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Amir visits King's Foundation at Dumfries House in Scotland

AYRSHIRE, Scotland, Jan 15, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Wednesday the King's Foundation at Dumfries House in Ayrshire County in Scotland.

His Highness the Amir toured Dumfries House facilities and got acquainted with the educational and cultural activities and events.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to Scotland, the UK, in response to the personal invitation of King Charles III underscores the deep-seated relations between the two countries, said Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK Bader Al-Munayekh on Tuesday.

The visit comes after marking the 125th anniversary of UK-Kuwait partnership that witnessed several events in both countries that showed the importance of these ties, Al-Munayekh told KUNA and Kuwait TV.



His Highness the Amir during a visit to King's Foundation headquarters at Dumfries House, Ayrshire, Scotland, UK. Amiri Diwan photo

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Greed killed the farmer, and city judge stole king's treasury

The ruler said, "The land you can walk on with your own two feet shall be yours."

The man began walking faster, driven by his desire for more. But!

After several weeks of walking, the farmer thought about returning to the ruler, but his greed pushed him to continue, as he desired more land.

After covering a long distance, he collapsed from extreme exhaustion and died.

The husband cut down the tree opposite the window, only to discover his wife's betrayal.

She had deceived him by claiming she was shy of the birds seeing her without her "hijab"(veil).

He found his wife sleeping in the arms of her lover, and so he left the city.

He walked on tiptoes to avoid harming even an ant.

The stranger said to the king: "My lord, if I am proven a liar, then kill me."

3

Kuwait targets harmful goods with new tax law

Finance minister outlines reform to boost revenue

PM reaffirms transparency with updated financial records



His Highness the Prime Minister meets with NAZAHA Chairperson Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim during a visit to the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority headquarters. Nazaha photo

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah on Wednesday visited headquarters of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (NAZAHA) updating his financial disclosure data, declared NAZAHA Chairperson Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim.

His Highness the Prime Minister's keenness on being physically present at the authority's headquarters to update his financial disclosure information affirms his support for NAZAHA and sends a message to everybody with respect of the necessity to present and update the financial disclosure, he said in a statement to KUNA.

The Prime Minister's step positively impacts on disseminating transparency and integrity among the State personnel, Al-Ibrahim said, affirming that combating corruption tops the Government manifesto priorities.

Continued on Page 5

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15, (KUNA): Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments Nora Al-Fassam said her department is preparing a selective taxation law targeting commodities harmful to human health, with projections the levies would reap KD 200 million (USD 648.3 million) per year.

In an exclusive interview with KUNA, Al-Fassam said some of the major steps, expected to be taken soon, at the level of reforming taxation in Kuwait, is levying taxes on corporate income. She alluded in particular to the decree-law 6/2024 for the Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes the decree 157/2024 for taxation on multi-national entities.

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MEW requests debt settlement for revoked citizenship holders

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Sources within the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy revealed that a review of debts owed by individuals whose citizenships have been revoked is underway.

The ministry has placed a 'block' on those with outstanding debts, requiring them to settle their dues in full.

The ministry is coordinating with the Central Agency for Remedying the Status of Illegal Residents in Kuwait to establish a mechanism for debt collection.

It emphasized that settling outstanding payments is a prerequisite for obtaining a clearance certificate necessary for completing procedures with the agency.

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Kuwait names new Coast Guard base in honor of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15, (KUNA): The Cabinet on Tuesday held its regular weekly meeting at the conventions hall at the Amiri Airport under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Following the session, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, Minister of Interior and the Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, said that the ministers were informed of the formation of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who departed

the country earlier Tuesday for the friendly United Kingdom.

His Highness the Amir is paying the visit in response to a special invitation by His Royal Highness King Charles III, the Monarch of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The delegation groups Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, senior officials from the Amiri Diwan and the Foreign Ministry.

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8 NBK's strategy shapes professional teams for long-term success

NewsWatch

Blame it on flu

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: The Ministry of Health reported that over 58 percent of acute respiratory infections in adults this season were caused by the influenza virus, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry emphasized that winter is still ongoing and preventive measures remain effective, urging the public to "Protect yourself and your loved ones. Get the influenza vaccine today — your health starts with you."

The ministry also highlighted that the vaccine is readily available across all governorates at preventive health centers.

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's military will be launching shooting drill using live ammunition at Al-Adera' range northwest of the country, January 15 to 23, Director of the Moral Guidance and Public Relations Department of the Kuwait Armed Forces said Wednesday. (KUNA)

Interior Minister honors officers for swift fugitive capture



First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah during the honoring ceremony for security personnel. Ministry of Interior photos



KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah on Wednesday honored personnel of the directorate general for sentences execution for detaining a fugitive in the case of falsifying the Kuwaiti citizenship.

Alluding the detention of the wanted who was hiding at a farm in Al-Wafra, the minister, according to a statement by the Ministry of Interior, lauded the fruitful personnel efforts affirming that the operation was an example to follow for all security apparatuses.

He praised in particular their success in locating his whereabouts despite encountering some difficult circumstances, urging the ministry staff to double their efforts to track down the fugitives particularly those convicted in cases of falsifying or counterfeiting the national identity.

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:20 Asr 14:52
 Sunrise .. 06:44 Maghrib .. 17:11
 Zohr 11:57 Isha 18:33

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speed of 08-28 km/h with a chance for drizzle.

By Night: Cold and partly cloudy with light to moderate vari-

Weather

able wind to light southeasterly wind, with speed of 08-28 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	20	11
Kuwait Airport	20	07

Abdaly	21	07
Bubyan	21	07
Jahra	21	09
Failaka Island	23	10
Salmiyah	20	13
Ahmadi	21	07
Jal Aliyah	19	08
Nuwaisib	22	10

Kuwait pledges to revitalize tourism, hospitality sectors

'HORECA Kuwait' eyes major uplift in economy

By Khaled Al-Jalis

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15, (KUNA): Hospitality and tourism exhibition, HORECA Kuwait, launched its 13th edition on Tuesday with the participation of local and international field experts.

The exhibition is held under the patronage of Information and Culture Minister and Minister of Youth Affairs, Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi, and attended by Information Ministry Undersecretary Dr. Nasser Muhaisen.

While inaugurating the exhibition, Muhaisen affirmed that hosting such events is a translation of leadership's vision of achieving sustainable development and boosting national economy.

HORECA Kuwait is an exceptional opportunity to exchange expertise in the field, as the sector stands as a pillar of economic growth, noted Muhaisen, adding that it also provides a platform for latest technological innovations, ensuring Kuwait's competitiveness across regional and international fronts.

A combination of the words HO(HOTELS), RE(RESTAURANTS) and CA(CAFES), HORECA was formed in Lebanon by Hospitality Services in 1994, after which its branches spread into Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait.

The exhibition is not merely a display of products and hospitality services, but is a meeting point for creatives, experts, and decision makers, he said, adding that this would create an ample environment for development, fortifying Kuwait's standing as an attractive center for



Dr. Nasser Muhaisen



Basmah Al-Mayman

investments.

As for Leaders Group Director General Nabila Al-Anjari, chief of the organizing committee, she told KUNA that the exhibition will include a variety of activities, meeting market demand. She spoke of the exhibition's importance in diversifying income sources, creating

job opportunities for youth, as well as providing prospects for talents and skilled workers. HORECA's franchisee was acquired by Leaders Group, and as a result it was inaugurated in Kuwait in 2012.

Al-Anjari also highlighted His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's directives of economic reformations to address structural faults in the single-source economic system.

She pointed out that the three-day fair will see the participation of 100 companies, 500 international brands, 8,000 visitor and 30 keynote speakers. It will also have its trade mark Culinary Art Show, where chefs participate in various competitions to showcase their skills and be evaluated by international judges.

Al-Anjari also underlined the government's directions of hosting regional and international championships, saying that it economically rejuvenated the sector, most recently with Khaleeji Zain 26.

As for United Nations Regional Director of World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Basmah Al-Mayman, she recalled Kuwait's long-standing tourism sector, saying that it had been attracting visitors since the 1960s.

Al-Mayman said that the New Kuwait 2035 vision is a step towards a prosperous and more sustainable future, and for making Kuwait a financial, commercial and cultural regional hub.

She also spoke of Kuwait's capabilities as a founding member of UNWTO, in becoming an international destination, saying it would necessitate a comprehensive strategy, as well as investment and touristic planning, in addition to an active partnership with the private sector.

KRCS to build health center in Basra

Iraq speaker praises Kuwait's support at int'l quarters

BAGHDAD, Jan 15, (KUNA): Chairman of the Iraqi parliament Mahmoud Mash-hadani on Wednesday lauded Kuwait's stances manifesting support for his country at the international quarters.

The house speaker praised the Kuwaiti stands during a reception of the State of Kuwait Ambassador to Iraq Hassan Zaman.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Ambassador said in remarks to KUNA that Mash-hadani also expressed satisfaction with the level of the bilateral relations bonding the two brotherly coun-



Mash-hadani

tries. He added that the discussions during the meeting addressed the bilateral ties, means of strengthening them for serving the two countries' interests in the political and economic spheres.

The Kuwaiti envoy indicated that the talks with House Speaker touched on the situation in Gaza Strip, efforts aimed at halting the war, restoring normal life, alleviating impact of the aggression with reconstruction and delivering humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. (end)

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society announced on Wednesday the initiation of a health center project in the southern Iraqi city of Basra. Dr. Nasser Al-Tannak, Vice Chairman of the Board of KRCS, told KUNA that the project would be constructed at a cost of USD 800,000.

The center would cover an area of 1,000 square meters, consist of two floors, and include laboratories, recovery rooms, anesthesia rooms, and radiology facilities.

Dr. Al-Tannak emphasized that the health center is one of several projects undertaken by the KRCS in Iraq and is expected to serve a significant number of residents in Basra Governorate.

The foundation stone was laid in collaboration with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Baghdad, and the Kuwaiti Consulate in Basra.

Over the years, the KRCS has organized numerous humanitarian campaigns to support the Iraqi people, including donations of mobile clinics, medical equipment, ambulances, and other essential supplies.

KUNA, Egypt's NPA seek spike in media relations

CAIRO, Jan 15, (KUNA): KUNA's Deputy Director General Mohammad Al-Mannai and Chairman of Egypt's National Press Authority Abdulsadiq Al-Shorbagy discussed joint cooperation to enhance relations between Kuwait and Egypt.

The meeting took place in Cairo on Wednesday, during KUNA's delegation visit to share experience with their Egyptian counterparts.

Al-Mannai underlined in a statement the importance of sharing experience and ideas between Kuwaiti and Egyptian media institutes to develop the field and enable the two sides to face the growing challenges in the Arab World.

The shared visits between the two sides are part of the strong media, political, economic and cultural ties between the two countries, he added.

On his part, Al-Shorbagy welcomed the visit of KUNA's delegation, affirming the strength of Kuwait-Egyptian ties on all levels.

He hoped that such visits will boost media cooperation and allow the two sides to keep up with the recent technological developments in the media field.

The two sides discussed a proposal to issue a joint photobook on the Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations that includes the most prominent authors from both sides and the main visits between the two countries.

Meanwhile, earlier, KUNA Deputy Director General for Administrative, Financial and Communications' Affairs Mohammad Al-Mannai discussed on Tuesday with Editor-in-Chief of Middle East News Agency (MENA), Ahmad Kamal ways to enhance media cooperation and exchange of expertise.

This came during Kamal's reception of the KUNA delegation headed by Al-Mannai, who praised the existing cooperation between KUNA and MENA when it comes to exchanging experiences and information that contributes to media development.

For his part, Kamal stressed the pivotal role of KUNA in exchanging information in a professional manner, expressing keenness to increase cooperation by kick-starting MENA's office in Kuwait.

He added that Kuwait is one of the most important Arab countries that report on Arab issues, especially the Palestinian cause.

Kamal pointed out MENA's unique media heritage that includes visits by various heads of state to Egypt, in addition to a huge archive of news, photos and video clips.

The meeting included a tour of MENA training center, halls, and museum where the delegation was briefed with the modern programs and methods provided by the Agency.



Some members of the board of trustees for the KAFO platform.

'Empowering youth talent'

'KAFO' announces formation of board of trustees; forum Feb 11

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: The 'KAFO' platform, Kuwait's first national initiative dedicated to showcasing and empowering youth talent has proudly announced the formation of its Board of Trustees, according to a press release.

This non-profit organization is committed to facilitating research, communication and collaboration among young people to foster a more connected and capable community.

Members of the Board of Trustees are Dr. Yousef Al-Ibrahim, Masoud Hayat, Fareed Al-Fawzan, Dr. Fawaz Al-Awadhi and Mrs. Taiba Al-Humaidhi.

With their collective expertise and vision, the Board will advance Kafo's mission of empowering youth to engage meaningfully

in building a brighter future for Kuwait.

On this occasion, KAFO is pleased to announce the KAFO Forum, which will be held on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. The forum will center on the theme of social innovation, aiming to inspire and encourage creative solutions to societal challenges.

Registration: Applications to attend the forum and participate in its accompanying activities are now open. Interested individuals can register via the link available in the KAFO platform's bio on Instagram (@kafo_kw).

KAFO remains steadfast in its mission to empower youth and drive positive change for a thriving community.

year imprisonment and a fine of KD 42,000. A teacher was sentenced to one-year imprisonment for leaking the exam papers to other defendants who had received KD 42,000 from students, with each student paying KD 50 to obtain the correct answers.

Earlier, the Public Prosecution ordered the imprisonment of the defendants and their

transfer to the Central Prison. They were also charged with money laundering by obtaining money through illegal means.

The security services had arrested the defendants and others in connection with similar cases involving the leakage of Ministry of Education exam papers, which were sold on social media for monetary gain.



Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr. Fatima Al-Salem with the visiting Kuwait National Guard delegation.

KUNA chief, KNG hold talks to enhance cooperation in media

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15, (KUNA): Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr. Fatima Al-Salem met with Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Undersecretary Lieutenant General Engineer Hashem Al-Rifai on Wednesday to discuss ways of enhancing media cooperation, particularly in news reporting and training.

The meeting also addressed various areas of mutual interest, including media cooperation and training initiatives.

During the meeting, Dr. Al-Salem praised the significant efforts of the National Guard personnel, particularly their role in protecting government institutions and facilities during events hosted in Kuwait, ensuring their success.

She also emphasized KUNA's commitment to providing media services to the National Guard and other institutions in Kuwait, supporting their efforts, and highlighting their achievements. Dr. Al-Salem expressed hope for further cooperation in training and the exchange of expertise between the two institutions.

For his part, Lt. Gen. Al-Rifai conveyed the greetings of KNG Chief Sheikh

Mubarak Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Deputy Chief Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Sabah to KUNA and its staff. He praised the agency's long-standing expertise, exceptional capabilities, and its important role in conveying news and media messages with professionalism and integrity.

He also stressed the importance of strengthening the partnership with KUNA, particularly in the field of training. Lt. Gen. Al-Rifai announced that the National Guard would allocate a seat for KUNA at its Crisis Management Center within the Operations Department to enhance KUNA staff's expertise and skill development.

He further highlighted KUNA's role as the primary source of news related to Kuwait and congratulated the agency on the launch of the "KUNA Observatory" for news verification and combating misinformation, particularly in light of the rapid spread of misleading rumors on social media platforms.

The meeting was also attended by Director of the National Guard's Moral Guidance Department Brigadier General Dr. Jadaan Fadhel.



Kuwait's Ambassador to Portugal Hamad Al-Hazeem presents a memento to the head of the delegation Brigadier Mohammad Qabazard.

Mol team visits Maritime Analysis and Operations Center in Portugal

MADRID, Jan 15, (KUNA): An official delegation from Kuwait's Ministry of Interior visited on Wednesday the Maritime Analysis and Operations Center in Lisbon, Portugal to be briefed about its activities and experiences in the field of maritime navigation.

In a statement to KUNA, head of the delegation Brigadier Mohammad Qabazard said that the purpose of the visit is to be informed about the mechanism of the center and enhance cooperation.

He noted that the Portuguese center welcomes any future cooperation and expertise exchange with Kuwait.

On his part, Kuwait's Ambassador to Portugal Hamad Al-Hazeem said that the embassy in Lisbon organized this visit.

Ambassador Al-Hazeem stressed the importance of these official visits between the two friendly countries and to exchange ex-

perience and in the field of maritime navigation especially on security procedures and drug transportation.

He pointed out that Portugal has great experience in this field, as it is Europe's maritime gateway from Latin America and has a coastline extending to 1,800 kilometers, therefore it is responsible for monitoring navigation traffic in cooperation with the rest of the European countries.

He added that the work of the Maritime Analysis and Operations Center, which was launched in 2007 at the initiative of eight European countries, has expanded in recent years to include countries outside of Europe and has partnerships with the most important European maritime and security organizations and agencies. It has also signed several memorandums of understanding (MoU) with the authorities of Brazil, Colombia and Senegal.

KU, KFAS to cooperate for research

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Kuwait University and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) have signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at enhancing scientific research and research cooperation between the two institutions.

The signing ceremony was held in the presence of the acting President of Kuwait University Dr. Osama Al-Saeed, and Director General of KFAS Dr. Amina Rajab Farhan.

In a statement issued following the ceremony, Dr. Al-Saeed highlighted Kuwait University's significant role in providing skilled professionals in all state institutions.

He emphasized the university's contribution to national development plans, and acknowledged KFAS' vital role in supporting development programs that focus on the professional advancement of academic and

research staff, as well as students, across various research domains.

Dr. Al-Saeed expressed his gratitude to KFAS for its ongoing support, which has played a major part in the success and progress of state institutions.

Meanwhile, Director General of KFAS Dr. Amina Farhan spoke about the importance of Kuwait University's contributions, particularly its research outputs, which have greatly advanced both local and international institutions.

She highlighted the success of the first Kuwaiti satellite "Kuwait Sat 1", which originated from Kuwait University and was supported by KFAS, and marked a huge achievement for both the country and the region.

Dr. Farhan expressed her appreciation for the continued collaboration between KFAS and Kuwait University, which she believes plays a major role in the continued development and prosperity of the State of Kuwait.

10 years jail for 5 people, KD 42,000 fine in exam paper leak

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: In the case of the 2024 high school exam leak, which involved sharing of exam materials in groups on social media, the Criminal Court ruled to sentence three Bedoun siblings, a Kuwaiti man, a Kuwaiti woman, and an Egyptian national to ten-

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Greed killed the farmer... and city judge stole king's treasury

Contentment in livelihood with ambition is the path to success. This means that striving for growth and improvement is legitimate, but greed leads to misery. Greed clouds one's judgment and prevents success. This is why wisdom teaches us to be content with what God has provided and to avoid being greedy.

There are many examples in this regard, but let us take into consideration an old Chinese tale: A king decided to reward a citizen by offering him ownership of all the land he could walk on. The man, overjoyed, immediately began walking swiftly to claim as much land as possible. His only focus was to acquire more.

As he walked, exhaustion began to set in, and he thought about returning to the king to claim the reward he had already earned. But greed overtook him, and despite his fatigue, he pressed on, hoping for even more land.

After several weeks of traveling long distances, the man considered returning, as he was content with what he had already gained. Yet, once again, he hesitated and chose to keep walking to get more land.

He continued on for days and nights, and his body overwhelmed by exhaustion, but he never turned back. Eventually, he lost his way on the rugged paths and is said to have died from sheer exhaustion.

In the end, he had nothing, and the happiness he sought remained out of reach, for he never understood the true meaning of satisfaction or contentment.

After several weeks of walking, the farmer thought about returning to the ruler, but his greed pushed him to continue, as he desired more land.

After covering a long distance, he collapsed from extreme exhaustion and died.

The husband cut down the tree opposite the window, only to discover his wife's betrayal.

He found his wife sleeping in the arms of her lover, and so he left the city.

The Thief Judge and the Cheating Wife

One important lesson to learn is not to be deceived by appearances, as they often conceal many flaws beneath the surface. This is especially true when someone exaggerates their piety, patriotism, or commitment to not harming others, while they secretly harbor bad intentions.

The following story illustrates how a husband uncovered his wife's betrayal, despite her outward display of chastity and devotion to God.

The story begins when a husband returns home to find his wife crying. He asked her the reason, and she explained, "The birds on the tree outside our house look at me when I am without my hijab (veil), and this might be a disobedience to God."

The husband, moved by her apparent chastity and piety, kissed her between the eyes and, in an act of devotion, took an axe and chopped down the tree.

A week later, he came home early from work and found his wife sleeping in the arms of her lover.

He did not react immediately. Instead, he quietly took what he needed and left the city. He journeyed to a distant city, where he found a crowd gathered near the king's palace. Curious, he asked what was happening, and they told him, "The king's treasury has been stolen."

As he stood observing, a man walked by on his tiptoes. He asked, "Who is this man?"

They replied, "That is the city judge. He walks on tiptoe to avoid stepping on an ant, out of fear of disobeying God."

The man looked at the judge and declared, "I swear to God, I know who the thief is. Take me to the king."

Once before the king, the man said, "My lord, I have found the thief, and he is the judge of this city. If I am wrong, cut off my head." The judge was brought before the king, and after some questioning, he confessed to the theft.

The king asked the stranger, "How did you know the judge was the thief?"

The man replied, "When caution is exaggerated, and talks of virtue are overstated, it is a clear sign that it is a cover-up of a big crime."

Be the hunter or the prey, but never the dog that brings the prey to the hunter.



The General Traffic Department at the Ministry of Interior should intensify the promotion of traffic laws and warn people of the penalties therein, so that no one can claim ignorance.



Being poor is not shameful, but claiming that money does not bring happiness, while being poor and foolish, is.



Days hurt us, and we say, "Tomorrow will be better." Yet, when tomorrow comes, we realize that yesterday was merciful. This is what the wise say.



Why do we live in a world that believes those who raise sheep and cows are ignorant, while those who raise cats and dogs are considered educated?



Throughout history and all over the world, justice remains the foundation of governance. God wills goodness and success for His servants.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Two-headed snake and the question of governorship

"THE events in recent days have been crowded and intertwined, prompting me to address two significant topics that shape the title of this article. One is regional, the other local. Together, they highlight challenges that demand immediate attention and action," columnist, Constitutional Expert **Dr. Mohammad Al-Moqatei** wrote for *Al-Jarida* daily.

"For decades, our region has endured the onslaught of a malicious, brutal snake with two heads: one Zionist and the other Persian.

"These two entities are alien to the region in their essence and composition, disconnected from the Arab identity that defines the region's cultural and historical fabric.

"Both aim to transform the region's demographics, seize its lands, and alter its identity and population through brutal, inhumane methods that destroy lives, uproot communities, and demolish the natural and cultural environment.

"From its inception in Palestine, the Zionist movement has unleashed savage armed gangs to inflict violence and displacement.

"Since 1948, it has systematically practiced killing, genocide, and the destruction of communities. Year after year, this entity has continued its aggression through key milestones -- 1948: The Nakba and the establishment of the Zionist state; 1956: The Suez Crisis; 1967: The Six-Day War; 1980s: Continued settlements and attacks; 2006: The war in Lebanon and 2023: The brutal war on Gaza.

