperation Council leaders, who are keen to advance player performance, improve sports infrastructure and foster closer ties among the region's people.

"I hope to see a multiplication of such sporting events, given their economic, social and cultural significance, as well as their role in revitalizing economies and fostering peace and goodwill among all."



"Before sharing any news, it is imperative to verify its accuracy, as credibility and honesty demand this standard," columnist, former MP and General Manager of Scope Satellite TV, **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"No reasonable individual, especially one with the ability to understand events, would believe leaks about ongoing investigations, even if they appear on social media, as the source is inherently unreliable -- often anonymous, with the publisher's identity unknown.

"For news to be trusted, the source must be credible and identifiable, and the publisher must be a reputable name that can be held accountable if the information is false or misleading, or a statement must come from an official government source.

"The recent reports concerning the investigations of a political figure, who claims to oppose the government and is said to be plotting to seize power, have surfaced in the last two days.

"According to these reports, the information came from social media, supposedly originating from an investigating officer working on the case.

"Despite the gravity of this information, it cannot be trusted or relied upon unless the source is confirmed. It is simply inconceivable that a responsible investigator working on a case potentially involving treason would leak information -- particularly when the investigation is still in its early stages.

"It is well understood that many individuals, both within and outside the country, may be identified during this investigation, including those providing financial backing in exchange for the actions of the accused.

"These facts do not require secret intelligence, and such details are easily inferred from the situation. It is no surprise that opposition figures living in foreign, often expensive, European capitals cannot do so without substantial financial support.

"Additionally, it's important to note that those who fund such individuals often treat them as pawns, using them to speak in ways they themselves cannot, only to discard them once they are no longer useful. Sadly, such individuals become victims of their own delusions.

"While we may have disagreements with the state on various matters, we always support it as a whole. Disagreement should never lead us to support anyone who would recklessly jeopardize themselves or others, as is evident in this case.

"The political figure, misled and exploited by those who do not fear God, now faces an uncertain and bleak future. "We are patient, and the truth will come to light in time. The coming days will reveal what once remained hidden."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes/
Mahmoud Attiyeh

'Ruling family member' goes to gallows in citizen's planned kill

Court overturns jail for ex-MP Al-Fikr

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Criminal Circuit of the Court of Cassation upheld the Court of Appeal's verdict, which sentenced a ruling family member, identified only as S. Al-Sabah, to death for the premeditated murder of citizen Abdulaziz Al-Zaatar.

The crime occurred in April 2022 when the defendant went to the victim's home in Mubarak Al-Kabeer and shot him 14 times, which led to his immediate death.

In response to the ruling, the heirs' legal coun-

sel Lawyer Bashar Al-Nassar, praised the court's impartiality, stressing that the judgment made no distinction between a member of the ruling family and an ordinary citizen.

He expressed pride in Kuwait's judicial system under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Al-Fikr ruling overturned: The Court of Appeals Monday overturned the verdict issued by the Criminal Court, which sentenced former MP Anwar Al-Fikr to three-year imprisonment with hard labor. The court instead decided to refrain from pronouncing a punishment against Al-Fikr, who was accused of insulting the Amir's entourage.

In July 2024, the Criminal Court had sentenced Al-Fikr to three-year imprisonment with hard labor on charges of using his X account for challenging the constitutional authority of His Highness the Amir, encroaching on the Amir's position, and spreading false news that could undermine the country's prestige and harm its national interests.



13 acquitted in primaries case: The Court of Appeals upheld the verdict issued by the Criminal Court, which acquitted 13 citizens of organizing and participating in by-elections for the Bani Ghaneem tribe in the Fourth Constituency to choose their representatives in the recently-conducted National Assembly elections, with some participants engaging from outside Kuwait.



KUNA photo

Engineers and workers conducting surveys before maintenance of roads starts in Al-Mangaf, south Kuwait.

Al-Mangaf road repairs could cause traffic jams: engineers

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Ministry of Public Works announced the commencement of significant road maintenance work in the Mangaf area.

The concerned teams have conducted inspections of the area ahead of the necessary repair and maintenance activities.

Minister of Public Works, Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, stated that the maintenance will begin in the most affected areas and progress to less impacted ones, with continuous supervision and monitoring of the work.

The maintenance teams from the Ministry of Public Works will oversee the execution of the project.

In this context, Engineers Abdullah Al-Kandari and Ali Al-Fulaijawi highlighted that the maintenance process includes photographing and cleaning the sewage network, which will be followed by surveying and asphalt work.

They expressed hope that the residents of the area will cooperate and show patience, especially as some roads will be closed for maintenance during the upcoming period.

60-year-old Kuwaiti swindled

Emotional Asian attempts suicide

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: A case of suicide attempt has been filed against a 1987-born expatriate at Waha police station, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, the expatriate was admitted at Jahra Hospital in a state of severe exhaustion but doctors found that he had attempted suicide by ingesting an unknown substance, which nearly killed him.

After his condition improved, the expatriate was questioned and he said he had contacted his family in his home country and quarreled with them. Under immense emotional pressure, he felt compelled to escape these problems and their financial demands by taking drastic measures, and he ingested an insecticide in an attempt to end his life.

When security personnel went to the expatriate's residence in Waha, they found a white liquid substance, which was later identified as insecticide, that the expatriate had ingested.



Elderly Kuwaiti swindled: A Kuwaiti citizen in his sixties filed a report at a police station in Ahmadi Governorate, claiming to be the victim of a scam by an expatriate who disappeared after receiving KD 5,000 from him, reports Al-Anba daily.

The citizen explained while filing the complaint that he had met an expatriate who claimed to be a merchant and offered to partner with him in a project for KD 5,000. After the agreement, the expatriate turned off his mobile phone and vanished. The complaint has been referred to the Criminal Investigation Department for further investigation and to locate the accused expatriate.

'Detain ex-MP'

Court finds man innocent in accusations of drug use

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Court of Appeals overturned the two-year prison sentence imposed on an individual accused of using psychotropic substances, declaring his innocence.

The court found that the procedures followed to obtain a urine sample for testing narcotics and psychotropic substances were invalid, as well as the referral letter from the investigator to the Criminal Evidence Department.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendant with possessing two psychotropic substances -- methamphetamine and amphetamine -- with the intent to use them, without any legal authorization, as stated in the investigation records.

However, the defendant's lawyer, Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan, argued that the original ruling was flawed; citing violations of legal procedures related to jurisdiction. He pointed out the invalidity of the search conducted on the defendant and the subsequent analysis of the urine sample, asserting that the General Department of Investigations lacked the jurisdiction to investigate felony cases, including conducting drug analyses, as such crimes are outside its authority.

Al-Qattan added there was no evidence in the case documents to charge or convict the defendant. He explained that the criminal evidence report relied upon by the prosecution was based on an invalid procedure; indicating the search of the defendant was conducted without any of the conditions for flagrante delicto, as required by law.



Detention ordered: The Public Prosecution has ordered the detention of former MP Mohannad Al-Sayer pending investigation into charges related to violating the law on combating internal state security crimes, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Sayer appeared before the Public Prosecution on Sunday and denied the charges against him. These charges stem from his appearance in a recorded dialogue that was broadcasted months ago, as well as a video clip he recently posted on his X account.

Other Voices

Forget and forgive, let go of last year grudges

By Ahmad alsarraf

The year 2024 has come and gone, leaving behind its share of joy, sorrow, and surprises. As it fades into memory, so too must we let go of grudges and animosities that weigh on our hearts. There's no true renewal in a new year if we carry old burdens within us. Forgetting is a gift, and forgiveness is a blessing we should embrace.

In 2024, I penned nearly 300 articles. Some were exhausting to write, yet a few brought immense satisfaction -- just as a mother treasures the child she labored hardest to bring into the world.

I found joy not only in the act of writing but in the engagement and feedback from readers who resonated with my words. I have never regretted a single piece I wrote, for each carried a part of me, and I am at peace with myself when I create.

New Year beckons, and I anticipate it to be the most rewarding one yet. Each passing year becomes more precious, and the next holds even greater promise. It is up to me to make the time I have left meaningful and joyous. But such joy is impossible if we allow grudges to fester, refuse to forgive, or hesitate to apologize to those we've wronged, intentionally or otherwise.

As the New Year unfolds, I wish for health for myself and my loved ones. Above all, I wish for prosperity for my country. I yearn for the Kuwait I've always cherished -- the Kuwait of love and peace, where tolerance thrives, and justice prevails. A nation where citizens and residents alike stand as equals before the law, basking in security and fairness.

We must reclaim the glory of our geniuses, the icons of art, and the pioneers of thought who once illuminated our path. They've left behind an irreplaceable void, filled now by voices that sow division, fear progress, and resist openness.

It is disheartening that such forces have found platforms in our schools, theaters, and media, while those who once elevated Kuwait in the realms of art, sports, science, and culture have been pushed aside.

Let us revive the Kuwait of nightingales and melody, the Kuwait of smiles and tolerance. Recent days have shown us glimpses of this, as the squares of Mubarakiya, the restaurants of Avenues, and the stadium seats buzzed with the innocent joy of citizens, visitors, and expatriates alike.

The success of the 26th Gulf Football Championship was proof of the happiness that simple openness can bring. No harm came to society -- no walls crumbled, no safety was lost. Instead, we witnessed unity, cheer, and a positive spirit.

The Football Association excelled in organizing the event, and we must build on that success, encouraging more initiatives that bring people together. Events like these are not just celebrations; they are opportunities for mutual benefit -- a true win-win.

The influx of visitors during the championship, the bustling hotels, and the thriving commercial activities revitalized the nation, reminding us of the potential Kuwait holds when it opens its arms.

The only ones who lamented the event's success were the naysayers -- the crows of darkness who thrive on division and oppose all that is beautiful. But their voices will not define us. Kuwait's future lies in joy, openness, and embracing the progress that unites us all.



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PAHW workers union urges minister to address pending employee grievances

Calls to resolve and improve workplace stability

KU opens online registration for Grade 12 Academic Ability Test

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: Kuwait University has announced the dates for electronic registration for the Academic Ability Test (Second Chance) for Grade 12 students.

The test will be held on Saturdays — Feb 1 and 15 and April 15 and 26 — at Sabah Al-Salem University City. Registration for Kuwaiti students and children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis will be open from Jan 7 -13.

In a press statement, the university disclosed that registration for non-Kuwaiti students will be on Jan 12-13, or until all available seats are filled. High school students wishing to take the Academic Ability Test, including those in Grade 12 or its equivalent, as well as high school graduates, are encouraged to register through the electronic link: <https://porta.ku.edu.kw/placement>. Students are reminded to fol-

low the registration steps carefully; which include entering their personal information, paying a KD 10 fee for each test using an ATM card, and printing the test entry card to determine the test location.

The university explained that the first two registration days will be reserved for Kuwaiti students and children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis and who have not taken the test. Students whose personal data are not available in the system should follow the 'create a new user' instructions. All students must register and make any modifications to their test details through the electronic registration system only.

The university also clarified that while the Academic Ability Test is a requirement, performance on the test does not guarantee university admission. Once the registration fee is collected, it cannot be refunded. For any inquiries, students can use the 'Help Me' service.

By Mohammed Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare workers' union has emphasized the necessity of recognizing the union as the official representative of the institution's employees and called for opening communication channels with the Ministry of State for Housing Affairs.

In a press statement, the union urged Minister Abdul Latif Al-Mishari to address the numerous pending complaints and grievances submitted by employees in recent months.

These unresolved issues, the union stated, have

created a sense of frustration and instability among workers, undermining efforts to foster a positive work environment.



Al-Mishari

performance.

The union described its role as vital in presenting the demands and concerns of employees in an organized and official manner.

The union highlighted the critical need for clear mechanisms to address employee concerns, emphasizing that these issues directly impact the stability of the workplace and the achievement of justice among staff.

It stressed that the lack of dialogue between the union and the Ministry exacerbates problems and negatively affects the institution's overall

However, without the cooperation of the Ministry, it warned, the potential for problems to escalate remains high.

"We have received a large number of complaints during the past period," the board noted, "and the delay in addressing these issues has left employees feeling frustrated and unstable. This does not align with our aspirations for a productive and positive work environment."

To resolve these challenges, the union called for periodic meetings with the Minister of State for Housing Affairs. It argued that regular dialogue could lead to strategic solutions benefiting all parties while reinforcing transparency and accountability.

"Constructive dialogue is the foundation of any reform process," the union emphasized, expressing hope that its appeal would prompt immediate action and collaborative efforts to enhance employee satisfaction and institutional efficiency.

Governor calls for enhanced urban aesthetic across Jahra Governorate

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi has emphasized the importance of intensifying efforts to enhance the aesthetic and civilized view of Jahra Governorate and Kuwait as a whole, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He highlighted the ongoing efforts, in collaboration with relevant authorities, to improve the main entrances, government institutions and key facades that reflect the country's identity.

This statement was made during an inspection tour of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources' worksites in the governorate, along with the Head of the Landscape Agriculture Department in Jahra Governorate, Salem Al-Anzi.

During the tour, Al-Habashi praised the efforts

of the Authority in implementing landscape projects and stressed the significance of cooperation between concerned parties to achieve development goals.

He was briefed on future plans to beautify and green the governorate's areas, underlining the importance of the next phase in presenting Jahra Governorate in the best possible civilized light.

Al-Habashi extended his gratitude to Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Dr. Mahmoud Boushehri, Director General of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources Nasser Taqi, and Head of the Ornamental Agriculture Department Salem Al-Enezi for their contributions to the development and beautification of the governorate.



Jahra Governorate photo
Governor Hamad Al-Habashi during the tour of Jahra Governorate.



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Kuwait Municipality hotlines receive 1,074 complaints in December 2024

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Kuwait Municipality announced that the Emergency Department's 'Hotline 139' and the 'WhatsApp Complaints Service 24727732' received a total of 1,074 complaints from all governorates in December 2024.

These complaints were related to various issues such as the presence of garbage, used furniture, bachelor hous-

ing, illegal landfills, rubble, fallen trees, broken poles, waste, sand dunes, rainwater, animal-related complaints, street vendors, roaming craftsmen, neglected vehicles and the provision of contact details for various municipality centers.

In terms of details, the Ahmadi Governorate recorded 220 complaints, Jahra Governorate had 194 complaints, Mubarak Al-Kabeer received 183, Farwaniya Governorate 180, Hawalli Governorate 155 and the Capital Governorate 142 complaints.



Ministry of Social Affairs leadership during the launching of the Central Aid Program.

Initiative integrates unified platform

MoSA launches 'Central Aid Program' for transparent, efficient charity distribution

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Ministry of Social Affairs has launched the Central Aid Program, a significant initiative aimed at improving coordination among charity organizations to ensure fair distribution of aid across the country, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This program is part of the ministry's broader efforts to modernize charity work and digitize related operations.

The key features of the central aid program include the following:

Centralized Database — The program establishes a central database that includes applicants for various types of aid. This database helps in selecting deserving cases efficiently and minimizes the risk of aid duplication.

Unified Platform — Charitable organizations and associations will benefit from a unified platform that enhances the transparency of aid requests and ensures that no duplicate disbursements occur. The platform is linked to the My Identity application, which helps in recording data and organizing operations.

Confidentiality and Data Management — The platform allows associations to view preliminary data of po-

tential beneficiaries, such as the type of assistance needed and family size. Personal data remains confidential until the request is finalized and selected by the relevant organization.

Timely Action Alerts — The system sends alerts to both the ministry and the associations if applications remain open for more than two weeks without a response. This ensures that the beneficiaries' needs are addressed promptly by directing applications to other associations if necessary.

Reporting and Analysis — The program offers daily or monthly reports detailing the types of aid, its value and the number of beneficiaries. These insights will help the ministry and charitable organizations make informed decisions and maximize the positive impact of aid distribution.

The Central Aid Program aims to streamline charitable efforts, increase transparency and ensure timely and equitable assistance for the people in need.

It empowers both the ministry and charity organizations to respond more effectively to the community's needs, contributing to a more organized and efficient aid system.

Five reserves set for rehabilitation

PAAAFR's environmental restoration receives boost with project approval

By **Mohammad Ghanem**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) has obtained approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) to contract for the restoration of vegetation cover in five reserves as part of projects aimed at rehabilitating Kuwait's environment. The total cost of the project is KD 1.978 million.

The reserves involved are:

- Umm Qadeer Reserve - first region: KD 406,275
- Wadi Al-Batin Reserve - northern part: KD 572,853
- Umm Qadeer Reserve - northern region: KD 406,275
- Khabari Al-Awzam Reserve: KD 831,868
- Wadi Al-Batin Reserve - southern part: KD 572,853

Meanwhile, the Director General of PAAAFR Eng. Nasser Taqi

commended the efforts exerted by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development in strengthening food security, particularly in the livestock sector.

He said this during the ceremony held for the distribution of certificates and honoring of participants in the courses organized by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, with the cooperation of PAAAFR.

The courses focused on providing technical and advisory support, and training on various livestock-related activities.

Held in December, these courses benefited approximately 100 individuals, including staff from the organization, farm workers, and

livestock breeders.

In this context, Head of the Regional Office for the Arabian Peninsula Countries Eng. Nasser Taqi honored the organization's expert Darar Al-Mustafa for his efforts in enhancing the role of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development as a key regional center of expertise in the agricultural field through its office in Kuwait.

In this regard, Al-Mustafa explained that the training program included both theoretical lectures and practical workshops. These sessions covered topics such as the basics of feeding dairy cows, the importance of food compounds, milk safety and health, and methods of preserving and storing feed.

Kuwait produces approximately 81,000 tons of milk annually, with 76,000 tons supplied to factories, resulting in a self-sufficiency rate of about 19 percent in 2023.



Eng. Taqi



KUNA photo

Official and popular ceremony celebrating the opening of Al-Babtain Primary School in Shabwa Governorate, Yemen, with Kuwaiti support.

Kuwait's charity opens primary school in Yemen

Kuwait's Shaikh Abdullah Al Nouri Charity Society inaugurated on Sunday the project of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain primary school and its facilities in Ausailan district in Shabwa Governorate, east of Yemen, as part of "Kuwait Beside You" campaign.

In a press release during the opening, Ahmad Karada, secretary general of Ausailan municipal council, thanked Kuwait and its people for their continued and unlimited support to Yemeni people in education and different humanitarian fields.

He also expressed appreciation to the family of the deceased Abdulaziz Al-Babtain and the society for carrying out this key project.

Meanwhile, head of education office in Ausailan Nasser Al-Shuraimi said the five-class school would contribute to mitigating high density in other schools and provide important opportunities for education.

The planned school has five equipped classes, two offices for management and teachers, a depot, bathrooms and a buffet. (KUNA)

Al-Ghanim elected as Chair

KOTC, PIC workers unions elect board of directors unanimously

By **Najeh Bilal**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Workers Union of the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) recently formed its new board of directors, which was elected by acclamation.

Nawaf Al-Enezi was chosen as the Chair of the board, and Jarrah Al-Baloushi was elected as his deputy.

Ahmad Al-Baloushi assumed the position of secretary, and Faisal Al-Hajri was appointed as assistant secretary.

Suleiman Al-Azmi was elected as treasurer, and Bader Nasrallah Al-Shammari became the secretary of external relations. Othman Al-Dhafiri was appointed as the secretary of external relations.

