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Opinion

We want Kuwait to be a welcoming destination for visitors

Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE atmosphere in Kuwait during the recent Gulf Cup tournament reminded many of what the country was like before a group of MPs imposed restrictions aimed at changing the culture of society, and transforming the nation into Taliban

Tora Bora.

With the ratification of certain laws and decisions on ministers, who are fearful of potential grilling, the country became subdued, and it seemed happiness was almost forbidden. As a result, statistics had placed Kuwait at the bottom of global tourism indexes. While citizens and residents collectively spend around \$15 billion annually on tourism, less than a quarter of this amount is directed toward domestic tourism.

Over the years, many countries have developed their tourism industries after recognizing the major benefits the sector brings to their national economies. If

the Kuwaiti government is serious about developing this sector, it must focus on building an integrated infrastructure, beginning with projects to establish public entertainment facilities, in collaboration with the private sector.

On the other hand, these projects must be interconnected with the region, open to the world, and include the establishment of free zones, similar to those found in many other countries.

The potential of Kuwait's islands, particularly Failaka Island, has been largely ignored. With smart investment, Failaka Island alone could be transformed into a global tourist destination.

We have repeatedly said that closing off the country in this way forces Kuwait to rely entirely on oil revenues as the sole source of national income. This approach hinders the development of diverse industries, no matter how wealthy a nation may be. Unfortunately, this issue has been overlooked for the past three decades.

For example, what prevents a resident from bringing their family and relatives to visit Kuwait? Why must flight tickets be booked only through specific airlines? Why is the visit limited to just one month? Why are residents and citizens prohibited from renting a hotel room if they are not married? Official statistics

have not recorded any violations regarding visits in recent months.

Many individuals who spend their vacations abroad are compelled to do so simply because they cannot find suitable entertainment options for their children within Kuwait. This is a result of the state's failure to recognize tourism as a profitable industry.

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Kuwait Amir receives Crown Prince, PM, First Deputy PM

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday at Al-Seif Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir also received separately His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received on Sunday at Al-Seif Palace His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness also received First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

Kuwait to shut door on trans fat effective May

Fines up to KD 1,000 for breaching food safety law

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) announced the implementation on hydrogenated fats in Kuwait starting early May, with the aim of improving public health and reducing the prevalence of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, obesity, and diabetes, linked to excessive consumption of hydrogenated fats.

The Deputy Director General for Community Nutrition Affairs at PAFN Dr. Shaima Al-Asfour highlighted during a press conference held Sunday that this regulation is not new globally, as it has been in effect since 2017 in European countries and is already implemented in some neighboring countries.

She affirmed its importance in enhancing compliance with international health standards for protecting both citizens and residents, and eliminating industrial trans fatty acids.

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Corporate tax to reshape Kuwait business climate

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Finance Ministry was bent on stepping up the pace of tax management as part of Kuwait's vision to improve the business environment, cope with developments, overhaul the tax system, meet global standards and slash reliance upon oil earnings.

The Kuwaiti Cabinet had recently approved a draft law imposing a 15-percent tax on multinational enterprises (MNEs), which run business in more than one country or jurisdiction.

The law, which came into effect early January 2025, is primarily meant to diversify the Gulf country's income, lessen dependence on oil revenues, build a resilient economy and overcome future challenges.

In 2023, the State of Kuwait joined the comprehensive framework of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and endorsed its two-pillar reforms, with over 137 countries, including the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, having endorsed this international tax reform.

Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments Nora Al-Fassam expected the country to earn roughly KD 250 million (around USD 800 million) in estimated taxes per annum as a result of the application of this law.

15 percent tax

As many as 300 groups, including 45 Kuwaiti and Gulf groups and 255 foreign ones operating in Kuwait, are subject to the 15 percent tax on multinational enterprises (MNEs), she remarked.

She underlined in earlier remarks that economic reforms adopted by the State of Kuwait within the framework of Kuwait Vision 2035 (New Kuwait) are backed by pieces of governmental legislation purposed to diversify the country's non-oil revenues, citing the tax on MNEs as a relevant unequivocal paradigm.

The minister elaborated that the targeted reforms include sustainable non-oil resources in a bid to ensure financial equilibrium through a governmental action plan to build a diversified economy, upgrade the quality of legislation, draw foreign investments and create jobs for young people.

She pointed out that the imposition of taxes on MNEs is considered to be a first step towards making reforms in line with international commitments, ensuring tax justice and avoiding tax evasion worldwide.

Experts, on their turns, stressed the significance of this step towards increasing the State's revenues due to the prevention of tax evasion, and serving Kuwait's public treasury.

Speaking to KUNA on Sunday, they opined that the move would contribute to improving the business environment for multinational enterprises and other companies operating in the country.

Dr. Sara Al-Sultan, a specialist in tax and financial laws and professor of Kuwait University's Law College, spoke highly of the 15 percent tax on multinational enterprises as a step on the right direction.

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'Makshat 3' showcases remarkable infrastructure advancements and inclusive offerings, marking a milestone in its historic success.

Operating hours extended due to overwhelming turnout

Makshat 3 smashes records with 150,000 visitors

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12, (KUNA): The number of visitors to the "Makshat 3" project has reached nearly 150,000, including citizens, residents, and visitors from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, said Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Khaled Al-Ajmi Sunday.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Ajmi, who doubles as Chairman of the National Cooperative Projects Committee, described this figure as unprecedented and historic, noting that such a record was not achieved in the previous two editions of the project.

He emphasized that the milestone reflects the remarkable success of the third edition of the event.

Al-Ajmi revealed that a range of exceptional activities and surprises are be-

ing planned for January and February to coincide with the national celebrations, promising visitors a unique experience that reinforces "Makshat 3" as a leading destination for citizens, residents, and visitors from Kuwait and abroad.

He added that, due to the overwhelming turnout, the operating hours of "Makshat 3" have been extended to run from 12:00 PM to 12:00 AM, ensuring visitor comfort and enabling them to enjoy the full array of activities offered.

Al-Ajmi explained that "Makshat 3" has become a major attraction, reflecting significant advancements in its infrastructure and offerings, which were designed to meet the needs of all segments of society, contributing to the project's historic success.

He highlighted that the project has played a substantial role in advancing the goals of Kuwait Vision 2035 by stimulating the local economy and revitalizing the tourism sector, marking a qualitative step toward diversifying the country's sources of income.

Al-Ajmi extended his gratitude to the Ministry of Interior for its pivotal role in organizing visitor entry and addressing logistical challenges, and praised the Ministry of Information, represented by the digital "Platform 51," the News Sector, and its key pillars (Radio and Television of Kuwait), for their significant efforts in spotlighting the project's exceptional activities and events.

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Deal highlights pilgrim awareness, logistics support

Kuwait, Saudi pact to streamline Hajj plans

JEDDAH, Jan 12, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi and Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Tawfiq Al-Rabiah signed, Sunday, an agreement to organize the affairs of Kuwaiti pilgrims of this year Hajj (1446 AH-2025).

Speaking to KUNA after the signing, Dr. Al-Wasmi said that the agreement includes contracts for transportation, catering, and accommodation services.

It also mandates full compliance with all general regulations of Hajj in Saudi Arabia, while also ensuring

proper awareness for pilgrims regarding the instructions and procedures, he added.

Dr. Al-Wasmi praised Saudi Arabia's efforts in serving pilgrims and visitors of the Holy Mosque in Makkah, highlighting the country's care in developing the Hajj system.

The agreement also emphasized the obligation to educate citizens about the prohibition of performing Hajj without a permit and to prevent unauthorized pilgrims from entering the holy sites, sheltering them, or transporting them in private vehicles.

Several officials attended the signing ceremony alongside and Kuwait's Consul General in Saudi Arabia, Yousef Al-Tunaib, and Diplomatic Attaché Saleh Al-Saeed.

On Monday, the fourth edition of the Hajj Conference and Exhibition will be launched in Jeddah organized by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, with the participation of government and private entities and the non-profit sector, under the slogan (The Road to the Nusuk).

The conference, which will be attended by Kuwait's Minister of Awqaf, serves as a comprehensive strategic platform for exchanging expertise and knowledge, will run until January 16.



Kuwaiti Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi and Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Tawfiq Al-Rabiah during the signing of the agreement.

NewsWatch

RIYADH: An expanded Arab ministerial meeting on Syria kicked off in Riyadh on Sunday, with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister **Abdullah Al-Yahya** participating.

The new Syrian administration's representatives, the foreign ministers of the GCC member countries and **Turkiye**, and the Arab ministerial liaison committee on Syria, which comprises **Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq**, attended the meeting.

U.S. and European representatives, Arab League Secretary-General **Ahmad Aboul-Gheit** and Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council **Jasem Al-Budaiwi** were also present at the Riyadh-hosted event. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Ministry of Higher Education said on Saturday it is closely following up on condition of the Kuwaiti students in the U.S., particularly in fires-stricken **Los Angeles** and the city suburbs.

The close follow-up on the students' situation is in line with instructions by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research **Dr. Nader Jalal**.

All the Kuwaiti students there are safe and have not encountered any difficulties under the extraordinary circumstances, the ministry statement affirmed. (KUNA)

Crucial data to expedite nationality investigation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: A government source has revealed that the Supreme Committee for Investigating the Kuwaiti Nationality has received crucial documents and information, which will enable it to accelerate its work despite the difficulty in verifying certain files due to their complexity and overlapping across multiple parties, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, has assured that "the cleansing of Kuwait from forgers continues, and many of them had their nationalities revoked."

He added that "several forgers have fled Kuwait before their cases were discovered, and we are actively pursuing legal actions to protect the national identity."

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef also noted that "these forgers obtained state loans in various ways, and unfortunately, some escaped before repaying what they owed."

He emphasized, "We will cleanse Kuwait of these forgers, and loans will be made available again afterward, possibly at double the current value."

On a different note, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef stressed the Cabinet's strong commitment to preserving heritage sites, in line with the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He highlighted the government's plans to develop these sites as part of the national vision. "Currently, a visitor to Kuwait can only visit the old Mubarakia in Kuwait City.

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8 Kuwait Finance House appoints Khaled AlShamlan as Group CEO

8 Boursa hosts LOYAC's KONTINUE social entrepreneurship program



9 NBK celebrates legacy as a cornerstone of Kuwait's economy

10 Gulf Bank appoints Abdulrahman Al-Saddah as Chief Risk Officer, reinforcing national talent and strategic growth

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:20 Asr 14:50
 Sunrise... 06:44 Maghrib .. 17:09
 Zohr 11:56 Isha 18:30

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speed of 15-42 km/h.

By Night: Cold with light to moderate freshening at times

Weather

over coastal areas northwesterly wind, with peed 10-40 km/h.

| Station | Max Exp | Min Rec | | |
|----------------|---------|---------|----------------|----|
| Kuwait City | 23 | 15 | Bubyan | 19 |
| Kuwait Airport | 23 | 15 | Jahra | 23 |
| Abdaly | 23 | 13 | Failaka Island | 22 |
| | | | Salmiyah | 21 |
| | | | Ahmadi | 20 |
| | | | Jal Aliyah | 22 |
| | | | Nuwaisib | 24 |
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Amir receives phone call from UK PM to further enhance ties

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call, Sunday, from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland, Sir Keir Starmer.

During the call, they discussed the strong and distinguished bilateral relations between Kuwait and the UK, expressing their shared aspirations to further enhance and strengthen these ties.

The Prime Minister conveyed his best wishes for His Highness the Amir's continued good health and well-being and expressed hopes for further progress, prosperity, and growth for

Kuwait under His Highness the Amir's leadership.

In response, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation for the call, emphasizing the strong bilateral relations between the two nations, and reaffirmed his commitment to fostering closer ties and expanding cooperation across various fields and sectors.

His Highness the Amir also wished the UK Prime Minister good health and well-being and extended his best wishes for continued prosperity and progress for the UK and its people, and expressed hope for further growth and development in the historic relations between the two nations.



Kuwaiti Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei with outstanding students from the Gulf countries.

Photo by Rizk Tawfiq

Education basis of nations' development, says minister

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei said on Sunday education is the basis of nations' development and prosperity and the sole way to build advanced and civilized societies, hailing outstanding students as the fruit of this effort.

The minister made the remarks while addressing the ceremony of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) to honor outstanding students of the member states in the 17th edition under the rubric: "Today's Outstanding Students... Tomorrow's Pioneers".

The minister said he was proud of the out-

standing Gulf students' accomplishments, voicing confidence that they would make achievements.

Lyan Al-Mutairi, a brilliant Kuwaiti student who got 100 percent, voiced much thanks to the Ministry of Education for hosting this event and appreciated the ABEGS' support to brilliant students.

Abdulazeez Al-Yafaie, a brilliant Qatari student who got 99 percent, voiced gratitude for this honoring as coming after studying hard, and spurring students to keep on.

Tala Al-Refda, a Saudi high achiever who got 100 percent, underlined that it is necessary to maintain brilliance in studying, speaking

highly of the event as very significant to the brilliant students who have done their best to get high marks.

The Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) stands as a regional and international entity in the Gulf region, operating within its Member States. Its inception dates back to 1975, when it was established by the highest leaders of the Gulf, acquiring international recognition through a constitution signed by the leaders of the founding Member States.

It organizes an annual ceremony to honor outstanding students of the GCC member states.



KUNA photo

PAI spokesperson Waleed Al-Mujanni addressing the seminar participants.

PAI DG urges factory owners to reduce carbon emissions

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) Shamlan Al-Jaihadli says the National Industrial Strategy 2035 aims to reduce emissions and promote a healthy environment in all sectors of the country.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the "Reducing Carbon Emissions in the Industrial Sector in Kuwait" symposium that was held on Sunday with the participation of numerous government agencies and private industrial companies, Al-Jaihadli explained that collaboration between the private sector and PAI has led to initiatives such as converting carbon from factory waste into alternative energy and water treatment. This is being achieved through cooperation with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), the Ministry of Electricity, and oil companies. This cooperation marks the beginning of the implementation of the goals outlined in the National Industrial Strategy for Kuwait.

Spokesperson of the Industry Authority, Waleed Al-Mujanni, stated that the sym-

posium is held in cooperation with various public and private sector representatives with the aim of identifying environmental solutions and creating a clean safe environment for future generations.

Regarding the volume of emissions, Al-Jaihadli stated that emissions will be reduced by more than seven percent by 2035 with the cooperation of all parties.

During his speech at the symposium, he stressed that it is part of Kuwait's commitment to international pledges and in response to the recommendations of the COP29 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled attended in Baku. Al-Jaihadli said the symposium is also in line with the activation of Kuwait's Industrial Sustainability Program for 2035, as the industrial sector plays a major role in achieving these goals.

He highlighted the need to encourage factory owners to invest in solutions that contribute to reducing carbon emissions, in line with the project's objective under the Industrial Sustainability Program.

Al-Jaihadli stressed that environmental protection is a shared responsibility that requires collective efforts and collaboration.

Head of the Investment Promotion Department at PAI Athari Al-Muhammid said the symposium highlighted efforts to reduce carbon emissions in the industrial sector and Kuwait's stance on this issue, based on environmental indicators and international obligations.



Al-Jaihadli



KUNA photo

Winter relief distributed by Nama'a Charity to the displaced families in northern Gaza.

Nama'a Charity gives out winter supplies to people in North Gaza

RAMALLAH, Jan 12, (KUNA): Nama'a Charity distributed on Sunday winter relief to the displaced people in Northern Gaza, benefiting 250 displaced families.

In a statement to KUNA, Executive Vice President of Nama'a Charity at the Social Reform Society, Abdulaziz Al-Kandari said that this distribution is part of ongoing efforts to support people in Gaza and provide the basic needs for the families affected by the harsh winter cold.

"The distribution of blankets and mattresses represents a direct response to the tragic conditions experienced by the residents of Northern Gaza, who suffer from lack of adequate shelters and basic heating means," he said.

"The aim of the project is not limited to providing material needs only but goes beyond that to protect families from winter-related diseases such as cold and diarrhea, in addition to alleviating the psychological pressures and economic burdens families,

bringing joy to the hearts of children, and enhancing their sense of dignity amidst these difficult circumstances," he added.

On her part, CEO of Palestine Al-Ghad Social Development Association Manal Seyam expressed her appreciation for Namaa Charity and its huge impact on Palestinian families.

She expressed her appreciation to Al-Kandari and the good people in Kuwait for always supporting and helping their brothers in Gaza, which made a big difference in the lives of needy and displaced families.

"We are grateful for this generous support from Namaa Charity and the people of Kuwait, who have once again demonstrated that they are at the forefront of global humanitarian work," she said.

"The distribution of 250 winter blankets and 250 mattresses is an important step towards alleviating the suffering of displaced and affected families in Northern Gaza," she noted.

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Head of the volunteer committees for the Mutlaa Residential City Mishaal Al-Hajri revealed that the Kuwait Credit Bank has stopped disbursing financial payments for construction loans after the citizenship of some citizens' wives was withdrawn under Article 8.

In a press statement, Al-Hajri appealed to the Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullahatif Al-Mishari to quickly intervene to resolve the issue affecting citizens whose residential plots are still under construction, both in Mutla'a City

and other areas.

He explained that many citizens were surprised when the bank suspended financial disbursements during the construction phase. A "block" had been placed on their transactions due to the withdrawal of the wife's citizenship, which made her non-Kuwaiti.

The Kuwait Credit Bank asked the husband to amend the wife's legal status by visiting the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) to amend the allocation, exclude the wife from ownership rights, and grant her only housing rights. Afterward, the husband must return to the bank to sign a new contract to lift the block and resume payments.

These procedures have led to delays in disbursing payments, and directly harmed Kuwaiti families, as it resulted in huge financial burdens, such as paying engineering office fees and incurring late charges

due to disruptions in the construction process.

Citizens who approached PAHW found the matter complicated, as there was no clear decision for allowing the wife to be excluded from ownership, which left the potential solutions unclear.

Al-Hajri urged the Minister of State for Housing Affairs, who also serves as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Credit Bank and PAHW, to urgently resolve the crisis.

He stressed the need for an electronic solution that simplifies procedures, and eliminates the need for temporary visits to relevant authorities until a clear regulation is issued.

Al-Hajri called for the immediate disbursement of financial payments for real estate loans to protect Kuwaiti families from both material and moral damages resulting from delays.

Awqaf renews contract of 1,409 Kuwaitis for 1 year

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: According to informed sources, the Civil Service Council approved the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs' request to renew for one year the services of 1,409 Kuwaitis holding religious positions (imams and muezzins) starting from September 11.

They explained that the Civil Service Council instructed the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to submit a comprehensive study should there be any future requests for further renewals.

This study must include the number of Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis holding religious positions (imam, muezzin and preacher), and whether they are full-time or part-time.

The study should also elaborate on the distribution mechanism for these positions in all mosques in Kuwait, along with the number of current mosques and those expected to be opened.

The Civil Service Council has requested that the ministry provide a detailed distribution of religious position holders by centers and regions, with a focus on both the temporal and spatial aspects of the work system, as well as the mechanisms in place for monitoring attendance and departure.

To further enhance Kuwaiti participation in this sector, the sources indicated that the Civil Service Council has tasked both the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the Civil Service Commission with preparing an incentive study aimed at motivating Kuwaiti citizens with Sharia qualifications to apply for positions as preachers, imams and muezzins, contingent upon passing the necessary job tests.

They affirmed that these measures are part of the Civil Service Council's efforts to improve job performance in line with the ministry's future plans.

Court acquits fake doctor of sexually assaulting 3 people

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Nayef Al-Dahoum, acquitted an individual accused of sexually assaulting three individuals, practicing medicine without a license, and impersonating a doctor. The Public Prosecution had charged the defendant with sexually assaulting the victims by convincing them he was a doctor, leading him to access their private parts, and performing medical procedures without the necessary authorization.

In court, the defendant's legal counsel Lawyer Sultan Al-Shammali argued that the charges against his client were not proven.

He explained that the victims' testimonies came after a significant delay, and referenced the testimony of a fourth witness, who had reported the case to the Public Funds Prosecution. This, according to the defense, revealed inconsistencies in the victims' statements.

□ □ □

Ex-MP released: The Public Prosecution has decided to release former MP Saleh Al-Mulla on bail of KD 1,000 in a State Security case.

Al-Mulla was detained on charges of challenging the powers of His Highness the Amir and misusing his phone to publish the controversial post on his X account in May. However, Al-Mulla denied all the charges against him.

□ □ □

'Return citizen's money': The Court of Appeals upheld the verdict issued by a lower court that obliged a major company, which was accused of real estate fraud by defrauding a Kuwaiti citizen in a property deal in Istanbul, to pay the citizen KD 250,000. The court also ordered the company to compensate the plaintiff with an additional KD 5,001 as temporary compensation.

According to case files, the citizen's legal counsel Lawyer Ali Al-Ali, filed a lawsuit against the company based on the plaintiff's claim that the defendants had agreed to purchase a building in Turkey for KD 350,000.

In a subsequent court, the first defendant acknowledged in clause seven that the plaintiff was entitled to KD 48,000. However, the defendants breached their contractual obligations, causing the plaintiff both material and moral damage.

Kuwaiti wanted in nationality forgery case arrested

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has announced the arrest of a person convicted of Kuwaiti citizenship forgery who had been escaping since 2021.

The fugitive received support from a former National Assembly MP at that time, so his arrest was delayed, the ministry's public relations and security media department said in a news statement.

His citizenship was withdrawn in 2024, in

accordance with the Article 21 of the Kuwaiti nationality law, in addition to the citizenship of 64 others affiliated to him, it added.

The defendant was hiding inside a farm in Wafra area, and he dug a corridor to help him escape, it noted.

He was arrested and referred to the competent bodies to take required legal measures against him, it stated.

The step came within the framework of the

ministry's efforts aiming to arrest the outlaws and pursue those wanted, it pointed out.

The ministry also stressed determination to chase the outlaws and those involved in cases that threaten the country's security and stability.

It urged all to cooperate with security apparatuses and inform about any violations to ensure maintaining security of all, according to the statement.

Thank you very much my country and its leadership

"FOR some time now, I have chosen to put my pen aside and step away from writing my cherished column in Al-Qabas Al-Gharra to devote myself fully to the important mission that my late Amir -- may God bless his soul -- entrusted to me and my colleagues: overseeing the establishment and creation of the second public university in Kuwait, which bears the name of 'Abdullah Al-Salem University, a name that holds a special place in the heart of every Kuwaiti," columnist **Dr. Moudhi Abdulaziz Al-Hamoud** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.



Al-Humoud

"This mission took up all of my time and doubled my effort. With God's grace and the support and honor of the Amir of the country, His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, may God protect and preserve him, the university was opened to stand alongside Kuwait University, and to be close to its colleagues in the higher education system, dedicated to serving and preparing the sons and daughters of Kuwait and the builders of its future.

"We all realize that Kuwait is going through a challenging phase, striving to meet the requirements of reform and construction simultaneously. It requires the effort, thought, and dedication of all its people to restore its authenticity, brilliance, and position among its peers.

"This is a great responsibility, a long journey, and ambitious goals. We ask God to guide and support those in every position to fulfill these tasks.

"In the education sector, we recognize that education is the solid foundation that must be built with quality and determination for other sectors to stand upon with confidence and strength. This will allow Kuwait to thrive and lead in the face of the rapidly changing and evolving world, which brings with it continuous work, increasing burdens, and the challenges posed by the 'influenza virus' that has taken hold of the nation.

"I was deeply moved by a beautiful surprise from the Minister of Information and Culture, who called me to inform me that I had won the State Appreciation Award. I sincerely thank him and am truly grateful for his recognition.