"Each chapter in this history reflects the Zionist head's ceaseless drive to impose its agenda through barbaric means. However, its vulnerabilities are becoming increasingly evident.

"The Palestinian resistance, particularly in Gaza, has delivered painful blows. The recent 2023 war inflicted a deep wound on the Zionist entity -- its army depleted, its social and political stability shaken, and its reputation tarnished internationally.

"Signs of its decline are clear -- Migration trends: Over 84,000 individuals have reportedly emigrated, with internal displacement exceeding half a million; Legal and economic pressures: The Zionist state faces scrutiny from the International Court of Justice and growing international boycotts and normalization efforts; Regional normalization efforts are waning, and global media outlets increas-

ingly expose its atrocities.

"The Zionist entity's collapse appears closer than ever, with the disintegration of its illegitimate structure seemingly inevitable.

"The Persian head, operating with expansionist ambitions, has infiltrated four Arab capitals -- Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen -- through violence, sectarian incitement, and systematic destruction. This head thrives on ethnic hatred and sectarian mobilization, perpetuating conflict and suffering among innocent civilians.

"Yet, this head too faces mounting resistance. In Syria and Lebanon, it has encountered significant setbacks. Its influence in Iraq and Yemen is crumbling, signaling an imminent defeat. The countdown to the severing of this head has begun, bringing hope for a region free from its divisive grip.

"Amid these external challenges, Kuwait is grappling with critical internal issues, particularly concerning the integrity of its citizenship files. The political leadership, under His Highness the Amir, has taken decisive steps to address cases of forged citizenship.

"The Supreme Committee for Citizenship is actively investigating irregularities, a crucial step in preserving Kuwait's national identity.

"Based on available information from Kuwait Today and other sources, several questions arise regarding the legitimacy of naturalization processes under Articles 4, 5, 7, and 8 of the Kuwaiti Citizenship Law:

"Article 4: Were individuals granted citizenship after meeting the specified conditions, including legal residence and a legitimate income source? Or were these processes conducted arbitrarily?"

"Article 5: Did naturalizations adhere to all legal criteria, such as verifying lineage and ensuring the applicant's contributions to Kuwait? Were these processes conducted in a transparent manner?"

"Article 7: Was citizenship granted to individuals and their dependents according to the stipulated conditions? Or were there cases of simultaneous naturalization for multiple generations without proper documentation?"

"Article 8: Were exceptions applied judiciously, ensuring compliance with legal provisions?"

"The number of naturalization decrees appears alarmingly low compared to the total number of individuals naturalized. Reports indicate a lack of decrees for many cases, suggesting significant irregularities and potential forgery. These discrepancies threaten the integrity of Kuwaiti citizenship and demand thorough examination."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Dr. Al-Moqatei

New center marks major step in Kuwait battle against drugs

'Highest standards'

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: A new addiction treatment center was inaugurated today in the Sabah Specialized Medical Zone, in the presence of the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, and the Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah.

The opening marks a significant milestone in the country's efforts to combat addiction, offering a comprehensive solution to treat and rehabilitate people suffering from addiction and reintegrate them into society as active, contributing members.

During the opening, Dr. Al-Awadhi emphasized that the center, donated by the National Cooperative Societies Committee, adheres to the highest international standards.

It serves as a complete facility providing advanced treatment and rehabilitation services. He reiterated the Ministry of Health's commitment to supporting those affected by addiction and assisting them in their journey to recovery, highlighting the center's role in a broader strategy aimed at improving specialized healthcare and combating drug abuse in Kuwait.

Dr. Al-Huwailah said she is delighted to see the opening of the specialized center, recognizing it as a vital community service for those in need of addiction treatment.

She stressed the center provides a full range of international standard treatments in partnership with the Ministry of Health, including medical, psychological and social care, along with recreational activities. She emphasized the ongoing efforts to address the global issue of addiction.

Dr. Hussein Al-Shatti, Head of the Kuwait Center for Addiction Treatment, described the new cooperative building as a key addition to the facility's resources.

The building spans four floors and has a capacity of 304 beds, complementing the existing center that houses over 200 beds.

Together, the two buildings offer more than 500 beds, with the new facility focusing on patients in advanced rehabilitation stages.

The building is equipped with a gym to encourage physical activity as part of the comprehensive rehabilitation plan, and it follows a "smoke-free" policy to ensure a healthy environment conducive to recovery.

The facility also includes multi-purpose halls for meetings, training programs, and counseling sessions, making it a fully integrated treatment, educational, and professional development center.



SAYING HI 🇰🇼, HELLO 🇰🇼, AND SHARING EMOJIS 😊
on social media is not enough

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MoE tightens medical ad regulations

All health product advertisements now require approval

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi has issued a ministerial decision for introducing new regulations aimed to regulate medical advertisements for pharmaceutical centers, retail outlets, and private-sector sales shops, enhance transparency, protect consumers from misleading advertisements, and ensure adherence to approved health standards.

The decision stipulates that any content promoting health products, whether paid or unpaid, and whether through traditional or digital media, will be considered an advertisement.

The ministry affirmed the importance of obtaining prior approval from the Drug Inspection Department before publishing any advertise-

ments, with a strict ban on publishing without this authorization, either through print, audio, visual media, or social media platforms.

The new rules apply to all advertisements on social media platforms, including official accounts of pharmaceutical centers and sales outlets, as well as influencers' accounts.

The decision requires that each pharmacy or sales outlet create a single official account for each platform. The account must include the name of the center or shop, its address, and its license number.

The decision includes specific prohibitions, including:

- Advertising product prices, offers, or discounts without prior approval from the Drug Inspection Department.
- Promoting any facilities or installment systems without the necessary license.
- The use of misleading terms such as "best," "latest," "fastest," or "the only," or unprofessional titles like "legend" or "celebrity expert."
- Photographing patients or consumers inside pharmaceutical centers for advertising purposes.

The decision provides exemptions for voluntary campaigns, provided that approvals from relevant authorities are obtained. Advertisements from the Ministry of Health or pharmacies affiliated with government agencies are also exempt with the aim of promoting transparency in medical advertising.

The decision also exempts advertisements by government-affiliated pharmacies for ensuring the public receives accurate and scientifically backed information.

The decision establishes a supervisory committee, led by the Assistant Undersecretary for Drug and Food Control Affairs. This committee will oversee license applications and issue or revoke necessary permits for advertisements based on adherence to the new regulations.

Penalties, including administrative and criminal sanctions, will be applied to violators, in accordance with laws regulating the pharmacy profession and drug circulation.

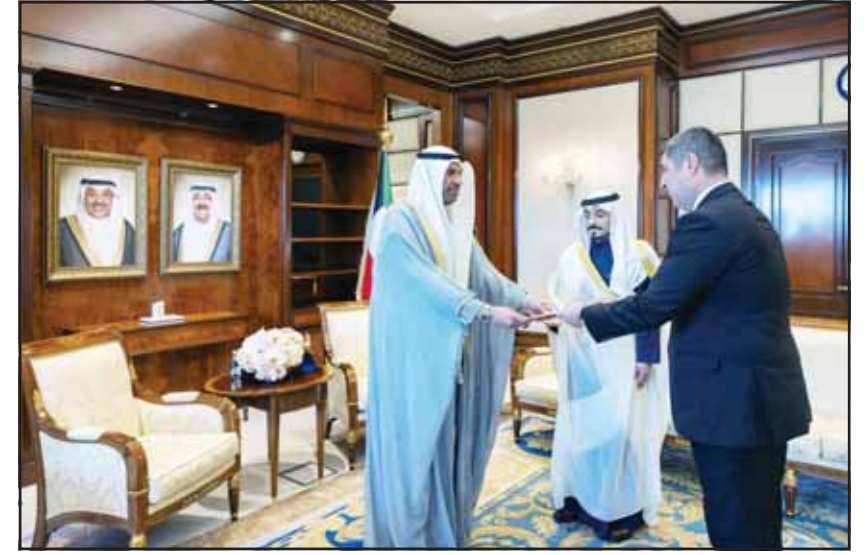
The decision also provides comprehensive definitions of the pharmaceutical centers and shops covered by the regulations.

A pharmaceutical center is defined as a pharmacy, warehouse, drug factory, scientific office, or company headquarters involved in drug and medical product imports.

Sales outlets are entities licensed by the Ministry of Health to display and sell nutritional supplements, health products, or veterinary medicines.



Dr. Al-Awadhi



The Minister of Foreign Affairs receives a copy of the credentials of the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the country.

FM accepts Armenian envoy's credentials

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15, (KUNA): Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received a copy of credentials of Armenian Ambassador to Kuwait Arsen Arakelyan on Monday at

the ministry's headquarters. The Minister wished the new ambassador success in performing his duties, and further progress and prosperity for bilateral relations.

Al-Tabtabaei honored at Int'l Scout Forum

Kuwait reaffirms commitment for global scouting movement

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei reaffirmed Kuwait's dedication to the scouting movement, emphasizing its vital role in promoting values of friendship and tolerance across cultures.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Third International Scout Forum for Youth Empowerment, Minister Al-Tabtabaei highlighted Kuwait's commitment to creating an environment that encourages youth to excel, innovate and contribute to society's development.

Organized by the Kuwait Scout Association in collaboration with the Arab Scout Organization, the forum, held under the slogan "Leadership and Influence," serves as a global platform for youth leaders from 29 countries, bringing together 350 scouts and guides of all ages to exchange experiences and enhance leadership skills.

Minister Al-Tabtabaei underscored the alignment of the forum's goals with Kuwait's development vision, 'New Kuwait 2035', which prioritizes human development and youth empowerment as core drivers of sustainable progress.

He praised the forum's role in fostering cross-generational collaboration and building capacity for creating sustainable communities.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Taraji, President of the Arab Scout Organization and



A scout presents a bouquet of flowers as an expression and appreciation of the minister's interest in the forum.

Chairman of the Kuwait Scout Association, lauded Kuwait's leadership in the scouting movement, noting its unwavering support for humanitarian and voluntary initiatives.

He expressed pride in the nation's contributions to the global scouting community, including hosting significant events and supporting international collaboration.

Dr. Al-Taraji also announced the transfer of the presidency of the World Scout Organization to the UAE at the end of the year, pledging Kuwait's continued support for the scouting movement regardless of its official position.

In recognition of his exceptional support for the scouting movement, Minister Al-Tabtabaei was honored with the 'Arab Scout Sword', the highest medal awarded by the Arab Parliamentary Scout Union.

Ambassador highlights trade and cooperation goals

Kuwaiti envoy presents credentials to Polish Prez



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti Ambassador to Poland Saad Al-Muhaini with Polish President Andrzej Duda.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to Poland Saad Al-Muhaini presented his credentials, Tuesday to Polish President Andrzej Duda during a special ceremony held at the Presidential Palace.

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

During the meeting, Ambassador Al-Muhaini emphasized the strong bilateral relations between the two nations, spanning over 60 years, as well as their cooperation in various domains including cultural, economic, and military.

He also recalled Poland's support as part of the coalition forces during Kuwait's liberation in 1990.

The Ambassador highlighted Kuwait's leadership's interest in further developing relations to benefit both countries by boosting trade, investment, and tourism, as well as strengthening cooperation in food and technology sectors.

He noted the significance of Kuwait's current presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Poland's presidency of the European Union Council until mid-year to serve the interests of both countries and the people of the GCC and EU. Ambassador Al-Muhaini expressed his aspiration to fulfill the leadership's vision of enhancing ties and cooperation for the progress and prosperity of both nations.

JANUARY

Room Promotion

One Night Stay in a Queen Cabana
for 2 persons with inclusive of breakfast
was BHD 76.230

Now **BHD 49.550** Net

One Night Stay in a 2 Bedroom Chalet
for 4 persons inclusive of breakfast
was BHD 170.247 Net

Now **BHD 110.661** Net



KUNA photos
The Third International Scouting Forum organizes an exhibition of local products in the presence of pioneers of the Scouting movement in the participating countries.

MoE sponsors global scouting exhibition

The third international scouting gathering for empowering the youth (command and influence) is continuing with participation of 350 scout members representing 29 States. Under sponsorship of the Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, an exhibition was organized today displaying products, with at-

tendance of scout commanders from the participating countries.

The participants presented products made by their countries, including clothes, food and perfumes.

The scouting event which kicked off on Sunday would conclude on January 17th. (KUNA)

Admissions align with quotas and standards

KU welcomes 29 foreign students

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Dr. Fadhel Abbas Aziz, the Acting Dean of Admissions and Registration at Kuwait University, has announced that 29 male and female foreign high school graduate students have been given admission into the university's colleges, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These admissions fall within the specified categories allocated for non-Kuwaiti students.

Dr. Aziz explained that the selection process was based on the applicants' stated preferences and the quota set for each college as per the University Council's decision.

This process also ensured adherence to the minimum acceptance criteria established for Kuwaiti students.

For the academic year 2024/2025, it was stipulated that non-Kuwaiti students must meet or exceed the lowest secondary school certificate percentage or equivalent average of the Kuwaiti students accepted in the same specialization.

Promo period from 1st January to 31st January 2025

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LOCAL



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt Ghanem Al-Ghanem meets with Arab Parliament Speaker Mohammed Al-Yamahi at the embassy in Cairo.

Kuwait's Ambassador hails Arab Parliament's role in Arab causes

CAIRO, Jan 15, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador in Cairo Ghanem Al-Ghanem has commended the Arab Parliament's role in defending just Arab causes, most notably the Palestinian cause.

Ambassador Al-Ghanem said this during his reception of Arab Parliament Speaker Mohammad Al-Yamahi at the Kuwaiti embassy in Cairo on Tuesday.

The Kuwaiti diplomat also praised the parliament's role in conveying the voice of the Arab people to all regional and international forums.

He admired the Arab Parliament's efforts to stop the war on Gaza and find a just and permanent solution to the Palestinian issue.

Al-Ghanem reiterated the State of Kuwait's support to the Arab Parliament at all levels.

The Arab Parliament plays a crucial role in formulating general policy recommendations on various political, economic, social and cultural issues to

enhance cooperation and integration among Arab countries, he argued.

For his part, Al-Yamahi lauded the great role and sincere efforts made by the State of Kuwait, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to strengthen joint Arab action.

He stressed that the State of Kuwait spares no effort in defending Arab issues in all international forums and at all levels.

Al-Yamahi spoke highly about Kuwait's wise foreign policy particularly in dealing with the regional developments and in cementing joint Gulf action.

He praised Kuwait's generosity and leading role in providing humanitarian and relief aid to countries hit by crises and conflicts.

The two sides agreed the current stage and the challenges and crises facing the Arab nation require intensifying solidarity and cooperation at all levels.

Ambassador applauds Bahrain's women empowerment efforts

Sheikha Jawaher lauds strong Kuwaiti-Bahraini ties

MANAMA, Jan 15, (KUNA): Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikha Jawaher Ibrahim Duaij Al-Sabah praised on Tuesday the depth of Kuwaiti-Bahraini relations and the importance of strengthening them in all fields.

Sheikha Jawaher told KUNA after visiting Bahrain's Women's Police Directorate, during her participation in the Global Women Economic Forum and Exhibition, hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain.

During her meeting with General Director Maj. Gen. Mona Abdurrahim, Sheikha Jawaher was briefed with the experience of Bahraini women in the field of police work, as Bahrain is considered one of the first Arab countries to form women's police.

Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah praised what Bahrain has achieved in the field of women empowerment and achieving gender equality, wishing Bahrain further progress and success in all fields.

The meeting discussed the importance of empowering women and enhancing their presence in decision-making positions, in addition to the importance of exchanging experiences and expertise in various fields between the two countries, and achieving more coordination and cooperation.



KUNA photo
Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights Affairs meets with the Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defense Force.

Platforms to strengthen cultural narratives

Sheikh Mubarak stresses importance of media content to preserve Arab identity

TUNIS, Jan 15, (KUNA): Director General of the Gulf Cooperation Council's Joint Program Production Institution Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed importance of focusing on media content to reinforce Arab identity and protect cultural heritage and ethical values.

Speaking at the 44th General Assembly of the Arab States

Broadcasting Union in Tunis Wednesday, Sheikh Mubarak revealed that the organization's programs will soon be broadcast on Gulf digital platforms in collaboration with Gulf media ministries.

He highlighted the need to adapt to rapidly advancing media technology, particularly multi-platform broadcasting, and to prepare for the future of media through

research and studies.

Moreover, he expressed hope for the eventual broadcast of the organization's programs on Arab digital platforms after their Gulf debut.

Sheikh Mubarak also met with Director General of the Arab States Broadcasting Union Abdul Rahim Suleiman, discussing shared areas of interest.



KUNA photo
Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah - Director General of Gulf Cooperation Council's Joint Program Production Institution.

MoH cites financial and reputational harm

Kuwait ex-officials hit with \$88 mn fine

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: The Civil and Commercial Division of the Court of First Instance has ruled that a former minister, undersecretary and assistant undersecretary must jointly compensate the Ministry of Health with \$88 million for damages related to the "Aetna America" contract, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry of Health had sought a collective compensation of \$88.5

million (or its equivalent in Kuwaiti dinars) from the defendants, citing financial and reputational harm caused to the ministry and public funds.

Additionally, the ministry requested a temporary civil compensation of 5,001 Kuwaiti dinars for undetermined damages, lost opportunities, and an order for the defendants to cover court expenses and attorney fees.

The case centered on an unauthor-

ized 2.5% addition to the agreed-upon commission in the contract signed on January 4, 2015.

This adjustment was made without the knowledge or approval of state regulatory authorities, resulting in financial harm to the Ministry of Health.

The ruling highlights the court's commitment to holding officials accountable for decisions that undermine public funds and breach regulatory compliance.

Kuwait development projects fail to meet spending targets

93 of 133 projects behind schedule

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: A follow-up report on the 2024/2025 annual plan, issued by the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, has highlighted delays in the completion of approximately 93 out of 133 development projects in the first six months of the fiscal year.

The report revealed that the total expenditures for development projects by the end of the second quarter reached just 9.7 percent. This is 1.2 percent lower than the previous year and 3.4 percent lower than the 2022/2023 fiscal year. The total spending on these 133 projects amounted to KD 111.6 million, out of an allocated KD 1.2 billion for the current fiscal year.

Projects in the implementation phase were 50 percent complete, with the projects distributed over nine key programs. Notable among these is the sixth program, which is focused on building cohesive infrastructure with 33 projects, and the second program, which includes two

projects.

The annual plan comprises 122 ongoing projects and 11 new ones, with 49 percent currently in the implementation phase. In addition, 17 projects have yet to commence.

In terms of achievements, the report indicated that 27 of the plan's projects were on track with the established timeline. This performance is slightly improved compared to the 25 percent on-time achievement rate for the same period in 2023/2024, but comparable to the 27 percent rate for 2022/2023.

By the end of the second quarter, 71 percent of projects were behind schedule, a slight improvement over the 72 percent delay rate for the previous year, but higher than the 68 percent reported in the 2022/2023 plan.

Regarding the actual status of construction and development projects, the report showed the following completion rates:

- 20 percent of construction projects in preparatory phase,
- 70 percent in implementation phase,
- 10 percent in the delivery phase.

For development projects, 30 percent are in the preparatory phase and 70 percent are in the implementation phase.

Justice Ministry bans notary services for non-Kuwaiti in debt transactions

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: The Ministry of Justice has issued a new directive to all notaries in the real estate registration and documentation sector, forbidding the issuance of debt, guarantee, or surety statements on behalf of Kuwaiti citizens in favor of any non-Kuwaiti, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This circular, which came into effect on January 12, 2025, aims to regulate and streamline real estate transactions

involving Kuwaiti citizens.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Justice, real estate transactions in Kuwait saw a significant increase in 2024, with a 30 percent rise in the total trading volume.

The total value of real estate transactions reached approximately 3.733 billion dinars, an increase of 1.127 billion dinars compared to the 2.606 billion dinars recorded in 2023.

Additionally, the number of real estate transactions grew by 14 percent, with 4,950 transactions in 2024, compared to 4,241 transactions the previous year.

Real estate sectors experienced varying levels of growth, with some showing increases of up to 90 percent. However, the coastal strip sector witnessed a decline, with a drop in trading volume by 44 percent.

Continued from Page 1

Amir visits

His Highness the Amir's visit to the residency of King Charles III in Dumfries House in Ayrshire, Scotland, reflects a "special and robust bond," which would have positive impacts and strong motives to bolster bilateral ties even further, the ambassador pointed out.

Bilateral relations date back to before signing the Anglo-Kuwaiti Agreement of 1899.

Of the pillars that contribute to promoting the UK-Kuwait ties are shared visits between the two sides, and over 10,000 Kuwaitis studying in the UK, the largest number compared to other countries, the ambassador pointed out, concluding.

Kuwait names

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef informed the ministers, upon instructions by His Highness the Amir, that the naval base located on the North Islet of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Bridge would be named the Coast Guard Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Base.

On another topics, the ministers expressed sincere congratulations to Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said on the fifth anniversary of ascending to the throne, wishing him good health, the Sultanate and the brotherly people of Oman further progress and prosperity.

They extended felicitations to Joseph Aoun on his election as President of the Republic of Lebanon, wishing him success for serving the country's interests and stability.

As the session proceeded, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel, with attendance of the Undersecretary Ziad Al-Najem, presented a visual display of the strategic supplies centers' project, designed to enhance food security at the national level.

The venture, executed in coordination between the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and several public departments, envisages establishing larger storage centers.

Minister Al-Ajeel explained that the project aims at improving ser-

VICES at the supplies delivery centers, indicating that there would be electronic applications for various purposes including delivery of the necessities to houses. The Cabinet asked the ministry to file a report every three months on accomplishments of the venture.

The ministers adopted the minutes of the supreme committee for authenticating the Kuwaiti citizenship with respect of stripping a number of people of the Kuwaiti nationality in line with Law 15/1959.

Kuwait targets

Kuwait joined, on November 15, 2023, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) that involved 140 states and judicial districts. Since then, it has been exerting efforts to tackle international taxing evasion, enforce a more transparent taxation environment; some of the key steps for the reforms in this field.

Alluding further to some of the moves for taxing reforms, the minister cited the enactment of treaties on double taxation, combating financial evasion, working out accords for encouragement and mutual protection of investments, in addition to ratifying some international treaties in the realm of taxation cooperation.

She indicated the entities that are compelled to pay the taxes according to the decree-into-law 157/2024 would not be compelled to pay levies for workers as stipulated in the law 19/2000, neither with respect of the alms proportion stipulated in the law 46/2006 for the period that began on January 1st.

Companies that pay financial contributions to Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research will continue to pay, she said, noting that decree into law 157/2024 mentions no pardon for the companies in this respect.

Asked on the companies and groups exempted from the taxation law of the multi-national entities, the minister said they include some government entities, non-profitable organizations, international agencies, pension and investment funds.

The estimated proceeds from the projected fees on the multi-national entities amount to KD 250 million (USD 810.6 million) per annum. The enforcement and the levying will be effective during the 2027-2028 period.