The board members include Turki Al-Turki, Sultan Al-Otaibi, Fahad Al-Mutairi, Mohammad Al-Kandari, Mohammad Al-Haroun, Musaed Al-Azmi, Mashari Al-Hubaini, and Mutaq Al-Subaie.

Meanwhile, the Workers Union of the Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) had formed its new board of directors on January 4, 2025, for the term from 2025 to 2027.

Turki Al-Ghanim was elected as the Chair by acclamation, and Raed Al-Kandari was appointed as Deputy Chair.

Hashem Behbehani assumed the position of secretary, Muslim Al-Sawagh became assistant secretary, and Ali Al-Failakawi was elected as financial secretary.

The members of the Board of Directors include Abdulrahman Al-Arouj, Jassim Al-Adhab, Obaid Al-Dousari, Fahed Al-Sahli, Thamer Al-Shaya, Ali Ghuloum, Khaled Al-Enezi, Fahad Al-Daihani, Ahmad Hassan Anbar, and Ali Al-Hazaa.

According to informed sources, the workers union of both KOTC and PIC have affirmed their commitment to preserving workers' rights and addressing any injustices faced by employees in their companies.

The renewal of confidence in both unions comes as a result of the huge achievements they have made in recent years.

Ministerial decision to grant exemptions for renting government housing in special cases

New policy eases restrictions for eligible Kuwaiti families

By **Mohammed Al-Enezi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mishari issued a ministerial decision to grant exemptions for renting government housing in special cases. This applies to families referred to in the housing care regulations, whose circumstances require assistance, so that they can rent a housing unit without being bound by the usual priority system, based on the minister's discretion.

The decision amends certain provisions of the housing care regulations. It states that, with the minister's approval and for reasons deemed appropriate, a one-time replacement of rented

housing units may be carried out between beneficiaries or between beneficiaries and the institution.

The decision also replaces the text of Article 46 of the housing care regulations to allow housing replacements between beneficiaries or between them and the institution, for reasons accepted by the institution, in accordance with the following conditions:

- Replacements are allowed for plots delivered in actual delivery, whether before the start of construction or after its completion, following the connection of electricity.

- Replacements are permissible in plots that are not fully constructed, provided the bank approves.

- Housing alternatives may be exchanged between beneficiaries without being restricted by the priority of their housing application registration.

The decision also stated that Article 49 was

amended to allow the institution to accept beneficiaries' waivers of the housing alternatives allocated to them, for reasons deemed acceptable by the institution.

This amendment is subject to the following conditions:

- The waiver applies to delivered plots, either before the start of construction or after its completion, upon connecting electricity.

- Waivers are allowed for plots that are not fully built, provided the bank approves.

- The priority for obtaining another housing alternative after the waiver must be based on the priority of the beneficiaries to whom the waiver is made, if it follows the waiverer's original priority.

The decision clarified that the number of times a beneficiary may replace or waive their housing alternatives is limited to one replacement or one waiver. The waiver may only be granted through a decision from the General Committee.

The committee will consider the stability of families in their allocated housing alternatives. It is not permissible to replace or waive plots distributed under the plans as of the date of this decision's implementation.



Al-Mishari

Al-Wafra energy project moves forward

MEW secures 'conditional' approval for overhead power lines from SAB

By **Mohammed Ghanem**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy recently received conditional approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) to directly contract with the Gulf Interconnection Authority for the establishment of two overhead power lines, which will run from the new Al-Wafra station to the Sabah Al-Ahmad 3z and 4z0 stations, at a total project cost of \$83.501 million (approximately KD 25.601 million), and a completion

timeline of 16 months.

In this regard, informed sources explained that the State Audit Bureau's approval is contingent upon the ministry's adherence to the Ministry of Finance's circular No. 3/2000 on the contracting conditions based on the value of the Kuwaiti dinar, as amended by circular No. 14/2021.

The ministry had previously submitted the matter to the State Audit Bureau, which requested the ministry to seek approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT)

and the Ministry of Finance to amend and approve the total project costs. The ministry had followed the required procedures for addressing these requests.

The sources affirmed that the contracting project is part of efforts to enhance, develop, and expand the Gulf Interconnection Network, and to maximize its potential. They said the overhead power lines to be constructed will facilitate the transmission of electricity from the new Al-Wafra station, which is expected to be completed by December 2025, to the Sabah Al-Ahmad stations.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait's evening

The initiative is expected to ease morning workloads and cater to clients unable to visit during regular hours.

Ministry of Communications – The evening shifts have commenced in departments such as the Postal Operations Department, Safat and Al-Masayel offices, the Liberation Tower, Customer Service Office at Jahra Exchange, Maintenance Department and Communications Complex Administration.

Ministry of Social Affairs – The Acting Undersecretary Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi reported that 400 employees began evening shifts, covering sectors like social care homes in Sulaibikhat, the women and children's department and community development.

Plans are underway to expand the number of employees and departments involved.

Public Authority for the Disability Affairs – Evening shifts have yet to begin, with discussions ongoing about implementation.

Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs – The Undersecretary Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi emphasized that evening work hours are fixed and not subject to flexible work systems or partial absence provisions.

Meanwhile the educational institutions such as the Kuwait University and the Ministry of Higher Education are studying the pilot phase to assess its impact and determine departmental readiness for evening shifts.

The Ministry of Education confirmed that the Adult Education Department and three departments of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training have long operated evening shifts.

While at the Kuwait Municipality preparations are underway to nominate employees for evening shifts, while the Municipal Council remains

excluded from the initiative.

The evening shift system is expected to enhance customer service availability, improve efficiency and reduce strain on morning operations. Agencies are carefully evaluating its feasibility before broader implementation.

SACGC invites

He noted that the tests; part of the national (11%) initiative, aim to enhance students' abilities for international Olympiads, with confidence in their ability to achieve results exceeding the targeted percentage.

Al-Daihani noted that the national Olympiad tests in physics and chemistry aim to identify young Kuwaiti scientists and researchers with a passion for these fields, emphasizing that the Center provides all necessary resources to improve students' skills through specialized training programs led by international trainers.

He pointed out that the national tests include multiple-choice questions that may be entirely new to students, adding that the purpose of the tests is to evaluate students' comprehension and adaptability to such question formats by establishing a unified assessment standard.

Regarding the registration requirements, Al-Daihani noted that the tests are open to Kuwaiti students for grades nine, 10, and 11, whether enrolled in public or private education.

Applicants must demonstrate proficiency in English, both written and spoken, and exhibit a passion for, or excellence in science.

Registration is available through the following links:

Chemistry test: <https://zfmz.com/U7E2Lczea6YsJfaEyT0Z>

Physics test: <https://zfmz.com/K8f-pAVuJXkbI3NmQJXdT>

Salmi road

The sources explained that the ministry has urged contractors to prioritize the repairs of roads that have experienced significant deterioration in the last five years.

The ministry and the monitoring authorities have set clear and precise requirements to ensure both the speedy completion and high quality of the ongoing road repairs. These requirements were developed by specialists from scientific, executive, and supervisory sectors.

To ensure work proceeds according to schedule and meets the required quality, the ministry has implemented several measures, including coordinating with the General Traffic Department to minimize disruptions to traffic flow. This is particularly important for internal roads in areas that experience heavy traffic, especially during school entry and exit times in the morning and evening.

The ministry has set detailed requirements to guarantee the quality of the work throughout the process. These include regular monitoring by the ministry's Testing Center Sector and independent laboratories, which will examine the asphalt from the factories to ensure quality before it is applied to the roads.

Furthermore, the contractor will be held responsible for the quality of both the foundation and surface layers, with a five-year warranty for the surface layer and a ten-year warranty for the foundation layer.

The sources affirmed that any defects identified during these periods will be rectified by the contractor at their own expense, as stipulated in the contracts.

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Jan 6 legacy hangs over the day

US Congress ready to certify Trump's election win

WASHINGTON, Jan 6, (AP): As Congress convenes amid a winter storm to certify President-elect Donald Trump's election, the legacy of Jan. 6 hangs over the proceedings with an extraordinary fact: The candidate who tried to overturn the previous election won this time, and is legitimately returning to power.

Lawmakers will gather noontime Monday under the tightest national security level possible. Layers of tall black fencing flank the U.S. Capitol complex in a stark reminder of what happened four years ago, when a defeated Trump sent his mob to "fight like hell" in what became the most gruesome attack on the seat of American democracy in 200 years.

No violence, protests or even procedural objections in Congress are expected this time. Republicans from the highest levels of power who challenged the 2020 election results when Trump lost to President Joe Biden have no qualms this year after he defeated Vice President Kamala Harris.

And Democrats frustrated by Trump's 312-226 Electoral College victory nevertheless accept the choice of the American voters. Even the threat of a massive snowstorm barreling down on the region wasn't expected to interfere with Jan. 6, the day set by law to certify the vote.

"Whether we're in a blizzard or not, we are going to be in that chamber making sure this is done," House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Republican who helped lead Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election, said Sunday on Fox News.

The day's return to a U.S. tradition that launches the peaceful transfer of presidential power comes with an asterisk as Trump prepares to take office in two weeks with a revived sense of authority. He denies that he lost four years ago, musing about staying beyond the Constitution's two-term White House limit and promises to pardon some of the more than 1,250 people who have pleaded guilty or were convicted of crimes for the Capitol siege.

What's unclear is if Jan. 6, 2021 was the anomaly, the year Americans violently attacked their own government, or if this year's expected calm becomes the outlier. The U.S. is struggling to cope with its political and cultural differ-

ences at a time when democracy worldwide is threatened. Trump calls Jan. 6, 2021 a "day of love."

"We should not be lulled into complacency," said Ian Bassin, executive director of the cross-ideological nonprofit Protect Democracy.

He and others have warned that it is historically unprecedented for U.S. voters to do what they did in November, reelecting Trump after he publicly refused to step aside last time. Returning to power an emboldened leader who has demonstrated his unwillingness to give it up "is an unprecedentedly dangerous move for a free country to voluntarily take," Bassin said.

Biden, speaking Sunday at events at the White House, called Jan. 6, 2021 "one of the toughest days in American history."

"We've got to get back to the basic, normal transfer of power," Biden said. What Trump did last time, Biden said, "was a genuine threat to democracy. I'm hopeful we're beyond that now."

Still, American democracy has proven to be resilient, and Congress, the branch of government closest to the people, will come together to affirm the choice of Americans.

With pomp and tradition, the day is expected to unfold as it has countless times before, with the arrival of ceremonial mahogany boxes filled with the electoral certificates from the states - boxes that staff were frantically grabbing and protecting as Trump's mob stormed the building last time.

Senators will walk across the Capitol - which four years ago had filled with roaming rioters, some defecating and menacingly calling out for leaders, others engaging in hand-to-hand combat with police - to the House to begin certifying the vote.

Harris will preside over the counting, as is the requirement for the vice president, and certify her own defeat - much the way Democrat Al Gore did in 2001 and Republican Richard Nixon in 1961.

She will stand at the dais where then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi was abruptly rushed to safety last time as the mob closed in and lawmakers fumbled to put on

gas masks and flee, and shots rang out as police killed Ashli Babbitt, a Trump supporter trying to climb through a broken glass door toward the chamber.

There are new procedural rules in place in the aftermath of what happened four years ago, when Republicans parroting Trump's lie that the election was fraudulent challenged the results their own states had certified.

Under changes to the Electoral Count Act, it now requires one-fifth of lawmakers, instead of just one in each chamber, to raise any objections to election results. With security as tight as it is for the Super Bowl or the Olympics, law enforcement is on high alert for intruders. No tourists will be allowed.

But none of that is expected to be necessary.

Republicans, who met with Trump behind closed doors at the White House before Jan. 6, 2021 to craft a complex plan to challenge his election defeat, have accepted his win this time.

Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., who led the House floor challenge in 2021, said people at the time were so astonished by the election's outcome and there were "lots of claims and allegations."

This time, he said, "I think the win was so decisive.... It stifled most of that." Democrats, who have raised symbolic objections in the past, including during the disputed 2000 election that Gore lost to George W. Bush and ultimately decided by the Supreme Court, have no intention of objecting. House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries has said the Democratic Party is not "infested" with election denialism.

"There are no election deniers on our side of the aisle," Jeffries said on the first day of the new Congress, to applause from Democrats in the chamber.

"You see, one should love America when you win and when you lose. That's the patriotic thing to do," Jeffries said.

Last time, far-right militias helped lead the mob to break into the Capitol in a war-zone-like scene. Officers have described being crushed and pepper-sprayed and beaten with Trump flag poles, "slipping in other people's blood."



Left: With the White House in the background, President Donald Trump speaks at a rally in Washington, Jan. 6, 2021. Right: Vice President Mike Pence and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., officiate as a joint session of the House and Senate convenes to count the Electoral College votes cast in the presidential election, at the Capitol in Washington, Jan. 6, 2021. (AP)



Former French leader denies 50 mln euros corruption charges

France's ex-Prez Sarkozy standing trial over alleged campaign funding by Libya's Gadhafi

PARIS, Jan 6, (AP): France's former President Nicolas Sarkozy goes on trial Monday over alleged illegal financing of his 2007 presidential campaign by the government of late Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi.

The so-called "Libyan case," the biggest and possibly most shocking of several scandals involving Sarkozy, is scheduled to run until April 10, with a verdict expected at a later date.

Sarkozy, 69, faces charges of passive corruption, illegal campaign financing, concealment of embezzlement of public funds and criminal association, punished by up to 10 years in prison. Sarkozy, who served as president from 2007 to 2012, has denied any wrongdoing.

The trial involves 11 other defendants, including three former ministers. Franco-Lebanese businessman Ziad Takieddine, accused of having played the role of intermediary, has fled in Lebanon and is not expected to appear at the Paris court.

Sarkozy is looking forward to the hearings "with determination," his lawyer Christophe Ingrain said in a statement.

"There is no Libyan financing of the campaign," the statement said. "We want to believe the court will have the courage to examine the facts objectively, without being guided by the nebulous theory that poisoned the investigation."

The case emerged in March 2011, when a Libyan news agency reported that the Gadhafi government had financed Sarkozy's 2007 campaign. In an interview, Gadhafi himself said "it's thanks to us that he reached the presidency. We provided him with the funds that allowed him to win," without providing any amount or other details.

Sarkozy, who had welcomed Gadhafi to Paris with great honors in 2007, became one of the first Western leaders to push for a military intervention in Libya in March 2011, when Arab Spring pro-democracy protests swept the Arab world. Gadhafi was killed by opposition fighters in October that same year, ending his four-decade rule of the North African country.

The next year, French online news site Mediapart published a document said to be a note from the Libyan secret services, mentioning Gadhafi's agreement to provide Sarkozy's campaign 50 million euros in financing.

Sarkozy strongly rejected the accusations, calling the document a "blatant fake" and filing complaints



French President Nicolas Sarkozy, left, greets Libyan leader Col. Moammar Gadhafi upon his arrival at the Elysee Palace, Dec. 10, 2007 in Paris. (AP)

for forgery, concealment and spreading false news.

However, French investigative magistrates eventually said in 2016 the document has all the characteristics of an authentic one, although there is no definitive evidence that such a transaction took place.

The official cost for Sarkozy's 2007 campaign was 20 million euros.

French investigators scrutinized numerous trips to Libya made by people close to Sarkozy, then the interior minister, between 2005 and 2007, including his chief of staff Claude Guéant. They also noted dozens of meetings between Guéant and Takieddine, a key player in major French military contracts abroad.

The investigation gained traction when Takieddine told news site Mediapart in 2016 that he had delivered three suitcases from Libya containing millions in cash to the French Interior Ministry.

However, Takieddine reversed his statement four years later.

Since then, a separate investigation has been launched into alleged witness tampering as magistrates suspect an attempt to pressure Takieddine in order to clear Sarkozy. Sarkozy and his wife, former supermodel Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, were given preliminary charges as financial prosecutors said the former president is suspected of "benefiting from corruptly influencing" Takieddine.

The other accused are three former French ministers, including Guéant, and a former adviser close to Sarkozy.

Like Takieddine, Franco-Algerian businessman Alexandre Djouhri is accused of having been an intermediary.

Eurozone visionary remembered

Costas Simitis, former Greek PM and socialist leader dies

ATHENS, Greece, Jan 6, (AP): Costas Simitis, former prime minister of Greece and the architect of the country's joining the common European currency, the euro, has died at age 88, state TV ERT reported.

Simitis was taken to a hospital in the city of Corinth early Sunday morning from his holiday home west of Athens, unconscious and without a pulse, the hospital's director was quoted as saying by Greek media. An autopsy will be performed to determine the cause of death.

The government decreed a four-day period of official mourning. Simitis will receive a state funeral.

Warm tributes appeared, and not just from political allies.

"I bid farewell to Costas Simitis with sadness and respect. A worthy and noble political opponent," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said in a Facebook post, also saluting the "good professor and moderate parliamentarian."

Another conservative politician, former European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, recalled how he, as mayor of Athens, had cooperated "seamlessly and warmly" with Simitis in organizing the Olympic Games.

"He served the country with devotion and a sense of duty.... He was steadfast in facing difficult challenges and promoted policies that changed the lives of (many) citizens," Avramopoulos added.

Simitis, a co-founder of the Socialist PASOK party in 1974, eventually became the successor to the party's founding leader, Andreas Papandreou, with whom he had an often contentious relationship that shaped the party's nature. Simitis was a low-key pragmatist where Papandreou was a charismatic, fiery populist. He was also a committed pro-European, while Papandreou



Greece's Prime Minister Costas Simitis declares a razor-thin victory over conservative opponents following general elections, in Athens on Monday, April 10, 2000. (AP)

banked on strong opposition to Greece's joining what was then the European Economic Community in the 1970s, before changing tack once he became prime minister.

When the profligate first four years of socialist rule, from 1981 to 1985, resulted in a rapidly deteriorating economy, Papandreou elevated Simitis to be finance minister and oversee a tight austerity program. Finances improved, inflation was partly tamed, but Simitis was pushed to resign in 1987 when Papandreou, eyeing an upcoming election, announced a generous wages policy, undermining the goals of the austerity program.

The socialists returned to power with Papandreou still at the helm in 1993, but he was ailing and finally resigned the premiership in January 1996. A tight two rounds of voting among the socialist lawmakers unexpectedly elevated Simitis to the post of prime minister, a post he held until 2004.

Europe

Christmas market attack death toll rises: The death toll in the attack on a Christmas market in the German city of Magdeburg last month has risen to six as a woman succumbed to her injuries, prosecutors said Monday.

Prosecutors in Naumburg said the 52-year-old woman died in a hospital, German news agency dpa reported. Authorities have said that the others who died were four women aged 45, 52, 67 and 75, and a 9-year-old boy.

More than 200 people were injured in the Dec. 20 attack.

Authorities have identified the suspect, who was arrested immediately after he drove a rented car through the crowded market early on a Friday evening, as a Saudi doctor who arrived in Germany in 2006 and had received permanent residency.

They have said he doesn't fit the usual profile of perpetrators of extremist attacks. The man described himself as an ex-Muslim who was highly critical of Islam, and on social media expressed support for the far-right. (AP)

'Bullying fuels war, not peace': Pope Francis warned that bullying in schools prepares students for war rather than peace, in a speech to Catholic educators gathered at the Vatican on Saturday.

Speaking to about 2,000 Italian teachers, educators and parents, Francis stressed his message against bullying, asking the audience to pledge to fight against it both at school and at home.

