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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Thank you Justice Minister, surely this is what is needed

THE basic characteristic of constitutional institutions, particularly the government and parliament, is their ability to adapt to global changes through societal development based on a modern legislative framework.

Unfortunately, this principle had not been fully implemented in Kuwait since its independence until recently. Over 900 laws have been enacted since 1962, many of which remain unchanged without undergoing any amendments. Others have been amended, often to become more stringent or to serve the interests of certain members of the National Assembly during specific terms or under the influence of certain governments in response to the desires of the majority of ministers. However, these

amendments have not benefited Kuwait, nor have they contributed to societal development or tackled the challenges facing the national economy.

As a result, Kuwait's legislative system requires a comprehensive overhaul to eliminate outdated laws that represent a burden on society and amend those that need modernization.

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Amir, accompanying delegation arrive in UK



His Highness the Amir arrives Tuesday in Scotland and is received by a representative of King Charles III of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

LONDON, Jan 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation arrived Tuesday in Scotland, the UK, at the personal invitation of King Charles III of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

His Highness the Amir was received at the airport by a representative of the King, along with a high-level welcoming delegation and Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK and Northern Ireland Abdullah Al-Munayekh.

His Highness the Amir is accompanied by an official delegation including Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, and senior officials at the Amiri Diwan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation departed Tuesday for Scotland, the UK at the personal invitation of King Charles III of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

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Former minister of interior gets 14 years, KD 20m fine

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The Ministerial Court has sentenced former Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled to seven years in prison and dismissed him from his position in connection with a Ministry of Defense case. An expatriate involved in the case was also sentenced to four years of imprisonment, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a separate ruling, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled was handed an additional seven-year prison term and fined approximately 20 million Kuwaiti dinars for charges linked to a Ministry of Interior case. The verdict highlights the government's commitment to addressing corruption and holding officials accountable for their actions.

3rd relief plane departs for Syria

Kuwait Embassy in Syria to reopen very soon: FM

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya revealed on Monday that the Kuwaiti Embassy in Syria would be re-opened "very soon".

Al-Yahya made the statement to reporters during a Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) ceremony, he attended and sponsored, that marked the passing of 20 years of launching the program of rehabilitating and training fresh engineers and architects.

The minister said there are ongoing preparations to visit Lebanon, renewing Kuwait's supportive position to the Syrian people.

Kuwait's aid to the Syrian people is increasingly ongoing, he noted. On March 15, 2012, a source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "in harmony with the GCC States' position and due to deteriorating security conditions in Syria, Kuwait decided to shut down its embassy in Damascus and ordered its diplomats to leave Syria."

In other news, the third relief plane departed to Damascus International Airport, Tuesday, carrying 35 tons of aid and medical supplies, as part of the "Kuwait by Your Side" humanitarian campaign.

Kuwait's Health Ministry and Red Crescent organized this relief plane in coordination with Ministries of Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Defense, represented by the Kuwaiti Air Force

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Relief Society, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Saleh, told KUNA before take-off that the relief plane comes from Kuwait's humanitarian role and demonstrates the nobility of its humanitarian message and its love and dedication to supporting and helping our brothers in all Arab and Islamic countries that are in need of support and assistance.

For his part, the treasurer of the Kuwait Relief Society, Eng. Jamal Al-Nouri,

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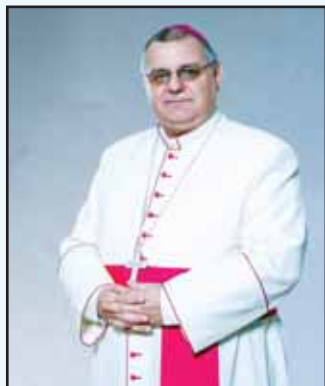
Kuwait a beacon of religious tolerance, co-existence among diverse communities

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The State of Kuwait, a conservative Muslim nation, is a shining example of religious tolerance and coexistence in the region, where diverse religious communities live side by side in harmony. This remarkable environment is a direct reflection of the vision and leadership of Kuwait, whose commitment to peace and inclusivity has shaped the nation's identity.

Under the guidance of the Ruling Family, the Kuwaiti government and with the support of its people, Kuwait has fostered an atmosphere where all religions are respected and freedom of worship is upheld.

The country's rich cultural fabric is woven with respect for differing



HE Bishop Aldo Berardi

beliefs, making it a beacon of tolerance and coexistence in the Gulf region. The steadfast dedication of the Kuwaiti leadership and its citizens to maintaining this peaceful coex-

istence ensures that Kuwait remains a safe haven for religious freedom and unity in the Arab world.

In an exclusive interview with the Arab Times newspaper, HE Bishop Aldo Berardi O.S.S.T., Vicar Apostolic of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia said, "The Middle East has always been a region of profound historical and cultural significance and the recent changes and conflicts have undoubtedly shaped its dynamics in unique ways. As a Church, we view these developments with both concern and hope."

"However, amid ongoing conflicts in the region, we also witness inspiring examples of resilience, dialogue, and solidarity among people of different faiths," he said.

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Housing support restored for revoked citizenship families

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: In response to a report published by Al-Seyassah under the title, "Construction payments halted for spouses of women whose Kuwaiti citizenship was revoked," under Article 8 of the Nationality Law, the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Housing,

Abdul Latif Al-Mishari, has directed the General Manager of the Credit Bank and the General Manager of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare to resume disbursing financial payments for credit bank loans to these individuals.

In a statement, the PAHW confirmed that the minister's directives align with the commitment to safeguarding the rights of those stripped

of citizenship, ensuring family stability and supporting housing welfare according to the relevant legal framework.

PAHW sources told the daily that Minister Al-Mishari has instructed the Credit Bank to simplify procedures for citizens affected by their spouses losing their citizenship.

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Body mix-up adds pain to tragic death of OFW

Philippines opens probe as family awaits true closure



His Highness the Prime Minister chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

PM Diwan photo

Cabinet declares Jan 30 public holiday in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): The Cabinet, in its weekly meeting held on Tuesday at the Amiri Airport under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, decided to suspend work across all ministries, government agencies, public authorities, and institutions on Thursday, January 30, in observance of the Isra and

Miraj anniversary. Official working hours will resume on Sunday, February 2.

A statement from the Council clarified that agencies with special work requirements will determine their holiday schedules in coordination with the relevant authorities, considering their operational needs and public interest.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The family of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) Jenny Alvarado, a domestic worker from Montalban, Rizal, was devastated after receiving the wrong remains from Kuwait. Alvarado's family discovered that the casket sent to them contained the body of her Nepalese co-worker instead, according to Philippine media reports.

Alvarado, along with her Sri Lankan and Nepalese coworkers, reportedly died from coal suffocation on January 2 after inhaling smoke from a heating system. However, the family raised concerns about potential foul play, claiming Alvarado's body showed signs of physical trauma, including bruising on her face and mouth.

The Philippine Embassy in Kuwait confirmed the deaths, while the Department of Migrant Workers has launched an investigation into the mix-up and is expediting the return of Alvarado's remains.

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration has also extended assistance to the grieving family.

Other Voices

The next four years: A precarious test for global resilience

By Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor
UAE Businessman

The world stands on the precipice of uncertainty as Donald Trump prepares to step back into the Oval Office on the 20th of January. His rhetoric, often provocative, has shifted from economic nationalism to what many analysts now see as a veiled expansionist agenda. In recent remarks, Trump floated the idea of annexing Canada, reclaiming control of the Panama Canal, renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America," and even acquiring Greenland. These declarations raise troubling questions: are they indicative of a broader shift, similar to Elon Musk's recent interference in German elections or Britain's evolving post-Brexit alignment with the United States? Are we witnessing the onset of a modern colonial era, or is



Al Habtoor

this another iteration of Trump's calculated bluster?

Trump's claims that he could have resolved the Russian-Ukrainian conflict underscore a paradox. On the one hand, he positions himself as a peacemaker. On the other, his actions and words point toward strategies that could escalate global tensions. His foreign policy agenda seems to disregard the sovereignty of nations, provoking alarm among allies and adversaries alike. The next four years will test not just America's standing but the resilience of the international community.

Trump's suggestion of annexing Canada was met with swift condemnation from Canadian leaders, who dismissed the notion as absurd and offensive. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau categorically rejected the idea, emphasizing the enduring sovereignty of Canada. Similarly, his comments about the Panama Canal have raised alarm in Latin America. The canal, a vital international trade route, has been under Panamanian control since 1999. Any suggestion of reclaiming it would not only violate international agreements but could destabilize the region.

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Day by Day

ENTERTAINMENT and openness projects play a vital role in the national economy. Closing the country under the pretext of security is baseless. If entertainment projects are fully developed, citizens and residents would no longer feel the need, with every holiday, to search for outbound flights to countries that offer joy, happiness and a culture of shared smiles.

These are nations that embrace optimism, all while enjoying safety and security. Achieving security has its own measures and it is not difficult to implement.

We are fortunate to have a decisive First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, capable of swift and effective decisions.

... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:20 Asr 14:51
 Sunrise .. 06:44 Maghrib .. 17:11
 Zohr 11:57 Isha 18:32

Local

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

By Day: Rather cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speed of 12-32 km/h.

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

Weather

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	Bubyan	Jahra	Falika Island	Salmiyah	Ahmadi	Jal Aliyah	Nuwaisib
Kuwait City	20	10	19	21	20	18	19	19	19
Kuwait Airport	20	09	19	21	20	18	19	19	19
Abdaly	20	07	21	21	20	18	19	19	19



Photo by Samer Shaqir

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya visits a stall at the ceremony.

FM praises program to train fresh engineers & architects

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya praised the outcomes of the program on rehabilitating and training fresh engineers and architects who have become "ambassadors of innovation and excellence".

Al-Yahya, also chairman of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), made the statement to reporters during a ceremony, he attended and sponsored, that marked the passing of 20 years of the program.

The 20-year program has constituted a platform that enabled young national efficiencies, he added, referring that more than

1,000 engineers graduated from this project. Meanwhile, the fund director general Waleed Al-Bahar said the training program is a main pillar of the institution's vision to enable Kuwaiti youth and rehabilitate them how to be the future leaders.

The program not only prepares engineers for markets but also helps them provide contributions to developing the country's institutions, he added.

The program has three phases, which lasts for one year, to help trainees how to develop their skills, he stated.

The fund launched the program in 2004 to upgrade national human resources and meet the needs of Kuwait's labor market.

Oman, Kuwait to forge ties with multiple new projects

Kuwait investment in Oman hits 2.163 billion: Al-Kharousi

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The Ambassador of Oman to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi says the Omani-Kuwaiti relationship had been marked by a variety of events and activities in the year 2024, which he described as a "golden year" with several significant milestones and events.

He said this during a press conference held at the embassy headquarters yesterday on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's assumption of power.

Ambassador Al-Kharousi affirmed that discussions are ongoing between Oman and Kuwait regarding future projects. He highlighted that Oman has projects in sectors such as renewable and clean energy, mining, and other industries within the Duqm Economic Zone.

The ambassador said, "These projects also include the automobile industry, which is open for investment from Kuwait. We also have major opportunities in the tourism sector, particularly in the Dhofar Governorate, which has been seeing a surge in tourism infrastructure projects, including resorts, hotels, cable cars, and more.

Kuwait is focusing on the food security sector, which is an important sector here joint projects are

currently being studied, including a fish farming venture between the Sultanate of Oman and Kuwait. While some projects are government-driven, others involve the private sector, which opens further opportunities for collaboration between businesses in both countries."

Ambassador Al-Kharousi stated, "There are projects currently being studied by both parties, with some driven by the government and others by the private sector.

The volume of investment and direct trade exchange between Kuwait and Oman reached 1.26 billion Omani riyals in 2023, while in 2024 up until the end of September, it amounted to 833 million riyals.

The trade exchange between the two countries in 2024 until October reached 1.564 billion Omani riyals, which marked a significant increase compared to 2023 with 877 million riyals, and 2022 with 281 million riyals in trade.

The trade exchange between Kuwait and Oman reached approximately USD 4.3 billion in the first ten months of 2024, which is nearly double compared to 2023.

Kuwait's direct investment in Oman amounted to USD 3.272 billion in 2023, and it reached USD 2.163 billion in 2024, up until the end of September."

Ambassador Al-Kharousi explained that the state visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad to Oman on February 6-7 included the inauguration of the Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries.

Managed and supervised by OQ8, a joint venture between OQ Oman Global Integrated Energy Company and Kuwait Petroleum International, the refinery has a daily production capacity of 230,000 barrels and an investment value of approximately USD 9 billion. It is regarded as one of the most advanced and largest refineries in the Middle East.

He went on to explain that the project marks a qualitative shift in the economic and investment cooperation between Oman and Kuwait, and exemplifies ideal cooperation within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Further complementing this major project is the petrochemical industries initiative, which is expected to commence soon, with a joint investment of around USD 7 billion. Also, the oil storage facility at Ras Markaz, with a capacity of 25 million barrels, is poised to become the largest oil storage site in the Middle East and among the largest in the world.

Ambassador Al-Kharousi highlighted Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said's state visit to Kuwait from May 13 to 14, during which the Omani-Kuwaiti Economic Forum was held and both sides reviewed opportunities to enhance investment and trade relations.



Saleh Al-Kharousi

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia declared successful

Informatics Award announces four winners for year 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award announced on Tuesday four winners of the 24th Informatics Award for the year 2024, from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia.

Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee of the Award Bassam Al-Shammari told KUNA that four participants from the pioneers of digital excellence won the award, two from the State of

Kuwait, one from Saudi Arabia and the other from Tunisia.



Al-Shammari

Al-Shammari explained that the winners from Kuwait were the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Gifted-

ness and Creativity (SACGC) affiliated to Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) and Bleems Company for Designing and Managing Websites, while the Saudi winner was Ministry of Municipalities and Housing and the Tunisian winner was Dr. Farouk bin Nouri Kamoun.

He explained that SACGC is a government agency distinguished by digital innovation and entrepreneurship, while Bleems is a lead-

ing Kuwaiti company in the Gulf electronic market, specializing in gifts and flowers, distinguished by electronic shopping and is a multi-channel digital platform.

The award was based on objective technical standards related to excellence in digital technologies and their uses, remarked Al-Shammari, indicating that many agencies and individuals from Kuwait and the Arab world competed for this award.



KUNA photo Undersecretary of the National Guard Lt Gen Engineer Hashem Al-Rifai receives the British First Defense Advisor and the accompanying delegation in the presence of senior officials.

'Kuwait pollution levels in desired limits, no risk to residents health'

By Enaas Awad

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The Head of the Kuwait Environment Protection Society, Dr. Wajdan Al-Aqab, has dismissed social media reports alleging that air pollution in Kuwait has reached dangerous levels, labeling them as completely false.

She clarified in an exclusive statement to Al-Seyassah that the Environment Public Authority (EPA) has not issued any warnings or statements in this regard.

Dr. Al-Aqab emphasized the importance of relying on official sources for information, such as the EPA's website, rather than foreign monitoring sites.

She pointed out that some of these foreign entities use air quality monitoring devices that are not calibrated for Kuwait's environment, resulting in inaccurate data and misleading indicators.

According to the EPA's official air quality monitoring application, e-MISK, current air quality levels in Ku-

wait are reported as good, with pollutant concentrations well below national standards.

Dr. Al-Aqab noted that while air pollution levels may occasionally rise due to the desert environment -- characterized by dust and dirt particles -- these remain within acceptable limits and pose no significant health risks.

She further explained that discrepancies arise because certain devices categorize dust particles as pollution, while EPA's monitoring stations differentiate between natural dust and harmful suspended materials.

When dust levels increase, the EPA issues targeted warnings for areas most affected, advising residents, particularly asthma sufferers, to take necessary precautions.

Dr. Al-Aqab urged the public to verify environmental information before sharing it and reminded them of their rights under Environmental Protection Law No. 42 of 2014, amended by Law No. 99 of 2015.

The law allows citizens and residents to file electronic complaints regarding environmental concerns via the EPA's official website.

For accurate updates and to file complaints, the public is encouraged to use the EPA's official platform.



Dr. Al-Aqab

'Women must play role in all sectors of government'

By Kholoud Al-Enezi

MANAMA, Jan 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Foreign Minister Assistant for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah emphasized on Monday the essence to enhance women leadership and empowerment across all sectors, especially the economic fields.

This statement made by Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah to KUNA, during her participation in the "World Businesswomen Forum and Exhibition in the Kingdom of Bahrain, under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa President of the Supreme Council for Women.

Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah stated that the forum provides an opportunity for businesswomen to exchange expertise and ideas, fostering holistic and sustainable development across various sectors.

She also praised the exceptional preparations and coordination of the forum by Bahraini businesswomen, expressing her gratitude to the Kingdom of Bahrain for hosting the event.

Association President Ahlam Janahi stated during the opening that the event is not only a platform for commercial and professional exchange but also an opportunity for women from diverse backgrounds to share success stories. She emphasized that women's role in the economy is more critical than ever.

The four-day event features an exhibition of participating corporations and discussion sessions on various topics.

Expat to hang for killing his 'rapist' countryman

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The Criminal Court has sentenced an expatriate to death for stabbing his compatriot to death in retaliation for the victim's repeated sexual assaults on him.

The Public Prosecution had called for the maximum penalty, which is the death sentence, as evidence clearly indicated that the defendant had committed the crime.

The investigation began after he voluntarily surrendered to the police, and confessed to committing the murder in Farwaniya.

□ □ □

Two cops assaulted: A family dispute escalated into an assault on two detectives and a vehicle collision in Hawally, leading to the arrest of four individuals, including a woman, all of whom were referred to the Public Prosecution on charges of assaulting a police officer and damaging vehicles, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, the incident occurred during an evening patrol by the Criminal Investigation Department in Hawally, as part of the General Department of Criminal Investigations' ongoing efforts to apprehend wanted individuals and outlaws.

During the patrol, the first suspect was seen walking in a white dishdasha stained with blood, and standing next to a car driven by the second suspect. As detectives approached to investigate, they noticed a woman asking for help. When they introduced themselves as detectives, the first and second suspects, with the assistance of a third accomplice, attacked the officers.



KUNA photo

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, receives the Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait, Mukai Kenichiro.

Sheikh Jarrah meets Japan envoy

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Tuesday Japanese Ambassador to the country Mukai Kenichiro. Bilateral ties between the two friendly countries were touched on during the meeting.

Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah also re-

ceived Head of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) Regional delegation for the GCC, Mamadu Sow. Ways of strengthening ties between the two sides, in addition to regional and international developments, especially in the humanitarian field were touched on during the meeting. (KUNA)

Al-Rifai meets UK Defense Advisor

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Undersecretary Lieutenant General Engineer Hashem Al-Rifai on Tuesday discussed with the British Defense Senior Advisor to the Middle East and North Africa Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren ways of enhancing military training cooperation and crisis management.

In a press statement, the National Guard said that this came during the Undersecretary's reception of Ahlgren and his accom-

panying delegation, where he conveyed to Ahlgren the greetings of the National Guard's Chief Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his deputy Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The meeting discussed ways of enhancing military training cooperation as the National Guard is keen on achieving the goals its guiding document 2025, through cooperation and partnership with military institutions in brotherly countries.

British Embassy clarifies entry criteria for Kuwaiti nationals

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: In response to a high volume of inquiries about visiting, working, or living in the UK, the British Embassy is pleased to share the following advice for Kuwaiti nationals, says a press release issued by the embassy.

The Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) -- An ETA permits you to make multiple short trips (including transit stops en route to another country), of up to six months at a time, to the UK over the course of two years or until the passport used to apply expires -- whichever is sooner.

Applying for an ETA on the "UK ETA" app (available on iOS and Android devices) is quick, cheap and easy.

We advise applicants to allow at least 72 hours for confirmation of their ETA, but most applications are processed more quickly. You do NOT need an ETA if you already hold a valid UK visa.

UK visa -- If your application for an ETA is refused or you are traveling to the UK for a purpose/duration that is not covered by an ETA (e.g. to study a university course for longer than six months), you will need to apply for a UK visa (being sure to check which specific type you need).

For visas of over six months duration, the UK has now transitioned from physical documents to electronically-held "eVisas", accessed via mobile devices/computers.

This transition brings significant benefits to customers, given they are secure, and, unlike a physical document, cannot be lost,



Flyer

stolen or tampered with.

They can also be accessed anywhere and in real time, putting customers in control of their own data and allowing them to swiftly update the UK Home Office with new contact or passport details.

Both new and existing customers will be/have been advised of this change through direct emails from UK Visas and Immigration (UVKI) and should take action accordingly.

For more information on eVisas, please visit: Get access to your online immigration status (eVisa) - GOV.UK.

To check UK immigration requirements ahead of any planned travel, please check the UK Government's official visa checker tool: <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>.

'Al-Egaila' witnesses road repairs

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan announced today the commencement of major road maintenance work in the Al-Egaila area, Block 3, as part of new contracts.

The minister emphasized the ministry's ongoing commitment to implementing

road maintenance projects across all areas, ensuring quality and adherence to international standards to advance infrastructure development.

Engineer Abdullah Al-Kandari, the supervisor of Contract 15 for the Ahmadi Governorate - First Zone, stated that the maintenance works included paving layers based on tests conducted by the government laboratory



Top talent must not suffer in review of salaries & benefits

"THERE has been significant discussion surrounding the government's move to reassess salaries and benefits for employees in state institutions, alongside the reintroduction of the previously proposed strategic alternative," columnist Dr. **Mohammad Hussein Al-Dallal** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Regular reviews of salaries and benefits are necessary to ensure fairness, support and the development of job performance through motivation and other incentives.

"However, the issue arises when such reviews aim solely to reduce salaries and benefits without addressing key considerations.

"First, reductions should not come at the expense of hardworking and experienced employees who contribute significantly to their roles. Equalizing financial benefits or broadly reducing them can undermine job performance and fail to achieve fairness.

"Second, sudden reductions without giving employees sufficient time to adjust their financial situations -- such as those managing home-building expenses or tuition fees -- can cause significant harm. These abrupt changes disrupt employees' financial, social and professional stability.

"Third, the necessity of any reduction should align with the state's financial solvency. If the budget is stable, the rationale for such cuts becomes questionable. The government must provide transparent insights into the financial situation and articulate a clear vision to justify adjustments.

"If the goal is to standardize salaries and benefits across government agencies, it is commendable, but jobs with specialized requirements need competitive incentives to attract and retain top talent.

"We urge the government to take a measured approach, considering factors like fairness in benefits distribution, recognition of diligence and expertise and the alignment of job roles with national development plans. Transparency in presenting these issues is critical.

"The Cabinet recently issued regulatory decisions on retirement controls for public sector employees. While these measures aim to create opportunities for younger talent, they have significant consequences that warrant careful evaluation.

"One major concern is the loss of experienced and skilled professionals at the peak of their careers. Their sudden departure could disrupt state institutions and their operations. The government should explore systems to re-engage retired experts under well-defined conditions, ensuring their invaluable knowledge benefits state agencies.

"The decisions are also likely to result in a surge of retirements, increasing the proportion of retirees in society. This growing demographics, often underutilized, presents an opportunity for research and initiatives to harness their potential for societal and state benefit.

"The recent amendment to Article 16 of the Nationality Law introduced provisions for handling the consequences of citizenship withdrawal. These changes grant specific rights and privileges to those affected, determined by the Council of Ministers.

"However, several concerns arise such as the amendment lacks a previously stated provision treating individuals holding Article 8 of the Nationality Law as Kuwaitis if their citizenship is withdrawn.

"While the Council of Ministers is tasked with defining these rights and privileges, no decisions have been announced yet, creating ambiguity for affected individuals.

"A clause preventing appeals or judicial objections to Cabinet decisions on these rights and privileges raises constitutional concerns.

"This restriction infringes on individuals' right to litigation and places administrative decisions beyond judicial oversight, challenging principles of justice.

"These issues highlight the need for clarity, fairness and adherence to constitutional principles when implementing such significant legal amendments."

Also:

"It is intriguing how certain mentalities persist, seemingly unaffected by centuries of progress in science, technology and philosophy," columnist **Abdul Latif Al-Duajj** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"Many within the Arab and Muslim worlds and perhaps even beyond, continue to approach contemporary phenomena with a lens rooted in historical, often outdated frameworks.

"This is evident in how some interpret natural disasters, such as the fires in Los Angeles, as divine retribution rather than natural occurrences explained by science.

"These fires, like many others across the globe, are tragic but natural events exacerbated by factors such as climate change and urban expansion.

"Modern media, including television, radio and the Internet, have magnified their visibility, making such tragedies shared global experiences.

"Decades ago, the same event might have remained a footnote, delayed by the limitations of communication technologies.