Preliminary count of the entities subject to this tax stands at 300 groups, including 20 Kuwaiti groups and 25 Gulf groups. The rest are foreign groups that operate in Kuwait -- estimated at 225 groups or entity.

Enforcing the tax is in line with the State of Kuwait vision 2035, aimed at achieving a diversified and sustainable economy. The proceeds will contribute to diversifying the non-oil returns and stem the siphoning of the returns to other states.

Minister Al-Fassam affirmed that enforcing the tax would contribute to boosting Kuwait's role at the level of international cooperation for achieving just taxing practices.

MEW requests

In a separate development, the Undersecretary of the Ministry, Dr. Adel Al-Zamel, has requested assistant undersecretaries to prepare a comprehensive report on each sector.

The report should include key projects, completion rates, maintenance activities, future plans, and notable challenges.

These will be discussed in an upcoming meeting with sector leaders.

PM reaffirms

He added that His Highness the Prime Minister praised the authority, its work mechanisms and the achievements it has made in its realm, calling upon all ministries, public and non-government authorities to cooperate with NAZAHA for the optimum execution of Kuwait strategy for boosting integrity, transparency and combating corruption.

Al-Ibrahim said he along with the staff were pleased with the prime minister's visit, expressing admiration of His Highness for setting an example to follow for everyone to adhere to rules of establishing the authority.



Kuwait Fire Force pose for a group photo during the fire drill at a commercial complex in the Egaila area.

KFF conducts fire drill in Egaila

The Kuwait Fire Force conducted a fire drill at a commercial complex in the Egaila area, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During the exercise, the building was evacuated, injured individuals were rescued and a virtual fire sce-

nario was controlled.

These training exercises are carried out by the KFF to ensure swift response to such incidents, with the aim of protecting lives, property and ensuring community security in the country.

ABK announces Ghadah Abdullah AlBassam as winner of Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) was excited to announce Ghadah Abdullah AlBassam as the winner of the Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw on Monday, 13 January 2025. The draw took place in the presence of a Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative, ensuring transparency.

From the highly coveted mega annual draw of a KD 5,000 monthly salary for 10 years to its KD 10,000 weekly prize, the account has attracted significant attention in the Kuwaiti market. Based on the account's great success, ABK decided to go above and beyond to reward customer loyalty.

With a KD 100,000 quarterly draw, in addition to an exciting KD 20,000 monthly draw, the Alfouz account continues to surpass expectations and deliver even more customer satisfaction.

To top it off, ABK has simplified the ability to open the account and win! Customers can enter the draws and get extra entry chances for every KD 10 deposited. The more you save, the higher your chance to be the next Alfouz winner!

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account or increase their balance to participate in the upcoming draw, which is scheduled to take place on Monday, 20 January 2025.

Open an Alfouz account today and enjoy increased op-



ABK-Al Fouz 2025 weekly winner flyer

portunities to win the lifestyle you've been waiting for! To learn more about the Alfouz account and its range of exciting draws and prizes, please follow ABK's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

California gains two new national monuments after wildfire disruptions

Biden moves to lift state sponsor of terrorism designation for Cuba

WASHINGTON, Jan 15, (AP) — President Joe Biden notified Congress of his intent to lift the U.S. designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism, the White House announced, as part of a deal facilitated by the Catholic Church to free political prisoners on the island.

Senior U.S. administration officials, who previewed the announcement on the condition of anonymity, said “many dozens” of political prisoners and others considered by the U.S. to be unjustly detained would be released by the end of the Biden administration at noon on Jan. 20.

The U.S. would also ease some economic pressure on Cuba, as well as a 2017 memorandum issued by then-President Donald Trump toughening U.S. posture toward Cuba.

“In taking these steps to bolster the ongoing dialogue between the government of Cuba and the Catholic Church, President Biden is also honoring the wisdom and counsel that has been provided to him by many world leaders, especially in Latin America, who have encouraged him to take these actions, on how best to advance the human rights of the Cuban people,” White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

The Cuban foreign ministry on Tuesday said that the government informed Pope Francis it will release 553 people who had been convicted of different crimes. It said that they will be gradually released, as the authorities analyze the legal and humanitarian ways to make it happen.

The foreign ministry didn’t link the release of the prisoners to the US decision of lifting the designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, but “in the spirit of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025 declared by His Holiness.” In a statement, the foreign minister condemned the ongoing U.S. sanctions on the country as “economic warfare” and acknowledged that the Biden decision could well be reversed by Trump.

The Cuban authorities didn’t say who is among the 553 people who will be released.

Ratcliffe tapped to lead CIA

Rubio vows to place US interests ‘above all else’

WASHINGTON, Jan 15, (AP) — Florida Sen. Marco Rubio is promising to implement President-elect Donald Trump’s “America First” vision as secretary of state, vowing in his confirmation hearing Wednesday that the incoming administration will forge a new path by placing American interests “above all else.”

“Placing our core national interests above all else is not isolationism,” Rubio will tell the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, according to an opening statement obtained by The Associated Press. “It is the commonsense realization that a foreign policy centered on our national interest is not some outdated relic.”

“The postwar global order is not just obsolete; it is now a weapon being used against us,” Rubio says.

It’s a remarkable opening salvo from Rubio, who was born in Miami to Cuban immigrants, and who, if confirmed, would become the first Latino ever to serve as the nation’s top diplomat.

The confirmation hearing begins a new chapter in the political career of the 53-year-old Florida Republican, whose relationship with Trump has evolved over the last decade. Once rivals trading schoolyard insults as they campaigned for president in 2016, the two men became close allies as Trump campaigned for another White House term last year.

Rubio first came to Washington as part of the “tea party” wave in 2010 and once advocated for allowing a path to citizenship for immigrants in the country illegally. But like other Republicans, Rubio’s views on immigration have shifted toward the hardline stance of Trump, who has pledged to aggressively pursue deportations once he takes office on Monday.

Unlike many of Trump’s Cabinet selections, Rubio is expected to easily win confirmation, nothing support not only from Republicans but also Democrats who endorse him as a “responsible” pick to represent the U.S. abroad. Many expect he will be among the first of Trump’s Cabinet picks approved.

Democratic Sen. Brian Schatz, who served alongside Rubio on the Foreign Relations Committee, said he has high hopes that the Florida Republican will reject the isolationist approach of other Trump allies.

“I think Marco is a hawk, but he’s also an internationalist, and I think the challenge for him will be to maintain the long bipartisan tradition of America being indispensable in world affairs,” the Hawaii lawmaker told AP. “And there are people in the Trump world who want us to run away from being the leaders of the free world. And I’m hoping that Marco’s instincts towards American strength will win the day.”

Meanwhile, lawmakers in Capitol Hill on Wednesday will question President-elect Donald Trump’s pick to lead the CIA on his vision for America’s premier spy agency.

John Ratcliffe, who served as director of national intelligence during Trump’s first term, is a former federal prosecutor and conservative member of Congress representing a district in Texas. He was a fierce defender of Trump during his first impeachment proceedings in the House.

His hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee is part of a weeklong marathon as the Republican-led Senate rushes to have some of Trump’s nominees ready to be confirmed by the full Senate as soon as Inauguration Day on Monday.

If approved, Ratcliffe will succeed outgoing CIA Director William Burns.

Trump first tapped Ratcliffe to serve as director of national intelligence in 2019, but he quickly withdrew from consideration after lawmakers raised questions about his qualifications. He was ultimately confirmed by a sharply divided Senate after Trump resubmitted the nomination.

America

US Justice operation removes malware: The US Justice Department and FBI announced a law enforcement operation that alongside international partners, deleted “PlugX” malware from thousands of infected computers worldwide.

As described in court documents unsealed in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, a group of hackers sponsored by the People’s Republic of China (PRC), known to the private sector as “Mustang Panda” and “Twill Typhoon,” used a version of PlugX malware to infect, control, and steal information from victim computers.

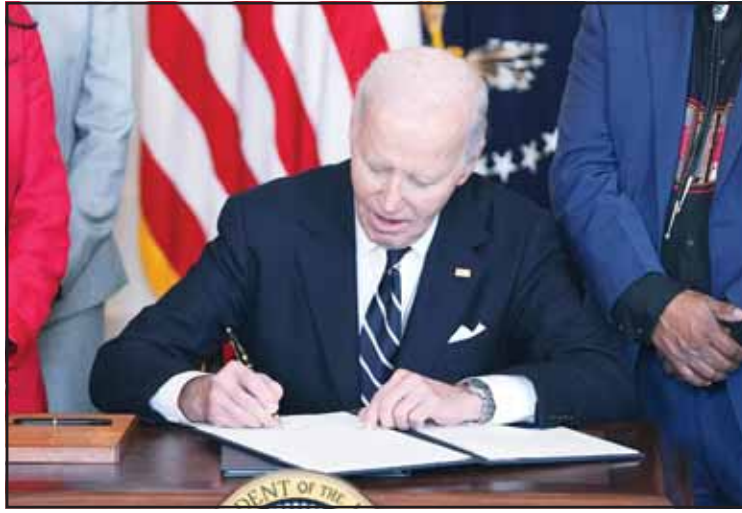
According to court documents, the PRC government paid the Mustang Panda group to, among other computer intrusion services, develop this specific version of PlugX. (KUNA)

AAPI adults prioritize immigration: Immigration is an issue that many Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders want the government to focus on this year, but they are sharply divided on what actions President-elect Donald Trump should take when he returns to the White House, according to a new poll.

The survey released Wednesday from AAPI Data and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that although Trump’s favorability appears to have increased among AAPI adults since before the election, most continue to view him negatively. And there’s little consensus on one of his major immigration proposals: About 4 in 10 AAPI adults support deporting all immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, while a similar share oppose the idea and the rest are neutral. (AP)

Border crossings in Dec trend low: U.S. officials on Tuesday announced the latest border data, and it suggests the Biden administration is poised to end its term without an expected bump in illegal border crossings.

In December, Customs and Border Protection reported 47,300 illegal border crossings — a slight elevation from November, when it reported 46,612, approaching the lowest level since July 2020. The first two weeks of January also indicate activity has dropped, with about 45% fewer crossings than in December, according to senior CBP officials who spoke with reporters during a virtual press conference Tuesday. (AP)



President Joe Biden signs a proclamation to establish the Chuckwalla National Monument and the Sattitla Highlands National Monument during an event in the East Room of the White House, Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

Meanwhile, an announcement postponed by the Los Angeles wildfires, President Joe Biden on Tuesday designated two sites in California as national monuments that will honor Native American tribes while shielding picturesque mountains and deserts from mining and energy development.

Biden made the designations at an event at the White House, a week after — and on the other side of the country from — how he’d originally planned to do so, with a speech in California’s Eastern Coachella Valley.

The president landed in California on Jan. 6, but made it as far as Los Angeles before high winds — that helped spark the Los Angeles blazes — forced officials to scrap the event. It was a stark reminder that, even as Biden uses the last days of his administration to attempt to safeguard the environment, climate change is already helping to exacerbate natural disasters.

Instead, Biden spoke next to screens featuring towering peaks, desert vistas and an array of plant and animal life.

“I was hoping we were going to do this in place,” the president said. “This is as close as we could get.”

Biden formally created the Chuckwalla National Monument, in Southern California near Joshua Tree National Park, and the Sattitla Highlands National Monument, in Northern California.

The declarations bar oil and natural gas drilling, as well as mining and other exploration and production initiatives, on the 624,000-acre (2,400-square-kilometer) Chuckwalla site, and roughly 225,000 acres (800 square kilometers) near the California-Oregon border.

The protected area encompasses natural wonders including the Painted Canyon of Mecca Hills and Alligator Rock, and is home to 50-plus rare species of plants and animals like the desert bighorn sheep and the Chuckwalla lizard — which the monument is named for, the White House said in a statement.

At the event, Biden talked about taking his children to national monuments around the country yearly when they were young to “witness the majesty, the beauty.”

“Our national wonders are the heart and soul of this nation,” he said. “It’s a birthright we pass on from generation to generation.”



Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump’s choice to be defense secretary, appears before the Senate Armed Services Committee for his confirmation hearing, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025. (AP)

Senators grill Trump’s choice for Pentagon chief

Hegseth deflects misconduct claims

WASHINGTON, Jan 15, (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump’s choice for defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, vowed to foster a “warrior culture” at the Pentagon and confronted allegations of sexual assault and excessive drinking and questions about his derisive views of women in combat during a heated Senate confirmation hearing.

Hegseth repeatedly deflected the various misconduct allegations and instead focused on his own military experience in the Army National Guard as senators determine whether the combat veteran and former TV news show host is fit to lead the U.S. military.

“It’s time to give someone with dust on his boots the helm. A change agent,” Hegseth said in his opening remarks.

Asked directly about the sexual assault allegation, Hegseth dismissed it as a “smear campaign,” as he did in response to a rapid-fire series of questions about his personal behavior and complaints of drinking on the job. He has vowed not to drink alcohol if he is confirmed to lead the Pentagon. But pressed about his marital infidelity, Hegseth acknowledged, “I am not a perfect person.”

Senators spent hours probing the concerns surrounding Hegseth, with the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee acknowledging the “unconventional” choice. But Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., compared Hegseth to Trump himself, and said he

will “bring energy and fresh ideas to shake up the bureaucracy.”

The top Democrat, Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, however, called the allegations “extremely alarming” and said flatly: “I do not believe that you are qualified to meet the overwhelming demands of this job.”

Hegseth, 44, comes from a new generation of veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and his military experience is widely viewed as an asset. But he also brings

a jarring record of past actions and statements, including about women, minorities and “woke” generals.

Hegseth also does not have the credentials typical of a defense secretary, raising questions about his ability to manage an organization with nearly 2.1 million service members, about 780,000 civilians and a budget of roughly \$850 billion.

The more than four-hour hearing launched a weeklong marathon as the Republican-led Senate is rushing to have some of Trump’s nominees ready to be confirmed as soon as Inauguration Day, Jan. 20. With a narrow GOP majority, almost all Republicans must support Trump’s pick if Democrats oppose.

Hegseth faces perhaps the most difficult path to confirmation, but GOP allies are determined to turn him into a cause célèbre for Trump’s governing approach amid the nation’s culture wars. Outside groups, including those aligned with the Heritage Foundation, are running costly campaigns to prop up Hegseth’s bid.

In the audience were cadres of men wearing clothing expressing support for veterans or service in the military, but also protesters who momentarily disrupted proceedings but were removed from the room.

Hegseth was combative at times, as he was forced to confront the allegations of misconduct and his own comments that are far from the military mainstream.

Pressed on his opposition to diversity initiatives, Hegseth agreed that the military “was a forerunner in courageous racial integration.” But he argued that modern diversity and inclusion policies “divide” current troops and don’t prioritize “meritocracy.”

In a striking scene, several female Democratic senators grilled Hegseth over his comments that women should “straight up” not be in combat roles, a view he has softened since his nomination.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., noted the switch. “Which is it?”

In one fiery exchange, Sen. Kristen Gillibrand, D-N.Y., told Hegseth: “You will have to change how you see women to do this job.”

PM seeks stability

Bayrou reopens pension debate to ease tensions

PARIS, Jan 15, (AP) — France’s new prime minister François Bayrou announced the renegotiation of a contested plan raising the retirement age from 62 to 64, in a crucial move to seek more stability for his minority government.

In his first address to lawmakers at the National Assembly, Bayrou said: “I’m choosing to put this subject back on the agenda, with the social partners, for a short time and under transparent conditions.”

Bayrou vowed to seek “a new path of reform, without any totems or taboos, not even the retirement age,” as long as the financing for the changes is guaranteed.

President Emmanuel Macron’s plan to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 unleashed months of mass protests from January to June 2023 that damaged his leadership.

Bayrou also outlined other 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. Bayrou on Tuesday said the government was aiming for a deficit of 5.4% this year, with the goal to reduce it to 3% — in line with EU rules — by 2029.

“Major spending cuts will be proposed,” he said, without providing concrete details.

The pension reform, which was enacted into law in April 2023 despite mass protests, has gradually started being implemented.

The Socialists urged Bayrou to announce a “suspension” of the reform with the aim of backtracking on the age of 64 and introducing specific measures for those who have long careers and certain professions considered to be hard work.

Bayrou on Tuesday stopped short of announcing such a move, yet his proposal to renegotiate the measure appears as a hand stretched out towards the left.

The new prime minister wants to secure a nonaggression pact with the Socialists so that they wouldn’t support any future move to topple the new government.

He suggested the age of 64, which was the most criticized change, could possibly be decreased depending on the outcome of the negotiations.

“We cannot deteriorate the financial balance” of the pension system, Bayrou insisted.

On the other side of the political spectrum, the conservatives have warned against any suspension of the pension changes.

“If we were to repeal the pension reform, the cost would be 3.4 billion euros (\$3.47 billion) in 2025 and almost 16 billion (\$16.3 billion) in 2032,” the president of the Senate Gérard Larcher, a conservative, said.

Bayrou said a so-called “conclave” with representatives from workers’ unions and employers’ organizations would be aimed at negotiating for three months with a strict deadline for a potential deal. If they were to agree on pension changes, the proposals would be introduced into law.



Bayrou



A California Department of Corrections hand crew works containment lines ahead of the Palisades Fire Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025 in Santa Monica, Calif. (AP)

Firefighters prep for increasing gusts following ‘brief reprieve’ for LA area

LOS ANGELES, Jan 15, (AP) — Millions of Southern Californians were on edge as a final round of dangerous fire weather was forecast for the region on Wednesday, along with a rare warning of a “Particularly Dangerous Situation” for an area near where two massive blazes have killed at least 25 and destroyed thousands of homes.

Firefighters got a reprieve Tuesday when winds were unexpectedly light and they were able to make progress battling

the two huge Los Angeles area fires and quickly snuff out several new fires.

The Eaton Fire burning just north of Los Angeles and the Palisades Fire that destroyed much of the seaside LA neighborhood of Pacific Palisades broke out Jan. 7 in conditions similar to what’s expected Wednesday. High winds last week pushed flames at remarkable speed and carried fire-sparking embers sometimes miles away.

— See Also Page 11 —

Europe

Zelensky visits Poland: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited Poland on Wednesday after the two countries reached an agreement on a longstanding source of tensions between them: the exhumation of Polish victims of World War II-era massacres by Ukrainian nationalists.

The visit by Zelensky, who arrived in Warsaw on Wednesday morning, came just days after Tusk announced progress on starting exhumations.

Although Poland has been one of Ukraine’s most stalwart supporters since Russia’s full-scale invasion nearly three years ago, the issue of the Polish victims lying in mass graves in Ukrainian soil eight decades after they were brutally killed has left a festering bitterness among many Poles. (AP)

Greek PM proposes next president: Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has proposed the current speaker of parliament to be the country’s next president.

Constantine Tassoulas, a member of Mitsotakis’ center-right New Democracy party, has served as Greece’s parliament speaker since 2019. A lawyer by profession, he previously held positions as culture and sports minister and deputy defense minister. (AP)

Slovak PM Fico to skip Kiev visit: Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico doesn’t plan to visit Kiev to discuss the halt in Russian gas transit through Ukraine, Deputy Speaker of the Slovak National Council Tibor Gaspar said on Tuesday.

Gaspar, who is visiting Moscow with a Slovak parliamentary delegation, told the News Agency of the Slovak Republic that a meeting in the Ukrainian capital will probably not take place due to security concerns for the Slovak prime minister.

Fico proposed on Monday holding talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to discuss gas transit through Ukraine which was halted recently.

In an open letter posted on social media, Fico extended the invitation to Zelensky for a joint meeting on Slovak territory near the border between Slovakia and Ukraine “preferably as soon as possible.” (Xinhua)

INTERNATIONAL

Hundreds more remain underground as handcuffed survivors led away in a line by police

Dozens of survivors and dead pulled from abandoned South African mine

STILFONTEIN, South Africa, Jan 15, (AP): Months after South African authorities initially cut off supplies to miners working illegally in an abandoned gold mine, rescuers brought dozens of bodies and emaciated survivors to the surface Tuesday with hundreds more still believed to be underground, many of them dead and others too weak to come out on their own.

At least 60 bodies and 92 survivors had been pulled from one of South Africa's deepest mines since Monday in a red cagelike structure lowered thousands of feet underground, police said. Police are uncertain how many miners remain inside but said it is likely in the hundreds. Another nine bodies were brought out Friday in a community-led rescue effort, according to a group representing the miners.

Authorities say the surviving miners are able to come out and are refusing because of fear of arrest, but that has been disputed by rights groups and activists, who have fiercely criticized police tactics at the Buffelsfontein Gold Mine, where more than 100 miners are believed to have died of starvation or dehydration.

Residents desperately waiting for news of family members gathered at the mine near the town of Stilfontein, southwest of Johannesburg, some holding placards criticizing authorities for their response. One sign said there had been a "Sacrifice at Stilfontein" while some handcuffed survivors were led away in a line by police.

The mine has been the scene of a tense standoff between police, miners and members of the local community since authorities launched an operation in November to force the miners out by cutting off food and water from the surface for a period of time.

At the time, a Cabinet minister said the aim was to "smoke them out" and the government would not send help because they were "criminals."

Civic groups won a court case to force authorities to allow food, water and medicine to be sent down to the miners. But they say the supplies aren't enough and many of the miners are dying of starvation and unable to climb out because the shaft is too steep and the ropes and pulley system they used to enter have been removed.

The community organized its own rescue operation on Friday before the official effort by authorities began Monday. They say a proper rescue operation should have been launched months ago.

"We are happy that this operation is happening, even though we believe that if it was done earlier, we wouldn't even have one dead person," said Mzukisi Jam, the regional chairperson of the South African National Civics Organization, an umbrella for civic and rights groups.

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 enter them illegally in a search for leftover deposits.

Large groups of 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.

Mineral Resources Minister Gwede Mantashe visited the site Tuesday and said that more than 1,500 miners who resurfaced from the Buffelsfontein mine have been arrested since authorities began a larger crackdown on illegal mining in late 2023. He said the vast majority were foreign nationals from neighboring countries.

Police have also doubled down on their assertion that



Forensic service workers carry remains in blue body bags during a rescue operation to rescue miners from below ground in an abandoned gold mine in Stilfontein, South Africa, Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025. Inset: A miner is assisted by rescue workers after he was rescued from below ground in an abandoned gold mine in Stilfontein, South Africa on Tuesday. (AP)

the miners who are still underground aren't coming out because they are afraid of being arrested.

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, but many are too weak or ill to climb out. The mine is 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) deep with multiple shafts, many levels and a maze of tunnels. The group representing the miners said there are numerous groups in various parts of the mine.

"The last time I spoke to my brother was in July, when he told us that he is going underground," said Zinzi Tom, a sister of one of the miners who remained underground. "We had not heard anything from him, but yesterday one of the miners who surfaced said he saw him about two

weeks ago. Apparently he is very sick and he is struggling to survive."

The Mining Affected Communities United in Action group, which took authorities to court in December to force them to allow supplies to be sent down to the miners, released two cellphone videos that 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."