"This news filled me with joy, reviving the spirit that had been fading amidst the cold and the weight of medications. It filled my heart with gratitude and appreciation for this honor, which I cannot claim credit for alone.

"Many sons and daughters of Kuwait who worked alongside me, carrying national responsibilities in every position I held, share in this acknowledgment.

"This appreciation also extends to everyone who is committed to their work, faithful in their performance, and resolute in overcoming challenges, refusing to be swayed by personal interests or weakened by obstacles.

"Finally, I found myself holding the pen I had set aside, to thank my country, its leadership, the government, the members of the State Awards Committee, my colleagues at work in every position, and the generous people of Kuwait who overwhelmed me with their love, support, and congratulations.

"I repeat the words written by our national poet, Raja Al-Qahtani: 'I can boast about Kuwait's achievements'; 'Praise emanates from the musk of her elevation,' 'Thank you very much, my country.'"

Also:

"This week, I came across a new video in which Dr. Ali Al-Saffar provides a clear and scientific explanation of how cancer cells form in the body," columnist **Ahmad Yaqoub Baqer** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"Dr. Al-Saffar describes how a cell in organs that produce cells, such as the lungs, heart, and brain, can deviate from its normal function due to a defect in the production process triggered by external factors.

"These factors cause the cell to multiply uncontrollably, eventually forming a cancerous tumor. These external triggers include alcohol consumption, smoking, processed meats, lack of physical activity, the Western diet, and other harmful substances. Dr. Al-Saffar also emphasized that alcohol has no health benefits whatsoever.

"Coincidentally, that same week, Vivek Murthy, the US Surgeon General, called for alcohol to be labeled with cancer warnings. He pointed out that alcohol consumption is a leading cause of cancer, responsible for an estimated 1 million preventable cancer cases in the US over the past decade.

"While beer, wine, and spirits already carry warnings about the risks

of birth defects if consumed during pregnancy, Murthy's proposed labels would expand these warnings to include the broader cancer risks linked to alcohol.

"Similar warnings already appear on cigarette packs, as both alcohol and tobacco are associated with a range of health problems, including car accidents, fires, assaults, rapes, and the immense costs incurred by nations in treating addiction.

"Despite these well-established scientific facts, many countries -- especially secular ones -- continue to view alcohol as a key component of their prosperity and economic growth.

"The wealthy often flaunt their expensive alcohol collections as symbols of sophistication and status, while secularists in countries where alcohol is banned campaign for its legalization.

"Similarly, smokers resist tobacco restrictions, claiming such measures infringe upon their personal freedom.

"These individuals and nations seem to disregard the reality of scientific data, revealing that their secular systems or personal beliefs are often driven more by desire than objective science. In contrast, the scientific facts presented by Dr. Al-Saffar, Murthy, and other experts align with divine law, reinforcing the importance of adhering to evidence-based health and safety practices."



"Al-Baqarah 269: He grants wisdom to whom He wills, and he who has been granted wisdom has certainly been granted much good. And none will remember except those of understanding," columnist **Dr. Khaled Al-Jenfawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The people of wisdom are those who, through life's experiences, have refined their words and actions. Their insight is profound, and their conduct serves as a model of sound judgment and clear understanding. They are often right in their decisions and actions, providing guidance and clarity.

"Some of the defining ethics of the wise include:

□ **Prudence and Seriousness:** Wise individuals exhibit balance, sound judgment, and mental clarity. They approach life's challenges seriously, and fulfill their responsibilities with integrity toward themselves and others.

□ **Serenity and Dignity:** The wise person maintains an inner peace that manifests both internally and externally. Their tranquility and self-respect prevent them from falling into recklessness or haste. Their confidence allows them to avoid showing weakness, and upholding their dignity in all circumstances.

□ **Patience in Relationships:** Wise individuals take their time when building relationships. They carefully assess others before forming deep connections, ensuring that their relationships are based on mutual benefit. They value relationships that contribute positively to their lives and avoid superficial bonds. The wise give others what they deserve, according to their character.

□ **Avoiding Fools:** The wise understand the damage that can arise from empowering foolish individuals, as their behavior often becomes bold and disrespectful. Therefore, wise people avoid engaging with the foolish as much as possible, as they recognize that their impudence can undermine meaningful conversation or progress.

□ **Intellectual and Behavioral Flexibility:** A wise person is adaptable, controlling their thoughts and actions rather than being swayed by fleeting desires or whims. They are not intellectually rigid nor naively behavioral. Instead, they assess each situation carefully and seek solutions that bring benefit, avoiding stagnant or unproductive paths.

□ **Justice for Others:** The wise value justice and never compromise others' rights. They hold themselves accountable before demanding fairness from others. They understand that true wisdom lies in adhering to both logical and moral boundaries. They ensure that their actions align with ethical standards and avoid wronging others, either directly or indirectly.

□ **Chivalry:** Chivalry is the epitome of noble character. It involves rejecting what is blameworthy, prioritizing reason over emotion, and tolerating others with grace. A wise person embodies these values, demonstrating respect and courtesy in all interactions while embracing moral fortitude."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes / Mahmoud Attiyeh

Customs takes action to cut down terror funding, money-laundering

Check transit passengers thoroughly, KGAC staff urged

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Director General of the General Administration for Customs (KGAC) Mullaq Turki Al-Salem issued a circular urging employees to strictly adhere to the procedures required for implementing Article 20 of law No. 106/2013 on Combating Money Laundering and Terror Financing, reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources.

They said the circular emphasized that directors and inspectors must follow the customs procedures and controls specified in the law, its executive regulations, and relevant decisions. It is necessary for customs inspectors to accurately activate the provisions of law No. 106/2013, its regulations, and associated procedures.

The sources affirmed the importance of questioning all transit passengers, and those arriving and departing from Kuwait, about any currencies or negotiable instruments they are carrying. This is in accordance with the two disclosure forms for entry and exit outlined in the

Minister of Finance's decision No. 24/2014, which pertains to customs procedures and controls related to law No. 106/2013.

They explained that travelers can complete the disclosure online through the KGAC website. In cases of false or non-disclosure, it is necessary to include the response in the seizure report. Coordination with financial investigation officers is required, and the incident officer should prepare the seizure report. These measures aim to reduce crimes related to money laundering and the financing of terrorism, and address the resulting threats to global stability and the economy.

Tears fail to save campsite thief

Hotel guest robbed of \$2,000, many bank cards

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: An expatriate has filed a report at the Salmiya Police Station, stating that an unknown person stole two thousand dollars and several bank cards from his room in a hotel, reports Al-Anba daily.

He revealed that he discovered the theft of the money and bank cards when he returned to the hotel, but he did not accuse anyone specifically of the crime.

A case has been registered, and referred to the concerned authorities for investigation.



Tears fail to save thief: In an incident in the Al-Subiya desert, an expatriate's attempt to steal a power generator from a camp was foiled when the camp owner caught him in the act and

handed him over to authorities.

According to details provided, the camp owner, a citizen, reported the incident to the Ministry of Interior's operations room. Upon entering his camp, he discovered a stranger attempting to steal the generator. The citizen immediately apprehended the suspect and alerted the authorities.

Security personnel arrived promptly at the scene, where the citizen handed over the thief. The suspect, overcome with emotion, reportedly broke into tears and pleaded for forgiveness, explaining that he was in dire need of money, which drove him to commit the crime.

A case has been filed, and the matter has been referred to the competent authorities for

further investigation.



3 hurt in accident: A collision between two vehicles on Jahra Road recently resulted in fractures and injuries to three individuals, reports Al-Anba daily. When the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior received a report about the accident, rescue officers and paramedics rushed to the location and discovered that two cars had collided, causing three individuals to suffer from fractures. The injured were referred to Jahra Hospital for treatment, while rescue teams managed traffic flow at the scene, and security personnel took over the site for further investigation.

Kuwaiti wanted in 5-year jail term poses as expatriate to avoid arrest

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Hawalli Traffic patrolmen have handed over two young men, one born in 1996 and the other in 1994, to the Directorate-General for Drugs Control for possessing and consuming narcotics, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily added, the men in uniform seized from the men three small sachets of crystal meth, four drug-use tools and a knife.

According to a security source, the arrest came after someone called the emergency number 112 and reported two men were slumped over the seats inside their parked vehicle near a beach in Salmiya.

A patrol unit dispatched to the scene determined that the individuals were under the influence of narcotics, causing them to lose consciousness. The vehicle was searched, and the aforementioned items were found.

In another incident, traffic officers have arrested a Kuwaiti citizen from Farwaniya who was wanted by law and had been sentenced in absentia for a five-year prison term.

Interestingly, the citizen claimed to be an expatriate in an attempt to have his fingerprint taken using the fingerprint devices in the patrol vehicle. It was later discovered that he was a Ku-

waiti citizen, wanted to serve a prison term.



Expat swindles Kuwaiti: A 1974-born expatriate has been detained at Faiba Police Station on charges of fraud and deception for swindling a citizen of KD 8,250. Investigations are ongoing with the company where he works as a contractor, reports Al-Anba daily.

Initial investigations revealed that the company, which sponsors 25 expatriates, has been found to have no business relations with its employees, as they appear to be self-employed.

According to details of the case No. 1/2025, a 1972-born citizen who resides in Faiba, had filed a report claiming that he was contacted by an expatriate who led him to believe he was a contractor specialized in surveying work. The two agreed on construction work for a plot in Mutlaa, and the citizen transferred KD 8,250 to the expatriate via bank links.

The citizen went on to explain that he sought the help of an engineering company to review the surveyor's work. The company identified serious errors and discrepancies in the defendant's work, which cast doubts on the expatriate's legitimacy.

Kuwait's Mol issues 1,754 traffic fines in Sulaibikhat

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior launched on Saturday a traffic and security campaign in Sulaibikhat, issuing 1,754 traffic fines, and arresting 32 violators and wanted persons.

The campaign was carried out under the direction of First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister, Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, and a number of field sectors, said the ministry's public relations and security media office in a statement.

The ministry assured that these campaigns are part of a strategy aimed at enhancing security and public order, to provide a safe and stable environment.



Live shooting drill: Kuwait Coast Guards will carry out a shooting drill using live ammunition the next two days, Sunday and Monday, near the islands of Boubyan and Failaka, said the Interior Ministry on Saturday.

In a statement, the ministry affirmed that the training will start at 8 a.m. and end at 3 p.m.

It also went on urging all sea-goers to stay away from the shooting range.



Road closure: The General Traffic Department has announced the closure of one-and-a-half lanes on the Fahaaheel Expressway towards Ahmadi for what it called 'essential maintenance work', reports Al-Jarida daily.

The closure began yesterday and will continue until February 10. The Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Ministry of Interior has urged drivers to adhere to speed limits and follow traffic instructions to ensure safety during the maintenance period.



KFF photo

The tent and its contents reduced to ashes.

Fire erupts, wrecks tent erected in family home

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Fire brigades from Al-Tahrir and Al-Jahra Crafts centers controlled a fire that broke out in a tent of a house in the suburb of Saad Al-Abdullah Monday morning, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The firefighting teams responded promptly upon receiving the distress call and contained the blaze.

The swift and coordinated efforts of firemen prevented the fire from causing significant damage or injuries.

No casualties have been reported. The cause of the fire is not known.

Dishdasha-clad man on SUV steals expat wallet

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: An expatriate filed a complaint at the Mahboula Police Station, reporting that an unknown individual robbed him of his wallet, which contained money and official documents, in a dirt square in Mahboula, reports Al-Anba daily.

He explained during the investigation that he was walking in the area when an SUV vehicle stopped near him and a person wearing the traditional attire asked to see his identification. As he was pulling out his wallet, the thief snatched it and fled, taking both the cash and documents.

A case has been registered and referred to the relevant authorities.



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'Ghasat Uboor' takes center stage to compete for top honor

Kuwaiti official stresses importance of Arab Theater Festival in Muscat



The Kuwaiti delegation participating in the Arab Theater Festival held in Muscat.

KUNA photo

MUSCAT, Jan 12, (KUNA): Kuwait is keen to participate in regional and international cultural festivals to represent the country, said Wael Al-Jaber, Acting Director of the Theater Department and Head of Arts at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters, on Sunday.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Jaber, who is heading the Kuwaiti delegation at the 15th Arab Theater Festival in Muscat, Oman, emphasized that Kuwait's participation in the event showcases its dedication to the arts, the festival began on Thursday and will continue until January 15.

Al-Jaber highlighted that Kuwait is participating in this prestigious event with the play (Ghasat Uboor) by the Kuwait Theater Group, written by Taghreed Al-Dawood and directed by Mohammad Al-Ansari.

The play was previously staged at the local theater festival in Kuwait, where it won the award for Best Theatrical Performance.

He expressed hope that the Kuwaiti play would win the Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi

Award for Best Arab Theater Production, noting that 15 performances from 13 Arab countries are competing for the prize after successfully passing the jury formed by the Arab Theater Authority.

The festival plays a key role in promoting high-quality Arab theatrical productions and allows Arab theater professionals living abroad to engage with the dynamic world of Arab theater, furthering the goals of the Arab theater development strategy.

Al-Jaber also noted the significance of cultural exchanges like this one in honing the talents of young Arab artists, allowing them to gain more knowledge, experience, and insight into the techniques used in the performances, particularly with the integration of artificial intelligence in modern theater.

He praised the theaters of the Gulf countries and their artistic achievements over the past 40 years, emphasizing the role of theater festivals in cultural tourism, with over 500 Arab theater artists participating in this year's festival.

MoE's budget soars in 2 decades

Spending exceeds KD 29 bln, but results fall short

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Ministry of Education's budget witnessed a major growth in two decades from 2003 to 2023.

During this period, the ministry's total current expenditures rose significantly from KD 486,631,352 in 2003 to KD 2,202,081,498 in 2023. Also, the total spending exceeded KD 29 billion in this 20-year period. This reflects the state's dedication to enhancing education through investments in salaries, bonuses, infrastructure, and educational services.

A statistical report issued by the Ministry of Education revealed that salaries accounted for the largest portion of the budget, representing more than 82 percent of total spending. However, other budgetary items also saw growth, which reflects Kuwait's efforts to modernize and expand its education system to meet future challenges and achieve sustainable development.

Despite the huge expenditure on the education sector, which exceeded KD 29 billion over the past two decades, the level of education remains below expectations when compared to global and regional indicators.

While the government has made major strides in developing infrastructure and supporting educational staff, the outcomes of the education system face huge challenges, leading Kuwait to rank low in international quality assessments. This highlights the need

to re-evaluate the spending strategies to ensure that the results align with the resources invested.

When comparing developments over the years, the period from 2003 to 2010 saw a gradual increase in total expenditures, with relatively modest growth. However, from 2011 to 2023, spending saw a sharp rise, nearly doubling during the last decade.

Salaries constitute the largest portion of the Ministry of Education's budget, followed by general administration, public services, and, lastly, commodity requirements and services.

While the significant increase in spending reflects the ministry's commitment to enhancing quality of education and providing advanced resources, this substantial investment requires continuous monitoring to assess efficiency and ensure maximum benefit in improving educational outcomes.

Authority calls for swift action

PAM sets clear guidelines for gov't contract registration, worker rights

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has specified the procedures for registering government contracts with the competent department of the authority.

In a letter to the municipality, PAM attached a list of expired government contracts previously registered with PAM and contracted by the municipality. The letter also included recommendations for the municipality to take the measures it presented to the Council of Ministers regarding the liquidation of these contracts.

This involves notifying contractors of their termination and taking the necessary steps to settle workers' rights and dues within one month from the date of

notification.

PAM stressed in its letter that if contractors fail to comply with the notification requirements, the municipality should address CAPT to impose the penalties specified under the fourth paragraph of Article 85 of law No. 49/2016, regarding public tenders. The authority also requested that it be informed of the actions taken in this regard.

In addition, PAM stressed the importance of instructing municipality's specialists to include a condition in the tenders they issue for obligating bidders to submit a certificate of clearance from PAM. This certificate should confirm that there are no suspension codes related to workers registered in the bidders' files with PAM, in order for it to register any new contracts concluded in the future.



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Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Naser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received in his office Sunday morning the Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal to Kuwait Ghana Shyam Lamsal.

Farwaniya Governor hosts Nepal's envoy

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Naser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received in his office Sunday morning the Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal to Kuwait Ghana Shyam Lamsal.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Sheikh Athbi Al-Naser welcomed the ambassador. During their meeting, they discussed the bilateral relations between the two

friendly countries and explored ways to strengthen them in various fields.

In turn, Ambassador Ghana Shyam expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Governor of Farwaniya, and commended the governorate's excellent organization.

He also thanked Kuwait for the hospitality extended to the diplomatic mission and wished Kuwait long-lasting security and safety.

KEPS launches plastic-free drive

Jahra's youth and children engage in environmental awareness campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) recently organized a national public campaign aimed at raising awareness among the youth and children of the Jahra Governorate, celebrating the opening of the Red Palace, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The campaign, as part of the association's awareness program, focused on educating the public about the environmental hazards of plastic waste and promoting alternatives.

The event featured an interactive activity that emphasized the importance of replacing single-use plastic bags with reusable cloth bags.

These cloth bags, decorated with images of local wildlife such as the eagle owl, the Arabian horse, and other wild creatures, served as both a practical tool and a symbol of environmental conservation.

The association's Public Relations Officer, Al-Aqab, explained that cloth bags are not only environmentally friendly but also a safer choice for marine life, which is increasingly threatened by plastic waste.

Al-Aqab highlighted concerning statistics, warning that if current trends in waste disposal continue, by 2050, the oceans could contain more plastic than fish.

Plastic waste, particularly single-use items like bags and cups, poses a significant threat to seabirds and marine life.

Projections suggest that global waste could reach 3.40 billion tons by 2050, more than doubling the rate of population growth, and threatening the environment, health, and sustainable development. Al-Aqab called for urgent action and stressed that consumers must be aware of the environmental impact of their purchases.

To combat this issue, the association shared practical steps for individuals to reduce plastic consumption in their daily lives.

These included using reusable water bottles, purchasing products made from biodegradable materials, and avoiding plastic bags. The campaign successfully highlighted the importance of making conscious choices to protect the planet for future generations.

MoHE handles 2,839 transactions in Dec

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Ministry of Higher Education has released statistics concerning the transactions completed in December 2024, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to the statistics, the transactions included 836 responses to guid-

ance and counseling inquiries from students and their parents. Also, technical guidance and solutions were provided to 674 students. In addition, the Certificate Equivalency Department processed a total of 1,329 equivalency transactions during the month.

Ministry handles 2,983 reports in Dec

MEW awaits SAB's approval for Subiya Power Plant tender worth KD45.96mn

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy is awaiting the response of the State Audit Bureau to the tender for providing highly efficient and sustainable engineering services for open-cycle gas turbines and their auxiliary equipment for Station 2 at the Subiya Power Plant, at a total cost of KD 45.96 million.

According to informed sources, the ministry had previously obtained approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to award the contract to the company with the best financial and technical bid. The tender was then referred to the State Audit Bureau, which is currently conducting an audit and study.

The tender aims to implement

precise and efficient engineering works and maintenance to extend the lifespan and ensure the safe operation of the plant, particularly during the summer months when high temperatures present huge challenges for all stations, including Subiya.

The Subiya station is one of nine power and water production stations in the country. The installed capacity of the Subiya station is 7,046 megawatts from gas and steam units, accounting for more than 34 percent of the ministry's total production capacity, which is 20,250 megawatts.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Works reported that its "Emergency Switchboard" handled a total of 2,983 reports in December.

The highest number of reports came from the Farwaniya Governorate, with 606 reports, followed by the Capital with 560,

and Jahra 538.

The Ahmadi Governorate reported 472 reports, while Hawalli 259, and the Expressways 194; the Sanitary Engineering Sector recorded 176, Mubarak Al-Kabeer 124, and Operations Department handled 54 reports.

In terms of asphalt quality, the ministry provided detailed statistics from the Asphalt Department for the same period.

A total of 432 visits were conducted to factories and 7 samples were taken for testing. Additionally, 151 laboratory tests were carried out, and 48 samples were collected from asphalt laying sites. The department issued 4 certificates and analyzed 4 gaps during this time.

These efforts demonstrate the ministry's ongoing commitment to maintaining the quality and safety of infrastructure across Kuwait.



KUNA photo
Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Chief Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Italian Ambassador to the country Lorenzo Morini.

KNG chief praises strong Kuwait-Italy ties

Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Chief Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah praised the distinct relations between Kuwait and Italy.

According to a press release from KNG on Sunday, Sheikh Mubarak

Al-Humoud received the Italian Ambassador to the Country Lorenzo Morini in his office at KNG's Headquarters, during which Morini congratulated Al-Humoud on gaining the trust of the political leadership

and his appointment as the Head of the National Guard. The statement noted that the Chief of the National Guard expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Italian ambassador for his congratulations. (KUNA)

Overhaul to follow global standards

Minister Al-Mashaan fast tracks Fahaheel Expressway upgrades

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan announced the commencement of major maintenance work on the Fahaheel Expressway as part of new contracts.

In a press statement, she said the concerned teams inspected the area before carrying out the necessary maintenance and repair activities, starting with the most affected areas and progressing to the less affected ones, adding that the work will be closely supervised by the ministry's teams.



Dr. Al-Mashaan

Dr. Al-Mashaan affirmed the ministry's commitment to closely monitoring all phases of implementation, from design to completion, while adhering to internationally recognized quality standards and technical specifications to ensure optimal performance and durability for the roads.

She said her directives for expediting the maintenance work were made based on the recommendations of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah, as part of the government's effort to maintain and repair the country's infrastructure.

The minister stressed that the infrastructure of any country is the main pillar of any economic vision.

She highlighted the need for coordination to resolve any outstanding issues related to the road maintenance work.

Dr. Al-Mashaan urged the implementing companies to complete the work quickly and efficiently based on

the approved quality standards and in adherence to the scheduled timeline.

She stressed that road maintenance and repair are a priority for the country's political leadership.

The minister praised the support of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince for road maintenance projects, which will be a main element of the "New Kuwait 2035" plan.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Project Supervisor Eng. Sultan Al-Otaibi said the maintenance work involves removing the old asphalt and laying new layers.

He urged road users to be patient and cooperate with the authorities to ensure the timely completion of the maintenance work.

On the other hand, informed sources revealed that the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) has requested the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to award the project for the study, detailed design, and preparation of documents for the first phase of the railway tender to one of the companies, at a total value of KD 2.426 million, after deducting the completion guarantee of KD 33,200 and the advance payment of KD 16,600.

In addition, the sources explained that PART, during a meeting held on January 8, reviewed two letters concerning the final financial report and its clarifications. It was decided to postpone the decision until a letter containing the Ministry of Finance's approval is received.

The duration for implementing the consulting study is 12 months, after which the tender for the first phase of the project will be issued. According to the established tender system, the proposed timetable for completing the Gulf train project in Kuwait, spanning 111 km, is set to conclude by the end of 2030.

Kuwaiti Specialized Hospital in Gaza treats nearly half million Palestinians

Chairman highlights urgent need for support



KUNA photo
Half a million displaced people benefit from the Kuwaiti hospital in the southern Gaza Strip.

GAZA, Jan 12, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Specialized Hospital announced on Sunday it has provided services to approximately half a million displaced Palestinian among the one million living in the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza.

Dr. Subhaib Al-Hams, the Hospital's Chairman of the Board, said in a press release that the number of patients treated at the hospital has reached 490,119, in addition to performing around 5,000 surgical operations of various types since the field hospital began operations six months ago.

He added that the number of displaced Palestinians in Khan Younis exceeded one million, with approximately 4,000 patients visiting daily and 40 surgeries performed, noting that there are 10 births daily.