"Ironically, the very technological advancements that bring these events into sharp focus owe their existence to scientific progress spearheaded largely by the very nations some criticize.

"What is troubling is the mental dissonance among those who attribute these events to divine punishment. They see the fires as vengeance for perceived injustices by the United States, particularly its support for Israel.

"Yet, many of these individuals simultaneously justify or celebrate acts of destruction and violence within their own communities, often against other Muslim factions, whom they label with divisive terms.

"This selective outrage underscores a deeper problem: a fixation on external blame and divine intervention while ignoring internal inconsistencies and hypocrisies.

"Cheering the bombing of Gaza or Lebanon, only to later condemn the US for supporting similar acts, reflects a mindset trapped in cycles of contradiction and resentment.

"The solution lies not in perpetuating these mental traps but in fostering the intellectual and moral clarity. Recognizing that the natural disasters are just that -- natural -- and that the modern science offers tools to mitigate their impacts, can redirect focus toward constructive action rather than misplaced schadenfreude. (Schadenfreude is a German word that refers to the feeling of pleasure or satisfaction derived from someone else's misfortune or suffering.)

"Moreover, introspection is needed to challenge double standards and embrace principles that transcend sectarian divides. By doing so, societies can begin to reconcile their internal conflicts and engage with the world from a position of rationality and moral consistency."



"As I pass by old landmarks such as hospitals, schools, or even the Kuwait Journalists Association in Shuwaikh, I often notice the enduring beauty of willow trees," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"These trees, with their lush green branches, have stood the test of time. Driving by Kaifan High School, I saw one or more willow trees thriving without regular care -- no watering, just rain during the winter months. For over fifty years, they've provided shade and charm, requiring little to no maintenance.

"This prompts me to question why our government chose to plant palm trees along the streets, trees that fail to provide shade, require constant watering, and often break in unsightly ways.

"Decades ago, willow trees were removed under the mistaken belief that they caused allergies -- a claim later debunked.

"It's time we consider reintroducing these hardy, water-efficient trees to beautify our streets while reducing maintenance costs. Willow trees require no irrigation, fuel for municipal vehicles, or additional labor and would undoubtedly enhance the aesthetics of Kuwait's urban landscape.

"Another pressing issue is the lack of proper road signage in residential areas. A recent visit to Jaber Al-Ahmad suburb (Block 7) with my young daughter highlighted this problem.

"After leaving her friend's house, I found myself searching for signs pointing toward major routes like the Fifth Ring Road, the Sixth, or Kuwait City -- but there were none. This left me frustrated and disoriented, especially at night.

"Eventually, I ended up at the gates of Jahra, only to discover a sign to Salmiya much later. Similarly, during another trip leaving the Al-Qurain area, I struggled to find any indication of the way back to Kuwait City and ended up heading toward the Saudi border!

"While some might suggest relying on GPS, road infrastructure should prioritize clear and accessible signage. Even navigation devices can falter, as they occasionally misinterpret the layout of poorly marked roads.

"In addition to signage, I urge the Ministry of Public Works to consider practical safety measures. For instance, cement bumpers could be fitted with reflective metal pieces to improve nighttime visibility. Such enhancements would help drivers slow down, preventing accidents and reducing vehicle damage.

"Moreover, Kuwait should explore innovative initiatives like artificial rain. Countries like the UAE and Saudi Arabia have successfully implemented cloud seeding technologies, resulting in much-needed rainfall.

"This could be another avenue for enhancing our environment and addressing water scarcity.

"With thoughtful planning and practical measures, we can address these issues and make Kuwait a safer, greener, and more beautiful place for everyone."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Dr. Al-Dallal



Al-Dawas



A group photo during a meeting between the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense and the British Defense Advisor for Middle East Affairs Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren.



Representative of the Deputy Chief of General Staff, Kuwaiti Army receives the UK Defense Advisor for Middle East Affairs.



Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah presents a memento to UK's Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren.

Kuwait, UK in defense talks

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Defense Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah discussed with British Defense Senior Advisor to the Middle East and North Africa Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren, issues of common interest.

A Defense Ministry statement said that this was on occasion of Ahlgren's official visit to the country along with an accompanying delegation.

Attending the meeting were Ministry Assistant Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Shamayel Al-Sabah, UK Ambassador to the country Belinda Lewis, as well as a number of Ministry senior officials.

Also, Representative of Kuwait's Deputy Chief of-Staff Maj. Gen. Khalid Al-Shuraian discussed with British Defense Senior Advisor to the Middle East and North Africa Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren, issues of common interest.

A Chief of Staff statement said that this was on occasion of Ahlgren's official visit to the country along with an accompanying delegation.

Attending the meeting were a number of senior military officials on both sides.

252 cams to monitor seat belt, phone use violations on road

Almost 2 million traffic citations issued: GTD

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: Brigadier General Mohammad Diadan Al-Ajmi, Chairman of the Traffic Week Activities Committee and Director of Coordination and Follow-up at the General Traffic Department, has revealed in a 2024 report that a total of 1,926,320 various types of traffic citations were issued including speeding violations.

During a traffic awareness lecture held Monday morning at the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) building, attended by acting PIFSS Director General Ahmed Hamed Al-Thunayan, Director General of the General Traffic Department Brigadier General Jamal Al-Foudari, Brigadier General Al-Ajmi, and Traffic Awareness Department Assistant Director Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Bouhassan, noted that road accidents in 2024 led to 284 deaths among people of various nationalities, primarily attributed to speeding and negligence while driving.

Juvenile joins ISIS

Court puts off verdict in 'false news' spread case

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The Criminal Court has postponed the case involving 18 Kuwaiti citizens, including former MPs, activists and social media users, to Feb 3 to give its verdict, reports Al-Anba daily.

The case stems from their posts about former MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri's refusal to undergo biometric fingerprinting.

The court had questioned the defendants about two charges -- spreading false news about the internal affairs of the country and misusing their phones. However, the defendants denied both these charges.

Among the prominent defendants are Musallam Al-Barak, Mohammad Hayef, Badr Al-Dahoum, Khaled Al-Munayes, Salem Al-Namlan, Saud Al-Asfour, Adel Al-Damkhi, Falah Al-Hajri, Shuaib Shaaban, Osama Al-Zaid, Mohammad Johar Hayat and Musaad Al-Dosari.

It is worth noting that the public prosecution had released these individuals on a bail of 500 dinars each after interrogating them regarding the two charges.

They were accused of posting tweets suggesting that former MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri was banned from entering the country due to biometric fingerprinting procedures.



Juvenile joins ISIS: The Criminal Court has sentenced a Kuwaiti juvenile to 5 years in prison with hard labor and immediate execution of the sentence, while another expatriate was sentenced to two and-a-half years in prison followed by deportation after serving the sentence, reports Al-Anba daily.

This came after the court found them guilty of joining the terrorist group ISIS.

The defendants were referred to trial after the Public Prosecution charged them with joining a banned group whose objective is to spread chaos and undermine the country's fundamental systems through illegal means.



Mol denies rumors: The Ministry of Interior has denied as rumors news circulating on social media regarding the alleged detention of a Kuwaiti citizen after he filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry urged everyone to verify the authenticity of news from official sources before sharing it on the media platforms.

Brigadier General Al-Ajmi also pointed out that 152,367 citations were issued for not wearing seat belts and 179,530 and 27,163 citations for causing loud noises from vehicles.

He also mentioned that 8,455 vehicles were impounded and 3,139 individuals of various nationalities were detained. He urged the citizens and residents to adhere to traffic laws to protect their lives and the lives of all road users -- motorists and pedestrians.

For his part, Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Bouhassan, Assistant Director of the Traffic Awareness Department, emphasized that the strict enforcement of traffic laws is not aimed at collecting fines but to raise awareness and ensuring compliance with traffic laws to reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries, often caused by speed and lack of attention.

Lieutenant Colonel Bouhassan also highlighted that recently, approximately 252 cameras were installed on public roads to monitor seat belt violations and mobile phone usage.

These cameras operate using artificial intelligence, and additional Point-to-Point cameras have been set up to measure distance and speed between cameras, enabling authorities to capture speeding violations even if the driver slows down before reaching the next camera.



Expatriate selling 'iqamas': An expatriate has been arrested for fraud after deceiving his fellow citizens into paying large sums of money in exchange for facilitating their residency applications in Kuwait, reports Al-Anba daily.

Based on instructions from the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef, the Residency Affairs Sector, represented by the Search and Investigation Department of the General Department of Residency Affairs Investigations, took action after a video clip surfaced, which showed a resident warning others about an individual of the same nationality who was committing fraud by offering fake job opportunities in Kuwait in exchange for up to \$250.

After reviewing the video, the search and investigation teams worked diligently to identify and arrest the suspect. He was subsequently referred to the appropriate authorities for legal action.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed its commitment to tackling human trafficking and fraud, stressing that it will take firm and decisive action against anyone attempting to exploit legal processes or engage in illegal activities related to residency.

The ministry highlighted its dedication to combating all forms of deception and exploitation.



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Crown Prince, PM send wishes for success in new term

HH Amir congratulates Croatian Prez on re-election

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable on Tuesday to the President of Croatia, Zoran Milanović, offering his heartfelt congratulations on his re-election for a new presidential term. In his message, His Highness expressed his best wishes for the President's health and well-being, along with hopes for the continued success and prosperity of Croatia.

Also, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince, Sheikh

Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, sent a cable to President Milanović, congratulating him on his re-election for a new term and wishing him good health and well-being, as well as success and prosperity for the Croatian people.

Furthermore, His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, sent a cable to President Milanović, congratulating him on his re-election for a new presidential term."



Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah during the annual charity market.

Al-Huwaila praises initiative's humanitarian impact

'Kuwait Al-Khair 49 sets standard for philanthropy'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila affirmed on Monday that the annual charity market, "Kuwait Al-Khair 49," serves as a pioneering model for charitable initiatives in the country.

Kuwait Al-Khair is an event that supports philanthropic activities that foster values of cooperation and social solidarity.

In a statement to KUNA, Dr. Al-Huwaila high-

lighted the significance of the charity market, organized by the "Help Your Muslim Brother" Committee, which is under the International Islamic Charitable Organization.

The three-day event aims to assist underprivileged families, support students, and sponsor orphans.

Minister Al-Huwaila emphasized that the initiative reflects Kuwait's humanitarian and cultural commitment, playing a pivotal role in advancing

the country's philanthropic mission.

She praised the efforts of the "Help Your Muslim Brother" Committee in organizing this annual event, which showcases the contributions of charitable organizations to achieving humanitarian goals.

She stressed the ministry's commitment to providing continuous support for such activities that contribute to achieving the goals of humanitarian and charitable work in the country and consolidate the principles of giving and volunteerism in society.



Photos by Samer Shiqr

Kuwaiti envoy Ali Hamada presents credentials to Bangladesh president

DHAKA, Jan 14, (KUNA): Ambassador Ali Thnayyan Hamada presented his credentials Tuesday as Kuwait ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Bangladesh President Mohammad Shahabuddin.

In a statement, Kuwait's Embassy in Bangladesh said that ambassador Hamada conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to president Shahabuddin, along with His Highness the Amir's sincere wishes for Bangladesh's progress and prosperity.

The bilateral ties between the two friendly countries were touched on.

In turn, President Shahabuddin lauded the Kuwaiti-Bangladeshi relations, stressing his country's keenness to strengthen and consolidate them in a way that serves the two countries and peoples.



KUNA photo
His Excellency the Ambassador of Kuwait to Bangladesh presents his credentials to President Mohammad Shahabuddin during an official protocol ceremony.

MoHE aligns with job market need

Ministry sets path for future scholarships

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The Ministry of Higher Education recently held a coordination meeting chaired by acting Undersecretary Lamyaa Al-Mulhim with the participation of acting Assistant Undersecretary for the Missions, Equivalencies and Cultural Relations Sector Ghaida Madhkour and representatives of various government agencies like the Public Institution for Social Security PIFSS, Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation (KNPC), Environment Public Authority (EPA), Public Authority for Industry (PAI) and Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN).

Al-Mulhim explained that the purpose of this meeting is to stress the importance of collaboration to ensure that higher education outcomes are in line with the labor market's needs and to enhance national efficiency in various sectors. "Through such meetings, the ministry aims to develop a comprehensive strategy for its external scholarship

plan, which will contribute to sustainable development and support the objectives of the national vision," the acting undersecretary elaborated.

Al-Mulhim reaffirmed the commitment of the ministry to work closely with all partners to achieve institutional integration and realize the nation's aspirations.

On the other hand, Madhkour pointed out that the meeting coincided with the preparation of the annual scholarship plan, which is presented to holders of secondary school certificates. She said the ministry is keen on diversifying the specializations offered in the scholarship plan to better align with the evolving demands of the labor market. "This is achieved through coordination with various State institutions to guarantee the development of national competencies and Kuwaiti youth capabilities, in line with the Kuwaitization plan and Kuwait Vision 2035," she added.

During the meeting, a visual presentation was given outlining the objectives of the ministry and its role in setting the framework for policies and plans aimed at advancing higher education. The presentation also highlighted a range of engineering and modern Science specializations that are anticipated to be in high demand by government sectors, and which the ministry hopes to include in the missions plan for academic year 2025/2026.



KUNA photo
Part of the coordination meeting with representatives of some government agencies.

Cleanliness and housing efforts underway

Municipality to amend development plans for labor complexes and cities

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The acting Director General of Kuwait Municipality Eng. Manal Al-Asfour revealed that efforts are underway to amend the requirements for cities and labor complexes, and to allocate lands for development, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a report issued in response to the recommendations from the second workshop of the Environmental Affairs Committee, which focused on the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Environmental System (Community Participation between Situation Assessment and Solutions), Al-Asfour affirmed the ongoing work in these areas.

The minutes of the meeting, as well as the recommendations from the General Cleanliness Committee, were reviewed, and the committee made the following recommendations:

■ Assigning the Vice Chairman of the General Cleaning Committee and Director of the General Cleaning and Road Occupancy Department at Farwaniya Municipality to coordinate with the Municipal Council regarding a field visit to the area.

■ Assigning the Vice Chairman of the General Cleanliness Committee to take the following actions:

1. Directing cleaning inspectors to

implement the regulations of the Kuwait Municipality and the Environment Public Authority (EPA) regarding cleanliness, as well as the provisions of cleaning contract No. 25-2016/2027 for Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. This aims to enhance the level of cleanliness in the area and other areas covered by the contract.

2. Coordinating with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), specifically the Rodent Control Section of the Ministry of Health, to address the spread of rats and stray dogs in the area.

Also, the Cabinet's decision taken on July 16, 2024, includes the following actions:

1. Transferring the affiliation of lands allocated for workers' cities to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW):

■ Subiya area (Sabriya - Al-Arfajiya)

■ South of Jahra - Al-Salmi Road

2. Transferring the affiliation of lands allocated for workers' cities to the Ministry of Finance:

■ North Mutlaa

■ Sulaibiya (Kabd)

■ South Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City

■ South Al-Khairan Residential City

In light of these decisions, Al-Asfour confirmed that work is progressing to amend the requirements for workers' cities and labor complexes, allocate lands accordingly, and submit relevant reports to the Municipal Council as per the Cabinet's directives.

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Amir,

His Highness the Amir was seen off at the airport by His Highness Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Mubarak Al-Hamoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir is accompanied by an official delegation including the Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, and senior officials at the Amiri Diwan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to the UK on Tuesday, at the personal invitation of King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, represents a significant milestone in the journey of the relations that have spanned 125 years between the two countries.

This visit marks the first trip of His Highness the Amir to the UK since he assumed office on December 20, 2023, succeeding the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Previously, His Highness visited the United Kingdom four times as Crown Prince, the first time was on September 18, 2022 - Representing the late Amir to offer condolences on the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, during which he met King Charles III.

The second time was on May 6, 2023 - Representing the late Amir at the coronation ceremony of King Charles III, the third on August 28, 2023 - At the invitation of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, during which he attended the 70th anniversary celebration of the Kuwait Investment Office in the United Kingdom, the fourth on October 24, 2023 - At the official invitation of King Charles III.

The visit on Tuesday, along with the exchanged visits between the rulers of Kuwait and the British monarchs, reflects the strength of historical ties, the mutual respect, shared interests, and coordination on regional and global issues of common concern.

The relations, which has steadily developed over the past decades, was formalized with the signing of several agreements, beginning with the treaty of January 1899, which marked the official start of diplomatic relations between the two nations and laid the foundation for extensive cooperation and strategic partnerships.

Notable events include Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visit to London on October 1919 as the first Kuwaiti official to congratulate King George V on Britain's victory in World War I, Sheikh Ahmad visited again as Kuwait's ruler mid-1935, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip visited Kuwait on February 12, 1979, marking the first visit by a British monarch, upon the invitation of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The bilateral relations remained stable for seven decades until 1961, when late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah initiated steps toward a new phase in the relationship by steering Kuwait toward independence.

On June 19, 1961, Sheikh Abdullah declared Kuwait's independence, abolishing the 1899 treaty, though Britain continued supporting Kuwait by defending its territorial integrity from external threats, including deploying military forces during Iraq's territorial ambitions.

During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the UK was one of the key allies in rejecting the Iraqi aggression and leading military efforts to liberate Kuwait.

In 2012, the Kuwaiti-British Joint Steering Group was formed, holding biannual meetings to strengthen bilateral relations and implement agreed-upon initiatives.

Kuwait Embassy

said that the aid, aims to contribute to supporting the Syrian brothers in achieving social stability as quickly as possible by participating in providing the necessities and basics of daily life that will benefit all Syrian citizens.

He emphasized on the efforts made by the official Kuwaiti bodies supervising and organizing Kuwaiti humanitarian work, headed by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Labor and Information, appreciating the role of Kuwaiti charitable associations and organizations that are partners in the joint Kuwaiti humanitarian work and the Kuwaiti popular efforts in supporting and assisting the needy in brotherly and friendly countries.

Housing support

This includes legal adjustments to the spouses' status within the PAHW, followed by coordination with the Credit Bank's legal department to finalize new contracts and facilitate the disbursement of construction payments.

The sources added that PAHW had submitted several inquiries regarding specific cases of these individuals, whose citizenship was revoked to the Council of Ministers, noting that the issue remains under study.

They also emphasized that the coordination between PAHW and the Credit Bank is progressing smoothly, ensuring streamlined procedures and minimizing the burdens arising from this issue.

Kuwait a beacon

In Kuwait, we are blessed to live in a country that promotes coexistence and respect for diverse communities. The government and society here have extended a remarkable level of support to ensure that Christians can worship freely and contribute positively to the nation's development. This spirit of mutual respect sets an example for the broader region, he added.

"Our role as the Church is to continue fostering peace and reconciliation, advocating for the rights and dignity of all people, and being a beacon of hope and service. Despite the challenges, we are confident that faith, love and dialogue will continue to guide us through these transformative times."

"The mission of the Church," he said, "has always been one of reconciliation, peace and unity. In the context of the Middle East, where tensions and divisions often define the landscape, the role of the Church becomes even more vital."

"We believe that the Church is not just a spiritual sanctuary but also a bridge-builder. Through our teachings, outreach programs, and partnerships with other faith communities, we aim to foster dialogue, understanding and mutual respect," he added.

"The Church has always been a source of refuge and support for those in need, especially during times of conflict and displacement. In Gaza, where many are forced to flee their homes due to unfortunate circumstances, the Church has stepped in to shelter those who had no place to flee - the elderly, the women and children - inside a church in Gaza and even in the school, which were partly damaged during the conflict."

In Kuwait, the Church plays an important role in supporting those affected indirectly by these crises. Many members of our congregation are expatriates who have family or friends impacted by conflicts in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Palestine and we offer them spiritual guidance, a community of solidarity and avenues to contribute to relief efforts.

Speaking of Kuwait, he said, the country has long been a beacon of religious tolerance in the Middle East, and its policies and practices serve as a model for peaceful coexistence among diverse faith communities. The government of Kuwait has shown a genuine commitment to ensuring that religious minorities are respected and allowed to practice their faith freely.

In Kuwait, Bishop Berardi said, "We have two churches catering to about 300,000 people - one in Ahmedi, which was built in 1948 and blessed in 1956 and the second one is the co-cathedral in downtown Kuwait city built (on a piece of land donated by the late Amir HH Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah) and was blessed in 1968. This is in addition to other places of worship in Salmiya and Abbasiya."

The co-cathedral, HE Bishop Berardi said, is now designated by the National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters as a historic edifice.

"As a Church, we deeply value the hospitality and openness extended by the Kuwaiti authorities. This enables us not only to serve our faithful but also to contribute to the broader society through charitable initiatives, education, and support for the marginalized. We are grateful for the trust and understanding that characterize this relationship and remain committed to working hand in hand with the authorities to foster peace, unity, and shared prosperity," he said.

The Bishop said, "Kuwait's openness to religious dialogue is a testament to its commitment to fostering harmony and understanding among its diverse communities. Our contribution to this dialogue begins with our commitment to building relationships based on mutual respect and shared values and peaceful coexistence."

Additionally, the Church organizes educational and cultural activities to foster awareness and appreciation of our faith while learning about others.

A plaque in English and Arabic that adorns the wall of the co-cathedral speaks volumes, because the land on which this edifice stands is a donation from the late HH Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah. The plaque also speaks of Al-Sabah family's generosity.

"The plaque is a symbol of the generosity and spirit of cooperation that exists in Kuwait. It reflects not only the remarkable support of the Al-Sabah family and the government of Kuwait but also the deep-rooted tolerance and respect that the Kuwaiti people have for religious diversity."

Kuwait's leadership has played a crucial role in nurturing this environment of openness, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work within such a framework. Together, we strive to show that cooperation among faiths is not only possible but essential for creating a society rooted in peace, understanding, and respect.

We remain committed to these efforts, praying and working for a world where dialogue and solidarity triumph over division and discord."

Our charitable work is another avenue through which we contribute to this dialogue. By serving the marginalized and those in need - regardless of their religious or cultural background - we demonstrate the unifying power of love and compassion, which transcends all differences.

We are grateful to the Kuwaiti authorities and the broader society for creating an environment that values dialogue and respect. It is our hope and prayer that these efforts will continue to grow, setting an example for peace and understanding in the region. The Church remains committed to being a bridge-builder, working alongside others to ensure that Kuwait remains a beacon of unity and harmony."

Speaking of religious holidays, he said, "They are a vital part of the Church's spiritual life, and their cel-



The Roman Catholic co-cathedral in downtown Kuwait City

bration offers a profound opportunity to unite our diverse community in faith, joy and fellowship. During major festivals like Christmas, and Easter, Eid and other religious festivities we greet each other in an atmosphere of brotherhood.

In Kuwait, during Christmas and Easter, where our congregation comprises people from various cultural backgrounds, the Church organizes special liturgical services, including festive Masses and prayer vigils.

In this unique environment, where expatriates form a significant part of the population, these celebrations provide a sense of belonging and connection to one's homeland while also building bridges across cultures, he added.

When asked how His Excellency views the future of Middle from religious point of view, he said, "My hope for the future of the Middle East is of religious harmony and interfaith cooperation. The Middle East is a cradle of great faith traditions, and I believe it has the potential to be a beacon of peace and unity for the world if its people and leaders commit to fostering mutual respect and understanding."

Interfaith cooperation is crucial in addressing the region's challenges, from social inequalities to conflicts and displacement. The Church is committed to working alongside other faith leaders to promote values of justice, compassion, and human dignity. By engaging in open and respectful dialogue, we can find common ground and solutions that serve the greater good.

Speaking of interfaith dialogue, the Bishop said, "The visit of the interfaith delegation from Bahrain and Kuwait to Pope Francis was a historic and deeply significant moment for the Middle East. It highlighted the shared commitment of the Gulf countries to promoting religious dialogue, peace, and mutual understanding. The very act of bringing together religious leaders and representatives from various faiths to meet with the Holy Father speaks volumes about the region's growing openness to interfaith cooperation and hoped such visits happen on reciprocal basis."

Looking ahead, he said, I pray for a Middle East where diversity is celebrated and where people of all faiths can live side by side in peace.

He added, Pope Francis has always championed for peace, emphasizing the importance of building bridges across religious divides. His Holiness has time and again been calling for peace in Gaza and more often than not his criticisms about the war have fallen on deaf ears in Israel.

The Bishop disclosed on Christmas Day the Patriarch of Jerusalem visited Gaza to take stock of the situation and see first hand how the needy are taken care of who are sheltered in the Church and school in Gaza which were partly damaged by the enemy bombing.

He also disclosed that Cardinal Paulini will be visiting Jordan to discuss the conflict in the region.