The rescue operation will go on for 10 days and authorities would then reassess, Police Minister Senzo Mchunu said. Police also said that the survivors who had been brought to the surface will be arrested and charged with illegal mining and trespassing after receiving medical attention.

Authorities have come under scrutiny for their tactics after South African Cabinet Minister Khumbudzo Ntshavheni told reporters in November that the government would not help the miners, who they consider criminals.

"We are not sending help to criminals," she said. "We are going to smoke them out. They will come out." She added: "Criminals are not to be helped. Criminals are to be persecuted."

Japan and Philippines to urge Trump for greater US engagement in Asia

MANILA, Jan 15, (AP): Japan and the Philippines will convey to President-elect Donald Trump the urgent need for the U.S. to remain committed to help uphold the rule of law in an Asian region where security concerns have become "increasingly severe," Japan's top diplomat said Wednesday.

The U.S., Japan and the Philippines have been building an alliance under outgoing President Joe Biden since last year to deal with China's increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed South China Sea and East China Sea. Trump's "America First" foreign policy thrust has triggered concerns about the scale and depth of U.S. commitment to the region under his new term.

"We will approach the next U.S. administration to convey that constructive commitment of the United States in this region is important also for the United States itself," Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya said in a news conference with his Philippine counterpart, Enrique Manalo, in Manila.

Iwaya said he was scheduled to attend Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration as one of Washington's closest treaty allies in Asia along with the Philippines.

"Amid the increasingly severe strategic environment in the region, Japan places importance on our bi-



Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya, left, and Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo shake hands after a joint press conference in Taguig City, Philippines Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2025. (AP)

lateral cooperation as well as on maintaining and strengthening trilateral cooperation between Japan, the Philippines and the United States," Iwaya said.

An alarming spike in confrontations between Chinese and Philippine coast guard and other forces in the busy sea passage has set off fears of a major escalation that could draw in the United States, which has repeatedly warned that it's obligated to help defend Philippine forces if they

come under an armed attack in the South China Sea.

"The issue over the South China Sea is a legitimate concern for the international community because it directly links to the regional peace and stability," Iwaya said. "Japan strongly opposes any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force or build up tension in the region. We strongly ask for easing of tensions."

Jonathan Malaya, assistant direc-

tor-general of the National Security Council in the Philippines, a top government body, said Tuesday that China was "pushing us to the wall" 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), the Philippine coast guard said.

A Chinese official said in Beijing that his country's sovereignty in the South China Sea is well established and its coast guard patrols are lawful and justified.

The Chinese government has repeatedly accused the Philippines and other rival claimant states including Vietnam and Malaysia of encroaching on what it says are "undisputed" Chinese territorial waters.

Manalo told reporters that the Philippines would raise China's latest actions in a meeting on Thursday between Chinese and Philippine diplomats in the Chinese city of Xiamen.

The rival claimants have been holding talks, called the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism, for years to prevent the disputes from worsening into a major armed conflict.

India unveils sub, warships to counter China in Indian Ocean

MUMBAI, Jan 15, (AP): India's navy on Wednesday simultaneously launched a submarine, a destroyer and a frigate built at a state-run shipyard, underscoring the importance of protecting the Indian Ocean region through which 95% of the country's trade moves amid a strong Chinese presence.

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh said that the Atlantic Ocean's importance has shifted to the Indian Ocean region, which is becoming a center of international power rivalry.

"India is giving the biggest importance to making its navy powerful to protect its interests," he said.

"The commissioning of three major naval combatants marks a significant leap forward in realizing India's vision of becoming a global leader in defense manufacturing and maritime security,"

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said while commissioning the vessels at the state-run Mazagon dockyard in Mumbai.

The situation in the Indian Ocean region is challenging with the Chinese navy, India's main rival, growing exponentially, said Rahul Bedi, a defense analyst.

Bedi said that the INS Vagsheer submarine, the sixth among a French license-built Kalvari (Scorpene)-class conventional diesel-electric submarines, is aimed at replacing aging Indian underwater platforms and plugging serious capability gaps in existing ones. India now has a total of 16 submarines.

The P75 Scorpene submarine project represents India's growing expertise in submarine construction in collaboration with the Naval Group of France, Bedi said.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets after the commissioning of INS Surat at a naval dockyard in Mumbai, India, Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2025. (AP)

South Korea's impeached President Yoon detained

SEOUL, Jan 15, (AP): South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol was detained in a massive law enforcement operation at the presidential compound Wednesday, defiantly insisting the anti-corruption agency didn't have the authority to investigate his actions but saying he complied to prevent violence.

In a video message recorded before he was escorted to the headquarters of the anti-corruption agency, Yoon lamented the "rule of law has completely collapsed in this country."

Yoon, the country's first sitting president to be apprehended, had been holed up in the Hannam-dong residence in the capital, Seoul, for weeks while vowing to



A huge screen shows a footage of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol as supporters stage a rally to oppose his impeachment near the presidential residence in Seoul, South Korea, Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2025. (AP)

"fight to the end" the efforts to oust him. He has justified his declaration of martial law Dec. 3 as a legitimate act of governance against an "anti-state" opposition employing its legislative majority to thwart his agenda.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials said Yoon was brought into custody about five hours after investigators arrived at the presidential compound and about three hours after they successfully entered the residence, in their second attempt to detain him over his imposition of martial law.

A series of black SUVs, some equipped with sirens, were seen leaving the presidential compound with police escorts. Yoon was later seen stepping out of a vehicle after arriving at the agency's office in the nearby city of Gwacheon. Following the questioning, Yoon was expected to be sent to a detention center in Uiwang, near Seoul.

Yoon could be held in custody for weeks. The anti-corruption agency, which is leading a joint investigation with the police and the military over whether Yoon's martial law declaration amounted to an attempted rebellion, has 48 hours to request a court order for a formal arrest on a charge of attempting a rebellion, and if it fails to do so, Yoon will be released. If Yoon is formally arrested, investigators can extend his detention to 20 days before transferring the case to public prosecutors for indictment.

The anti-corruption agency told reporters that Yoon, during his first two hours of questioning, exercised his right to remain silent. The detention warrant for Yoon, issued by the Seoul Western District Court, said there were substantial reasons to suspect that he committed crimes as a "ring-leader of a rebellion."

Yoon's presidential powers were suspended when parliament impeached him on Dec. 14. The impeachment case now rests with the Constitutional Court, which could formally remove Yoon from office or reject the case and reinstate him.

In a separate message posted on his Facebook account after his detention, Yoon claimed that "martial law is not a crime," saying his declaration was necessary to raise awareness about an opposition that was exercising "legislative dictatorship by blocking laws and budgets" and "paralyzing" state affairs. He denied the rebellion accusations, describing his impeachment as "fraud."

Lat/Am

Venezuelan opp'n leader in Guatemala: Venezuelan opposition leader Edmundo González landed in Guatemala Tuesday, four days after the inauguration of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to a third term.

Guatemala Foreign Affairs Minister Carlos Ramiro Martínez told The Associated Press that González arrived in Guatemala and Guatemala President Bernardo Arévalo planned to meet with him on Wednesday.

González, who is recognized by several countries as the winner of the presidential election, had promised to return to Venezuela to take office. But last Friday, when Maduro was sworn in, he called it off saying the necessary security conditions weren't there to allow his return. (AP)

Major fire in southern Peru claims 5: At least five people, including three children, lost their lives in a large fire that broke out Monday night in a community in the southern Peruvian region of Arequipa, local authorities said Tuesday.

The fire started around 11:00 p.m. local time Monday (0400 GMT Tuesday) in the Carlos Portocarrero Dongo settlement in Secocha, Camana province. It was brought under control by early Tuesday morning, leaving at least 10 homes damaged and over 100 people homeless.

Jose Barzuetta, head of the Regional Emergency Operations Center of Arequipa, told the private broadcaster Radio Programas del Peru that five fatalities had been confirmed so far. (Xinhua)

Gang battle leaves 5 dead in Mexico: Schools and some businesses were closed and few people walked the streets of this town south of Mexico's capital Tuesday, hours after five people were gunned down on the same street where another attack left eight dead just eight months earlier. Huitzilac is at the center of a restive area in Morelos state with competing criminal organizations and illegal logging. Those killed were apparently campaigning for local positions managing the community's collective resources, like the surrounding forest, ahead of an election scheduled for March. (AP)

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
SAUDI	- TASI	+39.49	12,212.24	JAPAN	- Nikkei	-29.72	38,444.587
PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	+30.79	6,330.46	PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	-553.58	114,324.44
DUBAI	- HDXMI	+5.31	5,250.86				
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+422.84	29,389.93				

Business

During a panel discussion with the youth of the 'TAMAKAN' program

NBK's strategy shapes professional teams for long-term success

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: In its second panel discussion of the season, the TAMAKAN Program, now in its sixth consecutive year, welcomed Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager, Head of Human Resources Group at National Bank of Kuwait (NBK). During the session, he shared his extensive experience and journey of contributing to Kuwait's largest banking institution with the Kuwaiti youth.

The panel discussion saw an enthusiastic exchange, with Mr. Al-Ablani discussing key skills essential for the labor market. He emphasized the importance of continuous education, self-development, effective communication, and contributing positively to the work environment. Al-Ablani also shared valuable insights on how to enhance personal skills and abilities, offering practical advice for successfully entering the labor market and ensuring long-term career growth.

During the panel discussion, Al-Ablani addressed participants' questions, covering a range of topics from personal interviews to career progression, and how to advance to the top of the organizational ladder.

Added Value

At the start of his conversation with the youth of the "TAMAKAN" Program, Al-Ablani emphasized, "Every individual must identify the added value they can bring to the organization they work for. Setting a clear goal and choosing the right job requires thorough research and careful consideration to make the right decision, whether it's regarding the sector you wish to join or the institution that will offer you a promising and sustainable career path."

Al-Ablani further stated, "Your ambitions and passion must align with the strategy of the organization you wish to work with. Building a successful career requires driven young individuals who are consistently motivated and passionate. There are institutions that prioritize a culture of education and development, and this alignment will create added value both for the employee and the organization."

The private sector offers abundant opportunities

Al-Ablani emphasized that the private sector is brimming with job opportunities for ambitious Kuwaiti youth. He encouraged recent graduates to pursue careers in this sector,

Al-Ablani:

- Aligning personal ambitions and passions with an organization's strategy is key to career success
- Honesty is essential: Avoid misleading job interviews or false information on your resume
- The private sector offers abundant opportunities for ambitious Kuwaiti youth
- Recognizing employees' contributions and efforts is a core value of NBK's work environment
- Teamwork is a fundamental pillar for the success of large organizations
- We are committed to developing professional, dynamic talent at all organizational levels
- NBK fosters an open-door policy that encourages dialogue and the exchange of ideas

noting its flexibility and dynamism. The private sector, he explained, offers ample space for innovation, development, and creativity, while also providing a conducive environment for continuous training and professional growth. This enables employees to build a solid foundation, equipped with the skills and expertise necessary to tackle the challenges of an ever-evolving labor market.

He highlighted that NBK's most defining feature is its deep appreciation for the dedication and efforts of its employees, regardless of gender. He emphasized that the bank's work environment is built on the principles of diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities. Furthermore, he noted that advancing within a prestigious institution like NBK demands three essential qualities: passion, determination, and patience.

Job Interviews

Addressing the topic of job interviews, Al-Ablani emphasized the importance of starting with a well-organized resume containing accurate and truthful information. He cautioned against including false details or overstating one's abilities, as misrepresentation can undermine credibility and trust during the hiring process.

Al-Ablani advised the youth of the "TAMAKAN" program, stating: "When attending a job interview, preparation is key. Speak openly and transparently about your skills and experience, and don't hesitate to ask questions about the organization, the specifics of the role, and potential future challenges. This approach demonstrates your genuine interest and enthusiasm for the position."

"We continuously seek young individuals who exhibit passion

and a strong willingness to learn and grow. This is assessed through thoughtful questions that evaluate their responses, reactions, and adaptability," he added, emphasizing that honest and transparent answers are key to earning the trust of the interviewer.

He stated: "Even if you lack extensive experience, avoid embellishing or providing inaccurate information, as this can have negative consequences. Instead, focus on demonstrating enthusiasm, genuine interest, adaptability, and a willingness to learn quickly."

Al-Ablani encouraged young individuals to showcase their personal skills during interviews and engage actively with the interviewer instead of giving brief answers. He also emphasized the importance of asking questions to make the conversation more dynamic, explaining that the primary purpose of an interview is to uncover personal qualities rather than delve into complex topics, particularly as most job applicants are recent graduates.

Al-Ablani emphasized that NBK views attracting, retaining, and developing top talent as a cornerstone for achieving its long-term ambitions. To this end, the Human Resources Department focuses on building professional and dynamic teams across all levels, supporting employees from their initial entry into the organization to their advancement into senior leadership roles. Additionally, NBK is committed to fostering a work environment that ensures employees' well-being and professional growth.

Al-Ablani highlighted that NBK is dedicated to cultivating a flexible and dynamic workforce through a strategy grounded in four core pillars: aligning the right competencies



Photos during the 'TAMAKAN' Program.

with the right roles at the right time, preparing future leaders by fostering individuals who inspire and empower innovation, attracting top talent through robust recruitment, retention, and development initiatives, and establishing a sustainable performance-driven culture that prioritizes diversity, inclusion, clear results management, and employee well-being.

Teamwork

Al-Ablani emphasized the critical role of teamwork for any organization, stating: "Teamwork is a cornerstone of success for major institutions, a defining feature of the work environment at a distinguished organization like NBK. The unique characteristics and capabilities of each individual bring diverse perspectives, enabling better and more comprehensive decision-making. This integration among team members ensures that success

becomes a natural outcome of their collaboration."

He emphasized the importance of patience and dedication in achieving career growth, encouraging individuals to continuously ask questions and learn from the experiences of their team members.

In the meantime, Al-Ablani cautioned against making hasty decisions, such as switching departments or jobs in response to criticism or negative evaluations. He emphasized the importance of addressing such feedback constructively, engaging with managers to identify areas for improvement, and focusing on developing the necessary skills to prevent similar evaluations in the future.

He highlighted that NBK fosters an open-door policy, actively encouraging discussion, idea-sharing, and diverse perspectives. Additionally, the bank provides various communication channels that enable employees

to voice their opinions, share suggestions, and gauge their satisfaction with the work environment.

Workforce Development

On the bank's commitment to employee development, Al-Ablani stated: "We strongly believe in the value of investing in human capital. Therefore, we focus on enhancing workforce capabilities by designing and delivering tailored training initiatives, workshops, and educational programs that elevate skills and competencies. Each employee receives targeted training aligned with their career stage, starting from the moment they join the bank."

"All training programs offered by the bank are meticulously crafted by specialized experts to cater to all job levels," he added, emphasizing that the "TAMAKAN" Program presents an outstanding opportunity to develop essential skills for entering the labor market in general, not just for working at NBK.

Al-Ablani emphasized that NBK's comprehensive strategy in training and development, coupled with its work environment that fosters creativity and innovation, contributes to the qualification of distinguished leaders. He highlighted that NBK's training programs are continuous and inclusive, covering all stages of an employee's career journey. From onboarding new hires to preparing leaders, every employee undergoes tailored training programs. As employees progress to higher roles, they receive specialized training designed to equip them with the necessary skills for their new responsibilities, ultimately preparing them for senior leadership positions.

At the conclusion of the panel discussion, Al-Ablani shared valuable advice with the youth, offering a roadmap to building a successful career through dedication and thoughtful application. His key recommendations included:

- Strive to acquire new skills daily.
- Strengthen your abilities by participating in training programs and courses.
- Embrace lessons from negative experiences and draw insights from those around you.
- Engage in discussions with your managers to identify areas for improvement and address feedback constructively.
- Practice patience and avoid altering your career path due to temporary setbacks.

Boursa Kuwait general index plunges 0.12 pct

Main Market Index drops 0.94%

By Mahmoud Shendi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Boursa Kuwait ended Wednesday's trading session with its general index slipping 9.23 points (0.12%) to close at 7,521.29.

A total of 473.7 million shares changed hands through 23,093 transactions, valued at KD 107.9 million (approximately \$332.3 million).

The Main Market Index dropped 66.92 points (0.94%) to 7,049.24, with 293.3 million shares traded via 13,152 transactions, worth KD 51.5 million (about \$157 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index edged up by 5.62 points (0.07%) to 8,009.66, with 180.3 million shares traded across 9,941 transactions, totaling KD 56.3 million (around \$173.4 million).

The Major 50 Index declined by 68.12 points (0.96%) to settle at 7,048.35, as 204.8 million shares were exchanged through 8,768 transactions, amounting to KD 41.17 million (approximately \$125.5 million).

On Tuesday, the general index increased by 46.8 points (0.6 percent), closing at 7,530 points.

The session saw significant trading activity, with 323.4 million shares exchanged through 18,136 transactions, amounting to a total value of 77.7 million dinars (\$239 million).

Investor optimism regarding companies' annual financial results for 2023 contributed to a market value increase, reaching 44.569 billion dinars, up from 44.292 billion dinars in the previous session, marking gains of 277 million dinars.

The following is the overview of performance across market indices

The Main Market Index rose by 42.1 points (0.6 percent) to close at 7,116 points, with 202.7 million shares traded across 10,107 transactions, totaling 36.2 million dinars (\$111.4 million).

The Premier Market Index gained 50.3 points (0.6 percent), ending at 8,004 points. Trading included 120.6

million shares through 8,029 transactions, valued at 41.5 million dinars (\$127.8 million).

The Main 50 Index increased by 14 points (0.2 percent) to reach 7,116 points, with 138.2 million shares traded in 6,108 transactions, worth 28.7 million dinars (\$88.3 million).

Six sectors recorded gains, led by the healthcare sector with a remarkable 14.48 percent increase, while six sectors declined, led by insurance, which dropped by 1.71 percent. The benefits sector remained stable.

Among individual stocks Meydan recorded the largest gain, surging by 20.89 percent; the National Industries led the losers, falling by 6.79 percent and the prices of 63 stocks rose, 49 declined and 14 remained unchanged.

In a major announcement, Gulf Bank and Boubyan Bank disclosed their decision to abandon the previously announced merger project.

The two banks stated that they have terminated the agreements and will take necessary measures to safeguard the interests of all parties while maintaining positive relations.

The decision follows the recent announcement by Warba Bank of its agreement to purchase 32.75 percent of Gulf Bank's capital from Alghanim Commercial Company.

The Gulf Bank emphasized its commitment to its strategic objectives, including the provision of innovative financial services and the continued evaluation of its transformation into an Islamic Sharia-compliant bank. The bank aims to ensure sustainable growth and maximize shareholder value.

The Gulf Bank announced the resignation of Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi from his position as Chairman and Board Member for personal reasons.

In a disclosure to the Kuwait Stock Exchange, the Board of Directors approved the resignation, effective from the end of January 14. The Board expressed gratitude to Al-Kharafi for his dedication and contributions during his tenure.

This development coincides with Gulf Bank's and Boubyan Bank's decision to terminate their merger project, signaling a phase of strategic reevaluation for Gulf Bank as it focuses on achieving sustainable growth.

Tourism, projects to boost Kuwait's Q4

Kuwait's Q3 GDP shrinks 3.9% amid oil and non-oil declines

By National Bank of Kuwait

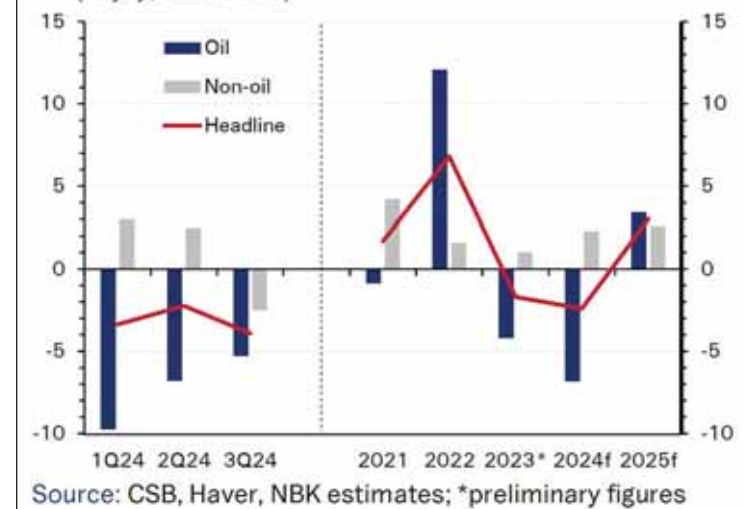
Preliminary Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) estimates show non-oil GDP in Q3 2024 declined by 2.5% y/y after a solid H1 and driven by contractions in manufacturing and public administration & defense output. Oil GDP also fell, by 5.3%, constrained by OPEC-linked production cuts that were extended through the second half of the year. As a result of the above sector moves, total GDP fell 3.9% in Q3. The near-term outlook is more constructive, with crude output cuts set to be unwound in 2025, interest rates on a downward trajectory, project awards rising strongly of late and the government expected to accelerate implementation of its economic development plan.

Non-oil sector contracts in Q3; better prospects for Q4 2024 and 2025

The decline in non-oil GDP in Q3 represented a weakening versus the downwardly revised 2.5% y/y recorded in Q2 (previously 4.2%). (Chart 1.) The year-over-year contraction in non-oil activity was broad-based, with growth negative in most non-oil subcomponents and particularly steep in the manufacturing sector (-10.8% y/y), despite output gains in refined petroleum products from the Al-Zour refinery, according to official data submitted to the Joint Organizations Data Initiative. Meanwhile, the contraction in activity in other large economic sectors, including public administration & defense (-2.5% y/y), financial intermediation (-2.5%), and wholesale and retail trade (-3.3%) was less acute though still notable. Output gains in the hotels & restaurants (5%) and education (3.1%) segments as well as in the transport sector (2.2%) helped mitigate some of the contraction.

Looking forward, the non-oil economy should benefit in Q4 2024 from an influx of tourists linked to Kuwait's hosting of the Arabian Gulf Cup football tournament. Moreover, average non-oil private sector output for Q4, using the Purchasing Managers' Index survey readings, pointed to the strongest quarter of expansion

Chart 1: Real GDP growth (% y/y; 2010=100)



Source: CSB, Haver, NBK estimates; *preliminary figures

(57.4) in the history of the series. For 2025, the growth outlook remains broadly constructive given the expected, albeit modest recovery in consumer spending, recent improvements in credit growth and project awards, which hit a near 8-year high in Q4, potentially lower interest rates and a possible rise in public investment as the government advances the Vision 2035 economic agenda. We see non-oil GDP growth at around 2.6% this year, up from an estimated 2.0% in 2024.

