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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Dear Prime Minister, the ministerial position has stabilized; what is needed is legal reform

THE supreme Amiri measures related to suspending certain articles of the Constitution were not issued without reason. They followed a careful review of the country's ongoing situation, marked by years of crises that have paralyzed all sectors, strained the national economy, hindered public affairs, and dissipated efforts.

When the new era began, the first step was to give the National Assembly an opportunity to rise to the occasion and deal with matters in a way that would enable Kuwait to confront regional and international challenges.

Unfortunately, instead of taking the right approach, the MPs, immediately from the very first moment, escalated tensions, with rhetoric suggesting the country was heading toward a series of critical crises. As a result, cauterization became the last resort.

Today, the road has been paved for the government. With the stability of the ministerial positions and the suspension of the parliamentary pressures

once aimed at the ministers, the government, which is the one entrusted with implementation and legislation, now has the opportunity to fulfill its responsibilities in both execution and legislation. Ministers must take the lead in updating and amending the laws relevant to their ministries; without these reforms, Kuwait will struggle to achieve progress.

As we previously mentioned, around 900 laws have remained unchanged since 1962. Many of these laws were approved based on personal interests, often driven by the principle of "scratch my back and I will scratch yours," or motivated by envy, which

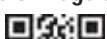
Continued on Page 5

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Amir receives Crown Prince, PM, 1st Deputy PM



Top and above: His Highness the Amir receives HH the Crown Prince and HH the Prime Minister at Al-Seif Palace on Sunday.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday at Al-Seif Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir then received at Al-Seif Palace His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir also received at Al-Seif Palace First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Youssef Saud Al-Sabah.

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

His Highness the Crown Prince also received First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Youssef Saud Al-Sabah at Al-Seif Palace.

3 escape gallows as Kuwait executes 5

Arab expat gets death for fatally stabbing Asian friend

By Munif Naif and Jaber Al-Hamoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: The Ministry of Interior executed five individuals on Sunday morning, including three Kuwaiti men, a Kuwaiti woman and an Arab expatriate.

A total of eight individuals were convicted of premeditated murder and were scheduled for execution, but three of them obtained pardons from the victims' blood relatives just hours before the executions were carried out.

According to security sources, the executions took place in the Central Prison building based on the judicial rulings issued against them.

Among the executed convicts was a Kuwaiti citizen who was affiliated with a terrorist organization and had killed a police

officer by running him over during the national celebrations in 2016. The Kuwaiti woman who was executed was sentenced for the murder of her friend in Sabah Al-Salem, and the sentence issued against her had been delayed since September in an attempt to obtain pardons from the victim's blood relatives. Also, a Kuwaiti citizen who had killed another in Kabad was executed.

The sources revealed that three of the convicts managed to secure pardons, with one having completed the procedures related to the pardon, while the others were in the process of obtaining the necessary pardons from the victims' blood relatives.

Last September, the Ministry of Interior had executed six convicts based on judicial rulings issued against them.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Court sentenced an Arab expatriate to death for stabbing his Asian friend to death in Farwaniya Governorate.

Continued on Page 5

1995 fee law scrapped

Public service costs now in hands of gov't entities

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: After repeated rejections by previous National Assembly councils of amendments to the law governing public service fees, Decree Law No. 1 of 2025 has been issued, effectively canceling Law No. 79 of 1995 related to fees and financial costs for the use of public facilities and services, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decree, published in Kuwait Alyawm, grants each government entity the authority to determine the fees and costs for using public facilities and services.

This will be done through decisions made by the competent authority within each entity, in accordance with relevant regulations and subject to approval by the Council of Ministers.

The explanatory memorandum highlights the need for greater flexibility in managing financial resources and ensuring the sustainable delivery of public services.

By canceling the previous law, the government aims to -- ensure effective use and management of public facilities, allow ministries and government departments to establish tailored mechanisms for pricing services and ensure fees do not compromise the minimum standard of living for citizens.

The fees for public services will now undergo detailed study and analysis by relevant authorities.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwaiti Al-Khair Society sends 10 relief shipments to Syria



Trucks loaded with more than 250 tons of various essentials bound to Syria.

Aid plane in Damascus

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Al-Khair humanitarian society announced sending 10 relief shipments leaving from Turkiye carrying more than 250 tons of various essentials to address shortages in Syria.

Society Chief of Board of Directors, Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Jerman told KUNA that the campaign is overseen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs Ministry.

The shipment includes foodstuff, warming essentials, as well as mattresses and covers, explained Al-Jerman saying that it is an affirmation of the Kuwaiti support to Syria especially considering current circumstances.

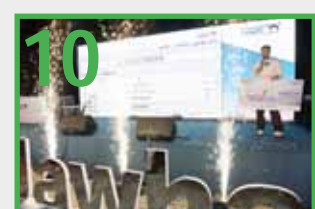
He called on all those wishing to donate to head over to society headquarters or through its website.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's seventh aid aircraft to Syria arrived at Damascus International Airport on Sunday, carrying 40 tons of food

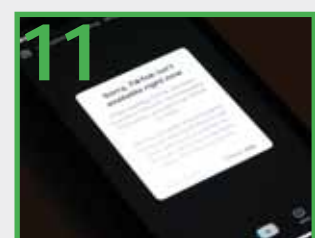
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ABK receives 'Best Investor Relationship Bank' Award from International Finance



NBK announces the Al-Jawhara Millionaire



TikTok goes dark as US ban takes effect

PART advances Kuwait Railway project with consulting tender

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: A government report revealed that the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) has included a tender for a consulting agreement for the establishment phase of the Kuwait Railway Company. This will be followed by the creation of a company responsible for the operation and maintenance of the project, which is part of the implementation phases of the GCC railway project.

The report explained that the method and type of partnership with the private sector will be studied for the establishment of this company.

The project offers major investment opportunities for the private sector and supports two of the important objectives of the nine-year development plan, which are:

1. Enhancing a dynamic private sector and transforming Kuwait into an at-

tractive investment hub led by private sector involvement.

2. Promoting general privatization, which will contribute to public finance reforms, diversify income sources, improve service quality, provide job opportunities in the private sector, and boost efficiency and innovation.

The report outlined seven investment opportunities in the project, which will be offered through tenders in stages, as follows:

1. Consulting tender for project design, which has been issued, and the award procedures are being finalized. Work is expected to begin soon, at a cost of KD 2.426 million and an implementation period of 12 months.

2. Consulting tender for design and implementation stages, which covers project management and control.

3. Project implementation tender, more than one of which may be issued.

Continued on Page 5

Change reflects Islamic focus

Ministry of Awqaf gets new name

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: A new decree Law No. 3/2025 has been issued, which cancels Law No. 10/2011 regarding the establishment of the Public Authority for Printing and Publication of Holy Quran, Sunnah, and their Sciences. As per the new decree, all the rights and obligations

of the Public Authority for Printing and Publication of Holy Quran, Sunnah, and their Sciences shall be transferred to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. The employees working in the authority will be transferred to the ministry, and they will retain their same grades, salaries, and financial benefits.

Continued on Page 5

Truce holds

3 released from Hamas captivity

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip, Jan 19, (AP): Three hostages released from Gaza are now in Israel in the first test of a fragile ceasefire with Hamas.

The three hostages are Romi Gonen, 24, kidnapped from the Nova music festival, and Emily Damari, 28, and Doron Steinbrecher, 31, kidnapped from Kibbutz Kfar Aza.

Later on Sunday, Israel is expected to release around 90 Palestinian prisoners.

A gradual release of 33 captives over the next six weeks has been agreed on. In exchange, Israel will release almost 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and Palestinians from Gaza who have been detained.

Israel's military said the three released hostages would undergo an initial medical assessment.

Continued on Page 5



Relatives and friends of people killed and abducted by Hamas and taken into Gaza, react to the news of the hostages' release, as they gather in Tel Aviv, Israel on Jan. 19, 2025. (AP)

'Selective tax' plan gains support for health and economic benefits

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: In a recent announcement, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Noura Al-Fassam, revealed that the Ministry of Finance is planning to introduce a 'selective tax' law aimed at goods that pose health risks.

The tax, expected to generate revenues of approximately 200 million dinars annually, targets harmful products like tobacco, energy drinks and soft drinks.

Economic experts have expressed their support for this initiative, noting its potential to reduce health risks while diversifying Kuwait's sources of income.

Entrepreneur Asrar Hayat welcomed the proposed tax, emphasizing the need to impose taxes on large companies, particularly those involved in government tenders or BOT projects.

She also highlighted the necessity for detailed studies before implementation, ensuring that small projects are not unfairly burdened.

According to Hayat, this tax could help curb the smuggling of harmful products to neighboring countries that have already enacted similar taxes.

She further noted that implementing such taxes would prevent over-reliance on a single income source, strengthening Kuwait's economic stability.

Hayat also pointed out that the tax would likely lead to a 5-20 percent reduction in the consumption of harmful products within the first few years.

However, she warned that heavy smokers from wealthier demographics may not be as affected, stressing the importance of public awareness campaigns targeting all societal classes to highlight the health dangers associated with these products.

Mishaal Al-Manea, Chairman of the Kuwaiti Consumer Protection Society, echoed the sentiment, supporting the selective tax on harmful products.

He emphasized the dual benefits of such a tax -- its positive economic impact and its potential to improve public health by reducing the consumption of products linked to chronic diseases like cancer, heart and lung diseases.

Continued on Page 5

CSC declares Jan 30 public holiday

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19, (KUNA): The Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced on Sunday that work in all ministries, government agencies, public authorities, and institutions will be suspended on Thursday, January 30, in observance of the Isra and Miraj anniversary.

In a statement posted on its official ac-

count on X, the CSC confirmed that regular working hours will resume on Sunday, February 2.

It noted that entities with specialized operations may set their own holiday schedules as deemed necessary, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing public interest in their decisions.

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:20	Asr	14:55
Sunrise ..	06:43	Maghrib ..	17:15
Zohr	11:59	Isha	18:36

Local

Weather		Expected weather for next 24 hrs:	
06-22 km/h with a chance for frost forming over agricultural and desert areas.	By Day: Mild with light variable wind to light to moderate north-westerly wind, with speed of 06-24 km/h.	By Night: Cold to very cold with light variable wind, with speed of	
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	Weather
Kuwait City	20	11	Bubyan 21 07
Kuwait Airport	20	06	Jahra 20 08
Abdaly	20	07	Failaka Island 22 09
			Salmiyah 19 13
			Ahmadi 20 06
			Jal Aliyah 19 06
			Nuwaisib 22 07
			Wafra - -



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Naser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA), Eng. Samira Al-Kandari in his office.

Environmental issues discussed

'EPA fully prepared to provide support for all public projects'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Naser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received the acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA), Eng. Samira Al-Kandari, at his office this morning.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the meeting was aimed to discuss and strengthen joint cooperation to serve the residents of Farwaniya Governorate.

During the meeting, they discussed ways to enhance EPA's role in the governorate, including plans for environmental sustainability, raising environmental awareness in the community, and creating a social culture that promotes the preservation of the environment, natural resources, and public properties. They also discussed efforts to present a more beautiful and civilized environmental face for

public facilities.

Eng. Al-Kandari praised the governor's commitment to environmental issues, affirming that EPA is fully prepared to provide the technical and logistical support needed to implement development projects that serve the public and contribute to sustainable development for improving the quality of life in Farwaniya Governorate.

At the end of the meeting, the governor highlighted the importance of continuing and strengthening cooperation with EPA to ensure a healthy environment for future generations.

He expressed his keenness to support joint initiatives and efforts, highlighting the significance of coordination among relevant authorities to achieve shared goals in line with Kuwait's general strategic objectives.

Leadership hailed for fostering global ties

Focus on Kuwait achievements in arts, media, culture

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19. (KUNA): The Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi affirmed that Kuwait selection as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media for 2025 highlights its achievements in arts, media and cultural dialogue.

In a statement released by the Ministry of Information on Sunday, Al-Mutairi highlighted that this milestone showcasing Kuwait's leadership in fostering connections among diverse communities globally.

Minister Al-Mutairi also said that Kuwait's prominent cultural role that led to

this win was by the continuous support from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Minister Al-Mutairi noted that the selection came from the The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), as the Arab ministers of information council chose Kuwait for its role in advancing and hosting events of media.

Al-Mutairi explained that preparations started following the Ministry of Information's 2021-2026 strategy and the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters' (NCCAL) 2023-2028 strategy.

These frameworks aim to create a sustainable cultural environment that promotes creativity while building a pioneering and purposeful

media industry, he added.

The minister emphasized that Kuwait's vision as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media 2025 focuses on strengthening the country's cultural and media standing, showcasing its cultural heritage, advancing digital media.

Al-Mutairi noted that the events will feature approximately 98 activities over 235 days, reflecting Kuwait's diverse cultural and media landscape, the program will include global and Gulf-wide events to promote cultural and media cooperation.

Al-Mutairi announced that the opening ceremony for Kuwait as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media will take place on February 13, featuring the national theatrical performance 'The Earth's Orbit'. A press conference will be held on January 26 to present details of the accompanying event program.



Al-Mutairi

'Public, private collaboration can up education standards'

Kuwaitis constitute over 30% students in private schools

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: The private education in Kuwait provides a diverse array of options tailored to meet the needs of students and their families, complementing the public education sector.

Its aim is to enhance the efficiency and diversity of the educational process, preparing students for a competitive global environment.

The private education in Kuwait plays a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape, offering diverse and high-quality options that appeal to Kuwaiti families. While challenges persist, the sector continues to evolve with new initiatives and regulations aimed at improving standards and ensuring accessibility.

By fostering collaboration between public and private sectors and addressing the concerns of parents and students, Kuwait can further enhance its private education system and prepare its youth for a bright future.

The total number of students enrolled in private education stands at 266,232, including 80,515 Kuwaiti students and 2,025 students with special needs, who are distributed across 7,681 classes encompassing a variety of nationalities.

Kuwaiti students constitute approximately 30.25 percent of the total enrollment in private education.

They are distributed across various educa-

tional systems such as Arab, American, British, bilingual and others. This statistic underscores the growing popularity of private education among Kuwaiti families, who value the diverse curricula and advanced educational opportunities it offers for their children.

The private education attracts a significant number of Kuwaiti students, particularly in systems such as bilingual, Arabic and British schools. This demand is primarily driven by:

■ **Diverse Curricula:** Private schools often follow international curricula, which focus on science, technology and other specialized fields, equipping students with skills for the global labor market.

■ **Quality of Education:** The emphasis on academic excellence, critical thinking and innovative programs fosters students' intellectual growth.

■ **Flexibility:** The ability to introduce modern teaching methods and creative programs enhances students' capabilities and encourages innovative thinking.

■ **Despite its growth and popularity, private education in Kuwait faces significant challenges:**

■ **High Tuition Fees:** Private education imposes financial pressure on middle- and low-income families. Annual tuition fees can range from 380 KD to over 6,000 KD, depending on the educational system and grade level.

■ **Quality Disparities:** Not all private schools maintain the same level of quality, necessitating government oversight to ensure adherence to educational standards.

To address these challenges, the Ministry of

Education has proposed a new draft law with 33 articles focused on: establishing a Higher Committee to monitor tuition fee increases; mandating schools to obtain academic accreditation to guarantee educational quality; providing schools with a two-year period to comply with regulations; unifying official holidays and vacations with public schools and enhancing transparency and ensuring the rights of parents and students.

Kuwaiti students in private education represent 30.25 percent of the sector and the new Career Pathways in Secondary Education Project aims to have a direct impact on their academic and vocational trajectories. This project aligns with Kuwait's vision of diversifying its economy by preparing national cadres with advanced skills.

However, challenges may arise in aligning the project's vocational curricula with the international standards prevalent in private education. Bridging this gap offers an opportunity for collaboration between the public and private sectors to create innovative and flexible educational pathways that meet the aspirations of Kuwaiti students.

Private education in Kuwait comprises 10 distinct systems, each offering unique curricula and opportunities such as the Arab System, the Bilingual System, the British System, the American System, the Indian System, the Pakistani System, the Philippine System, the French System, the Armenian System and the Iranian System.

However, the tuition fees vary significantly based on the educational system and services provided by foreign schools.

Other Voices

Not imitators but developers

By Ahmad alsarraf

With hope in our hearts, we look forward to a Kuwait that embraces openness and achievement, a Kuwait that realizes the dreams and aspirations that have inspired us and led us to ask the inevitable question: What do we lack?

Today, Kuwait is undergoing a transformation -- a workshop in progress that spans the entire country. This is undeniable, regardless of skepticism or criticism. From road infrastructure to agricultural projects, national identity organization to the expansion of health services, and even the contentious reform of the education system, Kuwait is moving.

But as we chart this path, it is crucial to recognize our strengths and our opportunities for growth. If innovation remains elusive, then let us become developers -- those who build upon the accomplishments of others, starting where they left off and advancing with a uniquely Kuwaiti touch.

A phrase that resonates deeply states: 'If you can't innovate like the Japanese, be a developer like the South Koreans, but don't settle for being an imitator like the Chinese.'

Japan is synonymous with groundbreaking invention, South Korea with transformative development, and China with strategic imitation. Each of these paths has its value, but for Kuwait, the ideal lies in developing and refining -- taking the essence of innovation and blending it with our distinctive identity to create something extraordinary.

Yes, we may have lagged in certain areas of services, initiatives, or activities. However, the successes of neighboring nations offer us a blueprint. By starting from where they succeeded, we can create remarkable progress with a Kuwaiti essence. Whether in arts, culture, or economy, let us strive for innovation and development that is uniquely ours.



alsarraf

Our history offers countless examples of creativity and distinction. The Kuwaiti opera, for instance, could transform our rich musical heritage into a global masterpiece -- a development of our identity rather than a mere imitation. The pioneering work of the late Mohammad Al-Sanousi with the TV band exemplifies Kuwaiti ingenuity. Such ideas, rooted in authenticity, must be revisited, modernized, and brought back into the spotlight.

Kuwaitis are inherently creative, excelling in every field when given the freedom to innovate. It is imperative to remove restrictive regulations, encourage the expression of ideas, and provide a platform for young minds to bring their visions to life.

True progress is not measured by towering buildings but by the elevation of intellectual and cultural innovation. Our competition with other nations lies not in the height of our structures but in the depth of our achievements, the richness of our heritage, and the brilliance of our youth.

By developing the achievements of past generations, we can build a modern Kuwait that reflects our land, sea, arts, and commerce. From the entrepreneurial spirit of the 1960s and 1970s to the vibrant dreams of today's youth, we have the potential to craft a future grounded in confidence, stability, and pride.

Let us not be imitators but developers. Let us aspire to go beyond what has been achieved, using innovation and continuous improvement as our guiding principles. By drawing on the lessons of others, we can elevate Kuwait's identity, enrich its culture, and build a nation that stands out -- not just in the Gulf, but on the global stage.

The road ahead is clear: A Kuwait that honors its past, celebrates its present, and boldly strides into the future, powered by its people and their unwavering spirit.

Our past is beautiful and proud of us... especially when we were the first to... and the first to... and the first to...

But it is time to replace 'we were and were' with 'we will be and we will be.'

We just need determination... and then take off.



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Licenses for offers, sales put on hold till after KSF

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has asked companies and institutions to consult with the Consumer Protection Department regarding the postponement of licenses for seasonal and unplanned offers until after the conclusion of Kuwait Shopping Festival (KSF) 2025.

In an official statement posted on its 'X' account, the ministry clarified that if the license period for seasonal or unplanned offers overlaps with the Kuwait Shopping Festival that runs from Jan 21 to Mar 31, 2025; businesses must coordinate with the Consumer Protection Department to postpone the license until after the festival ends in early April.

The ministry pointed out that the issuance of licenses for promotional offers, discounts, sales, raffles and gifts is temporarily suspended for all companies and commercial institutions. This decision is in line with the exclusivity granted to the Kuwait Shopping Festival, as approved by the Permanent Committee for the Celebration of National Holidays and Occasions. It is also pursuant to Administrative Resolution No. 19/2025, which gives the Major International Festivals Company the authority to organize and manage festivals and events.

It urged all concerned parties to comply with the established procedures, regulations and laws to ensure the success and integrity of this important national event.

Success rate in 12th grade exams exceeds 85 percent

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: According to educational sources, the success rate in the 12th grade for both scientific and literary sections, exceeded 85 percent. There was also a significant decline in cases of cheating and malpractice due to the strict procedures implemented by the Ministry of Education since the second semester last year.

Meanwhile, Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei congratulated all employees of the ministry for their dedicated efforts and exceptional contributions to the success of the examination process. He praised their commitment to maintaining high levels of quality, and their dedication to advancing the interests of students and improving the overall educational process.

Al-Tabtabaei also congratulated the students for their outstanding results, and commended their commitment to following the systems and regulations and respecting the laws, affirming that this reflects their maturity and understanding of the role discipline plays in enhancing the educational process. He encouraged them to continue working hard and striving for excellence in their academic journey.

In addition, the Ministry of Education announced the launch of the grievance submission period for the results of the 12th-grade exams for the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. This includes both the scientific and literary sections, as well as religious education.

Grievances can be submitted until January 20, with each student allowed to file a maximum of three grievances on their academic subjects. All grievances must be submitted through the Ministry of Education's electronic student services website.

MoH keen to adopt new tech in orthopedic ops diagnosis, care

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: Assistant Undersecretary for Supportive Medical Services Affairs in the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdullah Al-Faras affirmed the ministry's firm commitment to developing the medical sector, enhancing the efficiency of medical personnel, and improving the quality of healthcare services provided in Kuwait.

In the speech he gave at the opening of the annual Kuwait Orthopedic Surgery Conference recently on behalf of the conference sponsor Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Dr. Al-Faras said, "The ministry is keen about bringing together doctors and professors in the field of orthopedic surgery to enable them to stay updated on the latest developments in diagnosis and treatment, particularly in specialized surgeries."

The ministry is always focused on supporting continuing medical education programs



Dr Al-Faras

in various specialties, and hosting an elite group of international experts and surgeons."

Dr. Al-Faras affirmed that the outcomes of these programs are expected to reflect positively on the development of health services in the country.

He highlighted that the workshops held on the sidelines of the conference provide a unique opportunity to train Kuwaiti and local doctors on the latest technologies and devices used in surgical operations.

Dr. Al-Faras explained that, as part of the ministry's efforts to develop orthopedic surgery departments, these departments in hospitals have been expanded to include all sub-specialties. They have been equipped with specialized staff, including graduates of Kuwaiti board programs and international fellowships. Also, robotic surgery techniques have been introduced at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital and Farwaniya Hospital, and there are plans to extend this technology to other hospitals as well.

Three new departments have been approved as additional training institutes for Kuwaiti board doctors. The opening of the orthopedic surgery department at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital in 2022 has helped reduce patient waiting lists, while providing the latest medical devices to support subspecialty operations in various departments.



A fire brigade vehicle at the site.

1 dead in Wafra road accident

A two-vehicle collision on Wafra Farms Road on Saturday resulted in one fatality and three injuries.

According to a press release issued

by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), firefighters from the Wafra Fire Station dealt with the accident, and then handed over the site to the relevant authorities.

KFF photo

1st Deputy PM's messages lead to expanded reforms in Kuwait

"LAST week, Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef delivered three important messages during a ceremony Honoring the General Administration of Execution of Judgments, a Visit to the Women's Police Institute, and a meeting with an officer who earned a Master's Degree," columnist **Tarek Hamada** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"The first message followed the arrest of a convicted individual, emphasizing that Kuwait will remain one of the safest and most secure countries, thanks to the dedication of its strong officers who work tirelessly under any conditions.



Tarek Hamada

"These officers possess the ability, determination, and professionalism to handle difficult situations and complex issues. The law, Sheikh Fahad stressed, must always take its course without leniency for anyone who violates it.

"This message reaffirms the Ministry's commitment to implementing the instructions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may God protect him, ensuring that the law is applied equally to all and that no one can escape punishment. Violations will be addressed firmly, with offenders receiving their due punishment, whether soon or later.

"Sheikh Fahad also emphasized that all cases related to forgery and identity manipulation cannot be overlooked with the passage of time and that the Ministry is strongly committed to pursuing these crimes and bringing those responsible to justice.

"The second message highlighted the Ministry's commitment to utilizing the skills of women in the police force. Sheikh Fahad expressed that Kuwaiti women have proven their competence in military roles and emphasized the importance of expanding their role within various sectors of the security services.

