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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Dear Khalil Al-Hayya, this is not how camels are watered

LIFE in the Gaza Strip has become unbearable after 471 days of war, starvation, and destruction. We must ask: Is this not enough? Should the suffering continue until the Iranian agenda is fulfilled and the Israelis are allowed more time to kill and destroy? What kind of victory comes at the cost of 50,000 lives, 120,000 injured, and such widespread destruction? When Khalil Al-Hayya speaks of victory, he must reconsider his calculations.

Similarly, Israel, after engaging in its longest wars, must reassess its approach and move toward accepting a viable Palestinian state. Israel must abandon its plans to annex the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the idea of establishing Greater Israel. That vision has become an unrealistic fantasy like a midsummer night's dream.

Going back to the Hamas Commander Khalil Al-Hayya, it seems he has forgotten the crucial role played by the Gulf States in pres-

uring the world to end the ongoing devastation. He also overlooked Egypt's stance in refusing to displace Gaza's residents to Sinai, as well as the wise approach taken by the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in dealing with the issue.

Expressing gratitude to Iran indicates a misguided direction for Hamas, one that will neither benefit the Palestinian cause nor bring about the long-desired establishment of the promised Palestinian state.

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Kuwait's Amir receives Oil Minister, top oil executives



Amiri Diwan photo

HH the Amir receives Oil Minister and Chief Executive Officers of KPC and KOC.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Monday Oil Minister Tareq Al-Roumi, Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah and the CEO of Kuwait Oil Company Ahmad Jaber Al-Eidan.

TWO STRIKES, YOU'RE OUT FOR NEW LICENSE HOLDERS IN KUWAIT 3 months to tougher traffic laws

- Insurance must for licenses
- Visible car plates mandatory
- Interior Minister to set vehicle limit, taxi fares
- Learner drivers need permits
- Fines up to KD 300, jail for major offenses

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): The Law No. 5/2025 was released on Sunday amending some provisions of the Law No. 67/1976 on traffic. It will be effective in three months since its publication in the official Gazette.

The modified law stipulates that the issuance or renewal of a license is conditional to obtaining insurance. The Minister of Interior releases the

rules, terms, the insurance fees, and cases where the insurance companies pay compensation for the accident upon settlement.

Each moving vehicle must bear two plates, provided by the traffic directorate general once the licensing procedures have been completed. One must be posted in the car's front and the other in the back.

The Interior Minister is entitled to set the maximum number of the licensed vehicles. He can also set the taxi fares.

The plates must be visible, not blurred and fixed.

Any person seeking to learn driving, a vehicle or a motorcycle, must obtain a permit from the Traffic Directorate General.

The driving license, granted for a person for the first time, can be withdrawn in the cases where the driver commits two offenses as stipulated in the provision of 33 except for the term 3 and 33 repeated and 38 and can obtain a new license four months after withdrawal of the first one.

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Individual, collective strides to elevate Kuwait worldwide

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait is poised to usher in a fresh stage of development amid recent numerous accomplishments made thanks to individual and collective efforts to promote the country's regional and international status.

Among these achievements are good diplomacy, mega development projects, reinforced infrastructure, quantum leaps in global indicators, scientific and cultural innovations and medical and sports successes.

Politically and diplomatically, Kuwait has further cemented and beefed up its foreign relations by means of hammering out agreements and memos of understanding (MoUs) with many sisterly and friendly countries, mainly Turkiye, China, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the UK, Egypt, Bahrain and India.

Achievements

Kuwait has promoted its regional and international status through a package of achievements, mainly hosting the 45th GCC Summit, naming Mohammad Al-Ojairi of Kuwait as Assistant Secretary-General of the Arab League, re-electing Abdullah Al-Maatouq as a special advisor to the UN Secretary-General for the eighth consecutive year, and choosing Kuwait as a vice-chair of the Arab Union for Tourist Media representing Asian countries.

It has also adopted a package of laws, legislation and bills pertinent to the residency of foreigners, traffic, naturalization, property rentals, courts and taxes on multinational entities. Major development projects embrace the full operation of Al-Zour Refinery in May, the official opening of Abdullah Al-Salem University and the launching of Kuwait National Space Center under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Kuwait has also won the best Gulf partnership award 2024 for its partnership with the Sultanate of Oman in the largest joint Gulf venture of Al-Duqm Refinery Project and has even started countrywide road maintenance works.

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Ministry of Info finalizing plans

Kuwait National Day festivities to feature star-studded Feb concerts

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Ministry of Information is preparing to kick off the concert season in February to coincide with Kuwait's National Day celebrations. It is in the process of contracting with an artistic production company to organize the "February Kuwait" concerts for this year.

According to informed sources, the ministry is set to directly contract with a company to secure the broadcasting, recording, and airing rights for seven concerts, which are expected to feature prominent Arab and Gulf artists. The value of the contract is approximately KD 290,000, which covers all broad-

casting and recording rights, as well as the rights to air the concerts on Kuwait TV.

The ministry has already begun coordinating with the relevant regulatory authorities to obtain the necessary approvals and is now awaiting official clearance in preparation for finalizing the direct contract.

The sources indicated that some of the proposed artists for the concerts include Mohammed Abdu, Abdul Majeed Abdullah, Nabil Shuaib, Tamer Hosni, Asala, and others.

The Ministry of Information is gearing up to launch the concert season in February, in line with Kuwait's National Day celebrations.

Amir congratulates Trump, commends deep-rooted Kuwait-US ties

Trump sworn in as 47th US president



President-elect Donald Trump takes the oath of office during the 60th Presidential Inauguration in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Monday, Jan. 20, 2025. (AP)

WASHINGTON, Jan 20, (AP): Donald Trump, who overcame impeachments, criminal indictments and a pair of assassination attempts to win another term in the White House, was sworn in as the 47th president Monday, taking charge as Republicans assume unified control of Washington and set out to reshape the country's institutions.

Trump will act swiftly after the ceremony, with executive orders already prepared for his signature to clamp down on border crossings, increase fossil fuel development and end diversity and inclusion programs across the federal government.

He plans to declare the beginning of "a thrilling new era of national success" as "a tide of change is sweeping the country," according to excerpts of his inaugural address.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Monday a cable of congratulations to US President Donald Trump on assuming power.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere congratulations for President Trump on the inauguration ceremony as the US leader.

His Highness the Amir commended historic deep-rooted ties between Kuwait and the United States.

His Highness the Amir affirmed that he looks forward to enhancing friendship bonds and cooperation in all fields between the two friendly countries to serve their nations in light of strategic partnership.

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See Also Page 6

Reforms set to reshape Kuwait economy

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: In a decisive step toward economic and financial reform, Kuwait has unveiled a series of decrees and decisions aimed at reducing the state budget deficit, diversifying income sources and curbing public spending, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These reforms, published in the Official gazette, signal the government's commitment to achieving sustainable development and fiscal responsibility.

Decree-Law No (1) of 2025 cancels the previous Decree-Law No. (79) of 1995, which capped fees for public facilities and services at their 1994 levels. The new law introduces a system where fees will be determined by relevant authorities based on the cost of service delivery and usage, ensuring social justice and protecting the public's minimum standard of living.

Hydrocarbons found in Kuwait's Al-Jlaiaa

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): Kuwait Oil company announced on Monday discovery of commercial volumes of hydrocarbon materials in the maritime Al-Jlaiaa field, located within Kuwait's territorial waters.

The KOC said in a statement to KUNA that the discovery is the latest of a series of continuous discoveries, solidifying the State of Kuwait's status as a major producer of oil and gas in the region, in implementation of the exploration strategy in Kuwait's maritime region.

It added that tests at Al-Zubair geological trap (the Cretaceous period) at the well Jlaiaa-2 revealed forecast feasible productivity.

Stretching across a 74-sq-km plot of land, it harbors 800 million barrels of medium-density oil free from hydrogen sulfur gas with low proportion of carbon dioxide, in addition to 600 billion standard cubic feet of the associate gas, some 950 million barrels of oil equivalent.

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Egyptian president pushes for Gaza reconstruction

Israel releases 90 Palestinians under ceasefire deal

RAMALLAH, Jan 20, (KUNA): The Israeli occupation released 90 Palestinian detainees late Sunday from Ofer Military Prison in the occupied West Bank as part of a prisoner exchange and ceasefire agreement with Hamas.

The occupation released 69 Palestinian female prisoners and 21 children, 76 of whom were from the West Bank and 14 from the occupied city of Jerusalem.

Israeli soldiers intervened by firing tear gas and sound bombs at the crowd waiting for the prisoners to arrive in Beitunia, and raided the town with large number of jeeps and bulldozers.

Shortly after the raid on Beitunia, a bus carrying Palestinian detainees under the protection of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) departed from Ofer Military Prison.

On Sunday, Hamas handed over

three Israeli women detainees to a Red Cross team, marking the first phase of the ceasefire and prisoner swap agreement.

Meanwhile, Egyptian President Abdel-fattah El-Sisi affirmed on Monday the need to begin reconstructing Gaza Strip and make it habitable again, ensuring the return of normal life for its



Children play in the rubble of a destroyed building in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, Monday, Jan. 20, 2025. (AP)

residents as soon as possible.

In a statement, the Egyptian Presidential Spokesman Mohammad El-Shenawy said that President El-Sisi and Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg welcomed, via a phone call, the bilateral progress in various fields.

He added that their talks focused on both sides expressing their aspiration to enhance bilateral relations strategically in a way that achieves their interests, in addition to emphasizing consultations on issues of common interest regionally and internationally.

El-Shenawy said that El-Sisi reviewed during Egypt's efforts to ensure the implementation of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Strip in a sufficient manner.

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2 Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times, Al-Jarallah, hosts Tunisian ambassador



9 NBK and Alshaya Group launch exclusive collaboration with Mastercard

9 Weyay Bank announces launch of Weyay Aura prepaid card to earn more Aura points with every transaction

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:20 Asr 14:56
 Sunrise .. 06:43 Maghrib .. 17:16
 Zohr 11:59 Isha 18:36

Local

Weather

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

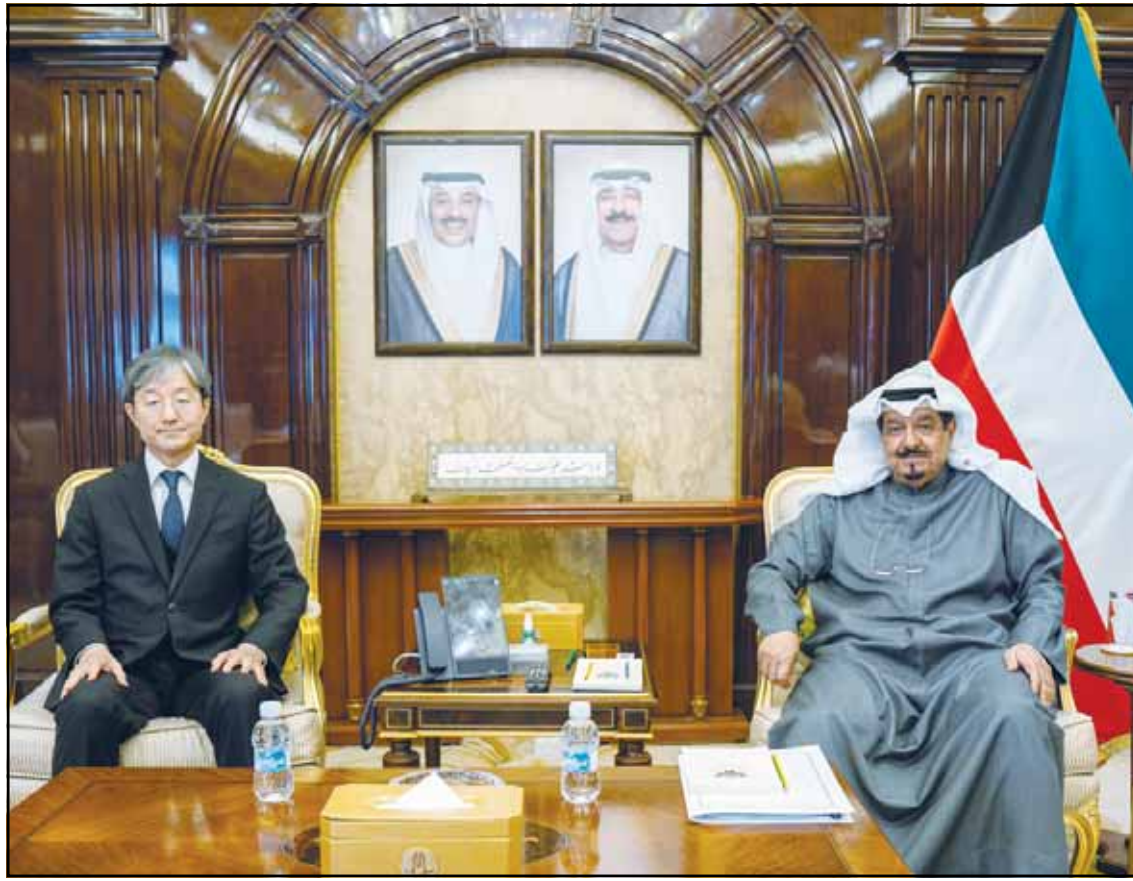
By Day: Mild with light variable wind to light to moderate north-westerly wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

By Night: Cold to very cold

with light to moderate northwest-erly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h with a chance for frost forming over agricultural and desert areas.

| Station | Max Exp | Min Rec |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Kuwait City | 21 | 11 |
| Kuwait Airport | 21 | 05 |

| | | |
|----------------|----|----|
| Abdaly | 21 | 05 |
| Bubyan | 20 | 07 |
| Jahra | 22 | 08 |
| Failaka Island | 22 | 10 |
| Salmiyah | 19 | 14 |
| Ahmadi | 24 | 06 |
| Jal Aliyah | 20 | 07 |
| Nuwaisib | 22 | 07 |



PM Diwan photo
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received in his office the Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Mukai Kenichiro.

HH PM welcomes Japan envoy

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Japanese Ambassador in Kuwait Mukai Kenichiro at Bayan Palace on Monday. During the meeting, they discussed ways of promoting

bilateral cooperation between both friendly countries and exchanged views about issues of mutual interest. Chief of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel attended the meeting. (KUNA)

'Accelerate Kuwaitization of jobs in co-ops, unions'

Al-Mutla'a co-op board dissolved

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (Agencies): Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah issued Ministerial Decision No. (25) of 2025 to form a committee chaired by the Ministry's Undersecretary to oversee the implementation of the nationalization plan for jobs in cooperative societies and unions.

The committee will work in coordination with the Public Authority for Manpower and the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies.

In a press statement on Sunday, Al-Huwailah said the committee will facilitate the recruitment process for national labor in supervisory and general positions within cooperative societies, while addressing obstacles and challenges that may arise during the plan's implementation.

This includes proposing necessary legal amendments to the mechanisms and conditions for employing Kuwaiti

citizens.

She noted that this initiative is part of the government's efforts to create more job opportunities for Kuwaitis in the non-governmental sector and attract outstanding national talents to enhance the work environment in cooperative societies.

Al-Huwailah emphasized that the nationalization plan aims to strengthen the role of cooperative societies in improving the economic and social standards of shareholders, protecting their funds from misuse, and ensuring the optimal management of available resources.



Dr. Al-Huwailah

Dr. Al-Huwailah, has issued a decision to dissolve the founding board of the Al-Mutla'a Cooperative Society, reports Al-Jarida daily.

An interim director has been appointed to oversee the society's operations for one year or until elections for a new board of directors take place,

whichever occurs first. The move aims to ensure the smooth continuation of the society's activities during the transition period.

Meanwhile, Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi, Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, has issued Administrative Circular No. (24/2025), announcing the commencement of automatic linking with the Civil Service Bureau's integrated systems.

Starting Sunday, the Ministry began using the "fingerprint" system for recording employee attendance. This initiative follows the rules outlined in Civil Service Council Resolution No. 41/2006 and its amendments.

The Ministry also plans to incorporate annual employee performance evaluations into the automated system, which will consider job performance (70 percent) and attendance (30 percent) as part of the evaluation process.

Approximately 6,000 employees across all sectors will be assessed based on criteria such as individual and group performance, personal capabilities and commitment to working hours.

The performance will be rated on a scale, with scores affecting eligibility for bonuses, ensuring fairness and transparency in the evaluation process.

Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times, Al-Jarallah, hosts Tunisian ambassador



Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah meets in his office the Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait, accompanied by Mohamed Amin Bouazizi. Retired Major General Faisal Al-Jazzaf and Mohammad Al-Farhan were also present during the meeting.

Al-Jarallah receives Dr. Al-Ramamaneh

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah received in his office Monday morning the Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohamed Karim Boudali, who was accompanied by Mohamed Amin Bouazizi.

The discussions during the meeting were centered on exploring opportunities to strengthen media collaboration between Kuwait and Tunisia, and other issues of mutual concern. These discussions were aimed to reinforce bilateral ties and foster greater cooperation in various areas.

Retired Major General Faisal Al-Jazzaf and Mohammad Al-Farhan were also present during the meeting.

As a gesture of goodwill, Ambassador Boudali presented the Editor-in-Chief Al-Jarallah with Tunisian dates.

