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## Opinion

### Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

## Dear President Joseph, restore Lebanon's glory ... enough with the homelessness

IN the 1950s, following a governance crisis similar to what Lebanon witnessed in recent years, an agreement was reached to name a new president. Shortly after the agreement, one of the rival candidates addressed his supporters, saying, "There is no longer any benefit. Let us go and congratulate the president." Since then, this saying has become a proverb in Lebanon.

This scenario now mirrors the situation of the current Lebanese deputies, who have been embroiled in a battle for the presidency for nearly 30 months. The country has been left in a political vacuum because one party insisted on controlling the decision and imposing its own candidate for president, even if by force. When the moment finally came, everyone lined up in front of the ballot box to elect Army Commander Joseph Aoun as president, and exchanged the familiar words, "Let us go and offer our congratulations."

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding this election, it remains a turning point on which many Arab decision-making countries have placed their hopes. They see in Aoun the reformative leader who is urgently needed to guide Lebanon towards stability, after his efficient leadership of the Lebanese Army during the seven years that witnessed the country's most difficult challenges. It is true that Aoun does not possess a magic

wand, especially given the immense pressure he faces. Southern Lebanon and much of the country are in ruins due to the adventures of Hezbollah, which followed Iran's agenda without any regard for the suffering it has caused the Lebanese people since the time it entered political life in 1992.

In addition to this, Lebanon is grappling with a multifaceted economic and financial crisis. There is also a deepening popular division, exacerbated by the sectarian and divisive tactics employed by Hezbollah in its attempt to monopolize Shiite representation in public institutions following a civil war that consumed Lebanon's resources. Also, Hezbollah added salt to injury by silencing dissenting voices, and turning the country from the land of the Cedars into an entity rejected by its Arab brothers.

Since yesterday, Joseph Aoun has officially begun his duties as President of Lebanon. This prominent military figure, who spent much of his life in an olive military uniform, fully understands that his people are placing their hopes in him to guide

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## Amir, Crown Prince, PM congratulate Omani Sultan on throne anniversary



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tareq

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable on Saturday to Sultan Haitham bin Tareq of Oman, congratulating him on the fifth anniversary of his ascension to the throne.

In his message, His Highness the Amir praised Oman's remarkable development achievements across various fields under the Sultan's leadership. He highlighted the strong historical and fraternal ties between the two nations, emphasizing the shared commitment to enhancing cooperation on all fronts. His Highness also

wished the Sultan good health and further progress and prosperity for Oman and its people under his wise leadership.

Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah extended his congratulations to Sultan Haitham, applauding Oman's comprehensive progress and wishing continued prosperity for the Sultanate.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also sent a cable congratulating Sultan Haitham on this significant occasion.

# Kuwait eyes VAT to boost economy

### GCC undergoes major financial shift with global tax alignment

## KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, including Kuwait, are undergoing significant financial transformations as they adopt new global tax standards, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

One of the most notable changes is the implementation of a minimum global corporate tax rate of 15 percent, which was endorsed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and adopted by over 140 countries.

This move aims to reduce the perception that GCC countries are merely tax havens, where multinational corporations shift profits to benefit from low or zero tax regimes.

Under the new global tax regime, large multinational companies with global revenues exceeding €750 million in two out of the past four years will have to pay a minimum tax rate of 15 percent, regardless of their legal presence or where they operate.

This change will make it harder for companies to exploit the GCC's historically low tax environments, such as in Dubai and Manama, to reduce their tax liabilities.

In response to these global tax initiatives, the UAE introduced a 9 percent corporate tax rate in June 2023 for companies with profits exceeding AED 375,000.

However, small and medium-sized companies with sales under AED 3 million are exempt, and other exemptions and incentives, such as tax-free zones, remain in place.

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## 39,765 Kuwaiti women over age 30 unmarried

By Najeh Bilal  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: According to some experts, the decision to withdraw citizenship under Article 8 could help reduce spinsterhood among Kuwaiti women.

Official statistics from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) revealed that as of mid-2024, the total number of unmarried Kuwaiti women aged 30 and above reached 39,765. The number of married Kuwaiti women stood at 269,611. Of these, 250,140 are married to Kuwaitis, while 18,002 are married to individuals of Arab nationalities. Also, 693 Kuwaiti women are married to individuals from Asian countries, 50 to non-Arab African nationals, about 264 to Europeans, 402 to North Americans, 64 to South Americans, and 39 to Australians.

The Director General of the Gulf Center for Information and Documentation Dr. Ibrahim Al-Shukri affirmed that the withdrawal of citizenship under Article 8 would have a positive impact on societal dynamics.

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Kuwait's Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi poses in group photo with participants during the first scientific conference of the Internal Medicine Department at Al-Adan Hospital on Saturday. - See Page 2

## Call for careful 'Article 8' review

## Al-Mulaifi backs gov't push to address citizenship fraud

By Najeh Bilal  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Former Minister and Member of Parliament (MP) Ahmed Al-Mulaifi voiced his support for the government's current stance on revoking citizenship, emphasizing that the citizenship file has been marred by corruption and political manipulation since 1967.

In an exclusive interview with Al-Seyassah daily, Al-Mulaifi criticized the misuse of citizenship for political, commercial, and material gain. He pointed out that certain political figures and blocs in the past contributed to the excessive granting of citizenship to secure votes and other advantages.

Al-Mulaifi stated that it is crucial for each case in the controversial "Article 8" to be studied individually.

He raised concerns about individuals who married Kuwaiti citizens solely for the purpose of acquiring citizenship, some of whom went on to exploit it for business interests or residency trade.

He stressed that there are also cases where citizenship was granted without exploitation, particularly to women who did not take advantage of the privileges it offered.

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## Other Voices

## Lebanon's golden opportunity: A new era with General Joseph Aoun

By Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor  
UAE Businessman

The election of General Joseph Aoun as President of the Republic of Lebanon on January 9 marks the dawn of a new era — an era brimming with hope for a nation burdened by decades of compounded crises. This election is not merely a step toward ending a prolonged constitutional vacuum; it is the beginning of a pivotal phase, loaded with both challenges and opportunities, demanding wise leadership and a clear vision to achieve security and prosperity for Lebanon.

From the outset, President Joseph Aoun has demonstrated that he is a leader of transparency and clarity. His words during the oath-taking ceremony were devoid of the usual diplomatic platitudes, reflecting an honest character and a deep love for his country. His vision is precise, and his goals are firmly set, prioritizing the restoration of security and rebuilding Lebanon's institutions on solid foundations that serve its people and deliver justice.

### A Roadmap for Revival

In his address, President Aoun emphasized the importance of restoring the state's authority and reinforcing its sovereignty



Al Habtoor

— an essential foundation for building a secure future. His discourse on institutional reform underscores his commitment to strengthening the state and restoring public trust. Furthermore, he highlighted the significance of national unity and the vital role of the youth in driving change, offering hope for Lebanon's revival through the participation of all its components.

Lebanon today faces numerous predicaments, but these very challenges could serve as a launchpad for reconstruction. Rebuilding trust between the state and its people requires tangible steps to combat corruption and enhance transparency — principles that President Aoun reinforced when he said, "Lebanon will only rise through the hands of its loyal citizens." Moreover, the implementation of international resolutions, such as Resolutions 1559 and 1701, will be crucial in establishing stability and distancing Lebanon from regional power struggles. President Aoun's firm stance that "Lebanon will not be a battleground for settling scores" renews hope for a sovereign and independent national future, free from regional tensions.

### The Need for a Competent Prime Minister

At this pivotal juncture in Lebanon's history, appointing a competent Prime Minister is an urgent priority. This individual must possess both economic expertise and integrity, someone capable of spearheading economic reform and attracting investments to restore trust in state institutions. Such an appointment will lay the groundwork for a comprehensive plan to return Lebanon to a path of growth and stability.

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## Draft reflects industry input

## Digital trade bill nears approval

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: According to informed sources from the commercial sector, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is nearing the completion of the draft of the Digital Trade Empowerment Law. A final version of

the proposed articles is being prepared for submission to the Fatwa and Legislation Department and the Council of Ministers soon.

The sources explained that the proposed version of the law incorporates feedback from relevant e-commerce companies through a barcode system

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## NewsWatch

**TUNIS:** The financial standing committee of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) approved on Saturday the financial budget of the Union, during its 86th meeting, with the participation of Kuwait.

ASBU Director General **Abdelrahman Suleiman** reviewed during the meeting the recent intensive activity, especially of the Hajj season, as well as other important summits in various Arab states, added the union in a statement. (KUNA)

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's Joint Operations Command announced on Saturday the killing of four militants, including a leader of the so-called Islamic State

(IS), in an airstrike in Diyala province, northeast of Baghdad.

The raid was carried out on Friday with F-16 aircraft, targeting ISIS elements in the Hamrin Mountains with the province's operations section, said the command in a statement. (KUNA)

**GAZA:** Israeli occupation forces employed their heavy caliber arms striking Gaza regions and causing martyrdom of up to 32 Gazans over the past 48 hours, the Gaza health authority declared in a statement on Saturday.

The occupation forces' renewed ferocious attacks also wounded 193 people during the same duration. (KUNA)



**9 NBK celebrates Most Valued Team Players and Most Collaborative Team of 2024**

**13 WMO confirms 2024 as warmest year on record, 1.55°C above pre-industrial**



**15 KIB launches the third season of KIB | The Stadium in partnership with Suffix**



Prayer Timings			
Fajr .....	05:20	Asr .....	14:49
Sunrise ..	06:44	Maghrib ..	17:08
Zohr .....	11:56	Isha .....	18:30

# Local

## Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

**By Day:** Warm and partly cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind changing to northwesterly wind, with speed of 10-32 km/h.  
**By Night:** Cold to very cold

## Weather

with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speed of 12-42 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	22	11
Kuwait Airport	23	08
Abdaly	24	07

Bubyan	22	08
Jahra	24	10
Failaka Island	23	10
Salamiyah	19	14
Ahmadi	24	09
Jal Aliyah	23	10
Nuwaisib	22	09
Wafra	-	-

## Kuwait MoH keen on procuring latest equipment, providing modern health care



Photo by Mohammad Morsi  
Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi inaugurates the conference at the Adan Hospital.

## Regular training for professionals dispensed

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi said the Salman Al-Dabbous Cardiac Center has provided exceptional services to over one million individuals in Kuwait.

The center, he said, has performed nearly 2,000 cardiac catheterization procedures using the latest international technologies, including ultrasound, aortic valve implantation via catheterization, a first in Kuwait, and the implantation of heart batteries using modern methods.

Speaking at the launch of the first scientific conference of the Internal Medicine Department at Al-Adan Hospital, Dr. Al-Awadhi praised the Ministry's commitment, bolstered by the support of Kuwait's wise leadership, to providing the latest medical equipment and advanced treatments. He also emphasized the Ministry's

focus on developing healthcare professionals through ongoing training and education programs.

The conference aligns with Kuwait's broader vision to innovate and integrate in the field of internal medicine. It reflects the nation's efforts to cooperate with regional and international medical centers.

Dr. Al-Awadhi also highlighted the conference as an opportunity to showcase the progress of Al-Adan Hospital's Internal Medicine Department, which has significantly improved its services.

Notable achievements include the establishment of a one-day service for patients requiring regular blood transfusions and the publication of clinical research that enhances healthcare quality.

He noted the advancements in diagnosing mental illnesses and tuberculosis using technologies such as the MFBPER test and improving the detection of lung tumors through

bronchoscopy.

Additionally, the department has embraced full digital transformation, streamlining processes like appointment scheduling, reviewing X-rays and CT scans, and analyzing lab results, resulting in faster and more accurate services.

Dr. Khalil Al-Shuwaiker, Head of the Internal Medicine Department and Conference Chairman, emphasized that the conference serves as a crucial platform to discuss cutting-edge developments in internal medicine.

It also facilitates the exchange of expertise between international and local medical professionals. Dr. Al-Shuwaiker underscored the timeliness of the event, as health challenges worldwide intensify, and noted the importance of the conference in fostering collaborative efforts to advance healthcare systems and ensure the delivery of high-quality services.

## New rehab hospital with more beds to be built, says minister

Sustainable, healthy future priority: Al-Awadhi

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi says physical medicine and medical rehabilitation is one of the basic pillars of the comprehensive healthcare system.

During the opening of the conference titled "The Rehabilitation Journey Continues... Current Updates and Recommendations" the day before yesterday, Al-Awadhi announced plans to establish a new hospital with increased capacity to meet the growing demand for rehabilitation services.

He emphasized that the "New Kuwait 2035" vision and the "Sustainable Development Goals" mandate a strong commitment to building a sustainable, healthy future. This includes enhancing the quality of life, improving health services, and developing the integration in various healthcare sectors.

Al-Awadhi explained that physical medicine and rehabilitation face challenges, including recovery after physical injuries, strokes, spinal cord injuries, age-related issues, and other conditions that require

integrated, comprehensive care. Kuwait has long recognized the importance of this specialty and its impact on enhancing the quality of life. Since the establishment of the first hospital specializing in physical medicine, Kuwait has made significant strides in developing this critical sector.

The minister expressed pride in the hospital, which has become a regional model, earning international certification for the quality of its health services, which reflects the country's commitment to applying the highest global quality standards in healthcare.

Dr. Al-Awadhi affirmed that current health challenges require innovative and integrated strategies, adding, "Given the noticeable rise in chronic diseases and injuries associated with modern lifestyles, it is necessary to integrate prevention and medical rehabilitation as essential components of national health policies and strategies. In this context, the Ministry of Health has launched several initiatives aimed at expanding the scope of physical medicine and rehabilitation services.

One of the most notable initiatives is the Daily Care Program, which offers intensive treatment to patients without requiring them to be separated from their families and communities. This program has been extended to include Jahra, Farwaniya, and

Adan hospitals".

He highlighted that this reflects the ministry's commitment to providing high-quality healthcare services that meet the needs of both citizens and residents.

Head of the Medical Authority at the Physical Medicine and Health Rehabilitation Hospital, Head of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Departments Council, and Chair of the conference's organizing committee Dr. Jamal Mohammad said, "Kuwait is a pioneering country and a founding leader in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation in the Gulf region and the Arab world. The Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Hospital is one of the oldest institutions of its kind. It offers a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation through its specialized medical team, which has become widely recognized in the region and serves as a global model for medical rehabilitation."

He highlighted the significance of the three-day conference, as it provides a valuable opportunity to exchange scientific expertise aimed at enhancing medical services.

Dr. Mohammad said the conference plays an important role in the ongoing development of the continuing medical education system, helping to ensure that care is based on evidence and scientific principles to serve patients.

## Kuwait stands by U.S. over wildfires in California State

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs voiced utter solidarity with the U.S. over wildfires in California State, which caused heavy casualties and damage.

In a press release, the ministry said that the State of Kuwait extends sincere condolences and sincere solace to the victims' families and wished a swift recovery of the injured.



KUNA photo  
NCAAL's Secretary-General Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar being briefed on the pictures at the exhibition.

Exhibition continues till Jan 20

## Kuwait's NCCAL, Japan embassy shed light on horrors of A-bomb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11, (KUNA): Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) and the Embassy of Japan in Kuwait, in collaboration with Japan's Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, and Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, opened on Thursday evening the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Exhibition.

The exhibition, being held at the 'Furnoon' (arts) Hall in Ahmad Al-Adwani Art Gallery, Abdullah Al-Salem District, Shuwaikh Industrial, until January 20, aims to promote the humanitarian values and the culture of peace.

It sheds light on facts of the atomic bomb damage with a view to inspiring the visitors to aspire to a nuclear weapon-free world, NCAAL's Secretary-General Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar told KUNA on the sidelines

of the opening ceremony.

"The documentary posters on display include, inter alia, one telling the story of a woman who survived the ordeal of the WWII atomic attack," he noted.

Al-Jassar affirmed NCCAL's commitment to promoting coexistence and dialogue among people with different cultures in the hope of ending the conflict-induced suffering.

On a similar note, Kuwait Ambassador to Japan Samy Al-Zamanan said the exhibition serves as a reminder of the devastating impacts of the wars and great suffering resulting thereof.

"Kuwait plays an active role in spreading the culture of peace," he said, highlighting the importance of such events in raising public awareness about the cause of peace and coexistence.

MoCI detects 156 cases in Dec '24

## Goods violating public morals, featuring Quranic verses sold

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Statistics issued by the Commercial Control Department of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry shows that in December, a total of 156 seizure reports and complaints were filed during the 444 tours conducted by inspectors across various markets.

These inspections led to the identification of multiple violations, including goods that violate public morals or feature Quranic verses inappropriately.

The violations were also found in the hiring of domestic workers, retailing at the Al-Farda vegetable market, and the display and sale of fruits and vegetables without proper labeling, such as unclear package weights and country of origin.

Further violations included the absence of scales for selling vegetables and fruits, missing price and weight signage, and failure to ensure the proper maintenance or insurance of imported goods under warranty.

The inspectors also uncovered artificial price increases, violations regarding advertising data, and issues with contracts, invoices, and special offers.

Other violations involved the sale of subsidized or counterfeit goods, commercial fraud and issues related to car rental services and fish auction markets.

Additionally, there were violations concerning commercial licenses and the prohibition of cash transactions.

These actions highlight the Ministry's ongoing efforts to maintain market integrity and protect consumers from unethical business practices.

## Other Voices

### Al-Kuwaiti's songs, melodies

**By Ahmad alsarraf**

My ears and artistic memory became attuned to Saleh Al-Kuwaiti's songs during my early teenage years, and his melodies continue to bring me immense joy.

I have written ten articles about him, compelled by the need to revisit and reflect on his biography and that of his brother, Daoud, as well as their artistic legacy.

Ezra, their father, emigrated with his family and whatever savings he had left at the end of the 19th century to Kuwait, forming the nucleus of the first Jewish community there.

The family excelled in trades that others hesitated to pursue, such as tanning, wine-making, organizing events, and selling fabrics in the alleys.

They were possibly among the first to practice currency exchange -- a point my grandfather once alluded to when defending their reputation. He spoke of their integrity and how they settled all their debts before immigrating to Israel.

The lives of Saleh and Daoud changed forever when an uncle returned from a business trip to India, bringing them an oud and a violin as gifts. This moment became a turning point not only in their lives but also in the history of musical heritage in Kuwait and Iraq.

Saleh studied the oud under Kuwaiti artist Khaled Al-Bakr, and his growing fame soon outgrew Kuwait's borders. Seeking broader horizons, Saleh and his brother moved to Iraq to further their artistic careers and record their music.

The Ezra family returned to Iraq, carrying the surname "Al-Kuwaiti," which their descendants in Israel and abroad still bear with pride.

Saleh's fame grew as he mastered the ancient Iraqi maqam under the guidance of the artist Azzour. He became renowned for composing and playing the violin, creating iconic melodies for "Salima Murad," often referred to as the Umm Kulthum of her time.

Shlomo Ben Saleh recounts how he, his father, and uncle continued to cherish Arabic as their primary language even after immigrating to Israel. Saleh

passed away in 1986 at the age of 78, with his brother Daoud preceding him. Shlomo dreams of visiting Kuwait, a country etched in his heart and identity.

Though geographical borders, political enmities, and religious divides may separate us from those we admire, art remains a universal language unbound by such limitations.

Saleh once said in a radio interview: "I was born and raised in Kuwait, where my father worked. Since childhood, I've been drawn to music and deeply moved by it, just as I am by Arabic poetry. At the age of ten, I attended school, where I learned a little English, Arabic, and religion.

"Later, I wanted to study music. There was an oud player, Khaled Al-Bakr, from whom I learned.

"Eventually, I shifted to the violin and became skilled at performing Kuwaiti and Al-Jazeera songs. My brother Daoud and I also learned maqamat and songs from Egyptian and Iraqi singers through records we brought from Iraq.

"My first song was 'Wallah Ajabi Jamalak,' followed by 'Ya Badi' Al-Jamal.' I sang the latter at a gathering of sheikhs, and their encouragement fueled my passion.

"Daoud and I performed at events hosted by merchants and sheikhs such as Ahmed Al-Jaber and Abdullah Al-Mubarak. Kuwait remains the best country I have ever known -- where safety and equality thrived, where one could sleep with their door wide open.

"As our fame grew, the need to record our music arose, but when recording companies stopped visiting Kuwait, we had to move elsewhere."

On the centenary of Saleh Al-Kuwaiti's birth, a grand celebration was held at London's Albert Hall. In Tel Aviv, a street was named in honor of the Al-Kuwaiti brothers.

Shlomo Saleh Al-Kuwaiti reflects on how his father pioneered modern music in Iraq. However, the transition to Israel was marred by disappointment, as their music -- seen as the "enemy's music" -- was rejected.

Despite this, the brothers always identified as Kuwaitis, both by birth and by heart. It is our hope that Kuwait continues to honor their legacy by broadcasting their timeless songs and keeping their memory alive.

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## Minister sacks seven board members of 'co-op society'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, the Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, has issued a ministerial decision to dismiss seven members of the Board of Directors of the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cooperative Society, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This action follows the discovery of serious financial and administrative violations, identified by a recently formed committee tasked with reviewing the society's operations and accounts.

According to sources from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the decision also appointed seven ministry employees to temporarily manage the association's affairs for one year or until new board elections are held, whichever comes first.

The dismissed members are required to return all assets in their possession, including money, documents, and papers, to the appointed members within one week from the date of the dissolution decision.

The decision to dismiss the board members was primarily based on several violations, including a financial deficit in the society's fund, the accumulation of unsold goods due to poor purchasing policies, and mismanagement that led to an increase in expenses and purchases while sales and revenue decreased, thereby weakening the society's financial stability.

In a separate decision, Al-Huwailah announced the retirement of 34 employees, both in supervisory and regular roles, who have completed 30 years of service and meet the required conditions.

Sources confirmed that this move aligns with the decisions of the Council of Ministers and the Civil Service Bureau, aiming to refresh the workforce.

## 'Apply for ETA 72 hours before traveling to UK'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has urged Kuwaiti citizens traveling to the United Kingdom, regardless of passport type (ordinary, special, or diplomatic), to apply for an electronic travel authorization (ETA) at least 72 hours before their scheduled departure date, reports Al-Jarida daily.

## CSC to reactivate 'delay periods' to record staff presence

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) is taking necessary steps to cancel the delay periods for employees of government agencies to record their fingerprint for proving their presence at the workplace, starting from the date of implementation until the end of 2024, and they will not be considered in the annual performance evaluations of employees,

reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources.

They revealed that CSC deleted the field for calculating delay periods recorded for employees for the above mentioned period from the systems of public agencies linked to its integrated systems, as this period was considered as a trial process. Therefore it will not have any negative impact on some employees' annual evaluations due to challenges in managing the mechanism for the fingerprint to prove their presence.

The sources explained that exempting employees from calculating the delay period for the presence fingerprint will be limited to the period from the start of its implementation until the end of last year. Starting from this year, the delay period will be reactivated, and any delays will

be calculated.

A large number of government employees were late in properly implementing the fingerprint mechanism for proving their presence. Also, there were repeated instances of employees forgetting to register their presence fingerprint, particularly during the initial phase of the system's rollout, due to unfamiliarity with the process.





## Obstacles in equality, Islamic jurisprudence, notions of law

"EQUALITY stands as a cornerstone principle in both Islamic jurisprudence and constitutional law. Yet, there are moments when achieving absolute equality encounters obstacles, necessitating exceptions to this fundamental rule," columnist Dr Abdulrahman Al-Jeeran wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"These obstacles arise due to prevailing interests or potential harm that may result from enforcing equality indiscriminately. Such factors demand careful consideration by legislators to ensure that equality serves justice and societal good.



Dr. Al-Jeeran

"Obstacles to equality are diverse and arise from the conditions of individuals, groups, or circumstances. These factors signal that enforcing equality in certain instances may not yield the desired benefits or align with societal welfare.

"Legislators must address these impediments, applying their effects only after thorough verification and ensuring their temporary nature. Reformers, on the other hand, bear the responsibility of eradicating obstacles rooted in negative customs, such as forgery or outdated traditions, which have been erroneously normalized over time.

"Obstacles to equality may stem from individual traits or group characteristics. For instance, individuals with a notorious reputation for specific negative traits -- such as Al-Hutai'ah's fame for satire or Ibn Abi Salul's association with hypocrisy -- cannot be equated with others in terms of social standing.

"Similarly, groups may exhibit behaviors shaped by their upbringing, such as racism or arrogance, creating barriers to equality.

"While virtues elevate individuals morally, they do not preclude equality in fundamental rights. The principle of Sharia, echoed in constitutional ideals, emphasizes equality: "There is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab except in piety."

"Yet, virtues merit acknowledgment and reward, ensuring that the virtuous are distinguished without infringing upon the rights of others.

"Political considerations often create temporary barriers to equality, especially in sensitive circumstances or emergencies where national interest prevails. Historical examples abound, such as the differentiation in salaries during Caliph Omar ibn Al-Khattab's time, based on the soldiers' memorization of the Qur'an, their migration status, or their early embrace of Islam. These decisions aimed to reward contributions to the state while promoting virtues and loyalty.

