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#### NO. 18803 **16 PAGES 150 FILS**

## Kuwait and US ties built on solid ground: Sheikh Fahad

Collaboration bolsters regional security, stability



Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior visits Camp Buehring (formerly Camp Udaire'), northwest Kuwait on Saturday.

## Manila mulls deployment ban 25 caught in to Kuwait after OFW tragedies

MANILA, Jan 18: The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) is weighing the possibility of banning the deployment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to Kuwait following the recent deaths of two OFWs, Dafnie Nacalaban and Jenny Alvarado, according to Philippine news outlets

Nacalaban was reported missing by her second employer in October and

was later found dead at the residence of a Kuwaiti individual. Meanwhile, Alvarado died from coal smoke inhalation at her workplace, along with her Nepalese and Sri Lankan colleagues. Compounding the family's grief, a wrong cadaver was initially sent back to the Philippines.

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KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah on Saturday affirmed that Kuwait and the United States of America have been bonded with solid ties. The Ministry of Defense said

in a statement that the minister was speaking on the heels of his visit to Camp Buehring (formerly Camp Udaire'), northwest Kuwait, where he met with General Patrick Frank, the

**Continued on Page 5** 

## Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Amiri Diwan on Saturday mourned the passing away of Sheikh Abdul-lah Rakan Naif Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the age of 14. The funeral service was to take place in the afternoon after Asr prayers Saturday. (KUNA)

MANAMA: The State of Kuwait Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has praised the volunteering campaigns launched by the Kuwaiti citizens.

Sheikh Thamer was speaking to KUNA during his participation in the voluntary academic campaign launched by Kuwaiti students who study at the Arab Gulf University. (KUNA)

## **Israel-Hamas ceasefire starts** Sunday morning, says Qatar



People gather to celebrate a newly reached ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas, in Damascus, Syria, Jan. 17, 2025. (Xinhua)

CAIRO, Jan 18, (AP): The ceaseceasefire will start at 8:30 a.m. fire between Hamas and Israel will (0630 GMT) Sunday. He advised go into effect in less than 24 hours, people to exercise caution when the said Qatar's foreign ministry on agreement goes into effect and wait Saturday. for directions from officials.

In a post on X, Qatar's Foreign Minister Majid al-Ansari, said the

## Sahel app introduces smart device update

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Yousef Kazim Abbas, the spokesperson for the unified government electronic services application Sahel, announced the release of a new update now available on digital stores for various smart devices, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

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## Frost alert in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18, (KUNA): Kuwait is currently affected with high altitude pressure accompanied by cold winds from eastern Europe along with unsteady northwesterly blows.

The temperature is ebbing particularly in farming and desert areas as of tonight, said Derar Al-Ali, the acting director of

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**Continued on Page 5** 

Al Mulla Auto **launches SOUEAST** and inaugurates brand's showroom in Kuwait

**Burgan Bank** signs purchase agreement to acquire United Gulf **Bank in Bahrain** 

Ministry of Defense photo

**Bneid sweep** 

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Security

campaigns by the Ministry of Inte-

rior continued in various areas and

governorates, with the latest be-

ing held in Bneid Al-Gar under the

field supervision of the First Deputy

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# **Beyond Horizons**



kfh.com 180 3333

	Prayer Timings				
Fajr Sunrise Zohr	06:43	Asr Maghrib Isha	17:14		



**Expected weather for next 24 hrs: By Day:** Rather cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear later on.

By Night: Cold to very cold with light variable wind to light to mod-

#### erate northwesterly wind, with Kuwait Airport speeds of 08-28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for frost forming over agricultural and desert areas. Min Rec

Weather

Station Max Exp Kuwait City 20

Kuwait Airport Abdaly Bubyan Jahra Failaka Island Salmiyah Ahmadi	20 20 21 20 22 18 19
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Photo by Mohammad Morsi

European Union Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen and Ambassador of the Republic of Poland Michał Cholewa during the press conference.

### Poland wins 2nd EU Council presidency

## EU-Kuwait, EU-GCC relations to get boost in '25: Koistinen

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: In a significant event hosted at the Polish Embassy in Ku-wait, Ambassador of the European Union Anne Koistinen and the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Kuwait Michał Cholewa jointly addressed the local media to mark the beginning of Poland's presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The presidency, which runs from January 1 to June 30, 2025, signals a vital period of cooperation and advancement for EU member states and their partners.

The press conference opened with warm exchanges and mutual appreciation between the ambassadors. The EU Ambassador expressed gratitude to the Polish Embassy for hosting the event and congratulated Poland on assuming the presidency which operates under the theme 'Security for Europe', focusing on multifaceted security measures.

Reflecting on Poland's first presidency in 2011, the ambassador expressed confidence in Poland's ability to lead effectively once again. The EU delegation plays a significant role in organizing and hosting regular meet-ings with ambassadors from EU member states represented here in Kuwait.

These meetings provide a platform for member states to exchange views, coordinate efforts, and foster the Team Europe spirit. In this context, we look forward to working closely with our colleagues during the coming six months to support them in achieving the objectives and priorities of the EU Presidency, she said.

The presidency, the EU envoy added, plays a key role in driving, the EU's legislative agenda and facilitating agreements between member states. In this context, Presidency also plays a very important role in advancing collective foreign policy objectives.

The presidency's power will be

integration, as Poland has one of the most pro-integration populations in the EU.

Cholewa acknowledged the complexity of the European Union, noting that European integration encompasses a broad range of issues, from trade and agriculture to health and digital affairs and traditionally includes a program that spans all of these domains.

For Poland, the presidency activities will focus on multifaceted security, encompassing external and internal security, as well as issues related to information, energy, the economy, food, and health. From a Kuwaiti perspective, the most significant aspect of the presidency program is likely to be in the realm of foreign affairs.

#### Strategic

The envoy highlighted Poland's strategic position on the Eastern flank of both the European Union and NATO, noting that its neighborhood has not always been friendly throughout history. Given this, Poland's approach in the foreign affairs domain of its presidency will focus on maximizing support for Ukraine at political, military and economic levels, while maintaining existing policies toward Russia.

Moreover, he said, Poland plans to combine efforts to promote pro-Éuropean reforms in countries aspiring to join the EU through the enlargement process. The presidency will also advocate for deepening relations, particularly in the areas of security and trade. Despite being a Baltic state, Poland has ambitions to play a more prominent role in the Middle East and the Gulf.

In this regard, the Polish presidency will support efforts aimed at ensuring the safety of navigation from the Gulf to the Red Sea, crucial for EU energy security, as Poland, like many other EU member states, imports oil and fuels from this region.

The envoy emphasized that Poland is actively involved in maritime security oprations, including the EU's Mari fensive Security operation in the Red Sea and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) Coalition, based in Bahrain. These initiatives demonstrate Poland's commitment to securing vital sea routes.

## **Co-op heads face flak** for not fulfilling jobs

## Law applies to all, times have changed: Dr Al-Huwailah

## By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18 : In a frank and open session with the financial and administrative supervisors of cooperative societies, the Minister of Social **Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs** Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah affirmed the important role of cooperative societies, and commended their history and the country's leadership in this sector.

During the session, Al-Huwailah said, "It is unfortunate that many supervisors fail to monitor effectively. I have received observations, either through complaints, feedback from the Council of Ministers, citizens, or even from the cooperative societies themselves.'

Addressing the attendees directly, she said, "Your title is supervisor, and you must fulfill your role.

Dr. Al-Huwailah stressed that some supervisors fail to fully execute their duties and show a lack of commitment when dealing with cooperative societies that violate the decisions and circulars from the ministry and the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies.

#### Penalize

She said, "You are just like traffic officers. You must penalize these cooperative societies, not out of mood or arbitrariness, but with objectivity and transparency, based on your observations or those of citizens. You all have the experience from your work in these cooperative societies

Some of you don't even receive monthly reports, or they are delayed. In some cases, cooperative societies prepare the report for the supervisor, which is then submitted to the ministry, whether in good faith or unintentionally. This data reaches me, and I find that some supervisors fail to report violations by certain cooperative societies.

Dr. Al-Huwailah acknowledged that her trans-parency might upset "some," as some supervi-sors could have a conflict of interest with these cooperative societies.

She said, "I do not want to harm anyone, and I do not want anyone to pass on information without first verifying it.'

able before Almighty Allah. This is your role,

and you must preserve your money and protect

She stressed, "We are living in a time of de-termination and firmness. This is a different era,

and the law applies to everyone, whether you are

Dr. Al-Huwailah urged the supervisors to be

cautious of some companies that might try to

manipulate situations for their own interests,

warning, "Be careful, some may try to implicate

over the calls for privatization, stating, "I am

not in favor of privatization. Kuwait has long been known for its cooperative sector, which

has played a major role. Do you want merchants

In addition, Dr. Al-Huwailah expressed regret

a trader, minister, ambassador, or employee."

Dr. Al-Huwailah made a surprising revelation in her speech when she said, "Unfortunately, a small percentage of supervisors cooperate with cooperative societies against the ministry, and some turn a blind eye to certain violations. But I say No, as this is state money, and all viola-

tions, whether minor or

to control the cooperative societies, especially since parallel markets and their prices are much lower than those of cooperative societies? Where will people go, especially since every-

one has the money and ability to buy? We should show compassion for the people and their circumstances, and our role is to support and assist them.

Meanwhile, Dr. Al-Huwailah highlighted a concerning issue by stating, "Mail and checks are delivered to your homes for you to sign. I am the Minister of Postal Services. I personally go there, and I have never had a document delivered to my home. How do checks and mail reach you while you are at home?" Some of you engage in such behaviors, and I receive reports from reliable sources about this. However, my trust in you is greater, and I feel it is my responsibility to deliver this information to you.'

#### Violations

She expressed surprise over the sale of products without prices, stressing that supervisors are obligated to issue violations and take notes in such cases.

The minister highlighted the lack of price consistency between cooperative societies and noted that some supervisors fail to attend mandatory courses on the laws and regulations organized for them.

She shared a statement from the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, who said, "The cooperative societies are under scrutiny, and they have been reported".

The minister stressed that, "When a decision is made to dismiss, dissolve, or refer someone to the Public Prosecution, I swear I lose sleep at night. My heart aches for the people because they have families. It is not right for us to reach this stage. Don't think I am happy about this. I want us to take our work seriously.

## **Other Voices**

## Kuwaiti arts on recovery road

#### By Ahmad alsarraf

n a recent episode of the 'Suwalif' podcast, a guest claimed there is no such thing as 'Gulf art,' asserting instead that art in the region is exclusively Saudi in origin.

As a coastal nation, Kuwait developed sea songs linked to pearl diving, fishing and maritime trade.

societal themes.

Traditional forms like Sawt, a blend

sical and theatrical expression, deeply intertwined with national identity and





major, must be documented. You are account-

the future of your children."

others for their own interests.'

larly significant in 2025, marking a notable moment for EU-Kuwait and EU-GCC relations.

Kuwait plays a key role in advancing the outcomes of the first EU-GCC Summit, which took place in Brussels last October. As a concrete example, I am excited that Kuwait will host the 29th Joint Council Ministerial Meeting later in 2025, bringing together the 27 EU member states and the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries at the level of foreign ministers, said the EU envoy.

#### Congratulate

"Lastly, I would also like to congratulate Kuwait on being named the Arab Capital of Culture and Media in 2025," the EU envoy said.

In his remarks the Polish envoy stated that Poland joined the European Union on May 1. 2004, and last year, the country celebrated the 20th anniversary of its accession. Poland is now assuming the presidency of the European Union for the second time, having previously held it in 2000 and 2011.

The envoy said Poland's EU Presidency logo was inspired by Poland's recent history, symbolizing the rebirth of an independent Poland and evoking the legacy of the Solidarity movement, which was established in the 1980s and played a pivotal role in the collapse of communism and Poland's return to the community of democracies.

The logo also reflects the Polish people's overwhelming enthusiasm for European

Poland also aims to support efforts for lasting peace in the region. The presidency is focused on preventing escalation in the Middle East, providing humanitarian assistance to civilians, and stabilizing the situation. Poland welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire, which still requires validation and implementation, and expressed hope that these steps will hold, he said.

The envoy also mentioned Poland's unwavering support for UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees), providing humanitarian and financial assistance to Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, and Syria, even during the most difficult periods for the organization. Poland's financial contribution to UNRWA in 2024 was the largest in its history.

Cholewa acknowledged that Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, including Kuwait, are increasingly active on the regional and global stage and have proven to be solid and reliable partners for the EU in areas such as trade, counter-terrorism, energy, the environment, climate change, non-proliferation, and economic diversification. Poland's presidency aims to further enhance the EU-GCC dialogue and cooperation, building on the momentum of the first EU-GCC summit held in Brussels last year.

easily been dismissed, the overwhelming support it received compelled me to address this issue in writing. That

said, I do not claim that my perspective is definitive or universally true.

Historically, Yemen been the cradle of art in the Arabian Peninsula, owing to its rich heritage, abundant

proximity to African and Indian influences -- factors absent in much of the peninsula, particularly in the central deserts.

The Yemeni art forms, such as Sana'a singing, are among the oldest musical traditions, distinguished by their profound melodies and poetic lyrics.

This style has earned a place on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. Additionally, Adeni singing reflects African and Indian influences, while Hadrami singing is noted for its serene tone and melodic sweetness.

During the early 20th century, Yemeni music evolved under Egyptian influence, introducing new instruments and fostering some of the peninsula's most renowned artistes.

Turning to the Gulf region, Bahrain and Kuwait emerged as early leaders in art and culture, well ahead of their neighbors, though Oman's contributions often remain underappreciated. Kuwait, with its rich and diverse cultural history, has long been a hub for muof poetic lyrics and stirring melodies and Nahma, performed by sailors to lighten the burden of their labor, stand out as quintessentially Kuwaiti.

Additionally, Kuwait boasts vibrant wedding and holiday music traditions, including Khammari and Samri arts. Over a century ago, Kuwait began recording its singers' music, initially in India and Baghdad, establishing itself decades ahead of its Gulf counterparts.

The mid-20th century saw the rise of Kuwaiti artists such as Abdullah Al-Fadala, Shadi Al-Khaleej and Awad Al-Duwaikhi, who played pivotal roles in modernizing Kuwaiti music.

The theatrical arts in Kuwait also date back to the 1920s, with the first school play, Islam Omar, performed in 1924. The renowned Egyptian artist Zaki Tulaimat later helped establish Kuwait's modern theater scene.

Kuwait also led the way in showcasing women's roles in the arts, with pioneers like Maryam Al-Saleh, Souad Abdullah, Hayat Al-Fahad and Maryam Al-Ghadhban, alongside theatrical legends such as Abdulhussain Abdulredha and Khaled Al-Nafisi.

Moreover, Kuwait introduced cinema to the Gulf in 1955 and I fondly recall visiting the Eastern Cinema with my father, near the Ahmad Tower and Diwan Al-Mulla.

Kuwait has always been a pioneer -- open, innovative and resistant to isolation and extremism. Its rich history serves as a reminder that it will undoubtedly reclaim its legacy, remaining a beacon of cultural excellence in the Gulf and beyond.

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KUNA photo

Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria Talal Al-Fassam meets Georg Knill, President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber.

## Kuwait, Austria to boost ties in trade, investment

VIENNA, Jan 18, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative to the UN and International Organizations in Vienna, Talal Al-Fassam reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to enhancing economic cooperation with Austria, emphasizing the promising investment opportunities available under the country's vision for 2035.

This statement was given to KUNA following Ambassador Al-Fassam's meeting with Georg Knill, President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, at its headquarters in Vienna, where they discussed prospects for bilateral cooperation in economic and industrial sectors.

Ambassador Al-Fassam underlined Kuwait's eagerness to collaborate with Austrian companies, particularly those with expertise in sustainable development, energy, and infrastructure.

He also highlighted the importance of strengthening partnerships between the two countries' private sectors, emphasizing the necessity of exchanging expertise and transferring industrial technology to support sustainable economic development efforts.

Ambassador Al-Fassam said that this cooperation marks a significant step toward bolstering bilateral relations and opening new horizons for joint investments, ultimately serving the developmental goals of both countries.

## Exams successful as MoE declares results of first semester, Grade 12

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei has praised the successful progression of the first semester exams for the academic year 2024-2025, highlighting the exceptional coordination between government agencies and the dedication of the Ministry's employees, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This statement came after the results for the 12th-grade exams in the scientific, literary and religious education tracks were announced on Friday.

KFF photo

Al-Tabtabaei expressed his gratitude to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah for his unwavering support, which he emphasized played a crucial role in ensuring the smooth operation of the exams.

He stressed that the ongoing commitment from the leadership has been a driving force in achieving the Ministry's educational goals with precision and effectiveness.

The Minister also acknowledged the Ministry of Interior's vital role in securing the exams and ensuring their confidentiality, which boosted confidence in the educational process.

Furthermore, he expressed his appreciation to all Ministry employees for their tireless efforts, which contributed significantly to the success of the exams.

In his statement, Al-Tabtabaei congratulated students for their outstanding results, commending their adherence to regulations and discipline.

He encouraged students to continue their dedication and hard work to achieve further success, while also thanking parents for their ongoing support.

Al-Tabtabaei concluded by emphasizing the importance of building an informed and creative generation, ready to contribute to Kuwait's development and asked for God's blessings on the country and its leadership.

'Bonus will be withheld if e-link with CSC not done'

#### By Mohammad AI-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: According to informed sources, the Civil Service Council has warned government agencies that new procedures will be implemented if they fail to complete the automated link with the integrated systems of the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

They said the council insisted that, should the automatic link not be finalized by the January 31 deadline, financial rewards for excellent performance will be withheld until the link is completed.

The sources stressed the importance of fully complying with the decision by the specified date in order to avoid any measures that could affect financial rewards or performance evaluations.

This move is in line with the Civil Service Council's directive that mandates all government agencies, as stipulated in Decision No. 41/2006 to establish an automated link with CSC's integrated systems.

Firemen during the drill.

## KFF conducts drill at clinic

As part of the ongoing cooperation between the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) and the Min-istry of Health, KFF conducted a practical exercise on Thursday at Bayan Health Clinic. According to a press release issued by KFF, the exercise involved evacuating the

clinic, rescuing the injured, and controlling a simulated fire as part of the scenario. These exercises carried out by KFF are designed to enable quick responses to

such incidents, with the goal of protecting lives and properties, and ensuring community safety.





## LOCAL





Talal Al-Roumi addressing the firemen.



Participants of the course getting certificates.

## KFF honors 'Khaleeji Zain 26' fire-fighters

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi, honored the personnel who participated in securing the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Championship "Khaleeji Zain 26" in recognition of their efforts that contributed to the success of the tournament.

According to a press release issued by KFF, Major General Al-Roumi expressed his gratitude to the KFF Committee for their role in securing Khaleeji Zain 26. He praised their efforts in organizing the tournament, developing a comprehensive plan to protect the public and guests of Kuwait from any emergencies, and their fruitful cooperation with the relevant authorities. This collaboration resulted in the successful execution of the event and the appearance of the participating force in a manner that reflected the professionalism and honor of Kuwait's firefighters.

In another development, the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) concluded an introductory course

on hazardous materials last Thursday at the Shadadiya Center for Hazardous Materials for members of the General Department of Coast Guard at the Ministry of Interior.

According to a press release issued by KFF, this course is part of the ongoing cooperation between KFF and the Ministry of Interior with the aim of educating personnel handling hazardous materials on the best professional methods for their initial management and response.

## **Court upholds death sentence for Bedoun in father's murder**

## Man attempted to kill mother, injured brother

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The Court of Cassation upheld the verdicts of the Criminal and Appeal courts, and sentenced a young man, a bedoun, to death for shooting to death his father in May 2023 and attempting to kill his mother inside the family home in the Al-Firdous area.

The defendant was apprehended by security forces shortly after committing the crime.

During interrogation, he claimed that he was under the influence of drugs given to him by a friend, and that he was not fully conscious at the time of the incident, and only realised the following day when the police informed him that he had killed his father.

However, the three court rulings rejected this claim, ruling that he does not deserve leniency or a reduced sentence.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendant with premeditated murder of his father, stating that he had planned and intended to kill him.

He left his vehicle at the crime scene, headed to a remote area, retrieved a firearm that was buried there, and returned to the scene. He then

fired a single shot that struck his father's chest, with the intention to kill him, as confirmed by the autopsy report.

The defendant also committed domestic violence by attempting to premeditatedly kill his mother, but he failed to do so.

In addition, he used a firearm (a machine gun) and ammunition in residential areas, an activity that is forbidden by law.

He possessed ammunition for the firearm in question without authorization. He also committed domestic violence by intentionally assaulting his mother, causing injuries documented in the case files, and attacked his brother, resulting in injuries described in the report.

### Road closure announced

## 981 traffic citations issued,27 cars seized, 2 arrested

#### By Munif Naif Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The General Traffic Department launched an extensive security traffic campaign in Sabah



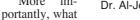
### A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Germany, Islamic world must work towards inclusive future

"THE recent statement by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, delivered with a trembling voice and stern demeanor during her visit to Syria, has left us both surprised and perplexed. Her declaration that Germany does not provide financial support to 'Islamic structures' raises question marks," columnist Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Jeeran wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"What does she mean by this? Is the Levant, with its ancient and vibrant history, being dismissed as a mere temple

akin to the alleged Temple of Solomon? Has Damascus, a city that has stood at the crossroads of civilizations, been reduced to a void?



of Syria's present reality? After years of turmoil under a corrupt regime propped up by foreign invasions that left behind thousands of dead, wounded, displaced and disabled, Syria is now gradually recovering.

"It extends a hand to friends and allies, seeking support rooted in humanity rather than imposed guardianship. Baerbock's comments, however, seem to ignore this context entirely.

"Equally baffling is Baerbock's apparent disdain when she refused to shake hands with Ahmad Al-Shara'a, an act she may frame as personal freedom. Yet, the very same principle of personal freedom allowed her to choose her attire for this diplomatic visit.

"Is this not a double standard? For a country like Germany, whose constitution and people pride on secularism, such actions seem incongruent. They stand in stark contrast to the secular ideals that Germany upholds and the lived reality of its diverse society.

"This inconsistency may stem from a lack of understanding of the historical ties between Islam and Germany. It risks reducing a complex relationship to superficial judgments about attire and gestures.

"The truth is that Europe -- and Germany in particular -- relies on the Middle East, not just for resources but for the shared legacy of human history and culture. To ignore this interdependence is to turn a blind eye to reality. "The history of Islamic-German relations is rich and instructive. In 732 AD, during the Battle of Tours, the tide of Islamic expansion was halted at the Byzantine kingdoms.

Yet, relations between the German Empire and the Islamic Caliphate evolved, with diplomatic exchanges under Emperor Karl Martel and Caliph Harun al-Rashid. Such interactions aimed to secure safe passage for Christians traveling to Jerusalem.

"This collaboration continued over centuries. In 1590, Germany saw the establishment of its first chair in Arabic studies at Heidelberg University, reflecting a deep engagement with Islamic scholarship. The contributions of Orientalists and translators enriched German academic and cultural life.

"Today, Germany is home to over five million Muslims, a community shaped by history and migration. From the Ottoman soldiers left behind after World War II to the modern influx of workers and refugees, this population has grown alongside Germany contributing to its economy and cultural fabric.