The pontiff praised educational efforts at schools to promote peace, noting that "imagining peace" lays the foundations for "a more just and fraternal world" through "every subject taught and through the creativity of children and young people."

"But if, at school, you wage war among yourselves or engage in bullying, you are preparing for war, not for peace," he said. (AP)

America

Biden plans to sign bill into law: President Joe Biden on Sunday plans to sign into law a measure that boosts Social Security payments for current and former public employees, affecting nearly 3 million people who receive pensions from their time as teachers, firefighters, police officers and in other public service jobs.

Advocates say the Social Security Fairness Act rights a decades-old disparity, though it will also put strain on Social Security Trust Funds, which face a looming insolvency crisis.

The bill rescinds two provisions - the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset - that limit Social Security benefits for recipients if they get retirement payments from other sources, including public retirement programs from a state or local government. (AP)

□ □ □

Truck suspect visited city twice: The man responsible for the truck attack in New Orleans on New Year's Day that killed 14 people visited the city twice before and recorded video of the French Quarter with Meta smart glasses, an FBI official said Sunday.

Shamsud-Din Jabbar also traveled to Cairo and Canada before the attack although it was not yet clear whether those trips were connected to the attack, Deputy Assistant Director Christopher Raia said at a news conference. Federal officials believe Jabbar, a U.S. citizen and former U.S. Army soldier, was inspired by the Islamic State militant group to carry out the attack.

Police fatally shot Jabbar, 42, during an exchange of gunfire at the scene of the deadly crash of the rented pickup truck on Bourbon Street, famous worldwide for its festive vibes in New Orleans' historic French Quarter.

Federal investigators so far believe Jabbar acted alone, but are continuing to explore his contacts. (AP)

Austrian far right leader could be asked to form government

VIENNA, Jan 6, (AP): Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen on Sunday announced that he would meet with far-right politician Herbert Kickl as an interim leader, but the president said Nehammer would remain chancellor for now.



Kickl

Van der Bellen said the announcement after meeting with Chancellor Karl Nehammer and others at his presidential palace. Nehammer has announced his intention to resign after coalition talks between his conservative Austrian People's Party and the center-left Social Democrats collapsed over the budget.

Nehammer has ruled out working

with Kickl, but others within his party are less adamant. Earlier Sunday, the People's Party nominated its general secretary, Christian Stocker, as interim leader, but the president said Nehammer would remain chancellor for now.

Van der Bellen said that this development has "potentially opened a new path," which has prompted him to invite Kickl for a meeting on Monday morning.

Kickl's Freedom Party topped the polls in the autumn's national election with 29.2% of the vote, but Van der Bellen tasked Nehammer with putting together a new government because no other party was willing to work with Kickl.

INTERNATIONAL



American and Chinese flags wave at Genting Snow Park ahead of the 2022 Winter Olympics, Feb. 2, 2022, in Zhangjiakou, China. (AP)

Chinese cyber security agency complains of foreign hacker attacks

China slams US sanctions tied to alleged hacking

BANGKOK, Jan 6, (AP): China has slammed a decision by the U.S. Treasury to sanction a Beijing-based cyber-security company for its alleged role in multiple hacking incidents targeting critical U.S. infrastructure, while the Chinese cyber security agency complained Monday of attacks on Chinese networks.

Asked about the sanctions against Beijing-based Integrity Technology Group, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said the country has cracked down on cyber attacks and that Washington was using the issue to "defame and smear China."

"For some time now, the U.S. side has been playing up so-called Chinese cyber attacks and has even initiated illegal unilateral sanctions against China," Guo said. "China firmly opposes this and will take necessary measures to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests."

Integrity Technology Group said the move by Washington had "no factual basis."

"The company firmly opposes the U.S. Treasury Department's unwar-

ranted accusations and illegal unilateral sanctions on the company," the company, also known as Yongxin Zhicheng Technology Group, said in a statement Monday to the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

Discovered

The China National Cyber Security Information Center said it had discovered attacks from various malicious websites and foreign IP addresses, including some in California and Florida. It also reported attacks from the Netherlands, Singapore, Mexico, Turkey and Vietnam using Trojan programs, botnets, phishing, theft of intellectual property and violations of privacy.

"They pose a major threat to China's domestic networked units and internet users and some activities have been suspected of criminal offenses," the center said in a notice on its WeChat social media site.

On Friday, the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control hit Integrity Technology with sanctions that block access to U.S. property and bank accounts and prevent the targeted peo-

ple and companies from doing business with Americans. It cited alleged multiple hacks against U.S. victims, including incidents attributed to Flax Typhoon, a Chinese state-sponsored campaign that targets U.S. critical infrastructure.

The sanctions did not appear to be related to an incident in which the Treasury Department reported that Chinese hackers had remotely accessed several of its workstations and unclassified documents in a major breach of cybersecurity.

The Treasury Department said it learned of that problem on Dec. 8, when a third-party software service provider, BeyondTrust, flagged that hackers had stolen a key "used by the vendor to secure a cloud-based service used to remotely provide technical support" to workers.

U.S. officials are grappling with the fallout from a massive Chinese cyber espionage blitz known as Salt Typhoon that they say gave officials in Beijing access to private texts and phone conversations of an unknown number of Americans.



This photo provided by U.S. Embassy, Philippines, shows the arrival of Afghan U.S. Special Immigrant Visa Applicants in the Philippines Monday, Jan. 6, 2025. (AP)

US-bound Afghan nationals arrive in Philippines for resettlement process

MANILA, Jan 6, (AP): A group of Afghan nationals arrived in the Philippines on Monday to process special immigrant visas for their resettlement in the United States, as part of an agreement between Manila and Washington.

The Philippines agreed last July to temporarily host a U.S. immigrant visa processing center for a limited number of Afghan nationals aspiring to resettle in America.

Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Teresita Daza said the Afghan nationals who landed in the Philippines on Monday were provided entry visas. She said they had completed extensive security vetting and undergone full medical screenings prior to their arrival.

The U.S. government will cover the costs for the Afghan nationals' stay in the Philippines, including their food, housing, security, medical and transportation expenses, she said.

She didn't specify how many Afghans arrived or how long the visa processing will take. Under the Philippines' rules, visa applicants can stay for no longer than 59 days.

A senior Philippine official told The Associated Press last year that only 150 to 300 applicants

would be accommodated in the Philippines under the "one-time" deal. The official who had knowledge of the negotiations agreed to speak on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to speak publicly.

The Afghan nationals seeking resettlement primarily worked for the U.S. government in Afghanistan or were deemed eligible for U.S. special immigrant visas but were left behind when Washington withdrew from the country and Taliban militants took back power in a chaotic period in 2021.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken first relayed the request to his Philippines counterpart in 2022, and President Joe Biden discussed the request with Philippines leader Ferdinand Marcos Jr. when he visited the U.S. last year, Philippine officials said.

Marcos has rekindled relations with the U.S. since winning the presidency by a landslide margin two years ago. In February last year, he allowed an expansion of the American military presence under a 2014 defense agreement in a decision that upset China.

South Korea says North Korea fired ballistic missile into sea

Anti-graft agency presses police to detain impeached S. Korean president

SEOUL, Jan 6, (AP): South Korea's anti-corruption agency has requested that police take over efforts to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol after its investigators failed to bring him to custody following a standoff with the presidential security service last week.

The agency and police confirmed the discussion on Monday, hours before the one-week warrant for Yoon's detention was to expire.

The Seoul Western District Court last Tuesday 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 over his short-lived martial law decree on Dec. 3. But executing those warrants is complicated as long as Yoon remains in his official residence.

Yoon has described his power grab as a necessary act of governance against a liberal opposition bogging down his agenda with its legislative majority and has vowed to "fight to the end" against efforts to oust him. While martial law lasted only several hours, it set off turmoil that has shaken the country's politics, diplomacy and financial markets for weeks and exposed the fragility of South Korea's democracy while society is deeply polarized.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials will likely seek a new court warrant to extend the window for Yoon's detention, according to police, which said it was internally reviewing the agency's request. It wasn't immediately clear whether the anti-corruption agency will make another attempt to detain Yoon on Monday before the deadline expires at midnight.

The anti-corruption agency has faced questions about its competence after failing to detain Yoon on Friday, and police have the resources to possibly make a more forceful attempt to detain him.



Supporters of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol stage a rally to oppose his impeachment near the presidential residence in Seoul, South Korea, Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025. (AP)

Yoon's legal team claimed in a statement that the agency's move to delegate execution of the detention warrant to police is illegal, saying there's no legal grounds for it to delegate certain parts of an investigation process to another agency. 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.

Yoon's lawyers also on Monday filed complaints with public prosecutors against the anti-corruption agency's chief prosecutor, Oh Dong-woon, and six other anti-corruption and police officers for orchestrating Friday's detention attempt, which they claim was illegal.

The lawyers also filed complaints against the country's acting national police chief, the acting defense minister and two Seoul police officials for ignoring the presidential security service's request to provide additional

forces to block the detention attempt. The lawyers said they also plan to file complaints against some 150 anti-corruption and police investigators who were involved in Friday's detention attempt.

The anti-corruption agency, which leads a joint investigation with police and military investigators, has been weighing charges of rebellion after Yoon declared martial law and dispatched troops to surround the National Assembly. Lawmakers who managed to get past the blockade voted to lift martial law hours later.

Yoon's presidential powers were suspended after the opposition-dominated National Assembly voted to impeach him on Dec. 14, accusing him of rebellion, and his fate now lies with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberations on whether to formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him.

Dozens of anti-corruption agency



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, and South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul, right, shake hands after a joint press conference following their meeting at the Foreign Ministry in Seoul, South Korea, Monday, Jan. 6, 2025. (AP)

investigators and assisting police officers attempted to detain 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.

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 agency has urged the country's acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, to instruct the presidential security service to comply with their execution of the detention warrant. Choi has yet to publicly comment on the issue.

In a video message on Sunday, Park

Jong-joon, chief of the presidential security service, hit back against criticism that his organization has become Yoon's private army, saying it has legal obligations to protect the incumbent president. Park said he instructed his members to not use violence during Friday's standoff and called for the anti-corruption agency and police to change their approach.

Also:

SEOUL: North Korea on Monday fired a ballistic missile that flew 1,100 kilometers (685 miles) before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, South Korea's military said, extending its weapons testing weeks before Donald Trump returns as U.S. president.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the midrange missile was fired from an area near the North Korean capital Pyongyang and that the launch preparations were detected in advance

by the U.S. and South Korean militaries. It denounced the launch as a provocation that poses a serious threat to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. The joint chiefs said the military was strengthening its surveillance and defense posture in preparation for possible additional launches.

Japan's Defense Ministry said the missile landed outside its exclusive economic zone and that there were no reports of damage to vessels or aircraft.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba expressed concern that the North's accelerated pace in missile tests is advancing its capabilities. The North last year tested various nuclear-capable systems that threaten its neighbors and the United States, including a new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile that achieved both the highest altitude and longest flight time of any missile the country has launched.

The launch came as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was visiting Seoul for talks with South Korean allies over the North Korean nuclear threat and other issues.

Blinken's visit comes amid political turmoil in South Korea following President Yoon Suk Yeol's short-lived martial law decree and subsequent impeachment by parliament last month, which experts say puts the country at a disadvantage in getting a steady footing with Trump ahead of his return to the White House.

In a news conference with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul, Blinken condemned North Korea's latest launch, which violates U.N. Security Council resolutions against the North. He also reiterated concerns about the growing alignment between North Korea and Russia in Moscow's war on Ukraine.

According to U.S., Ukrainian and South Korean assessments, North Korea has sent more than 10,000 troops and conventional weapons systems to support Moscow's war campaign.

Subcontinent

4 perish in India bus gorge plunge: At least four persons, including two women, died and 29 others were injured when a bus fell into a deep gorge in India's southern state of Kerala on Monday, a local police said.

The incident, which took place early in the morning in the Idukki district of the state, is suspected to have been caused by a brake failure in the bus.

The bus belonged to the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation.

The dead bodies had been recovered from the site and those injured were admitted to a local hospital, said the police. (Xinhua)

Animal attacks claim 83 in Nepal: A total of 83 Nepalis were killed and 599 others injured in attacks by wild animals in the first five months of the current 2024-25 fiscal year, the Nepal Police said on Monday.

Snake bites alone left 70 dead and 532 wounded from mid-July to mid-December in 2024, the Nepal Police said in a statement.

Six people died and 14 were injured in elephant attacks, while rhinoceros attacks claimed four lives and injured 14 others.

In addition, assaults by tigers left three dead and 24 wounded, and 15 others were injured in bear attacks.

"Nepal Police mobilized 1,835 personnel for the rescue

of the victims," the statement noted. (Xinhua)

Sri Lanka nets \$96m worth of drugs: The Sri Lankan navy announced on Monday it confiscated narcotic drugs worth 28.1 billion rupees (around 95.8 million U.S. dollars) during operations carried out in 2024.

Among the drugs seized are 622 kg of heroin and more than 1,211 kg of Crystal Methamphetamine (ICE), the navy said in a statement.

Moreover, 21 local fishing boats along with 230 individuals suspected of involvement in drug trafficking have been apprehended, with legal action taken against them.

In total, the navy arrested 407 suspects in 2024 involved in illegal activities such as smuggling of narcotics, prescription drugs, and contraband, and apprehended those involved in human smuggling.

The navy said it conducts continuous operations to prevent illegal activities. (Xinhua)

Gas leak kills 5 in Afghanistan: Gas leakage of a heater has claimed the lives of five members of a family in eastern Afghanistan's Khost province on Sunday night, provincial police spokesman Tahir Ehrar said Monday.

According to the official, the family members were sleeping in their apartment, where they used a gas heater to keep themselves warm in the chilly weather, but the gas leakage suffocated and killed eventually.

This is the second incident of similar nature in Khost province over the past couple of weeks. (Xinhua)

Africa

Khartoum airstrike kills 10: At least 10 people were killed and 30 others injured on Sunday in an airstrike that targeted an area south of the Sudanese capital Khartoum, a volunteer group and local media reported.

"Ten people were killed and 30 others injured, including five cases of first-degree burns, after an airstrike targeted the Al-Sahrij station in the Mayo neighborhood, south of Khartoum," the South Khartoum Emergency Room, a local volunteer group, said in a statement.

The group noted that the Al-Sahrij station had been bombed three times within one month, pointing out that the area is usually crowded with civilians, as it contains a market and several food shops.

For its part, the Sudanese news portal Al-Rakoba reported on Sunday that most of the injured in the airstrike were transferred to Bashair Hospital, located approximately 4 km from the site of the incident.

No group has claimed responsibility

for the attack. (Xinhua)

Ethiopia launches evacuation:

The Ethiopian government said Saturday it is coordinating evacuations in response to successive and recurring earthquakes wreaking havoc around eastern parts of the country.

Recent tremors have shaken areas around Awash Fentale, Metahara, and Abomsa towns, with magnitudes frequently exceeding five, according to data from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

The strongest quake, a magnitude 5.8, occurred early Saturday, striking 56 km south-southeast of Abomsa. Its epicenter was at a depth of 10 km, at 9.505 degrees north latitude and 40.169 degrees east longitude, according to the USGS.

USGS data indicate that at least seven earthquakes have hit eastern Ethiopia in the past two days, marking a significant increase in intensity compared to previous weeks' moderate tremors.

In a Saturday evening statement, the Ethiopian National Disaster Risk

Management Commission highlighted the urgent need for action in affected areas. About 15,000 people across six localities in the Awash Fentale district, Afar region, are at risk, with 7,000 already relocated. In the Dulecha district, around 20,000 individuals have been impacted, and 6,223 have been moved to safer zones. (Xinhua)

'9mn children out of school':

More than nine million children are out of school across Ethiopia due to man-made and natural disasters, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has disclosed.

In its latest Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report released late Thursday, UNICEF said that more than 6,000 schools have been closed across the East African country due to climate shocks and conflicts.

The report further noted that over 10,000 schools, representing 18 percent of schools across the country, have been damaged by conflicts and climate shocks, further reducing the availability of safe and functional learning spaces for children. (Xinhua)

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
SAUDI - TASI	+34.87	12,104.69	JAPAN - Nikkei 225	-587.49	39,307.05
DUBAI - DFMGI	+63.96	5,190.70	EGYPT - EGX 30	-253.97	29,929.64
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+21.36	6,625.17	PAKISTAN - KSE 100	-1,225.17	116,499.75

Business

The company maintained its prestigious position and garnered global awards

KFH Capital achieves milestones in Sukuk, Investment Funds, Asset Management, and Digitalization in 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: KFH Capital, the investment arm of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Group, successfully achieved unprecedented accomplishments in 2024 across all levels.

KFH Capital Chief Executive Officer, Abdulaziz Almarzooq said that the company successfully led and arranged approximately \$17.8 billion in Sukuk issuances for sovereigns and corporates across various sectors and geographies in 2024.

Furthermore, KFH Capital has emerged as a leader in Sukuk issuance, acting as joint lead manager and bookrunner for \$6.5 billion worth of issuances for sovereign funds in the region.

Investment Funds

In line with KFH Capital's ambitious plans to expand its presence in the wealth management sector, Almarzooq explained that the company successfully marketed two Ijara funds, two real estate funds, and a USD money market fund. These funds are designed to provide clients with balanced returns while managing risk. The investment objective of these investment funds is to achieve attractive rates of return by investing primarily in Ijara-based assets. The U.S. real estate fund seeks to generate stable income through investments in a diversified portfolio of residential land in major urban areas within the United States. In addition,



Abdulaziz Almarzooq

the company aims to market a UK real estate fund whose portfolio consists of two student housing properties in London.

These initiatives signify the continued expansion of KFH Capital's

international investment portfolio and reflect the company's growing presence in the real estate markets of North America and the United Kingdom. This growth stems from KFH Capital's experience in these markets for over 25 years.

Almarzooq stated that the Asset Management Sector at KFH Capital remained committed to delivering innovative services and value-added solutions to customers, with a particular focus on enhancing trading services last year. He expressed pride in the company's comprehensive approach to asset management, which emphasizes strategic portfolio diversification, robust risk management, and a balanced approach to both.

He added: "Our expert team works closely with clients to understand their financial goals, ensuring that our investment strategies are aligned with their aspirations and plans. We will continue to strive to strengthen our relationships with clients and achieve sustainable growth by providing innovative investment solutions and products."

He said: "The company maintained its prestigious position during 2024, winning distinguished global awards, including Hybrid Deal of the Year Award from the Islamic Finance News (IFN), Kuwait's Best Investment Bank from Global Finance, Islamic Finance Deal of the Year Award for its role in the Republic of Turkey's USD 2.5 billion Sukuk, and

Best for Fixed Income in Kuwait" in the 2024 from Euromoney.

Moreover, Almarzooq emphasized that 2024 marked a pivotal year for KFH Capital's digital transformation. The company has launched two impactful initiatives. First, an integrated investment management portal that connects with internal systems, empowering employees to complete tasks that previously necessitated physical intervention and client presence. Second, a dedicated mobile application (KFH Wealth App), meticulously designed, which provides customers with a holistic view of their investments and streamlines the subscription process for any public funds offered by KFH Capital.

Firm expands foreign oil investments

KUFPEC plans to increase oil prod. to 150,000 bpd by 2027

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: According to informed sources, the Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) aims to increase production from 107,000 bpd to 150,000 bpd by 2027. To achieve this, KUFPEC is working on expanding its foreign oil investments with partners and is currently evaluating several profitable opportunities to acquire highly lucrative projects.