"Earlier he had called for the expansion of training programs to recruit more women into the security forces to serve the country through their work in law enforcement. He also noted that investigations involving female police officers lead to more comfort and honesty, whether the woman is a suspect or a victim. The presence of female officers is especially important in cases involving children.

"Therefore, Sheikh Fahad underscored the importance of increasing the presence of female police officers in police stations, particularly in tackling issues such as cyber extortion.

"Their involvement, he pointed out, is not only crucial to their professional growth but also vital to maintaining stability and safety in society.

"The third message emphasized the Ministry's support for scientific research, especially research that studies emerging criminal phenomena.

"Sheikh Fahad acknowledged the role of scientific research in identifying the causes of these phenomena, which helps in crafting plans to mitigate them. Such research provides decision-makers with valuable insights into security issues.

"The Ministry of Interior, Sheikh Fahad assured, is committed to encouraging researchers and providing them with all the necessary resources to succeed. The Ministry strives to eliminate any obstacles faced by research work, providing opportunities for excellence and helping those with the ambition to advance their careers in research.

"We pray to God to protect Kuwait under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, may God protect them."

"Final Thoughts: The opening of the specialized security library by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Major General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf, demonstrates the Ministry's dedication to promoting security culture, knowledge, and public awareness.

"The establishment of the library is the result of forward-thinking efforts by the Public Relations and Security Media Department. Special thanks go to Major General Nasser Abu Sulaib, Director General, Colonel Othman Al-Ghareeb,

Director of Security Media, and all those who contributed to the opening of the specialized library. We pray to God to reward you all."

Also:

"The Supreme Committee for Nationality Investigation, under the leadership of the First Deputy Minister of Interior and Minister of Defense, has made significant strides in addressing issues related to nationality violations in Kuwait," columnist **Badr Khaled Al-Bahr** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"Guided by directives from the Supreme Command, the committee is close to finalizing the closure of the Article 8 file -- a major step towards ensuring justice and integrity in the national records

"The ongoing efforts to expose forgers and restore nationalities in alignment with legal frameworks reflect the seriousness of addressing infiltration into Kuwait's social fabric.

"Such crimes have not only compromised national identity but also resulted in the illegal acquisition of state funds and properties. The committee's work is essential in upholding Kuwait's sovereignty and ensuring accountability for violations.

"Moreover, there is a pressing need to examine cases of naturalization under the clause of 'noble deeds.' This provision, originally intended to reward acts of merit, appears to have been exploited in ways that contradict its lofty ideals.

"Special attention should be given to individuals who gained nationality through political favoritism, particularly by representatives affiliated with religious parties. Such affiliations pose risks to national unity and security, underscoring the importance of opening this file for transparent review."

"Turning to the broader Arab context, we see a strange pattern among some leaders and factions of celebrating defeats as victories. Throughout history, defeated leaders have often embraced denial, misleading their people into believing in illusory triumphs. Examples cited include Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi and others who proclaimed victory even in the face of overwhelming losses.

"The recent actions of Hamas in Gaza reflect a similar narrative. Despite the devastating consequences of the October 7 war with Israel, including the destruction of Gaza's infrastructure and immense civilian suffering, Hamas declared victory.

"This self-proclaimed triumph, does little to address the realities on the ground -- where families mourn their losses, children are orphaned and survivors face insurmountable challenges.

"Hamas's leadership has been accused of prioritizing political agendas over the well-being of Gaza's residents, leaving them trapped and besieged. Messages from within Gaza reveal the grim realities of life under blockade, with injured civilians unable to access medical treatment due to exorbitant fees and closed borders. The region's plight, compounded by fears of settlement in neighboring countries, underscores the dire need for a humanitarian solution.

"The history of ceasefire agreements with Israel paints a bleak picture. Truces, such as the one commemorated in 2009 following the deaths of 1,300 Palestinians, often fail to hold, resulting in renewed violence and suffering.

"The Oslo Agreement of 1993, once hailed as a path toward peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state, remains unfulfilled. Instead of progress, the conflict has persisted, with Israel expanding settlements and renegeing on commitments.

"Amid these challenges, where is the legitimacy of Hamas's claims of victory and prisoner releases? What we look for is more honest appraisal of the situation. Genuine peace and stability require addressing the root causes of the conflict and prioritizing the welfare of the people over political posturing.

"The ongoing efforts to rectify nationality violations in Kuwait and the broader reflections on conflicts in the Arab world highlight the importance of integrity, accountability and a commitment to the well-being of people.

"Whether addressing internal issues or international conflicts, the path forward requires transparency, justice and a focus on sustainable solutions that prioritize humanity over politics."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Mol photo

Bottles of home-made liquor found in possession of two expatriates in Mahboula.

Expat bootleggers held in Mahboula

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: Kuwait's emergency police officers have arrested two expatriates and referred them to the Directorate-General for Drug Control, for possessing 213 bottles of home-made alcohol and 260 Kuwaiti dinars in cash believed to be proceeds from the sale of alcohol, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to a security

source, the suspects were spotted by a police patrol in Mahboula driving a sedan attempting to change route after seeing the patrol car. They were forced to pull over and after checking the car, police found the homemade booze bottles.

The bootleggers, during interrogation, have confessed to trafficking the homemade alcohol.

2 hurt as 5 Kuwaiti men fight over car parking in Shamiya

PADA supervisor accused of forgery

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: Five young Kuwaiti men were involved in a fight allegedly over 'the right to park the vehicle' in Shamiya, reports **Al-Anba** daily. Two of the men have reportedly claimed to have been assaulted and have submitted medical reports to support their case to the area police station.

According to a security source, the complainants are -- an employee of the Ministry of Interior (born in 2001) and the other a student at a private university (born in 2002).

The incident happened, they said, at the Wahran Park parking lot.

According to one of the complainants one of the suspects who was in the car yelled at him while

walking, talking on the phone and he was attacked with a 'ring box' even though the victim said he replied politely.

He added at this point, his friend came to his rescue seeing he being assaulted, but he too was beaten for no reason.

The suspects were arrested based on the car plate number provided to the police by the victims.

During interrogation, one of the suspects is said to have denied using the ring box or the offensive language.

Police have asked to see CCTV cameras from nearby areas to get the full details of the brawl.

□ □ □

PADA under probe: The Public Authority for Combating Corruption (Nazaha) has announced the referral of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs

(PADA) to the Public Prosecution, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The referral is based on the suspicion that the supervisor committed forgery, which is punishable under Articles 257 and 259 of the Penal Code.

□ □ □

Kuwaiti hurt in mishap: A collision between two cars on the Sixth Ring Road left a Kuwaiti citizen injured with fractures and caused heavy traffic disruption, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Upon receiving a report of the accident, the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior dispatched rescue and paramedic teams to the scene. The injured citizen was rushed to the nearest hospital for treatment. Rescue personnel also towed the two vehicles to clear the roadway and alleviate traffic congestion.

Kuwaiti seamstress robbed by shop worker

Feb 5 verdict in case against ex-sports body president

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: The Criminal Court has set the session of February 5 for issuing its verdict in the case filed against a former sports federation president who is accused of fraud, forgery, and money laundering by organizing referee camps and tournaments, after the court heard the defense's plea, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendant with money laundering, involving KD 1,181,529, which was allegedly obtained through crimes of forgery of official documents and fraud. The defendant was also charged with collaborating with a public employee to forge official documents from a travel and tourism office, and falsely documenting expenses for the Kuwait Fencing Federa-

tion. He allegedly submitted fake invoices to the Public Authority for Sports to justify the expenditure of the illicit funds.

□ □ □

Kuwaiti seamstress robbed: Following instructions from the investigator at the Maidan Hawalli police station, the name of an expatriate worker has been added to the wanted list, in connection with accusations of stealing wedding dresses and a collection of crystal items valued at over 16,000 Kuwaiti dinars, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

It remains unclear whether the suspect stole the items in a single instance or over multiple occasions, as well as the worker's relationship with the tailor shop where the theft occurred.

The investigation began after a Kuwaiti woman, born in 1975, reported to the police that she had been betrayed by one of her employees at her private tailoring business.

She explained that despite her efforts to contact the worker through multiple channels, she was unable to reach him. The stolen items included wedding dresses, engagement dresses, and a collection of crystal and accessories.

The woman expressed concerns that the accused might flee the country with the stolen goods.

A case of breach of trust was filed, and the matter has been transferred to the criminal investigations department for further action to apprehend and interrogate the accused.



KFF photo

KFF employee seals an industrial establishment in Al-Ahmadi.

KFF shuts down 25 firms, warehouses in Al-Ahmadi

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) closed 25 industrial establishments and warehouses in Al-Ahmadi.

According to a press release issued by KFF, some of these establishments did not obtain the required license from KFF, while others violated fire safety regulations. Despite prior warnings to rectify the violations, they failed to comply.

The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) concluded an introductory course on strengthening buildings and sand pits on Thursday, which was held at the Search and Rescue Center for personnel from the Ministry of Defense.

According to a press release issued by KFF, this course is part of the ongoing cooperation between KFF and the Ministry of Defense. It aims to educate participants on the best professional methods for the initial handling of these materials used in strengthening buildings and sand pits.

□ □ □

KFF honors Karam: Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi received Colonel Khalid Fadel Karam and honored him for his scientific achievement in securing the bronze medal by coming third place in the final round of the World Powerboat Championship held in Plymouth in Great Britain.

According to a press release by KFF, Major General Al-Roumi conveyed the congratulations of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defense Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, wishing Karam continued progress and success.

CAPT opens bids for Juvenile Court's building in Sulaibiya

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: According to informed sources, the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) opened bids for the study and design of the Juvenile Court building in Sulaibiya during its meeting on Wednesday, January 15.

The sources explained that a total of 17 companies submitted bids, with one company being excluded in accordance with Article 45 of the Public Tenders Law.

The next step involves referring the bids to the Ministry of Public Works' Construction Projects Sector, which has one month to review the bids and prepare a technical recommendation. The recommendation will then be submitted to CAPT, which will decide on awarding the contract to the best-qualified contractor, both technically and financially. After that, the State Audit Bureau will review the procedures for of-

fering and awarding the contract and audit the process. If there are no objections from the bureau, the contracts will be approved and signed.

The objective of establishing the Juvenile Court is to provide justice services, facilitate juvenile attendance for investigations and court sessions, and expedite the adjudication of their cases.

This study tender is an important step in moving the project forward, and the design tender is part of the ministry's annual plan for contracts for the current fiscal year of 2024/2025.

In April 2015, the Municipal Council approved the allocation of a 9,400-square-meter site in Sulaibiya for the construction of the court. The ministry plans to meet all engineering and technical requirements for the building, which will include multiple floors and basements, using the latest specifications and construction practices.

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'Be Outstanding' male students departing for Republics of Togo and Benin.



'Be Outstanding' female students before departing for Bosnia.

KUNA photos

KFAED's 'Be Outstanding' program takes students on educational journey abroad

The 'Be Outstanding' program, organized annually by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, is currently underway, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The 14th edition of the program has sent male students to the Republics of Togo and Benin and female students to Bosnia.

The students are on a cultural and educational trip until January 25, where they will visit development projects funded by the Kuwait Fund and explore historical, cultural and tourist landmarks.

Mona Al-Ayyaf, Director of the Media Department at the Kuwait Fund, highlighted that the Fund has become more interactive with local and community development while maintaining its core mission.

The initiative serves as both a reward and support to encourage students to continue their education. It also aims to showcase Kuwait's role and status internationally, with the students returning as ambassadors of the country.

The supervisors of the trips, Saleh Al-Taqi for the male students and Fatima Al-Turkait for the female students, emphasized that the students

would visit several Kuwait Fund-supported development projects to understand their positive impact on the local economies and people.

Additionally, they will engage in cultural experiences to broaden their global perspective. Supervisors from the Ministry of Education are accompanying the students throughout the trip.

The initiative, launched in 2010, aims to motivate high school students to excel in their studies and raise awareness of Kuwait's influence in friendly countries.

MEW finalizes renewable energy deal, targets 2,500 MW by 2030

Project aims to support Kuwait's sustainability goals for 2060

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: According to informed sources, the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has completed the project to purchase renewable en-

ergy from external sources on March 31, which is the target date set by the ministry itself in its development plan for the current year.

They revealed that the ministry has allocated KD 500,000 for the project.

The sources highlighted the in-

terest of the ministry in the project due to it being an important development project that aims at creating sustainable living environments and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 in line with international commitments.

They said the ministry has included the project into its 2030 plan as an investment opportunity in the energy and renewable energy sectors, with plans to generate 2,500 mega-

watts of "self-produced" energy.

The sources indicated that great progress has been made towards the project's approval and implementation, particularly in terms of studying its feasibility on the ground, including selecting the appropriate type of energy based on factors such as climate and the characteristics of the buildings where the renewable energy projects will be built.

Anti-smoking society holds awareness campaign at KU

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: A member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Society for Combating Smoking and Cancer and Head of the Smoking Harm Awareness Initiative at Kuwait University Anwar Burhama held a meeting with the acting Director of Kuwait University Dr. Osama Al-Saeed to discuss organizing an anti-smoking campaign at the university, reports Al-Anba daily.

They discussed developing a strategy for the campaign, which will involve forming a joint committee between the society and the university.

According to a press release issued by the society, this meeting is part of the ongoing efforts to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking.

Discussions included strengthening cooperation between the university and the society in combating smoking and providing necessary treatment to smokers through the university's smoking cessation clinic, which aims to highlight the harms of smoking and encourage students and staff to benefit from the clinic's services to quit smoking.

The society revealed that 388 patients have visited since the opening of the smoking cessation clinic at its Qadisiya headquarters, with a seven percent success rate in the percentage of those who have quit smoking.

It added that the clinic provides specialized treatments for those who wish to quit the habit of smoking under the guidance of experienced doctors.

Council to review water lab decision

Municipal Capital Committee set to tackle urban development projects

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: The Capital Committee of the Municipal Council, chaired by Dr. Hassan Kamal, will hold its 12th meeting of the third legislative term on Sunday, January 26.

A number of items on its agenda are slated for discussion, including:

q The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy's request to use an administrative building for a site located in Shuwaikh Industrial 2.

q The Public Authority for Sports' letter regarding the contract for the design of the football stadium project at Kuwait Sports Club, with a request for study and approval.

q A request from residents of Jaber Al-

Ahmad, Saad Al-Abdullah, Northwest Sulaibikhat, Granada, and Doha areas to establish two car parks.

q A proposal from Dr. Hassan Kamal regarding the design and establishment of longitudinal parking lots for the Dasma Cooperative Branch, Block 5.

The committee will also discuss amending the Municipal Council's decision dated June 24, 2024, regarding the establishment of modern laboratories for water analysis in Shuwaikh, affiliated with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy.

Additional agenda items include a request from the Public Facilities Management Company for the management, operation, and maintenance of surface parking lots near the former building of the Kuwait Credit Bank, and a letter from the Mayor of Qurtuba regarding the designated garden yards within the Qurtuba survey plan. The committee will also review the bidding process for the management and operation of the irrigation market project.



Dr. Kamal



Chairman of Al-Awazem Charity, Hamad Al-Busais, presents a copy of the book to Dr. Abdul Mohsen Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi.

Hikma Charitable Society honors winners of Khaled Al-Essa Al-Saleh Charity Competition

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: The Kuwaiti Al-Hikma Charitable Society, led by Chairman Dr. Ahmed Sabah Al-Mulla, recently hosted the monthly meeting of charity work pioneers to honor the winners of the Khaled Al-Essa Al-Saleh Annual Charitable Work Competition, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The event was attended by board members and representatives from various charity societies and foundations to celebrate the success of the winners and emphasize the importance of participating in the competition, which highlights the excellence of Kuwaiti charitable organizations and the quality of their projects.

During the event, Hamad Zaid Al-Busais, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation, expressed his gratitude to the Al-Hikma Charitable Society for or-

ganizing such meetings.

He stressed that these gatherings foster the exchange of ideas and help integrate efforts to achieve common goals in charitable work.

Additionally, Al-Busais, along with the Foundation's Secretary, Dr. Ahmed Al-Shabo, presented Dr. Abdul Mohsen Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi, Chairman of the Al-Aal and Al-Ashab Foundation, with the book titled The Role of Kuwaiti Endowments in Supporting Charitable and Humanitarian Work. This book was published by the Al-Awazem Endowment.

Al-Busais emphasized the importance of maintaining regular meetings among those involved in charitable work, such as associations and charities, to present ideas, develop strategies and maximize positive outcomes while addressing any challenges.



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LOCAL



KUNA photo
Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Sunday signed the contract for construction, execution and operation of the security fence at the diplomatic suburb.

Council probes accessibility delay

Municipal Technical Committee to tackle key development proposals

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: The Technical Committee of the Municipal Council will hold its meeting on Tuesday, headed by Munira Al-Amir, during which it will discuss several items in the agenda, the most important of which are:



Al-Amir

- A proposal by council chair Abdullah Al-Mahri to add a goldsmith workshop activity.
- A letter from the Ministry of Information regarding the plots for Media Street in Ardiya
- A joint proposal by members Fahad Al-Abdul-Jader, Saud Al-Kandari, and Ismail Behbehani to add more hotels and motels to the approved list.
- A project to design and establish

multi-storey marinas for small-sized and medium-sized boats at no financial cost to the state.

■ A proposal from members Sherifa Al-Shalfan, Abdullah Al-Da'i, and Farah Al-Roumi to establish an independent municipality specifically for Kuwait City.

■ A proposal by member Munira Al-Amir to issue a regulation for organizing the procedures for land allocation.

■ A proposal by Abdullah Al-Mahri and Abdullah Al-Hidhal for the addition of a restaurant and café activity along the Fourth Ring Road extension in Shuwaikh.

In the same context, the committee is examining the reasons behind the delay in responding to the proposal submitted by Municipal Council member Alia Al-Farsi, which calls for the formation of a joint committee to oversee the implementation of accessibility requirements for people with disabilities, in accordance with the Kuwait Code for Accessibility and the overall design standards.

Egyptian PM highlights historic ties

Egypt seeks deeper Kuwaiti partnerships

CAIRO, Jan 19, (KUNA): Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly affirmed on Saturday his country is seeking to enhance collaboration in all fields, mainly economy and investment, with Kuwait.

Meeting with Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt Ghanem Al-Ghanem to discuss the ways of boosting cooperation, Madbouly stressed the deep-rooted historic ties with Kuwait.

He emphasized Egypt's keenness to allure further Kuwaiti investments in several sectors to exploit various opportunities in a manner that achieves interest of both sides.

He pointed to the Egyptian government's efforts to start implementing proposals regarding collaboration between both sides in the upcoming period.

Madbouly referred to his recent participation in a ceremony organized by Auto Mobility Co. for inaugurating a factory for assembling Geely cars in Egypt with Kuwaiti investments.

Speaking to KUAN in a statement after the meeting, Al-Ghanem referred to Kuwait's eagerness to back bilateral collaboration in various domains in a way that meets aspirations of the two countries and their nations.

He stressed his keenness on enhancing common cooperation in trade and investment fields mainly that are related to the private sector.

Al-Ghanem pointed to multiple meetings held over the past period with Egypt's bodies to focus on cooperation opportunities in all fields.



KUNA photo
Egyptian Prime Minister Dr. Mostafa Madbouly meets with the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Egypt Ghanem Al-Ghanem.

Kuwait inks bilateral agreement on aviation operations with Mongolia

New pact boosts trade, tourism and safety



KUNA photo
President of Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during the signing of the contract with the representative of Mongolia.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19, (KUNA): Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) signed a bilateral agreement with Mongolia on Sunday to regulate air transport between the two countries.

The agreement establishes legal frameworks for designating airlines, operational mechanisms, and technical aspects related to aviation security and safety.

In a statement to KUNA, President of DGCA, Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah emphasized that the agreement aims to ensure safe aviation operations between Kuwait and Mongolia, which enhances joint cooperation in the aviation sector.

Sheikh Humoud added that the agreement focuses on implementing the legal and technical measures necessary for airline operations at Kuwait International to ensure the safety and security of passengers.

He noted that this agreement was part of Kuwait's broader efforts to establish similar agreements with various countries in the near future, aiming to strengthen the aviation sector, and promote tourism in Kuwait.

On his part, State secretary of Ministry of Roads and Transport, Sandagdorj Batbold expressed his satisfaction with the agreement, stating that this would have a positive impact on trade and tourism between Kuwait and Mongolia.

He added that it will further strengthen bilateral relations and contribute to achieving mutual interests.

Continued from Page 1

Dear Prime

stified development and allowed a few influential individuals to divide the nation's resources, even at the expense of the country and its people.

This paralyzed state activities, causing the nation to turn inward and hindering the development of various industries. It also restricted the flow of capital from abroad, especially with the lack of mechanisms to attract foreign investment.

Moreover, this environment contributed to the failure to secure food security, which is the basic pillar for any country to maintain the minimum level of self-reliance. Also, certain laws have even driven investment away, with many laws being contradictory or overlapping.

The challenges faced by small and medium enterprises are a prime example of this, with many finding safer and more attractive environments for growth in neighboring countries.

Therefore, with the recent changes and the stability of the ministerial positions, it is now the responsibility of each minister to review the laws within their ministry's scope. They must seriously strive to learn from the experiences of both neighboring and distant countries that have advanced through progressive laws that align with the current era, cater to societal needs, and eliminate the obstacles that have hindered development.

Today, there is intense competition both regionally and globally to modernize industries, support innovation in various fields, and achieve self-sufficiency. International conditions demand that we think outside the box and embrace broader perspectives. The main factor in this is making room for creativity, and allowing citizens to contribute their full potential.

It is also important to abolish laws that prioritize individual interests without providing any real benefit to the country. The funds wasted in wrong places have contributed to the financial deficits we still face today. These resources must be redirected toward more productive sectors, particularly those related to rationalizing public expenditure.

Achieving this requires a ministerial workshop, not just superficial efforts aimed at media attention. Each minister must focus on significant meaningful achievements. Their role involves two primary tasks - first, repair the damage caused by previous stages, and second, update the legislation governing their respective ministries.

There is no doubt that this responsibility lies primarily with His Highness the Prime Minister, who must issue decisive directives to ensure that the Council of Ministers works in line with the vision set by His Highness the Amir in his series of speeches, statements, and directives to ministers, as well as his meetings with concerned officials.

Many laws, particularly those related to money laundering, supporting terrorism, and violations of the International Covenant on Human Rights, continue to draw sharp criticism in international forums. In addition, laws that restrict free trade and hinder the creation of an integrated industrial, commercial, and food system need to be revised to better serve the future of Kuwait and its people, and contribute to the regional trade movement.

These ideas should serve as a positive catalyst, free from envy or undue pressure. As mentioned previously, there is no harm in drawing lessons from other countries. We should also provide incentives for workers in every sector to contribute to Kuwait's future, benefiting from the country's strategic geographical location and the tolerant nature of its people. These principles should guide the government as it navigates the launch of a new era for Kuwait.

3 escape

The accused had initially denied the charges, but the court took into consideration the evidence presented and issued the death sentence against him.

According to case files, a violent altercation occurred between them in Farwaniya, during which the suspect fatally stabbed his friend. Following an intensive investigation and search around the area, authorities identified and arrested the perpetrator, and recovered the weapon used in the crime.

Upon being confronted, the accused admitted to the crime, citing personal differences as the motive for the murder. He was then referred to the Public Prosecution for further necessary action.

Kuwaiti Al-Khair

and winter supplies to people in need, as part of the country's humanitarian campaign: "Kuwait By Your Side".

The relief planeload was organized by Al-Salam Association for Humanitarian and Charitable Works, with the participation of charity societies and in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

Kuwait's humanitarian and relief efforts to help the Syrian people are primarily meant to alleviate their anguish and woes.

The sixth Kuwaiti airplane carrying humanitarian aid to Syria was dispatched to Damascus International Airport on Saturday, with 10 tons of essential items on board.

Public service

The pricing will be revised to reflect the cost of delivering the service and the fair usage fee for public facilities.

This approach aims to balance operational sustainability with accessibility, fostering better public service management.

The new decree marks a significant step in modernizing Kuwait's approach to public service fees, aligning them with contemporary economic principles while ensuring fairness and equity for all.

PART advances

depending on the outcomes and recommendations of the consulting tender and the Board of Directors' decisions.

4. Consulting tender for project supervision for overseeing the project's implementation.

5. Consulting tender for establishing the Kuwait Railway Company.

6. A tender for the actual establishment of the Kuwait Railway Company.

7. A tender for investing in the passenger station, which will be built in Shadadiya. The Municipal Council has already approved its allocation.