"Despite this shared history, recent trends in Germany reveal a troubling disconnect. A 2023 study from the Institute for Criminal Research in Saxony found that 67.8 percent of surveyed Muslim students prioritize the Qur'an over secular laws.

"This belief is not exclusive to Germany but shared by over a billion Muslims worldwide. Instead of fostering fear, Germany could view this as an opportunity to engage with its Muslim population through dialogue and mutual respect.

"Secularism, after all, guarantees freedom of belief. If Muslims abide by German laws, their faith should not be seen as a threat. The rise of far-right movements and extremist rhetoric against Muslims and people of color only underscores the urgency of bridging this divide.

"Germany and the Islamic world have a long history of coexistence and collaboration. To dismiss Islam or its adherents is to overlook this shared past and jeopardize a shared future.

"Diplomatic etiquette and mutual respect must guide international relations, especially with regions like the Middle East, whose history and resources are indispensable to Europe.

rope. "Minister Baerbock's visit to Syria was an opportunity to strengthen ties and foster understanding. Instead, her statements and actions have raised questions about Germany's approach to Islam and its place in a secular, diverse society. "Moving forward, Germany must reflect on how it engages with the Islamic world -- not as a threat but as a partner in building a better, more inclusive future."





Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Naser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah visits the zoo in Omariya.

Plan to woo more tourists

## Kuwait Zoo to be refurbished, all needs will be met: Al-Athbi

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Naser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah visited Kuwait Zoo in Omariya on Thursday morning to inspect its latest developments and deal with its most pressing needs.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the governor was welcomed by the acting Director General of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Nasser Taqi, Director of Farwaniya Security Command Brigadier General Mohammad Mutlaq Al-Mutairi, Deputy Director of Farwaniya Security Command Brigadier General Nayef Al-Hajraf, Director of Kuwait Zoo Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Kandari, and other officials.

The governor and the concerned officials were given a general tour of the zoo's facilities and were briefed on existing projects and the future plans to develop the facility. Discussions focused on the zoo's basic requirements and needs with the aim of enhancing the role of the tourist park and exploring ways to cooperate with relevant authorities.

This visit is part of the governor's efforts to monitor the vital facilities and strengthen cooperation to achieve sustainable development, protect the environment, and improve tourist facilities.

The Kuwait Zoo, which was established in 1966 and opened in 1968, has since undergone continuous development, becoming an agricultural, tourist, and recreational heritage site with special significance for Kuwaiti families.

At the end of the visit, Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser affirmed the importance of dealing with the existing deficiencies and evaluating the main development plans for this vital facility, which is part of Kuwait's agricultural and animal wealth.

He stressed the need for continued collaboration with all relevant authorities to meet the zoo's needs. Al-Ahmad Residential area, during which 981 traffic citations were issued, 27 vehicles were seized, and two individuals - one found in an abnormal condition and the other in possession of narcotics - were arrested.

During the campaign, which was aimed to apprehend violators and wanted individuals, nine vehicles wanted by the judiciary were seized and three absconding individuals were arrested and referred to the competent authorities.

The General Traffic Department reiterated its warning to drivers about the importance of fastening seat belts for both the driver and the front-seat passenger.

It emphasized the enforcement of ministerial Resolution No. 963/1993, which mandates that "drivers of cars and passengers in the front seats must use the seat belt while the vehicle is moving."

Meanwhile, the General Traffic Department has announced the continuation of maintenance work on the Maghreb Road at the Fourth Ring Road intersection, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The GTD report said the second phase will involve closing the secondary exit from Maghreb Expressway towards Jabriya for drivers coming from Ahmadi and moving to the city.

city. The closure will affect access to Salmiya and Jabriya via the Fourth Ring Road and is expected to last until next Friday.

Motorists are advised to plan alternate routes during this period.

## Two Kuwaiti brothers die in accident on Salmi Road

#### By Munif Naif Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: A tragic traffic accident occurred on Salmi Road, resulting in the death of two brothers and the injuries to an individual.

According to a security source, when the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room received a report about the collision of two vehicles on Salmi Road, police officers and firefighters from the Shaqaya Fire Station immediately rushed to the location. Upon arrival, they discovered that two Kuwaiti brothers had died, and a third person had been injured.

The bodies of the victims were referred to the Forensic Medicine Department. The injured individual was taken to the nearest hospital for treatment. A case has been filed.

## Kuwait stresses GCC cyber ties boost to counter new threats

DOHA, Jan 18, (KUNA): A visiting Kuwaiti official underscored significance of the 2025 Gulf Cybersecurity Forum for swapping expertise among the GCC countries in the present times where digital challenges have alarmingly soared.

Speaking to KUNA at end of the twoday forum today, Ghaida' Al-Mazkour, an assistant undersecretary from the Ministry of Higher Education, said the forum grouped cybersecurity experts from the GCC countries to discuss latest technologies in the sphere and security systems for protecting information in the face of rapidly increasing threats.

rapidly increasing threats. The State of Kuwait had presented a scientific paper at the gathering including a project about the Quantum computing application -- presented by Dr. Omar Al-Ibrahim.

The Kuwaiti team had also addressed the gathering about the experience of the central information technology apparatus (the government cyber shield), presented by Nasser Al-Azmi.

Al-Mazkour noted that youth from GCC countries took part in the workshop and congratulated the Kuwaiti student Abdullah Al-Mekhial for winning "the research stamps award." Teams from the other GCC countries were also honored in the final session.

## MoE open to accept Grade 12 exam result grievances

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The Ministry of Education has announced that students can now submit grievances regarding their Grade 12 exam results for the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year in the scientific, literary and religious education sections, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The gievances will be accepted over three days, starting Saturday, until January 20.

Students are allowed to submit grievances for up to three academic subjects and all submissions must be made through the Ministry of Education's official website. - Compiled By PFX Fernandes



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#### ARAB TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 2025

## LOCAL



Kuwait Fire Force participates in the introductory seminar for the Sharjah Award in Public Finance.

### KFF joins Sharjah Award seminar on Public Finance

The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) participated in the introductory seminar for the Sharjah Award in Public Finance, which was held Wednesday morning at the Regency Hotel in Kuwait.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the award aims to promote best financial practices in public administration, enhance the efficiency of financial and administrative performance through the use of the latest technologies, and honor distinguished institutions and individuals in the field. The award also encourages government institutions and individuals to participate, enhances regional cooperation to improve financial practices, and serves as a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences through the publication of its results.

During the seminar, introductory sessions covered the objectives of the award, evaluation criteria, and participation requirements, along with a specialized training workshop in public finance

KFF was represented at the seminar by Director of the Financial Affairs Department Brigadier Wael Ali Yousef.

## MEW seeks CSC approval to fill 200 vacant leadership positions

## Leadership reshuffle to support strategic goals

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has requested the **Civil Service Commission (CSC) to** approve the terms and conditions for filling up 200 vacant leadership positions.

Sources from the ministry said the vacant

leadership positions are in various sectors and departments and the ministry aims to fill them in order to improve its operations. Sources confirmed that filling up these vacant posts is a priority for the ministry's leadership, with expectations that the coming period will witness the filling of these vital positions.

Sources said the ministry is keen on completing all necessary procedures to fill the vacancies, with the goal of improving work efficiency in its departments. "The list of vacancies includes leadership and technical positions that are crucial for enhancing the ministry's performance. The ministry is committed to filling these positions with highly qualified candidates to ensure smooth operations and to achieve the strategic objectives of each sector." sources added.

In a related development, a ministerial decision was issued two days ago appointing Director of the Program Planning and Follow-up Department in the Power Plants and Water Distillation Sector Eng Khalaf Al-Kafifa to also assume the responsibilities of the Director of the Undersecretary's Office effective immediately

### Meeting needs of labor market

## Al-Jalal updates list of top global universities for Kuwaiti students

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Abdullah Al-Jalal issued a ministerial decision to approve the updating of the lists of distinguished higher education institutions and specializations in the United States for both undergraduate and postgradu-

ate programs. The decision also includes updat-ing the lists of distinguished higher education institutions according to specialization in the **United Kingdom**, as well as in several

European countries, Dr. Al-Jalal including:

Republic of Austria, Republic of Belgium, Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Finland, Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Ireland, Republic of Italy, Luxembourg, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kingdom of Norway, Kingdom of Spain, Kingdom of Sweden, and Swiss Confederation.

In a press statement, Minister Al-Jalal affirmed that this ministerial decision to update the lists is part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to ensure the quality of education provided to Kuwaiti students.

He explained that this decision reflects the Ministry of Higher Education's commitment to providing a distinguished academic environment that aligns with the aspirations of students and meets the needs of both the local and international labor markets, and thereby enhancing national competencies in various fields.

The update of the lists of distinguished higher education institutions followed a thorough study and comprehensive evaluation by the National Authority for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance, based on internationally recognized standards, with the aim of ensuring scientific and research excellence for the students.

The minister encouraged students planning to study at distinguished universities to periodically review the updated lists of educational institutions provided by the National Authority for Academic Accreditation and Education Ouality Assurance, before enrolling, to ensure they receive an education that aligns with global developments in science and technology and meets the expectations of both students and their families.

He affirmed that the ministry will continue to support students' academic progress, and offer guidance and assistance to help them achieve their educational goals.

Al-Jalal highlighted that investment in higher education is the basis for building an advanced knowledge-based society and for enhancing Kuwait's position on the global education map.

In addition, the Director General of the National Authority for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance Dr. Jassim Al-Ali explained that the Board of Directors of the authority, chaired by His Excellency the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, approved the update of the lists of distinguished higher education institutions outside the State of Kuwait, including those in European countries, the United Kingdom, and the United States, for both undergraduate and graduate programs.

He affirmed that the authority is continuously working to evaluate international educational institutions and track periodic updates in line with global academic developments through specialized committees to ensure that the quality of academic programs adheres to the best international standards.

Dr. Al-Ali encouraged all students, parents, and relevant governmental and private entities to visit the official website of the authority at https://nbaq.edu.kw to view the latest updated lists of distinguished and accredited higher education institutions and to ensure their compliance with these standards.







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Minister of Social Affairs during the delivery of wheelchairs to people with disabilities.

Broader plan to enhance services

## Wheelchair aid for special needs to resume, says Minister Al-Huwailah

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs, Family Affairs and Childhood, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah declared on Thursday resumption of distributing wheelchairs to cases of special challenges after years of stoppage.

The decision is part of a full-scale plan to back up the rights of the handicapped and ensure that they get the services they need, she said in a statement.

The minister declared that she is tackling

the issues that had led to halting delivery of such aid equipment to this segment of the people of Kuwait.

Moreover, Minister Al-Huwailah affirmed her keenness on exerting itensive efforts to overhaul the infrastruture and the services for the disabled -- including medical equipment, training programs, social and psychologica support. She also pledged to ensure that they be able to merge into the society and boost their rights.

Claims must be submitted by March 16

## MoE sets deadline for financial closure of fiscal year 2024/2025

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: In preparation for the conclusion of the current fiscal year --2024/2025, Assistant Undersecretary for Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Education Mohammad Al-Khalidi issued a circular to all sectors and departments, stating the necessary procedures to close accounting entries and prepare the final account for the fiscal year.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the circular, indicating that the ministry is keen on appropriately allocating expenses and revenues for each fiscal year in accordance with the directives of its finance counterpart to guarantee compliance with the regulations and procedures followed by government agencies.

Al-Khalidi underscored the importance of submitting all financial claims related to the ministry's sectors and departments, along with the supporting documents, to the Financial Affairs Sector by March 16, 2025. "This deadline is crucial to ensure that financial dues for fiscal 2024/2025 are paid before the period ends," he explained.

He also stressed that adherence to the instructions in the circular is essential for the accurate completion of the financial accounts for the current year. "This step is intended to improve the efficiency of financial operations and prevent delays that could disrupt the ministry's workflow," he asserted.

The circular was distributed to the concerned departments and entities to guarantee full cooperation between them. This collaborative effort aims to ensure the smooth and timely closure of accounting entries to achieve financial discipline and improve the quality of financial management. These steps are in line with the State's broader goals of improving public spending efficiency and managing government funds more effectively.

## Kuwait upgrades food supply centers

KUWAITCITY, Jan 18, (KUNA): Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel on Wednesday affirmed that the strategic supplies centers' project contributes to enhancing the national food security.

Such a goal is attainable with larger storage capacities that are also more effective in addition to an expanded space for displaying the items, as well as updating the services for the citizens, the minister said in a statement o KUNA.

In addition to the larger storage spaces, the venture envisages electronic applications including delivery services to the houses, in line with the Government keenness on ensuring comfortable means of living for the nationals, Minister Al-Ajeel added.

The advanced services will benefit more 70,000 citizens from each center, he said, revealing that each center's storage capacity will range between 500 and 1,000 square meters.

## LOCAL



Participants at the Leadership Empowerment Workshop in London.

12 government heads gain insights

## CSC concludes leadership workshop in London

LONDON, Jan 18, (KUNA): In the presence of Kuwait Ambassador to the United Kingdom Bader Al-Munayekh, the Civil Service Commission concluded a contractual program, themed "workshop on leadership empowerment" in London on Friday.

Heads of 12 government bodies

took part in the program between January 13 and 17, according to a CSC statement.

The commission's overseas training department organized the program under a memorandum of understanding between Kuwait and the UK.

The workshop aimed to improve the reliability of civil servants the strate-

gies for qualifying future leaders of government institutions, drawing on the experience of the UK Civil Service.

As part of the program, participants visited both chambers of the UK Parliament and were apprised of the development of the lawmaking process in the UK in the course of time.

KUNA photo Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadi inaugurates the exhibition accompanying the conference.

## Al-Sabah Hospital as one of Kuwait's leading medical institutions: minister

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said Al-Sabah Hospital has a rich medical experience and is one of Kuwait's top scientific and medical facilities.

In a speech at the opening of the hospital's first scientific conference

on Saturday, the minister underlined the recent achievements of Al-Sabah Hospital, including opening an epilepsy monitoring unit for children, the first of its kind in Kuwait, which reduced the numbers of patients who

need medical treatment abroad. He also mentioned the expansion

in the Gastroenterology Department, to receive more patients and reduce the time period on waiting lists.

Moreover, minister Al-Awadhi noted the launch of critical medical care unit for children in 2022, as well as providing specialized surgery treatments.

## **KISR launches 7th Scientific Exhibition for Children**

Initiative to foster scientific creativity and research skills among Kuwait's youth



Opening of the Seventh Children's Science Exhibition.

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), in collaboration with the American University of the Middle East (AUM), launched the 7th Scientific Exhibition for Children yesterday at the Capital Mall, and it will continue until December 18.

In a statement, the acting Director General of KISR



#### Group photo of children participating in the exhibition.

"Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Culture" this year, an occasion that confirms the distinguished position of Kuwait in the field of culture. It also reaffirms the dedication of Kuwait's political leadership to enhancing culture and scientific research.

Meanwhile, the Director of Marketing and Commercial Operations at KISR Abdul Mohsen Al-Haroun highlighted the importance of such events in shaping future scientists, particularly in light of rapid technological advancements and the continual renewal of knowledge.



Part of the Seventh Children's Science Exhibition.

eight innovative scientific experiments that complement the research activities offered by KISR's various centers, including the Energy and Construction Research Center, the Petroleum Research Center, and the Environmental and Life Sciences Research Center. The experiments cover various topics, including the impact of dust, rehabilitation of desert areas, soil types, and studies on desert birds and plants.

During the exhibition, researchers will assist children in conducting 11 simplified and diverse scientific experiments in several fields, such as desert birds and plants, soil and its types, the impact of dust, and rehabilitation

Dr. Faisal Al-Humaidan affirmed that organizing this exhibition reflects KISR's commitment to enhancing the culture of scientific creativity among children and developing their research skills. This initiative is part of KISR's ongoing efforts to prepare a scientifically aware and creative generation.

He said the exhibition coincides with the selection of

Dr. Al-Humaidan called for further cooperation and collaboration among scientific, cultural, and educational institutions to simplify the outputs of science, technology, and innovation, and to push for greater interest in scientific culture among children and youth.

He stressed that investing in children from a young age is the basis for both scientific and societal progress.

Al-Haroun explained that AUM is participating in the exhibition for the second consecutive year by presenting of desert areas.

The exhibition, which was first launched in 2018, has attracted over 5,087 children in seven sessions.

Al-Haroun affirmed that KISR will continue to organize it as an educational platform that blends entertainment with learning with the aim of enhancing children's intellectual abilities and supporting their academic excellence.

## **Continued from Page 1**

### Kuwait and

Commander of the US Central Command Ground Force, and the US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Hideko Sasahara.

It quoted him as affirming the two states' keenness on bolstering the partnership in the fields of training and defense coordination for serving mutual interests, strengthening regional security and stability.

The statement added that the Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef examined tasks at the camp, operating plans and the forces' missions. Moreover, senior officers briefed him about the troop preparedness and mutual coordination.

He was accompanied during the visit to the camp by the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwait Army, Staff Air Vice Marshal Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior officers.

## 25 caught

Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef. The campaign resulted in the issuance of 1,521 traffic citations and the arrest of 25 wanted individuals.

The Ministry of Interior explained that the campaign involved officers from the Traffic, Operations, and Special Security sectors. It resulted in the arrest of two individuals in a disoriented state, 12 wanted persons, four violators of residency laws, four individuals without identification papers, and three individuals who were reported as absconding. Also, two vehicles that were reported as stolen, along with 53 vehicles and motorcycles were seized due to traffic violations.

The ministry reiterated its commitment to continuing security and traffic operations throughout the country to apprehend violators, criminals, individuals with enforceable judicial rulings, residency and labor law offenders, suspects in cases, and anyone breaking the law.

It urged the public to cooperate with security personnel and report any vio-

lations or unlawful activity by calling the emergency No. 112.

## Sahel app

The update includes several enhancements to improve user experience, speed and account security. Key features of the update include a complete redesign of the login interface for smoother navigation, a new alert box at the top of the screen for easy access to the latest data and improved organization of notifications, with color-coded alerts for better prioritization.

The update also introduces a 'Favorite Notifications' feature, allowing users to save important alerts for quick access and provides direct contact information for government agencies in the settings menu for easier communication.

Users are advised to reactivate protection for their accounts after updating the application, which supports both Arabic and English languages.

## Manila mulls

Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Cacdac revealed that the possibility of a deployment ban has been brought to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s attention. While details remain unclear, the potential ban could either target specific types of workers, such as domestic helpers, or apply to all Filipino workers in Kuwait.

Currently, the Philippines already prohibits first-time domestic workers from being deployed to Kuwait. Cacdac also hinted at the possibility of stricter regulations for OFW deployments to the Gulf country. "If our review finds that a suspension of deployment will help, we will implement it," Cacdac said, adding that the welfare and safety of OFWs are paramount, though employment opportunities must also be considered.

With around 215,000 OFWs currently in Kuwait, any decision will significantly impact many Filipino families relying on remittances. The DMW is conducting further assessments to determine the best course of action.

## Frost alert

the meteorology center, in remarks to KUNA, on Saturday.

The weather is tending to remain cold during the days and very cold at nights until Wednesday, with the temperature forecast to ebb less than three degrees Celsius, forming frost in the farming and arid regions, he said.

### **Israel-Hamas**

Early Saturday morning, Israel's Cabinet approved the deal for a ceasefire in Gaza that would release dozens of hostages and pause the 15-month war with Hamas, bringing the sides a step closer to ending their deadliest and most destructive fighting ever.

Despite the ceasefire news, sirens sounded across central Israel on Saturday, with the army saying it intercepted projectiles launched from Yemen. The Iran-backed Houthis have stepped up their missile attacks, in recent weeks. The group says the attacks are part of their campaign aimed at pressuring Israel and the West over the war in Gaza.

There were also continued Israeli strikes into Gaza. The Palestinian Health Ministry said at least 23 people were killed in the previous day.

Under the first phase of the ceasefire, 33 hostages are set to be released over the next six weeks, in exchange for hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. The remainder, including male soldiers, are to be released in a second phase that will be negotiated during the first. Hamas has said it will not release the remaining captives without a lasting ceasefire and a full Israeli withdrawal.

According to the ceasefire plan, approved by the Cabinet and signed by Israel's national security adviser, the exchange will begin Sunday at 4 p.m. (1400 GMT). During each exchange, prisoners will be released by Israel after the hostages have arrived safely.

The plan says that during phase one, some 1,900 Palestinian prisoners will be released, in exchange for 33 Israeli hostages, both alive and dead.

## Kuwait's sixth humanitarian plane with ten tons of aid arrives in Syria

Lifeline continues, boosting relief efforts

DAMASCUS, Jan 18, (KUNA): The sixth Kuwaiti airplane carrying humanitarian aid to Syria arrived at Damascus International Airport on Saturday, with ten tons of essential items on board, as part of the "Ku-wait by Your Side" campaign.

Kuwait Society for Relief, with the participation of charity societies, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense.

country. In a statement to KUNA earlier.

Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Society for Relief Dr Ibrahim Al-Saleh said that the society continues to provide humanitarian aid to Syrians, under direct orders from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

On his part, the society's Director General Abdulaziz Al-Obaid said the campaign aims to ease the suffering of Syrians during the harsh winter months and provide them with daily essential items.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Board of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society Jamal Al-Nouri said that the society has been aiding Syrians since the crisis broke out in 2011.

The society is eager to take part in the reconstruction of Syria, including building the infrastructure and renovating buildings and schools.



Kuwaiti relief aid arrives at Damascus International Airport.

Kuwait, since establishing the re-

The campaign is organized by

lief air bridge with Syria on December 30, 2024, has dispatched more than 150 tons of relief supplies to the

## INTERNATIONAL

## Putin, Pezeshkian forge 20-year strategic pact amid sanctions

## Moscow and Tehran deepen ties, sign historic partnership treaty

MOSCOW, Jan 18, (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Iranian counterpart, Masoud Pezeshkian, signed a broad cooperation pact as their countries deepened their partnership in the face of stinging Western sanctions.

Russian and Iranian officials say the "comprehensive strategic partnership treaty" covers all areas -- from trade and military cooperation to science, education and culture. The 20-year treaty could be extended further.

Putin praised the deal as a "real breakthrough, creating conditions for the stable and sustainable development of Russia, Iran and the entire region."

He said the amount of trade and economic cooperation was still insufficient, voicing hope the new treaty will help clear bureaucratic hurdles and expand ties. The Russian leader added that the countries are trying to resolve technical obstacles to advance planned projects to ship Russian natural gas to Iran via Azerbaijan and build transport corridors to Iranian ports in the Gulf.

Pezeshkian said the projects are feasible, adding that experts were working to resolve remaining obstacles.

"We witness a new chapter of strategic relations," the Iranian president said, adding that the countries were set to expand trade ties and also boost the "level of security cooperation.'

His visit came ahead of Monday's inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump, who has pledged to broker peace in Ukraine and take a tougher stance on Iran, which is grappling with growing economic problems and other chal-lenges, including military setbacks in its sphere of influence across the Middle East.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed any link with Trump's inauguration, saying that Pezeshkian's visit had been planned long ago.

The signing of the treaty with Iran follows last year's pact with North Korea -- countries once identified by former President George W. Bush, along with Iraq, as "the Axis of Evil.