Al-Hams praised, particularly, the Kuwaiti Relief Society, which supports the health system in facing the significant challenges amid the genocide faced by the Palestinian people in Gaza for more than 461 days.

He called for further donations to provide the health system with a lifeline to continue delivering services to the displaced.

The Kuwaiti hospital in Rafah city in the southern sector was destroyed after the Israeli army invaded the city six months ago.

'No mandate for four-year inspection certificate'

Municipality clarifies regulations on investment, commercial building

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Acting Director General of Kuwait Municipality, Eng. Manal Al-Asfour, clarified that there is no circular or administrative decision mandating the issuance of an inspection certificate every four years for investment or commercial buildings or parking lots, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In response to a question from Municipal Council member Dr. Hassan Kamal regarding periodic inspections of parking lots in such buildings, Al-Asfour emphasized that if any violations are detected, legal action will be taken in accordance with Ministerial Circular No. 68/2009.

This includes issuing a warning for violations of

building regulations, with a one-week period for compliance.

If violations persist beyond the warning period, a follow-up inspection is conducted, and a report is filed under the relevant building regulations, potentially resulting in the precautionary seizure of the property until the issues are resolved.

Continued from Page 1

We want

The lack of government support for this sector, either through appropriate legislation, regulations, or preparations to accommodate foreign tourists, prevents tourism from contributing to the country's gross national product.

Is it reasonable that Kuwait welcomed only 200,000 tourists last year, while over 850,000 Kuwaitis and residents traveled abroad for tourism?

This year, expenditure on tourism by Kuwaitis and residents amounted to \$14.302 billion, with spending reaching \$13.095 billion, equivalent to over KD 9 billion, in 2022. Kuwait could have saved three-quarters of this amount if it had embraced greater openness.

During the last Gulf Cup tournament, officials observed a strong recovery in the retail market, as well as in the hotel industry, transportation, and other sectors. This presents an opportunity to think about what would benefit the country and contribute to enhancing the gross national product. It is essential to take this into account and begin opening up Kuwait.

We have repeatedly suggested that the actuarial deficit faced by the Public Institution for Social Security could be addressed by allocating desert land to it, under one condition that the land be invested in productive projects. It is very important that such projects be entrusted to capable senior officials with the expertise to manage these types of investments.

Opportunities, like time, are fleeting. If not seized and used wisely, they are lost, and then there will not be any point in crying over spilled milk.

Corporate tax

She said the legislation aligns with the international trend of closing international tax law's loopholes exploited by world companies to avoid tax and limit tax competition among countries.

She added that in 2021, more than 135 countries agreed on new international tax rules that would establish a minimum tax rate of 15 percent on multinational corporate income regardless of where it was reported.

It was called the "international tax agreement" that was reached under the umbrella of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and in collaboration with the G20 or Group of 20.

It is part of the base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) - where multinationals shift profits to low or no-tax locations where they have little or no economic activity or erode tax bases through deductible payments like interest or royalties.

The BEPS relates to tax planning strategies that multinational enterprises use to exploit loopholes in tax rules to artificially shift profits to low or no-tax locations as a way to avoid paying tax.

The OECD/G20 BEPS Project equips governments with rules and instruments to address tax avoidance, ensuring that profits are taxed where economic activities generating them take place and where value is created.

Since early 2024, many countries worldwide have been making fresh tax rules in their national laws in tandem with the international tax agreement of 2021, the expert pointed out.

She underlined that Kuwait's new law imposing a 15-percent tax on multinational enterprises (MNEs) comes in line with international initiatives aiming at closing some loopholes of the international tax system, but does not affect Kuwait's capability of roping in foreign direct investments.

However, the Kuwaiti academic underlined that it is still necessary to adopt a package of tax incentives

in order to draw more foreign direct investments to the country, excepting the recently approved move to help Kuwait get projected additional earnings of roughly KD 250 million (about USD 800 million) per annum.

On his part, Mohammad Ramadhan, an economist, said that the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is seeking to bridge the gap among multinational companies by pressing countries to impose a minimum tax of 15 percent on these companies.

He added that the OECD had to take this step as some companies run unjustifiably growing business in the countries that do not impose taxes, noting that to close this gap, an international leverage group was created in a bid to push different world countries to impose taxes on multinationals.

Therefore, the State of Kuwait has no choice but to impose the 15 percent tax on multinational companies operating in the country, he said in a statement to KUNA, defending that the tax is not meant to make financial gains or burden these companies.

Former chairman of Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association (KAAA) Ahmad Al-Fares said that the new tax law would be useful to Kuwait as banks operating in Kuwait also operate outside it and the taxes levied on them are directed abroad, so it would be better for the opposite to be the case.

Also speaking to KUNA, Al-Fares underlined that some bodies like, inter alia, Kuwait Banking Association and Union of Investment Companies should voice views on the tax application mechanism.

He added that the Ministry of Finance would bear the bigger burden of applying the tax since shifting the tax system would require mega investments in information technology infrastructure.

However, he called for setting up a new independent tax agency, particularly amid the developments around the world, noting that Kuwait is one

of the few countries that do not have such a tax body.

Al-Fares added that the law, which came into effect early January, would lead to maintaining Kuwait's tax revenues, upgrading the tax system in line with international standards and promoting fair tax practices.

Al-Shall Consulting's recent report spoke highly of the issuance of the fresh tax law by decree as a step in the right direction as it marks the beginning of tax system reforms in Kuwait.

It stressed that the contribution of taxes to financing Kuwait's public budget is among the lowest, perhaps in the world, considering that axes are not just a source of revenue for the public treasury, but a fundamental tool in fiscal policy.

Kuwait to

Dr. Al-Asfour said she anticipates the regulation will lead to a decrease in the rates of heart disease, obesity, and diabetes, and ensure improved quality of life for individuals and a reduced financial burden on the health system.

She affirmed PAFN's commitment to enforcing the regulation, stating that hydrogenated fats are unsuitable for human consumption.

Dr. Al-Asfour highlighted the need to prevent the entry of any imported products that contain hydrogenated fats into the Kuwaiti market, as well as the need for thorough testing of all imported food items.

She also highlighted the necessity of educating the public on how to select foods and read food labels.

Dr. Al-Asfour indicated that PAFN inspectors will carefully audit imported products to ensure that no goods containing hydrogenated oils are allowed entry into Kuwait, adding that this will be enforced through laboratory testing of product samples.

She stressed the keenness of PAFN to earn international recog-

inition for Kuwait as a country free from trans or hydrogenated fats.

Dr. Al-Asfour explained that food products must be entirely free of partially hydrogenated oils.

If a product contains fully hydrogenated oils and is intended for final consumption or retail sale, the trans fat content must be less than two percent of the total fats in the product.

If the product contains natural trans fats, the trans fat content should not exceed eight percent of the total fat in the food product, unless otherwise specified in the product's specifications.

If the product contains refined oils, the trans fat content must be less than two percent of the total fat in the food product intended for consumer sale, in accordance with technical regulation 2106 GSO, which pertains to infant milk, follow-up milk, and milk intended for medical use.

The trans fat content in milk fat must not exceed three percent of the total fat in infant milk products, follow-up milk, and milk intended for special medical use.

Meanwhile, Dr. Al-Asfour stressed that hydrogenated fats are a type of unsaturated fat produced industrially by adding hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils for turning them into a solid or semi-solid state at room temperature.

She highlighted that one of the main advantages of hydrogenated fats is their ability to increase the shelf life of products.

In the same context, Deputy Director General for Control and Inspection Affairs at PAFN Dr. Saud Al-Jalal affirmed that penalties for non-compliance with the regulations include fines, removal of non-compliant products from the market, and suspension of the activities of violating companies, in accordance with the applicable regulations.

He explained that penalties for violations range from KD 500 to KD 1,000, in addition to referral to the Public Prosecution. Violations that cannot be settled will be forwarded

to the Public Prosecution, which will determine whether to close the facility or imprison its owner.

During the grace period granted to companies, which ends on May 1, inspection tours will be carried out in all central markets, restaurants, and companies in all governorates.

Crucial data

His Highness the Amir has encouraged the establishment of a 'second Mubarakiya' in the Jahra Governorate, and a third in Ahmadi, which will soon be inaugurated," he revealed.

He further added, "We are also planning to develop the Red Palace in Jahra, and the Jahra Waterfront will open soon.

With the expansion of the governorate, we also look forward to the establishment of several sports clubs, especially in Al-Mutla'a, which has become a city in itself. It requires its own sports facilities and services. However, these projects require time, and while we are eager, progress takes patience."

Makshat 3

He expressed appreciation for the collaboration of all participating entities, including the Ministry of Health and the Kuwait Fire Force, which contributed to this national success.

He noted that this achievement underscores the importance of joint efforts in promoting tourism and economic development in Kuwait.

The Makshat 3 project includes 60 designated family areas and hosts entertainment events during public holidays, ensuring an enjoyable experience for everyone. It features enhancements such as over thirty restaurants and cafes, an expanded popular cafe, and additional public facilities to better serve citizens, residents, and visitors.

Crews race to protect landmarks and residents as blazes consume 62 square miles

Wildfires claim 16 lives as Los Angeles braces for fierce winds

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 12, (AP) — The death toll from the wildfires ravaging the Los Angeles area rose to 16 as crews battled to cut off the spreading blazes before potentially strong winds return that could push the flames toward some of the city's most famous landmarks.

Five of the deaths were attributed to the Palisades Fire and 11 resulted from the Eaton Fire, the Los Angeles County coroner's office said in a statement Saturday evening.

The previous number of confirmed fatalities before Saturday was 11, but officials said they expected that figure to rise as teams with cadaver dogs conduct systematic grid searches in leveled neighborhoods. Authorities have established a center where people can report the missing.

There were fears that winds could move the fires toward the J. Paul Getty Museum and the University of California, Los Angeles, while new evacuation warnings left more homeowners on edge.

By Saturday evening, Cal Fire reported the Palisades, Eaton, Kenneth and Hurst fires had consumed about 62 square miles (160 square kilometers), an area larger than San Francisco. The Palisades and Eaton fires accounted for 59 square miles (nearly 153 square kilometers).

In a briefing posted online Saturday evening, Michael Trauma of the California Office of Emergency Services said 150,000 people in Los Angeles County were under evacuation orders, with more than 700 people taking refuge in nine shelters.

Crews from California and nine other states are part of the ongoing response that includes 1,354 fire engines, 84 aircraft and more than 14,000 personnel, including newly arrived firefighters from Mexico, he said.

With Cal Fire reporting containment of the Palisades Fire at 11% and the Eaton Fire at 15% on Saturday night, the fight is set to continue.

"Weather conditions are still critical and another round of strong winds is expected starting Monday," Trauma said.

A fierce battle occurred Saturday in Mandeville Canyon, home to Arnold Schwarzenegger and other celebrities not far from the Pacific coast, where swooping heli-



Firefighters watch as water is dropped on the Palisades Fire in Mandeville Canyon Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025, in Los Angeles. Inset: A firefighter sets up a hose while fighting the Palisades Fire in Mandeville Canyon on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025, in Los Angeles. (AP)

copters dumped water as the blaze charged downhill. Firefighters on the ground used hoses in an attempt to beat back leaping flames as thick smoke blanketed the chaparral-covered hillside.

CalFire Operations Chief Christian Litz said Saturday that a main focus was the Palisades Fire burning in the canyon area, not far from the UCLA campus.

New evacuations were ordered Friday evening after a flare up on the eastern side of the Palisades Fire.

The National Weather Service warned that strong Santa Ana winds could soon return. Those winds have been largely blamed for turning the wildfires into infernos that leveled entire neighborhoods around to city where there has been no significant rainfall in more than eight months.

The fire also threatened to jump over Interstate 405 and into densely populated areas in the Hollywood Hills and San Fernando Valley.

The fires that began Tuesday just north of downtown LA have burned more than 12,000 structures.

Firefighters for the first time made progress Friday afternoon on the Eaton Fire north of Pasadena, which has burned more than 7,000 structures, a term that includes homes, apartment buildings, businesses, outbuildings and vehicles. Most evacuation orders for the area were lifted, officials said.

No cause has been determined for the largest fires and early estimates indicate the wildfires could be the nation's costliest ever. A preliminary estimate by AccuWeather put the damage and economic losses so far

between \$135 billion and \$150 billion.

Volunteers overflowed donation centers and some had to be turned away at locations including the Santa Anita Park horse racing track, where people who lost their homes sifted through stacks of donated shirts, blankets and other household goods.

Altadena resident Jose Luis Godinez said three homes occupied by more than a dozen of his family members were destroyed.

"Everything is gone," he said, speaking in Spanish. "All my family lived in those three houses and now we have nothing."

Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna warned residents against venturing back to destroyed homes to sift through rubble for keepsakes.



Kaegan Baron takes a moment as she sifts through the rubble of her mother's home after it was destroyed by the Palisades Fire in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025. (AP)



A medical examiner and sheriff's deputies check on a home destroyed by the Eaton Fire on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025, in Altadena, Calif. (AP)

"We have people driving up and around trying to get in just to look. Stay away," Luna said, urging people to abide by curfews.

Officials on Saturday warned the ash can contain lead, arsenic, asbestos and other harmful materials.

"If you're kicking that stuff up, you're breathing it in," said Chris Thomas, a spokesman for the unified incident command at the Palisades Fire who warned the material was "toxic." Residents will be allowed to return with protective gear after damage teams evaluate their properties, Thomas said.

LA Mayor Karen Bass faces a critical test of her leadership during the city's greatest crisis in decades, but allegations of leadership failures, political blame and investigations have begun.

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 had run dry.

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," Crowley said.

The level of devastation is jarring even in a state that regularly confronts massive wildfires. Trauma of the state Office of Emergency Services said those impacted by the fires can apply online for immediate government assistance.

— See Also Page 11

Union bloc leads race as Scholz fights to stay relevant

Far-right party's convention draws protests as Germany's election campaign warms up

RIESA, Germany, Jan. 12, (AP) — Thousands of people demonstrated against a convention of the far-right Alternative for Germany on Saturday, blocking some roads and delaying the meeting's start as parties launched their campaigns for the country's election next month. A heavy police presence was in place in Riesa - in the eastern state of Saxony, a stronghold of Alternative for Germany, or AfD - and officers cleared some protesters from the streets. However, the two-day convention started a little over two hours late as many delegates' trips to the venue were slowed by blockades.

AfD formally nominated co-leader Alice Weidel as its candidate for chancellor by acclamation. Weidel, who was among those held up, thanked delegates for "defying the left-wing mob and getting here."

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



Tino Chrupalla, foreground center, AfD national chairman and parliamentary group leader of the AfD, and Alice Weidel, AfD national chairman, stand on stage at the AfD national party conference following Weidel's nomination as candidate for chancellor in the upcoming federal elections, in Riesa, Germany, Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025. (AP)

with around 30% and its candidate, Friedrich Merz, is the favorite to become the next chancellor.

The Union is focusing on boosting Germany's stagnant economy in particular and on reducing irregular migration. Weidel assailed it as a "party

of fraudsters" Saturday, urging people to "vote for the original" and strengthen her party.

She called for closing Germany's borders to undocumented migration and large-scale deportations of asylum-seekers, making clear that she

has no problem with the politically charged term "remigration."

She pledged to return to service the Nord Stream gas pipeline that was damaged in 2022 explosions shortly after Russia cut off gas supplies to Germany, and won loud applause for saying that AfD would tear down all wind turbines - which she described as "windmills of shame" - if it came to power.

At a news conference in Hamburg, Merz concentrated on his own party's offer of "fundamental change" after the unpopular and notoriously rancorous coalition of center-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz collapsed.

He said he aims to lead "a government that stops arguing; a government that draws up reliable laws that also endure in the longer term," producing a reliable environment for domestic and foreign investors. "Then we will have higher potential growth, and then we will have higher actual growth again."

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%. His coalition government collapsed in November when he fired his finance minister in a dispute over how to revitalize the economy, leading to an early election.

'I think I am worth it'

Croatia's Milanović favorite to win reelection in a runoff vote

ZAGREB, Croatia, Jan. 12, (AP) — Croatia's incumbent President Zoran Milanović was the overwhelming favorite to win reelection as he faced a candidate from the ruling conservative party in a runoff presidential vote on Sunday.

The left-leaning Milanović comfortably won the first round of voting on Dec. 29, leaving his main challenger, Dragan Primorac, a forensic scientist who had unsuccessfully run for presidency previously, and six other candidates far behind.

"I am hoping for a victory," Milanović said after voting. "I believe in victory because I think I am worth it and because it is important, primarily because it is important."

The runoff between the top two contenders was necessary because Milanović fell short of securing 50% of the vote by just 5,000 votes, while Primorac trailed far behind with 19%.

The election comes as the European Union and NATO member country of 3.8 million people struggles with biting inflation, corruption scandals and a labor shortage.

Milanović, 58, is an outspoken critic of Western military support for Ukraine in its war against Russia. He is the most popular politician in Croatia, and is sometimes compared to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump for his



President incumbent Zoran Milanović casts his ballot during a runoff vote for the Croatian presidential election at a polling station in Zagreb, Croatia, Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025. (AP)

combative style of communication with political opponents.

On Sunday, he again criticized Brussels as "in many ways non-democratic" and run by unelected officials. The EU position that "if you don't think the same as I do, then you're the enemy" amounts to "mental violence," Milanović said.

America

Canada's ex-PM slams Trump: President-elect Donald Trump's remarks that Canada should become the 51st state drew condemnation and a patriotic outburst on Saturday from a former Canadian prime minister who offered blunt advice to the incoming U.S. leader: "Give your head a shake!" Jean Chrétien, who was Canada's prime minister from 1993 to 2003, joined a chorus of officials from the northern U.S. neighbor who say Trump's remarks are no longer a joke and may undermine America's closest ally. (AP)

Giuliani's condo at stake: After he was found in contempt twice in one week, Rudy Giuliani faces another potentially treacherous week ahead at a trial to determine whether his Florida condominium and three World Series rings must be turned over to two Georgia election workers who won a \$148 million defamation award against him.

The former New York City mayor was found in contempt on Friday by a Washington judge for repeating false claims that the workers corruptly counted votes in the 2020 presidential election. Last Monday, a New York judge found him in contempt for failing to adequately turn over evidence about his assets. (AP)

DoJ's special counsel resigns: Special counsel Jack Smith has resigned from the Justice Department after submitting his investigative report on President-elect Donald Trump, an expected move that comes amid legal wrangling over how much of that document can be made public in the days ahead.

The department disclosed Smith's departure in a court filing Saturday, saying he had resigned one day earlier. The resignation, 10 days before Trump is inaugurated, follows the conclusion of two unsuccessful criminal prosecutions against Trump that were withdrawn following Trump's White House win in November. (AP)

Winter storm maintains icy grip: A winter storm that dropped heavy snow and glazed roads throughout the U.S. South was maintaining its icy grip on much of the region into the weekend.

Power outage numbers around Atlanta crept up Friday night as meteorologists warned of accumulating freezing rain. More than 110,000 customers were without electricity, mostly in the Atlanta area. (AP)



President Joe Biden, left, meets with Pope Francis in Savalletri, Puglia, Italy, June 14, 2024. (AP)

Biden honors Pope Francis with Presidential Medal of Freedom

WASHINGTON, Jan. 12, (AP) — President Joe Biden on Saturday honored Pope Francis with the Presidential Medal of Freedom with distinction, the highest civilian award given by the president, saying the pontiff was "a light of faith, hope, and love that shines brightly across the world."

Biden had been scheduled to present the medal to the pope in person on Saturday in Rome on what was to be the final overseas trip of his presidency, but Biden canceled his travel plans so he could monitor the wildfires in California.

The White House said Biden bestowed the award to the pope during a phone call in which they also discussed efforts to promote peace and alleviate suffering around the world.

It's the only time Biden has presented the honor with distinction during his presidency. Biden himself is a recipient of the award with distinction, recognized when he was vice president by then-President Barack Obama in a surprise ceremony eight years ago. That was the only time in Obama's two terms when he awarded that version of the medal.

Europe

Pope baptizes 21 babies: Pope Francis baptised 21 babies in the Sistine Chapel on Sunday under the ceiling frescoed by Michelangelo, in what has become an annual tradition that marks the end of the Christmas holiday period at the Vatican.

Francis celebrated the Lord's gift of faith to the children, stressing they were the protagonists of the ceremony. "It is important that these children feel well," the pope said. "If they are hungry, feed them so they don't cry. If they feel hot, change them. ... But let them feel at ease, because today they are in charge and we must serve them with the Sacrament, with prayers." (AP)

Trams collide in Strasbourg: Two trams collided in Strasbourg in eastern France on Saturday, causing dozens of injuries, though none critical, authorities said. The accident took place during the afternoon in a tunnel leading to the station near the city's central train station.

An additional 100 people, though uninjured, were assessed for shock or stress, said René Cellier, director of the Bas-Rhin Fire and Rescue Service. Emergency services deployed 130 firefighters, 50 rescue vehicles and established a wide safety perimeter. (AP)

Kyiv captures 2 NKorean soldiers: Ukraine's forces have captured two North Korean soldiers fighting alongside Russian forces in Russia's Kursk border region, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday, the first such claim by Kyiv since North Korea sent thousands of troops to shore up Moscow's war effort on the other side of the world.

Zelenskyy made the comments days after Ukraine, facing a slow Russian onslaught in the east, began pressing new attacks in Kursk to retain ground captured in a lightning incursion in August - the first occupation of Russian territory since World War II. (AP)

Jean-Marie Le Pen buried: Jean-Marie Le Pen, the founder of France's main far-right party and a polarizing figure in French politics, was buried Saturday in a private family ceremony in his hometown of La Trinité-sur-Mer in Brittany.

Le Pen, whose death Tuesday at the age of 96 reignited debates over his divisive legacy, will be interred alongside his parents, according to reports in French media. (AP)

War enters alarming phase as Ukraine braces for unfamiliar enemy

Battlefield experience cements North Korea-Russia alliance

KYIV, Jan 12, (AP): For weeks, Ukrainian troops braced for an unfamiliar enemy: North Korean soldiers sent to bolster Moscow's forces after Ukraine launched a lightning-fast incursion and seized territory in Russia's Kursk region over the summer.

Their arrival marked a new and alarming phase in the war. And while initially inexperienced on the battlefield, North Korean troops have adapted quickly - a development that could have far-reaching consequences as they gain combat knowledge in the war against Ukraine.

Unlike the Russian troops Ukraine has been battling for nearly three years, Kyiv's forces were uncertain about what to expect from this new adversary, drawn into the war after Moscow and Pyongyang signed an agreement pledging military assistance using "all means" if either were attacked.

One Ukrainian soldier who has witnessed North Koreans in battle described them as disciplined and highly methodical, saying they were more professional than their Russian counterparts. The soldier spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the sensitive military issue.

However, other soldiers, including Ukrainian special forces, have shared battlefield drone footage on the Telegram messaging app mocking their tactics as outdated.

Nevertheless, there is consensus among Ukrainian soldiers, military intelligence and others monitoring developments on the ground: While Pyongyang's troops lacked battlefield experience when they arrived, that has been changing quickly.

With 1.2 million troops, North Korea's military ranks among the largest standing armies globally. But its post-Korean War foreign engagements have been limited, leaving them inexperienced with modern warfare technologies like drones.

"For the first time in decades, the North Korean army is gaining real military experience," said Andrii Yusov, spokesperson for Ukraine's military intelligence agency. "This is a global challenge - not just for Ukraine and Europe, but for the entire world."

Despite Ukrainian, U.S. and South Korean assertions that Pyongyang has sent 10,000-12,000 troops to fight alongside Russia in the Kursk border region, Moscow has never publicly acknowledged the North Korean forces.