Oil sector fortunes remain linked to OPEC policy as output in Q3 declines for sixth quarter in a row

The contraction in oil sector GDP continued for a sixth consecutive quarter in Q3 2024, albeit less negative than Q2's (-6.8% y/y), and output did improve on a quarter-on-quarter basis (1.0%). Since the start of 2024, Kuwait has kept its monthly crude production steady at 2.41 mb/d in accordance with its OPEC+ quota and voluntary production cut obligations, which in 2024 called for a further reduction of 135 kb/d at the outset. These cuts were scheduled to be unwound in H2 2024 but due to weaker-than-expected market fundamentals and prices were extended three times. On the basis of the De-

cember 2024 OPEC+ meeting, Kuwait's crude production will only start rising in April 2025, at the rate of 7 kb/d per month until all 135 kb/d is restored and production reaches 2,548 mb/d by September 2026. On this schedule, which assumes no further extension of output cuts, oil GDP growth will turn positive in Q2 2025.

Data revisions show economy escaped recession in 2022-23

The latest release was once again accompanied by significant revisions to the historical series across several non-oil components, but especially public administration & defense, manufacturing and 'taxes less subsidies'.

As a result, Kuwait's non-oil economy looks to have escaped recession in 2022 and 2023 amid significant upgrades to public administration and defense, electricity, gas & water, and construction.

In 2022 and 2023, non-oil GDP growth was revised up to 1.6% (from -0.1% previously) and 1% (from -2.9%), respectively. In 2021, though, growth was downgraded to 4.2% from 5.4% previously. Similarly, the latest figures for Q3 2024 are preliminary and subject to revisions in future releases.

Kuwaiti oil price drops to \$82.25 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by six cents to USD 82.25 per barrel (pb) on Tuesday, compared with USD 82.31 pb the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) on Wednesday. At the global level, the Brent crude went down by USD 1.09 to USD 79.92 pb, and the West Texas Intermediate also fell by USD 1.32 to USD 77.50 pb.

Company participated in the second INJAZ Internship Fair

Zain offered training opportunities for youth at its Wonderful World

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Part of its longstanding strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, Zain participated in the second edition of the INJAZ Internship Fair, recently held at Boulevard Hall. During the event, Zain offered students hands-on internship opportunities within the company, enabling them to gain practical experience in the private sector and develop both personal and professional skills in preparation for their future careers.

Zain joined the event's opening ceremony, attended by INJAZ Kuwait's CEO, Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi, members of the INJAZ Kuwait Board of Directors, Zain's team, representatives from participating organizations, and a large gathering of students from various public and private schools.

This collaboration is a continuation of Zain's strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, which spans over 20 years since the organization's establishment in 2005. Throughout this period, Zain has supported a wide array of academic and training initiatives led by INJAZ, aimed at nurturing the talents and creativity of Kuwaiti youth, empowering them to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations, and equipping them with the skills



Laila Al-Mutairi with INJAZ Board members and Zain's team at the company's booth.

necessary for success in the work-force and job market.

During the event, Zain highlighted its internship opportunities available

under the company's FUN program. This flagship sustainable initiative, launched in 2008, has provided hundreds of students with real-world

work experience at Zain through a part-time structure, complemented by a monthly incentive. Participants gain valuable personal and profes-



Zain introduced internship opportunities as part of its FUN program.

sional insights, preparing them for their future careers.

Through its strategic partnership with INJAZ, Zain aims to inspire and support ambitious youth in developing their ideas and projects to global standards. This is achieved through various training programs conducted throughout the year, including the annual Company Program competition. Zain remains committed to fostering an environment that nurtures the talents of Kuwait's youth.

INJAZ Kuwait is a non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to preparing Kuwaiti youth for success in the global economy. It achieves this through specialized training programs focusing on business management, entrepreneurship, employability, and financial literacy. As a member of Junior Achievement Worldwide, INJAZ Kuwait has trained over 100,000 students from more than 200 schools and universities in the public and private sectors, with the support of over 7,000 volunteers.

Kuwaiti non-oil exports total 20.7m dinars in Nov; data reflects fluctuations across different regions

Certificates of origin issued to Arab countries in November numbered 265

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry revealed that Kuwait's non-oil exports for November 2024 reached a total value of 20.7 million Kuwaiti dinars (approximately \$67 million). This figure shows a slight decrease from the 21.1 million

dinars (around \$68.4 million) recorded in October, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the Ministry's International Organizations Affairs and Foreign Trade Sector provided a detailed breakdown of the export activities:

The total number of certificates of origin issued for exports to GCC countries are

1,785, representing an export value of 11.4 million dinars (\$36.9 million).

Slightly

This is slightly lower than October's figures, which saw 1,823 certificates issued for exports valued at 11.9 million dinars (\$38.5 million).

Certificates of origin issued to Arab countries in November numbered 265 across 10 countries, with exports valued at 8.9 million dinars (\$28.8 million).

This marks an increase in value compared

to October's 8.3 million dinars (\$26.9 million), despite the higher number of 322 certificates issued in the previous month.

Kuwaiti exports to Europe saw a notable decline in November, with only three certificates issued to three countries, worth 47,800 dinars (\$154,800). In contrast, October recorded seven certificates to five countries, with exports valued at 616,000 dinars (\$1.9 million).

Exports to African countries were minimal in November, with a single certificate issued for one country at a value of 16,000 dinars

(\$52,000). This is down from October's two certificates issued for two countries, totaling 29,700 dinars (\$96,000).

The data reflects fluctuations in Kuwait's non-oil export activities across different regions. Exports to GCC and Arab countries remain the most significant contributors, while exports to Europe and Africa experienced notable declines. These figures underline the importance of diversifying export markets and maintaining steady trade partnerships globally.

A busy year ahead

Sustainable sukuk issuance reaches \$11.9 billion

This is the concluding part of the story

To ensure that investors are exposed to the creditworthiness of the sponsor and not the value of shares, we understand that the sponsors have typically undertaken to make up any shortfall in the amount owed to investors (principal and periodic distributions) and the amount derived from the hedging mechanism. While this shortfall obligation exposes investors to the credit risk of the sponsor, the additional costs incurred by the sponsor to put in place the hedging mechanism may render sukuk more expensive than conventional bonds.

In light of this, we believe there is a heightened risk that an issuer might ignore its contractual obligations to put in place and annually renew the hedging mechanism and dissolve the transaction. However, the risk remains that the Sharia scholars (internal or external to the transaction) may question the Sharia compliance of this strategy, potentially leading to uncertainty over how the transaction could unwind and thereby increase uncertainty for investors.

Therefore, we consider that these structures contain additional risk compared with traditional sukuk and conventional financial obligations.

Sustainable Sukuk Remain On The Backburner

The total volume of sustainable sukuk issuance amounted to \$11.9 billion in 2024, compared with \$11.4 billion in 2023, and accounted for about 25%-30% of sustainable issuance in the Middle East in 2024. We expect the issuance volume of sustainable sukuk to hover at approximately \$10 billion to \$12 billion in 2025, in the absence of any major acceleration in the implementation of net zero policies by core Islamic finance countries or regulatory action. We expect demand for sustainable sukuk will continue to grow, further supported by the introduction of the International Capital Market Association's Islamic finance guidelines in April 2024 and other regulatory initiatives.

Saudi Arabian issuers contributed the highest share of total sustainable sukuk issuance, at 38% in 2024, underpinned primarily by Saudi bank issuance. Indonesia was the second-largest market thanks to sovereign issuance. While the volume

of sustainable sukuk issuance in the UAE fell by 60% compared with the 2023 figure, which was boosted by COP28-related activity, the country still contributed 15% of the overall issuance volume. We expect to see an acceleration of issuance if and when there is an acceleration in the climate transition of GCC issuers and renewable energy targets, as well as regulators offering incentives to take the sustainable issuance route.

Most of this category of issuance in 2024 was in the form of sustainability sukuk, which focuses on raising funds for projects with both environmental and social benefits. This is because the financial institutions were the leading sustainable issuers in 2024, whereas green instruments comprised the majority of issuance in 2023 and social sukuk volume remained marginal.

A Busy Year Ahead

With a forecast of \$190 billion to \$200 billion in issuance, our expectation is that foreign currency-denominated issuance will remain elevated in 2025, and the AAOIFI's continued consultation on its draft of Standard 62, 2025 is looking like another busy year for the sukuk market.

Kuwait participates in Gulf cybersecurity forum in Doha

DOHA, Jan 15, (KUNA): Kuwait is taking part in the first Gulf cybersecurity forum launched on Wednesday in Qatar capital of Doha, under the slogan "Building Capacities and Competencies in Educational Cybersecurity."

Qatari Education Ministry Undersecretary, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naemi, described the forum as an opportunity or experts in the field from gulf states to discuss latest developments, avenues of cooperation as well as regional and international partnerships.

He stated that in light of the rapid growth and development, cybersecurity became a joint responsibility requiring cooperation to protect data.

Al-Naemi spoke of the role of AI in cybersecurity saying it helps in predicting threats, analyzing patterns and countering attacks in record time, but misuse could also form a dangerous threat.

The Ministry official called education a cornerstone to facing such challenges, as it is integral to initiating a promising qualified generation for the safe use of technology and the development of innovative solutions.

As for Gulf Cooperation Council secretariat representative, Maher Al-Saleh, he mentioned that holding such events reflects the growing interest in

promoting cyberspace.

He pointed to the establishment of ministerial cybersecurity committee in 2022, and the launch of the 2024-2028 strategy, saying that it aims to protect from cyber threats and enhance infrastructure, as well as raise awareness and encourage innovation in this vital field.

Forum Director General, Dr. Mona Al-Fadhli, she remarked that current day digitization calls for boosting cybersecurity to ensure sustainability and data protection especially at a time of rapidly increasing digital challenges.

She clarified that the forum aims to encourage exchange of expertise, explore latest technologies and solutions as well as add to the skillsets of university and educational institution faculties.

The Doha-hosted event aims to facilitate the exchange of expertise among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in the field of cybersecurity and raise awareness about cybersecurity issues.

The forum seeks to increase awareness among university and higher education institution affiliates and equip technical staff in these institutions with practical skills related to cybersecurity.

Riyadh hosts Future Minerals Forum

Saudi Arabia signs deals with six countries on mineral development

RIYADH, Jan 15, (Xinhua): The Saudi Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resource signed on Tuesday cooperation agreements with six countries on mineral development.

The Saudi ministry, and representatives from Djibouti, Jordan, Britain, Zambia, Austria, and France signed the agreements on the sidelines of the Future Minerals Forum held in Riyadh, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Saudi Arabia and Djibouti signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on mineral resources, paving the way for enhanced efforts to explore mining opportunities between the two nations.

The kingdom has also signed agreements with Jordan, Britain, and Zambia to collaborate on mineral resource development, focusing on sustainable practices, technology transfer, and economic growth.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia established a MoU with Austria and a declaration of intent with France, further broadening its global network of partnerships.

The Future Minerals Forum kicked off on Tuesday and was attended by representatives from over 90 countries, 50 international governmental and non-governmental organizations, commodity trade associations, and leading figures in the global mining industry.

Italy, Albania and UAE ink clean energy cooperation deal

ROME, Jan 15, (AP): Italy, Albania and the United Arab Emirates signed a three-way clean energy cooperation deal Wednesday that calls for the Gulf country's expertise to be put to use in Albania to produce solar, wind and other renewable energy, some of which would then be transferred to Italy via an underwater cable.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni traveled to Abu Dhabi to announce the deal, which further cements Italy's partnership with Albania beyond the migration deal that saw Italy build two migrant detention centers in the Balkan country to process the asylum requests of some migrants.

Albanian Premier Edi Rama valued the energy deal at around 1 billion euros.

Meloni said the three-way arrangement would help Italy meet its long-term electricity needs while honoring its sustainable energy commitments made at U.N. climate conferences. She praised it as pragmatic way to transition away from fossil fuels at a time when energy needs are soaring due to the demand from AI-generated technologies.

"The future of energy transition and digitization will thus depend on our ability to strike a balance between sustainability and innovation," she said, adding that nuclear fusion could be another way to produce clean and safe energy. She acknowledged the unusual nature of the three-way deal, noting the "seemingly distant partners, at least geographi-

cally speaking."

The UAE, a major oil-producing nation, has pledged to be carbon-neutral by 2050 and hosted the COP28 climate summit last year.

Sultan al-Jaber, the UAE's minister of industry and technology, said the deal would help meet the goal of tripling renewable energy.

Al-Jaber, the chairman of Masdar and CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., a state-owned firm producing millions of barrels of crude oil daily, was president of the COP summit. It for the first time mentioned fossil fuels - coal, oil and natural gas - as the cause of climate change and said the world needs to be "transitioning away" from them.

LONDON, Jan 15, (KUNA): The UK will benefit from boosts to trade and further cooperation on tackling illegal migration as Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani visits Downing Street Tuesday for talks with the British Prime Minister.

A statement by the British Premier office said, "as part of the closer economic relationship being forged today, the Prime Minister and his counterpart announced and up to pound 12.3 billion export package, worth around ten times last year's trade between the UK and Iraq."

"This package is underpinned by a series of export agreements, which will boost the growing trading relationship between the UK and Iraq, representing significant opportunities for UK businesses and contributing to the government's mission to deliver economic growth," the statement said.

"The leaders discussed a new specific migrant returns agreement between the UK and Iraq."

Once in place, the deal will ensure those who have no right to be in the UK can be returned swiftly," the statement added.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said, "today marks a new era in UK-Iraq cooperation, which will deliver mutual benefits from trade to defence, as we

continue to work together towards stability in the wider region.

It's clear that Iraq shares our priority of delivering economic growth and the pound 12.3 billion export package being unveiled today offers huge opportunities for British businesses, representing a step-change in the trade and investment relationship between our two countries.

Secure borders are a vital foundation of our Plan for Change, so I am also very pleased get started on talks for a bespoke returns agreement between our countries.

The deal will help dismantle the people smugglers' business model by sending the clear message that if you come here illegally, you cannot expect to stay."

The leaders signed a milestone Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, leveraging UK private sector expertise on water, energy, telecoms, and defence infrastructure to secure future investment projects and major opportunities for British business the leaders will also mark the export of pound 66.5 million worth of equipment from the UK to strengthen Iraq's borders and disrupt smuggling gangs, delivering on the government's Plan for Change by securing our border and delivering economic growth.

Advancing strategic plans to strengthen operational performance and elevate customer experience

Gulf Bank appoints Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar as new chairman

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Gulf Bank's Board of Directors convened yesterday (Tuesday) and unanimously approved the reformation of the Board. Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar has been appointed Chairman of the Board, with Mr. Ali Morad Yousuf Behbehani serving as Vice Chairman. The Board also includes Mr. Omar Hamad Yousuf Al-Essa Al-Qanai, Dr. Fawaz Mohammad Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Mr. Abdullah Sayer Bader Al-Sayer, Mr. Barrak Abdulmohsen Ahmad Al-Asfour, Mr. Abdullateef Abdulazeez Abdullateef Al-Sharikh, Dr. Abdulrahman Mohammad Al-Taweel, Mr. Talal Ali Nasser Al-Sayegh, and Mrs. Reem Abdullah Eissa Al-Saleh.

The Board of Directors expressed its gratitude to

the former Chairman, Mr. Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, for his dedication and efforts during his tenure as Chairman and member of the Board. The Board reaffirmed its commitment to continuing the implementation of the Bank's strategic plans aimed at enhancing financial and operational performance while delivering the highest standards of services and products to all customers.

Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar joined Gulf Bank's Board of Directors as an Independent Member in November 2020. Prior to his appointment as Chairman of the Board, he served as the Chairman of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee.

Mr. Al-Bahar brings extensive experience to his new role, having held several senior leadership posi-

tions in well-known organizations. His previous roles include CEO of Gulf Custody Company (Kuwait) and Chairman of Gulf Custody Company (Bahrain & Oman). He has also served as Partner-in-Charge of the Settlement Group at The International Investor, Senior Manager of the Settlement Department at Kuwait Foreign Trading Contracting and Investment Company (KFTCIC), and Manager of the Consumer Loans Department at Arab European Financial Management (AREF). Additionally, he was Chairman of Bahrain Real Estate Company and a Board Member of National Cleaning Company.

Mr. Al-Bahar holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Finance from Southern Oregon State University, USA.



Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar

US inflation likely increased in Dec, raising Fed concerns

Higher gas prices push inflation up

WASHINGTON, Jan 15, (AP): U.S. inflation probably worsened last month on the back of higher prices for gas, eggs, and used cars, a trend that could lessen the chance that the Federal Reserve will cut its key interest rate much this year.

On Wednesday the Labor Department is expected to report that in December the consumer price index rose 2.8% from a year ago, according to economists surveyed by FactSet, up from a 2.7% yearly increase in November. It would be the third straight rise, after inflation fell to a 3 1/2 year low of 2.4% in September.

The uptick could fuel ongoing concerns among many economists and in financial markets that inflation has become stuck above the Fed's 2% target. Such concerns have sent interest rates on Treasury securities higher, which has also pushed up borrowing costs for mortgages, cars, and credit cards, even as the Fed has cut its key rate.

Last Friday's unexpectedly strong jobs report caused stock and bond prices to plunge on fears that a healthy economy could keep inflation elevated, preventing the Fed from cutting further.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, economists forecast that so-called core inflation remained at 3.3% in December for the fourth month in a row.

On a monthly basis, prices likely rose 0.3% in December for the second month in a row. Price increases at that pace would exceed the Fed's 2% target. Core prices are forecast to have risen 0.2%.

Some of the uptick in prices was likely fueled by one-time factors, such as another jump in the cost of eggs, which has been one of the most volatile food categories in recent years. An outbreak of avian flu is decimating many chicken flocks, reducing egg supply.

Economists generally expect inflation to decline a bit in the coming months, as apartment rental prices,



The Marriner S. Eccles Federal Reserve Board Building in Washington, Nov. 18, 2024. (AP)

wages, and car insurance costs grow more slowly. But clouding the outlook are potentially inflationary policies from President-elect Donald Trump. Trump has proposed to boost tariffs on all imports to the U.S. and to implement mass deportations of unauthorized migrants.

On Tuesday, Trump said that he would create the "External Revenue Service" to collect tariffs, suggesting he expects many duties to ultimately be imposed, even as he has also said he intends to use them as bargaining chips. During the campaign, he promised to impose up to 20% duties on all imports and as high as 60% tariffs on goods from China.

Last week, minutes from the Fed's December meeting showed that economists at the central bank expect inflation to remain about the same this year as in 2024, pushed up a bit by higher tariffs.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell has said the central bank will keep its key interest rate elevated until inflation is back to 2%. As a result, Wall Street investors expect the Fed to cut its key rate just a single time this year, from its current level of 4.3%, according to futures prices.

Other borrowing costs remain high, in part because of expectations for higher inflation and few Fed rate cuts. Mortgage rates, which are strongly influenced by the yield

on the 10-year Treasury note, rose for the fourth straight time last week to 6.9%, far above the pandemic-era lows of below 3%.

With the job market resilient - the unemployment rate ticked down to a low 4.1% last month - consumers are able to keep spending and drive growth. If demand exceeds what companies can produce, however, that could fuel further inflation.

Earlier this month, several prominent economists, including former Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke, agreed that the tariffs Trump will ultimately impose will probably only have minor effects on inflation. The issue was discussed at the American Economic Association's annual meeting in San Francisco.

Jason Furman, a top economic adviser during the Obama administration, said at the conference that the duties may lift the annual inflation rate by just several tenths of a percentage point. But he added that even an increase of that size could be enough to affect the Fed's rate decisions.

"You are in a world where the Trump policies are more like tenths, than something cataclysmic," he said Jan. 4. "But I think we're also in a world where the direction of whether rates are staying the same, going down, or going up, depends on those tenths."

close his ownership, but he failed to do so until April 4, 11 days after the report was due.

Musk's lawyer, Alex Spiro, said in a statement that the lawsuit "is an admission by the SEC that they cannot bring an actual case" since Musk has "done nothing wrong." He called the lawsuit a "sham."

"As the SEC retreats and leaves office - the SEC's multi-year campaign of harassment against Mr. Musk culminated in the filing of a single-count ticky tack complaint against Mr. Musk under Section 13(d) for an alleged administrative failure to file a single form - an offense that, even if proven, carries a nominal penalty," Spiro added.

After Musk signed a deal to ac-

quire Twitter in April 2022, he tried to back out of it, leading the company to sue him to force him to go through with the acquisition.

The has SEC said that starting in April 2022, it authorized an investigation into whether any securities laws were broken in connection with Musk's purchases of Twitter stock and his statements and SEC filings related to the company.

Before it filed the lawsuit, the SEC went to court in an attempt to compel Musk to testify as part of an investigation into his purchase of Twitter.

The SEC's current chair, Gary Gensler, plans to step down from his post on Jan. 20 and it is not clear if the new administration will continue the lawsuit.

Critics warn UK budget could fuel inflation

UK inflation falls to 2.5% in Dec, boosting rate cut expectations

LONDON, Jan 15, (AP): Inflation in the U.K. unexpectedly fell in December, a move that has bolstered expectations that the Bank of England will cut interest rates again next month and relieved some pressure on the U.K. government following the recent turbulence in financial markets.

The Office for National Statistics said Wednesday that inflation, as measured by the consumer prices index, was 2.5% in the year to December, largely as a result of easing price pressures in the services sector, which accounts for around 80% of the U.K. economy.

That was down from 2.6% the previous month, a reading that was expected to be repeated.

Though inflation has fallen, it remains above the Bank of England's target of 2%. However, the bank sets interest rates on what it expects inflation to be in the coming year or two, so if policymakers look past an anticipated uptick in coming months, they may decide to cut borrowing rates at their next policy meeting on Feb. 6.

In the wake of the inflation numbers, markets have moved to price in a growing likelihood of a cut then, to the likely relief of Treasury chief Rachel Reeves, who has faced a stream of negative headlines in recent days over her handling of the economy since Labour returned to power last July for the first time in 14 years.

Following the figures, the yield on the British government's benchmark 10-year bond fell by

"The small tick down in inflation will be met with a big sigh of relief in both the Treasury and the Bank of England," said Luke Bartholomew, deputy chief economist at abrdn.

At the start of the year, financial markets had priced in the prospect of three to four quarter-point interest rate reductions this year from the



A man walks into a money exchange office, in London, Thursday, Jan. 9, 2025. (AP)

current level of 4.75%. However, in recent weeks, concerns about the U.K.'s inflation outlook have tempered those expectations.

That's been evident in the bond market, where the interest rate investors charge the U.K. government to lend money over 10 years has hit a 16-year high of 4.93% amid concerns over the upcoming economic policies of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump as well as more domestic worries.

Following the inflation numbers, the interest rate charged on the benchmark 10-year bond fell by a sizeable 0.08 percentage point to 4.81%.

Without any further declines, this year's upward move will mean that the government will pay out more in interest rate payments, putting pressure on Reeves' other spending pledges and projections for the public finances.

Critics have argued that her first budget last October will lead to higher inflation than otherwise would

have been case. The extra public spending announced in the budget will be largely funded through increased business taxes and borrowing. Some economists think the splurge, coupled with the prospect of businesses cushioning the tax hikes by raising prices, could put upward pressure on inflation and lead to interest rates to be higher.

Inflation is way down from levels seen a couple of years ago, partly because central banks dramatically increased borrowing costs from near zero during the coronavirus pandemic when prices started to shoot up, first as a result of supply chain issues and then because of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which pushed up energy costs.