Unlike the treaty with Pyongyang, the pact with Tehran



Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian attend a signing ceremony for a partnership treaty to deepen their ties after their talks at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia, on Jan. 17, 2025. (AP)

doesn't envisage mutual assistance in case of aggression. But it does oblige each country not to offer any military or any other aid to an aggressor attacking another party.

Moscow and Tehran, which both have faced massive Western sanctions, agreed in the document to coordinate their response to such restrictions and facilitate payments in national currencies. The pact also envisions the exchange of intelligence information and cooperation on security issues.

Welcoming Pezeshkian as they sat down for talks, Putin said the new treaty will "give an additional impetus to practically all areas of our cooperation.'

Pezeshkian, who met Putin for the third time since coming to power in July, said the documents form a "solid foundation for our forward movement."

'We do consider our relations with you as vital, sensitive and strategic, and we are on this path strongly," he said.

The Iranian president emphasized that countries in the region should resolve their own problems themselves, adding in an apparent reference to the U.S. that the presence of outside forces will only exacerbate tensions and destabilize the situation.

"They come from another side of the world to make chaos in the region," he said. "These ties will defuse their plot, definitely

Russia's ties with Iran have grown closer after Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022. Ukraine and the West have accused Tehran of providing Moscow with hundreds of drones for use to attack Ukraine, which Moscow and Tehran have denied.

Pezeshkian spoke in support of prospective Russia-Ukraine peace talks, saying that "war is not a solution" and urging the West to "avoid imposing excessive demands" and acknowledge others' "security concerns."

Last year, Iran joined the BRICS bloc of developing economies and Pezeshkian attended its summit, which was hosted by Russia in Kazan.

Russia and Iran, which had troubled relations in the past, developed cordial ties after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, with Moscow emerging as a key trade partner and supplier of weapons and technologies for Tehran, which has faced bruising international sanctions.

Russia built Iran's first nuclear plant that was launched in 2013 and is building two more nuclear reactors there.

Russia was part of the 2015 deal between Iran and six nuclear powers offering sanctions relief for Tehran in exchange for curbing its atomic program, and the Kremlin offered political support to Iran when the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the agreement during Trump's first term.

'Equal Rights Amendment law of the land'

## Biden pushes for equality and sidesteps legal hurdles on ERA

WASHINGTON, Jan 18, (AP): President Joe Biden announced Friday that the Equal Rights Amendment should be considered a ratified addition to the U.S. Constitution, making a symbolic statement that's unlikely to alter a decades-long push for gender equality.

"The Equal Rights Amendment is the law of the land," Biden said even though presidents have no role in the constitutional process. He did not direct the leader of the National Archives to certify the amendment, as some activists have called for, sidestepping a legal battle.

It was the latest in a collection of pronouncements that Biden has made in the waning days of his presidency as he tries to tie up loose ends and embroider his legacy despite leaving after only one term. He's also called for a ban on stock trading for members of Congress and proposed term limits for Supreme Court justices - ideas that lingered for years before Biden endorsed them.

With his popularity low and political influence running dry before he's replaced by Donald Trump on Monday, Biden's statements have stirred aggravation among some allies who should have acted more



President Joe Biden speaks at the U.S. Conference of Mayors, on Jan. 17, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

on gender, was sent to the states for ratification in 1972. Virginia became the 38th state to ratify it in 2000, although vears past the deadline set by Congress. leading to a legal standoff over whether it could he considered vali

agreed until Friday.

"I wish it was done sooner because it's so important," said Christian F. Nunes, leader of the National Organization for Women. "The fact that it's getting done now is more important

## Lithuania pledges to boost defense spending, citing Russian aggression

NATO allies weigh Trump's demands

VILNIUS, Lithuania, Jan 18, (AP): Lithuania has decided to raise its spending on defense to between 5% and 6% of overall national economic output starting in 2026 due to the threat of Russian aggression in the region, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda said Friday.

With the president's pledge, the Baltic nation bordering Russia be-comes the first NATO nation to vow to reach a 5% goal called for by U.S. President-elect Donald Trump. It currently spends a bit over 3%.

Nauseda said the "historic decision" was taken by the State Defense Council on Friday. "The possibility of Russian military aggression is still real, but not imminent," Nauseda told reporters after the meeting in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius. "We need to increase our efforts to strengthen defense and deterrence significantly, devoting more resources to this end.

The decision comes as European members of the NATO alliance are wrestling with how to deter their newly aggressive neighbor to the east in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Increases in defense spending have moved onto the agenda as Europe faces a new U.S. administration from Monday under Trump, who has for years expressed skepticism about



The President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nauseda, gives a statement ahead of a summit of the Baltic Sea NATO ountries in Helsinki, Finland, Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025. (AP) countries in Helsinki,

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

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

Reaching the 5% goal, up from the current 2% goal for members, would make Lithuania the NATO country spending the most on defense s a per centage of its economic output. The current leader is Poland, which already spends more than 4% and plans to go higher.

"Our security is also assured by our membership in the NATO alliance, but it will only be effective if we are prepared to defend ourselves," Nauseda said. The center-left government has increased the state's international borrowing limit in order to be able to spend more on defense.

There has been a mixed reaction from European NATO leaders to Trump's call to massively raise investments on defense, with some stressing the difficulty of raising their spending so dramatically and potentially taking on additional government debt. The three Baltic states are well within the European Union limit on government debt of 60% of annual economic output, but Germany faces constitutional restrictions on added borrowing and France is facing concerns over its debt pile of 110% of GDP.

Spain was only spending 1% on defense in 2022, when Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. It has since raised that to 1.5%.

However those on NATO's eastern front who feel most vulnerable are embracing the idea, and many believe costly expenditures on def now will be far less expensive than having to defend themselves in case of Russian aggression later.

swiftly and spoken out earlier. The Equal Rights Amendment, which would ban discrimination based

Democrats and activists have long pressed to consider the amendment as ratified, but Biden did not say he the fact that it took long, but we can't continue to delay women's protections and equal rights in this country.'

### Blinken worried about Trump administration **UK launches Soft Power Council**

WASHINGTON, Jan 18, (AP): Outgoing Sec-retary of State Antony Blinken told The Associated Press that he hopes the incoming Trump administration will press forward with key points in President Joe Biden's foreign policy, including on the Middle East and Ukraine.

But in an wide-ranging interview Friday on his last workday as America's top diplomat, he expressed concern that the Trump team might abandon all or some of those policies.

Blinken said there is reason to be concerned that the new administration might not follow through on initiatives that Biden's national security team put into place to end the war in Gaza, help Ukraine get free of Russian interference and maintain strengthened alliances with key partners. "When we came in, we inherited partner-

ships and alliances that were seriously frayed," he said. "So if past is prologue, yes, it would be a concern."

"I don't know - can't know - how they approach things," Blinken added. "I do think that there is, there could and I believe should be. some real continuity in a couple of places."

President-elect Donald Trump has been

skeptical of U.S. alliances, including NATO and defense partnerships in the Asia-Pacific, all of which the Biden team has worked to shore up over the past four years. Trump has also been critical of U.S. military aid to Ukraine and has praised Russian President Vladimir Putin.

But Trump's incoming Middle East envoy has been deeply involved in helping the Biden administration broker a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas. Both incoming and outgoing presidents claimed credit for the breakthrough this week.

LONDON, Jan 18, (KUNA): British Foreign Secretary David Lammy and Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy have launched the UK Soft Power Council in London.

The move aims to drive UK growth and security, in support of the government's Plan for Change, said in a statement.

He said, "Soft power is fundamental to the UK's impact and reputation around the world. I am often struck by the enormous love and respect which our music, sport, educations and institutions generate on every continent. But we have not taken a sufficiently strategic approach to these huge assets as a country. Harnessing soft power effectively can help to build relationships, deepen trust, enhance our security and drive economic growth.

That is why I have created the Soft Power Council to channel British expertise as we look to re-imagine Britain's role on the world stage, reinvigorate alliances and forge new partnerships.

The UK ranks in the top three across all major soft power indices, with global affinity for culture and creative industries, sport, education and institutions.

Europe

### America

Garland exits: During hearings on Merrick Garland's nomination to be President Joe Biden's attorney general, the longtime federal appeals court judge told senators in 2021 that he hoped to "turn down the volume" on the public discourse about the Justice Department and return to the days when the agency was not the "center of partisan disagreement.'

It didn't go as planned.

Garland came in with a mission to calm the waters and restore the department's reputation for independence after four turbulent years under Republican President Donald Trump, who fired one attorney general and feuded with another. Now the soft-spoken Garland, who was denied a seat on the Supreme Court by the Republican-led Senate before Trump's 2016 election, is leaving with the department under siege on all sides and his own legacy in question. (AP)

Charges dropped: Federal prosecutors in New York dropped bribery and fraud charges on Friday against former New York Lt. Gov. Brian Benjamin, citing the death of a cooperating witness against the Democrat who the governor had once chosen to be her second-incommand.

Judge J. Paul Oetken signed an order closing the case against Benjamin after prosecutors told him in a letter that a review of evidence in the case led them to conclude they could no longer prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt after the death of co-defendant Gerald Migdol. (AP)

## Tribal strength on California's frontlines Navajo Nation firefighters battle wildfires in LA

LOS ANGELES, Jan 18, (AP): Firefighters from the Navajo Nation worked tirelessly through a haze of dust to cut away dirt from a narrow road at the side of a mountain struck by a landslide in Southern California, coughing and sneezing amid the backbreaking work.

It was the Navajo Scouts' eighth straight day battling the Eaton Fire outside Los Angeles and their assignment Friday morning was two-fold: restore vehicle access to the mountain on the outskirts of Altadena and check on the fire damage to structures at the top.

The team of 23 crew members had traveled for two days to Southern California from the Navajo Scouts' headquarters along the Arizona-New Mexico state line at Fort Defiance to join the fight against wildfires that have killed at least 27 people, destroyed more than 12,000 structures and put more than 80,000 under evacuation orders. The crew is one of several firefighting teams from Native American tribes and the Bureau of Indian Affairs battling the blazes.

The Navajo Scouts' "initial attack" crew, which includes several elite hotshot-certified firefighters,



Anthony Platero, a member of the Navajo Scouts firefighter crew, wipes dust from his eyes as he clears debris from a landslide across a road on a hillside at the Eaton Fire, Friday, Jan. 17, 2025, in Altadena, Calif. (AP)

have helped Los Angeles residents cut through landslides and mangled trees and worked to snuff out lingering "hot spot" fires.

"We all feel like we're giving back to the peo-

ple," said Brian Billie, an emergency coordinator for the Navajo Scouts. "Just talking to the locals, some of them have been here ever since childhood and they lost their homes.'

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren praised the crew for "answering the call" to protect people in Los Angeles, including the diaspora of Navajo people who live there.

Let us send them our heartfelt wishes for protection, so that they may return home safely," he said of the Navajo Scouts in a post on the social platform X.

Eleven electric utility journeymen from the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority also have deployed to Los Angeles to assist in the wildfire response and recovery, with qualifications to work on both new construction and "hot" lines.

They're repaying a debt of gratitude after utility workers from the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power traveled to the Navajo Nation repeatedly in recent years on a training mission and helped extend power to 170 Navajo households that didn't have service previously, said Deenise Becenti, a spokesperson for the Navajo utility.



3 lawyers convicted: Three lawyers who once represented the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny were convicted by a court Friday as part of the Kremlin's crackdown on dissent that has reached levels unseen since Soviet times.

Vadim Kobzev, Igor Sergunin and Alexei Liptser were already in custody and were given sentences ranging from 3-1/2 to five years by a court in the town of Petushki, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Moscow. (AP)

Gov't official sanctioned: Sanctions issued by the United States last week against a powerful Hungarian official with close ties to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán have "strengthened" that official's standing within the populist government, Orbán said Friday. Speaking on state radio, Orbán

said the U.S. sanctions against Antal Rogán, a senior government minister who leads the prime minister's Cabinet office and is believed by the U.S. Treasury Department to be involved in official corruption, had not shaken his confidence in the minister. (AP)

Ukraine, UK sign deal on 100-year partnership

KIEV, Jan 18, (Xinhua): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and visiting UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer here on Thursday signed a 100-year partnership agreement between their countries, the presidential press service reported.

The deal stipulates that the UK will provide Ukraine with annual military assistance of at least 3.6 billion U.S. dollars for "as long as needed," according to the statement on the presidential website.

It envisages deepening defense cooperation, building partnership in maritime security, and boosting economic and trade collaboration between the two nations.

Under the deal, the UK plans to expand its contribution to the modern fighter jet coalition for Ukraine, increasing training efforts and assisting with the supply of aircraft used by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states.

The agreement also lays grounds for enhanced cooperation on long-range weaponry, and investment in Ukrainian defense industry, including drones and artillery production.

Additionally, the deal includes provisions for building consensus on Ukraine's potential membership in NATO, alongside strengthening partnership in energy, justice, science, migration, and other key sectors.

Starmer arrived in Ukraine earlier in the day for his first visit since assuming the office.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

## Court verdict could be challenged in superior courts: defense lawyer

## Pakistan ex-PM Imran Khan, wife sentenced to 14 and 7 years in graft case



Pakistan's already-imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan's legal team member Salman Sardar, flanked by Khan's sisters Uzma Khanum, right and Aleema Khan, left, talks to media after a court verdict on corruption case against Khan outside Adiala prison, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, Friday, Jan. 17, 2025. (AP)

ISLAMABAD, Jan 18, (AP): A Pakistani court sentenced the country's alreadyimprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife to 14 and seven years in jail after finding them guilty of corruption, officials and his lawyer said.

It's yet another blow for the former premier who has been behind the bars since 2023.

The couple are accused of accepting a gift of land from a real estate tycoon in exchange for laundered money when Khan was in power.

Prosecutors say the businessman, Malik Riaz, was then allowed by Khan to pay fines that were imposed on him in another case from the same laundered money of 190 million British pounds (\$240 million) that was returned to Pakistan by British authorities in 2022 to deposit with the national exchequer.

Khan has denied wrongdoing and insisted since his arrest in 2023 that all the charges against him are a plot by rivals to keep him from returning to office. According to Khan's legal team, Khan laughed and his wife, Bushra Bibi,

smiled when judge Nasir Javed read the verdict.

Later, Khan and Bibi were taken into custody by prison officials after the announcement of the verdict, according to officials. She had earlier served a prison sentence in another graft case until she was freed on bail by a court in October. She



Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan, right, with his wife Bushra Bibi, speaks to the media before signing documents to submit surety bond over his bails in different cases, at an office of Lahore High Court in Lahore, Pakistan, on July 17, 2023. (AP)

recently led a rally to demand her husband's release.

Later, a post from Khan's account on the X platform urged his supporters not to panic over the verdict, under which the al-Qadir University built by his wife's charity will also be taken over by authorities in the Punjab province.

"I will never accept this dictatorship and I will stay in the prison cell for as long as I have to in the struggle against this dictatorship, but I will not compromise on my principles and the struggle for the true freedom of the nation," Khan wrote. Khan's family has said such posts are shared with his consent.

Khan's family has said such posts are shared with his consent. Faisal Chaudhry, a defense lawyer, said the court verdict could be challenged in the superior courts.

Shortly after the announcement of the verdict, lawmakers from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, or PTI, party rallied outside the parliament in the capital, Islamabad, saying the former premier had been wrongly punished.

"This is a bogus case, and we will approach an appeals court against this decision," said Omar Ayub Khan, a senior party leader who is not related to the former premier.

Imran Khan was ousted in a no-confidence vote in parliament in April 2022, had previously been convicted on charges of corruption, revealing official secrets



Supporters of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan chant slogans during a protest condemning a court verdict on the corruption case against Khan, in Peshawar, Pakistan, Friday, Jan. 17, 2025. (AP)

and violating marriage laws in three separate verdicts and sentenced to 10, 14 and seven years respectively. Under Pakistani law, he is to serve the terms concurrently - meaning, the length of the longest of the sentences.

Some of Khan's supporters were also present outside the Adiala prison in the city of Rawalpindi, and they chanted slogans against the government, demanding the release of their leader.

On Thursday, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar told reporters in Islamabad that there was "irrefutable evidence" against Khan and his wife in the "mega corruption scandal." Tarar said that Khan even did not tell his own Cabinet members about the money that was returned to Pakistan by Britain.

Tarar also claimed that Khan built a new sprawling house in the eastern city of Lahore after giving benefits to the business tycoon, and that he was unable to prove that from where he got the money from to build it.

The latest development came a day after Khan's PTI party held a crucial round of talks with representatives of the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to demand the release of all political detainees, including Khan and other party leaders. Sharif became prime minister following the February 2024 election, which PTI claims was rigged.

## Asia

**China's population dips for 3rd year:** China's population fell last year for the third straight year, its government said Friday, pointing to further demographic challenges for the world's second most populous nation, which is now facing both an aging population and an emerging shortage of working age people.

China's population stood at 1.408 billion at the end of 2024, a decline of 1.39 million from the previous year. The figures announced by the government in Beijing follow trends worldwide, but especially in East Asia, where Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and other nations have seen their birth rates plummet. China three years ago joined Japan and most of Eastern Europe among other nations whose population is falling. (AP)

#### 

Japan inaugurates mission to NATO: The Japanese government has inaugurated the Mission of Japan to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels, making it as an independent mission from the Japanese Embassy in Belgium, the Foreign Ministry said Friday.

The inauguration, which took place earlier this week, will enable Japan to cooperate with NATO more efficiently and to contribute to further enhancing and developing the relationship between Japan and NATO in the future, the ministry said in a statement. (KUNA)



A migrant carries a child through Tapachula, Chiapas state, Mexico, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025, as part of a caravan of migrants trying to reach the U.S. border. (AP)

### Africa

**US sanctions Sudan military leader:** The U.S. imposed sanctions on the leader of Sudan's military Thursday, saying he was blocking humanitarian aid and bombing hospitals, schools and markets in a war against an armed rival that has created a widening famine and the world's largest displacement crisis.

The sanctions that the Treasury Department announced against Sudanese Armed Forces leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and separate sanctions announced Thursday over North Korea's alleged forced labor for profit abroad, were among the last efforts by the outgoing Biden administration to use financial penalties to shape the behavior of foreign actors. (AP)

**S.Sudan imposes overnight curfew:** South Sudanese authorities have imposed a countrywide dusk-to-dawn curfew after a night of violence during which businesses run by Sudanese traders in the capital were looted.

Police chief Gen. Abraham Manyuat said Friday that the curfew will commence from 6 p.m. local time to dawn to curb looting incidents reported in Juba and other major towns.

Businesses are now required to close by 5 p.m. as part of measures to enhance security. "We will protect all the markets," said Manyuat, speaking on state-run television. (AP)

#### 

**Thailand to mark Chinese New Year:** Thailand is set to celebrate the upcoming Chinese New Year with a wide range of festivities across the capital Bangkok and other major cities, marking a historic milestone in Thai-Chinese diplomatic relations.

Speaking at a press conference on Friday, Thai Minister of Tourism and Sports Sorawong Thienthong said this year's celebrations not only reflect the vibrant traditions of Chinese New Year and Thailand's commitment to showcasing its cultural charm but also mark the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties with China. (Xinhua)

#### 

**Indonesia mall fire claims 5:** Five bodies were evacuated on Friday from a fire that broke out at a shopping mall in the western part of Jakarta on Wednesday evening, as rescuers intensified search efforts for other missing persons.

"Five bodies were found on the eighth floor, inside a karaoke room. All victims were unable to be identified," West Jakarta Fire and Rescue Agency chief Syarifudin told reporters, adding that they were already transferred to a police hospital for identification through DNA analysis.

He also confirmed that the number of missing persons has increased from eight to 14 as more people reported their missing relatives to authorities. (Xinhua)

## Mexico expands regional migrant support to Latin America as Trump's inauguration nears

MEXICO CITY, Jan 18, (AP): Mexico agreed Friday to expand

support to other Latin American and Caribbean nations as part of a regional migratory response, days before U.S. President-elect Donald Trump takes office with a promise to carry out mass deportations.

The aid was announced by Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs Juan Ramón de la Fuente after a two-day closed meeting with ministers and representatives of 11 countries of the region.

The meeting - led by De la Fuente and the Honduran foreign minister in the Mexican capital - was the latest in a series of regional summits aimed at building a comprehensive regional response to the unprecedented levels of migration across the Americas. Government leaders of Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Venezuela, Brazil, Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador participated.

Speaking before government representatives, De la Fuente acknowledged that "significant changes are imminent" in the United States, the primary destination for most migrants traveling through Latin America. He said Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has confirmed that her government will expand aid projects in a number of countries working on migration and other issues, but offered few further details.

For years, Mexico has implemented such projects in over 20 countries, primarily those that serve as points of origin for migrants, including Honduras, Colombia, Venezuela and Haiti. In 2024, the Mexican government allocated over \$108 million to this

initiative.

Friday's announcement follows a period of increasing uncertainty in Latin America, fueled by concerns among some regional leaders about the potential impact of mass deportations and other threats made by Trump ahead of his Jan. 20 inauguration.

Sheinbaum has opened the possibility of receiving non-Mexican migrants deported by the United States and said she plans to launch a mobile app that would allow migrants in the U.S. to alert relatives and the consulate when they face imminent detention.

#### Also:

**GUATEMALA CITY:** Guatemala's President **Bernardo Arévalo** said Wednesday he anticipates issues like immigration will generate tension with the incoming administration of President-elect **Donald Trump,** but the former peacebuilder also sees shared interests.

At the start of the second year of his presidency, Arévalo said in an interview with The Associated Press that Guatemala is "one of the United States' few trusted partners" in the region.

For example, Arévalo pointed out that in the first year of his presidency, Guatemala seized more than double the amount of drugs compared to the previous year.

"We mustn't assume that it will be a relationship that turns dramatic," he said. "I believe the conditions exist to be optimistic about what we can become."

#### **Ex-finmin gets another 2.5 years:** Mozambique's former finance minister has been sentenced to serve another two-and-ahalf years in prison by a U.S. court for his role in the "tuna bond" scandal that triggered a financial crisis in the struggling Af-

rican nation. Manuel Chang, 69, was convicted last year of accepting payoffs to put his homeland secretly on the hook for about \$2 billion in loans from major overseas banks.

A federal judge in New York on Friday sentenced Chang to eight-and-a-half years in prison, including nearly six years he has already served behind bars in the U.S. and South Africa, where he was arrested in 2018. (AP)

**237,000 displaced in DR Congo:** About 237,000 people have been displaced since the beginning of 2025 in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), one of the world's largest hosts of people uprooted within their own borders, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said on Friday.

Escalating clashes between armed groups and the DRC army in North and South Kivu provinces, already home to 4.6 million internally displaced people, are intensifying one of the world's most alarming yet under-reported humanitarian crises, UNHCR spokesperson Eujin Byun said at a press briefing. (Xinhua)

## Impeached S.Korean president argues for release as court reviews his formal arrest

SEOUL, Jan 18, (AP): South Korea's impeached president on Saturday argued for his release before a Seoul judge as the court reviewed whether to grant a law enforcement request for his formal arrest.

Yoon, who has been in detention since he was apprehended on Wednesday in a massive law enforcement operation at his residence, faces potential rebellion charges linked to his declaration of martial law on Dec. 3, which set off the country's most serious political crisis since its democratization in the late 1980s.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and the military, requested the Seoul Western District Court to grant a warrant for Yoon's formal arrest.