The report explained that the project aims to enhance trade and economic exchange between GCC countries in the field of land transport for passengers and goods. It seeks to develop both the local and regional economies, open new investment opportunities, and strengthen social ties among the GCC nations.

The project will also reduce the cost of transporting goods and passengers, as well as lower road maintenance costs by minimizing the number of vehicles used for passenger and freight transport. It will contribute to reducing carbon emissions by decreasing the number of trucks transporting goods.

Other benefits include a reduction in traffic accidents, as fewer passenger and freight vehi-

cles will be on the roads, and the opening of labor markets and transportation services between GCC countries. It will also support the development of areas adjacent to the railway track, create new job opportunities for citizens, and contribute to the goals of New Kuwait 2035 vision.

'Selective tax'

Al-Manea also stressed the importance of monitoring market prices to ensure that taxes are not exploited to unjustifiably raise prices and that tax revenues are directed toward strengthening Kuwait's health sector.

Former Director General of the General Department for Combating Drugs, retired Major General Badr Al-Ghadouri, linked the proposed tax to reducing addiction rates.

He pointed out that cigarettes and other harmful products often serve as gateways to more serious addictions. Al-Ghadouri also noted that the selective tax, already applied in several Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, helps reduce the consumption of harmful products and generates much-needed revenue for governments.

The proposed selective tax aligns with GCC agreements from 2016, which set tax rates on harmful products such as tobacco, soft drinks and energy drinks.

For instance, countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman and Bahrain have implemented excise taxes on these goods, with varying tax rates ranging from 50 percent to 100 percent. Kuwait's introduction of a selective tax would bring it in line with regional efforts to reduce smoking rates and other health risks.

According to 2024 statistics from the Arab Statistics website, Kuwait ranks second in the Gulf in terms of smoking rates, with 22.1 percent of the population affected.

This places Kuwait just behind Bahrain, which leads the region with 25.1 percent of its population smoking.

3 released

Meanwhile, in Tel Aviv, thousands of people gathered to watch the news on large screens erupted in cheers. For months, many had gathered in the square to demand a ceasefire deal.

The deal ushers in an initial six-week period of calm and raises hopes for the release of dozens of militant-held hostages and an end to the devastating 15-month war. A last-minute delay by Hamas put off the truce's start by nearly three hours and highlighted its fragility.

Even before the ceasefire took effect, celebrations broke out across the territory and some Palestinians began returning to their homes. Israel earlier announced the names of the first three hostages to be freed in exchange for the planned release of 90 Palestinian prisoners later Sunday.

The truce, which started at 11:15 a.m. local time, is the first step toward ultimately ending the conflict and returning nearly 100 hostages abducted in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack.

An Israeli official confirmed that Romi Gonen, 24, Emily Damari, 28, and Doron Steinbrecher, 31, were the hostages being released Sunday. Gonen was abducted from the Nova music festival, while the others were kidnapped from Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Damari is an Israeli-British dual citizen.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said the families had approved the publication of the names.

In the interim between 8:30 a.m. and when the ceasefire took hold, Israeli fire killed at least 26 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It did not say whether they were civilians or fighters. The military has warned people to stay away from Israeli forces as they retreat to a buffer zone inside Gaza.

Ministry of

Article 3 of the decree law prohibits any official or civil entity from printing or importing any edition of the Quran without obtaining a permit from the Ministry of Islamic Affairs.

The explanatory memorandum stated that, "In recognition of the pioneering role of the State of Kuwait and its commitment to spreading the Islamic call, including the printing and publishing of the Quran, the traditions of the prophet, and their sciences, this law was enacted to strengthen the role of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs."

"The ministry will now bear responsibility for this important task using its accumulated expertise, available resources, and capabilities to ensure the work is carried out efficiently, with high quality, and at a reduced financial cost. This is in line with the state's general policy, and in light of the current economic conditions, which call for efficient performance while minimizing public spending."

"Violations of the provisions outlined in Article 3 would result in a fine ranging from KD 3,000 to KD 5,000, along with the confiscation of the violating publications and a closure of the facility for a period between three months and one year."

Meanwhile, Decree No. 8/2025 was issued, which amends the decree-law concerning the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. The amendment changes the ministry's name from "Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs" to the "Ministry of Islamic Affairs".

According to informed sources, the recent amendment to the name of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs was made at the request of the ministry itself with the aim of granting the General Secretariat of Awqaf independence as a separate entity and eliminating any potential confusion regarding its status.

Previously, government studies recommended dissolving the Public Authority for Printing and Publication of Holy Quran, Sunnah, and their Sciences, and integrating its responsibilities under the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. This recommendation followed concerns about the authority's limited achievements and the significant overlap of its competencies with those of other government bodies.

In addition, sources clarified that this move is part of a comprehensive government plan to restructure public institutions with similar functions. The objective is to streamline government operations, reduce public spending, and eliminate overlapping duties, which would, in turn, reduce administrative inefficiency.

Ministry of Commerce and Industry

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RECALL INFORMATION

RECALL REASON

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Thomas-Greenfield urges America to stay proactive on world stage

Biden's departing UN envoy warns US rivals will fill vacuum if Trump abandons global leadership

WASHINGTON, Jan 19, (AP) — The outgoing U.S. ambassador to the United Nations says she watched America's leadership diminish in the world during Donald Trump's first presidency and China fill the vacuum. Linda Thomas-Greenfield is warning that if it happens again during Trump's second term, adversaries will move in anew.

In a wide-ranging interview with The Associated Press, Thomas-Greenfield said during Joe Biden's presidency, the United States again engaged with the world, rebuilt alliances and reestablished America's leadership.

"That is the gift that we hand over to the next administration," she said, "and I hope that they will accept that gift in the spirit in which it is being given to them."

In a brief meeting with Trump's nominee, Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, Thomas-Greenfield told her "that the U.N. is important, and that it is important that we not cede any space to our adversaries."

Those rivals "will change the rules of the road," she warned. "And so, U.S. leadership is extraordinarily important."

In his first term, Trump called the United Nations "just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time." He suspended funding to its health and family planning agencies and withdrew from its cultural and education organization UNESCO and top human rights body. That's raised uncertainty about what's ahead, especially because the United States is the U.N.'s biggest single donor.

Stefanik has called for a "complete reassessment" of U.S. fund-



Linda Thomas-Greenfield, United States Ambassador to the United Nations, speaks after a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, Aug. 24, 2023, at the United Nations headquarters. (AP)

ing for the 193-nation world body, described the U.N. as a "den of antisemitism" and urged a continued halt to support for the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA.

Of course, the U.N. isn't perfect and needs reforms, Thomas-Greenfield said.

But to those who criticize the U.N. as a big bureaucracy where little gets done or decisions are ignored, she said she always quotes the late former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Madeleine Albright, who said "if it didn't exist, we would invent it."

Thomas-Greenfield stressed the U.N.'s importance in dealing with major global issues, from war to humanitarian aid and the need to regulate artificial intelligence.

The United States must stay at the table, she said, "so that we can have

influence and work with the entire system to ensure that the system delivers to the world."

The most important table is the horseshoe-shaped one for the 15 members of the U.N. Security Council, the most powerful U.N. body, which is charged with maintaining international peace and security.

Thomas-Greenfield said she gave Stefanik the same advice she got - to meet quickly with all of them - including permanent members Russia and China, rivals with veto power.

"She's going to be sitting around the table with them on almost a daily basis," Thomas-Greenfield said. "So, it's important to know the individuals you are going to have to engage with, whether they are friends or foes."

In her final emotional speech to the Security Council, Thomas-

Greenfield focused on Sudan, saying she wished there was closure on one crisis the world faces - ticking off Gaza, Ukraine, Congo and other hotspots.

She told AP the U.N. and the world "have to be more proactive in our engagement" to try to end these conflicts.

Sudan, where nearly two years of fighting has created famine and the world's worst displacement crisis, is an example "of where as an international community, we could have done more sooner and ended the suffering sooner."

Thomas-Greenfield, now 72, started her career as an academic and lived in Liberia, where she first saw U.S. diplomats at work and decided to join the Foreign Service in 1982.

She spent much of her more than 40-year career in Africa, returning to Liberia as ambassador, and rose to be assistant secretary of state for African affairs from 2013 to 2017, when Trump took office.

Biden brought her out of retirement to become U.N. ambassador and a member of his Cabinet.

At the United Nations, she said she's gained a much broader perspective on Africa's important place in the world and urged recognition of its immense resources - its people.

"Africa is an extraordinarily young continent," Thomas-Greenfield said. "These young people will be the future of the world."

At the U.N., Thomas-Greenfield harkened back to her Louisiana roots, saying she was going to engage in "gumbo diplomacy" by cooking the state's famous dish - which mixes up lots of different flavors - for fellow diplomats.

'Marked by a yellow tag'

Detained Nobel laureate highlights human rights violations in Belarus

TALLINN, Estonia, Jan 19, (AP) — The yellow name tag that Ales Bialiatski wears on his prison garb sets him apart from other inmates in Penal Colony No. 9 in eastern Belarus.

It marks Bialiatski as a political prisoner to be singled out for harsh treatment. Because he's been labeled an "extremist" by authorities, he's routinely denied medications, food parcels from home and contact with relatives, and is subjected to forced labor and stints in punishment cells, according to former inmates.

Authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko often claimed in his three decades in power that Belarus has no political prisoners, but activists say it currently holds about 1,300 of them. Many endure harsh conditions like Bialiatski, 62, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022 for his human rights activism and is believed to be in worsening health.

Belarus will hold a presidential election on Jan. 26 with no real opposition candidates. That all but assures a seventh term for Lukashenko, who was dubbed "Europe's last dictator" early in his tenure.

The vote is shining a spotlight anew on Belarus' human rights record after balloting in 2020 that was denounced at home and abroad as fraudulent. It triggered mass anti-government protests that led to a harsh crackdown on dissent and thousands of arrests.

"Bialiatski's fate underscores the catastrophe in the center of Europe that Lukashenko's regime has plunged Belarus into," said opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who ran in the 2020 election but was forced into exile.

Her husband, activist Siarhei Tsikhanouski, also is imprisoned and hasn't been heard from for nearly 700 days.

"If the authorities are openly abusing the Nobel laureate and demonstra-



Nobel Peace Prize winner Ales Bialiatski, head of the Viasna human rights group, sits in a defendants' cage at a court session in Minsk, Belarus, on Jan. 5, 2023. (AP)

tively turning his life into hell, then it is not difficult to imagine the torment that thousands of other Belarusian political prisoners are experiencing," Tsikhanouskaya told The Associated Press.

In recent months, Lukashenko has pardoned some political opponents, but critics say it's a revolving door, with his government simultaneously arresting others in a continuing crackdown. Nearly 65,000 people have been arrested since 2020, and many of them alleged they were beaten or tortured in custody, which the government denied. Activists say at least seven have died behind bars.

Bialiatski was arrested in 2021 amid raids by the country's KGB. In March 2023, he was convicted on charges of smuggling and financing actions that "grossly violated public order," and sentenced to 10 years. Authorities labeled him as especially dangerous because of alleged "extremist" tendencies.

He was transferred to the harsh Penal Colony No. 9 in 2023, and Bialiatski's wife, Natalia Pinchuk, hasn't heard from him since August, she told AP in a December interview. A food parcel she had sent to him was returned to her in November - an ominous sign of his bleak conditions.

New administration set to roll out series of executive orders and other actions in first days

Trump returns to Washington for celebrations ahead of inauguration

WASHINGTON, Jan 19, (AP) — Donald Trump returned to Washington Saturday evening to celebrate with family, supporters and political allies ahead of his second inauguration, a triumphant return for the Republican four years after he departed the city under the shadow of an attack by his supporters on the Capitol.

Trump marked his return to power with a celebration at his Trump National Golf Club in Sterling, Virginia, about 30 miles outside Washington.

He addressed the crowd, giving shoutouts to Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, and declaring his Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff a "great negotiator." Witkoff this past week helped negotiate a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas that's scheduled to take effect on Sunday.

Soon after his remarks, Trump stepped out onto a clubhouse balcony while guests gathered on the patio below him for a fireworks display and performance by tenor Christopher Macchio.

Trump returned to Washington as organizers of Monday's Inauguration Day ceremony were scrambling to move inside most of the outdoor events, including the swearing-in of president and vice president that traditionally takes place on the steps of the U.S. Capitol, due to forecasted frigid temperatures.

It will be the first time since President Ronald Reagan took the oath of office in 1985 for his second term that the ceremony will be moved inside the U.S. Capitol.

Trump made his way from West Palm Beach, Florida, with his wife Melania Trump and their son Barron aboard a U.S. military C-32 aircraft on a flight dubbed Special Air Mission 47 - a nod to Trump becoming the 47th president on Monday.

It's a courtesy that's traditionally been extended by the outgoing administration to the incoming one. Trump did not make a government plane available to President Joe Biden ahead of his inauguration in 2021, and instead the Democrat flew to Washington on a privately chartered aircraft.

As his motorcade neared his golf club for Saturday's celebration, he was greeted by dozens of well-wishers who gathered along the roadside and chanted "Trump" and "USA, USA!"

With a blast of Arctic air expected to leave the nation's capital facing frigid temperatures on Inauguration Day, Trump opted to move inside most of Monday's outdoor events, including the swearing-in ceremony.



President-elect Donald Trump, Melania Trump and family watch fireworks at Trump National Golf Club, Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025, in Sterling, Va. (AP)

"I think we made the right decision. We'll be very comfortable now," Trump told NBC News in a phone interview Saturday.

On Pennsylvania Avenue leading to the White House, crews were breaking down metal bleachers that would have been used for outdoor inauguration viewing stands.

Even before Trump got to town, groups of protesters began taking to the street in the morning as a light sleet fell.

Melody Hamoud, a Washington resident, wore a pink hat that she had on at a 2017 march to protest Trump's first inauguration.

"I just didn't want to sit home and fret in front of the TV," she said. "I wanted to feel like our movement still has energy

and be around others who felt the same."

Timothy Wallis, 58, flew in for the inauguration from Pocatello, Idaho, with friends. The group had tickets to watch the ceremony outside but haven't been able to get tickets to any of the indoor events.

"We found out on the plane," he said about the change of plans.

Wallis said he was disappointed about the switch and a little bemused since he's used to cold at home.

"We left snow to come here," he said. "I brought my gloves!"

Meanwhile, Trump said Saturday he is preparing to roll out a series of executive orders and other actions in the first

days of his new administration.

He confirmed he'll "most likely" grant an extension that might allow TikTok to keep operating in the U.S. beyond Sunday, when a law that prohibits mobile app stores and internet hosting services from distributing TikTok to U.S. users takes effect.

And Trump in the NBC News interview confirmed that his administration would begin its effort "very early, very quickly" on following through on a campaign promise of mass deportations of migrants living in the U.S. without legal permission.

Federal immigration officers are expected to initially target more than 300 people in the Chicago area with histories of egregious, violent crimes after Trump takes office Monday, according to an official familiar with the planning who spoke on condition of anonymity because plans have not been made public.

"Well, it's got to happen, and if it doesn't happen, we're not going to have a country any longer," said Trump, who declined to say where the deportation operations would begin.

Trump, a Republican, left office in 2021 as a political pariah after his refusal to accept his loss to Democrat Joe Biden led a mob to overrun the Capitol. He then broke tradition by skipping Biden's inauguration.

Biden will adhere to one of the most potent symbols of the democratic handover, welcoming Trump to the White House and joining him on the ride to the Capitol before Trump takes the oath of office.

The first time Trump was sworn into office eight years ago, the former reality TV star billionaire came in as an outsider disrupting Washington's norms, delivering a dark inaugural address as his swearing-in drew large protests and some clashes in the street.

This time, Trump told NBC, the theme of his inauguration speech would be "unity and strength, and also the word 'fairness.'"

As he takes power, the protests were far less noticeable, eclipsed by the ceremonies and celebrations around Trump's taking power. As one more marker of Trump's remarkable comeback, the events surrounding his inauguration will be more celebrity-studded than the last time, along with a noticeable turnout by a cadre of tech-world billionaires.

While Trump held court at his Virginia golf club on Saturday evening, Vice President-elect JD Vance attended a reception for Cabinet members and hosted a dinner in Washington.

America

Mayor defends Trump meeting: New York City's Democratic mayor, who faces federal bribery charges, is defending his private meeting with President-elect Donald Trump as the Republican prepares to retake the White House on Monday.

Mayor Eric Adams on Saturday brushed off questions that his criminal case - or the possibility of a presidential pardon if he is convicted - came up during the Friday sit-down near Trump's Florida estate, saying the case is something his legal team is handling.

"I made this clear a few days earlier that I was seeking to sit down and talk to the president about the issues concerning the city infrastructure, the migrant asylum-seeker issues, the settlement of the crisis in the Middle East," he said. (AP)

Judges allow rioters' return to DC: Thousands of Donald Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol after he lost the 2020 presidential election. Four years later, some of them are allowed to return to the nation's capital so they can celebrate Trump's return to the White House.

At least 20 defendants charged with or convicted of joining the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol have asked federal judges for permission to attend President-elect Trump's second inauguration Monday in Washington, D.C., according to an Associated Press review of court records. The majority can go. Several others cannot. (AP)

Oregon man gets life sentence: An Oregon man has been sentenced to life in federal prison after being convicted of kidnapping and sexually assaulting two women in separate instances, including locking one in a cinder block cell.

Negasi Zuberi, 31, was sentenced Friday in federal court in Medford, Portland television station KGW reported. A federal jury convicted him in October on charges of kidnapping, transportation for criminal sexual activity, being a felon in possession of a weapon and attempting to break out of jail when he tried to smash through his cell window in August 2023. (AP)

Special call to action as Trump takes office

Civil rights leaders, King family mark MLK Day

WASHINGTON, Jan 19, (AP) — When President-elect Donald Trump is sworn in as president of the United States inside the Capitol's rotunda, he will do so facing a bust of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. on the federal holiday commemorating King's legacy.

It's a disquieting contrast for some civil rights advocates who wish to fulfill the late reverend's dream of non-violent social revolution.

Events honoring King and advocating for his vision of a just society will occur across the nation as many in the U.S. observe the peaceful transfer of power in the capital. The concurrent events have been met with mixed feelings by civil rights leaders, who broadly reviled Trump's rhetoric and stances on race and civil rights during his third presidential campaign.

But many leaders, including King's own family, see the juxtaposition as a poignant contrast and a chance to refocus the work of advancing civil rights in a new political era.

"I'm glad it occurred on that day because it gives the United States of America and the world the contrast in pictures. Is this the way you want to go - or is this the way you want to go?" said the Rev. Bernice King, the late King's youngest daughter and CEO of the King



People attend a wreath-laying ceremony at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial marking MLK Day in Washington, Jan. 16, 2023. (AP)

Center.

"It's not a day that he can be the star, which he loves to be," King's daughter said of Trump. "He has to contend with that legacy on that day, regardless of how he manages it and handles it in his presentation. I hope those around him are advising him well to honor the day appropriately in his speech."

This is the third time in the nearly 40 years since the federal King holiday became law that it coincides with a presidential inauguration. Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama also were sworn in for their

second terms on the holiday. Both praised King in their remarks; it is yet to be seen if and how Trump - who falsely claimed his first inauguration had larger crowds than King's March on Washington - will acknowledge the day.

"Will he sound a message of unity and a presidency for all, or will he continue to focus on his base and some of the divisive policies he's championed, like an anti-DEI stance, rounding up immigrants and cutting important parts of the social safety net through this DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) process?" asked Marc Morial, president of the National Urban League civil rights group.

Morial added that Trump's inauguration landing on MLK Day represented "a contradiction of values."

Many civil rights leaders will spend the day commemorating King's legacy after a week of public and private organizing, giving speeches and strategizing how to respond to the incoming administration's agenda.

"It's the best of times and the worst of times," said Derrick Johnson, president of the NAACP, an organization whose members mentored, collaborated and clashed with King throughout the Civil Rights Movement.

Europe

EU sends election observers to Kosovo: An election observation mission has been set up by the European Union to oversee parliamentary elections in Kosovo scheduled for Feb. 9.

The poll is expected to be a key test for Prime Minister Albin Kurti, whose governing party won in a landslide in the 2021. Tensions with neighboring Serbia remain tense since the former Serbian province declared independence in 2008, which Belgrade doesn't recognize.

A team of 100 observers will monitor the elections, underlining "continuous EU support for Kosovo to further strengthen its democratic governance," Nathalie Loiseau, the French member of the European Parliament who has been appointed as chief of the mission, said Saturday. (AP)

Ski lift accident leaves 30 injured: At least 30 people have been injured in a ski lift accident at the Spanish resort of Astún, in the Pyrenees mountain range, emergency services for Spain's northern Aragon region said Saturday.

Regional emergency services said that 10 people needed to be treated in hospitals, including two who were seriously injured.

State TV channel TVE reported that around 80 people were trapped on the chairlifts in the immediate aftermath.

"It's like a cable has come off, the chairs have bounced and people have been thrown off," one witness told TVE. Fernando Beltrán, a representative of Spain's government in Aragon, later posted on X that "all the skiers affected by the accident" have been evacuated and those who were injured were receiving medical treatment. The cause of the incident is unknown. (AP)

Swedish forces arrive in Latvia: Hundreds of Swedish troops arrived in Latvia on Saturday to join a Canadian-led multinational brigade along NATO's eastern flank, a mission Sweden is calling its most significant operation so far as a member of the Western defense alliance.

A ship carrying parts of a mechanized infantry battalion arrived early Saturday in the port of Riga, the Latvian capital, escorted by the Swedish air force and units from the Swedish and Latvian navies, the Swedish armed forces said in a statement. (AP)

Chinese military conducts combat readiness patrols in South China Sea

ASEAN FMs seek breakthrough in Myanmar conflict, South China Sea dispute

LANGKAWI, Malaysia, Jan 19, (Agencies): Southeast Asian foreign ministers gathered Sunday for their first meeting this year under the regional bloc's new chair, Malaysia, seeking a breakthrough over Myanmar's drawn-out civil war and territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

The retreat on the idyllic northern resort island of Langkawi was the first major meeting of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations hosted by Malaysia. Officials said it aims to chart the bloc's direction for the year as it tries to resolve Myanmar's deadly four-year crisis and tensions over China's increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan said Myanmar - represented by a low-level Foreign Ministry official after its junta leaders were barred from formal ASEAN meetings - briefed the gathering about plans for a general election this year. But the bloc wants Myanmar's government to ensure peace before any polls are held, he said.

"We said the election has to be inclusive. The election cannot be in isolation, it has to involve all stakeholders," he told a news conference at the end of the retreat. "We told them the election is not our priority. Our priority is to stop the violence."

The crisis in Myanmar has emerged as one of the bloc's biggest challenges since a military coup ousted an elected civilian government in February 2021, plunging the country into conflict. It has sparked an armed resistance movement, with rebel forces now controlling large parts of the country. The war has killed tens of thousands of people, and displaced millions.

ASEAN's peace plan and other efforts to seek a solution have so far been futile, hampered by the bloc's non-interference policy and the Myanmar junta's refusal to comply. The military government hopes an election will legitimize its rule, but critics say polls are unlikely to be free or fair.

Malaysia, which brought Myanmar into ASEAN during its chairmanship



From left to right: Laos's Foreign Affairs Minister Thongsavanh Phomvihane, Myanmar's Permanent Secretary to ASEAN Aung Kyaw Moe, Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, Thailand's Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa, Vietnam's Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son, Malaysia's Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan, Philippines's Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, Brunei Darussalam Foreign Minister Erywan Yusof, Cambodia's Secretary of State Kung Phoak, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Sugiono, East Timor's Foreign Minister Bendito Freitas and ASEAN Secretary General Kao Kim Hourn pose for a group photo during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' Retreat in Langkawi Island, Malaysia, Sunday, Jan. 19, 2025. (AP)

of the bloc in 1997, is expected to take a more proactive stance as the Myanmar crisis has led to the flourishing of criminal activities, online scams and human trafficking along Myanmar's border.

Hasan said Malaysia had appointed Othman Hashim, a former foreign ministry senior official, as special en-

voy for ASEAN chair to Myanmar to engage various factions in the country to find a way forward.

"We have no intention to carve out Myanmar," he said, adding that dialogue and diplomacy were the best strategies to help the country return to a democratic path.