As inflation rates have fallen from multidecade highs, central banks have started cutting interest rates, though few, if any, economists think that rates will fall back to the super-low levels that persisted in the years after the global financial crisis of 2008-2009.

Germany's DAX and London's FTSE rise

Global stocks mixed ahead of US inflation data

HONG KONG, Jan 15, (AP): World stocks were mixed on Wednesday following Wall Street's mostly positive performance before key U.S. inflation data that could influence the pace of market-boosting rate cuts by the Federal Reserve.

Germany's DAX was up 0.2% to 20,311.39, and the CAC 40 in Paris was flat at 7,424.49. In London, the FTSE rose 0.8% to 8,263.60.

The futures for the S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average were 0.1% higher.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index edged 0.1% lower to 38,444.58.

The Kospi ended the day with a minor change at 2,496.81 after South Korean law enforcement officials detained impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol on Wednesday in connection with his failed declaration of martial law last month.

South Korea's unemployment rate reached 3.7% in December on a seasonally adjusted basis, the highest since June 2021, amid political uncertainty, the government reported.

The Hang Seng in Hong Kong added 0.3% to 19,286.07 after media reported that U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's incoming economic team is discussing gradually ramping up tariffs in different phases. The Shanghai Composite shed 0.4% to 3,227.12.

Shares related to Xiaohongshu, the Chinese Instagram-style app, surged after it topped the Apple App Store chart in the United States, as U.S. TikTok users flock to the app amid the looming threat of a TikTok ban. Companies like Foshan Yowant Technology, a digital marketing firm, and Inly Media Co., an advertising company, both saw their shares rise by around 10%.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 0.2% to 8,213.30.

On Tuesday, the S&P 500 rose 0.1% to 5,842.91 as three out of every four stocks in the index climbed. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.5% to 42,518.28, and the Nasdaq composite slipped 0.2% to 19,044.39.

Stocks got a boost from a report showing inflation at the U.S. wholesale level wasn't as high last month as economists expected. It's an encouraging signal before a report coming later in the day, which will show how much inflation U.S. consumers faced at gasoline pumps, grocery registers and auto lots in December.

Stubbornly high readings on inflation and a run of better-than-expected updates on the U.S. economy have sent Wall Street into a weeks-long rut, pulling it further from the dozens of all-time highs set last year.

The fear is that all the strong data will convince the Federal Reserve to deliver less relief this year through lower interest rates.

The Fed has already hinted it's likely to cut rates just two times in 2025, down from an earlier projection of four. Speculation is growing about whether the Fed may cut rates zero times this year.

Indexes drifted between gains and losses through the day in large part because of drops for several Big Tech stocks. Nvidia fell 1.1% and was the second-heaviest weight on the S&P 500.

The only stock to drag more on the market was Eli Lilly, which fell 6.6% after saying it expects to report weaker revenue for the last three months of 2024 than previously forecast.

CEO David Ricks said that last quarter's 45% growth in Lilly's revenue for its Mounjaro diabetes treatment, Zepbound obesity injections and other products in the incretin market wasn't as big as expected.

In other dealings on Wednesday, U.S. benchmark crude oil rose 29 cents to \$76.66 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, added 42 cents to \$80.34 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar fell to 157.08 Japanese yen from 158.00 yen. The euro slipped to \$1.0299 from \$1.0309.

GDP contracts 0.2% in 2024

Germany's economy shrinks for second consecutive year in 2024

BERLIN, Jan 15, (AP): The German economy shrank for the second straight year in 2024 as worried consumers held back on spending and Chinese competition ate into the country's traditional exports of cars and industrial machinery.

The year's weak performance underlines Germany's status as Europe's worst performing major economy and shows the country as having no meaningful growth in four years.

Gross domestic product contracted by 0.2% last year following a 0.3% decline in 2023, according to preliminary official figures released Wednesday, weeks before an election in which the economy is the top issue.

The economy is now only 0.3% bigger than it was in 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic.

German business has been battered by external shocks and homegrown prob-

lems, unleashing an angst-ridden national debate over how to remedy the situation. Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three-party coalition government collapsed in November when Scholz fired his finance minister in a dispute over how to revitalize the economy. That paved the way for an early election on Feb. 23.

Contenders to lead the next government have made contrasting proposals on how to inject new vigor into the economy.

Ruth Brand, the head of the statistics office, ticked off the list of short- and long-term challenges: higher energy prices after the loss of cheap natural gas from Russia; high interest rates from the European Central Bank that deter investment in new machinery and vehicles; and consumers worried about the future who are saving their wages instead of spending it.

Spending on hotels and restaurants sagged by 4.4% and outlays for clothing and shoes fell by 2.8% despite rising disposable income.

On top of that comes increasing competition for export markets from China in traditional areas of German strength such as cars, industrial machinery and chemicals.

"German exports saw themselves exposed to stronger international competition, not least from the People's Republic of China," Brand said. "German exports shrank although world trade increased in 2024."

Despite the weak growth figures, the jobs market remains strong and disposable income is rising along with pay raises from new wage agreements aimed at making up for inflation. But willingness to spend is being held back by worries fed by a range of factors, including a drumbeat of job cut announcements at major companies including Volkswagen, steelmaker and industrial conglomerate ThyssenKrupp and auto technology supplier Bosch, and by the war next door in Ukraine.

Sci-fi writer's Altadena cemetery survives

Octavia Butler imagined LA ravaged by fires

ALTADENA, Calif., Jan 15, (AP): Decades ago, the writer Octavia Butler had imagined a Los Angeles ravaged by fires. The Altadena cemetery where the science fiction and Afro-futurism author is buried did catch fire last week but suffered "minimal damage," according to a statement on the cemetery's web site.

A spokesperson at the Mountain View cemetery confirmed the accuracy of the website's announcement to The Associated Press, but would not comment on the status of individual markers. The grave of Butler, who died in 2006 at 58, is marked by a footstone etched with a quote from "Parable of the Sower," among her most famous novels: "All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you."

Since the fires began last week, "Parable of the Sower" and other Butler works have been cited for anticipating a world - and, particularly, a Los Angeles - wracked by climate change, racism and economic disparity. "Parable of the Sower" was written in 1993 and set in a post-apocalyptic Los Angeles. "We had a fire today," reads a Feb. 1, 2025, diary entry in the book, referring to a small fire that presages the destructive fires to come in the novel.

The Eaton fire razed large swaths of Altadena, a

longtime haven for Black families that for generations eschewed the discriminatory housing practices found elsewhere. In the fire's aftermath, fears have abounded about whether recovery and rebuilding is achievable for Altadena's diverse community, amid the pressures of gentrification.

On Tuesday, crews were inside the closed cemetery, clearing away debris. Singed brush around the perimeter was the main sign of the fire's toll, though the surrounding area was quiet, replete with damaged structures.

Butler's prescience predates this year. In the book's sequel, "Parable of the Talents," an authoritarian politician promises to "Make America Great Again." (Butler, who died before Donald Trump's political rise, heard the phrase used by President Ronald Reagan.)

"She seems to have seen the real future coming in a way few other writers did," Gerry Caravan, an associate professor at Marquette University and co-editor of Butler's work for the Library of America, told the AP in 2020. "It's hard not to read the books and think 'How did she know?'"

Butler herself once remembered a student asking her about her "Parable" books and whether she believed all of

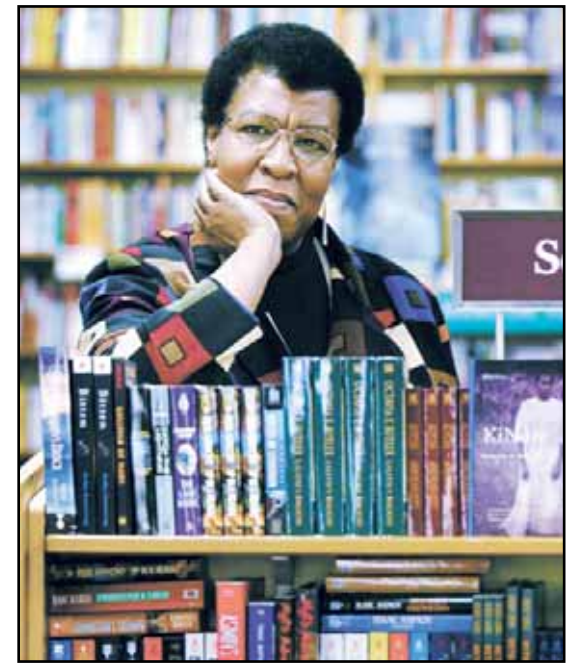
the troubles she described would take place.

"I didn't make up the problems," the author responded. "All I did was look around at the problems we're neglecting now and give them about 30 years to grow into full-fledged disasters."

Widely cited as the first major Black woman author of science fiction, Butler grew up near Altadena, in Pasadena, and spent much of her life in Southern California before moving to the Seattle suburbs, where she died after a fall outside her home. She remains widely identified with her home state. Her papers are stored at The Huntington Library and a Black-owned store named for her, Octavia's Bookshelf, opened in Pasadena in 2023 and is functioning as a donation center in the fire's wake.

Butler won numerous awards in her lifetime and her stature has risen steadily since her death, with admirers ranging from N.K. Jemisin and other science-fiction writers to actor Viola Davis and musician Toshi Reagon. Hulu aired an eight-part adaptation of her novel "Kindred" in 2022 and numerous other projects are planned.

In 2000, Butler considered the whole idea of prophecy with the essay "A Few Rules for Predicting the Future," which she broke down into a handful of sections:



Science-fiction writer Octavia Butler poses for a photograph near some of her novels at University Book Store in Seattle, Wash., on Feb. 4, 2004. (AP)

Dates changed

Wildfires disrupt 'awards season'

LOS ANGELES, Jan 15, (AP): Hollywood's awards season has all but come to a rare halt as the wildfires continue to disrupt life and work in the Los Angeles area. There are near daily updates from the Hollywood guilds and organizations that put on awards shows as the industry navigates the ongoing crisis.

Here's an overview of the major upcoming awards shows, from the Oscars to the Grammys, including updated dates for nominations.

Postponed, no new dates announced
The Writers Guild of America nominations were to be announced Jan. 8, a date that was pushed to Jan. 13 and then postponed indefinitely. The Producers Guild of America nominations for feature films were to be announced on Jan. 10, which was pushed to Jan. 12 and then postponed to an unspecified date this week.

Jan. 23: The Oscar nominations have been twice-delayed - they were initially slated for Jan. 17, then Jan. 19, before being delayed again. The delay in the announcement accommodates an extended voting deadline, as many Academy members have been affected by the wildfires.

The nominations will be announced via a "virtual presentation," eschewing press on site.

Jan. 26: Originally slated for Jan. 12, the awards were set to take place at the Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, only miles from the Pacific Palisades neighborhood where fire was raging.

The awards will be broadcast live on E!, hosted by Chelsea Handler.

Feb. 2: By virtue of announcing their nominations back in November, the Grammys' schedule has largely been unaffected by the wildfires. Some auxiliary events have been canceled, though - Universal Music Group nixed all related events, including its Artist Showcase and after-party, saying it would redirect those resources to wildfire recovery aid.

The Grammys will be broadcast live on CBS; a host has yet to be announced.

Feb. 8: These are two separate awards shows. Both untelevised shows are still set to be held in Los Angeles on the same night. The winner of the PGA's Darryl F. Zanuck Award for Outstanding Producer of Theatrical Motion Pictures has six times in the past seven years gone on to win the best picture Oscar. Over the past two decades, the winner of the DGA award has nearly always also triumphed at the Oscars.

Feb. 15: The Writers Guild of America gives awards to adapted and original feature film screenplays, which often align with Oscar nominees and winners, documentaries and television shows and films. It's an untelevised event.

Feb. 16: The British Academy Film Awards - officially called the EE BAFTA Film Awards - are Britain's equivalent of Hollywood's Academy Awards. Nominations will be announced Jan. 15, a date that has been unaffected by the fires (while the awards are in London, nominees come from all over and even many British celebrities call LA home.)

Airing on BBC in the U.K. and Brit-Box in North America, David Tennant will host.

Feb. 22: The Film Independent Spirit Awards spotlight films made for budgets of \$30 million or less, meaning some years it lines up with the Oscar frontrunners ("Everything Everywhere All at Once") and other years ("Oppenheimer") it doesn't.

The show streams on YouTube, and will be hosted by Aidy Bryant.

Feb. 23: The actors guild went ahead with announcing nominees, though pivoted to a press release instead of a live announcement in the early days of the fires. The SAG Awards are arguably the most telling Oscar forecast there is. Their picks don't always align exactly with those of the film academy, but they often come very close to mirroring them. The last three best ensemble winners - "Oppenheimer," "Everything Everywhere All at Once" and "CODA" - all went on to win best picture at the Academy Awards.

The show will stream live on Netflix, hosted by Kristen Bell.

March 2: The marquee event and caper of Hollywood's awards season will proceed as scheduled from Los Angeles' Dolby Theatre, which was briefly imperiled by the quickly extinguished Sunset Fire. The film academy did delay the Scientific and Technical Awards from Feb. 18 (a rescheduled date has not been announced) and canceled altogether its annual nominees luncheon, an untelevised mainstay of the social calendar known for its mingling and "class photo."

The Oscars will be broadcast live on ABC, hosted by Conan O'Brien.

Valuables

Rivers recalls escaping fire

LOS ANGELES, Jan 15, (AP): Melissa Rivers recalled how swiftly the California wildfires spread, forcing the county's Ready, Set, Go evacuation plan to essentially skip straight to "Set." That left her with little time to gather her most valued possessions before fleeing her home.

When the final warning arrived, Rivers said Tuesday, "The fire was still a canyon away, but you could clearly see the flames."

In the rush to evacuate, she quickly gathered her pets and a few sentimental items, including her late mother Joan Rivers' Emmy Award. "I grabbed both my parents' watches and my dad's dress watch," which she had given to her son Cooper for his 18th birthday.

She also managed to pack a few pieces of clothing. "All our belongings are crammed into three tote bags, three large canvas bags, and several Macy's plastic bags along with a CVS bag," she said.

The fire completely devastated her property. "We lost everything. The only thing that survived is our front gate and the barbecue," Rivers shared.

She described the scale of destruction as unimaginable.

"It's so much more than just the homes - it's an entire town wiped off the map," she said. "Many businesses in Palisades were family-owned. There are people who not only lost their homes but also their businesses and livelihoods."

Finding safe shelter has been another challenge.

"We've had to move three times due to evacuations, but we've settled at a friend's house in Santa Monica," Rivers said. "They've been kind enough to take us in, along with another family we're friends with."

Rivers copes with these challenges through her self-proclaimed "dark sense of humor" and her knack for making people laugh. She also finds solace in supporting others who are struggling, which helps to ease her own burdens.

"Checking in and comforting the people in my world that are affected by this allows me to not deal with my home stuff right now. I cried once for five minutes and then again for like 20 and don't have time to do that. I am my parents' daughter."

Despite losing most of her belongings, Rivers is adamant about prioritizing those in greater need.

"People are donating, and stores are offering huge discounts. I see so many of my friends from the Palisades wanting to get a discount somewhere. And I keep trying to say to them, these are not meant for you. You can buy another pair of freaking jeans at Neiman Marcus just like you always did. Let the people who really need it have the first shot at it."

Among the charitable donations, one stood out to Rivers.

"Apparently, Jennifer Lopez dropped off some clothes. And we were laughing someone, somewhere just got a pair of a Jennifer Lopez's jeans. How amazing," she said.

Earlier the Pacific Palisades wildfires torched the home of "This Is Us" star Milo Ventimiglia, perhaps most poignantly destroying the father-to-be's newly installed crib.



Melissa Rivers appears at the premiere of 'Lucy and Desi' in Los Angeles on Feb. 15, 2022. (AP)

LA wildfires



A California Department of Corrections hand crew works containment lines ahead of the Palisades Fire Tuesday, Jan. 14, in Santa Monica, Calif. (AP)

Hope film sparks action amid LA wildfire struggles

Walker's 2021 wildfire film resonates now

NEW YORK, Jan 15, (AP): When Lucy Walker debuted her harrowing documentary about California wildfires, "Bring Your Own Brigade," at Sundance in 2021, it was during peak COVID. Not the best time for a film on a wholly different scourge.

"It was really hard," the Oscar-nominated filmmaker says now. "I didn't blame people for not wanting to watch a film about the fires in the middle of the pandemic, because it was just too much horror."

And so the film, though acclaimed - it was named one of the 10 best films of the year by the New York Times - didn't reach an audience as large as Walker had hoped, with its urgent display of the human cost of wildfires and its tough, crucial questions for the future.

That could change. Walker thinks people may now be more receptive to her message, given the devastating wildfires that have wrought havoc on Los Angeles itself the past week. Firefighters were preparing on Tuesday to attack new blazes amid warnings that winds combined with severely dry conditions created a "particularly dangerous situation."

"This is probably the moment where it becomes undeniable," she said in an interview.

She added: "It does feel like people are now asking the question that I was asking a few years ago, like, 'Is it safe to live in Los Angeles? And why is this happening, and what can we do about it?' And the good news is that there are some things we can do about it. What's tricky is that they're really hard to accomplish."

Devastation

In "Bring Your Own Brigade" (available on Paramount+), Walker portrays in sometimes terrifying detail the devastation caused by two wildfires on the same day in 2018, products of the same wind event - the Camp Fire that engulfed the northern California city of Paradise and the Woolsey fire in Malibu, two towns on opposite ends of the political and economic spectrum.

She embeds herself with firefighters, and explores the lives of locals affected by the fire. She shares harrowing cellphone footage of people driving through exploding columns of fire as they try to escape, crying out "I don't want to die!" She plays 911 calls in which people plead vainly for rescue as fire laps at their backyards or invades their homes.

And she conveys a layered message: Devastating fires in California are increasingly inevitable. Climate change is a clear accelerating factor, yes, but it's not the only one, and therein lies an element of hope: There are things people can do, if they start to make different (and difficult) choices

- in both where and how they choose to live.

But first, complacency must be vanquished. "Complacency sets in when there hasn't been a fire for a few years and you start to think, it might not happen again," Walker says.

It even affected Walker herself a few months ago. A British transplant to Los Angeles, she had chosen to live on the Venice-Santa Monica border - too scared, she says, to live in the city's lovely hilly areas with small winding roads, surrounded by nature and vegetation, near the canyons that wildfires love.

But a few months ago, she started wondering if over-anxiety about wildfires had incorrectly influenced her choice. And then, of course, came the Palisades catastrophe - "this ... awful reminder that it only takes one event," she says.

Walker became interested in making a film about wildfires after she arrived in the city and wondered if she was safe. "Why is the hillside on fire?" she says she wondered. "Why do people just keep on driving?" She had considered such fires "a medieval problem."

One thing she learned while filming: Firefighters were even more impressive and courageous than she'd thought. "If you want to watch a firefighter have their heart broken, it's when they want to do more," she says. "I was just absolutely wowed by how incredibly selfless and brilliant they were."

Not that the public wasn't angry at them - her film depicts angry residents of Malibu, for example, chastising firefighters for not doing enough.



Brad Weldon, (left), and Lyndon McAfee pose among the destruction from the wildfire in Paradise, Calif., on Nov. 19, 2018, during the filming of the documentary 'Bring Your Own Brigade.' (AP)



Bulgarian Ambassador Dimitar Dimitrov congratulating.



Ahmed Al-Thuwaini congratulating.



Ambassador Mohammed Taqi Hussein offering his congratulations.



Deputy Ambassador of Kazakhstan, Nourzheniz Aibayev (center), flanked by the groom, Maitham, and his father, Louay Amir, and Dr. Nael Al-Qattan.



The groom Maitham Shah Aswar

Jamal celebrates his son's wedding

Jamal Hassan Shah Aswar hosted a celebration to mark the wedding of his son, Maitham, to the daughter of Lua'e Abdulhameed Al-Qattan.

The party took place at the Ibrahim Al-Baghli Wedding Hall and was attended by a number of diplomats, public figures, as well as close relatives and friends. They all congratulated the groom, and wished him happiness and blessings.



Deputy Ambassador of Iraq Hussam Al-Azzam and Nader Ibrahim congratulating.

Photos by Mohammed Morsi
Ali Al-Salem and Abdullah Bazgheib congratulating.

Royals

Offers support to cancer patients at Royal Marsden

Princess Kate says her cancer is in remission

LONDON, Jan 15, (AP) — The Princess of Wales said Tuesday that her cancer is in remission after she spent the day supporting other cancer patients at the hospital where she received treatment.

In a statement on social media, she offered her thanks to everyone who helped her and her husband, Prince William, as they navigated the ups and downs of treatment and recovery. Earlier, the princess, usually known simply as Kate, hugged patients at the Royal Marsden Hospital in London and described her own treatment as "exceptional."

"It is a relief to now be in remission and I remain focused on recovery," the princess, 43, wrote in a note signed with her initial, C. "As anyone who has experienced a cancer diagnosis will know, it takes time to adjust to a new normal."

Remission is good news, but it doesn't necessarily mean cancer has been cured. It could mean that treatment has knocked out all the cancer that can be measured. That's called complete remission. Or it could mean that treatment has eliminated at least half the cancer. That's called a partial remission.

The American Cancer Society says reduction in the tumor's size must last at least a month for it to be considered in remission.

Update

Tuesday's announcement marked the first official update on her condition since September, when Kate said she had completed chemotherapy. The princess still hasn't revealed what type of cancer she was treated for.

During her solo engagement at the Royal Marsden, a world-leading cancer center known for its pioneering research, Kate thanked the medical team for their support and spoke with other patients receiving chemotherapy and immunotherapy.

The princess hugged Tina Adumou, who wept as she told Kate that her 19-year-old daughter is in the intensive care unit. Putting an arm around her, Kate offered sympathy and told Adumou that her daughter was in the best possible place.

"I'm sorry, I wish there was more I could do to help," Kate said. "I wanted to come and show my support for the amazing work that's going on here, and



Britain's Princess Kate walks during a visit to The Royal Marsden Hospital, where she received her cancer treatment, in London, Tuesday Jan. 14, in London, England. (AP)

for those who are going through treatment and having such a hard time."

But then she offered encouragement. "There is light at the end of that tunnel," she said. "Very nice to meet you and best of luck. You are in the best of hands."

The princess also shared her experiences with Katherine Field, 45. Gesturing to her arm and chest, she discussed the port mechanism through which drugs were flowed.

"I got so attached to it," Kate said,

joking that she had been almost reluctant to have hers removed when told she no longer needed it.

The princess's office at Kensington Palace stressed that even though her cancer is in remission she would continue her gradual return to public-facing engagements. The palace described the visit as reflecting her "own personal cancer journey."

Tuesday's announcement was a welcome sign of good news for the royal family, which was buffeted by health

concerns last year. The medical odyssey began last January when royal officials announced that King Charles III would receive treatment for an enlarged prostate and Kate would undergo abdominal surgery.