While reports of their presence first emerged in October, Ukrainian troops only confirmed engagement on the ground in December.

Analysts say that without the influx of North Korean troops, Russia would have struggled to pursue its strategy



This photo provided by the North Korean government, shows a military parade to mark the 90th anniversary of North Korea's army at the Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang, North Korea, on April 25, 2022. (AP)

of overwhelming Ukraine by throwing large numbers of soldiers into the battle for Kursk.

While Moscow's counterattack in Kursk has inflicted thousands of Ukrainian casualties, Kyiv's overstretched forces have managed to hold on to about half of the 984 square kilometers (380 square miles) seized in August, though the situation remains dynamic. Besides the symbolic impact of Ukraine's success capturing Russian territory, control of Kursk could also be a bargaining chip in any ceasefire negotiations.

According to Ukraine's intelligence agency, the North Korean soldiers are operating alongside Russian units, with the latter providing reconnaissance and electronic warfare support.

The North Koreans wear Russian military uniforms

with fake military IDs in their pockets, according to a report by a Ukrainian military unit that has observed them on the battlefield, and they could easily be mistaken for Russian soldiers.

The subterfuge means Moscow and "its representatives at the U.N. can deny the facts," said Yusov, the Ukrainian military intelligence spokesperson.

Among the things proving their presence is that they have been heard speaking Korean with North Korean accents in intercepted communications, Yusov said.

He said the North Korean troops are using their own weapons and equipment and have learned to cope with the improvised explosives-laden drones that have become emblematic of the war, first-hand experience even some NATO-member countries don't have.

"This is a new level of threat," Yusov said. "Regional countries must prepare for what this means in the future."

The North Koreans' early missteps were largely caused by inexperience, such as moving in large groups in open terrain, making them easy targets for drones and artillery strikes.

According to the Ukrainian military unit's report, the North Korean soldiers were spotted easily as they moved in single-file columns through forest in groups of three, with 3 to 5 meters (yards) between soldiers. On open terrain, they moved in dispersed formations of five to 15 soldiers, making them vulnerable and leading to heavy losses.

However, during night operations, their movements were swift and units oriented themselves using red flashlights along routes, the report said.

"They're fast, physically well-prepared, and act strictly according to their algorithms," said the Ukrainian soldier who spoke to the AP. "If you drill the same routines for years, to the point where they can be executed blindfolded, it will yield results."

Despite their discipline, their lack of combat experience hindered their effectiveness. The Ukrainian military reported that North Korean troops often sustained heavy losses, with many killed by drones.

On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy put the number of killed or wounded North Koreans at 4,000, though U.S. estimates are lower, at around 1,200.

"Much of their military doctrine and training is based on strategies and experiences from over half a century ago," said Glib Voloskyi, a military analyst with the Ukrainian think tank CBA Initiatives Center.

The large-group formations date to when artillery accuracy was significantly lower, and observing troop movements much more difficult. Today, reconnaissance and so-called first-person view drones, or FPVs, that transmit video allowing soldiers to strike targets in real time have made the battlefield highly transparent, and anyone stepping onto it without cover, let alone moving in groups, is immediately spotted.

"But it is only a matter of time before they acquire the necessary skills to improve their combat effectiveness, which, combined with their discipline and training, could make them a significant military force," Voloskyi said.

After weeks of fighting, Ukrainian soldiers have taken only two prisoners of war. In announcing the capture Saturday, Zelenskyy said taking them alive "was not easy" because of efforts to conceal the North Koreans' presence and avoid their interrogation by Ukraine.

Wad Medani had been a safe haven for displaced families in early months of war

Sudan's military retakes strategic city from RSF rebels in major blow

CAIRO, Jan 12, (AP): Sudan's military and its allies have taken back a strategic city from the rebel Rapid Support Forces, officials said, dealing a major blow to the notorious paramilitary group which the United States accused of committing genocide in the country's ongoing civil war.

The recapture of the city of Wad Medani, the capital of Gezira province, came more than a year after it fell to the RSF. Wad Medani had previously been a safe haven for displaced families in the early months of the war.

The conflict in Sudan started in April 2023 when simmering tensions between the leaders of the military and the RSF exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and other cities across the sprawling northeastern African country.

The conflict has killed more than 28,000 people, forced millions to flee their homes and left some families eating grass in a desperate attempt to survive as famine swept parts of the country. It has been marked by gross atrocities including ethnically motivated killing and rape, according to the United Nations and rights groups. The International Criminal Court said it was investigating alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Earlier this month, the Biden ad-



Left: A Sudanese man gestures waving a Sudan flag following the reports that Sudan's army had entered the central city of Wad Medani and pushed out its paramilitary rivals the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), in Merowe, Sudan, Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025. Right: People celebrate following the reports that Sudan's army had entered the central city of Wad Medani and pushed out its paramilitary rivals the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), in Merowe, Sudan on Saturday. (AP)

ministration said that the RSF and its proxies are committing genocide, and slapped sanctions on the RSF leader, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, as well as seven RSF-owned companies in the United Arab Emirates, including one handling gold likely smuggled out of

Sudan. The military said in a statement that its forces had entered Wad Medani early Saturday and that they were working to "clear the rebels' remnants inside the city."

"Congratulations to the Armed



Forces, their supporting forces everywhere and to our people as they reclaim their dignity, security and stability," the statement said. There was no immediate comment from the RSF.

Culture and Information Minister

Kahlid Aleiser, who is the government spokesman, said the military and its allies "liberated" Wad Medani, which is about 100 kilometers (60 miles) south-east of Khartoum.

Soldiers posted videos on social media purportedly showing forces cel-

ebating with residents in the city center. One video showed residents taking to the streets to celebrate the "liberation" of the city, and shouting, "Allah is Great."

Since the RSF captured Wad Medani in December 2023, tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes in and around the city.

In recent months the RSF has suffered multiple battlefield blows, giving the military the upper hand in the war. It has lost control of many areas in Khartoum, the capital's sister city of Omdurman, and the eastern and central provinces.

The war has created the world's largest displacement crisis, driving over 14 million people - about 30% of the population - from their homes, according to the United Nations. An estimated 3.2 million people have crossed into neighboring countries including Chad, Egypt and South Sudan.

Famine has been also detected in at least five areas, including three camps for displaced people in the western Sudanese region of Darfur, according to an international monitoring project, the Integrated Food Security Classification, or IPC. The IPC said five other areas are projected to experience famine in the next six months. More areas are also at risk of famine, it said.

Subcontinent

Pakistan PM calls for int'l cooperation: Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has called for international cooperation in creating scalable and sustainable opportunities for ensuring education to women, saying women participation in the workforce would create immense prospects for social and economic prosperity.



Sharif

"Educated women have the potential to not just lift themselves, their families and the nation out of the poverty, but also to enrich the global economy, new markets and find innovative solutions to their shared challenges," Sharif said while addressing a conference titled "Girls' Education in Muslim Communities: Challenges and Opportunities."

Talking about the challenges in ensuring access to education for girls, the prime minister said that denying education to girls amounted to denying their rights and voice and denying them their right to a bright future, adding that no cultural or social impediment should stand in the way of achieving their dreams. (Xinhua)

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Islamabad thwarts smuggling op, recovers arms: The police in Pakistan's capital city of Islamabad successfully averted a major security threat by thwarting a smuggling operation and seizing a large consignment of weapons, ammunition and narcotics.

Senior Superintendent of Police Islamabad Arsalan Shahzeb told media that the police intercepted a suspicious vehicle attempting to transport a significant quantity of weapons and drugs from the country's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to Islamabad.

He said that one person has been arrested and further investigations are underway, adding that the seized weapons include hundreds of pistols of various calibers, advanced automatic rifles with magazines, and thousands of rounds of ammunition. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Punjab lawmaker fatally shoots self: Lawmaker in India's northern state of Punjab, Gurpreet Gogi, died of bullet injuries on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday, confirmed the local police.

Gogi, 58, reportedly shot himself accidentally inside his house in Punjab's Ludhiana district. He was rushed to a local hospital but died on the way.

He represented the Ludhiana West Assembly constituency and belonged to the state's ruling Aam Aadmi Party. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Sri Lanka seizes 2 Indian fishing boats: The Sri Lankan navy seized two Indian fishing boats that were poaching in Sri Lankan waters on Saturday night and arrested eight Indian fishermen, the navy said in a press statement on Sunday.

The boats were seized off the seas north of Mannar, in Sri Lanka's Northern Province, the navy said.

The navy said they conduct regular patrols and operations in Sri Lankan waters to curb illegal fishing practices of foreign fishing boats, taking into account the impact of those practices on the livelihood of local fishermen. (Xinhua)



Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, right, shakes hands with Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba during a joint press conference after their meeting at Bogor Presidential Palace in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, Jan. 11, 2025. (AP)

Indonesia, Japan vow deeper ties

BOGOR, Indonesia, Jan 12, (AP): Japan and Indonesia have pledged to deepen economic and defense ties during a visit by the Japanese prime minister, seen as promoting regional cooperation as China flexes its muscle and Donald Trump prepares to take over as the next U.S. president.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba arrived in Jakarta on Friday from Kuala Lumpur after meeting Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

He said he hopes to meet Trump at the earliest possible timing after his Jan. 20 inauguration, and plans to convey the importance of engaging with the region.

"I don't know how much interest Mr. Trump has in this region until I actually talk with him," Ishiba told reporters. "I am convinced that having diplomatic engagement in this region is extremely important for Japan, and it is extremely important for America as well."

Japan wants to send a message that its respect for a rules-based international order, in contrast to China's more aggressive behavior in claiming islands in the disputed South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety, makes it the best partner for Southeast Asian countries.

Ishiba said in a statement on Friday that "any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion is unacceptable anywhere in the world."

Black boxes from South Korea plane crash failed to record final 4 minutes, officials say

SEOUL, Jan 12, (AP): The black boxes of a Boeing jetliner that crashed in South Korea last month stopped recording about four minutes before the accident, South Korean officials said Saturday, possibly complicating investigations into the cause of the disaster that killed 179 people.

After analyzing the devices, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board concluded that both the flight data and cockpit voice recorders stopped working about four minutes before the crash, the South Korean Transportation Ministry said.

The Boeing 737-800 operated by Jeju Air skidded off a runway in the South Korean town of Muan on Dec. 29 after its landing gear failed to deploy, slamming into a concrete structure and bursting into flames, killing all but two of the 181 people on board.

After initially analyzing the black boxes, South Korean officials sent the devices to the NTSB for closer examination after discovering that some of the data was missing. The transportation ministry said it wasn't im-

mediately clear why the devices failed to record data in the last four minutes.

"Data from the CVR (cockpit voice recorder) and FDR (flight data recorder) are crucial in investigating accidents, but such investigations are conducted through the examination and analysis of various sources of information, and we plan to do our utmost to determine the cause of the accident," the ministry said in a statement.

South Korean investigators have said that air traffic controllers warned the pilot about possible bird strikes two minutes before the aircraft issued a distress signal confirming that a bird strike had occurred, after which the pilot attempted an emergency landing.

South Korean officials have also pledged to improve airport safety after experts linked the high death toll to Muan airport's localizer system, the structure hit by the aircraft as it crashed. The localizer, a set of antennas designed to guide aircraft during landings, was housed in a concrete structure covered with dirt on an elevated embankment.



Rescue team members work at the site of a plane crash at Muan International Airport in Muan, South Korea on Dec. 31, 2024. (AP)

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Business

As part of the bank's strategy to promote national leadership

Kuwait Finance House appoints Khaled AlShamlan as Group CEO

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has appointed Khaled Yousef AlShamlan as Group Chief Executive Officer, following approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait. AlShamlan served as the CEO for KFH-Kuwait since August 2023.

The appointment affirms the Bank's strategy to promote the national workforce by prioritizing the development of its leadership capabilities within the internal selection process for leadership roles. This aligns with the Bank's efforts to enhance performance and drive growth

at local, regional, and global levels. This is achieved by deploying experienced banking professionals with the ability to lead and contribute to the Bank's success as they assume their assigned leadership positions.

With over 27 years of experience, AlShamlan is one of the distinguished national competencies who held numerous prominent leadership positions, most of which were at KFH.

This appointment aligns with KFH's strategic priorities, which emphasize technological advancement, digital transformation, performance excel-



Khaled AlShamlan

lence, competitive advantage, and continuous operational modernization. This also reflects the Group's business expansion, spanning 12 countries worldwide and encompassing multiple strategic markets through a vast network of KFH Group.

AlShamlan played a key role in managing the digital transformation of banking services during the merger process, significantly enhancing KFH's market share within the Kuwaiti banking sector. He also contributed significantly to the successful acquisition and conversion of Ahli United Bank to comply with Sharia

principles.

AlShamlan is one of KFH's prominent figures in management and finance. With extensive expertise in KFH's numerous activities, he has successfully completed numerous training courses and specialized programs from global and reputable entities. He also holds several certified professional accreditations in his field.

Since August 2023, he has been at the helm of KFH as KFH-Kuwait Chief Executive Officer. Prior to that, he held numerous prominent leadership positions including Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Of-

ficer, General Manager Retail Banking, General Manager Corporate Banking, Deputy General Manager Individual Financing, Deputy General Manager Corporate Real Estate Financing. AlShamlan received his bachelor's degree in economics from Kuwait University in 1995. He completed a 2-year specialized training program for graduates at Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA). He is also a Board member of Ahli United Bank - Bahrain and Vice Chairman to the Board of KFH-Capital. He is also a board member in the Shared Electronic Banking Company (KNET).

Kuwait's real estate financing hits record KD 7 billion in '24

Commercial real estate deals plunge 85% in Nov

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Since the beginning of 2024, real estate financing in Kuwait has experienced record growth, with investments in the local real estate market reaching approximately 7 billion dinars during the first 11 months of the year.

However, recent statistics from the Central Bank of Kuwait show a decrease in real estate financing in November, with a monthly drop of 40 percent, totaling 584 million dinars, compared to 984 million dinars in October. On an annual basis, this marks a decrease of 14.3 percent from November 2023's 682 million dinars.

Despite this, the overall accumulated balance of real estate financing provided by local banks saw an increase of 0.7 percent month-on-month, rising by 73 million dinars to 10.200 billion dinars by the end of November.

This reflects a 3.2 percent increase from the previous year, when the total balance stood at 9.881 billion dinars in November 2023.

The real estate transactions in November also saw a decline, both in terms of volume and value; while the number of deals dropped by 5.6 percent from 518 in October to 489 in November.

In value, the decrease was 4 percent, with transactions totaling 333.412 million dinars, down from 347.3 million dinars in October.

This was particularly evident in the private real estate market, where both the number and value of deals fell by 6.7 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively. In contrast, investment real estate transactions saw growth, with a 10.5 percent increase in the number of deals and a 21.9 percent rise in value, amounting to 116.418 million dinars.

The commercial real estate transactions, however, experienced a significant downturn in November, with a sharp 85 percent drop in the number of transactions and a 9.9 percent decline in value.

The number of commercial transactions fell to just 3 deals worth 62.28 million dinars, compared to 20 deals worth 69.157 million dinars in October.

On the other hand, craft sector transactions saw a

remarkable increase of 71.4 percent in the number of deals and 70.6 percent in their value. In terms of banking assets, local banks witnessed a notable increase in November, with assets growing by 4.84 percent year-on-year, reaching 91.41 billion dinars.

The monthly growth in assets was 1.4 billion dinars. Notable contributors to this growth include a 12.67 percent rise in foreign assets, reaching 27.53 billion dinars, and a 4.07 percent increase in claims on the private sector, totaling 47.07 billion dinars.

However, claims on public institutions declined by 5.72 percent, and mutual deposits in the local inter-bank market saw a 10.84 percent drop.

The value of credit facilities also saw an increase in November, rising by 745 million dinars to reach 57.118 billion dinars. Personal credit facilities stood at 19.273 billion dinars, while deposits grew by 332 million dinars, totaling 53.690 billion dinars.

The private sector deposits in foreign currencies decreased slightly, while local banks' claims on the Central Bank in dinars decreased by 25.3 percent.

These statistics reveal a mixed picture of Kuwait's real estate and banking sectors, with significant fluctuations in financing and transactions, yet continued overall growth in assets and credit facilities.

Eurozone inflation surges to 2.4%

Strong US job growth contrasts with China's 'deflation worries'

By National Bank of Kuwait

United States

US Services PMI

In December, the U.S. services sector experienced accelerated growth, with the Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) non-manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) rising to 54.1 from November's 52.1, surpassing economists' expectations of 53.3. Concurrently, the ISM's measure of prices paid for inputs surged to 64.4, the highest since February 2023, signaling elevated inflation pressures. This aligns with the Federal Reserve's projections for fewer interest rate cuts this year, acknowledging the economy's resilience and persistent inflation. The ISM survey also reported increases in new orders and business activity, reflecting strong demand. In response to these economic indicators, U.S. Treasury yields have risen, with benchmark 10-year yields reaching an eight-month high, reflecting economic strength. The dollar has also strengthened against major currencies.

JOLTS Job Openings

The U.S. job market saw job openings rise by 259,000 to 8.1 million in November 2024, exceeding market expectations of 7.7 million and surpassing October's revised 7.84 million. Gains were noted in professional and business services (+273,000), finance and insurance (+105,000), and private education services (+38,000), while the information sector saw a decline (-89,000). Regionally, job openings increased significantly in the South (+194,000), the Northeast (+49,000), and the West (+32,000) but fell in the Midwest (-16,000). Hires and separations remained steady at 5.3 million and 5.1 million, respectively, with quits dropping by 218,000 to 3.1 million, while layoffs held steady at 1.8 million.

FOMC Meeting Minutes

The Federal Reserve's December meeting minutes highlighted concerns over inflation and uncertainty surrounding President-elect Donald Trump's potential trade and immigration policies. While the FOMC lowered the benchmark rate to 4.25%-4.5%, they indicated a slower pace of future cuts, reducing 2025 projections to two from four. With core inflation at 2.4% in November, driven by strong consumer spending and a stable labor market, policymakers stressed a cautious, data-driven approach. They expect inflation to gradually return to the 2% target by 2027 but noted persistent near-term risks and the need for careful monitoring before making further policy changes.

NFP Report

The U.S. labor market remained robust in December, with non-farm payrolls increasing by 256,000, well above the expected 150,000 and the 2024 monthly average of 186,000. The unemployment rate dropped to 4.1%, beating forecasts of 4.2% and marking seven months of stability within the 4.1%-4.2% range. The labor force participation rate held steady at 62.5%, consistent with levels since late 2023. Wage growth rose by 0.3% month-on-month, meeting expectations, while annual wage growth eased slightly to 3.9% from 4.0%.

The US Dollar Index closed the week at 109.64.

Europe

Eurozone Inflation

In December 2024, the eurozone's inflation rate increased to 2.4%, marking the highest level since July and up from 2.2% in November. This rise was primarily driven by a 4% increase in service costs, while energy prices saw a modest uptick of 0.1%. Food, alcohol, and tobacco prices remained steady with a 2.7% inflation rate. Among member countries, Croatia, Belgium, and Estonia experienced the highest inflation rates, whereas Ireland, Italy, and Luxembourg reported the lowest. Germany's inflation stood at 2.8%, slightly above its national

Highlights

- US Services PMI rises to 54.1 from 52.1.
- JOLTS Job Openings up 8.1 million versus 7.7 million expected.
- NFP report shows 256,000 added jobs versus 150,000 forecasted.
- Eurozone inflation accelerates to 2.4% y/y from 2.2% previously.
- CPI in China rises 0.1% y/y versus 0.2% previously. Producer inflation remains in negative territory.

estimate of 2.6%. The ECB has been implementing a series of interest rate cuts to stimulate economic growth amid these inflationary pressures. In December 2024, the ECB reduced its key deposit rate by a quarter point to 3%, marking the third consecutive cut. This decision was influenced by a worsening growth outlook and slowing inflation, with political turmoil in the eurozone adding to the troubled picture. The ECB's inflation forecasts were adjusted to 2.4% for 2024 and 2.1% for 2025, each down by 0.1 percentage point. Despite these measures, the eurozone's economic recovery is expected to be slower than previously anticipated, with growth forecasts for 2024 and the following two years revised to 0.7%, 1.1%, and 1.4% respectively. Furthermore, these latest figures suggest that inflationary pressures persist in the eurozone creating a dilemma for the ECB to balance between stimulating growth and making sure inflation is tamed.

The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.0244.

Asia Pacific

Australia CPI Report

In November 2024, Australia's Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 2.3% year-over-year, exceeding forecasts of 2.2% and up from 2.1% in the previous month, marking the highest figure since August. This rise was influenced by the timing of government electricity rebates. Despite this, inflation stayed within the Reserve Bank's target range of 2%-3% for the fourth consecutive month. Electricity prices declined more slowly (-21.5% vs -35.6% in October), as did automotive fuel prices (-10.2% vs -11.5%). Prices rose for alcohol and tobacco (+6.7% vs 6.0%) but remained stable for health and education. Recreation and culture costs eased (3.2% vs 4.3%), while food prices grew at their slowest rate since January 2022 (+2.9% vs 3.3%). Core CPI rose 2.8%, the highest in three months, recovering from a near three-year low of 2.4% in October.

The AUD/USD currency pair closed the week at 0.6145.

China Inflation

China's consumer inflation slowed to near zero for the fourth consecutive month, reflecting weaker demand despite government stimulus efforts. The consumer price index rose 0.1% year-over-year in December, down from 0.2% the previous month but aligning with expectations. Meanwhile, factory deflation persisted for the 27th month, with the producer price index declining 2.3%, a slower pace than November. Unlike other major economies grappling with high inflation, China faces deflationary pressures, raising concerns in Beijing about a potential cycle of falling prices that could dampen household spending, reduce corporate revenues, stifle investment, and lead to salary cuts and job losses.

The USD/CNY currency pair closed the week at 7.3326.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30850.



KONTINUE program launched to empower young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs.

Participants learn business skills, network, and compete for cash prizes

Boursa hosts LOYAC's KONTINUE social entrepreneurship program

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Demonstrating its commitment to Kuwait's sustainable development and the empowerment of the next generation of entrepreneurs, Boursa Kuwait hosted and sponsored LOYAC's KONTINUE social entrepreneurship program, which aims to develop the skills of aspiring business owners and entrepreneurs.

KONTINUE is an expert-led program developed in collaboration with Babson College, a U.S. higher learning institution specializing in entrepreneurial leadership, that offers participants an opportunity to acquire essential entrepreneurial skills and build a professional network to contribute to their future success. Launching on Sunday, January 12, and running until February 19, the six-week program provides participants with the practical and theoretical knowledge necessary to develop their project ideas into sustainable and feasible business models.

The program features interactive workshops led by expert entrepreneurs and industry leaders, covering a wide range of essential topics. Participants will learn how to identify customer needs, develop innovative business models, and secure funding for their startups. Dedicated mentors will provide personalized guidance throughout the program, ensuring each participant receives individualized support to maximize their progress and achieve their goals.

Grounded in Babson's Entrepreneurial Thought & Action® theory and other renowned methodologies, the program aims to guide aspiring business owners in developing business models, identifying user needs, creating value, and differentiating their products and services. It also covers market testing, customer targeting, key metrics for monetizing ideas, securing funding, and handling legal paperwork. Additionally, local entrepreneurs will provide

personalized one-on-one mentorship to participants throughout the program.

To participate in the program, aspiring entrepreneurs must submit a project idea and commit to the program schedule, which culminates in a final presentation where each participant or group showcases their business plan and prototype to a panel of expert judges. Winners will be awarded valuable cash prizes, with top honors going to the top three projects."