In his message to the youth and future generations, the Bishop said, it is one of hope, unity, and love. "In a world that is increasingly diverse and interconnected, it is essential that we learn to appreciate and respect one another's differences. Faith, tolerance, and understanding are not just ideals but the guiding principles that can shape a better future for all of us."

Faith, in its many forms, provides us with a foundation for living meaningful lives. It teaches us to love, to forgive, and to be compassionate toward others. It reminds us that our shared humanity is more important than our differences. I encourage young people to cultivate their faith, to draw strength and wisdom from it, and to live in a way that reflects the values they hold dear.

The next

The renaming of the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America" further underscores Trump's disregard for historical and cultural ties. Mexican officials, along with the broader Latin American community, view such rhetoric as an affront to their national identity and a potential prelude to more aggressive policies. These statements have set the stage for heightened tensions across the Americas, with nations bracing for what may come next.

Trump's fixation on Greenland resurfaced during his recent speeches, where he reiterated that acquiring Greenland was a matter of national security. Denmark, which governs Greenland, dismissed these claims as absurd and reaffirmed Greenland's autonomy. Danish officials referred to Trump's proposals as a "preposterous affront" to their sovereignty. The geopolitical implications of such an acquisition could shift the balance of power in the Arctic, a region critical for global trade and security.

These ambitions could also backfire, threatening US security and economic interests. By provoking allies and destabilizing key regions, Trump's policies risk undermining America's

strategic partnerships and exposing vulnerabilities. What more can we expect from the Trump administration? These questions loom large as his foreign policy agenda takes shape.

For the Arab region, Trump's return may bring heightened challenges. The United States maintains significant military bases in key Arab nations, and tens of thousands of troops on the ground. These military footholds signify strategic dominance, but they also paint targets on these nations amid potential geopolitical escalations.

Trump's past remarks add to the unease. On different occasions, he suggested that the Arab countries "owed" the US a share of their wealth as compensation for military protection. More infamously, he also implied that Arab leaders should "pay up," suggesting that America's security umbrella comes at a price. Such statements raise questions about his approach to allies and whether financial leverage will become a cornerstone of his foreign policy.

The implications of these developments extend beyond the Arab world. Trump's antagonistic stance toward Canada, Denmark, and Panama threatens to strain long-standing alliances. His audacious vision could undermine the very principles of international law and diplomacy. Sovereign nations will not stand idly by. They will respond - perhaps diplomatically, perhaps economically, or in ways that could spiral into broader conflicts.

For Europe, the stakes are high. Trump's criticism of NATO has already rattled member states. His potential disregard for the European Union as a cohesive bloc may embolden adversarial powers, further destabilizing an already fragile geopolitical landscape.

As the world grapples with these uncertainties, the question remains: is Trump serious, or is this posturing? More ominously, could his actions steer the world toward a third World War? His previous term was marked by a mix of rhetoric and action. He withdrew from international agreements, imposed tariffs, and redefined alliances. Yet, some of his most bombastic threats never materialized.

If history teaches us anything, it is to take such threats seriously. Trump's unpredictability is his trademark, and the global community must prepare for all eventualities. The Arab world, in particular, must reassess its strategic alliances and prepare for a potential shift in US policy. This is a time for unity, resilience, and vigilance.

The next four years will be pivotal. They will test not just the resilience of nations but the principles of sovereignty and international cooperation. The world's leaders must stand firm, ready to defend their people and their territories against any encroachment. Could this align with other global influences, such as Elon Musk's controversial role in Germany and Britain's strategic recalibrations? As Trump's agenda unfolds, one thing is certain: this is not a time for complacency but for decisive and united action. History will judge us by how we respond to these looming threats.

Thank you

It is unfortunate that 47 consecutive governments and 18 National Assemblies have failed to address this, as many were focused on personal gains or consolidating their political agendas.

Given that the Council of Ministers currently holds responsibilities along with the National Assembly, His Highness the Prime Minister should direct ministers to review the laws pertaining to their respective ministries. They should propose amendments to outdated laws and repeal those that no longer align with current needs, particularly the extreme and restrictive ones that hinder the development of the national economy and investments. These should be replaced with laws that promote fair and effective justice.

Many proposals and bills remain stagnant in the drawers of the National Assembly and urgently need to be reviewed and amended. This includes laws related to the Ministry of Justice, the judiciary, and its associated institutions.

Over the years, many ministers have overseen the Ministry of Justice, some reappointed for multiple terms, while others dismissed. However, no amendments to the laws governing the judiciary have been considered for various reasons, which are beyond the scope of this article.

The current Minister of Justice, however, has made notable strides in advancing justice and has shown a commitment to developing the ministry. Guided by the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the minister is diligently working to develop the judiciary, particularly the laws that harm Kuwait's reputation in international forums or negatively impact the country and its citizens.

The minister embodies the wisdom of "Give the dough to the skilled baker", prioritizing facilitation over difficulty. By diagnosing the root causes of the problem, he follows the guiding principle of His Highness the Amir to establish a foundation of justice where no one is wronged.

Therefore, we hope that other ministers will adopt this approach and that His Highness the Prime Minister will instruct all ministers to take on the national responsibility entrusted to them.

Ministers now have the opportunity to review and develop the laws relevant to their ministries, and create a legislative framework that promotes societal and economic progress in line with modern developments. It is time for Kuwait to emerge from the backwardness caused by irresponsible ministerial and parliamentary actions that have led to persistent crises.

It is time for us to have laws that encourage growth and the opening up of the country, and promote trade, industry, and economy, rather than laws that foster envy or greed.

As the saying goes, "Honor the generous and sophisticated so that we may earn their loyalty and share in their prosperity."

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INTERNATIONAL

Bayrou pushes for urgent fiscal reforms

France's new PM faces first big test during period of political instability

PARIS, Jan 14, (AP): France's new prime minister, François Bayrou, is facing his first major test at parliament on Tuesday as his government has no majority amid unprecedented political instability.

Bayrou will address lawmakers through a general policy speech meant to outline his top priorities, including key budget decisions, one month after he was appointed by President Emmanuel Macron.

Bayrou urgently needs to pass a budget bill for 2025. Following the collapse of the previous government, an emergency law has been approved to enable the state to levy taxes from Jan. 1, pay basic expenses and avoid a shutdown.

But only a proper budget would help reduce France's deficit and allow key expenses such as defense measures needed amid the war in Ukraine or aid promised to angry farmers.

Financial markets, ratings agencies and the European Commission are pushing France to comply with EU rules limiting debt and keep France's borrowing costs from spiraling. That would threaten the prosperity of eurozone countries.

France's deficit is estimated to reach 6% of its gross domestic product in 2024. Finance Minister Éric Lombard said last week the government is "aiming for a deficit of between 5 and 5.5%" this year.

When he took office, Bayrou said that "no one knows the difficulty of the situation better" than he does, comparing the challenges faced to an "Himalaya."

Bayrou's Cabinet relies on a fragile deal between Macron's centrist allies and conservatives of The Republicans party who even together have no parliamentary majority.

The previous government was in place for only three months before being brought down by opposition lawmakers from both the left and the far right amid a budget dispute.

To avoid a repetition of that scenario, Bayrou seeks to secure a nonaggression pact with the Socialists so that



French President Emmanuel Macron, right, and Prime Minister François Bayrou talk during the commemorations marking 10 years since an Islamist attack on the Charlie Hebdo satirical newspaper and the Hypercacher Jewish supermarket in Paris, France, on Jan. 7, 2025. (AP)

they wouldn't support any future move to topple the new government.

The Socialists said they are open to talks on the condition that they would include negotiations on Macron's unpopular pension reform that passed two years ago.

However, the possibility of another no-confidence vote is still looming.

The hard-left France Unbowed party refused to enter into talks with the government and already announced it would file a no-confidence motion.

A vote later this week would have little chance of succeeding as the far right appears unwilling to support such move in the immediate term.

Yet the question could be raised again during the future budget debate at parliament, with more uncertainty on the result.

Ministers vow support for Ukraine

Europe's top 5 military spenders say Trump's 5% challenge won't be easy

WARSAW, Poland, Jan 14, (AP): The defense ministers of Europe's five top military spenders said Monday they want to continue increasing their investments in defense but described meeting President-elect Donald Trump's challenge for them to raise spending to 5% of their overall economic output as complicated.

The defense ministers of Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Poland came together near Warsaw for a meeting in a new format that they established after Trump was re-elected last year. Their first meeting in this format of five NATO members was held in Berlin in late November.

The five are seeking ways to maintain their support for Ukraine as U.S. policy is expected to shift when Trump takes power. They also discussed how to strengthen Ukraine's own weapons production capacity.

The German minister, Boris Pistorius, stressed at the start of the meeting that they all support a just peace for Ukraine, one in which Kyiv has a say over its fate. There are concerns in Europe that Trump could push Ukraine to make unacceptable concessions to Russia.

The defense leaders also addressed questions of military spending after Trump recently called for NATO allies to increase their spending to 5% of gross domestic product, a level that no NATO member has reached - not even Poland, which is the closest, spending over 4% and expected to approach 5% this year.

Several of the ministers said that focusing on the number as a percentage isn't enough.

"I just think that a static debate about percentages doesn't really help us if it doesn't ultimately lead to the implementation of what NATO has agreed upon together, what the goals must be," Pistorius said at a joint press conference. "In my opinion, that's what matters."

He also said that for Germany to invest 5% in defense would mean spending a little more than 40% of its entire



From left: Italy's Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto, France's Minister of the Armed Forces Sebastien Lecornu, Poland's Minister of National Defence Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz, Germany's Federal Minister of Defence Boris Pistorius, and Luke Pollard, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the British Ministry of Defence pose for cameras before a meeting of defense ministers of five NATO countries to discuss coordinating their defense plans and support for Ukraine, in the village of Helenow, near Warsaw, Poland, Jan. 13, 2025. (AP)

national budget on defense. "I think that would put an end to the debate very quickly," he said.

His Italian counterpart, Guido Crosetto, said his government knows it needs to spend more on defense but also needs to weigh that against reviving the economy.

"Increasing defense spending at a time of economic crisis is more complicated than at other times," Crosetto said. "If we combine the two, that is, if we make the European defense industry one of the ways in which we can revive the economy, we can combine the two."

'US stronger, more reliable than four years ago'

Biden says he's leaving Trump with a strong hand to play in world conflicts

WASHINGTON, Jan 14, (AP): President Joe Biden said that his stewardship of American foreign policy has left the U.S. safer and economically more secure, arguing that President-elect Donald Trump will inherit a nation viewed as stronger and more reliable than it was four years ago.

Biden trumpeted his administration's work on expanding NATO, rallying allies to provide Ukraine with military aid to fight Russia and bolstering American chip manufacturing to better compete with China during a wide-ranging speech to reflect on his foreign policy legacy a week before ceding the White House to Trump.

Biden's case for his achievements will be shadowed and shaped, at least in the near term, by the messy counterfactual that American voters once again turned to Trump and his protectionist worldview. And he will leave office at a turbulent moment for the globe, with a series of conflicts raging.

"Thanks to our administration, the United States is winning the worldwide competition compared to four years ago," Biden said in his address at the State Department. "America is stronger. Our alliances are stronger. Our adversaries and competitors are weaker. We have not gone to war to make these things happen."

The one-term Democrat took office in the throes of the worst global pandemic in a century, and his plans to repair alliances strained by four years of Trump's "America First" worldview were quickly stress-tested by international crises: the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and Hamas' brutal 2023 attack on Israel that triggered the war in the Middle East.

Biden argued that he provided a steady hand when the world needed it most. He was tested by war, calamity and miscalculation.

"My administration is leaving the next administration with a very strong hand to play," Biden said. "America is once again leading."

Trump, hours after the remarks, said Biden had overseen "a terrible four years" in American foreign policy.



President Joe Biden, right, walks with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, as he arrives to give a speech about foreign policy at the State Department in Washington, Monday, Jan. 13, 2025. (AP)

"When you look at what happened, during this last four-year period, I think it was the lowest point in the history of our country," Trump said in a Newsmax interview. "It's been so bad."

With the U.S. completing its 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan, Biden fulfilled a campaign promise to wind down America's longest war.

But the 20-year conflict ended in disquieting fashion: The U.S.-backed Afghan government collapsed, a grisly bombing killed 13 U.S. troops and 170 others, and thousands of desperate Afghans descended on Kabul's airport in search of a way out before the final U.S. aircraft departed over the Hindu Kush.

The Afghanistan debacle was a major setback just eight months into Biden's presidency that he struggled to recover from.

"Ending the war was the right thing

to do, and I believe history will reflect that," Biden said. "Critics said if we ended the war, it would damage our alliances and create threats to our homeland from foreign-directed terrorism out of a safe haven in Afghanistan - neither has occurred."

Biden's Republican detractors, including Trump, cast it as a signal moment in a failed presidency.

"I'll tell you what happened, he was so bad with Afghanistan, it was such a horrible embarrassment, most embarrassing moment in the history of our country," Trump said in his lone 2024 presidential debate with Biden, just weeks before the Democrat announced he was ending his reelection campaign.

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Biden rallied allies in Europe and beyond to provide Ukraine with billions in military and economic assistance - in-

cluding more than \$100 billion from the U.S. alone. That allowed Kyiv to stay in the fight with Russian President Vladimir Putin's vastly bigger and better-equipped military.

Biden's team also coordinated with allies to hit Russia with a steady stream of sanctions aimed at isolating the Kremlin and making Moscow pay an economic price for prosecuting its war.

Biden on Monday marveled that at the start of the war Putin thought Russian forces would easily defeat Ukraine in a matter of days. It was an assessment U.S. and European intelligence officials shared.

Instead, Biden said his administration and its allies have "laid the foundation" for the Trump administration to help Ukraine eventually arrive at a moment where it can negotiate a just end to the nearly three-year old conflict.

Firefighters battle massive infernos

Stronger winds threaten to spread wildfires ravaging Los Angeles area

LOS ANGELES, Jan 14, (AP): A growing force of firefighters battled massive infernos across the Los Angeles area on Monday as more powerful winds moved in and threatened recent progress against wildfires that have destroyed thousands of homes and killed at least 24 people.

Planes doused homes and hillsides with bright pink fire-proof chemicals, crews prepared to pounce on hotspots across the region and dozens of water trucks rolled in to replenish supplies after hydrants ran dry last week.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass and other officials have faced criticism over their initial response to fires that began last week. But they expressed confidence Monday that the additional firefighters brought in from around the country, as well as from Canada and Mexico, would help them turn the tide.

"We're absolutely better prepared," LA County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone said when asked what will be different from a week ago, when hurricane-force winds propelled multiple fires across the parched, brush-filled region that hasn't seen rain in more than eight months.

But Marrone warned that the strong winds could prevent airplanes from fighting the blazes from above, just as they did last week. If winds reach 70 mph (112 kph), "it's going to be very difficult to contain that fire," he said.

He urged residents to have pets, documents and other important items

ready in case of evacuations. Other fire officials advised residents in high-risk areas to just leave home - and not wait for formal evacuation orders -- if they sense danger.

That's exactly what Tim Kang of La Crescenta did last Wednesday. Feeling sick from the smoky air and fearful of nearby fires spreading, Kang and his brothers packed up and have stayed away from their neighborhood.

"Everything just felt like, 'Oh man, the world's ending,'" said Kang, who's staying with his girlfriend in Pasadena.

In less than a week, four fires around the nation's second-biggest city have scorched more than 62 square miles (160 square kilometers), roughly three times the size of Manhattan.

The National Weather Service warned of "particularly dangerous" dry and blustery weather approaching - especially on Tuesday, when wind gusts could reach 65 mph (105 kph), experts say. A large part of Southern California around Los Angeles is under this extreme fire danger warning through Wednesday, including densely populated Thousand Oaks, Northridge and Simi Valley.

Firefighters made progress over the weekend on the region's two biggest fires - the Eaton Fire, near Pasadena, and the Palisades Fire, in a wealthy enclave along the Pacific Coast. The Eaton Fire is roughly one-third contained, while the Palisades Fire is far less contained.



A helicopter drops water while fighting the Auto Fire in Ventura County, Calif., on Monday, Jan. 13, 2025. (AP)

America

Hegseth faces crucial test: President-elect Donald Trump's choice for defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, is heading into a potentially explosive confirmation hearing Tuesday as senators question whether the former combat veteran and TV news show host is fit to lead the U.S. military.

Hegseth's former experience in the Army National Guard is widely viewed as an asset for the job, but he also brings a jarring record of past statements and actions, including allegations of sexual assault, excessive drinking and derisive views about women in military combat roles, minorities and "woke" generals. (AP)

Prosecutor slams Biden: The criminal charges against Hunter Biden "were the culmination of thorough, impartial investigations, not partisan politics," the prosecutor who led the probes said in a report released Monday that sharply criticized President Joe Biden for having maligned the Justice Department when he pardoned his son.

"Other presidents have pardoned family members, but in doing so, none have taken the occasion as an opportunity to malign the public servants at the Department of Justice based solely on false accusations," said the report from special counsel David Weiss, whose team filed gun and tax charges against the younger Biden that resulted in felony convictions that were subsequently wiped away by a presidential pardon. (AP)

Queen Elizabeth II kept in dark about Soviet spy in her palace, declassified MI5 files show

LONDON, Jan 14, (AP): Queen Elizabeth II wasn't told details of her long-time art adviser's double life as a Soviet spy because palace officials didn't want to add to her worries, newly declassified documents reveal.

The files about royal art historian Anthony Blunt are among a trove from the intelligence agency MI5 released Tuesday by Britain's National Archives. They shed new light on a spy ring linked to Cambridge University in the 1930s, whose members spilled secrets to the Soviet Union from the heart of the U.K. intelligence establishment.

Blunt, who worked at Buckingham Palace as Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, was under suspicion for years before he finally confessed in 1964 that, as a senior MI5 officer during World War II, he had passed secret information to Soviet agents.

In one of the newly released files, an MI5 officer notes that Blunt said he felt "profound relief" at unburdening himself. In return for information he provided, Blunt was allowed to keep his job, his knighthood and his social standing - and the queen was apparently kept in the dark.

In 1972, her private secretary, Martin Charteris, told MI5 chief Michael Hanley



Professor Anthony Blunt, former surveyor of the Queen's pictures, photographed at the Courtauld Institute with Queen Elizabeth II on Nov. 15, 1979. (AP)

that "the queen did not know and he saw no advantage in telling her about it now; it would only add to her worries and there was nothing that could be done about him."

The government decided to tell the monarch in 1973, when Blunt was ill, fearing a media uproar once Blunt died and journalists were able to publish stories without fear of libel suits.

Charteris reported that "she took it all

very calmly and without surprise," and "remembered that he had been under suspicion way back" in the early 1950s. Historian Christopher Andrew says in the official history of MI5 that the queen had previously been told about Blunt in "general terms."

Blunt was publicly unmasked as a spy by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the House of Commons in November 1979. He was finally stripped of his knighthood, but never prosecuted, and died in 1983 at the age of 75.

Files held by Britain's secretive intelligence services usually remain classified for several decades, but the agencies are inching toward more openness. Some of the newly released documents will feature in an exhibition, entitled "MI5: Official Secrets," opening at the National Archives in London later this year.

Two of the Cambridge spies, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess, fled to Russia in 1951. A third, Kim Philby, continued to work for foreign intelligence agency MI6 despite falling under suspicion. As evidence of his duplicity mounted, he was confronted in Beirut in January 1963 by his friend and fellow MI6 officer Nicholas Elliott.

Europe

NATO announces new mission: NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte announced Tuesday that the alliance is launching a new mission to protect undersea cables in the Baltic Sea region.

Rutte said at a meeting in Helsinki with the leaders of NATO countries located on the Baltic Sea that the effort would be dubbed Baltic Sentry.

"It will involve a range of assets, including frigates and maritime patrol aircraft, among others, and will enhance our vigilance in the Baltic," Rutte told reporters. He also said that a small fleet of naval drones will be deployed "to provide enhanced surveillance and deterrence." (AP)

EU denies cover up: The European Commission denied on Monday that it had tried to cover up the state of health of its president, Ursula von der Leyen, after the head of the EU's executive branch was hospitalized with severe pneumonia.

Von der Leyen, 66, is the EU's most high-profile political figure. In September, she marked the start of her second five-year term as commission president by traveling to Ukraine and then to South America for a major trade meeting.

On Jan. 3, the commission had said von der Leyen was ill with "severe pneumonia" and that her appointments for the next two weeks had been canceled. (AP)

Manila eyes new lawsuits

Philippine official slams Chinese 'scare tactics' in disputed waters

MANILA, Jan 14, (AP) — A Philippine security official said Tuesday that China is "pushing us to the wall" with growing aggression in the disputed South China Sea and warned that "all options are on the table" for Manila's response, including new international lawsuits.

A large Chinese coast guard ship patrolled hotly disputed Scarborough Shoal in recent days and then sailed toward the northwestern coast of the Philippines on Tuesday, coming as close as 77 nautical miles (143 kilometers), Philippine officials said in a news conference.

"The presence of the monster ship in Filipino waters ... 77 nautical miles from our shoreline, is unacceptable and, therefore, it should be withdrawn immediately by the Chinese government," **Jonathan Malaya**, assistant director-general of the National Security Council, said at the news conference alongside senior military and coast guard officials.

"You're pushing us to the wall," Malaya said of China. "We do not and will not dignify these scare tactics by backing down. We do not waver or cower in the face of intimidation. On the contrary, it strengthens our resolve because we know we are in the right."

Two Philippine coast guard ships, backed by a small surveillance aircraft, repeatedly ordered the 165-meter (541-foot) Chinese coast guard ship to withdraw from the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, a 200-nautical mile (370-kilometer) stretch of water, Philippine coast guard Commodore Jay Tarrila said.

"What we're doing here is, hour-by-hour and day-to-day, (we're) challenging the illegal presence of the Chinese coast guard for the international community to know that we're not going to allow China to normalize the illegal deployment," Tarrila said.

There was no immediate comment from Chinese officials. In the past, they have repeatedly accused the Philippines and other rival claimant states including Vietnam and Malaysia of encroaching on

what they say are "undisputed" Chinese territorial waters.

Under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who took office in mid-2022, the Philippines has aggressively defended its territorial interests in the South China Sea, a key global trading route. That has brought Philippine forces into frequent confrontations with China's coast guard, navy and suspected militia boats and sparked fears that a bigger armed conflict could draw in the United States, the Philippines' longtime treaty ally and China's regional rival.

The lopsided conflict has forced the Philippines to seek security arrangements with other Asian and Western countries, including Japan, with which it signed a key agreement last July which would allow their forces to hold joint combat training. The pact, which must be ratified by lawmakers of both countries before it takes effect, was the first such agreement to be forged by Japan in Asia.

China surrounded Scarborough Shoal with its coast guard and other ships after a tense territorial standoff with the Philippines in 2012. The Philippines responded by bringing its disputes with China to international arbitration in 2013 and largely won three years later when an arbitration panel in The Hague invalidated China's expansive claims in the busy sea passage under the 1982 United Convention on the Law of the Sea. China has rejected the 2016 arbitration ruling and continues to openly defy it.

"Will this lead to another case?" Malaya said. "All options are on the table because the closer the monster ship is in Philippine waters, the more it makes tensions high and the more that the Philippine government contemplates things it was not contemplating before."

China has warned the Philippines from pursuing another legal case in an international forum after the arbitration, preferring bilateral negotiations, which give Beijing an advantage because of its size and clout, a senior Philippine official has said on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss such sensitive issues publicly.

The two countries have also been discussing their territorial conflicts under a bilateral consultation mechanism to avoid an escalation of the disputes. The next round of talks will be hosted by China, the official said.



Police officers and private security personnel stand by the opening of a reformed gold mineshaft where illegal miners are trapped in Stilfontein, South Africa, Friday, Nov. 15, 2024. (AP)

More than 100 believed to have died of starvation or dehydration

Hundreds still trapped in South African mine for months

STILFONTEIN, South Africa, Jan 14, (AP) — Rescuers were sending a cage-like structure into one of South Africa's deepest mines on Tuesday in an attempt to bring out survivors among hundreds of illegal miners trapped underground for months in an abandoned shaft. More than 100 are believed to have died of starvation or dehydration.

A group representing the miners said that at least 18 bodies and 26 survivors have been brought out of the Buffelsfontein Gold Mine since Friday, but more than 500 miners are still believed to be underground. Police said they are uncertain how many remain, but it is likely to be hundreds.

The mine near the town of Stilfontein, southwest of Johannesburg, has been the scene of a tense standoff between police, miners and members of the local community since November, when authorities first launched an operation to try and force the miners out. Reports say some of them have been underground since July or August last year.