This meeting highlighted the commitment of both Kuwait and Tunisia to enhance

media and diplomatic relations, as well as their mutual desire for constructive dialogue to advance the shared interests of both nations.

The Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah also received at his office the founder and general supervisor of the Child Rights Council and Vice President of the Balqa Jordanian Youth Authority (Mubaderoon) Dr. Mohammad Al-Ramamaneh.

Dr. Al-Ramamaneh, who is a prominent figure in Jordanian society, shared insights into his work in promoting children's rights and youth development.

He highlighted initiatives aimed at raising community awareness on child protection and youth empowerment.

Al-Jarallah praised Dr. Al-Ramamaneh's dedication to these causes, and affirmed the important role of media coverage in supporting such humanitarian efforts.



Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah receives the Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohamed Karim Boudali, accompanied by Mohamed Amin Bouazizi.



Photos by Rizk Tawfiq
 Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah receives in his office Dr. Mohammad Al-Ramamaneh, founder and general supervisor of the Child Rights Council and Vice President of the Balqa Jordanian Youth Authority (Mubaderoon).

Dr. Al-Mashaan inspects Salmi Road Repair Project's progress

By Mohammad Ghanem
 Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan held an inspection visit of the Salmi Road Repair Project yesterday to assess the implementation plan, progress, and asphalt treatment methods.

In a press statement, Minister Al-Mashaan explained that the inspection was part of the ministry's efforts to enhance infrastructure by reviewing the latest developments and monitoring the on-site implementation of the work.

She affirmed the need for the implementing company to adhere to international standards, and urged citizens and residents to cooperate with authorities in terms of road closures associated with the project.

The minister affirmed that the ministry teams will closely monitor the project's progress, and a committee will be formed to select and test engineers who will oversee the

project's development contracts, and ensure effective project management.

Dr. Al-Mashaan said road maintenance and repair are a priority for the political leadership. She praised the support of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah for these projects.

She highlighted that these projects will be a cornerstone of advanced infrastructure under the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

It is noteworthy that the Ministry of Public Works has referred the practice of connecting the sewage network of the Future Area in the Free Trade Zone with its main network to the State Audit Bureau for review and study prior to contracting and starting implementation. The project, which is estimated to cost KD 319,200, aims to protect the coastal environment by preventing sewage flows into Kuwait Bay.

PAI takes action against firm found breaking Industry Law

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Public Authority for Industry (PAI) has taken action against a company operating in violation of the Industry Law by closing one of its industrial plots located in the Sabhan Industrial Area, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The closure follows the discovery that the facility was being rented out to others, a practice prohibited by the Industry Law and its executive regulations.

According to the closure decision, the penalty will remain in effect until the violations and their consequences are rectified.

The Authority also warned that if the violation is not addressed within a month, a more severe penalty will be imposed.

In a related matter, the PAI has issued a warning to another company for committing two significant violations, one of which involved encroaching on state property.

The company was found placing counters outside the boundaries of its plot, occupying an area of about 200 square meters.

The company was instructed to remove the encroachment within a month, with the threat of stricter measures if the violation persists.

The Public Authority has recently intensified its enforcement actions, canceling several industrial licenses due to misuse of industrial plots, including renting facilities to third parties or leaving them unused.

In the past few weeks, the Authority's Permanent Committee for Industrial Violations has taken action against 16 industrial facilities and factories for various infractions. As a result, three industrial plots were closed and 13 facilities were issued warnings.

These measures are part of the Authority's ongoing efforts to ensure compliance with industrial regulations, protect state property and promote the efficient use of industrial resources in Kuwait.

Buggies confiscated: The Security Control Department (Traffic Investigations), of the General Traffic Department, during a recent traffic campaign in Bnaider targeted drivers of four-wheel drive motorcycles (buggies) to enforce traffic laws and ensure public safety, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The department stressed that it is strictly prohibited to operate buggies on main roads, expressways and within residential areas.

During the enforcement operation in Bnaider, 21 traffic violations were issued, 18 buggies were seized and two individuals were referred to the Juvenile Prosecution for further legal action.

This campaign highlights ongoing efforts to maintain order on the roads and ensure compliance with traffic regulations.

Two human traffickers, stamp forger arrested

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior, through the General Department of Residency, announced the arrest of two individuals of Asian nationality involved in human trafficking operations, and one other Asian individual charged with forging government electronic payment system stamps.

In a statement issued by the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media on Monday, the ministry emphasized that these arrests were part of ongoing efforts to enhance public safety and combat all forms of fraud, forgery, and deception.

According to the statement, the two individuals involved in human trafficking had been bringing in workers in exchange for amounts ranging between KD 1,700 and 1,900 per transaction.

The third individual was arrested after a reliable tip-off from confidential sources revealed his involvement in forging stamps for the government's electronic payment system.

The authorities promptly set up a targeted operation that led to the arrest of the suspect, who was found in possession of a large quantity of counterfeit stamps.

The Ministry of Interior confirmed that the appropriate legal actions have been taken against the suspects, who have been referred to the competent authorities, and the ministry also reiterated its determination to take strong action against anyone attempting to undermine the country's security or violate its laws.



Fencing hero Al-Qallaf.

KAC honors fencing hero Al-Qallaf

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Captain Abdul Mohsen Al-Faqan, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Airways, along with company officials, welcomed hero Tariq Al-Qallaf at the T4 passenger building, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Qallaf, who won three medals (gold, silver and bronze) at the Kansas Open Championship for Countries in January 2025, was also crowned the best épée player of 2025 in the United States for athletes with disabilities.

Al-Faqan expressed pride in Al-Qallaf's international accomplishments, emphasizing

ing Kuwait Airways' ongoing support for him in his global endeavors.

"We celebrate his honorable achievements and honor him for raising Kuwait's name on the international stage," said Al-Faqan.

He also highlighted Kuwait Airways' commitment to supporting national talents, particularly athletes with special needs, as part of the company's social responsibility strategy.

Al-Faqan reaffirmed Kuwait Airways' dedication to backing Kuwaiti athletes, with hopes for further successes in international competitions.

Kuwait Amir and King of Britain reaffirm deep-rooted relations

"CERTAINLY, His Highness the Amir's visit to Britain, made at the official and personal invitation of King Charles III, represents a vital chapter in the deep-rooted historical relations between Kuwait and Britain," columnist, former permanent envoy of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations (UN), the former Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) secretary general **Abdullah Bishara** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"This visit is expected to enhance the longstanding partnership, fostering greater collaboration and understanding between the two nations."

"It is built upon a history marked by Britain's steadfast commitment to Kuwait's security, a small emirate whose resilience and ingenuity have defined its survival amidst challenging conditions, including a harsh climate and limited natural resources."

"Kuwait's history is a testament to the ingenuity of its people, who mastered maritime skills and ventured across the Indian Ocean, connecting with India and East Africa."

"These journeys were not merely economic ventures but a demonstration of Kuwait's adventurous spirit and determination to thrive despite adversity. Britain's presence in the Gulf, initially to safeguard trade routes to India, naturally aligned with Kuwait's maritime endeavors, fostering a harmonious relationship."

"This alignment culminated in the 1899 protection agreement, initiated by Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, to shield Kuwait from Ottoman ambitions. This protection continued until Kuwait's independence in 1961, after which the relationship evolved into a robust partnership encompassing trade, education and mutual support."

"Britain's vital role during the liberation of Kuwait in 1990 further solidified the bond between the two nations. The cooperation has since expanded across all sectors, including defense, economy and education."

"The visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah underscores the depth of this partnership and the mutual commitment to strengthening ties. It also reflects the enduring connection between the leadership of both countries, built on trust and shared strategic interests."

"The Kuwaiti-British relationship is an example of a reliable alliance forged over a century, characterized by Britain's unwavering commitment to its obligations. For Kuwait, a nation with a small population and limited geographic size, alliances with trusted partners are crucial for ensuring security, sovereignty and stability."

"The lessons learned from historical challenges, including the Iraqi invasion, emphasize the importance of steadfast allies like Britain."

"The strategic partnership between Kuwait and Britain spans diverse domains, including security, defense, trade, investment and education. Regular consultations and cooperation ensure that the partnership evolves to meet the aspirations of both nations."

"This collaboration also aligns with Kuwait's role in promoting stability in the Gulf region, a vital area for global energy security and trade."

"Similarly, Kuwait's alliance with the United States has played a critical role in securing its sovereignty. The US response during the liberation of Kuwait, under Security Council Resolution 687, established a solid foundation for a long-term security agreement."

"This partnership includes a strategic framework for periodic reviews of bilateral priorities, encompassing security, economy, education and technology, thus ensuring Kuwait's readiness to address emerging challenges."

"His Highness the Amir's visit to Britain is not only a reaffirmation of historical ties but also an opportunity to open new avenues of cooperation. His Highness's strategic vision and security acumen, coupled with his personal rapport with King Charles III, are set to strengthen the bilateral relationship further."

"This visit signals the start of a promising new chapter in the enduring partnership between Kuwait and Britain, guided by mutual respect, shared values and a commitment to peace and prosperity. May His Highness the Amir enjoy continued good health and a long life as he leads Kuwait toward a secure and prosperous future."

Also:

"These days mark the anniversary of the birth of Jamal Abdel Nasser, a fitting occasion to reflect on the journey of this Arab leader, his intellectual and political experience and the decisions he made during his tenure as a head of state and a leader of the Arab nationalist movement," columnist **Dr Adel Reda** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"Nasser embodied a vision for revival, striving to say 'no' in a time dominated by 'yes-men', if the expression may be used. His journey, with all its positives and negatives, triumphs and setbacks, remains a rich experience that continues to spark debates among Arabs -- some supporting and others opposing his legacy."

"It represents an ongoing dialogue to reassess what transpired, as his efforts were a genuine attempt at initiating a movement to restore the Arab world's natural historical role as a cradle of civilization."

"Nasser's journey was a multifaceted one, a pioneering experience that

resonated deeply with Arab populations across the region. People connected with him emotionally, eagerly awaiting his speeches and shared his hopes and aspirations. For them, Nasser symbolized a renewed Arab renaissance, aiming to reclaim creativity and civilization for all Arabs."

"Jamal Abdel Nasser once declared, 'We will work with all our strength and capabilities to build a nation that feels empowered. We seek sincere cooperation with both the West and the East, without constraints or reservations, as long as it is founded on equality, non-interference and mutual interests.'"

"These words reflect his vision for an independent Arab identity, unshackled from foreign dominance and a balanced approach to global alliances."

"As a unique phenomenon in the modern history of the Arab world, Nasser sought to lead the region towards autonomous decision-making, away from external influences. He worked to foster a collective Arab psyche imbued with freedom, both culturally and emotionally. Through his policy of positive neutrality, he distanced the Arab world from global conflicts that did not concern them and he played a key role in founding the Non-Aligned Movement."

"Nasser also strove to build a new generation of Arab nationalists, imbued with a sense of mission -- one that valued freedom, independence and the creation of a confident, forward-looking society. This society, in his vision, would rely on itself to chart a path toward development and progress."

"Nasser, the man, did not impose himself upon the people. Leadership, after all, cannot be forced. As a president, however, he presented his project, outlined his principles and championed his slogans. He engaged with reality, driven by a sincere commitment to his vision."

"Like any leader, he made mistakes in some areas, succeeded in others and faced setbacks elsewhere. This is the nature of leadership. Regardless, he always had something to offer."

"Operating within the constraints of his era, Nasser confronted economic, administrative and organizational challenges. He remained committed to the idea of Arab unity, believing that it could not be imposed by force but rather must arise from the independent will of each Arab nation."

"His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (May God protect him) recently visited the United Kingdom. However, the visit was not preceded by any prior media preparation from either Kuwaiti or British outlets, and it received limited coverage in both British and Arab international media," columnist **Khaled Ahmad Al-Tarrah** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This visit, which marked His Highness' first trip to the UK since he assumed power on December 20, 2023, holds significant political and media importance in both Kuwait and abroad, particularly in Britain."

"Reflecting on past visits, such as the official state visit of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad in 2007, it is clear that the media arrangements were far more extensive, drawing considerable attention from British media and the international Arab press before, during, and after the visit."

"On my own initiative, as the Director of the Media Center in London at the time, I had the honor of arranging a special interview for the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad in 2007 with the British newspaper **The Times**."

"A journalist and photographer from the newspaper traveled to Kuwait at **The Times**' expense, not Kuwait's, to ensure the interview was not perceived as being paid for by the state and to uphold the journalistic code of conduct and professional standards. In addition, I coordinated several meetings with prominent Arab and British political and media figures."

"The **Times** newspaper published the interview with His Highness on the day of Amir's arrival. The article included professionally meaningful photographs that amplified media attention on his first official state visit to Queen Elizabeth II."

"The visit of Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad (May God bless his soul) received wide coverage from both British and Arab international media outlets, with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) providing live broadcasts of the official dinner banquet and the exchange of letters with Queen Elizabeth II on both television and radio."

"The usual British royal protocol, followed for decades, has always focused on sharing the visit schedule and program with British, Arab, and international media outlets, which typically include meetings with top figures such as former Prime Minister Tony Blair, as well as discussions on matters concerning the Gulf, the Middle East, and the international stage."

"Like many others, I saw the published photos and brief news reports about the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to the United Kingdom in the Kuwaiti press. However, I noticed the absence of any mention or coverage in the British press and media!"

-- Compiled by PFX Fernandes / Mahmoud Attiyeh



Bishara

Mol officers honored for outstanding job output

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Assistant Undersecretary for Residency and Nationality Affairs at the Ministry of Interior Major General Ali Al-Adwani honored a group of distinguished officers and personnel from the General Department of Residency Investigations recently for their excellent performance, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

The ceremony was held in the presence of the Director General of the General Department of Residency Investigations Brigadier Mishaal Al-Shanfa, and Assistant Director General of the General Department of Residency Investigations Brigadier Abdullah Al-Hamlan. Major General Al-Adwani commended the honorees, stressing that recognizing those dedicated to their work is a core principle of the security institution.

He highlighted that the country's security is upheld by the dedicated efforts of distinguished members of the Ministry of Interior, who perform their duties with skill and commitment.

In response, the honorees expressed their sincere gratitude and appreciation to the security leadership for this thoughtful gesture, which brings a sense of unity within the Ministry of Interior.

They reaffirmed their commitment to continuing to excel and serve their country with dedication.



KUNA photo
Major General Khaled Al-Shariaan presents a souvenir to Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Nuaimi.

Kuwait, Bahrain in military talks

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Major General Khaled Al-Shariaan, Commander of the Kuwaiti Air Defense Force, met with Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Nuaimi, Commander of Air Defense Missiles in Bahrain, to discuss key topics of mutual interest, particularly in the military sector, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The meeting, held at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense, aimed at strengthening and developing military cooperation between the two countries. A number of senior officers from both sides were present at the

meeting.

In a related development, Major General Saif Al-Hamlan, Assistant Commander of the Kuwaiti Naval Force, also met with Brigadier General Hugues Laine, Commander of the Naval Region in the Indian Ocean for the French forces.

Their discussions focused on military issues of shared concern and strategies to enhance bilateral cooperation. This meeting, which took place during Brigadier General Laine's visit to Kuwait, was also attended by senior military officials from both sides.

Man not guilty in molestation, illegal custody of minor niece

Al-Khalidi in good health, Mol refutes rumors

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Criminal Court has acquitted a Kuwaiti citizen accused of molesting his minor niece and unlawfully depriving her of her freedom. The court determined that the charges were based on a malicious report and found no conclusive evidence to support the allegations.

The Public Prosecution had charged the defendant with forcibly molesting the child, accusing him of deliberately touching her private parts while he was raising her and holding authority over her. Additionally, the defendant was

charged with unlawfully detaining the child in circumstances not permitted by law.

Defending the accused, lawyer Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan argued that the charges of indecent assault were not supported by the case papers and the evidence failed to substantiate the accusations.

Al-Qattan emphasized that there was no proof of the elements necessary to charge the defendant with unlawful detention, stating that the accusations were fabricated and malicious in nature. Al-Qattan further explained that indecent assault is inherently an intentional crime, noting that the law does not recognize unintentional indecent assault.

He argued that for such a crime to be committed, there must be clear intent, with the perpetrator fully aware of the unlawful nature of their actions. He pointed out that the act of violating modesty must be accompanied by a deliberate and intentional denial of the victim's consent.

'Al-Khalidi in good health': The Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Ministry of Interior has refuted rumors circulating on social media regarding the health of Salman Al-Khalidi, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The ministry clarified that he has neither been admitted to intensive care unit nor his health has deteriorated. The Ministry confirmed that Al-Khalidi is in good health and does not suffer from any medical issues.

The Ministry emphasized that the claims being shared are false and urged the public to verify information before spreading it. It also reminded citizens to rely on official channels for accurate news and avoid falling for rumors or disseminating unreliable information.

Al-Khalidi, wanted for 11 enforceable prison sentences, was recently arrested in close coordination with Iraqi authorities and the Kuwaiti Embassy in Iraq and was handed over to Kuwait to face legal proceedings.