Yoon's lawyers said he spoke for about 40 minutes to the judge during the nearly five-hour closed-door hearing. His legal team and anti-corruption agencies presented opposing arguments about whether he should be held in custody. The lawyers did not share his specific comments.

The judge is expected to make a decision by late Saturday or early



Supporters for impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol greet as his motorcade passes by near the Seoul Western District Court in Seoul, South Korea, Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025. (AP)

the court rejects the investigators' re-

quest, Yoon will be released and return

from a detention center in Uiwang,

near Seoul, in a blue Justice Ministry

van escorted by police and the presi-

Yoon was transported to the court

to his residence.

dential security service.

Sunday. Yoon's motorcade was seen leaving the court Saturday evening for the detention center, where Yoon will await the decision.

If Yoon is arrested, investigators can extend his detention to 20 days, during which they will transfer the case to public prosecutors for indictment. If 'New achievements ... shared strategic future'

## Xi pledges new heights in China-Vietnam ties

BEIJING, Jan 18, (Xinhua): Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Saturday that he is ready to work with Vietnamese leaders to deepen strategic mutual trust, strengthen practical cooperation, and push for new achievements in building a China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks when exchanging congratulations with General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee To Lam and Vietnamese President Luong Cuong over the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties.

Xi said that China and Vietnam, two friendly socialist neighbors, represent a community with a shared future that carries strategic significance. Since the establishment of diplo-

matic ties 75 years ago, the two sides have fought side by side and supported each other in their struggle for national independence and liberation, Xi said, adding that "So profound is the friendship between Vietnam and China, because we are both comrades and brothers" has become the most vivid portrayal of the relations between the two parties and countries.



This photo taken on Jan. 16, 2025 shows a performance during the intervals of the 'Global Mayors Dialogue – Nanning event in Nanning, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. (Xinhua) In advancing socialism, the two sides have learned from each other and forged ahead hand in hand, thereby deepening their comprehensive strategic cooperation, he said, adding that China and Vietnam share the same ideals and pursue a shared future, which is the most striking feature of the relations between the two parties and countries.

Recalling his successful visit to Vietnam in 2023, Xi said that the two sides pledged to work for a China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance, raising up the relations between the two parties and countries to a new stage.

As changes of the world, of the times and of history are unfolding in unprecedented ways, Xi said, China and Vietnam continuing to follow in good faith the path of socialism has a bearing on the future of the two parties and countries as well as the future of the global socialist cause, and is of great significance to the peace, stability, development and prosperity of the region and the world at large.

## Gold steady, set for third weekly gain

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The yellow metal pric-es remained steady on Friday, on track to close with gains for the third straight week, supported by recent US economic data suggesting the Federal Reserve may continue to cut interest rates this year, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The spot gold held steady at \$2,715.21 per ounce by 03:47 Kuwait time, near its highest level in more than a month. Gold has gained around 1 percent this week. Meanwhile, US gold futures dropped 0.1 percent to \$2,747.50 an ounce

# Business

## **Boursa indices show** 'mixed' performance

Kuwait real estate gains 4%

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The performance of the Boursa Kuwait indices was varied during the last sessions of the week, with the general and main market indices experiencing gains while the first market index saw a slight decline. The market variables, including value, liquidity and the number of transactions, remained stable, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The General Market Index increased by 0.08 percent, or 6.17 points, closing at 7527.46 points, with the liquidity standing at 78.8 million dinars.

A total of 367.3 million shares were traded through 17,349 transactions. Of the 132 shares traded, 50 gained, 58 lost and 24 remained unchanged.

In contrast, the Premier Market Index fell by 0.01 percent, or 0.03 points, to close at 8009.63 points, with liquidity reaching 39.5 million dinars.

A total of 130.4 million shares were traded through 6,880 transactions, with 12 of the 34 traded shares gaining, 17 losing and 5 remaining unchanged.

Meanwhile, the Main Market Index saw a gain of 0.44 percent, or 30.71 points, closing at 7079.95 points, with liquidity at 39.2 million dinars. A total of 236.8 million shares were traded through 10,469 transactions. Of the 98 shares traded, 38 gained, 41 lost

and 19 remained stable. The market started with gains supported by shares in the Eva block, especially Eva and Arzan. Small shares, such as Business City, were also trading in the green. However, profit-taking activities led to some declines, with Eva, Arzan and Business City losing 4 percent, 2 percent and 1 percent respectively by the end of the session.

Madar stock experienced significant gains, rising by 14.4 percent with large transactions and near-record liquidity of nearly 2 million dinars.

The United stock rose by 5 percent and Kuwait Real Estate gained 4 percent with liquidity of around 5.5 million dinars.

Leading stocks showed mixed results, with KFH, Gulf and Warba showing limited gains, while NBK and Burgan remained stable. Boubyan, Agility and GFH saw losses, with GFH declining by 2 percent.

At the regional level, the GCC market indices performed positively, with gains seen in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain.

However, the UAE indices and the Kuwait Premier Market Index declined, while oil prices rebounded, with Brent reaching close to \$81 per barrel.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Reinforcing its solid position in the Kuwaiti market and reflecting its continued leadership in the local telecom sector, Zain has been recognized with the prestigious titles of Best Telecom Company in Kuwait and Best Digital Transformation Company for the sixth time. The awards were presented at the 12thannual Excellence Awards ceremony organized by International Finance in Dubai, honoring achievements for the year 2024.

Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, received the awards during the ceremony, which celebrated the most outstanding companies and organizations across the Middle East and North Africa region. International Finance, a renowned London-based publication specializing in annual rankings in economics and business, hosted the event, bringing together leading organizations from various vital sectors in the region.

This achievement underscores Zain's unwavering efforts to lead the telecom and digital innovation landscape, reinforcing its position as a market leader in Kuwait. The awards add to a series of accolades the company recently received from local, regional, and global entities, reflecting its consistent excellence in both technological advancements and contributions to community service initiatives.





Company solidifies its leading position with two prestigious awards

Zain named Best Telecom Company in Kuwait and

**Best Digital Transformation Company for sixth time** 

Waleed Al-Khashti receives both awards in Dubai.

tinguished role of Kuwait's private sector in driving economic growth and advancing digital transformation. These achievements also reflect Zain's strategic vision of fostering a competitive edge in the digital era through world-class services, innovative solutions, and exceptional customer experienc-

es. This recognition reflects Zain's leadership across its operational and commercial activities, particularly in driving digital transformation and delivering innovative digital services and exceptional customer experiences. Through strong partnerships with technology leaders, Zain is spearheading Kuwait's digital transformation journey, setting new benchmarks in advanced 5G and artificial intelligence technologies, and contributing to the nation's development objectives.

As a leading digital service provider, Zain is committed to harnessing the potential of artificial intelligence to drive digital transformation and foster innovation. The company continues to advance its efforts in offering AI-driven innovative services and automating 5.5G networks, emphasizing the pivotal role AI tools and applications play in transforming telecommunica-tions networks by enhancing performance, quality, operations, maintenance, resource optimization, analytics, and more.

Zain offers a comprehensive portfolio of solutions for busi-



The awards reflect Zain's commitment to delivering innovative experiences and empowering digital transformation.

nesses, including cloud computing services, cybersecurity solutions, AI-powered drone technologies, 5G solutions, and other cutting-edge technologies. These offerings are tailored to meet the needs of government and private institutions, promoting economic growth and supporting the country's development goals.

At its annual ceremony, International Finance celebrated the remarkable achievements of organizations excelling in economics, finance, and business, with a particular focus on companies that have significantly contributed to improving the business environment across the region.

## KOC CEO Al-Aidan declares key organizational changes

#### By Najeh Bilal Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The CEO of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Ahmad Al-Aidan has issued a decision to implement a series of organizational changes within the company. According to informed sources, the

appointed individuals are:

Sheikh Mohammad Nayef Al-Sabah as the Director of the Kuwait Contract Labor Group ■ Inaam Al-Janaa as Head of the Da-

tabase and Servers Operations Team in the Joint Information Technology Group

Bashar Al-Khashti as Director of the Training and Career Development Group in the Financial and Administra-Manal Al-Mudhahka and Iman Al-Shatti as senior specialists in the Legal Affairs Group Jamal Al-Enezi as Head of the Call Center and Services Team, Mohammad Al-Safi as Head of the Cybersecurity Team,

ploration and Production Systems Team, Reem Al-Shammari as Head of the Communications and Networks Team. Mohammed Al-Sarraf as Head of the Administrative Systems Working Group, Huda Al-Aradi as Head of the Inno-

Fatima Al-Otaibi as Head of the Ex-

vation and Technology Support Working Group,

Mohammed Al-Aqab as Head of the Research and Technology Working Group (Wells),

Basil Al-Otaibi as Head of the Research and Automated Technology Working Group ■ Khaled Abdulsalam as Head of the

Innovation and Digital Transformation Working Group,

Mohammed Al-Sallal as Head of

the Research and Technology

UAE leads for the third year raising \$6.4 bln

## GCC IPOs raise \$13.2 bln in 2024, Markaz report

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" released its research report titled "Initial Public Offerings (IPO)in the GCC markets", stating that the region has seen 53 offerings during the year 2024 raising a total of USD 13.2 billion in proceeds, marking a 23% increase compared to the previous year, where issuers raised USD 10.7 billion through 46 offerings. Corporate IPOs raised USD 8.9 billion, or 67% of the total GCC IPO

Selected IPOs	Country	Market	Offering Size (Stake)	Sector
Arabian Oud Company	KSA	Tadawul	NA	Consumer
Derayah Financial Company	KSA	Tadawul	20%	Financial
United Carton Industries Company	KSA	Tadawul	30%	Industrial
Al Koot Insurance	Qatar	Qatar Stock Exchange	NA	Insurance
Arabian Company for Agricultural and Industrial Investment	KSA	Tadawul	30%	Agriculture
Asyad Shipping Company	Oman	Muscat Stock Exchange	NA	Logistics
ALEC Engineering & Contracting	UAE	DFM	NA	Construction
National Unified Procurement Company	KSA	Tadawul	30%	Medical Supply
Amanat Holding Education platform	UAE	DFM	30%	Education

Group for Surface Facilities, Hamad Al-Rashidi as Head of the Rawdatain Fields Development Work-Fahad Al-Mutairi as Head of the Technology Working Group in North

## **Other Voices**

### 'Alternative energy sources needed'

Kuwait.

## High oil prices unsustainable amid multiple market factors

#### By Kamel Al-Harami Independent Oil Analyst

There are several factors that do not support the current high oil price of around \$80 per barrel. While there are genuine reasons driving the market in this direction, these are likely to be temporary. Despite the European and U.S.

boycotts

on Russian oil, Russian crude continues to be attractive to buvers due to the huge discounts. which make it appealing. Russia has

been able to Al-Harami export its oil

through heavy cash discounts or favorable barter deals that involve goods and services instead of direct cash transactions.

Also, OPEC+ has been holding six million barrels in reserve. which has helped in maintaining strong oil prices at current levels. However, this situation is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term, as some OPEC members are increasingly desperate for cash. These members may face challenges, such as higher bank rates or difficulty meeting international terms and conditions, which could prompt them to release more barrels for easing the pressure and lowering prices.

Thirdly, the growing oil production from non-OPEC countries will also likely contribute to pushing the oil prices back into the \$70 range.

With the new US administration

ing Group,

taking office tomorrow, global oil

supply dynamics may change. The

new president is focusing on Iran,

with efforts to reduce its oil exports

to around 500,000 barrels per day,

down from the current 1.5 million

barrels per day. If the US continues

its previous policies toward Iran,

this could tighten the market. The

administration is also likely to en-

courage domestic producers to cap-

italize on higher oil prices, with the

famous slogan "Drill, baby, drill.'

Also, the administration's close

relationship with Kremlin leaders

may influence future energy poli-

cies. Turning to the main concern,

which is the future of oil prices, it

seems unlikely that prices will re-

main far from where they were 12

months ago, in the absence of any

major supply disruptions. With the

unlikeliness of such disruptions,

the market is expected to be well-

supplied, which will keep the oil

prices in a comfortable range. It

is anticipated that oil prices may

decline to an average of \$75 per

Oil-producing countries are

likely to face budget deficits for

the fifth consecutive year, with

little hope of achieving a bal-

anced budget by the end of 2025.

Therefore, it seems we must con-

tinue relying on borrowing or

tapping into our cash reserves, as

tightening our belts is not a viable

crude oil price is unlikely to last.

Searching for alternatives to oil

must become a priority for the state.

Email: naftikuwaiti@yahoo.com

Let us work towards that goal.

Unfortunately, the current \$80

barrel.

option.

proceeds during the year, through 48 offerings. While IPOs offered by government related entities only accounted for 33%, amounting to USD 4.3 billion through 5 offerings.

#### **Geographical Allocation:**

Markaz's report stated that the UAE led the region in terms of IPO proceeds for the third year in a row, raising a total of USD 6.4 billion which constituted 49% of the total GCC IPO proceeds during the year.

The Emirates saw 7 IPOs during the year where Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) raised USD 3.6 billion hosting 4 IPOs led by NMDC Energy and Lulu Retail Holdings. On the other hand, Dubai Financial Market (DFM) raised a total of USD 2.8 billion from Talabat, Parkin Company and Spinneys IPOs

Saudi Arabia followed, raising a total of USD 4.1 billion, or 31% of the total GCC IPO proceeds, with 42 offerings. Saudi Exchange (Tadawul) saw 14 IPOs on its Main Market amounting to a total of USD 3.8 billion and 28 IPOs on its Parallel Market (Nomu) raising a total of USD 297 million. Dr. Soliman Fakeeh Hospital, Almoosa Health Group and Nice One IPOs were the largest offerings listed on Tadawul this year.

Oman raised USD 2.5 billion during the year, or 19% of the total GCC IPO proceeds, witnessing two IPOs on Muscat Securities Market (MSX).

Offerings by OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) and OQ Base Industries (OQBI) were held during the last quarter of the year, in alignment with the Oman Investment Authority's strategy to divest certain government assets. It is worth noting that OQEP is the largest IPO in Oman's history raising a total of USD 2.0 billion for a 25% stake.

Kuwait has seen its first IPO since 2022, with Boursa Kuwait hosting the IPO of Beyout Investment Group Holding during the second quarter of the year. The offering raised a total of USD 147 million constituting 1% of the total GCC IPO proceeds raised during the year.

Bahrain have placed one IPO during the year raising a total of USD 24 million. Bahrain Bourse (BHB) welcomed the IPO of Al Abraaj Restaurants Group marking Bahrain's first IPO since 2018. The company offered 35% stake with proceeds constituting to 0.2% of the total GCC IPO proceeds during the year.

#### Sector Allocation:

The Energy sector raised a total of USD 3.7 billion, accounting for nearly 28% of the total proceeds during 2024 from offerings by Abu Dhabi's NMDC Energy and Oman's OQEP and OQBI.

This was followed by the Consumer Staples sector with USD 3.1 billion, or 24% of the total proceeds, from 8 IPOs including Lulu Retail Holdings, Spinneys and Saudi Modern Mills Company.

The Consumer Discretionary sector raised a total of USD 2.7 billion, constituting 20% of the total proceed, from 9 IPOs including Talabat, Nice One and Abu Dhabi National Hotels Catering

Moreover, the Healthcare sector saw USD 1.4 billion in proceeds, constituting 10% of the total proceeds, through 7 IPOs while the Industrials sector saw USD 877

million from 11 offerings and constituting 7% of the total GCC IPO proceeds during the year. This was followed by the Financial Services sector, Technology, Utilities and Material which constituted 5%, 4%, 1% and 1% of total offerings respectively.

**Post-Listing Performance:** Excluding December listings, more than 59% of the GCC IPOs shares surged on their first 30 days post-listing. Saudi Arabia's IPOs, on both the Main and Parallel markets, recorded the highest performances post-listing compared to other GCC markets. Positive market sentiments for sectors such as technology, healthcare and consumer drove the strong gains for these IPOs.

Miahona Company recorded the biggest gains with its shares rising more than 147% compared to its offering price of SAR 11.5. The company floated 30% of its capital on Tadawul's Mian Market in May 2024.

This was followed by Purity for Information Technology Company which gained 118% on its first 30 days after offering a 20% stake for SAR 8 on Tadawul's Parallel Market (Nomu) in October 2024.

On the other hand, some IPOs have recorded negative performance noting that majority of which were minor declines. The largest decline recorded was Pan Gulf Marketing Company which was listed on Nomu in February 2024. The shares dropped by 35% after its offering price at SAR 51. Yaqeen Capital Company has also underperformed, slumping by 28% from its offering price of SAR 40 in June 2024.

A negative trend was seen as well across milling companies, all of which dropped, which might be due to investors being skeptical over government's support for this industry.

#### **GCC Markets Performance**

Most of the GCC equity market indices ended the year 2024 on the rise. Dubai Financial Market outperformed its GCC peers with a 26.9% increase followed by Boursa Kuwait with a 12.4% increase. Muscat Securities Market increased by 1.3% similarly to Bahrain Bourse which increased by 1.2%.

Saudi Tadawul increased by 0.6% while Qatar Stock Exchange fell by -1% as well as Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange which fell by -1.7%.

#### GCC IPO Pipeline:

Saudi Arabia is expecting more than 50 IPOs during the next two years. Seven IPOs have already gained regulatory approvals and are expected to be listed by the first quarter of 2025.

The UAE, Qatar and Oman are also expecting several IPOs as local companies started appointing banks for potential offerings.

## 10 GCC ports ranked among world's 70 most efficient in 2024

MUSCAT, Jan 18, (KUNA): Ten Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) container ports have been listed among the world's 70 most efficient ports in 2024, out of 405 ports worldwide, according to the GCC Statistical Centre.

The UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar are among the list of 35 countries that have the largest global maritime fleets in view of both weights and tonnage, the center said in a report on Saturday, citing the United Nations Confer-

ence on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) 2024 report.

As for the size of the world commercial fleet, the center indicated that the Gulf commercial fleet of ships makes up 54.2 percent of the total Arab fleet for 2023.

Most GCC member countries exceeded the Arab average in the Port Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (PLSCI), recording 100.5 points in 2023, it added. The number of major Gulf seaports hit more than 25 in 2024, it pointed out.



## **BUSINESS**

'Important milestone in the history of our strategic growth journey in the automotive industry'

## Al Mulla Auto launches SOUEAST and inaugurates brand's showroom in Kuwait



Talal Al-Mulla in the middle between the Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jianwei and Liu Tan and the Economic and Commercial Counselor of the Chinese Embassy Hu Hanming and Imad Flayhan and Hisham Faqih.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: At a momentous celebration by Al Mulla Auto, a member of Al Mulla Group and a leading distributor of international automotive brands in Kuwait, the company recently announced the launch of the SOUEAST brand in Kuwait. The ceremonial activity also included the inauguration of a vibrant state-of-the-art showroom, which will become the new home of the iconic vehicles in the country. This strategic expansion marks an important milestone in the history of the company with the introduction of innovative and stylish automobiles by Fujian SOUEAST Automobile Sales Co. Ltd., a world-renowned Chinese car manufacturer.

The announcement was made in the presence of Mr. Talal A. Al Mulla, Board Member and Chief Executive Officer of Al Mulla Group, who was accompanied by H.E. Ambassador Zhang Jianwei, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in the State of Kuwait, as well as senior management representatives from SOUEAST including the Vice President of SOUEAST International Mr. Liwei Tan, Sales Manager of SOUEAST Kuwait Mr. Eric Zhao among others. The inauguration ceremony was also attended by senior management teams from Al Mulla Group including Mr. Imad Flayhan, Managing Director of Al Mulla Automotive, the Director of Al Mulla Automotive Mr. Hisham Fakih, and other senior management representatives from Al Mulla Group.

The celebration of launching the brand SOUEAST



Part of the attendees at the event.

every sector we operate.

Commenting on this important development, Board Member and CEO of Al Mulla Group Mr. Talal A. Al Mulla said: "We are delighted today to announce the official launch of the SOUEAST brand in Kuwait by Al Mulla International Auto Trading Co, and the inauguration of this iconic showroom for the brand. Today's celebration marks an important milestone in the history of our strategic growth journey in the automotive industry both in Kuwait and the region. Our new business partners SOUEAST Motor, are one of the leading manufacturers of Chinese automobiles in the global market and we look forward to representing their brand and taking it to new heights, a reputation that has become synonymous with Al Mulla Automotive." a dynamic and promising environment, SOUEAST aims to achieve long-term success with local partners and customers through innovative technology, superior quality, and user-centric services."



Talal Al-Mulla and the Chinese Ambassador and Imad Flayhan with members of the Executive Management.

and effortless mobility.

The SOUEAST lineup introduces the S06, S07 and S09 models, all designed to captivate the adventurous spirit of young drivers.

This new line of vehicles comes with exclusive introductory packages, as well as 6 years/200,000 KM warranty, and 10 years/1 million KM engine warranty. Furthermore, the Al Mulla brand promise ofdelivering best sales & aftersales experience will ensure that our customers receive the best customer service, spare parts support, and maintenance service at the 3S Service Facility that comes equipped with the industry's highest standards of advanced technologies and quality of service to ensure full customers' satisfaction and convenience.

#### Looking into the future with upcoming models:

SOUEAST Motor, a subsidiary of Chery Automobile Company, plans to launch 13 innovative models within the next five years globally, which will include Internal Combustion Engine (ICE), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV), and Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) options across SUVs and Sedans, covering all mainstream market segments, from the B to the D segments. In addition to an extensive portfolio of vehicles, SOUEAST Motor has constructed a 6,500-square-meter spare parts warehouse in Dubai to meet all regional spare parts demands, serving as a testament to SOUEAST Motor's focus on the Middle East market. Some of the new models from SOUEAST that in the pipeline for future releases include the Sedans: E05 and E07 respectively B type and C-type Sedan. Also the SUV: S05 and S08 respectively segment B and C-SUV.

and the inauguration of the showroom follows the recently signed agreement between Al Mulla Group and Wuhu Jetour Automobile Sales Co. Ltd., which appointed Al Mulla International Auto Trading Company as the authorized distributor for SOUEAST vehicles in Kuwait. This partnership aims to deliver a range of dynamic vehicles by SOUEAST combining cutting-edge technology, comfort, and style to meet and exceed the growing diverse needs of Kuwaiti drivers. Furthermore, this collaboration reflects the commitment of Al Mulla Automotive to offering high-quality, innovative and seamless automotive solutions tailored to modern Kuwaiti consumers, whilst continuing to experience the Al Mulla Group's promise of unsurpassed commitment to offering the best products and services backed-up by our unparalleled dedication to excellence and professionalism in

Vice President of SOUEAST International Mr. Liwei Tan, said: "Kuwait is a nation of wisdom and passion. Its future is full of opportunity and hope, and we are all looking forward to a great time. In such The SOUEAST showroom in Al Rai is designed to offer a premium customer experience, featuring sophisticated interiors that reflect modern aesthetics and advanced technology. Visitors will be welcomed into an environment where they can explore the latest models, engaged by knowledgeable staff dedicated to providing personalized service.