"In another instance, merchants in war were taxed differently to encourage the supply of food to holy cities with high populations, demonstrating how policies adapt to serve collective welfare. Permanent political obstacles also exist, such as the agreement among early Muslims to reserve the caliphate for the Quraish tribe, ensuring unity and preventing tribal competition that could disrupt the community.

"The Islamic and constitutional principles view obstacles to equality not as barriers to justice but as mechanisms to ensure fairness and societal stability.

"These considerations aim to balance rights, virtues, and public welfare without compromising the essence of justice. As the Qur'an emphasizes, "And let not the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness."

"Applying this principle today, we find no justification for equating those guilty of forgery with law-abiding individuals, whether constitutionally or practically. Addressing such cases with fairness preserves the integrity of justice and upholds societal values."

### Also:

"Praise be to God in all circumstances. After a long wait filled with effort and challenges, the so-called 'darkest football league in the world' was launched a few days ago. National coach Mohammad Azab of Al-Sahel Club aptly described it as the 'neglected league,' a label that resonates with the competition's reality, which has become a source of mockery for many," columnist Abdul Karim Al-Shamali wrote for Al-Jarida daily.

"This situation is not the fault of one entity alone but a collective responsibility, requiring collaborative efforts to elevate the league and enhance its impact on Kuwaiti football's ranking and reputation. To propose solutions, we must first diagnose the root issues.

"No problem can be resolved without understanding its source. In this case, the league suffers from numerous challenges that have left it frail and weak, seemingly beyond repair. However, with proper care and determined action, this league can be rejuvenated and restored to health.

"One of the most critical problems plaguing the league is the number of participating teams. While the organizing federation cannot be solely blamed, it must actively pursue realistic solutions.

"Instead of recycling outdated proposals, such as involving teams from the army, police, and national guard -- an approach that violates legal and reg-

ulatory frameworks -- efforts should focus on engaging existing clubs.

"These governmental entities are not permitted to establish or own professional clubs, and their players are often already registered with other clubs. Including them contravenes the federation's bylaws.

"A practical solution lies in persuading all recognized clubs to participate, with a particular emphasis on Al-Qurain Club.

"The club has refused to form football teams, citing a lack of facilities -- a weak excuse that highlights a failure on the part of both the club and the General Authority for Sports. Addressing this issue requires joint accountability to remove barriers and promote inclusivity.

"The need to increase team numbers also highlights the necessity of establishing new clubs. The first-division league exemplifies this demand.

"The government, through the General Sports Authority, must take decisive action to establish new clubs or revisit shelved or rejected applications. Applicants should be informed of the reasons for rejection and given an opportunity to address them.

"Another pressing issue is the league's media neglect, particularly by state-run media. While private outlets and newspapers play a role, the absence of state television coverage is glaring.

"Even if the Premier League's broadcasting rights are unavailable, there is no reason why state television cannot collaborate with the federation to broadcast First Division matches.

"This practice is common worldwide and could provide financial benefits for clubs while promoting the competition and its players.

"Highlighting the league through official media would boost morale, enhance the technical level, and fulfill the state's constitutional obligation to support youth and sports.

"On a related note, the conduct of certain players has drawn attention for all the wrong reasons. A recent interview with one such player, who displayed arrogance and self-importance, serves as an unfortunate example.

"His attempt to portray himself as a gift to his teammates, coupled with his failure to acknowledge past mistakes -- such as his suspension and poor World Cup performance -- underscores the need for humility and professionalism in the league.

"Reviving Kuwaiti football requires a united effort from all stakeholders -- clubs, the federation, the government, and the media. By addressing these core issues, we can transform the league into a source of pride rather than ridicule."



"Whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul, it is those who will be the successful - Al-Hashr 9. A person with a stingy soul is selfish and overly focused on their own gain. They seek to have others serve their needs and fulfill their desires at the expense of others. Once their interests are satisfied, they often distance themselves, sometimes even showing open disdain for the person who once helped them, as a reminder of their own vulnerability," columnist Dr. Khaled Al-Janfawi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"There are some clear signs of self-interested individuals and why people often fall victim to such exploiters:

"Signs of Exploitation: While some manipulative people may be direct in expressing their desire to achieve specific personal interests, often under the guise of a 'joke,' the more common exploiters are those who hide their intentions.

"These manipulators often start by being overly friendly with people they meet for the first time, sensing an opportunity to benefit from them. You might notice them becoming unusually close and ingratiating with someone, without a clear reason to form such a strong bond. This behavior usually lacks a foundation in long-standing acquaintance, shared aspirations, or common values and moral principles.

"This morally corrupt individual often flatters the rich and influential as long as they hold power and wealth. However, once they have achieved their own gain, they will quickly turn against them, and harbor both secret and open disdain.

"Such manipulators work to befriend their target, and offer free services or share seemingly personal, insignificant secrets to gain trust. This allows them to weave their manipulative web, and slowly tighten control over their victim. Once the victim falls into their trap, the exploitation begins in earnest.

" - Why Victims Fall for Exploiters: The most prominent reason victims fall into the hands of exploitative personalities is a lack of social skills. Weak social intelligence makes them more vulnerable to manipulation. Other factors include an exaggerated emotional response to unexpected situations and a tendency to believe everything others say. These individuals often fail to recognize the flaws in others, believing that perfection exists, which makes them even more susceptible to being used."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

# Access to justice, litigation rights must be ensured post gov't move

Kuwait Constitution, int'l laws guarantee fairness

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Despite the widespread agreement on the importance of taking measures to ensure the seriousness of litigation, curb malicious lawsuits and reduce pressure on the courts, these steps should not come at the cost of individuals' fundamental right to litigation, reports Al-Jarida daily.**

As the government moves toward approving amendments to the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law, which includes increase in fees and guarantees for appealing court rulings, concerns arise about how these changes may obstruct access to justice.

These proposed changes have the potential to hinder the right to litigation, especially

if the increase in fees and guarantees are set too high, disproportionately burdening plaintiffs.

It's crucial that any amendments consider alternative legal mechanisms, such as conciliation, settlement, and judicial mediation, which could serve as more accessible pathways to justice.

The right to litigation is enshrined in the Kuwaiti Constitution and supported by international law. Any amendments should ensure that while litigation is made serious, the fees and guarantees do not make the right to appeal inaccessible or unconstitutional.

A balance must be struck to preserve both the effectiveness of the judicial process and the right to access justice, particularly in cases where the value of claims is relatively low.

Furthermore, the recent proposal to limit

access to the Court of Cassation for cases valued below 30,000 dinars risks eliminating the opportunity for judicial review of such cases, potentially allowing errors to go uncorrected.

With the Court of Cassation currently addressing over 8,000 appeals annually, many stemming from judicial errors, reducing the volume of appeals without addressing the root cause of these errors could undermine the integrity of the judicial system.

As such, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as settlement, conciliation, and judicial mediation, must be incorporated into the legal framework.

These alternatives would help alleviate the burden on the courts while ensuring that litigants still have access to justice through non-traditional means, ultimately ensuring that litigation remains a right accessible to all.

## Kuwaiti carrying drugs detained

# Municipality working on e-platform for violations

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Kuwait Municipality has affirmed that it is in the process of developing an electronic platform for violations. This statement was issued in response to a proposal submitted by Municipal Council member Fahad Al-Abdul Jader regarding the establishment of such a platform.**

In its statement, the municipality clarified that the system for building violations has already been completed, and efforts are underway to implement it in the relevant department. Also, work is ongoing to design and implement the system for other types of violations.

In a related matter, the municipality also responded to a question submitted by the Municipal Council member Abdullah Al-Hedhal Al-Enezi regarding the location of the tree belt planned around the Mutlaa Residential City.

It explained that the site for the tree belt has been handed over to the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), as outlined in a letter from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) dated December 17. This letter confirmed that PAAAFR has received the project site, complete with all boundary and elevation markers, and is now preparing for its implementation.



Kuwaiti held with drugs: A Kuwaiti citizen in

his thirties was arrested in Salmiya recently after being found in a disoriented state and in possession of narcotics and drug paraphernalia, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to reports, rescue police patrols were on their routine patrol in Salmiya last night when they became suspicious of a parked car. Upon approaching the vehicle, officers discovered a man inside who appeared to be under the influence of drugs. After questioning, it was revealed that the man was an unemployed citizen in his thirties. During the search, a bag containing drugs and drug paraphernalia was discovered on him.

The individual, along with the seized items, was immediately referred to the Drugs Control General Department for further investigation.

## Kuwait busts four-man gang of drug traffickers

By Munif Naif  
Al-Seyassah / Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Ministry of Interior has announced that personnel from the Directorate-General for Drugs Control during a security operation have busted members of an international drug trafficking network.**

The daily quoting security sources said, the network consisted of four individuals -- two Arab nationals, bedoun and a female Kuwaiti citizen.

These suspects were involved in smuggling large quantities of drugs into the country, with instructions coming from outside Kuwait.

During the operation, authorities seized 16 kilos of shabu and 10,000 Tramadol pills, cleverly hidden inside two fire extinguishers in an attempt to evade detection.

The Ministry of Interior emphasized its commitment to cracking down on drug smuggling and trafficking, warning that it will relentlessly pursue those involved in spreading such harmful substances.

The ministry also urged the public to cooperate with security forces and report any suspicious activities via the emergency number (112) or the General Department for Combating Narcotics hotline (1884141).



Mol photo

Four-man gang of drug traffickers busted by CID personnel.



The scene of incident.

## Water heater explosion causes wall to collapse

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: On Friday evening, the Hawalli Fire Department responded to an incident involving a water heater explosion, which caused the collapse of a wall in the parking lot of a private hospital in the Hawalli area, reports Al-Seyassah daily quoting the Kuwait Fire Force.**

Fortunately, the explosion did not result in any injuries. Meanwhile, firefighters from Salmiya and Hawalli fire stations extinguished a fire that broke out in a house in Shaab on Saturday afternoon.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), no casualties were reported.

## Injuries as two attacked by gang of five in eatery

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Hawalli Search and Investigation Department has been tasked with investigating an assault involving five unknown individuals who attacked an illegal resident and a Gulf national in a restaurant and caused them injuries, reports Al-Anba daily.**

A security source stated that the restaurant's cameras, along with those in the surrounding areas, will be reviewed to determine the cause of the altercation and to identify the perpetrators through the vehicles they were using.

According to the case details, the illegal resident and the Gulf national, both 1992-born, were dining at a well-known restaurant when they noticed a group of young men staring at them strangely from a nearby table. When they inquired about the reason, the five young men unexpectedly assaulted them in full view of restaurant patrons and staff.

The two victims stated that they did not provoke the attackers but were simply defending themselves.

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Group of students delivers an impressive Hindi storytelling and vibrant cultural performances.



Event featured speeches, cultural performances and student activities

## Indian Embassy in Kuwait celebrates World Hindi Diwas

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Indian Embassy in Kuwait marked World Hindi Diwas (Day) on Jan 10 with a vibrant celebration that showcased the beauty and cultural richness of the Hindi language.

In his remarks on this auspicious occasion, the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, HE Dr Adarsh Swaika, said Hindi Diwas is not just a celebration of a language but also a tribute to India's diverse linguistic traditions and the unifying role that Hindi plays in connecting millions across the nation.

It is an occasion, he said, to promote the language, encourage its use in various fields, and reflect on its historical importance in fostering a sense of national identity and pride.

The Ambassador added, on this day, let us embrace the beauty of Hindi, celebrate its profound influence on literature, culture, and art, and pledge to preserve its legacy for future generations.

Principal of the New Gulf Indian School Anup Sharma, delivered an in-



Indian Ambassador Dr. Adarsh Swaika inaugurates the opening ceremony of the World Hindi Diwas celebrations.

sightful and engaging address about the alphabets and unique features of the Hindi language.

Highlighting its rich linguistic heritage, the Principal explained the structure of the Devanagari script, emphasizing its scientific design and phonetic accuracy.

The audience was captivated by the discussion on how each letter represents not

only a sound but also embodies cultural and historical significance.

The Principal also spoke about Hindi's unifying role in India's diverse linguistic landscape calling it a symbol of "our shared heritage and a thread that binds millions of hearts," the Principal remarked.

The talk inspired students and teach-



Photos by Rezk Taufiq

Diverse audience enjoys the insightful Hindi poetry discussions and lively performances at the World Hindi Day event.

ers and principals of schools who were present on the depth and beauty of Hindi, encouraging its use in daily communication and creative expression.

The celebration of Hindi Diwas was not limited to speeches. Students participated enthusiastically in activities such as poetry recitations, storytelling based on Hindi literature and grammar. Their

performances captured the audience's attention and conveyed the profound impact of Hindi in connecting communities and fostering unity.

These events served to deepen their understanding of the language while fostering a sense of pride in their cultural roots.

A Hindi song rendered by Kuwaiti

singer Mubarak, who is well-known among the Indian community for his love of Indian music and culture received an enthusiastic applause from the audience. In addition to this, some Kuwaitis also participated in a competition which was organized by the embassy to celebrate the occasion.

World Hindi Day, observed on Jan 10 each year, celebrates the global significance and widespread use of the Hindi language. Initiated in 2006 by the Government of India, the day marks the anniversary of the first World Hindi Conference held in Nagpur, India, in 1975.

It aims to promote Hindi as an international language and foster a sense of pride among Hindi-speaking communities worldwide. On this day, embassies, cultural institutions, and academic organizations organize various events like seminars, cultural programs, and literary gatherings to promote Hindi's rich heritage and its role in connecting people across nations. World Hindi Day is not only about honoring the language but also about reinforcing efforts to ensure its continued relevance in a multilingual and digital age.



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## New social allowance mechanism unveiled

Measures aim to prevent unjust claims

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Kuwait Municipality issued an administrative circular concerning the new mechanism for approving the social allowance and establishing provisions for its oversight.**

This circular is based on Civil Service Commission (CSC)'s circular No. 14/1992, which affirms the importance of government agencies to ensure the proper disbursement of social allowances to employees.

The aim is to curb the practice of disbursing financial amounts without justification, particularly due to changes in an employee's social status that have not been officially reported.

The circular, approved by the acting Director General of the Municipality Manal Al-Asfour includes four main articles.

The first article mandates that all municipality employees who are subject to the provisions of CSC's resolution No. 1/1997 regarding the granting of social allowances must fill an attached form detailing their social status every six months. This form must then be submitted to the relevant administrative units listed in the second article of the circular, which are:

- Head of the Sector Head's Office
- Head of the Branch Manager's Of-

- Head of the Financial and Administrative Support Department
- Secretariat Departments

The units will be responsible for collecting and reviewing the social status declarations from employees within their administrative units. They will also prepare consolidated lists that include the names and civil IDs of employees who have submitted their declarations, as well as those who have not.

These lists will be approved by the respective units and sent to the Personnel Affairs Department within one month of the circular's issuance. The process will be closely monitored and supervised by the senior official of each administrative unit.

The third clause stresses that the Personnel Affairs Department is obligated to review the information provided in the social status declarations. If any incorrect or false data is found, particularly in cases where employees attempt to obtain the social allowance unjustly, the Personnel Affairs Department is required to take the appropriate action.

The department is also responsible for reviewing the lists it receives, and identifying employees who either failed to submit their declarations or did not report changes in their social status. These employees will be referred to the Legal Department for disciplinary action if violations are confirmed.

In addition, the fourth clause of the circular requires all administrative units to distribute the CSC's letter No. 34,038 regarding the activation of social allowance services on the Sahel application to all employees within their unit.



Al-Asfour

## 'Red Palace a source of pride'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Red Palace is a source of pride and one of Kuwait's key landmarks, and the Council of Ministers is keen on preserving and promoting heritage sites, in alignment with the directives of His Highness the Amir, said Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

During his inspection visit to the Red Palace Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef emphasized the importance of developing the site and organizing more events there, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef also highlighted His Highness's support for establishing more heritage hubs, with plans for a second Mubarakiya market in Jahra and another in Ahmadi. He expressed optimism that these projects

would be inaugurated soon.

Additionally, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef mentioned the upcoming Jahra Waterfront project, calling it a long-awaited dream for the people of Jahra.

He commended the Governor of Jahra for his active efforts in developing the area and attracting tourism, noting that the governorate has a robust infrastructure to support such initiatives.

Looking ahead, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef expressed the goal of establishing more sports clubs in Jahra, particularly in the expanding Mutla'a area, which he described as a city in its own right.

While acknowledging the need for time to realize these plans, he emphasized the commitment to further developing the governorate to meet the needs of its residents.



Continued from Page 1

## Dear President

the country out of its critical situation.

It is true that the Lebanese people know their salvation depends on Aoun fulfilling his promise to ensure that weapons remain exclusively in the hands of the State and to prevent Lebanon from becoming a transit point or factory for drugs, like what happened when Hezbollah was allowed to promote soft terrorism in the Arab Gulf countries through the production and smuggling of Captagon and other substances in collaboration with Syrian intelligence during the reign of the ousted Bashar al-Assad.

This presidential pledge is non-negotiable, for it signifies that Lebanon, once known as "the Switzerland of the East," has been under the control of one of the most corrupt political classes in modern history for fifty years.

The Lebanese people know that their escape from this political class lies in recognizing the illegitimacy of any weapon outside the control of the armed forces, now led by Joseph Aoun.

Therefore, when Aoun declared in his inaugural speech before the country's representatives that, "Lebanon is going through a governance crisis in which political performance must change," and pledges to work toward judicial independence and reforming state institutions, he is reflecting the will of the Lebanese people. This also signals that the current political class has become thoroughly discredited. These words are a direct message to the "mafia class."

Any meaningful change, Aoun knows, must begin with reforming the electoral law. Anyone familiar with his speeches and statements during his leadership of the army knows that he has long criticized the current electoral law, which empowers the unqualified who have compromised the country's interests through electoral bribes, financial corruption, and personal gains. This law has allowed the worst elements to remain in power indefinitely. Meanwhile, Hezbollah's Al-Qard Al-Hassan Association has become the largest bank in Lebanon, while the rest of the country's banks have collapsed.

That is why hopes are placed on the strong and honest Joseph Aoun, despite the immense challenges he faces.

In this context, it may be useful to recall the story mentioned in the Holy Quran of the Prophet Moses when he arrived in the city of Midian and saw two women struggling to fill their jars, as the crowds prevented them from reaching the water source. Prophet Moses helped these women, and one of them said, "O my father, hire him. Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the honest".

It has become clear over the past two days that this sentiment reflects the opinion of the majority of the Lebanese people about Joseph Aoun, a man of integrity who has remained untainted by any political deals. The years he spent as commander of the Lebanese army serve as a testament to the truth of this view.

In contrast, Aoun's election signals historic shifts in the balance of power in Lebanon and the broader Middle East, especially after the weakening of the Persian influence that, for four decades, worked to turn Beirut, which was once known as the capital of beauty, creativity, and freedom, into a mere Iranian outpost used by Tehran to stir trouble in Arab capitals.

Lebanon, a cherished icon, is expected to return to its former glory under the new president. The new era should be one that depends on the Lebanese people who are known for their high culture and hard work, which they demonstrated in the countries of immigration where they sought refuge. There, they established industrial institutions and excelled in various fields.

Therefore, the Lebanese are waiting for this new era, seeing it as an opportunity to reaffirm their presence in their homeland. They expect support from both Arab and Western nations to help lift this beautiful country out of the tunnel of crisis and restore it to its rightful place, as the Lebanese used to describe it "a phoenix rising again in the Arab world".

## Al-Mulaifi backs

Al-Mulaifi believes that Kuwait is currently undergoing a significant reform phase, one that will ultimately pave the way for broader structural changes.

He urged the Kuwaiti people to be patient during this transitional period, stressing that the government is now focused on ensuring the rule of law is respected and enforced.

The former minister noted that while some may view the recent actions as harsh, they are part of a broader effort to restore law and order, particularly in areas such as citizenship and residency.

Al-Mulaifi acknowledged the growing issue of residency trade, which he attributed to the corruption in the citizenship process.

He pointed out that many individuals who acquired citizenship illegally did so to gain financial advantages, with little regard for the country's integrity. According to him, these people are focused solely on exploiting the system for personal gain, regardless of the negative impact on Kuwait's reputation.

On the topic of "Article 8," which addresses the revocation of citizenship for certain individuals, Al-Mulaifi expressed disagreement with the broad application of the law.

He argued that each case should

be examined carefully, particularly when it involves individuals who entered into marriages for the sole purpose of obtaining citizenship and noted that there are instances where women paid men to marry them for this benefit, while some men sought Kuwaiti citizenship to access financial benefits, such as loans.

Al-Mulaifi proposed that the solution should not be a blanket withdrawal of citizenship, but rather a nuanced approach that considers the validity of marital relationships and the ongoing family connections involved.

He emphasized that the automated systems in place could be leveraged to identify individuals who have exploited the system for material gain.

Al-Mulaifi strongly supported holding accountable those who obtained citizenship through fraudulent means.

He believes that these individuals should be investigated thoroughly and that the necessary legal measures should be enforced.

He also advocated for better monitoring of naturalized citizens to ensure that they adhere to Kuwaiti laws and values, a process that had been neglected in the past.

Al-Mulaifi addressed concerns that the widespread withdrawal of citizenship could have a negative impact on financial institutions and companies, particularly when it comes to people who may not be able to meet their financial obligations after losing their citizenship.

He acknowledged the potential consequences for retirees and individuals with financial commitments, suggesting that the government should consider these effects and ensure that proper support mechanisms are in place.

Al-Mulaifi also touched on the "bedoon" issue, noting that revoking citizenship could exacerbate the plight of those who were once stateless. He raised concerns about the potential difficulties these individuals could face if their country of origin refuses to reclaim them.

However, he clarified that international courts cannot interfere in a country's sovereignty regarding citizenship laws, although they may scrutinize humanitarian issues.

When asked about the potential impact of citizenship revocation on Kuwait's aspirations within OPEC, particularly with a goal of reaching 4 million barrels per day in oil production, Al-Mulaifi dismissed concerns that citizenship policies would affect Kuwait's OPEC quota.

He explained that quotas are determined by multiple factors beyond population size, including technological advancements in the oil sector.

Al-Mulaifi concluded his remarks by urging patience from the Kuwaiti people during this period of reform. He acknowledged that there would be challenges along the way but expressed confidence that the country would emerge stronger through comprehensive changes.

He also encouraged the government to be open to all opinions and to consider the broader public good when making decisions.

Al-Mulaifi's statements reflect his firm belief in a more transparent and accountable approach to citizenship, residency, and broader national reform, with a clear call for the rule of law to take precedence in the country's future.

## Kuwait eyes

This enables the UAE to maintain its competitive edge while adhering to international standards. Other GCC countries, including Kuwait, have implemented the 15 percent profit tax rate, while Qatar's tax rate stands at 10 percent, with plans for future reforms.

Bahrain is also expected to implement the global minimum tax regulations by 2025. Saudi Arabia and Oman, who have joined the OECD's global minimum tax measures, are expected to follow suit, signaling a region-wide shift towards coordinated tax policies.

The Gulf countries have also been implementing value-added tax (VAT) since 2018, with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain raising their VAT rates to 10 percent and 15 percent, respectively.

Qatar and Kuwait may introduce VAT within the next few years. These tax reforms are seen as beneficial for economic growth, helping to attract investment, create jobs, and enhance government revenue, which can be reinvested in infrastructure and services.

The no-income tax policy in the region remains a key competitive advantage, especially compared to financial centers with higher personal income tax rates.

Oman is considering a personal income tax on high earners, but most Gulf countries maintain no personal income tax, offering an attractive environment for global talent.

Additionally, the region is embracing digital transformation, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE leading the way with e-invoicing initiatives.

These initiatives aim to improve tax compliance, reduce fraud, and enhance operational efficiency, particularly for SMEs and large corporations alike.

Overall, the introduction of corporate taxes, the global minimum tax, and e-invoicing, along with ongoing digitization efforts, represent a strategic move to create a more transparent, efficient, and competitive economic ecosystem.

This transformation aims to position the GCC as a global leader in innovation and economic resilience, attracting investment and talent while ensuring that businesses contribute their fair share to public finances.

## Lebanon's golden

## A Call to Gulf Nations

Lebanon has always been a beacon of culture, diversity, and tolerance, and, God willing, it will reclaim its rightful place. President Aoun recognizes the essential role of Gulf nations in supporting Lebanon's renaissance and has called upon them to return and invest in its economic recovery. This call is not solely economic; it is an expression of gratitude and appreciation for the vital role the Gulf has historically played in Lebanon's development.

As one of Lebanon's largest investors and a lifelong admirer of this beautiful country, I echo the President's invitation. I urge Arab, Gulf, and capable Lebanese investors to seize this opportunity to contribute to Lebanon's reconstruction. I am confident that this appeal will be met with enthusiasm and support. With the united efforts of all who cherish Lebanon, we can transform challenges into opportunities and restore its status as a hub for investment and culture.

## Conclusion: Hope and Action

The election of General Joseph Aoun is a landmark moment in Lebanon's history. His honest leadership and transparent approach inspire hope for a brighter future. However, realizing this hope requires collective effort and serious action.

Lebanon deserves the best, and with firm leadership and the support of its people and allies, a nation worthy of its history and stature can be rebuilt. Let this new era be a golden opportunity for a fresh start, and let us always remember that hope is built on action and dedication.