'All police patrols equipped with surveillance cams'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Brigadier Faisal Al-Rabbah, Director of the Jahra Traffic Police Department, highlighted that all police patrols are equipped with surveillance cameras to monitor activities inside and outside the patrol, as well as "pager" devices to record interactions between officers and the parties involved, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

He explained that the patrols are part of a comprehensive security plan that adjusts according to events and seasons, ensuring rapid response to emergencies.



Al-Rabbah

Brigadier Al-Rabbah explained that the role of the police patrol is to maintain public order, respond to accidents, assist other security sectors and support the safety of both citizens and residents. They act as the first line of defense during emergencies, helping to preserve security.

Regarding security control in Jahra, one of the largest ar-

reas in Kuwait, the department uses an organized approach, dividing the governorate into several security sectors with patrols assigned to cover all residential and rural areas.

This includes establishing both fixed and mobile patrols, especially during camping seasons. The most common reports they handle include traffic violations and disputes.

Regarding specific issues such as gunfire at weddings, Brigadier Al-Rabbah emphasized that these cases are dealt with promptly, with patrols being dispatched immediately to apprehend the offenders.



KFF photo
KFF vehicles at the site of incident.

No injuries reported

Building falls during demolition process

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Firefighting teams from Salmiya, Hawalli and the Search and Rescue Centers responded promptly on Sunday afternoon to a building collapse during demolition work in the Al-Shaab Al-Bahri area, according to a press release by Kuwait Fire Force.

The General Fire Department confirmed that the rubble was cleared and search and inspection operations were carried out to ensure no individuals were trapped under the debris.

Fortunately, the incident did not result in significant injuries. The site has been handed over to the relevant authorities for further action.

'Runaway car' rescue: Southern Road Security officers successfully rescued a citizen without injuries, despite facing significant challenges, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The only damage was minimal, limited to the patrol car, which was slightly impacted during the operation.

The patrol vehicle had to approach the citizen's car closely from the front, matching its speed, and the collision was gradual.

Details of the incident revealed that the Ministry of Interior operations room received a call from a citizen who reported that his vehicle control had malfunctioned and he was unable to stop his vehicle.

In response, the authorities immediately instructed patrol units to clear the road for the vehicle.

A patrol unit was then dispatched and managed to bring the situation to a safe conclusion.



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LOCAL

Ahmadi Governor 'unveils' Green Urban Initiatives' digital hub for beautification

New platform invites landscaping proposals

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): Ahmadi Governor and Chairman of the Green Urban Development Initiatives Committee, Sheikh Humoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, announced that the committee has started receiving initiatives for landscaping main roads, developing public parks, establishing memorials, enhancing roundabouts, and painting bridges and murals through its website, starting Sunday.

Sheikh Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah added in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the occasion of the launch of the committee's website (<https://gudi.gov.kw>) and its accounts on X and Instagram (@gudikuwait) that the committee is part of the government's efforts to achieve sustainable development in line with Kuwait's future vision.

He emphasized that the initiative aims to encourage contributions from individuals, companies, and cooperative societies to improve landscaping in public squares and main roads, develop public parks in various regions, plant roundabouts, establish memorials, and paint bridges and murals.

He stated that the committee has established standards and guidelines for implementing various

types of initiatives to ensure compliance with conditions set by the relevant government agencies. He also noted that the committee has identified the locations where initiatives will be implemented, determined the licenses required for each project, and prepared procedural models for initiators to follow with the relevant government agencies.

Sheikh Humoud pointed out that the beautification initiatives include planting trees and plants along main roads to enhance the aesthetic appearance and create a greener, healthier environment that reduces pollution and improves quality of life.

Regarding the development of public parks, he stated that initiatives should include adding new facilities within parks, such as walking paths, seating areas, and additional trees and plants.

As for the establishment of memorials, Sheikh Humoud explained that these initiatives should involve building monuments to commemorate significant events, with designs reflecting the historical or cultural value of those events. Concerning bridge painting, the initiatives should use weather-resistant paints to maintain quality and durability over time.

During its weekly meeting on December 31, the Council of Ministers reviewed a visual presentation by the Governor of Ahmadi and committee members on the initiatives and donations made by individuals, companies, and cooperative societ-

ies for ornamental agriculture and enhancing Kuwait's aesthetic appeal. The Council expressed its appreciation for these valuable contributions.

On August 29, the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, Dr. Mahmoud Boushehri, issued Ministerial Resolution 56/2024, forming the committee headed by the Governor of Ahmadi.

The committee comprises the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources, the Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters, the Secretary-General of the Union of Investment Companies, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works, the Director-General of the Public Institution for Housing Care, the Director-General of the Agriculture Authority, and the Director-General of the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport.

It also includes the Dean of the College of Architecture at Kuwait University, the Assistant Undersecretary for Water Operation and Maintenance at the Ministry of Electricity, the Assistant Undersecretary for Corporate Affairs and Commercial Licenses at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Kuwait Banking Association, the Deputy Chairman of the Volunteer Work Center, the Deputy Director-General for Urban Planning and Structural Planning Affairs at the Kuwait Municipality, the Director-General of the General Traffic Department at the Ministry of Interior, the Head of the Environmental and Life Sciences Research Center at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, and the Head of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies.



Sheikh Humoud



Photos during the celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Kuwait at the Kuwait National Library.

60 years of diplomatic excellence

Kuwait seeks to strengthen bilateral relations with Canada

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Minister Plenipotentiary Nawaf Al-Ahmad, Assistant Minister for the American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighted the keenness of Kuwait to strengthen its bilateral relations with Canada.

He revealed plans to enhance cooperation through high-level visits by senior officials of both countries and political consultations in the coming period. Discussions will cover areas including the economy, trade, investment, food security, defense, oil and natural gas, education, health, and technology.

Speaking at the celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Kuwait at the Kuwait National Library, Al-Ahmad highlighted the deep and lasting ties between the two nations, which go beyond official engagements to include active cultural and tourism exchanges, which is evident from the increasing number of Kuwaiti tourists visiting Canada.

He affirmed Kuwait's readiness to continue collaborating with Canada in the same constructive spirit that shaped their relationship in the past.

Al-Ahmad said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pays great attention to enhancing relations with Canada, viewing this occasion as an opportunity to shed light on the long-standing friendship and fruitful cooperation between the two countries in various fields.

He also recalled Canada's generous support during the Iraqi invasion, as well as the shared values of freedom, justice, and respect for international law and human rights.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Ambassador Al-ya Mawani expressed her pride in the celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Kuwait, especially since it is being held under the patronage of Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, as it is a testament to the strength and potential of the relationship between the two countries.

She affirmed that Kuwait plays an important role in Canada's defense and security, with the country hosting a Canadian Armed Forces base since 2011.

Ambassador Mawani described Kuwait's contribution to the security, stability, and humanitarian efforts in the region as vital.

She said, "The 60th anniversary of relations between the two countries comes at a time of change and transformation for both



Token of appreciation being presented.

countries, as well as the world.

While global polarization and uncertainty persist, both Kuwait and Canada have taken on leadership roles to pursue our shared commitment to humanitarian work, cooperation, and the promotion of global security and stability.

These priorities serve as the foundation for economic development and prosperity, not just for Canada and Kuwait, but for the world. Both countries prioritize collective action to solve global challenges, under the belief that more can be achieved together. This has been the essence of our diplomatic relations and a hallmark of cooperation between Canada and Kuwait since the time the relationship was formally established on April 27, 1965.

This was reinforced by Canada's role in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation during the first Gulf War, in which approximately 4,500 Canadian service members participated."

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) Dr. Mohammed Al-Jassar highlighted the depth of Kuwaiti-Canadian relations in various fields.

He revealed that many Kuwaiti professionals who have contributed to the country's development graduated from well-respected Canadian universities.

Dr. Al-Jassar emphasized that both Kuwait and Canada work collaboratively to promote peace in the region and globally, and share common values and principles.

He added that Kuwait, throughout its history, has consistently upheld the values of rapprochement, friendship, and positive partnership among nations, and has always been committed to strengthening its relationships with countries around the world.



Photos by Samer Shaqir

Dignitaries present at the event.

Kuwait Airport T2 expansion on track

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: As part of its ongoing field visits, the Government Performance Follow-up Agency sent a team of engineers from the Government Projects Follow-up Sector to inspect the progress of the project to establish, complete, furnish, and maintain package No. 3 for aircraft parking lots, runways, and service buildings at Kuwait International Airport's T2 terminal, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The engineers were briefed on the latest developments in the project's implementation through a visual presentation provided by those overseeing the work.

The agency affirmed the importance of this vital project, which is a main component of the development plan. It reassured that it is fully committed to overcoming any challenges or obstacles that may arise during the execution of the project.



GPF photo

The Government Performance Monitoring Agency inspects the progress of work in the project at Kuwait International Airport (Terminal II).

PAMA hosts sports day for children

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Public Authority for Minors Affairs (PAMA) hosted a special sports day at Boulevard Park for the children under its care, aiming to promote recreational and sports activities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Under the patronage of Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumaiti, the event saw wide participation from minors and their families and was supervised by a team from PAMA, creating a joyful and interactive atmosphere.

The event featured a variety of sports activities, including a marathon, group games, football, interactive physical exercises, and a musical segment with characters.

Director General of PAMA, Eng. Dalal Mahmoud Al-Nouri, emphasized her commitment to providing valuable and enjoyable experiences for minors, promoting a healthy lifestyle, and instilling values of cooperation and sportsmanship.



Photo by Samer Shaqir

Minors enjoy a day of fun at the PAMA Sports Day event.

JANUARY

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PAHW unveils new digital services

Authority distributes 11,897 housing units in 2024, key projects underway

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) announced that it distributed 11,897 housing units in 2024 through 17 draws.

In a recent report about its achievements in the year 2024, PAHW revealed that the total value of ongoing contracts amounted to KD 1.956 billion, distributed to 71 housing projects. These projects include residential plots, public buildings, and infrastructure developments, among others.

Regarding building permits, PAHW issued 32,204 certificates to citizens in the areas of Mutlaa, South Abdullah Al-Mubarak, and South Khaitan.

The report highlighted great progress in construction projects, with the completion of 587 homes. An additional 597 houses and 20,380 plots are currently under development in the South Saad Al-Abdullah and South Sabah Al-Ahmad projects.

PAHW also completed 17 public buildings, and launched electricity in 23 buildings. It is currently carrying out construction work on 126 buildings. Also, 44 buildings are under construction, and 91

buildings have been handed over to the relevant authorities.

During the year, PAHW received 7,460 new housing applications and allocated housing projects to 4,870 citizens.

The total number of services provided by PAHW reached 889,163, and the number of services available online is 29.

PAHW also launched 27 new tenders for projects related to construction of houses, vertical residential units, public buildings, and infrastructure, as well as lighting and electrical cable works.

Meanwhile, PAHW has launched an introductory pavilion at Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 4 to highlight its electronic housing services.

The pavilion, which will remain open until January 23, is designed to showcase services offered through automated systems and Sahel application. It will also serve as a point for responding to inquiries from citizens, particularly travelers.

PAHW explained that the pavilion at Terminal 4 was established to save time and effort for travelers. It enables the completion of 29 different electronic services via digital systems and the Sahel government application.

MEW secures approval for KD 2.3m photovoltaic cell system in Subhan

Solar project to generate 7,000 kW, reducing oil dependency

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has obtained approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) in its meeting last Wednesday to award a contract worth KD 2.293 million for the supply, installation, and operation of a photovoltaic cell system on car awnings in the main workshops and the Emergency Services Department in Subhan.

According to informed sources from

the ministry, the project aims to generate 7,000 kilowatts of electricity to power the ministry's buildings and departments in Subhan from its sustainable sources instead of traditional energy sources. This shift is expected to reduce costs associated with electricity production from oil and contribute to environmental preservation by promoting sustainable energy use.

The ministry, following the approval of CAPT, will refer the tender documents and procedures to the State Audit Bureau for prior oversight, review, and approval. Once the Bureau approves the procedures or raises no objections, the project will proceed with implementation.

Meanwhile, the sources explained that the ministry has received approval from CAPT for issuing a tender to construct a new build-

ing in Sabah Al-Ahmad City and provide necessary electricity and water services to its residents, considering the city's status as a remote area.

Following the approval, a date will be set for the submission of bids, and another date for the closing of submissions. Submitted bids will then be studied within one month in accordance with the tender law. Once the evaluation process is complete, a decision will be made regarding the award, followed by an audit and review by the State Audit Bureau, and the eventual contract signing.

The building project is part of the ministry's annual plan for the current fiscal year, which includes development projects aimed at meeting the needs of both the ministry's employees and the residents of Sabah Al-Ahmad. The project will be executed in line with the latest standards to ensure the delivery of quality services.

'Gatherings strengthen student bonds'

Kuwait University participates in 10th GCC Universities Sports Tournament

MUSCAT, Jan 20, (KUNA): Kuwait University Dean of Students Affairs Dr. Jassim Al-Hamdan affirmed on Monday the importance of GCC sports gatherings to strengthen bonds between students in universities and educational institutes.

Al-Hamdan heads Kuwait University's delegation participating in the 10th GCC Universities Sports Tournament at the Cultural Centre of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) that kicked off on Sunday and will run until January 24, uniting 16 universities from across the GCC.

In a statement for KUNA, Al-Hamdan said that this sports tournament is organized under the slogan (Our Gulf is Our Pride), which carries great connotations and deep meanings that combine honorable competition and a brotherly spirit.

"Pride in the authentic Arabic language means strength and support and is used to refer to the people you are proud of and can depend on when facing difficulties," he pointed out.

"Such sports meetings contribute to consolidating the values of cooperation and teamwork and enhanc-

ing physical fitness and mental health for students. They also give them the opportunity to represent their country in the best way by achieving great victories that would make everyone proud," he said.

Kuwait's participation in this sports gathering reflects the extent of its keenness to build bridges of communication and cooperation between the people of the GCC and strive towards building and preparing a promising sports generation capable of representing its country in regional and international forums, he added.



KUNA photo
Kuwait University delegation participating in the 10th Sports Tournament for Students of Universities and Higher Education Institutions in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries.

Continued from Page 1

Dear Khalil

Dear Khalil Al-Hayya, you have lost your way. For years, your actions have only served to prolong the aggression, and never came close to liberating Palestine. In fact, you moved further away from achieving your legitimate national rights. Hence we say to you "This is not how camels are watered."

From the beginning of this war, the world called for national unity, and urged all factions to unite under the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah. This, they believe, is the only way to end the suffering that has continued for 75 years. Yet, you chose to align Gaza with the forces of Iranian influence. You made this clear by thanking Hezbollah, Saten Party, Tehran, and other forces who are using the Palestinian cause for their own agendas.

When Muhammad Deif issued his first statement on October 7, 2023, he claimed it was a step towards liberating Palestine. But is that still true today, after all the suffering endured by 2.5 million Palestinians?

Everyone has the right to ask - What is there to celebrate? Should we reenact the scene of the tents, as though the Nakba is being renewed? Should we celebrate further oppression of the Palestinians in the West Bank and give the Israeli entity justifications to expand settlements and displace more Palestinians?

Yes, the people of Gaza Strip endured 471 days of legendary steadfastness. They faced unimaginable torture and terrible living conditions that no human being should have to bear. Many died from a lack of food and medicine, as Israeli attacks destroyed hospitals and shelters, killed children, and almost wiped out an entire generation. Is this really a victory?

Today, the four capitals that Tehran once boasted of controlling have fallen. Iran used to claim domination over the entire Arab world through those four capitals. Therefore, betting on the Iranian regime and those who manipulate the Palestinian issue has become a fantasy.

The region has witnessed how global powers quickly rallied to support Israel, as they considered Hamas and other factions supported by Iran as part of the axis of evil, whose mission is to destabilize many Arab countries.

The world will no longer tolerate the fair Palestinian cause being used as a tool to serve a fascist regime in Tehran that seeks to reshape the cultural and social fabric of a vital region in the world.

Why did Iran distance itself when the war on Gaza began? Have you asked yourself that question? While Israel aims to achieve its goals through Palestinian blood, Iran also

profits from Arab and Palestinian blood. When Iran faces a blow, its leaders remain silent. In fact, they did not respond to Israeli attacks until they received the green light from the United States, which set the limits for any Iranian reaction. Khalil Al-Hayya and the leaders of Hamas and Jihad must learn from this harsh lesson.

3 months

The amended law mentions strict penalties such imprisonment no longer than three months and a KD 300 fine -- no less than KD 150 -- for the following offenses:

Driving the vehicle without knowledge of the owner or a person who has the license, in the case where the vehicle has no plate or damaged one with blurred figures, in the case where there is no license or availability of an expired one, abstention from providing policemen with the driving license and the vehicle's papers, using illegal lights and other banned devices, parking on sidewalks or pedestrians' alleys, parking it on the highways at night without turning on the blinking lights, driving opposite the traffic direction, changing the car's color or replacing major parts without obtaining a permit from the directorate.

It also listed many other cases that are punishable by the authorities.

Individual, collective

Economically, key credit rating agencies, notably Fitch, Standard and Poor's and Moody's, have underlined the Kuwaiti economy's strength and outlook, with seven Kuwaiti banks having been listed among the top 100 Arab banks for 2023.

The Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) announced the discovery of huge commercial quantities of light oil and associated gas in the Nokhatha offshore field, which is located east of Failaka Island in Kuwaiti economic waters.