In February, Buckingham Palace announced that Charles was receiving treatment for an undisclosed type of cancer. Six weeks later, Kate said she, too, was undergoing treatment for cancer, quieting the relentless speculation about her condition that had circulated on social media since her surgery.

The strain on the royal family was severe. With two of the most visible royals out sick - and Prince William taking time off to support his wife - the other members of the house of Windsor had to take care of the never-ending whirl of public appearances that the British public demands.

Treatment

But Charles, 76, and Kate slowly returned to duty after receiving treatment. The princess announced in September she had completed chemotherapy, appearing alongside her husband and children in a video in which she expressed "relief" at the turn of events.

"Life as you know it can change in an instant, and we have had to find a way to navigate the stormy waters and road unknown," she said in the video, which was shot in a woodland near the family's summer home in Norfolk.

Though she stepped away from most public duties during her treatment, Kate made a handful of appearances last year, including at the king's birthday parade in June, known as Trooping the Colour, and later at the men's final at Wimbledon in July, where she received a standing ovation.

"To all those who are continuing their own cancer journey - I remain with you, side by side, hand in hand," Kate said.

The hospital visit comes just days before the 1st anniversary of Kate's admittance to the London Clinic for major abdominal surgery on Jan. 16, 2024. She recuperated for two weeks in the hospital, and was at home recuperating when she was told she needed to begin chemotherapy.

William described 2024 as "brutal" and probably "the hardest year" of his life.

BAFTA

Subdued nominations

'Conclave' leads race for the BAFTA awards

LONDON, Jan 15, (AP) — Papal thriller "Conclave," which stars Ralph Fiennes as a cardinal overseeing the election of a new pope, leads the race - just - for the British Academy Film Awards, with nominations in 12 categories, one more than the genre-busting trans musical "Emilia Perez."

But with the wildfires in Los Angeles over the past week fresh in the minds of everyone in the movie industry, Wednesday's announcement of the latest BAFTA nominations was understandably subdued.



Brody

"We are very much thinking of our colleagues, friends, community over there," BAFTA chair Sara Putt told The Associated Press. "It's devastating what's going on."

She wouldn't be drawn on whether the fires may impact the BAFTA ceremony, which is due to take place on Feb. 16.

"The ceremony is a month away, it would be inappropriate and far too early to say anything about that," Putt said.

The five films nominated for the prestigious best film award were "Conclave," "Emilia Perez," the 215-minute postwar epic "The Brutalist," the Palme d'Or-winning comedy/drama "Anora" and the Bob Dylan biopic "A Complete Unknown."

"The Brutalist" ended up with nine nominations, including leading actor for Adrien Brody, who faces stiff competition from Fiennes and Timothee Chalamet, who plays the young Dylan in "A Complete Unknown."

The other actors nominated are

Hugh Grant for his creepy role in the horror film "Heretic," Colman Domingo in real-life prison drama "Sing Sing" and Sebastian Stan for his portrayal of a real estate mogul - a certain Donald Trump - in "The Apprentice."

"Anora," the sci-fi epic "Dune: Part Two" and "Wicked" each received seven nominations. "A Complete Unknown" received six nominations, as did "Kneecap," the Irish-language hip-hop drama.

The prizes - officially called the EE BAFTA Film Awards - are Britain's equivalent of Hollywood's Academy Awards and will be watched closely for hints of who may win at the Oscars on March 3.

Putt lauded the variety in the list of nominations, noting that six different genres were represented on the best film list.

"There's some really exciting stories in there and just a real glorious range of film-making this year," she said.

She also highlighted that 14 of the 24 nominations in the acting categories were first-timers, and that whoever wins the best actress award will be a first-time BAFTA winner.

Demi Moore is in with a chance for that, having been nominated for lead actress for her role in the body horror film "The Substance."

Other notable female nominations for best supporting actress were Selena Gomez and Ariana Grande for their roles in "Emilia Perez" and the musical "Wicked."

Like other major movie awards, Britain's film academy has introduced changes in recent years to increase diversity. In 2020, no women were nominated as best director for the seventh year running and all 20 nominees in the lead and supporting performer categories were white.

Experts add waist size, health issues to obesity criteria

Obesity diagnosis won't be solely defined by BMI

NEW YORK, Jan 15, (AP) — A group of global experts is proposing a new way to define and diagnose obesity, reducing the emphasis on the controversial body mass index and hoping to better identify people who need treatment for the disease caused by excess body fat.

Under recommendations released Tuesday night, obesity would no longer be defined solely by BMI, a calculation of height and weight, but combined with other measurements, such as waist circumference, plus evidence of health problems tied to extra pounds.

Obesity is estimated to affect more than 1 billion people worldwide. In the U.S., about 40% of adults have obesity, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"The whole goal of this is to get a more precise definition so that we are targeting the people who actually need the help most," said Dr. David Cummings, an obesity expert at the University of Washington and one of the 58 authors of the report

published in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology journal.

The report introduces two new diagnostic categories: clinical obesity and pre-clinical obesity.

People with clinical obesity meet BMI and other markers of obesity and have evidence of organ, tissue or other problems caused by excess weight. That could include heart disease, high blood pressure, liver or kidney disease or chronic severe knee or hip pain. These people would be eligible for treatments, including diet and exercise interventions and obesity medications.

People with pre-clinical obesity are at risk for those conditions, but have no ongoing illness, the report says.

BMI has long been considered a flawed measure that can over-diagnose or underdiagnose obesity, which is currently defined as a BMI of 30 or more. But people with excess body fat do not always have a BMI above 30, the report notes. And people with high muscle mass - football players or other athletes - may have a high BMI



A man uses measuring tape on his waist in California on Jan. 9, 2025. (AP)

despite normal fat mass.

Under the new criteria, about 20% of people who used to be classified as obese would no longer meet the definition, preliminary analysis suggests. And about 20% of people with

serious health effects but lower BMI would now be considered clinically obese, experts said.

"It wouldn't dramatically change the percentage of people being defined as having obesity, but it would

better diagnose the people who really have clinically significant excess fat," Cummings said.

The new definitions have been endorsed by more than 75 medical organizations around the world, but it's not clear how widely or quickly they could be adopted in practice. The report acknowledges that implementation of the recommendations "will carry significant costs and workforce implications."

A spokesman for the health insurance trade group AHIP, formerly known as America's Health Insurance Plans, said "it's too early at this point to gauge how plans will incorporate these criteria into coverage or other policies."

There are practical issues to consider, said Dr. Katherine Saunders, an obesity expert at Weill Cornell Medicine and co-founder of the obesity treatment company Flyte-Health. Measuring waist circumference sounds simple, but protocols differ, many doctors aren't trained accurately and standard medical

tape measures aren't big enough for many people with obesity.

In addition, determining the difference between clinical and pre-clinical obesity would require a comprehensive health assessment and lab tests, she noted.

"For a new classification system to be widely adopted, it would also need to be extremely quick, inexpensive, and reliable," she said.

The new definitions are likely to be confusing, said Kate Bauer, a nutrition expert at the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

"The public likes and needs simple messages. I don't think this differentiation is going to change anything," she said.

Overhauling the definition of obesity will take time, acknowledged Dr. Robert Kushner, an obesity expert at the Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine and a co-author of the report.

"This is the first step in the process," he said. "I think it's going to begin the conversation."

JEV warning

Marburg kills 8 in Tanzania

ARUSHA, Tanzania, Jan 15, (Agencies) — The World Health Organization said Wednesday an outbreak of suspected Marburg disease has killed eight people in a remote part of northern Tanzania.

"We are aware of 9 cases so far, including 8 people who have died," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement. "We would expect further cases in coming days as disease surveillance improves."

Like Ebola, the Marburg virus originates in fruit bats and spreads between people through close contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals or with surfaces, such as contaminated bed sheets.

Without treatment, Marburg can be fatal in up to 88% of people who fall ill with the disease. Symptoms include fever, muscle pains, diarrhea, vomiting and in some cases death from extreme blood loss. There is no authorized vaccine or treatment for Marburg.

WHO said its risk assessment for the suspected outbreak in Tanzania is high at national and regional levels but low globally. There was no immediate comment from Tanzanian health authorities.

An outbreak of Marburg in Rwanda, first reported on Sept. 27, was declared over on Dec. 20. Rwandan officials reported a total of 15 deaths and 66 cases, with the majority of those affected healthcare workers who handled the first patients.

An outbreak in 2023 of Marburg in Kagera, which shares a border with Rwanda, killed at least five people.

Japanese encephalitis: Health authorities in the Australian state of Victoria have advised people to be cautious of mosquitoes after detecting cases of Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV).

The Department of Health in Victoria, Australia's second-most populous state, on Wednesday said that its early warning program identified JEV in two mosquito traps in the state's north, marking the first detections of the potentially deadly disease in the current summer.

Hope to protect endangered species

AI can help bridge gap between humans and animals: research

MONTREAL, Jan 15, (AP) — Peeps trickle out of a soundproof chamber as its door opens. Female zebra finches are chattering away inside the microphone-lined box. The laboratory room sounds like a chorus of squeaky toys.

"They're probably talking about us a little bit," says McGill University postdoctoral fellow Logan James.

It's unclear, of course, what they are saying. But James believes he is getting closer to deciphering their vocalizations through a partnership with the Earth Species Project. The nonprofit laboratory has drawn some of the technology industry's wealthiest philanthropists - and they want to see more than just scientific progress. On top of breakthroughs in animal language, they expect improved interspecies understanding will foster greater appreciation for the planet in the face of climate change.

The Earth Species Project hopes to decode other creatures' communications with its pioneering artificial intelligence tools. The goal is not to build a "translator that will allow us to speak to other species," Director of Impact Jane Lawton said. However, she added, "rudimentary dictionaries" for other animals are not only possible but could help craft better conservation strategies and reconnect humanity with often forgotten ecosystems.

"We believe that by reminding people of the beauty, the sophistication, the intelligence that is resident in other species and in nature as a whole, we can start to, kind of, almost repair that relationship," Lawton said.

At McGill University, the technology generates specific calls during simulated conversations with live finches that help researchers isolate each unique noise. The computer processes calls in real time and responds with one of its own. Those recordings are then used to train the Berkeley, California-based research group's audio language model for animal sounds.

This ad hoc collaboration is only



McGill University postdoctoral fellow Logan James, an affiliated researcher with the nonprofit Earth Species Project, opens a soundproof recording chamber on Dec. 12, 2024 in Montreal, Canada. (AP)

a glimpse into what ESP says will come. By 2030, Lawton said, it expects "really interesting insights into how other animals communicate." Artificial intelligence advancements are expediting the research. New grants totaling \$17 million will help hire engineers and at least double the size of the research team, which currently has roughly seven members. Over the next two years, Lawton said, the nonprofit's researchers will select species that "might actually shift something" in people's relationship with nature.

Standing to benefit are animal groups threatened by habitat loss or human activity that could be better protected with better understandings of their languages. Existing collaborations aim to document the vocal repertoires - the distinct calls and their different contexts - of the Hawaiian crow and St. Lawrence River beluga whales.

After spending more than two decades extinct in the wild, the crows have been reintroduced to their home of Maui. But some conservationists fear that critical vocabulary has faded in captivity. Lawton said the birds might need to relearn some "words" before they reenter their natural habi-

tat in droves. In Canada's St. Lawrence River, where shipping traffic imperils the marine mammals who feed there, the group's scientists are exploring whether machine learning can categorize unlabeled calls from the remaining belugas. Perhaps, Lawton suggested, authorities could alert nearby vessels if they understood that certain sounds signaled the whales were about to surface.

Big donors include LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman, the family charity founded by late Microsoft co-founder Paul G. Allen and Laurene Powell Jobs' Waverley Street Foundation. The latter aims to support "bottom-up" solutions to the "climate emergency." At the root of that crisis, according to Waverley Street Foundation President Jared Blumenfeld, is the idea that humans deserve "dominion" over the world.

Blumenfeld finds that ESP's work is an important reminder that we are instead stewards of the planet.

"This is not a silver bullet," he said. "But it's certainly part of a suite of things that can help transform how we view ourselves in relation to nature."



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifts off from pad 39A with a payload of a pair of lunar landers at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2025. (AP)

Roundabout journey

2 private lunar landers head toward the moon

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Jan 15, (AP) — In a two-for-one moonshot, SpaceX launched a pair of lunar landers Wednesday for US and Japanese companies looking to jumpstart business on Earth's dusty sidekick.

The two landers rocketed away in the middle of the night from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, the latest in a stream of private spacecraft aiming for the moon. They shared the ride to save money but parted company an hour into the flight exactly as planned, taking separate roundabout routes for the monthslong journey.

It's take 2 for the Tokyo-based ispace, whose first lander crashed into the moon two years ago. This time, it has a rover on board with a scoop to gather up lunar dirt for study and plans to test potential food and water sources for future explorers.

Lunar newcomer Texas-based Firefly Aerospace is flying 10 experiments for NASA, including a vacuum to gather dirt, a drill to measure the temperature below the surface and a device that could be used by future moonwalkers to keep the sharp, abrasive particles off their spacesuits and equipment.

Firefly's Blue Ghost - named after a species of U.S. Southeastern fireflies - should reach the moon first. The 6-foot-6-inches-tall (2-meter-tall) lander will attempt a touchdown in early March at

Mare Crisium, a volcanic plain in the northern latitudes.

The slightly bigger ispace lander named Resilience will take four to five months to get there, targeting a touchdown in late May or early June at Mare Frigoris, even farther north on the moon's near side.

"We don't think this is a race. Some people say 'race to the moon,' but it's not about the speed," ispace's founder CEO Takeshi Hakamada said this week from Cape Canaveral.

Both Hakamada and Firefly CEO Jason Kim acknowledge the challenges still ahead, given the wreckage littering the lunar landscape. Only five countries have successfully placed spacecraft on the moon since the 1960s: the former Soviet Union, the US, China, India and Japan.

"We've done everything we can on the design and the engineering," Kim said. Even so, he pinned an Irish shamrock to his jacket lapel Tuesday night for good luck.

The US remains the only one to have landed astronauts. NASA's Artemis program, the successor to Apollo, aims to get astronauts back on the moon by the end of the decade.

Before that can happen, "we're sending a lot of science and a lot of technology ahead of time to prepare for that," NASA's science mission chief Nicky Fox said on the eve of launch.

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Slalom stars Shiffrin, Vihova missing

Swiss skier Rast earns 2nd win of her breakthrough season

FLACHAU, Austria, Jan 15, (AP): Swiss skier Camille Rast earned the second World Cup victory of her breakthrough season, leading teammate Wendy Holdener for a Swiss 1-2 finish at a night slalom.

The result pushed Rast back to the top of both the slalom and overall season standings.

With injured slalom stars Mikaela Shiffrin and Petra Vihova missing, Rast had a frenetic final run to improve from eighth position and beat runner-up Holdener by 0.16 seconds.

Rast became the first skier other than Shiffrin or Vihova to win the annual floodlit race since Frida Hansdotter triumphed in 2017, a year before the Swede won Olympic slalom gold.

"I saw yesterday on Instagram that Mikaela and Petra won the last six races here. Then I'm really happy today to make a new name on the list," Rast said.

Olympic giant slalom champion Sara Hector of Sweden trailed by 0.38 in third.

Home crowd favorite Katharina Liensberger,

who held a big lead after the opening leg, struggled in her second run down the Griessekar course and the 2021 slalom world champion dropped to fourth.

Rast hadn't been on a World Cup podium before this season but has racked up two wins and a third, two fourth and a fifth place in the current slalom campaign.

Her maiden victory came in Killington, Vermont, in December, when she also led a Swiss 1-2 ahead of Holdener.

Rast leads the overall standings by 26 points over Hector and the slalom season rankings 60 points clear of Holdener.

"I never expected this, I just enjoy it. But I go day by day from here," Rast told Austrian TV.

Zrinka Ljusic, who entered the race as the discipline leader after winning the last two slaloms, failed to qualify for the second run. The Croatian was slowed by a mistake early in her run and finished 3.70 seconds behind.

Paula Moltzan was the best American finisher

in sixth, 0.73 behind Rast.

Shiffrin, who won the first two slaloms this season, is recovering from abdominal surgery to clean out a deep wound she suffered in a GS crash in November when chasing her 100th career victory.

The American started training on snow again last week but there is no date set for her return to racing.

Vihova has been out since knee surgery a year ago.

Lindsey Vonn, who has made an impressive return to World Cup racing this season after nearly six years away from the circuit, competes only in the speed events of downhill and super-G and plans to race in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, next weekend.

Swiss allrounder Michelle Gisin finished 23rd. The two-time Olympic champion in Alpine combined said before the race it would be her last slalom as it's "time to focus my energy on the remaining three disciplines."



Switzerland's Camille Rast gets to the finish area after completing an alpine ski, women's World Cup slalom in Flachau, Austria. (AP)

76ers stumble against Thunder, season slipping away without three injured stars

Atlanta overcomes Booker's 35 points to beat Phoenix



Cleveland Cavaliers guard Darius Garland (10) drives on Indiana Pacers guard Ben Sheppard (26) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis. (AP)

PHILADELPHIA, Jan 15, (AP): Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 32 points and Jalen Williams had 24 to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 118-102 win over a Philadelphia 76ers team missing three All-Stars on Tuesday night.

Joel Embiid, Tyrese Maxey and Paul George sat out with injuries as the Sixers continued their slide down the Eastern Conference standings.

The Thunder built a 21-point lead and have won 18 of 19 games headed into Thursday's rematch against Cleveland in a matchup of teams with the best records in each conference.

With the stars out, Justin Edwards led the 76ers with 25 points, and Jeff Dowtin Jr. had 18.

Hawks 122, Suns 117

In Atlanta, Trae Young scored a season-high 43 points and Atlanta overcame Devin Booker's 35 points to beat Phoenix.

Kevin Durant scored 14 of his 31 points in the third quarter for Phoenix (19-20), which lost for the 11th straight time in Atlanta. Durant added nine rebounds.

The Suns are still looking for their first win in Atlanta since March 24, 2014.

The Hawks (20-19) were without forwards De'Andre Hunter (left foot

soresness), Larry Nance Jr. (right hand) and Jalen Johnson (right shoulder inflammation), who missed his fourth consecutive game.

The injuries left Atlanta rookie Zacharie Risacher with the challenge of guarding Durant. Hawks coach Quin Snyder described the matchup before the game as an "unique experience."

Young, whose status was listed as questionable with an illness, made six 3-pointers and 11 of 14 free throws to carry the Hawks.

Cavaliers 127, Pacers 117

In Indianapolis, Donovan Mitchell scored 35 points and Cleveland Cavaliers beat Indiana.

Darius Garland scored 24 points and Evan Mobley added 22 points and 13 rebounds for the Cavaliers.

Pascal Siakam scored 23 points and Benedict Mathurin 19 for the Pacers, who had their six-game winning streak halted. Myles Turner added 17 points.

The Cavaliers led 82-77 in the third quarter before going on a 10-0 run that included 3-pointers by Max Strus, Georges Niang and Mobley. Cleveland led 100-89 after three periods.

Indiana cut its deficit to 111-106, but could get no closer.

With Indiana trailing 120-111, Mathurin lost his cool and was ejected with a double technical with 3:58 left. Mitchell sank both technical free throws and Mobley hit one of two free throws.

The Pacers had ended the host Cavaliers' 12-game winning streak with a 108-93 victory on Sunday night.

Indiana played without All-Star

point guard Tyrese Haliburton, who was sidelined with left groin strain.

Bucks 130, Kings 115

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 30 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds for his 50th career triple-double as Milwaukee beat Sacramento to snap the Kings' seven-game win streak.

Antetokounmpo's triple-double was his fifth of the season. He had a sixth in the Bucks' NBA Cup championship victory over Oklahoma City, but players' statistics from that game aren't official.

Damian Lillard had 24 points, Brook Lopez 21 and A.J. Green 16 for the Bucks, who never trailed and led by as many as 28.

DeMar DeRozan scored 28, De'Aaron Fox 20 and Keon Ellis 16 for Sacramento. Domantas Sabonis had 16 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists.

Sacramento's Malik Monk didn't play due to a sore right groin. The Bucks didn't have Kris Middleton (ankle injury management) or Gary Trent Jr. (hip flexor strain).

Pelicans 119, Bulls 113

In Chicago, Trey Murphy III scored 32 points and Zion Williamson added 21 as New Orleans beat Chicago.

Williamson, in his third game since returning from a left hamstring strain and a one-game suspension, led the Pelicans in rebounds (seven) and assists (nine). Murphy shot 9 for 20 from the field - just 2 for 13 from 3-point distance - and was helped by hitting all 12 of his free throws.

The Pelicans, who are last in the Western Conference, have won four of their last seven games to improve to 9-32.

Zach LaVine, limited to two points in the first half, finished with 25 points for the Bulls. Nikola Vucevic had 22 points and 15 rebounds, and Coby White scored 22.

Nuggets 118, Mavericks 99

In Dallas, Jamal Murray scored 32 of his season-high 45 points in the first half and led Denver to a victory over Dallas.

Murray easily surpassed his previous season-best of 34 points, scored against Detroit on Dec. 28.

Murray shot 18 for 26 from the floor, including 5 of 9 from 3-point distance, and added six assists and two steals. He headed to the bench with just under four minutes remaining, five points shy of his career high of 50 points against Cleveland on Feb. 19, 2021.

Nets 132, Trail Blazers 114

In Portland, Cam Johnson returned from a five-game absence with a right ankle sprain and scored 24 points in Brooklyn's victory over Portland.

Keon Johnson and Noah Clowney each added 20 for the Nets, who snapped a five-game losing streak.

Scott Henderson had a career-high 39 points, including eight 3-pointers, for the Blazers.

Nets guard Ben Simmons, whose status was uncertain because of lower back injury management and a sore left knee, started and finished with five points, 11 assists and nine rebounds.

Arizona knocks off Baylor

Missouri stuns Florida to end its 16-game home winning streak

GAINESVILLE, Fla., Jan 15, (AP): Caleb Grill scored 22 points, including two free throws with 5 seconds remaining, and Missouri stunned No. 5 Florida 83-82 on Tuesday night to end the Gators' 16-game winning streak at home.

Mark Mitchell added 15 points and eight rebounds for the Tigers (14-3, 3-1 Southeastern Conference), who notched their first road win against a top-five team since 2012.

Anthony Robinson II chipped in 12 points for Mizzou, which dominated the first half while building a 19-point lead.

Grill hit four 3-pointers in the first 10 minutes, including three on consecutive possessions, as the Tigers kept pulling away. He also hit a 3 with 2:23 to play - although replays showed his foot was on the line.

Nonetheless, the 24-year-old graduate student missed two free throws a minute later. He redeemed himself with the game on the line.

Florida (15-2, 2-2), which was a 10-point favorite according to BetMGM, showed life in the second half but never got the lead.

Walter Clayton Jr. led the Gators with 28 points.

Henri Veesaar scored 19 points and Arizona stretched its winning streak to seven games with a victory over No. 25 Baylor.

The Wildcats (11-5, 5-0 Big 12) beat UCF 88-80 on Saturday, but coach Tommy Lloyd wasn't thrilled after they blew most of a 17-point lead.