Hasan said the meeting also dis-

cussed implications of the second term of incoming U.S. President Donald Trump on the region amid its rivalry with China. He said ministers raised concerns that competition between the major powers may increase tensions and have spillover effects in the region. He said ASEAN ministers stressed the urgency to bolster

regional unity and make economic integration a top priority amid the global uncertainties.

"We must ensure that ASEAN remains our central go-to platform for solution seeking... We are the speakers and not the spoken-for. We must drive our own path forward," he said. Tensions in the South China Sea,

one of the world's vital shipping lanes, were also high on the agenda following violent confrontations in the waters last year. Hasan said the ministers called for accelerated negotiations between ASEAN and China on a code of conduct in the waterway. Officials earlier targeted them for conclusion in 2026 but the talks have stalled over disagreements including whether the pact should be binding and its scope of coverage.

"We stressed that the South China Sea must remain peaceful and stable," Hasan said.

ASEAN members Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei along with Taiwan have overlapping claims with China, which asserts sovereignty over virtually all of the South China Sea.

Chinese and Philippine vessels clashed repeatedly last year. Chinese forces also assaulted Vietnamese fishermen and Chinese patrol vessels ventured into areas that Indonesia and Malaysia claim as exclusive economic zones. ASEAN has not openly criticized China, which is the bloc's top trading partner.

As chair, Malaysia is likely to push for quiet diplomacy as it balances security challenges with economic gains, analysts say.

"It would be pragmatism on Malaysia's side, as the country - as well as ASEAN as a whole - lack the diplomatic and military heft to confront China on the South China Sea," said Muhamamd Faizal Abdul Rahman, a research fellow at Singapore's S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

Also:

BEIJING: The Chinese military conducted joint sea-air combat readiness patrols in the South China Sea from Friday to Saturday to maintain peace and stability in the area, according to a statement by the Chinese People's Liberation Army Southern Theater Command.

"Any military activity that stirs up trouble in the South China Sea is within our control," the statement read.



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro addresses government supporters after he was sworn in for a third six-year term, at the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela, Jan. 10, 2025. (AP)

US rejects Venezuelan President Maduro's reelection, but WH keeps financial lifeline

CARACAS, Jan 19, (AP): Things seemed to be looking up for Venezuela in 2022. Following years of authoritarian rule and withering economic sanctions, President Nicolás Maduro had agreed to work toward a democratic presidential election. The White House, in return, granted him a financial lifeline: a permit for U.S. energy giant Chevron to pump and export Venezuelan oil.

Oil wells roared back to life and massive tanker ships returned to Venezuela's coast to be filled with heavy, hard-to-refine crude destined for the U.S.

Maduro's promised election was neither fair nor free, and the longtime president was sworn in this month for a third six-year term despite credible evidence that his opponent got more votes. Yet, the sanctions relieve the U.S. offered "to support the restoration of democracy" is still helping fill state coffers.

Venezuela's opposition says Ma-

duro's government has earned billions of dollars from exports allowed by the permit.

The White House has ignored calls from the main opposition coalition, as well as Republicans and Democrats in the U.S. Congress, to cancel a permit that now accounts for around a quarter of the South American country's oil production.

Senior administration officials have struggled to explain why the permit has been left in place under questioning by reporters, saying only that sanctions policy toward Venezuela is frequently reviewed. President Joe Biden told reporters last week he "didn't have enough data" to adjust oil-related sanctions before he leaves office Monday.

Venezuela sits atop the world's largest proven oil reserves and once used them to power Latin America's strongest economy. But corruption, mismanagement and eventual U.S. economic sanctions saw production steadily de-

cline from the 3.5 million barrels per day pumped in 1999, when the fiery Hugo Chávez took power and began his self-described socialist revolution, to less than 400,000 barrels per day in 2020.

California-based Chevron Corp., which first invested in Venezuela in the 1920s, does business in the country through joint ventures with the state-owned company Petroleos de Venezuela S.A., commonly known as PDVSA.

The joint ventures produced about 200,000 barrels a day in 2019, but the following year, U.S. sanctions imposed by then-President Donald Trump forced Chevron to wind down production.

In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to a 30% decline in the country's economic activity, Venezuela's Central Bank reported year-over-year inflation of over 1,800%. For many, rummaging through garbage in search of food scraps or valuable items became a common activity.



Supporters of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol march during a rally to oppose his impeachment near the Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials in Gwacheon, South Korea, Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2025. (AP)

S.Korea's impeached president formally arrested

Hours after South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol was formally arrested, triggering rioting by his supporters, his lawyers said Sunday that he remains defiant in his refusal to answer questions over the probe into his declaration of martial law last month.

Yoon was formally arrested early on Sunday, days after being apprehended at his presidential compound in Seoul. He faces possible imprisonment over his short-lived authoritarian push, which set off the country's most serious political crisis since its democratization in the late 1980s.

Yoon's arrest could mark the beginning of an extended period in custody, lasting months or more.

The decision to arrest Yoon ignited unrest at the Seoul Western District Court, where dozens of his supporters broke in and rioted, destroying the main door and windows. They used plastic chairs, metal beams and police shields that they managed to wrestle away from officers. Some were seen throwing objects and using fire extinguishers, destroying furniture and office machines, smashing glass doors and spraying water on computer servers. They shouted demands to see the judge who had issued the warrant, but she had already left.

Hundreds of police officers were deployed and nearly 90 protesters were arrested. Some injured police officers were seen being treated at ambulance vans. The court said it was trying to confirm whether any staff members were injured and assess the damage to its facilities.

In a statement issued through lawyers, Yoon lamented

that the court did not recognize the "just purpose" of his martial law decree but also urged his supporters to express their frustrations peacefully. He called on the police to adopt a lenient stance toward the protesters.

In granting law enforcement's request for an arrest warrant for Yoon, the court said he was a threat to destroy evidence. Yoon and his lawyers on Saturday appeared before the court and argued for his release.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and the military, can now extend Yoon's detention to 20 days, during which they will transfer the case to public prosecutors for indictment.

Investigators are examining whether Yoon's Dec. 3 martial law decree amounted to an attempted rebellion. While South Korean presidents have wide-ranging immunity from prosecution while in office, the protection does not extend to allegations of rebellion or treason.

Yoon's lawyers could also file a petition to challenge the court's arrest warrant. Yoon Kab-keun, one of the president's lawyers, said he will not attend a questioning by the anti-corruption agency set for Sunday afternoon and will remain at the detention center.

Yoon Suk Yeol's appearance in court caused chaotic scenes in nearby streets, where thousands of his fervent supporters rallied for hours calling for his release. Even before the court issued the warrant for Yoon's arrest, protesters repeatedly clashed with police. At least two vehicles carrying anti-corruption investigators were damaged as they left the court after arguing for Yoon's arrest. (AP)

Africa

Kenya deploys 217 more cops to Haiti: Kenya has deployed 217 more police officers to Haiti as part of a multinational force to curb gang violence plaguing the Caribbean nation, Kenya's interior minister said on Saturday.

According to the minister, Kipchumba Murkomen, the police officers departed from Kenya on Friday.

"The Kenya-led mission has made tremendous progress in reducing gang violence, earning praise across the globe," Murkomen said as he shared a photo of himself with some of the officers aboard a plane.

Kenya first sent troops to Haiti in June and the total deployment now exceeds 600. Kenya's President William Ruto has pledged to deploy 1,000 troops as part of the U.N.-backed force in Haiti. (AP)

Scores feared dead in Nigeria tanker blast: Scores of people were believed to have died and many others sustained injuries early Saturday after a tanker laden with gasoline exploded when it overturned, spilling its content on a busy road in Nigeria's north-central state of Niger, a senior official said. Many residents in the Dikko area of the state were caught in a heavy fire while trying to scoop fuel from the gasoline tanker, said Mohammed Bago, the Niger governor, in a statement.

"Scores were said to have been burned to death," Bago said, noting those who were not so close to the tanker escaped with injuries. He described the incident as "worrisome, heartbreaking, and unfortunate." (Xinhua)



Members of the citizen forum including doctors walk in a rally protesting a rape and murder of a resident doctor in a government hospital early August, in Kolkata, India, Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024. (AP)

Indian police volunteer convicted of rape, murder of trainee doctor

NEW DELHI, Jan 19, (AP): An Indian court on Saturday found a police volunteer guilty for the rape and murder of a trainee doctor, a crime that sparked nationwide protests and hospital strikes last year amid renewed concerns over lack of safety for women.

The killing of the 31-year-old physician while she was on duty at a hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata in August highlighted once again the chronic issue of violence against women in the country. The trial in the case was fast-tracked through India's notoriously sluggish legal system and arguments

began in November. Judge Anirban Das said the sentence for 33-year-old Sanjay Roy will be announced on Monday and could range from life imprisonment to the death penalty.

Police discovered the bloodied body of the woman at the city's R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital's seminar hall on Aug. 9. An autopsy later found the victim had been strangled and confirmed sexual assault.

Roy was arrested a day after the crime. He has since consistently maintained his innocence and told the court that he was not guilty.

		Change	Closing pts	Change	Closing pts
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+75.81	12,331.87		
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+123.49	29,728.61		

Business

Kuwait real estate market sees strong liquidity growth in 2024

Liquidity hits 3.512 billion dinars

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: According to Al-Shall's latest report, the liquidity in Kuwait's real estate market for 2024 reached approximately 3.512 billion dinars, marking a 21.3 percent increase from the previous year, which had liquidity of about 2.896 billion dinars, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The liquidity for the second half of 2024 amounted to about 1.939 billion dinars, outpacing the first half's 1.573 billion dinars. This growth parallels the performance of the stock market, highlighting a positive trend for both key assets in Kuwait.

Over the past 15 years, the market has experienced significant fluctuations, especially after the global finan-

cial crisis of 2008-2009. The highest liquidity level occurred between 2010 and 2014, reaching 4.992 billion dinars. The market liquidity started to decline in 2015, following a sharp drop in oil prices, and continued to fall into 2017, reaching about 2.382 billion dinars.

However, liquidity rebounded in 2018 and remained relatively strong until the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp decline in 2020. Post-pandemic recovery in 2021 saw liquidity rise to 3.936 billion dinars, the second-highest level in 15 years.

In 2024, market liquidity grew by 21.3 percent, driven by significant increases in the investment and commercial housing sectors. Private housing activity saw a modest increase of 4.9 percent, totaling around 1.530 billion dinars, but its relative share of the market decreased from 50.3 percent in 2023 to 43.6 percent.

The investment housing activity

surged by 33.6 percent, reaching 1.210 billion dinars, increasing its market share to 34.4 percent. Commercial activity also rose by 45.1 percent, amounting to 745.4 million dinars, with its contribution to market liquidity climbing to 21.1 percent.

The private and investment housing combined accounted for 78 percent of total market liquidity in 2024. The average transaction value for private housing fell slightly to 437 thousand dinars from 469 thousand in 2023.

However, the average value for commercial transactions rose to 5.5 million dinars, up from 4.4 million dinars, while investment housing transactions saw an increase to one million dinars from 789 thousand.

The overall increase in real estate sector trading by 9.5 percent in 2024 reflects a growing confidence in the market, with the liquidity shift toward investment and commercial sectors playing a key role in the sector's performance.

145 projects in 5 Arab nations capture 89% of total Capex

Arab automotive sector 'attracts' \$25 billion in foreign investments

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: The Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhamaan) revealed that the automotive sector in Arab countries attracted 184 foreign projects, with Capex of more than \$25 billion, providing more than 102,000 jobs from January 2003 to October 2024.

In its fourth sectoral report for 2024 on the Arab automotive sector in Arab countries, issued at its headquarters in the State of Kuwait today, the Corporation said that 5 Arab countries: Saudi Arabia, Morocco, the UAE, Algeria and Egypt, drew 145 foreign projects with a share of 79% of the total, with Capex of more than \$22 billion representing 89%. These projects created more than 91,000 jobs with a share of 89% of the total.

The report, which focuses on four key pillars: 1- Evolution and future of auto sales until 2028, 2- foreign trade in vehicles and their components for 2023, 3- foreign projects in the automotive sector, 4- assessment of investment and business risks in auto sales for 2024, showed that China ranked first as the most important investor in the Arab region with 27 projects between 2003 and 2024 with capex nearly \$8 billion and creating roughly 20,000 jobs.

It indicated that the top 10 companies held around 41% of new projects implemented, 67% of the Capex and 58% of new jobs, and that Japan's Nissan topped the list with 18 projects or roughly 10% of the total. China's Human Horizon came first as the largest investor in the estimated Capex with a value of \$5.6 billion. The French Renault ranked first in terms of the number of new jobs with 15,000 jobs, making up 15% of the total.

As for risks and rewards for investment and business in auto sales activity in 16 Arab countries according to Fitch, monitored through two indicators of risks and rewards for 2024, the Gulf countries, led by the UAE, topped the Arab list as the best and most attractive destination for investment and business in auto sales activity for 2024, followed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain, respectively.

The report expected a hike of more than 5% in vehicle sales in the Arab region (16 countries) to exceed 2.3 million vehicles by the end of 2024, or 2.4% of the global total amid a likely hike to about 3 million vehicles by 2028. It

also pointed out a large geographical concentration of sales in a limited number of countries, where 5 countries: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Algeria, Morocco and Kuwait had around 75% of overall vehiclesales in the region by the end of 2024.

Concerning passenger car sales in the region (12 Arab countries), they are likely to exceed 1.8 million cars by the end of 2024, up 4.5% compared to 2023, with Saudi Arabia ranking first with a share of 45% amid a projected rise in sales in the region to exceed 2.2 million cars by 2028, according to Fitch.

Regarding the vehicle fleet index per 1,000 population, the report showed that the Arab average went up by 9 points to 307 vehicles per 1,000 population by the end of 2024, even though Libya and five Gulf countries exceeded this average. Yet, it is likely to keep rising to 353 vehicles per 1,000 population by 2028.

The report also indicated that Arab countries' foreign trade in road vehicles and their components shot up by about 23% to over \$126 billion in 2023, as a result of the hike in the value of exports by around 29% to \$29 billion (supported by the growth in the re-export activity of vehicles, cars and their components, which accounted for \$14 billion in the GCC countries alone in 2023), and imports by roughly 21% to \$97 billion, with around 82% of the total trade concentrated in 5 Arab countries: the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iraq and Kuwait, with a total value of \$103 billion.

It added that the top 9 exporting countries to the region during 2023 held roughly 75% of the total Arab imports of road vehicles and their components with a value of nearly \$73 billion. Japan topped the list as the largest exporter to the region with a value of \$17 billion (more than 17% of total). The region's top 10 importing countries accounted for 80% of the total Arab exports of vehicles and their components with a value of more than \$23 billion, led by Iraq as the region's largest importer with a value of \$10 billion or 34% of the total.

The report concluded that passenger vehicles came in the forefront of Arab imports of vehicles and their components during 2023, with a value of more than \$63 billion representing more than 65% of overall imports, while vehicle parts and accessories came second with a value of \$14 billion, making up 14% of the total.

'Energy sector vital to Libya's economy'

Libya Energy & Economy Summit opens in Tripoli

TUNIS, Jan 19, (Agencies): Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Mohammad Al-Dbeibeh opened the third Libya Energy and Economic Summit in Tripoli on Saturday in the presence of OPEC and OAPEC secretaries general Haitham Al-Ghais and Jamal Al-Loughani, respectively.

Nearly 1,500 energy corporate leaders, ministers, policymakers, and service and technology providers take part in the two-day global event.

The gathering aims to support Libya's energy sector and infrastructure, promote investment and explore new business opportunities, according to a statement from the Libyan government.

In his inaugural speech, Al-Dbeibeh said his government considers the energy sector the mainstay of national economy. The government strives to rehabilitate the oilfields and was able to re-operate 10 of them, thus raising the oil output

capacity to 1.4 million bpd, he noted.

Also:

TRIPOLI: The Acting Chairman of Libya's state-owned National Oil Corporation (NOC) Masoud Sulaiman said on Saturday the company plans to increase daily oil and gas production to two million barrels over the next three years if "the right funds are made available."

Speaking at the third Libya Energy and Economy Summit in Tripoli, Sulaiman announced that Libya's oil sector is on a path of continuous recovery. He highlighted the NOC's achievements over the past three years, including a significant increase in crude oil production, which has surpassed 1.41 million barrels per day, along with gains in gas and condensate production, according to a NOC statement published on its Facebook page.

Eurozone inflation rises to 2.4%

US labor market remains robust whilst headline inflation ticks up

By National Bank of Kuwait

United States

US Consumer Price Index
In December, US consumer prices experienced their most significant increase in nine months, primarily due to rising energy costs. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) climbed by 0.4% on the month following a 0.3% rise in November, with energy products, especially gasoline, contributing notably to this uptick. Food prices also saw an increase, with egg prices surging due to an avian flu outbreak. Annually, the CPI went up by 2.9%, slightly surpassing expectations. Despite this, core inflation, which excludes food and energy, showed signs of slowing. Core CPI rose 0.2% on the month, below the previous 0.3% increase, and 3.2% annually, better than the forecasted 3.3% figure. As a result, equities rallied, with the S&P 500 rising by 2.9%, while the Nasdaq Composite, dominated by technology stocks, surged 2.5%. Markets are anticipating a potential rate cut by the Federal Reserve in June. However, the Fed is expected to proceed cautiously with rate reductions, considering economic resilience and potential inflationary risks from forthcoming tariffs and immigration policies. At its upcoming January meeting, the Fed is likely to maintain current rates.

US Producer Price Index
The December Producer Price Index (PPI) rose 0.2% monthly and 3.3% annually, lower than economists' expectations of 0.3% and 3.4%, suggesting inflation may not be accelerating as feared. Core PPI, excluding food and energy, remained flat monthly and edged up to 3.3% annually. A surge in energy prices, particularly a 9.7% increase in gas prices, drove the monthly rise. Economist Chris Rupkey warned that the positive report might be temporary, with potential inflationary pressures from President-elect Donald Trump's proposed tariffs on key trading partners, which could increase costs for American consumers. Despite the annual PPI reaching its highest since February 2023, the data signals moderated inflation trends for now.

Unemployment Claims
US initial jobless claims rose by 14,000 to 217,000 in the week ending January 11, 2024, exceeding expectations of 210,000 but remaining below the second-half 2024 averages, reflecting a strong labor market. Outstanding claims fell to 1,859,000, continuing a decline from November's peak of 1,908,000. The four-week moving average of claims decreased by 750 to 212,750, smoothing out volatility. Non-seasonally adjusted claims rose by 45,228 to 351,885, with notable increases in California (+13,074), Michigan (+15,175), and Texas (+10,677). The robust labor market supports the Federal Reserve's hawkish stance.

Highlights

- In December, US consumer prices experienced their most significant increase in nine months.
- In the US, the December Producer Price Index (PPI) rose 0.2% monthly and 3.3% annually.
- US initial jobless claims rose by 14,000 to 217,000 in the week ending January 11, 2024.
- US retail sales rose by 0.4% month-over-month in December 2024, the smallest increase in four months.
- The Eurozone's annual inflation rate rose to 2.4% in December 2024, the highest since July.
- UK inflation unexpectedly declined in December, fueling expectations of an interest rate cut next month.
- UK retail sales fell by 0.3% month-over-month in December 2024, contrary to expectations of a 0.4% increase.
- China's economy grew by 5.4% year-on-year in Q4 2024, exceeding expectations of 5.0%.

Retail Sales

US retail sales rose by 0.4% month-over-month in December 2024, the smallest increase in four months, down from an upwardly revised 0.8% in November and below the expected 0.6%. Despite the slowdown, consumer spending remained strong. Key gains were recorded in miscellaneous store retailers (4.3%), sporting goods (2.6%), and furniture (2.3%). Increases also occurred in gasoline stations (1.5%), clothing (1.5%), food and beverage stores (0.8%), and motor vehicle dealers (0.7%). However, sales fell in building materials (-2%), food services (-0.3%), and health stores (-0.2%). Core sales, excluding volatile categories, rose 0.4% m/m.

The US Dollar Index closed the week at 109.347.

Europe

Inflation
The Eurozone's annual inflation rate rose to 2.4% in December 2024, the highest since July, up from 2.2% in November and in line with expectations. The increase was driven by base effects from last year's energy price declines, with energy costs rebounding (0.1% vs -2% in November) and service inflation slightly accelerating (4% vs 3.9%). Food inflation eased as slower unprocessed food price growth (1.6% vs 2.3%) offset faster gains in processed food, alcohol, and tobacco (2.9% vs 2.8%). Inflation rose in Germany (2.8%) and France (1.8%) but fell in Italy (1.4%). Core inflation remained steady at 2.7%. The ECB expects inflation to return to its 2% target by year-end.

The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.0271.

United Kingdom

Inflation
UK inflation unexpectedly declined in December, fueling expectations of an interest rate cut next month. Annual price growth slowed to 2.5% in December, down from 2.6% in November, marking the first decrease in inflation in three months. The drop was largely due to falling hotel prices and smaller-than-usual increases in airfares. However, inflation remains above the Bank

of England's target. Following the inflation data, investors increased their expectations for an interest rate cut next month, with a second cut anticipated by the end of the year. The Bank of England held interest rates steady at 4.75% last month, citing weaker-than-expected economic performance and stagnant growth between October and December.

Retail Sales

UK retail sales fell by 0.3% month-over-month in December 2024, contrary to expectations of a 0.4% increase, following a revised 0.1% rise in November. Declines in food store sales (-1.9%) were partly offset by a 1.1% rise in non-food stores, with clothing sales surging by 4.4% and stronger Christmas sales boosting department and household goods stores. Year-on-year, retail sales rose 3.6%. Excluding fuel, sales dropped 0.6% on the month but rose 2.9% annually. For Q4, sales fell 0.8% compared to Q3 but increased 1.9% year-on-year. In 2024, retail sales volumes grew 0.7%, recovering from declines of 2.9% in 2023 and 4.1% in 2022.

The GBP/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.2163.

Asia Pacific

Chinese Economy
China's economy grew by 5.4% year-on-year in Q4 2024, up from 4.6% in Q3 and exceeding expectations of 5.0%, marking the fastest annual growth in 1.5 years. This was driven by stimulus measures introduced since September. December saw industrial output reach an 8-month high, while retail sales recovered from a 3-month low. However, unemployment hit a 3-month high. Exports surged, reaching the highest level in three years, with firms rushing shipments ahead of possible US tariffs. Imports also unexpectedly rose to a 27-month peak. For 2024, GDP grew by 5.0%, meeting Beijing's target but below 2023's 5.2%. Fixed investment increased by 3.2%, slightly above the 3.0% growth in 2023.

The USD/CNY currency pair closed the week at 7.3249.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30855.

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0240	1.0176	1.0354	1.0271	1.0170	1.0375	1.0315
GBP	1.2191	1.2097	1.2305	1.2163	1.1950	1.2300	1.2160
JPY	157.75	154.96	158.20	156.30	154.95	157.40	154.70
CHF	0.9160	0.9081	0.9200	0.9149	0.9020	0.9395	0.9055

Internship Fair offers interactive platform for career exploration

AAW joins INJAZ Kuwait Internship Fair to empower students

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW) announced its participation in the second INJAZ Kuwait Internship Fair, held on January 7-8 at Boulevard Ballroom. This participation aligns with AAW's Corporate Social Responsibility commitment to supporting young talents by helping them explore job opportunities, secure internships, access to cutting-edge training programs, and kick-start their careers.

AAW's Human Resources team interviewed high school students and university graduates for a range of internship opportunities across various sectors within the company. AAW also set up a booth for the INJAZ Podcast, designed and furnished by its Danish furniture brand JYSK, adding a modern touch to the experience.

AAW praised INJAZ Kuwait for its pivotal role in empowering Kuwaiti youth by facilitating training opportunities in collaboration with private

sector companies. The fair served as an interactive platform where students could explore available internship opportunities, book interview slots, and attend on-site interviews at designated company booths.

AAW remains committed to investing in young talents, expanding their knowledge, and helping them develop their professional skills and capabilities in the business sector.

Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. is one of Kuwait's trading and commercial companies, with business operations across a range of growing sectors, such as Consumer Goods, Pharmaceuticals, Furniture, Real Estate, Kitchen & Home Appliances, Outdoor Equipment, Sports and Lifestyle and Food & Beverages. The company represents over 200 global brands in Kuwait's retail and consumer goods market.



AAW team at Injaz exhibition



Injaz podcast sponsored by JYSK, a subsidiary of Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co.