Authorities say the miners are able to come out and are refusing, but that has been disputed by rights groups and activists, who have fiercely criticized police tactics in cutting off the miners' food and water supplies from the surface in an attempt to force them out. The rights groups say many of the miners are effectively dying of starvation and unable to climb out because the



Relatives and friends protest near a reformed gold mineshaft where illegal miners are trapped in Stilfontein, South Africa, Friday, Nov. 15, 2024. (AP)

shaft is too steep and the ropes and pulley system they used to enter have been removed.

Illegal mining is common in parts of gold-rich South Africa where companies close down mines that are no longer profitable, leaving groups of informal miners to illegally enter them to try and find leftover deposits.

Large groups of illegal miners often go underground for months to maximize their profits, taking food, water, generators and other equipment with them, but also relying on others in their

group on the surface to send down more supplies.

Some have escaped from the mine since November, authorities have confirmed, although the exact number is not clear. Police say the miners are afraid of being arrested if they come out.

Rights activists said the only way out is for miners to make a dangerous trek to another shaft, which can take days, and crawl out there. They said many of the miners are too weak or ill to climb out. The mine is 2.5 kilometers (1.5

miles) deep and has multiple shafts, many levels and is a maze of tunnels, and the community mining group said there are numerous groups of miners in various parts of the mine.

The Mining Affected Communities United in Action group, which took authorities to court in December to force them to allow food, water and medicine to be sent down to the miners, released two cellphone videos which they said were from underground and showed dozens of dead bodies of miners wrapped in plastic. A spokesman for the group said "a minimum" of 100 miners had died.

The cellphone videos purportedly from the depths of the mine are filmed by a man who can be heard saying, "This is hunger. People are dying because of hunger," as he records emaciated-looking men sitting on the damp floor of the mine. He adds: "Please help us. Bring us food or take us out."

South Africa's minister of police and minister of mineral resources were due to visit the mine on Tuesday, while authorities have come under scrutiny for their tactics.

South African Cabinet Minister Khumbuzo Ntshavheni told reporters in November that the government would not help the miners, which they considered "criminals."

"We are not sending help to criminals," she said, according to local media. "We are going to smoke them out. They will come out."



Staff clean up shattered and scattered glass caused by an earthquake at JR Miyazaki Airport Station, in Miyazaki, in southwestern Japan, Monday Jan. 13, 2025. (AP)

Tsunami alert lifted after 6.6 Japan earthquake

A tsunami advisory was issued for part of southwest Japan after a magnitude 6.6 earthquake struck Monday, but the warnings to stay away from coastal areas were later lifted. A few instances of minor damage were reported.

Japan's Meteorological Agency initially estimated the magnitude was 6.9 but later revised it to 6.6.

One man was slightly injured in Kyushu after falling down some

stairs, NHK TV reported. A small landslide blocked a road, and some underground water pipes ruptured.

NHK said a tsunami, estimated to be as high as 1 meter (3.2 feet), reached land within 30 minutes of the quake. The waters detected at Miyazaki Port measured 20 centimeters (0.7 feet) high, the reports said.

Tsunami advisories were issued

for Miyazaki prefecture, where the quake was centered, on the southwestern island of Kyushu, as well as nearby Kochi prefecture in Shikoku island, shortly after the quake struck at 9:19 p.m., JMA said. They were all lifted before midnight.

Agency official Shigeki Aoki told reporters that aftershocks were possible, especially in the next two or three days. (AP)

Top aide of impeached South Korean president pleads for investigators to halt detention efforts

SEOUL, Jan 14, (AP) — The top aide of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol pleaded with law enforcement on Tuesday to abandon their efforts to detain him over last month's martial law imposition, as authorities prepared a second attempt to take him into custody.

In his statement, presidential chief of staff Chung Jin-suk said Yoon could instead be questioned at a "third site" or at his residence and claimed that the anti-corruption agency and police were trying to drag him out like he was a member of a "South American drug cartel."

However, Yoon Kab-keun, one of the president's lawyers, said Chung issued the message without consulting them and that the legal team has no immediate plans to make the president available for questioning by investigators.

Yoon Suk Yeol has not left his official residence in Seoul for weeks, and the presidential security service prevented dozens of investigators from detaining Yoon after a nearly six-hour standoff on Jan. 3.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials and police pledged more forceful measures to detain Yoon while they jointly investigate whether Yoon's brief martial law declaration on Dec. 3 amounted to an attempted rebellion. The National Police Agency has convened multiple meetings of field commanders in Seoul and nearby Gyeonggi province in recent days to plan the detention efforts and the size of those forces fueled speculation that more than a thousand officers



South Korea's Constitutional Court's judges, from left, Jung Jung-mi, Lee Mi-sun, acting Chief Justice Moon Hyung-bae, Kim Hyung-du and Cheong Hyung-sik sit for the first formal hearing of a trial on the validity of President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment by the National Assembly at the constitutional court of Korea in Seoul, South Korea, Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025. (AP)

could be deployed in a possible multi-day operation. The agency and police have openly warned that presidential bodyguards obstructing the execution of the warrant could be arrested on site.

The anti-corruption agency and police haven't confirmed when they would return to the presidential residence, which has been fortified with barbed wire and rows of vehicles blocking paths. But Chung said he understood "D-day" to be Wednesday, without specifying the information he had.

Anti-corruption agency and police

officials met with representatives of the presidential security service Tuesday morning for unspecified discussions regarding efforts to execute the detention warrant for Yoon, the agency said. It wasn't immediately clear whether they any kind of compromise was reached.

The country's acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, had raised concerns on Monday about potential clashes between authorities and the presidential security service, which, despite a court warrant for Yoon's detention, has insisted it's obligated to protect the president.

Treachery carries death penalty for those convicted

Ugandan military court rules it can try opposition figure on treachery charge

KAMPALA, Jan 14, (AP) — A prominent opposition figure in Uganda will stand trial on the serious charge of treachery, a military court ruled Tuesday, escalating the legal trouble Kizza Besigye faces ahead of presidential elections scheduled for 2026.

Treachery carries the death penalty for those convicted.

Besigye, who has contested the presidency four times, went missing in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, on Nov. 16. Days later, he and his co-accused, an assistant named Obeid Lutale, appeared before a military court in Kampala, the Ugandan capital.

Besigye was charged with illegal possession of a firearm and a charge relating to the alleged solicitation of military support overseas in order to destabilize national security. Besigye,

who denied the charges, has since been remanded in custody.

A military prosecutor on Monday amended the charge sheet to include treachery and introduce a third suspect,



Ugandan opposition leader and four-time presidential candidate Kizza Besigye, stands in the dock at the Makindye Martial Court in Kampala, Uganda, Nov. 20, 2024. (AP)

who is a serving army officer, surprising defense attorneys who then challenged the move.

Besigye, 68, has faced arrest and assault many times in his political career. But he's never been convicted of a crime.

Amnesty International has called for Besigye's release, saying his "abduction clearly violated international human rights law and the process of extradition with its requisite fair trial protections."

Besigye's trial is "the latest example of Uganda's authorities misusing military courts and military-related charges to clamp down on the opposition," according to Human Rights Watch.

The unfolding trial of Besigye is being watched closely by Ugandans anxious over political maneuvers ahead of presidential elections.

Subcontinent

India summons Bangladesh envoy: India summoned on Monday Bangladesh Acting High Commissioner to the country Md. Nural Islam to convey its stand on border fencing.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement that Nural Islam was summoned and conveyed New Delhi's position with security measures at the border, including on fencing.

The ministry said that India observed all protocols and agreements between the two governments and between the Border Security Force and Border Guard Bangladesh.

"India reiterated its commitment to ensuring a crime-free border by effectively addressing the challenges of cross-border criminal activities, smuggling, movement of criminals and trafficking. Barbed wire fencing, border lighting, installation of technical devices and cattle fences are measures for securing the border," the statement said.

New Delhi also conveyed its expectation that Dhaka will implement all earlier understandings and that there will be a cooperative approach to combating cross-border crimes. (KUNA)

□ □ □

Singapore prez to arrive in India: Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam is scheduled to arrive in India Tuesday on a five-day official visit to strengthen bilateral relationship.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement that Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam will pay a state visit to India from 14-18 January.

In his first visit to India as President, Tharman will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including Ministers, Members of Parliament and officials.

He is scheduled to meet Indian President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to discuss ways of deepening bilateral relationship. (KUNA)

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Pakistani security forces kill 8 militants: Pakistani security forces killed eight militants in two raids targeting militant hideouts in restive northwest Pakistan bordering Afghanistan, the military said Tuesday.

The raids were conducted Monday in the Tank and Tirah Valley districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, it said in a statement.

The military described the dead militants as "Khwarij," a phrase the government uses for Pakistani Taliban. It gave no further details. (AP)

Kuwaiti oil prices surge to \$82.31pb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by USD 4.36 to USD 82.31 per barrel (pb) on Monday, compared with USD 77.95 pb Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC)

on Tuesday. At the global level, the Brent crude went up by USD 1.25 to USD 81.01 pb, and the West Texas Intermediate also rose by USD 2.25 to USD 78.82 pb.

Business

Appointments are critical in advancing KIPCO's long-term investment goals, says Group CEO

KIPCO announces key leadership appointments to strengthen investment strategy

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: KIPCO – Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – announced two key executive promotions that are set to drive the company's growth and enhance the performance of its portfolio companies. Effective January 6, 2025, Sheikh Sabah Mohammad Abdulaziz Al Sabah transitioned to the role of Group Chief Investment Officer, and Mr Samer Abbouchi was promoted to Deputy Group Chief Investment Officer.

These strategic appointments are part of KIPCO's ongoing efforts to maximize the value of its existing investments, explore opportunities in new business sectors, and enhance the long-term performance of its portfolio. The leadership changes are designed to further reinforce the company's investment strategy and its capacity to grow its diverse portfolio across various sectors.

Sheikh Sabah Mohammad Abdulaziz Al Sabah has been an integral part of KIPCO Group for many years, with a wealth of experience in managing strategic projects and driving the company's key initiatives. Prior to his appointment as Group CIO, Sheikh Sabah held the role of Chief Strategic Projects Officer, where he was responsible for overseeing the development and execution of strategic initiatives across KIPCO's portfolio. His deep knowledge of KIPCO's business operations, coupled with his expertise in identifying and nurturing high-impact investments, uniquely positions him to lead the company's investment strategies and manage its growing portfolio. As Group CIO, Sheikh Sabah will be instrumental in shaping the company's investment direction, ensuring that KIPCO capitalizes on new market opportunities



Sheikh Sabah Mohammad Abdulaziz Al Sabah

while maintaining a focus on sustainable and profitable growth.

Mr Samer Abbouchi, who joined KIPCO in 2023, has been promot-



Samer Abbouchi

ed to Deputy Group CIO, focusing on supporting the CIO in the implementation of the company's investment strategies. As Group Sen-

ior Vice President – Investments, Mr Abbouchi has played a pivotal role in identifying, analyzing and managing KIPCO's investments across a wide range of sectors. His extensive experience in corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, and asset management, as well as his in-depth understanding of regional and global market dynamics, will make him a key contributor to KIPCO's ongoing success. In his new role, Samer will work closely with Sheikh Sabah to manage KIPCO's investment portfolio, streamline operations and contribute to the company's broader growth objectives.

Commenting on these appointments, Sheikha Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer, said: "These changes are a testament to the deep talent within KIPCO

and the strong leadership pipeline we have built over the years. Sheikh Sabah's strategic vision and Samer's investment acumen will be critical in advancing KIPCO's long-term investment goals. We are confident that these appointments will enhance our ability to capitalize on emerging opportunities, optimize the performance of our portfolio companies, and continue to create value for our shareholders and stakeholders."

KIPCO remains committed to delivering sustained growth, advancing its strategic initiatives, and positioning itself as a leading investor in the region. These leadership changes are expected to further strengthen KIPCO's operational and investment capabilities, ensuring the company is well-positioned to succeed in an ever-evolving regional market.

Boursa Kuwait ends Tuesday with 0.63% gain, index climbs 46.81 pts

Major 50 Index rises 0.20% amid strong trading activity

By Mahmoud Shendi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: Boursa Kuwait concluded its Tuesday trading session with the general index climbing 46.81 points (0.63%) to close at 7,530.52 points.

A total of 323.4 million shares were exchanged through 18,136 cash transactions, generating a turnover of KD 77.7 million (approximately \$239.3 million).

The Main Market Index gained 42.12 points (0.60%) to settle at 7,116.16 points, with 202.7 million shares traded in 10,107 transactions worth KD 36.2 million (around \$111.4 million).

Similarly, the Premier Market Index advanced 50.32 points (0.63%) to close at 8,004.04 points. Trading volume reached 120.6 million shares through 8,029 transactions, with a value of KD 41.5 million (about \$127.8 million).

Meanwhile, the Major 50 Index rose 14 points (0.20%) to 7,116.47 points, recording a trade of 138.2 million shares via 6,108 cash transactions valued at KD 28.7 million (approximately \$88.3 million).

On Monday, the general index slipped 8 points, or 0.1 percent, to settle at 7,483 points.

A total of 304 million shares were traded across 18,619 cash transactions, amounting to 76.2 million dinars (approximately \$234.6 million).

The market value decreased by 48 million di-

nars, bringing the total market capitalization to 44,292 billion dinars, down from 44,340 billion dinars in the previous session.

The performance across the indices was varied. The Main Market Index rose by 34 points, or 0.4 percent, to reach 7,074 points, with 143.2 million shares traded through 8,996 transactions valued at 23.3 million dinars (\$71.7 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index experienced a decline of 19.5 points, or 0.2 percent, finishing at 7,953 points, with 161.2 million shares changing hands in 9,623 transactions, amounting to 52.9 million dinars (\$163 million).

The Main 50 index saw a positive movement, climbing by 58.4 points, or 0.8 percent, to 7,102 points, supported by the trading of 82.5 million shares through 4,950 transactions valued at 13.7 million dinars (\$42.1 million).

The session witnessed a decline in six sectors, with Healthcare leading the losses, falling by 6.94 percent. On the other hand, Insurance emerged as the top-performing sector, with a 3.95 percent increase, while the Technology sector remained unchanged.

On the stock front, 55 stocks saw gains, led by UNICAP, which rose by 8.19 percent. However, 51 stocks declined, with KMEFIC experiencing the most significant drop of 14.79 percent. A total of 23 stocks remained unchanged.

The Warba Bank led the trading activity with 36.48 million shares traded, amounting to 8.32 million dinars in liquidity. Among the top gain-

ers were UNICAP, Gulf T, M Business and Al Maamel, while the biggest losers were KMEFIC, Meydan, Hayat Com and Osool.

National Consumer Holding Company (Consumer) announced the establishment of a subsidiary, Prime Snack Box Restaurant Management Company, with a capital of 10 thousand dinars.

Consumer holds a 90 percent stake in the new entity, which will be consolidated as a subsidiary from Q1 2025.

The company also reported a 32.46 percent decline in its Q3 2024 profits, totaling 368.25 thousand dinars, down from 545.26 thousand dinars in the same period in 2023.

Warba Capital Holding Company revealed that it had received an offer to sell its 100 percent stake in the Construction and Building Factory Company, which specializes in cement block production, for 1.9 million dinars.

The company is currently evaluating the offer. Warba Capital also reported a significant increase in losses for the first quarter of FY 2024, with losses rising by 61.6 percent to 69.24 thousand dinars, compared to 42.84 thousand dinars in the same quarter of the previous year.

These developments reflect a fluctuating market environment, as some sectors and stocks showed promising growth, while others faced notable declines.

Investors will likely keep an eye on these shifts in the coming weeks, particularly in the wake of corporate announcements and economic trends.

CBK issues KD 200 million bonds with 1.125% return

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The Central Bank of Kuwait has announced the issuance of bonds and securitization instruments valued at 200 million dinars, with a maturity period of three months and a return rate of 1.125 percent, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This issuance of bonds and securitization is part of the Central Bank's ongoing efforts to maintain financial stability and manage the liquidity needs of the country's banking sector.

In addition, these debt instruments serve as one of the tools for implementing the Central Bank's monetary policy, particularly with respect to interest rates.

One key advantage of these instruments is that they are classified as "risk-free" in bank data, providing a stable and secure option for financial institutions.

These "bonds and corresponding securitization" are primarily offered to banks operating within the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Their main purpose is to regulate liquidity by withdrawing excess liquidity in the market. By issuing these bonds, the Central Bank can manage liquidity levels and adjust them as needed. Banks can redeem these bonds, receiving their value after deducting the return.

Kuwait Ports Authority plans to modernize to 'smart ports'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14, (KUNA): Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) Director General, Sheikh Khaled Salem Al-Sabah, affirmed Tuesday the authority's endeavor to upgrade to smart ports, to enable its cadres to keep up with the growth in maritime transport and links the local economy to global markets.

The authority is working on sending its corps to local and international training courses to develop their performance and their skills, said Sheikh Khaled in an interview with KUNA.

Regarding the authority's revenues, he explained that it maintained its profits by rationalizing spending, streamlining ship unloading, providing storage yards to handle goods quickly, and removing customs inspection obstacles.

He added that short-term plans are in place to develop the infrastructure of Shuwaikh and Shuaiba ports, espe-

cially the service and road networks, to prepare them for development projects.

Regarding what the authority requires to be among the world's ports, he stressed that it needs information technology and digital development to increase production, as well as the latest handling mechanisms, and to update its regulation to comply with ports across the world.

Concerning the future, he added that the authority is working on studying projects that include developing marine basins and the exploitation of allocated lands for storage purposes that ensures the authority's revenue.

He noted the role the private sector plays in the management of ports and their facilities when it comes to cargo handling and providing marine equipment, stressing the need to continue cooperation with the private sector due to its vital role.

Iraq's BNGL project cuts gas flaring, boosts clean energy

BASRA, Jan 14, (Xinhua): Hussein takes a deep breath as he rolls down his car window during his morning commute, something unthinkable just a few years ago in this oil-rich city where black smoke once dominated the skyline.

"The air in Basra is much better now," says Hussein, a petroleum engineer who, like many locals, has witnessed a remarkable transformation in this industrial hub's environment. Even on this crisp winter morning, the difference is palpable.

For decades, Iraq's economic lifeline -- the oil and gas sector -- has come at a steep environmental cost. The practice of gas flaring, where associated gas from oil production is burned off into the atmosphere, has cast a shadow, both literal and figurative, over cities like Basra, where residents have long suffered the consequences of industrial pollution.

But a series of ambitious environmental projects, led by Chinese enterprises and dubbed the "Blue Sky Projects" by the locals, is helping Iraq turn a corner in its battle against pollution while addressing chronic energy shortages.

At the heart of this transformation is the Basra Natural Gas Liquids (BNGL) project, a facility that captures and processes associated gas from three major oilfields. The project, built by China Petroleum Engineering and Construction Corporation (CPECC), stands as a testament to what's possible when modern technology meets environmental consciousness.

"Every cubic meter of gas we process is one that won't be directly flared into Basra's skies," says Sun Baojun, the project manager, whose facility now produces enough dry gas to power nearby communities that have long struggled with electricity short-

ages. The numbers are impressive: 4.4 million cubic meters of dry gas and 2,600 tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas daily.

In the sprawling al-Rumaila oilfield, where antiquated flare stacks once spewed black smoke into the air, change is visible. New low-pressure flaring systems are replacing the old "candlestick" flares, part of an upgrade project scheduled for completion by February 2025.

"By then, Basra's skies will be bluer, and the air even cleaner," says Wang Jingyang, who manages the upgrade project. His optimism reflected the broader mood of transformation in the region.

The initiative extends beyond gas processing. In a country blessed with abundant sunlight, Chinese engineers are helping Iraq harness solar power. A new one-megawatt solar station in the al-Rumaila oilfield, complete with energy storage systems, represents Iraq's steps toward renewable energy. The facility is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 1,600 tonnes annually -- a small but significant step in the country's environmental journey.

Wang Xianghui, senior vice president of CPECC Middle East Branch, emphasizes that embracing green development is a fundamental social responsibility for companies contributing to the high-quality advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative.

"We aim to play our part in building a 'Green Silk Road,'" he concluded. For Iraqi officials, these developments mark a new chapter in the nation's industrial development. At the inauguration ceremony of the BNGL project, Oil Minister Hayan Abdul Ghani emphasized how these projects are not just environmental victories but economic ones, improving both livelihoods and air quality.

Through CXBanking app, in collaboration with NCR ATLEOS

NBK unveils a new banking experience with ATMs tailored to customers' needs

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: As it strives to give customers a better experience tailored to their needs, in alignment with the 2025 Consumer Banking Digital Transformation Strategy, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced introducing CXBanking, an ATM client application that extends a traditional client software into a modern, web enterprise environment, on all its ATMs across Kuwait, in collaboration with NCR ATLEOS.

CXBanking is a platform that will allow the bank to use latest development technologies on the ATM/CDM so that they can move from host driven customer journey to programmable customer journey. Therefore, by implementing CXBanking to NBK's ATM/CDM's will enhance the customer journey and enable more customer interaction, allowing them to explore the new and enhanced banking features on NBK's ATMs through state-of-the-art modern technology.

CX banking main provides a wide range of features including cash withdrawal and deposit, transfer locally and internationally, adding and changing e-mail, selecting denomination, making payments using credit cards, and paying credit card installments.



Rasha Al-Barjas

Al-Barjas: The new ATMs will better serve the needs of our customers through the new and enhanced features

- Services include local and international transfers, adding or changing e-mail, credit card payments, and cardless cash withdrawal

Other services include cardless cash withdrawal using mobile number or using civil ID, updating civil ID expiry date, extract account statement, view and manage accounts and credit cards.

On top of that, the app offers a customized look and feel based on segment for a



NBK's CXBanking

unique experience, by having different colors and themes appear when customers access the ATM machine for each segment.

This state-of-the-art technology will reduce load on branches, by introducing new services and revamping the existing features, which will be accessible 24/7 and available at all NBK branches throughout all the governorates of Kuwait.

Commenting on this, Rasha Al-Barjas, ATM and CDM Channels Manager at National Bank of Kuwait, said, "NBK always strives to develop its products and services within its endeavors to offer customers a top-notch banking experience that meets their expect-

tations, saves their time and effort, and enables faster and easier transactions."

"With the launch of the CXBanking app, NBK ATMs are better able to serve the needs of customers by providing new and enhanced features, which will make these ATMs an alternative preferred channel for many, through which they will be able to make various banking transactions easily, without having to visit branches," she explained.

It is worth mentioning that NBK boasts the largest domestic branch network in Kuwait, with 72 branches, in addition to having the largest ATM network locally, with a total of 450 on-site and off-site ATMs/CDMs.

Bank's commitment to sustainability showcased

Gulf Bank hosts WHO delegation at Al-Shaab branch, showcasing sustainability efforts and advancing Kuwait's Healthy City goals



Group photo of the visiting delegation with bank officials.



The delegation learning about the bank's efforts in the field of environmental sustainability.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: As part of its commitment to sustainable development and promoting Kuwait's status as a forward-thinking and progressive country, Gulf Bank hosted a delegation from the World Health Organization (WHO) at its Al-Shaab branch. The visit marked a key step in the region's journey toward being recognized as a Healthy City.

During the visit, Gulf Bank representatives showcased the Bank's commitment to sustainability through its ambitious plan to transform its branch network into eco-friendly spaces. The first phase of this initiative saw the renovation of six branches: Al-Ghazali, Al-Zahra, Abdullah Al-Salem Suburb, Al-

Shaab, Al-Jabriya, and Al-Nuzha. This transformation aligns with the Bank's five-year strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035, emphasizing the transition to a sustainable economy and the reduction of carbon emissions.

The renovated branches incorporate sustainability-focused designs, including solar panels and natural lighting to reduce electricity consumption, motion sensors to optimize electricity. Furthermore, the branches feature green spaces and electric vehicle charging stations in selected branches.

Gulf Bank reaffirmed its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, paper usage,



Al Shaab branch after renovation. One of Gulf Bank's environmentally friendly branches.

waste, and reliance on non-renewable energy. These efforts extend beyond the Bank's operations, reaching into community-

driven projects. For example, Gulf Bank has partnered with various Cooperative Societies and Kuwait's Environment Public Authority, to encourage the use of reusable bags instead of plastic. To date, the bank has distributed 100,000 reusable bags and continues to innovate by repurposing its expired outdoor advertisements into reusable bags.

These initiatives reflect Gulf Bank's commitment to fostering a culture of sustainability in society, contributing to Kuwait's environmental and economic goals.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service

while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

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

Türkiye's business community eager to tap Syria's economic potential

ANKARA, Jan 13, (Xinhua): Türkiye's business community, in collaboration with government institutions, has launched initiatives to aid Syria's recovery, focusing on rebuilding the war-torn country's devastated economic structure.