With over 20 years of international experience, SOUEAST Motors is celebrated for its innovative automotive solutions that merge advanced technology with comfort and reliability. Guided by the motto "Ease Your Life," SOUEAST vehicles are designed to connect people, cities, and embracing ease of life, emphasizing style and warm-tech features. SOUEAST offers versatile SUVs designed to appeal to urban youth, prioritizing cutting-edge technology With SOUEAST entering the Kuwaiti market, Al Mulla Auto is excited to offer a range of vehicles that emphasize quality, innovation, and easy lifestyle. Our partnership with SOUEAST represents a transformative moment in our commitment to the evolving needs of our customers, showcasing vehicles that not only meet but exceed expectations. We invite all automotive enthusiasts and prospective buyers to visit our new showroom in Al Rai and discover how SOUEAST vehicles embody the blend of style, performance, and cutting-edge technology all for the main purpose of making their lives easy.



The car SOUEAST S06

### SOUEAST S06: Compact Excellence for Urban Life

The S06 redefines modern driving with its advanced technology, seamlessly integrated to enhance every journey. Designed for the connected drivers of today, it offers intuitive controls and smart features that keep you in sync with your world. Sophisticated yet effortless, the S06 embodies the perfect balance of innovation and practicality for today's on-the-go lifestyle. The S06 model comes with 1.5L Turbo charged engine & 1.6L Turbo charged engine with horsepower up to 197.

#### Unique selling points include:

■ 15.6" Infotainment system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, 6-way electrical seats,

- 50W wireless fast charger,
- 540 degrees panoramic visual parking assist,
- 8 SONY speakers,
- Leather seats and intelligent air purification.
- 8 Airbags
- Lateral & backward collision warning and electric stability control (ESC)



SOUEAST S07: Bold and Stylish SUV for Adventurers

This dynamic SUV is tailored for the modern urbanite, combining

engine, intuitive infotainment system, and spacious interiors, making

it perfect for those who crave a vehicle that aligns with their active

lifestyle. With advanced safety features and efficient fuel consump-

tion, this model ensures peace of mind without sacrificing style. The

S06 model comes with a 1.5L Engine, Turbo charged engine & 1.6L

Turbo charged engine and horsepower: Up to 197.

Some of its unique selling points include:

■ Unique LED front & Rear light strips,

**7** seater

■ 20" Wheel Hub,

■ 12.3' Connected screens,

■ 50W fast wireless charging,

Apple CarPlay & Android Auto.

Adaptive cruise control (ACC).

sleek design with robust performance. The S07 boasts a powerful



The car SOUEAST S09

### **SOUEAST S09: Premium SUV for Families**

The S09 is more than just a car; it's a statement of innovation and sophistication. With its bold exterior and premium finishes, this SUV is perfect for those who want to stand out from the crowd. The S09 offers cutting-edge technology, including advanced driver-assistance features and a state-of-the-art multimedia system. Its versatility caters to both daily commuting and adventurous excursions, making it the ideal choice for the stylish and daring. The S09 model comes with 2.0L Turbo charged engine and horsepower up to 187.

#### Some of its unique selling points include:

- U-Shaped Grill,
- Seat Ventilation
- 3 Row Seats
- Multi-functional Ergonomic Seat,
- 15.6" LCD Dashboard and 10.25" Console Screen,
- 50W fast wireless charging.
- Spacious interior (3 rows, 7 Seats)
- Adaptive cruise control (ACC)

#### ARAB TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 2025

## **BUSINESS**

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In line with its strategy for reallocating assets and building new revenue streams

## Burgan Bank signs purchase agreement to acquire United Gulf Bank in Bahrain

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Burgan Bank K.P.S.C. announced the signing of a Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) to acquire a 100% stake in United Gulf Bank B.S.C (UGB),a wholesale bank licensed and head-quartered in Bahrain, from United Gulf Holding Company B.S.C. (UGH) for USD 190 million. This transaction is in line with the Bank's strategy to diversify its asset portfolio by focusing on stable and less fluctuating markets, particularly Kuwait and the wider GCC region.

The agreement follows Burgan Bank's receipt of all required regulatory approvals in both Kuwait and in Bahrain. The two parties will commence the ownership transfer process, the last step in this transaction, with expectations to be completed within the first quarter of 2025. UGB has a wholesale banking license in Bahrain with an 'Islamic window' and is supervised by the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB). It also owns a 60% stake in Kamco In-vestment Company (Kamco Invest), an investment company licensed and regulated by the Capital Markets Authority - Kuwait (CMA) and the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

Commenting on the acquisition, Mr. Tony Daher, Group CEO of Burgan Bank, said: "The acquisition marks a significant milestone for our Group and is aligned with the Bank's strategic pillars of diversifying its assets, enhancing its competitiveness and building new income streams. This acquisition provides Burgan with an opportunity to tap into key



Mr. Tony Daher, Group CEO of Burgan Bank.

high-growth sectors of Islamic financing and investments, while creating significant cross-selling and up-selling opportunities, in addition to various integrational synergies."

Furthermore, the transaction will strengthen the Bank's offerings to its clients, providing them with access to the Kamco Invest platform. Kamco Invest currently offers a comprehensive range of investment solutions covering asset manage-ment, investment banking and brokerage. It is considered one of the largest asset managers in the region with AUM of ~USD 16 billion and has notable presence in key capital markets, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom.

"The acquisition will solidify the

business relationship between Burgan Bank and Kamco Invest, enabling both entities to deliver a seamless and integrated suite of financial services, leveraging their combined expertise to enhance client experiences and meet their diverse and evolving financial needs effectively," added Mr. Daher.

Mr. Daher explained that Burgan Bank continues to be driven by its vision to become the most modern and advanced bank in Kuwait in the ambitious steps it takes to achieve sustainable growth and expansion. The Bank's confident strides are further supported and guided by its focus on strategic priorities – most notably the redistribution of assets - keeping pace with digital transformation, developing human capital, and achieving environmental, social, and gov-

ernance (ESG) excellence. Together. these efforts aim to provide a distinctive banking experience for Burgan's customers that lives up to their aspirations and meets their needs. This latest acquisition comes following the sale of the Bank of Baghdad and the partial sale of Burgan Bank Turkey in 2023, which is a testament to Burgan's commitment to deliver on its strategic pillars.

Mr. Daher concluded by stating that, "The key priority for Burgan now is to deliver on its envisioned operating model for UGB, which would be focused on generating onshore client revenues and serving clients in Bahrain, as well as supporting the Bank's existing clientele through enhanced product and services offerings."

#### US Federal debt nears \$36 trillion

## Janet Yellen reveals 'extraordinary measures' to avoid US debt default

WASHINGTON, Jan 18, (AP): In one of her last acts as Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen said her agency will start taking "extraordinary measures," or special accounting maneuvers intended to prevent the nation from hitting the debt ceiling, on January 21 in a letter sent to congressional leaders Friday afternoon.

She sent a letter in late December to lawmakers stating that Treasury expected to hit the statutory debt ceiling between January 14 and January 23. And now, the agency will stop paying into certain accounts, including the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund and the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund, to make up for the shortfall in money beginning Tuesday.

The move comes during the switchover of administrations, where President-elect Donald Trump takes over control of the White House and federal agencies from President Joe Biden on Monday. Yellen will be out of office when the extraordinary measures take effect.

The department has in the past deployed what are known as "extraordinary measures," or accounting maneuvers, to keep the government operating. But once those measures run out, the government risks defaulting on its debt unless lawmakers and the president agree to lift the limit on the U.S. government's ability to borrow.

"The period of time that extraordinary measures may last is subject to considerable uncertainty, including the challenges of forecasting the payments and receipts of the U.S. Government full faith and credit of the United States," she said.

When the debt limit is raised or suspended those funds will be paid back and federal retirees and workers won't be affected by the actions.

Outgoing President Joe Biden in December signed a bill into law that averted a government shutdown but did not include President-elect Donald Trump's core debt demand to raise or suspend the nation's debt limit.

Trump has called for the statutory debt ceiling to be abolished. He told NBC News in December that getting rid of the debt ceiling entirely would be the "smartest thing" the Congress could do. The federal debt currently

stands at roughly \$36 trillion - which ballooned across both Republican and Democratic administrations. And the spike in inflation after the coronavirus pandemic pushed up government borrowing costs such that debt service next year will exceed spending on national security.

Republicans, who will have full control of the White House, House and Senate in the new year, have big plans to extend Trump's 2017 tax cuts and other priorities but debate over how to pay for them.

Trump has nominated South Carolina investor Scott Bessent, to lead the Treasury Department. During his confirmation hearing on Thursday, Bessent was questioned by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), who asked whether Bessent thinks the statutory debt limit should be repealed.

Bessent said in response that

## Global economy to grow steadily at 2.7% through 2026, says World Bank

Developing economies' growth slows, insufficient to ease poverty

WASHINGTON, Jan 18, (AP): The global economy is growing steadily in the face of war, protectionist trade policies and high interest rates. It just isn't growing fast enough to bring relief to the world's poorest, the World Bank said Thursday in its latest assessment of the global economy.

The bank expects the world economy to expand 2.7% in 2025 and again in 2026. It's a remarkably consistent performance matching 2023 and 2024 - but also a lackluster one. Growth is running 0.4 percentage points below the 2010-2019 average. The slump reflects lingering damage from the "adverse shocks of recent years," including COVID-19 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The bank's latest Global Economics Prospects report, which comes out in January and June, did offer some good news. Global inflation, which was running over 8% two years ago, is expected to slow to an average of 2.7% in 2025 and 2026, close to many central bank targets.

The World Bank, comprising 189 member nations, seeks to reduce poverty and boost living standards by providing grants and low-rate loans to poor economies.

For low- and middle-income countries - so-called developing econo-



The World Bank building in Washington, Monday, April 5, 2021. (AP)

The World Bank noted that growth has been decelerating for years in the developing world - from a robust average of 5.9% a year in the 2000s to 5.1% in the 2010s to just 3.5% in the 2020s. Excluding China and India, those countries are lagging behind the world's wealthy countries in per-capita economic growth.

Their economies have been hobbled by sluggish investment, high levels of debt, the increasing costs of climate change and growing protectionism that hurts their exports. None of those things seems likely to go away anytime soon. "The next 25 years will be a tougher slog for developing economies than the last 25," World Bank chief economist Inderinvestment and manufacturing activity, partly reflecting the cost of high

energy prices. The Chinese economy, the world's second biggest, is expected to decelerate - from 4.9% growth last year to 4.5% in 2025 and 4% in 2026. China's real estate market has crashed, demoralizing consumers and causing them to rein in their spending. But Chinese exports and investment in factories and infrastructure have been sturdy.

provements in productivity.

Europe, by contrast, is expanding

at an agonizingly slow pace. The World Bank downgraded its GDP growth forecast for the 20 countries

that share the euro currency to 1%

this year from the 1.4% it had pro-

jected in June. The bank cited "ane-

mic" consumer spending, business

Meanwhile, India, which has supplanted China as the world's fastestgrowing major economy, is expected to see a 6.7% expansion both this year and next. In rural areas, a recovery in farm production has boosted consumer spending - though inflation and slow lending growth have discouraged shoppers in cities.

The World Bank's forecasts assume no major shifts in trade or budget policies.

But in the United States, Presidentelect Donald Trump is promising big things - slashing taxes, slapping hefty tariffs on foreign goods, deporting millions of immigrants who are working in the country illegally. All those policies could drive up U.S. inflation and disrupt global trade. The bank said that the outlook for U.S. economic policy is "unclear, with resulting impacts on U.S. and global growth and inflation clouded by uncertainty."

and violence" in places like Gaza and Sudan. "We have all-out war in Europe, in the Middle East and in Africa," Gill told reporters ahead of the report's

release. "Conflicts are the worst economy killers." The bank expects low-income countries' growth to rebound to 5.7% this year and 5.9% in 2026, "contingent" on the easing of conflict in some places.

The World Bank marked up the outlook for the United States, the world's largest economy. It now expects U.S. gross domestic product the nation's output of goods and services - to expand 2.3% this year. That is down from 2.8% in 2024 but up from the 1.8% the bank forecast for this year back in June. The American economy has managed to thrive despite high interest rates. U.S. growth has been boosted by strong consumer spending, an influx of immigrants who eased labor shortages and im-

months into the future," Yellen wrote in a letter addressed to House and Senate leadership.

"I respectfully urge Congress to act promptly to protect the if Trump wants to eliminate the debt limit, "I will work with him." "The U.S. is not going to default on its debt if I'm con-

mies - growth is expected to come in at 4.1% this year and slow slightly to 4% in 2026. The World Bank says that plodding pace of growth is "insufficient" to ease global poverty.

mit Gill said in the report.

The world's poorest countries with per-person annual incomes below \$1,145 - grew just 3.6% in 2024 "on account of escalating conflict

### China's economy grows 5 pct in TikTok threatens to 'Go Dark' after Supreme Court upholds US ban 2024, slower than previous year

firmed," he said.

### HONG KONG, Jan 18, (AP): China's economy expanded at a 5% annual pace in 2024, slower than the year before but in line with Beijing's target of "around 5%" growth, helped by strong exports and recent stimulus measures.

In quarterly terms, the economy grew 5.4% in October-December, the government reported Friday

Exports accelerated as companies and consumers rushed to beat potential tariff hikes incoming President-elect Donald Trump may impose on Chinese goods.

"The national economy was generally stable with steady progress and new achievements were made in highquality development," according to the report by the National Bureau of Statistics on Friday.

"Particularly, with a package of in-cremental policies being timely rolled out, the social confidence was effectively bolstered and the economy recovered remarkably," it said. Manufacturing was a strong engine

for growth last year, with industrial output jumping 5.8% from a year earlier. Total retail sales of consumer goods grew 3.5% at an annual rate.

Exports expanded 7.1% in annual terms, while imports grew 2.3%

The world's second largest economy has struggled with weaker consumer spending and resulting deflationary pressures as its recovery after the COVID 19 pandemic faltered and the property sector, once a main driver of business activity, fell into a downturn.

The Chinese economy grew at a 5.2% annual rate in 2023, and economists have forecast that it will slow further in coming years.

China's population also is aging and declining, adding to pressures on growth. The government reported Friday that the population fell for a third straight year in 2024, to 1.408 billion at the end of 2024, a decline of 1.39 million from the previous year.

The rising cost of living has causing young people to put off or rule out marriage and childbirth while pursuing higher education and careers, accentuating the impact of birth control policies that once limited most families to one child each.

Some economists say the economy is growing at a slower pace than shown in official estimates.

"The precise achievement of the official growth target is highly dubious at a time when most indicators of economic activity and financial markets are flashing red," Eswar Prasad, an economics professor at Cornell University, said in an emailed comment.

"The economy continues to be beset by a combination of weak domestic demand and persistent deflationary pressures, in addition to a hostile external environment that could limit exports,' he said.

Trump, who will be inaugurated next week, has pledged to increase U.S. import duties on Chinese goods. This week, the Biden administration also imposed further restrictions on exports of advanced semiconductors and technology as it sought to maintain the U.S. lead on advanced technologies and block China's access.

The ruling Communist Party has rolled out a series of stimulus measures, including reducing banks' reserve requirement ratios, cutting interest rates and frontloading billions from its budget in 2025 to fund construction projects. It has ordered banks to lend to beleaguered property developers that were left mired in debt after authorities cracked down on excess borrowing.

Beijing has also expanded a trade-in scheme for consumer goods and raised the wages of millions of government workers to revive domestic demand.

Those incremental moves need to be accompanied by broader structural reforms, some economists say, that will improve productivity and make the economy less reliant on construction and export manufacturing. In particular, private businesses remain wary of boosting investment or hiring after years of policy shifts that have added to uncertainty over their role in the economy.

Scant social safety nets, meanwhile, lead families to save rather than spend, and falling housing prices and weak stock prices have hurt household wealth, compounding the problem.

"China needs a strong and multipronged policy package to revive growth momentum," Prasad said. Such a package would need to include substantial and well-targeted monetary and fiscal stimulus, complemented by reforms and other measures to revive private sector confidence.'

WASHINGTON, Jan 18, (AP): TikTok said it will have to "go dark" this weekend unless the outgoing Biden administration assures the company it won't enforce a shutdown of the popular app after the Supreme Court on Friday unanimously upheld the federal law banning the app unless it's sold by its China-based parent company.

The Supreme Court in its ruling held that the risk to national security posed by TikTok's ties to China overcomes concerns about limiting speech by the app or its 170 million users in the United States.

The decision came against the backdrop of unusual political agitation by President-elect Donald Trump, who vowed that he could negotiate a solution, and the administration of President Joe Biden, which has signaled it won't enforce the law - which was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support beginning Sunday, his final full day in office.

'TikTok should remain available to Americans, but simply under American ownership or other ownership that addresses the national security concerns identified by Congress in developing this law,' White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement, noting that actions to implement the law will fall to the new administration.

TikTok released a statement late Friday saying 'statements issued today by both the Biden White House and the Department of Justice have failed to provide the necessary clarity and assurance to the service providers that are integral to maintaining Tik-Tok's availability to over 170 million Americans.

#### Statement

"Unless the Biden Administration immediately provides a definitive statement to satisfy the most critical service providers assuring non-enforcement, unfortunately TikTok will be forced to go dark on January 19," the statement said.

A sale does not appear imminent and, although experts have said the app will not disappear from existing users' phones once the law takes effect, new users won't be able to download it and updates won't be available. That will eventually render the app unworkable, the Justice Department has said in court filings.

Trump, mindful of TikTok's popularity and his own 14.7 million followers on the app, finds himself on the opposite side of the argument from prominent Senate Republicans who fault TikTok's Chinese owner for not finding a buyer before now. Trump said in a Truth Social post shortly before the decision was issued that TikTok was among the topics in his conversation Friday with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew, who is expected to attend Trump's inauguration, used the app to thank the incoming president for "his commitment to work with us to keep TikTok available."

It's unclear what options are open to Trump, a Republican, once he is sworn in as president Monday.

The law allowed for a 90-day pause in the restric-tions on the app if there had been progress toward a sale before it took effect. Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar, who defended the law at the Supreme Court for the Democratic Biden administration, told the justices last week that it's uncertain whether the prospect of a sale once the law is in effect could trigger a 90-day respite for TikTok.

Trump promises to negotiate solution after TikTok ban ruling

The decision explores the intersection of the First Amendment and national security concerns in the fast-changing realm of social media, and the justices acknowledged in their opinion that the new terrain has been difficult to navigate given they know relatively little about it.

"Congress has determined that divestiture is necessary to address its well-supported national security concerns regarding TikTok's data collection practices and relationship with a foreign adversary," the court said in an unsigned opinion, adding that the law "does not violate petitioners' First Amendment rights.'

Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Neil Gorsuch filed short separate opinions noting some reservations about the court's decision but going along with the outcome.

Without doubt, the remedy Congress and the President chose here is dramatic," Gorsuch wrote. Still, he said he was persuaded by the argument that China could get access to "vast troves of personal information about tens of millions of Americans." Some digital rights groups slammed the court's

ruling shortly after it was released.

"Today's unprecedented decision upholding the TikTok ban harms the free expression of hundreds of millions of TikTok users in this country and around the world," said Kate Ruane, a director at the Washington-based Center for Democracy & Technology, which has supported TikTok's challenge to the federal law.

Content creators who opposed the law also worried about the effect on their business if TikTok shuts down. "I'm very, very concerned about what's going to happen over the next couple weeks," said Desiree Hill, owner of Crown's Corner mechanic shop in Conyers, Georgia. "And very scared about the decrease that I'm going to have in reaching customers and worried I'm going to potentially lose my business in the next six months.

At arguments, the justices were told by a lawyer for TikTok and ByteDance Ltd., the Chinese technology company that is its parent, how difficult it would be to consummate a deal, especially since Chinese law restricts the sale of the proprietary algorithm that has made the social media platform wildly successful

The app allows users to watch hundreds of videos in about half an hour because some are only a few seconds long, according to a lawsuit filed last year by Kentucky complaining that TikTok is designed to be addictive and harms kids' mental health. Similar suits were filed by more than a dozen states. TikTok has called the claims inaccurate.

The dispute over TikTok's ties to China has come to embody the geopolitical competition between Washington and Beijing.

"ByteDance and its Chinese Communist masters had nine months to sell TikTok before the Sunday deadline," Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., wrote on X. "The very fact that Communist China refuses to permit its sale reveals exactly what TikTok is: a communist spy app. The Supreme Court correctly rejected TikTok's lies and propaganda masquerading as legal arguments.'

The U.S. has said it's concerned about TikTok collecting vast swaths of user data, including sensitive information on viewing habits, that could fall into the hands of the Chinese government through coercion. Officials have also warned the algorithm that fuels what users see on the app is vulnerable to manipulation by Chinese authorities, who can use it to shape content on the platform in a way that's difficult to detect.

TikTok points out the U.S. has not presented evidence that China has attempted to manipulate content on its U.S. platform or gather American user data through TikTok.

#### Legislation

Biden signed the legislation it into law in April. The law was the culmination of a yearslong saga in Washington over TikTok, which the government sees as a national security threat.

TikTok, which sued the government last year over the law, has long denied it could be used as a tool of Beijing. A three-judge panel made up of two Republican appointees and a Democratic appointee unanimously upheld the law in December, prompting TikTok's quick appeal to the Supreme Court.

Without a sale to an approved buyer, the law bars app stores operated by Apple, Google and others from offering TikTok beginning Sunday. Internet hosting services also will be prohibited from hosting TikTok.

ByteDance has said it won't sell. But some investors have been eyeing it, including Trump's former Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and billionaire businessman Frank McCourt. McCourt's Project Liberty initiative has said it and its unnamed partners have presented a proposal to ByteDance to acquire TikTok's U.S. assets. The consortium, which includes "Shark Tank" host Kevin O'Leary, did not disclose the financial terms of the offer.

McCourt, in a statement following the ruling, said his group was "ready to work with the company and President Trump to complete a deal.'

Prelogar told the justices last week that having the law take effect "might be just the jolt" ByteDance needs to reconsider its position.

## **BUSINESS**



R-L: Haitham Al-Tarkait, Khaled AlShamlan, Hamad Al-Marzouq, Abdulaziz Al-Nafisi, Khaled Al-Nisf, and Dalal Al-Nouri



R-L: Dalal Al-Nouri, Moath Al-Asimi, Nasser Al-Roudhan, Ahmed Al-Fares, Ahmed Al-Sumait, and Fawaz Al-Anzi

Maintaining growth and commitment to innovation in the digital era

## KFH unveils new visual identity ... beyond horizons





KFH Chairman Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq.





The New Visual Identity





Event host Abdullah Al-Sayegh



Salma Al-Ayubi



Thamer Al-Baz

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has unveiled a new visual identity to align with its growth, significant achievements, and expanding global presence. The rebranding also reflects KFH's aspirations and reinforces its dedication to embracing technology, progress, and innovation in the digital era, solidifying its position as a leader in Islamic banking.

The new visual identity was unveiled at a grand ceremony held at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre. This special event was attended by the Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq and Board members, Group Chief Executive Officer, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan, along with other members of KFH executive management and employees.

KFH Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said: "We are delighted to announce the dawn of a new chapter for Kuwait Finance House, characterized by a distinct experience and an exceptional vision for the future. This phase marks a transformative milestone in our journey, signified by the launch of our new visual identity. This identity embodies the future and reflects the Group's leading position in digital excellence, innovation, and global leadership in the development of Islamic financial services."