The Mina Abdullah Refinery, affiliated with the Kuwait National Petroleum Company, achieved the first place globally in risk management engineering according to a field survey conducted by the American company (Marsh), which specializes in risk management and providing insurance coverage.

Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) received the Green Maritime Transport Award for envi-

ronmental protection at regional and international levels from the Dubai-based Maritime Standard (TMS).

Forbes magazine recognized Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Vice Chairman and CEO of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) as the top CEO in Kuwait and the sixth best in the Middle East and North Africa.

In industry, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry inaugurated the Taihan Kuwait factory, the first Kuwaiti factory at the Mina Abdullah Industrial Area for manufacturing fiber optic cables.

Kuwait has also witnessed concrete progress in digital transformation by means of launching numerous online services and signing an agreement with Google Cloud to launch cutting-edge data centers for cloud computing services in the country, along with Sahel App and the official environmental portal for Kuwait (www.beatona.net).

It secured the second spot in the 2024 Information and Communications Technology Development Index (IDI) by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for the second consecutive year.

In security and stability, Kuwait made a major achievement by ranking 35th among 163 states in the Global Peace Index (GPI) in 2023, improving by four ranks as compared to 2022, in the Gallup report. It also aborted a terrorist cell targeting Shiaa mosques in the country.

In health, it has achieved quantum leaps in the medical domain in general, with its As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center and Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital having been internationally recognized as being distinguished medical facilities.

While establishing more health centers, Kuwait has been awarded by the World Health Organization (WHO) in recognition of its eminent role in the Expanded Program on Immunization, with Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital having conducted an unprecedented achievement in the Middle East in blood vessel and catheter surgeries.

In addition, the Extracorporeal Life Support Organization (ELSO) named Dr. Huda Al-Foudhari as its chairperson for Southwest Asia and Africa.

Dr. Fawaz Al-Zaid was chosen as member of the International Council for the European Association for the Study of Diabetes, while Badriyah Al-Halaili was chosen as the first Kuwaiti to become member of the scientific research arbitration panel of the

International Conference on Renewable and Sustainable Energy.

Dr. Mousa Khurshid was awarded an honorary fellowship certificate from the American College of Surgeons, becoming the first Gulf and Middle Eastern physician to win this international recognition.

Furthermore, Kuwait has obtained several international patents in several scientific technology. Kuwait University, for instance, won the best robot in the VEX Robotics World Championship.

Fadya Al-Refai, a student of Kuwait University Law College, was honored at a UN competition as the best scholar, while three Kuwaiti students won artificial intelligence (AI) awards in Bahrain.

Mohammad Al-Kanderi, a Kuwaiti photographer, obtained the best travel photo for 2024 from the Arab Union for Tourism Media (AUTM), and the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information won 12 prizes during the 16th edition of the Gulf Radio and TV Festival.

In sport, Kuwait hosted the 26th edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup, and bagged 17 various medals during the 12th Sharjah Para Athletics Forum, three medals at an Arab taekwondo tournament and qualified for the 2025 World Handball Cup.

Kuwaiti swimmer Mohammad Zubaid won a gold medal during the Arab water game championship. Faisal Sorour got Kuwait's first gold medal at Paris 2024 Paralympic Games and Mohammad Al-Baz ranked first during the UAE Jet Ski Championship.

The Guinness World Records honored Kuwait's world-famous jet ski champion Mohammad Burbayea for setting a new Guinness record for the fourth time by winning 28 medals during world jet ski events.

In addition, Kuwait made a great sport achievement by having won posts at several committees of the Arab Modern Pentathlon Federation for 2024-2028.

Israel releases

Regarding the situation in Syria, he pointed out Egypt's keenness to preserve Syria's unity, the integrity of its territories and the security of its people, and regarding the situation in Lebanon, he stressed the need to maintain the ceasefire and support Lebanese authorities.

For his part, the Austrian Chancellor appreciated the continuous Egyptian efforts over the past months to mediate and stop the

bloodshed, and its essential role in the ceasefire, commending Egypt's constant efforts to maintain regional security and stability.

Also:

BEIRUT: The Israeli occupation troops continued violations the truce agreement in southern Lebanon advancing into the Lebanese territories and attacking properties in a number of towns in the region.

The official National News Agency (NNA) reported on Monday that the occupation troops cut off roads linking villages in the region. They had brought in tanks and bulldozers to block the roads.

They advanced into the town of Mais Al-Jabal and demolished sports and industrial facilities. They also crushed transport vehicles and a truck. Moreover, they machine-gunned areas around the town of Al-Khiam.

Meanwhile, the occupation gunners shelled outskirts of Kfar Shouba and ravaged cemeteries in the town of Al-Dhairah, the NNA reported. At a location between Ain Arab and Al-Wazzani, they abducted three Lebanese farmers.

The occupation breaches in the south have continued although a truce was due to take effect on November 27. According to the cease-fire agreement, they were supposed to withdraw by the end of the current week.

The occupation forces had occupied a number of southern areas and villages during the recent wide-scale aggression, but the accord called for their withdrawal within a 60-day grace period.

Reforms set

The authorities will establish these fees with approval from the Council of Ministers, enhancing flexibility and sustainability in managing public resources.

This decree also emphasizes the importance of regulating service demand to align with good governance principles. Informed sources suggest the reform may lead to adjusted prices for petroleum derivatives, municipal services, health services and official document fees such as passports and IDs.

Another significant reform, Decree-Law No. 3 of 2025, dissolves the Public Authority for Printing and Publishing the Holy Quran and transfers its responsibilities to the Ministry of Islamic Affairs. Employees will retain

their positions, grades and benefits, ensuring a smooth transition.

Additionally, Decree No. 7 of 2025 abolishes the Social Development Office, transferring its functions to the Supreme Council for Family Affairs.

These moves are part of a broader government strategy to reduce administrative redundancies, rationalize public spending and address overlapping competencies across agencies.

In line with these reforms, the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, has approved a fee schedule for services provided by the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition. Prices range from 250 fils to 250 dinars and will be implemented starting May 1, 2025.

The Decree No. (8) of 2025 amends the name of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs to the "Ministry of Islamic Affairs." This change reflects the ministry's request to grant the General Secretariat of Endowments operational independence.

Legal expert Dr. Ibrahim Al-Hamoud emphasized that the new fee structure will adhere to market principles, balancing supply and demand. Fees will be closely monitored to prevent any undue financial burden on citizens, with potential adjustments covering services such as housing loans, marriage licenses and electricity connections.

These reforms align with Kuwait's broader economic strategy to restructure government operations, reduce administrative inflation and enhance fiscal efficiency.

By re-pricing services and consolidating agencies with overlapping mandates, the government aims to foster economic sustainability and strengthen public trust in its management of resources.

Hydrocarbons found

The discovery is a significant addition to the hydrocarbon materials in the State of Kuwait, the statement said, indicating that it would boost forecasts of more of such discoveries dating back to the same period, noting that Al-Jaiaa field was the second one in the current exploration plan after the discovery of Al-Nokhaza maritime field in July 2024.

Pope Francis calls Trump's plans of mass deportation of immigrants 'a disgrace'

As Donald Trump returns to White House, families prepare for mass deportations

MIAMI, Jan 20, (AP): Parents around Nora Sandigo's large, rectangular dining table had lunch before signing documents to make the Nicaraguan immigrant a legal guardian of their children, entrusting them to her if they are deported. She gave a list of what to carry with them: birth certificates, medical and school records, immigration documents, her phone number.

"Talk to your children and tell them what can happen, let them have my phone number on hand, let them learn it, let them record it," Sandigo said Sunday.

For the group at Sandigo's southwest Miami home and for millions in the United States illegally or with temporary legal status, the start of Donald Trump's second term as president on Monday comes with a feeling that their time in the US may end soon. Trump made mass deportations a signature issue of his campaign and has promised a raft of first-day orders to remake immigration policy.

"You don't have to be afraid, you have to be prepared," Sandigo told the group of about 20 people, including small children, who watched a demonstration of how to respond if immigration officers knock on their door. "Take precautions wherever you are."

Sandigo, who came to the US in 1988, has volunteered to be guardian for more than 2,000 children in 15 years, including at least 30 since December. A notary was on hand Sunday.

Erlinda, a single mother from El Salvador who arrived in 2013, signed legal rights to her US-born children, ages 10 and 8. She said she applied for asylum but doesn't know the status of her case.

"I am afraid for my children, that they will live the terror of not seeing their mother for a day, for a month, for a year," said Erlinda, 45, who asked to be identified by first name only due to fears of being detained.

Plans for deportation arrests appeared to be in flux after news leaked of an operation in Chicago this week. Trump's "border czar" Tom Homan said on Fox News Sunday that Chicago was "not off the table, but we're reconsidering when and how we do it." He said the leak raised concerns about officer safety.

So-called sanctuary cities, which limit how local police cooperate with federal immigration authorities, have been a favorite Trump target, especially Chicago. Reports that his initial push would be in the nation's third-largest city brought a new sense of urgency and fear.

Chicago became a sanctuary city in the 1980s and has beefed up policies since, including after Trump first took office in 2017. Last week, the City Council heartily rejected a longshot plan calling for exceptions allowing local police to work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents on deportation cases for people accused or convicted of crimes.

The Rev. Homero Sanchez said he didn't realize the depth of fear in



A member of the Texas delegation holds a sign during the Republican National Convention, July 17, 2024, in Milwaukee. (AP)

the Chicago immigrant community he serves until someone asked him to handle the sale of their family's home and other finances if they are picked up after Trump takes office.

"They feel they have been targeted for who they are. They feel like they're reviving this fear they had eight years ago," said Sanchez, who serves the St. Rita of Cascia Parish on Chicago's South Side. "They're feeling like something is going to happen. This is not their city because of the threat."

Sanchez, whose congregation has consisted mostly of people of Mexican descent since the 1980s, devoted Sunday Mass "to solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters."

Cardinal Blase Cupich, who leads the Archdiocese of Chicago, said reports of the city being targeted by immigration officers were "not only profoundly disturbing but also wound us deeply."

"We are proud of our legacy of immigration that continues in our day to renew the city we love," Cupich said Sunday during a visit to Mexico City, according to a copy of his prepared remarks.

ICE arrests a fraction of targets in its street operations, though Trump is expected to cast a wider net than President Joe Biden, whose focus on picking up people away from the border was largely limited to those with serious criminal histories or who pose a risk to national security.

Biden's administration also ended the practice of mass worksite arrests,

which were common under Trump, including a 2019 operation targeting Mississippi chicken plants.

Trump aides have said immigration officers will arrest others, such as spouses or roommates, who are not targets but happen to be in the country illegally.

Meanwhile, Pope Francis said Donald Trump's plans to impose mass deportations of immigrants would be a "disgrace," as he weighed in on the incoming US president's pledges nearly a decade after calling him "not Christian" for wanting to build a wall along the US-Mexican border.

Francis made the comments during an appearance at an evening talk show, and then followed up Monday with an official telegram of congratulations to Trump on the day of his inauguration. Francis said he prayed that America would live up to its ideals of being a "land of opportunity and welcome for all."

"It is my hope that under your leadership the American people will prosper and always strive to build a more just society, where there is no room for hatred, discrimination or exclusion," he wrote in the telegram.

History's first Latin American pope was asked Sunday night about the Trump administration pledges of deportations during an appearance on a popular Italian talk show, Che Tempo Che Fa.

"If true, this will be a disgrace, because it makes the poor wretches who have nothing pay the bill" for the problem, Francis said. "This won't do! This is not the way to solve things. That's not how things are resolved."

Trump, who is being sworn in on Monday, made mass deportations a signature issue of his campaign and has promised a raft of first-day orders to remake immigration policy.

During his first campaign for the presidency, in 2016, Francis was asked about Trump's plans to build a wall along the US-Mexico border. Speaking after he celebrated Mass along the border, Francis famously said anyone who builds a wall to keep out migrants is "not Christian."

Another cardinal close to Francis, Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich, said the reports of mass deportations targeting the Chicago area "are not only profoundly disturbing but also wound us deeply."

In a statement delivered from the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City on Sunday, Cupich said governments have the responsibility to protect borders and communities.

"But we also are committed to defending the rights of all people, and protecting their human dignity," according to the text of his statement.

Francis, who grew up in Argentina in a family of Italian immigrants, has long prioritized the plight of migrants and called for governments to welcome, protect and integrate them, within their means. He has said the dignity and rights of migrants trump any national security concerns.



A pedestrian crosses First Avenue as a winter storm sweeps over the intermountain West, plunging temperatures into the single digits and bringing along a light snow in its wake on Jan 18, in Denver. (AP)

Millions across US brace for plummeting temperatures

Residents across the country from the Northern Plains to the tip of Maine are bracing for dangerously low temperatures as tens of millions of residents along the East Coast contend with a thick blanket of snow - and more snowfall in the forecast.

Winter storm warnings issued by the National Weather Service were in effect for parts of the Mid-Atlantic through Monday morning, and warnings began in New England on Sunday afternoon. Heavy lake-effect snow was expected in western New York state Monday through Wednesday morning, with 2 to 3 feet (about 60 to 90 centimeters)

possible in some areas including Oswego along Lake Ontario.

Marc Chenard, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in College Park, Maryland, projected that as many as 70 million residents will be under some kind of winter storm warning in the coming days.

Sunday snowfall was just the start of a chaotic week of weather. Much of the Eastern Seaboard will be enduring some of the coldest temperatures this winter.

An area from the Rockies into the Northern Plains will see colder than normal weather over several days, with temperatures forecast to

drop to between minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 34 degrees Celsius) to minus 55 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 48 degrees Celsius) on Monday. Sub-zero wind chills are forecast to reach as far south as Oklahoma and the Tennessee Valley.

Minnesota residents were urged to wear appropriate clothing and carry a survival kit for travel. Kristi Rollwagen, director of homeland security and emergency management at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, also urged motorists to drive with a full tank of gas and a fully charged cellphone to keep in touch with loved ones. (AP)

Biden pardons Fauci and Milley in effort to guard against potential 'revenge' by Trump

WASHINGTON, Jan 20, (AP): US President Joe Biden has pardoned Dr Anthony Fauci, retired Gen Mark Milley and members of the House committee that investigated the Jan 6 attack on the Capitol, using the extraordinary powers of his office in his final hours to guard against potential "revenge" by the incoming Trump administration.

The decision by Biden comes after Donald Trump warned of an enemies list filled with those who have crossed him politically or sought to hold him accountable for his attempt to overturn his 2020 election loss and his role in the storming of the US Capitol on Jan 6, 2021. Trump has selected Cabinet nominees who backed his election lies and who have pledged to punish those involved in efforts to investigate him.

"The issuance of these pardons should not be mistaken as an acknowledgment that any individual engaged in any wrongdoing, nor should acceptance be misconstrued as an admission of guilt for any offense," Biden said in a statement. "Our nation owes these public servants a debt of gratitude for their tireless commitment to our country."

It's customary for a president to grant clemency at the end of his term, but those acts of mercy are usually offered to everyday Americans who have been convicted of crimes. But Biden has used the power in the broadest and most untested way possible: to pardon those who have not even been investigated yet. And with the acceptance comes a tacit admission of guilt or wrongdoing, even though those who have been pardoned have not been for-



US Capitol Police Sgt. Aquilino Gonell, (left), and Washington Metropolitan Police Department officer Daniel Hodges listen as the House select committee investigating the Jan 6 attack on the US Capitol holds a hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, Oct 13, 2022. (AP)

ally accused of any crimes.

"These are exceptional circumstances, and I cannot in good conscience do nothing," Biden said, adding that "Even when individuals have done nothing wrong - and in fact have done the right thing - and will ultimately be exonerated, the mere fact of being investigated or prosecuted can irreparably damage reputations and finances."

Fauci was director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health for nearly 40 years and was Biden's chief medical advisor until his retirement in 2022. He helped coordinate the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and raised the ire of Trump when he refused to back

Trump's unfounded claims. He has become a target of intense hatred and vitriol from people on the right, who blame him for mask mandates and other policies they believe infringed on their rights, even as tens of thousands of Americans were dying.

Mark Milley is the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and called Trump a fascist and detailed Trump's conduct around the deadly Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.

Biden is also extending pardons to members and staff of the Jan. 6 committee, including former Reps. Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger, both Republicans, as well as the U.S. Capitol and D.C. Metropolitan police officers who testified before the committee.

Border with Belarus highlights challenges

Poland wants European Union firmly focused on security

POLOWCE, Poland, Jan 20, (AP): Poland's six-month presidency of the European Union is firmly focused on security. As Europe's biggest land war in decades rages, fewer places highlight the challenges and contradictions of defending the bloc and its values more starkly than the border with Belarus.

Some 13,000 border guards and soldiers protect around 400 kilometers (250 miles) of border. It's become a buffer zone since Belarus' ally, Russia, invaded neighboring Ukraine three years ago. Similar fortifications farther north line Poland's frontier with the Russian region of Kaliningrad.

Poland is Ukraine's top logistical backer. Most of the Western-supplied arms, ammunition and equipment helping to keep Ukraine's armed forces afloat transit through Russia, meanwhile, uses Belarus as a staging ground for its invasion.