CEO highlights \$300m AT1 bonds success

ABK receives 'Best Investor Relationship Bank' Award from International Finance

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is proud to announce that it has been awarded the title of Best Investor Relationship Bank—Kuwait by International Finance. This recognition highlights the Bank's commitment to excellence and its strong reputation within the financial community.

Abdulla AlSumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, and Abdulaziz Jawad, Chief Strategy Officer, proudly accepted the award during a distinguished ceremony held in Dubai, attended by numerous esteemed entities and institutions.

Expressing his gratitude for this recognition, Al-Sumait stated, "This award reflects our distinguished record in developing investor relations and our ongoing efforts to adopt transparency in disclosing the Bank's operational results and developments." He emphasized that continuous engagement with the investment community, both locally and globally, has been crucial in building and reinforcing robust relationships with investors. This is achieved through consistent communication with the Investor Relations Unit and active participation in various events and conferences.

AlSumait also highlighted ABK's



Mr. Abdulla Al Sumait – Acting Group Chief Executive Officer

significant achievement in successfully issuing USD 300 million AT1 bonds in 2024. This marked the Bank's return to capital markets for the first time since 2018, with a remarkable coverage ratio exceeding 4.5 times the offered amount, showcasing strong trust and confidence



Abdulla Al Sumait and Abdulaziz Jawad receive the award.

from investors in the Bank's stability.

Al Sumait concluded by thanking International Finance for its recognition which reflected the great confidence and leading position that the Bank enjoys in the banking sector. He added that ABK will continue to work

on enhancing investors' confidence in the upcoming period, which is considered as one of the Bank's top priorities.

On his part, Jawad added that this award is a testament to the many advancements ABK has experienced in 2024, such as its upgrade to the Premier



Mr. Abdulaziz Jawad – Chief Strategy Officer

Market on the Kuwait Stock Exchange. This upgrade was made possible due to the Bank's adherence to the regulatory requirements set forth by the Capital Markets Authority and Boursa Kuwait. He reiterated the Bank's commitment to meeting investor needs through compre-

hensive disclosures regarding operations impacting financial indicators and ensuring value for traders and clients alike.

He noted, "ABK actively participates in various events and conferences to connect with investment groups, collaborating closely with Boursa Kuwait and other entities." He reiterated that the Bank is dedicated to employing best practices in investor relations, which has proven effective in establishing trust and credibility with analysts and shareholders.

Further addressing transparency, Jawad stated that the Bank follows a policy of complete openness in external communications, adhering to the highest international standards. The Bank has instituted quarterly online analysts' conferences on financial results to facilitate dialogue and responsiveness to inquiries.

In conclusion, Jawad emphasized that ABK will continue to develop strategic plans aimed at providing superior services and improving operational efficiency while enhancing communication with investors, financial analysts, and portfolio managers. This approach underscores the Bank's commitment to transparency and disclosure of its business results.

US sanctions on Russia's energy sector impact key importers

Oil prices surge to 5-month highs in early 2025 amid supply tightness

By KAMCO Invest

Oil prices declined for the second consecutive year in 2024 after expectations of a recovery in oil demand in China failed to realize while record production in the US forced prices to remain subdued during the year. The market in 2024 two distinct halves with gains seen during the first half of the year followed by declines during the second half. Prices remained below the 80/b mark for most part 2H-2024 also due to lower economic growth seen in key economies in Europe. Also, the war on Gaza and Lebanon, the Russia/Ukraine conflict and the supply disruption in the Red Sea further added to the risks in the oil market, resulting in temporary support to prices. Meanwhile, a consistently strengthening US Dollar against a basket of currencies limited demand growth from key emerging market oil importers.

The start of 2025 was marked by a healthy recovery in prices backed by talks of renewed stricter sanctions on Russia coupled with hopes of higher demand from China. The colder weather conditions as well as crude oil inventory decline for the eighth consecutive week in the US also added support to oil prices. The record gain in natural gas prices also led to talks of gas to oil switch for electricity generation. However, uncertainties related to oil production policies in the US after the formation of the new government capped further gains as the market expects policy support for further production growth in the US. Talks of trade wars and retaliatory sanctions and tariffs also increased speculations in the oil market as Canada and Europe work on their respective strategies to tackle the expected hike in tariffs by the incoming US government.

The US government introduced new sanctions on Russia's energy sector last week and imposed harsher curbs on key oil supplying companies in Russia including Gazprom and Surgutneftegas and on 183 vessels that have shipped Russian oil. Key oil importers like India and China are expected to be the most impacted as reports suggested that these countries benefitted from the lower priced Russian oil during 2024. There is a winddown period until 12-March-2025 to settle payments for Russian oil as the sanctions also include curbs on dealing with Russian banks. A report from IEA showed that the banned vessels carried around a fifth of seaborne Russian oil or 1.6 mb/d during 2024.

Supply side factors have also supported the recent crude oil price trend. While OPEC+ production remained constrained, oil production in the US declined for the fifth consecutive week until the week of 10-January-2025. Weekly oil production data from the US showed output at 13.48 mb/d last week as compared to a record high of 13.63 mb/d reached at the start of December-2024. OPEC crude oil production remained range-bound during last month at 26.7 mb/d, as per data from OPEC secondary sources, after a recovery in production in swing producers were offset by fall in output in larger producers in the group.

Oil Market in 2024

Crude oil traded in a relatively narrow range but mostly trended downward during 2024...

The oil market in 2024 was characterized by continued risk on the geopolitical front with the continued war on Gaza, the Russia/Ukraine conflict and the disruption of the Red Sea route. However, the risk premium related to the war faded as the market witnessed record oil supplies from the US that limited the impact of OPEC+ curbs on the oil market. In addition, lower-than-expected demand growth in China in 2024 also affected the sentiments in the oil market. The Chinese government announced measures to support the economy only came during the tail end of the year and were mostly related to policies with an implied impact on crude oil demand in the country.

In terms of prices, crude oil traded in a relatively narrower range in 2024 vs. 2023. Crude oil prices only briefly breached the USD 90/b mark during the 1H-2024 and mostly traded around the USD 85/b mark. However, the third quarter of the year witnessed continued decline in prices going below the USD 70/b mark by the second week of September-2024 as OPEC+ discussed unwinding of the supply cuts that were ultimately postponed. The last quarter of the year mostly saw range bound prices below the USD 75/b mark.

asset classes. In a rapidly changing world with ever-evolving market dynamics, this event serves as a guiding compass to change makers, delivering actionable insights and strategic foresight to empower participants in navigating the complexities of the financial landscape.

The distinguished lineup of speakers and panelists, including executives from Kamco Invest, prominent figures, and respected guests from renowned regional and international asset management firms, will contribute to a robust exchange of ideas and insights. This collaborative effort is designed to foster a collective understanding of how to thrive amidst uncertainties, leveraging the combined expertise of industry leaders.

The event will commence with a thought-provoking presentation by Oxford Economics, providing a comprehensive analysis of the macroeconomic and geopolitical environment, exploring key factors shaping the global and regional landscapes and their impact. Following this, four engaging panel discussions will unfold, focusing on the GCC economies, regional equity markets, investment opportunities in a high-interest rate environment, in addition to success stories in private equity and venture capital.

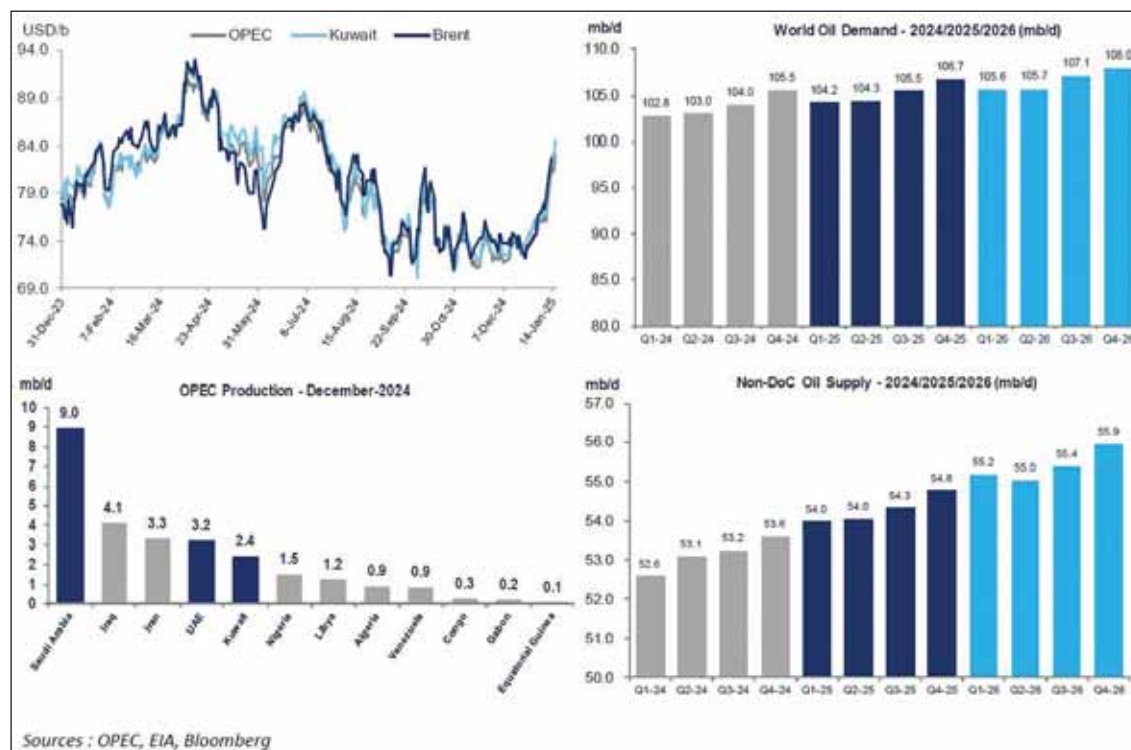
Highlighting the collaboration between Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank, Sana Al-Hadlaq, Senior Executive Director of Wealth Management at Kamco Invest stated, "This conference highlights the continued success of

our ongoing collaboration with Burgan Bank, which was exemplified by the outstanding impact of last year's event. Together, we are committed to providing unmatched insights into the financial landscape, tackling challenges, and uncovering opportunities to empower our clients and guide them toward confident and successful investment decisions."

Meshari Shehab, General Manager of Private Banking and Wealth Management at Burgan Bank added, "We are excited to co-host this impact-driven event for the second consecutive year, reinforcing our commitment to delivering not only exceptional financial services but also playing an active role in driving the conversations shaping our industries

today. By leveraging the combined strengths and expertise of both our institutions, we are poised to offer innovative solutions, actionable insights, and forward-thinking strategies that will enhance our clients' understanding of the financial landscape."

The panels will feature esteemed guest speakers from Kamco Invest and renowned regional and international institutions and asset management firms, including the Arab Fund for Economic & Social Development, MSCI, SNB Capital, FlexamInvest, European Green Logistics Space (EGLS), Impact46, Yiswa App, and ARK Invest. This distinguished lineup of speakers will enrich the discussions and provide valuable insights into the evolving landscape of global investments.



OPEC reference basket prices peaked at a yearly high of USD 91.11/b at the start of April-2024, the highest prices since the end of October-2023 led by tensions in the Middle East region in addition to an increase in crude oil imports in China during March-2024. Brent spot prices also peaked around the same time at USD 92.8/barrel during the first week of April-2024. On the other hand, the lowest point during the year was seen in September-2024 when OPEC reference basket prices reached USD 70.8/barrel while Brent spot crude reached USD 70.3/barrel. The year closed with OPEC reference basket trading at USD 74.59/barrel resulting in a decline of 4.9% during the year, while Brent prices saw a slightly smaller yearly decline of 4.0% after reaching USD 74.58/barrel by the end of the year. Future prices witnessed an even smaller decline of 3.1% for near term Brent contracts that traded at USD 74.64/b at the close of the year. The spread between Brent and WTI crude grades narrowed during the year and stood at an average of USD 4.44/b as compared to an average of USD 4.69/b in 2023. The spread at the end of the year narrowed to USD 2.47/b as compared to USD 5.2/b at the start of the year.

The consensus estimates on crude oil grades underwent drastic changes during 2024 as unprecedented events occurred during the year, in addition to underwhelming recovery in global oil demand, especially in China. The Bloomberg estimate for Brent crude oil future prices in 2024 started the year with a forecast of USD 84.6 per barrel but closed the year significantly lower at around USD 80 per barrel. A similar downgrade was seen in forecasts from the EIA for both Brent and WTI crude grades.

OPEC Production

The production policy for the countries under the OPEC+ agreement (DoC) remained unchanged during the year after the implementation of additional voluntary cuts of 2.2 mb/d at the start of the year. The group's attempt to unwind the output cuts and the voluntary cuts were unsuccessful as oil prices remained subdued during the year. OPEC production witnessed consistent growth during the first half of the year followed by a steep decline during September-2024 due to a fall in production in Libya. The recovery in production in the country supported the growth during October-2024 and November-2024 resulting in the highest yearly production rate for OPEC at 27.17 mb/d at the end of November-2024.

Average OPEC crude oil production declined for the second consecutive year during 2024. Output from the 12-mem-

bers in the OPEC averaged at 26.6 mb/d during the year as compared to 27.0 mb/d during 2023, registering a decline of 1.6% or 435 tb/d, according to data from OPEC secondary sources. The decline was led by fall in output from 7 out of the 12 producers in the group while the remaining 5 producers reported higher production. Saudi Arabia once again registered the biggest decline in crude oil production during 2024 after the implementation of voluntary cuts. Average crude oil production in the Kingdom reached 8.97 mb/d during 2024 as compared to 9.6 mb/d in 2023, registering a decline of 6.6% or 636 tb/d during 2024. Kuwait was next with the second-biggest decline in average crude oil production at 172 tb/d with production averaging at 2.42 mb/d in 2024 as compared to 2.6 mb/d during 2023. Iraq and Algeria also recorded decline in average production during the year. Iraq produced at an average rate of 4.2 mb/d in 2024 registering a decline of 99 tb/d as compared to 2023. Algeria, meanwhile, recorded a decline of 66 tb/d and produced at an average rate of 907 tb/d during 2024, the lowest in four years. Average oil production in Libya also declined during the year to 1.11 mb/d as compared to 1.16 mb/d in 2023 mainly led by production embargo in the country during August-2024. Average monthly output in Libya declined to the lowest in four years during August-2023 to reach 0.54 mb/d as a result of a political standoff in the country that halted production and exports from the terminals in the country.

On the other hand, Iran reported the biggest increase in output during the year reaching an average of 3.26 mb/d in 2024 as compared to 2.86 mb/d during 2023, registering an increase of 0.4 mb/d or 14.0%. Venezuela was next with an output growth of 107 tb/d in 2024 reaching an average production of 856 tb/d, the highest in six years. Nigeria recorded the third-biggest production growth during the year at 94 tb/d and an average yearly production of 1.4 mb/d, the highest since 2020.

Oil Prices

Oil prices surged to the highest level in five months last week following consistent gains since the start of the year. Brent spot prices gained 10.9% since the start of the year until Wednesday (13-Jan-2025) to reach USD 82.7/b, while Brent futures breached the USD 80/b mark for the first time since October-2024 and traded around USD 81/b on Thursday. The gains came after data showed tightening oil market in 2025 led by sanctions on Russia coupled with positive data that suggested higher demand for crude oil. The latest weekly data on crude oil inventories in the US showed the longest streak of declines since 2021 with eight consecutive

weeks of declines that pushed aggregate inventories to the lowest level in almost two years at 412.7 million barrels as of 10-January-2024. The prompt spread on WTI widened to 1.29 per barrel indicating a backwardation in the oil market and reflecting tightening market conditions.

On the other hand, rig count data from Baker Hughes indicated that the aggregate oil rigs in the US once again went below the 500 mark and was reported at 497 for the week ended 19-January-2024. The decline in rig count coupled with higher supplies from the US indicated better well productivity in the sector.

Meanwhile, in its latest forecast, the EIA made a slight upgrade to its forecast for Brent crude for 2025. The agency expects Brent crude spot to average at USD 74.0/b in 2025 as compared to its previous forecast of USD 73.58/b. The forecast for 2026 showed a steep decline from around 10.8% from 2025 estimates and is expected to reach USD 66/b, as per the EIA. The broader consensus estimate from Bloomberg showed a downgrade in estimates for the next four quarters and prices are expected to reach USD 72.75/b by year end. In terms of monthly trend, Brent crude averaged at USD 73.8/b during December-2024 after witnessing a marginal monthly decline of 0.7% vs. November-2024. The OPEC crude basket, meanwhile, showed a small gain of 0.1% and averaged at USD 73.1/b.

World Oil Demand

The global oil demand growth forecast for 2025 was kept unchanged by the OPEC in its latest monthly report. The agency expects demand to grow by 1.45 mb/d this year to reach 105.2 mb/d. However, there was a revision to demand data for 2024 that resulted in a downgrade of 0.07 mb/d to total demand forecast for 2025. The year 2024 was characterized by strong demand fundamentals in the US with indicators like labor, unemployment rates, economic growth rates as well as industrial production and manufacturing all pointing to a resilient year despite higher inflation rates. The most recent data on industrial production in the US for December-2024 showed a monthly growth of 0.9% with the index reaching the highest since February-2024. The data on inflation also showed progress with core consumer price index showing a decline for the first time in six months during December-2024 at 3.2% while headline CPI came in line with expectation at 2.9% as compared to 2.7% in November-2024. On the other hand, oil demand in China failed to reach the levels expected at the start of 2024 and overall imports of crude oil declined during the year by 1.9%. This was the first yearly decline in crude oil imports in China (excluding the pandemic years) in two decades. In terms of regional trend, the demand in the OECD region is expected to grow by 0.11 mb/d while non-OECD region is expected to show a stronger growth of 1.34 mb/d in 2025. Meanwhile, the forecasts from the IEA showed demand increasing by a relatively smaller pace of 1.05 mb/d in 2025 to reach 104.0 mb/d as compared to 102.9 mb/d in 2024.

For 2026, the OPEC forecasts suggest steady growth in demand driven mainly by higher demand from China and India. In its first forecast for the year 2026, the OPEC expects world oil demand to grow by 1.43 mb/d to reach 106.63 mb/d. The growth is expected to mainly come from the non-OECD region with demand in the region expected to grow by 1.31 mb/d in 2026 to reach 60.62 mb/d. Non-OECD demand, meanwhile, is expected to see a much smaller growth of 0.12 mb/d and is expected to average at 46.0 mb/d during the year. Demand from India, China and Other Asia are expected to see the strongest growth during the year.

Oil Supply

According to IEA, global oil supply increased by 20 tb/d in December-2024 to reach 103.5 mb/d led by higher production from Libya that more than offset a seasonal decline in production from non-OPEC+ suppliers. Data also showed a noticeable decline in production in the UAE and Kuwait. Data from Rystad Energy showed a fall in output from shale patches in the US for the first time in six months during December-2024 to reach 10.5 mb/d. The decline is expected to continue in the coming weeks led by the cold snap in the Permian basin that affects pipeline flows.

Conference to explore global trends and geopolitics

Kamco Invest & Burgan Bank to host 2nd Investment Conf in Feb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank are set to co-host the second edition of their exclusive Investment Conference at St. Regis Kuwait on Monday, February 10th, 2025. Building on its strong foundation of its highly-successful inaugural edition, the event will convene an elite gathering of thought leaders, industry experts, and institutional investors for insightful discussions on critical topics shaping the global economy, geopolitics, and diverse asset classes.

Under the theme "Exploring Trends: Ideas That Move Markets", the conference seeks to delve into the intricacies of the global economy, uncover the forces shaping geopolitics, and examine emerging challenges and opportunities across a spectrum of



Mr. Meshari Shehab, General Manager of Private Banking and Wealth Management at Burgan Bank.



Mrs. Sana Al-Hadlaq, Senior Executive Director of Wealth Management at Kamco Invest.



The moment the winner of the one million dinar prize was announced in the Al-Jawhara Draw.

An extraordinary event held at Dar Sheikha Farm in Wafra

NBK announces the Al-Jawhara Millionaire

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: In a vibrant setting with an outstanding media and public turnout, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) hosted a special 8-hour event last Friday at Dar Sheikha Farm in Wafra. The occasion marked the announcement of the winners of the grand prize draw for both Al-Jawhara and Al-Jawhara Junior draws.

The event saw the attendance of senior leaders and officials from National Bank of Kuwait and featured a diverse array of entertainment shows, activities, competitions, and raffles. These activities garnered enthusiastic participation and engagement from the attendees.

The draw, held under the supervision of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and a Deloitte representative, resulted in Al-Jawhara account customer Bibi Hussain Ali Akbar winning the grand prize of KD 1 million. Simultaneously, Al-Jawhara Junior draw winner Rouh Hussain Ali Al-Enezi secured the grand prize of KD 10,000.

NBK set up several booths at the celebration site to highlight its premier services and products, catering specifically to its private and privilege banking customers.

On this occasion, Mr. Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO, Consumer and Digital Banking Group at NBK, remarked: "We remain committed to rewarding our customers across all segments with an exceptional range of draws, prizes, and offers throughout the year. Our goal is to consistently deliver a superior banking experience that reinforces NBK's leadership and competitive edge in the Kuwaiti banking sector."

"Today, we celebrate the announcement of the millionaire of the Al-Jawhara Grand Prize Draw, alongside the winner of Al-Jawhara Junior Grand Prize Draw, in a vibrant and exceptional setting befitting this occasion. This reinforces NBK's commitment to remaining closely connected to its customers at all times," Al-Othman added.

He emphasized that Al-Jawhara account is a fundamental pillar of the bank's strategy, designed to offer customers the chance to win extraordinary prizes that enhance their banking experience. It also serves as a vital tool for profit, saving, and future planning for all family members, while supporting NBK's efforts to foster a culture of savings and promote financial inclusion.

Al-Othman highlighted that NBK has increased the total prize value of Al-Jawhara Account to reach KD 5 million annually since the start of 2024. He also mentioned the recent introduction of Al-Jawhara Saver Account, which offers customers guaranteed interest rate of up to 1.5% for the first year, along with the chance to enter monthly draws and the grand prize draw, provided the balance reaches KD 5,000 or more.

He emphasized that all of NBK's services, rewards, and payment solutions are developed based on thorough studies, analytical tools, and customer surveys to better understand their needs and aspirations. These insights are then used to set clear, irreplaceable goals, with the bank relying on a distinguished team of professionals and the latest global analysis tools and programs.

Since the beginning of 2023, NBK increased total prize pool for Al-Jawhara account draws, establishing it as the largest draw program in Kuwait. The draws include a weekly prize of KD 20,000, a monthly prize of KD 125,000, and a grand prize of KD 1 million, awarded three times annually.



Mr. Mohammed Al Othman

Al-Othman:

- We are committed to delivering an unparalleled banking experience that underscores the bank's leadership and dedication to excellence
- Al-Jawhara Account plays a pivotal role in promoting a culture of savings while advancing the bank's initiatives to enhance financial inclusion



The Jawhara Draw in progress.



NBK's Jawhara Draw saw massive participation from the public and media.



The National Bank of Kuwait's Al-Jawhara draw event featured entertainment shows, activities and competitions.



Honoring the first-place winners in the men's padel championship.



Honoring the second-place winners in the men's padel championship.



One of the fun activities at the event.

TikTok goes dark as US ban takes effect

Company's app was removed

NEW YORK, Jan 19, (AP): Millions of TikTok users in the United States are no longer able to watch videos on the social media platform as a federal ban on the immensely popular app takes effect.

The company's app was removed Saturday evening from prominent app stores, including the ones operated by Apple and Google, while its website told users that the short-form video platform was no longer available. The blackout began just hours before the law took effect.

Users opening the TikTok app on Saturday encountered a pop-up message preventing them from scrolling videos that read, "Sorry, TikTok isn't available right now."

"A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S.," the message said. "Unfortunately that means you can't use TikTok for now."