Speaking on behalf of Boursa Kuwait, Senior Director of Marketing and Corporate Communication Mr. Naser Meshari Al-Sanoussi said, "Boursa Kuwait's partnership with LOYAC reflects its commitment to empowering youth and fostering innovative educational programs that shape future leaders. Through the KONTINUE program, we aim to support entrepreneurship and sustainable development, aligning with our Corporate Sustainability Strategy."

Al-Sanoussi also emphasized that hosting the program on the Boursa Kuwait premises underscores its role as a key catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurship. This initiative reflects a comprehensive vision to support programs that contribute to a brighter future for Kuwait.

He added that this sponsorship aligns with the company's strategy for corporate social responsibility, which focuses on empowering youth and fostering a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem and directly supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 8, promoting decent work and economic growth, and Goal 9, focusing on industry, innovation, and infrastructure.

"Education is a cornerstone of Boursa Kuwait's corporate sustainability strategy due to its profound impact on achieving sustainable development and economic prosperity. We believe this program will

be an ideal platform to stimulate innovation and develop participants' skills, contributing to the national economy and the sustainable development of the State of Kuwait," he concluded.

Boursa Kuwait's sponsorship of the KONTINUE program marks its second collaboration with LOYAC, as part of a strategic partnership aimed at empowering the youth and supporting their aspirations for innovation and entrepreneurship. The partnership underscores both organizations' commitment to launching initiatives that promote sustainability and social development, with a focus on building youth capacity and developing their skills across various fields. It also exemplifies their dedication to fostering social responsibility and building collaborative bridges to create a positive and long-lasting impact on society.

Chairperson and Managing Director of LOYAC Mrs. Fareah A. Al-Saqaf thanked Boursa Kuwait for their support of the KONTINUE program, saying: "LOYAC is proud to partner with Boursa Kuwait on the KONTINUE social entrepreneurship program, which demonstrates Boursa Kuwait's belief in LOYAC's vision to build the capabilities of young Kuwaitis and empower them to unleash their creativity and innovation skills. By fostering this entrepreneurial spirit, they can become leaders, create job opportunities for themselves and others as well as drive economic growth."

Founded in 2002, LOYAC is dedicated to empowering young people and nurturing their growth into influential leaders who make a positive impact on society. By providing unique opportunities for leadership development, LOYAC strives to cultivate an enlightened generation committed to peace and prosperity and guided by the values of peace, empowerment, inclusivity, sustainability, and innovation."

| Currencies | Previous Week Levels | | | | This Week's Expected Range | | 3-Month Forward |
|------------|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| | Open | Low | High | Close | Minimum | Maximum | Forward |
| EUR | 1.0301 | 1.0214 | 1.0436 | 1.0244 | 1.0100 | 1.0500 | 1.0286 |
| GBP | 1.2418 | 1.2189 | 1.2575 | 1.2204 | 1.2000 | 1.2500 | 1.2197 |
| JPY | 157.23 | 156.22 | 158.87 | 157.69 | 155.00 | 159.00 | 156.05 |
| CHF | 0.9086 | 0.9006 | 0.9188 | 0.9164 | 0.9000 | 0.9300 | 0.9071 |

During a panel discussion with fresh graduates as part of the sixth edition of the 'TAMAKAN' program

NBK celebrates legacy as a cornerstone of Kuwait's economy

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) officially launched a series of panel discussions featured in the sixth edition of the "TAMAKAN" program. Organized by Creative Confidence under NBK's patronage and strategic support, the program facilitates meaningful dialogue between the bank's executive management and the participating trainees.

The program featured Mr. Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO at NBK-Kuwait, who shared his extensive experience with Kuwaiti youth, shedding light on the key milestones of his career that led to his senior leadership role at the country's largest banking institution.

From Branch Management to Leadership

Al-Marzouq opened the panel discussion by engaging with the trainees, learning about their academic specializations, and then delving into the key stages of his professional journey. Reflecting on his path, he shared: "I initially pursued engineering during my university studies before transitioning to economics, eventually graduating from a university in the United States. Upon returning to Kuwait, I began my career at NBK, starting in branch management. This role marked a pivotal turning point in my career, as it provided invaluable insights into the banking cycle and honed my ability to engage with customers and address their needs—an essential aspect of branch operations, where customer service remains the cornerstone of success."

Al-Marzouq continued, stating: "Following my time in branch management, I was offered roles in three different departments. However, I chose to join the treasury department, as it provides essential skills and experience vital for anyone in the banking sector. The treasury serves as a critical link between the bank and both local and international financial markets, demanding swift and informed decision-making. I dedicated 12 years of my career to this dynamic and pivotal department."

"Working in the treasury department deepened my passion for banking and instilled a boldness in me to take on greater responsibilities. For me, earning a high salary

Al-Marzouq:

- Success is a collective endeavor, achieved through teamwork and collaboration among all employees
- Equip yourself with the right experience and skills, and be prepared to seize opportunities when they arise
- Advancing to a new position without readiness or proper qualifications can lead to burnout
- Managers value employees who demonstrate creativity, a passion for their work, and ambition for growth
- Mutual encouragement among colleagues boosts team morale and fosters confidence
- Embrace your managers' feedback as a chance to enhance your abilities, and seek wisdom from experienced professionals
- NBK offers an unparalleled work environment, setting the benchmark for private sector institutions in Kuwait
- The "TAMAKAN" program provides an exceptional platform for fresh graduates to transform into dynamic contributors to Kuwait's economy

was never the primary goal; my focus was on developing my skills, learning quickly, and shouldering more responsibilities. Ambition requires boldness, and one should never fear making mistakes, as mistakes are crucial to learning and personal development. They are often the first step on the path to success. However, the key is not to repeat the same mistake," Al-Marzouq added.

Career at the Central Bank

Reflecting on his transition from the private sector to the public sector, Al-Marzouq remarked: "After 12 years in the treasury department at NBK, I embarked on a new chapter at the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). The nature of the work differed significantly, as the CBK serves as a regulatory authority responsible for issuing the policies and legislation governing the banking sector. However, this experience proved invaluable, equipping me with a wealth of skills and a deep understanding of regulatory and administrative frameworks."

He emphasized that the CBK stands as a cornerstone institution for the operations of local banks, housing seasoned bankers whose extensive expertise plays a pivotal role in bolstering confidence in the local banking sector and Kuwait's economy as a whole.

NBK offers the best work environment in the private sector

Al-Marzouq highlighted how his tenure at the CBK enriched his expertise and strengthened his standing in the banking sector. He revealed that he received three job offers from various banks but chose to return to NBK due to its unparalleled and exceptional work environment, which he described as the best among all private sector institutions in Kuwait.

Al-Marzouq emphasized that working at NBK is the ideal choice

for anyone driven by passion and ambition to ascend to top leadership positions. He praised the bank's exemplary work environment, which rivals that of leading international institutions and companies, fostering a culture of creativity and innovation. He also highlighted NBK's commitment to continuous professional development, offering its employees—especially recent graduates—world-class training programs in collaboration with prestigious educational institutions, both locally and globally.

Al-Marzouq highlighted that NBK's enduring distinction lies in its adherence to regulations and values that have been ingrained since its founding in 1952 by a group of prominent Kuwaiti merchants. Over the decades, these principles have cemented NBK's position as the cornerstone of Kuwait's financial landscape and one of the largest and most influential financial institutions in the region.

"Amid the rapid advancements in the banking industry driven by modern technology and artificial intelligence, training programs have become indispensable for enhancing employee capabilities and workforce efficiency. At NBK, fostering a culture of training and development is a cornerstone of its strategy, rooted in the belief that employee excellence directly translates into superior service quality for its clients," Al-Marzouq stated.

Teamwork

Al-Marzouq underscored the vital role of collaboration and teamwork, stating: "Teamwork forms the foundation of any organization's success. It fosters mutual growth among team members through the exchange of diverse ideas, experiences, and skills. This dynamic not only enhances perfor-



Founding principles drive NBK's continued success and innovation.

mance and boosts productivity but also drives diversity and innovation, which are essential for sustained growth."

He emphasized that mutual motivation among colleagues and recognizing each other's achievements play a crucial role in uplifting team morale, bolstering confidence, and fostering commitment. "Success is never a solitary journey," he remarked, "but rather the outcome of teamwork and collaboration among all employees."

Key Drivers of Success and Excellence

Al-Marzouq offered advice to the trainees in the "TAMAKAN" program, emphasizing to the Kuwaiti youth: "Anyone who aspires to advance in their career must put in extra effort and seek more responsibilities, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and expertise to handle them. Managers value proactive employees who bring innovative ideas, a passion for their work, and a strong ambition for growth."

Al-Marzouq also advised the trainees to select a work environment that fosters creativity and innovation at the outset of their careers. He emphasized that the private sector operates on profitability and requires employees who add significant value to the organization. Therefore, he urged each individual to define their goals and choose a career path that aligns with those objectives.

He stressed the importance of not rushing promotions, as they can lead to burnout if an individual is not prepared or qualified for the new role. He emphasized that the key to success lies in focusing on

skill development and being ready to seize the right opportunities at the right time, which benefits both the employee and the organization.

In response to a question from one of the trainees about how to achieve career development, Al-Marzouq advised: "Always seek feedback from your colleagues and manager, and use their insights as opportunities to improve your performance and enhance your skills. Learn from the experiences of others, benefit from the advice of those with expertise, and set clear, specific goals for yourself, working diligently to achieve them."

Al-Marzouq encouraged young people to be patient and advised them not to leave their workplace due to issues with a single individual in a managerial role or within their work team. He emphasized the importance of having a clear plan and goal, explaining that career decisions should be based on the pursuit of these objectives, rather than being influenced by transient factors.

He emphasized that the labor market is highly competitive across all sectors, requiring ambitious individuals to focus on developing the necessary skills and gaining the expertise needed to build a successful and sustainable career. He also highlighted that the "TAMAKAN" program offers a unique experience, providing fresh graduates with the opportunity to forge a bright future and become a valuable and effective part of the Kuwaiti economy.

It is worth noting that the "TAMAKAN" program is designed to enhance the personal skills essential for entering the workforce, while also inspiring Kuwaiti youth

to explore their potential, harness their energies, and unlock their creativity.

The program adopts a blended learning approach, combining in-person and online training through electronic platforms and interactive tools for distance education. It covers a range of themes and workshops, including creativity and innovation, design thinking, business model development, career exploration, and strategies for mitigating risks.

NBK is dedicated to advancing the country's strategic agenda by bolstering the private sector and contributing to the nation's development plans, aligning with the long-term objectives set forth in Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait".

Valuable Insights

During his meeting with the trainees of the "TAMAKAN" program, Al-Marzouq shared a set of invaluable insights to guide them toward excellence, progress, and a successful career, including:

- Success is not an individual journey but the outcome of collaboration and teamwork.
- Mutual motivation boosts morale and enhances team spirit.
- Don't rush promotions unless you are fully prepared and qualified.
- Listen to the advice of those with experience.
- Seek out additional responsibilities and take the initiative to propose innovative solutions.
- Always focus on the value you bring to the organization.
- Continuously develop your skills and be ready to seize opportunities when they arise.



Nawaf Al-Gharabally receives Zain's recognition from Dr. Mohammed Al-Mulla and Dr. Khaled Al-Hazza.



Waleed Al-Khashti recognizes the winning team with Zain's IT & AI Award.

Company presents Zain's IT and AI Award to winning team

Zain Platinum Partner of 47th Engineering Design Exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting students, innovators, and creative individuals, Zain has announced its role as the Platinum Partner for the 47th Engineering Design Exhibition. The event was organized by the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University, with support from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), held at Sabah Al-Salem University City in Shadadiya under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Nader Al-Jalal, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Zain participated in the exhibition's opening ceremony, attended by Dr. Mohammed Al-Mulla, Vice President for Academic Support Services at Kuwait University; Nawaf Al-Gharabally, CEO of Zain Kuwait; Dr. Khaled Al-Hazza, Acting Dean of the College of Engineering and Petroleum; as well as university leaders and representatives of partner organizations.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, Waleed Al-Khashti, Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer of Zain Kuwait, presented the IT and Artificial Intelligence Award

to the HALALI team. Sponsored by Zain, the award recognized the team's exceptional project for effectively leveraging AI tools and technology solutions to achieve its objectives.

Zain's ongoing support for the exhibition and sponsorship of the award reflects its commitment to fostering innovation and promoting exceptional educational and student initiatives. This aligns with the



Al-Gharabally with Dr. Al-Hazza and Zain's team at the company's booth.

company's corporate social responsibility and sustainability strategy, which prioritizes the development of the education sector.

Education remains a top priority for Zain, as the company continues to strengthen its collaboration with academic institutions across the country. This investment in education is seen as a cornerstone for driving national economic growth.

The Engineering Design Exhibition

organized by the Engineering Training and Alumni Office at the College of Engineering and Petroleum, is regarded as the most significant engineering event in the country. It showcases design projects from various scientific departments, providing a platform for research, development, and innovation. The exhibition opens new horizons for a sustainable and forward-thinking engineering future.

This year, it featured 67 projects with the participation of 263 engineers who presented their promising designs to visitors.

This year's exhibition featured 13 projects in chemical engineering, 17 projects in civil engineering, 9 projects in computer engineering, 12 projects in electrical engineering, 7 projects in mechanical engineering, 5 projects in petroleum engineering, and 4 projects in industrial engineering.

Zain remains steadfast in its efforts and initiatives to enhance the educational process in Kuwait across all fields. The company spares no effort in leveraging its resources to strengthen ties with institutions dedicated to advancing education and development.

US stocks fall amid job data

Kuwait leads GCC gains with 2.44% market surge

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The financial market indices (FMIs) across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries showed varied performances in the first week of the new year, with four indices registering growth and three others experiencing declines, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The Kuwait Stock Exchange led the region with a notable increase of 2.44 percent in the general market index, largely driven by the banking sector.

The Dubai and Abu Dhabi indices followed closely, with increases of 1.87 percent and 1.75 percent, respectively.

The Amman Stock Exchange saw a moderate rise of 0.54 percent. Meanwhile, the Qatar Stock Exchange index faced its first significant weekly loss of 1.23 percent, and the Bahrain Stock Exchange index dropped slightly by 0.29 percent. The Saudi stock index, TASI, remained largely stable, posting a marginal loss of 0.04 percent.

In Kuwait, the stock market experienced strong gains, with the General Market Index rising 2.44 percent to close at 7,542.31 points.

The Premier Market Index saw a similar gain of 2.37 percent, breaking the 8,000-point level. The Main 50 Index surged by 4.28 percent, surpassing the 7,000-point mark.

Liquidity levels in the market were

notably higher, especially after Warba Bank announced the purchase of Al-Ghanim Commercial Company, which provided a boost to the banking sector.

Warba Bank's shares rose by 20 percent, with the biggest gains seen in stocks like National Building Materials and Energy House, which increased by 23 percent and 21 percent, respectively.

Meanwhile, in the UAE, the Dubai Financial Market Index continued its positive momentum with a 1.87 percent rise, while the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange saw a 1.75 percent increase. In Oman, the market index gained 0.54 percent.

The Qatari market saw a decline of 1.23 percent, while Bahrain's market held steady with a minimal loss of 0.29 percent. The Saudi market index saw a slight decrease of 0.04 percent.

In global markets, US stocks faced pressure from better-than-expected jobs data for December, which raised concerns about prolonged higher interest rates, causing the Dow Jones to drop by 1.8 percent, with the Nasdaq falling the most at 2.34 percent.

On the other hand, gold prices increased by 1.88 percent, and oil prices rose by 4.5 percent, boosted by issues surrounding energy contracts between Russia's Gazprom and European companies.

Egypt's inflation drops to 24.1% in December

CAIRO, Jan 12 (KUNA): The Central Bank of Egypt reported that the country's inflation rate went down by 1.4 percent to 24.1 percent in December, expecting the downward trend to continue in the first quarter of 2025.

The average monthly inflation rate slid to 0.9 percent by the end of last year from 1.3 percent in the corresponding period of 2023, according to the latest CBE report released on

Thursday.

The annual inflation rate also retreated from 25.5 percent in November 2024 to 24.1 percent in December 2024. The CBE targets cutting the inflation rate to a five-seven percent range in 2026-2028 through a package of macro-economic reforms, including liberalization of the exchange rate, being put in place since last March, the report added.

Al-Saddah brings over two decades of experience in the banking sector

Gulf Bank appoints Abdulrahman Al-Saddah as Chief Risk Officer, reinforcing national talent and strategic growth

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Gulf Bank was pleased to announce, with the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait, the appointment of Mr. Abdulrahman Al-Saddah as Chief Risk Officer. This strategic decision underscores Gulf Bank's commitment to its five-year strategy and its dedication to nurturing national talent to assume pivotal leadership roles.

Mr. Al-Saddah brings over two decades of experience in the banking sector, including 15 years in Corporate Banking. Throughout his career, he has developed robust expertise in Credit Management, Debt Restructuring, and Corporate Financing.

His leadership journey includes serving as Acting Chief Risk Officer since August 2023. In 2020, he assumed the role of Deputy General

Manager under the Risk Management Group, as well as holding key roles such as Deputy General Manager of Corporate Banking and Head of Structured Workout & Remedial, where he spearheaded and co-led numerous high-profile financial transactions.

Mr. Al-Saddah holds a Bachelor's degree in Accounting from Kuwait University and has completed advanced certifications in Leadership Development and Strategic Management from Harvard Business School.

This appointment reflects Gulf Bank's unwavering commitment to fostering national talent and strengthening its leadership framework to drive sustainable growth within the banking sector.

As part of its vision to be Kuwait's leading

bank, Gulf Bank continues to prioritize creating a diverse and inclusive workplace while delivering exceptional customer service. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, GulfBank ensures a seamless banking experience for its customers, empowering them to manage their financial needs with convenience and efficiency.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The Bank implements diverse and impactful sustainability initiatives, both internally and externally, to contribute meaningfully to the community and the nation's future.



Abdulrahman Al-Saddah

US orange juice and steel will be on Canada's list for retaliation if Trump imposes tariffs

Trump has been misinformed about U.S. not needing Canadian products

TORONTO, Jan 12, (AP): Canada is looking at putting retaliatory tariffs on American orange juice, toilets and some steel products if U.S. President-elect Donald Trump follows through with his threat to impose 25% tariffs on all Canadian products, a senior official familiar with the matter said Thursday.

The official said the wide-ranging list hasn't been completed yet. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

Trump said this week he will use economic coercion to pressure Canada to become the nation's 51st state. And he continues to erroneously cast the U.S. trade deficit with Canada - a natural resource-rich nation that provides the U.S. with commodities like oil - as a subsidy.

Outgoing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Trump is trying to distract from his threats of stiff tariffs by talking about making Canada the 51st state.

"President Trump, who is a very skillful negotiator, is getting people to be somewhat distracted by that conversation," Trudeau said.

"Everything American consumers buy from Canada is suddenly going to get a lot more expensive if he moves forward on these tariffs. And that's something we need to be focusing on a little bit more."

Trudeau made comments in an interview with CNN in Washington, where he attended the funeral for the late U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

When Trump imposed higher tariffs during his first term in office, other countries responded with retaliatory tariffs of their own. Canada, for instance, announced billions of new duties in 2018 against



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau arrives to speak to the media after a meeting with Jay Timmons, president and CEO of The National Association of Manufacturers, in Washington, Thursday, Jan. 9, 2025. (AP)

the U.S. in a tit-for-tat response to new taxes on Canadian steel and aluminum.

"We would definitely respond as we did years ago," Trudeau said.

Yogurt imports from Wisconsin and whiskey from Kentucky, the home states of top Republicans Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell respectively, were hit with 10% duties in 2018.

Florida, Trump's home state, is known for its extensive citrus production.

Trump claimed again Thursday that the U.S. doesn't need anything from Canada, including oil.

Almost a quarter of the oil the U.S. consumes every day is from Canada, with Alberta exporting 4.3 million barrels a day to the U.S. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the

U.S. consumes about 20 million barrels a day, while domestically producing about 13.2 million barrels a day.

"We don't need their energy. We don't need their oil and gas," Trump said. "We don't need anything that they have."

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, the leader of Canada's most populous province, said Trump has been misinformed about the U.S. not needing Canadian products.

Supply chains for the auto industry are deeply connected, with parts manufactured in Ontario being used in cars that are assembled in Detroit and then sold back to Canada. Ford has noted that in the auto sector alone parts can go back and forth across the Canada-U.S. border several times.

Ford warned that Canada will retaliate if Trump imposes tariffs. He said a wide range of U.S. products shipped to Canada will be targeted, but he declined to specify which ones.

Top Canadian government officials say Trump's comments that Canada should become the 51st state are no longer a joke and are meant to undermine America's closest ally.

"The joke is over," Dominic LeBlanc, the country's finance minister and point person for U.S.-Canada relations, said Wednesday. "It's a way for him, I think, to sow confusion, to agitate people, to create chaos knowing this will never happen."

LeBlanc has been talking to incoming Trump Cabinet officials about a billion-dollar plan to increase border security in an effort to deflect Trump's threat of tariffs. Trudeau called that a win for Trump.

Canada is the top export destination for 36 U.S. states. Nearly \$3.6 billion Canadian (US\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border each day.

Some of the vessels are owned by the Russian state

Shadow fleet of tankers keeps Russia's oil money flowing despite Western sanctions

FRANKFURT, Germany, Jan 12, (AP): The Group of Seven democracies have sought to crimp Russia's oil export earnings that help fund the war against Ukraine. But Western governments and sanctions experts say Moscow has resorted to using a so-called shadow fleet of hundreds of aging tankers of uncertain ownership and safety practices that are dodging sanctions and keeping the oil revenue coming.

Here are things to know about the shadow fleet - and why it worries Western governments and environmental groups.

The shadow fleet is made up of aging tankers bought used, often by nontransparent entities with addresses in non-sanctioning countries such as the United Arab Emirates or the Marshall Islands, and flagged in places like Gabon or the Cook Islands. Some of the vessels are owned by the Russian state Sovcomflot shipping company. Their role is to help Russia's oil exporters elude the \$60 per barrel price cap imposed by Ukraine's allies.

Estimates vary, but S&P Global and the Kyiv School of Economics Institute have put the number at over 400 ships that can transport oil, or products made from crude such as diesel fuel and gasoline.

The shadow fleet in fact isn't all that shadowy. The ships don't hide their stops at Russian oil terminals. Some have direct connections to Russia, as with the vessels owned by Sovcomflot. In other cases, it's often unclear who exactly is behind the listed owners, and what kind of safety practices and insur-

ance the vessels have. What sets them apart is that they transport Russian oil and operate outside the jurisdictions of the sanctioning G7 countries.

The Kremlin has so far dodged commenting on the shadow fleet.

The cap is aimed at limiting Russia's profits while keeping the oil flowing to global markets and avoiding an energy crunch that would drive up gasoline prices and inflation.

The cap, which went into effect on Dec. 5, 2022, is enforced by barring service providers such as insurers and shipping managers from dealing with oil priced above the threshold. Those companies are mostly based in Western countries and thus within reach of sanctions enforcement.

Requirements

That leverages the strict requirements from the U.N.'s International Maritime Organization that vessels must have financially solid insurance backed up by reputable audits in order to operate. That insurance has traditionally been provided by a network of Western-based industry insurers known as the International Group, or IG.

When the cap was first imposed, some 70% of Russian oil was transported on vessels with IG insurance, but that share has now fallen to 10%, according to the Kyiv School of Economics.

The vessels are bought used and owned by opaque entities located in places like the United Arab Emirates, the Seychelles, India or Vietnam that aren't taking part in sanctions. The new owners use

new insurers in Russia or other non-Western locations.