## Digital trade

established by the ministry to collect input from businesses and stakeholders. This collaborative process aims to develop a draft that meets the needs of all entities involved, and promotes the digital economy in Kuwait. The goal is to create a regulatory environment that empowers the sector, protects consumers, improves the work environment, and opens new opportunities for digital trade in the country.

It is worth noting that the Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel previously indicated that the draft law includes important articles intended to benefit the business community and professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants. These provisions include requiring service providers to offer electronic payment options approved by the Central Bank of Kuwait, thus encouraging the use of Kuwaiti payment and financial technology companies.

Also, the draft law emphasizes the adoption of advanced technologies, such as blockchain, smart contracts, and artificial intelligence, to enhance the efficiency of digital trade. It also mandates the use of the Arabic language for product descriptions, purchasing and payment procedures, and communication at all stages of digital trade.

## 39,765 Kuwaiti

He explained that it would significantly reduce the marriage of Kuwaiti youth to foreigners. The statistics show that the ease of marriage to non-Kuwaiti women was what had contributed to an increase in the number of unmarried Kuwaiti women. By not granting citizenship to non-Kuwaiti women married to Kuwaitis, Kuwaiti youth would be more likely to seek marriage with Kuwaiti women.

Dr. Al-Shukri stressed that Kuwaiti society holds conservative customs and traditions, due to which it is important for a wife to be Kuwaiti so that children inherit the mother's customs and traditions.

Meanwhile, a professor of family psychology Dr. Ahmed Salama stated that the state's decisions regarding the withdrawal of nationalities under Article 8 will inevitably lead to a more balanced societal structure.

He explained that families in which the father is Kuwaiti and the mother is non-Kuwaiti often experience challenges related to the dispersion of their children's identity and dual loyalty to two countries.

These decisions would put an end to the self-interest of some foreign women who married Kuwaiti citizens with the hope of acquiring Kuwaiti citizenship.

In the past, marriages between Kuwaiti citizens and non-Kuwaiti women were often successful, as material interests did not factor into these unions. Consequently, these families did not face the same issues as those where material interests played a role in the marriage.

Dr. Salama referred to a saying often repeated in Kuwaiti society: "Whoever marries someone outside their nationality dies with their illness", noting that divorce rates tend to be higher in marriages involving non-Kuwaiti women.

He explained that there is a significant number of women who filed for divorce after acquiring Kuwaiti citizenship. However, it would be unfair to generalize these cases, as there are also many successful marriages where excellent non-Kuwaiti women, particularly from Gulf and Arab countries, gained citizenship through marriage.

Family stability depends on the choice of the wife. Given that Kuwaiti society is filled with outstanding women, whether married for the first time or divorced/widowed, there is no reason why Kuwaiti men should not prioritize marrying Kuwaiti women.

Strengthening diplomatic relations

## Kuwaiti Ambassador presents credentials to Azerbaijan prez

ANKARA, Jan 11, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador Mohammad Faisal Al-Mutairi presented his credentials on Friday to Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Kuwait to the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Kuwait's Embassy in Baku told KUNA in a press statement that Ambassador Al-Mutairi conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal AL-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to President Aliyev.

During the meeting, Ambassador Al-Mutairi expressed Kuwait's keenness to grow bilateral relations between both countries and achieve both leaderships' vision across all sectors, in addition

to the issues of common interest, and challenges listed on the agenda of the United Nations.

Al-Mutairi also congratulated Azerbaijan for its success in hosting the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP29).

In the statement, President Aliyev Highlighted the expansion of active political relations between the two countries, and expressed confidence that the brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Kuwait would continue to develop successfully.

President Ilham Aliyev also remembered with satisfaction Kuwait's representation at COP29 with a high-level delegation, and his meeting with Kuwait's Crown Prince Shaikh Sabah Khaled Al Hamad Al Sabah during the event.



KUNA photo  
President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev receives Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Baku Mohammad Faisal Al-Mutairi.

## Kuwait organizes Third International Scout Forum

Participants set to engage in workshops

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The State of Kuwait is hosting the Third International Scout Forum for Youth Empowerment, organized by the Kuwait Scout Association, from January 11 to 17, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The event is held under the theme "Leadership and Influence" and is under the patronage of the Minister of Education, Jalal Al-Tabtabaei.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Taraji, Chairman of the Kuwait Scout Association's Board of Directors, highlighted in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that Kuwait's hosting of this major international event for the third consecutive time underscores its leading role in supporting and empowering youth.

It also demonstrates the country's commitment to developing young leaders on both the Arab and international stages.

The forum will feature the honoring of a number of prominent



KUNA photo  
Dr. Abdullah Al-Taraji – Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Association

scout leaders from the global and Arab levels, including 90 male and female pioneers, as well as the founders of the Arab Parliamentary Scout Union and the Arab Union of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.

A total of 350 participants are

expected, including scouts, guides, pioneers, and scout leaders representing 29 countries.

The forum has been meticulously coordinated with the Arab Scout Organization, in collaboration with the Arab Parliamentary Scout Union and the Arab Union of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.

It will include meetings of the heads of Gulf and Arab scouting associations and the leaders of the Arab Union of Scouts and Guides.

Additionally, many workshops will be held, aimed at providing young people with hands-on training and fostering interactive participation, empowering them to make a positive impact in their communities.

Dr. Al-Taraji extended his gratitude to Minister Al-Tabtabaei for his sponsorship of the forum, emphasizing the significant role this support plays in advancing the scouting movement.

He also highlighted how the sponsorship encourages youth participation in scouting activities that enhance leadership, social skills, and teamwork.

## Authority denies claims of zoo ownership transfer

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources has refuted claims circulating on social media about transferring ownership of the zoo to the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS), reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The authority clarified that it is actively working on a comprehensive development project for the zoo. It also urged the public and media outlets to rely on official sources for accurate information and updates.



## JOINT OPERATIONS

SAUDI ARABIAN CHEVRON INC. (SAC) - KUWAIT GULF OIL COMPANY



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

Kuwaiti and Saudi Merchants, registered with either Company wishing to participate in any of the under-mentioned Tenders are invited to collect the Tender documents from Purchasing Section, Purchasing & Logistic Division, Administration Building, Ground Floor, Joint Operations, Wafra, during the official working hours from 12 JAN 2025 up to 28 JAN 2025 for a non-refundable fee mentioned against each tender.

Tender Fees to be deposited in the National bank of Kuwait (NBK) Account No. 1001132057. Saudi Suppliers can collect the tender documents from Saudi Arabian Chevron office in Al-Khobar Telephone No.: (013) 8645104 - Fax No.: (013) 8985436

The closing date for the following Tenders will be on **Tuesday, 4 FEB 2025 @ 09:00 A.M.**

S.NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS	FEES (KD)
1	030199	WOODEN POLES	15
2	030324	SAMPLE COOLER	35
3	028346-R1	S/F SULZER PUMP	35
4	030358	PIPE FITTINGS	5
5	030394	S/F ROSEMOUNT TANK MASTER SYSTEM	25

## Notes:

Gate Passes are required for Suppliers entering JO-Wafra Administrative Offices to collect the tender document and gate pass processing time is 48 hours. Please fill request for gate pass along with legible copies of Authorization letter, Civil ID, Car Registration, Supplier Registration (KGOC or SAC) to e-mail [HBJH@chevron.com](mailto:HBJH@chevron.com) and [CBMS@chevron.com](mailto:CBMS@chevron.com) at least 48 hours prior to arrival.

For additional information, you may contact:

Telephone No.: **23983639** - Ext. : **2502 - 3477**



## INTERNATIONAL

## US Prez to deliver prime-time farewell to nation

## Biden levies new sanctions against Russian energy sector, but it's up to Trump whether to keep them

WASHINGTON, Jan 11, (AP): President Joe Biden's administration announced Friday that it's expanding sanctions against Russia's critically important energy sector, unveiling a new effort to inflict pain on Moscow for its grinding war in Ukraine as President-elect Donald Trump gets set to return to office vowing to quickly end the conflict.

The outgoing Democratic administration billed the new sanctions as the most significant to date against Moscow's oil and liquefied natural gas sectors, the driver of Russia's economy. Officials said the sanctions, which punish entities that do business with the Russians, have the potential to cost the Russian economy upward of billions of dollars per month.

More than 180 oil-carrying vessels that are suspected to be part of a shadow fleet utilized by the Kremlin to evade oil sanctions as well as traders, oil field service firms and Russian energy officials are also targeted by the new sanctions. Several of the vessels targeted are also suspected of shipping sanctioned Iranian oil, according to the Treasury Department.

"Putin is in tough shape right now, and I think it's really important that he not have any breathing room to



President Joe Biden speaks in the Roosevelt Room at the White House in Washington, on Jan. 10, 2025. (AP)

continue to do the god-awful things he continued to do," Biden told reporters.

In the move coordinated with Washington, the U.K. also slapped sanctions on Russian energy firms. The U.S. and Britain are both targeting two of Russia's major oil producers, Gazprom

Neft and Surgutneftegas, and dozens

of the companies' subsidiaries.

The Foreign Office said that between them the two companies produce more than 1 million barrels of oil a day, worth \$23 billion a year. British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said "oil revenues are the lifeblood of Putin's war economy."

The U.K. has already sanctioned

almost 100 vessels in Russia's oil-transporting "shadow fleet" as Ukraine's Western allies seeking to increase economic pressure on Moscow ahead of any negotiations on ending the war.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the Biden administration chose this moment—just 10 days before Biden leaves office—for tougher oil measures because worries about world oil markets have subsided. Biden told reporters that he anticipated the move could cost drivers "three, four cents a gallon" at the pump.

The State Department also announced it was hitting 14 senior Rosatom officials and executives with travel bans that also affect their immediate family members.

Biden administration officials said that it will ultimately be up to Trump's administration whether to keep or scrap the new sanctions.

Trump's transition team did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the sanctions.

Meanwhile, President Biden will deliver a farewell address to the nation Wednesday from the Oval Office, five days before President-elect Donald Trump is sworn in.

## 'Europe's security on knife-edge'

## UK Foreign Secretary agrees Trump's call for NATO defense spending hike

LONDON, Jan 11, (AP): Europe's security "is on a knife-edge" and President-elect Donald Trump is right to say NATO member nations must increase military spending, Britain's top diplomat said Thursday.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy said that "the post-Cold War peace is well and truly over."

"Donald Trump and JD Vance are simply right when they say that Europe needs to do more to defend its own continent. It's myopia to pretend otherwise with Russia on the march," Lammy said during a speech in London setting out the center-left Labour government's approach to foreign policy, which he termed "progressive realism."

Lammy said people often ask him when world affairs will get back to normal, and "my answer is that they will not. Europe's future security is on a knife edge."

Trump has for years expressed skepticism about NATO, openly questioning the value of the alliance that has defined American foreign policy for decades and threatening not to defend members that fail to meet defense-spending goals.

This week Trump said NATO countries should spend at least 5% of their GDPs on defense, up from the current 2% target. He also said



Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy delivers a speech on the government plans for new sanctions which will target the finances of people smuggling networks as part of efforts to stop migrants crossing the English Channel, in London, on Jan. 9, 2025. (AP)

he would not rule out the use of military force to seize control of Greenland, an autonomous territory of NATO member Denmark.

Britain spends 2.3% of GDP on defense and says it will increase it to 2.5%.

Lammy said that while Trump's unpredictability and "intensity of rhetoric" were part of his signature style, "we can be guided not entirely by the rhetoric and the language, but by (his) actions as president."



U.S. President-elect Donald Trump appears remotely for a sentencing hearing in front of New York State Judge Juan Merchan in the criminal case in which he was convicted in 2024 on charges involving hush money paid to a porn star, at New York Criminal Court in Manhattan in New York, Jan. 10, 2025. (AP)

## Felony conviction sticks

## Trump gets no-penalty sentence in hush money case, while calling it 'despicable'

NEW YORK, Jan 11, (AP): President-elect Donald Trump was sentenced Friday to no punishment in his historic hush money case, a judgment that lets him return to the White House unencumbered by the threat of a jail term or a fine.

With Trump appearing by video from his Florida estate, the sentence quietly capped an extraordinary case rife with moments unthinkable in the U.S. only a few years ago.

It was the first criminal prosecution and first conviction of a former U.S. president and major presidential candidate. The New York case became the only one of Trump's four criminal indictments that has gone to trial and possibly the only one that ever will. And the sentencing came 10 days before his inauguration for his second term.

In roughly six minutes of remarks to the court, a calm but insistent Trump called the case "a weaponization of government" and "an embarrassment to New York." He maintained that he did not commit any crime.

"It's been a political witch hunt. It was done to damage my reputation so that I would lose the election, and, obviously, that didn't work," the Republican president-elect said by video, with

U.S. flags in the background.

After the roughly half-hour proceeding, Trump said in a post on his social media network that the hearing had been a "despicable charade." He reiterated that he would appeal his conviction.

Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan could have sentenced the 78-year-old to up to four years in prison. Instead, Merchan chose a sentence that sidestepped thorny constitutional issues by effectively ending the case but assured that Trump will become the first president to take office with a felony conviction on his record.

Trump's no-penalty sentence, called an unconditional discharge, is rare for felony convictions. The judge said that he had to respect Trump's upcoming legal protections as president, while also giving due consideration to the jury's decision.

"Despite the extraordinary breadth of those protections, one power they do not provide is the power to erase a jury verdict," said Merchan, who had indicated ahead of time that he planned the no-penalty sentence.

As Merchan pronounced the sentence, Trump sat upright, lips pursed, frowning slightly. He tilted his head to

the side as the judge wished him "good-speed in your second term in office."

Before the hearing, a handful of Trump supporters and critics gathered outside. One group held a banner that read, "Trump is guilty." The other held one that said, "Stop partisan conspiracy" and "Stop political witch hunt."

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, whose office brought the charges, is a Democrat.

The norm-smashing case saw the former and incoming president charged with 34 felony counts of falsifying business records, put on trial for almost two months and convicted by a jury on every count. Yet the legal detour - and sordid details aired in court of a plot to bury affair allegations - didn't hurt him with voters, who elected him in November to a second term.

Beside Trump as he appeared virtually Friday from his Mar-a-Lago property was defense lawyer Todd Blanche, with partner Emil Bove in the New York courtroom. Trump has tapped both for high-ranking Justice Department posts.

Prosecutors said that they supported a no-penalty sentence, but they chided Trump's attacks on the legal system throughout the case.



Luke Dexter kneels as he sifts through the remains of his father's fire-ravaged beach front property in the aftermath of the Palisades Fire Friday, Jan. 10, 2025 in Malibu, Calif. (AP)

## 13mln people grapples with enormous challenge

## With their LA-area homes still smoldering, families return to search ruins for memories

LOS ANGELES, Jan 11, (AP): Many watched their homes burn on television in a state of shock.

Since the flames erupted in and around Los Angeles, scores of residents have returned to their still smoldering neighborhoods even as the threat of new fires persisted and the nation's second-largest city remained unsettled. For some, it was a first look at the staggering reality of what was lost as the region of 13 million people grapples with the gargantuan challenge of overcoming the disaster and rebuilding.

Calmer winds enabled firefighters to start gaining some control of the biggest blazes in metropolitan LA on Friday before gusty weather returns over the weekend to an area that hasn't seen rain in more than eight months. But by Friday evening, new evacuations were ordered in an area that includes part of Interstate 405 after a flare up on the eastern side of the Palisades Fire.

Bridget Berg, who was at work when she saw on TV her house in Altadena erupt in flames, came back for the first time with her family two days later "just to make it real."

Their feet crunched across the broken bits of what had been their home for 16 years.

Her kids sifted through debris on the



People wait in line at an aid center for those affected by wildfires at the Pasadena Convention Center Friday, Jan. 10, 2025 in Pasadena, Calif. (AP)

sidewalk, finding a clay pot and a few keepsakes as they searched for Japanese wood prints they hoped to recover. Her husband pulled his hand out of rubble near the still-standing fireplace, holding up a piece of petrified wood handed down by his grandmother.

"It's OK. It's OK," Berg said as much to herself as others as she took stock of the destruction, remembering the deck and pool from which her family watched fireworks. "It's not like we just lost our house - everybody lost their house."

Since the fires first began popping up around a densely populated, 25-mile (40-kilometer) expanse north of downtown LA, they have burned more than 12,000 structures, a term that includes homes, apartment buildings, businesses, outbuildings and vehicles. No cause has been identified yet for the largest fires.

Allegations of leadership failures and political blame have begun and so have investigations. Gov. Gavin Newsom on Friday ordered state officials to determine why a 117 million-gallon (440 million-liter) reservoir was out of service and some hydrants ran dry, calling it "deeply troubling." Meanwhile, Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley said city leadership failed her department by not providing enough money for firefighting. She also criticized the lack of water.

"When a firefighter comes up to a hydrant, we expect there's going to be water," she said.

At least 11 people have been killed, with five from the Palisades Fire and six from the Eaton Fire, according to the LA County medical examiner's office. Officials said they expected that number to rise as cadaver dogs go through leveled neighborhoods to assess the devastation to an area larger than San Francisco.

See Also Pages 11 & 13

## America

**Judge holds Giuliani in contempt:** Rudy Giuliani was found in contempt of court Friday for the second time in a week, as a federal judge warned him he could be sent to jail if he doesn't stop spreading lies about two former Georgia election workers who won a \$148 million defamation judgment against him.

U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell in Washington, D.C., found the former New York City mayor and one-time attorney for President-elect Donald Trump violated court orders barring him from defaming Wanda "Shaye" Moss and her mother, Ruby Freeman. The judge ordered him to review trial testimony and other materials from the case, and warned him that future violations could land him behind bars. (AP)

**Navy vet cleared of charges:** A retired Navy intelligence officer who was cleared of the most serious charges in his U.S. Capitol attack trial alongside Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes avoided additional time behind bars when he was sentenced on Friday.

Thomas Caldwell was acquitted by a jury in Washington's federal court of seditious conspiracy and two other conspiracy offenses in one of the most serious cases brought by the Justice Department in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack. And one of two counts he was found guilty on at trial was dismissed in light of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling last year. (AP)

**Delta jet aborts takeoff:** Four passengers were injured Friday at the Atlanta airport after a Delta Air Lines jet bound for Minneapolis aborted its takeoff.

The plane had experienced an engine problem. Delta spokesperson Morgan Durrant said. The incident happened while a snowstorm was causing widespread cancellations and delays in Atlanta, the world's busiest airport. But officials can't say if the problem had anything to do with the weather. (AP)

## Germany heads into election

## Far-right party's convention draws protests

RIESA, Germany, Jan 11, (AP): A convention of the far-right Alternative for Germany party was met by protests on Saturday as it and other major parties launch their campaigns for the country's election next month.

Alternative for Germany, or AfD, is holding a two-day gathering in Riesa - in the eastern state of Saxony, one of its strongholds - to formally nominate co-leader Alice Weidel as its candidate for chancellor and finalize details of its platform.

A heavy police presence was in place as thousands of demonstrators were expected. Officers partly broke up a sit-in blockade at a crossroads, and fireworks were thrown toward police on the sidelines of another protest, German news agency dpa reported.

Polls show AfD in second place ahead of the Feb. 23 election, with about 20% support. However, Weidel - who this week held a live chat with tech billionaire Elon Musk, who has endorsed the party, on his X platform - has no realistic chance of becoming Germany's leader as other parties refuse to work with AfD.

It is the mainstream conservative opposition Union bloc that leads polls with around 30% and its candidate,



Police officers react with protesters to stop a demonstration against the AfD's national party conference, in Riesa, Germany, Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025. (AP)

Friedrich Merz, is the favorite to become the next chancellor.

Center-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz is hoping for a come-from-behind victory, but there has been little sign of significant movement so far in polls that show support for his Social Democrats at 14-17%. Scholz leads a minority govern-

ment after his unpopular and notoriously rancorous three-party coalition collapsed in November when he fired his finance minister in a dispute over how to revitalize Germany's stagnant economy. The election is being held seven months earlier than originally scheduled.

## Europe

**Estonia steps up patrols:** As they plied the gray, icy waters of the Baltic Sea west of Russia on Thursday, the crew of the Estonian minehunter EML Sakala kept a careful eye on any vessels slowing down suspiciously or suddenly changing course.

They use binoculars and cameras with long zoom lenses, logging the names of ships, scouring them for missing anchors or trailing cables. The Sakala has approached about 200 vessels in a week at sea.

It is one of three Estonian navy ships that are part of stepped-up maritime patrols by NATO countries after the Estlink-2 power cable and communication links between Finland and Estonia were damaged Dec. 25. A month earlier, two other undersea data cables were damaged. (AP)

**Kremlin welcomes possibility:** The Kremlin has welcomed U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's readiness to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a senior Moscow official said Friday.

Russia attaches no conditions to the possibility of face-to-face talks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters during a conference call.

Trump said Thursday that "Putin wants to meet" and that a meeting is being set up. He indicated that efforts to end the almost three-year war between Russia and Ukraine were behind the overtures for talks. "We have to get that war over with," Trump said when referring to his supposed meeting with Putin. (AP)

**Polish gov't adopts resolution:** The Polish government adopted a resolution on Thursday vowing to ensure the free and safe participation of the highest representatives of Israel - including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu - who choose to attend commemorations for the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau later this month. (AP)



US, Canada, Britain and EU announce new sanctions on more than 20 Venezuelan officials

## Venezuela's opposition supporters grapple with hope, disappointment after Maduro sworn in

CARACAS, Jan 11, (AP) — The inauguration of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro left his opponents to grapple with conflicting feelings of hope and disappointment on Saturday, pondering why the self-described socialist leader could not be stopped despite credible evidence that he had lost the election last year.

Some described their mood after Friday's ceremony at the legislative palace in Caracas, Venezuela's capital, like an emotional hangover while others said they feel abandoned.

Many expressed cautious optimism, finding a measure of comfort in the social media videos released by two opposition leaders — popular former lawmaker María Corina Machado and Edmundo González, the opposition's candidate in the vote — who had promised to topple Maduro.

"In the end, it feels as if the soup got cold," college professor Nelson Perez said. "We've been on the subject of not losing hope for a while. ... But then you realize it's more of the same."

That realization is hard to process for millions of Venezuelans who, like Perez, had imagined a different Jan. 10 — one with González receiving the presidential sash and Machado giving one of her signature fiery speeches before the National Assembly.

Instead, González and Machado sent messages on social media while Maduro placed his hand on Venezuela's constitution and took the oath of office, defying overwhelming evidence contradicting his victory claim in the July presidential election.

Maduro compared himself to a biblical David fighting Goliath and accused his opponents and their supporters in the United States of trying to turn his inauguration into a "world war." He said his enemies' failure to block his inauguration to a third six-year term was "a great victory" for Venezuela's peace and national sovereignty.

"I have not been made president by the government of the United States,



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores wave after his swearing-in ceremony for a third term at the National Assembly in Caracas, Venezuela, Friday, Jan. 10, 2025. (AP)

nor by the pro-imperialist governments of Latin America," he said after being draped with a sash in the red, yellow and blue of Venezuela's flag. "I come from the people, I am of the people, and my power emanates from history and from the people."

Venezuela's National Electoral Council, stacked with government loyalists, had declared Maduro the winner of the July 28 election. But unlike in previous contests, electoral authorities did not provide detailed vote counts to back the announced

result.

The opposition, however, collected tally sheets from 85% of electronic voting machines and posted them online — showing its candidate, González, had won by a more than a two-to-one margin. U.N. experts and the U.S.-based Carter Center, both invited by Maduro's government to observe the election, said the tally sheets published by the opposition are legitimate.

Machado, in a message on social media Friday, said Maduro was guilty

of a coup by not leaving office by Jan. 10, when by law, Venezuela's presidential term begins. She also said she was confident that the country's "freedom is near" but stopped short of saying anything about future steps the opposition could take to end Maduro's presidency.

"Today, Maduro didn't put the sash on his chest. He put a shackle on his ankle, which will tighten every day," she said.

A day earlier, Machado — who was banned from running for office

but remains the driving force behind Venezuela's beleaguered opposition — had emerged from months of hiding to join an anti-Maduro protest in Caracas. She said security forces had briefly detained her after leaving the rally, an allegation the government promptly denied.

Thursday's rally drew far smaller crowds than the massive demonstrations Machado and González had led during the election campaign, primarily because of fears over the government's brutal crackdown on

dissent. More than 2,000 people were arrested during and after the civil unrest that followed the election.

"You see people, and they look like they have a hangover," bricklayer Luis Carlos Moreno, 55, said of the mood among those who had stayed away from the inauguration ceremony. "We have to wait until next week to see how things go and if ... everyone goes to work and the kids go to school."

In contrast, Maduro's supporters near the legislative palace were jubilant, some unable to hold back tears of joy.

State TV said 10 heads of state attended the ceremony. But far more governments around the world have rejected Maduro's victory claims, pointing to credible evidence validated by election observers.

Underscoring Maduro's growing isolation, the U.S., Canada, Britain and the European Union announced new sanctions Friday on more than 20 Venezuelan officials, accusing them of gutting the country's democracy. Those sanctioned included Supreme Court justices, electoral authorities, the head of Venezuela's state oil company and Cabinet ministers.