They explained that KUFPEC is intensifying efforts to discover new oil wells in Egypt, and is anticipating further discoveries in the Gulf of Suez Basin, particularly in the "Geisum & Tawila West" concession during the current year.

In pursuit of this goal, KUFPEC is expanding its exploration investments in Egypt in partnership with local collaborators and using advanced drilling platforms. As a result, production has reached 23,000 bpd since the discovery of the "GNN" well.

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has increased its confidence in

KUFPEC after the company achieved unprecedented positive financial results in 2023.

KUFPEC's exit from its assets in Pakistan is not final, as the company is preparing for a new round of future projects in Pakistan, Indonesia, and other countries where it operates.

The company's strategy focuses on exiting unprofitable projects with a beneficial value for the company.

The sources highlighted the sale of its investments in Norway in 2024, which generated returns of USD 700 million since KUFPEC's initial investments in 2013.

They revealed that KPC has given the green light to KUFPEC to continue its exploration efforts in various regions and countries to maintain the company's progress.

The sources said the sale of any company assets requires the approval of KPC, which holds regular meetings between KUFPEC's leadership and the Board of Directors of KPC, headed by Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah, who expressed his satisfaction with the efforts made by KUFPEC in recent years.

Stocks outperform emerging markets

GCC economies shift towards diversification, robust growth

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region is undergoing a significant and positive transformation, according to State Street Global Advisors, an asset management firm, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The company highlighted in its annual report that the region's economies, traditionally reliant on energy prices, are now shifting towards economic diversification and are actively working to attract both local and international investors. This change is evident in the performance of the region's stock and bond markets.

State Street's report emphasized that the GCC economies are expected to grow at an annual rate of around 4 percent over the next five years, significantly outpacing the GDP growth rate of advanced economies, which is typically much lower.

This growth is driven not only by the region's ongoing influence in global energy markets but also by government initiatives that aim to reduce dependence on oil and gas.

The firm pointed to the Vision plans launched by each GCC country as pivotal in steering the region toward sustainable economic development.

These plans are integral to the ongoing transformation, aiming for a diversified economy that can withstand fluctuations in oil prices and open new opportunities across various sectors.

The GCC's stock markets have evolved from limited access to becoming more integrated into global financial markets.

Notably, the region's inclusion in global indices like the MSCI Emerging Markets Index (EM) and the MSCI All Country World Index (ACWI) is a significant milestone.

Despite this, State Street noted that the region is still under-represented in global indices, suggesting there is substantial room for future growth and greater integration into international markets.

The report further discussed the changing dynamics of the GCC stock markets, where the financial services sector has traditionally dominated.

However, with increasing efforts at economic diversification, there is an expected shift towards greater prominence in other sectors. Developments in areas such as healthcare, education, smart infrastructure, renewable energy and technology are opening up a broader range of investment opportunities.

Over the past decade, Gulf stocks have consistently outperformed the broader emerging markets index, a trend that has persisted even amid global challenges. This outperformance is notably less linked to oil prices and more reflective of the region's resilience and strategic efforts to diversify its economic base.

According to State Street Global Advisors, the ongoing transformation of the GCC economies presents growth potential, diversification benefits and advanced sectoral dynamics that make the region a promising investment destination.

Boursa Kuwait sees surge in foreign investments, reaches \$723m in 2024

Market value rises 8.24%, reaching 43.58bn dinars

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Boursa Kuwait has made notable strides in 2024, attracting foreign investments totaling 222.4 million dinars (approximately \$723 million).

This surge in foreign investments is largely attributed to a rise in net purchases by foreign institutions and companies. Specifically, their net purchases amounted to around 227.8 million dinars, with purchases reaching 1.78 billion dinars while sales stood at 1.55 billion dinars.

However, the data also reveals a dominant selling trend among foreign individual investors. Net sales by foreign individuals amounted to 4.9 million dinars. Their purchases totaled 364.6 million dinars, but sales surpassed this figure at 369.5 million dinars.

Foreign investment funds also displayed a selling inclination, with net sales of approximately 473.2 thousand dinars after purchases of 7.5 million dinars, compared to sales of 8 million dinars. Turning to domestic transactions, Kuwaiti investors reported net sales of approximately 117.8 million dinars in 2024.

This was driven by heavy selling pressure from

Kuwaiti individuals, whose net sales totaled 5.36 billion dinars against 5.24 billion dinars in purchases.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti institutions saw a slight difference in their transactions, with net sales amounting to 8 million dinars, as they purchased 6.9 billion dinars worth of shares while selling 6.908 billion dinars. Investment funds saw modest net purchases of around 3.8 million dinars.

For Gulf investors, net sales reached 94.1 million dinars, driven primarily by Gulf institutions and companies whose net sales amounted to 95.7 million dinars.

Interestingly, Gulf individual investors recorded net purchases of 2.4 thousand dinars, with purchases and sales totaling 85.7 million dinars each.

The market value of shares on the Boursa Kuwait reached approximately 43.58 billion dinars at the close of 2024, marking an 8.24 percent increase from the previous year's market value of 40.26 billion dinars.

The institutions and companies dominated the transactions, accounting for more than half of the market's activities, while investment funds recorded the lowest level of transactions.

On a daily basis, Boursa Kuwait's general index surged by 53.8 points, or 0.7 percent, reaching 7,416 points. The main market index also saw an uptick of 84.6 points, or 1.2 percent, settling at 6,991 points.

The premier market index gained 48.2 points, or 0.6 percent, bringing it to 7,887 points, while the Main 50 index rose by 110 points, or 1.6 percent, to 6,917 points.

The session saw a total of 203.4 million shares traded across 11,935 transactions, with a total value of 46.2 million dinars (around \$141 million).

Among the various sectors, consumer goods led the gains with a 4.25 percent increase, while utilities and energy saw declines of 1.99 percent and 0.11 percent respectively. The healthcare and technology sectors remained stable.

The trading day saw 77 stocks rise, led by Ammar with an 11.11 percent increase. Conversely, 39 stocks declined, with Al Eid leading the losses, falling by 6.18 percent. Thirteen stocks maintained stable prices.

The Business City share led in volume activity with 27.29 million shares traded, while IFA shares topped liquidity, with a transaction value of 5.84 million dinars.

Ammar, Gulf T, IFA Hotels and Cinema were among the highest gainers, while Al Eid, Tamdeen A, KFIC and Holding MK experienced the most significant declines.

As the Boursa Kuwait continued to attract foreign investment and sees significant market activity, its performance throughout 2024 reflected positive investor sentiment and sustained economic growth.

Legislative & structural changes needed for oil sector listings

Kuwait considers listing oil sector firms on Boursa Kuwait amid economic shifts

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The saying that "The stock market is a mirror of the economy" holds significant weight in the world of finance and investment, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

However, one notable gap in the Kuwaiti market is the absence of the oil sector on the Boursa Kuwait. While some Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, such as the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, have successfully listed shares of their major oil companies, this increasing market attractiveness and drawing foreign investments, Kuwait has not yet taken similar steps.

This shift in neighboring markets could potentially encourage Kuwait to consider listing its own oil sector companies in the future.

Experts believe that such a move could invigorate the local market, boost foreign investment and provide alternative financing channels for oil-related firms. Additionally, converting some state-owned oil companies into joint-stock companies could help ease the financial burden on the government.

According to Mohammed Al-Hamad, head of the Funds and Portfolios Department at the National Invest-

ments Company, Kuwait is likely to study the issue of listing oil companies on the stock exchange.

This move would align the country with the broader Gulf region, where oil company listings have become a common practice. Al-Hamad suggested that the listing of oil companies could help mitigate risks to the government by diversifying funding sources for these companies.

Al-Hamad further mentioned that, while the idea has been proposed, it may take several years before it materializes. Legislative approval, along with the establishment of regulations to protect production confidentiality, will be essential for the successful listing of these companies.

However, the recent development of the Boursa Kuwait, coupled with an increase in foreign investor ownership in 2024, suggests that the market is becoming more attractive to external capital, making this a potentially opportune time for such a move.

While the idea of listing oil companies is appealing, Ashraf Jarrar, an international markets broker at United Securities, cautioned that the challenges are significant.

According to Jarrar, the legislative environment is not yet equipped to handle the transformation of these companies into public shareholding entities. This transition would require significant legal amendments and comprehensive organizational and financial restructuring of the oil sector.

However, Jarrar acknowledged that with Kuwait Vision 2035, which seeks to diversify the economy and reduce reliance on oil, the government may pursue the necessary legislative and regulatory changes in the future.

For now, he believes that such a shift would require careful consideration of the potential impact on market organization, governance and transparency. Moreover, the decision would need to align with the government's broader sustainable development goals.

Kamel Al-Harmi, an independent oil analyst, emphasized that privatizing government sectors, particularly in the oil industry, is a key strategy for attracting more foreign investment, diversifying the economy and creating alternative funding sources for the state budget.

Al-Harmi stressed that companies such as refineries, oil tankers and pet-

rochemical plants should be privatized and brought into the private sector to enhance their growth potential.

Listing companies, particularly those affiliated with the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), could break these entities out of the governmental framework, allowing them to find foreign partners and secure the necessary financing to support their long-term strategic plans.

Al-Harmi believes that such steps are critical to Kuwait's economic future, aligning with the country's need for economic diversification and modernization.

The idea of listing oil sector companies on the Boursa Kuwait has not yet been fully realized, but the conversation is gaining momentum.

As the Kuwaiti government continues to work towards Vision 2035, which aims for economic diversification, the oil sector could become an integral part of this transformation.

Legislative and regulatory changes may take time, but with increased investor activity and market reforms, there may be a clearer path for the oil industry to become part of Kuwait's evolving financial landscape.

Lebanese pound hits new lows amid ongoing economic crisis

Currencies weakened by inflation, instability, and debt, report reveals

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The list of the weakest currencies against the US dollar saw little change last year, though some countries experienced shifts in their rankings, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Notably, the Lebanese pound reached new lows due to Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, which worsened after the Beirut port explosion in 2020. Meanwhile, the Syrian pound improved slightly against the dollar.

Several Arab countries, including Lebanon and Egypt, are now represented in the list of the worst-performing currencies.

The following is the list of the weakest currencies:

Lebanese Pound — The Lebanese pound experienced a dramatic decline in 2024, with the dollar rising by about 500 percent to reach 89,560 pounds per dollar on the parallel market.

This currency depreciation is attributed to Lebanon's ongoing economic and financial crisis. However, international support measures, including those by the IMF, are attempting to stabilize the situation.

Iranian Rial — The Iranian rial has been among the weakest currencies for years, primarily due to international sanctions.

In 2024, the rial depreciated by 0.21 percent, with the dollar rising to 42,090 rials per dollar. Tensions in the Middle East could put further pressure on the rial.

Vietnamese Dong — The Vietnamese dong became weaker due to restrictions on foreign exports and a decrease in export volumes.

The US dollar rose by 4.46 percent against the dong, reaching 25,460 dong per dollar by the end of 2024.

Sierra Leonean Leone — The Sierra Leonean leone is heavily impacted by factors like high debt levels, inflation and slow economic growth. The dollar rose by 1.43 percent, reaching 22,790 leones per dollar.

Laotian Kip — The Lao kip struggled with issues such as inflation, high external debt and slow growth. The dollar rose by 6.44 percent, reaching 21,820 kip per dollar.

Indonesian Rupiah — Indonesia's reliance on imports, particularly oil, has led to a higher import bill, pushing the currency down. The dollar increased by 4.86 percent to 16,220 rupiahs per dollar.

Syrian Pound — Despite a slight improvement towards the end of the year, the Syrian pound remains among the weakest currencies, with the dollar trading at

around 13,000 pounds per dollar. The country's prolonged civil war continues to affect its economy.

Uzbek Som — The Uzbek som has faced challenges due to high unemployment, inflation and slow economic growth. The dollar rose by 4.59 percent, reaching 12,900 soms per dollar.

Guinean Franc — The Guinean franc has suffered due to political unrest and inflation. However, it has shown signs of recovery. The dollar rose by 1.61 percent, reaching 8,645 francs per dollar.

Paraguayan Guarani — Paraguay's currency, the guaraní, is weighed down by inflation, high unemployment and corruption. The dollar rose by 7.55 percent, reaching 7,800 guaranis per dollar.

Meanwhile, the worst-performing currencies include Zimbabwe's (gold-backed currency) Zig, plummeting by 954.2 percent.

Other poor performers include the Lebanese pound, South Sudanese pound, Ethiopian birr, Nigerian naira and the Egyptian pound.

These currencies have suffered due to various factors, including inflation, political instability, external debt and economic crises.

'2024 was a landmark year for Gulf Bank'

Gulf Bank concludes 2024 with major achievements in innovation, digital transformation, and community engagement



Waleed Khaled Mandani and the Governor of Ahmadi during the opening of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential Area branch.



Plan to transform the branch network to environmentally friendly.



Waleed Khaled Mandani

Waleed Khaled Mandani:

- We achieved significant milestones across various levels last year and look forward to even more in 2025.
- The digital transformation journey included the mobile app, electronic services, branches, ATMs, and the Call Center.
- "Invest GB" has been established as Gulf Bank's investment arm, overseeing assets surpassing \$3 billion.
- Gulf Bank has introduced an upgraded version of its Gulf Points Program, raising the bar for loyalty rewards in Kuwait.
- The rebranding of private banking services was introduced, along with innovative products and cards to meet customer needs.
- Gulf Bank's branches have been renovated as part of the plan to transform its branch network into eco-friendly spaces, while continuing to support and finance SMEs.
- The grand prize for the AlDanah Millionaire Account was increased to KD 2 million, with quarterly prizes distributed to 100 winners.
- The 2030 sustainability strategy was announced, alongside a wide range of community and charitable initiatives.
- The 10th edition of the Gulf Bank Marathon was held, alongside continuous support for youth, women, and talent empowerment.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: Gulf Bank has successfully concluded 2024, a year defined by innovation and growth, reinforcing its commitment to enhancing the customer experience. With a focus on delivering exceptional banking services, the Bank looks forward to achieving even greater milestones in the coming year.

Acting Chief Executive Officer at Gulf Bank, Mr. Waleed Khaled Mandani, commented on the Bank's achievements, stating: "We successfully completed the second phase of our new core banking system, launched an upgraded version of the Gulf Bank mobile app, and finalized the establishment of Invest GB. Additionally, we introduced a flexible points program, refreshed our identity-driven banking services, and launched the Neo account for children, along with the Lulu Hypermarket credit card."

He added: "This year, we unveiled our 2030 Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategy and made significant progress in converting our branches into eco-friendly spaces. Gulf Bank has remained at the forefront of community engagement by organizing a wide range of programs and events that reflect the aspirations of our customers and the public, particularly during Ramadan. We have also prioritized fostering a dynamic and rewarding workplace environment for our employees."

Mr. Mandani highlighted that 2024 was a landmark year for Gulf Bank, with the AlDanah Millionaire account's grand prize increasing to KD 2 million – earning the Bank a Guinness World Record for the second time.

The quarterly prize was expanded to reward 100 winners instead of one, enhancing customers' chances of winning. Furthermore, Gulf Bank hosted the 10th edition of the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon, attracting 10,000 participants from Kuwait and abroad. Some of the major achievements of 2024 include:

Digital Transformation

As part of its ongoing efforts to establish itself as the bank of the future, Gulf Bank has launched the second phase of its new Core Banking Services system, marking a significant milestone in the bank's digital transformation journey. This move aims to enhance operational efficiency and ease banking transactions for customers. Gulf Bank is now equipped with cutting-edge technological infrastructure, making it one of the most advanced banks in the sector, fully prepared to meet customers' banking needs and provide innovative digital services.

In addition, Gulf Bank has completely redesigned its mobile app, marking a significant step forward in its digital transformation. This update has transformed a variety of services and banking transactions, making them more accessible, simpler to use, and available to everyone, anywhere, at any time, with an interface that is user-friendly, fast, and secure.

The app provides Gulf Bank customers with a wide range of exceptional banking services, some of which are exclusive to them, and the bank continues to innovate and expand these offerings. Gulf Bank's digital transformation also extends to enhancing electronic services, branches, ATMs, and the Call Center, aiming to make Gulf Bank's services among the most convenient, efficient, and highly rated in the banking sector, all while using technology that exceeds customer expectations.

New Products

In line with its commitment to offering the best services and products, Gulf Bank has introduced the Neo Kids Account, a revamped version of the "Nassour" account. This new account provides a simple and secure way for parents to build their children's financial future and teach them the value of saving and financial responsibility. The account is available for children up to the age of 14, and parents can open the account without a minimum balance or fees at any Gulf Bank branch.

Moreover, Gulf Bank has partnered with Lulu Hypermarket and Mastercard to launch a prepaid card, offering exclusive discounts and cashback of up to 5% at all Lulu Hypermarket branches in Kuwait. The card also provides cashback on local and international purchases,



Badr Al Ali and Najla Al Essa during the launch of the new points program.

with an annual cashback of up to KD 600.

Gulf Points Program

Gulf Bank has introduced an upgraded version of its Gulf Points Program, raising the bar for loyalty rewards in Kuwait. Recognized as the fastest and most rewarding loyalty program in the country, the enhanced Gulf Points now offer outstanding benefits, including cashback, smooth airline and hotel bookings, and an innovative online store – a first in the banking sector. With more options available, customers can now personalize their rewards to better suit their individual needs.

New Identity for Private Banking Services

In a move aimed at enhancing customer experience and providing unprecedented levels of banking services, Gulf Bank has unveiled a fresh identity for its private banking services, aiming to enhance the customer experience and deliver exceptional banking solutions for high-net-worth individuals. This move reflects the bank's dedication to redefining private banking and providing an unparalleled experience tailored to the unique needs of its affluent clients.

The updated identity is centered around three core principles: developing long-term wealth strategies, safeguarding assets, and ensuring seamless wealth transfer in line with clients' personal preferences. Gulf Bank's private banking services include family wealth planning, liquidity and financing options, global asset management, and a variety of other tailored solutions designed to grow and protect wealth.

Supporting SMEs

Gulf Bank remains committed to supporting

and financing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by providing a wide range of banking services, either directly or through a dedicated online portal tailored to this sector. SMEs can apply for both cash and non-cash credit facilities without the need for a bank account. Available services include payroll transfers, ATM card issuance, point-of-sale and payment gateway registration, as well as logistics and consulting services. Additionally, Gulf Bank has partnered with Omnifintec to offer comprehensive advisory and commercial services, aimed at fostering SME growth.

Launch of Invest GB

After securing regulatory approvals, Gulf Bank has officially launched Invest GB, its investment arm with a capital of KD 10 million. Invest GB manages assets exceeding \$3.2 billion and has forged successful strategic partnerships, including collaborations with Avaloq, a global leader in private banking and wealth management technology, and Investcorp, a prominent global alternative investment firm.

Sustainability Strategy

Gulf Bank has revealed its ambitious environmental, social, and governance (ESG) strategy for the period 2024-2030, outlining a clear roadmap and key performance indicators for the next six years. The strategy focuses on implementing sustainability standards and enhancing corporate governance practices that reflect the bank's core values and guide every aspect of its banking operations.