At the border near the town of Polowce, a 5.5-meter (18-foot) steel barrier strung with razor wire and topped by security cameras separates once-friendly communities that war has turned into wary rivals. Drones, helicopters and armored vehicles keep watch.

The border crossing is closed. Around 40 border guards and troops could be seen on Jan. 16, when the Polish EU presidency invited 60 reporters from international media to witness the security effort.

The road was strewn with layers of concrete obstacles and concertina wire likely to dissuade an advancing army. Border guards peered into Belarus.

It's needed, the government in Warsaw says, because Russia and Belarus are waging a particular kind of hybrid warfare: helping groups of migrants - mostly from Africa or the Middle East - to break through the border to provoke and destabilize Poland and the



Polish border guards look east into Belarus at the crossing point Polowce-Pieszczatka in Polowce, Poland on Jan 16. (AP)

rest of Europe.

"We have tightened our visa policy, and above all we have decided to suspend the right to asylum wherever we are dealing with mass border crossings organized by Belarus and Russia," Prime Minister Donald Tusk told reporters on Friday.

Almost 30,000 attempted border crossings were spotted last year. Most are young men, often from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. Polish authorities say they arrive in Belarus on tourist or student visas and are helped across for a fee ranging from \$8,000 to \$12,000.

Poland says they're assisted by the Belarus security services and other "organizers." They're mostly Ukrainians, perhaps fallen on hard times since fleeing the war. They can earn \$500 for each person they help, border officials say.

Border guards claim to be routinely attacked. One guard was killed last

year and several injured.

They say that migrants shoot slingshots, throw small explosives or rocks, or use pepper spray on guards. More than 400 incidents were recorded last year in this section of the border, with 307 people hospitalized.

The deputy commander of the Podlaski border guard division, Col. Andrzej Stasiulewicz, said the migrants are hard to discourage. "Warning shots don't work, so force is needed," he said. Reporters were shown video and photos purported to show migrants assaulting the border.

Stasiulewicz said their actions are "very unpredictable, and very precise and coordinated."

Medical aid group Doctors Without Borders paints a different picture. The charity says it's treated more than 400 people since November 2022, "many of them stranded for weeks in uninhab-

itable forests and exposed to violent practices at the border."

People suffered from exhaustion, hypothermia, dehydration and mental health issues. Last year, it noted "a sharp increase in people carrying the scars of physical assaults, including bruises and dog bites."

It's almost impossible to independently verify such reports. The area is off limits. NGOs and media must apply for a permit to enter. EU and international agencies that work with migrants are not invited either, although migrants are provided with their contact details should they want to complain.

Stasiulewicz said those who force their way in "are sent back to Belarus, which is in line with our legal framework."

The Norwegian Refugee Council, a migrant aid charity, has another take. It said that nearly 9,000 "violent pushbacks" have been reported by NGOs in what it describes as "Europe's death zone" since 2021.

Pushbacks - depriving someone who may be in fear for their safety of their right to apply for asylum - are illegal under international law.

Polish Undersecretary of State Maciej Duszczyc rejects the pushback allegations. He prefers "turnbacks." The rationale is that migrants are obliged to apply for asylum in good faith at open border points, not force their way in.

The nearest place they can do that is in Terespol, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of Polowce.

As far as the Polish authorities are concerned, their methods are working. The number of people arriving in Polowce has dropped significantly. Around 670 people applied for asylum there last year, and none to mid-January. The Office for Foreigners was empty when reporters visited.



Police officers inspect a home for the elderly where eight people died in a fire, in Barajevo, a municipality of Belgrade, Serbia on Jan 20. (AP)

Eight people die in fire at home for elderly in Serbia, say officials

BELGRADE, Serbia, Jan 20, (AP): Eight people died Monday in a fire at a home for older people on the outskirts of the Serbian capital, Belgrade, that is suspected of being set by a resident, officials said.

Seven others were injured in the blaze that erupted around 3:30 a.m. in Barajevo, a municipality on the southern edge of Belgrade, state RTS television reported.

"Emergency crews reacted swiftly ... but unfortunately the fire had already flared up and eight people lost their lives," said Serbian Social Care Minister Nemanja Starovic.

Police said in a statement that 30 people were in the home when the fire

broke out. They said the fire engulfed over a third of the care facility, which is located in a house in a rural area.

The suspected cause of the fire was arson, police said.

The state prosecutor's office said an investigation is still underway but that initial indications suggest that one of the residents who died in the fire had started it.

The injured were transferred to two hospitals in Belgrade, RTS said. At least one person was in serious condition, doctors said.

"This is a huge tragedy, but it could have been even worse," RTS quoted emergency sector officer Luka Causic as saying.

S.Korea, UAE to hold combined military drills

Police raid South Korean presidential office to secure martial law related-documents

SEOUL, Jan 20, (Agencies): South Korea's police on Monday planned to seize martial law documents in the presidential office, according to multiple media outlets.

Investigators arrived at a so-called safe house in Seoul to confiscate closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage at around 1:35 p.m. local time (0435 GMT). Impeached President Yoon Suk-yeol was believed to have discussed the martial law imposition at the house with officials and military commanders, according to multiple media outlets.

Other investigators will be sent to the presidential office to secure documents relevant to the martial law imposition.

A warrant to extend the detention of Yoon for up to 20 days was granted by a Seoul court on Sunday, making Yoon the country's first sitting president to be formally arrested.

The impeachment motion against

Yoon was passed in the National Assembly on Dec. 14 last year and was delivered to the constitutional court to deliberate for up to 180 days, during which Yoon's presidential power is suspended. Yoon, who was named by investigative agencies as a suspected ringleader on an insurrection charge, declared martial law on the night of Dec. 3. It was revoked by the National Assembly hours later.

Also:

TOKYO: South Korea and United Arab Emirates (UAE) will conduct combined drills in the Middle East nation in February as part of efforts to bolster their defense cooperation, Yonhap News Agency reported Monday, citing Seoul's Defense Ministry.

Under the plan, service members of the South Korean Army, Navy and Marine Corps departed for the UAE earlier in the day to attend the combined exercise scheduled for February 10-20, according to the ministry.

The upcoming exercise, organized

upon **Abu Dhabi's** request, will take place at Al Hamra Training Center and waters off Abu Dhabi and involve a 4,900-ton South Korean warship as well as 14 pieces of equipment, including the K2 tank and K9 self-propelled howitzer, the ministry said.

On the sidelines of the training, South Korea plans to showcase its homegrown weapons systems and hold military exchange activities, such as discussing ways to expand cooperation with high-level officials, it added.

The ministry expected the combined drills to enhance the military's capabilities to conduct joint operations as well as boost arms exports.

Last year, the South Korean Army conducted its first overseas drills involving the K2 and K9 in Qatar, as part of efforts to bolster cooperation with counterparts in the Middle East, the report added.



Investigators from the state anti-corruption agency and police officers make their way to the residence of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol to execute a warrant to detain Yoon in Seoul, South Korea, on Jan 15. (AP)

China executes 2 men who committed deadly attacks

Chinese president's envoy meets with Vance, Musk on eve of Trump's inauguration

BEIJING, Jan 20, (AP): China's vice president held meetings with the US vice president-elect and US business leaders, including Elon Musk, in Washington on the eve of Donald Trump's inauguration, as the two major powers tackle ongoing tensions over trade and technology.

Han Zheng, who serves as an envoy for Chinese President Xi Jinping at the inauguration, "discussed a range of topics including fentanyl, balancing trade and regional stability" with J.D. Vance, according to the Trump transition team.

Han stressed the "extensive common interests and enormous space of cooperation" the United States and China share in economic and trade relations despite "some disagreements and frictions," according to a read-out of his meeting with Vance issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry on Monday.

Trump has threatened to impose tariffs and other measures against China in his second term, while also hinting at ways in which the two rival powers could cooperate on issues such as regional conflicts and curbing the export of substances used in the production of fentanyl.

In an unorthodox move, Trump last month invited Xi to his inauguration. No head of state has previously made an official visit to the US for the inauguration, according to State Department historical records.

While Xi will not personally attend the event, he and Trump held a phone call on Friday during which they discussed trade, fentanyl and TikTok. The Chinese social media app restored service to users in the U.S. on Sunday, just hours after it went dark in response to a federal ban, which Trump said he would pause by executive order on Monday.

Han also met with Musk and other top US business executives, including representatives of the U.S.-China Business Council and the US Chamber of Commerce in Washington, DC, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.



Chinese Vice President Han Zheng, as Chinese President Xi Jinping's special representative, meets with U.S. Vice President-elect J.D. Vance in Washington, D.C., Jan 19. (Xinhua)

The Chinese vice president reiterated promises for an improved business environment for foreign firms in China and expressed hopes that US companies will continue expanding investment in the country.

Musk, whose company Tesla operates a factory in Shanghai, posted on his platform X after the meeting that he has long opposed the TikTok ban "because it goes against freedom of speech."

"That said, the current situation where TikTok is allowed to operate

in America, but X is not allowed to operate in China is unbalanced," he wrote. "Something needs to change."

X is banned in China alongside other major US social media and news apps and websites, including YouTube, Google, Facebook and many major US media.

Also:

BEIJING: China has executed two men who committed deadly attacks that killed dozens in November, raising concerns about a surge in what are called "revenge on society crimes," state media reported Monday.

Fan Weiqu, 62, who rammed his car into a crowd outside a sports stadium in the southern city of **Zhuhai**, killing at least 35 people, was executed on Monday. The attack was the country's deadliest in over a decade, according to authorities. Police said Fan was upset over his divorce settlement.

Also in November, 21-year-old **Xu Jiabin** killed eight people and injured 17 others in a stabbing attack at his vocational school in the eastern city of Wuxi. Police said Xu had failed his examinations and could not graduate, and was dissatisfied about his pay at an internship. He was also executed on Monday, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The killings spurred Chinese President **Xi Jinping** to urge local governments to take measures to prevent such attacks, known as "revenge on society crimes."

The two men's death sentences were issued by the intermediate people's courts in the cities of Zhuhai and Wuxi, respectively, in December and approved by the Supreme People's Court, according to state media.

China is believed to execute more prisoners each year than the rest of the world combined, though the precise total is classified a state secret. Executions are traditionally carried out by gunshot, though lethal injections have also been introduced in recent years.



This photo provided by US Embassy, Philippines, shows the arrival of Afghan US Special Immigrant Visa Applicants in the Philippines on Jan 6. (AP)

Manila, Washington conduct MCA in sea

Afghans in Philippines leave for US with special visas

MANILA, Philippines, Jan 20, (Agencies): Nearly 200 Afghan nationals have flown on to the United States after their special immigration visas were processed in the Philippines as part of an agreement between Manila and Washington, the US Embassy in Manila said Sunday.

The Afghans left the Philippines in several groups on commercial flights last week after completing their application process for resettlement in the US, according to the embassy spokesperson Kanishka Gangopadhyay.

An embassy statement expressed "deep appreciation to the government of the Philippines for their cooperation and support for US efforts to assist Afghan special immigrants."

The Afghans, including many children, arrived in the Philippines on Jan 6. Details of their numbers and location were kept secret by US and Philippine officials. Washington covered the cost of their stay in the Philippines.

The Afghans primarily worked for the US government in Afghanistan or were deemed eligible for US special immigrant visas but were left behind when US and NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan after 20 years of war in August 2021 as the Taliban seized power.

At the time, the Taliban takeover exposed Afghan supporters of US forces to potential retaliatory attacks by Afghanistan's new rulers.

Outgoing President Joe Biden and President-elect Donald Trump have blamed one another for the chaotic pullout of US forces.

Biden discussed the Afghan resettlement issue with Philippines leader Ferdinand Marcos Jr. when he visited the US last year, Philippine officials said. In July, the Philippines agreed to temporarily host a US immigrant visa processing center for the Afghan nationals although there were concerns over security due to threats faced by some of the Afghans trying to flee from the Taliban rule.

A senior Philippine official said last year that the accommodation in the Philippines was a one-time deal.

Marcos has rekindled relations with the US since his 2022 election victory and has allowed an expansion of the American military presence under a 2014 defense agreement in a decision that has alarmed China.

The Marcos administration has also broadened military and defense ties with the US, Japan and Australia and moved to build stronger security rela-

tions with France, New Zealand and Canada to strengthen its territorial defense, including in the disputed South China Sea.

Also:

KUALA LUMPUR: The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the US Navy conducted on Sunday a bilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) in the South China Sea.

This came in a press release by **Philippines** armed forces saying that MCAs with the US is its first for the year and fifth overall since launching the joint activities in 2023.

The activities reinforced bilateral maritime cooperation and interoperability, the Philippine armed forces said.

Security engagements between the two allies have soared under Philippine President **Ferdinand Marcos Jr.**, who has pivoted closer to Washington, allowing the expansion of military bases that American forces can access, including facilities that face Taiwan, it noted.

The joint maritime activity included the United States' Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group, two guided missile destroyers, two helicopters and two F-18 Hornet aircraft, it added.

Indian police volunteer gets life in rape, murder of trainee doc

NEW DELHI, Jan 20, (AP): An Indian court on Monday sentenced a police volunteer to life in prison after finding him guilty in the rape and killing of a trainee doctor last year, a crime that sparked nationwide protests over inadequate safety for women and led to a speedy trial in the country's slow-moving justice system.

Sanjay Roy, 33, who has consistently maintained his innocence, can appeal the judgment in a higher court.



Roy

The killing of the 31-year-old physician while she was on duty at a hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata highlighted the chronic issue of violence against women in the country. Police discovered the woman's bloodied body at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital's seminar hall last Aug. 9. An autopsy found she had been strangled and sexually assaulted.

Federal police, who investigated the case, said the crime deserved the death penalty. Parents of the victim had also sought the death penalty for Roy and said they suspected more people were involved in the crime.

The case was initially investigated by Kolkata police but later the court handed over the probe to federal investigators after state government officers were accused of mishandling the investigation.

After the assault, doctors and medical students across India held protests and rallies demanding better security. Thousands of women also protested in the streets demanding swift justice for the victim.

Roy was arrested a day after the crime, and arguments in the case began in November. The assault prompted India's Supreme Court to set up a national task force to suggest ways to enhance safety in government hospitals.

Pakistan launches security operation in NW after surge in violence and sectarian strife

PARACHINAR, Pakistan, Jan 20, (AP): Pakistani security forces launched an operation targeting militants in a restive northwestern district bordering Afghanistan, officials said on Monday, following a surge in attacks and sectarian strife. It is the first large-scale operation in the area in recent years.

The latest attack in Kurram, in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was on Friday when unidentified gunmen ambushed and burned aid trucks, killing two security personnel and at least five drivers.

The district has been cut off from the rest of the country since November after authorities blocked roads following clashes between heavily armed Shiite and Sunni tribes. At the time, gunmen ambushed a convoy of vehicles carrying passengers, killing 52 people, mostly Shiites. Retaliatory attacks left over 70 others dead.

Hundreds of thousands of residents have since faced a shortage of food and medicine with aid organizations unable to enter the area.

Barrister Saif Ali, a spokesman for the provincial government, said the operation became "inevitable"



A police officer stands guard at a post while a convoy of aid trucks carrying medicines, food and other relief supplies for besieged residents, enter in Kurram, a restive northwestern Pakistani district in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Jan 8. (AP)

following the surge in violence. He also said authorities are moving some residents to temporary governmental shelter camps while the operation is ongoing in several areas, including the city of Bagan from where most of the violence has been reported.

Motasim Billah, a government administrator, said the goal of the operation is to fully restore peace and ensure the writ of the government.

Shiite Muslims dominate parts of Kurram, although they are a minority in the rest of Pakistan, which is majority Sunni. The area has a history of sectarian conflict, with militant Sunni groups previously targeting minority Shiites.

At least five militants were killed by security forces intercepting their attempt to infiltrate through Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, Pakistan's military said on Sunday.

According to a press release by Pakistan military's media wing, Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), a movement of a group of militants, who were trying to infiltrate through Pakistan-Afghanistan border, was picked up by the security forces in general area Sambaza in Zhob district of Balochistan.

The security forces effectively engaged and thwarted their attempt to infiltrate, killing at least five militants, ISPR confirmed.

Lat/Am

Journos demand justice in Haiti: The young boy wore a suit and bow tie to his stepfather's funeral on Saturday, where he demanded a handkerchief and wiped tears off his mother's face as they buried Marc Kendy Natoux, one of two journalists killed by gangs in Haiti.

Natoux was fatally shot on Christmas Eve in one of the worst attacks on the press in the troubled Caribbean country, with gangs opening fire during what was supposed to be the reopening of Haiti's largest public hospital. The 42-year-old father of two spoke four languages and worked for several local and US media outlets. He also taught English and Spanish and was known for his kindness.

"Natoux was a protector of journalists," recalled Oriol Jacklin, a journalist with Radio Regard FM. "He worked with everyone and respected everybody."

Natoux did marketing for Voice of America's Creole service and worked for the US Agency for Global Media and the Boston Caribbean Network, among others. On Dec. 24, he traveled to downtown Port-au-Prince with other journalists to cover the anticipated reopening of Haiti's General Hospital, which gangs had pillaged. Shortly after he arrived, gunmen opened fire. (AP)

Traffic collision kills 5: At least five people were killed, and several others injured in a five-vehicle collision early Saturday on a key highway connecting Bolivia and Chile, the police said.