Meanwhile, González, who left for Spain in September to avoid arrest, was in the Dominican Republic, which was supposed to be the last stop on his tour of the Americas before attempting to return to Venezuela to be sworn in. In his video message, he told supporters that Maduro's government will end "soon, very soon" and reiterated his promise to return to Venezuela.

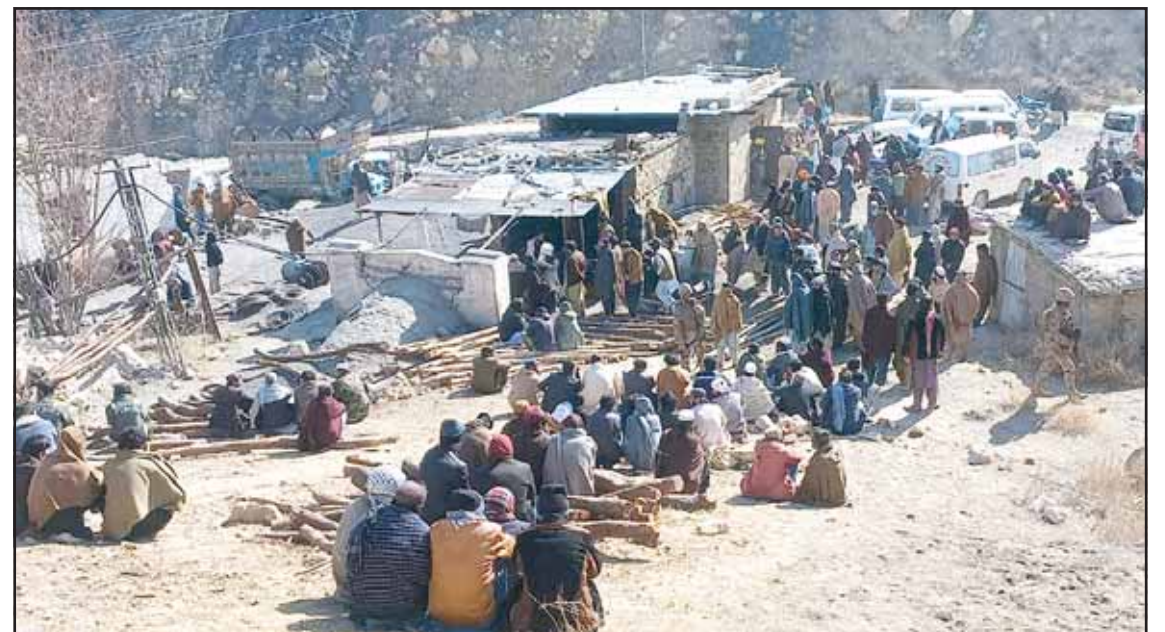
"I am ready for safe entry at the right time," he said.

Those struggling with the idea of Maduro's rule for six more years included poll workers — many of them were harassed or arrested following the election.

"I'm very disappointed," said Caracas resident and poll worker Marlyn Ruiz. "Reality is not as we were led to believe."



Supporters of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol attend a rally to oppose his impeachment in Seoul, South Korea, Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025. The letters read "Impeachment is invalid." (AP)



Local residents gather as rescuers conduct an operation to recover coal mine workers following a methane gas explosion caused a coal mine to collapse in Singidi, a remote area of southwest Pakistan's Balochistan province, Friday, Jan. 10, 2025. (AP)

## Authorities eye second bid to detain Yoon

## South Korea's acting leader Choi accepts resignation of presidential security chief

SEOUL, Jan 11, (AP) — South Korea's acting leader accepted the resignation of the chief of the presidential security service, Park Jong-joon, as he faced police questioning over how his forces blocked law enforcement efforts to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol last week.

The acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, also expressed regret over the clashes between law enforcement officials and the presidential security service and called for lawmakers to reach a bipartisan agreement to launch an independent investigation.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials and police are planning a second attempt to bring Yoon into custody as they jointly investigate whether his brief martial law declaration on Dec. 3 amounted to an attempted rebellion. The presidential security service blocked an earlier attempt to detain Yoon at his official residence, which he has not left for weeks.

It wasn't immediately clear how Park's resignation and Choi's call for an independent investigation to take over the probe on Yoon would affect the push to bring Yoon into custody.

"The government has been deliberating to find a wise solution, but unfortunately, within our current legal framework, it's difficult to find a clear resolution to end the conflict between the two agencies," Choi said about the tensions between the anti-corruption office and presidential security service over Yoon's potential detention.

"We urge the ruling and opposition parties to work together to agree on a bill to launch a special prosecutor investigation that is free from constitutional issues. This will naturally resolve the ongoing intense standoff."

The main liberal opposition Democratic Party accused Choi of legitimizing Yoon's refusal to comply with a court-issued warrant under the guise of neutrality.

"It amounts to a public declaration of support for the leader of a rebellion," said Noh Jong-myun, a party lawmaker and spokesperson.

The Democrats and other opposition parties on Thursday introduced a



Park Jong-joon, the chief of the presidential security service, arrives at the Joint Investigation Headquarters in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, Jan. 10, 2025. (AP)

bill calling for an independent investigation into allegations of rebellion against Yoon.

An earlier bill by the opposition proposing an independent investigation was scrapped after members of Yoon's conservative party opposed a clause allowing only opposition parties to recommend special prosecutor candidates.

The conservatives also aren't endorsing the new bill, which proposes that the Supreme Court's chief justice recommend two candidates to Yoon, who would then select one as the special prosecutor. If Yoon refuses to appoint anyone, the older of the two candidates would automatically assume the role, according to the bill.

Park ignored two summonses before appearing for questioning on Friday over allegations of obstructing justice, a week after his forces repelled dozens of anti-corruption and police investigators from Yoon's official residence. Park said his duty is to protect the president and warned of "bloodshed," as critics said that his agency is becoming Yoon's private army.

The embattled president remains holed up at his official residence in

Seoul, where the presidential security service has fortified the grounds with barbed wire and rows of vehicles blocking the roads.

Yoon made a short-lived declaration of martial law and deployed troops to surround the National Assembly on Dec. 3, which lasted only hours before lawmakers managed to get through the blockade and voted to lift the measure.

His presidential powers were suspended when the opposition-dominated Assembly voted to impeach him on Dec. 14 and accused him of rebellion. His fate now rests with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberating on whether to formally remove Yoon from office or reject the charges and reinstate him.

A Seoul court on Tuesday issued a new warrant to the anti-corruption agency to detain Yoon after the previous one-week warrant expired. The agency and police have not publicly disclosed how long the new warrant will remain valid. Speaking to reporters upon arriving for police questioning, Park again criticized the efforts to detain Yoon, saying that the investigation should proceed in a manner "appropriate for the status of an incumbent president" and the "dignity of the nation."

## 8 out of 16 mine workers abducted by militants recovered

## Pakistan mine collapse kills 3, 9 missing

QUETTA, Pakistan, Jan 11, (AP) — At least three miners have died after a methane gas explosion caused a coal mine to collapse in a remote area of southwest Pakistan, officials said, as authorities launched an operation to rescue nine other missing workers.

Abdul Ghani, a mines inspector, said the blast happened on Thursday night in Singidi, a town in Balochistan province. He said rescuers had retrieved the bodies of three peoples and were carefully removing debris from the mine as part of a rescue effort.

Shahid Rind, a Balochistan government spokesman, said all available resources are being used in the rescue operation. An investigation has also been ordered to determine the cause of the collapse, he said in a statement.

Safety standards can be poor in the coal mining industry, leading to accidents and fatalities in recent years.

In other news, Pakistani security

forces recovered at least eight out of 16 mine workers who were kidnapped by militants in the country's restive northwest Thursday morning, police and two security officials said.

The operation was launched hours after insurgents ambushed and attacked the workers' vehicle in a narrow road in Lakki Marwat district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, police officer Mohammad Ijaz said.

The attack occurred as the men were traveling from Lakki Marwat to a nearby mining project, Ijaz said. He gave no further details.

Other security officials said the mining project where the men worked is related to the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, though the abducted workers are not its employees. They said an operation is still underway to recover the remaining workers.

It was unclear whether those insurgents holding the men suffered casual-

ties. No one from the commission was immediately available for comment.

The latest development comes after militants sent a video to journalists, showing some of the abducted laborers. In the video, one of the men was seen urging authorities to accept the kidnappers' demands for their release, but it was unclear what those demands were.

There was no immediate claim for the abduction, but suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban, which have stepped up attacks on security forces and civilians in recent months.

The latest attack came a day after dozens of armed Baloch separatists seized a government office, robbed a bank and partially burned a police station in a remote district in southwestern Pakistan before fleeing when security forces arrived, police said Thursday.

## Africa

**Mahama orders probe:** Ghanaian President **John Dramani Mahama** ordered the police to investigate the deaths of eight Ghanaians during the 2020 and 2024 general elections to ensure justice for the victims and their families. In a letter issued by the president's office, Mahama instructed the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to establish a dedicated task force within the Criminal Investigations Department to focus exclusively on the election-related murder cases.

"The task force should also review electoral security arrangements and investigate the role and actions of security personnel deployed at the affected polling stations to determine their involvement or oversight," the letter said. The president requested that the committee provide periodic updates to the government at various stages of the investigation to maintain transparency and public trust. (Xinhua)

**Dos Santos rejects pardon:** Jose Filomeno dos Santos, son of Angola's former President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, has rejected a pardon granted by incumbent President Joao

Lourenco that took effect on Jan. 1, local media reported Thursday.

Jose Filomeno dos Santos, commonly known as "Zenu," was sentenced to five years in jail following his conviction for embezzling 500 million U.S. dollars during his tenure as the head of Angola's sovereign wealth fund. According to local media Club-K, Zenu described the pardon as a "legal error" in a letter to Lourenco, arguing that it merely cancels the serving of the sentence without fully restoring fundamental rights.

He said that accepting the presidential pardon would contradict his claims of innocence, and be tantamount to admitting guilt for a crime he insisted he did not commit.

Angola's Constitutional Court



Mahama



Dos Santos

overturned the previous conviction of Zenu in April 2024. However, Zenu alleged that the Supreme Court has refused to comply with the ruling and is seeking to uphold his conviction through a new judgment. He continues to assert his innocence, another media outlet Valor Economico reported. (Xinhua)

**US to repatriate assets:** The United States announced Friday that it would be returning \$52.88 million in seized assets to Nigeria as part of a yearlong corruption probe against former oil minister Diezani Alison-Madueke and associates, according to a joint statement by Nigeria's minister of justice and the United States government.

It marks the first repatriation of assets linked to Alison-Madueke, who served as Nigeria's oil minister from 2010 to 2015. She rose to prominence as a powerful figure under former President Goodluck Jonathan, and became the first female president of the oil alliance OPEC.

The seized assets, including a superyacht and prime real estate in New York and California, were confiscated in 2023 by U.S. authorities during Alison-Madueke's trial. (AP)



PAKISTAN	KSE 100	Change	Closing pts	UAE	DFM	Change	Closing pts
		+749.67	113,439.25	UK	FTSE 100	-1.02	5,228.32
				JAPAN	Nikkei	-71.20	8,248.49
				EUROPE	Euro Stoxx 50	-414.69	39,190.40
				PHILIPPINES	PSEI	-40.65	4,977.26
						-15.25	6,496.32

# Business

In line with its commitment to social responsibility

## KFH supports Kuwait's Ya Hala Shopping Festival as strategic partner

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: In line with its commitment to social responsibility and supporting vital sectors and projects for Kuwaiti youth, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated as a strategic partner in the inauguration ceremony of Ya Hala Shopping Festival.

Ya Hala Shopping Festival is a national initiative encompassing economic, commercial, cultural, and entertainment activities. It contributes to stimulating the economy, aligning with Kuwait's national and festive occasions. Held from January 21 to March 31, the festival offers 70 days of promotional campaigns featuring discounts and special offers from participating companies and retailers. The festival also includes exciting raffles with prizes exceeding \$8 million, including both cash and in-kind rewards.

On this occasion, KFH Deputy General Manager Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh, said that KFH's participation in this new national initiative, the largest of its kind, underscores the bank's commitment to its social responsibility and its leading role in supporting initiatives that enhance key sectors and serve community and development. Notably, this includes initiatives that stimulate the economy and invigorate trade and sales activity within Kuwait.

He added that the Ya Hala Shopping Festival is a distinctive initiative that contributes to enhancing Ku-



Yousef Al-Ruwaieh receiving an honor.

wait's shopping experience within the region. This positively reflects on commercial activity and the national economy through promotional offers and discounts that

encourage consumer spending.

Al-Ruwaieh expressed his confidence in the festival's success in offering integrated and diverse ac-

tivities that would attract various segments of society, each according to their interests. He emphasized the importance of maintaining collaborative relationships between the public and private sectors to support economic stimulation and develop local market capabilities.

He added that KFH's participation in the festival follows its successful contribution to the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup, Khaleeji Zain, which garnered significant attention and recognition from both official and public sectors. KFH's pavilion at the championship was a prominent feature, attracting youth, sports enthusiasts, and fans from Kuwait and the participating nations. This reflects KFH's commitment to actively participate in official events and activities, supporting all endeavors aimed at achieving success.

KFH's partnership was unveiled at a ceremony held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Information, Culture, and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, the Undersecretary of ministry of information, Nasser Muhaisen, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ziyad Al-Najem, Chairman of the Kuwait Shopping Festival, Faisal Al-Shaiji and the Festival's CEO, Fadhel Al-Dousari, and other senior officials from both the public and private sectors.

## KAFCO earns KD 14M in net profits for 2024

Jet fuel sales boost profits

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Vice Chairman and General Manager of Kuwait Aviation Fueling Company (KAFCO) Mishaal Al-Tunaib announced that the company has achieved approximately KD 14 million in net profits from the beginning of the last fiscal year until the end of November 2024.**

In a recorded speech during the company's annual ceremony to honor veteran employees, Al-Tunaib attributed the achievement to a rise in jet fuel sales and a reduction in operating expenses. He credited this success to the efficient use of resources and the com-

pany's policy of cost rationalization and prudent spending.

He expressed confidence that the company's profits would continue to grow, projecting an increase in overall revenue when preparing the final accounts for the 2024/2025 fiscal year.

Al-Tunaib affirmed that the company is actively improving its operational procedures by integrating advanced digital solutions, such as the fuel supply management system, to enhance efficiency and streamline operations.

He highlighted the company's ongoing collaboration with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Ministry of Public Works on the supervision and coordination of the HABIS network project for the new T2 passenger terminal.

Al-Tunaib explained that the T2 terminal, once operational, will represent a major advancement in air navigation in Kuwait due to its large operational capacity. This will position Kuwait International Airport as a vital hub for aviation movement in the region and

contribute to the strengthening of the national economy.

The company successfully renewed its accreditation for the integrated management system last July, which includes the Quality Management System, the Environmental Management System, and the Occupational Health and Safety Management System, for three years until August 2027. This affirms KAFCO's commitment to providing safe, reliable, and environmentally sustainable fuel supply services within the Kuwait International Airport area.

Al-Tunaib highlighted the company's ongoing preparations to support the operation of the new passenger terminal, which includes several key projects, such as replacing the supply nozzles in the eastern and western areas of the existing T1 terminal, updating control units in the loading area of the new warehouse, and upgrading air operations facilities. KAFCO is also strengthening its fuel supply fleet, with ongoing efforts to supply new fuel dispensers and refilling equipment.

## Platinum and silver dip

### Gold prices stable after strong week

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Gold prices remained stable in early Asian trading on Friday, maintaining a steady position after a strong performance earlier in the week, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Spot gold was at \$2,670.16 per ounce, having gained over 1 percent since the start of the week. US gold futures rose slightly by 0.1 percent, reaching \$2,694.50.

Investors are closely awaiting the

release of US jobs data later in the day for insights into the Federal Reserve's future interest rate decisions.

Gold had reached a near four-week high in the previous session, buoyed by safe-haven demand as concerns over US President-elect Donald Trump's economic policies -- particularly his tariffs and protectionist stances -- stoked worries about inflation.

Trump's policies are expected to drive

inflationary pressures, making gold an attractive hedge against rising prices. However, higher interest rates could reduce the appeal of non-yielding gold.

Other precious metals showed mixed movements. Spot silver was slightly lower at \$30.12 per ounce, platinum decreased by 0.1 percent to \$957.98, while palladium rose 1 percent to \$934.28. Despite the fluctuations, all three metals are on track to finish the week with gains.

## Al-Turkait confirms initial settlement payment received

### Al Safat Investment settles dispute with Evolve Group & Al Muhairi

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Al Safat Investment Company has reached a settlement agreement with the Emirati Evolve Group of Companies and Khaled Salem Al Muhairi regarding judicial disputes at the Center for Friendly Settlement of Disputes in Dubai, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The dispute stemmed from rulings issued in favor of Al Safat Invest-

ment.

Abdullah Hamad Al-Turkait, Chairman of Al Safat Investment, stated that the company has received the first payment of AED 60 million out of the total AED 160 million settlement amount.

The financial impact of this first payment will be reflected in the company's financial statements for

the first quarter of 2025, resulting in a profit of 5 million Kuwaiti dinars.

The remaining balance of AED 100 million will be paid in installments over five years, with an annual payment of AED 20 million.

These annual payments are expected to be recorded as yearly profits for the company, amounting to 1.6 million dinars each year.

Brent hits \$79.76, WTI at \$76.57

## Oil price rises to \$77.95 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by USD 1.51 to USD 77.95 per barrel (pb) on Friday, compared with USD 76.44 pb the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) on Saturday.

At the global level, the Brent crude went up by USD 2.84 to USD 79.76 pb, and the West Texas Intermediate also rose by USD 2.65 to USD 76.57 pb.

## CO2 emissions to drop by 18M tonnes

### Türkiye's Akkuyu nuclear plant set to begin operations in 2025

ANKARA, Jan 11, (Xinhua): Türkiye's long-awaited nuclear energy ambitions are taking shape with one of its biggest energy investments, the Akkuyu nuclear power plant, set to become partially operational in 2025.

The plant, located in the southern province of Mersin, began construction in 2018 and will consist of four reactors with a total capacity of 4,800 megawatts (MW) once completed. It is expected to meet 10 percent of Türkiye's electricity demand and cut CO2 emissions by 18 million tonnes annually.

In late December 2024, Türkiye's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Alparslan Bayraktar told reporters that the plant will start power generation in its first reactor in 2025 and have all reactors running by 2028.

Türkiye overtook Germany to become Europe's largest producer of coal-fired electricity in 2024. To meet the country's increasing electricity demand, which is projected to grow by 4 percent annually through mid-century, the Turkish government has pivoted to nuclear energy as part of its broader clean energy strategy and its efforts to achieve net-zero emissions by 2053.

The country is making significant investments in renewables to reach its ultimate goal of energy self-sufficiency, with plans to allocate 100 billion U.S. dollars by 2035, and seeks to increase its wind and solar

capacity fourfold, reaching 120,000 MW by 2035.

It also plans to triple its interconnection capacity with the European Union, targeting 77 percent of its electricity production from domestic and renewable sources by 2035.

To move toward adopting nuclear energy, the Turkish government plans to establish at least two more nuclear power plants by 2050, one in the Thrace region and the other in the Black Sea province of Sinop.

Additional small modular reactors with a combined output of 5,000 MW are also in the pipeline to further diversify the country's energy mix, with final decisions likely to be announced this year, unnamed sources told Xinhua.

"Negotiations are ongoing with Russia and South Korea on these projects," they said. "The commissioning of Akkuyu's first reactor in 2025 will be a milestone in Türkiye's energy ambitions," one of the sources said.

"The Akkuyu plant represents not just a shift toward energy diversification but also a step toward reducing Türkiye's reliance on carbon-intensive fuels," Murat LeCompte, an Istanbul-based energy expert, told Xinhua recently.

"Nuclear energy is practical and effective because the amount of energy it provides is incomparable with other sources such as coal," he added.

## China-Arab states mark 20 years of cooperation forum

The year 2024 marked the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. In May 2024, the forum convened its 10th ministerial meeting in Beijing, where China proposed "five cooperation frameworks" to step up the building of a China-Arab community with a shared future.

These frameworks outline a roadmap for developing China-Arab relations with the following objectives: a more dynamic framework for innovation, an expanded framework for investment and finance cooperation, a more multifaceted framework for energy cooperation, a more balanced framework for mutually beneficial economic and trade ties, and a broader framework for people-to-people exchanges.

The five frameworks serve as the cornerstones for future China-Arab collaboration, building upon the past successes of the partnership in traditional fields such as energy, infrastructure and trade, as well as emerging areas like information technology, digital economy and renewable energy.

The five frameworks reaffirm both sides' commitment to intensifying joint efforts to accelerate the building of a China-Arab community with a shared future, with the vision of establishing a model relationship based on mutual benefits, shared success, reciprocal learning and common progress.

In light of the above-mentioned ambitious blueprint, the past years have seen China and Arab states

score success across various fields, most notably in the following sectors.

In energy and infrastructure, significant strides were made toward greater integration. In November 2024, the Fujian Gulei Phase II Integrated Refining and Petrochemical Project broke ground in east China's Fujian Province. This project exemplifies Chinese-Arab energy cooperation, with a total investment of 71.1 billion yuan (about 9.7 billion U.S. dollars) and an annual output value estimated to reach around 80.8 billion yuan (about 11 billion dollars). The project, expected to reach its full capacity in 2030, will supply 5 million tons of raw materials annually for downstream companies at the Gulei complex, enhancing its industrial chain while promoting smart and green development.

The two sides have also strengthened cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). For example, the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone has created nearly 9,000 direct and over 80,000 indirect job opportunities in Egypt. In Algeria, the eastern section of the East-West Highway, constructed with China's participation, has become a vital economic artery. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), China's Harbin Electric International Engineering has partnered with Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power in a joint venture to build the Hassyan clean coal project in Dubai, the first of its kind in the Middle East. Statistics

show that China and Arab countries have initiated more than 200 major projects in infrastructure, energy and other fields under the BRI, benefiting nearly 2 billion people in the two regions.

Tourism has flourished thanks to visa-free policies for Chinese citizens implemented by several Arab states, including Morocco, the UAE, Qatar and Tunisia, as well as the launch of direct flights between Chinese cities and destinations like Riyadh, Doha and Cairo.

Remarkable achievements were also made in satellite development, manufacturing and launching, as well as in data sharing, technical exchange and specialist training. China has also signed space cooperation agreements with countries like Algeria, Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, successfully launching Algeria's first communication satellite, Alcomsat-1, the Saudi Sat 5A and Sat 5B, Sudan's scientific experimental satellite, and MISR-SAT-2 for Egypt.

China has established several Luban Workshops in the Arab world, including Djibouti, Egypt and Morocco, providing training in various disciplines such as mechatronics integration, railway operations and traditional Chinese medicine, aligning with the economic and social development strategies of host countries to nurture talents in key sectors.

The Arab youth has shown a growing interest in learning Chinese. Countries such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt have in-

corporated Chinese language instruction into their national education programs.

These accomplishments represent just a small fraction of the extensive cooperation between China and Arab nations, which share a commitment to building stronger ties under the BRI.

Over the past decade, China regarded Arab countries as natural partners in advancing the BRI, while Arab nations viewed the initiative as a vital developmental vision.

To date, all 22 Arab countries have become partners in the BRI, aligning its goals with their developmental needs, such as economic diversification and industrialization. The BRI also complements the long-term strategies of Arab nations, including Egypt Vision 2030, Saudi Vision 2030, Qatar National Vision 2030, the UAE's Principles of the 50 and Kuwait's 2035 Vision. Additionally, the League of Arab States was the first regional organization to sign a cooperation agreement with China on the BRI.

In conclusion, the strength of international friendships depends on the closeness of their people. In 2025, both sides aspire to continue practical cooperation, enhance exchanges in economy, technology and culture, and enhance mutual understanding and friendship between their people. I expect more cultural, educational and tourism exchanges to foster friendship and deepen intergovernmental cooperation. (Xinhua)

## Oman aims to strengthen economic ties with China

MUSCAT, Jan 11, (Xinhua): Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Oman's minister of commerce, industry, and investment promotion, said here on Thursday that Oman looks forward to enhancing economic and trade cooperation with China.

Al Yousef made the remarks during a media meeting named "Oman and the World," organized by the Ministry of Information of Oman.

Speaking to Xinhua, the minister underscored the significance of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as

a key regional bloc and expressed hope that the GCC and China would finalize their Free Trade Agreement negotiations soon, paving the way for a GCC-China Free Trade Zone.

The GCC, founded in 1981 and headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi

Arabia, comprises Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. It is the most influential political, economic, and security organization in the Gulf region. China established ties with the GCC shortly after its inception.



# NBK celebrates Most Valued Team Players and Most Collaborative Team of 2024

In line with its commitment to valuing employee contributions and fostering a positive work environment



Shaikha Al Bahar, Mohammed Al Kharafi, Emad Al-Ablani, Yousef Al Qateefi and Mark Diamond with the winners from the Operations and IT group.



Isam Al-Sager, Emad Al-Ablani and Amir Hanna during the honoring of the winners of the Investor Relations and Communications Group.