Green Branch Transformation

Gulf Bank has launched a plan to transform over 50 of its branches into eco-friendly branches, incorporating the latest technology and sustain-

able design principles. In 2024, the bank opened its newly renovated branch in Sabah AlAhmad Residential Area, alongside several other refurbished branches, all designed to minimize energy consumption and incorporate solar panels, natural lighting, and thermal insulation.

AlDanah Millionaire Account Prizes

Gulf Bank has increased the grand prize for its AlDanah Millionaire Account to KD 2 million, up from KD 1.5 million. In addition, the quarterly prizes will now be awarded to 100 winners, rather than just one. The annual grand prize remains at KD 2 million, with a semi-annual prize of KD 1 million. Monthly prizes of KD 1,000 each will be given to 10 winners. This new prize structure provides customers with more opportunities to win.

Social Impact Initiatives

Gulf Bank has launched a variety of initiatives to promote social sustainability, including:

- Sponsoring "The Company Program" Competition for the eighteenth consecutive year, organized annually by INJAZ Kuwait.
- Hosting the third edition of the "Datathon" competition to empower data professionals, students, and individuals interested in the fields of data and analytics.
- Distributing 100,000 reusable bags in collaboration with various cooperative societies and the Environment Public Authority in Kuwait. Additionally, the Bank has launched an initiative to transform street advertisements into reusable bags once their display period concludes.
- Sponsoring the "Kilmaitan" forum to empower creative industries in Kuwait.
- Organizing numerous charitable events, including distributing thousands of Iftar meals during Ramadan, providing food baskets for the holy month, and donating to those impacted by the war in Gaza. The Bank also hosted "Nuqsat Al-Khamees" to support SMEs, along with other successful initiatives in collaboration with the "Sawa'ed Al-Khaleej" volunteering team.
- Sponsoring the 33rd Memorial Journey for Pearl Diving, organized by the Kuwait Sea Sport Club, as part of Gulf Bank's dedication to promoting sustainability and preserving Kuwaiti heritage.

■ Introducing the "GB Talks" series as a platform to engage with employees and customers through a series of seminars across various departments.

■ Organizing the second edition of the Fekrety Innovation Competition for 2024, aiming to foster innovation among staff. The Bank also continued its monthly meetings for the Women of Wisdom (WOW) Women Empowerment initiative.

■ Organizing the 10th edition of the AJYAL training program, which attracts a new cohort of high-potential employees with less than five years of experience at the Bank. This program aims to refine their skills and support their professional and personal growth.

Global and Regional Awards

In recognition of its exceptional customer service, corporate social responsibility efforts, and commitment to empowering women and youth, Gulf Bank has received 13 international and regional awards.

Prestigious Rankings

Gulf Bank has been ranked among the top 100 companies in the region by Forbes and was recognized by The Banker as one of the top 100 Arab banks for 2024. The bank holds a prestigious "A" rating from all three major credit rating agencies, with total assets reaching KD 7.5 billion as of September 2024.

Financial Literacy Campaigns

For the fourth consecutive year, Gulf Bank has supported the "Diraya" financial literacy campaign, organized by the Kuwait Banking Association in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait. Additionally, the Bank has launched the "A Step Towards Change" campaign, aimed at reducing plastic usage in society.

Two Marathons in One Year

In 2024, Gulf Bank successfully organized two editions of the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon, the only internationally recognized marathon in Kuwait. The ninth edition, postponed due to the war in Gaza, and the tenth edition, which saw the participation of 10,000 runners from both within Kuwait and abroad, reaffirming our commitment to supporting health and fitness in the community.



The distinctive customer experience has become more distinctive.



Gulf Bank is a major supporter of the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign.



Part of the Gulf Bank Marathon activities.



The first winner of the Al Dana Millionaire Prize after its value was increased to two million dinars.



Part of the social initiatives during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

A fruitful collaboration between Zain and the International Islamic Charity Organization

Zain's 2025 calendar: a message of solidarity from Kuwait to Palestine

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: Zain has unveiled its 2025 annual calendar, created this year in collaboration with the International Islamic Charity Organization, titled From Kuwait to Palestine. The calendar sends a unified message of solidarity for a shared cause.

The partnership was announced in the presence of Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Chairman of the Board of the International Islamic Charitable Organization Dr. Abdullah Al-Matouq, the organization's Director General Bader Al-Sumait, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, and officials from both entities.

The calendar features exquisite illustrations and artworks that celebrate the rich Palestinian heritage. These were exclusively developed for Zain's calendar by the talented Palestinian-Jordanian artist Salma Kanaan, who brought various Palestinian landmarks and elements to life through her vibrant artistic style. She drew inspiration from her heritage and the deeply rooted spirit of the Palestinian people, and discovered her passion for art at a young age, seeing it as a powerful medium for expression and resistance.

The illustrations in the calendar depict iconic Palestinian elements such as Al-Aqsa Mosque, the olive tree, Dome



Al-Gharabally, Al-Matouq, Al-Sumait, and Al-Khashti

of the Rock, the keffiyeh, the watermelon, Al-Ibrahimi Mosque, Handala, Jaffa oranges, the Palestine sunbird, the poppy anemone, the Faqqa Iris, and the Key of Return.

The calendar is priced at KD 5, with

all proceeds allocated to supporting the IICO's campaigns dedicated to aiding the Palestinian people. Additionally, users can easily contribute extra donations via QR codes embedded throughout the calendar, linking directly to the

organization's donation platform. The campaigns include a food aid convoy providing essential supplies to families and a campaign for distributing clothing to orphans in Gaza.

In line with Zain's sustainability



Zain's 2025 calendar

strategy, the calendar is made from recyclable materials. It is available at select locations, including Zain's HQ in Shuwaikh, new Al Kout Mall, The Warehouse Mall, Assima Mall, Farwaniya Co-op, Kuwait International Airport, Hawalli and Rawda Co-op, Mishref Co-op, Baitak Tower, Marina Mall, 360 Mall, Saad Al-Abdullah Co-op, Sahara Center, Adan Co-op, and The Avenues (Phase 4). Customers can also order it through Zain's official website at kw.zain.com.

This calendar is more than a collec-

tion of dates and symbols; it is a testament to the enduring bond between Kuwait and Palestine. Each symbol represents not only an aspect of Palestinian culture but also the strength and resilience of its people.

Zain proudly stands with Palestine, echoing Kuwait's longstanding commitment to justice and peace. These symbols serve not only as cultural markers but also as powerful reminders of a cause that continues to inspire and unite us all.

Regional success across Kuwait, Saudi, UAE & Bahrain

Kamco Invest manages 9 bond and sukuk issuances worth \$4.2b in '24

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, successfully lead and managed nine bonds and sukuk issuances in 2024 worth USD 4.2bn. The transactions consisted of five sukuk and four bond issuances for financial institutions and corporates in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

The Debt Capital Markets team acted as Joint Lead Manager for three Kuwaiti issuers worth USD1.15bn. These issuances include the first Perpetual Additional Tier 1 Capital Bond issuance denominated in Kuwaiti Dinar by a bank, which is also considered to be amongst the largest Kuwaiti Dinar issuances in the sector and a landmark achievement for the local debt market. Leveraging on its strong regional presence and wide network of investors, the team also managed six regional issuances, three in UAE worth USD1.4bn, two in Saudi Arabia worth USD1.15bn, and one in Bahrain worth USD500mn.

Since launching its debt capital markets platform, Kamco Invest has played a key role in managing over USD20.2bn through conventional and Islamic debt issuances. This achievement highlights the Company's position as a trusted debt advisor in the region, assisting clients in navigating the complexities of issuing debt capital instruments including bonds and sukuk with tailored solutions to meet their diverse requirements.

The GCC debt capital markets witnessed significant growth in 2024, with total bond and sukuk issuances reaching USD184.9bn during the year, a 59.1% increase compared to USD116.2bn in 2023. This surge was driven by higher corporate issuances, which rose by 51.6% to USD107.6bn, and government issuances, which grew by 71.1% to USD77.3bn. Saudi Arabia emerged as the largest issuer in the region, with USD85.1bn in issuances, dethroning the UAE, which recorded USD61.6bn. Additionally, perpetual instruments saw renewed momentum, more than doubling to USD10.7bn, with Saudi issuers leading this category.

Abdullah M. AlSharekh, Managing Director of Markets and Investment Banking, said, "We are proud to continue building our track record while setting new record highs in terms of value of completed transactions. Our strategic focus on fostering long-term partnerships and delivering innovative financing solutions and our involvement in a growing number of regional issuances have further solidified Kamco Invest's position as a key player in the region's debt capital markets."

Kamco Invest's ability to adapt to the evolving regulatory and economic environment in the GCC has allowed it to provide innovative solutions that cater to a diverse range of issuers across different sectors. Through aligning its offerings with regional development and investor demand, the Company has consistently delivered on promises to its clients and contributed to the growth across debt capital markets.

Executive Director of Debt Capital Markets, Omar Zaineddine, said, "Our Debt Capital Markets team is dedicated to delivering solutions that meet the evolving needs of local and regional issuers, which simultaneously plays a contributing role in the development of the region's capital markets. Throughout our years of experience and solid



Abdullah Al Sharekh



Omar A. Zaineddine

track record, we managed to develop an efficient platform that assists clients and investors in achieving their goals by building longstanding relationships and staying attuned to market dynamics. As the market continues to grow, we look forward to exploring new debt opportunities and contribute to developing the financial landscape in Kuwait and across the region."

Alsharekh concluded, "As the GCC's debt markets continue to expand, now approaching the USD1tr mark with a significant portion in sukuk, we will continue to leverage our expertise and relationships to further navigate this dynamic landscape and contribute to the region's economic growth."

The Investment Banking division at Kamco Invest successfully completed 11 transactions in 2024 valued at USD4.9bn. In addition to the nine debt issuances, the transactions included executing the largest mandatory tender offer in Kuwait's insurance sector and the Initial Public Offering of an Omani sovereign-owned oil company. Since inception, Kamco Invest has acted as an investment banker to deals exceeding USD41.2bn in equity capital markets, debt capital markets and mergers & acquisitions.

Bank invests in human capital for long-term success

Burgan Bank achieves 89% participation rate in the Great Place to Work® survey

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: Attesting to its steadfast commitment to remaining a top employer of choice in Kuwait, Burgan Bank revealed that 89% of its staff participated in its Great Place to Work® (GPTW) employee engagement survey, an impressive rate by international standards. The survey showcases the Bank's numerous efforts to foster effective communication with its employees, recognize their crucial role in achieving strategic goals, and cultivate a work environment that promotes creativity and innovation to align with the aspirations of both employees and the Bank.

"Being certified as a Great Place to Work® isn't a one-time achievement but a commitment to our employees to constantly evaluate and elevate every aspect of their work experience, providing them with the work environment that fulfills their aspirations for personal and professional development," commented Mr. Ali Akbar, Deputy General Manager – Human Resources and Development for the Group at Burgan Bank. "Guided by a vision of investing in human capital as a cornerstone of success and sustainable growth, the Bank adopts the best international practices in human resources and remains dedicated to evolving as an institution that attracts top talent and empowers them to strive for excellence."

"In line with the Bank's core values, particularly transparency, the survey results were shared with employees and carefully analyzed to identify strength points as well as areas for improvement. Based on these findings, the Bank is committed to developing actionable short-term and long-term plans aimed at enhancing the work environment, boosting employee engagement, and improving job satisfaction, ultimately contributing to an elevated quality of service for our customers," added Mr. Akbar.

It serves to note that Burgan Bank is the first bank in Kuwait to be certified as a Great Place to Work®, reflecting its steadfast commitment to providing an inspiring work environment that fosters employee growth on a personal and a professional level. Guided by its comprehensive strategy, the Bank prioritizes the development of human capital while promoting transparency, cooperation and innovation. It focuses on implementing programs and initiatives designed to elevate the work environment, strengthen employee loyalty, and encourage excellence. These efforts solidify the Bank's position as a leader in the local banking sector and are reflected in the outstanding banking experience it provides to customers, in accordance with international standards.

About Burgan Bank

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is a Kuwait-based conventional bank with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institution sectors. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly sought to diversify its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base.

Burgan Bank has majority-owned subsidiaries, collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group", in the MENA region. This Group is supported by one of the largest branch networks across the region and includes: Gulf Bank Algeria – AGB (Algeria), Tunis International Bank – TIB (Tunisia), and Burgan Bank Turkey. Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office, Burgan Fi-



Mr. Ali Akbar, Deputy General Manager – Human Resources and Development for the Group at Burgan Bank.

ancial Services Limited.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years, through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Moreover, Burgan Bank's brand has been built on a foundation of real values – trust, commitment, excellence, and progression – which serve as a reminder of the high standards to which the Bank always aspires. In fact, the Bank's core philosophy of "Driven by You" is the foundation on which its products and services are continuously developed.

Burgan Bank has achieved the LEED v4.1 O+M: EB Gold Certification for its Head Office in Kuwait City. The Bank has also obtained the ISO/IEC 27001: 2022 Information Security Management Systems certificate (ISMS), ISO/IEC 27701:2019 Privacy Information Management Systems (PIMS), ISO/IEC 20000-1: 2018 Information Technology Service Management System (ITSMS) and was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System (QMS), making it one of the few banks in the GCC and Kuwait to receive such certification for five consecutive times. At the same time, the Bank has the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twenty consecutive years. Moreover, in a testament to its dedication to the development of its human capital, Burgan Bank is the first bank in Kuwait to be certified as a Great Place to Work®, earning the distinct honor in 2023.

Burgan Bank is a majority-owned subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), one of the largest holding companies in the MENA region.

3 months waiting period to reapply for registration

National Fund delists four companies from registry for violating regulations

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development has removed four companies from its national registry due to violations of regulations outlined in Article 8 of the National Registry Rules, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This action is based on non-compliance with various requirements, including failure to provide

necessary data on time, using the company for unintended purposes and unauthorized changes to company structure or ownership.

The National Fund is authorized to cancel registration if a company fails to meet its established criteria or if the certificate issued is exploited illegally.

Companies that are delisted cannot reapply for registration for

three months unless the reasons for the deletion are addressed.

Additionally, if a certificate is canceled, its validity is immediately suspended and the decision is published in the official Gazette.

The National Registry serves as the official database for small and medium enterprises approved by the National Fund.

Prices settle at \$2,639.56 per ounce

Gold futures drop slightly as market awaits Fed's stance on interest rates

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The gold prices held steady on Monday as investors awaited crucial US economic data set to be released this week, which could provide insights into the Federal Reserve's future stance on interest rates, reports Al-Rai daily.

The yellow metal settled at \$2,639.56 per ounce, while US gold futures dipped slightly by 0.1 percent to \$2,652 per ounce.

The market's focus is on the US jobs report, due on Friday, which could provide further clues on the Fed's rate plans following a recent market shakeup when the Fed scaled back its forecast for rate cuts by 2025.

Additionally, investors are looking forward to the ADP employment report and the release of the Federal Reserve's last monetary policy meeting minutes.

Gold traditionally rises when interest rates fall and is also sought after as a hedge during times of political uncertainty and inflation.

With US President-elect Donald Trump set to return to the White House on January 20, his proposed tariffs and protectionist trade policies are expected to stoke inflation, potentially influencing the Fed's decision on interest rates and, in turn, the price of gold.

Oil prices dip, US dollar strengthens against Japanese yen

Global stocks mixed as Wall Street recovers from holiday blues

HONG KONG, Jan 6, (AP): Global stocks were mixed on Monday after Wall Street snapped out of a spell of holiday season blues.

Germany's DAX added 0.4% lower, to 19,984.85, and the CAC 40 in Paris was up 0.6% to 7,324.36. Britain's FTSE 100 fell 0.2% to 8,212.70.

The future for the S&P 500 was 0.3% higher and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.1%.

Japan's finance minister rang in the New Year as Tokyo's market resumed trading after the long traditional holiday, as staff in suits and kimonos clapped for good fortune in 2025.

"The Japanese government will act to secure economic growth led by wage increases and investment," the finance minister, Katsunobu Kato said, vowing to "grasp signs of recovery" and to ensure that "every single citizen can feel the improvement in their salaries."

The prevailing sentiment in much of Asia has been caution over potential

changes by President-elect Donald Trump, who has vowed to sharply raise tariffs on imports from China and other countries, potentially denting growth for a region heavily reliant on trade.

Nippon Steel was expected to sue after U.S. President Joe Biden rejected its nearly \$15 billion bid to acquire Pittsburgh-based U.S. Steel Corp, citing national security concerns. Nippon Steel's shares fell 0.8% in Tokyo on Monday. U.S. Steel's shares sank 6.5% on Friday.

"It is an unfortunate fact that Japanese industry has voiced concerns about future investment between the U.S. and Japan," Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said Monday, without referring directly to the steelmakers. "We have to take this very seriously."

"We strongly urge the U.S. government to take action to dispel such concerns. We need to have a clear statement as to why there are security concerns, otherwise we will not be able to talk about it in the future. No matter how much

we are an ally, I believe that the points I have just made are extremely important for our future relations," Ishiba said.

Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 1.5% to 39,307.05, while the Hang Seng in Hong Kong declined 0.4% to 19,677.37.

The Shanghai Composite index slipped 0.1% to 3,206.92.

Markets shrugged off a report that China's services economy grew at its fastest pace in seven months in December, while export businesses declined, according to a private sector survey. The index rose to 52.2 in December, surpassing the 50 level that separates expansion from contraction.

Elsewhere in Asia, the mood was lighter. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.1% to 8,257.40 and Taiwan's Taiex jumped 2.8%.

In South Korea, the Kospi jumped 1.9% to 2,488.64, driven by a 9.8% increase in computer chip maker SK Hynix Inc. and a 2.8% jump in shares in Samsung Electronics, the country's biggest company.



Trevor Matthews, (from left), Nick Gordon, Brian Young, Felicity Jones, Adrien Brody, winner of the award for best performance by a male actor in a motion picture - drama for 'The Brutalist', Daniel Blumberg, Brady Corbet, winner of the award for best director - motion picture for 'The Brutalist', Mona Fastvold, and Guy Pearce pose with the award for best motion picture - drama for 'The Brutalist' during the 82nd Golden Globes on Sunday, Jan. 5, at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)



Adriana Paz, (from left), Edgar Ramirez, Selena Gomez, Jacques Audiard, Karla Sofia Gascon, and Zoe Saldana pose in the press room with the award for best motion picture - musical or comedy for 'Emilia Perez' during the 82nd Golden Globes on Sunday, Jan. 5, at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)

Golden Globes

Kieran Culkin, Zoe Saldaña among big winners

'The Brutalist,' 'Emilia Perez' win top honors

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif., Jan 6, (AP): Two wildly audacious films - Brady Corbet's 215-minute postwar epic "The Brutalist" and Jacques Audiard's Spanish language, genre-shifting trans musical "Emilia Perez" - won top honors at the 82nd Golden Globes on Sunday.

The Globes, which are still finding their footing after years of scandal and makeover, scattered awards around to a number of films. But the awards group put its strongest support behind a pair of movies that sought to defy easy categorization.

"The Brutalist" was crowned best film, drama, putting one of 2024's most ambitious films on course to be a major contender at the Academy Awards. The film, shot in VistaVision and released with an intermission, also won best director for Corbet and best actor for Adrien Brody. In his acceptance speech, Corbet spoke about filmmakers needing approval on the final cut.

"I was told that this film was undistributable," said Corbet. "No one was asking for a three-and-a-half-hour film about a mid-century designer in 70mm. But it works."