He added: "Last year, by the grace of Allah, we accomplished a historic mission. We achieved a significant milestone by successfully implementing the first and largest merger project in the Kuwaiti banking sector. This merger was part of the strategic acquisition of Ahli United Group – Bahrain, the largest such deal in the region.Following the acquisition, KFH has become the largest bank in Kuwait by market capitalization and the largest Kuwaiti private sector company listed on Boursa Kuwait, with a market capitalization of approximately KD 13 billion. Furthermore, KFH has emerged

#### AI-Marzouq:

■ This phase marks a transformative milestone, embodies the future, and reflects the Group's leadership

as the world's second-largest Islamic bank, achieving significant milestones and reaping substantial benefits across all areas of the institution. This has positively impacted our valued customers and shareholders."

Al-Marzouq pointed out that KFH Group boasts a substantial financial network encompassing 12 countries worldwide. Among the most prominent of these are Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkey, Egypt, the United Kingdom, and Germany. KFH's global presence confirms its standing as a global leader of Islamic banking services.

He said that the new visual identity encompasses more than just a logo. It represents a significant step towards a new era in modern Islamic banking, serving as a driving force in our pursuit of becoming one of the world's top 100 banks.

Al-Marzouq expressed his gratitude to all who contributed to shaping this new identity for KFH, wishing everyone success.

## KFH Group Chief Executive Officer – Khaled Yousef AlShamlan

Meanwhile, KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan said: "Today, we unveil the new visual identity of Kuwait Finance House, the Group's banks and subsidiaries, marking the beginning of a new chapter and a launch toward the future. This milestone reinforces our excellence in the various aspects of banking, innovative financial solutions, and pioneering financial

### AlShamlan:

The launch of the new visual identity aligns with KFH's growth, leadership, and extensive global reach

technology. It will directly reflect on performance levels and work methodologies, enhancing the banking experience to align with our new identity."

AlShamIan added that the launch of the new visual identity aligns with KFH's growth, leadership, and extensive global reach. It also underscores the bank's commitment to digital transformation, sustainability, and innovation, while emphasizing its dedication to enhancing customer experience and providing innovative banking solutions.

He explained: "During the rebranding process of KFH, we were keen to maintain our legacy and Islamic heritage while reflecting our commitment to excellence in the Islamic banking industry, in accordance with the highest global standards of technology and innovation."

AlShamlan said: "Today, we begin a new chapter in our journey and a strategic shift towards achieving our forwardthinking plans. At KFH, we take pride in our unprecedented success and leadership throughout decades, reaching a remarkable position as the largest bank in Kuwait in terms of market cap and the second-largest Islamic bank in the world. We will continue our efforts to sustain our leading position and fulfil the aspirations of our shareholders and customers, our core priority. We continue to play a significant role in advancing the future of Islamic finance. We remain a distinctive, credible, and reliable brand renowned for high financial solvency, consistent profitability, sustainable growth, competitive performance, and a global reach." Al-Shamlan expressed gratitude to employees for their exceptional contributions and indispensable role in KFH's success. He emphasized that they are the true wealth and core assets of KFH, and the foundation upon which its leadership journey is built. "We are advancing our pioneering vision and leadership in Islamic banking worldwide, emphasizing continuous development and innovation in the age of digital transformation. We aspire to further growth and prosperity to fulfill the aspirations of our shareholders and customers. We believe in a brighter future."

#### The new visual identity

The rebranding process necessitated concerted efforts, encompassing extensive research and gathering feedback from customers, employees, and design experts. The objective was to create a logo that authentically reflected the brand's identity and its vision for the future.

**Symbol:** The redesigned symbol reflects our global reach, digital focus, and innovative spirit. It embodies KFH's commitment to providing cutting-edge banking solutions while remaining grounded in cultural heritage and Islamic values.

**Lettering:** The bold, clean lines of KFH's new custom font symbolize solidity, reliability, and stability, blending tradition with modernity.

**Employees:** It opens new opportunities for growth, innovation, and collaboration within a forward-thinking, value-driven environment. It enhances the sense of pride in working for a trusted, international brand that is committed to integrity and Islamic banking principles.

**Customers:** The rebranding signifies KFH's continued commitment to providing modern, innovative, and accessible financial solutions, ensuring access to world-class services, enhanced digital tools, and a broader range of offerings and empowering customers to achieve their financial goals with a trusted, future-focused partner.



A crowd of employees.



Unveiling the New Visual Identity

# Features



## Gibson, Voight, and Stallone named 'Special Ambassadors'



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Justin Baldoni, (right), and Blake Lively in a scene from 'It Ends With Us.' (AP)

### 'It Ends With Us' fight

## Baldoni sues Lively, **Reynolds for \$400M**

LOS ANGELES, Jan 18, (AP): "It Ends With Us" actor and director Justin Baldoni has sued his co-star Blake Lively and her husband, "Deadpool" actor Ryan Reynolds, for defamation and extortion on Thursday in the latest move in a bitter legal battle surrounding the dark romantic drama.

The suit filed in federal court in New York by Bal-doni and production company Wayfarer Studios seeks at least \$400 million for damages that include lost future income. It alleges that Lively and Reynolds hijacked the production and marketing of "It Ends With Us" and manipulated media to smear Baldoni and others on the production with false allegations of sexual and other harassment.

"This is a case about two of the most powerful stars in the world deploying their enormous power to steal an entire film right out of the hands of its director and production studio," the suit says. "Then, when Lively and Reynolds' efforts failed to win them the acclaim they believed they so richly deserved, they turned their fury on their chosen scapegoat."

The lawsuit comes about two weeks after Lively sued Baldoni and several others tied to the film, alleging they retaliated against her for coming forward about her treatment on the set.

Her lawyers called Baldoni's new lawsuit "another chapter in the abuser playbook."

"This is an age-old story: A woman speaks up with concrete evidence of sexual harassment and retaliation and the abuser attempts to turn the tables on the victim," they said in a statement Thursday night. "This is what experts call DARVO. Deny. Attack. Reverse Victim Offender.

"It Ends With Us," based on the bestselling 2016 novel by Colleen Hoover, was released in August and exceeded box office expectations with a \$50 million debut. It begins as a standard romantic drama before taking a dark turn into domestic violence. The fallout in its aftermath has made major waves in Hollywood and led to discussions of the treatment of female actors both on sets and in media.

"Heartbreakingly, a film that Baldoni envisioned years ago would honor the survivors of domestic violence by telling their story, with the lofty goal of making a positive impact in the world, has now been overshadowed beyond recognition solely as a result of Lively's actions and cruelty," the lawsuit says.

#### Harassment

## Donald Trump vows to help 'troubled' Hollywood

NEW YORK, Jan 18, (AP): Donald Trump wants to make Hollywood "bigger, better and stronger" and has cast Mel Gibson, Jon Voight and Sylvester Stallone as stars of what he is calling his "Special Ambassadors to a great but very troubled place, Hollywood, California."

On Wednesday, the President-elect announced on his social media site that the three actors would be his eyes and ears to the moviemaking town.

"It will again be, like The United States of America itself, The Golden Age of Hollywood!" he wrote on Truth Social.

He also called the trio special envoys. Special ambassadors and envoys are typically chosen to respond to troubled hot spots like the Middle East, not California.

Gibson said in a statement that he got the news "at the same time as all of you and was just as surprised. Nevertheless, I heed the call. My duty as a citizen is to give any help and insight I can.'

Gibson, who lost his home in the Palisades fire, added, "Any chance the position comes with an Ambassador's residence?"

U.S. film and television production has been hampered in recent years, with setbacks from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hollywood guild strikes of 2023 and, in the past week, the ongoing wildfires in the Los Angeles area. Overall production in the U.S. was down 26%

Film

from 2021, according to data from ProdPro.

In the greater Los Angeles area, productions were down 5.6% from 2023 according to FilmLA, the lowest since 2020. This past Octo-ber, Governor Gavin Newson

proposed expanding California's Film & Television Tax Credit program to \$750 million annually (up from \$330 million). Other U.S. cities like Atlanta, New York, Chicago and San Francisco have used tax incentives to lure film and TV productions to their cities. Actor Mark Wahlberg is even making plans for a Las Vegas production hub.

Trump

"I'm old enough to have touched some years of the Golden Age of Hollywood, and I've seen its slow deterioration since. Today, we are in pretty bad shape," Voight said. "Very few films are made here now, but we are fortunate to have an incoming President, who wants to restore Hollywood to its former glory, and with his help, I feel we can get done." It's unclear what exactly Gibson, Voight and Stallone

will be doing in this effort to bring productions back to the US. Representives for Stallone did not immediately respond to request for comment.

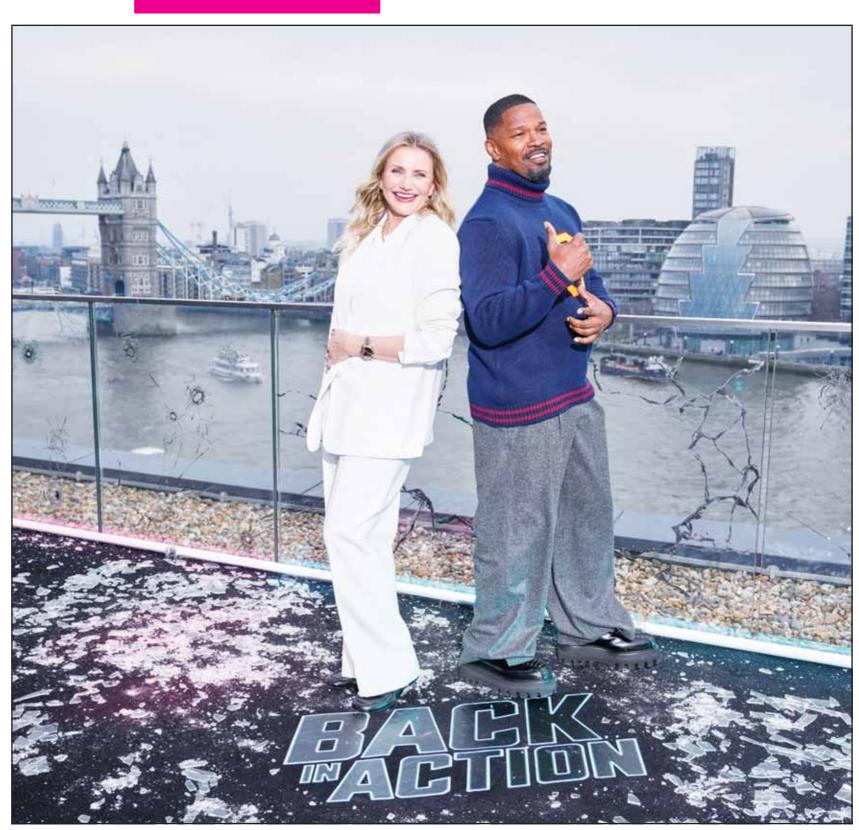
Trump's decision to select the actors as his chosen "ambassadors" underscores his preoccupations with the 1980s and '90s, when he was a rising tabloid star in New York, and Gibson and Stallone were among the biggest movie stars in the world.

Stallone is a frequent guest at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club and introduced him at a gala in November shortly after the election.

"When George Washington defended his country, he had no idea that he was going to change the world. Because without him, you could imagine what the world would look like," Stallone told the crowd. "Guess what? We got the second George Washington. Congratulations!'

The decision also reflects Trump's willingness to overlook his supporters' most controversial statements. Gibson's reputation has been altered in Hollywood since 2006, when he went on an antisemitic rant while being arrested for allegedly driving under the influence. But he's also continued to work in mainstream movies and directed the upcoming Wahlberg thriller "Flight Risk.

Voight is a longtime Trump supporter who has called Trump the greatest president since Abraham Lincoln.



Lively's allegations of sexual and other harassment followed by retaliation are utterly false, Baldoni's suit

alleges. "Lively was so close and comfortable with Baldoni that she freely breast-fed in front of him during meetings," the suit says.

She would later take moments like these that she encouraged and recast them as sexual harassment and misconduct, his lawsuit alleges.

Lively's Dec. 31 lawsuit came just hours after Baldoni sued the New York Times for libel, alleging the paper worked with Lively to smear him. The Times said it stood by its reporting and planned to "vigorously defend" against the allegations.

Baldon's new suit also says that counter to Lively's allegations, every request she made for an intimacy coordinator to help with sensitive scenes on the film was honored. It focuses especially on a a birthing scene, saying Lively's contention that she was "mostly nude" with non-essential people present including the film's financier were "knowingly false."

Baldoni says that at another point during the production, because he has back problems, he privately and politely asked Lively her weight so that he could work with

his personal trainer to be able to safely lift her in the film. Reynolds later "swore at Baldoni and accused him of fat-shaming his wife," the suit says.

"In fact, Lively had earlier expressed insecurity about her postpartum figure, and Baldoni made every attempt to genuinely reassure her," his lawsuit says.

Baldoni took a backseat in promoting the film while Lively took center stage along with Reynolds, who was on the press circuit for "Deadpool & Wolverine" at the same time.

The backlash against Baldoni led to his being dropped by his agency WME, which also represents both Lively and Reynolds. The suit alleges Reynolds was responsible for this, saying that he approached a WME executive at the "Deadpool & Wolverine" premiere and "expressed his deep disdain for Baldoni, suggesting the

agency was working with a 'sexual predator.'" Prior to "It Ends With Us," Baldoni starred in the TV comedy "Jane the Virgin," directed the 2019 film "Five Feet Apart," and wrote "Man Enough," a book pushing back against traditional notions of masculinity.

"Lively knew full well that making those allegations would be a career death sentence for Plaintiffs, especially given that Baldoni has lived his private and public life as an impassioned advocate for gender equality and healthy masculinity," his lawsuit says.

But Lively's lawyers' statement said that evidence will show that other cast members had similar experiences with Baldoni.

"In short, while the victim focuses on the abuse, the abuser focuses on the victim," the attorneys said. "The strategy of attacking the woman is desperate, it does not refute the evidence in Ms. Lively's complaint, and it will fail.'

Lively came to fame through the 2005 film "The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants," and bolstered her stardom on the TV series "Gossip Girl" from 2007 to 2012. She has since starred in films including "The Town" and "The Shallows."

Baldoni's lawsuit says Lively's cruelty even extended to her serving the papers from her lawsuit on Baldoni and his co-defendants in the days after she filed it during the onset of the wildfires that have ravaged the Los Angeles area, saying that on a day when they were "gathering their kids and pets, preparing 'go bags' and monitoring evacuation orders while fearing for their homes, Lively - from the safety of her penthouse in New York deployed process servers."

Cameron Diaz, (left), and Jamie Foxx pose for photographers at the photo call for the film 'Back In Action' on Friday, Jan. 17, in London. (AP)

Glam spies turned dorky parents

## **Diaz is 'Back in Action' with Foxx**

LOS ANGELES, Jan 18, (AP): But, we do Wordle!! Er, OK. That's how former secret agent Matt (Jamie Foxx) explains that he and wife Emily are now living a boring, mundane, glamour-free life and nobody would ever be looking for them.

To which the rest of us Wordle players say: Whoa, speak for yourself, Matt! Lots of us play Wordle and we don't think We're boring or mundane.

Anyway! More to the point is that Matt's explanation obviously doesn't work, because within a moment he and Emily are, yes, "Back in Action." It's not only the title of director Seth Gordon's film, but the story of Foxx's co-star, Cameron Diaz. Back in movies after more than a decade, Diaz retains her easy charm and has chemistry with Foxx.

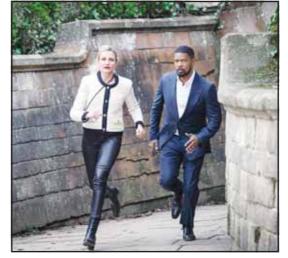
But this doesn't mean their lines are funny or logical. Often, they are neither.

We start 15 years ago, in a pre-credits sequence featuring our ultra-cool co-spies (also lovers). Their job is to pose as French arms dealers visiting the home of a shadowy Russian terrorist - then break into a safe and steal a key to the entire world's infrastructure or something

On the private jet headed back home, Emily reveals a secret we already knew: her home pregnancy test was positive. Actually, all six of them were.

Matt says he's all in. They break out the champagne (well, for him.) And then all heck breaks loose and they end up needing to kill a bunch of people and parachute into the snowy mountains. It's indeed funny when Matt observes: "We can't keep doing this, especially with that baby on the way.'

Flash forward 15 years and the couple, having gone underground, live in a comfy suburban house with two lovely (and barely annoying) teenagers. Matt coaches the soccer team. The teens, Alice and Leo (McKenna Roberts and Rylan Jackson, both appealing), are not



This image released by Netflix shows Cameron Diaz, (left), and Jamie Foxx in a scene from 'Back In Action.' (AP)

aware of their parents' high-flying past; Matt and Emily want their lives to be normal.

Director Gordon, who co-wrote the script with Brendan O'Brien, has said he was aiming to explore what might happen when spies become parents. (This was brilliantly addressed in "The Americans" on FX, but that was a whole different thing.) Now, without knowing too many spy couples, or any, I'm pretty sure what happens is NOT that the parents become SO uncool SO fast that they buy binoculars on Amazon to spy on their daughter's social life from the car at school dropoff. Guys, at least hide so she doesn't see you. Did CIA training teach you nothing?

Equally unartful is the way they explain their past to their kids. We join this conversation as the kids wonder why Dad was speaking Russian to the AC guy. The parents explain they picked it up during their time in the Peace Corps. But they don't even have their story straight: Were they in Colombia, Belize, or Russia? Again, they had 15 years to get this straight.

All is peaceful in suburbia, sort of, except Emily is having trouble connecting with daughter Alice (could this be because she spies on her?) She's also getting bored, and wonders if she and Matt can briefly skip down to South America and stop a coup somewhere or, heck, start a coup! Either way! And then the doorbell rings with a long-lost contact, and Matt and Emily claim Wordle and Etsy, but soon they're dragged back in, and the whole fam is on the run.

You also should know that Emily has both a past with a jealous MI6 agent (Andrew Scott) and a complicated relationship with her mother (Glenn Close, game for broad comedy), who lives on a huge estate in England, was also a spy, and has enthusiastic but terrible taste in men.

The action comes fast and furious, and the banter is pleasant enough. Diaz, especially, makes the proceedings decently enjoyable and some of the sillier lines believable.

It all leads to some predictable questions: Will Emily and her estranged mother find some common ground? Will the kids come to understand their parents? Will Emily and Alice forge a truce? Will a good time be had and lessons learned on the family adventure?

Also, what's Matt's Wordle streak? "Back in Action," a Netflix release, has been rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association "for sequences of violence and action, some suggestive references and strong language, and brief teen partying." Running time: 114 minutes. Two stars out of four.

## **HEALTH/SCIENCE**

## New gene discovery offers hope for obesity treatment

## UAE develops stem cell therapy for diabetes treatment

DUBAI, Jan 18, (Xinhua): The Abu Dhabi Stem Cells Center (ADSCC) has introduced a new approach to diabetes management using umbilical cord-derived mesenchymal stem cell (MSC) therapy, the United Arab Emirates state news agency WAM reported on Thursday.

Mesenchymal stem cells have the ability to self-renew and can differentiate into a variety of cell types. MSCs can be isolated from a variety of tissues, such as umbilical cord.

The treatment was successfully administered to a 20-year-old Emirati patient with type 1 diabetes. Within a month, the patient's blood sugar levels showed significant improvement, and diabetes-related antibodies were reduced, with further progress anticipated, according to the report. The procedure involved a two-hour intravenous infusion carried out under strict medical protocols

Maysoon Al Karam, chief medical officer at ADSCC, emphasized the therapy's potential to reduce insulin dependency. The patient's condition is being closely



Taormina Lepore, (foreground), who has low vision, walks with a white cane during an accessible field trip to the San Andreas Fault organized by the International Association of Geoscience Diversity Thursday, Sept. 26, 2024, in San Bernadino, Calif. (AP)

### Breaking barriers

## **Experts with disabilities** redefine field, lab work

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif., Jan 18, (AP): The path to Lost Lake was steep and unpaved, lined with sharp rocks and holes

A group of scientists and students gingerly made their way, using canes or a helping hand to guide them. For those who couldn't make the trek, a drone brought the lake - blue and narrow - into view.b The field trip was designed to illustrate the challenges disabled researchers often face - and how barriers can be overcome.

"Just because you can't do it like someone else doesn't mean you can't do it," said Anita Marshall, a University of Florida geologist leading the out-ing. The group included scientists with sight, hearing and mobility disabilities.

Marshall's organization ran the field trip to the lake along the San Andreas Fault, outside of San Bernadino. Her group - the International Association for Geoscience Diversity - and others are working to improve access to field and lab work so that those with disabilities feel welcome and stay.

Taormina Lepore, a Western Michi-

monitored through regular checkups. Antonio Bencomo, general manager at ADSCC Research Center, stated that

plans are underway to expand the therapy's application to patients with type 2 diabetes.

#### 

Obesity: A team of New Zealand and international researchers have discovered how a gene regulates human appetite and bodyweight, raising hopes for new and effective treatments for obesity.

The finding of a gene that controls expression of the Melanocortin 4 Receptor (MC4R), which plays a pivotal role in regulating appetite and bodyweight, could help diagnose and treat people whose obesity is caused by gene mutation, the researchers from the University of Auckland said on Friday.

More than two decades of human genetic data showed mutation in a particular

gene was associated with obesity, and the team found this was because it controlled a second gene, causing appetite and bodyweight changes in mice. When they modified the first gene in mice to have the same mutation found in a child with severe obesity, the mice ate more and became obese, but could be treated by medication targeting the second gene, the study showed.

"It will be a challenge, but it offers a potential way of treating obesity in the general population," said Kathy Mountjoy, who researches molecular medicine and pathology at the University of Auckland, also the co-author of the study published in the Science Translational Medicine.

Subtle changes in the gene can cause obesity, which showed that the amount of the MC4 receptor that is expressed is important in regulating appetite and bodyweight, Mountjoy said, adding drug companies have attempted to target the MC4 receptor for years to find molecules that could activate it to treat obesity, but the drugs they have discovered have had unwanted side effects.

**MVD** outbreak

## Mpox kills over 1,321 in Africa

ADDIS ABABA, Jan. 18, (Xinhua): The number of mpox cases reported in Africa since the start of last year has surpassed 77,800, with the death toll rising to 1,321, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has disclosed.

Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya, addressing an on-line media briefing on Thursday evening, said the African continent has reported 77,888 mpox cases since the start of 2024, including 16,767 confirmed cases and 1,321 deaths.

Sierra Leone became the latest African country to report mpox cases as it confirmed its first outbreak on Jan. 10, bringing the total number of affected countries to 21, according to Kaseya.

Data from the African Union's specialized healthcare agency show that among the 21 affected countries, 13 are currently experiencing active transmission of the mpox virus.

Marburg virus: Uganda has intensified border surveillance with neighboring Tanzania following a suspected Marburg vi-rus disease (MVD) outbreak that has claimed eight lives, a senior government official said Friday.

Ugandan Minister of Health Jane Ruth Aceng told reporters that the World Health Organization (WHO) had alerted Uganda about the suspected outbreak in Tanzania's Kagera region, which shares a border with Uganda.