"We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work

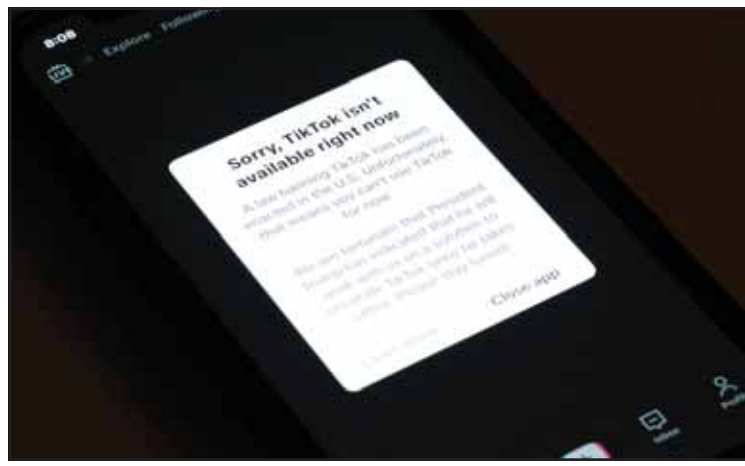
with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office," the notice continued, in a reference to President-elect Donald Trump's pledge to "save" the platform. The company told its users to stay tuned.

The only option the message gives to U.S. users is to close the app or click another option leading them to the platform's website. There, users are shown the same message and given the option to download their data, an action TikTok previously said may take days to process.

Before the announcement went out, TikTok said in another message to users that its service would be "temporarily unavailable" and the company was working to restore its U.S. service "as soon as possible." But how long the platform will remain dark is unclear.

Apple said in a statement on its website that TikTok and ByteDance apps were no longer available in the U.S., while visitors to the country could have limited access. "Apple is obligated to follow the laws in the jurisdictions where it operates," the company said.

"If you already have these apps installed on your device, they will remain



A message reading 'Sorry, TikTok isn't available right now' is displayed from the TikTok app on a cell phone screen on Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025, in Los Angeles. (AP)

on your device. But they can't be re-downloaded if deleted or restored if you move to a new device. In-app purchases and new subscriptions are no longer possible," the statement said, adding that the change could impact perfor-

mance, security and compatibility with future versions of iOS and iPadOS.

TikTok CEO Shou Chew posted a video thanking Trump for his commitment to work with the company to keep the app available in the U.S. and

a "strong stand for the first amendment and against arbitrary censorship."

"We are grateful and pleased to have the support of a president who truly understands our platform. One who has used talk to express his own thoughts and perspectives, connecting with the world and generating more than 60 billion views of his content in the process," Chew said.

In an interview with NBC News on Saturday, President-elect Donald Trump said he was thinking about giving TikTok a 90-day extension that would allow them to continue operating. If such an extension happens, Trump - who once favored a TikTok ban - said it would "probably" be announced Monday, the day that he is sworn in as president. TikTok CEO Shou Chew is expected to attend Trump's inauguration with a prime seating location.

In Washington, lawmakers and administration officials have long raised concerns about the app, which they see as a national security threat due to its Chinese ownership. TikTok is owned by ByteDance, a technology company based in Beijing that operates the well-

known video editing app CapCut and Lemon8, both of which were also unavailable for service Saturday evening.

The federal law required ByteDance to cut ties with TikTok by Sunday or face a nationwide ban. The statute was passed by Congress in April after it was included as part of a high-priority \$95 billion package that provided foreign aid to Ukraine and Israel. President Joe Biden quickly signed it, and then TikTok and ByteDance quickly sued on First Amendment grounds.

While defending the law in court, the Biden administration argued it was concerned about TikTok collecting vast swaths of U.S. user data 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. But to date, the U.S. has not publicly provided evidence of TikTok handing user data to Chinese authorities or tinkering with its algorithm to benefit Chinese interests.

The Conversation

Supreme Court upholds TikTok ban: Five essential reads on case & its consequences

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

By Eric Smalley, The Conversation and Matt Williams, The Conversation

The U.S. Supreme Court on Jan. 17, 2025, upheld a law requiring TikTok's China-based parent company, ByteDance, to sell the video app by Jan. 19, 2025, or face a nationwide ban on the app. In a unanimous decision, the court rejected TikTok's claim that the law violates its First Amendment rights. The company shut down the app shortly before midnight on Jan. 18.

The court's ruling is the latest development in a lengthy saga over the fate of an app that is widely popular, especially among young Americans, but that many politicians in Washington say is a security risk.

The ruling is unlikely to be the end of the story. President Joe Biden said that he will not enforce the law in the waning hours of his administration. President-elect Donald Trump said he will reverse the ban and is reportedly considering an executive order to do so.

But why is TikTok controversial? Are the claims of it being a national security risk valid? And what will the case mean for free speech? The Conversation's contributors have been on hand to answer these questions.

Politicians who wanted to ban TikTok, or at least sever its links to China, fear that the app provides a way for the Chinese Communist Party to influence Americans or use their data for malicious purposes. But how much influence does the

Chinese government have on TikTok? That question is addressed by Shaomin Li, a scholar of China's political economy and business at Old Dominion University.

Li explains that the relationship between TikTok, ByteDance and the Chinese Communist Party is nuanced - it isn't simply a matter of officials in Beijing telling ByteDance to jump and the parent company dictating how high its subsidiary will leap. Rather, as with all companies in China, employees are under certain obligations when it comes to advancing national interests. In China, private enterprises, such as ByteDance, operate as joint ventures with the state.

"Regardless of whether ByteDance has formal ties with the party, there will be the tacit understanding that the management is working for two bosses: the investors of the company and, more importantly, their political overseers that represent the party," Li writes. "But most importantly, when the interests of the two bosses conflict, the party trumps."

The risks TikTok poses to U.S. users are similar to the risks posed by many popular apps, principally that the app collects data about you. That data, which includes contact information and website tracking, plus all data you post and messages you send through the app, is available to use or misuse by ByteDance and any other entity that has or gains access to it.

Iowa State University cybersecurity researcher Doug Jacobson writes that U.S. officials and lawmakers are concerned that the Chinese government could exploit TikTok user data to spy on U.S. citizens. Government hackers could use the TikTok data to trick users into revealing more personal

information.

But if the goal is to counter Chinese hackers, banning TikTok is likely to prove too little, too late. "By some estimates, the Chinese government has already collected personal information on at least 80% of the U.S. population via various means," Jacobson writes. "The Chinese government - along with anyone else with money - also has access to the large market for personal data."

Banning TikTok could also make U.S. users more vulnerable to hackers of all stripes. Rochester Institute of Technology computer security expert Robert Olson writes that many of the 170 million U.S. TikTok users could try to get around a ban on the app, with negative consequences for their digital safety.

If TikTok ends up banned from Apple's and Google's app stores, users could try to access the app elsewhere via sideloading. This practice of getting around the Apple and Google app stores leaves users vulnerable to malware posing as the TikTok app. TikTok users might also be motivated to circumvent Apple and Google security controls in order to keep the app installed, a move that would make users' phones more vulnerable.

"I find it unlikely that a TikTok ban (is) technologically enforceable," Olson writes. "This ... legislation - aimed at improving cybersecurity - could motivate users to engage in riskier digital behavior."

In its legal challenge to the U.S. government, ByteDance claimed the government is violating its First Amendment rights. Technology law scholars Anupam Chander of Georgetown University and Gautam Hans of Cornell University write that ByteDance had

grounds for its claim, and that the implications go beyond this case.

TikTok is a publisher - an online publisher of users' videos. Forcing ByteDance to divest TikTok is a form of prior restraint - the government preventing speech before it occurs, Chander and Hans write.

"By forcing the sale of TikTok to an entity without ties to the Chinese Communist Party, Congress' intent with the law is to change the nature of the platform," they write. "That kind of government action implicates the core concerns that the First Amendment was designed to protect against: government interference in the speech of private parties."

Security and legal issues aside, the forced sale to a U.S.-based company or ban of TikTok in the United States is a questionable approach to solving the problems the law aims to address: potential Chinese government influence in the U.S., harm to teens and data privacy violations, writes Arizona State media scholar Sarah Florini.

The Chinese government - and other U.S. adversaries - have long used social media apps owned by U.S. companies to attempt to influence American public opinion. TikTok is hardly alone in posing harm to teens, as the Facebook whistleblower case amply demonstrated. And vast amounts of Americans' personal data are already available to any buyer on the open and black markets.

"Concerns about TikTok are not unfounded, but they are also not unique. Each threat posed by TikTok has also been posed by U.S.-based social media for over a decade," Florini writes.

This is an updated version of an article originally published on Sept. 16, 2024. (AP)

Nigeria admitted as partner country of BRICS bloc: Brazil

ABUJA, Nigeria, Jan 19, (AP): Nigeria has been admitted as a "partner country" of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, according to Brazil, the group's chair.

BRICS was formed by Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2009, with South Africa added in 2010, as a counterweight to the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations.

Last year, the bloc added Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia has been invited to join. Turkey, Azerbaijan and Malaysia have formally applied to become members, and a few others have expressed interest.

Nigeria becomes the ninth BRICS partner country, joining Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia,

Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan.

"With the world's sixth-largest population - and Africa's largest - as well as being one of the continent's major economies, Nigeria shares convergent interests with other members of BRICS," Brazil's government said in a statement Friday.

"It plays an active role in strengthening South-South cooperation and in reforming global governance - issues that are top priorities during Brazil's current presidency."

President-elect Donald Trump last year threatened 100% tariffs against BRICS if they act to undermine the U.S. dollar. The bloc's leaders have voiced their commitment to introduce an alternative payment system that would not be dependent on the dollar.

Treasury nominee calls for stronger Russia sanctions & Fed independence

WASHINGTON, Jan 19, (AP): U.S. Treasury nominee Scott Bessent on Thursday faced sharp questions from both Democrats and Republicans on tax policy, tariffs, China, Russia sanctions and the future of an IRS tax filing system that Republicans have called to be cut.

Bessent sat in front of the Senate Finance Committee for his confirmation hearing, where he told lawmakers that the U.S. faces economic calamity if Congress does not renew provisions of President-elect Donald Trump's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. He also asserted the Federal Reserve should remain independent from the president's influence and U.S. sanctions on Russian oil should be more aggressive.

He was introduced by a fellow South Carolinian, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, who said the U.S. needs a treasury secretary "who knows what he's doing, has the trust of the president and loves his country." Graham added: "Your ship came in with this guy."

But Democrats, including Sens. Ron Wyden of Oregon and Michael Bennet of Colorado, expressed frustration that Trump's promise to extend provisions of his 2017 tax cuts would benefit the wealthiest taxpayers and add to the growing national debt that has surpassed \$36 trillion.

Bennet assailed Bessent for shedding "crocodile tears" over the debt and spending, while the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act drove up the debt. "There's so many things I think you owe the American people after we have seen the catastrophe" from the tax cuts.

Bessent is a billionaire who, before becoming a Trump donor and adviser, donated to various Democratic causes in the early 2000s, notably Al Gore's presidential run. He also worked for George Soros, a major supporter of Democrats.

Republican Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin also probed Bessent with questions about bringing national spending down to pre-pandemic levels.

In his testimony, Bessent committed to maintaining the IRS' Direct File program - which allows taxpayers to file their returns directly to the IRS for free - at least for the 2025 tax season, which begins Jan. 27. Republican lawmakers say the program is a waste of money because free filing programs already exist, although they are not popular.

He also called for stronger sanctions on Russia, saying the Biden administration's sanctions regime isn't "muscular" enough. "I believe the previous administration was worried about raising U.S. energy prices during an election season," he said.

Promoting economic growth remains govt's top priority

Britain's CPI falls as inflation pressure persists

LONDON, Jan 19, (Xinhua): Britain's Consumer Price Index (CPI) unexpectedly declined in December, drawing concerns about inflation and monetary policy outlook.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported Wednesday that December's CPI fell slightly to 2.5 from 2.6 percent in November. The core CPI decreased to 3.2 from 3.5 percent, while the CPI service annual rate dropped to 4.4 from 5 percent. These figures surpassed market expectations, as earlier surveys had predicted CPI to remain steady at 2.6 percent.

Grant Fitzner, chief economist at the ONS, pointed out that the price declines in sectors such as hotels and tobacco offset rising energy costs. Easing inflation provided relief for the British Treasury, which has been grappling with concerns over economic and fiscal stability.

Commenting on the latest figures, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves emphasized that promoting economic growth remains the government's top priority, though much work remains to be done.

From firms' perspective, the impact of this decline in prices might be limited. Companies face mounting cost pressures due to fiscal measures set to take effect in April, including increases in National Insurance Contributions (NICs) for employers and a rise in the minimum wage.

These policies are forcing many businesses to raise prices to offset higher costs. According to a recent survey by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), 75 percent of firms reported that rising labor costs have compelled them to increase their product and service prices.

Stuart Morrison, research director at the BCC, welcomed the slower pace of inflation but highlighted its insignificance in altering the broader economic picture.

Labor cost pressures remain acute, particularly in the hospitality sector, where most companies expect to hike prices in the next three months.



People purchase fruit in a shop in London, Britain. The United Kingdom's (UK) consumer price index (CPI) rose by 4 percent in the 12 months to December 2023, up from 3.9 percent in November, according to data released on Wednesday. (Xinhua)

Similarly, a survey by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) echoes the trend. Some 67 percent of 52 chief financial officers surveyed by the BRC plan to raise prices in response to higher NICs.

BRC Chief Executive Helen Dickinson warned that new fiscal measures are likely to push costs up by an additional 7 billion British pounds (about 8.52 billion U.S. dollars) by 2025 for retailers. Given the slow-growing nature of the market and low-profit margins, most retailers have no choice but to raise prices. So she expects steady increases in food inflation throughout the year.

Research institutions have reached a general consensus on the trajectory of Britain's inflation.

Monica George Michail, an assistant researcher with the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), forecasts "headline inflation to rise in January 2025 due to base effects from last year dropping out, before slowing again."

Some analysts argue that the new inflation data may allow the Bank of England (BoE) to cut rates in February, while some others say more data is needed to support any changes in the interest rate due to significant inflationary pressures persisting in the economy.

"The path ahead on interest rates this year is likely to remain slow and cautious," said Morrison. "The upcoming Trump presidency has heightened global uncertainty and inflation expectations."

Threat of tariffs looms

Mexico and EU revamp trade deal days before Trump takes office

MEXICO CITY, Jan 19, (AP): Mexico and the European Union on Friday announced a revamped trade agreement that they said would substantially increase trade and investment, days before the inauguration of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, who has threatened to slap sweeping tariffs on Mexico and other trading partners.

The new Global Trade Agreement between Mexico and the 27-nation bloc would reduce Mexican tariffs of agri-food imports from Europe, remove a number of barriers that would allow European companies to more easily invest in Mexico and boost Mexican exports of raw materials like fluorspar (used in electronics) as well as antimony, copper, zinc and lead.

The updated deal, which first entered into force 25 years ago, also seeks to facilitate "strategic cooperation on key geopolitical issues," the European Union said in a statement.

"We have entered a new era in our strategic partnership with Mexico today. Our upgraded agreement shows the E.U. and Mexico united for freer trade and an open global economy," said Kaja Kallas, vice president of the European Commission, in a statement.

The announcement comes days before the return to the White House of Trump, who has threatened to impose tariffs as high as 25% on all Mexican imports, which could deal a

sharp blow to both economies. While an updated agreement with the E.U. could mitigate some of the potential losses from disrupted U.S.-Mexico trade, trade between Mexico and the European Union still represents only a small portion of Mexico's annual trade with the United States.

U.S.-Mexico trade netted more than \$800 billion in 2023. In contrast, trade between Mexico and the European Union reached \$84 billion in the same year, according to the EU.

Gabriela Siller, director of economic analysis of the local financial group Banco Base, hailed the updated agreement with the E.U. as a step towards reducing the near "hegemonic power" the U.S. exerts over Mexican exports, given their strong trade ties.

"This is very positive for Mexico, because it needs to diversify its exports," said Siller, noting that 80% of Mexico's exports go to the U.S. "This gives the United States all the power to demand whatever they want - and slap on tariffs."

Mexico's economy ministry has not commented on the updated agreement.

Also on Friday, Mexico's Economy Secretary Marcelo Ebrard said on the social platform X that he was in Detroit meeting with representatives of the city's automotive sector in an effort to strengthen the bilateral relationship.

Rapper's shooting trial set to begin

A\$AP Rocky at a crossroads: A glorious future or prison?

LOS ANGELES, Jan 19, (AP) — A\$AP Rocky is at a crossroads. He could soar to new heights of celebrity in 2025, or be brought back to earth quickly by a trial starting Tuesday that could lead to his imprisonment for years.

The hip-hop star, and longtime partner to Rihanna, with whom he has two toddler sons, is set to touch the highest levels of high fashion as one of the celebrity chairs of the Met Gala in May along with Pharrell Williams, LeBron James and others.

And his modest acting career will get a major boost from starring alongside Denzel Washington in director Spike Lee's "Highest 2 Lowest," planned for a summer release.

But at the Los Angeles trial that's expected to last about three weeks, he is charged with two felony counts of assault with a semiautomatic firearm. He's accused of firing on a former friend on the streets near a Hollywood hotel in 2021. If convicted, he could get up to 24 years in prison.

The 36-year-old has pleaded not guilty, and his attorney says he committed no crime.

"We're ready to go. It's been a long time," defense lawyer Joe Tacopina said after a hearing Wednesday. "It's been something that's waiting over Rocky's head and Rihanna and their family's heads for a while. We're anxious to get this thing underway and get this behind him."

The trial has its roots in high school in New York, when the Harlem-raised Rakim Mayers, now known as A\$AP Rocky, met Terrell Ephron, also known as A\$AP Relli, who will be the trial's most important witness.

Ephron testified at a 2023 preliminary hearing that he brought Rocky into a crew of young creators who called themselves A\$AP - for "Always Strive and Prosper."

"We had dreams, pretty much," Ephron said.

He testified that the members remained close even as Rocky became rich and famous, but the relationships would



Rapper A\$AP Rocky at Pre-Grammy Gala and Salute To Industry Icons in Beverly Hills, Calif, on Feb 9, 2019. (AP)

eventually erode.

The feud came to a head in Hollywood on the night of Nov. 6, 2021, when according to Ephron, Rocky fired at him three or four times, the shots grazing his knuckles.

Ephron went to the police two days later, and brought shell casings he had picked up himself - both points the defense will seize on.

"You need nothing more than Mr. Ephron's testimony by itself," Deputy District Attorney Paul Przelomic, the case's

lead prosecutor, told a judge at the 2023 hearing.

The trial is full of large personalities, along with two huge names that will loom over the proceedings despite having no direct role: President-elect Donald Trump and Rihanna.

The trial begins the day after the second inauguration of Trump, whom Tacopina represented in the defamation and sexual abuse lawsuit of writer E. Jean Carroll. And Rocky himself became an unlikely cause celebre for then-President Trump during his first term when Trump publicly declared he was trying to get the rapper freed and returned to the U.S. when he was jailed after a brawl in Sweden in 2019.

But Trump has no power over these proceedings, and could not pardon Rocky if he's convicted.

Those anticipating the trial have long been asking whether Rihanna may attend.

"The mother of his children is she going to be here?" Superior Court Judge Mark Arnold asked the defense at an October hearing. "She's welcome to be here whenever she wants I'd just like to know."

Tacopina has been unable to give a definitive answer, but has said that he does not expect it.

"He's very protective of Rihanna and doesn't want her anywhere near this proceeding," he said after Wednesday's hearing. "But that's a family decision they'll make."

Tacopina said he has no intention of bringing Rihanna's name up at trial, but Arnold suggested he may when screening jurors.

The judge, a former sheriff's deputy, has an affable but no-nonsense style and dispenses with many court formalities. He said he will keep the juror selection process simple, and a jury should be seated quickly.

In an uncommon move in LA County courts, he will allow cameras in court for nearly the entire trial.

"I believe that the public deserves to see what goes on in

the courtroom," he said.

Tacopina has also represented other hip-hop figures, including Meek Mill and YG. The lawyer who normally practices in New York is gregarious, quick with a joke and always happy to talk to the media, but can be ruthless in cross-examination.

When discussing Ephron's minor injuries at the 2023 hearing, he said, "It's a miracle he survived that shooting" and was admonished for his tone.

Deputy District Attorney John Lewin, best known for his successful murder prosecution of real estate scion Robert Durst, was a late addition to the prosecution team. He's also known for his aggressive cross-examination, including a relentless, weeks-long questioning of Durst.

The case against Rocky will largely depend on how credible the jurors find Ephron.

Police officers who searched the Hollywood sidewalk after a report of shots fired found no shell casings. Police recovered no fingerprints from the 9 mm casings Ephron brought them, and no 9 mm pistol was found when a search warrant was served on Rocky.

Surveillance video captured parts of the incident. Prosecutors at the 2023 hearing showed a video still with a man in a hooded sweatshirt whose face is not visible holding what appears to be a gun, along with another image showing the face of the man in the sweatshirt, with no gun visible. A detective testified that investigators established it was Rocky.

Tacopina said he has not decided whether Rocky will testify, which he is legally allowed to avoid.

"He is eager to tell his story, he would love the opportunity to do so," the lawyer said Wednesday. "He is very articulate and very intelligent, he's a good human being, that would come out if he testifies, but that decision has not been made yet. It depends on how the case goes."

Variety

NEW DELHI: Police arrested on Sunday a 30-year-old man in India's financial capital Mumbai whom they said was considered the prime suspect in the stabbing of Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan.

The assault shocked the country's film industry and raised concerns over the lack of security in Mumbai, home to many Bollywood actors.

Khan was stabbed with a knife on Thursday at his home and sustained one deep wound near his spine. A female employee at Khan's home was also injured during the attack. The actor, who underwent surgery, was out of danger, his doctors said.

Senior police officer Dixit Gedam said the suspect was a Bangladeshi citizen who had entered India illegally and changed his name from Mohammad Shariful Islam Shehzad to Bijoy Das, and that initial evidence suggested he entered Khan's home with the intention of theft. (AP)

KANSAS CITY, Mo.: Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce gave pop superstar Taylor Swift plenty to cheer about Saturday.

With his girlfriend watching alongside WNBA star Caitlin Clark from a suite, Kelce caught seven passes for 117 yards and a touchdown - setting a whole bunch of records in the process - and helped Kansas City roll to a 23-14 victory over the Houston Texans that earned it a spot in the AFC championship game for the seventh straight season.

"I feel like if you're going to step out here on the football field, you've always got something to prove," said Kelce, who had a pedestrian regular season by his standards but always seems to elevate his game in the postseason.

"I wish it was something like it was just a flip of the switch and I could just turn it on like that," he added. "But I think it was everybody in that building, all week long, all, really, the past two to three weeks figuring out how to get our bodies the best rest and ready for the play-offs for a run like this. And, man, we came out firing on all cylinders today. That felt really good."

He certainly had Swift and Clark cheering throughout the game. Clark, a longtime Chiefs fan, wore a parka in Kansas City red. (AP)

NEW YORK: Police in New York City have arrested a man in connection with the beating death of a pioneering rock musician in the Bronx.

Sharief Bodden, 29, was charged Friday in the killing of Peter Forrest, a 64-year-old Bronx resident, who under the stage name P. Fluid had been a frontman for 24/7 Spyz.

The Bronx band was part of a wave of Black-led rock groups, including Living Colour and Fishbone, that emerged in the 1980s, melding elements of heavy metal, funk, R&B, punk and other genres.

Among the band's signature songs was a remake of Kool & the Gang's "Jungle Boogie." Forrest quit the band during its 1990 tour with Jane's Addiction, according to Rolling Stone.

The Black Rock Coalition, a New York-based artists' collective, remembered Forrest as an "essential chapter to an essential band" in the history of the group, which was formed by Vernon Reid of Living Colour and other Black musicians. (AP)

Fashion



A model wears a creation of Simon Cracker's Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection, in Milan, Italy, Sunday, Jan. 19. (AP)



A model presents a creation from Simon Cracker Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection, in Milan, Italy, Sunday, Jan. 19, 2025. (AP)



Models wear creations part of the men's Emporio Armani Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection, that was presented in Milan, Italy, Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025. (AP)



A model wears a creation from Dolce & Gabbana Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection. (AP)



A model presents a creation from Emporio Armani Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection. (AP)



A model wears a creation part of the men's Dolce & Gabbana Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection. (AP)

Dolce & Gabbana evoke the Dolce Vita

Emporio Armani charms with soft textures

MILAN, Jan 19, (AP) — Giorgio Armani kept his youth game sharp with an Emporio Armani menswear collection presented during Milan Fashion Week on Saturday that was all about texture and glistening surfaces.

Titled "Seductive," the 90-year-old designer's Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection for youthful dressers invited the touch: velvet three-piece suits decorated with delicate watch chains, fine ribbed lurex knitwear, luxurious corduroy pants that puddled around lug sole shoes.