Contender

"Emilia Pérez" won best film, comedy or musical, elevating the Oscar chances of Netflix's top contender. It also won best supporting actress for Zoe Saldaña, best song ("El Mal") and best non-English language film. Audiard, the French director, made way for Karla Sofia Gascón, the film's transgender star who plays a Mexican drug lord who undergoes gender affirming surgery, to speak on behalf of the film.

"The light always wins over darkness," said Gascón, gesturing to her brightly orange dress. "You can maybe put us in jail. You can beat us up. But you never can take away our soul or existence or identity."

"I am who I am. Not who you want." Though the Globes audience was particularly starry, including nominees Zendaya, Timothée Chalamet, Angelina Jolie and Daniel Craig, most of the winners hailed from smaller, less seen films.

That included some surprises. One was Demi Moore's win for best actress in a comedy or musical. Her comeback performance in "The Substance," about a Hollywood star who resorts to an experimental process to regain her youth, landed the 62-year-old Moore her first Globe - a victory that came over the heavily favored Mikayla Madison of "Anora."

"I'm just in shock right now. I've been doing this a long time, like over 45 years, and this is the first thing I've ever won as an actor," said Moore, who was last nominated by the Globes for a film role in 1991 for "Ghost." "Thirty years ago, I had a producer tell me that I was a popcorn actress."

Best actress, in a drama film, was an even bigger surprise. The Brazilian actress Fernanda Torres won for her performance in "I'm Still Here," a based-on-a-true-story drama about a family living through the disappearance of political dissident Rubens Paiva in 1970s Rio de Janeiro. Torres dedicated the award to her mother, the great actor Fernanda Montenegro, who appears in "I'm Still Here," too.

"She was here 25 years ago," said Torres. "And this is like a proof that art



Cosmo Jarvis, (from left), Michaela Clavell, Tadanobu Asano, Anna Sawai, Hiroyuki Sanada, Rachel Kondo and Justin Marks pose with the award for best television series - drama for 'Shogun.' (AP)



Fernanda Torres poses with the award for best performance for 'I'm Still Here.' (AP)



Jean Smart poses with the award for best performance for 'Hacks.' (AP)



Jeff Goldblum, (from left), Michelle Yeoh, Ariana Grande, Cynthia Erivo, Marc Platt, and Jon M. Chu pose with the award for "Wicked." (AP)

can endure through life even through difficult moments."

Best supporting actor in a musical or comedy went to Sebastian Stan for "A Different Man," in which Stan plays a man with a deformed face who's

healed. Stan, who was also nominated for playing Donald Trump in "The Apprentice," noted that both films were hard to get made.

"These are tough subject matters but these films are real and they're ne-



Demi Moore poses with the award for best performance by a female actor in a motion picture - musical or comedy for 'The Substance.' (AP)



Jessica Gunning poses with the award for best performance for 'Baby Reindeer.' (AP)

essary," said Stan. "But we can't be afraid and look away."

Comedian Nikki Glaser kicked off the Globes, with a promise: "I'm not here to roast you."

But Glaser, a stand-up whose breakthrough came in a withering roast of Tom Brady, made her way around the ballroom of the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California, on Sunday picking out plenty of targets in an opening monologue she had worked out extensively in comedy clubs beforehand.

While Glaser might not have



Zoe Saldana with award for best performance in a supporting role for 'Emilia Perez.' (AP)



Jodie Foster with the award for best performance for 'True Detective: Night Country.' (AP)



Sebastian Stan poses with the award for best performance for 'A Different Man.' (AP)



Anna Sawai poses with the award for best performance for 'Shogun.' (AP)

reached Tina Fey and Amy Poehler levels of laughs, the monologue was a winner, and a dramatic improvement over last year's host, Jo Koy. Last year's Globes, following a diversity and ethics scandal that led to the dissolution of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, were widely panned. But they delivered where it counted: Ratings rebounded to about 10 million viewers, according to Nielsen. CBS, who waded in after NBC dumped the Globes, signed up for five more years.

Hosting the Globes two weeks before the inauguration of Donald Trump, Glaser reserved perhaps her most cutting line for the entire room of Hollywood stars.

"You could really do anything... except tell the country who to vote for," said Glaser. "But it's OK, you'll get 'em next time... if there is one. I'm scared."

The Globes are now owned by Todd Boehly's Eldridge Industries and Dick Clark Productions, which acquired the award show from the now defunct Hollywood Foreign Press Association. However, more than a dozen former HFPA members are currently seeking to have the sale to Eldridge Industries and Dick Clark Productions rescinded.

Golden Globe Winners

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif., Jan 6, (AP): "Emilia Pérez" won best musical or comedy motion picture at the 82nd Golden Globes.

"The Brutalist" won best motion picture drama, and Adrien Brody took home best actor for his role in the film.

"Shogun" won best television drama, and "Hacks" won for TV comedy or musical. Emilia Pérez entered the night as the lead nominee, with 10 nods.

Demi Moore, Sebastian Stan, Zoe Saldaña, Kieran Culkin and Jean Smart were among the acting winners.

Comedian Nikki Glaser hosted Sunday's ceremony from the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California.

Here's a list of winners at Sunday's Golden Globes:

Movies

- Best motion picture, drama: "The Brutalist"
- Best motion picture, musical or comedy: "Emilia Pérez"
- Best performance by a female actor in a motion picture, drama: Fernanda Torres, "I'm Still Here"
- Best performance by a male actor in a motion picture, drama: Adrien Brody, "The Brutalist"
- Best performance by a female actor in a motion picture, musical or com-

edy: Demi Moore, "The Substance"

■ Best performance by a male actor in a motion picture, musical or comedy:

Sebastian Stan, "A Different Man"

■ Best performance by a female actor in a supporting role: Zoe Saldaña, "Emilia Pérez"



Ali Wong with the award for best performance for 'Ali Wong: Single Lady.'

■ Best performance by a male actor in a supporting role: Kieran Culkin, "A Real Pain"

■ Cinematic and Box Office Achievement: "Wicked"

■ Best motion picture, non-English: "Emilia Pérez"

■ Best motion picture, animated: "Flow"

■ Best director: Brady Corbet, "The Brutalist"

■ Best screenplay: Peter Straughan, "Conclave"

■ Best original score: Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross, "Challengers"

■ Best original song: "El Mal" from "Emilia Pérez" music/lyrics by Clément Duclou, Camille, Jacques Au-

diard

Television

- Best television series, drama: "Shogun"
- Best television series, comedy or musical: "Hacks"
- Best performance by a female actor, drama: Anna Sawai, "Shogun"
- Best performance by a male actor, drama: Hiroyuki Sanada, "Shogun"
- Best performance by a female actor TV series, musical or comedy: Jean Smart, "Hacks"
- Best performance by a male actor, TV series, musical or comedy: Jeremy Allen White, "The Bear"
- Best limited series, anthology series or movie made for television: "Baby Reindeer"
- Best performance by a male actor in a limited series, anthology series or movie made for television: Colin Farrell, "The Penguin"
- Best performance by a female actor in a limited series, anthology series or movie made for television: Jodie Foster, "True Detective: Night Country"
- Best performance by a female actor in a supporting role: Jessica Gunning, "Baby Reindeer"
- Best performance by a male actor in a supporting role: Tadanobu Asano, "Shogun"
- Best performance in stand-up comedy on TV: Ali Wong, "Ali Wong: Single Lady"

Globes Fashion

Classic red carpet glamour returns

Timeless glamour and opera gloves shine at Globes

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif., Jan 6, (AP): Fasten your seatbelts, fashion fans! With some of Hollywood's most fashion-forward stars up for awards this year, it's going to be an eventful season. And the Golden Globes gets it all started, with stars (and their stylists) marking their territory at one of Hollywood's splashiest events. Big this year: lots of sparkle and shine, and a return to old-school red carpet glamour. Also: long opera gloves.

Here are some of the looks catching attention Sunday at the Golden Globes:

She didn't wear pink, the favored color of *Glinda the Good*. But "Wicked" star Grande evoked another Ozian color - yellow (of the yellow brick road, of course) in Givenchy haute couture. The gown was in pale silk with a hand-beaded bodice, a vintage 1966 gown from what the designer calls the Audrey Hepburn era of Givenchy. She wore a Swarovski choker and white opera gloves.

Few red-carpet arrivals were more anticipated than that of Mikey Madison, the breakout "Anora" star who's been making waves in the fashion world, too, this season. Madison wore a shiny gold, strapless column gown from Bottega Veneta that emphasized her much-discussed fashion transformation into classic movie-star glamour.

Actor Blanchett looked like an awards statue come to life in a glistening gold gown with a ruched top by Louis Vuitton - one that she also wore at the Cannes Film Festival. New gold stones were added to the gown, designed by Nicholas Ghesquiere, to freshen the look.



Zendaya arrives at the 82nd Golden Globes on Sunday, Jan. 5, at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)



Ariana Grande



Kate Hudson



Cate Blanchett



Kristen Bell

Voluminous

Where Blanchett glistened in gold, Kidman sparkled in silver, in a daring, one-shoulder backless Balenciaga gown. The "Babygirl" star polished off the look with a chic, voluminous half-ponytail.

Actor-comedian Wong wasn't easy to miss on the carpet: She wore a cascading gown of bright fire-engine red tulle. The grand Balenciaga number was accessorized with a satin belt and glamorous black spandex opera gloves, almost up to the shoulder.

The "Don't Blink Twice" director went traditional with a black velvet Saint Laurent gown featuring a plunging neckline, with a sweet pastel pink silk bow around her waist. She was a favorite of Kevin Huynh, InStyle's fashion director, who said he loved how she "channeled old-school Hollywood glamour."

Globes host Nikki Glaser zeroed right in on Chalamet, one of the hottest stars in Hollywood, in her monologue, telling him: "You have the most gorgeous eyelashes on your upper lip." As for the clothes on his body, Chalamet went more traditional than other recent trips to the carpet, wearing a sleek Tom Ford black suit with embellished jacket, a white shirt and a blue scarf tossed around his neck (or was it a tie?) No wool beanie like in the Dylan-inspired look he wore to the New York premiere of his film, "A Complete Unknown."

Edebiri has been a bright spot of many a recent red carpet. This time, she went in an unusual direction: menswear. Workin with designer Jonathan Anderson at the label Loewe, Edebiri decided to channel Julia Roberts' memorable Golden Globe attire at the 1990 show - a big, boxy gray suit. Edebiri added a brilliant gold leaf necklace to the mix, resembling a long necktie.

One surefire red-carpet star is "Sing Sing" actor Colman Domingo, who consistently wows with his appearances. These



Angelina Jolie



Kate Winslet



Dakota Fanning



Kaley Cuoco



Nicole Kidman

Globes were no exception. His Valentino ensemble included a voluminous, ever-stylish silk bow tie in black and white, and a polka dot shirt.

The "Wicked" actor continued her season-long fashion show in a black embellished dress by Louis Vuitton, choosing not to wear green this time. But it was her remarkably detailed nail art, a hallmark of Erivo's style, that got a lot of attention, too, including her admission on E! News that it had

taken her manicurist five hours to create the day's artwork.

Those opera gloves are really a thing this year: Also wearing them was actor Washington, who sported a neon pink silk taffeta gown, also from Balenciaga, with a train - the combo providing "a bit of edgy glamour," Huynh said.

Jolie was definitely part of the evening's glamour contingent, wearing a glistening Alexander McQueen gown of intertwining

metallic colors in a branchlike pattern. Her daughter, Zahara, dressed to coordinate with mom, with a similar pattern on her long white dress. Huynh said it was one of his favorite looks, because while Jolie is often known to wear simple, sleek gowns, "this dazzling, heavily embellished McQueen look made her every bit the silver screen siren."

Williams, of "Abbott Elementary," is never safe or boring on the carpet. On Sunday he sported

a gray pinstripe suit with cropped, double-breasted jacket with dramatic shoulder pads and a bare chest peeking out, over loose trousers.

Williams' colleague, "Abbott Elementary" creator and star Quinta Bronson, looked sleek in a heavily embellished custom Roberto Cavalli gown. Huynh called the color, chocolate brown, "the color of the season."

Powell eschewed the tie and instead channeled casual glamour in

an open-necked brown shirt and black velvet jacket, by Giorgio Armani. Looks like Powell's "are proving that best-dressed lists aren't just for actresses," Huynh said.

It's been the year of celeb lookalike contests. Max Braunstein won a Powell lookalike contest. Miles Mitchell won a Chalamet event. And so they both ended up at the Globes. Their key fashion accessory: Signs that read "I won a lookalike contest and now I'm at the Golden Globes."



Kerry Washington



Felicity Jones



Elle Fanning



Amy Adams



Alexandra Daddario

Kuwait to host 6th Annual Conference on Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

Conference aims to update treatment practices in medical rehab

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: Head of the Medical Authority at the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Hospital and Head of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Departments Council at the Ministry of Health Dr. Jamal Mohammad Jamal announced the launch of the 6th Kuwait Conference on Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. The event, which will be held under the patronage of the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, will take place from January 9 to 11 under the theme "The Rehabilitation Journey Continues... Current Updates and Recommendations."

In a press release issued recently, Dr. Jamal affirmed that the conference will feature 32 doctors from Kuwait, Canada, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, and it offers an

opportunity to exchange knowledge, as well as provides participants with 17 continuing education points accredited by the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties.

He affirmed the importance of the conference as a scientific platform to improve medical performance, develop treatment programs, and share professional experiences. This, in turn, will enhance the quality of medical rehabilitation services in Kuwait by learning about the latest standards and technologies in the field worldwide, promoting awareness of rehabilitation's importance, and improving the skills of workers in this field.

Dr. Jamal explained that the conference represents a major step towards building a healthy society, free from the challenges faced by patients with disabilities, and improving the level of medical rehabilitation services to address various diseases and health issues.

The conference aligns with New Kuwait 2035 vision and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by supporting professionals in the field of medical rehabilitation and enhancing the quality of life within society. Achieving these goals relies heavily on the development of medical competencies and the adoption of modern technologies.

The conference will feature two specialized workshops. One will focus on the use of ultrasound for diagnosing and treating joint and muscle issues such as knee, shoulder, and ankle problems. The second workshop will address the diagnosis and treatment of muscle spasms associated with central nervous system conditions like strokes and spinal cord injuries.

The conference will also include lectures and training sessions on a range of topics, including spinal cord injury, sports injuries, strokes, back pain, and age-related conditions.

In addition, scientific and medical posters will be presented, showcasing the ongoing scientific research movement within Kuwait.

Dr. Jamal affirmed that Kuwait continues to lead the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation in the region, and has earned international recognition for its quality and medical safety standards.

He said the sector has seen significant developments, including the modernization of medical devices and systems, the enhancement of specialized facilities and clinics, and the hosting of international experts.

Dr. Jamal highlighted the ongoing expansion of physical medicine and rehabilitation departments in various hospitals of the Ministry of Health, and announced plans to establish a new hospital dedicated to physical medicine for further supporting and advancing this specialty in the country.



The Dasman Diabetes Institute official receives the Best Health Application Award for 'Dasman Switch.'

Health care innovation

DDI wins best health app award for Dasman Switch

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Dasman Diabetes Institute was awarded the Best Health Application Award in Kuwait for its innovative Dasman Switch application during the 12th Arab Media Forum, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This recognition highlights the institute's commitment to leveraging technology for social responsibility and health awareness.

The key highlights of the Dasman Switch Application include:

Promoting healthy lifestyles: The application provides valuable nutritional information about various food products, suggesting healthier alternatives for those unsuitable for individuals looking to manage or prevent diabetes.

It aims to raise awareness about the risks of unhealthy eating habits and encourage healthier dietary choices.

Accessible Health Education: De-

signed to be simple and user-friendly, Dasman Switch offers an innovative way for individuals to stay informed about nutrition and health; accessible to everyone, wherever they are.

Free to the Public: The app is available free of charge, making health information and guidance accessible to all members of society, ultimately contributing to the prevention of diabetes and promoting overall well-being.

In a statement the acting DDI Director General, Dr. Faisal Al-Rifai, emphasized the institute's dedication to innovation, saying the app aligns with their efforts to help individuals adopt healthier lifestyles through increased awareness and knowledge.

The app's contribution to diabetes prevention and its focus on social responsibility exemplify the institute's commitment to the health of both Kuwaiti citizens and residents.

Cholera vaccination

India HMPV cases rise to 3

NEW DELHI, Jan. 6, (Xinhua): The number of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) cases rose to three in India on Monday after one more case, a two-month-old infant, was detected in the country's western state of Gujarat.

Earlier in the day, two cases, a 3-month-old female infant and an 8-month-old male infant, were confirmed in the southern state of Karnataka.

Confirming the HMPV case in Gujarat, the state's Health Minister Rushikesh Patel said that the 2-month-old infant had arrived from the neighboring state of Rajasthan.

In response to the detection of three HMPV cases in the country, necessary health preparedness measures have been initiated in the national capital Delhi.

□ □ □

Cholera: Malawi health authorities

have launched cholera vaccination campaigns in four districts following the resurgence of the disease, which has caused over 200 cases and at least 13 deaths since September 2024.

Spokesperson in the Ministry of Health Adrian Chikumbe shared the update with local media on Sunday via a social media group, identifying Chitipa and Karonga in the north and Balaka and Machinga in the south as the affected districts.

Chikumbe said that Malawi has received over 720,000 doses of oral cholera vaccine (OCV) from the World Health Organization (WHO), with plans to administer them in the affected areas by mid-January.

Malawi previously battled its worst cholera outbreak in March 2022, declaring it a National Public Health Emergency on Dec. 5 of the same year.

Indonesia takes action to end malnutrition

JAKARTA, Indonesia, Jan 6, (AP): Indonesia's new government started an ambitious project on Monday to fight malnutrition by feeding nearly 90 million children and pregnant women that is expected to cost \$28 billion through 2029, although critics question whether the program is affordable.

The Free Nutritious Meal program delivers on a campaign promise by President Prabowo Subianto, who was elected last year to lead the nation, which has more than 282 million people and Southeast Asia's largest economy. He said the program aims to fight the stunting of growth that afflicts 21.5% of Indonesian children younger than 5 and would raise the income of farmers.

Subianto has pledged to accelerate GDP growth to 8% from 5% now.

In his inauguration speech in October, Subianto said many children are malnourished. His promise to provide free school lunches and milk to 83 million students at more than 400,000 schools is part of a longer-term strategy to develop the nation's human resources to achieve a "Golden Indonesia" generation by 2045.

"Too many of our brothers and sisters are below the poverty line, too many of our children go to school without breakfast and do not have clothes for school," Subianto said.

Subianto's signature program could cost upward of 450 trillion rupiah (\$28 billion) by the end of his term in 2029. He said his team has made the calculations to run such a program, and "We are capable."

The government's target is to reach

Free meals offered to children and pregnant women



A student has his meal during the kick off of President Prabowo Subianto's ambitious free meal program to feed children and pregnant women nationwide despite critics saying that its required logistics could hurt Indonesia's state finances and economy, at an elementary school in Depok, West Java, Indonesia, Monday, Jan. 6, 2025. (AP)

an initial 19.5 million schoolchildren and pregnant women in 2025 with a budget of 71 trillion rupiah (\$4.3 billion) so as to keep the annual deficit under a legislated ceiling of 3% of GDP, said Dadan Hindayana, the head of the newly formed National Nutrition Agency.