Shaikha Al Bahar, Emad Al-Ablani, Omar Bouhdiba and Zaid Al Saqr with the winners from the group of foreign branches and affiliated companies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Aligned with its corporate culture and strategy of valuing employee contributions and fostering a positive work environment, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) honored its Most Valued Team Players (MVP) and Most Collaborative Team (MCT) for 2024. The recognition spanned Kuwait, international branches, and for the first time NBK Wealth, celebrating their outstanding achievements and dedication throughout the year.

The Bank's executive management presented the "MVP" and "MCT" awards for 2024 to the winners, aiming to inspire continued dedication and exceptional performance to uphold the bank's leadership locally and regionally. A total of 79 employees and 32 teams from various departments locally have been awarded for their outstanding contributions, along with NBK Wealth.

NBK's International Branches have also taken part in this initiative, nominating MVPs and MCTs in their respective locations.

This group-wide recognition program is based on peer-to-peer voting. Winners were considered by their peers in the same group for their teamwork spirit, engagement, communication, effectiveness, transparency, contribution to the team and division, and overall positive impact on the group.

The executive management commended the dedication, commitment, and efforts of the bank's employees, emphasizing the collaborative spirit that consistently drives the bank's success. This collaborative spirit empowers NBK to provide banking services that meet international quality standards.

This recognition underscores the bank's commitment to its human resources, reaffirming its dedication to providing comprehensive support that enhances employee performance and contributes to elevating the quality of services and products NBK delivers to its customers.

On this occasion, Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager - Head of Human Resources Group, stated: "We are committed to celebrating our outstanding employees every year, recognizing the crucial role they play in NBK's ongoing achievements at local, regional, and international levels. We continuously strive to motivate and appreciate their efforts and contributions, as this forms an integral part of NBK's thriving work environment and culture of sustainable performance."

"This recognition is a cornerstone



Isam Al-Sager, Emad Al-Ablani and Fahd Al-Thuwaine during the honoring of one of the winners from the administrative services.



Salah Al-Fulaij, Mohammed Al-Othman and Emad Al-Ablani during the honoring of the winners of Business Banking Services.



Sulaiman Al Marzouq, Emad Al-Ablani and Ahmed Boursali during the honoring of one of the winners from the local corporate banking group.

### Al-Ablani:

- NBK's recognition of its Most Valued Team Players highlights its steadfast commitment to acknowledging the pivotal role our people play in driving the bank's achievements
- Our commitment lies in continually inspiring our employees and recognizing their contributions, a principle that forms the foundation of our corporate culture
- We believe that maintaining the bank's legacy of excellence depends on nurturing a workforce of exceptionally skilled and professionally capable individuals

of our corporate culture, reflecting the bank's commitment to appreciating the efforts of its talented workforce. It boosts employee morale, encourages the generation of new and innovative ideas, and reinforces their sense of being a vital part of the organization's success. This, in turn, deepens their loyalty and connection to the bank,



Faisal Al-Hamad, Emad Al-Ablani and Nabil Marouf during the honoring of one of the winners from the National Wealth Group.

while further bolstering NBK's standing as the leading work environment in Kuwait's private sector," he added.

"Our employees are our greatest asset, which is why we continually invest in human capital and work to enhance the capabilities of our workforce at all levels within the group. We achieve this by designing and implementing training initiatives, workshops, and educational programs aimed at boosting their skills and competencies. We proactively analyze our training needs, aligning them with future business transformations, and focus on refining

and enhancing our employees' abilities to ensure they are equipped to navigate the evolving landscape of our industry," Al-Ablani emphasized.

He highlighted that NBK provides a unique work environment that promotes continuous professional development, utilizing all available resources to facilitate employee growth. The bank is committed to fostering creativity, motivating employees to strive for excellence, and creating opportunities for career progression and future leadership roles.

Al-Ablani explained that teamwork is the key driver behind the bank's



Salah Al-Fulaij, Mohammed Al-Othman, Emad Al-Ablani and Amal Al-Duwaisan during the honoring of the winners of digital banking services.

success, as it facilitates the exchange of ideas and experiences among employees, leading to diverse perspectives that contribute to making more informed and well-rounded decisions. He emphasized that NBK will continue its initiatives aimed at energizing its workforce, firmly believing that the bank's sustained excellence relies on having qualified human resources with high professional competence.

The MVP awards stand out as a unique initiative, where employees have the opportunity to nominate colleagues within their own departments

or teams whom they deem the most valuable. These outstanding individuals are subsequently honored and rewarded by NBK's senior management, with their efforts celebrated through special ceremonies held for each of the bank's divisions.

Voting is conducted through a digital poll, allowing each employee to cast their vote for colleagues they consider deserving of the MVP award. Award recipients are presented with a certificate from senior management during a ceremony organized by the bank, with executive management in attendance.



Emad Al-Ablani with the Most Valued Team Players.



Isam Al-Sager, Emad Al-Ablani, Walid Al-Sioui and Faisal Al-Rayes during the honoring of one of the winners from the Compliance and Governance Group.



Sulaiman Al Marzouq, Emad Al-Ablani and Jad Zakhour with the winners from the Treasury Group.



Isam Al-Sager, Emad Al-Ablani and Sujit Rongi during the honoring of the winners of the Financial Control Group.



Customers can complete various transactions within a maximum of 30 seconds

## ABK launches Kuwait's first 'Virtual Customer Service Representative'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has launched the "Virtual Customer Service Representative," the first service of its kind in Kuwait, now available in the Al Khiran Mall, Al Jabriya, Al Zahra, and Al Salmiya branches.

This service offers a smooth and convenient way for customers to complete their banking transactions, simplifying processes and enhancing the bank's digital services for its customers.

With the new service, customers

can enjoy several benefits without the need to wait inside the branch. These benefits include activating or changing withdrawal limits for all types of cards, activating frozen accounts, stopping or requesting a new or replacement card, receiving an electronic account statement, and assistance with banking services through the website and the bank's mobile application.

Commenting on this launch, Johair Marafi General Manager of the Retail Banking Division at ABK, said: "We are committed to



Ms. Johair Marafi – General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK

### Johair Marafi:

■ We take pride in setting new standards for convenience and efficiency in customer service

enhancing the customer experience and achieving integration between branches and the contact center. Our goal is to provide customers with a seamless banking experience. With

the 'Virtual Customer Service Representative,' interacting with our customers will be easier and more efficient than ever before."

Marafi explained how to utilize the new service, stating that once a customer visits the branch and enters their mobile number through the smart device provided in the branch, a customer service representative from the contact center will call the customer within a maximum of 30 seconds to complete his transaction seamlessly.

She added, "We are proud to lead

the evolution of the banking industry in Kuwait by introducing our innovative 'Virtual Customer Service Representative' service, which sets new standards for convenience and efficiency in interacting with customers and meeting their ever-changing needs."

Marafi concluded by inviting everyone to follow the Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait's website and social media pages to stay updated on the latest services, offers, and promotional campaigns launched throughout the year.

# US job growth surges with 256,000 jobs added in Dec

Fed likely to slow rate cuts as job growth remains strong

WASHINGTON, Jan 11, (AP): U.S. job growth surged and unemployment fell last month, an unexpected show of strength that may prove costly to homebuyers and businesses who were counting on sharply lower interest rates to lower the cost of buying everything from refrigerators to homes.

Employers added 256,000 jobs last month, up from 212,000 in November, the Labor Department reported Friday.

Unemployment, which was expected to hover around 4.2%, fell to 4.1% last month. Health care companies added 46,000 jobs, retailers 43,000 and government agencies at the federal, state and local levels 33,000.

The final jobs report of 2024 underscores that the economy and hiring were able to grow at a solid pace even with interest rates much higher than they were before the pandemic. As a result, the Federal Reserve could be much less likely to cut borrowing costs again in the coming months. The Fed cut its rate three times last year in part out of concern that hiring and growth were flagging.

Overall, the solid jobs figures suggest the economy is entering a post-COVID period of steady growth, higher interest rates, low unemployment, and slightly elevated inflation.

"There's just no need for additional cuts in the Fed's rate any time soon," said Joe Brusuelas, chief economist at RSM, an accounting and tax advisory firm.

Brusuelas says that the economy, fueled in part by greater productivity, can grow at a steadily faster rate than it has since the Great Recession 16 years ago. Low unemployment can fuel healthy consumer spending. Yet greater demand can also push up inflation.

"The economy is going to grow at a much higher equilibrium level, which implies higher inflation and higher interest rates relative to what we got used



A hiring sign is displayed at a restaurant in Skokie, Ill., Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025. (AP)

to from 2000 to 2020," he said.

The U.S. continued to create jobs steadily throughout 2024, 2.2 million in all. That is down from job growth of 3 million in 2023, 4.5 million in 2022 and a record 6.4 million in 2021 as the economy bounced back from massive COVID-19 layoffs. But last year's average of 186,000 new jobs a month still slightly exceeds the pre-pandemic average of 182,000 from 2016-2019, solid years for the economy.

U.S. markets tumbled on the release of December's jobs numbers as investors sensed the odds of further interest rate cuts have faded. But rates are still painfully high for Americans trying to buy a house, a car, or even a kitchen appliance. Mortgage rates have risen for four consecutive weeks to reach the highest level since July.

Average hourly wages rose 0.3% from November and 3.9% from a year earlier. The year-over-year wage gain was slightly less than economists had forecast.

Over the past few years, the strength of the U.S. economy and the job market have surprised almost everyone. Responding to inflation that hit a four-decade high two and a half years ago, the Fed raised its benchmark interest rate - the fed funds rate -- 11 times in 2022 and 2023, pushing it to the highest level in more than two decades.

A much-anticipated recession never happened. Companies kept hiring, consumers kept spending, and the economy continued to roll. In fact, U.S. gross domestic product - the nation's output of goods and services -- has expanded at a robust annual pace of 3% or more in four of the last five quarters.

Inflation has come down, too, from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022 to 2.7% in November. The drop in year-over-year price increases gave the Fed enough confidence to cut rates three times in the last four months of 2024.

But Fed officials signaled in December that they planned to be more cautious about rate cuts this year. They now project just two rate reductions in 2025, down from the four they envisioned back in September. Progress against inflation has stalled in recent months, and it remains stuck above the Fed's 2% target.

"There is more to do to lower costs, but we've taken action to lower prescription drug prices, health insurance premiums, utility bills, and gas prices that will pay dividends for years to come," President Joe Biden said Friday. "This has been a hard-fought recovery, but we've made progress for working families, showing what can be accomplished when we build from the middle out and bottom up."

Biden is handing a largely solid

economy to his successor, President-elect Donald Trump, though many Americans have been hit hard by the price spikes of the past three years and have generally been pessimistic about the economic outlook.

Many businesses are still scrambling to find workers.

Optimistic about 2025, Matt Harding, chief concept officer at Piada Italian Street Food, plans to open seven new stores and hire another 250 people this year. The fast casual restaurant chain, based in Columbus, Ohio, now operates 58 stores in seven states and has 1,200 employees. Hourly pay has risen 35% to 40% since 2020 to a starting wage as high as \$16.45 for typical workers, helping to reduce turnover.

UCHealth, a nonprofit that runs hospitals and clinics in Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska, is struggling to find skilled clinical workers - nurses, physical and occupational therapists, said Angela Spinelli, UCHealth's senior director of talent acquisition.

"The market has not softened for these positions," Spinelli said. UCHealth, which hired 9,400 people last year and currently has 1,200 openings, has raised pay and focused on "growing our own" - promoting within the company and offering tuition to employees to learn new skills to move from, say, a health aid to a nursing position.

Still, a job hunt can still be tough in the current environment.

Mike Pincus was out of work for 20 months after the startup where he'd worked went out of business. Pincus, 55, had previously spent 35 years as a personal trainer and wanted to try something new. "I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do," he said. "But I knew what I didn't want to do."

The search proved frustrating. Pincus said that many employers seemed to use algorithms to weed out unconventional applicants.

"If a human actually looks at your resume, it's a very quick glance over," he said.

Visiting a friend at a bike shop, his "happy place," Pincus applied and received a job there. He's been a manager at Trek's Ventura, California, shop since early December.

"I love it," he said. "I didn't know I'd love it. I didn't know I could do it."

## Food inflation remains high, pushing many into poverty

# Global economic growth projected to remain at 2.8% in 2025

WASHINGTON, Jan 11, (KUNA): Global economic growth is projected to remain at 2.8 percent in 2025, unchanged from this past year, according to a UN flagship report released on Thursday.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2025 report shows that despite withstanding a series of mutually reinforcing shocks, global economic growth has stagnated and remains below the pre-pandemic annual average of 3.2 percent.

The report produced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), highlights the enduring impact of weak investment, sluggish productivity, and high debt levels on global economic performance.

The United States is expected to experience a slowdown in 2025 as labor markets soften and consumer spending settles down, the report projects.

Meanwhile, despite easing inflation and resilient labor markets, Europe's economic recovery remains constrained due to recurring challenges such as weak productivity growth and an ageing population.

In East Asia, the economy is projected to sustain relatively strong growth, supported by robust private consumption and stable performance in China.

On the other hand, South Asia is poised to remain the fastest-growing region, driven by India's continued economic expansion.

In Africa, modest improvements in growth are anticipated, thanks to recoveries in major economies in-

cluding Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa. Although conflicts, rising debt-servicing costs and climate-related challenges weigh heavily on the region's prospects.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in his foreword, called for decisive action to address these challenges.

"Countries cannot ignore these perils. In our interconnected economy, shocks on one side of the world push up prices on the other. Every country is affected and must be part of the solution," he stated.

Overall, global trade is forecast to expand by 3.2 percent in 2025, driven by strong exports from Asia and a rebound in services trade.

Moreover, inflation is projected to ease globally, declining to 3.4 percent, providing some relief to businesses and households.

Nevertheless, many developing countries are expected to face persistent inflationary pressures, with one in five experiencing double-digit rates. High debt burdens and limited access to international financing will continue to hinder recovery.

Food inflation remains a pressing issue, with nearly half of developing countries experiencing rates above five per cent.

This has deepened food insecurity, particularly in low-income nations already grappling with extreme weather events, conflicts and economic instability.

The report warns that persistent food inflation,

coupled with slow economic growth, could push millions further into poverty.

Growing industrial demand for critical minerals, such as lithium and cobalt, presents both opportunities and risks.

For resource-rich developing countries, these minerals offer potential for growth, job creation and increased revenues to accelerate progress towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, the report warns that poor governance, unsafe labor practices and environmental degradation could undermine long-term benefits and exacerbate inequalities.

Calling for comprehensive policies to ensure sustainable extraction and equitable benefit-sharing, DESA chief Li Junhua emphasized: "Critical minerals have immense potential to accelerate sustainable development, but only if managed responsibly."

The report concludes with a call for bold multilateral action to address interconnected global crises, including debt, inequality and climate change.

Governments are urged to focus on investments in clean energy, infrastructure and critical social sectors such as health and education.

Stronger international cooperation is deemed essential for managing the risks and opportunities associated with critical minerals, ensuring that developing countries can benefit equitably and sustainably.

## Critics warn of ethical dilemmas

# Trump Organization releases 'voluntary ethics agreement'

NEW YORK, Jan 11, (AP): The Trump family business released a voluntary ethics agreement Friday that allows it to strike deals with private foreign companies, a move that could help outside actors try to buy influence with the new administration.

The so-called ethics white paper bars the Trump Organization from striking deals directly with foreign governments, but allows ones with private companies abroad, a significant departure from President-elect Donald Trump's first term. An ethics pact that Trump signed eight years ago barred both foreign government and foreign company deals.

### Private

The Trump company also announced it would commit to several safeguards from his first term designed to stop his private financial interests from shaping policy. That includes hiring an outside ethics adviser to vet deals.

"The Trump Organization is dedicated to not just meeting but vastly exceeding its legal and ethical obligations during my father's Presidency," said executive vice president Eric Trump.

The Trump Organization recently struck deals for hotels and golf resorts in Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, raising concerns by government ethics experts that president-elect Trump's personal financial interests could influence policy toward those countries.

The family company has expressed interest in striking deals in Israel and elsewhere, and has financial interests in two businesses with publicly traded stock that could get a boost from foreign investors. That includes Trump Media & Technology Group, the parent company of social media platform Truth Social, and a new cryptocurrency venture, World Liberty Financial.

"The scale of corruption will be orders of magnitude greater than what we saw in the first Trump administration," said government ethics lawyer Kathleen Clark of Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. People trying to win Trump's favor now have an easy way to do so, she said, by using "massive influxes of cash through investments" in Trump crypto and real estate ventures.

The Trump Organization announced that it was hiring William A. Burck, a managing partner of Quinn Emanuel LLP, to vet deals that could pose conflicts with public policy.

### Agreement

As in the last ethics agreement, the five-page white paper also prohibits Trump from "day-to-day" decision making at the Trump Organization, limits financial information about the business shared with him and commits the company to donate to the U.S. Treasury profits from foreign government spending at its properties.

Under U.S. law, federal government officials are not permitted to hold financial interests in businesses that could sway their opinion on public policy they help shape, and are often forced to sell off their stakes. U.S. presidents are excluded from the post-Watergate ethics ban, but all presidents have voluntarily agreed to follow the law, except for Trump.

The first billionaire president would have had to sell more than a dozen golf courses around the world, office and residential towers in Las Vegas, Chicago and New York and several resorts, including Mar-a-Lago in Florida.

In his first term, Trump pledged to avoid even the appearance of conflicts of interest at the outset of his presidency, but ended up openly courting business to his properties

instead. He once tried to hold a G-7 meeting of global leaders at his golf resort in Doral, Florida. He had to abandon the idea after outcry from critics.

His Trump hotel in Washington D.C. was also a major source of concern for ethics watchdogs in his first term. The Trump International Hotel down the street from the White House quickly became a gathering spot for lobbyists, both domestic and foreign, as well as foreign diplomats.

Several groups accused Trump of violating the Constitution's "emoluments" ban on gifts and payment to the president, citing the hotel in particular. The hotel has since been sold and the Supreme Court refused to rule on an emoluments violation after Trump had left office, citing that the issue was moot.

Now, the emoluments clause could become a legal headache for Trump again given his company's sprawling businesses, including the two new, publicly traded ventures.

His financial stake in one of them, Trump Media, is worth billions of dollars.

Critics worry people who want to curry favor with the president, including foreign officials, could buy stock in the company, pushing the price up further along with his paper wealth.

Another new Trump family venture, World Liberty Financial, a platform used to trade cryptocurrencies, is also controversial.

In his first term in office, Trump said he was "not a fan" of cryptocurrency and tweeted in 2019, "Unregulated Crypto Assets can facilitate unlawful behavior, including drug trade and other illegal activity."

### Position

He has since reversed that position, promising to make the U.S. the "crypto capital of the planet" at a bitcoin conference in Nashville this year. He has tapped two cryptocurrency champions to join his administration. Commerce Secretary nominee Howard Lutnick and Treasury Secretary nominee, Scott Bessent.

The Securities and Exchange Commission has warned that cryptocurrencies are volatile investments with few safeguards to protect investors from manipulation and fraud, and cracked down on some firms. It's not clear if the agency's close scrutiny of the industry will continue in the new administration. Trump's nominee to head the SEC, Paul Atkins, is an advocate for cryptocurrencies.

Eric Trump, the son most heavily involved in running the Trump Organization, has expressed frustration that the company had become a lightning rod for conflicts of interest critics during his father's first presidential term despite the company's voluntary ethics ban on certain deals. He has said he wants a freer hand this time running the business.

In a Vietnam deal in October, the Trump Organization joined with a Vietnamese developer with ties to the ruling Communist Party for a \$1.5 billion luxury golf resort, raising questions about whether this might influence U.S. policy.

The deal comes at an especially vulnerable time for Vietnam as Trump vows to raise tariffs on many countries. Vietnam has a large U.S. trade surplus that makes it a ripe target for Trump's threat to punish countries he says are engaging in unfair trading practices.

The Trump Organization also has buildings bearing the Trump name in India, Turkey and several other countries. It owns two golf courses in Scotland, and one in Ireland, and has plans for resorts in other countries, including Oman and Indonesia that are at various stages of development.

## UK Treasury chief leads delegation to Beijing for key talks

# China and Britain restart economic talks after six-year hiatus

TAIPEI, Jan 11, (AP): China and Britain restarted economic and financial talks on Saturday after a six-year hiatus during a visit by Britain's Treasury chief to Beijing, as the U.K.'s Labour government seeks to reset strained ties with the world's second-largest economy. Rachel Reeves traveled to Beijing accompanied by a delegation of British business leaders and finance officials. She met with Chinese leaders including Vice Premier He Lifeng and Vice President Han Zheng.

The two sides revived the China-U.K. Economic and Financial Dialogue - annual bilateral talks that have been suspended since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and deteriorating relations. London hopes renewed dialogues will help bring down barriers that U.K. businesses face when looking to export or expand to China. "Today marks a significant milestone in the U.K.-China relationship with the first Economic and Financial Dialogue between our countries for nearly six

years," Reeves said. She said the meeting signaled the new U.K. government's "commitment to fostering a stable, long-term partnership" with China and desire to boost economic cooperation.

Britain wants to improve exchanges in areas such as sustainable finance, capital markets connectivity, pensions and regulatory alignment, as well as trade and investment, Reeves added.

"As part of this, it is important to prevent economic links weakening our national security and economic resilience," she said.

Vice Premier He said China and Britain should improve cooperation in trade and investment, clean energy, financial services, the green economy, biomedicine, artificial intelligence and other fields.

"We are willing to work with the U.K. to create a fair, just and non-discrim-

inatory business environment and provide good conditions for the other side's companies to invest and operate in each other's countries," he said.

The Sino-British ties have soured following a series of spying allegations from both sides. China's support for Russia in the Ukraine war and a crackdown on civil liberties in Hong Kong, a former British colony.

British officials said Reeves will also urge Beijing to stop its material and economic support for the Russian war effort in Ukraine and raise the issue of rights and freedoms in Hong Kong.

The delegation included Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey and the CEOs of the U.K. Financial Conduct Authority and the London Stock Exchange Group. Senior executives from some of Britain's biggest financial services firms, including the group chairs of HSBC and Standard Chartered, were also included.





A firefighter walks past a charred bunny sculpture and debris at the destroyed Bunny Museum, Thursday, Jan. 9, in the Altadena section of Pasadena, Calif. (AP)



The Andrew McNally House, built in 1887 by the co-founder of the Rand McNally publishing company, is pictured after it was destroyed by the Eaton Fire, Thursday, Jan. 9, in Altadena, Calif. (AP)

## Hollywood icons safe

## LA landmarks from film, TV damaged by wildfires

LOS ANGELES, Jan 11, (AP): The high school where Brian De Palma brought Stephen King's "Carrie" to life, Will Rogers' ranch house and a motel owned by William Randolph Hearst are among some of the famous structures that have been damaged or destroyed by the California wildfires.

Los Angeles is a town full of landmarks, thanks to its co-starring role in over a century of filmed entertainment. Some famed spots - like the Hollywood Bowl, the TCL Chinese Theatre and the Dolby Theatre, where the Oscars are held - initially seemed imperiled by the Hollywood Hills fire, yet remained at least largely unharmed Thursday. But the fires have taken a toll on some familiar sites.

### Palisades Charter High School

There was "significant damage" to Palisades Charter High School, though the main campus building stands. Founded in 1961 and built for a reported \$6 million, the high school currently serves some 3,000 students throughout the Los Angeles area, though they were not in session this week.

**Famous credits:** De Palma's 1976 adaptation of "Carrie," starring Sissy Spacek as the outcast teen, is perhaps Pali High's most recognizable credit. It's also played high schools in the 2003 remake of "Freaky Friday," with Lindsay Lohan and Jamie Lee Curtis, the Kirsten Dunst movie "Crazy/Beautiful," the Anne Hathaway film "Havoc," the television series "Teen Wolf" and "American Vandal" and the music video for Olivia Rodrigo's "good 4 u." Notable alumni include filmmaker J.J. Abrams, actors Jennifer Jason Leigh and Forest Whitaker, musician will.i.am, Los Angeles Lakers owner Jeanie Buss and Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr.

### Will Rogers' ranch house

Will Rogers' Western Ranch House, a property dating back to the 1920s, was completely destroyed in the Palisades Fire. Built on 186 acres in the Pacific Palisades area, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, it had 31 rooms, corrals, a stable, riding ring, roping arena, polo field, golf course and hiking trails. It was where the famed actor (once one of the highest paid) and radio personality would ride horses and practice roping before his death in 1935. His widow, Betty Rogers, gave the property to the state in 1944 and it became a historic state park.

**Famous credits:** The state park was featured in the 1975 Barbra Streisand sequel "Funny Lady."

### Topanga Ranch Motel

The Palisades Fire also destroyed the Topanga Ranch Motel, a 30-room, bungalow-style motel built by William Randolph Hearst in 1929. The property had been uninhabited and deteriorating for nearly 20 years, but there were plans for a restoration and reopening in the works.

**Famous credits:** The 1970s television series "Mannix" as well as an episode of "Remington Steele," the 1986 Judd Nelson and Ally Sheedy movie "Blue City" and the 1991 Bridget Fonda movie "Leather Jackets."