Earlier last week, government officials and business leaders convened in the capital Ankara to discuss actionable plans for Syria's reconstruction and economic development.

"We aim to re-establish trade routes with Syria and empower Syrian businesses to realize their potential," said Mustafa Uyar, a businessman from Gaziantep, a city near the border with Syria.

Gaziantep, home to hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees, has been a historical gateway for commerce between the two nations. "We've already initiated contact with Syrian counterparts and have begun limited exports," Uyar told Xinhua.

Recent trade figures reflected this renewed momentum. According to data from the Türkiye Exporters Assembly, Turkish exports to Syria grew by nearly 20 percent year-on-year in December 2024, surpassing 150 million U.S. dollars. This brought Türkiye's total export volume to Syria for 2024 to over 1.5 billion dollars.

Syria has been grappling with severe economic and infrastructural

challenges after over 13 years of civil war. Following the fall of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government on Dec. 8, 2024, Ankara has voiced its support for Syria's new leadership, with the reopening of the Turkish embassy in Damascus and high-level visits to the Syrian capital in the past weeks.

Multiple Turkish ministries have also unveiled plans to help repair roads, airports, and energy and electricity infrastructure in Syria.

Bilgehan Fuat, head of the Association of International Transport and Logistics Service Providers, identified Syria as a market with significant untapped trade potential.

"The cessation of Syria's civil conflict presents significant opportunities for Turkish industries, particularly in logistics and infrastructure sectors," Engin told Xinhua.

Ibrahim Fuat Ozcoekci, chairman of the Türkiye-Syria Business Council at the Foreign Economic Relations Board, highlighted the enthusiasm of Turkish businesses to invest in Syria.

"My phone hasn't stopped ringing. Everyone wants to know when and how to begin operations in Syria," he told local Hurriyet Daily News last week.

Syrian entrepreneurs operating in Türkiye also played a crucial role in boosting the revival of bilateral trade, experts underscored.

Kuwait could save more than quarter of budget through improved efficiency of social spending

New ESCWA report: country's public spending represents equivalent of 50% of GDP

BEIRUT, Jan 14: Kuwait is at a critical juncture in its economic journey, facing fundamental challenges in fiscal sustainability and the efficiency of social spending. A new report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), entitled "Social spending, expenditure efficiency and fiscal sustainability: strategies for rebalancing Kuwait's Budget", provides a critical analysis of current shortcomings and proposes reform steps to enhance the efficiency of the Kuwaiti economy.

The report shows that the country's public spending represents the equivalent of 50% of its GDP, well above the global average of 37%. However, the management of this spending lacks efficiency, with Kuwait scoring 0.54 on the efficiency index compared with a global average of 0.74. The report indicates that improving efficiency to reach this average could achieve financial savings estimated at 6.8 billion

Kuwaiti dinars, or about 27% of the State's public spending for the year 2023/2024.

Education and health under the microscope
With regard to social spending, which consumes 44% of the total public budget, the report records a decline in the per capita share of this spending by 12% since 2018/2019. It also indicates that the education sector, which accounts for 12% of the public budget, is still lagging behind international standards, despite the large spending that has been allocated over the years. In the health sector, the high level of public spending has not contributed to addressing health challenges, as about a quarter of the population in Kuwait suffers from diabetes, indicating an urgent need to improve the effectiveness of these expenditures.

Imbalance in the distribution of government transfers

The report highlights problems in the fairness of the distribution of government transfers to individuals, as the wealthiest families benefit by 22% of the total transfers due to the absence of effective targeting mechanisms. It recommends rationalizing transfers to middle- and low-income households, which in turn would provide significant financial resources to be directed towards the most needed development sectors.

Roadmap for reforms

The report calls for implementing comprehensive financial reforms to boost the Kuwaiti economy, most notably diversifying the economy by strengthening

non-oil sectors and supporting the private sector. It also stresses the need to improve non-oil revenue collection mechanisms and adopt performance-based budgets and digital platforms to improve transparency and enhance efficiency.

Improving public services

The report also stresses the importance of developing public services, emphasizing investment in preventive healthcare and modernizing medical infrastructure. It also recommends improving education through teacher training and developing curricula, in addition to expanding research initiatives to support long-term economic and social goals.

In this context, the report's author, Niranjan Sarangi, affirmed: "Kuwait needs to act immediately. Implementing targeted financial reforms is not an option but a necessity to protect the economy and ensure the well-being of citizens."

Sustainable Development Goals at the heart of reforms

The report also indicates that aligning Kuwait's financial strategy with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is crucial to achieving long-term economic stability. Implementing these reforms could improve Kuwait's ranking in global indicators, such as the Human Development Index and the Sustainable Development Goals Index, putting it in a better position to achieve its economic and development aspirations.

Main contributors to the increase were issuers from Malaysia, GCC states

Sukuk market: strong performance set to continue in '25

By S&P Global Ratings

S&P Global Ratings forecasts that sukuk issuance will amount to \$190 billion to \$200 billion in 2025, following the market's strong performance last year. Total issuance reached \$193.4 billion in 2024, down slightly from the previous year's \$197.8 billion. However, a notable difference was seen as of Dec. 31, 2024. The main contributors to this increase were issuers from Malaysia, GCC countries led by Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia. We expect foreign currency-denominated issuance to remain elevated in 2025.

Many issuers wanted to benefit from the improving global liquidity conditions in 2024, with major central banks starting to ease their monetary policy and avoid any potential disruption that could come from local or geopolitical developments. In 2025, we expect monetary easing to continue, albeit at a slower pace than previously expected. This, combined with high financing needs in core Islamic finance countries due to ongoing economic diversification programs, will lead issuers to take any windows of opportunity to issue in the market, we believe.

We also think that the potential impact from the adoption of Standard 62 of the Accounting and Auditing Organization for the Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) will come in 2026 at the earliest, as we understand the organization is continuing to receive feedback from the market. We are uncertain whether the feedback will lead to any fundamental changes to the original proposals, which we still regard as potentially highly disruptive for the industry.

Evolving Sharia requirements have already led to a weakening of legal documents in some of the structures we have observed, specifically for sukuk in which equity holdings are used as underlying assets. In our view, some of these sukuk may contain additional risks compared with traditional sukuk and conventional financial obligations, which could lead to potential uncertainty about their resolution. At some stage, the industry will have to rethink the best way to reconcile Sharia requirements with the market appetite for fixed-income instruments. Collaboration between the industry stakeholders could help to achieve this objective.

Monetary Easing And Core Countries' Financing Needs Will Likely Underpin A Strong 2025 Global sukuk issuance stabilized in 2024, reaching \$193.4 billion at year-end compared with \$197.8 billion a year earlier. This performance was underpinned by a significant increase in foreign currency-denominated issuance and a drop in local-currency issuance. It was further aided by strong financing needs in core Islamic finance countries, the need to attract foreign capital, and improving global liquidity conditions, with major cen-

tral banks starting to ease their monetary policy.

In 2025, we expect the total volume of issuance to approach 2023 levels of about \$190 billion to \$200 billion, with foreign currency-denominated issuance contributing \$70 billion to \$80 billion as monetary easing continues and economic conditions in core Islamic finance countries remain supportive. Geopolitical risk has not yet dragged on issuance but could pose some downside risk, though our base case does not expect significant disruption.

The volume of local currency-denominated sukuk issuance declined in 2024.

Local currency-denominated sukuk issuance fell by 14.6% year on year, primarily due to lower issuance in Malaysia, Pakistan, Türkiye, and Indonesia. The largest drop in local-currency issuance was in Malaysia, where government issuance decreased because of a smaller fiscal deficit due to the reduction of subsidies. Similarly, Malaysia's central bank's issuance fell as a result of tighter liquidity conditions for the Islamic banks as their financing growth continued to outpace deposit growth. Pakistan also saw lower local-currency issuance, as the government's fiscal position remains under pressure and monetary conditions remain tight, as did Türkiye, where tight monetary conditions resulted in lower local currency-denominated issuance. However, local-currency issuance in Saudi Arabia resumed its growing trend as the government tapped the market with jumbo issuance and started issuing retail sukuk.

Foreign currency-denominated sukuk issuance increased significantly in 2024. Significant financing needs in core Islamic finance countries and improving liquidity conditions, with major central banks starting monetary easing, led to a surge in issuance on the international sukuk market in 2024. Many issuers also wanted to avoid any potential disruption that could come from local or geopolitical developments. Overall, total issuance in foreign currency rose to \$72.7 billion in 2024 from \$56.5 billion in 2023.

The increase was mainly attributable to the GCC, Malaysia and Indonesia. Among GCC countries, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait led the way, with banks, corporations and the government of Saudi Arabia stepping up their foreign-currency issuance, while banks and corporations in Qatar and Oman were also more active in this area. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) ended the year with marginally lower foreign-currency sukuk issuance than last year. In Malaysia, performance was mainly underpinned by increased issuance by the International Islamic Liquidity Management Corporation (ILLM) and a couple of issuances by the central bank and the sovereign wealth fund.

Indonesia's higher sukuk volumes were due to the country's increased sovereign issuance.

In 2025, not only do we expect monetary easing to continue but we also think financing needs in core Islamic finance countries will remain high and lead issuers to take any opportunity the market has to offer. We therefore forecast that the volume of foreign currency-denominated sukuk issuance will reach \$70 billion to \$80 billion in 2025. It is worth noting that we did not see significant activity by non-traditional issuers in this area in 2024 and we expect such activity to remain sporadic in 2025.

Market Disruption Could Be On The Horizon In late 2023, the AAOIFI published its exposure draft of Sharia Standard 62 on sukuk and gave the industry until July 31, 2024 to provide feedback. The organization is planning to hold other market consultations on this standard in the first half of 2025. In our view, if the standard is adopted as presented, it could change the nature of sukuk as an instrument, expose investors to higher risks, and increase market fragmentation.

However, we think that the potential disruption from this standard will come in 2026 at the earliest. We are uncertain whether market feedback to the AAOIFI will lead to any fundamental changes to the original proposals.

If adopted as proposed, Sharia Standard 62 will result in the sukuk market shifting from structures in which the contractual obligations of sukuk sponsors underpin repayment to structures in which the underlying assets have a more prominent role. In our view, this could affect the market in several ways:

■ Sukuk may become more expensive than conventional issuances. This is because of costs related to asset registration applied to certain asset classes, such as real estate, in certain core Islamic finance countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, as the draft new standard requires a true sale of assets. This could make some transactions uncompetitive compared with conventional instruments.

■ Investors may be exposed to asset-related risks. Transferring an asset comes with risks; the risk of confiscation or asset nationalization could become more relevant, as issuers may no longer be able to bear such risk. Some structures could also expose investors to the market value of the assets, and issuers may use this to avoid their remaining payment obligations if the value of the underlying assets drops materially.

■ Potential legal issues: In some countries, sukuk may become difficult to structure if foreign investors cannot own the assets. In addition, the proposed Standard 62 stipulates that Sharia should be the governing law of sukuk, while the market norm is to use English law. If English law continues to be used, the standard specifies that its application should not contradict the principles of Sharia as determined by the AAOIFI Sharia standards.

This indicates to us that if the standard is adopted as is, the market for AAOIFI adopters could be substantially disrupted until sukuk structures find ways to restore the fixed-income characteristics of the instrument and its attractiveness for fixed-income investors. If structures cannot find a way to do this, the sukuk market could experience fundamental changes, and we are uncertain about investors' appetite for adopting these changes. Some market commentators believe the market will remain resilient, arguing that it survived the adoption of Sharia Standard 59 (governing the sale of debt in 2021) and even the comments made by scholars on the compliance of sukuk with Sharia in the past.

We don't share this opinion. In our view, if Standard 62 is adopted as proposed, it could introduce significant changes to the credit characteristics of sukuk. This could also lead to the complexity of the instrument increasing further. Ultimately, market fragmentation between AAOIFI adopters and non-adopters may become more prominent. This could encourage some adopters to transition away from the standards if their ability to tap capital markets is significantly restricted.

Assuming the standard is approved later this year, the disruption would likely begin in 2026. We note that a change to the standards is unlikely to affect existing sukuk, because, as we understand it, any changes to the contractual obligations of these instruments are subject to their investors' consent.

Some Structures Come With Additional Risks

We note that, in some structures, sponsors have used shares as underlying assets. In Asia, this was typically combined with a Murabaha transaction that was used to pay principal and the periodic distribution amounts owed to investors, as we saw in the Khazanah Global Sukuk Bhd. \$5 billion program. In the GCC, this structure is unlikely to be considered as acceptable due to local Sharia requirements.

Therefore, sponsors have combined this structure with an obligation to subscribe to a hedging mechanism to ensure the price of the shares is always at least equal to the principal and the last periodic distribution amount owed to investors (in the context of normal or early dissolution of the sukuk). Generally, the terms and conditions of the sukuk require this hedging mechanism to be renewed annually. If the sponsor is unable to implement this hedging mechanism within a specific time frame or is unable to renew it on an annual basis, the legal documents typically require the principal to be returned to the investors without any periodic distribution amount (in case of inability to implement the initial hedging mechanism at the transaction's inception) and the sukuk dissolved.

To be continued

Tamil Nadu Engineers Forum kicks off 2025 with 'Technical Symposia'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The Tamil Nadu Engineers Forum (TEF) inaugurated 2025 with a highly successful Inaugural and Technical Symposia on January 8, 2025, at the Al Hashemi Grand Ballroom, Radisson Blu, Salmiya. The event gathered leading industry professionals, renowned speakers, and engineers to engage in discussions centered around innovation and entrepreneurship.

The evening commenced with the registration session at 5:30 PM, followed by a formal welcome address from event anchors Engr. Gem Prasanna and Engr. Middleton. The event began with a rendition of "Tamilthaai Vaazhthu," fostering a sense of unity and cultural pride among attendees. This was followed by a safety moment and Thirukural shared by Er. Kalai Arasan and Er. Maniyarasu, emphasizing the importance of safety in the workplace. Er. Arun Golden, the Treasurer of TEF-2025, extended a warm welcome to sponsors, guests, and members, setting the tone for a successful evening.

The Presidential address was delivered by Mr. RAJA, TEF-2025 President, who emphasized the importance of continuous professional development and reaffirmed the organization's commitment to fostering engineering excellence. Mr. RAJA also outlined upcoming initiatives, including special events to commemorate TEF's 26th anniversary.

The event featured three key technical sessions:

1. Bouncing Back from Failures: The Power of Entrepreneurs – Mr. Mohan, CEO of IPPO Pay, delivered an insightful session on resilience and the importance of consistency in entrepreneurship, drawing from his own experiences of overcoming business challenges.

2. Compressor Seal Solutions – New Technologies – Ms. Farah Elderbi, Director of Business Development at Eagle Burgmann, discussed cutting-edge innovations in compressor seal technology, highlighting their role in improving operational efficiency and reliability across industries.

3. Aryabhata to Aditya L1: ISRO's Memorable Journey – Ms. Kalpana Arvind, Former Associate Director at ISRO, provided an inspiring account of India's space exploration journey, from the launch of Aryabhata to the recent success of the Aditya L1 mission.

In line with its commitment to excellence, TEF also announced upcoming events: the 9th Engineering Excellence Awards and the 16th Technological Innovations Conference & Exposition, both scheduled for October 9, 2025. Additionally, TEF proudly celebrated its distinction as the only ISO-certified non-profit engineering organization in the region, reinforcing its commitment to quality, safety, and professionalism.

A significant highlight of the evening was the launch of the TEF Kuwait Mobile App, which is designed to enhance communication and collaboration within the engineering community. Attendees were encouraged to explore the app's features, which will promote networking and active engagement among members.

A special felicitation ceremony honored the esteemed Guests of Honor: Mr. Mohammed Sulman Al Refai, Mr. Jasem Al Nori, Mr. Sabah Al-Shammari, Mr. Rabih Abdul Qader, and Shri Manasa Raj Patel, IFS, First Secretary of the Indian Embassy in Kuwait. The Chief Guest, Er. Kalpana Arvind, along with Guest Speaker Mr. Mohan of IPPO Pay and Distinguished Speaker Ms. Farah Elderbi, were also felicitated for their invaluable contributions.

The evening concluded with a gracious vote of thanks delivered by Engr. Kapil, acknowledging the efforts of sponsors, speakers, and attendees. A networking dinner provided an excellent opportunity for guests to connect and engage in further discussions about the themes of innovation and professional growth.

Looking forward, TEF is poised to continue its mission of driving progress and fostering collaboration in the engineering sector throughout 2025.



Photos during the Symposia.

Special mention award dedicated to late Judge M. V. John

NIRAM '24 painting competition concludes with grand ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: Kala (Art) Kuwait "NIRAM 2024" Children's Day painting competition in association with American Tourister has concluded with the grand prize distribution to all winners at a colorful ceremonial function held at Indian Community School, Khaithan on Friday, 10th January 2024. The program was witnessed by Community Leaders, Business Personalities, School Principals, Art Teachers, Parents and Media Representatives. The Painting competition was held on 6th December 2024 the occasion of the birthday of late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India.

Mr. Mustafa Al-Mosawi, President, Kuwait Transplant Society and Organ Transplant Center, has inaugurated the function. During the inaugural speech, Mr. Mosawi appreciated all winners for their fabulous painting works, which were displayed at the entrance and appreciated the organizers for conducting such a big program.

The welcome speech was addressed by Mr. Aneesh Varghese, General Secretary, Kala (Art) Kuwait. Organization President Mr. Sivakumar P. K. Chaired the function. NIRAM-2024 program reporting done by Niram-2024 General Convener Mr. Rakesh P. D and Judging Assessment was briefed by Niram-2024 Judge Mr. Sasi Krishnan. The 20th Anniversary souvenir of "NIRAM" was released by Mr. Habeeb, American Tourister Marketing head, handing over the first copy to Mrs. Jyothi Sivakumar, Niram 2024 Souvenir Convener.

Indian Community School Chairman Sheikh Abdul Rahman, Goscore Learning Head of Sales Jagak Kishore and NIRAM Coordinator Mukesh V. P spoke while extending their greetings. Kala (Art) Joint Convener Sista Girish proposed the vote of thanks.

The program was enriched by the presence of the dignitaries on the dais, Dr. Farida, Organ Transplantation Consultant, Niram-2024 Judges Artist Sasi Krishnan, Artist Sunil Kulanada, Artist Hari Chengannur and Artist Mukundan Palanimala, Mr. Harshal, Malabar Gold Marketing Head, Arun Rajagopal, Hyperion Toys, ICSK Khaithan Principal, Mr. Gangadhar Shirshad, ICSK Jr. Salmiya Principal, Mrs. Sheeja, Kala (Art) Kuwait office bearers Mr. Sunil Kumar & Mr. Johny Kumar.

Panel of Judges were honored by Kala (Art) Kuwait in recognition of their laudable contributions in the field of Arts. Kala (Art) Kuwait founding member Mr. Hassan Koya and Mr. Johny Kumar were honored at the event. Mrs. Aneecha Shyji and Ms Namita Sivakumar performed the competing. The prizes to all the group winners were presented by the dignitaries.

It is noteworthy that a total of 3085 students from 28 Indian schools in Kuwait have participated in the com-



Photos during the ceremony.

petition classified into 5 groups and the prizes were distributed among, Five 1st Prizes in to each group, Eight 2nd Prizes, Nine 3rd prizes, 66 Merit Prizes and 247 consolation prizes (Total 335 Prizes). The first place winners of each group received a Gold coin & Gold medal, Second place winner with silver medal and Third place winner with bronze medal apart from memento and certificate. Merit Prize & Consolation Prize winners received Trophy, Certificate. All winners have received Aerican Tourister Sponsored Bag and Hyperion Toys Gift Pack.

Kala (Art) Kuwait has thanked all the participants as well as School Managements, Sponsors, All Indian Associations, Kuwait's English dailies, Web Portals and Malayalam Medias for their wholehearted support to make the event a grand success. Also thanked the Parents and Art Teachers for their cooperation and support and to the management of Aspire Indian International School, Abbasiya.

The program was well-ordered by the office bearers of Kala (Art) Kuwait, Rijo, Vishnu, Sarath, Mustafa, Prince, Sonia, Shajit, Kanakaraj, Anil, Santosh, Lijo, Girish, Ashraf, Jayesh, Pramod, Shalini, Prejesh, Praveen, Rahul, Salim, Prabish, Rashmi, Shiny, Tirtha, Bindu, Jeeva, Shweta, Shimma, Nandika, Niyathi, Sanjana, Sayona, etc.

The Prize Winners as follows:

Overall Championship: 1st Position - Indian Community School, Khaithan, 2nd Position - Indian Community School, Salmiya, 3rd Position - IES-Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, Abbasiya.

C. Bhaskaran Memorial Trophy as a tribute to Late. Mr. C Bhaskaran, one of the founder and advisory board member of Kala (Art) Kuwait, won by Indian Community School, Khaithan, the school from which maximum numbers of students were participated in this event.

Group-A: 1st Prize-Aashka Yashpal Poojari, 1st Std, IES-Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, Abbasiya, 2nd Prize-Zayd Ibrahim Shaji, UKG, Indian Community School, Amman, and Mozhisikaran Dinakaran, 1st Std, Indian Community School, Khaithan, 3rd Prize-Prarthana Neeraj Pillai, 1st Std, Fahaheel Al-Watanieh Indian private School, Ahmadi and Elsa Rose Sebastian, 1st Std, United International Indian School (UIIS-New).

Group-B: 1st Prize-Anika Murathuvilakathu Ajish, 2nd Std., Indian School of Excellence, 2nd Prize-Sharvani Rohit Panchal, 3rd Std., Indian Community School, Salmiya and Ayisha Midha, 4th Std., Indian Community School, Khaithan, 3rd Prize-Advik Pradeep kumar, 4th Std., New Gulf Indian School, Mahboula and Dhyan Krishna, 3rd Std.,

Smart Indian School, Kuwait.

Group-C: 1st Prize-Dimple Khatri, 7th Std., IES-Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, Abbasiya, 2nd Prize-Kaavya Ashutosh Panchal, 6th Std., Indian School of Excellence, 3rd Prize-Sachin Kolanchi, 7th Std., Indian Community School, Salmiya and Daniel Sanju Paul, 7th Std., Indian Community School, Salmiya.

Group-D: 1st Prize-Gauri Krishna Ginu, 8th Std., Indian Community School, Amman, 2nd Prize-Tiara D'cruz, 12th Std., Indian Community School, Khaithan and Jessica Mary Dias, 12th Std., Learners Own Academy, Abbasiya, 3rd Prize-Keziah Thomas, 9th Std., Indian Community School, Khaithan. Clay Sculpture: 1st Prize-Onega William, 12th Std., Indian Community School, Salmiya, 2nd Prize-Jalaluddeen Akbar, 10th Std., IES-Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, Abbasiya, 3rd Prize-Akshay Rajesh, 10th Std., Indian Community School, Amman and Angela Anilson, 9th Std., Learners Own Academy, Abbasiya.

Open Canvas (for Parents & Guests): 1st Prize- Mrs. Anvesha Biswas, 2nd Prize-Mrs. Mashida Manaf, 3rd Prize- Mrs. Deepa Praveen Kumar. Special Mentioned Award, in honor of the late Mr. M. V. John, a respected Judge of Niram Judging Committee until year 2022 – Mrs. Badarunnisa Muhammed.

Dr. Joe Daniel, Dr. Twinkle Mary Alex, and Master Mathews Cherian crowned winners

IDAK's Go-Karting event celebrates unity and friendly rivalry

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The much-awaited IDAK-KDD Go-Karting Championship 2025 took center stage on 10th January at the picturesque Q8 Karting Club, Al Kout Mall, igniting a day filled with thrill, sportsmanship, and camaraderie. This exhilarating event was meticulously organized by the IDAK Sports Committee. The dedicated efforts of Dr. Eldho George (Chair), Dr. Renjit George (Co-chair), Dr. Anjana Nair, and Dr. Sharon Thomas ensured the seamless execution of the event.

The championship was officially flagged off by IDAK President, Dr. George P Alex and set the tone for a high-octane day. It showcased exceptional talent across all categories and resulted in Dr. Joe Daniel, Dr. Twinkle Mary Alex and Master Mathews Cherian emerging as ecstatic winners in the Men's, Women's and Juniors Category respectively.



Photos during the event.

The success of the event was a testament to the collaborative efforts of the IDAK Council and Event Management Team, who provided unwavering support and flawless planning, while the team captains and vice-captains ensured excited participation and enthusiasm among all participants.

Dr. Santosh, Dr. Shaheer, Dr.