Arizona responded with an early intensity the Bears (11-5, 3-2) couldn't match, building a 27-point lead early in the second half behind a

stifling defense.

Baylor bounced back with a stellar second half, hitting eight straight shots to trim Arizona's lead to 71-62 with 2 1/2 minutes left before running out of steam.

Robert Wright III had 16 points and VJ Edgecome added 14 for the Bears, who shot 20 of 29 from the floor in the second half.

Arizona's Jaden Bradley had 13 points, six assists and five rebounds. The Wildcats shot 54% overall and 7 of 14 from 3-point range.

Cam Carter scored 27 points and LSU beat Arkansas.

LSU's Jordan Sears made a pair of free throws to end the scoring with 21 seconds left. Arkansas missed its next two shots and had its last shot blocked.

Carter was 7 of 15 from the floor, made three 3-pointers and all 10 of his free-throw attempts. Sears also hit three 3s and finished with 17 points on 5-of-13 shooting for LSU (12-5, 1-3, Southeastern Conference).

Boogie Fland scored 19 points to lead five in double-figure scoring for Arkansas (11-6, 0-4). Adou Thiero scored 13 points and Jonas Aidoo added 12, and the pair each grabbed 10 rebounds.

Carter scored nine points during a 23-7 run to give LSU a 66-57 lead with 4:50 to play. Fland answered with eight points that included a pair of 3s to pull Arkansas to 68-65 with 3:29 left. Carter scored four points in a 7-4 surge to push the advantage to seven points, 76-69, with 46 seconds to go.

Trevon Brazile hit a 3-pointer and Thiero added two free throws for Arkansas before Sears sealed it.

Klopp slams 'useless' Club World Cup, says there are already too many games

SALZBURG, Austria, Jan 15, (AP): Red Bull head of global soccer Jürgen Klopp slammed the Club World Cup, saying it is asking too much of overworked players.

Despite Red Bull-backed Salzburg's inclusion in FIFA's expanded 32-team tournament in the United States next summer, Klopp said he doesn't like the competition.

"I think it's useless. It doesn't help if you have no summer break," Klopp said, referring to players who played in the World Cup, European Championship, Copa America or other international competitions.

"Who wins the tournament is the poorest winner of all time because he has to play the whole summer through and then the league starts again. We have now a lot of injuries in European football," Klopp added. "We have to reduce the amount of games. That means in some leagues it would be better (if) you have 18 instead of 20. That means in other competitions, you don't add games."

Klopp, who was being presented in his new role by Red Bull, suggested



Former soccer coach Juergen Klopp, listens a question during a press conference where he officially introduced as Global Head of Soccer at Red Bull in Salzburg, Austria. (AP)

fans should have the opportunity to watch other sports, too.

"In Germany, you could watch handball. In Austria, you could watch skiing or whatever. You have other wonderful sports that you could watch in that time," Klopp said. "You don't have to fill each gap with football."

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Juventus the draw specialist, Milan the comeback king

MILAN, Jan 15, (AP): Juventus is earning a reputation as draw specialist, AC Milan as the comeback king.

Juventus was held 1-1 at Atalanta for its seventh draw in its past eight league matches and its 13th out of 20 Serie A games this season. It remains unbeaten in Serie A, however.

Milan fought back to win 2-1 at nearby Como. Atalanta moved level on points with second-placed Inter Milan, which has played two matches less, and four points behind Serie A leader Napoli.

Milan was three points below fifth-placed Juventus. They face each other

in Turin on Saturday and Milan is likely to be without key player Christian Pulisic after the United States international limped off on the stroke of halftime at Como.

Juventus took the lead in Bergamo in the 54th minute following great play by Weston McKennie. The United States midfielder ran onto a long ball and then played a perfectly-weighted pass for Pierre Kalulu to fire past Marco Carnesecchi at the near post.

Kalulu had come incredibly close to scoring moments earlier when his header bounced off the inside of the far post and rolled across the line before Carnesecchi man-

aged to claw it away. Television replays showed that only a few millimeters were still on the line, with about 98% of the ball having gone over.

Mateo Retegui made his comeback in the 65th minute after several weeks out with injury and the league's top scorer headed Atalanta level 13 minutes later with 13th league goal of the season.

A historic Theo Hernández goal saw Milan earn a comeback victory for the third time in four matches under Sérgio Conceição, who got his first Serie A win as coach.

Conceição, who replaced the fired Paulo Fonseca at the end of last

year, had got his reign off to the perfect start as he steered Milan to the Italian Super Cup trophy with two comeback wins after just over a week at the helm.

That was followed by a disappointing 1-1 draw against relegation-threatened Cagliari on Saturday, however.

Milan again went behind on Tuesday, when Como's new signing Assane Diao - on the teenager's first start - ran down the right flank and cut inside before firing into the near bottom corner.

Hernández had perhaps been at fault for backing off Diao too much but he atoned for that error with a fine equalizer in the 71st

minute. It was his 30th goal in Serie A, overtaking Paolo Maldini as the Milan defender with the most goals in the Italian league.

Milan turned the match around completely five minutes later when Rafael Leão ran onto Tammy

Abraham's through ball and dinked it over Como goalkeeper Jean Butez.

Leão and Hernández are two of Milan's key players but they have both had a difficult first half of the season as they often clashed with Fonseca.

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Kuwait Marine Sports Club leadership meets to discuss future developments



Sheikh Mubarak, Major General Al-Fahad, Al-Foudari, Board Members, Bursley and Al-Humaidhi.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: The Honorary President of the Kuwait Marine Sports Club, Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak, held a meeting with the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Major General Fahad Al-Fahad, Secretary General Khaled Al-Foudari, Treasurer Faisal Al-Qaseer, and Board members Mahmoud Abu Al-Qasim, Mohammed

Hamza, Ali Al-Qabandi, and Ali Al-Shamali at the club's headquarters. During the meeting, they discussed the club's recent developments and achievements, as well as plans for the maintenance and enhancement of its facilities. The session was followed by an inspection tour of several club facilities.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Major General Al-Fahd expressed gratitude to Sheikh Mubarak for his ongoing support and dedication to maintaining communication with the board, with the goal of improving the club's services and further developing its activities and infrastructure.

Liverpool comes up short against Forest again

Man City's fallibility returns

LONDON, Jan 15, (AP): Liverpool will be glad to see the back of Nottingham Forest.

Two games against the big surprise of the Premier League season have yielded just one point for the leaders after their 1-1 draw at Forest's rocking City Ground.

Liverpool has lost only once in 20 games so far this campaign - and that was 1-0 at home to Forest in September.

Four months later, Diogo Jota scored with a header from a corner in the 66th minute - just 22 seconds after coming on as a substitute - to earn Liverpool a draw that maintained its six-point cushion over Forest, which moved into second place in its improbable bid to qualify for the Champions League. And who knows, maybe more.

Forest was on course to record an unlikely home-and-away double over Arne Slot's team after top scorer Chris Wood scored in the eighth minute.

Liverpool piled on the pressure late on but again failed to defeat Forest, which started the season more likely to be in a relegation battle than competing for the title.

"Before the season we needed to get as quickly as possible to 40 points," Forest goalkeeper Matz Sels said, referring to the total that typically is enough to guarantee safety. "With 17 games to go, we have got 41 so we can look a little bit higher."

Forest's fans goaded Slot at times in a febrile atmosphere at the City Ground that hasn't been this bounc-

ing for a generation. The good times look to be back at a club that was famously European champions in back-to-back years under managerial great Brian Clough, in 1979 and '80.

Liverpool has a game in hand over Forest so is still in a strong position to win a record-tying 20th English league title. Arsenal is in third place, a further point back, and can trim the gap to Liverpool to four points by beating Tottenham in the north London derby on Wednesday.

"If we continue bringing performances like in the second half today," Slot said, "then we will not always be that unlucky that it ends with a draw."

Manchester City showed more late-game fallibility in squandering a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at Brentford.

City conceded in the 82nd minute and again two minutes into stoppage time after Phil Foden scored twice for the struggling champions, who are battling to simply qualify for the Champions League this season.

Prior to winning its last two league games against Leicester and West Ham, City had won just one in nine to drop out of the Champions League qualification positions. During that poor run, City conceded two late goals to lose to Manchester United while also throwing away a three-goal lead late in a 3-3 draw against Feyenoord in the Champions League.

"We have to manage (games) a little bit better," City manager Pep Guardiola said, "but today was not bad."

Yoane Wissa and Christian Nor-



Manchester City's Manuel Akanji, right, and Brentford's Yoane Wissa jump for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Brentford and Manchester City at the Gtech Community stadium, in London, England. (AP)

gaard were the scorers for Brentford

to leave City in sixth place. Chelsea salvaged a 2-2 draw at home to Bournemouth thanks to Reece James' free kick in the fifth minute of stoppage time but saw its winless run in the league extend to five games.

Cole Palmer put Chelsea ahead with a cheeky finish in the 13th

minute for his 14th goal of the season, only for Bournemouth to respond as Antoine Semenyo won a penalty - converted by Justin Kluivert - and smashed home a rising finish in the 68th.

Graham Potter secured his first win as West Ham manager as his new team beat Fulham 3-2.

Carlos Soler and Tomas Soucek scored first-half goals before Lucas Paqueta grabbed the crucial third for West Ham, which brought in Potter last week as a replacement for the fired Julen Lopetegui.

Potter's first match in charge was a defeat at Aston Villa in the FA Cup on Friday.

Alex Iwobi scored Fulham's goals to make it 2-1 and then 3-2.

West Ham moved 10 points clear of the relegation zone with the victory.

Third-tier Leyton Orient set up a fourth-round match with Man City in the FA Cup next month by beating second-tier Derby 6-5 on penalties.

Al-Hardan highlights progress of Kuwait women's futsal team amid challenges

TASHKENT, Jan 15: Hanan Al-Hardan, a member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Football Association and head of the delegation for the Kuwait women's futsal team in the Asian Cup qualifiers held in Uzbekistan, emphasized that women's football in Kuwait is undergoing a significant transitional phase. She acknowledged the challenges faced by the women's Blue team, describing them as difficult but not insurmountable.

Al-Hardan expressed her pride and satisfaction with the players' performance, which has garnered widespread praise from other teams participating in the qualifiers. She highlighted the notable improvement in the team's performance, despite its recent loss, crediting the efforts of the technical, administrative, and medical staff.

She pointed out that some people focus solely on results without considering the challenges the team has faced, particularly the short preparation period of only one month. Limited time also restricted the number of friendly matches, as the priority was to



Players fighting for the ball.

avoid player injuries. Al-Hardan noted that the improvement in the global ranking of the Kuwaiti futsal team is a promising sign of progress.

She expressed optimism for further advancements, attribut-

ing the team's growth to the support provided by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Football Association, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Youssef Al-Sabah, as well as other board members and the Public Authority for Sports.

Burgan set for opening match against Al-Jazira in Arab Clubs Championship

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

DOHA, Jan 15: The 43rd Arab Clubs Volleyball Championship will take place in Doha, Qatar, from January 16-25, featuring 15 clubs divided into four groups. Group A includes Omani Al-Salam, Emirati Bani Yas, and Libyan Al-Suwaihlh, while Group B features Omani Al-Seeb, Egyptian Zamalek, Kuwait, and Libyan Al-Hilal. Group C consists of Iraqi Arbil, Bahraini Dar Kulaib, Egyptian Al-Ahly, and Qatari Al-Shorta. The fourth group includes Kuwaiti Burgan, Palestinian Gaza, Qatari teams, and Emirati Al-Jazira.

The tournament will kick off with three matches on the opening day. Al-Salam will face Bani Yas at 2:00 pm, followed by Burgan's match against Al-Jazira at 4:30 pm, and at 7:00pm, Gaza will play Qatar.

According to the tournament format, the top two teams from each group will advance to the quarter-finals, which will take place on January 22. The remaining teams will compete for positions 9 through 15.

Burgan prepared for the championship with an external camp in Cairo,

Egypt, where they played a friendly match against Heliopolis. The Burgan volleyball delegation is headed by the club's vice president, Mohammed Al-Faraj, and includes team officials such as head of the volleyball apparatus Mohammed Al-Otaibi, administrator Ahmed Al-Houli, Argentine coach Alejandro Grossi, and 18 players.

In local league action, two volleyball matches are scheduled today for the general men's category. At 5:00 pm, Kazma (3 points) will face Al-Sahel (0 points) at the Union Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, followed by the match between Al-Qadisiyah (3 points) and Al-Sulaibikhat (0 points) at 7:00 pm.



Players in during the league match.



Supporters of Hady Habib of Lebanon react on his second round match against Ugo Humbert of France at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Sports

65 male and female athletes to represent Kuwait in Harbin

Kuwait prepares record delegation for Games

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: The Kuwait Winter Games Club has announced that 65 male and female athletes will represent Kuwait in five sports at the Asian Winter Games, set to take place in Harbin, China, from February 7 to 14.

The event features competitions in 17 winter sports, highlighting Kuwait's growing presence in the Asian Olympic movement.

During a press conference, the club's honorary president, Sheikh Jaber Bandar Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, emphasized the significance of this record-breaking Kuwaiti participation and extended his gratitude to all supporters of the club.

Club President Fahad Al-Ajmi highlighted that Kuwait's involvement in the

tournament was made possible through coordination with the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee.

The athletes will compete in five sports: ice hockey, figure skating, ice skating, speed skating, and curling. He described this as the largest Kuwaiti delegation in the history of the tournament, reinforcing Kuwait's vital role in the Asian Winter Games, which will see participation from approximately 1,500 athletes representing 32 countries.

Al-Ajmi affirmed that the club has provided extensive resources to prepare the five teams for the event. He noted that the Kuwaiti ice hockey team will be the first to compete, with their opening match scheduled for February 3, followed by the curl-

ing team on February 4.

The other events will follow the official opening ceremony.

The athletes have been undergoing intensive training at the club, with plans for external training camps in the coming weeks to optimize their readiness for the competition. These camps will be held in locations tailored to the specific needs of each sport.

Club Vice President Khaled Al-Mutairi inaugurated a ceremony to introduce the athletes. Players representing each sport entered the club's hall, receiving enthusiastic support from their teammates across all age groups, symbolizing the spirit of unity and encouragement within the Kuwaiti delegation.



Sheikh Jaber Al-Sabah and Fahad Al-Ajmi.

Siegemund stuns Zheng

Sabalenka and Alcaraz cruise to Australian Open third round

MELBOURNE, Jan 15, (Xinhua): Chinese tennis star Zheng Qinwen crashed out of the Australian Open on Wednesday, but women's defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and men's third seed Carlos Alcaraz enjoyed comfortable second round victories.

Ten-time tournament winner Novak Djokovic, second seed Alexander Zverev and former US Open champion Coco Gauff were among the winners on a dramatic day four that started with Zheng's stunning exit.

Fifth seed Zheng's trusted serve let her down and she had no answers for German veteran Laura Siegemund, who prevailed 7-6 (3), 6-3 in two hours and 16 minutes on John Cain Arena.

It was a bitter disappointment for last year's finalist Zheng, whose hopes of a maiden Grand Slam triumph was undone by a first serve percentage of just 56 percent.

"I knew I had to play more than my best tennis," said Siegemund, who beat a top-10 opponent for the first time since 2022.

"I had nothing to lose. She's an amazing player and one of the best players right now, but I know I can play well." Zheng's exit has opened up the draw for Sabalenka, who progressed 6-3, 7-5 over Jessica Bouzas Maneiro. It was her 16th straight victory in Melbourne as Sabalenka's bid for a third straight Australian Open remained on track.

But Sabalenka has plenty of room left to improve after her normally reliable serve was broken three times by her 54th ranked opponent.

"She played incredible tennis today, and it was a really tough one," Sabalenka said of the 22-year-old Spaniard. "It's a good challenge to have and I love it. I have to play better, so this is the way I improve my game." Third seed Gauff continued her strong form after beating Jodie Burrage 6-3, 7-5 in one hour and 29 minutes. Gauff did endure struggles on serve in the second set and trailed 3-5 before winning the last four games.

Gauff will next play 30th seed Leylah Fernandez as she looks to continue her

unbeaten start to this season after leading the US to the title at the United Cup.

"She really stepped her level up in the middle of the second set, so I was just trying to be offensive when I could," Gauff said.

Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka came from behind to beat 20th seed Karolina Muchova 1-6, 6-1, 6-3 as she reached the third round of a major for the first time since 2022.

"It took everything, I left everything out there on the court," said Osaka, who lost to Muchova in straight sets at last year's US Open.

In the men's draw, a frustrated Djokovic overcame a second set stumble to keep alive his bid for a record 25th Grand Slam title after beating Jaime Faria 6-1, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-2.

Djokovic was occasionally left flustered by the hard-hitting Faria, but his defensive mastery pulled him out of trouble.

His mood fluctuated throughout the three-hour contest, souring late in the second set when he complained about the lights from high above that were turned on amid increasingly gloomy skies.

But Djokovic regrouped and dominated after the roof of Rod Laver Arena was closed early in the third set. He will next face 26th seed Tomas Machac, who came from behind to beat Reilly Opelka in five sets.

While Djokovic has had to endure consecutive four-set matches, Alcaraz's red-hot start continued after blasting past Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 6-0, 6-1, 6-4 in 81 minutes. "I think I played really solid today," said Alcaraz, who is striving to win an elusive Australian Open title to complete his career haul of majors.

"I improved the things that I had to improve from the first match. Just really, really happy with everything today." Zverev romped to a 6-1, 6-4, 6-1 victory over Pedro Martinez in the night session.

But sixth seed Casper Ruud became the biggest casualty in the men's draw after losing to 19-year-old Jakub Mensik, who fired 62 winners in the 6-2, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 upset.

Men's top seed Jannik Sinner highlights day five action on Thursday, while Chinese women's players Wang Xiyu, Zhang Shuai and Wang Yafan will be playing their second round matches.



Casper Ruud of Norway plays a forehand return to Jakub Mensik of the Czech Republic during their second round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Al-Qadsia seeks stability ahead of derby against Al-Arabi

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Sheikh Fahad Talalis working tirelessly to address internal issues and restore stability in Al-Qadsia ahead of the highly anticipated "Derby" match against Al-Arabi on Sunday in the 12th round of the Zain Premier League.

The dispute that occurred between Montenegrin coach Zeljko Petrovic and his assistant Saleh Al-Sheikh, along with football director Musaed Neda, has captured the attention of most fans. The disagreement arose during Al-Qadsia's 2-2 draw against Al-Yarmouk in the 11th round, which saw Al-Qadsia drop 10 points behind league leaders Kuwait and Al-Arabi.

Sources reveal that Petrovic intended to substitute Libyan player Mohammed Soula into the match against Al-Yarmouk, despite objections from Neda and Al-Sheikh due to Soula's on-

going injury. The player missed a crucial penalty in stoppage time. Petrovic, however, did not believe Soula was

responsible for the draw, instead highlighting his past contributions to Al-Qadsia's victories.



Al-Qadsia lost two important points against Al-Yarmouk.

The match also saw several positional changes, prompted by the absence of key players due to injury, including Khaled Al-Rashidi and Khaled Ibrahim Soula, who only featured in the final 15 minutes of the game.

In the aftermath of the draw, Al-Yarmouk team manager Abdulaziz Al-Felakawi emphasized the significance of securing a point against Al-Qadsia. He acknowledged his team's inability to convert dominance into goals, despite a strong performance. Al-Felakawi noted that Al-Yarmouk aimed for victory, given Al-Qadsia's recent triumph over league leaders Kuwait. He pointed out that Al-Yarmouk had a chance to strengthen their lead in the opening 15 minutes but were undone by individual errors, allowing Al-Qadsia to equalize. Al-Felakawi credited his players for their resilience in tough moments, earning a point that could serve as a foundation for the team's future success.

Kuwait starts World Cup campaign on losing note



Austria's Elias Kofler, left, tries to block a shot of Kuwait's Saif Aldawani during the preliminary round Group C match between Austria and Kuwait at the Handball Men's World Championship in Porec, Croatia. (AP)

ZAGREB, Jan 15, (KUNA): The 29th edition of the International Handball Federation (IHF) 2025 Men's World Championship began on Tuesday, with Austria defeating Kuwait 37-26 in the co-hosted tournament by Croatia, Denmark, and Norway. The championship features 32 participating countries and will run until February 2.

Despite the loss, the Kuwaiti team delivered an impressive performance, particularly in the first half, which ended with a close score of 18-16 in Austria's favor.

Kuwait is set to face France on Thursday. France comes into the match after a dominant 37-19 victory over Qatar in their opening game.

Matouq calls time on career after 20 yrs of achievements

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 15: Former Al-Qadsia Club and Kuwait national team player Amer Matouq will bid farewell to soccer next Sunday, marking the end of a distinguished two-decade career. His retirement festival will be held under the patronage of businessman Ahmed Abdullah Al-Radaan. The event will take place alongside the highly anticipated summit match between Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium, part of the 12th round of the Zain Premier League.

Born on April 21, 1988, Matouq began his professional journey with Al-Qadsia's first football team during the 2006/2007 season. His outstanding performances and consistent contributions quickly made him a key figure for both Al-Qadsia and the national team. Over his illustrious career, Matouq helped his club secure 30 championships, including one AFC Cup, six Premier League titles, five Amir Cups, four Crown Prince Cups, six Super Cups, five Federation Cups, two Reserve League titles, and one Al-Jazeera Friendly Tournament.

In addition to his success at the club level, Matouq also made significant



Matouq invites Al-Radhan to his retirement festival.

contributions to the Kuwaiti national team from 2009 to 2019, securing three major titles: the 2010 West Asia Tournament, the 2010 Gulf Cup, and the 2011 Fox Friendly Tournament. He also represented Al-Fahaheel and Al-Tadamon clubs on loan during his career.

Real looks to recover in Copa

MADRID, Jan 15, (Xinhua): Real Madrid returns to action on Thursday when it entertains Celta Vigo in the fourth round of the Copa del Rey with something to prove.

Sunday's 5-2 thrashing to FC Barcelona in the Spanish Supercup final asked some serious questions about the Madrid side, especially in defense, and also saw coach Carlo Ancelotti come in for criticism as his team was taken apart by Barca, who led 5-1 shortly after half-time before holding on for the last half hour with few problems, despite having a player less on the pitch.

Real Madrid's main problems lie in defense, where the lack of a consistently effective holding midfielder has left Lucas Vazquez exposed at right back and where Aurelien Tchouameni struggled as a stand

in central defender against Barca.

Raul Asencio could play in central defense against Celta with Fede Valverde dropping in at right back, although that is another problem for Ancelotti as Valverde and Antonio Rudiger (his best fit central defender) are the two players who have played the most minutes this season.

The good news for Real Madrid is that Celta travels to the capital without injured club captain, Iago Aspas and forward Alfonso Gonzalez both out injured, and without that duo, the Celta attack loses a lot of its bite.

Ancelotti may be tempted to rest Vinicius Jr and Jude Bellingham on Thursday, with Arda Guler (unused in Saudi Arabia) and Brahim Diaz given their chance to start.