Dodging the cap has increased the price Russia gets for its oil on global markets, sanctions experts say. The discount for Russian oil compared to international benchmark Brent has shrunk from as much as \$35 per barrel to less than \$10 per barrel. Russia has seen oil income hold up steadily and even rise.

Export revenues averaged \$16.4 billion per month for the first 11 months of 2024, 5% higher than in the same period in 2023 as Russian oil averaged \$64 per barrel, according to the Kyiv School of Economics. Evading the cap earned Russia an extra \$9.4 billion.

That's money that the Kremlin can use to pay for the production of weapons and other goods for the military.

Oil income promotes economic stability by helping keep the budget deficit under control, and by supporting the value of the Russian ruble against other currencies. Oil keeps Russia's trade balance in surplus, meaning it sells more than it buys from the rest of the world and has money to pay for imports.

As a result, "Russia faces no significant constraints on its budget or war spending," Kyiv school experts said in their latest assessment of the Russian economy.

The average age of the vessels is around 18 years, meaning they're near the end of their lifespan and are more vulnerable to accidents, especially if they're not well-maintained. Meanwhile it's questionable if the non-IG insurance could be counted

on to pay the enormous cleanup costs in case an oil spill fouls a coastline in the Baltic, the Aegean or the English Channel, all routes used by tankers carrying oil from Russia's ports in the Baltic or the Black Sea to its markets in China, India and Turkey.

In May 2023, an 18-year-old shadow tanker carrying 340,000 barrels of Russian oil products from the port of Vysotsk on the Baltic lost engine power and almost ran aground while passing through the narrow Danish Straits.

In October, the UK said it would start requesting insurance details from suspected shadow vessels, and in December Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Finland and Estonia followed suit. Vessels aren't stopped, but those that can't prove adequate insurance can be added to sanctions lists.

Finnish police on Dec. 26 seized the Eagle S, a tanker they said was part of the dark fleet, on suspicion it used its anchor to damage the Estlink 2 power cable that supplies electricity from Finland to Estonia under the Baltic.

The Joint Expeditionary Force, a group of 10 countries including Sweden, Norway, Finland, the three Baltic states and the U.K., has stepped up efforts to track shadow fleet vessels to safeguard undersea infrastructure.

"Specific vessels identified as being part of Russia's shadow fleet have been registered into the system so they can be closely monitored when approaching key areas of interest," the U.K. Ministry of Defense said in a statement.

Georgieva warns Trump's tariff plans will contribute to high global borrowing costs

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Kristalina Georgieva, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has warned that US President-elect Donald Trump's plans to impose tariffs are already contributing to an increase in long-term borrowing costs globally, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement to reporters in Washington, Georgieva explained that uncertainty surrounding the trade policies of the upcoming administration is negatively affecting the global economy, with rising long-term interest rates being a key indicator of this impact.

She emphasized that this increase in borrowing costs is occurring despite low short-term interest rates, which is an unusual development.

Trump, set to take office on January 20, has vowed to introduce tariffs on imports from countries he views as US adversaries, such as China, as well as from allies like Canada and Mexico.

These actions have raised concerns that disruptions to supply chains could slow down global economic growth and drive prices higher. Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the IMF's chief economist, had already cautioned in October that the introduction of tariffs and ongoing

trade uncertainty could lead to a reduction in global output by about 0.5 percent.

In the final weeks of 2024 and the early days of 2025, bond yields have surged across much of the world, while the US dollar has strengthened, as investors try to assess the potential effects of Trump's second-term policies.

Georgieva acknowledged the significant global interest in the direction of US policies, particularly in areas like tariffs, taxes, deregulation, and government efficiency.

She pointed out that countries and regions closely integrated with global supply chains, such as many medium-sized economies and the entire Asian region, would feel the most severe effects of the US trade policies.

Moreover, Georgieva noted that a strong US dollar could increase financing costs for emerging market economies, especially for low-income countries.

She also highlighted that US economic indicators, including a robust jobs report, suggest that the Federal Reserve could be patient in deciding whether to make further cuts to its benchmark interest rate.

Robotaxi use up in China

BEIJING, Jan. 12, (Xinhua): Whenever she works late into the night in Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province, Wu You ends up hailing an "unmanned cab" or robotaxi, via her smartphone to take her home. This futuristic way of travel has now become part of Wu's existence in this city.

"It's convenient, and the difference between these cars and regular ride-hailing services isn't that big," Wu said. "The car is clean and odorless, and offers a more private ambiance."

It is the Apollo Go service that Wu is opting to use in Wuhan. Operated by China's internet giant Baidu, this robotaxi service featured more than 400 fully driverless vehicles in Wuhan as of October 2024, covering an area of over 3,000 square km in the

city. Some parts of the city even offer 24-hour testing and demonstration services.

In Wuhan, more people now share sentiments similar to Wu's. They have gradually transitioned from curiosity and concern regarding this novel mode of transportation to acceptance and appreciation of its convenience.

Wuhan is not the only city where this fresh new riding experience is available. Chinese megacities like Chongqing, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou have also invested heavily in experimentation and development concerning the service, with companies focusing on robotaxis having emerged nationwide -- including Apollo Go, WeRide and Pony.ai.

Angry Pansy ... a performance to remember

Jean-Baptiste steals the show in 'Hard Truths'

LOS ANGELES, Jan 12, (AP): Pansy is angry and she doesn't know why.

We all have days like that, when we snap at strangers for a minor infraction: The person who wants the spot in the parking lot that you're not ready to leave, the couple behaving a little inappropriately in a public place, the chipper doctor making pleasant-tries when you're in pain. It's the stuff road rage is made of: Irrational, primal, real and inescapable. Sometimes it's a loving family member that bears the brunt of the fury. For the most part, we all leave the vortex eventually and hopefully without too much damage in the wake.

But for Pansy, the unforgettable heroine of Mike Leigh's film "Hard Truths" portrayed by Marianne Jean-Baptiste, that simmering discontent is her all day, every day. It's life, and she can't break the cycle. She's a tornado of unhappiness, spiraling

through the mundanities of everyday life with seething anger and a vicious tongue to back it up. No one is spared: Not the young doctor filling in for her normal one, not her 20-something son Moses (Tuwaine Barrett) who lives at home, not her merry hairdresser sister Chantelle (Michelle Austin) or her plumber husband Curtley (David Webber), but especially and mostly not strangers who dare cross her path. Sins include being too happy, being too slow, being too stupid or contrite, filling the kettle up too much, or not enough.

It's funny at times, heartbreaking at others and always fascinatingly watchable. What, you wonder, is she going to say this time? Often Pansy does have a bit of a point, saying all the things that we've been conditioned not to say out loud so that our social structure can go on functioning. She gave up caring about any of that long ago,

you imagine. Part of the brilliance of "Hard Truths" is that it drops the audience in the middle of it all, not explaining (but definitely complaining). It's a mystery to everyone, but those closest to her mostly just accept it. What other choice do they have, really? And yet it's a tragedy for all to see Moses and Curtley walk on eggshells through their own lives. Chantelle tries a little harder to get to the heart of it, a central relationship that provides a small but monumentally meaningful arc about visiting their mother's grave and a Mother's Day gathering. It crescendos into an emotional release and a bit of perspective about Pansy's emotional and physical pain that has only intensified since her own mother's passing. But "Hard Truths" isn't there to wrap it all up in a bow and leave the audience feeling good and healed. I'll leave the cliffhanger for you to discover and

debate (Jean-Baptiste gave her own reading of it).

It is a truly blistering performance from Jean-Baptiste, reuniting with Leigh after many years, in a collaboration that was entirely worth the wait and speaks volumes for his brilliant, unconventional process. And it is deeply silly that she's already been overlooked for it from a major awards body. Hopefully others can correct the wrong.

Pansy is, of course, the biggest tragedy of all, a human so lost in their own resentments, manifested or real, that she may never get out of it. Sure she makes everyone's life a little miserable when she's around, but she's having the worst time of all and it never, ever ends. Chantelle tries to remind her that she has a choice in the matter. You wonder if she believes or even hears her, or if she's just too far gone.



Marianne Jean-Baptiste attends the New York Film Critics Circle Awards at Tao Downtown on Jan. 8, 2025, in New York. (AP)

People

Fortunate escape

Guttenberg returns to 'fire-ravaged' LA

LOS ANGELES, Jan 12, (AP): Steve Guttenberg awoke Thursday morning to a grim reality: The treacherous wildfire that tore through the Pacific Palisades had left his once-lush neighborhood charred and unrecognizable.



Guttenberg

With homes smoldered, streets emptied and friends scattered by evacuation orders, Guttenberg counted himself among the fortunate. His property was miraculously spared. But the actor-producer still struggled to reconcile his relief with the haunting sight of his ravaged, once lavish community.

"Just this morning, I woke up and I was really conscious of my mental state and my mental health, because the last three days, I've seen so much tragedy," said Guttenberg, pacing through the ruins of his neighborhood. He said his home has electricity but no running water.

Guttenberg thanked God that his block was safe, but he said about 20 homes were burned "pretty bad" in his 80-home community after wind-whipped fires tore across Los Angeles, destroying homes, clogging roadways as tens of thousands fled as the fires burned uncontained Wednesday. He said the fires are the worst he's ever seen in his 66-years.

The wildfires have burned the homes of several celebrities including Billy Crystal, Carey Elwes and Paris Hilton. Guttenberg said he never expected all of this to happen.

"It's like when someone dies suddenly," he said. "It's like when someone gets hit by a car. You never expect that to happen. That's how shocking it was."

During Guttenberg's stroll, it was an eerie scene with scorched palm trees, homes reduced to ash and rubble, and the daytime skies casted an ominous twilight over the devastation.

"I've seen people scared, people in wheelchairs, mothers and fathers trying to find their kids, people having anxiety and panic attacks," said Guttenberg, who returned to his neighborhood to help others who stayed behind with relief efforts. He has helped move cars to clear the street, handed out food and assisted neighbors from out their homes.

"All these houses behind me burned to the ground where their families enjoyed wonderful times together with their friends and family," said Guttenberg while pointing at one charred home before dropping his head in sadness. "There's really a lot of pain going on right now. I'm doing whatever I can to help alleviate it."



Actor James Woods attends the premiere of the film 'Bleed for This' in Beverly Hills, Calif., Nov. 2, 2016. (AP)

'A miracle'

James Woods grateful as home survives fires

LOS ANGELES, Jan 12, (AP): Actor James Woods says his house in Pacific Palisades has survived the Los Angeles wildfires that had devastated much of his neighborhood.

"A miracle has happened," Woods posted Friday on X. "We managed to get to our property and our home, that we were told is gone forever, is still standing."

Woods added: "In this hellish landscape 'standing' is relative, but smoke and other damage is not like the utter destruction around us."

Earlier this week, Woods was among hundreds of thousands around Los Angeles who were forced to evacuate as the fires spread and intensified. He has posted regular updates on X, showing charred ruins of homes near his, and had been convinced his house would fare no better.

"So many beautiful messages from all of you," he posted later Friday. "I'm so happy and grateful, but honestly the entire area looks like the dark side of the moon."

Numerous celebrities, from Paris Hilton to Billy Crystal, have confirmed their homes were lost or sustained damage in blazes burning in and around Los Angeles. At least 10 people have died, and thousands of structures and vehicles have been destroyed.

Film



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Robbie Williams in a scene from 'Better Man.' (AP)

Biopic blends showbiz drama and personal struggles

Williams keeps the show on in 'Better Man'

LOS ANGELES, Jan 12, (AP): "I came out of the womb with jazz hands," pop star Robbie Williams recounts in "Better Man," his new biopic. "Which was very painful for my mum."

Badum Dum. But also: Wow. What an image, to illustrate a man who, we learn, agonized from early childhood as to whether he had "it" - the star quality that could make him famous.

Turns out, he did. Williams became the hugest of stars in his native Britain, making 14 No. 1 singles and performing to screaming crowds (though he never gained traction in the United States.) And whatever else we learn from director Michael Gracey's brassy, audacious and sometimes utterly bonkers biopic, the key is that Williams' need to entertain was primal - so primal that it triumphed over self-doubt, depression and addiction. It should surprise nobody, then, that this film, produced and narrated by Williams (now 50), is above all entertaining.

But wait, you may be saying: Five paragraphs in, and you haven't mentioned the monkey?

Good point. The central conceit of Gracey's film, you see, is that Williams is represented throughout by a monkey - a CGI monkey, that is (actor Jonno Davies provides the captured moves and speaking voice). This decision is never explained or even referred to.

There's a clue, though, in one of Williams' opening lines: "I want to show you how I really see myself." Gracey based his film on many hours of taped interviews he did with Williams. He says the pop star told him at one point that he felt like a monkey sent out to entertain the masses - particularly in his teens as a member of the boy band Take That. It was

Gracey's idea to take this idea and run with it.

We begin in 1982, in Stoke-on-Trent, England. Young Robert Williams is bad at football and mercilessly taunted. But there's no football in his DNA, he explains. There is cabaret.

He gets the performing itch from his father. When Sinatra appears on telly singing "My Way," little Robert jumps up to join Dad (Steve Pemberton, excellent) in singing along. But Dad cares more about performing than parenting, and one day just leaves home for good. Robert is raised by his mum and his adoring grandmother, who assures him he's a somebody, not a nobody.

Flailing

At 15, flailing in school, Robert auditions for Take That, the boy band, and somehow makes the cut. The band first covers the gay club circuit - until it emerges that girls go wild over these young men.

Director Gracey, who helmed "The Greatest Showman," is quite the showman himself, never more obviously than in a terrific musical sequence that chronicles the band's journey to success. Filmed to Williams' hit "Rock DJ" on London's Regent Street and featuring some 500 extras, the number starts with the boys hardly noticed by passersby, representing the start of their career. Gracey illustrates their rise to fame with explosive choreography, pogo sticks, scooters, London buses - all ending in a flash mob with hundreds dancing on the famed street.

And now, Robert is forever Robbie - his name changed by the band's shrewd manager, Nigel. "Where's my Robert gone?" asks his grandmother (a touching Alison Stead-

man), bewildered by the hype. "I'm a pop star now," he replies.

But fame brings all sorts of trouble for Robbie. Later, he will note that when you become famous, your age freezes - so he never graduates from 15. He sinks into depression and develops alcohol and cocaine habits.

But when the band kicks him out, his competitive fire is stoked: He's going to have a "massive" solo career. A woman overhears him saying this to himself at a New Year's party; she turns out to be Nicole Appleton, of the girl band All Saints. Another of Gracey's grand song and dance numbers ("She's the One") covers their troubled relationship, including an abortion.

Nicole ends up leaving Williams (for Liam Gallagher of Oasis), part of a miserable time for the singer, who manages to destroy most of his relationships. But he reaches a career pinnacle, performing at the storied Knebworth Festival to some 375,000 adoring fans.

Gracey punctuates shots of Williams performing with a violent, medieval-style battle between the singer and his demons - other (monkey) versions of him, essentially. It's another over-the-top sequence that makes this biopic radically different than most - if also a tad indulgent (and a bit too long).

But, hey, it's all in service of one thing. "Let me entertain you," Williams seems to be screaming through every scene. Mostly, he succeeds.

"Better Man," a Paramount release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association "for drug use, pervasive language, sexual content, nudity and some violent content." Running time: 135 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Variety

NEW YORK: Jim Nantz has called many signature events during his nearly 40 years at CBS Sports. He was to reach a milestone on Sunday, though, that only a few NFL announcers have accomplished.

Nantz will call his 500th NFL game when the Buffalo Bills host the Denver Broncos in an AFC wild-card round game.

According to CBS records, Nantz is the first person in CBS' storied NFL history to work 500 games as a play-by-play announcer. Pat Summerall did more than 500 games at CBS, but started as an analyst in 1962 after retiring from playing. He moved to play-by-play midway through the 1974 season.

"That's a lot of games. It's just staggering," Nantz said. "With the historic relationship between the league and CBS that no one else can boast about and to think I have been given the blessing of calling more NFL games play-by-play than anyone in the network's history, it's meaningful and something that resonates for me."

Nantz will be the eighth NFL TV play-by-play announcer to reach 500 games, but only the second with all of his games at one network.

Kenny Albert, who has done games since Fox got the NFL in 1994, reached the milestone on Oct. 13 when the Cleveland Browns faced the Philadelphia Eagles.

According to research from the 506 Sports Archive, Al Michaels, Dick Stockton, Don Criqui, Summerall, Kevin

Harlan and Charlie Jones, are also part of The 500 Club.

Joe Buck is at 494 going into Monday night's NFC wild-card game between the Minnesota Vikings and Los Angeles Rams in Arizona.

Sunday will be Nantz's 69th playoff game, including seven Super Bowls and 20 AFC championship games.

Last week's Week 18 contest in Denver between the Broncos and Kansas City Chiefs was his 431st regular-season game.

Nantz's first NFL game for CBS was on Oct. 16, 1988, when he called the Indianapolis Colts' 35-31 victory over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers with Pat Haden. He called seven games between 1988 and '90 before being added to the regular rotation of announcers in 1991. In 1993, he was part of the network's No. 2 crew calling games with Randy Cross, and

worked the NFC divisional round game between the Dallas Cowboys and Green Bay Packers on Jan. 16, 1994.

That would be the last NFL game Nantz would call for a while, though, as CBS lost the NFL rights to Fox.

CBS regained the rights to the league beginning with the 1998 season, but Nantz would not return to the booth until 2004. He hosted "The NFL Today" for six seasons (1998 through 2003). (AP)

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A saleswoman packages Dubai chocolate at a shop in Ankara, Türkiye, Jan. 8, 2025. (Xinhua)

Pistachio and chocolate fusion wins over consumers

Dubai chocolate sparks frenzy in Türkiye

ANKARA, Jan 12, (Xinhua): In Türkiye, a country famous for its sweets and desserts, a new treat has captured the nation's palate: the Dubai chocolate. Filled with pistachios and shredded phyllo dough, this confection has become a sensation that consumers are eager to indulge.

Renowned worldwide for its delicacies such as Baklava and Lokoum, Türkiye has embraced this new trend since late last year. The craze for the Dubai chocolate is ubiquitous, from high-end patisseries to budget supermarkets.

"People have shown great interest in this chocolate bar. I think that customers are, first and foremost, intrigued by this blend of phyllo dough and chocolate," said Eylül Tabay, a young baker from the capital city of Ankara.

When the craze started a couple of months ago, long queues formed outside the Cumhuriyet Lezzet Duyası bakery and patisserie, where Tabay prepares the treats, with buyers eager to get their hands on the crunchy bars.

"For many weeks, we have sold out all of our pro-

duction because of the great demand," Tabay said.

The Dubai chocolate's use of knafeh, a crispy shredded phyllo pastry commonly found in Turkish and Middle Eastern desserts, and pistachio, strongly appeals to local palates, explained the baker.

In Tabay's view, the craze surrounding this candy bar is, first and foremost, a fashion.

The Dubai chocolate, a distinctive treat featuring a chunky, hand-decorated chocolate bar filled with unique flavors, with its signature being a luxurious pistachio cream, was reportedly created in 2021 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) by a female entrepreneur, and quickly gained popularity thanks in part to social media influencers sharing videos of themselves degustating these treats and offering comments.

Its success has inspired numerous imitators worldwide, including Türkiye, where major chocolatiers have produced their variety of the viral chocolate bar.

Despite being pricier than standard chocolate bars, its popularity shows no signs of slowing down for the moment in Türkiye.

"There is knafeh and chocolate in this bar, and this

creates a great taste; I love it!" Sema Emiroglu, a customer, told Xinhua after purchasing five big bars for her family.

"The use of pistachios, knafeh, and chocolate in the same bar is very appealing and tasteful," she noted with a smile.

The frenzy has prompted Turkish officials to look for pistachio imports in response to the significant surge in demand, even though Türkiye is already one of the world's top pistachio producers.

According to a recent report by the semi-official Anadolu News Agency, to satisfy the rise in local demand for pistachios, the Ministry of Trade has begun assessing the situation and exploring avenues to facilitate imports from neighboring Syria, another big producer for pistachios.

Aylin Oney Tan, one of Türkiye's leading food writers, told Xinhua that the success of this new chocolate trend comes mainly from its texture.

"The Dubai chocolate brings together two great taste champions: everyone's favourite combo of chocolate and pistachios," Tan said.

Culture



A Goshuin stamp at the Tsuruokaoka Shrine in Kamakura, Japan.



A Goshuin stamp at the Katori Shrine in Chiba Prefecture, Japan.



Various designs of Goshuin books.



KUNA photos
Japanese people visit a temple on New Year's Day.

Goshuin ... Japan's original stamp rally

Japan has a tradition of pilgrimage, in which people visit certain groups of sacred places and complete stamp-collection notebooks. It is Japan's original stamp rally, which has been a popular activity from about 1,000 years ago. Goshuin is a seal stamp and calligraphy

available in special notebooks called "goshuin-cho" at some shrines and temples. "Go" is an honorific, and "shuin" is a vermilion red seal.

Visitors usually donate several hundred Japanese yen (a few US dollars) to obtain one goshuin. In return, the shrine or temple offers

its name and the date of visit beautifully written by hand with a red seal.

The goshuin originated in the 13th century as a receipt stamp for a sutra copy dedicated by worshippers. Today, visitors collect goshuin simply commemorating their visits. (KUNA)

Film

'I'm Still Here' tells powerful family story

Brazilian drama moves audiences

NEW YORK, Jan 12, (AP): In movies, political resistance often takes the form of protest, hunger strike or armed uprising. But in Walter Salles' "I'm Still Here," it comes in the shape of a defiant smile.

The film stars Fernanda Torres as Eunice Paiva, the wife of Rubens Paiva, a former leftist Brazilian congressman who, at the height of the country's military dictatorship in 1971, was taken from his family's Rio de Janeiro home and never returned.

But the focus of "I'm Still Here," based on the memoir by Paiva's son Marcelo, is Eunice, the mother of five who was left to remake their family's life with neither her husband nor any answers for his disappearance. It unfolds as a portrait of a different kind of political resistance - one of steadfast endurance. Eunice refuses the military dictatorship's attempt to break her and her family. When, in one scene, Eunice and her children - by then long without their disappeared father - pose for a newspaper photograph, she tells them to smile.

"The smile is a kind of resistance," Torres says. "It's not that they're living happily. It's a tragedy. Marcelo recently said something that Eunice said that I had never heard: 'We are not a victim. The victim is the country.'"

"I'm Still Here," which opens in theaters Jan. 17, is a profoundly moving story of family life and political oppression. It's a deeply Brazilian story, made by one of the country's most acclaimed directors (Salles' films include "Central Station" and "Motorcycle Diaries") and starring the daughter of one of the country's greatest stars, Fernanda Montenegro. She appears late in the film as the older Eunice.

But "I'm Still Here" has taken on added meaning in Brazil and beyond. The film was released on the heels of the presidency of former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who Brazilian federal police last year reported attempted a coup in 2022 to stay in power. (Bolsonaro, who has admirably called the 1964 military coup "Liberty Day," has denied any involvement.) In the years that Salles developed the film, he saw numerous other countries, and their citizens, reckoning with the rise of strongmen political leaders.

"When we started to develop the project seven years ago, it was truly about trying to bring light to a past that wasn't sufficiently focused by Brazilian cinema," says Salles. "Then, little by little, the political situation shifted to the point that we realized the film was about our present, and also about our future."

Those reverberations, and the film's acute sense of humanity, has made "I'm Still Here" a box-office sensation at home and a celebrated Oscar contender in the U.S. At Sunday's Golden Globes, Torres won best actress in a drama over a starry field of nominees including Angelina Jolie and Nicole Kidman. "I'm Still Here" is Brazil's Oscar submission.