Preliminary reports indicate that the vehicles collided violently due to excessive speed.

Local media suggested that the vehicles may be transporting contraband, a claim supported by the presence of anti-smuggling authorities at the scene. (Xinhua)

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Business

A new brand identity that aligns with customer aspirations and provides an exceptional experience for the affluent

Gulf Bank unveils exclusive new services for private banking clients

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Gulf Bank has introduced a new brand identity for its Private Banking Services, marking a major milestone in enhancing customer experience and offering exceptional banking solutions. This initiative highlights the Bank's dedication to reshaping Private Banking and providing tailored services designed for affluent clients.

Sattam Al-Marzouq, Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking - Wealth Management, said: "Our clients drive us to continually raise the bar in service excellence. This new identity reflects their ambitions and reinforces our commitment to delivering outstanding services and innovative products. We remain dedicated to offering tailored support and expert investment advisory services that address their distinct needs."

He added, "Our focus is on protecting and growing our clients' wealth today, tomorrow, and for generations to come. With a dedicated team of experienced professionals, we ensure their financial ambitions are met through exclusive benefits, promising investment opportunities, and seamless banking experiences."

Gulf Bank's Wealth Management strategy is built on three core pillars:



Sattam Al-Marzouq

fostering long-term wealth growth, safeguarding assets and ensuring financial security, and facilitating seamless wealth transfer in line with clients' personal goals. The Bank provides a comprehensive suite of services, including family wealth planning, liquidity and financing solutions, global asset management, and customized offerings designed to meet the unique needs of its clients.

GulfBank has introduced innovative financing solutions to meet real estate and investment needs, offering securities-backed loans and access to diverse, high-potential investment opportunities. These solutions are

Sattam Al-Marzouq:

- We are committed to growing our Private Banking Clients' wealth—today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.
- Gulf Bank provides a full range of real estate and investment financing solutions, featuring securities-backed loans and exclusive access to high-potential investment opportunities.
- Private Banking clients can access diverse, high-potential investment opportunities through various investment funds tailored to meet their needs and aspirations.
- Each Private Banking client is assigned a dedicated Relationship Manager, delivering tailored financial and investment solutions with discretion and expertise.

crafted to deliver exceptional financial flexibility, reflecting the unique goals and distinguished status of the Bank's clients.

Al-Marzouq highlighted: "Whether you aspire to acquire your dream property, grow your investments, or strategically leverage your assets, we are committed to supporting you at every stage with exceptional banking services."

Private Banking clients receive the dedicated support of a relationship manager who handles all their banking requirements, providing tailored financial and investment solutions to protect and grow their wealth. Addi-

tionally, clients enjoy exclusive benefits, including debit cards with airport lounge access, travel and hotel discounts, and premium credit cards such as Visa Infinite or Mastercard World. These cards offer comprehensive travel and accident insurance, concierge services, and access to Gulf Bank's Points and Discounts Program.

Recently, Gulf Bank received the Best Next-Generation Offering award at the 2024 Private Banker International Global Wealth Awards in Singapore. This recognition highlights the bank's success in expanding its offerings and effectively



Gulf Bank enhances private banking experience with revamped identity.

attracting the next generation of affluent clients.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently,

ensuring a seamless experience.

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

Kuwait's US Treasury holdings rise to \$51.20 bln in November

Japan remains top holder of US Treasury bonds

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Kuwait's holdings of US Treasury bonds surged to approximately \$51.20 billion in November 2024, marking an 18.90 percent increase compared to \$43.06 billion in November 2023, according to the latest data from the US Treasury Department, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The value of Kuwait's holdings has grown by 10.46 percent since the start of 2024, adding

\$4.85 billion, as they stood at \$46.35 billion at the end of 2023.

However, Kuwait's holdings saw a slight decrease of 0.43 percent from \$51.42 billion in October 2024. In terms of distribution, Kuwait's holdings were divided into \$49.80 billion in long-term bonds and \$1.40 billion in short-term bonds.

Saudi Arabia remains the leading Arab nation in holding US Treasury bonds, with approximately \$135.6 billion and continues to be the only Arab country listed among the top 20 global holders of these bonds. Japan leads the

global ranking with holdings worth \$1.10 trillion.

Overall, the US Treasury bond market reached \$8.63 trillion in November 2024, reflecting an 11.79 percent increase compared to \$7.72 trillion in the same month of 2023, despite a slight monthly decrease of 0.58 percent.

It is important to note that the US Treasury's monthly data only reflects investments in US Treasury bills and bonds, excluding other types of US investments, whether governmental or private.

Main market index gains 0.43 pct

Boursa Kuwait ends on positive note, general index up 0.53 pct

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Monday's trading session on a high note, with its general index gaining 39.80 points, or 0.53 percent, to close at 7,580.64 points. The total trading volume reached 316.4 million shares, executed through 16,015 cash transactions, with a total value of KD 71.7 million (approximately \$220.5 million).

The Main Market Index also posted gains, rising by 30.49 points, or 0.43 percent, to settle at 7,175.39 points. A total of 172.5 million shares were traded on this market segment through 8,567 cash transactions, amounting to KD 24.5 million (around \$75.4

million). Similarly, the Premier Market Index rose 44.19 points, or 0.55 percent, to end at 8,054.17 points. This segment recorded a trading volume of 143.8 million shares, facilitated through 7,448 transactions, with a total value of KD 47.15 million (approximately \$145.2 million).

Meanwhile, the Major 50 Index advanced by 14.07 points, or 0.20 percent, to close at 7,127.32 points. A total of 89.16 million shares were traded in this segment through 4,099 cash transactions, generating a value of KD 15.3 million (around \$47.12 million).

In partnership with LOYAC, the program prepares students to thrive in the job market

Agility concludes successful internship program

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Agility, a supply chain services, infrastructure and innovation company, announced the successful completion of its 2024 internship program in collaboration with LOYAC, honoring six interns who completed an eight-week training period across five departments.

At Agility's main office, interns gained experience in Human Resources (HR), Marketing, Finance, Information Technology (IT), and spent time in the Sales and Customer Service departments of Agility Logistics Parks (ALP).

The interns built practical skills and expanded capabilities intended to help them prepare to meet the demands of the ever-evolving and competitive job market. The program concluded with presentations in which the six interns showcased their achievements and growth. The Agility training program offers a valuable opportunity for interns, preparing them to thrive in the workforce by equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their professional ambitions.

Agility's focus on education and skill development extends beyond this training program. Since 2006, Agility has been a strategic partner



Agility LOYAC Internship Program.

of LOYAC, supporting young people in Kuwait through specialized courses and initiatives in financial literacy and entrepreneurship. Agility's commitment to education and skill development has positively impacted over 687,000 young people since 2014, with

nearly 50% of participants being girls and young women.

In addition to its local initiatives in Kuwait, Agility supports community-enabling initiatives and partners in Saudi Arabia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, India, Egypt, and other countries. Over the past dec-

ade, Agility has impacted more than 2.3 million people, providing funding for youth education, entrepreneurship, employment, and digital training, while also providing resources in response to the aftermath of natural disasters and complex humanitarian crises.

KPC approves tender awards for KIPIC and KOTC projects

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) has announced that the tender for quality control services at the Zour Refinery has been awarded for KD 14.145 million, following the approval of the Higher Purchasing Committee for Tenders of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

KIPIC also announced the award of the public tender for supplying hydraulic pipe bundle cranes at a value of KD 95.200.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) has launched a public auction for the investment of areas designated for providing interactive banking devices and ATMs at the company sites, with the deadline for bid submission being March 20.

Furthermore, Kuwait Oil Tankers Company (KOTC) announced a limited tender for the drydocking and maintenance of eight tankers, with bids due by February 18.

Also, the company has issued a tender for the rehabilitation of buried gas tanks and the development of the gas network, with the closing date for bids extended to January 21, instead of the initially set date of January 7.

In addition, KOTC, through KIPIC, has also announced a tender for the supply of stationery to the company, with the deadline for submitting bids set for March 4.

Also, the Higher Purchasing Committee for Tenders of KPC and its affiliated companies, based on the request of KOTC, announced the launch of a limited global tender for a purchase request and special service for the Al-Siddiq tanker. The deadline for receiving bids is February 11.

Liquidity remains strong

Kuwait's residential sector shows mixed performance

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The residential sector in Kuwait has witnessed significant developments and transactions over the past five years, with total trading reaching 10.8 billion dinars between 2019 and the end of 2024, according to statistics from the Real Estate Registration Department at the Ministry of Justice, reports Al-Jarida daily.

During this period, there were 29,600 transactions, with various milestones impacting the sector, including regulatory decisions, liquidity and average transaction values.

In 2024, the residential sector saw 3,527 property transactions, valued at 1.55 billion dinars. The average value per transaction was 440.7 thousand dinars.

This figure represents a 13.2 percent increase in the number of deals compared to 2023, which recorded 3,114 transactions. However, the 2024 figure shows a decline compared to previous years – down by 25.4 percent, 25.4 percent, 60.8 percent and 22.3 percent from the years 2020 to 2022, respectively.

Liquidity in the residential market also showed positive signs, with a notable 18.5 percent increase compared

to 2023, reaching 1.31 billion dinars. This is a 7.4 percent rise compared to 2020, which saw trading worth 1.44 billion dinars. However, liquidity decreased when compared to 2022, 2021 and 2019, by 22.6 percent, 47.6 percent and 1.05 percent, respectively.

The average value of transactions in 2024 was the second highest in the past five years, just behind 2022 when it stood at 442 thousand dinars.

The average value in 2024 showed a slight decrease of 0.29 percent compared to 2022 but was the highest compared to the years 2023, 2021, 2020 and 2019, with increases of 4.6 percent, 34.2 percent and 44.01 percent, respectively.

Despite fluctuations in transaction volumes, experts noted that residential property prices in major areas like the Capital and Hawalli Governorates remained stable on a quarterly basis.

However, there were some declines observed in other regions, with prices falling by 1.3 percent in Farwaniya, 0.5 percent in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, 0.3 percent in Ahmadi and 1.8 percent in Jahra.

Looking ahead to 2025, many real estate experts anticipate continued liquidity growth in the residential sector.

Silver remains stable

Gold prices rise to \$2,702 amid global uncertainties

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Gold prices ended last week's trading higher at \$2,702 per ounce, marking a third consecutive week of gains, with a 1.25 percent increase from the previous closing price, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This upward movement in gold prices comes amidst ongoing geopolitical tensions and economic challenges around the world, particularly with the inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump.

According to a report from the Kuwaiti company Dar Al-Sabayek, the political and economic uncertainties, especially those associated with the incoming US administration, have significantly impacted gold prices.

There is growing expectation that President Trump's policies will include stricter economic measures, such as imposing tariffs, which could intensify global trade tensions. This has prompt-

ed investors to seek gold as a safe haven.

The report also highlighted expectations of higher inflation resulting from these policies, which could further boost gold's appeal as a hedge.

Recent US economic data showed core inflation was lower than expected, which has raised the possibility of the US Federal Reserve cutting interest rates in the near future, potentially increasing demand for gold.

Additionally, the report noted that China's economy is expected to grow by 5 percent in 2024, adding to the economic divergence at the global level.

With important US economic data expected this week, such as initial unemployment claims and purchasing managers' indices, market participants are closely monitoring developments that could influence economic expectations and

interest rates.

Looking ahead, Dar Al-Sabayek forecasts that gold prices could continue to rise in the coming months if economic instability persists, particularly with escalating trade conflicts and protectionist policies between the US and China.

Gold prices may exceed \$2,800 per ounce and could reach \$3,000 per ounce in the second half of the year, especially if inflationary pressures intensify.

In the local market, 24-karat gold was priced at 26.89 dinars per gram (about \$82), while 22-karat gold was priced at 24.65 dinars per gram (about \$75). Silver prices remained stable at 340 dinars per kilogram (about \$1,111).

The report also clarified that a troy ounce, the unit of measurement used for precious metals, is equal to 31.103 grams.



Alshaya Group team honored.



Salah Al-Fulaij



Mohammed Al-Othman, John Hadden and Jihad Khalil

Introducing NBK-Aura Credit & Prepaid Cards: A first-of-its-kind partnership

NBK and Alshaya Group launch exclusive collaboration with Mastercard



Mohammed Al-Othman, John Hadden during the launch ceremony of the new cards.



Mohammed Al-Othman, John Hadden and Jihad Khalil.



John Hadden

Offering customers up to 8% Aura Points, redeemable across over 50 leading international brands in fashion, beauty, dining and more

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: In a groundbreaking collaboration with Alshaya Group, a global leader in retail brand management and operations, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) proudly unveiled the NBK Aura World Mastercard Credit Card and the NBK Aura Platinum Mastercard Prepaid Card.

The announcement was made during a special event at NBK's headquarters, attended by Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK Kuwait, Mohammed Al-Othman, Chief Executive Officer of Consumer and Digital Banking at NBK, John Hadden, CEO of Alshaya Group, and Jihad Khalil, Mastercard's General Manager for MENA East Cluster. The event also saw the presence of senior executives from NBK, Alshaya, and Mastercard.

The launch of these cards follows NBK's recent exclusive partnership agreement with Alshaya Group, reaffirming the bank's commitment to delivering exceptional benefits to its customers. This initiative underscores NBK's leadership and dedication to introducing innovative and distinctive offerings.

The two new cards enable NBK customers to earn up to 8% in Aura points on their purchases, offering a seamless experience for redeeming rewards through the customer's Aura application account. These points can be redeemed at over 50 iconic brands across fashion, beauty, dining, and more, such as H&M, Bath&Body Works, Footlocker, Shake Shack, Raisin Cane's, Charlotte Tilbury, and Harvey Nichols. The application provides customers with the flexibility to manage and redeem their points, enabling them to shop and pay directly at participat-

Al-Othman:

- The new cards were developed in over 18 months through strategic partnership with Alshaya Group
- They are meticulously crafted to deliver unmatched value and maximum benefits for customers

Hadden:

- We are excited to expand strategic partnership with NBK and Mastercard to enhance customer experience through our Aura loyalty program, starting in Kuwait

ing stores using their earned rewards. This exclusive program includes a wide array of globally recognized brands managed and operated by Alshaya Group, ensuring unparalleled value and choice.

Both cards also grant holders exclusive Mastercard benefits, including complimentary access to numerous airport lounges worldwide, free travel insurance, travel discounts, and a host of additional perks.

Reflecting on this collaboration, Mr. Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO, Consumer and Digital Banking Group at NBK remarked,



Mastercard Cobrand Launch (Aura)

"We are thrilled to see the result of 18 months of dedicated collaboration with our partners at Alshaya Group. Our goal was to create a groundbreaking product that delivers maximum value to both NBK and Alshaya Group's customers, in partnership with Mastercard."

Al-Othman also emphasized that the launch of these cards marks the first collaboration between NBK and Alshaya Group following their recent exclusive partnership agreement. He further highlighted that NBK consistently seeks to forge strategic partnerships with leading companies across various sectors, aiming to provide its customers with exceptional offers and benefits that not only meet their needs but also exceed their expectations, enhancing their overall banking experience with NBK.

Meanwhile, Mr. John Hadden, CEO at



Salah Al-Fulaij, Mohammed Al-Othman, Hesham Al-Nusf, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Ahmed Borsali, John Hadden and Jihad Khalil during the launch ceremony of the new cards.

Alshaya Group said, "We are excited to announce this new partnership today with NBK, has a trusted and strong partner of Alshaya throughout our 40-year journey of growth."

This announcement marks the next evolution in this longstanding relationship with NBK, as well as the beginning of a new collaboration with Mastercard, with a shared focus on enhancing customer experience and financial services. We are particularly proud that Kuwait is the first country to launch this innovative collaboration, built upon Alshaya's Aura loyalty program, which already has 8.5 million members, with 1.6 million of

those members based in Kuwait alone."

NBK is committed to offering rewarding deals and exclusive value-added benefits to customers across all segments, reinforcing its leading position in both the local and regional banking sectors. Meanwhile, Alshaya Group manages a vast portfolio of renowned brands across the Middle East, North Africa, Turkey, and Europe, providing customers with access to some of the world's most famous brands through a network of thousands of stores, restaurants, cafes, entertainment venues, and more than 125 e-commerce and digital platforms.

The first-of-its-kind digital experience in Kuwait

Weyay Bank announces launch of Weyay Aura prepaid card to earn more Aura points with every transaction

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Weyay Bank announces the launch of the new Weyay Aura card in collaboration with Alshaya Group, a leading international brand franchise operator, offering an unparalleled choice of well-known brands to customers. The Bank aims to help Weyay customers using the Aura Loyalty Program by Alshaya Group maximize their points with every spend they make with the new card.

The Weyay Aura card was launched in a special event attended by the executive management of the Bank, represented by the Chief Executive Officer of the National Bank of Kuwait, Salah Al-Fulaij, the Chief Executive Officer of Consumer and Digital Banking, Mohammed Al-Othman as well as the Head of Weyay Bank, Amal Al-Duwaisan, the Chief Executive Officer of Alshaya Group, John Hayden, and the Division President of East Arabia at Mastercard, J. K. Khalil.