Aceng said health authorities have identified Uganda's border districts of Kyotera, Isingiro, Rakai, Kalangala, and Ntungamo as being at immediate high risk of disease importation.

According to the ministry, no confirmed or suspected cases of MVD -- characterized by symptoms such as headache, high fever, back pain, diarrhea, vomiting with blood, body weakness, and external bleeding -- have been reported in Uganda.

Cholera: The number of cholera cases in Uganda has risen to 67 since the disease outbreak was announced in the northern part of the country on Jan. 7, the Ministry of Health said Friday. Daniel Kyabayinze, director of public health at the Ministry of Health, told reporters that out of the 67 cases, seven are laboratory confirmed, while the rest remain suspected cases. Of the 67, all reported in the northern border district of Lamwo, 21 remain hospitalized, while the rest have been treated and discharged, Kyabayinze said, adding that one death has been registered. He said it is suspected that the disease was imported into the country from neighboring countries.

Focus on primary care and mental health

## WHO announces executive plan for health response after Gaza ceasefire

GENEVA, Jan 18, (KUNA): The World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday announced its executive plan for the health response in Gaza and the West Bank which will span 60 days following the immediate implementation of the ceasefire.

Speaking online from Jerusalem during a UN briefing in Geneva, WHO representative for the occupied Palestinian territories Rik Peeperkorn said that the plan exists but has been updated to reflect the current situation.

He explained that the plan focuses on supporting the health response including providing integrated primary healthcare child health maternal and child health care mental health emergency care and primary healthcare with a focus on deploying specialized medical teams and expanding health services in hospitals and medical facilities.

Peeperkorn welcomed the announcement of the ceasefire agreement and expressed hope that all parties would fully commit to implementing the deal following through on the three phases of the ceasefire in pursuit of a comprehensive and lasting peace.

He added that the execution of the plan cannot proceed without coordination with the organization's health partners emphasizing that the priority is to expand operations and ensure the delivery of essential supplies and resources to meet immediate needs and support early recovery efforts in the region.

Peeperkorn stressed the necessity of removing the security and political barriers that hinder the delivery of aid to affected areas. He also emphasized that rebuilding Gaza's health system must be a collective effort in close collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Health. "Solutions must be "Palestinian" for all issues related to the health sector,"

he stressed. Peeperkorn called on international donors to provide flexible funding to support a rapid and effective response to humanitarian needs in Gaza and the West Bank.

He reaffirmed WHO's commitment to continue supporting basic health services and noted that many hospitals in Gaza and the West Bank are facing shortages of equipment and supplies due to ongoing barriers.

to healthcare in West bank also faces some restrictions due to ongoing violence checkpoint closures and security obstacles.

access to these areas and ensure the continued operation of hospitals and health centers that struggle to provide

ceasefire would facilitate better access to healthcare allowing medical teams to provide support across Gaza and the West Bank.

## Health benefits reported for adult smokers

## US OKs sales of Zyn nicotine pouches

WASHINGTON, Jan 18, (AP): Federal health officials have backed the public health benefits of nicotine pouches, authorizing Philip Morris International's

tobacco users without attracting teens and adolescents. FDA officials said Thursday that Zvn contains fewer harmful ingredi-

other nicotine pouches don't contain tobacco, only nicotine and flavoring. For decades, tobacco companies

ah, central Gaza Strip, Thursday Jan. 16, 2025. WHO aims to strengthen health services in Gaza, West Bank amid ceasefire. (AP)

WHO official confirmed that access

He stressed the need to improve

basic health services. Peeperkorn expressed hope that the



gan University paleontologist who went on the trip, said scientists tend to value a single, traditional way of getting things done. At Lost Lake, everyone got a view - even if they couldn't

physically get there. "It's really about empathy, as much as it is about science," said Lepore, who also researches science education.

Disabled people make up about 3% of the science, technology, engineering and math workforce, according to 2021 data from the National Science Foundation.

Scientists with disabilities say that's in part because labs, classrooms and field sites aren't designed to accommodate them. Students and faculty are still told that they can't work in a lab or do research safely, said Mark Leddy, who formerly managed disability-related grants

Venu Varanasi, a biomaterials engi neer at the University of Texas at Arlington who has low vision, prints out signage using high-contrast color combinations and encourages his students to keep floors and counters clutter-free so he can navigate the lab more easily.

for the National Science Foundation.

The Americans with Disabilities

Act, passed in 1990, sets minimum

regulations for new buildings and labs,

including ramps and wheelchair-acces-

complicated and lengthy process.

But modifying older labs can be a

Alyssa Paparella is working on her

doctorate in biology at Baylor College

of Medicine and founded an online

community for disabled scientists. She

said a science building at one of her

former schools had no automatic but-

want actually working in the laborato-ries?" she said. "That's the front door

Leddy said researchers with disabil-

ities are invaluable because of their life

experiences. They have to constantly

come up with creative ways to get past

barriers in their lives - a problem-solv-

ing skill that's indispensable in a lab.

don't get access, then how can they contribute that talent?" Leddy said.

"If they don't feel welcome, if they

that they're not even able to get in."

"What is that saying about who you

sible walkways.

tons to open doors

He said those modifications also keep accidents to a minimum for nondisabled students.

"When you realize that you have a person with a disability, you have an opportunity, not a problem," he said.

At Purdue University in Indiana, engineering professor Brad Duerstock helped design an accessible biomedical lab years ago with support from the school and a National Institutes of Health grant, removing cabinets under sinks and fume hoods so that wheelchairs can easily pull up.

Zyn to help adult smokers cut back or quit cigarettes.

The Food and Drug Administration OK'd 10 Zyn flavors, including coffee, mint and menthol. It's the first time regulators have authorized sales of nicotine pouches, which are the fastest-growing segment of the US tobacco market.

The pouches have been available for more than a decade as FDA reviewed company data intended to show the products can serve as an alternative to cigarettes and other traditional tobacco products. The decision doesn't mean that Zyn is safe, just less harmful than older alternatives.

To remain on the market, companies generally must show that their products will reduce disease among adult ents than cigarettes and various types of chewing tobacco, including snuff, which are linked to cancer and other life-threatening diseases. Company data also showed "a substantial portion of adults" who previously smoked switched completely to Zyn, regulators said. The pouches are sold in two different strengths.

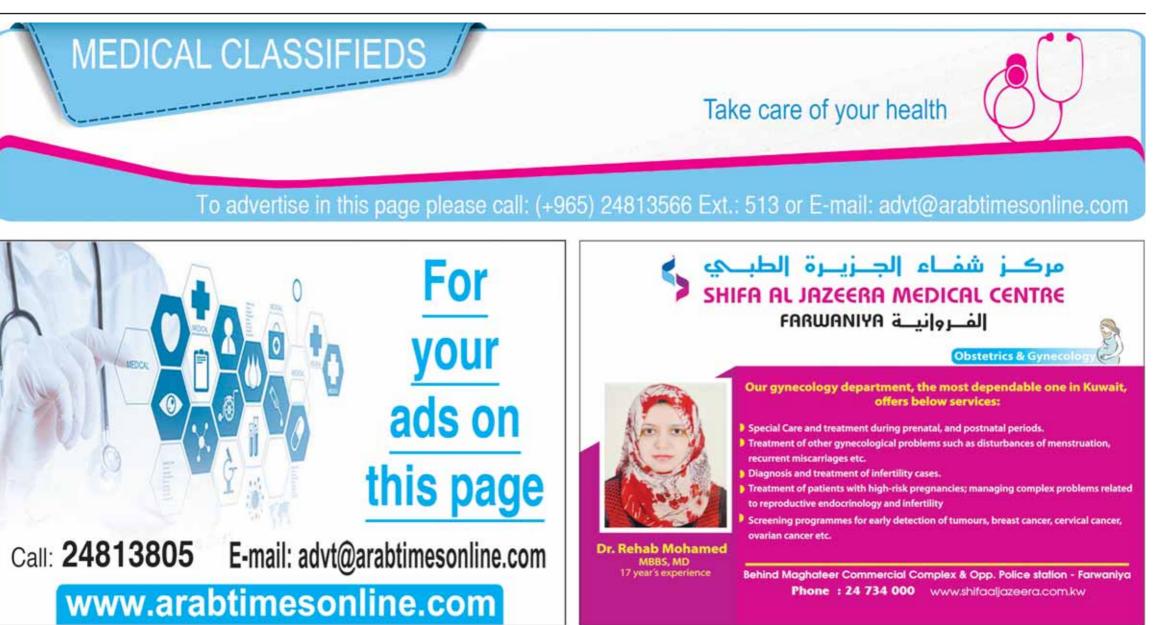
"The data show that these nicotine pouch products meet that bar by benefiting adults who use cigarettes or smokeless tobacco products," said Matthew Farrelly of FDA's Center for Tobacco Products.

The FDA has previously granted similar authorization to several brands of e-cigarettes, a tobacco-heating device, and snus, a type of pasteurized tobacco that is popular in Scandinahave tried to develop alternative products to replace dwindling sales of cigarettes, as smoking levels in the U.S. and worldwide continue to fall. Ecigarettes became popular more than a decade ago, but faced a backlash after they triggered a multiyear spike in underage vaping.

vian counties. Unlike snus, Zyn and

In recent months, antismoking groups have warned that nicotine pouches could follow a similar path, pointing to videos of young people popping Zyn and other pouches that have racked up millions of views on social media platforms.

But the FDA pointed to government survey data showing fewer than 2 percent of American high school and middle school students used nicotine pouches last year.



### After the Games, these venues will be opened to the public

## Harbin 2025 Asian Winter Games to emphasize green, eco-friendly concepts

HARBIN, Jan 18, (Xinhua): With just three weeks to go before the 9th Asian Winter Games opens in northeast China's Harbin, the principles of green and eco-friendly have been emphasized by the organizers.

Wang Hesheng, vice chairman and secretary-general of the organizing committee for Harbin 2025, introduced that all ice events will utilize existing venues and facilities, with renovations having been conducted on refrigeration, dehumidification, lighting, heating, and networking systems.

After the Games, these venues will be opened to the public with higher standards, better environments, and more complete functions.

Wu Fei, a teacher at Harbin Sport University, shared her expectations regarding the legacy of the 9th Asian Winter Games for her institution.

"The indoor ice rink at Harbin Sport University will host the ice hockey competitions during the Asian Winter Games. Following the Games, the university will have a more professional space for daily teaching and training," Wu said.

The rink has received professional upgrades in preparation for the Games, which not only eliminates the need for new facilities but also enhances the standards of the university's ice and snow sports infrastructure.

The Heilongjiang Ice Training Center is designated for athletes' preparations for speed skating, short track speed skating, and figure skating events at the games.

Wu Xian, the chief engineer of the center, introduced that the facilities originated from older sites, with the speed skating rink completed in 1995 based on an outdoor arena, and the multi-functional rink constructed in 1983

In anticipation of the 9th Asian Winter Games, these venues have undergone extensive renovations.

"We renovated the roof and exterior walls of the speed skating rink, incorporating a heat-insulation system and waterproofing. The lighting system has been upgraded, refrigeration capacity has been increased, and a heat recovery system has been installed, significantly enhancing the venue's energy efficiency.

"We have replaced gasoline-powered ice resurfacing machines with electric alternatives, thereby further improving the environmental sustainability of the venue," Wu Xian said. This is also the first time in history

that 100% green electricity will be guaranteed during the Asian Winter Games, covering both the venue renovations and the Games' operations.

Liu Qinghui, head of the environmental protection task force at the organizing committee, explained that green energy sourced from wind and solar power will be consistently supplied to the venues throughout the Games to fulfill their energy requirements.

"We have implemented a rigorous selection process for quality material suppliers and brands for venue renovations, creating a 'green material' whitelist after conducting environmental assessments to guarantee that all materials used are eco-friendly. We have minimized the utilization of adhesives, opting instead for riveted or assembled structures wherever feasible," Liu added.



The Kazakhstan national short track speed skaters conduct pre-match training for the upcoming 2025 Harbin Asian Winter Games in Astana, Kazakhstan. (Xinhua)

The organizing committee has also introduced new energy vehicles to cater to transportation needs during the Games, underscoring that the green and low-carbon approach is not only a fundamental principle

of the Games but is also expected to positively influence daily life in the future.

### Akron defeats Ohio 92-80

UCLA routs lowa to snap

four-game January skid

## Tatum scores 30 as Celtics break out of shooting slump in win over Magic



LOS ANGELES, Jan 18, (AP): Eric Dailey Jr. scored a career high 23 points and UCLA snapped its four-game los-ing streak with a 94-70 win over Iowa on Friday night.

The Bruins never trailed and the Hawkeyes were only able to tie the game at 2-2 when Owen Freeman answered Tyler Bilodeau's opening jumper. UCLA reached a double-digit lead in under four minutes and pushed it to 20 points on Kobe Johnson's free throw at the 11:24 mark. UCLA led 57-24 at the half.

UCLA (12-6, 3-4 Big Ten) shot 62.1% from the field, converting 36 of 58 shots, including 8 of 23 from behind the arc. Five players reached double-figure scoring led by Dailey, who topped his previous career high of 20. Bilodeau finished with 18 points and Dylan Andrews knocked down 3 of 5 from distance to add 13. Skyy Clark and William Kyle III each contributed

Luke Goode stroked a 3-pointer with more than a minute left in overtime to give Indiana the lead and Anthony Leal blocked John Mobley Jr.'s jumper with a second left to allow Indiana to escape Ohio State with a 77-76 Big Ten Conference win .

Indiana (14-5, 5-3) now has won five of the last six meetings with the Buckeyes, including both games a year ago. Ohio State (10-8, 2-5) lost its third straight conference game, all by two points or less.

Mobley hit a 3-pointer with 38 seconds remaining in regulation to tie the game at 71-71. Indiana held the ball before Luke Goode drove for a layup that missed, Oumar Ballo got the offensive rebound but missed the put-back, rebounded again and missed a jumper. Ohio State rebounded but was unable to get off a shot as the clock ran out.

Ohio State took the lead, 76-74, on Bruce Thornton's three-point play with 1:26 left in overtime. Indiana's Myles Rice drove to the basket but missed a layup to tie the game, but Oumar Ballo came down with the offensive rebound and kicked the ball to a wide-open Goode on the wing for the game-winner. Mobley missed a 3-point attempt for Ohio State and Kanaan Carlyle drove the baseline and misfired on a short jumper with :14 left.

Goode finished with a career-high 23 points and Ballo scored a doubledouble with 21 points and 15 rebounds with four assists and two blocks for the Hoosiers. Carlyle added 13 points.

Isaiah Gray's 22 points helped Akron defeat Ohio 92-80.

Gray had five rebounds for the Zips (12-5, 5-0 Mid-American Conference). Amani Lyles scored 17 points while shooting  $\tilde{7}$  of 9 from the field and 3 for 3 from the line and added six assists and three blocks. Nate Johnson had 14 points and shot 6 for 16, including 2 for 6 from beyond the arc.



Boston Celtics' Jaylen Brown (7) chases a loose ball after making a steal on Orlando Magic's Cole Anthony during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Boston. (AP)

## Grizzlies hand Spurs largest loss of season

#### BOSTON, Jan 18, (AP): Jayson Tatum scored 30 points and the Boston Celtics ran past the Orlando Magic 121-94 on Friday night.

With freshman star Cooper Flagg and his Duke teammates looking on from the stands, Tatum, a former Blue Devils standout, went 12 of 21 from the floor to help Boston break out of a recent shooting slump. No. 3 Duke plays at Boston College on Saturday.

Boston shot a season-best 61% in the first half and took a 12-point lead into halftime. The Celtics shot 53% on the night, including 46% from 3-point range, and led by 27 in the second half. Kristaps Porzingis finished with 23 points on 7-of-10 shooting. Jaylen Brown added 20.

Cole Anthony led Orlando with 23 points, and Paolo Banchero scored 21.

#### Grizzlies 140, Spurs 112

In San Antonio, Santi Aldama scored a career-high 29 points and the Memphis Grizzlies rolled to a victory over San Antonio, handing the Spurs their largest losing margin of the season even with Ja Morant sidelined by a foot injury.

Desmond Bane added 22 points and 14 assists, and Jaylen Wells had 22 points to help Memphis sweep the two-game set in Antonio, where the Grizzlies have won nine straight

Devin Vassell led San Antonio with 21 points. Stephon Castle added 20, and Victor Wembanyama had 9 points and 12 rebounds

#### Mavericks 106, Thunder 98

In Dallas, Kyrie Irving scored 25 points, Spencer Dinwiddie and P.J. Washington Jr. added 16 apiece and the Dallas Mavericks beat Oklahoma City as Thunder All-Star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander missed his first game of the season.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the NBA's leading scorer with a 31.6 average, was sidelined by a sprained wrist, one night after scoring 40 points in a dominating 134-114 victory over Cleveland in a matchup of the Western and Eastern Conference leaders.

The Mavericks (23-19) snapped a three-game losing streak

#### Lakers 102, Nets 101

In Los Angeles, Austin Reaves scored a career-high 38 points, LeBron James had 29 and the Los Angeles Lakers held on to beat the Brooklyn Nets

The Nets, who lost 126-67 to the LA Clippers on Wednesday night in a franchise-record 59-point defeat, had a chance to win it, but D'Angelo Russell missed a 3-pointer with 2.6 seconds remaining. James got the rebound as the Lakers won their second straight

Reaves was 13 for 23 from the floor and 8 for 8 from the foul line. His previous career high was 35 points, accomplished twice, including Dec. 31 against Cleveland. Reaves had 15 points in the fourth quarter, including three 3-pointers Bucks 130 Raptors 112

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 35 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to a victory over the Toronto Raptors.

Damian Lillard added 26 points and eight assists for Milwaukee, which swept the three-game season series from Toronto. Bobby Portis scored 15 and Khris Middleton had 13 points in 24 minutes off the bench

Antetokounmpo posted his 12th straight doubledouble, the second-longest active streak in the NBA. Nuggets 133, Heat 113

In Miami, Jamal Murray scored 30 points, Nikola Jokic extended his NBA lead with his 17th tripledouble of the season and the Denver Nuggets spoiled Jimmy Butler's return by beating the Miami Heat .

Jokic finished with 24 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists. Aaron Gordon added 16 for Denver.

Tyler Herro scored 22 points for Miami, while Butler had 18 in his first game back from a seven-game suspension. Bam Adebayo finished with 16 points and 11 rebounds, and Nikola Jovic scored 16 points for the Heat

#### **Timberwolves 116, Knicks 99**

In New York, Anthony Edwards had 36 points, a season-high 13 rebounds and seven assists, leading the Minnesota Timberwolves to a victory over the New York Knicks

## Denis Law, Manchester United and Scotland soccer great, dies at 84

LONDON, Jan 18, (AP): Denis Law, the Manchester United and Scotland great, has died. He was 84.

The death of Law, the only Scottish player to win the Ballon d'Or, was announced by his family through United. In 2021 he was diagnosed with dementia.

"It is with a heavy heart that we tell you our father Denis Law has sadly passed away. He fought a tough battle but finally he is now at peace," the statement read.

"We would like to thank everyone who contributed to his wellbeing and care, past and much more recently. We know how much people supported and loved him and that love was always appreciated and made the difference.'

Law is forever linked with Bobby Charlton and George Best, the threepronged strike force that led United to English league titles in 1965 and '67 and the European Cup in 1968 - a first for an English club.

"Everyone at Manchester United is mourning the loss of Denis Law, the King of the Stretford End," United said in a statement. "With 237 goals in 404 appearances, he will always be celebrated as one of the club's greatest and most beloved players. The ultimate goal-scorer, his flair, spirit and love for the game made him the hero of a generation. Law, Charlton and Best would be

voted as European footballer of the year and win the Ballon d'Or in a five-season period from 1964-68. They are united in a statue at Old Trafford. Law is the only player with two statues at the stadium: He stands solo on the Stretford End concourse, naturally.

Law's 46 goals in the 1963-64 season remains a single-season record for United. His 237 goals for the club are bettered by only Charlton and Wayne Rooney, though his goals-per-game ratio is higher.

However, a goal he scored against United is arguably his most famous. In one of the last games of his career, Law was playing for Manchester City - where he had two spells - at Old Trafford in United's next-to-last game of the 1973-74 season.

His late goal, with an audacious backheel flick he insisted was "a fluke," meant United lost 1-0 and helped to ensure its relegation to the second division just six years after being European champion.

Law did not celebrate his goal and was substituted with head bowed as United fans invaded the pitch before the game restarted

His 30 goals for Scotland are matched by only Kenny Dalglish, though was achieved in just 55 games compared to Dalglish's 102.

## **Residential Property for Sale** in Mannanthala / Nalanchira Trivandrum, Kerala

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## LA's Olympic venues were spared by wildfires, but the city's rebuild could impact the Games' runup

LOS ANGELES, Jan 18, devastation (AP): The wrought by the deadly wildfires that ravaged sections of Los Angeles have left an indelible imprint on the region's landscape and psyche.

The runup to the city hosting the 2028 Summer Olympics and Paralympics, in addition to World Cup matches in 2026 and a Super Bowl in '27ng an, will coincide with massive rebuilding of housid infrastructure. That

seems cruelly ironic after Los Angeles organizers sold the Games as a no-build event. None of the Olympic venues have been damaged by

the still-burning fires that tore through Pacific Palisades on the city's westside and Altadena, an unincorporated community above Pasadena a statement in the foothills of the San Ga-

briel Mountains. The Palisades fire came close to Riviera Country Club, which will host Olympic golf and was inside the evacuation zone. UCLA, which will house athletes, was just outside the zone.

"While our focus remains on healing and rebuilding, there is no reason to believe that the fires will adversely impact or delay preparations for the 2028 Olympic and

Paralympic Games, which are already well underway,' Paul Kerkorian, executive director of the city's new Office of Major Events, said in

The NFL, NBA and college basketball relocated or postponed games in the days after the fires began on Jan. 7. Neither of the two major fires has been contained and thousands remain evacuated. "We are in full solidar-

ity with the citizens of Los Angeles and full of admiration for the tireless work of the firefighters and the security forces," the International Olympic Committee said in a statement. "Currently the full focus must be on the fight against the fires and the protection of the people and

property." Los Angeles was awarded the 2028 Olympics for a third time in 2017, with the IOC praising organizers' bid for using existing and temporary venues rather than constructing new stadiums and sports facilities specifically for the Games, as well as its commitment to sustainability and fiscal responsibility.

Yet the Games were still expected to cost roughly \$6.9 billion for investments like upgraded transportation, revamped facilities and improvements to the city's infrastructure with a goal of

benefitting residents long after the Olympic flame is extinguished.



## Runup to the city hosting various events, will coincide with massive rebuild of housing and infrastructure

## Marmoush transfer to Man City imminent

## Dortmund's woes continue with loss to Frankfurt

FRANKFURT, Germany, Jan 18, (AP): Omar Marmoush didn't play though he still made it onto the field to bid what seemed like a farewell as Eintracht Frankfurt beat struggling Borussia Dortmund 2-0.

Frankfurt left Marmoush out of its squad and confirmed he is close to completing a transfer to Manchester City. He will remain out of the team while negotiations continue.

After Frankfurt won the Bundesliga game, Marmoush joined the team on the field to acknowledge the cheers of the home crowd before being swarmed by his teammates.