To Torres, Eunice Paiva is a heroine of Greek dimensions: a Penelope for modern times who won't let the spirit of her family die.

"She's a great guide, this character, for nowadays," Torres says. "It's not about should we be to the right or to the left. It's about humanity. It's about the endurance of the family."

For Salles, the story of the Paivas is particularly personal. Growing up in Rio, he was friendly with one of their children and often visited their teeming, music-filled home.

"I remember a house where the door

was always open - very unlikely under military dictatorship," says Salles. "The windows were always open. Every time I went there, I met people I had never met before. It was a place to which people drifted. Later, I realized this was the Brazil I wanted to live in."

The 59-year-old Torres, whose father was the actor Fernando Torres, grew up during the dictatorship that lasted until 1985. Her first memories of life under it are of her parents nervously preparing to perform plays for the government censor, who could - and sometimes did - cancel a production days before opening.

History

Eunice in some ways reminded Torres of her own mother. Both mother and daughter had a history with Salles. One of Montenegro's most famous roles was her Oscar-nominated performance in Salles' "Central Station." The 95-year-old Montenegro is the first and only Brazilian nominated for best actress; her daughter could be the second.

Torres had acted in earlier Salles' films, "Foreign Land" (1994) and "Midnight" (1998). But she had in recent years starred in popular TV series and written a novel. When Salles sent her the script for "I'm Still Here," she imagined he was just looking for feedback from a

friend. For Salles, though, it ultimately mattered that "I'm Still Here" would be, like its story, a family affair.

"It touched on something so personal that, more than anything else, I needed allies with her sensibility and intelligence and talent to reach the end of the journey," says Salles.

Salles, guided by his own memories, sought to recreate the lively atmosphere of the Paiva home, where art and movies were freely discussed and someone was usually running out to Ipanema Beach. "I'm Still Here" follows the tragedy of what happens to the Paiva family and this home, but the movie is sustained by the warmth the Paivas fostered despite the military regime.

"We cooked in that house, to the point where Marcelo, the first time he entered the house, said, 'It smells like my house,'" says Salles. "It was really about not trying to create a fictional family but more about inviting the spectator to spend time with a family I had met personally. It was about capturing life happening."

Salles' melodrama-free treatment of the story - another deviation from typical films of political resistance - took adjusting to. The one scene in which Torres, as Eunice, cried, Salles cut. The actress estimates she has just one close-up in the entire film.

"When we were doing it, I was like, 'Is it going to be good? It's so simple,'" says Torres. "When I watched it for the first time, I couldn't remember when I started to cry."

Instead of following familiar story beats, "I'm Still Here" unfolds with time, as Eunice refuses to allow the Paiva family's grief to be the defining factor of their lives. Her resistance is stubborn perseverance. It took her 25 years to get a government-issued death certificate for her husband. Finally, in 2014, a National Truth Commission report detailed the killing or disappearing of 434 people by the military regime, with tens of thousands more tortured.

"This may have to do with today's world. We are faced with losses and the angst of times we don't fully know what's going to happen. Will someone knock on your door?" Salles says. "If you somehow sense the magnitude of joy at some point, this may be how you find the inspiration to resist."

Conservation message

Albatross reality show wows global audience

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Jan 12, (AP): It's a reality show about a loving couple waiting to welcome their new arrival, watched by thousands of ardent fans. But the stars of Royal Cam, now in its 10th season, aren't socialites or hopefuls in love but northern royal albatrosses - majestic New Zealand seabirds with 10-foot (3-meter) wingspans.

The 24-hour livestream of the birds' breeding season at Taiaroa Head - a rugged headland on New Zealand's South Island - was established to raise awareness of the vulnerable species, numbers of which have grown slowly over decades of painstaking conservation measures.

Millions have watched the stream since it began in 2016.

"Before that, it was very difficult to follow an albatross' life cycle because they're only on land 15% of the time," said Sharyn Broni, a Department of Conservation ranger who has worked with the birds for nearly three decades. "You'd have to travel a long way to see one."

But Royal Cam's popularity exploded during the coronavirus pandemic. On a busy comments page hosted by New Zealand's Department of Conservation, devoted fans track the birds' locations on an app, discuss significant moments and even create art inspired by the albatross.

Albatross

The show's premise is simple: Each season, conservation rangers select an albatross couple as that year's stars. A camera on the remote headland follows the chosen birds as they lay and incubate an egg, before their chick hatches around February, grows to adult size, and finally takes flight.

Unlike human reality shows, drama is rare: Royal albatrosses usually mate for life. Rangers selecting the birds to follow each "season" avoid anything controversial: no first-time parents and no aggressive or grumpy personalities.

This year's stars are RLK, a 12-year-old male, and GLG, a 14-year-old female, who have raised two chicks

before. Their names are derived from the colors on bands that rangers attach to their legs.

"They're a youngish pair, but not so young that they don't know what they're doing," Broni said.

Action unfolds slowly, which for many fans is the joy of it. Clouds drift by, ships pass in the distance and the sun sets in glowing pinks and peaches. During January, incubation season, an albatross sits on an egg.

But regular watchers anticipate certain moments: About once every 10 days, the second bird in the pair returns from feeding at sea to relieve the parent looking after the nest. Other fan highlights include albatross crash landings, mating dances and the appearances of rangers or the feathered stars of previous seasons.

Mysterious

France Pilière, an artist who lives in Montreal, has never visited New Zealand. But during the pandemic she discovered Royal Cam, fell in love with the "mysterious" creatures, and became a daily viewer.

"You see the birds and all their adventures and their lives, struggling to raise their chicks," she said.

Pilière stayed, too, for the global community of posters. Unlike much of the internet, the nearly 75,000 comments on the Royal Cam viewing page are uniformly encouraging and educational.

"We care about these people," Pilière said of her fellow posters. "If one is on a flight to New Zealand, everyone is waiting to hear their comments."

The past two breeding seasons were the birds' most successful ever, with 33 chicks each year. There are more than 60 breeding pairs at the colony - conservation measures began in 1937 with one pair.

Progress is unhurried because the northern royal albatross lives long and slowly; after their first flight, chicks stay at sea for 4 to 10 years - traveling up to 118,000 miles a year - then spend about three years choosing a mate. They live until around 40.



Conservation rangers Sharyn Broni, left, and Colin Facer weigh an albatross at Taiaroa Head, New Zealand on June 18, 2024. (AP)

Variety

LONDON: Ed Sheeran wants people to take music in schools seriously.

The British singer-songwriter has set up a foundation to ensure that kids in the UK get access to "high-quality" music education.

Sheeran started writing songs from a young age, after encouragement from a teacher, and says he wants to help plug the gap left by reduced arts funding. To support the launch of the foundation, the Grammy-winner is visiting schools and youth groups in Cardiff, Coventry, Edinburgh and Belfast.

Addressing a group of pupils in Wales on Thursday, alongside his songwriting partner Amy Wadge, Sheeran said that music should be treated as a legitimate career option.

"Britain has this sort of thing where it's pushing people towards

being bankers or like working in tech or finance or like all this sort of stuff," said Sheeran.

"We've basically just come here today being like, 'We've done it. We both came from state school education and all that takes is you guys having confidence built in you by the teachers around you,'" he added. (AP)

NEW YORK: Grab a drink and juice, Snoop Dogg is hosting the next episode of NFL Honors.

He's sure to be the life of the party.

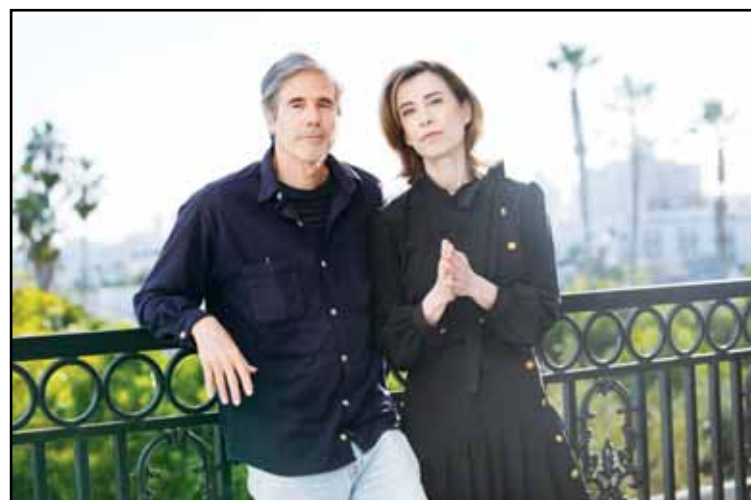
Snoop Dogg will take center stage at the Saenger Theater in New Orleans for the primetime awards show that recognizes the NFL's best players, performances and plays from the 2024 season. The annual event will take place Feb. 6, three days before the Super Bowl.

Keegan-Michael Key hosted the event last year. The league turned to Snoop Dogg in hopes of more of an emcee than.

The entertainment icon has sold more than 40 million albums worldwide. He's reached No. 1 countless times on Billboard charts internationally and recently served as a coach on NBC's "The Voice." (AP)



Sheeran



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

Kuwait enhances cancer detection training

CAN campaign highlights thyroid cancer as treatable disease

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Cancer Awareness Network (CAN), Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh, has reported that 158 cases of thyroid cancer have been recorded in Kuwait, based on data from the Kuwait Cancer Control Center.

While this type of cancer is more prevalent among women than men, Dr. Al-Saleh emphasized its high curability, with recovery rates exceeding 95 percent when detected early.

Speaking during the launch of the annual campaign to raise awareness about thyroid cancer, titled 'Care, Health, and Wellness', Dr. Al-Saleh underlined the critical role of public awareness in identifying risk factors and early signs of cancer.

He also stressed on the importance



Photo by Momammed Morsi
Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh (right) CAN chairman and Dr. Iman Al-Shammari, CAN's campaign manager and board member.

of guiding individuals on where to seek help and medical advice.

Dr. Al-Saleh highlighted the efforts of CAN in enhancing skills of

healthcare professionals in cancer detection.

Since the inception of its training programs, the network has achieved the following:

■ 1,656 primary care physicians and 1,617 dentists trained on early detection of head, neck, and thyroid cancers.

■ 2,843 nursing staff trained in effective communication with cancer patients and their families.

These programs ensure that medical professionals are equipped with the latest knowledge and tools for early diagnosis and treatment.

He disclosed, CAN has partnered with the Ministry of Education to instill awareness among young women saying the initiative includes training 172,000 secondary school students on breast cancer self-examination techniques and training 200 physical education teachers to serve as train-

ers, further expanding the program's reach.

Dr. Al-Saleh emphasized that these initiatives are vital in promoting a culture of health awareness across society.

Dr. Iman Al-Shammari, CAN's campaign manager and board member, noted that thyroid cancer awareness efforts originated as part of head and neck cancer campaigns.

Over time, the focus shifted to thyroid cancer, with public outreach conducted through various channels such as lectures and awareness brochures; interactions in malls, hospitals, and health centers and direct communication with patients and primary care physicians to address early signs of the disease.

The following are the key facts of the thyroid cancer:

■ Prevalence: Thyroid cancer is the fourth most common cancer in

Kuwait and ranks second among women after breast cancer.

■ Symptoms: Early stages are often asymptomatic. However, as the disease progresses, symptoms such as neck swelling, voice changes, or difficulty swallowing may appear.

■ Prognosis: Most types grow slowly and are highly treatable with appropriate medical care.

Dr. Al-Shammari emphasized that the cornerstone of combating cancer lies in raising awareness. "After years of efforts, we are witnessing the positive impact of these initiatives," she said, expressing hope for continued progress in the fight against thyroid cancer.

The "Care, Health, and Wellness" campaign aims to build on this momentum, promoting early detection and empowering the community with knowledge to combat cancer effectively.



Fish swim around brain coral deep below ocean at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary in the Gulf of Mexico, Sept 16, 2023. (AP)

Assumes ICRI Secretariat role

Saudi Arabia takes charge of coral reef conservation

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, Jan. 12. (AP): Saudi Arabia has officially assumed the Secretariat of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) for its 14th term, marking a significant milestone in global coral reef conservation. ICRI represents 102 members including 45 countries that are custodians of 75% of the world's coral reefs.

The Kingdom's leadership for this three-year term was confirmed by ICRI members during the 38th General Meeting in September 2024, succeeding the United States. Saudi Arabia will lead this historic role through the General Organization for the Conservation of Coral Reefs and Turtles in the Red Sea (SHAMS). The virtual handover ceremony featured distinguished attendees, including Ambassador Peter Thomson, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, along with representatives from IUCN, UN Environment Program, NOAA, the US Department of State and other distinguished entities.

Coral reefs, which sustain 25% of the world's marine biodiversity, contribute an estimated US\$9.9 trillion annually in goods and services, highlighting their immense ecological and economic value.

ICRI members are working under Saudi Arabia's leadership to develop the 2025-2027 Action Plan. The plan aims to expand membership to include 90% of the world's coral reefs, integrating resilient reef management into global policies and enhancing national biodiversity strategies. Key priorities include boosting the blue economy, advancing reef monitoring with innova-

tive technologies, and utilizing insights from the upcoming "Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025" report. Other notable initiatives include the launch of ICRI's Youth Strategy, strengthening collaboration in the Red Sea, South Asia and East Africa regions, and raising global awareness through major events such as the UN Ocean Conference.

This milestone underscores Saudi Arabia's commitment to environmental stewardship, aligning with Vision 2030's ambitious sustainability goals and economic diversification strategy. It also complements the recently launched National Strategy for Red Sea Sustainability, announced by H.R.H. Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, which reinforces the Kingdom's dedication to conserving the Red Sea's unique marine ecosystems and creating a sustainable blue economy.

Dr. Khaled Asfahani, CEO of SHAMS and Chair of ICRI, emphasized the significance of this role: "Saudi Arabia's role as ICRI Secretariat underscores our unwavering commitment to a sustainable future for coral reefs worldwide. We are deeply grateful to ICRI members for their trust and recognition in selecting Saudi Arabia to lead this critical global initiative. Through this leadership, we aim to set new benchmarks in coral reef conservation, leveraging science, innovation, and collaboration to drive both national and international initiatives. Our goal is to protect these vital ecosystems, ensuring their resilience for future generations while maintaining their invaluable contributions to the global economy."

Longevity

Australia bans junk food ads

CANBERRA, Jan. 12. (Xinhua): South Australia (SA) has become the first Australian state to ban junk food advertisement on public transport to tackle obesity and promote healthy diet.

The ban, to be effective on July 1, 2025, prohibits images of unhealthy products such as chocolate, lollies, confectionary, deserts, ice creams, soft drinks and chips from appearing on public buses, trains and trams.

Strong evidence has demonstrated that food and drink marketing can affect a child's nutrition knowledge, food preferences and consumption patterns; obesity and type 2 diabetes have also been linked to the advertisement of unhealthy food and drinks, experts said on Saturday.

"Junk food marketing has a really powerful, persuasive influence on what our children eat," the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) quoted Jane Martin from the Food for Health Alliance as saying.

"It is very important that advertisements are kept under state control because this advertising builds up, it's not just on TV and digital platforms, it is where children are as they commute to school," Martin said, adding that children are bombarded with this set of fast-food marketing everywhere they go, and it would be great if broccoli and carrots were promoted above fast-food deals.

Physical activity: Chinese researchers have recently uncovered the links between physical activity, sedentary behavior, and their impacts on longevity and age acceleration, supporting the advice to "sit less and move more" for healthy longevity.

Researchers from Sun Yat-sen University selected 20,924 Chinese participants aged 50 or above from the Guangzhou Biobank Cohort Study and gathered data on their physical activity and sedentary behavior through questionnaires.

Upon analyzing the relationships between physical activity and longevity, they discovered that moderate physical activity, compared to low levels, is associated with a higher likelihood of longevity, with a 56 percent increased chance.

No new infectious diseases in China

HMPV infections decline in China

BEIJING, Jan 12. (Agencies): The rate of infections with the flu-like human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in northern China is declining, a health official said Sunday, amid some international concern over a potential pandemic.

HMPV, which belongs to the same family as the respiratory syncytial virus, causes flu or cold-like symptoms including fever, cough and nasal congestion. The symptoms often clear up by themselves, though they can cause lower respiratory tract infections among children, older adults and those immunocompromised.

"The human metapneumovirus is not a new virus, and has been with humans for at least several decades," said Wang Liping, a researcher at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, during a press briefing by China's National Health Commission.

Wang added that the increase in recent years in the number of cases of the virus, first detected in the Netherlands in 2001, is due to better detection methods.

"At present, the rate of positive cases in human metapneumovirus detection is fluctuating, and the rate of positive cases in northern provinces is declining, and the rate of positive cases among patients aged 14 and below has started to decline," she said.

Concerns surfaced in recent days over a surge in HMPV infections in northern China after images circulated online of hospitals overrun with masked patients. The World Health Organization said it has not received reports of unusual outbreaks in China or elsewhere.

Experts say HMPV is unlike COVID-19 in that it has been around for decades and there is some built-in im-



Gao Xinqiang, deputy director of the Department of Medical Emergency Response of the health commission, (right), speaks next to Wang Liping, researcher for the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention during a press briefing by the National Health Commission as concerns surging in recent days over a surge in human metapneumovirus (HMPV) infections in northern China after images circulated online of hospitals overrun with masked patients, in Beijing, Sunday, Jan. 12. (AP)

munity to it. Most children are infected with the virus by the age of 5.

Wang said respiratory diseases currently affecting people in China are caused by known pathogens, and no new infectious diseases have emerged.

The number of patients in fever clinics and emergency departments across the country has been rising but is still generally lower compared to the same period last year, said Gao Xinqiang, deputy director of the Department of Medical Emergency Response of the health commission.

"There is no obvious shortage of medical resources," Gao said.

Flu infections across the country

are expected to gradually decline in mid-to-late January, said commission spokesperson Hu Qiangqiang.

There are no vaccines or drugs available for HMPV. Experts recommend precautions against catching the virus and other respiratory diseases including washing one's hands regularly, avoiding crowds if possible, and wearing a mask in crowded places.

There are no new infectious diseases in China, and the current respiratory infectious diseases in the country are all caused by known pathogens, according to an expert with the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC).

Animal transports banned

Foot-and-mouth disease detected in Germany

BERLIN, Jan 12. (AP): Animal transports were banned in a state surrounding Berlin on Saturday and the capital's two zoos closed as a precaution after foot-and-mouth disease was detected in a buffalo herd just outside the city, Germany's first outbreak for more than 35 years.

Authorities in Brandenburg state, which surrounds Berlin, said on Friday that a farmer found three of a 14-strong herd of water buffalo dead in Hoerow, just outside the capital's city limits. Germany's national animal health institute confirmed that foot-and-mouth disease had been detected in samples

from one animal, and the rest of the herd was slaughtered. It wasn't clear how the animals were infected.

A 72-hour ban on transporting cows, sheep, goats and other animals such as camels and llamas in Brandenburg went into force Saturday. Berlin's two zoos closed starting Saturday as a preventive measure. Their management noted in a statement that while the virus isn't dangerous to humans, it can stick to their clothing and be transmitted.

Authorities said that around 200 pigs at a farm in Ahrensfelde, near where the outbreak was detected, would be

slaughtered as a precaution. Foot-and-mouth disease is caused by a virus that infects cattle, sheep, goats, swine and other cloven-footed animals. While death rates are typically low, the disease can make animals ill with fever, decreased appetite, excessive drooling, blisters and other symptoms.

The virus spreads easily through contact and airborne transmission and can quickly infect entire herds. People can spread the disease though things like farming equipment, shoes, clothing and vehicle tires that have come into contact with the virus.

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SPORTS

Morant delivers in final seconds as Grizzlies edge Timberwolves

Booker scores 34, Suns never trail in defeating Jazz

MINNEAPOLIS, Jan 12, (AP): Ja Morant made a tiebreaking jumper with 18 seconds left, Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 33 points and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 127-125 on Saturday night in a game that was tight from start to finish.

Morant finished with just 12 points, but he had the tying basket with 54 seconds to go before his 11-footer for the lead. Desmond Bane had 21 points for Memphis, going 4 for 8 from 3-point range.

Anthony Edwards missed two 3-pointers in the final 7.3 seconds of a game in which neither team led by more than six and featured 25 lead changes.

Donte DiVincenzo scored a season-high 27 points for Minnesota. Jaden McDaniels added 21 and Edwards scored 15 for the Wolves, whose three-game winning streak ended.

Suns 114, Jazz 106

In Phoenix, Devin Booker scored 34 points and the Phoenix Suns never trailed in a victory over the Utah Jazz.

Booker had 22 points in the first half on 7-of-8 shooting, including 4 of 5 from 3-point range. He finished 12 for 20 overall and 6 for 12 from behind the arc.

Kevin Durant scored 25 points for



Phoenix Suns guard Bradley Beal (3) battles with Utah Jazz center Micah Potter (25) for a rebound during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Phoenix. (AP)

the Suns, who led by as many as 16 points but struggled to put away the Jazz, who dropped their third in a row, until the fourth quarter. Grayson Allen had 14 points, nine in the final period.

The Suns have won three of four since coach Mike Budenholzer reorganized the Suns' rotation with Bradley Beal coming off the bench. Ryan Dunn moved into the Suns' lineup at forward.

Lauri Markkanen led the Jazz with 24 points and Collin Sexton had 20.

The Suns beat the Jazz for the third time this season. Walker Kessler had 16 points and 13 rebounds for Utah,

and former Sun Drew Eubanks also had 11 rebounds.

Heat 119, Portland 98

In Portland, Tyler Herro had 32 points, including seven 3-pointers, and the Miami Heat downed the Portland Trail Blazers.

Nikola Jovic added 21 points and eight rebounds off the bench for the Heat, who have won three straight after a three-game losing streak.

Miami led by 20 points at the half but Portland closed the gap in the third quarter, getting within 68-64 on Anfernee Simons' off-balance jumper and free throw. Simons had 17 in the quarter and led the Blazers

with 28.

Miami took a 94-83 lead into the final quarter and led the rest of the way.

The Heat would not discuss the ongoing drama with forward Jimmy Butler, who is serving a seven-game team suspension for conduct detrimental to the team. Butler was suspended by the Heat on Jan. 3 after he suggested he wouldn't be able to find joy playing with Miami.

Portland, back home after a five-game road trip, played without Jerami Grant (facial contusion), Deandre Ayton (calf) and Robert Williams III (illness).

Pistons 123, Raptors 114

In Detroit, Cade Cunningham had 22 points, 17 assists and 10 rebounds, and the Detroit Pistons beat the Toronto Raptors.

Cunningham fell one assist of his career high, set on Dec. 16, and has the second-most triple-doubles in Pistons history.

Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 27 points for the Pistons, who have won nine of 11. Malik Beasley added 18. Immanuel Quickley had 25 points for Toronto, which has lost five straight and 16 of 17. Scottie Barnes had 16 points and 11 rebounds as Toronto had seven players score in double figures.

Quickley's jumper tied the game at 109 with five minutes left, but Toronto missed four straight free throws to allow Detroit to take a 113-109 lead on Cunningham's short jumper with 3:48 to play.



New Zealand's Nathan Smith appeals for the wicket of Sri Lanka's Charith Asalanka during the first ODI international cricket match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at the Basin Reserve, Wellington, New Zealand. (AP)

O'Rourke, Smith & Sears in squad

NZ names young pacers for the Champions Trophy

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Jan 12, (AP): Fast bowlers Lockie Ferguson and Ben Sears were recalled to New Zealand's 15-man squad on Sunday for the Champions Trophy next month in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.

Ferguson is no longer contracted to New Zealand Cricket and missed the home series against Sri Lanka which finished on Sunday, while playing in Australia's Big Bash League.