Nithin, and Dr. Jyothy captured, exceptionally well, the high energy unforgettable moments of the race.

The event, which was sponsored by KDD, saw their Brand Manager, Mr. Gautham Sridhar, gracing the occasion and felicitating the winners. Al Mulla Exchange was the official remittance partner for the event. IDAK is grateful for the invaluable

support of the sponsors.

The event ended up being more than just a race; it was a celebration of unity, friendly competition, and a shared passion for excellence, both on and off the track! In continuation of strengthening the bonds within the IDAK community, the evening left both participants and spectators with cherished memories.

Best account of its kind in Kuwait offering the highest monthly expected returns

KIB announces winners of Al Dirwaza account's weekly draw

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the winners of the weekly draw held under the Al Dirwaza account's 2024 campaign, which is distinguished by the highest number of winners throughout the year. The second weekly draw, based on customers' December deposits, recently took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. The KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Khaled Faraj Salem Alsaad, Ahmad Saleh Ismaeil Saleh, Iman Yousef Jamal Hamdan, Maha Ali Mahmud Albaghli, Layan Talal Abdullah Alawadhi, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Abdalnaser Abdullah Abdulaziz Almasoud, Mohannad Mohammad Ameen Alsalkini, Mishaal Abdullah Fahad Fahad, Mariam Habeeb Abdulredha Almail, Mandani Ali Mandani Alkandari, Khaled Bader Ali Alomran, Husain Abdulkareem Husain Almoumen.

It serves to note that AlDirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, launched by KIB as one of its banking products for individuals. The account is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the customer gets an expected profit of 2% for the first 3 months from the account opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer's account within the first day of the beginning of each month.

Al Dirwaza account holders are eligible to enter the weekly, monthly and annual draws on the condition of maintaining at least KD 100 in their account. For the weekly and monthly draws, each KD 1 that has completed a full month's cycle in the account will count for one chance, and chances are calculated based on the lowest monthly balance preceding the draw. As for the mega draw, chances are calculated for each KD 1 that completes a two-month cycle in the account – based on the lowest two monthly balances prior to the draw.

Al Dirwaza account is also in compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia and approved by the KIB's Sharia Supervisory Board. Furthermore, the account comes with a wide range of benefits, including the ease of opening the account, which does not require a salary transfer, and the customer's ability to open it remotely without visiting a branch through KIB Online on the Bank's website or KIB Mobile application on smartphones.

Additionally, Al Dirwaza account automatically grants customers instant issuance of an ATM card, with a KD 2,000 ATM daily withdrawal limit, as well as the ability to issue credit cards against the cash collateral in the account. To open the account and participate in its draws, a minimum of KD 100 is required and can only be withdrawn upon account closure.

About KIB

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

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

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

LiAngelo Ball signs deal with Def Jam after 'Tweaker' success

Montag tops iTunes chart after losing house in LA wildfires

LOS ANGELES, Jan 14, (AP): Reality television star Heidi Montag's 2010 album "Superficial" has hit No. 1 on iTunes' all-genre songs and albums charts - 15 years after its release and just after Montag and husband Spencer Pratt lost their home in the Palisades Fire.

Pratt on Friday posted a series of photos of their house on TikTok with the caption, "Please stream any of @heidmontag music on any platforms it will make a huge difference."

It worked. "Superficial" beat Bad Bunny's new album "Debí Tirar Más Fotos" for the top spot on the albums chart, and the title track beat Blackpink's ROSÉ and Bruno Mars' chant-along single "APT." on the songs chart.

"Thank you everyone! Who needs a house, who needs clothes, who needs anything but this level of clout, pop, superstardom?" Pratt

said in an Instagram video posted Sunday. "Our sons are gonna be like, 'My mom was No. 1 on iTunes America.' Thank you to everyone who made this happen."

Representatives for Montag and Pratt didn't immediately respond to requests for comment. "Superficial" saw some of its biggest gains at Apple Music as well. Saturday was Montag's biggest streaming day in Apple Music history, jumping nearly 600% from the previous Saturday, an Apple Music representative confirmed to The Associated Press.

On Sunday, the album reentered Apple Music's pop albums chart in 17 countries. It reached the chart for the first time in six countries, including the U.S., Canada, Australia and the U.K. Stateside, it peaked at No. 9. It also reentered Apple Music's all-genre albums chart in seven countries, including in the U.S. for



Heidi Montag attends 'The Hills: New Beginnings,' premiere party at Liaison, June 19, 2019, in Los Angeles. (AP)

the first time, where it hit No. 65.

Montag was already a cast member on "The Hills," which debuted

in 2006, when she met Pratt, who joined the MTV reality show for its second season. The couple - particularly Pratt - leaned into their on-screen personas as spotlight-seeking villains, even publishing a book, "How to Be Famous: Our Guide to Looking the Part, Playing the Press, and Becoming a Tabloid Fixture," in 2009, the same year they got married.

Dubbed "Speidi" by the press, they were tabloid regulars known for seeking out entertainment opportunities of all kinds. Music was one of Montag's many ventures.

After "The Hills" aired its final episode in 2010, the couple's fame waned. In the years since, they've turned to social media to keep loyal followers updated on their lives.

LiAngelo Ball is expanding his life playbook, taking a pivot from

his hoop dreams to a fresh focus on music with a new record deal.

Ball signed with Def Jam and Universal Music Group, a representative from the label confirmed Monday. He had a brief stint in the NBA and overseas, but he's created positive waves with his rap debut "Tweaker," which has gone viral garnering millions of views on social media.

The track, which was released Jan. 3, oozes with nostalgic mid-2000s rap vibes gaining popularity with co-signs popular music figures such as Meek Mill, Lil Yachty and T-Pain. His surging momentum helped earn him an opportunity to perform at Rolling Loud California in March.

Ball, 25, comes from a basketball lineage as the middle brother of Chicago Bulls guard Lonzo Ball and Charlotte Hornets all-star LaMelo Ball. After LiAngelo went unselected in the 2018 NBA draft, he signed

training camp deals with a couple of teams - including the Pistons and Hornets - but he never secured a spot on an active regular-season roster.

In 2021, LiAngelo joined the Greensboro Swarm, an NBA G League team, where he averaged 4.4 points and 1.1 rebounds in 31 games.

LiAngelo started the 2017-18 college season with UCLA, but was involved in a shoplifting scandal during a team trip to China. UCLA suspended him, and he ended up leaving school. He and LaMelo signed with a Lithuanian club.

But now, LiAngelo was enough to make Def Jam's roster - which includes other rap acts like 2 Chainz, Big Sean, Pusha T and Rapsody.

ESPN reported that LiAngelo's new deal is worth around \$13 million with \$8 million guaranteed, including full ownership of his music and record label.

Variety

NEW YORK: The authors of stories set everywhere from Australia to Central America are nominees for a \$20,000 prize for short fiction.

The Story Prize, established in 2004, has honored books by Edwidge Danticat, George Saunders and Elizabeth Strout among others.

This year's finalists are Fiona McFarlane's "Highway Thirteen," which centers on an Australian serial killer; Ruben Reyes Jr.'s "There Is a Rio Grande in Heaven," stories about Central American migration to the US; and Jessi Jezewska Stevens' "Ghost Pains," skewed narratives as told from a witness stand, a troubled visit to Tuscany or a decidedly awful party.

The winner will be announced March 25. (AP)

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NAPA, California: BottleRock Napa Valley, presented by JaM Cellars, announced the 2025 festival lineup featuring headline artists Green Day, Justin Timberlake, and Noah Kahan. The 3-day music, wine, craft brew and culinary festival will take place in the City of Napa at the Napa Valley Expo on May 23-25, 2025.



Timberlake

BottleRock Napa Valley is committed to supporting California wildfire relief by matching every dollar donated by fans for the first \$50,000 to support FireAid, a benefit concert dedicated to aiding those affected by the devastating wildfires.

BottleRock Napa Valley also presents its highly entertaining Williams Sonoma Culinary Stage, showcasing a unique mashup of cooking demonstrations with renowned chefs, celebrities, performers and rock stars, details announced at a later date. (AP)

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PHILADELPHIA: Comcast NBCUniversal has announced the exclusive premiere of the award-winning documentary, "Color," on Black Experience on Xfinity and the Xumo Play free streaming app. The 90-minute documentary, from multi-award-winning writer and director John Campbell and featuring acclaimed multidisciplinary artist and founder of Dark Matter Media Alteronice Gumbay, takes viewers on a global journey to redefine how color is perceived and understood across different cultures.

The highly acclaimed documentary was nominated for Best Documentary at the Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival, featured in the Montreal Independent Film Festival, and received awards at the Cine Paris Film Festival and International Independent Film Awards. It is now available exclusively on Comcast's Black Experience on Xfinity channel, a comprehensive content destination featuring the best in Black storytelling from diverse programming partners and film studios and a variety of original documentaries showcasing diverse talent and content creators.

Color is also available on the Xumo Play free streaming app for non-Xfinity customers.

Color takes viewers around the world starting with captivating discussions and demonstrations with pigment expert Michael Ambron and celebrity stylist Jerome Lamaar in the Bronx, NY and then to Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Louisiana, to celebrate the vibrancy of French Creole, Caribbean, African, African American, and global cultures. (AP)

LA wildfires



A mural by Sergei Statsenko, who also goes by the artist name Steeke, thanks firefighters in the Venice Beach area of Los Angeles as wildfires burn Monday, Jan. 13. (AP)

Oscar nominations delayed

Beyoncé donates \$2.5M to fire relief fund

LOS ANGELES, Jan 14, (AP): Weaker winds and intense firefighting efforts over the weekend boosted containment of fires burning in and around Los Angeles, but the effects of the blazes on the entertainment world continue.

The Oscar nominations have been delayed and the film academy announced Monday that it would cancel a gathering of nominees due to the fire. It's the latest shift to Hollywood's awards season and other projects are also being delayed. Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, announced Sunday she would not launch a Netflix lifestyles program as planned this week and would wait until March.

Celebrities and entertainment organizations are pledging millions to help those who have been displaced or lost their homes, with Beyoncé directly millions to help families in the Eaton fire area.

While firefighters over the weekend were able to push the flames away from several populated areas, strong winds are expected to resume this week and last through Wednesday.

Thousands of homes have been destroyed, and 24 people have died as a result of the fires. More are reported missing and officials expect that number to increase.

Here's more on how the fires are affecting celebrities and the entertainment world.

Beyoncé has contributed \$2.5 million to a newly launched LA Fire Relief Fund created by her charitable foundation, BeyGOOD.

The announcement arrived via the BeyGOOD foundation Instagram account on Sunday. "The fund is earmarked to aid families in the Altadena/Pasadena area who lost their homes, and to churches and community centers to address the immediate needs of those affected by the wildfires," the caption read.

Founded in 2013, the BeyGOOD foundation concentrates on economic equity, by "supporting marginalized and under-resourced programs," according to its mission statement.

Last week, Beyoncé's mother Tina Knowles shared that her Malibu bungalow was de-



Beyoncé accepts the award for best R&B performance for 'Black Parade' at the 63rd annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles March 14, 2021. (AP)

stroyed in the Los Angeles-area fires. "It was my favorite place, my sanctuary, my sacred happy place. now it is gone," she wrote on Instagram. "God Bless all the brave men and women in our fire department who risked their lives in dangerous conditions."

Netflix and Comcast NBCUniversal on Monday pledged \$10 million each to organizations offering aid to victims of the LA-area wildfires.

Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos said its donation will be split among five recipients including World Central Kitchen and the Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation. Comcast Corporation Chairman and CEO Brian L. Roberts allocated \$2.5 million of its \$10 million

cash commitment to Habitat for Humanity of Greater Los Angeles' ReBUILD LA initiative. The remainder of the money would go to other charitable foundations helping victims.

The Screen Actors Guild announced over the weekend it would commit \$1 million to help members affected by the fires. While a lot of attention has been paid to stars who have lost homes, numerous less-famous industry workers have also lost homes or been displaced by the fires.

The nonprofit fundraising group Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS has awarded \$500,000 in emergency grants to help Los Angeles-area residents and first responders with meals, shelter, medical care, clothing and emergency financial assistance.

"These wildfires have left deep scars, but they've also ignited a powerful wave of support from Broadway to the West Coast," said Robert E. Wankel, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS Board of Trustees president and chairman and CEO of The Shubert Organization.

The Duchess of Sussex has pushed back the release of her new Netflix series due to the wildfires that have ravaged the LA-area.

"With Love, Meghan" was set to debut Wednesday, but the streaming service said Sunday that it supports her request to push the premiere to focus on helping those affected by the fires.

The Duchess was born and raised in Los Angeles and now lives in Montecito, California, with Harry, the Duke of Sussex and their two children.

On Saturday, the royal couple visited Pasadena to hand out food and water to fire victims and thank first responders.

"With Love, Meghan" is a lifestyle program featuring the Duchess chatting with celebrity pals and demonstrating tasks like floral arrangements and baking. "I've always loved taking something pretty ordinary and elevating it," Meghan says in the trailer. The show will

now drop March 4.

The publisher of Arnold Schoenberg's works says original manuscripts and scores from the composer were lost in the Los Angeles wildfires.

Belmont Music Publishers, located in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood, made the announcement Sunday.

"We have lost our full inventory of sales and rental materials," the company said in a statement. "We hope that in the near future we will be able to 'rise from the ashes' in a completely digital form. ... There are some scores and performing materials for which we have digital scans."

Born in Austria, Schoenberg moved to the US when the Nazis took power and settled in Los Angeles, where he died in 1951.

Schoenberg gained attention for a 12-tone technique of composition and along with his students, including Alban Berg and Anton Webern, became known as the Second Viennese School. Among his most-known works are "Ewartung," "Gurre-Lieder," "Verklärte Nacht" and "Pierrot lunaire."

Many Hollywood events have been postponed and canceled due to the ongoing fires in the Los Angeles area, but the Sundance Film Festival is still planning to move forward with the 11-day event next week in Park City, Utah.

In a letter Monday to registrants from Southern California, the Institute's CEO Amanda Kelso and festival director Eugene Hernandez wrote that, "we may mourn, but we also know it is important to carry on." Those who received the letter were also invited to share more about how they've been affected by the fires.

Michelle Satter, a founding director of the Sundance Institute and its artists programs, wrote on social media last week that she lost her home in the Palisades fire. Satter is among those being honored at the festival's opening gala on Jan. 24.

Books

Kenitz's debut novel 'The Perfect Home' is a gut-roiling thriller

'The Big Empty' delivers a twisting, violent detective tale

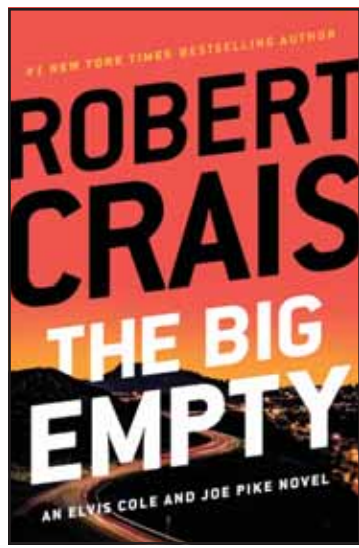
NEW YORK, Jan 14, (AP): Traci Beller was 13 when her father — co-owner of a heating and air conditioning company — went out on some service calls and never returned home. The police, who found no trace of him, concluded that he had simply abandoned his family.

The family then turned to Jessica Byers, a Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office investigator turned private eye — and a darned good one. But she also turned up nothing.

Ten years later, the missing man has been officially declared dead, but Traci, now a known as "the muffin girl," a celebrity chef with a huge following, never believed her sweet daddy had walked out on her without a word. The people managing her career urge Traci to let it go and get on with her life — but she can't. Instead, she turns to Elvis Cole, the self-declared world's greatest detective.

So begins "The Big Empty," Robert Crais' 20th novel featuring Cole and his partner, Joe Pike.

After warning Traci that his chances of finding something the police and Byers overlooked is extremely



This image released by Putnam shows 'The Big Empty' by Robert Crais. (AP)

small, Cole begins by chatting up the people at the SurfMutt, a burger joint in the little desert town of Rancho, California, where the missing man was last seen.

Before long, he begins to suspect that Traci's father wasn't the sweet



This image released by Scribner shows cover art for 'The Perfect Home' by Daniel Kenitz. (AP)

daddy that she remembers. As he digs deeper, local thugs start tailing him, he gets jumped and severely beaten, and potential witnesses turn up dead.

With Pike, an ex-marine, arriving to provide backup, the partners

gradually unravel a long-hidden, deeply disturbing conspiracy that explains why Traci's daddy never came home. But just when it appears that the case is resolved, the author introduces a startling twist that leads to a violent conclusion.

As always, Cole spices the action with wryly humorous observations, Pike is an irresistible force, and Crais' clear, precise prose makes reading as easy as breathing.

Crais has helped keep the classic tradition of the hardboiled Los Angeles private detective alive with this fine series, and his new novel may well be his finest yet.

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Dawn and Wyatt Decker are a reality TV couple renovating homes on-screen and dealing with fertility problems off-screen. Their story and their marriage seem like a foregone conclusion, but only a few chapters in, a sharp twist turns this unassuming world of domesticity upside-down.

Daniel Kenitz's debut novel is a cleverly paced domestic thriller named for the protagonists' TV show, "The Perfect Home." The

story shifts between the husband and wife, taking turns with the narration building up sympathy for both characters.

Dawn has the role of the nagging wife. If a stranger recognizes her on the street, they're liable to send a backhanded compliment Dawn's way and then expect an apology from her. Wyatt, on the other hand, is the stunningly handsome, joke-cracking, all-American husband who only has to flash his charming smile to subdue an upset fan. But it's an emasculating revelation that his low sperm count is behind the couple's lack of offspring, and he has an image to uphold.

These first few chapters are easy enough; a silky-smooth journey through character introductions and early plot developments. Dawn and Wyatt have small tiffs but manage to get pregnant. They trade inside jokes and Tennessee lore. Their story is predictable, comfortable and perfect for lulling you into a sense of security so you never see what's coming next.

Then, a shocking discovery has Dawn taking their newborn twins on the run. Suddenly, all the trappings

of their perfect home and life seem like traps.

Dawn and Wyatt soon become entrenched in a game of public relations chess where both of their lives and the things they hold most dear are at stake.

Kenitz carefully aligns the pieces so the odds are stacked almost insurmountably. It's going to take something really big to overcome the sheer cliff-face that is reality TV and how it shaped the country's perception of Dawn, from the hotel clerk to the local police chief.

You could easily devour "The Perfect Home" in one sitting if it wasn't so nerve-jangling that you have to put it down to regain your composure. This book had me shocked, despondent and furious in turns, and I loved it.

Kenitz crafts a terrifying modern-day villain. And he's refined exactly what makes domestic thrillers so gut-roiling: They turn the places and people that should be safest — home and family — into something to be avoided at all costs. Kenitz turns the perfect home into a nightmare with proficiency and horrifying pizzazz.

Music



Carrie Underwood performs during the Times Square New Year's Eve celebration on Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2024, in New York. (AP)

Village People to perform at two inaugural events

Underwood to sing at Trump's inauguration

NEW YORK, Jan 14, (AP): Country music star Carrie Underwood will perform "America the Beautiful" at Donald Trump's inauguration next week and the 1970s hitmakers Village People will perform at two inaugural events.

Underwood, who launched her career on "American Idol," is to perform shortly before Trump takes the oath of office at the US Capitol on Jan. 20, according to a copy of the inaugural program provided to The Associated Press on Monday.

"I love our country and am honored to have been asked to sing at the Inauguration and to be a small part of this historic event," Underwood said in a statement Monday. "I am humbled to answer the call at a time when we must all come together in the spirit of unity and looking to the future."

American disco group the Village People made a name for themselves in the late-70s for their chant-along dance-pop hits and their colorful on-stage personas. Their best known hit, "Y.M.C.A.," is widely considered a gay anthem -- and became a staple of Trump's rallies in the last election, along with their hit "Macho Man."

The American disco group is set to perform at one of Trump's inaugural balls and a rally he's holding in Washington the day before he's sworn in.

"We know this won't make some of you happy to hear however we believe that music is to be performed without regard to politics," the band said in a post on its Facebook page Monday. "Our song Y.M.C.A. is a global anthem that hopefully helps bring the country together after a tumultuous and divided campaign where our preferred candidate lost. Therefore, we believe it's now time to bring the country together with music which is why Village People will be performing at various events as part of the 2025 Inauguration of

Donald J. Trump."

Other inauguration ceremony performers will include two of the president-elect's musical favorites, country singer Lee Greenwood and opera singer Christopher Macchio.

The pomp and spectacle that comes with the inauguration of a new president kicks off this weekend in Washington with a fireworks show at Trump's golf club in Sterling, Virginia, a campaign-style rally in D.C., a visit to Arlington National Cemetery and glitzy dinners before the former president takes the oath to become the next president.

Trump's second inauguration is expected to be a much different affair than the last time America got a new president. Trump, who refused to accept his 2020 loss, did not attend Democratic President Joe Biden's swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol, where there were still visible reminders of the violent Jan. 6, 2021 siege on the building by Trump's supporters.

The committee planning Trump's inaugural ceremonies released a schedule Monday of four days of events centered around the Jan. 20th swearing-in ceremony, which Biden is planning to attend.

Historic

"President Trump is dedicated to uniting the country through the strength, security, and opportunity of his America First agenda," Steve Witkoff and Kelly Loeffler, the co-chairs of the inaugural committee, said in a statement.

Witkoff is Trump's incoming Middle East envoy and Loeffler is a former Georgia senator who is Trump's pick to run the Small Business Administration.

"The 2025 inaugural celebrations will reflect President-elect Trump's historic return to the White House and the American people's decisive

vote to Make America Great Again," Witkoff and Loeffler said.

On Saturday, Trump is scheduled to attend a reception and fireworks display at his Trump National Golf Club in Sterling, Virginia. Separately, Vice President-elect JD Vance will attend a reception for the incoming Cabinet members and host a dinner.

On Sunday, the president-elect is to participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery and then hold a campaign-style "MAGA Victory" rally at Capital One Arena in downtown Washington. The Village People are scheduled to perform at the rally.

Ceremony

The Republican's Inauguration Day plans include tea at the White House, the swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol, a congressional luncheon, a parade on Pennsylvania Avenue and a trio of balls.

The inaugural balls include a Commander in Chief Ball focused on military service members, a Liberty Inaugural Ball geared toward Trump supporters that will feature a Village People performance, and the Starlight Ball, focused on high-dollar donors. Trump is scheduled to speak at all three balls.

The presidential parade after Trump is sworn in will include about 7,500 participants including first responders, veterans groups and school marching bands. First responders from Butler County, Pennsylvania, where Trump survived an assassination attempt, will be among the groups participating.

Incoming first lady Melania Trump will join tea with the Bidens. In 2021, the Trumps did not invite the Bidens for a tea before Biden's inauguration, instead leaving town before the next president was sworn in. In November, when Joe Biden invited President-elect Trump to the

White House, Melania Trump chose to skip the visit.

Tuesday, Trump's first full day as the 47th president, will include a National Prayer Service in the morning.

Greenwood will perform as Trump walks out to take the oath, according to Trump's inaugural committee. Macchio is Trump's choice to perform the National Anthem at the end of the program.

Macchio performed at the Republican National Convention in July, at Trump's return rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, in October after his first rally there was marred by an assassination attempt, and during his Madison Square Garden rally that drew blowback for crude and racist jokes from some speakers.

The invocation is scheduled to be delivered by Franklin Graham, son of the late pastor Billy Graham, and New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan.

Trump's first inauguration in 2017 featured performances from the Rockettes, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and 16-year-old "America's Got Talent" singer Jackie Evancho.

Beyond the official events that Trump is scheduled to attend, there are a number of satellite and unofficial events being held in Washington surrounding the inauguration where supporters are expected to celebrate and toast the incoming president. Vance is scheduled to attend a ball hosted by the conservative group Turning Point USA. Other groups have announced plans for a Coronation Ball, the All American Ball, the Crypto Ball, and the Legacy of Freedom Ball, which is hosted by the Black Conservative Federation.

Celebrities expected to attend the Legacy of Freedom Ball on Sunday include rappers Waka Flocka and Fivio Foreign, YouTube personality Anton Daniels, former NFL player Antonio Brown, podcasters and YouTubers The Cartier Family.

Artifacts

Pre-sale exhibition

Rock icon Beck's guitars go on display in London

LONDON, Jan 14, (AP): Some of the most iconic guitars in rock history are going on display in London before they go under the hammer at auction.