Urban outerwear included belted trenches, sleek, oversized leather coats with deep slits for big steppers and long fake furs. Silken scarves were knotted like a tie, for a tromp l'oeil wave beneath blazers.

The runway show in Armani's theater opened and closed with a soundtrack of blowing wind, beckoning cold, perhaps as a hex against global warming. Mountaineers toting climbing gear and decked out in color-block parkas in shades of purple, pink, olive and brown opened the show. An urban couple dressed for a party and bundled against the elements closed it.

Armani, dressed in his trademark navy blue, took a bow for the fashion crowd, then posed with models before greeting VIPs, in-

cluding US actor Toby Wallace, Chinese actor and singer Zeng Shunxi, and model Lennon Gallagher.

Faux fur collars. Body-con fine knits that glisten. Cap of all sorts, but especially a neat leather beanie.

Dolce & Gabbana

To bling, or not to bling is the eternal question at Dolce & Gabbana - and the designing duo had it both ways Saturday during the Milan Fashion Week menswear preview for the next cold weather season.

The elegant show invitation in winter-neutral Burgundy - suggested an understated collection and the runway silhouette was loose and effortless. Emblazoned with the word paparazzi, there was also a hint of look-at-me flash.

Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana's collection for Fall/Winter 2025 evoked the Dolce Vita of easy men's dressing with two moods: pulled-together daytime casual and red (or make that burgundy) carpet/evening formalwear.

Denim jeans provided the clean canvas for statement outerwear: star-sized faux fur jackets, a leather bomber-trench combo and a long leopard coat. Knitwear with loose cargo pants were easy to wear, functional and contemporary. Except for a bright sequined

jacket, the colors palette was timeless and reassuringly neutral.

The essence of the daywear was distilled in a dark tank top worn with loose tweed trousers and matching cap, and a tech-bro gray T-shirt secured with double-belted trousers.

For evening or formal events, elegant suiting incorporating cummerbunds, tasseled silk scarves and wide lapels were accented with crystal brooches, all the better to glisten as two risers of paparazzi snapped from the runway.

Watch for high-neck faux fur dickies, fastened with silken ribbons for extra warmth and luxury. Bow ties and brooches finishing suits - because why choose? Low-sole sneakers and mid-calf biker boots finish the looks. Capacious soft bags in high-end leathers suggest someplace to go. Key fobs on belt loops, reminders of home.

Risers of flashing paparazzi set the mood inside the designers' Metropolitan theater.

Outside, Lucien Laviscount sprung like a gazelle over barriers and crossed tram tracks in front of the theater to greet cheering fans after the show. The "Emily in Paris" actor wore an elegant double-breasted pinstripe suit with gold neck chains, worthy of his stylish businessman character Alfie, as he signed autographs and snapped selfies.

Kuwait ranks average regionally in cancer prevalence

More than 90% of thyroid cancer cases can be cured

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: A member of the Board of Directors of the Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) and the official responsible for the annual head and neck cancer awareness campaign Dr. Iman Al-Shammari says Kuwait's rank among Gulf countries in terms of cancer prevalence is "average" due to increased public awareness and governmental and community initiatives focused on educating people about the disease.

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Shammari explained that thyroid cancer is the second most common cancer among women in Kuwait, after breast cancer, with an annual incidence ranging between 160 and 200 cases, compared to about 600 cases of breast cancer. Women are most susceptible to thyroid cancer after the age of 40. In men, thyroid cancer fluctuates between the ninth and tenth most

common cancer.

Dr. Al-Shammari said, "We began raising awareness about head and neck cancers around ten years ago due to the growing prevalence of these cancers in Kuwait and worldwide. It is important to note that head and neck cancers vary in severity, from aggressive to less aggressive forms. While thyroid cancer accounts for approximately 85 percent of head and neck cancers in both Kuwait and globally, it is one of the cancers that can be cured completely in more than 90 percent of cases."

She affirmed the importance of raising public awareness about the early detection of thyroid cancer and the use of modern screening and treatment techniques.

Dr. Al-Shammari indicated that Kuwait may go for years without recording any deaths from thyroid cancer, which reflects its high curability and instills optimism and hope in the hearts of patients.

She shared the story of a patient who was diagnosed with thyroid cancer years ago while still a high school student. With treatment, she made a full recovery, got married, and continues to live a normal life.

Dr. Al-Shammari explained that the treatment for thyroid cancer is generally less intensive compared to other cancers. It typically involves surgery, radioactive iodine therapy, and hormonal therapy. Patients do not need chemotherapy or concentrated radiation, which are often more difficult to endure. This makes thyroid cancer treatment more manageable.

Regarding the stages of thyroid cancer treatment, Dr. Al-Shammari revealed that the treatment process typically begins with the removal of the thyroid gland, followed by treatment with radioactive iodine, and then continued lifelong treatment with radioactive iodine.

She said thyroid cancer is often linked to radiation exposure, particularly when individuals are exposed to ra-

diation during childhood, because the effects of radiation exposure can take more than 20 years to manifest.

Dr. Al-Shammari went on to say that thyroid cancer detection relies on ultrasound examinations, which are available in all Kuwaiti hospitals, adding, "If a tumor is found, the treating physician will take a biopsy to determine the type of cancer and develop an appropriate treatment plan".

On the subject of side effects, Dr. Al-Shammari said, "The most common early signs of thyroid cancer include persistent difficulty swallowing, voice changes (hoarseness), and swelling in the neck area.

Some types of head and neck cancers can affect children, though at very low rates. Annual cases in children sometimes do not exceed one, and there may be years without any cases being recorded. Thyroid cancer in children typically begins as lymphoma before progressing to thyroid cancer."



Elderly people with their purchased goods rest as people shop at a New Year bazaar set up for the upcoming Chinese Lunar New Year, in Beijing on Jan. 13, 2025. (AP)

Global birthrates decline

More countries struggle with aging populations

BEIJING, Jan 19, (AP): A growing number of countries are confronting the dual challenges of population decline and aging, as younger generations opt to have fewer children and advances in healthcare extend life expectancy.

China said Friday that its population fell for the third straight year in 2024, falling by almost 1.4 million to 1.408 billion. Elsewhere in Asia, Japan's population has been falling for 15 years, while South Korea's growth turned negative in 2021. In Italy, the number of births has fallen below 400,000 for the first time since the 19th century.

The population has peaked in 63 countries and territories, about half in Europe, the United Nations says. The UN projects another 48 will hit their peak over the next 30 years.

Globally, the population of 8.2 billion people is still growing, with the U.N. projecting it will reach 10.3 billion in roughly 60 years and then start to decline.

For many countries with shrinking populations, the slow-moving but hard-to-reverse trend has prompted governments to offer financial incentives to try to encourage people to have children to help support growing numbers of elders.

The Japanese government's chief cabinet secretary, Yoshimasa Hayashi, called the demographic situation critical last year, saying that the next six years will be "the last chance for us to possibly reverse the trend."

The population of Japan peaked in 2008 at 128 million people and has fallen to 125 million since then. The number of births hit a record low of 730,000 in 2023.

Surveys show that younger Japanese are increasingly reluctant to

marry or have children, discouraged by bleak job prospects, a cost of living that is rising at a faster pace than salaries and a corporate culture difficult for women and working mothers.

Japan's population is projected to fall to 87 million people by 2070, when four out of every 10 people will be 65 years of age or older.

One segment of the population is still growing: an 11% increase in foreign residents helped push their population above 3 million for the first time in 2023, making up nearly 3% of the total.

China is growing older, a trend that could sap economic growth and challenge the government's capacity to provide for a larger elderly population with fewer workers.

Some see opportunity. An "elderly university" in Beijing, the Chinese capital, has enrolled 150 students in dance, singing, yoga and modeling classes. The business has yet to break even but founder Liu Xiuqin believes in the market's future, given the value that retirees born in the 1960s place on quality of life and health compared to earlier generations.

The government is raising the retirement age over the next 15 years to 63 from 60 years old for men; to 55 from 50 for women in factory and other blue-collar jobs and to 58 from 55 for women in white-collar work.

China ceded its position as the most populated country to India in 2023, after the population began to fall in 2022. Women are having fewer babies despite the easing of China's one-child policy to allow up to three children. The population of 1.4 billion people - still more than 10 times that of Japan - is projected to fall to 1.3 billion by 2050.

Keeping BP under control is critical

New treatment shows promise for tough-to-treat high blood pressure

WASHINGTON, Jan 19, (AP): Nothing doctors prescribed controlled Michael Garrity's dangerously high blood pressure - until they zapped away some nerves on his kidneys.

If that sounds weird, well, kidneys help regulate blood pressure in part through signals from certain nerves. The new treatment disrupts overactive renal nerves.

"My blood pressure would spike and I'd run out of breath and feel tired, and that doesn't happen anymore," said Garrity, 62, of Needham, Massachusetts. He still takes medicine but at lower doses, his blood pressure normal for the first time in years. "I'm thrilled."

About half of U.S. adults have high blood pressure, a major risk for heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, even dementia. Many people don't even realize they have hypertension until it's done serious damage.

"Know your blood pressure, know the numbers," stressed Dr. Randy Zusman of Massachusetts General Hospital, who specializes in the hardest-to-treat cases and advises people who think they're fine to at least get a yearly check.

And only a fraction of patients have their hypertension well-controlled, meaning there's a need for novel strategies. The Food and Drug Administration approved that "renal denervation" option about a year ago, based on studies showing a modest benefit in patients whose blood pressure remains high despite multiple medicines.

Now, after the American Heart Association recently deemed it promising, some hospitals including Mass General Brigham are cautiously offering it as they work out who are good candidates - and whether their insurance will cover a minimally invasive procedure costing thousands of dollars.

Two numbers describe blood pressure. The top, "systolic" pressure, is the force blood puts on the walls of arteries as it pumped out of the heart. The bottom "dia-



In this photo provided by Massachusetts General Hospital, patient Mike Garrity, center, speaks with Drs. Joe Garasic, (left), and Randy Zusman in Boston, on Sept. 25, 2024. (AP)

stolic" number measures that same pressure but between heartbeats.

Normal is less than 120 over 80. Blood pressure naturally fluctuates throughout the day, higher when you're physically active or stressed. But when it stays high - consistently 130 over 80 or higher, according to the most recent guidelines - it stiffens arteries and makes the heart work harder.

It doesn't take a doctor's visit. Pharmacies and sometimes even libraries offer screening, and people can use at-home monitors.

To avoid falsely high readings, the American Medical Association has tips: Sit quietly with feet on the floor, legs not crossed. Place the cuff on a bare arm, not over clothing. Don't dangle the arm - rest it on a table.

Lifestyle changes are the first step, especially for otherwise healthy people. Guidelines urge losing weight, exercise,

eating more fruits and vegetables, limiting salt and alcohol, and taking steps to handle stress.

Medicine is a must once hypertension reaches 140 over 90. The average patient requires two or three drugs, sometimes more, along with healthier living, Zusman said.

But the hypertension Garrity has struggled with since his late 20s is treatment-resistant. Despite taking four to six drugs plus a strict diet and exercise, his blood pressure regularly reached 150 over 100 or worse. Doctors thread a small catheter, or tube, through blood vessels to reach the kidneys, and then beam in ultrasound or radiofrequency energy. Those pulses pass through the renal arteries to selectively target surrounding nerves, said Dr. Joseph Garasic, a Mass General interventional cardiologist who performed Garrity's procedure. It takes about an hour.

New finding uncovers Huntington's cause

NEW YORK, Jan 19, (AP): Scientists are unraveling the mystery of what triggers Huntington's disease, a devastating and fatal hereditary disorder that strikes in the prime of life, causing nerve cells in parts of the brain to break down and die.

The genetic mutation linked to Huntington's has long been known, but scientists haven't understood how people could have the mutation from birth, but not develop any problems until later in life.

New research shows that the mutation is, surprisingly, harmless for decades. But it quietly grows into a larger mutation - until it eventually crosses a threshold, generates toxic proteins, and kills the cells it has

expanded in.

"The conundrum in our field has been: Why do you have a genetic disorder that manifests later in life if the gene is present at conception?" said Dr. Mark Mehler, who directs the Institute for Brain Disorders and Neural Regeneration at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and was not involved in the research. He called the research a "landmark" study and said "it addresses a lot of the issues that have plagued the field for a long time."

The brain cell death eventually leads to problems with movement, thinking and behavior. Huntington's symptoms - which include involuntary movement, unsteady

gait, personality changes and impaired judgment - typically begin between the ages of 30 and 50, gradually worsening over 10 to 25 years.

Scientists at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, McLean Hospital in Massachusetts and Harvard Medical School studied brain tissue donated by 53 people with Huntington's and 50 without it, analyzing half a million cells.

They focused on the Huntington's mutation, which involves a stretch of DNA in a particular gene where a three-letter sequence - CAG - is repeated at least 40 times. In people without the disease this sequence is repeated just 15 to 35 times.

HMPV death

Naps sharpen 'brain power'

NEW YORK, Jan. 19, (Xinhua): A simple way to sharpen your cognition and memory is also an enjoyable one: take a nap. The Washington Post on Thursday cited scientific findings.

Research shows that napping can not only take the edge off a night of inadequate sleep but also boost our cognitive and learning capabilities. Even a 10-minute nap can have profound effects on our cognition and mood in addition to alleviating afternoon slumps, it said.

Taking an afternoon nap can boost mental acuity, the newspaper cited a 2022 meta-analysis of 54 studies.

Researchers reported the greatest benefits for vigilance and memory, but the results also showed improved mental processing speed following a siesta. Whether people habitually napped or had adequate sleep the night before, they all reaped the benefits, according to the report.

HMPV: Bangladesh reported on Thursday its first fatality from the human metapneumovirus (HMPV) when a woman died with multiple health complications.

The deceased, Sanjida Akhter, died around 6:00 p.m. local time Wednesday in the capital Dhaka's Infectious Diseases Hospital, where she had received treatment since Sunday.

Ariful Bashar, a senior consultant of the hospital, announced on Thursday that the woman had several underlying conditions, including obesity, kidney issues, and lung complications.

The death comes days after Bangladesh reported its first case of HMPV infection this season, with the woman testing positive for the virus.

Ahmed Nowsher Alam, head of virology at the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), said the woman also tested positive for Klebsiella Pneumoniae, a variant of pneumonia.

The patient had no history of overseas travel, he mentioned.

Tahmina Shirin, director of IEDCR, had earlier said that the HMPV was first detected in Bangladesh in 2017. Since then, the virus has been reportedly identified almost every year in winter.

Cholera: Malawi has launched a 5-year cholera control plan, aiming to reduce the disease's annual incidence rate by 90 percent and achieve a case fatality rate of less than 1 percent by 2030.

Dubbed the Malawi Multi-sectoral Cholera Control Plan (MMCCP), the initiative, launched on Thursday, will enhance the coordination and implementation of multi-sectoral interventions for cholera prevention and control in the country.

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SPORTS

Three-time champion sailed a flawless race in gusty conditions in the final

Australia beats Spain and Britain to win New Zealand leg of SailGP

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, Jan 19, (AP): Australia won the New Zealand leg of the SailGP series Sunday, pressing home an advantage they enjoyed throughout the event to beat Spain and Britain in the three-boat final.

Three-time champion Australia sailed a flawless race in gusty conditions in the final, beating Spain by 22 seconds with Britain third.

After two events this season, Britain and New Zealand

are tied with 17 points to lead the series standings. Australia and Spain are third with 16 points each and Australia now heads to its home event on Sydney on Feb. 8 and 9.

After four fleet races on day one, Australia led the Auckland event standings with 34 points from Britain with 27, Spain with 26 and New Zealand with 25.

Australia then won the first of three fleet races on day two and finished second in the next to secure its

place in the final before the third race from which it had to withdraw with a technical issue.

The Australians won the start in the final as they did in the first two races of the day. The boats were close at gate one but Australia rounded narrowly ahead of Spain and Britain fell of the foils near the gate to lose any chance of winning.

Spain closed the gap when the boats split on the fifth of seven legs but Australia managed to hold onto its

lead, then stretched away on the sixth leg to win comfortably.

Winds on the day reached 32 knots in choppy conditions in Auckland, which hosted a SailGP event for the first time. The conditions fully tested the teams and the new T-Foils which were being used for the first time in this event.

Canada was unable to race on Day 2 because of an injury to a team member and France did not take part in the Auckland event because

of equipment problems.

Spain set the fastest speed on the final day of 96 kph (59.6 mph). Australia took 10 points, Spain 9 and Britain 8 towards the series standings.

SailGP involves 12 national teams sailing identical 50-foot foiling catamarans. The foils allow the boats to rise up and "fly" across the water at speeds of up to 100kmh (60mph). There are 13 events leading up to the series final in Dubai in late November.



The Australia SailGP team, helmed by Tom Slingsby, celebrate winning the New Zealand leg of the SailGP series in Auckland, New Zealand. (AP)

Durant and Booker power Suns past Pistons

Curry leaves with ankle injury as Warriors beat Wizards

DETROIT, Jan 19, (AP): Kevin Durant scored 30 of his 36 points in the second half and the Phoenix Suns defeated the Detroit Pistons 125-121 on Saturday.

Devin Booker scored 35 points, his fifth consecutive 30-point outing, as the Suns won for the fifth time in six games.

Center Nick Richards made a huge impact in his Suns debut. Richards, acquired in a trade with Charlotte earlier in the week, had 21 points and 11 rebounds off the bench. Ryan Dunn added 12 points and eight rebounds.

Tobias Harris led the Pistons with 21 points, while Cade Cunningham added 20 points and 11 assists. Cunningham, Detroit's All-Star candidate, shot 7 for 26 from the field. Jalen Duren finished with 15 points and 10 rebounds, Malik Beasley scored 14 points, Tim Hardaway Jr. and Marcus Sasser each had 11.

Warriors 122, Wizards 114
In San Francisco, Stephen Curry scored 26 points before leaving the game with an ankle injury in the final minute as the Golden State Warriors beat the Washington Wizards.

Curry got tangled with Washington's Jordan Poole under the basket and was down on the court for a few seconds before heading to the Warriors' bench. There was no immediate word on the extent of his injury.

Andrew Wiggins had 31 points and 11 rebounds to lead Golden State.

Poole, playing in his second game at Chase Center since the Warriors traded him to the Wizards, had 38 points for Washington.

Up by one midway through the fourth, the Warriors went on an 11-2 run, capped by two 3s by Curry, to take a double-digit lead with two and a half



Phoenix Suns forward Royce O'Neale, right, passes the ball against Detroit Pistons center Isaiah Stewart, left, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Detroit. (AP)

minutes left.

Pacers 115, 76ers 102

In Indianapolis, Pascal Siakam scored 10 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter, and Myles Turner added 18 points and 11 rebounds to help the Indiana Pacers beat the short-handed Philadelphia 76ers.

Indiana has won two straight and eight of nine and is fifth in the Eastern Conference standings.

Tyrese Maxey led the Sixers with 28 points on a night Philadelphia was missing five key players - including Joel Embiid, Paul George and Kyle Lowry - because of injuries.

The bench got even shorter when Justin Edwards fouled out early in the fourth. Ricky Council IV had a career-high 18 points and Kelly Oubre Jr. added 18. Philadelphia has lost five

straight and eight of 10.

Still, the Sixers managed to make it competitive. They trailed 61-59 at halftime and moved within 79-76 with 3:06 left in the third, but Indiana closed out the quarter on a 10-4 run.

Hawks 119, Celtics 115 OT

In Boston, Dyson Daniels hit a short jumper in the lane with just over a minute left in overtime and Onyeka Okongwu made two free throws with 11 seconds left, lifting the Atlanta Hawks to a victory over the Boston Celtics.

Trae Young led Atlanta with 28 points and 12 assists, and Daniels finished with 23 points.

Jaylen Brown had 24 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for Boston.

Celtics' star Jayson Tatum added 23 points after coming into the game list-

ed as questionable with a left shoulder strain. He shot 7 of 21 overall.

After putting up 30 points in a victory over Orlando on Friday, Tatum was flexing his shoulder often when he was talking to a trainer during pregame shootaround. He didn't seem to take many shots and started the game by missing seven of eight.

Cavaliers 124, Timberwolves 117

In Minneapolis, Donovan Mitchell scored 36 points, Darius Garland added 29 and the NBA-leading Cleveland Cavaliers took control in the second half and beat the Minnesota Timberwolves.

With the teams tied at halftime, Cleveland (35-6) outscored Minnesota by 10 in the third quarter and opened the fourth with a 10-0 run to seize control.

Anthony Edwards scored 28 points and Julius Randle finished with 20 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists for Minnesota. Cleveland was without forward Evan Mobley, who sat with right calf soreness, and Isaac Okoro, sidelined with a right AC joint sprain. Both played in Thursday's loss to Oklahoma City.

Rockets 125, Trail Blazers 103

In Portland, Jalen Green scored 26 points and the Houston Rockets beat Portland, the Trail Blazers' fifth straight loss.

Alperen Sengun had 23 points and 15 rebounds for the Rockets.

Scott Henderson had 21 points and 11 assists off the bench for the Blazers. Toumani Camara added 17 points.

Fred VanVleet started for the Rockets and finished with nine points after missing Thursday's 132-127 loss to Sacramento for personal reasons. That defeat snapped Houston's five-game winning streak.

Jerami Grant started for Portland after a facial contusion sidelined him for the last nine games. He finished with seven points.



Cleveland Cavaliers guard Donovan Mitchell (45) works toward the basket as Minnesota Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards (5) defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Minneapolis. (AP)

'Player advised to off load from bowling'

Bumrah's fitness to be tested by India vs England before Champions Trophy



India's Jasprit Bumrah talks with teammate India's captain Rohit Sharma, right, following the fifth cricket test between India and Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground, in Sydney, Australia. (AP)

MUMBAI, India, Jan 19, (AP): Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah was picked for India's Champions Trophy squad on Saturday despite doubts about his fitness.

Bumrah suffered back spasms and didn't bowl on the last day of the fifth and final test against Australia in Sydney two weeks ago. He was the leading wicket-taker in the series.

India chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar suggested Bumrah may play the third one-day international against England on Feb. 12 in Ahmedabad to test his fitness for the Champions Trophy, which starts for India eight days later in the United Arab Emirates.

"Bumrah has been advised to off load from bowling for five weeks and he won't be available for the first two ODIs against England. We are awaiting news on his fitness and will know in early February from the medical team," Agarkar said.

Captain Rohit Sharma added, "We were not sure about his fitness at the moment, and thus picked Arshdeep Singh to perform his roles with the new and old ball."

Opening batter Yashuvi Jaiswal was included even though he has yet to play an ODI.

Jaiswal takes Suryakumar Yadav's spot and will be the third opener choice after skipper Sharma and Shubman Gill. Virat Kohli and Shreyas Iyer complete the top-four options.

Jaiswal averages 54 in List A cricket and he will compete for the second opener's slot with Gill, who averages 58.20 in ODIs. There will also be a keen spotlight on the batting form of Sharma and Kohli who both struggled in the five tests against Australia.

Missing the cut from the squad which reached the final of the 2023 ODI World Cup were Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Ishan Kishan, Prasad Krishna, Shardul Thakur, and Ravichandran Ashwin.

Ashwin has retired, and

Yadav and Kishan have been dropped. Rishabh Pant and Lokesh Rahul are the wicket-keeper-batter options.

Pacer Krishna and allrounder Thakur lost their spots as India bet heavy on spin. Left-arm spin allrounders Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel were picked alongside off-spin allrounder Washington Sundar. Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav complete India's spin options.

Kuldeep Yadav has missed much of the season since October after a groin issue led to hernia surgery.

In the pace department, India has opted for Bumrah, Singh and Mohammed Shami. They will be complemented by all-rounders Hardik Pandya and Nitish Reddy, who impressed with a maiden test century in Australia.

Shami has also been picked for the Twenty20s against England before the ODIs. He took 23 wickets in the 2023 World Cup.

India will play its Champions Trophy matches in the UAE after the government refused clearance for the team to travel to Pakistan owing to political tensions.

While the rest of the tournament will be in Pakistan, India will play its group matches in Dubai against Bangladesh on Feb. 20, Pakistan on Feb. 23, and New Zealand on March 2.

If India qualifies for the semifinals or final, both matches will also be in Dubai. If India doesn't qualify for the final, it will be staged in Lahore on March 9.

India won the 2013 Champions Trophy under MS Dhoni and was runner-up to Pakistan in 2017 under Virat Kohli. Both tournaments were in England.

India: Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Lokesh Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Yashuvi Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh.