### Reel Inn Malibu

This seafood shack on the Pa-

cific Coast Highway and across the street from Topanga Beach State Park opened in 1986 and burned to the ground in the fire. In an Instagram post, the owners wrote that they weren't sure what would remain of the beloved spot. "Hopefully the state parks will let us rebuild when the dust settles," Teddy and Andy Leonard wrote.

**Famous credits:** It's been featured on shows like "Man vs. Food" and "The Chew" and counted the likes of Cindy Crawford, Paris Hilton and Jerry Seinfeld as fans of its fried seafood fare. It also made a cameo in "24."

### The Bunny Museum

A quirky Los Angeles-area oddity, The Bunny Museum, located in Altadena and dedicated to all things bunnies, was also destroyed. The museum had all sorts of bunny-themed items, from Trix boxes and bottles of Nesquik, Bugs Bunny paraphernalia and magazine covers of performer Bad Bunny. There was also a Chamber of Hop Horrors detailing the historical abuse of bunnies that had an age requirement: 13 and up.

**Famous credits:** It's made the Guinness Book of World Records, and been featured in Ripley's Believe It Or Not!, the Smithsonian Magazine and an episode of "Visiting...With Huell Howser."

### "Hacks" mansion

The 1915 Spanish Colonial Revival mansion that played Deborah Vance's Los Angeles home in the HBO series "Hacks" was located in Altadena and fell victim to the Eaton fire. According to the trade publication Deadline, only the facade remains.

**Famous credits:** It played the "side mansion" belonging to Jean Smart's character in "Hacks." According to reports, it will be seen in the fourth season.

### The Andrew McNally House

The Queen Anne-style mansion in Altadena that dates back to 1887 and was commissioned for wealthy map-maker Andrew McNally was lost in the Eaton Fire. Designed by architect Frederick L. Roehrig, the house had nine bedrooms, six bathrooms, seven fireplaces, a distinctive bell-shaped turret (that had a view of the San Gabriel Mountains and the Pacific Ocean) and a wrap-around porch. It was adorned with hand-carved woodwork, stained glass windows and included an opulent "Turkish Room" decorated with Moorish influences. The grounds also had an aviary. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

**Famous credits:** The 2001 Whoopi Goldberg and Jada Pinkett Smith movie "Kingdom Come."

### Charles S. Farnsworth Park

A picturesque 15-acre park with a playground, amphitheater, walking paths and a baseball field was damaged in the Eaton Fire. The Los Angeles County Parks department wrote on Instagram that the Altadena park's Davies Community Center, a stone building that dates back to 1934, was destroyed.

**Famous credits:** The amphitheater, directly next to the community center, can be seen in "American Pie 2" as the location of the band camp concert. The park has also been used in the Apple TV+ series "Shrinking."

## More stars learn they've lost their homes

## Disney pledges \$15M in Los Angeles fire aid

LOS ANGELES, Jan 11, (AP): The Pacific Palisades wildfires torched the home of "This Is Us" star Milo Ventimiglia, perhaps most poignantly destroying the father-to-be's newly installed crib.

CBS cameras caught the actor walking through his charred house for the first time, standing in what was once his kitchen and looking at a neighborhood in ruin. "Your heart just breaks."

He and his pregnant wife, Jarah Mariano, evacuated Tuesday with their dog and they watched on security cameras as the flames ripped through the house, destroying everything, including a new crib.

"There's a kind of shock moment where you're going, 'Oh, this is real. This is happening.' What good is it to continue watching?" And then at a certain point we just turned it off, like 'What good is it to continue watching?'"

Firefighters sought to make gains Friday during a respite in the heavy winds that fanned the flames as numerous groups pledged aid to help victims and rebuild, including a \$15 million donation pledge from the Walt Disney Co.

While seeing the remains of his home, Ventimiglia was struck by a connection to his "This Is Us" char-

acter, Jack Pearson, who died after inhaling smoke in a house fire. "It's not lost on me life imitating art."

Mandy Moore, who played Ventimiglia's wife on "This Is Us," nearly lost her home in the Eaton fire, which scorched large areas of the Altadena neighborhood. She said Thursday that part of her house is standing but is unlivable, and her husband lost his music studio and all his instruments.

### Damage

Mel Gibson's home is "completely gone", his publicist Alan Nierob confirmed Friday. The Oscar winner revealed the loss of his home earlier Friday while appearing on Joe Rogan's podcast.

Numerous stars have confirmed their homes were lost or sustained damage in devastating wildfires burning in and around Los Angeles. At least 10 people have died, thousands of structures and vehicles have been destroyed and more than 150,000 people remain under evacuation orders.

The home that Miles Teller and his wife, Keleigh, shared was a pile of dust and debris, with only the fall shrubbery and a gate surrounding the lot still standing. Keleigh posted photos of the home on Ins-

tagram of before the wildfire and after, urging people to get out of the neighborhood and thanks to first responders.

"We will come back stronger than ever," she wrote. She added that she wished she'd taken her wedding dress.

Billy Crystal and his wife lost their home of 45 years. Paris Hilton, Jeff Bridges and Cary Elwes and R&B star Jhené Aiko have also said their homes are gone. Haley Joel Osment says he lost everything in Altadena.

"I am so sorry for the losses that thousands of people are suffering and I'm trying to etch in my mind the unique details of this lovely town that are gone forever - thank you to everyone who has reached out and who has helped as we lose our home," the actor wrote on Instagram.

Disney says it will donate \$15 million to respond to the fires and help rebuild.

The company announced the donations Friday afternoon. It said the money would be spread across several groups, including the American Red Cross, the Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation and the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank.

## Entertainment



Elton John performs on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Friday, Sept. 23, 2022. (AP)

## Elton John's documentary celebrates his life, work

## 'Never Too Late' is a life mantra

NEW YORK, Jan 11, (AP): Capturing Sir Elton John's 50-year career is a herculean task. Good thing his husband, David Furnish, and filmmaker R.J. Cutler were up for the challenge.

"Elton John: Never Too Late," one of The Associated Press' picks for the best music documentaries of 2024, was inspired by John's final US tour in 2022 - but quickly became a celebration of his life and work. It is filled with insight into his music, relationships - including a fiery friendship with John Lennon - troublesome childhood and struggles with addiction. It is bookended by myth-making performances at Los Angeles' Dodger Stadium in 1975 and 2022.

For fans - and even John himself - it is revelatory viewing.

"I was struck by how good the music was in those first five years, because I very rarely listened to my music. I was very proud of that," John told the AP this week. "And also, it brought back the incredible struggle that I had with success, having no foundation underneath it. I turned to alcohol, drugs and then had redemption by getting sober."

Success and satisfaction are not one in the same, a fact that's quickly established in the film. John had fame but hungered for connection. Having a family changed him.

"The greatest things in my life are my two kids and David. And the music comes secondary to them," he says.

"The title 'Never Too Late' sums it up for everybody, not just me. You can change things. It's never too late to change anything. Thank God

I did. Because when I got sober, my whole life completely changed." He's now been sober for 34 years.

"It's been glorious compared to what it was for about 10 years, 15 years," he says of his past struggles with drug and alcohol addiction. "You know, I was still playing and touring while I was doing drugs. I never stopped. Because music kept me alive. Music kept me alive. It nearly killed me, but it saved me, if you get what I mean. I am just so proud because now I have a family."

He views "Never Too Late" as not only a celebration of that journey, but an effective "piece of advocacy," as he describes it. "You can have children, and you can be gay, and you can have a happy family. I couldn't be happier."

### Theme

"Never Too Late" is also the title of an uplifting theme song written by Brandi Carlile, Andrew Watt, John and his longtime lyricist Bernie Taupin, currently shortlisted for the 2025 Oscars. Carlile was the catalyst; she paid John and Furnish a visit to their home in France, saw a rough cut of the documentary and felt moved to write a song.

"This song was about my life, and I found it very easy to write to," he said of the collaboration. And its message is simple: "I've been through hell," John says. "And I still come out fighting the other side. So, you know, it's very true to what I am."

And while his days of touring are behind him, the song "Never Too Late" is part of a "new era," as John explains it. Fans can expect new music in the

future. "There will be a new album sooner or later," he said. "I'm dying to record new stuff."

A project like "Never Too Late" allows for reflection. When asked what John hopes his legacy becomes 50, 100 years from now, he says simply: "I just want, on my tombstone to say, 'He was a great dad.' That's what I want. The musical legacy will speak for itself. But from a human point of view, 'He was a great dad and a great husband.'"

Last month, John revealed he had lost some vision after contracting an infection. "The eyesight is a problem. But we're looking into treatment for it. I'm a huge optimist. I basically lost the eyesight in my right eye for the time being. My left eye is not the greatest," he says.

He's been adjusting to the condition for six months. "I've had, since this happened, such an empathy for sight-impaired people and blind people... When you see so many other people who just can't see at all - I'm very blessed."

John's positivity is felt throughout "Never Too Late." He's uninterested in looking backwards; in the same way his record-breaking accomplishments are celebrated on film, so too are contemporary moments that spotlight his enthusiasm for his family and younger talent.

"For me, it's all about what's going to happen in the future, not what's happened in the past," he says. "With this documentary, we leave certain time behind. And now it's all about starting again."

"Elton John: Never Too Late" is available to stream now on Disney+.

## Chalamet back as 'SNL' host, guest J-Hope sets solo tour post-service

NEW YORK, Jan 11, (AP): **Timothée Chalamet** will return to "Saturday Night Live" for his third stint as a host - but this time, he'll be pulling double duty.

NBC announced Friday that comedian Dave Chappelle will host the sketch show Jan. 18, with musical guest GloRilla, while Chalamet will be the host and musical guest on Jan. 25.

It's Chappelle's fourth time hosting. The trio of announced performers are all in the thick of awards season. Chappelle and GloRilla, one of The Associated Press' Breakthrough Entertainers of 2024, are each nominated for Grammys at the Feb. 2 show. Chalamet has been nominated for a slew of acting awards for "A Complete Unknown" and is considered a contender for the Oscars, whose nominations will be announced Jan. 19.

For "A Complete Unknown," Chalamet sang and learned to play the guitar and harmonica to embody Bob Dylan. It's not clear what the actor will sing during the live show (he also sang in "Wonka" and dedicated fans may be hoping for a "Statistics" reprise), but he did previously identify to which Dylan songs he was drawn.

"I like the more intimate songs like 'Girl From the North Country' or 'Books of Spanish Leather' or 'One Too Many Mornings' or 'Tomorrow Is a Long Time,'" he told the AP late last year. "But then I also liked 'North Country Blues' and 'Rocks and Gravel' or 'Ballad of Hollis Brown' - things where you hear the iron ore in Bob's voice, the North Country in Minnesota, the Hibbing."



Chalamet



J-Hope

NEW YORK, Jan 11, (AP): Smooth like butter, like a superstar about to hit the road. BTS member **J-Hope** will embark on his first solo tour next month.

The "Hope on the Stage" tour will kick off Feb. 28 at the KSPO Dome in Seoul. He'll do three nights there, before heading to Brooklyn, New York; Chicago; Mexico City; San Antonio; Oakland, California; Los Angeles; Manila, Philippines; Saitama, Japan; Singapore; Jakarta, Indonesia; Bangkok; Macau; Taipei, Taiwan; and Osaka, Japan.

The announcement was shared to J-Hope's social media accounts as well as on Weverse, an online fan platform owned by BTS management company Hybe.

According to Weverse, details surrounding the North American tour will arrive later, "due to the large-scale wildfires in California and their resulting impact on the region," the statement read. "We kindly ask for your understanding."

In October, J-Hope completed his 18-month compulsory military service in South Korea, having been the second member of BTS to join the country's army.

"I was able to finish (the military service) healthy and safely thanks to my fans," he said in Korean at a press conference held at an army base in Wonju, South Korea. "Thank you so much for waiting and thank you for your cheering me on."

In 2022, J-Hope became the first South Korean performer to headline Chicago's Lollapalooza festival.



## Obituary

## Surgery complications reported

## Sam Moore, who sang 'Soul Man' in Sam &amp; Dave duo, dies

CORAL GABLES, Fla., Jan. 11, (AP) — Sam Moore, the surviving half and higher voice of the 1960s duo Sam & Dave that was known for such definitive hits of the era as "Soul Man" and "Hold On, I'm Comin'," has died. He was 89.

Publicist Jeremy Westby said Moore died Friday morning in Coral Gables, Florida, due to complications while recovering from surgery. No additional details were immediately available.

Moore, who influenced musicians including Michael Jackson, Al Green and Bruce Springsteen, was inducted with Dave Prater into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992.

At the Memphis, Tennessee-based Stax Records, Moore and Prater were second only to Otis Redding. They transformed the "call and response" of gospel music into a frenzied stage show and recorded some of soul music's most enduring hits, which also included "You Don't Know Like I Know," "When Something is Wrong With My Baby" and "I Thank You."

Most of their hits were written and produced by the team of Isaac Hayes and David Porter and fea-



Sam Moore arrives at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for the 18th annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor in Washington, Oct. 18, 2015. (AP)

tured the Stax house band Booker T. & the MGs, whose guitarist Steve Cropper received one of music's most famous shoutouts when Sam & Dave called "Play it, Steve" midway

through "Soul Man."

Like many '60s soul acts, Sam & Dave faded after the 1960s. But "Soul Man" hit the charts again in the late 1970s when the Blues Brothers, John

Belushi and Dan Aykroyd recorded it with many of the same musicians. Moore had mixed feelings about the hit becoming associated with the "Saturday Night Live" stars, remembering how young people believed it originated with the Blues Brothers.

In 2008, the movie "Soul Men" depicted a pair of aging, estranged singers who bore more than a little resemblance to Sam & Dave. Moore lost a lawsuit claiming the resemblance was too close.

He also spent years suing Prater after Prater hired a substitute and toured as the New Sam & Dave. Prater died in a 1988 car crash in Georgia.

Moore also pressed legal claims that the record industry had cheated him out of retirement benefits. Moore and other artists sued multiple record companies and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists in 1993.

Moore told The Associated Press in 1994 that he joined the legal effort after learning, despite his million-selling records, his pension amounted to just \$2,285, which he could take as a lump sum or in payments of \$73 monthly.

"Two thousand dollars for my

lifetime?" Moore said then. "If you're making a profit off of me, give me some too. Don't give me cornbread and tell me it's biscuits."

Moore wrote the song "Dole Man," modeled on "Soul Man," for Republican Bob Dole's presidential campaign in 1996. In 2017, he was among the few entertainers who performed for Republican President Donald Trump's inaugural festivities. Eight years earlier, Moore had objected when Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's campaign used the song "Hold On, I'm Comin'."

Moore was born Oct. 12, 1935, in Miami and got his start singing in church.

He and Prater performed in soul and R&B clubs in the 1950s, but didn't meet until 1961 in Miami. Moore helped coach Prater on the lyrics of a song and they quickly became a popular local duo. In 1965, after signing with Atlantic Records, producer Jerry Wexler sent them to the label's Stax subsidiary in Memphis.

Moore and Prater argued often and Moore told the AP in 2006 that a drug habit, which he kicked in 1981, played a part in the band's troubles and later made entertainment ex-

ecutives leery of giving him a fresh start. The duo broke up in 1970 and neither had another major hit.

He married his wife, Joyce, in 1982, and she helped him get treatment for his addiction that he credited with saving his life.

"I did a lot of cruise ships, I did a lot of oldies shows," during those struggles, he said, adding that he once opened for a group of Elvis impersonators.

"That's funny to think back to it now. And I did a lot of shows where if I did a show with an oldie show, I had to actually audition," he said. "But you know what? You keep your mouth shut and you get up there and you sing as hard and perform as hard as you can, and get the little money and go on about your business and try and pay those bills. I'm laughing about it now, but at that time, man, it was really serious."

Moore kept recording and singing. He was a frequent performer at the Kennedy Center Honors and performed for presidents, including Obama.

Moore is survive by his wife, Joyce, daughter, Michell, and two grandchildren.

## Obit

## Iconic director

## Opera legend Otto Schenk dies at 94

VIENNA, Austria, Jan. 11, (AP) — Otto Schenk, an actor who became a noted director praised for traditional opera productions and criticized by advocates of contemporary approaches, died Thursday at age 94.

Schenk lived in Austria, and his death was announced by the Vienna State Opera.

He created 31 productions there, starting with Janáček's "Jenufa" in 1964 and ending with Janáček's "The Cunning Little Vixen" in 2014. Many of his creations remain in use, including a 1979 version of Johann Strauss II's "Die Fledermaus" that was streamed around the world on New Year's Eve.

"Otto Schenk is an essential, unforgettable chapter in the history of our theater," Vienna State Opera Director Bogdan Roščić said in a statement. "But he was also an artist who shaped the world of theater for half a century like few others. As sacred as the theater was to him, he approached the works naturally and fearlessly, drawing on an immense knowledge. An infinite love for the singers went hand in hand with hard, uncompromising rehearsal work and honesty."

Schenk led 16 productions at New York's Metropolitan Opera, starting with Puccini's "Tosca" in 1968 and ending with Donizetti's "Don Pasquale" in 1996. His staging of Wagner's four-work "Der Ring des Nibelungen" premiered from 1986-89 and was shown in 20 full cycles from 1989 to 2009 and broadcast on public television in 1990. Schenk received a huge ovation when he took a curtain call after an April 18, 2009, performance of "Siegfried."

## Realistic

His romantic, realistic staging had set designer Günther Schneider-Siemssen create images of a river, forest and mountains dominated by greens and oranges, and costumes by Rolf Langenfass that evoked the original Ring of the 1876 Bayreuth Festival. It was in a way a response to Patrice Chéreau's centennial Ring at Bayreuth in 1976, set in an industrial age Ring and interpreted by some as Marxist.

"I wanted to tell a romantic old story, like starting with 'Once upon a time,'" Schenk said during a 1989 interview with The Associated Press. "All the secrets of Wagner's Ring should be guessed by the audience or found by the audience."

Born in Vienna, Schenk studied acting at Vienna's University of Music and Performing Arts, began directing in 1953 and led his first opera, Mozart's "Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute)," at Salzburg's State Theatre in 1957. He continued to act and performed 237 times at the Salzburg Festival from 1950-97, becoming head of drama there from 1986-88.

"The theater world has lost one of its greatest phenomena, an exceptional artist, a real legend," current Salzburg Festival artistic director Markus Hinterhäuser said in a statement.

At the Met, his stagings of Offenbach's "Les Contes d'Hoffmann (The Tales of Hoffmann)" and Wagner's "Tannhäuser" in 1977 earned rave reviews, and Met artistic director James Levine picked him to direct a new Ring Cycle plus Wagner's "Parsifal" in 1991 and "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg" in 1993.

"At a time when many new productions of 'Der Ring des Nibelungen' might be more aptly entitled 'Der Ringling des Barnum and Bailey,' the Metropolitan Opera's staging of Wagner's epic has cast a vote for the notion that maybe, just maybe, the composer knew best," New York Times critic Donal Henahan wrote in 1989.

## Fashion



Creations are displayed during the exhibition 'From the Heart to the Hands: Dolce & Gabbana' at the Grand Palais, in Paris, Thursday, Jan. 9. (AP)

## Paris exhibit defies fashion rivalry

## D&amp;G debut Italian artistry in Paris

PARIS, Jan. 11, (AP) — For the first time in their 40-year history, the Italian design duo Dolce & Gabbana are showcasing their work in the French fashion capital. Paris, the birthplace of haute couture, now finds itself hosting a powerful Italian counterpart to French luxury fashion.

The message, as curator Florence Müller puts it, is direct: "Yes, Italy does it too."

The landmark exhibition, Du Coeur a la Main (From the Heart to the Hand) running from Jan. 10 to March 31, is a not only a love letter to Italian craftsmanship, but to the interconnectedness of fashion. "The story of couture is global," Müller explained. "Embroidery, lace, brocade - they existed long before Parisian couture, in Italy, in India, and beyond."

Spread across 1,200 square meters (1,400 square yards) of the newly refurbished Grand Palais, the exhibit showcases over 200 looks from the company's Alta Moda and Alta Sartoria collections and 300 handmade accessories, as well as objects like Sicilian ceramics. It includes 10 themed rooms that delve into the artistic roots of Dolce & Gabbana's work.

Baroque grandeur defines the collection, unapologetically maximalist and layered with embellishments. Among the highlights is a gown inspired by Venice's Murano glass, encrusted with glass

mosaics from Orsoni Venezia 1888, the glassmakers behind the golden mosaics of St. Mark's Basilica. Müller described it as "a sculpture on textile - pure craftsmanship elevated to art."

Opera takes center stage. A black velvet gown softened by gold embellishments captures the drama of Bellini's Norma, while a romantic blue dress for Verdi's La Traviata flows like an aria, its tulle layers whispering love and loss. Meanwhile, icons of the brand, such as Sophia Loren and Naomi Campbell, are immortalized in giant paintings. Classical Italian opera and traditional Sicilian folk melodies provide the soundtrack, adding layers of drama.

But Du Coeur a la Main is not just about finished pieces. Five real seamstresses from Dolce & Gabbana's Milan atelier work live during the exhibition, crafting bodices, bustiers and corsets before visitors' eyes. "This seamstress is sewing lace to form a dress, while another is draping fabric by hand," Müller said. "It's extraordinary. This is not just fashion - it's art."

Sicily, Domenico Dolce's birthplace, lies at the heart of the collection. Traditional Sicilian hand-painted carts, ceramics and lace-making techniques are woven into couture. Yet the exhibit also underscores fashion's often-ignored global influences.

"Luxury goods and artisans traveled more than we think," Müller said. "The silk and brocades used at Versailles Palace came from India, and Italian artisans were hired to craft the Hall of Mirrors ... (Fashion) is constant exchanges and inspirations - this exhibit reveals what time forgot."

Italian and French fashion have long been framed as rivals, with French conglomerates such as LVMH and Kering and Paris Fashion Week sometimes viewed as the pinnacle of the industry. But this exhibition challenges that hierarchy, showing that the two traditions are more interconnected than they are opposed. Both rely on les petites mains - "the little hands" - the artisans whose precision and passion elevate couture to art.

"The techniques may differ - Sicily's lace traditions versus Paris's tailoring - but the soul of couture remains the same: the human touch," Müller said. The exhibit reveals the shared ingenuity of French and Italian ateliers, whether in a Sicilian workshop or a Parisian salon.

Even beyond couture, the exhibit highlights the breadth of "Made in Italy." Everyday items like Smeg refrigerators and coffee presses given a D&G reworking reflect the ethos of Italian craftsmanship, transforming functional objects into canvases for artistry.

## Variety



Wang

**BANGKOK:** A Chinese citizen surnamed Wang has departed from Thailand for China on Friday night following collaborative efforts from both countries, as confirmed by the Chinese Embassy in Thailand.

The Chinese embassy expressed its gratitude to the Thai government for prioritizing Wang's case which was

caused by cyber-fraud, and for promptly launching a rescue operation that ensured his safe return.

The Chinese embassy and consulates in Thailand will continue to work closely with the Thai government and other relevant departments to protect the safety and legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens visiting Thailand, said the Chinese embassy. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

**NEW YORK:** Anita Bryant, a former Miss Oklahoma, Grammy-nominated singer and prominent booster of orange juice and other products who became known over the second half of her life for her outspoken opposition to gay rights, has died. She was 84.

Bryant died Dec. 16 at her home in Edmond, Oklahoma, according to a statement posted by her family to news site The Oklahoman on Thursday. The family did not list a cause of death.

Bryant was a Barnsdall native who began singing at an early age, and was just 12 when she hosted her own local television show. (AP)

## People

## Megan's order

## Baldwin sues in 'Rust' case

SANTA FE, N.M., Jan. 11, (AP) — Actor Alec Baldwin has filed a civil lawsuit for malicious prosecution and civil rights violations in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on the set of the Western movie "Rust."

The lawsuit was filed Thursday at state district court in Santa Fe, where a judge in July dismissed a charge of involuntary manslaughter against Baldwin in the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins.

Baldwin also alleges defamation in the suit, saying that prosecutors and investigators intentionally mishandled evidence as they pursued the case.

Defendants named in the lawsuit include special prosecutor Kari Morrissey and Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altewies, along with three investigators from the Santa Fe County sheriff's office and the county board of commissioners.

"Defendants sought at every turn to scapegoat Baldwin for the acts and omissions of others, regardless of the evidence or the law," the lawsuit states. It also says prosecutors and investigators targeted Baldwin for professional or political gain.

Hutchins died shortly after being wounded during a rehearsal for the movie "Rust" in October 2021 at a film-set ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Baldwin, the lead actor and coproducer, was pointing a pistol at Hutchins when it discharged, killing Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza. Baldwin has said he pulled back the hammer - but not the trigger - and the revolver fired.

Baldwin's trial was upended by revelations that ammunition was brought into the Santa Fe County sheriff's office in March by a man who said it could be related to Hutchins' killing. Prosecutors said they deemed the ammo unrelated and unimportant, while Baldwin's lawyers say investigators "buried" the evidence in a separate case folder and filed a successful motion to dismiss.

Morrissey said she learned more than a year ago that Baldwin was considering a lawsuit.