Auctioneer Christie's held a preview on Tuesday for the collection of the late Jeff Beck, who died in January 2023 at age 78. Starting Wednesday, the public can view 90 guitars and dozens of other items that belonged to Beck, whom Christie's calls "the ultimate guitarist's guitar hero," until they are sold on Jan. 22.

One of a group of 1960s guitar heroes that included Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix, Beck was twice inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame - with his 1960s band Yardbirds and as a solo artist. Renowned for his unique sound and improvisational skill, he played over the years with

everyone from Rod Stewart to Davie Bowie, Stevie Wonder, Tina Turner and Johnny Depp.

Valued at more than 1 million pounds (\$1.2 million), the collection includes an oxblood 1954 Gibson Les Paul that Beck bought in Memphis in 1972 and played for the rest of the decade. The guitar, which is featured on the cover of Beck's Grammy-winning 1975 jazz-fusion album "Blow by Blow," is expected to sell for between 350,000 pounds and 500,000 pounds (\$425,000 and \$610,000).

The sale includes a Telecaster-Gibson hybrid "Tele-Gib" valued at between 100,000 pounds and 150,000 pounds (\$122,000 and \$183,000) and Beck's 1954 Sunburst Fender Stratocaster, valued at between 50,000 pounds and 80,000 pounds (\$61,000 and \$98,000).



An art handler displays a Gibson, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1954 and 1972 A Solid-Body Electric Guitar, Les Paul, known as 'The Oxblood,' at the Jeff Beck Guitar Collection in London, Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025, ahead of the pre-sale exhibition at Christie's auction rooms in London. (AP)



An art handler displays Bohemian Guitars, Atlanta, Georgia, circa 2015, a novelty electric guitar in London. (AP)

Legal fight shelved

No plans to salvage more Titanic artifacts, firm says

NORFOLK, Va., Jan 14, (AP): The US government has scrapped its litigation against the company that owns the salvage rights to the Titanic, noting that the firm no longer has dive plans to the shipwreck that could break federal law.

The scuttling of the government's latest legal battle isn't necessarily the end of RMS Titanic Inc.'s attempts to enter the rapidly deteriorating ocean liner or to fetch more historic objects. The company said last month that it's still considering the implications of future expeditions.

But the US on Friday withdrew

its motion to intervene in a federal admiralty court in Virginia, which oversees salvage matters for the world's most famous shipwreck. The withdrawal concluded the second of two legal battles in five years that the US has waged against RMST, which also exhibits the artifacts.

The US filed its latest legal challenge in 2023 when RMST was planning to take images inside the ship's hull and pluck items from the surrounding debris field. RMST also said it would possibly recover freestanding objects from the room where the ocean liner broadcast its distress calls.

DNA repair may determine how cancer cells die following radiotherapy

Routine eye tests could help predict stroke risk: study

SYDNEY, Jan. 14, (Xinhua): An Australian research has found that routine eye tests can accurately predict a person's risk of stroke.

The research, which was published on Tuesday by the Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) in Melbourne, identified a blood vessel "fingerprint" at the back of the eye that can be used to predict a person's stroke risk as accurately as traditional risk factors, but without the need for invasive tests.

The research found that the fingerprint consists of 118 indicators of vascular health and can be analyzed from fundus photography, a common tool used in routine eye tests.

The team used a machine learning tool called the Retinal-based Microvascular Health Assessment System (RMHAS) to analyze fundus photos of the eyes of 45,161 people in the UK with an average age of 55. During an average monitoring period of 12.5 years, 749 participants had a stroke.

The researchers identified 29 of the 118 indicators as being significantly associated with first time stroke risk.

Of the 29, 17 of the indicators were related to vascular density, the percentage of a region of tissue that is occupied

by blood vessels. Low density in the retina and brain is associated with an increased risk of stroke.

According to the study, each change in density indicators was associated with an increased stroke risk of 10-19 percent.

Decreases in twistedness and complexity indicators were found to increase stroke risk by 10.5-19.5 percent.

"Given that age and sex are readily available, and retinal parameters can be obtained through routine fundus photography, this model presents a practical and easily implementable approach for incident stroke risk assessment, particularly for primary healthcare and low-resource settings," the authors wrote.

Stroke affects over 100 million people worldwide and causes approximately 6.7 million deaths globally every year, the study said, making early identification of individuals at-risk critical to reduce stroke-related disability and mortality.

In addition to those from CERA, the study involved researchers from the University of Melbourne, Monash University and Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

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Cancer: Australian researchers have found that DNA repair may determine how cancer cells die following radiotherapy in a new study that may help improve cancer treatment and cure rates.

To understand how cancerous tumor cells die after being subjected to radiotherapy, scientists from Sydney's Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI) followed irradiated cells for one week after radiation therapy by using live cell microscope technology, said an announcement by CMRI.

"The surprising result of our research is that DNA repair, which normally protects healthy cells, determines how cancer cells die following radiotherapy," said Tony Cesare, head of the CMRI Genome Integrity Unit.

He said that the study found that DNA repair processes can recognize when overwhelming damage has occurred, such as from radiotherapy, and instruct a cancer cell how to die. When DNA damaged by radiation was repaired by a method called homologous recombination, they found that cancer cells died during reproduction, a process called cell division or mitosis.

Cesare said that death during cell division goes unnoticed by the immune system so does not activate the desired immune response.

However, he said that cells that dealt with radiation-damaged DNA through other repair methods survived cell division but released DNA repair byproducts into the cell.

"To the cell, these repair byproducts look like a viral or bacterial infection. This causes the cancer cell to die in a manner that alerts the immune system, which is what we do want," Cesare said.

The team showed that blocking homologous recombination changed the way cancer cells died to evoke a strong immune response.

The researchers said that the discovery will make it possible to use drugs that block homologous recombination to force cancer cells treated with radiotherapy to die in a manner that alerts the immune system to the existence of a cancer that needs to be destroyed.

The findings, which were published in Nature Cell Biology, may open up new opportunities to improve treatment and increase cure rates, said the announcement.

'All are working well'

Musk reveals 3rd Neuralink implant

NEW YORK, Jan 14, (AP): Elon Musk said a third person has received an implant from his brain-computer interface company Neuralink, one of many groups working to connect the nervous system to machines.

"We've got ... three humans with Neuralinks and all are working well," he said during a wide-ranging interview at a Las Vegas event streamed on his social media platform X.

Since the first brain implant about a year ago, Musk said the company has upgraded the devices with more electrodes, higher bandwidth and longer battery life. Musk also said Neuralink hopes to implant the experimental devices in 20 to 30 more people this year.

Musk didn't provide any details about the latest patient, but there are updates on the previous ones.

The second recipient - who has a spinal cord injury and got the implant last summer - was playing video games with the help of the device and learning how to use computer-aided

design software to create 3-D objects. The first patient, also paralyzed after a spinal cord injury, described how it helped him play video games and chess.



Musk

computer interfaces, or BCIs, helped people with ALS communicate better.

More than 45 trials involving brain-computer interfaces are underway, according to a U.S. database of studies. The efforts are aimed at helping treat brain disorders, overcoming brain in-

juries and other uses.

Many research labs have already shown that humans can accurately control computer cursors using BCIs, said Rajesh Rao, co-director of the Center for Neurotechnology at the University of Washington.

Rao said Neuralink may be unique in two ways: The surgery to implant the device is the first time a robot has been used to implant flexible electrode threads into a human brain to record neural activity and control devices. And those threads may record from more neurons than other interfaces.

Still, he said, the advantages of Neuralink's approach have yet to be shown, and some competitors have eclipsed the company in other ways. For example, Rao said companies such as Synchron, Blackrock Neurotech and Onward Medical are already conducting BCI trials on people "using either less invasive methods or more versatile approaches" that combine neural recording with stimulation.

'Silent brain changes' early signs of Alzheimer's

40% at risk of dementia after 55: What you can do to prevent it

WASHINGTON, Jan 14, (AP): About a million Americans a year are expected to develop dementia by 2060, roughly double today's toll, researchers reported Monday.

That estimate is based on a new study that found a higher lifetime risk than previously thought: After age 55, people have up to a 4 in 10 chance of eventually developing dementia -- if they live long enough.

It's a sobering number but there are steps people can take to reduce that risk, such as controlling high blood pressure and other bad-for-the-brain health problems. And it's not too late to try even in middle age.

"All of our research suggests what you do in midlife really matters," said Dr. Josef Coresh of NYU Langone Health, who coauthored the study in the journal Nature Medicine.

Taking longer to recall a name or where you put your keys is typical with older age. But dementia isn't a normal part of aging -- it's a progressive loss of memory, language and other cognitive functions. Simply getting older is the biggest risk and the population is rapidly aging.

Alzheimer's is the most common form, and silent brain changes that eventually lead to it can begin two decades before symptoms appear. Other types include vascular dementia, when heart disease or small strokes impair blood flow to the brain. Many people have mixed causes, meaning vascular



A doctor looks at PET brain scans at Banner Alzheimers Institute in Phoenix on Aug. 14, 2018. (AP)

problems could exacerbate brewing Alzheimer's symptoms.

Measuring the risk from a certain age over the potential remaining life span can guide public health recommendations and medical research.

"It's not a guarantee that someone will develop dementia," cautioned Dr. James Galvin, a University of Miami Alzheimer's specialist. He wasn't involved with the new study but said the findings fit with other research.

Prior studies estimated about 14% of men and 23% of women would develop some form of dementia during

their lifetime. Coresh's team analyzed more recent data from a US study that has tracked the heart health and cognitive function of about 15,000 older adults for several decades.

Importantly, they found the risk changes with the decades.

Only 4% of people developed dementia between the ages of 55 and 75, what Coresh calls a key 20-year window for protecting brain health.

For people who survive common health threats until 75, the dementia risk then jumped - to 20% by age 85 and 42% between ages 85 and 95.

'Children will interact more'

Brazil limits smartphone use in schools

SAO PAULO, Jan 14, (AP): Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva signed a bill restricting the use of smartphones at school, following a global trend for such limitations.

The move will impact students at elementary and high schools across the South American nation starting in February. It provides a legal framework to ensure students only use such devices in cases of emergency and danger, for educational purposes, or if they have disabilities and require them.

"We cannot allow humanism to be replaced by algorithms," Lula said in a closed ceremony at the presidential palace in the capital, Brasilia, adding that the bill "acknowledges the work of every serious person in education, everyone who wants to take care of children and teenagers in this country."

In May, Fundacao Getulio Vargas, a leading think-tank and university, said Brazil had more smartphones than people, with 258 million devices for a population of 203 million Brazilians. Local market researchers said last year that Brazilians spend 9 hours and 13 minutes per day on screens, one of the world's highest figures. Education minister Camilo Santana told journalists that children are going online at early ages, making it harder for parents to keep track of what they do, and that restricting smartphones at school will help them.

The bill had rare support across the political spectrum, both from allies of



An Indigenous Tembe mother and daughters take photos on their smartphones outside a school in the Tenetehar Wa Tembe village, located in the Alto Rio Guama Indigenous territory of the Paragominas municipality in the Para state of Brazil, May 30, 2023. (AP)

leftist Lula and his far-right foe, former President Jair Bolsonaro.

Many parents and students also approved the move. A survey released in October by Brazilian pollster Datafolha said that almost two-thirds of respondents supported banning the use of smartphones by children and teenagers at schools. More than three-quarters said those devices do more harm than good to their children.

"(Restricting cell phones) is tough,

but necessary. It is useful for them to do searches for school, but to use it socially isn't good," said Ricardo Martins Ramos, 43, father of two girls and the owner of a hamburger restaurant in Rio de Janeiro. "Kids will interact more."

His 13-year-old daughter Isabela said her classmates struggled to focus during class because of their smartphones. She approved the move, but doesn't see it as enough to improve the learning environment for everyone.

50,000 dengue cases, 24 deaths in Sri Lanka

Sierra Leone declares emergency over mpox

DAKAR, Senegal, Jan 14, (AP): Sierra Leone declared a state of emergency Monday after the country reported its second case of mpox in less than four days, health authorities said. Neither case had known recent contact with infected animals or other sick individuals, the health ministry said. Only the first case involved recent travel, limited to the airport town of Lungi in the northern Port Loko District between Dec. 26 and Jan. 6th. Both patients are receiving treatment at a hospital in the capital, Freetown.

Mpox, also known as monkeypox, was first identified by scientists in 1958 when outbreaks of a "pox-like" disease in monkeys occurred. Until recently, most human cases were seen in people in central and West Africa who had close contact with infected animals.

Dengue: Nearly 50,000 dengue cases were reported in Sri Lanka in 2024 with 24 fatalities, according to the latest figures released by the country's National Dengue Control Unit (NDCU).

The NDCU said 49,877 dengue cases were identified in

2024 and the case fatality rate was 0.05 percent.

A total of 2,045 cases have been reported so far in January this year, with the Western Province, the most populous province in Sri Lanka, accounting for 44.1 percent of these cases, according to the NDCU.

Cholera: Angola has registered 224 cholera cases as of 6 p.m. local time (1700 GMT) on Sunday, reported the Ministry of Health. In the past 24 hours, three cholera deaths and 54 new cases have been reported, with most of the cases recorded in the capital province of Luanda.

National emergency response measures have been activated as the cholera outbreak continues to escalate since the first confirmed case was reported in Angola on Tuesday.

Malnutrition: Chinese Ambassador to Indonesia Wang Lutong met with Maniza Zaman, the UNICEF representative in Indonesia, to discuss the China-UNICEF cooperation on Indonesia's free meal program on Monday.

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Sociedad records sixth consecutive home clean sheet

Bottom club Monza shocks Fiorentina in Serie A

MONZA, Italy, Jan 14, (AP): Monza notched its second win in Serie A after shocking high-flying visitor Fiorentina 2-1 on Monday.

Monza's first win since October snapped a five-game losing streak. Salvatore Bocchetti's beleaguered side remained on the bottom of Serie A but the win cut the gap to second-from-bottom Venezia to one point.

Fiorentina was sixth having missed a chance to go above Juventus. Patrick Ciurria gave Monza the lead two minutes before halftime when he followed up to lash a loose ball into the corner of the net with his left foot.

The midfielder has missed much of the season through injury and recorded

his first goal of the campaign.

Fiorentina replaced Albert Gudmundsson with Lucas Beltran at the break and he was unlucky to see a goal-bound shot cleared off the line nine minutes into the second half.

Beltran did get a goal from the penalty spot with 16 minutes remaining but it came after Daniel Maldini scored a second for Monza.

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Real Sociedad recorded a sixth clean sheet in a row at home on the way to

a 1-0 win over Villarreal in La Liga.

Sociedad played under protest having criticized the league for a schedule that will see it play three games in seven days.

However, the busy run got off to a perfect start thanks to Japanese winger Takefusa Kubo, who six minutes into the second half seized on a long clearance to muscle his way into the Villarreal box and poke the ball under the goalkeeper.

It was the sixth home game in a row where Sociedad has kept a clean sheet but its first league win since early December. The result moved it into seventh spot, two points and two places behind Villarreal.

Lakers lose to Spurs in their 1st game back after wildfire postponements



Houston Rockets' Fred VanVleet (5) shoots as Memphis Grizzlies' Jaren Jackson Jr. (13) defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Houston. (AP)

Timberwolves beat struggling Wizards

LOS ANGELES, Jan 14, (AP): Victor Wembanyama had 23 points and eight rebounds, Harrison Barnes scored 10 of his 17 points in the fourth quarter, and the San Antonio Spurs beat the Lakers 126-102 on Monday night in Los Angeles' first game back from two postponements due to the wildfires devastating the area.

Anthony Davis had 30 points and 13 rebounds, and LeBron James added 18 points and eight assists for the Lakers in their first home game since catastrophic wildfires killed at least 24 and burned thousands of structures.

The Lakers have lost three straight, but their previous two scheduled games were postponed, and they hadn't played since last Tuesday in Dallas.

Devin Vassell and Stephon Castle scored 23 points apiece for San Antonio.

The Spurs dominated the fourth quarter, making a 25-9 run in the first nine minutes to take control of a game that was tied entering the period.

The Lakers retired Michael Cooper's No. 21 in a halftime ceremony honoring the Hall of Fame guard who won five championships in the Showtime era.

Spurs: A gritty performance after three consecutive losses were followed by four straight days off. They were also scheduled to play the Lakers last Saturday.

Timberwolves 120, Wizards 106

In Washington, Anthony Edwards scored 20 of his 41 points in the fourth quarter and the Minnesota Timber-

wolves overcome a sloppy first half and beat the NBA-worst Washington Wizards.

Earlier Monday, Edwards was fined \$50,000 by the NBA for an obscene gesture directed at an official in Saturday's loss in Memphis.

Edwards, a two-time All-Star, had a strong final period, shooting 6 for 11 from the floor and 3 for 5 from 3-point range to turn what had been a tight contest into a comfortable win.

Julius Randle added 20 points and 10 rebounds and Rudy Gobert had 11 points and 11 rebounds for Minnesota, which committed 13 turnovers in the first half and briefly trailed the Wizards in the third quarter.

Raptors 104, Warriors 101

In Toronto, Ochai Agbaji scored the go-ahead basket with 1:33 left in the fourth quarter and Toronto rallied to beat Golden State.

Scottie Barnes scored 23 points and

Jakob Poeltl had 13 points and 13 rebounds as the Raptors won for the second time in 18 games.

Chris Boucher scored 18 points, RJ Barrett added 15, and Agbaji and Grady Dick each had 12.

Stephen Curry scored 26 points and Andrew Wiggins had 20 for the Warriors, who have lost two straight and four of their last five.

Golden State's Buddy Hield had one last chance for a game-tying shot, but his 3-pointer in the final seconds fell short.

Clippers 109, Heat 98

In Inglewood, James Harden scored 13 of his 26 points in a third-quarter revival that rallied Los Angeles past Miami, snapping a two-game skid.

The Clippers were playing their first game in five days after their scheduled game on Saturday was postponed because of deadly wildfires in the Los Angeles area. White towels with LA



Los Angeles Lakers forward Dorian Finney-Smith and San Antonio Spurs center Victor Wembanyama battle for the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)

Strong and the state of California in blue were given out.

Norman Powell led the Clippers with 29 points. Ivica Zubac had 21 points and a season-high 20 rebounds for his 25th double-double. Harden added 11 assists.

Pistons 124, Knicks 119

In New York, Cade Cunningham scored 36 points, Malik Beasley had 22 and a pair of clutch 3-pointers in the final 40 seconds and surging Detroit beat New York, their second straight victory over the Knicks after dropping the previous 16 meetings.

Cunningham's brilliant play helped the Pistons nurse a small lead for much of the second half, but the Knicks forced the ball out of his hands on two late possessions. Both times the Pistons were able to swing it around to an open Beasley, who made the first for a 121-117 lead and the second to put them up five with 6.3 seconds to go.

Beasley was 6 for 8 behind the arc as the Pistons (21-19) won for the 10th time in 12 games.

Jalen Brunson had 31 points and 11 assists for the Knicks, not appearing bothered by the shoulder injury he sustained while scoring 44 points Sunday in a win over Milwaukee. Mikal Bridges added 27 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 26 points and 12 rebounds despite frequently grabbing his right thumb in pain after getting hit on a drive in the first half.

Rockets 120, Grizzlies 118

In Houston, Jalen Green tied his career high with 42 points, capped by a layup that gave Houston the lead late, and the Rockets rallied for a win over Memphis.

The Grizzlies were down by four before Jaylen Wells made a 3-pointer followed by a steal and layup from Brandon Clarke that put them up 115-114 with just under a minute left.

3 newcomers in squad

Australia names Short, Hardie, Ellis for the Champions Trophy

SYDNEY, Jan 14, (AP): Matt Short and Aaron Hardie will play at their first ICC tournament after being named in Australia's 15-man squad for the Champions Trophy which begins next month in Pakistan and the UAE.

Short, Hardie and Nathan Ellis are the newcomers to the squad which won the 2023 ICC World Cup in India.

Opener Jake Fraser-McGurk is the notable omission from the squad which is heavy with allrounders. Australia are two-time winners of the Champions Trophy which was last staged in 2017 and brings together the top eight ODI teams in the world.

The call-up of Short, Hardie and Ellis is made possible by the retirement of David Warner, the unavailability of Cameron Green who is recovering from a back injury and the absence of Sean Abbott.

Ellis earned his call-up after leading the Hobart Hurricanes into the finals of the Big Bash League. Short has played in nine of Australia's last 11 one-day internationals and returned from a broken toe to score a century for the Adelaide Strikers in the BBL on Saturday.

He and Fraser-McGurk were traveling reserves for the Australia squad at last year's T20 World Cup.

Pat Cummins will lead the team, though head of selectors George Bailey has revealed the fast bowler carried an ankle injury through the recent Border-Gavaskar test series against India. While squads have to be named five weeks before the tournament begins on Feb. 19, changes can be made if required.

Cummins will sit out Australia's test tour of Sri Lanka which begins later this month as will Josh Hazlewood and Mitch Marsh. Australia will play a lone one-dayer at the end of that tour which will be its only Champions Trophy warm-up.

Short supplements his batting with off-spin while Hardie bowls pace. Marsh, Glenn Maxwell and Marcus



Australia's captain Pat Cummins celebrates after taking the wicket of India's Rishabh Pant during play on the second day of the fifth cricket test between India and Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground, in Sydney, Australia. (AP)

Stoinis also provide allround options.

"This is a balanced and experienced squad with the core having been involved in the previous one-day World Cup, the West Indies series, last year's successful tour of the UK and the more recent Pakistan home series," Bailey said. "It offers a variety of options for touring management depending on opposition and the conditions that may present in Pakistan."

Australia is drawn alongside England, South Africa and Afghanistan in Group B at the Champions Trophy.

Australia squad: Pat Cummins (captain), Alex Carey, Nathan Ellis, Aaron Hardie, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Mitch Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Matt Short, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa.

Athletes report quality issues

Controversy erupts over Paris medals

PARIS, Jan 14, (Xinhua): The quality of Paris Olympic medals has sparked controversy recently as two French Olympic medalists shared photos of their awards on social media, showing peeling coatings and discoloration.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has stated that all damaged medals will be replaced.

Yohann Ndoye-Brouard, who won a bronze medal in the men's 4x100m medley relay at the Paris Olympics, recently posted a photo of his medal on social media. He captioned the post with "Paris 2024," accompanied by laughing emojis, jokingly suggesting that the bronze medal looks like an "antique" from the 1924 Olympics.

Ndoye-Brouard's post was in response to a similar one from his teammate Clement Secchi, who had shared his own medal and described its rough and damaged surface to "crocodile skin." In fact, complaints about the quality of the medals first surfaced during the Games last year. American skateboarder Nyjah Huston revealed that his medal began to lose its luster and show signs of peeling just about 10 days after he received it.

He expressed his dissatisfaction on

social media, stating, "Olympic medals, we gotta step up the quality a little bit." Since the Games concluded, more athletes have reported similar issues with their medals. According to French media outlet La Lettre, over 100 medals have been returned due to damage. The IOC has since responded to address the matter.

According to Agence France-Presse (AFP) on Monday, the IOC announced that the Paris Organizing Committee is working closely with Monnaie de Paris, the French state mint responsible for the production and quality control of the medals, to investigate the causes of the damage and evaluate the situation. Damaged medals identified as defective will be replaced, and the replacements will be identical to the originals.

Monnaie de Paris also stated that they had begun replacing damaged medals as early as August 2024 and will continue to handle such requests "professionally." The Paris Olympic medals were designed by French luxury brand Chaumet and manufactured by Monnaie de Paris. A unique feature of the design is the incorporation of materials from the Eiffel Tower, symbolizing Paris's rich cultural heritage.

Mascherano still getting settled with Inter Miami, as it preps for start of season

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., Jan 14, (AP): Javier Mascherano's first game as Inter Miami's new coach is this weekend. His first night at his new home remains unscheduled.

Mascherano - Lionel Messi's former teammate and now his coach - was hired by Inter Miami a few weeks ago, yet he still hasn't had time to get to know much about South Florida or even look for a home. He's living in a hotel for now, simply because he's had too much work on his plate to get ready for his new job and a new Major League Soccer season.

"Maybe in two or three weeks, I'll try to find a house," Mascherano said. "His priority right now is clearly the new job. His second official training session as Inter Miami's coach was Monday, with Messi - the reigning MLS MVP - and most of the rest of the team on the field to continue working out in advance of Saturday's preseason opener in Las Vegas.

"I like my teams to play with intensity and courage," Mascherano said. "But we know we are just starting and we need to stay calm. We're happy with the players. They're working hard and doing very well."

Mascherano - Messi's teammate with both Barcelona and the Argentina national team - plans to coach the way he played, with a mind on tactics and with aggression when needed.