As Kuwait's first digital bank, Weyay aims to provide an innovative digital experience allowing Weyay customers to use the Weyay Aura card for purchases both locally and internationally, earning more Aura points that can be redeemed for a variety of benefits within the Aura Loyalty Program.

Key Features of the Weyay Aura prepaid card:

- A rewarding experience by getting more Aura points with every transaction:
 - Up to 30 points for every 1 KD spent at stores participating in the Aura Loyalty Program.
 - 10 points for every 1 KD spent at any store at The Avenues that is not part of the Aura Loyalty Program.
 - 2 points for every 1 KD spent at any other location inside and outside Kuwait.
- Easy digital card creation via the Weyay app: Weyay customers can easily get their Weyay Aura card instantly through the app and start using



Salah Al-Fulaij, Mohammed Al-Othman, John Hadden, Hisham Al-Nusf and Amal Al-Duwaisan during the ceremony.

it for both online and in-store purchases. As a completely digital card, customers can add their card to e-wallets like Apple Pay, enabling them to make fast and secure payments. This digital card also ensures customers can increase the value of their rewards anytime and anywhere.

■ Points added automatically to Aura account: once the card is created within the Weyay app, it is fully integrated with Aura's app, ensuring that points are automatically added to the Aura account of the customer with every purchase. This eliminates the need to separately redeem points after payment, providing

a seamless and hassle-free experience.

On this occasion, Naser Al-Duwaisan, Product Manager at Weyay Bank, said: "we are excited to launch the Weyay Aura prepaid card and offer a unique, enriching experience to our customers. Our partnership with Alshaya Group reflects our commitment to innovation and our shared vision to enhance the digital experience, focusing on customer needs. This also highlights the growing demand for digital banking solutions in the region."

"Our collaboration with Weyay Bank is a transformative opportunity for our customers. By merg-



Aura PR Visuals

ing our extensive retail network with their cutting-edge digital banking solutions, we're creating a seamless and rewarding experience that prioritizes customer needs. We're excited to collaborate and deliver groundbreaking services to the market," said Mr. Francois Orhan, Vice President of Loyalty, Payments, and Data at Alshaya Group.

All information about the Weyay Aura card can be found on its website www.weyaybank.com or in the Weyay app that can be downloaded from the App Store or Google Play Store.

Weyay Bank is Kuwait's first digital bank, providing innovative banking solutions designed to keep up with the digital age we live in. Weyay offers a wide range of digital services and benefits via its easy-to-use app, focusing on speed, flexibility, and security.

Aurora Nealand Jazz Quintet performs at Yarmouk Cultural Center

US Embassy hosts Aurora Nealand Jazz Quintet in Kuwait

By Paulo X. Fernandes

Arab Times/Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Public Diplomacy Section of the US Embassy in Kuwait hosted the musical performance of the Aurora Nealand Jazz Quintet at the Yarmouk Cultural Center.

The event brought together jazz enthusiasts from across Kuwait, eager to experience the quintet's dynamic blend of traditional and contemporary jazz.

Aurora Nealand, a celebrated multi-instrumentalist and vocalist, led the group with her signature charisma and exceptional artistry.

The quintet delivered a captivating repertoire, blending soulful melodies, intricate improvisations and rhythmic brilliance that kept the audience enthralled.

The performance was not just a showcase of musical mastery but also a celebration of the unifying power of jazz, resonating deeply with the diverse crowd.

This memorable evening reinforced the Yarmouk Cultural Center's reputation as a hub for cultural enrichment and world-class performances.

The event was opened by HE Karen Sasahara, the US Ambassador to the State of Kuwait warmly welcoming the audience and expressed great honor in hosting such a distinguished group of musicians -- the renowned Aurora Nealand Jazz Quintet from New Orleans.

The US envoy also took a moment to thank the Yarmouk Cultural Center for its invaluable support in bringing this spectacular event to life.

In her speech, the envoy highlighted the significance of the performance, noting that the audience was about to experience an unforgettable display



Photos during the event.

Photo by Samer Shaqir

of jazz music -- a true testament to the friendship and cultural exchange between the two nations. "We are going to be treated to a vibrant performance, where the rhythms of jazz music will speak the universal language of unity and connection," the envoy stated.

Indeed, music has an unparalleled ability to transcend borders, and the evening's performance served as a perfect example of this unique power, she said.

As the audience immersed themselves in the rhythms of jazz, they cele-

brated the harmony that music creates, allowing everyone in the room to share in the joy and unity it brings.

This memorable night not only showcased the immense talent of the Aurora Nealand Jazz Quintet but also strengthened the cultural ties between

Kuwait and the United States, highlighting the special bond that music can help nurture.

Aurora Nealand is a New Orleans-based composer, multi-instrumentalist and social-practice organizer known for her innovative work in traditional

jazz and improvised music.

Active since 2004, she has become a key figure in preserving and evolving the New Orleans jazz tradition, drawing inspiration from her experiences performing in streets, clubs and parades while learning from local elders.



New Joe & The Juice store in 360 Mall.

Joe & The Juice opens new store at 360 Mall in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Light Food, a subsidiary of Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW), celebrated today the launch of its Joe & The Juice store at 360 Mall.

Joe & The Juice's expansion is driven by the growing demand for healthy and convenient food options in Kuwait.

The new store in 360 Mall is located on the M2 level in Phase 2 and features a modern, comfortable setting where customers can enjoy a diverse menu of fresh juices and snacks made with healthy ingredients.

The 360 Mall location joins a

network of Joe & The Juice stores across Kuwait, including Argania Complex in Shuwaikh, Argan Square in Salmiya, The Walk Mall in Ardiya, Al Andalus Complex in Hawally, The Warehouse in South Sabahiya, Sahara Golf Resort next to Hunting and Equestrian Club, GUST campus in West Mishref, Al Khiran Mall, Arraya Centre in Kuwait City, and Kuwait International Airport Terminal 1- Arrivals, Murouj in Sabah Al Salem, and Vibes Complex in Abu Al Hasaniya, and Bnaider Resort, which operates 24 hours a day from Thursday to Saturday.

IMA Kuwait to host Quran Conf.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait is set to host the Grand Quran Conference 2025, an event aimed at deepening the community's connection with the Holy Quran and its timeless teachings. The conference marks the culmination of IMA's month-long Quran campaign and promises to be a night of spiritual enlightenment and inspiration.

Event Details:
Date: Friday, 24th January 2025

Time: 7:00 PM
Venue: Masjid Al Kabir, Kuwait

The highlight of the evening will be a powerful address by Dr. Taha Mateen, a distinguished and inspirational speaker from India, renowned for his eloquence and insightful discourse on Islamic teachings. His speech is expected to provide thought-provoking perspectives and inspire attendees to strengthen their faith and spiritual connection.

Conference Highlights:
Gain a deeper understanding of the Quran's wisdom and teachings.
Strengthen personal faith and spiritual bonds.

Be inspired by the captivating words of Dr. Taha Mateen.

Experience a sense of community and shared devotion in a welcoming atmosphere.

The IMA invites individuals and families to participate in this spiritually enriching gathering and take advantage of the opportunity to rekindle their connection with the Quran. Attendees are encouraged to bring along their friends and loved ones to share in the experience.

"This conference is an opportunity for us all to reignite our connection with the divine message and rediscover the Quran's guidance for our lives," said an IMA spokesperson. "We welcome everyone to join us in this enlightening journey."

The IMA urges the community to spread the word about the event and extend invitations to those who may benefit from the experience.

For more information, interested individuals can contact 9730 7561.

Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to embrace the light of the Quran and rejuvenate your spiritual journey.

Over 250 donors participate in Blood Donation Drive

'United for Humanity' Pak Donors successfully conducts 26th Blood Donation Drive in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Pak Donors, a leading non-profit organization committed to promoting blood donation awareness and facilitating blood donations, successfully conducted its 26th Blood Donation Drive. The event witnessed an overwhelming response, with around 250 individuals registering to donate blood, showcasing humanity's commitment to this noble cause.

The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Mr. Hamza Tauqir, the Pakistan Embassy's Community Welfare Attaché (CWA). During his visit, Hamza Tauqir praised Pak Donors for their tireless efforts and dedication to humanity, emphasizing the significance of such initiatives in fostering a spirit of unity and compassion. He commended the Pak Donors team for their exceptional organization and community service.

Pak Donors is grateful to Falcon General Trading & Contracting Co.'s CEO Mr. Muddasar Hussain, for his generous support, which played a vital role in ensuring the event's success. Their cooperation highlights the importance of partnerships in advancing humanitarian causes.

Pak Donors team, Camp Leader, Abdul Waheed Jaber, Inam Morganite and Hakeem Tariq warmly welcomed all guests, including notable Pakistani dignitaries and other nationals, who attended the event to show their support. Their participation reinforced the shared commitment to the cause of saving lives through voluntary blood donation.

Pak Donors extends heartfelt gratitude to all donors, Embassy of Pakistan in Kuwait, supporters, Media Partner and volunteers whose contributions made this event possible. The organization also acknowledges the amazing support provided by Central Blood Bank Jabriya, Kuwait, which has al-



Photos during the event.

ways been a cornerstone of our successful events. The event also witnessed the presence of female donors, warmly welcomed and attended to by our dedicated female wing volunteers, who handled

them with care and professionalism. The organization also acknowledges the amazing support provided by Central Blood Bank Jabriya, Kuwait, which has always been a cornerstone of our

successful events. The organization remains dedicated to its mission of raising awareness about the critical need for blood donation and facilitating life-saving support to those in need.

IDAK delegation meets Kuwait Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Executive Council of the Indian Dentists' Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK) had the privilege of meeting the Honorable Minister of Health, Kuwait, Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi, at his office recently, to discuss IDAK's ongoing activities and contributions. The meeting was graced by the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary of Dental Administration, Dr. Ahmad Asad.

IDAK was represented by President Dr. George P. Alex; General Secretary, Dr. Jijan Sam Thomas; Vice President, Dr. Roshila Mariam Mathew; Joint Secretary, Dr. Amrita Geevarghese and President-elect Dr. Shalin Anna Simon.

The delegation briefed the Minister about the comprehensive activities of IDAK, emphasizing the release of the 9th Oral Health Guide, titled Decoding Dental Pain: Care to Cure. Additionally, the Minister viewed the video montage of IDAK's cultural show, Cinephilia, which was featured during the Oral Health Guide release event. He expressed his admiration for the creative excellence of the show.

Dr. Al-Awadhi commended IDAK for its dedication to enhancing the professional and personal lives of Indian dentists in Kuwait through scientific, cultural and sports events. He also appreciated IDAK's commitment to serving the broader community through various community outreach initiatives and efforts to enhance dentistry in Kuwait through Scientific initiatives.

The Minister has graciously accepted IDAK's invitation to attend the Felicitation Ceremony of the 5th IDAK International Scientific Symposium. Scheduled for April 25, 2025, this prestigious event will be held at the Al Hashemi Ballroom, Hotel Radisson Blu and is open to all dentists in Kuwait. The symposium will feature esteemed speakers from India and Kuwait, making it a significant platform for professional pursuits.



Kuwait Health Minister lauds IDAK's community and scientific initiatives.

To commemorate the release of the Oral Health Guide and the success of Cinephilia, the IDAK Council presented the Minister with a memento.

In return, Dr. Al-Awadhi awarded a special memento to IDAK, recognizing its outstanding service to the field of dentistry, dental practitioners and the

community at large.

The meeting was a testament to IDAK's unwavering commitment to promoting excellence and fostering collaboration within the dental fraternity in Kuwait, Indian Dental professionals in particular and with the authorities in Kuwait.

Keke Palmer comedy opens strong on slow weekend

'One of Them Days,' 'Mufasa' in close race for No. 1

WASHINGTON, Jan 20, (AP) — The Keke Palmer buddy comedy "One of Them Days" opened in first place on the North American box office charts on a particularly slow Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend.

The R-rated Sony release earned \$11.6 million from 2,675 theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday, beating Disney's "Mufasa: The Lion King" by a hair. By the end of Monday's holiday, "Mufasa" will have the edge, however.

"One of Them Days" cost only \$14 million to produce, which it is expected to earn by Monday. The very well-reviewed buddy comedy stars Palmer and SZA as friends and roommates scrambling to get money for rent before their landlord evicts them. Notably it's the first Black female-led theatrical comedy since "Girls Trip" came out in 2017 and it currently carries a stellar 96% rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

But the marketplace was also quite weak overall. The total box office for Friday, Saturday and Sunday will add up to less than \$80 million, according to data from Comscore, making

it one of the worst Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekends since 1997.

"For an individual film like 'One of Them Days' this was a great weekend," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "You can still find success stories within what is overall a low grossing weekend for movie theaters."

The Walt Disney Co.'s "Mufasa" was close by in second place with \$11.5 million from the weekend, its fifth playing in theaters. Globally, the Barry Jenkins-directed prequel has made \$588 million. It even beat a brand-new offering, the Blumhouse horror "Wolf Man," which debuted in third place with \$10.6 million from 3,354 North American theaters.

Writer-director Leigh Whannell's monster tale starring Christopher Abbott and Julia Garner did not enter theaters with great reviews. It currently carries a 53% on Rotten Tomatoes. Reviews don't generally affect the success of horror movies in their first weekend, but audiences also gave it a lackluster C- CinemaScore in exit polls. The Blumhouse production and

Universal Pictures release cost a reported \$25 million to make and is expected to reach \$12 million by the close of Monday's holiday.

"Sonic the Hedgehog 3" was in fourth place with \$8.6 million and "Den of Thieves 2" rounded out the top five with \$6.6 million.

In specialty releases, Brady Corbet's 215-minute post-war epic "The Brutalist" expanded to 388 screens where it made nearly \$2 million over the weekend. A24 reported that it sold out various 70mm and IMAX showings. The studio also re-released its Colman Domingo drama "Sing Sing" in theaters and prisons, where over 1 million incarcerated people in 46 states were able to view the film.

The Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend has seen major successes in the past. Dergarabedian noted "Bad Boys for Life," which had a three-day opening of \$62.5 million in 2020, and "American Sniper," which earned \$89.3 in its first weekend in wide release in 2016.



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Keke Palmer, right, and SZA in a scene from 'One of Them Days.' (AP)

Variety

NASHVILLE, Tenn.: Draft lyrics to Bob Dylan's song "Mr. Tambourine Man" went for over a half-million dollars as part of a weekend sale of dozens of items related to the iconic American singer-songwriter.

About 60 Dylan items - including photos, music sheets, his guitar, pencil drawings and an oil painting composed by the Nobel Prize for literature winner - were sold on Saturday in Nashville, Tennessee, through Julien's Auctions.

The items generated nearly \$1.5 million in sales overall through in-person and online bidding, the auction house said. Julien's said 50 of the items, including the lyrics that received the highest sale price, came from the personal collection of late music journalist Al Aronowitz.

The typewritten lyrics, which covered three drafts of the 1965 song, were written on two sheets of yellow paper, with Dylan's annotation on the third draft.

Dylan wrote the original draft lyrics in the journalist's New Jersey home, according to Julien's, citing a 1973 newspaper article by Aronowitz.

Dylan sat "with my portable typewriter at my white formica breakfast bar in a swirl of chain-lit cigaret smoke, his bony, long-nailed fingers tapping the words out" on copy paper, Aronowitz was quoted as writing.

The third draft, while close to the final version, still had significant variations from the final lyrics, the auction house said on its website. (AP)

TOKYO: The head of Japan's Fuji Television network announced plans on Friday for an independent investigation into sexual misconduct allegations against one of the country's top celebrities and company officials' suspected involvement.

Masahiro Nakai, a former member of the SMAP boy band who is now a popular TV host at the network, has been linked by local media reports to allegations of sexual assault at a party which it is alleged was arranged by a member of staff at Fuji TV.

The issue has had a negative effect on the television company's share price and led to one of its largest shareholders to write a letter expressing concerns over its corporate governance.

Fuji TV President Koichi Minato on Friday apologized for "causing tremendous trouble and concern due to the (media) reports" and said an external panel would investigate the actions of company officials, including himself.

The scandal stems from reports that began in December by the Shukan Bunshun weekly magazine that Nakai had reached a 90 million yen (\$580,000) settlement with a woman in connection with alleged sexual misconduct at a dinner party last year. (AP)

MINNEAPOLIS: Saturday was cold even for Minneapolis, but that didn't stop thousands of people from tromping out onto a frozen lake to immerse themselves in art, make new friends - and try their best to stay warm.

The annual Art Shanty Projects drew crowds onto Lake Harriet for the first of four weekends of interactive, often silly and occasionally downright strange art events. The art was presented in or near shanties, a repurposing of the shelters often seen on Minnesota lakes for hardy souls who ice fish in the frigid depths of winter.

Minnesotans are passionate about water and view the state's thousands of lakes as public spaces to enjoy, even during winters that would keep people elsewhere deep under the covers, said Erin Lavelle, the organization's artistic director.

"In the summertime you'll see people in boats and swimming, in canoes and kayaks. And in the winter you'll see people on the frozen lakes," Lavelle said. "So they bike and ski and ice skate and ice fish, and we happen to make art on the frozen lake."