Hindayana said the money would buy an estimated 6.7 million tons of rice, 1.2 million tons of chicken, 500,000 tons of beef, 1 million tons of fish, vegetable and fruit, and 4 million kiloliters of milk.

Nearly 2,000 cooperatives will be involved in the free meals program by

providing eggs, vegetables, rice, fish, meat, milk and other food, Cooperative Minister Budi Arie Setiadi said.

On Monday, a truck carrying food arrived at SD Cilangkap 08, a primary school in the Jakarta satellite city of Depok. The 740 students were provided rice, stir-fried vegetables, tempeh, stir-fried chicken and oranges.

"We will send a team to each school to facilitate the meal distribution to students every day," Hindayana said, adding that the program will provide one meal per day for each student from early childhood education to senior high

school, covering a third of the daily caloric needs for children, with the government providing the meals at no cost to recipients.

But the program has drawn criticism from investors and analysts over the scale of its logistics, the burden on state finances and the economy, and its relation to the interests of industrial lobby groups.

Nailul Huda, a researcher at the Center of Economic and Law Studies, said Indonesia's state finances are not strong enough to support the program and this will lead to additional national debt.

"The burden on our state budget is too heavy if it is forced to reach 100% of the target recipients, and it will be difficult for Prabowo's government to achieve the economic growth target of 8%," Huda said.

He warned it could also worsen the external balance of payments for the country, which is already a major importer of rice, wheat, soybeans, beef and dairy products.

Reni Suwarso, the director of Institute for Democracy, Security and Strategic Studies, said the decline in the stunting rate in Indonesia was far from the target of a 14% reduction in 2024.

According to the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey, the national stunting prevalence was 21.5%, down around 0.8% from the previous year. The United Nations Children's Fund estimated that one in 12 Indonesian children younger than 5 suffers from low weight while one in five is shorter than normal. Both conditions are caused by malnourishment.

Health officials urge flu shots

Sharp increase in flu activity across US

NEW YORK, Jan 6, (AP): The holidays came with a side of flu for many Americans, with 40 states reporting high or very high levels of illness last week, according to the latest government health data.

"A lot of flu out there," said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Carrie Reed.

Of course, there are a number of bugs that cause fever, cough, sore throat and other flu-like symptoms. One is COVID-19. Another is RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus, which is a common cause of cold-like symptoms but can be dangerous for infants and the elderly.

The most recent CDC hospitalization data and other indicators show that the flu virus is trending higher than the other germs, Reed said. Several seasonal flu strains are driving cases, with no dominant one, she added.

Pediatric hospitals have been busy since November with RSV, but "influenza has now joined the party," said Dr. Jason Newland, an infectious diseases specialist at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

"Now we're really starting to roll," he added. "Our hospitals are busy."

One indicator of flu activity is the percentage of doctor's office visits driven by flu-like symptoms. That level last week was about equal to the peak of last winter's respiratory virus season - which occurred at the same time of year. Reed noted that most people avoid medical appointments over the holidays if they can help it, so the data in late December might be skewed by people who came down with sudden illnesses.

Last week's flu activity was particularly intense in the South, Southwest and western U.S. The states reporting lesser amounts of suffering were mostly in the northern Great Plains and in New England.

So far this season, the CDC estimates, there have been at least 5.3 million flu illnesses, 63,000 hospitalizations, and 2,700 deaths - including at least 11 children.

It's not clear if this winter respiratory virus season will be any worse than others. So far it seems relatively typical, at least for kids, Newland said.

U.S. health officials recommends that everyone 6 months and older get an annual flu vaccination, and they say it's not too late to get a shot.

You should also avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth because germs can spread that way, health officials say. You should also wash your hands with soap and water, clean frequently touched surfaces and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

The CDC also has been keeping its eye on a rise of illnesses from norovirus, a nasty stomach bug, with 91 outbreaks reported early in December.

Investigators also have been closely watching another kind of influenza virus, the Type A H5N1 version of bird flu. The CDC says 66 human U.S. cases of that were reported last year, but none of them in the last week.

The cases are "fairly sporadic" and the overall risk to the public remains low, Reed said. Almost all have been traced to direct contact with infected animals, with no proof of spread between people.

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SPORTS

Japanese makes only one bogey over the final 59 holes

Matsuyama has record-setting start to PGA Tour season with win at Kapalua

KAPALUA, Hawaii, Jan 6, (AP): Hideki Matsuyama opened the new season with a record performance, though it was hard to tell from his emotions. He was a machine at The Sentry, with 35 holes at birdie or better to finish at 35-under par, both PGA Tour records.

He only broke into a wide smile when his caddie, Shota Hayafuji, spoke to him on the side of the 18th green Sunday at Kapalua after one final birdie gave Matsuyama the scoring records and a three-shot victory over Collin Morikawa.

"Otoshidama arigato gozaimasu." It translates roughly to thanks for a traditional Japanese gift to children in the new year to wish them luck and prosperity. Matsuyama won \$3.6 million from his 11th career victory.

There was little luck involved over four days on a Plantation course that was vulnerable as ever without hardly any wind for which it was built. Matsuyama made only one bogey over the final 59 holes to finish at 35-under 257.

Staked to a one-shot lead going into the final round, Matsuyama holed out from 107 yards for eagle on the third hole, expanded the lead when Morikawa had consecutive three-putts -

one for par, another for bogey - and answered a late challenge with another wedge to 4 feet.

He closed with an 8-under 65 and started the new season in ways Matsuyama would not have imagined.

The 32-year-old Japanese star had only a few days of practice leading into the season opener because he was not feeling well, most recently with sores in his mouth. He decided on a whim to switch to a more center-shafted putter he received a few days after Christmas.

"I used the putter for the first here," Matsuyama said through his interpreter. Asked why that style of putter worked so well for him, he added, "I'm not sure, but it went in."

The last one was for the record book. Matsuyama wasn't entirely sure that 34 under had been the record for 72 holes. The tournament already was in the bag.

"That last putt, it felt like if I make it, then it's going to be the record," he said. "So I'm so happy that it went in."

He extended his arm and lightly pumped his fist when it fell. His 35 under broke by one the record to par Cameron Smith set at Kapalua in 2022. It also was his 35th hole of birdie or better, breaking the record

set by Smith in 2022 and matched by Sungjae Im at Kapalua last year.

"He was matching me yesterday shot-for-shot," said Morikawa, alluding to both posting a 62 in the third round that set them apart from the field.

"Today he just never let up," Morikawa said. "Then you get to the third hole and the guy holes it. I just knew I had to be on top of everything, and just kind of let a few slip on that front nine. Played a good back nine, but to win on a course like this, conditions like this, you've got to have it for 72 (holes). And I had it for 65."

Morikawa closed with a 67 to finish three behind at 32-under 260.

Matsuyama has three PGA Tour victories in the last 10 months, all of them against strong fields - Riviera last February, the first FedEx Cup playoff event in August. He moves to No. 5 in the world ranking.

Matsuyama began to build some separation when he holed a sand wedge from 107 yards on the third hole, the ball landing in front of the pin, taking one hop and disappearing in the cup for eagle.

Matsuyama saw the crowd cheer from behind the elevated green, widened his eyes and pursed his lips and

tapped fists with his caddie. And that was that. It was a methodical game, a methodical week.

Morikawa, determined to give it his best shot, stayed within two until he had a three-putt par on the fifth hole after Matsuyama hit a superb chip from behind the green to tap-in range. Then, Morikawa had another three-putt from 60 feet, this one for bogey on the sixth.

That put him four shots behind and he did well to stay in the game until the final few holes. Morikawa birdied the 14th and 15th holes - Matsuyama missed birdie chances from 6 feet and 10 feet - to close to within two shots with three to play.

Matsuyama effectively ended it with a wedge to 4 feet on the 16th for birdie.

The Sentry is a signature event with a \$20 million purse, and the \$3.6 million payoff to Matsuyama put him over \$60 million for his career.

Im closed with a 65 to finish alone in third, worth \$1.36 million.

Matsuyama is the seventh player to win both Hawaii tournaments on the PGA Tour schedule. Justin Thomas (2017) and Ernie Els (2003) are the only players to win both in the same year. Matsuyama will have a chance



Hideki Matsuyama, of Japan, holds the champions trophy after the final round of The Sentry golf event at Kapalua Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii. (AP)

to join them next week in the Sony Open on Oahu, where he won three years ago.

Taylor Pendrith delivered the most unlikely shot of the tournament, holing out his 6-iron from 200 yards on the par-5 fifth for the first albatross on the Plantation course since this

season-opening tournament moved to Kapalua in 1999.

"As soon as I hit it I knew it was going to be really good," Pendrith said. "Didn't expect it to go in. Didn't see it go in. But the fans that were up by the green went crazy so, yeah, it was a really good bonus."

Kings dominate Warriors as Rockets hold off LA Lakers



Golden State Warriors guard Moses Moody, bottom, and Sacramento Kings guard Malik Monk, top, compete for the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

Cavaliers beat Hornets for 10th straight win

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 6, (AP): Malik Monk had 26 points and 12 assists, Domanas Sabonis contributed 22 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists, and the Sacramento Kings dominated the Golden State Warriors 129-99 on Sunday night for their fourth straight win despite playing without leading scorer De'Aaron Fox.

The Kings never trailed, led 75-51 at halftime and didn't look back - with many frustrated home fans heading early for the Chase Center exits while Sacramento's lively contingent chanted "Let's go Kings!"

Stephen Curry scored 26 to go with seven rebounds after resting the first night of a back-to-back Saturday against the Grizzlies, and Andrew Wiggins added 18 points.

This marked Sacramento's first visit to Chase Center since coach Mike Brown - the former top assistant for Golden State - was dismissed Dec. 27 following a 13-18 start. Warriors coach Steve Kerr continued to express his "shock" over good friend Brown's firing. Doug Christie is interim coach.

Rockets 119, Lakers 115
In Houston, Jalen Green scored 33 points and Fred VanVleet grabbed a key steal late to allow the Houston Rockets to hold on for a win over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Amen Thompson added 23 points and a career-high 16 rebounds in his return after a two-game suspension to help Houston eke out the victory after leading by as many as 22.

A basket by LeBron James got the Lakers within 117-115 with eight seconds to go. Alperen Sengun missed 1 of 2 free throws after that to give Los Angeles a chance to tie it.

But VanVleet stole the inbounds pass intended for James. VanVleet made 1 of 2 free throws to secure the victory.

Anthony Davis had 30 points and 13 rebounds for the Lakers. James added 21 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists.



Houston Rockets forward Amen Thompson (1) shoots against Los Angeles Lakers center Jaxson Hayes (11) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Houston. (AP)

Cavaliers 115 Hornets 105
In Cleveland, Darius Garland scored 25 points, Jarrett Allen had 19 points and 11 rebounds, and the NBA-leading Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Charlotte Hornets to extend their winning streak to 10.

Donovan Mitchell had 17 of his 19 points in the second half and Evan Mobley added 17 for Cleveland, which won for the 18th time in 19 home games and is 31-4 overall. All 10 victories in the Cavaliers' streak have been by double digits, a franchise record.

LaMelo Ball and Brandon Miller paced Charlotte with 24 points apiece, while Nick Smith Jr. had 18 off the

bench. The Hornets dropped their 10th in a row and are 1-18 since Nov. 23.

Cleveland has not lost since Dec. 8 at Miami. Its lone home defeat was Nov. 27 against Atlanta.

Jazz 105, Magic 92
In Orlando, Brice Sensabaugh scored 27 points, Collin Sexton added 20 and Walker Kessler grabbed 17 rebounds for the Utah Jazz in a win over the Orlando Magic.

Sensabaugh shot 11 for 19 from the field including 5 of 6 on 3-pointers in 28 minutes off the bench.

Johnny Juzang, Kyle Filipowski and Svi Mykhailiuk scored 12 points each for Utah, who have won two in a row.

Jett Howard led Orlando with a career-high 21 points. Wendell Carter Jr. had 15 points and Cole Anthony added 12 points in his first start since the final game of the 2022-23 season.

The Magic shot 36% overall and made 14 of 47 3-point shots (30%).

Pelicans 110 Wizards 98
In Washington, CJ McCollum scored 25 points and Dejounte Murray had a triple-double to help the New Orleans Pelicans to a second straight victory over the Washington Wizards.

Murray had 14 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds for his 20th career triple-double. Trey Murphy III added 22 points for the Pelicans.

New Orleans (7-29) swept a home-and-home set with the Wizards (6-27) and moved past them in the standings in this matchup of the NBA's bottom two teams. The Pelicans had dropped 11 in a row before winning these two games.

Relays filled with mishaps

Ukraine wins first World Cup luge medal since '09

SIGULDA, Latvia, Jan 6, (AP): Germany won a World Cup luge team relay, with Austria finishing second. That's not exactly breaking news. Those nations have the top two luge programs in the world right now.

The news was Ukraine finishing third - and how the war-torn nation got there.

Ukraine won its first World Cup luge medal in more than 16 years. The country's relay team - singles sliders Yulianna Tunytska and Andriy Mandziy, along with Ihor Hoi and Nazarii Kachmar on one doubles sled, Olena Stetskiy and Oleksandra Mokh on the other - finished third in a race at Sigulda, Latvia.

"It's amazing," Tunytska said, holding a bouquet of flowers and blowing kisses on the award podium afterward.

The medal came in a very unconventional way. There were seven teams in the relay, and four of them didn't finish. Ukraine finished almost four seconds back of Germany's winning time - four seconds is a lifetime in luge, a sport where races are often decided by hundredths or even thousandths of a second - but out of the three finishers, it was third-fastest.

That meant bronze. "Congratulations to Ukraine. ... Drama is drama, and a great story is a great story," commentator Tim Singer said on the International Luge Federation's broadcast of the race.

To say Ukraine - a nation about to enter its fourth year of war with Russia - does not have much in the way of sliding resources would be an understatement.

There is no sliding track in Ukraine; the team considers the facility in Sigulda to be its home track and prepares for seasons with a fall training camp there. Sliders from many nations - Germany, the U.S., Canada, Italy, Austria, China, South Korea and Switzerland among them - often have the chance to slide on tracks in their own countries, a big advantage. Ukraine doesn't have that luxury.

It has never won a sliding sport medal - not in luge, bobsled or skeleton - at the Olympics, and it hadn't been a real contender in any race contested during the four World Cup luge stops so far this season until Sunday. Ukraine's most recent World Cup luge medal before Sunday was Natalia Yakushenko winning silver in a women's singles

race at Sigulda on Dec. 6, 2008; she also won bronze at the world championships in Lake Placid, New York, on Feb. 6, 2009.

"It was a curious race," Mandziy said.

The U.S., Italy, Latvia and Poland all failed to finish the team relay, a variety of mishaps thwarting their chances.

The team relay is composed of four sleds - women's singles, men's singles, women's doubles and men's doubles - and a slider from each sled must not only finish getting down the track but reach up and hit a pad at the finish line that triggers a signal telling the next sled it's time to start. The best total, four-sled time wins.

U.S. women's slider Emily Sweeney did not hit enough of the pad on her run, so the Americans were disqualified - but were given a second chance after a technical error with the timing system at the start. Sweeney crashed on her second try, and the Americans were out again.

Latvia also got a second chance after the timing issues at the start and crashed out on its second try as well. Poland and Italy crashed out, and Ukraine was one of the three teams standing when it was all over.

"It's a very emotional race," Mandziy said. "Very emotional. ... We're very happy."

In the World Cup luge men's singles race, Nico Gleirscher of Austria was first, with Kristers Aparjods of Latvia second and Max Langenhan of Germany third. The top U.S. men's finisher was Tucker West, who placed seventh.

At Winterberg, Germany, the home nation won five of six available medals in a pair of World Cup races on Sunday.

Germany swept the podium in a women's bobsled race, with Lisa Buckwitz and Kira Lipperheide winning, Laura Nolte and Deborah Levi finishing second and Kim Kalicki and Leonie Fiebig placing third.

The top U.S. women's sled - driven by Kaillie Humphries and pushed by Emily Renna - placed fourth. Lolo Jones, in her first World Cup bobsled race since 2021, was part of a 12th-place finish with driver Elana Meyers Taylor.

In the four-man race, Brad Hall of Britain drove to the win, with Germans Francesco Friedrich second and Adam Ammour third. The U.S. sled driven by Frank del Duca was 12th.

Man City loans Kaboré to Werder

BREMEN, Germany, Jan 6, (AP): Manchester City loaned Issa Kaboré to Werder Bremen on Monday, sending the Burkina Faso defender out to his sixth different club while still yet to play a game for the English champion.

Man City said Kaboré's move to join the German club for the rest of the season is subject to international clearance.

The 23-year-old right-back spent the first half of the season at Benfica and played in seven games, including two in the Champions League.

Werder is in seventh place in the Bundesliga, two points behind the fourth-place spot that guarantees qualifying for the Champions League next season.

Since joining Man City in July 2020, Kaboré has yet to appear for the club though he was an unused substitute in two games at the start of this season.

Kaboré played five times this season for Burkina Faso and helped the team become the first to qualify for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations. The tournament starts in December hosted by Morocco.

Change Name

I, Abisina D'Silva, R/O - H.No. 560, Ballio Zuvern, Usgeo, Ponda, North - Goa, 403406 (India), presently residing in Kuwait has changed my name from Abisina Mascarenhas To Abisina D'Silva. Hereafter, in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name Abisina D'Silva SD/- Abisina D'Silva

Indonesia fires head coach ahead of vital World Cup qualifiers

JAKARTA, Indonesia, Jan 6, (Agencies): Indonesia has dismissed Shin Tae-yong as head coach of its national team, the country's federation announced.

"This decision was made based on long and mature considerations and evaluations carried out by as a

whole regarding the team's performance and the long-term goals that the Indonesian National Football Team wants to achieve," the Indonesian federation, known locally as PSSI, said in a statement.

Appointed in 2020, the South Korean boss had led

Indonesia to the third round of qualification for the 2026 World Cup for the first time. In November, the team defeated Saudi Arabia 2-0 to move into third place in the six-team group with four games remaining.

At a press conference in Jakarta, PSSI chairman Er-

ick Thohir, who handed Shin a contract extension to 2027 last June, explained the decision.

"The dynamics of the national team need special attention from us," Thohir said. "We see the need for a leader who can better implement strategies agreed

upon by the players, good communication and better implementation." There was no announcement of a replacement, though there is speculation that the new boss could be European.

The national team's recent success has been driven by the naturalization of players

of Indonesian heritage, born and raised in Europe. Of the team that started November's victory over Saudi Arabia, only Marselino Ferdinan, who scored both goals, was born in the Southeast Asian nation.

Indonesia's next qualifier is against Australia in March.

Local driver Yazeed Al Rajhi leads

Dakar Rally defending champ Sainz flips in the dunes and is an hour behind

BISHA, Saudi Arabia, Jan 6, (AP): Defending champion Carlos Sainz was nearly an hour off the pace in the Dakar Rally after his car flipped in the Saudi Arabia dunes.

Local driver Yazeed Al Rajhi led the race at the mandatory evening rest stop north of Bisha on the nearly 1,000-kilometer second stage, which started early Sunday and finishes late Monday.

But his lead was only 79 seconds over five-time champion Nasser Al-Attiyah.