Sears was a traveling reserve for last year's Twenty20 World Cup but missed New Zealand's test series in India in November and the first half of the domestic season with a knee injury. He returned from injury on Thursday in a T20 match for Wellington province.

Sears, Will O'Rourke and Nathan Smith have been named to play at their first ICC tournament but Jacob Duffy, who was outstanding in the T20 and one-day international series against Sri Lanka, has been named as a traveling reserve.

"ICC tournaments represent the pinnacle of our game and it's a huge honor to be picked to represent your country at them," coach Gary Stead said.

"I'd especially like to acknowledge Ben, Nathan and Will, who will be attending their first senior ICC events and I know they're really excited to do so."

The pace attack is led by the experienced Matt Henry and Ferguson, who has played in two T20 and two ODI World Cups.

The experience of the squad is

also bolstered by captain Mitchell Santner, wicketkeeper-batter Tom Latham and former captain Kane Williamson, who played in the last Champions Trophy in 2017. Williamson also played in the 2013 edition.

Santner will be leading New Zealand to a major tournament for the first time. He offers a spin bowling option along with Michael Bracewell, Glenn Phillips and Rachin Ravindra.

The batting lineup is a strong one with Devon Conway, Will Young, Ravindra, Mark Chapman, Daryl Mitchell and Williamson providing depth and experience.

"Although the Champions Trophy hasn't been played for a few years, the team is well aware of the history of the tournament and the fact New Zealand were the first winners of the tournament in 2000 when it was known as the ICC KnockOut Trophy," Stead said.

"We're currently blessed with a lot of quality players and that certainly made for some challenging selection discussions. Ultimately, we've gone with the squad that will offer us the best options to perform well in the expected conditions in Pakistan and the UAE."

New Zealand will prepare for the tournament with a warmup tri-series against Pakistan and South Africa in Karachi and Lahore and a warmup match against Afghanistan in Karachi.

The Champions Trophy is contested by the top-eight ranked men's ODI teams in world cricket.

Macuga wins World Cup super-G race

ST. ANTON, Austria, Jan 12, (AP): Breakout star Lauren Macuga and comeback queen Lindsey Vonn made it a classic Sunday for the United States ski team.

Macuga's first World Cup race win - in a super-G where the 40-year-old Vonn impressed again in fourth - was no surprise to ski watchers who saw the 22-year-old American's fast-improving results.

Maybe now sponsors will catch up with a racer from what shapes to soon be the first family of the extended U.S. sk team.

Macuga raced with speed and style Sunday wearing a helmet that has a question mark on the front where a sponsor's brand could be.

The American was almost flawless on a course that caught out veterans like Federica Brignone and Lara Gut-Behrami, who made errors and knew crossing the finish line their times would not hold up.

Macuga won by 0.68 seconds - a huge winning margin in super-G - ahead of Stephanie Venier of Austria, with Brignone 0.92 back in third. Olympic champion Gut-Behrami was 1.26 back in fifth.

"I can't believe it, it's so excit-

ing," Macuga said. "I don't even think the nerves have settled in. I'm just waiting for it to hit me."

Vonn, in the third race of her surprise comeback season, trailed Macuga by 1.24 yet no one was faster down the steep middle section of the course.

"It was a crazy run today," Vonn said. "I'm also really proud of my teammate Lauren. It's really nice to be part of such a fun team. It's great to see another American on top of the podium."

Macuga stood course-side punching the air to salute her storied teammate's run. Vonn smiled broadly and held her arms out wide as the racecourse commentator praised her "unbelievable" run.

A half-hour earlier, Macuga had crossed the line and seeing her race-leading time put her right hand to her open mouth, waved both arms in the air and shrieked "Oh my God!"

Macuga was installed in the leader's box, wearing a bucket hat with stars and stripes, to watch Vonn start wearing the No. 31 bib, one day after an impressive sixth-place finish in downhill. Macuga had been ninth Saturday.

Chinese snowboarder Yang claims career first world cup gold in Austria

KREISCHBERG, Austria, Jan 12, (Xinhua): Chinese snowboarder Yang Wenlong won his first-ever FIS Snowboard Big Air World Cup victory, narrowly edging out Japan's Hasegawa Taiga.

In the men's event, Yang scored a total of 182.5 points, surpassing Hasegawa's 180.25 points to claim gold. Hasegawa's compatriot Kimura Kira rounded out the podium in third place with a score of 168.75.

The competition followed a three-run format, with the best two runs determining the final score. Yang entered the third run trailing Hasegawa by seven points but executed a near-perfect backside 180 with a Japan grab, earning 96.5 points. Hasegawa attempted to reclaim the lead with another high-difficulty trick but was unsuccessful.

This season's World Cup results are critical for qualification for the 2026 Milan Winter Olympics. Yang, who had previously claimed

bronze at the Beijing World Cup stop, expressed his determination to excel in each event to secure enough points for Olympic qualification.

"Winning a World Cup medal is a dream come true, it motivates me to keep pushing for my ultimate goal - the Winter Olympics," said Yang after the Beijing World Cup stop.

On the women's side, Austrian veteran Anna Gasser, 33-year-old, claimed gold with 167.75 points, followed by Japan's Iwabuchi Reira with 157.75 points and Britain's Mia Brookes in third with 148 points.

"To still be able to keep up with my younger competitors, it's such a great time for me... It's kind of proof that it was right to keep on going, that I'm still on the right path," Anna Gasser said.

China's 18-year-old rising star Zhang Xiaonan finished fourth in her first World Cup final appearance during her debut senior season.



Toronto Raptors forward Scottie Barnes (4) defends against Detroit Pistons forward Ausar Thompson (9) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Detroit. (AP)

Camara's right eye swollen from punches

Dubois dominates, retains title but bout ends in technical draw after head clash

SHEFFIELD, England, Jan 12, (AP): Caroline Dubois scored a first-round knockdown and retained her WBC lightweight title against Jessica Camara despite the bout ending in a technical draw due to an accidental clash of heads Saturday.

Dubois, whose older brother Daniel is the IBF

heavyweight champion, dominated in her first title defense, which ended just after the bell rang to start the third round.

Camara's right eye was swollen from punches and the Canadian was bleeding from a cut above her left eye - the result of an accidental clash of heads in the second round.

"I don't think she wanted it," Dubois said. "The blood wasn't coming in her face, it was coming around the side of her face - she didn't want it, man."

Dubois (10-0-1) was in full control when the referee called a timeout. The ringside doctor ruled that the 36-year-old Camara

(14-4-1) could not continue.

Because it was under four rounds, the bout was declared a technical draw.

Dubois immediately called for a fight against WBO champion Terri Harper.

"Terri Harper, that's who I want," she said.

Dubois said she wants to be the undisputed lightweight champion by the end of 2025. Beatriz Ferreira of Brazil holds the IBF belt, and the WBA belt is vacant.

Shane McGuigan, Dubois' trainer, said she has the talent to win titles at multiple weight classes.

"She's the best female fighter on the planet, by a mile," McGuigan said.



Boxer Caroline Dubois celebrates after the WBC World Lightweight Championship contest against Jessica Camara at the Canon Medical Arena, Sheffield, England. (AP)

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Al-Anaz takes the center stage at Atyab Al-Marshoud Championship

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Sahara Club knight and member of Kuwait's National Equestrian Team, Anaz Al-Anaz, claimed the championship title at the 11th edition of the Atyab Al-Marshoud International Championship. Organized annually by Waleed Al-Marshoud, the prestigious event brought together an elite lineup of knights and female riders from Kuwait, the Gulf region, and Europe, showcasing intense competition for the coveted title.

In the Grand Prix round, with a course height of 145 cm, Anaz Al-Anaz clinched first place with an impressive time of 35.71 seconds, finishing penalty-free in the differentiation round. He was followed by knight Ali Al-Kharafi, who recorded a faster time of 34.93 seconds but incurred four penalty points, placing him second. British knight Nick Channing secured third place, while Abdullah Al-Awadhi, Fawaz Rashid, and Madi Al-Khamis completed the top six rankings.

The champions were honored in a grand ceremony by the tournament's sponsor and Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee, Waleed Suleiman Al-Marshoud, alongside Vice Chairman and Tournament Director Marshoud Al-Marshoud, Bashar Abdullah, Director General of the General Sports Authority, and the Bahraini Ambassador to Kuwait, Salah Al-Maliki.

In other events, Ali Al-Kharafi triumphed in the medium prize round (135 cm), while Fatima Al-Khenaini claimed victory in the small prize round (125 cm).

Notably, Ali Al-Kharafi had secured the Grand Prix titles during the first two days of competition. However, it was Anaz Al-Anaz who emerged as the ultimate cham-



Al-Anaz celebrates with Atyab Al-Marshoud Championship title.

pion on the final day, winning the car awarded to the tournament victor.

Waleed Suleiman Al-Marshoud expressed his delight at the success of this year's tournament, which

coincided with the centennial celebration of Atyab Al-Marshoud's founding. Knight Marshoud Al-

Marshoud highlighted the overwhelming audience turnout at the Kuwait Equestrian Center, empha-

sizing the importance of community engagement in making the event a resounding success.

Atalanta gets tough month off to poor start with draw at Udinese

Relegation-threatened Cagliari holds Milan

MILAN, Jan 12, (AP): Atalanta got a tough month off to a poor start at Udinese as it could draw only 0-0 in Serie A.

It could have been worse for Atalanta had Alexis Sánchez not wasted a glorious opportunity to give Udinese the lead on the stroke of halftime.

The Chile forward headed a cross onto the right post and fired the rebound onto the underside of the crossbar from six meters out and with the goal gaping.

It was a woeful performance from Atalanta, which produced few chances and had goalkeeper Marco Carnesecchi to thank for a wonder save in the first half.

Atalanta next faces Juventus and then Napoli in Serie A. It also has Champions League matches against Sturm Graz and Barcelona this month.

Mike Maignan made a rare howler as Sérgio Conceição's first Serie A match as AC Milan coach ended 1-1 at home against relegation-threatened Cagliari.

Conceição steered Milan to the Italian Super Cup trophy after just over a week at the helm and the trophy was paraded to the fans before kickoff.

Milan took the lead in the 51st minute. Christian Pulisic hit the crossbar moments earlier and the United States international saw another shot go off the right post but Álvaro Morata was quickest to the rebound to tap it in from point blank range.

But Cagliari was level just four minutes later as Maignan - who made



AC Milan's Christian Pulisic, left, attempts a shot on goal during the Serie A soccer match between AC Milan and Cagliari at the San Siro stadium, in Milan, Italy. (AP)

a miraculous save in the first half - got his dive very wrong and was unable to push away Nadir Zortea's weak and scuffed effort.

Milan remained eighth, although it has played less matches than most of the other teams. Cagliari inched to within a point of safety.

Juventus fell to yet another Serie A draw as it was held at Torino to 1-1 in a derby match.

It was Juventus' sixth draw in sev-

en league matches. Both coaches were sent off early in the second half after an argument between them sparked a scuffle on the touchline.

Juventus took the lead in the eighth minute with a fantastic solo effort from Kenan Yıldız, who cut inside from the right, past two defenders, and drilled hard into the near bottom corner.

However, Torino levelled in first-

half stoppage time, also with a wonderful goal. Nikola Vlasic controlled Yann Karamoh's pass and smashed it in off the inside of the left post from the edge of the area.

Nikola Krstovic scored twice to help Lecce to what could prove to be a crucial 3-1 win at fellow struggler Empoli.

Lecce moved up to 13th, level with Empoli and three points above the relegation zone.

Kuwait and Poland flag football teams set for joint training camp

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The head of the Kuwaiti American Football Committee, Madi Al-Mutairi, has announced that Kuwait's national flag football team will host Poland's national team in a joint training camp set for mid-February. The camp will feature two friendly matches between the teams as part of Kuwait's preparations for the 2025 Asian Cup and its broader plan to compete in the qualifying rounds for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

Al-Mutairi highlighted that this initiative is part of the ongoing support from Sheikh Mishal Talal Al-Fahad, the founder of American football in Kuwait. He added that efforts are underway to coordinate with other advanced teams in the sport to organize additional friendly matches. These initiatives aim to provide valuable experience for Kuwait's players and enhance the sport's development in the country.

Expressing gratitude for Sheikh Mishal's contributions, Al-Mutairi



Al-Mutairi with Sheikh Mishal Al-Fahad

noted that his support and active involvement are instrumental in advancing the committee's long-term goals for upcoming international events.

Al-Sahel tops 1st Division League with 1-1 draw against Al-Shabab

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: Al-Sahel secured the top spot in the First Division League with four points after a 1-1 draw with Al-Shabab in the second round of the tournament. Meanwhile, "Sons of Ahmadi" earned their first point in the competition, placing fourth on the table.

In another match, Burgan claimed its first three points in the competition with a 2-0 victory over Al-Sulaibikhat, moving up to second place, while Al-Sulaibikhat remained in fifth and last place without any points.

Al-Jahra, with three points, did not participate in this round.



Players battling for the ball during first division league game.

Pyramids Club flight faces emergency return to Luanda



The stranded Pyramids Club players.

CAIRO, Jan 12: The Egyptian Pyramids Club experienced a serious air emergency during its return flight from Angola to Cairo, resulting in an emergency evacuation at Luanda Airport.

Sources close to the club reported that the plane encountered severe turbulence and a drop in cabin air pressure, causing some mission members, including players and technical staff, to faint.

The flight, which had departed Angola for Cairo, was forced to return to Luanda Airport two hours after takeoff due to unpredictable weather fluctuations and turbulence.

The health of the mission members was promptly assessed, and medical care was provided, though no serious injuries were reported.

This incident has raised concerns about the safety of air travel in Africa, while the club awaits further announcements regarding the rescheduled flight.

In the match prior to the emergency, Pyramids secured a crucial victory over Sagrada in Angola, with Marawan Hamdi scoring the only goal to ensure Pyramids' historic qualification for the African Champions League quarter-finals.

Al-Arabi plays Al-Tadamon in Zain Premier League

Kuwait Club aims to bounce back against Al-Fahaheel

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The 11th round of the Zain Premier League kicked off with a thrilling match between Kuwait Club and Al-Fahaheel at 5:40 pm at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium.

Kuwait Club, leading the standings with 27 points, will look to bounce back from its first defeat of the season, a 1-2 loss to Al-Qadsiya in the previous round. This defeat allowed Al-Arabi to share the top spot, and now Kuwait Club, under the guidance of Montenegrin coach Nebojsa Jovic, cannot afford another slip-up if it is to retain its lead. Another loss could open the door for Al-Arabi to take the top spot if it wins against Al-Tadamon in the same round.

Although Kuwait Club triumphed 3-0 over Al-Fahaheel in the first half of the season, the "Whites" are aware that the current situation has changed, and the match will be much more challenging. Al-Fahaheel



Kuwait looks to return to winning ways.

has been performing well in recent rounds and will be a tough opponent.

Kuwait Club will be without midfielder Amr Abdel Fattah, who is serving a suspension after receiving a red card against Al-Qadsiya. How-

ever, Jovic can rely on a strong squad, with key players like Mohammed Daham, Bahraini international Mohammed Marhoon, Tunisian Yassin Al-Khenisi, Youssef Nasser, Reda Hani, Yahya Jabran, Ali Hus-

sein, Faisal Zayed, Fahad Al-Hajri, Malek Zola, Sami Al-Sanea, and Mishari Ghannam in defense.

Al-Fahaheel, currently fourth in the standings with 17 points, aims to take advantage of Kuwait Club's recent setback and improve its position in the league. A win tonight would propel Al-Fahaheel into third place, provided Al-Qadsiya falters against Al-Yarmouk tomorrow. The team will be motivated to avenge its earlier defeat to Kuwait Club and continue its push for a higher spot in the standings.

Syrian coach Firas Al-Khatib knows that securing a positive result against Kuwait Club will require significant effort from his players, particularly top scorer Vitor da Silva, who leads the competition with 11 goals. Al-Fahaheel will also rely on Abdul Mohsen Al-Ajmi, Brazilian William Barros, and Abdullah Mawi. However, the team will be missing key players due to injury, including Brazilian Rodrigo, Ahmed Al-Riyahi, and Mohammed Naeem.



Former Barcelona star and newly appointed head coach of Indonesia's national soccer team Patrick Kluivert speaks to the media during a press conference in Jakarta, Indonesia. (AP)

Sports

Blues poised for glory after intensive training

Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser inspires Kuwait handball team ahead of World Cup

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

ZAGREB, Jan 12: As part of the extensive support extended to Kuwait's national handball team ahead of their participation in the 2025 World Cup, Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser, Chairman of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, visited the team's training camp in Croatia. During his visit, Sheikh Fahad met with players, technical staff, and administrators to personally motivate and encourage them.

In his address to the players, Sheikh Fahad urged them to perform at a level that reflects the rich legacy of Kuwaiti handball. He emphasized the importance of representing Kuwait with high spirit and determination in this major international tournament, marking the team's return to the World Cup after a 14-year absence.

"Kuwaiti handball holds a distinguished reputation globally. These achievements are a testament to the unwavering support of our political leadership, led by 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," Sheikh Fahad stated.

Qaed Al-Adwani, Secretary of the Handball Federation and Head of the National Team's World Cup Mission, expressed gratitude for Sheikh Fahad's visit and support. He remarked, "This visit has a significant impact on the players, motivating them to give their all and represent Kuwaiti handball at its best on the global stage."

The Kuwaiti will compete in the 29th World Cup, hosted across Croatia, Denmark, and Norway from January 14 to February 2. Kuwait has been placed in Group 3, with matches scheduled in the Croatian city of Portitsch, alongside Qatar, France, and Austria.

The team's schedule begins with Austria on January 15, followed by France on January 16, and Qatar on January 18.

Kuwait's preparation included an external training camp in Croatia,



Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser poses with Kuwait handball team.

followed by another in Tunisia, before returning to Croatia for the final phase. The team is set for their last training session today ahead of the opening match against Austria.

This extensive preparation and high-level support aim to position Kuwait as a competitive force in the 2025 World Cup, rekindling its global presence in handball.

Habib advances in historic victory for Lebanon

Qinwen starts bid for another final on rainy Day 1 at Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 12, (AP): Hady Habib's history-making run at the Australian Open will continue after the first man to represent Lebanon in a Grand Slam singles tournament in the Open era became the first to win a match, defeating Bu Yunchaokete of China 7-6 (4), 6-4, 7-6 (6) on Sunday.

The 26-year-old Habib won three matches in qualifying rounds just to get into the field of 128 players.

Now he'll be one of the 64 to make it into the second round after his victory on Day 1 at Melbourne Park, which was achieved with the help of 61 winners, 36 more than his opponent.

Habib, who is ranked outside the top 200, was born in Houston, Texas; his father is Lebanese.

Habib went to Texas A&M University.

He represented Lebanon at the Paris Olympics last year, losing to four-time Grand Slam champion Carlos Alcaraz in the first round.

Zheng Qinwen's tennis resume is quite different from what it was when she showed up at the Australian Open a full year ago. No matter everything she accomplished in 2024 - a runner-up finish at Melbourne Park; an Olympic gold medal for China - she felt jitters before entering Rod Laver Arena on Sunday.

After overcoming some hiccups late in the opening set of her first-round match on a stormy Day 1 at the season's first major tennis tournament, Zheng came through with a 7-6 (3), 6-1 victory against Anca Todoni, a 20-year-old qualifier from Romania who has won one Grand Slam match in her career.

It was 12 months ago on Melbourne's hard courts that Zheng made it all the way to the final before losing to Aryna Sabalenka. The two-time champion began her bid for a third consecutive title with a 6-3, 6-2 victory over 2017 U.S. Open title winner Sloane Stephens.



Hady Habib of Lebanon plays a backhand return to Bu Yunchaokete of China during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Two of the first three men's contests to conclude both went five sets. Kei Nishikori, the 2014 U.S. Open runner-up, saved a pair of match points in the third set and came all the way back to

beat qualifier Thiago Monteiro 4-6, 6-7 (4), 7-5, 6-2, 6-3, while No. 6 Casper Ruud, a three-time finalist at majors, defeated Jaume Munar 6-3, 1-6, 7-5, 2-6, 6-1.

Nishikori, competing in Melbourne for the first time in four years after a series of hip, ankle and knee injuries, raised his arms and threw his head back, causing his black hat to fall off, after improving to 29-8 in five-setters, including 8-1 at the Australian Open.

Before her run in Australia last January, Zheng had only played in eight major tournaments, making one quarterfinal. Her big-hitting breakthrough opened a season in which she wound up with a gold draped around her neck at the Paris Games in August.

The 22-year-old Zheng's power-based game is best suited for hard courts, and playing indoors doesn't hurt, either, so she eventually was quite comfortable against Todoni under a closed retractable roof, while thunder and lightning and a serious downpour suspended action on the courts that can't be covered.

Still, Zheng frittered away set points while serving for the opener at 5-4, then was forced to save set points for Todoni later. Afterward, Zheng said that being nervous usually makes her focus better, but this time, it didn't

make "me play my best tennis out there."

Maybe that's because it was her first match of the season. Still, she was good enough on this day.

The second set was more one-sided, and Todoni took a medical timeout for treatment on her lower back after three games.

Zheng was among only a handful of players able to complete matches in the early going at what is now a 15-day tournament after a Sunday start was instituted last year.

No. 29 Linda Noskova was the first seeded player to exit the bracket, just a year after she stunned Iga Swiatek in Melbourne. Noskova lost 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 to Clara Tauson, while seeds who won Sunday included No. 11 Paula Badosa; No. 14 Mirra Andreeva, No. 18 Donna Vekic; and No. 30 Leylah Fernandez, the 2021 U.S. Open runner-up.

"To be able to play a match and to finish a match with a roof, it's much more easy than ... to stop with the rain," said the 20th-seeded man, Arthur Fils, who eliminated Otto Virtanen of Finland 3-6, 7-6 (4), 6-4, 6-4. "So, yeah, it's a nice treatment."

Kuwait dominates UAE jet ski championship with six titles



Kuwait jet ski team poses with its trophies.

DUBAI, Jan 12, (KUNA): Kuwait's Club of Sea Sports claimed six trophies across various categories in the first round of the UAE Jet Ski Championship held in Dubai.

Ibrahim Ramadhan, head of the Kuwaiti team, shared his thoughts with KUNA after the competition, highlighting the impressive return of international champion Yusuf Alabdulrazzaq, who secured third place in the

JB1 professional division.

Fares Ramadhan topped the JB4 category, while his teammate Fahad Al-Yaqoub took second place, and Fawaz Al-Mkaimi finished third. In the JB2ski category, Fares Ramadhan once again shone, earning second place. Additionally, in the junior's category, Yusuf Ramadhan placed third.



Players vie for the ball during Kuwait and Philippines match.

Kuwaiti women's futsal team falls to Philippines in qualifiers

TASHKEN, Jan 12: The Kuwaiti women's futsal team suffered a 1-4 defeat to the Philippines in its opening match of the third group stage of the qualifiers for the 2025 Asian Futsal Cup, held in Uzbekistan. Shurooq Basha scored Kuwait's only goal in the match.

Kuwait remains in fourth place in the group, with no points, trailing behind host Uzbekistan in third, the Philippines in second, and Australia in the lead. Australia secured a dominant 6-1 victory over Turkmenistan, who is at the bottom of the group.

In the second round, Kuwait will face Australia today at 4:00 pm.

Arab teams faced challenges on the opening day of the tournament. In the first group, held in Nonthaburi, Thailand, two Arab matchups ended in 1-1 draws: Bahrain against Lebanon and Iraq against Palestine.

The qualifiers will run until January 19, with nine teams advancing to the finals. The top three teams will secure spots in the first-ever 2025 Women's Futsal World Cup, which will be hosted by the Philippines.