Midfielder Yannick Bright said he could see a clear difference Monday in Mascherano's approach compared to what the first few voluntary workouts of the year were like.

"It was more intense for sure," Bright said. "It gives you a little, I'll say, flashes of what he's going to be like, expectations and his character and everything. It's exciting. Yeah, it's exciting."

Mascherano takes over a team that posted the best regular-season record in MLS history last season under coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino, who stepped down citing personal reasons. Martino said he made that decision before Inter Miami fell in the first round of the playoffs to Atlanta United, losing in a best-of-three series.

The expectations for this team - and any team with Messi, really - are to win trophies. That might be one of the reasons why Mascherano is spending hour after hour at work, and not any time looking for a place to live yet.

Inter Miami midfielder Benjamin Cremaschi - an American born to Argentine parents - said Mascherano's approach is one he understands, given what the game means in his parents' homeland.

"I think Argentinians, you know, play with a lot of passion and they've shown it around the world," said Cremaschi, who, along with Inter Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender, was at the team facility on Monday but are currently working out with the U.S. national team for upcoming games against Venezuela and Costa Rica and not yet training with their club team.

"That's something that they definitely bring to the table," Cremaschi said. "I think just the passion, the way they live the game. I feel like that's something that a lot of players could learn from."

Change Name

I, AMMAR EZZY has Changed My Son's Name HATIM, holder of Passport No. X4816284 to hereby change his name to HATIM (as Given name) EZZY (as surname) for all purposes. He will henceforth be known in the name HATIM EZZY and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

Change Name

I, AMMAR EZZY has Changed My Son's Name SHABBIR, holder of Passport No. W7990787 to hereby change his name to SHABBIR (as Given name) EZZY (as surname) for all purposes. He will henceforth be known in the name SHABBIR EZZY and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

Change Name

I, Padma Priya Kadambil holder of Indian Passport No. V6054045 having permanent address 1883, 3rd Main Road, MMDA Mathur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, Pin Code: 600068 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given Name: Padma Priya Surname: Sunilkumar

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Company sponsored 11th Al-Marshoud Int'l Showjumping Championship

Zain renews support for equestrian sports and Kuwaiti riders

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: Zain proudly sponsored the 11th Atyab Al-Marshoud International Showjumping Championship, which spanned three days of thrilling competitions at the Kuwait Riding Center in Sabhan. The event attracted a large audience of equestrian enthusiasts and showcased remarkable performances by both local and international riders.

Zain participated in honoring the top winners of the championship, with the ceremony attended by Acting Director of the Public Authority for Sports Bashar Abdallah, Chairman of the Organizing Committee Waleed Al-Marshoud, Vice Chairman and Championship Director Marshoud Al-Marshoud, and Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti.

Zain takes pride in its annual support of this championship, reflecting its deep belief in the vital role the private sector plays in supporting and developing the sports and youth sectors. The company is committed to fostering young local talent in equestrian sports, a discipline that is an integral part of Kuwaiti, Arab, and Islamic heritage.

The championship featured exciting competitions, culminating in a grand victory for rider AnnazAl-Annaz, who claimed the grand prize and championship title on the third day. Rider Ali Al-Kharafi won the grand prize titles for the first two days of the event. The championship drew a large crowd of equestrian fans, families, youth, and athletes. Zain also set up a dedicated zone to ensure attendees and fans could enjoy the best experience.

The 11th Atyab Al-Marshoud International Showjumping Championship took place at the Kuwait Riding Center in Sabhan, featuring wide participation from Kuwaiti, Gulf, and international riders representing leading local and international equestrian clubs, under the supervision of a professional international judges panel.

Zain is steadfast in its commitment to supporting major sporting events held in Kuwait, aiming to elevate the nation's sports sector and contribute to its growth. The company firmly believes in the critical role the private sector plays in developing youth and sports, a belief it translates into action through supporting various sports activities and competitions.

Zain also takes pride in sponsoring numerous Kuwaiti athletes who represent Kuwait on local, regional, and international stages, achieving honorable accomplishments in various sports under the nation's name.



Waleed Al-Khashti joins in awarding the winners.

Record-breaking 1.4 million dinars in prizes for Kuwait horse racing season

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: The Secretary-General of the Hunting and Equestrian Club, Sheikh Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser, highlighted significant advancements in equestrian sports in Kuwait, attributed to the decision to open all Kuwaiti tracks to one another and allow horses and trainers to participate across local clubs. This initiative, led by the Chairman of the Hunting and Equestrian Club, Sheikh Dhari Fahad Al-Ahmad, along with the club's board of directors and the Supreme Authority for Horse Racing, has resulted in prize offerings exceeding 1.4 million dinars for winners across all tracks.

Speaking during the 11th horse race meeting at the Hunting and Equestrian Club, Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser explained:

"The registration and participation process for races is conducted online, enabling participants to select their preferred rounds and distances with ease. The integration of tracks has simplified participation for horse owners, and prize values have been significantly increased. The minimum prize is now 1,500 dinars, and every race at the Hunting and



Hamad Al-Dubos honors Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser.

Equestrian Club offers a trophy. Additionally, winners throughout the season receive valuable rewards, including cars. At the end of the season, four cars will be awarded to the champions of the points league, recognizing the top trainer, jockey, owner, and horse, along with cash prizes for second and third place winners."

Sheikh Sabah also noted a remarkable increase in participation, with over 300 horses competing

in the races. Public interest has surged, attracting diverse audiences, including families and a growing number of female attendees, who actively support the participants.

During the 11th meeting, the horses "Kahlan," "Inertempel," "Hawda de Nilance," "Marrakesh Express," "Hoor," "Northern Prince," and "Jalmoud Al-Mazban" claimed first-place victories in their respective races.

Al-Shabab stuns Al-Qadsiya in volleyball league



Al-Shabab players defend as Al-Qadsiya player spikes the ball during the league match.

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: Al-Shabab Club delivered the first upset of the volleyball league championship by defeating Al-Qadsiya 3-1 (21-25, 34-32, 26-24, 25-17) in a thrilling match at the Game Union Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. On the same day, Al-Arabi secured a straight-sets victory over Al-Sulaibikhat (25-18, 25-23, 25-22).

The 2024-2025 volleyball league season began with a strong performance from Kuwait Club, who defeated Al-Nasr 3-1 in a preliminary match, setting the stage for its preparation for the Arab Clubs Championship

in Qatar, scheduled from January 16 to 26. Kazma followed with a win over Yarmouk, while Al-Qadsiya claimed a 3-0 victory over Al-Sahel before its unexpected loss to Al-Shabab.

The current standings show Kuwait Club, Kazma, Al-Qadsiya, Al-Arabi, and Al-Shabab tied with three points each, while Yarmouk, Al-Sahel, Al-Sulaibikhat, and Al-Nasr remain without points.

The tournament adopts a single-stage preliminary league format, with the top four teams advancing to the final rounds. In the semifinals, the first-placed team will face the fourth, and the second will meet the third. The winners will compete for the championship title, while the losing teams will vie for third place.

Arsenal faces high-stakes derby against Tottenham

Coach Postecoglou under pressure

LONDON, Jan 14, (Xinhua): Arsenal and Tottenham play a north-London derby that is vital to both of their interests at the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday night in a midweek round of fixtures.

Arsenal has to win to keep its title hope alive, and could go into the game nine-points behind Liverpool, if Liverpool beats Nottingham Forest (who is level on 40 points with Arsenal) on Tuesday night.

Mikel Arteta's side lost in the third round of the FA Cup at home to Manchester United on penalties on Sunday, with that defeat followed hot on the heels of their 2-0 Carabao Cup loss at home to Newcastle United.

Arteta's side is starting to run the risk of being labeled as a team that lacks a cutting edge, but with Bukayo Saka already out with a knee problem, Gabriel Jesus was added to its long injury list with a knee problem on Sunday.

Tottenham's problems are even worse as it was taken to extra-time by fifth tier (National League) Tamworth on Sunday, while in the Premier League, three defeats and a draw from the last four games have seen it drop to 12th in the classification and a heavy defeat on Wednesday could mark the end for coach Ange Postecoglou.

There is a very different vibe at St James Park, where five straight wins, eight in all competitions, have taken Newcastle United to fifth place ahead of its match at home to Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Newcastle forward Alexander Isak is clearly the man to watch as he aims to extend his scoring run to eight consecutive games, while Anthony Gordon is also in excellent form for Eddie Howe's team.

There will be emotion as David Moyes returns to the Goodison Park dugout after being named as the replacement for Sean Dyche on Saturday.

The 61-year-old needs an immedi-



Arsenal's Kai Havertz, right, jumps for the ball with Manchester United's Noussair Mazraoui during the English FA Cup soccer match between Arsenal and Manchester United at the Emirates stadium in London. (AP)



Tamworth's Thomas McLinchey, left, and Tottenham Hotspur's Archie Gray battle for the ball during the English FA Cup third round match at The Lamb Ground, Tamworth, England. (AP)

ate reaction as he begins his second spell at the club after a round trip which has taken him to Manchester United, Real Sociedad, Sunderland and West Ham.

Everton faces Aston Villa and anything but a win could see it slip into the bottom three.

Wednesday also sees Leicester

City at home to Crystal Palace, with Leicester needing to build on its FA Cup thrashing of Queens Park Rangers, to end a run of five straight defeats that has seen it drop to second from bottom of the table.

Two games on Thursday see Ipswich at home to Brighton, while Manchester United faces rock bottom, Southampton.

Southampton chairman Henrik Kraft has stepped down from his role with the relegation-threatened Premier League club and been replaced by majority shareholder Dragan Solak.

The club announced the changes on Tuesday and Solak said more were to come.

"Whilst I am pleased with many aspects of the club's management, I am deeply disappointed with the football results this season," Solak said in a statement. "We will be strengthening our football management team in the near future, and we will share details of that as soon as things are confirmed."

Southampton is bottom of the standings and last month fired manager Russell Martin after a 5-0 loss to Tottenham.

Promoted last season, the club looks set to make a quick return to the second division after losing 16 of its 20 league games this term and winning just once.

Ivan Juric was hired as Martin's replacement last month.

"Our aim at the start of the season was to stay in the Premier League, and I know our fans share in my frustration at how this season has gone so far," said Solak. "I ask everyone to continue supporting the club with as much passion and dedication as they have shown all season as we navigate the rest of the season together."

Solak is listed by Southampton as the club's ultimate beneficial owner.

He is the lead investor in Sport Republic, which has majority ownership of St Mary's Football Group Ltd, which owns Southampton.

Solak thanked Kraft for his "dedication and passion" and Southampton said he remained a shareholder and on the board of Sport Republic.

Best of the Rest

Wu to take knee surgery: Chinese forward Wu Lei is ready to have a knee operation that will leave him out of action for at least two months.

Wu has been nursing a right knee complaint which ruled him out of China's latest two World Cup qualifiers - its 1-0 away win over Bahrain and 3-1 home defeat to Japan in mid-November.

Wu was also dropped by the Chinese side which is holding a training camp in Haikou, Southern China Hainan province.

He tried a conservative treatment, but it did not work out well.

"The problem will not go away completely without an operation," he told Shanghai local media.

"It's very disturbing. If I don't receive an operation, it will get worse than last year," he said.

Wu said he is discussing with his club Shanghai Port about the surgery plan.

He is expected to be sidelined for at least two months after the surgery, which means he will miss China's next

two World Cup qualifiers -- one against Saudi Arabia on March 20, and the other one against Australia five days later. (Xinhua)

Bayern wants to keep Tel: Bayern Munich's sporting director Christoph Freund says the German club is planning to keep Mathys Tel, after several media reports linked the French forward with a move to Chelsea.

Freund said Tuesday that the 19-year-old Tel was a "very important player" for Bayern and that the club wants to follow a plan for his development.

"We have a very good dialogue because he's a big talent who should take on an important role for us. We've had a lot of conversations. Our clear aim is that Mathys will make the breakthrough with us," Freund said. "Obviously we'll listen if a player isn't happy, then we'll talk about it. We want to see through our plan with Mathys."

Freund's comments followed reports in British and German media that Chelsea was interested in signing Tel, with some claiming a swap deal could see out-of-form Chelsea forward Christopher Nkunku head to Bayern. (AP)



Wang Yafan of China plays a backhand return to Anna Bondar of Hungary during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Sports

Fonseca upsets Rublev in first round of Australian Open

Medvedev, Rune survive as trio of Chinese women progress

MELBOURNE, Jan 14, (Xinhua): Fiery Russian Daniil Medvedev and 13th seed Holger Rune survived major frights on Tuesday, while Chinese women's players Wang Xiyu, Zhang Shuai and Wang Yafan progressed through to the Australian Open second round.

Fifth seed Medvedev has a tremendous record in Melbourne having made the final in three of the past four years.

But he almost crashed out on day three after facing a serious challenge from Thai Kasidit Samrej before prevailing 6-2, 4-6, 3-6, 6-1, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena.

Medvedev's temper boiled over when he was down 3-5 in the third set and he slammed his racket into the net camera repeatedly, causing a brief delay.

But Medvedev, a noted hothead, composed himself and dominated the final two sets in his first match since the ATP Finals in November.

"I watched his matches before and didn't see this level, so I was surprised," Medvedev said of his 418th ranked opponent.

Rune also battled hard before ousting China's top men's player Zhang Zhizhen 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 in three hours and 10 minutes.



Joao Fonseca of Brazil plays a forehand return to Andrey Rublev of Russia during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Zhang trailed 2-4 in a gripping final set before digging deep to break Rune's serve. But Rune lifted his intensity when it mattered to book a second round match with former Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini.

"It was definitely an incredibly tough

match," said Rune, who had to withstand 21 aces from 49th ranked Zhang.

"But I'm super happy to get through to the second round. He was serving very well and he played very well. But I'm happy how I fought today." US Open finalist Taylor Fritz had a far eas-

ier time after crushing fellow American Jenson Brooksby 6-2, 6-0, 6-3.

"I would really want to be in another Slam final, obviously the goal is to win, but just another opportunity at winning a Slam," said Fritz, who teamed up with women's star Coco Gauff to lead the US to victory at the United Cup.

Eighth seed Alex de Minaur, Australia's main title hope, defeated Boti van de Zandschulp 6-1, 7-5, 6-4 at a raucous Rod Laver Arena in the night session.

In the women's draw, former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina thrashed Australian teenager Emerson Jones 6-1, 6-1.

The sixth seed was a class above the 16-year-old and needed just 53 minutes to move into the second round after serving 11 aces and hitting 26 winners.

"She has a great future and many more years on tour, but I am pretty happy with my performance," said Rybakina, who finished runners-up at the Australian Open to Aryna Sabalenka in 2023.

China's successful day in the women's draw started with 108th ranked Wang Xiyu blasting past Julia Grabher 6-1, 7-5.

Unleashing powerful groundstrokes,

the left-handed Wang hit 15 winners to book a second round clash with eighth seed Emma Navarro.

World No. 64 Wang Yafan beat Hungary's Anna Bondar 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in two hours and 13 minutes to win her first round match for the second straight year.

She has fond memories of Melbourne having reached the third round last year before losing to compatriot Zheng Qinwen in a three-set thriller.

Wang next plays ninth seed Daria Kasatkina.

Veteran Zhang Shuai's resurgence continued when she upset 47th ranked McCartney Kessler 6-3, 6-4 in one hour and 16 minutes.

The 204th ranked Zhang, who earned her place in the draw after securing a wildcard, hit 26 winners to seal her spot in the second round against 24th seed Yulia Putintseva.

It wasn't all rosy for Chinese women's players with Wei Sijia's much-anticipated Grand Slam debut ending with a straight sets defeat to fourth seed Jasmine Paolini.

Paolini handed the 21-year-old Wei a lesson with a comfortable 6-0, 6-4 victory in 73 minutes.

Zheng Saisai also failed to advance

after she was beaten by 20-year-old Russian Erika Andreeva 6-1, 7-6 (6) in under two hours.

But the 69th ranked Zheng did produce a moment of magic when she chased down a lob and hit a shot between her legs from well behind the baseline that forced Andreeva into error.

The second round starts on Wednesday and features China's title hope Zheng Qinwen playing German Laura Siegemund, while defending women's champion Sabalenka and third seed Gauff are also in action.

The men's draw will be highlighted by second seed Alexander Zverev, four-time Grand Slam champion Carlos Alcaraz and 10-time tournament winner Novak Djokovic.

Joao Fonseca definitively introduced himself to the world as the latest teen sensation in men's tennis on Tuesday night, upsetting No. 9 seed Andrey Rublev 7-6 (1), 6-3, 7-6 (5) in the first round of the Australian Open.

It was quite a debut in the main draw of a Grand Slam tournament for the 18-year-old Brazilian, who is currently ranked 112th and made it into the bracket at Melbourne Park by winning three matches in qualifying rounds last week.

Kuwait bowling team shines with 3rd place at Hong Kong World Cup



Kuwait bowling team with Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad.

Malaysia claims championship title

HONG KONG, Jan 14: The Kuwait men's bowling team delivered a remarkable performance at the World Cup hosted in Hong Kong from January 6 to 14, securing an impressive third-place finish alongside the American team.

The team, comprising Aseel Al-Roumi, Mustafa Al-Moussawi, Mohammed Abdul Razzaq, and Adel Abel, demonstrated exceptional skill and determination in a highly competitive tournament featuring some of the world's strongest teams. Their achievement stands as a proud milestone for Kuwait on the global stage.

In the men's division, the Malaysian team claimed the championship title, while Puerto Rico finished as runners-up. Meanwhile, in the women's competition, the American team took first place, followed by Malaysia in second, with Macau and Singapore sharing third place.

Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Bowling Club and President of the Asian and International Bowling Federations, expressed his delight with this outstanding achievement. He emphasized that it reflects the progress of bowling in Kuwait, guided by a strategic roadmap aimed at advancing the sport and elevating team performance to achieve accolades for Kuwait in international arenas.

Sheikh Talal dedicated this success to Kuwait's wise leadership, including His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah. He noted that their directives and unwavering support for sports and athletes have been a source of great inspiration.

He also extended his gratitude to the Public Authority for Sports for their continuous support in overcoming challenges faced by Kuwaiti athletes. Praising the players' excellent performance and determination, Sheikh Talal affirmed that this accomplishment firmly places Kuwait on the global sports map in bowling.

Atletico visits Elche

Supercup winner Barcelona back in Copa del Rey action

MADRID, Jan 14, (Agencies): Spanish Supercup winner FC Barcelona is in Copa del Rey action on Wednesday night when entertains Betis in Montjuic in the fourth round of the knockout tournament.

Hansi Flick's team had barely three days to prepare for the game after the 5-2 destruction of Real Madrid in the Supercup final in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah, after which it flew directly back to Spain.

Flick will be without central defender Inigo Martinez, who will miss the next six weeks after tearing a hamstring in Sunday's final, with either Ronald Araujo or Eric Garcia to replace him in defense.

Fermin Lopez and Ferran Torres could also start as Flick looks to freshen up his side after the efforts in Jeddah.

The injury to Martinez looks as if it could put the breaks on any move for Araujo this January, with Juventus rumored to be willing to make a big offer for the Uruguayan, but with Martinez sidelined, Barcelona can't afford to lose another experienced defender.

Betis has had since last Friday to recover from league defeat to Valladolid and has been highly inconsistent so far this season, the big question is whether Barca's hectic schedule with four matches and two long flights in 12 days, will start to take a toll.

La Liga leader, Atletico Madrid travels to face second division high-flyers Elche, who has won four of the last five matches in the league, while also thrashing Las Palmas 4-0 in the last round of the cup.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone is likely to make some squad rotations, but with the Copa del Rey very much on his side's agenda this season, expects players such as Conor Gallagher and Alexander Sorloth to start.

Wednesday also sees second division leader Almeria looking to add another top-flight scalp after a 4-1 win at home to Sevilla in the last round when it entertains Leganes.

Finally, RFEF II (fourth division) Pontevedra aims to follow up wins over Villarreal and Mallorca in the previous rounds by adding Getafe to its list of top-flight conquests.

Pontevedra beat Villarreal 1-0, before putting three goals past Mal-

orca and will think it has an excellent chance of making the quarterfinals.

Real Madrid hopes some home comfort will help the team get over yet another embarrassing loss to Barcelona.

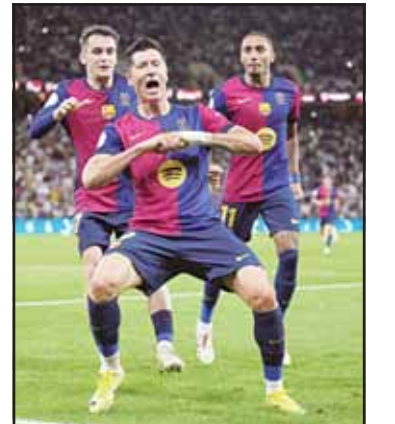
After losing 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final on Sunday in Saudi Arabia, Madrid has a run of three home games over seven days.

The home run begins on Thursday against Celta Vigo in the Copa del Rey last 16. Las Palmas visits on Sunday in La Liga then Salzburg on Jan. 22 in the Champions League.

"We are sad and disappointed," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "We have no option but to look forward and try to regain the good momentum that we had until this match against Barcelona."

Madrid won five in a row across all competitions before the latest Barcelona loss. The Catalan side also routed Madrid 4-0 at the Santiago Bernabeu in October in La Liga.

"We have to stick together, be a team and react the same as we did after losing to them in La Liga," Madrid midfielder Luka Modric said. "We showed a reaction and I hope we will react to this tough defeat, because we didn't think we would lose like this. It's good that the Copa game is coming up soon and we won't have much time for regrets."



Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski, centre, celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during the Spain Super Cup final soccer match between Real Madrid and Barcelona at King Abdullah Stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

Reported interest from Saudi Arabia for Rashford

January transfer window is teasing some big moves involving United, City & PSG

MANCHESTER, England, Jan 14, (AP): The January transfer window is open and big names could be on the move, from Marcus Rashford to Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.

It is often tricky to get big ticket deals over the line in the mid-season window, with prices inflated and budgets reduced - but the 2025 edition is teasing major moves, with Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain among Europe's giants tipped to spend before the Feb. 3 deadline.

The January window is effectively the last chance for clubs to make a major move to revive an ailing season or strengthen the push for silverware or Champions League qualification.

But it can be fraught with difficulty. A perceived desperation from buying clubs to bring in targets can see

valuations rise. Selling clubs are understandably reluctant to lose a key player midway through the campaign and look for extra incentive to offload now, rather than in the offseason.

They have little time to bring in their own replacements and with opposition teams aware of the windfall they may have just received for selling a star talent, negotiations become even more complicated.

Standoffs are regular. And so are negotiations that are pushed right to the wire on deadline day.

With clubs generally having spent large parts of their budget in the previous offseason, the preference for many is to wait until the end of the campaign.

What potentially makes this window so unusual is the number of stellar players looking for a move - and how



Manchester United's Marcus Rashford smiles during the warm up before the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Newcastle at the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

public they or their clubs are being about the situation.

Rashford has been dropped by new United head coach Ruben Amorim and said last month he was "ready for a new challenge."

There has been reported interest from Saudi Arabia and Monaco, but no confirmation of an official bid.

The problem for Rashford and United is that he is only a year-and-a-half into a lucrative contract reportedly worth nearly \$400,000 a week. Only the very richest clubs in the world could afford to match that salary and offer the sort of transfer fee United would be looking for to be able to make the type of signings Amorim needs to refresh his squad.

If Rashford, who hasn't played since Dec. 12, is to leave this month,

a compromise would likely have to be reached in terms of his valuation and salary. Much then could depend on the determination of both player and club for him to move.

United likely needs to sell to be able to make any major signings this month, with Amorim requiring more players to suit his preferred wingback system.

The Premier League's financial rules mean United could benefit most from selling academy graduates like Rashford or Kobbie Mainoo because they represent pure profit, having cost nothing to bring to the club.

The jewel of Napoli's Serie A-winning team in 2023, Kvaratskhelia has long been expected to move to one of Europe's leading teams.

PSG and Liverpool have both been linked with the Georgia international

this month.

"Nine out of 10 times, 99 times out of 100 times in the end of the window, it's been clear that almost all of these stories weren't true," Liverpool coach Arne Slot said of January speculation last week.

But Napoli coach Antonio Conte has confirmed Kvaratskhelia wants a move.

"He asked the club to be sold," Conte said. "I spoke to the player who confirmed this decision to me. I am disappointed, it was a bolt from the blue, and I am taking a step back."

PSG, which has lost Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe in recent seasons, is in need of some stardust and Kvaratskhelia would fit the bill.

France international Randal Kolo Muani could exit the French champion.