□ □ □

Megan Thee Stallion has been granted a restraining order from imprisoned rapper Tory Lanez until early 2030.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Richard Bloom on Thursday granted Megan's request for a protective order after the hip-hop star alleged that Lanez is harassing her from prison through surrogates as he serves a 10-year sentence for shooting her in the feet.

The order was granted after a hearing. Michael Hayden, Lanez's attorney, wrote in an objection to the restraining order request that his client's incarceration means there "is no longer any form of current or future threat" to Megan and there has been no direct contact between the two recently.

A summary of Thursday's hearing said Bloom found that Megan's lawyers had met the burden of proof to extend a temporary restraining order until Jan. 9, 2030.

Hayden did not immediately return a message seeking comment Friday.



## HEALTH/SCIENCE

Past 10 years 2015-2024 were warmest years on record

## WMO confirms 2024 as warmest year on record, 1.55°C above pre-industrial

GENEVA, Jan 11: The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has confirmed that 2024 was the warmest year on record, based on six international datasets. The past ten years have all been in the Top Ten, in an extraordinary streak of record-breaking temperatures.

The global average surface temperature was 1.55°C (with a margin of uncertainty of  $\pm 0.13$  °C) above the 1850-1900 average, according to WMO's consolidated analysis of the six datasets. This means that we have likely just experienced the first calendar year with a global mean temperature of more than 1.5°C above the 1850-1900 average.

"Today's assessment from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) proves yet again - global heating is a cold, hard fact," said UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

"Individual years pushing past the 1.5 degree limit do not mean the long-term goal is shot. It means we need to fight even harder to get on track. Blazing temperatures in 2024 require trail-blazing climate action in 2025," he said. "There's still time to avoid the worst of climate catastrophe. But leaders must act - now," he said.

The WMO provides a temperature assessment based on multiple sources of data to support international climate monitoring and to provide authoritative information for the UN Climate Change negotiating process. The datasets are from the European Center for Medium Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), Japan Meteorological Agency, NASA, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the UK's Met Office in collaboration with the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia (HadCRUT), and Berkeley Earth.

"Climate history is playing out before our eyes. We've had not just one or two record-breaking years, but a full ten-year series. This has been accompanied by devastating and extreme weather, rising sea levels and melting ice, all powered by record-breaking greenhouse gas levels due to human activities," said WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo.

"It is important to emphasize that a single year of more than 1.5°C for a year does NOT mean that we have failed to meet Paris Agreement long-term temperature goals, which are measured over decades rather than an individual year. However, it is essential to recognize that every fraction of a degree of warming matters. Whether it is at a level below or above 1.5°C of warming, every additional increment of global warming increases the impacts on our lives, economies and our planet," said Celeste Saulo.

There is a margin of uncertainty in all temperature assessments. All six datasets place 2024 as the warmest year on record and all highlight the recent rate of warming. But not all show the temperature anomaly above 1.5 °C due to differing methodologies.

The timing of the release of the six temperature datasets was coordinated across the institutions in order to underline the exceptional conditions experienced during 2024.

A separate study published in *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences* found that ocean warming in 2024 played a key role in the record high temperatures. The ocean is the warmest it has ever been as recorded by humans, not only at the surface but also for the upper 2000 meters, according to the study led by Prof. Lijing Cheng with the Institute of Atmospheric Physics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. It involved a team of 54 scientists from seven countries and 31 institutes.

About 90% of the excess heat from global warming is stored in the ocean, making ocean heat content a critical indicator of climate change. From 2023 to 2024, the global upper 2000 m ocean heat content increase is 16 zettajoules (10<sup>21</sup> Joules), about 140 times the world's total electricity generation in 2023, according to the study, which is based on the Institute of Atmospheric Physics dataset.

WMO will provide full details of key climate change indicators, including greenhouse gases, surface temperatures, ocean heat, sea level rise, glacier retreat and sea ice extent, in its State of the Global Climate 2024 report to be issued in March 2025. This will also give details of high-impact events.

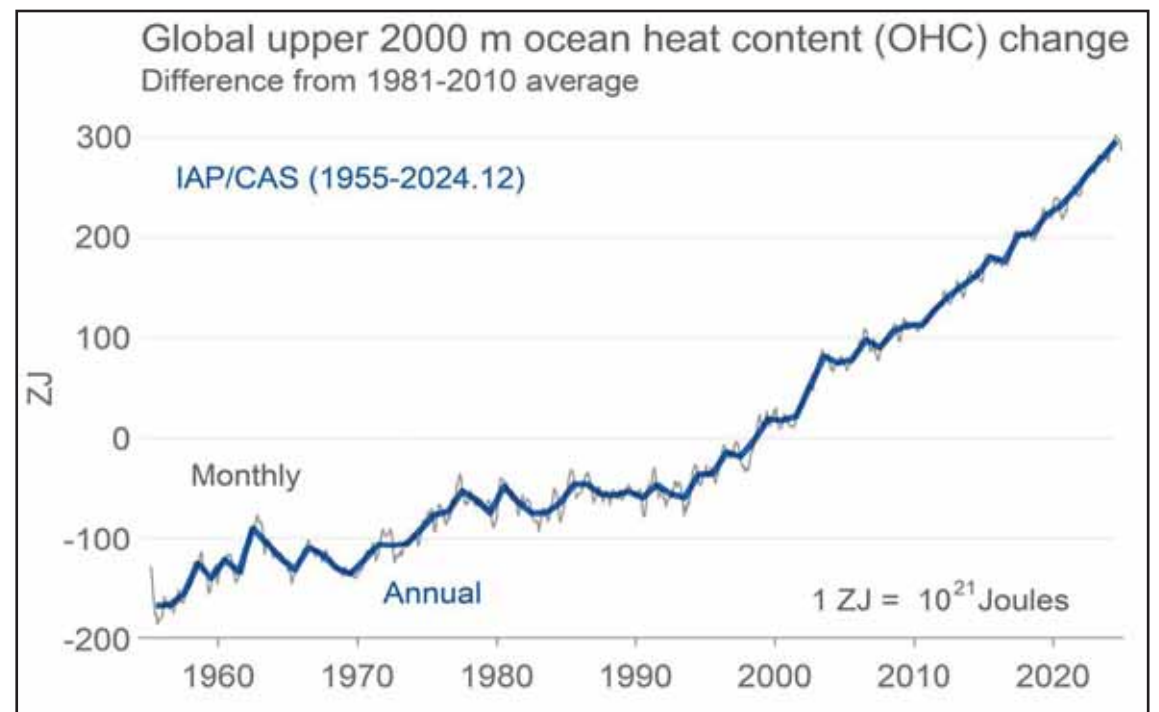
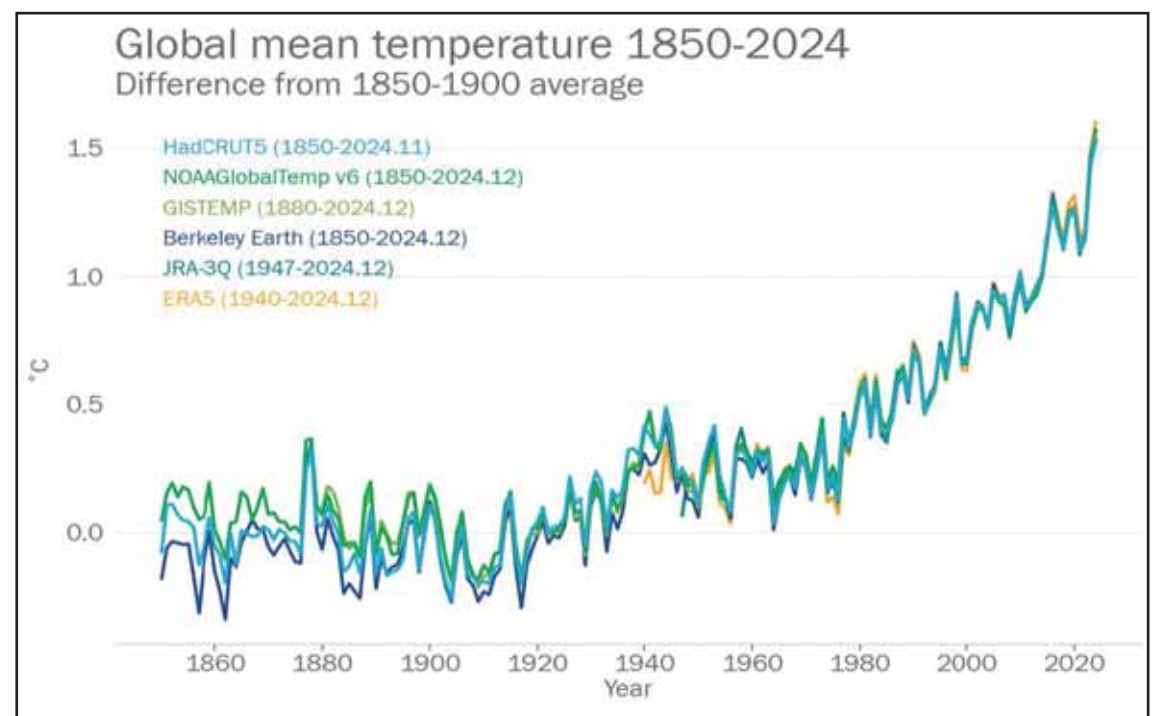
### Paris Agreement

Mr Guterres called on governments to deliver new national climate action plans this year to limit long term global temperature rise to 1.5°C, and support the most vulnerable deal with devastating climate impacts.

One or more individual years exceeding 1.5°C does not mean that we have missed the goal of "holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change" as stated in the Paris Agreement. This refers to an extended period, typically decades or longer, although the Agreement itself does not provide a specific definition.

Short-term temperature spikes in long-term warming can be caused by naturally occurring phenomena like El Niño, which persisted from mid-2023 to May 2024. As global warming continues, there is an urgent need for careful tracking, monitoring and communication with regard to where the warming is relative to the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement, to help policymakers in their deliberations.

An international team of experts established by WMO has given an initial indication that long-term global warming as assessed in 2024 is currently about 1.3°C compared to the 1850-1900 baseline.



Institute of Atmospheric Physics (Chinese Academy of Sciences)

### Expert calls for climate action amid fires

## US wildfires highlight climate threat

WASHINGTON, Jan 11, (AP): The massive wildfires that have killed 10 people in the Los Angeles area and caused billions of dollars in property damage are the latest sign of the growing threat posed by climate change - one that President-elect Donald Trump will have to take more seriously than he did in his first term, a top adviser to President Joe Biden said.

John Podesta, Biden's senior adviser for international climate policy, said one of the iconic images of Trump's first term showed him tossing paper towels to people in Puerto Rico who had been ravaged by a hurricane. Many critics called Trump's action disrespectful, especially after he disputed a death count from Hurricane Maria that reached nearly 3,000 people.

"You would think hopefully he would have learned from the public's reaction to that - that you have to take the science seriously. You have to take the facts seriously. You have to take the threat seriously," Podesta said in an interview with The Associated Press.

As the unfolding disaster in California demonstrates, "these challenges from extreme weather events that are induced by climate change are just getting worse and worse," Podesta said. "I think that, hopefully, the second Trump administration will indeed take this more seriously" than in Trump's first term.

Trump, a Republican, has not been offering much sympathy as the wild-



A helicopter drops water on the Palisades Fire in Mandeville Canyon, Friday, Jan. 10, 2025, in Los Angeles. (AP)

fires rage. Instead, he claimed this week that he could do a better job managing the crisis, casting blame on California's Democratic governor.

Trump has criticized his longtime political foe Gov. Gavin Newsom's forest management policies and falsely claimed the state's fish conservation efforts are responsible for fire hydrants running dry in urban areas.

Trump and his transition team have signaled that they will seek to reverse many of the mitigation actions the Biden administration has taken to re-

duce planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions, including tighter pollution standards for power plants and cars and trucks. But Podesta suggested that when it comes to climate resilience - including hardening infrastructure to make it more resistant to climate change - Trump should listen to scientists and other experts.

"At least when it comes to this question of resilience and adaptation, I think, that is not a liberal or conservative issue. That's not a red state or blue state issue. It's happening all across the country," he said, citing Hurricane Helene, which devastated North Carolina and other states last fall.

"North Carolina was used to hurricane damage, but not in the mountains and not in Asheville," Podesta said.

Trump and his team "would do well to understand - and listen to the experts in NASA and NOAA - and begin to plan and prepare for what is likely to be, again, an increasing risk across the country from these extreme weather challenges," he said.

Podesta and Ali Zaidi, Biden's domestic climate adviser, spoke to the AP as the White House released a report Friday on national adaptation and resilience planning strategy for climate change.

"Across the United States, climate change is accelerating the frequency and fueling the severity of extreme weather events, resulting in tragedies and new realities that once seemed unimaginable," the report said.

### Symptoms of flu, cold, and COVID-19

## How to protect against winter viruses

NEW YORK, Jan 11, (AP): In the winter months, it seems few are safe from some kind of illness - flu, COVID-19, norovirus, colds.

While many of the germs that cause this misery can circulate throughout the year, scientists think that the winter surge of flu and cold activity may be because we spend more time indoors and the cold, dry air may weaken our defenses.

But knowing what these bugs are and how they spread can help. While it may be difficult to make it through the season totally unscathed, there are some things you can do to protect yourself from these respiratory and stomach viruses. Some symptoms are hard to distinguish among illnesses, especially with respiratory viruses. Others are unmistakable.

■ Norovirus is a foodborne illness that can spread through water and contaminated surfaces and can cause vomiting, diarrhea, nausea and stomach pain for about one to three days.

■ The common cold can be caused by several different types of viruses and can cause a runny nose, congestion, cough, sneezing, sore throat, headaches, body aches or low fever for less than a week.

■ The flu, caused by influenza viruses that are always changing, leads to fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headaches and feeling tired. Flu symptoms tend to hit more quickly than cold symptoms, and can last anywhere from a few days to

two weeks.

■ COVID-19 can cause fever, chills, cough, short of breath, sore throat, congestion, loss of smell or taste, fatigue, aches, headache, nausea, or vomiting for several days.

■ RSV can cause a runny nose, congestion, coughing, sneezing, wheezing, fever and a loss of appetite for a week or two.

Seriously. Rigorous and frequent handwashing - with soap! - is crucial to reduce the spread of norovirus, colds, flu and COVID-19.

This is especially true after using the bathroom and eating or preparing food, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

Don't speed through it, either. Count to 20, slowly, while you scrub away.

If you don't have access to soap and water, try a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol - though that isn't enough to wipe out norovirus.

If norovirus has found you, you'll want to immediately clean surfaces that came in contact with contaminated food or bodily fluids. The CDC recommends disinfecting things with a chlorine bleach solution or one of the products listed on this Environmental Protection Agency website.

Don't forget to wash any clothing that came in contact with vomit or feces - use hot water and detergent. Then, wash your hands. Again.

With colds and flu, it's best to regularly clean surfaces that you come into a lot of contact with. Think doorknobs,

light switches, countertops, beloved toys, cellphones.

Use household cleaning products that contain soap or detergent, and follow it up with a sanitizer. The CDC has more tips on how to clean.

COVID-19 generally spreads through the air from droplets and particles, and the CDC says the risk of getting the virus from a contaminated surface is low.

Viruses can spread through talking, coughing and sneezing, so cover your mouth with a tissue if you feel a tickle in your throat or your nose. Then, wash your hands. Again.

Also, even if you're not sick, consider masking in crowded areas with an N95 or medical-grade mask to protect yourself from respiratory viruses.

Don't touch your face: If you have a germ or virus on your unwashed hands - respiratory or norovirus - and touch your face, eyes or nose, it can get into your mucus membranes and, voila!, you're sick!

Updated COVID-19 vaccines are available, as well as annual flu shots for people 6 months and older. For those 60 and older or for people who are pregnant, you may want to get the RSV vaccine.

But there is no vaccine for norovirus or the common cold.

Your immune system may not work as well if you're sleep-deprived, stressed out or dehydrated. So don't grind yourself into the ground if you can help it. Rest. Sleep. Drink water.

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## Ohio State plays Notre Dame in Atlanta on Jan. 20

## Ohio St getting shot at 6th national title after win over Texas in CFP semi

ARLINGTON, Texas, Jan 11, (AP): Jack Sawyer had the kind of moment that will live on long past his playing days with Ohio State. Of course, one more victory would make it that much sweeter.

Sawyer stripped Texas quarterback Quinn Ewers - his former roommate - and returned the fumble 83 yards for the clinching touchdown in a 28-14 victory over the Longhorns in the Cotton Bowl on Friday night, giving the Buckeyes a shot at their sixth AP national title.

"We talked before the game about how do you leave a legacy is to become your old legend. And there's some guys on this team today that I believe will become legends in Ohio State history," coach Ryan Day said. "Now they get 10 more days together, and an opportunity to tell their story if they go win one more."

Led by Ohio native Sawyer and Quinshon Judkins, who rushed for two touchdowns, the Buckeyes (13-2) posted the semifinal victory in the same stadium where 10 years ago they were champions when the College Football Playoff debuted with a four-team format. Now they have the opportunity to be the winner again in the first season with an expanded 12-team field.

Ohio State plays Orange Bowl

champion Notre Dame in Atlanta on Jan. 20. It could be quite a finish for the Big Ten Buckeyes after they lost to rival Michigan on Nov. 30.

Sawyer got to Ewers on a fourth-and-goal from the 8, knocking the ball loose before scooping it up and lumbering all the way to the other end zone with 2:13 left. It was the longest fumble return in CFP history.

"I saw the ball pop out right to me after I tackled him, I was just thinking, I've got to stay on my feet, because I almost blacked out when I scooped it and saw a bunch of green grass ahead of me," Sawyer said.

Ewers and Sawyer were roommates in Columbus for one semester before the quarterback transferred home to Texas. Ewers helped lead the Longhorns (13-3) to consecutive CFP semifinals, but next season will be their 20th since winning their last national title with Vince Young in 2005.

"I felt him. I started drifting away, thought I was going to be able to get the ball off before he got there," Ewers said. "I saw Jack running with the ball down the sideline. ... Jack's a good player made a great play."

Texas had moved to the 1, helped by two pass-interference penalties in the end zone, before Quintrevion Wisner



Ohio State quarterback Will Howard (18) passes against Texas during the second half of the Cotton Bowl College Football Playoff semifinal game in Arlington, Texas. (AP)

was stopped for a 7-yard loss. Ewers then threw a third-down incompleteness while being pressured by Sawyer on the play before the defensive touchdown.

"He's everything that we possibly ask for in a captain," Day said. "To make a play like that in that moment ... He just became a legend at Ohio State."

Judkins, a transfer from Mississippi, had a 1-yard touchdown for a 21-14 lead with 7:02 left, capping an 88-yard, 13-play drive over 7:45. That score came four plays after quarterback Will

Howard converted a fourth-and-2 from the Texas 34 with a stumbling 18-yard run that probably should have been a score.

"That fourth down was huge. ... I fell on purpose. I'm joking," Howard said. "A statement drive. We needed that."

Howard was 24-of-33 passing for 289 yards with a touchdown and an interception. He played his first game at AT&T Stadium since leading Kansas State to a win over undefeated TCU in the Big 12 championship two years ago. He was 0-3 as a starter against the Longhorns while at K-State, including an overtime thriller in Austin last season.

Ewers finished 23 of 39 for 283 yards with two TD passes to Jaydon Blue and an interception after getting the ball back one final time. It might have been his last play for the Longhorns since he could go into the NFL draft.

Texas won the Big 12 title last season before moving to the SEC.

The Buckeyes went ahead on their opening drive of the game when Judkins scored on a 9-yard run. It looked as if they could get off to another fast start, after jumping ahead 21-0 and 34-0 in their first two playoff games.

## Jokic, Westbrook make triple-double history as Nuggets cruise past Nets



Philadelphia 76ers' Kelly Oubre Jr., right, goes after the ball against New Orleans Pelicans' Dejounte Murray, left, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

DENVER, Jan 11, (AP): Nikola Jokic had 35 points, 15 assists and 12 rebounds in his return to the lineup, Russell Westbrook had 25 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists and the Denver Nuggets beat the Brooklyn Nets 124-105 on Friday night.

It was the 145th career triple-double for Jokic, who missed Denver's previous two games due to an illness.

It was Westbrook's 202nd career triple-double. It was the second time this season they have had triple-doubles in the same game, and according to the NBA they are the first teammates in NBA history to have triple-doubles in the same game multiple times in a single season.

Westbrook has the most career NBA triple-doubles and Jokic is third. Oscar Robertson is second with 181.

Ben Simmons played for the first time since Jan. 1 and had 10 points and six assists for Brooklyn, which has dropped four straight and 12 of its last 15. Keon Johnson had 22 points

and Tyrese Martin had 19 points for Brooklyn.

## Thunder 126, Knicks 101

In New York, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 39 points in 29 minutes, and the Oklahoma City Thunder emphatically bounced back to rout the New York Knicks in the first game since their 15-game winning streak was snapped.

Isaiah Joe added 23 of his 31 points in the first half for the Thunder, who were coming off a 129-122 loss at NBA-leading Cleveland on Wednesday in the biggest game of the season thus far. There was no hangover at Madison Square Garden, where Oklahoma City had a 36-12 run in the first half en route to a 70-43 lead.

Jalen Brunson scored 27 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 in the Knicks' fourth loss in five games, a stretch that began when the Thunder used a big fourth quarter to win 117-107 last Friday and snap New York's nine-game winning streak.

## Kings 114, Celtics 97

In Boston, Domantas Sabonis had 23 points and a career-high 28 rebounds and the Sacramento Kings

used a fourth quarter rally to beat the Boston Celtics.

The victory extended Sacramento's season-high win streak to six games. It was Sabonis' 33rd double-double of the season and 24th game of his career with 20 or more rebounds. Entering Friday, the NBA's previous high for rebounds in a game this season was 23 by San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama.

DeMar DeRozan added 24 points and nine assists, and Malik Monk finished with 22 points and eight assists.

Boston has lost two of its last three.

Jaylen Brown led the Celtics with 28 points, Kristaps Porzingis added 22 points and 10 rebounds, and Jayson Tatum had 15 points and 12 rebounds.

## Bucks 109, Magic 106

In Orlando, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 41 points and 14 rebounds and the Milwaukee Bucks beat Orlando in spite of 34 points by the Magic's Paolo Banchero in his long-awaited return from an injury.

Damian Lillard added 29 points for the Bucks, including a couple of free throws with 9.3 seconds left for the game's final points.

Playing for the first time since tear-

ing his right oblique on Oct. 30, Banchero also had seven rebounds and three assists in 27 minutes. He made 5 of 8 3-point shots.

Cole Anthony had 18 points and seven rebounds for Orlando and Tristan da Silva had 16 points and 10 rebounds.

Bobby Portis came off Milwaukee's bench to score 11 points and grab seven rebounds.

## Pacers 108, Warriors 96

In Indianapolis, Tyrese Haliburton and Pascal Siakam each scored 25 points on Friday night to help the Indiana Pacers race past the Golden State Warriors.

Haliburton added 10 assists and Siakam also had 10 rebounds as Indiana won its fifth straight to match its longest streak of the season.

Golden State was led by former Pacers star Buddy Hield who had 17 points. Pat Spencer scored a season high 17 as the Warriors sat six players on their second game in two nights, including All-Star Stephen Curry, Draymond Green and Andrew Wiggins.

Coach Steve Kerr said Green was bothered by a back injury and Curry had a bad knee.

## Monfils becomes oldest player to win an ATP Tour singles title

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, Jan 11, (AP): French veteran Gael Monfils became the oldest player to win an ATP Tour title after beating Zizou Bergs 6-3, 6-4 in Auckland on Saturday.

Monfils claimed his 13th tour title 20 years after his first and at the age of 38 years, 132 days. He took over from Roger Federer, who was 38 years, 74 days old when he won the final tour title of his career, the Swiss Indoor title at Basel in 2019.

Monfils currently is ranked 52 and is the oldest player in the history of the ATP Tour to be ranked in the top 100.

Pancho Gonzalez was 44 years, 7 months and 4 days old when he won a Kingston, Jamaica singles title in 1972, prior to the formation of the ATP Tour in 1990.

The Auckland final was delayed on Saturday by a medical emergency in the crowd but Monfils showed the same mixture of aggression and tenacious defense to claim his first title since the Stockholm Open in 2023.

Prior to the start of the Auckland tournament, Monfils spoke about how his love of tennis kept him going.

"I love tennis. I love what I'm doing so of course all the sacrifices you do, they are a little bit easier. When you love something, it's easier to keep pushing," he said.

"I've been enjoying myself since the first day I played tennis and (at) 60 years old I will still have this joy. Prac-



Gael Monfils of France holds up his trophy after defeating Zizou Bergs of Belgium to win the men's singles of the ASB Classic tennis tournament at Manuka Doctor Arena in Auckland, New Zealand. (AP)

ice, it's easy. It's in the DNA. Stay in shape, it's easy. It's more the travel."

After collecting the Auckland trophy, Monfils headed straight to the airport for a flight to Melbourne where he will face Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in the first round of the Australian Open.