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Makhachev submits late-replacement Renato Moicano in 1st round

INGLEWOOD, Calif., Jan 19, (AP): Lightweight champion Islam Makhachev submitted 10th-ranked Renato Moicano at 4:05 of the first round Saturday night at UFC 311 for his 15th straight victory.

It didn't take long for Makhachev (27-1-0) after he took down Moicano (20-6-1), as he quickly administered a D'Arce choke.

The 33-year-old Makhachev has the most title fight wins in the division with five, and accomplished what no other fighter in his division had ever done - successfully defending his belt four times. It was his 13th win by submission.

"I like this belt," said Makhachev, the UFC's top-ranked pound-for-pound fighter and the most decorated lightweight ever. "If somebody wants this belt, come to the cage."

Moicano was a last-minute replacement for top-ranked challenger Arman Tsarukyan, who pulled out of the bout Friday because "of significant back pain" related to an injury. The 35-year-old Moicano, from Brazil, came in with nine victories in his past 10 fights, but proved to be no match for Makhachev, whose grappling has been unmatched as he continues to prove why he's one of the best in the world

In an epic, action-filled bantamweight title match, champion Merab Dvalishvili (19-4-0) was successful in his first title defense as he extended his winning streak to 12 while handing second-ranked contender Umar Nurmagomedov (18-1-0) the first loss of his career.

The pace of the match saw both fighters dominate at different times in the fight, with Dvalishvili closing strong after two of the three judges had Nurmagomedov leading after the first two rounds.

Nurmagomedov said he felt he broke his left hand, and couldn't use it after the first round.

In a light heavyweight match, former champion

and second-ranked Jiri Prochazka (31-5-1) used a flurry of punches in the third round to overwhelm third-ranked Jamahal Hill (12-3-0) prompting a stoppage at 3:01 for a TKO.

In the heavyweight division, sixth-ranked Jail-

ton Almeida (22-3-0) used a flurry of right hands to hurt seventh-ranked Sergei Spivak (17-5-0) late in the first round and used a ground-and-pound attack to finish the match with a TKO at the 4:53 mark.

Reinier de Ridder (19-2-0) wasted no time in taking down Kevin Holland (26-13-0) roughly 10 seconds into their middleweight bout and finished him off with a rear-naked chokehold at 3:31 of the first round.

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SPORTS

Wolves and Lama Mama take home titles at The League Championship



KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: "The League" Championship for amateur basketball players concluded recently at the Mishref courts attracting a large and enthusiastic audience.

In the men's competition, the Wolves clinched the title with a narrow 60-59 victory over the Mustangs in the final match. On the women's side, the Lama Mama team emerged victorious, defeating the Bulls 62-54 in the final.

Following the tournament, representatives of the sponsors and organizers, including Salem Al Salem, Dalal Al Mishaal, and Sara Al Muslim, awarded trophies to the winning teams.

Salem Al Salem, one of the event organizers, praised the championship's success, attributing it to the high technical skill level of the participating teams and the vibrant audience support from citizens and residents. The event



Left-right: Winners celebrate at the end of the tournament.

featured players from diverse backgrounds, including American, Lebanese, Egyptian, Palestinian, and Tunisian participants, adding to the championship's appeal.

Al Salem expressed his gratitude to the championship sponsors. He also thanked the Mishref Cooperative Society for providing the courts at Mishref Walkway for the event.

He highlighted that the week-long championship in-

cluded six men's teams and four women's teams, with matches officiated by referees accredited by the Basketball Federation.

Building on the success of this tournament, Al Salem announced plans to organize a basketball championship for children under 12, emphasizing the health benefits of such events and their role in positively engaging young players.

Battling Napoli underlines Serie A title credentials

Juventus blanks Milan

MILAN, Jan 19, (AP): Napoli underlined its Serie A title chances by fighting back for a crucial win over one of its main rivals.

Antonio Conte's side won 3-2 at Atalanta, which hadn't lost since September, and moved six points clear of second-placed Inter Milan.

Atalanta remained third and fell seven points behind Napoli.

Atalanta knew it could gain a major boost to its own title hopes with a win. It was unbeaten in its past 15 league matches but had faltered of late, drawing its past three games.

However, it took the lead in the 16th minute with a ferocious finish into the top left corner from league leading goal-scorer Mateo Retegui, back in the starting lineup after injury.

But Matteo Politano levelled in similar fashion in the 27th and Scott McTominay turned the match around completely for Napoli five minutes from halftime.

Ademola Lookman equalized 10 minutes after the break with a fine solo goal, skipping past one challenge and holding off several Napoli players before firing into the far bottom corner.

Then Romelu Lukaku headed in what proved to be the decider 12 minutes from time.

Tim Weah scored against his father's former club as Juventus beat AC Milan 2-0 to inflict Sérgio Conceição's first loss as the Rossoneri coach.

Weah, whose father is former world player of the year George Weah, was substituted on for the injured Kenan Yildiz at halftime, and fired Juventus 2-0 up in the 64th.

Samuel Mbangula scored the opener five minutes earlier.

Conceição's reign started with three wins and a draw in four matches, including a win over Juventus in the Italian Super Cup semifinals this month.

Juventus moved up to fourth, six points above eighth-placed Milan.

Bologna was up to sixth after beating bottom club Monza 3-1.



Juventus' Timothy Weah, right, scores during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Juventus and AC Milan at the Allianz Stadium in Turin, Italy. (AP)

Italy goes 2-for-2 on Olympic course

Lie McGrath leads Norway sweep in World Cup slalom

WENGEN, Switzerland, Jan 19, (AP): Atle Lie McGrath protected his first-run lead and completed a Norwegian sweep of the podium in a World Cup slalom on Sunday.

McGrath celebrated victory just as he did posting the fastest time in the morning run - kicking up his right ski to flip it end over end and catching it, in the style of Swiss former downhill star Didier Cuche to delight fans in the finish area.

The United States-born Norwegian finished 0.18 seconds ahead of Timon Haugan, who was 10th-fastest in the first run. Henrik Kristoffersen was 0.29 back in third and extended his lead in the season-long slalom standings.

While Switzerland has been the strongest men's team across the World Cup disciplines this season, Norway is a solid second now with five race wins by five different skiers. Haugan and Kristoffersen also each won a slalom and joined McGrath for hugs after he finished.

Switzerland is still searching for a first slalom win at Wengen since 1987, though had Tanguy Nef, Loic Meillard and Daniel Yule finishing fourth, fifth and sixth.

McGrath, whose father Felix raced for the U.S. team at the 1988 Calgary Olympics, had described Cuche after his morning run as "one of my heroes."

"He told me in Kitzbühel last year that if I taught his son how to ski slalom he would teach me the Cuche Flip because I'm so bad at it," said the 24-year-old McGrath, who did it expertly twice Sunday.

McGrath further explained his emotions because he failed to finish the past two slaloms, including at nearby Adelboden last Sunday, following three straight podium finishes.

"The last two weeks I have been challenging and feeling like I'm the best slalom skier in the world and not getting results. I felt today it had to happen," he said.

McGrath said he heard the race-course commentary while standing in the start gate and knew his teammates led the race, so "there was no other choice" but to complete the sweep.



Norway's Atle Lie McGrath celebrates on the podium after winning an alpine ski, men's World Cup slalom, in Wengen, Switzerland. (AP)

One year ago, he also led the Wengen race into the second run but let the win slip away to Manuel Feller of Austria.

The sunshine and blue skies of Saturday for the classic Lauberhorn downhill were replaced by clouds for the slalom that is raced on a different slope that shares the same finish area.

That downhill was won by Marco Odermatt, who skips slalom though still has a big lead in the overall World Cup standings in search of a fourth straight title. Kristoffersen is currently second, McGrath fourth and Haugan fifth.

Federica Brignone and Sofia Goggia made it a sweep for host Italy on the course for next year's Milan-Cortina Olympics.

Brignone dominated a World Cup super-G on Sunday to follow Goggia's downhill victory a day earlier when Brignone was third.

Meanwhile, Lindsey Vonn had another rough day, falling midway down her run on the Olympia delle Tofane course, where she holds the record of 12 wins.

But Vonn, who returned to the circuit last month at age 40 with a new titanium knee after nearly six years of retirement, avoided injury and got right back up.

Rennes slumps to another defeat

Barcola scores winner, Donnarumma stands tall as leader PSG edges Lens

PARIS, Jan 19, (AP): Bradley Barcola's brilliance and Gianluigi Donnarumma's decisive saves helped Paris Saint-Germain win at Lens 2-1 in Ligue 1.

The win extended PSG's lead in the standings to 10 points but did little to mask Luis Enrique's team's defensive frailties ahead of a crucial Champions League match against Manchester City next week.

PSG remained unbeaten in Ligue 1 but suffered a lot in front of the buoyant crowd at Stade Bollaert. Lens played boldly and had many chances. Lens finally cracked in the 86th minute when Barcola, who previously delivered the assist that led to Fabian Ruiz's equalizer, scored the winner.

PSG has conceded four goals in its past three matches, including a pair midweek against an amateur side in the French Cup.

With two matches left in the Champions League, PSG is in 25th place, which means it could miss out on the knockout stage.

The host defended well early on to withstand PSG's attacks and grew into the game to take the lead from a corner.

Przemysław Frankowski kicked the ball into the box for Vitinha to head

it toward the far post where the unmarked M'Bala Nzola was waiting. The Angolan forward beat Donnarumma with a precise low shot from close range.

Nzola thought he had a second in the 57th after a fast counterattack only for his goal to be ruled out for offside.

Instead, PSG leveled three minutes later from its first big occasion

as Barcola resisted a challenge from Malang Sarr and set up Ruiz with a cut-back pass. The Spanish midfielder gave Lille's keeper Hervé Koffi no chance.

Lens then caused havoc in the PSG defense several times but could not convert its chances because of Donnarumma. Often criticized this season, he was decisive in the 65th

to deny Goduine Koyalipou with a double save, and his spectacular diving effort nine minutes from time kept out a powerful goal-bound strike from Jonathan Gradi. He made another save in stoppage time.

Koffi was crucial, too, when he blocked a shot from Désiré Doué with his head but was powerless when Barcola was picked in the box and expertly controlled João Neves' pass and shot into the top corner.

Lens remained in seventh place, 19 points behind PSG.

Rennes slumped to another defeat in a dismal season three days after exiting the French Cup with a loss to a second-tier opponent.

The 2-1 loss to Brest left Rennes one point above the relegation playoff spot. Rennes has lost 11 of its first 18 league matches for the first time since 1983-84.

Hugo Magnetti and Ludovic Ajorque scored for Brest. Ludovic Blas pulled one back in the 77th, too late for angry Rennes supporters. A group of Rennes players who moved toward diehard supporters after the final whistle faced a hostile reception and security officers had to stop some from entering the pitch.

Also, sixth-placed Lyon drew with Toulouse 0-0.



PSG's goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, center, saves the goal during the French League One soccer match between Lens and Paris Saint-Germain, at the Bollaert-Delelis stadium in Lens, France. (AP)

Messi scores goal as Inter Miami opens preseason with friendly win

LAS VEGAS, Jan 19, (AP): Lionel Messi scored a goal and made his presence known throughout the first half as Inter Miami beat Mexican superpower Club America 3-2 on penalty kicks after the teams played to a 2-2 deadlock in regulation.

Messi's goal came on a header in the 34th minute, taking a pass from Luis Suarez to even the match at 1-1. Fans soon broke into a Messi chant, but they were quickly booed out by the pro-Club America crowd.

That goal came 12 minutes after Messi shook his head in disbelief after overshooting the goal from nearly

point blank. Messi also drew two free kicks in the opening half. He played the first 21 minutes of the second half before being substituted out.

It was Inter Miami's first match of the exhibition season, the first of five that also will take place in Central and South America. The team's regular season doesn't begin until Feb. 22 against Sporting Kansas City.

Inter Miami hoped the friendly against the team from Mexico City was a good early test under new coach Javier Mascherano, Messi's longtime Argentinian national club teammate.

Club America is the three-time defending LIGA MX champion and a 15-time winner overall, the most in the league.

Much attention this MLS season will be on whether this is the last for the 37-year-old Messi, considered by many as soccer's greatest player ever. His contract expires after this season, and even at an advanced age by professional sports' standards, Messi is the best player in MLS and the one who draws the most attention.

The former Barcelona star is the reigning MVP after getting 20 goals and 16 assists in 19 matches last sea-

son. He has 21 goals and 18 assists in 25 games since joining Inter Miami. Henry Martin gave Club America a 1-0 lead in the 31st minute of the first half before Messi responded three minutes later.

Israel Reyes' shot from the box following a corner gave put Club America back on top at 2-1 seven minutes into the second half.

Inter Miami tied the game two minutes into stoppage time on Tomas Aviles' header off a corner kick to set up the club's win on penalty kicks.



Tunisia's Yousef Maaref in action with Algeria's Abdeldjalil Zennadi during the men's handball World Championship match in Group B between Algeria and Tunisia at Jyske Bank Boxen in Herning, Denmark. (AP)

Sports

Kuwait bids farewell to Handball World Championship

Tunisia edges Algeria

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

ZAGREB, Jan 19: Kuwait bids farewell to the 29th edition of the 2025 Handball World Championship, which is being held in Croatia, Denmark, and Norway and will conclude on February 2nd. The team suffered its third consecutive loss in the preliminary round of Group 3, losing to Qatar 22-25.

The "Blues" had previously lost their first two group matches—against Austria 26-37 and France 19-43—leaving them in last place in Group 3. With this result, Kuwait has been eliminated from the race for a qualification spot in the main round. The team will now focus on improving its world ranking through the remaining matches.

Despite the loss, the Kuwaiti team showed resilience throughout the match, with the goal difference and performance levels remaining close. The first half ended with Qatar leading 11-7.

The tournament, which spans across three host countries—Croatia, Norway, and Denmark—has seen Kuwait struggle in the competition. The team suffered heavy losses against Austria (37-26) and France (43-19), the 2024 European champion and second-place finisher in the previous World Cup edition. In other Group C action, France triumphed 35-27.

Meanwhile, in another Arab match, Tunisia claimed a narrow 26-25 victory over Algeria in Group B. Tunisia secured its first win in the tournament, after two previous defeats. In Group B, Denmark defeated Italy with a dominant 39-20 shoreline.

In Group F, Spain triumphed over Japan 39-20, while Sweden defeated Chile 42-30.

Group G saw Slovenia beat Cape Verde 36-24, and Iceland dominated Cuba with a 40-19 victory.



Kuwait's Salmeen makes a goal attempt against Qatar during the Handball World Championship.

Al Sarkal hails the influence of Sheikha Fajr, Sheikh Sabah on Kuwaiti equestrian growth

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: Emirati equestrian Mohammed Jassim Al Sarkal praised the significant progress in Kuwaiti equestrianism, particularly in dressage, in recent times. He attributed this development to the organization of numerous championships, backed by the support and patronage of Sheikha Fajr Badr Al Sabah and Sheikh Sabah Al Mubarak, as well as the enthusiasm and dedication of equestrian enthusiasts in the sisterly State of Kuwait.

Al Sarkal shared, "I decided to visit Kuwait last week to meet Sheikha Fajr Badr Al Sabah, whom I've known for many years, dating back to the early stages of my equestrian career. Since then, we've worked together to build a robust Arab equestrian community. Sheikha Fajr and her husband, Sheikh Sabah Mubarak Al Sabah, are the founders of Equicety, a horse breeding and sports program, which has produced talented stallions and high-performance mares."

He continued, "I am grateful for Kuwait's warm hospitality, its love for equestrianism, and the presence of many ambitious dressage riders in the country. I'm genuinely excited about the future developments. During my visit, I had the pleasure of meeting some exceptional Kuwaiti riders, and their passion for dressage and commitment to strengthening the community, with a focus on the fundamentals, was



Sheikha Fajr Badr Al Sabah with Mohammed Jassim Al Sarkal, Amer and Ismail.

truly inspiring. I quickly grew close to riders Abdullah Al-Amer and Ibrahim Ismail, and I am thankful for their guidance during my time in Kuwait."

Concluding his visit, Al Sarkal stated, "I wrapped up my trip by attending the 11th edition of the Atyab Al-Marshood International Show Jumping Championship, alongside fellow rid-

ers. The Al-Marshood Championship is Kuwait's largest and most prestigious show jumping competition."

Accompanied by Sheikha Fajr Badr Al-Sabah, Sheikh Sabah Al-Mubarak, and riders Abdullah Al-Amer and Ibrahim Ismail, Al Sarkal expressed his delight at the impressive advancements in Kuwaiti equestrianism.

West Indies bowled out for 123 runs

Khan masterminds Pakistan's emphatic win

MULTAN, Pakistan, Jan 19, (AP): Off-spinner Sajid Khan masterminded Pakistan's emphatic 127-run win against the West Indies with a match haul of nine wickets in the first test on Sunday. Khan followed his four-wicket haul in the first innings with 5-50 as the West Indies were bowled out for 123 runs in the second after being set a target of 251 runs on a spinning pitch.

Alick Athanaze, playing in only his 12th test match, made a fighting 55 off 68 balls before he became Khan's fifth victim with inexperienced West Indies resistance folding in the second session on Day 3.

"As long as we get 20 wickets and are able to put in a good performance, we will be happy," Pakistan captain Shan Masood said. "We did not know whether in these conditions the ball would spin as it is cold... but our spinners were clinical."

Khan replicated his first-innings show with the new ball by yet again removing the top four batters as the tourists limped to 54-5 inside the first session that saw 11 of the 12 wickets falling to the spinners.

Leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed, who shared the new ball with Khan, claimed figures of 4-27 that included the wickets of Kevin Sinclair (10) and Gudakesh Motie (0) off successive balls with both edging to Salman Ali Agha in the slips as the tourists lost their last four



Pakistan's Sajid Khan celebrates after taking the wicket of West Indies Kraigg Brathwaite during the day three of the first test cricket match between Pakistan and West Indies, in Multan, Pakistan. (AP)

wickets without scoring a run.

"The batters didn't play as well as they should have," West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite said. "We just have to be brave... it is important to be positive on these types of pitches. We should still trust our defence. If we can bring it together batting and bowling wise, we can come out on top."

In a sensational 2-1/2 hour first session, left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican had grabbed a career-best 7-32 as Pakistan batters also struggled on their own engineered wicket for spinners. Warrican featured in all but one dismissal in Pakistan's second innings as

the home team was bowled out for 157 runs inside 1-1/2 hours after resuming on 109-3.

It gave Pakistan an overall lead of 250 runs after West Indies conceded a 93-run first innings lead when it was dismissed for 137 inside one session on Day 2 in reply to Pakistan's score of 230.

Khan removed Brathwaite (12), Mikyle Louis (13), Keacy Carty (6) and Kavem Hodge (0) for the second successive time in the match as the tourists' ploy to counterattack the off-spinner failed with slow bowlers getting purchase off the sluggish surface. "The team is playing together and it is great," Khan said. "The wicket had a lot of turn and bounce. The spin bowling coach spoke to me and in the second innings, I bowled a little slower and did not leak too many runs."

Brathwaite holed out at deep mid-wicket while going for an overly ambitious shot; Carty lobbed an easy catch behind the wicket while attempting a sweep, while Hodge and Louis were bowled by Khan's sharp-turning deliveries.

Athanaze delayed the inevitable by sharing a 41-run stand with debutant Tevin Imlach (14) and completed his half century with a cover driven boundary before Ahmed hurried the collapse to finish off the West Indies resistance.

Coco drops a set but reaches Australian Open quarterfinals

Next chapter in Alcaraz, Djokovic rivalry unfolds at Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 19, (AP): It's time for the eighth installment of the riveting, inter-generational rivalry between Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz.

This one, though, will be the first at the Australian Open - and the first in the quarterfinals of a tournament; each of the others came in either a semifinal or final. The other quarterfinal on the bottom half of the men's bracket will be No. 2 Alexander Zverev against No. 12 Tommy Paul.

Alcaraz reached his 10th career Grand Slam quarterfinal, tied for the most by a man before his 22nd birthday, by advancing when 15th-seeded Jack Draper stopped playing because of a hip injury after dropping the first two sets Sunday afternoon.

Djokovic, who is being coached in Melbourne by old rival Andy Murray, did his part at night in Rod Laver Arena, needing to work a little longer but getting through just the same with a 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (4) victory over No. 24 Jiri Lehecka.

Djokovic smacked a ball off a wall in the third set, drawing boos and whistles from some spectators. When they made more noise moments later, chair umpire Mohamed Lahyani admonished the folks in the stands to be more polite toward the players.

Otherwise, though, Djokovic had plenty of

support, from the Serbian flags in the stands to the chants of his nickname. There is plenty at stake at this tournament for both No. 3 seed Alcaraz, who is 21, and No. 7 Djokovic, who is 37.

Alcaraz seeks to become the youngest man



Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns a shot from Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic during their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

to complete a career Grand Slam with at least one trophy from all four of the most prestigious events in tennis. His four so far came elsewhere: two at Wimbledon by virtue of wins over Djokovic in the 2023 and 2024 finals, and one apiece at the U.S. Open in 2022 and the French Open last year. At the majors, though, Alcaraz leads 2-1.

On Sunday, Alcaraz was ahead 7-5, 6-1 when Draper decided he couldn't continue. He'd been dealing with physical issues after winning each of his first three matches at Melbourne Park in five sets.

Coco Gauff's consecutive-set streak ended at the Australian Open. Her bid for a second Grand Slam title continued on Sunday with a 5-7, 6-2, 6-1 comeback victory over Belinda Bencic in the fourth round. Gauff now faces No. 11 Paula Badosa in the quarterfinals on Tuesday. Badosa defeated Olga Danilovic 6-1, 7-6 (2) to get to the final eight in Melbourne for the first time.

The winner of Gauff vs. Badosa will play either No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka, who is seeking a third consecutive Australian Open title, or No. 27 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, the 2021 French Open runner-up.

Sabalenka stretched her winning streak in Melbourne to 18 matches by defeating 14th-seeded Mirra Andreeva 6-1, 6-2, and Pavlyuchenkova beat No. 18 Donna Vekic 7-6 (0), 6-0.

Atletico's win streak ends

Barcelona held again at Getafe

BARCELONA, Spain, Jan 19, (AP): Barcelona was bested by Getafe's defense again in a 1-1 draw in La Liga on Saturday, while Atletico Madrid's club record winning streak ended after a late penalty miss by Antoine Griezmann.

Barcelona got its first goal in five visits to Getafe thanks to Jules Koundé in the 10th minute, but Getafe equalized and clamped down to get a fourth consecutive draw at its stadium against the powerhouse. The last time Barcelona won at Coliseum Stadium was in 2019, making the fixture an annual quagmire for the Catalan club.

Barcelona was coming off huge wins: A 5-2 thrashing of Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup final and a 5-1 win over Real Betis in the Copa del Rey. Barcelona visits Benfica in the Champions League on Tuesday.

But José Bordalás's Getafe, with its physical, defensive style, once again frustrated Barcelona in Hansi Flick's first visit as its coach.

Koundé put Barcelona ahead when Pedri threaded a pass to meet the right back's move into the area. Goalkeeper David Soría blocked his first effort but Koundé scrambled the rebound out of Soría's grasp and over the line.

Moments after Raphinha headed a cross by Koundé into the side netting, Getafe leveled in the 34th during a defensive letdown by the visitors. Mauro Arambarri put in a loose ball after Iñaki

Peña did well to make a one-handed save of a volley by Cobi de Costa.

Griezmann had a chance to at least snatch a point for Atletico after a video review awarded a 90th-minute penalty for a handball by defender Sergio González. But the French forward stroked his spot kick wide.

Griezmann and Julián Alvarez hit the woodwork in the first half, but Atletico couldn't respond after Leganes defender Matija Nastasic scored with a 49th-minute header.

Last week, Atletico broke its own record of 13 consecutive victories from 2012-13.

Leganes returned to the first division this season and has become a giant-slayer in the top-flight. The modest club from Madrid stunned Barcelona when it was leader in December. Its win over Atletico lifted it into 15th place.

Atletico, which was the biggest spender for Spanish clubs in the summer, is trying to win its third league under Simeone after titles in 2014 and 2021. Simeone said that during those championship runs, his side lost to smaller clubs Almeria (in 2014) and Levante (in 2021), and that didn't stop it from still beating Barcelona and Madrid to the title.

Atletico defenders Javi Galán and Clement Lenglet received their fifth yellow cards of the season and will miss the next round against Villarreal.