Sainz was within five minutes of the leaders after more than 200 kilometers, but his Ford Raptor turned upside down in the dunes at 327 kilometers. Teammate Mitch Guthrie helped Sainz right the car after 20

minutes but broken rear parts were left behind and Sainz limped to the rest area at 620 kilometers, more than 59 minutes behind.

Another title contender who suffered was Sebastien Loeb, who won this stage last year. The Frenchman broke down with fan issues at 409 kilometers and arrived more than 32 minutes back.

Al-Attiyah led Al Rajhi by four minutes in the early going but Al Rajhi turned the tables about 350 kilometers in and held on.

Sweden's Mattias Ekstrom was running third, nine minutes back. He was the only driver within 10 minutes of Al Rajhi.

First stage winner Seth Quintero was 48

minutes back.

Australian rider Daniel Sanders continued to set the pace in the motorbike class, even after starting at the back from winning the first stage.

Racing a different course to the cars, Sanders was only 40 seconds ahead of American titleholder Ricky Brabec.

Ross Branch, second last year, lost some time but was still third.

The 48-hour chrono stage was introduced last year, sending racers into the desert overnight with minimal team help. What organizers call "the quintessential rally-raid experience" was the stage in which Al Rajhi's car somersaulted and he was forced to abandon the 2024 race.



Riders Tosha Schareina, right, and Ricky Brabec, left, prepare before taking part in stage two, day two, of the Dakar Rally with start in Bisha and finish in Bisha, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

Dembélé stars as last-gasp PSG wins Champions Trophy



PSG players celebrate with a trophy after the French Super Cup final match between Paris Saint Germain and Monaco in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

Marseille routs Le Havre in Ligue 1

PARIS, Jan 6, (AP): Ousmane Dembélé scored a stoppage-time winner as Paris Saint-Germain beat Monaco 1-0 to win the Champions Trophy.

The France winger was unmarked at the back post to meet a low cross from the left by Fabian Ruiz in the second minute of added time.

PSG won the trophy, also known as the French Super Cup, for the third straight time and a record-extending 13th overall. PSG won the league and cup double last season, with Monaco finishing second in the league.

"The result reflects our domination," PSG coach Luis Enrique said, while Monaco coach Adi Hütter conceded PSG played better.

"A goal in the last minute always feels like a knife in the back," Hütter said. "PSG deserved to win if we're being honest, they had more chances."

The match took place at Stadium 974 in Doha, Qatar, with PSG owned by Qatar-based QSI since 2011.

Désiré Doué hit the crossbar early on for PSG and Monaco goalkeeper Philipp Köhn made several saves.

Monaco improved after the break and hit the post through Eliesse Ben Seghir and Brazilian defender Vanderson.

Although Köhn made a fine save to deny Achraf Hakimi in the 74th minute, he failed to properly read Ruiz's cross and Monaco missed out on winning the trophy for the first time since 2000.

Marseille strengthened its grip on second place in the French league, moving three points ahead of third-place Monaco after routing Le Havre 5-1 at home.

Ghana's Andre Ayew was on the wing for Le Havre against his former club. He scored 60 goals in 209 games

for Marseille from 2007-15 and won two League Cups. His brother, Jordan Ayew, and his father - Abedi Pele - both played for the club.

Marseille opened the scoring against 17th-place Le Havre in the 25th minute when midfielder Valentin Rongier drilled a low shot into the left corner from 20 meters out.

Rongier's rare strike was followed by a first league goal for midfielder Bilal Nadir, who turned neatly before arrowing a shot in off the left post in the 39th.

It was a special moment for Nadir, who ruptured his left ACL one year ago and was given a new contract by the club as a show of faith.

Moments before halftime, striker Neal Maupay headed in from close range and Mason Greenwood broke down the right to set up substitute Elye Wahi midway through the second half. Ullisses Garcia added the fifth goal for coach Roberto De Zerbi's side.

Home fans at Stade Velodrome chanted Ayew's name after he headed in a consolation goal in the 85th. Ayew applauded the fans back when he went off moments later.

PSG is seven points ahead of Marseille after 16 rounds.

Toulouse climbed up to eighth place with a 1-0 win at seventh-place Lens, which leads Toulouse on goal difference.

Striker Zakaria Aboukhmal scored a penalty in the 73rd.

The goal came shortly after Lens midfielder David Pereira da Costa was shown a second yellow card following a video review and was sent off.

Angers beat Brest 2-0, and Strasbourg rallied to win 3-1 at home to Auxerre and move into 10th spot.

Esteban Lepaul scored early on for Angers and fellow striker Ibrahima Niane, who replaced Lepaul in the 75th, wrapped up the win in stoppage time.

Al-Hilal aims for fourth straight Tuesday victory over Al-Ittihad

RIYADH, Jan 6: The much-anticipated clash between Al-Hilal and Al-Ittihad Jeddah in the quarter-finals of the King's Cup is set to take place today, Tuesday, at the Kingdom Arena stadium. The matchup has historically brought good fortune to Al-Hilal, while Al-Ittihad Jeddah approaches it with less optimism.

According to statistics from the "Transfer Market" website, Al-Hilal and Al-Ittihad have faced off 12 times across all competitions on a Tuesday. Al-Hilal emerged victorious in nine of those encounters, while Al-Ittihad secured just one win, and two matches ended in a draw.

Al-Hilal has dominated recent Tuesday matchups, winning the last three, including a 2-1 victory in the semi-finals of last season's King's Cup and a 2-0 triumph in the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League. Al-Ittihad's sole victory on a Tuesday dates back to 2011, when they defeat-

ed Al-Hilal 3-1 in the round of 16 of the AFC Champions League.

In these encounters, Al-Hilal has scored 21 goals compared to Al-Ittihad's 10. Notably, Salem Al-Dawsari, Al-Hilal's star player, leads as the top scorer in Tuesday matchups between the teams, with three goals to his name.

Meanwhile, Saudi press reports have revealed potential setbacks for Al-Ittihad. Star players Karim Benzema and Moussa Diaby suffered injuries just two days before the El Clasico showdown against Al-Hilal. According to Al-Youm newspaper, the duo missed training sessions, and their participation in the match will depend on the results of medical evaluations.

Benzema, Ittihad's leading scorer this season with 10 goals, and Diaby, the team's top assist provider with 10 assists, are both pivotal players whose potential absence could significantly impact Al-Ittihad's performance.



Benzema's participation is not confirmed.

China's Zhang and Wang fall short at Adelaide International

CANBERRA, Jan 6, (Xinhua): China's Zhang Zhizhen and Wang Xinyu were knocked out of the first round of the Adelaide International, a warm-up event for the Australian Open.

Zhang, the ninth seed at the tournament, was beaten 6-3, 6-4 by Canada's Denis Shapovalov in 67 minutes.

The Canadian former world No. 10 was dominant on serve, winning 80 percent of his service points.

Shapovalov hit nine aces in the match and won 31 of 32 first serve points. Zhang did not have a single opportunity to break serve, while Shapovalov converted two of his five break point chances.

It came after Zhang won one of his three matches at the United Cup in

Perth, with a straight-set victory over Brazil's Thiago Monteiro followed by defeats against top-five opponents Alexander Zverev and Taylor Fritz.

Earlier on Monday, Wang went down against 16-year-old Australian Emerson Jones 6-4, 6-0.

After both players had their serve broken twice early, scores were level at 4-4 in the first set before Jones won eight straight games.

Wang, the world No. 37, won only 39.6 percent of her service points for the match, compared to 60.9 percent for Jones.

It was the first career win against a top-50 opponent for Jones, who is the top-ranked female junior player in the world.

Kuwait's inaugural International Chess Festival kicks off



Club members with competitors.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6, (KUNA): Kuwait's inaugural International Chess Festival began, featuring five tournaments and drawing over 250 participants from 25 countries.

Adel Al-Amiri, Vice President of the Kuwait Mind Sports Association,

highlighted the significance of the event in promoting chess among young players. He expressed confidence in the success of the tournaments.

The festival runs for nine days and concludes on January 13.

Las Palmas, Valladolid crash out of Copa del Rey

MADRID, Jan 6, (Xinhua): The third round of the Copa del Rey saw two more upsets on Sunday with La Liga sides crashing out against lower league opposition.

Second-division Elche claimed an emphatic 4-0 win at home to top-flight Las Palmas, with the home side dominating from start to finish and moving into the last-16 with Rodrigo Mendoza's goal on the stroke of halftime.

Elche then ran riot after the break with goals from David Afengruber, Jose Salinas and Nicolas Fernandez sealing a resounding win.

Third-tier Ourense twice came back from behind before dumping out La Liga's bottom club Valladolid 3-2.

Raul Moro and Selim Amallah twice put Valladolid ahead in the first half, but the visitor was quickly pegged back by Jairo Noriega and Jerin Ramos, before Angel Sanchez scored the winner for the home side seven minutes after the break.

Celta Vigo was close to being knocked out as well, as it trailed 2-1 away to Racing Santander with just four minutes of normal time on the clock, before an own goal and

a 92nd-minute finish from Alfon saw it through.

Racing opened the scoring after just eight minutes when Andres Martin kept calm after being slipped through on goal, although Alfon's first goal of the game soon leveled the score.

The second-division side was down to 10 men before halftime when defender Alvaro Mantilla was sent off for bringing down Alfon when the striker was through on goal, but it dug deep and retook the lead when Javi Rodriguez deflected a shot into his own net.

Celta pressed for an equalizer

and got its reward when Javier Castro headed a corner into his own net in the 86th minute, with Alfon scoring the winner in injury time.

Leganes had to come from a goal down to win 2-1 against second-division struggler Cartagena, with goals from Munir El Haddadi and Dani Raba canceling out Luis Munoz's opener for the home side.

Real Sociedad had a much easier afternoon as second-half goals from Mikel Oyarzabal and Brais Mendez eased it past third-tier Ponferradina 2-0.



Torino's Guillermo Maripan battles for the ball with Parma's Simon Sohm, right, during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Torino FC and Parma, at the Stadio Olimpico Grande Torino, in Turin, Italy. (AP)

Sports

Khaleeji Zain 26: Kuwait remarkable success sets stage for global events



Large fan attendance during the Khaleeji Zain 26.

Legacy etched in Gulf history

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: On the land of love and peace, where civilizations converge and cultures unite, Kuwait hosted the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup, "Khaleeji Zain 26," culminating on Saturday in a historic celebration. This edition of the championship transcended sports, becoming a unifying icon that brought together hearts and nations, leaving a legacy etched in Gulf history.

More than just a sporting event, "Khaleeji Zain 26" painted a vivid picture of shared heritage, blending athletic excellence with cultural and social connections. The tournament showcased the power of sports to foster brotherhood and collective enthusiasm while emphasizing the unity of Gulf nations.

Kuwait's exceptional organization and hospitality elevated the Gulf Cup to new heights, cementing the country's position as a burgeoning hub for international sports. With flawless execution and dazzling events, Kuwait demonstrated its capability to host world-class tournaments, earning widespread acclaim from officials, fans, and media alike.

An "unprecedented" turnout marked this tournament, with ticket sales surging across physical outlets and online platforms. Overwhelming demand for tickets even led to delays in sales for the semi-finals and finals, highlighting the event's extraordinary appeal and fan enthusiasm.

The opening ceremony celebrated Gulf identity and unity through a creative artistic display, while the closing ceremony honored Gulf football legends whose contributions enriched the game's history. These moments reinforced the deep connections between Gulf nations, presenting a message of unity and shared pride.

The historic Mubarakiya Market became a vibrant hub for Gulf football fans, exuding a spirit of harmony, love, and cultural pride. Media outlets across the region spotlighted this unique gathering place, where the energy of sports merged seamlessly with Kuwait's rich heritage.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's traditional diwanias transformed into lively gathering spaces for Gulf fans, blending the passion of sports with the timeless bond of Gulf brotherhood. These spaces embodied the unity that "Khaleeji Zain 26" sought to promote throughout the tournament.

The "Hayakom" application, launched alongside the tournament, revolutionized fan engagement. It provided services ranging from ticket bookings and live match streaming to visa issuance and tourist information. By integrating advanced digital tools, the app enhanced the fan experience, making "Khaleeji Zain 26" a model for future sporting events.

Kuwait's efforts to unite Gulf peoples through the tournament underscored the region's shared heritage and sporting spirit. By celebrating the legacy of Gulf football and fostering goodwill among nations, "Khaleeji Zain 26" stands as a testament to Kuwait's commitment to excellence and its readiness to host more prestigious global championships in the future.

Roma defeats Lazio 2-0

Ranieri maintains perfect derby record

ROME, Jan 6, (AP): Forget about the Tinkerman. Claudio Ranieri is the Derbyman now.

Ranieri extended his perfect record in the capital derby as Roma beat Lazio 2-0 in Serie A to give the Giallorossi a much-needed boost in what has been a difficult season.

Roma captain Lorenzo Pellegrini scored the opener with a curling shot from the edge of the area and Alexis Saelemaekers finished off a counterattack to give Roma a two-goal advantage after 18 minutes.

Ranieri improved his record to five wins in five derbies as Roma's coach. He's the team's third manager this season after Daniele De Rossi and Ivan Juric were both fired. His other derby wins came during his first stint as Roma's coach from 2009-11. He also coached his hometown club briefly in 2019.

"The coach is a legend of Rome. We all know it and we're all happy for him," Saelemaekers said. "He took over the team in a tough moment, reset the entire group and improved the mentality."

Ranieri has also won the three other big derbies in Italy in Milan, Turin and Genoa as coach of Inter Milan, Juventus and Sampdoria, respectively.

"The coach acts as a counterpoint for the derby," Ranieri said. "If the squad is lacking energy, you need to provide energy. But usually the team has enough energy for the derby and the coach doesn't need to add anything. I just try to keep the players serene and



Lazio's Gustav Isaksen, left, duels for the ball with Roma's Leandro Paredes during a Serie A soccer match between Roma and Lazio, at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome, Italy. (AP)

calm so they can give everything they can on the pitch."

Ranieri is best known for shocking the soccer world by leading Leicester to a Premier League title in 2016 but he was also ridiculed at times in England for his tendency to rotate his players regularly, hence the Tinkerman moniker.

Ranieri helped Cagliari avoid relegation last season and had said that would be his final club job but

he couldn't turn down Roma when he was called in to restore order in November. Ranieri's contract calls for him to step up into an executive role after this season, from which he'll have a say who will be the teams' next coach.

Roma, which has won three of its last five in Serie A, moved up to 10th place. Lazio remained fourth.

Pellegrini has been subjected to severe criticism by Roma's fans this season, and his goal lifted the

pressure off of Roma.

A car went up in flames outside the Stadio Olimpico about an hour before kickoff after being struck by fireworks as rival fans attempted to approach each other.

Also Sunday, Cagliari came back from a goal down to win 2-1 at last-place Monza with scores from Nadir Zortea and Roberto Piccoli.

Torino-Parma and Lecce-Genoa each finished 0-0.

Kuwaiti figure skaters join Dream Program in SKorea

SEOUL, Jan 6: The Kuwait Winter Games Club has announced the participation of Najat Al-Turki and Laila Al-Farsi in the 2025 Dream Program, scheduled to take place in South Korea from January 6 to 19. The program will feature around 120 participants from various countries worldwide.

Salem Al-Ajmi, Director of the Kuwait Figure Skating Team, emphasized the club's dedication to enrolling the skaters in this prestigious program. It includes an intensive international training camp designed to enhance talent development in winter sports through high-quality training sessions over two weeks.

Al-Ajmi highlighted that the training camp aims to sharpen the skaters' skills and provide them with invaluable experience, representing a significant milestone for figure skating in Kuwait. He expressed hopes that the players would gain maximum benefit from this remarkable opportunity.



Najat Al Turki and Laila Al Farsi

In addition to technical training and lectures, the program offers cultural, recreational, and sightseeing activities, fostering cultural exchange among the participants. Al-Ajmi commended the club's board of directors for supporting this initiative, which is expected to contribute significantly to the advancement of the sport in Kuwait.

Kuwait's Adel Al-Gharib nominated for Asian Squash Federation vice presidency

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 6: The Kuwait Squash Federation has nominated Board Member Adel Al-Gharib for the position of Vice President of the Asian Squash Federation for the 2025-2029 term. The elections are scheduled to take place on February 16 in Hong Kong during the 45th General Assembly of the Asian Squash Federation, held alongside the 22nd Asian Junior Championship.

Adel Al-Gharib is recognized as one of Kuwait's prominent figures in squash, bringing extensive experience in sports management. Over the years, he has held numerous key positions in sports organizations and played a vital role in organizing several international tournaments in Kuwait.

As a player, Al-Gharib represented Al-Salmiya Club and the Kuwait national team in various Gulf, Arab, and international championships. He was Kuwait and Gulf champion from 1987 to 1997.

Within the Squash Federation, he has held roles such as Assistant Secretary-General, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and Chairman of the Squash Organizing Committee for the Gulf



Adel Al-Gharib with presidential candidate Duncan Shaw.

Cooperation Council. Notably, the sole candidate for the presidency in the upcoming session is Duncan Shaw, representing Hong Kong.

Bilbao takes on Barca as Real faces Mallorca

Questions to be answered ahead of Spanish Supercup

MADRID, Jan 6, (Xinhua): There are some questions to be answered ahead of the Spanish Supercup in Jeddah, which kicks off on Wednesday when Copa del Rey holder Athletic Club Bilbao takes on FC Barcelona, with Real Madrid facing cup runner-up Mallorca in the second semifinal on Thursday.

FC Barcelona has included Dani Olmo and Pau Victor in its group to travel to Jeddah, despite not having permission to register them in its first team squad due to financial fair-play reasons.

That means that unless a 'miracle' happens, the pair will spend their time sightseeing in the Saudi Arabian city.

The pro-Barcelona press continue to insist that the club is continuing with its appeal process despite the rules being very clear that a player cannot be registered with the same club twice in a season.

Barca also has a big fitness doubt over Lamine Yamal, who ended 2024 with an ankle injury and didn't play in the Copa del Rey on Saturday.

Real Madrid has a disadvantage of playing a Copa del Rey game against Deportivo Minera on Monday in Cartagena (south-east Spain), meaning it will fly to Jeddah on Tuesday.

Madrid's main problem is with forward Vinicius Jr, after he was sent off for hitting Valencia goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski during his side's 2-1 win in La Liga on Friday.

A suspension occurred in one competition in Spain is usually only applicable to that tournament, meaning a ban picked up for offenses in La Liga is only served in league matches, however, Vinicius was sent off for a clear aggression, which carries a ban of between 4-12 matches and bans of four or more games are served in the next matches irrespective of the tournament.

Given that the referee of Friday's game also included in his report that Vinicius had to be "restrained and taken to the dressing room as he continued his protests", under normal circumstances the Spanish Football Federation would ban Vinicius for more than four games.

If that happens, Vinicius won't be able to play in the Supercup, but Real Madrid is using all its off-field influence to try and pressure the RFEF into giving Vinicius a shorter ban, in which case the winger will be able to take part.

Athletic Club Bilbao coach Ernesto Valverde has named a 26-man squad for a tournament his side won in 2021, but with doubts over the fitness of key trio, Inigo Ruiz de Galarreta, Yeray Alvarez and top-scorer Oihan Sancet, none of whom played on Saturday, while Mallorca also has doubts after losing 3-0 in the Copa del Rey on Friday away to fourth tier Pontevedra, although it has an advantage of 6 days to prepare the game against Real Madrid.