The Egyptian striker has scored 15 league goals this season, raising questions over whether his departure will derail Frankfurt's bid to qualify for the Champions League.

For now at least, Frankfurt stayed on track, and 10th-placed Dortmund's losing run dragged on, piling pressure on coach Nuri Sahin. He called the team's plight "catastrophic" in comments to broadcaster DAZN, minutes after sporting director Sebastian Kehl said the club would carry on with Sahin as coach.

Marmoush has played most of his breakout season in a two-striker formation with Hugo Ekitiké, who scored the opening goal in the 18th minute with a low shot through defender Waldemar Anton's legs to finish off an incisive counterattack.



Frankfurt's Hugo Ekitike, back, challenges Dortmund's Nico Schlotterbeck during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Eintracht Frankfurt and Borussia Dortmund in Frankfurt, Germany. (AP)

## **Al-Nemshan wins Air Pistol gold**

Sheikh Ali Al-Sabah Shooting Championship concludes

### KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18, (KUNA): The annual Sheikh Ali Al-Sabah Shooting Championship wrapped up the 2024-2025 season on Saturday, crowning the winners in both the men's and women's categories.

Sheikh Sabah Badr Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor, emphasized the significance of this event in a statement following its conclusion. Organized by the Kuwait Shooting Club, he expressed his support for the competition, highlighting its role in recognizing the achievements of Kuwaiti shooters who have consistently excelled in international tournaments. He also commended the club's dedication in organizing the event at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Range.

In comments to KUNA, Duaij Al-Otaibi, president of the Kuwait Shooting Club, explained that the competition featured various categories, including the gun, pistol, rifle, and bow and arrow.

The standout performances included Hamad Al-Nemshan, who claimed first place in the air pistol (10 m) division, Abdullah Al-Harbi in the air rifle (10 m), Hassan Al-Failakawi in the pistol shooting (25 m), and Saud Al-Subaiee in the rifle competition (50 m). In the Olympic bow and arrow category, Habes Al-Sehammari took

first place, with Mohammad Madi also securing the top position in the 30 m category. Abdullah Malallah emerged as the champion in the bow and arrow contest.

In the women's competition, Ghezlan Ali won gold in the air pistol (10 m) division, while Mariam Al-Rezouqi triumphed in the air rifle (10 m) event. Nour Al-Sherhan excelled in the Olympic bow and arrow category, and Hessa Mohammad claimed victory in the same event (30 m). Additionally, Hanan Al-Mayyas won gold in the compound bow and arrow category. For the juniors, Nasser Al-Rabah emerged as the champion in the air rifle (10 m) category, while Rataj Al-Zayadi claimed the top spot in the same event for female athletes.



Oscar Hojlund made sure of the win in added time, catching Emre Can in possession on the halfway line to start a breakaway that he ended with a low shot past stranded goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

Frankfurt is third in the Bundesliga, six points off leader Bayern Munich

Serhou Guirassy hit the post early on and Jamie Gittens had a penalty appeal turned down late in Dortmund's third straight loss to start 2025.

In each of those games, Dortmund struggled to deal with counterattacks and it was the same story on Friday as Sahin's team had 63% possession. Ansgar Knauff, in for Marmoush, could have scored a second goal for Frankfurt when he hit the post.

Dortmund coach Sahin was already under pressure before kickoff after his team - the Champions League runner-up last season - dropped to 11th in the Bundesliga following a shock 4-2 loss on Wednesday to relegationthreatened Holstein Kiel.

Dortmund has won just one of its last eight games in all competitions in a run stretching back nearly two months.

The one bright spot has been solid Champions League form ahead of Dortmund's visit to Italian club Bologna on Tuesday. Dortmund is ninth in the 36-team standings and is a strong contender to be one of the top eight teams who qualify directly for the round of 16 and skip the playoff stage.

## Al-Nassr slips to 4th after draw with Al-Taawoun in Saudi league

RIYADH, Jan 18: Al-Nassr continued to drop points, settling for a 1-1 draw against hosts Al-Taawoun at King Abdullah Sports City Sta-dium in the 15th round of the Saudi Roshn League. This result pushed Al-Nassr down to fourth place with 29 points, while Al-Qadisiyah climbed to third after defeating Al-Wehda 3-0. The gap between Al-Nassr and league leader Al-Hilal widened to 11 points.

Al-Khaleej secured a dominant 3-0 victory over Al-Orou-

- Al-Qadisiyah A comfortable 3-0 win pushed it to third.
- Al-Fayha edged Al-Kholood 2-1
- Al-Ittihad showcased attacking prowess to beat Al-Raed

Al-Hilal delivered a historic 9-0 win over Al-Fateh, matching its earlier 9-0 triumph over Al-Hazm.

Al-Hilal's emphatic 9-0 vic-



Al-Hilal player celebrates after scoring.

tory over Al-Fateh in Round 15 marked another milestone in the league's history. The match also recorded the highest number of yellow cards (6) and a single red card, emphasizing its intensity.

Round 15 delivered thrilling matches and memorable moments, keeping the competition fierce in the Saudi Roshn League.

## **Basel Al-Sabah Club celebrates** victories in the Arab Drag Racing

DOHA. Jan 18: The director of Basel Al-Sabah Club for Car and Mo-torcycle Racing, Saif Al-Mutairi, expressed his pride in the club's racers for securing top positions in the second round of the Arab Drag Race Championship held in Qatar.

Al-Mutairi highlighted that the club's champions consistently achieve leading results in competitions hosted by the Qatar Club for Car and Motorcycle Racing, emphasizing their dedication to representing Kuwait on the international KUNA photo stage. In the Index 00.9 category, Saleh Al-Misbah clinched first place, followed by Salem Al-Yamani in second. In the Index 50.8 category, Khaled Al-Amiri took the top spot. For the 50.8 motorcycle racing category, Abdulwahab Bouqmaz se-Bournemouth ends Newcastle's



Winners of the Sheikh Ali Al-Sabah Shooting Championship with officials.

Kluivert scores another hat trick

winning run in Premier League

cured first place, while Muhammad Ismail finished third.

In the Street Bike category, Fahad Al-Harbi claimed first place, with Mohammed Al-Matrouk taking third. In the Index 80.4 category, Mohammed Al-Farih emerged as the winner, followed by Abdullah Al-Kandari in second place.

The Index 50.4 category saw Abdullah Al-Yassin finish second, while in the Index 00.4 category, Bader

Saif Al-Mutairi

Khorshid won first place. In the Super Street Bike category, Bader bin Eidan took first place, Yaqout Al-Awad secured second, and Ahmed bin Bilal finished third.

In the Pro Bike category, Mishaal Al-Saber earned second place. Turki Al-Dhafiri triumphed in the Super Street Pro category, with Jaber Al-Maghribi taking second. Ali Ibrahim emerged victorious in the Pro NE category, followed by Sayed Al-Haddad in second place.

These impressive achievements underline the skill and determination of the Basel Al-Sabah Club racers, reaffirming their status as a driving force in the Arab drag racing circuit.

### **Best of the Rest**

Lille sends Fernandes to Rangers: French club Lille has loaned defender Rafael Fernandes to Glasgow Rangers until the end of the season.

The 22-year-old Fernandes joined the Ligue 1 club in January last year but didn't see any playing time.

Fernandes, who honed his skills at Sporting Lisbon's youth academy, has represented Portugal at youth levels.

Rangers said it has an option to make the move permanent.

"He will come in to provide competition and cover in the defensive line, with an aim to contribute this season and potentially develop into the future, should the club exercise the option on his loan," Rangers said in Saturday's announcement. (AP)

#### 

FIFA bans Venezuelan official: FIFA has banned a Venezuelan soccer official from the sport for five years for financial wrongdoing and fined him nearly \$1 million.

Manuel Álvarez was secretary general of the Venezuelan soccer federation when his conduct enabled the "misappropriation and misuse" of its and FIFA's money, soccer's world body said announcing the verdict late Friday.

FIFA's ethics committee had also charged Álvarez with breaching "duty of loyalty" and "general duties" under its code.

FIFA, which makes at least \$2 million available in funding each year to all 211 member federations, gave no details about the financial misconduct. The verdict can be challenged on appeal.

It is unclear how FIFA can enforce payment of the fine if Álvarez does not return to soccer.

Venezuela is the only member of the 10-nation CONMEBOL group of South American federations that has never qualified to play at the men's World Cup. (AP)

#### 

Solskjær appointed Besiktas coach: Ole Gunnar Solskjær was hired as Beşiktaş coach on Saturday in his first managerial position since being fired by Manchester United more than three years ago.

The Turkish club said Solskjær has been given an 18-month contract, taking the Norwegian through to the end of next season, with the option for a further year.

"We believe Ole Gunnar Solskjær will make significant contributions to our club, and we warmly welcome him to the Beşiktaş family, wishing him great success," Beşiktaş said in a statement.

Beşiktaş, which was playing third-place Samsunspor later on Saturday, is sixth in the Turkish league standings and has been without a coach since Dutchman Giovanni van Bronckhorst was fired in late November. (AP)

followed a reduction of six points - reduced from 10 following an appeal -

for breaching spending limits. The independent regulatory commission that issued the two-points deduction deferred one part of the case relating to the accounting treatment of interest payments on the club's new stadium. The pause allowed Everton to supply more information about its accounting

Everton, which has since come

under new ownership following the purchase of the club by the Friedkin Group, said that the matter was closed because the club "has resolved all outstanding profit and sustainability rules (PSR) charges brought by the Premier League."

The league and Everton said in a joint statement that the club will face "no further action" related to the period ending the 2022-23 season.

"After considering the further in-

formation and documents provided by the club in detail, the Premier League Board has concluded that it would not be appropriate or proportionate to continue to pursue the second part of their complaint," the joint statement said. "The club and the league agree that this brings to an end all proceedings between the league and the club in relation to the club's breaches of the PSR for the financial years ending 30 June 2022 and 30 June 2023."

Bournemouth's Illya Zabarnyi, left, and Newcastle United's Alexander Isak, right, challenge for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Newcastle United and AFC Bournemouth in Newcastle upon Tyne, England. (AP)

spire Bournemouth to a 4-1 victory at Newcastle, whose nine-match winning run in all competitions came to an end emphatically on Saturday. The Dutch midfielder netted in the sixth and 44th minutes, and again in the second-half stoppage time to com-

LONDON, Jan 18, (AP): Justin Kluiv-ert scored his second hat trick of the

season in the Premier League to in-

plete his hat trick at St. James' Park. Milos Kerkez added a fourth goal in the sixth minute of added-on time. Bruno Guimaraes had equalized for

Newcastle. Kluivert also scored three goals against Wolverhampton in November. In that match, all of Kluivert's goals were penalties, but he scored from open play each time against Newcastle.

Six of Newcastle's nine straight victories had come in the league, helping to lift the Saudi-controlled team into the top four in its bid to return to the Champions League.

Newcastle striker Alexander Isak failed to score, having previously netted in eight league games in a row. That left him three games short of Leicester striker Jamie Vardy's record for the longest scoring run in Premier League history.

Bournemouth climbed to sixth place, tied for points with fifth-place Chelsea.

Meanwhile, Everton avoided another points deduction when a complaint brought by the Premier League regarding spending rules was discontinued .

The Merseyside club staved off the threat of relegation last season despite having been docked a total of eight points for breaching the league's spending rules.

The Toffees were hit with a deduction of two points in April for overspending in a three-year period. That



Iga Swiatek of Poland plays a forehand return to Emma Raducanu of Britain during their third round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)



## **Unstoppable Swiatek storms into 4th round**

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 18, (AP): Everything came so easily for Iga Swiatek during a 6-1, 6-0 victory over Emma Raducanu on Saturday in the only Australian Open women's third-round match between two past Grand Slam champions - if you thought that meant it would be close, you'd have been rather wrong - that this was how she described it:

"I felt like the ball," Swiatek said, "is listening to me."

Loud and clear. Asked to explain that sensation, Swiatek put her two index fingers a few inches apart and said, "It's just being able to aim for this kind of space." Then she spread her palms more than a foot apart to show that's the margin for error on other days.

The difference, she said, comes down to "being more precise and actually knowing where the ball is going to go, seeing the effects that you want it to."

When the five-time major champion and former long-time No. 1-ranked woman - now No. 2, behind Aryna Sabalenka - is at the height of her powers, as she sure has seemed to be in Week 1 at Melbourne Park, it is hard for anyone to slow Swiatek down.

The heavy-spinning, high-bouncing forehands. The squeaky-sneaker scrambling to get to every shot. The

Fritz stunned by Monfils at Australian Open



Ben Shelton of the U.S. plays a backhand return to Lorenzo Musetti of Italy during their third round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

terrific returning. And so on.

No. 4 Taylor Fritz, the runner-up at last year's U.S. Open, became the highest-seeded man to leave the bracket, defeated by 38-year-old Gael Monfils 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (1), 6-4. Monfils joined Roger Federer as the only men 38 or older to get to the fourth round in Melbourne since the field expanded to 128 players in 1988. At the other end of the age spectrum,

a pair of young Californians who have been pals for a while and trained together in the offseason - Learner Tien, 19, and Alex Michelsen, 20 - earned debuts in the fourth round at a major. Ben Shelton, who is 22, won, too. No. 1 Jannik Sinner, however, eliminated American Marcos Giron 6-3, 6-4, 6-2. Tien, a qualifier ranked 121st, followed up his surprising win against No. 5 Daniil Medvedev in a five-setter that ended at 3 a.m. on Friday with a 7-6 (10), 6-3, 6-3 victory over Corentin Moutet of France. Michelsen, who is ranked 42nd, overwhelmed No. 19 seed Karen Khachanov of Russia 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-2. It was the second time Michelsen knocked off a top-20 seed this week after beating No. 11 Stefanos Tsitsipas, the 2023 Australian Open runner-up, in the first round.

Shelton, the 21st seed and a U.S. Open semifinalist in 2023, defeated No. 16 Lorenzo Musetti of Italy 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5) and will take on Monfils on Monday.

Michelsen will try to send another high seed packing when he plays No. 8 Alex de Minaur, an Australian who beat No. 31 Francisco Cerúndolo 5-7, 7-6 (3), 6-3, 6-3. Tien faces 55thranked Lorenzo Sonego of Italy, a 6-7 (3), 7-6 (6), 6-1, 6-2 winner over Fabian Marozsan.

Against Raducanu, who won the 2021 U.S. Open as a teenage qualifier, Swiatek played at a level she called "perfect."

Indeed, Swiatek mounted a 24-9 edge in winners, made only 12 unforced errors - roughly half of Raducanu's 22 - and claimed 59 points to 29. That caused one spectator to yell out, "No mercy!" in the second set as Swiatek was reeling off the last 11 games after the match was tied at 1-all early with not a cloud in the sky and the temperature approaching 80 degrees Fahrenheit (above 25 Celsius).

Swiatek, who agreed to accept a onemonth suspension in a doping case late last year, owns four trophies from the French Open and one from the U.S. Open. But she's never been beyond the semifinals in Australia; she lost in that round to Danielle Collins in 2022.

A year ago, Swiatek was upset in the third round by teenager Linda Noskova. Swiatek, who said she dedicated Saturday's win to her grandfather, has

Spinners rule Day 2 of 1st test

Pakistan takes control against West Indies

clue how to combat the sharp turning

deliveries of Khan, who grabbed four

wickets in space of his first three overs

Khan dismissed Mikyle Louis and

Keacy Carty off successive deliveries

with the latter brilliantly snapped up in

the slips by debutant Mohammad Hur-

bowled after the West Indies skipper

went for an ambitious sweep against an-

other sharp spinning delivery and Alick

Athanaze offered a low return catch to

the off-spinner as the tourists slipped to

Khan then had Brathwaite clean

with the new ball.

raira.

ceded a total of only 10 games through three matches with new coach Wim Fissette sitting courtside. Next up will be 128th-ranked Eva Lys of Germany, who lost in qualifying but was given a spot in the main draw when someone withdrew about 10 minutes before her first-round match.

Lys defeated Jaqueline Cristian 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 and is the first "lucky loser" to get to the Australian Open's fourth round since the tournament moved to Melbourne Park in 1988.

Others who now will get a chance to play for a quarterfinal berth after victories Saturday included No. 6 Elena Rybakina, No. 8 Emma Navarro and No. 9 Daria Kasatkina. Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, beat No. 32 Dayana Yastremska 6-3, 6-4, Navarro eliminated three-time major finalist Ons Jabeur 6-4, 3-6, 6-4, and Kasatkina got past No. 24 Yulia Putintseva 7-5, 6-1. Unseeded Veronika Kudermetova beat No. 15 Beatriz Haddad Maia 6-4, 6-2.

No. 4 Jasmine Paolini, who is a twotime Slam finalist, was eliminated by No. 28 Elina Svitolina 2-6, 6-4, 6-0.

Danielle Collins was booed both before and after her 6-4, 6-4 loss to No. 19 Madison Keys. In the previous round, the 10th-seeded Collins had a back-and-forth with the crowd. Collins received treatment on her left knee in the second set.

Navarro, who reached her first major semifinal at Flushing Meadows in September, has won all three of her matches in Melbourne this year in three sets. That means she has been involved in 30 tour-level three-setters since the start of last season, the most of any female player.

## Al-Hajri crowned champion of Sahara Equestrian Champ'ship

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Kuwait Equestrian Club rider Latifa Al-Hajri emerged as the champion of the Sahara Equestrian Championship, held at the Sahara Resort.

In the prestigious sixth round, the "main" competition featuring jumps at a height of 130 cm, Al-Hajri claimed first place with an impressive time of 42.10 seconds, completing the course flawlessly without any penalty points. She was followed by Khaled Al-Khubaizi, Yaqoub Al-Nasrallah, Mohammed Al-Mullafi, Mazen Birqadar, and Faisal Al-Shatti. Sheikh Sabah Ali Al-Sabah and rider Nasser Abdulaziz Al-Masaeed crowned the champions and presented Latifa Al-Hajri with the championship trophy.

Al-Hajri also secured victory in the fifth round, which featured jumps at a height of 120 cm, further cementing her dominance in the championship.

Other notable winners included Khaled Juma, who took first place in the 110 cm category, and Abdulwahab Al-Baloul, who claimed top honors in the 100 cm competition.



The championship attracted significant participation, with over 150 male and female riders competing in the first and second rounds, which featured obstacles at 60 and 80 cm. Many participants successfully completed the course without errors, showcasing their skill and determination.

Knight Nasser Abdulaziz Al-Masaeed praised the high level of competition, highlighting the strong rivalry among riders striving for top positions. He noted the significant turnout in the beginner category, reflecting growing interest in equestrian sports.

Al-Masaeed also emphasized that the increasing number of local championships and equestrian clubs has contributed to the development of the sport in Kuwait. He expressed optimism for a promising future for Kuwaiti equestrianism, driven by the sport's steady growth and rising standards.

Sahara Equestrian Championship winners.

## Kuwait Club targets quarterfinal spot against Zamalek in Arab Clubs Volleyball Champ'ship

#### By Khaled Al-Enezi Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, Jan 18: The Kuwait Club is set to face a formidable opponent, Zamalek of Egypt, at 6:30 pm today in the second round of Group Two of the 43rd Arab Clubs Volleyball Championship. The tournament, hosted in Doha, Qatar, runs until January 25 and features the participation of 15 clubs from across the Arab region.

The match will take place at Al-Arabi Club Hall in Doha, following the earlier Group Two clash between Al-Seeb of Oman and Al-Hilal of Libya. In Group Three action at Qatar Club Hall, Arbil of Iraq will face Al-Ahly of Egypt, while Al-Shorta of Qatar will play Dar Kulaib of Bahrain.

the team into the eight-nation tournament.

at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru.

rah



Al-Hilal player spikes the ball as Kuwait Club players defend.

Kuwait Club started their campaign with a commanding 3-0 victory over

Yadav named in India squad for Champions Trophy

Al-Hilal of Libya. Meanwhile, Zamalek also began strongly, defeating Al-Seeb 3-1 in their opening match. The preliminary round of the championship is scheduled to conclude the day after tomorrow.

Burgan Club, the second Kuwaiti representative in the tournament, played its second Group Four match against Qatar SC. Burgan had previously lost a tightly contested opening match against Al-Jazira SC of the UAE, 2-3, and will conclude its group stage match against Gaza SC of Palestine.

According to the tournament format, the top two teams from each group at the end of the preliminary round will advance to the quarterfinals on January 22, while the remaining teams will compete for rankings from ninth to fifteenth. MULTAN, Pakistan, Jan 18, (AP): West Indies collapsed to 137 all out within one session against Pakistan spinners Noman Ali and Sajid Khan as 19 wickets fell on Day 2 of the first test Saturday.

Pakistan, which got bowled out for 230 in the first innings on a turning wicket, stretched its lead to 202 and reached 109-3 with spinners claiming 17 of the 19 wickets to fall in a day.

Captain Shan Masood (52) raised his 11th test half-century off 60 balls and gave Pakistan a clear advantage before he got run out late in the final session with Kamran Ghulam not out on 9.

Left-armer Ali grabbed 5-39 and offspinner Khan baffled the top four batters with 4-65 in the middle session on the same pitch where the spin duo had picked up all 20 England wickets in a test match last October.

Captain Kraigg Brathwaite (11) was the only among the top seven batters to breach the double figures as Khan and Ali bowled all but 14 deliveries before West Indies' innings folded in 25.2 overs.

West Indies was in disarray at 91-9, but an aggressive counterattacking partnership of 46 runs off 21 balls between Jomel Warrican (31 not out) and Jayden Seales (22) took the visitors beyond the 100-run mark.

It was the second-lowest test innings, in terms of balls, against Pakistan, which bowled out Sri Lanka for 73 in 24.5 overs at Kandy in 2006.

West Indies top-order batters had no



Pakistan's Saud Shakeel, center, plays a shot during the day two of the first test cricket match between Pakistan and West Indies, in Multan, Pakistan. (AP)

22-4 in the fifth over.

Ali then got into the act and edged Khan for a five-wicket haul when he clean bowled Gudakesh Motie (19) off an inside edge as West Indies got bowled out before tea.

Earlier, West Indies spinners also profited from favorable conditions to bowl out Pakistan at stroke of lunch after the home team resumed on 143-4.

Left-arm spinner Warrican picked up 3-69 and Kevin Sinclair (2-61) accounted for the vital wickets of Saud Shakeel (84) and Mohammad Rizwan (71) as Pakistan lost last six wickets for 43 runs.

## ARAB 🕐 TIMES

NEW DELHI, India, Jan 18, (AP): India named fit-again

spinner Kuldeep Yadav in a 15-man squad for next month's

Champions Trophy on Saturday with Rohit Sharma leading

Kuldeep hasn't played competitive cricket since his her-

nia surgery in November but could play pivotal role on slow

pitches of Dubai, where India will be playing all its games.

The left-arm wrist spinner has been building up his workload

The Indian squad also includes fast bowler Jasprit Bum-

India retained most of its players who competed at the

2023 ODI World Cup. Shreyas Iyer and Lokesh Rahul have

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retained their places while Shubman Gill was named as the

team's vice-captain. Rishabh Pant is the second wicketkeep-

er chosen in the squad as Sanju Samson couldn't make the

India is placed in group A alongside host Pakistan, Ban-

Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli,

Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Yashasvi Jaisw-

al, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washing-

ton Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed

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