## Moyes returns as Everton boss during 'pivotal time' for the club

LIVERPOOL, England, Jan 11, (AP): Everton hired David Moyes for a second stint as manager at the Premier League club on Saturday.

Moyes replaces Sean Dyche, who was fired Thursday with the team just one point above the relegation zone.

The 61-year-old Moyes managed Everton from 2002-13, during which he led the Merseyside club to the 2009 FA Cup final and four European campaigns.

"It's great to be back," Moyes said. "I enjoyed 11 wonderful and successful years at Everton and didn't hesitate when I was offered the opportunity to rejoin this great club."

The storied club - a nine-time English champion which has been without a major trophy since 1995 - was bought last month by the Texas-based Friedkin Group in a deal reportedly worth in excess of 400 million pounds (\$495 million).

Everton's next game is Wednesday at home against Aston Villa in the Premier League.

"We are pleased that David is joining us at this pivotal time in Everton's history," club executive chairman Marc Watts said in the team's statement. "With over a decade of experience at the club, he is the right leader to propel us through our final season at Goodison Park and into our new stadium. We look forward to working



In this file photo, Everton manager David Moyes stands on the touchline, in Liverpool, England during a Premier League game. (AP)

with David to build the foundation of a new era for Everton."

The team did not specify the length of Moyes' contract but British media reported it to be 2 1/2 years.

Dyche was fired hours before Everton hosted and beat third-division Peterborough 2-0 in an FA Cup third-round match.

## Alcaraz and Sinner have a real rivalry atop men's tennis

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 11, (AP): When Carlos Alcaraz is on court for a training session, perhaps working on his newly revamped service motion, he's doing so to buttress a game already good enough to claim four Grand Slam titles.

He's also got his young rival, Jannik Sinner, in mind.

"The good thing for me is, when I'm seeing him winning titles, when I'm seeing him in the top of the ranking, it forces me to practice even harder every day. In practice, I'm just thinking (about) the things that I have to improve to play against him," Alcaraz said Saturday, a day before the start of the Australian Open. "That, I think, is great for me: Having him (and) such a great rivalry, so far, just to (force me to) give (my best), every day."

Alcaraz, 21, and Sinner, 23, head into the 2025 tennis season at the top of the men's game, coming off a year that portended greatness for both. With Rafael Nadal now joining Roger Federer in retirement, leaving 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic as the lone remaining member of

the Big Three on tour, it appears as though Alcaraz and Sinner have separated themselves from the rest of the next generation, each taking two of the four Slam singles trophies in 2024.

Forever, it seemed, the sport's most important laurels were dominated by Federer, Nadal and Djokovic, and anyone harboring hopes of claiming them needed to defeat at least one, and often two, of that trio.

The names have changed, but the dynamic is similar.

"I feel like now, with Jannik and with Carlos, it kind of moved toward the same way, just with new guys. You have to go through them to win big tournaments. It's as simple as that," said Alexander Zverev, a two-time major finalist who is seeded No. 2 at Melbourne Park, between No. 1 Sinner and No. 3 Alcaraz. "They both won two Grand Slams (last) year. And they're the two best players in the world, for sure. And you have to beat them to win the tournament."

Sinner is the defending champion in Australia, and went on to also win the U.S.

Open in September, part of a season in which he went 73-6 with eight titles - but also dealt with a doping case in which he tested positive twice for trace amounts of an anabolic steroid, blamed it on accidentally being exposed to a banned substance via a massage from his trainer and was exonerated. (The World Anti-Doping Agency appealed that ruling; a closed-door hearing will be held at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Switzerland on April 16-17.)

Alcaraz exited from the Australian Open in the quarterfinals against Zverev last January, but then triumphed at the French Open, getting past Zverev in the final, and Wimbledon, where he won against Djokovic in the final for the second year in a row.

On Sunday, Zverev faces wild-card entry Lucas Pouille at night, after defending champion Aryna Sabalenka takes on 2017 U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens. Other top names scheduled for Day 1 action include 2024 Australian runner-up and Paris Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen and three-time major finalist Casper Ruud.

Alcaraz, Sinner and Djokovic, along

with five-time major champ Iga Swiatek and 2023 U.S. Open winner Coco Gauff, all will get started Monday.

If Alcaraz, whose first major title came at the 2022 U.S. Open at age 19 and propelled him to a debut at No. 1, wins this Australian Open, he would be the youngest man in tennis history to complete a career Grand Slam, with at least one championship from each of the sport's four most prestigious events.

"It's truly remarkable," former player Feliciano Lopez said, "what he has achieved in the last three years."

Alcaraz and Sinner already are establishing quite a head-to-head rivalry, one that already has shown glimpses of the potential to become as memorable as Federer vs. Nadal, or Djokovic vs. Nadal.

"You have more eyes on us," Sinner said, "because this is a match most people want to see."

Overall, Alcaraz leads 6-4.

In 2024 alone, he went 3-0 against Sinner, who was 73-3 against everyone else, with setbacks only against Daniil Medvedev, Andrey Rublev and Stefanos Tsitsipas.

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The first-of-its-kind international show jumping tournament by the sea in Kuwait

## KIB launches the third season of KIB | The Stadium in partnership with Suffix

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the launch of the third season of the KIB | The Stadium championship, set to officially begin on Friday, January 24, 2025, at Marina Beach, organized by the Bank's strategic partner Suffix Events. The latest edition will kick off with a local show jumping competition, followed by a 2-star international competition (CSI2\*), before ending with the final competition of the 3-star category (CSI3\*-W), which serves as a qualifier for the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) Jumping World Cup.

The announcement of this prominent annual event was made during a press conference attended by Othman Tawfeeq, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB; Ahmed AlHuzami, CEO of Suffix; Marwa Marafie, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB; and Nasser AlQallaf, Senior Vice President – Sales and Product Development at United Real Estate Company(URC); alongside representatives from the Kuwait Olympic Committee and the Kuwait Equestrian Federation.

Building on the outstanding success of the previous edition, the third season will once again focus on equestrian sports, featuring Kuwait's first-of-its-kind international show jumping tournament by the sea. The event will be held on a larger scale than last year, with expanded participation from local and international teams.

The three-week championship aims to establish Kuwait as a premier sports destination, highlight emerging young Kuwaiti talents, and showcase their diverse athletic achievements. It also reflects KIB's commitment to its Kuwaiti identity, dedication to fostering a sports culture, and efforts to create an ideal environment for celebrating promising athletic talent. This initiative aligns with KIB's comprehensive social responsibility program and its corporate slogan, "Bank for Life."

KIB, as the title sponsor, and Suffix Events, as the event organizer, collaborated with leading experts and specialists in sports management, building a world-class equestrian arena along Marina Beach to provide a unique and innovative experience for the Kuwaiti community and participating local and international teams. The championship features a range of cash prizes for winners across its events and challenges, with rewards available for both men and women.

Commenting on the occasion, KIB's Marafie said: "Sponsoring the third season of KIB | The Stadium builds on the successes of previous seasons. This year's championship will be bigger, with an expanded arena and increased participation from both local and international equestrians, underscoring our commitment to launching sports and social initiatives that enhance community engagement and promote the development of sports in Kuwait. We are proud to reintroduce the country's first-ever show jumping tournament by the sea and look forward to it becoming a global platform that highlights our national talents while bringing together local and international professionals in an exceptional competitive setting."

Marafie added: "We have worked diligently on every detail to ensure the championship meets the highest international standards, whether in terms of the arena or the level of organization and participating teams. We also aim for this championship to serve as an opportunity to promote equestrian culture in Kuwait."

Furthermore, Marafie emphasized that sports are a core component of KIB's comprehensive social responsibility program. The Bank actively organizes and



Left-right: Fatema Hayat, Board Member of Kuwait Olympic Committee, Othman Tawfeeq, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB, Ahmed Al Huzami, CEO of Suffix, Marwa Marafie, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Ghazi Al-Jarwi, Representative from the Kuwait Equestrian Federation and Nasser Al Qallaf, Senior Vice President – Sales and Product Development at United Real Estate Company (URC).

sponsors a variety of sports activities and events in Kuwait, consistently working to promote a culture of sports within the community. KIB also remains dedicated to supporting young athletes who have achieved remarkable milestones and proudly represented Kuwait on international stages.

Concluding her remarks, Marafie said: "We extend our sincere gratitude to all the participants, athletes, partners, and supporters who have played a vital role in the success of this major sporting event over the years. We look forward to making this year's edition truly exceptional, reflecting our vision and commitment to providing an extraordinary sports experience in a competitive atmosphere filled with excitement and sportsmanship."

On his part, Suffix CEO AlHuzami said: "Building on the success of the previous editions, we are excited to present the third version of KIB | The Stadium and the second version of our unique showjumping event by the sea. This championship exemplifies our commitment to delivering world-class sporting events and promoting equestrian culture in Kuwait. We aim to provide an exceptional experience for both athletes and spectators, creating an environment that fosters talent and celebrates the spirit of sportsmanship."

To enhance the overall experience of riders and spectators alike, the warm-up area has been expanded this year, and service areas now feature additional restrooms and larger prayer spaces. KIB | The Stadium is expected to draw approximately 500 riders and 5,000 spectators, with participants representing a diverse range of nationalities, including Argentina, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, and Spain.

It is worth noting that KIB remains committed to enhancing its impactful



Othman Tawfeeq, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB, Ahmed Al Huzami, CEO of Suffix, Fatema Hayat, Board Member of Kuwait Olympic Committee, Marwa Marafie, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Ghazi Al-Jarwi, Representative from the Kuwait Equestrian Federation and Nasser Al Qallaf, Senior Vice President – Sales and Product Development at United Real Estate Company (URC).



A snapshot from the press conference.

community role by launching and supporting initiatives and events that create a positive influence across society, with a strong focus on contributing to sustainable development. The Bank also prioritizes showcasing local talent and celebrating exceptional Kuwaiti achievements, particularly in sports.

## Liverpool routs Accrington to advance to FA Cup 4th round

Potter era starts with elimination for struggling West Ham

**LONDON, Jan 11, (AP): Liverpool's bid to win an unprecedented quadruple is still on after a 4-0 victory over Accrington Stanley in the FA Cup on Saturday.**

The Premier League and Champions League leader is also into the semifinals of the English League Cup. And fourth-division Accrington was never expected to prevent Arne Slot's team from advancing to the fourth round of soccer's oldest knockout competition.

Diogo Jota, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Jayden Danns and Federico Chiesa scored for Liverpool at Anfield, with 16-year-old Rio Ngumoha becoming the Merseyside club's second-youngest debutant.

The third round of the FA Cup is traditionally one of the most anticipated weekends in English soccer as Premier League clubs enter the competition.

Top-flight Wolverhampton also advanced with a 1-0 win at second-division Bristol City.

The Graham Potter era at West Ham got off to a disappointing and controversial start when Aston Villa came from behind to beat Potter's side 2-1 and knock it out of the FA Cup.

The third-round match will be remembered for a poor decision in the buildup to Morgan Rogers' winning goal.

Lucas Paqueta put the Hammers ahead after just nine minutes only for Amadou Onana to equalize for Villa with 19 minutes remaining.

But the referee gave the home team a 75th-minute corner after an Onana shot flew wide and it was from that decision that Rogers scored the winner. After the ball was cleared Ollie Watkins sent it back into the box for Rogers to fire home.

Video replay clearly showed Onana's shot did not hit a West Ham player and should have been a goalkick.

A former Swansea, Brighton and Chelsea coach, Potter replaced Julen Lopetegui this week to return to management after almost two years out of the game.

But after its bright start his team ceded too much possession and territory to Villa and it is the home side that goes into the fourth round seeking a first FA Cup win since 1957.

In the night's other game, third-tier Wycombe scored twice in the first half to advance past second-division Portsmouth 2-0.

The match pitted the second in League One against the team second from bottom of the Championship and it went with the form side.

Brandon Hanlan gave Wycombe the lead after 17 minutes when he lashed home from close range and Sonny Bradley doubled their advantage 10 minutes later with a header from a speculative free kick.

FA Cup winner in 2008, Portsmouth made three changes at halftime but it made little difference as Wycombe competently saw out the game.



Liverpool's Federico Chiesa, left, and Accrington's Ben Woods vie for the ball during the FA Cup soccer match between Liverpool and Accrington Stanley at the Anfield stadium in Liverpool, England. (AP)

## Supercup 'Clasico' to show evolution of Barca and Real

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, Jan 11, (Xinhua): Real Madrid and FC Barcelona go head-to-head in the second 'Clasico' of the year when they play the Spanish Supercup final in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah on Sunday.

Madrid beat Mallorca 3-0 on Thursday to book its ticket against Barcelona 24 hours earlier to assure its place in the showpiece match.

The last meeting of the two traditional rivals in the Spanish game was at the end of October 2024 when Barca thrashed Madrid 4-0 in the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Things have changed since then

with Real Madrid improving its form in December and the start of this year, with Kylian Mbappe adapting to the club and Jude Bellingham returning to his best level, while Barca paid the price for its high-energy press towards the end of 2024, with a series of defeats that have seen it drop to third in La Liga.

The good news for Barca coach Hansi Flick is that he will be able to count on Dani Olmo and Pau Victor after the Spanish government's Superior Sports Council allowed them to be registered.

Lamine Yamal showed on Wednesday that he has recovered from the

ankle injury that saw him miss the end of 2024, while Ronald Araujo is also available despite stories linking him with a move to Juventus and midfielder Gavi has now fully recovered to continue his on-off feud with Vinicius Jr.

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti has a couple of doubts ahead of the final, after Aurelien Tchouameni was substituted after a clash of heads on Thursday and replaced by Raul Asencio. Meanwhile, Bellingham looked to be feeling his hamstring towards the end of the same game and although he should be able to start, he may not play 90 minutes as a precaution, especially

with Madrid having a packed two months ahead of it.

The two sides met in the 2024 Supercup final which saw Madrid win 4-1 and after October's clash, this meeting will show how both teams have evolved since then.

FC Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski says his club can beat Real Madrid in Sunday's Spanish Supercup final.

In the semifinals, Barcelona outplayed Athletic Bilbao 2-0, while Real Madrid beat Mallorca 3-0. The final will be played at King Abdullah Sports City stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Sunday evening.



Burgan and the Kuwait Clubs in a previous meeting.

### Women's volleyball season kicks off

## Burgan and Kuwait Club finalize preparations for Championship

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

CAIRO, Jan 11: Burgan Club is set to face Egypt's Zamalek today in its second friendly match during its external training camp in Cairo. This camp serves as preparation for the 43rd Arab Men's Volleyball Clubs Championship, scheduled to take place in Doha from January 13 to 26, featuring 15 Arab clubs, including Burgan and Kuwait.

Burgan previously played a friendly against Heliopolis, where both teams agreed to play four sets. The delegation will head directly to Doha on January 14.

The team faced an early setback as several players contracted the flu at the start of the Cairo camp. The medical staff intervened, providing rest to the affected players to ensure their recovery ahead of the championship.

The Burgan delegation is led by the club's vice president, Mohammed Al-Faraj, and includes Mohammed Al-Otaibi, head of the volleyball apparatus; Ahmed Al-Holi, team administrator; and Argentine coach Alejandro Grossi. The roster consists of 18 players.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Club continues its rigorous preparations in Doha. The team will play its first friendly match today against Qatari side Al Rayyan and plans a second match before the tournament begins. Kuwait's delegation, led by Musleh Al Rashidi, Director of Volleyball at Kuwait Club, includes administrators Mosaed Al Omairi and Abdulaziz Al Duwaisan, Turkish coach Taner Atik, his assistant Erin Jay, and Dr. Abdullah Talib, alongside 18 players.

The championship draw placed Burgan in Group Four, alongside Palestine's Gaza, Qatar, and UAE's Al Jazira. The Kuwait Club team is in Group Two, competing against Oman's Al Seeb, Egypt's Zamalek, and Libya's Al Hilar.

In other volleyball news, the 2024-2025 women's season began yesterday with the Super Cup match between Al-Fatma Club and Salwa Al-Sabah Club. The general league is set to commence next Tuesday, featuring Al-Fatma, Salwa Al-Sabah, and Al-Ouyun Girls clubs. The league will be contested in four divisions, concluding on March 18.

## Ronaldo beats rival Messi as soccer's highest earner in '24

PARIS, Jan 11: The French website Foot Mercato has unveiled a fascinating statistic that places Cristiano Ronaldo at the top once again, surpassing his long-standing rival Lionel Messi.

Ronaldo, the captain and star of Saudi Arabia's Al-Nassr, leads the list of the highest-paid players in global football. According to the report, the Portuguese icon earned an astounding 263 million euros in 2024.

Breaking down the earnings, Ronaldo receives 203 million euros as his salary from Al-Nassr and an additional 60 million euros from sponsorships and his expanding social media presence. Notably, he recently launched YouTube channel set a record as the fastest to reach one million subscribers.

Lionel Messi, the Argentine captain of Inter Miami, ranks second with an annual income of 124 million euros.

Neymar Jr., the Brazilian star of Al-Hilal, holds third place with a salary of 101 million euros, followed by Al-Ittihad captain Karim Benzema with 96 million euros.

In fifth place is French forward Kylian Mbappé of Real Madrid, earning 86 million euros annually.



Cristiano Ronaldo

Norwegian striker Erling Haaland of Manchester City ranks sixth with 55 million euros.

Real Madrid and Brazil's rising star Vinicius Junior comes in seventh with 51 million euros, while Egyptian sensation Mohamed Salah claims the eighth spot with 49 million euros.

The figures highlight the remarkable financial rewards for football's top stars, with Ronaldo continuing to set new records both on and off the field.





Leverkusen's Piero Hincapie, left, challenges for the ball with Dortmund's Karim Adeyemi during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and Bayer Leverkusen at the Signal-Iduna Park in Dortmund, Germany. Leverkusen won 3-2. (AP)

# Sports

## Al-Kharafi shines at Atyab Al-Marshoud International Championship

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: Kuwait Equestrian Club star Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi claimed the Grand Prize titles on both the first and second days of the 11th edition of the "Atyab Al-Marshoud" International Championship. This prestigious event, organized annually by Waleed Al-Marshoud, brings together top riders from Kuwait, the Gulf region, and Europe, showcasing intense competition among elite male and female equestrians vying for the coveted titles.

On the opening day, Al-Kharafi secured victory in the Grand Prize competition at a height of 140 cm, clocking an impressive 26.55 seconds. He was followed by Anaz Al-Anaz, Yara Al-Hunaidi, Abdullah Al-Awadhi, and Fawaz Rashid.

The second day saw Al-Kharafi repeat his triumph, winning the Grand Prize again at a height of 140 cm with a flawless time of 60.33 seconds, free of penalty points. He was trailed by Abrar Al-Musallam, Nick Channing, Fawaz Rashid, Hamad Al-Hajri, and Abdulrahman Al-Mudhahka. Additionally, Al-Kharafi clinched the minor prize in the 135 cm category, while Ghanima Al-Marzouq emerged victorious in the minor prize at 130 cm.

The champions were crowned by the tournament sponsor and Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee, Waleed Sulaiman Al-Marshoud, alongside the Vice Chairman and Tournament Director, Marshoud Al-Marshoud, and Hamad Al-Musaibih, Director of Corporate Relations at Zain Kuwait.



Ali Al-Kharafi with other winners on the podium.

## Al-Qadsiya hands Kuwait Club first loss in league

Al-Arabi joins Whites at the top

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 11: The Zain Premier League witnessed a significant shakeup in its tenth round as league leader Kuwait Club suffered its first defeat of the season, falling 2-1 to Al-Qadsiya. This victory not only ended Al-Qadsiya's 14-match winless streak against Kuwait but also served as a major boost for its traditional rival, Al-Arabi, who capitalized with a 3-0 win over Kazma to join Kuwait Club at the top of the standings.

Al-Qadsiya, sitting third in the table with 19 points, narrowed the gap to the leaders, reigniting hopes of reclaiming a title that has eluded them for eight seasons. This win was particularly significant as it marked their first victory over Kuwait at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium since 2012. Despite missing key players such as Khaled Ibrahim, Khaled Al-Rashidi, and Yousef Al-Haqan, the team delivered a spirited performance that restored their championship ambitions.

Kuwait Club, now level on points with Al-Arabi, saw its solo reign at the top disrupted. The team paid the price for Amr Abdel Fattah's red card, which proved costly in its defeat to Al-Qadsiya. This loss has opened the door for

Al-Arabi to stake their claim for the title, ending Kuwait's dominant streak over recent rounds.

Al-Arabi emerged as the biggest winner of this round, sharing the lead with Kuwait Club and seizing an opportunity to end its three-season title drought. With momentum on its side, the "Green" now has its fate in its own hands as the race for the title intensifies.

Fahaheel and Al-Salmiya, both with 17 points, secured crucial victories to strengthen their positions in fourth and fifth place. Fahaheel edged past Khaitan 1-0, while Al-Salmiya defeated Al-Nasr 2-1, distancing it from the relegation zone.

Tadamon, in sixth place with 14 points, recorded a vital 3-2 win over Yarmouk, a direct rival in the relegation battle. However, it remains close to the danger zone and must stay consistent to avoid slipping further.

Kazma's woes continued as they fell to Al-Arabi, leaving it in seventh place with 10 points. Despite new signings, the team failed to impress and faces the prospect of repeating last season's struggle in the relegation avoidance league.

Meanwhile, Khaitan (5 points), Al-Nasr (4 points), and Yarmouk (3 points) are on the brink of relegation league participation. Their survival now requires a near-impossible turnaround to break into the top six.

As the league progresses, the top six teams will vie for the title, while the bottom four will battle in the relegation league, with two teams facing demotion to the first division. The stakes are higher than ever, with every match crucial in shaping the fate of the teams.



Al-Qadsiya player controls the ball as Kuwait Club players chase him during the Zain League game.

## Sri Lanka wins 3rd ODI, New Zealand claims series

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, Jan 11, (AP): Asith Fernando and Maheesh Theekshana shared six wickets as Sri Lanka bowled out New Zealand for 150 runs in 29.4 overs to win the third one-day international by 140 runs Saturday.

Fernando took 3-26 and Theekshana 3-35 to jointly knock the top off the New Zealand innings as it chased 291 for victory. Eshan Fernando also contributed 3-35 as Sri Lanka completed a comprehensive

victory.

New Zealand won the three-match series 2-1 in its last matches at home before the ICC Champions Trophy begins in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates next month.

Earlier, Pathum Nissanka made 66 in an innings of two parts as Sri Lanka compiled 290-8 after choosing to bat first. New Zealand then slumped to 21-5 inside seven overs as Fernando helped Sri Lanka unpick the New Zealand top order.

"It's a huge confidence boost for me and for the team as well because we haven't played well in the first two games. It's a pleasure to play like this," Fernando said.

"We identified a few areas to be improved (after the first two games). Now we are going straight back to work to continue improving day by day."

Mark Chapman was the only New Zealand batter to stand against the chaos, making 81 at a run a ball. Chapman's 51-run partnership with Nathan Smith (17) for the eighth wicket was New Zealand's hope of making a game of it. The run rate never got away from New Zealand but it lost too many wickets early to seriously challenge Sri Lanka's total.

Nissanka reached 50 from 31 balls but almost immediately fell to the ground in pain from an apparent groin or hip strain.

He tried to bat on but was clearly impaired while running between wickets and was 50 not out when he was summoned from the field by Sri Lanka coach Sanath Jayasuriya to receive medical treatment.

Matt Henry took 4-55 for New Zealand.



New Zealand team pose for a photo at the conclusion of the 3rd one day international cricket match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Eden Park in Auckland, New Zealand. (AP)

## Brignone stars, Vonn impresses and Blanc shocks in epic WCup downhill

ST. ANTON, Austria, Jan 11, (AP): Federica Brignone had zero World Cup downhill wins in her stellar career. Lindsey Vonn had a record 43. Malorie Blanc had never even started a World Cup downhill.

In an instant classic Saturday, Brignone started closing the gap with her debut downhill win at age 34 before ski great Vonn was hugely impressive racing into fifth place in her first downhill for six years - at age 40 and now with a titanium knee.

The drama was not over. Wearing low-ranked bib No. 46 in just the second race of her World Cup career, Swiss prospect Blanc stunningly had the fastest time at the final checkpoint before finishing just 0.07 seconds behind Brignone. Vonn was pushed down into sixth.

Italian star Brignone looked shocked, sitting in the course-side leader's box, by the world junior championships silver medalist's performance before celebrating with a determined smile.

Three generations of downhill racers had served up a compelling race for the ages.

"That was fun," Vonn told broadcaster Eurosport. "All things considered it was a great start."



Switzerland's Malorie Blanc speeds down the course during an alpine ski, women's World Cup downhill race, in St. Anton, Austria. (AP)

Brignone, the 2020 World Cup overall champion and a five-time runner-up in downhills, finally stepped up to the top step of the podium in a sun-splashed race. Her debut downhill success was her 30th career World Cup win.

The Italian star was technically excellent to finish ahead of Blanc, whose only

previous World Cup race was failing to finish a super-G three weeks ago in St. Moritz that was Vonn's comeback race.

In third place Saturday was Ester Ledecka, who also once shocked the ski world by taking gold at the 2018 Olympics in super-G. Ledecka was 0.18 behind Brignone.