In the 21 years the event has been held, Lavelle said it has been curtailed by warm winters a few times but never because it was too cold. On this weekend, temperatures weren't expected to top the single digits. (AP)

Culture



A rich cultural, civilizational, and economic heritage dating back to the pearl diving era.



Sovereign Council, the oldest stone structures in Muharraq.

Archival pieces crafted by the world's most skilled jewelry designers.



Unique decorations and precision in design.



Some of the archival pieces crafted by the hands of the world's most skilled jewelry designers. (KUNA photos)

Siyadi Majlis in Muharraq ... proof of Bahrain cultural, economic heritage

In the heart of Muharraq City, Bahrain, the Siyadi Majlis stands as proof of cultural and economic heritage dating back to the pearl diving era presenting a magnificent model of Bahraini architecture with its unique decorations and meticulous design.

The Siyadi Majlis is located within the Pearl Path and is considered one of the most important places for Bahraini merchants in the past, it witnessed commercial deals on pearls while receiving merchants from places as far away as India and Europe.

The Majlis includes a pearl museum designed by Dutch architect Anne Holtrop, which contains some of the oldest pierced pearls in Bahrain, with an exhibition dating back to the Dilmun and Tylos eras. It also includes a selection of jewelry made from Bahraini pearls known for their beauty and purity, which formed the basis of the Kingdom's economy for many centuries before the discovery of oil, in addition to other archival pieces crafted by skilled international jewelry designers. (KUNA)

Charged with murder, attempted murder

Teen goes on trial for Taylor Swift dance class stabbings

LONDON, Jan 20, (AP) — It was the first day of summer vacation and the little girls at the Hart Space, a sanctuary hidden behind a row of houses, were there to dance to the music of Taylor Swift.

What was supposed to be a day of joy turned to terror and heartbreak when an intruder with a knife attacked the girls and their teacher on July 29 in the seaside town of Southport in northwest England.

The teen arrested in the aftermath goes on trial Monday on three counts of murder, 10 counts of attempted murder and additional charges related to possessing the poison ricin and for having an al-Qaida manual.

The trial is expected to last four weeks. Axel Rudakubana, 18, who has refused to speak in court, had pleas of not guilty entered on his behalf at Liverpool Crown Court. He was 17 at the time of the attack.

Prosecutors haven't said what they believe led to the rampage.

The stabbings led to a week of rioting across parts of England and Northern Ireland after Rudakubana - then unnamed - was falsely identified as an asylum-seeker who had recently arrived in Britain by boat.

Violent groups made up mostly of men who were mobilized



Tributes are seen outside the Town Hall in Southport, England, Aug. 5, 2024 after three young girls were killed in a knife attack at a Taylor Swift-themed holiday club the week before. (AP)

by far-right activists on social media attacked mosques and hotels housing migrants, tossed beer bottles, rocks and other weapons at police, and set fire to cars as they clashed with officers in dozens of cities.

More than 1,200 people were arrested for the disorder and hundreds have been jailed for up to nine years in prison.

Rudakubana, who was born in Wales to Rwandan immigrants, is charged with murder in the deaths of Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Bebe King, 6.

Eight other girls, ranging in age from 7 to 13, were wounded, along with instructor Leanne Lucas and Jonathan Hayes, who worked in a business next door and intervened. Fifteen other girls, as young as 5, were at the class but uninjured.

Several months after his arrest on the day of the killings, Rudakubana was charged with additional counts for production of a biological toxin, ricin and possession of information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing to commit an act of terrorism for having the manual in a document on his computer.

Police have said the stabbings haven't been classified as acts of terrorism because the motive isn't yet known.



Carrie Underwood arrives at the People's Choice Awards, Dec. 6, 2022, in Santa Monica, Calif. (AP)

Changing entertainment alliances

Celebrities embrace Trump's inauguration this time

WASHINGTON, Jan 20, (AP): Carrie Underwood might not be Beyoncé or Garth Brooks in the celebrity superstar ecosystem. But the singer's participation in President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration is nevertheless a sign of the changing tides, where mainstream entertainers, from Nelly to The Village People are more publicly and more enthusiastically associating with the new administration.

Eight years ago, Trump reportedly struggled to enlist stars to be part of the swearing-in and the various glitzy balls that follow. The concurrent protest marches around the nation had more famous entertainers than the swearing-in, which stood in stark contrast to someone like Barack Obama, whose second inaugural ceremony had performances from Beyoncé, James Taylor and Kelly Clarkson and a series of starchy onlookers.

There were always some celebrity Trump supporters, like Kid Rock, Hulk Hogan, Jon Voight, Rosanne Barr, Mike

Tyson, Sylvester Stallone and Dennis Rodman, to name a few. But Trump's victory this time around was decisive and while Hollywood may always skew largely liberal, the slate of names participating in his inauguration weekend events has improved.

Kid Rock, Billy Ray Cyrus, The Village People and Lee Greenwood all performed at a MAGA style rally Sunday. Those performing at inaugural balls include the rapper Nelly, country music band Rascal Flatts, country singer Jason Aldean and singer-songwriter Gavin DeGraw.

"The people who are coming out and participating directly are still a small subset of the entire universe of what we call celebrity," said Robert Thompson, a professor of pop culture at Syracuse University. "But we're seeing a lot more celebrities who are coming out and supporting Trump. There may not be that distinct division that we saw before."

Even some who have publicly criticized Trump in the past

seem to have changed course. One of the highest-profile examples is the rapper Snoop Dogg, who in a 2017 music video pretended to shoot a Trump lookalike, and then this weekend performed at a pre-Inaugural event called The Crypto Ball. When a social media user posted a video of his performance, his name quickly became a trending topic on social media with a fair amount of disbelief and outrage.

There may still be a tinge of stigma, however. Thompson pointed to the statement from The Village People, in which they offered a justification for their involvement, which he likened to an apology.

Also, Thompson said, "the idea of being featured in a big national civic ritual perhaps can transcend political identity."

The participation of people like Underwood is not going to change anyone's mind about Trump, Thompson said. It could, however, change minds about the artist.

Fashion

Simon Cracker delivers upcycled parodies

Prada offers savage, instinctive menswear

MILAN, Jan 20, (AP): Miuccia Prada and her co-creative director Raf Simons described the latest Prada menswear collaboration unveiled during Milan Fashion Week on Sunday as raw and cinematic.

While the Milan Fall-Winter 2025-2026 runway was full of faux fur collars, Prada went the usual step beyond and created primitive detailing in shearing that looked almost torn from the beast and set askew on outerwear lapels, or patchworked into garments.

"Maybe, it reads as savage, primitive cavemen. I think that our aim was to make it feel warm and human and instinctive, but also kind of beautifully domestic in a way," Simons said backstage.

Cinematic references were broad and not specific to any film, director or even character type, Simons said. Western touches included scuffed cowboy boots and knitwear mimicking a wrangler's shirt - without creating characters or caricatures.

Feminine touches flourished. Men were invited to wear jewelry, such as bracelets with mini basketballs or baseballs. Chains with amulets hung from fine knits. Fake fur-lined hoods came in florals.

The silhouette mixed skinny trousers, often in bright rock-and-roll satin, with more ample volumes like pajama tops or slightly ratty sweaters. Suits required no shirts, as the designers advocated instinctive dressing.

One look seemed to distill the collection to its boyish essence: Straight leg jeans with a knit top featuring striped detailing, worn with floral-stamped cowboy boots.

The designers said the collection was meant to offer hope in difficult times, proffering humanity as a form of resistance to whatever may be oppressing.

"It's a bit of an answer to what of course is happening. We have to resist with our instinct, with our humanity, with our passion, with our romance," Prada said backstage. Good work, she said, is also a form of resistance.

The message contained in the collection "has to be optimistic by definition and in principle," Prada said.

The ever-transforming showroom inside the Prada Foundation's Deposito contemporary art space was sheathed in Art Nouveau carpet, and the runway was set on raised metal scaffolding. Simons said it represented contrasts, decoration and a work-in-progress.

Suits require no shirts. Two puffers are better than one. Raw shearing collars let loose primitive instincts. Subtle jewelry and florals for men. Cowboy boots.

Prada's front row hailed from across the globe and disciplines, including British actor and musician William Gao, arriving with British musician Olivia Hardy, US actor Keith Powers, South Korean actress Kim Tae-ri, Chinese table tennis player Ma Long and British actor Louis Partridge. A crowd of fans waited just beyond a barricade to cheer them all.

Simon Cracker

The independent Italian fashion brand Simon Cracker denounced the luxury fashion system with an upcycled collection previewed during Milan Fashion Week on Sunday that riffed on what they see as bygone days of quality and creativity.

The coed looks created from recovered and deadstock garments, materials and accessories included a tongue-in-cheek



A model wears a creation part of the men's and Women's Simon Cracker Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection, that was presented in Milan, Italy, Jan. 19, 2025. (AP)

swipe at Hermes' highly prized Birkin bag, with the designers drawing the tell-tale hardware on leather bags or screen-printing images of the coveted bag on sweaters.

Co-creative directors Simone Botte and Filippo Biraghi were delighted that Walmart came out with what was widely seen as a Birkin knockoff while they were working on this collection.

"People have lost interest in fashion," Biraghi said. "They have been taken for a ride for 20 years. And with 50 wars in the world, climate change, we all are getting poorer. There is no longer a connection between price and value. At a certain point, you can't go on."

The collection pokes fun at the typical Milanese signora, known in dialect as sciura, sending her up with funky tweed separates, a foulard and even a tiny dog. Each silhouette is unique, constructed from garments the pair recover from dry cleaners and other sources, and

models slide into character with insouciant slouches and exaggerated catwalk strides.

The brand extended its collaboration with Doc Martens, decorated with trompe l'oeil ballerina shoes. At times, skirts, collars and decorative fringe were fashioned out of shiny tinsel packing material, and ribbons covered shoes.

The show closed with a garment completely concealed by luxury tags from Biraghi's own wardrobe collected over the years. "We are making fun of wealth," he said.

The Simon Cracker runway critique hits the sector when its down - and analysts say in need of reform.

A new study by McKinsey consultancy and The Business of Fashion said that top brands are facing a significant slowdown this year, after a four-year period of exceptional growth from 2019-2023 that allowed the sector to grow by a compounded 5% a year despite the pandemic.



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



A model displays from Simon Cracker's 2025-2026 collection. (AP)



A model presents a creation part of the men's Giorgio Armani Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection. (AP)

Most of that expansion - a full 80% - was due to price increases that outpaced innovation, the McKinsey-Business of Fashion report said.

The Bain consultancy similarly has forecast a contraction of 2% for 2025, the first since the Great Recession, not including the 2020 pandemic year. It cited a crisis in creativity along side global turbulence.

The findings are of no surprise to Botte and Biraghi.

"If a garment is not interesting, it doesn't tell a story, if there is nothing creative, who cares," said Biraghi. "We all have lots of clothes, too many. We don't need more."

Italian singer Chiara Galiazzo was in the front row dressed in a pinstripe and plaid jacket painted in sky blue and worn with royal blue Bermuda cutoffs and matching painted boots. She said she was drawn to the brand by its authenticity.

"I feel like I am part of a community," she said after the show. "I think this is something that is important, and a lot of fun."



A model presents Prada's creation. (AP)



A model wears a creation from Giorgio Armani's collection. (AP)



A model presents a creation from Giorgio Armani's collection. (AP)



A model wears a creation from the Giorgio Armani collection. (AP)

Disneyland



A light show is projected on the castle of Sleeping Beauty as fireworks explode in Disneyland, in Marne-la-Vallée, east of Paris, Friday Jan. 17, 2025. (AP)

\$2bln expansion

Disneyland Paris touts night show

CHESSY, France, Jan 20, (AP): A cutting-edge nighttime show at Disneyland Paris featuring lasers used at the Paris Games is heralding a bold new chapter for Europe's most-visited theme park, as a raft of ambitious developments comes to fruition under a 2 billion euro (\$2.05 billion) expansion plan.

The overhaul includes the completed revamp of the luxury Disneyland Hotel, the upcoming renaming and doubling in size of Walt Disney Studios Park, and the much-anticipated arrival of The World of Frozen and a first-of-its-kind The Lion King land - cementing the resort's gains after the wilderness years for theme parks during the pandemic.

Disney Tales of Magic, an immersive 20-minute spectacle blending mind-boggling drones, synchronized fountains, high-definition projections and ultra-bright lasers, was unveiled this month, wowing crowds.

The show's standout feature - ultra-bright lasers - has been used only once before, at the Paris 2024 Olympics at the Eiffel Tower during the iconic opening ceremony featuring a performance by Céline Dion. The lasers, which travel 23 miles (37 kilometers), deliver extraordinary power while remaining safe near crowds.

"The Paris Olympics used it first. But we saw it first," said Dana Harrel, executive entertainment director at Disneyland Paris.

Featuring Disney and Pixar tales brought to life amid drone-made 3D figures dazzling the night sky, synchronized fountains and a 100-piece orchestra, the show is elevated further by the original anthem "Live in Magic."

Audiences of any age have been awestruck. "It's marvelous. We've never seen such a beautiful light show," said Sacha Tellier, a 33-year-old mother visiting with her family. "It gave me goosebumps," added Nathan Ruiz, a graphic designer from Madrid. "The combination of music, lights, and the drones felt like pure magic. I've been to Disney before, but this show is on another level."

Spectacle

"For the very first time, not only will we be projecting onto Sleeping Beauty's Castle, but also Main Street USA," said Tim Lutkin, artistic director of the production, referring to the park's main commercial artery lined with boutiques and merchandise.

The spectacle also reflects Disney's storytelling evolution. Lutkin noted the shift from classic ball-gown tales to modern narratives like "Encanto" and "Inside Out 2," which delve into deeper themes such as anxiety and depression. The level of the latter's box office success, Lutkin said, "was a big surprise for everybody."

It was "an indicator the world and its relationship with Disney are ready to embrace more complex stories."

This shift is mirrored in the show's selection of movies, spanning Disney's timeless classics and emotionally resonant modern hits.

At the heart of Disneyland Paris' expansion is the transformation of Walt Disney Studios Park, doubling in size and reimagined as Disney Adventure World. Opening in spring 2025, a new park entrance, World Premiere, will greet visitors with the glamour of a Hollywood film premiere, leading them into immersive themed areas.

"These projects reflect our commitment to innovation and storytelling," said Natacha Rafalski, head of Disneyland Paris, adding that they will further strengthen it as Europe's top tourist destination.

Already Europe's most-visited theme park and France's top tourist attraction outdrawing the Louvre, Disneyland Paris welcomed over 10 million visitors in 2023.

The expansion includes two eagerly awaited themed lands. The World of Frozen, debuting in 2026, will transport guests to Arendelle with a central lake hosting water performances and the Frozen Ever After boat ride, alongside themed dining, shopping, and accommodations. Meanwhile, The Lion King land will bring the Pride Lands to life with a log flume cascading from Pride Rock and encounters with beloved characters like Simba and Timon.

The COVID-19 pandemic delivered one of the toughest challenges to Disneyland Paris, as with all resort parks around the world, forcing an eight-month closure in 2020 and another in 2021.

But Disney doubled down.

H5N1 is a complex and evolving disease

Bird flu flares up again in US, expert weighs risks

By Kimberly Dodd
Michigan State University

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

After a relatively quiet fall, there's been another spike in cases of bird flu in Michigan.

When state officials announced on Dec. 16, 2024, that bird flu had been found in another poultry facility in Ottawa County, it was the first time the H5N1 virus had been detected in Michigan poultry in over six months. Since then, the US Department of Agriculture has confirmed seven more outbreaks - in five commercial and two backyard flocks - in the state, the most recent in Oakland County.

Meanwhile, on Jan. 6, 2025, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the first human death from bird flu in the US, in Louisiana.

Bird flu is a complex and evolving disease with significant impact to the poultry and dairy industries. Since the beginning of the outbreaks in poultry and cattle, almost 135 million birds and more than 900 cattle herds have been affected nationwide. A significant number of wild animals - such as raccoon, skunks, foxes and bobcats - as well as marine mammals and domestic cats have also died from the virus.

Kimberly Dodd, dean of Michigan State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, is an expert in outbreak response for emerging infectious diseases. Michigan was among the first states to see H5N1 outbreaks in commercial poultry and dairy facilities. Both state and federal officials have worked closely with the Michigan State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory to identify newly infected herds, while continuing to provide surveillance for the virus in poultry and wild birds.

Dodd talked to The Conversation US about the risks H5N1 presents to families, pets and livestock, and how researchers are working together to find ways to limit its spread.

In the case of H5N1 in cows, scientists and animal health experts here in Michigan and around the country are working to understand a familiar disease in a novel species.

The transmission of the avian flu virus H5N1 to dairy cattle was first confirmed in March 2024 in Texas and has since spread to 15 other U.S. states, most recently California.

The virus impacts milk production and poses significant risks to other bird

species, particularly domestic poultry as well as some mammals. The CDC has also confirmed mild cases in humans, and a fatal one in Louisiana in January 2025.

Diagnosticians at Michigan State University and the USDA's National Animal Health Laboratory Network provide rapid diagnostics to identify infected herds and monitor the virus in wild birds and mammals, helping control the spread.

We've learned, based on sequencing the circulating viruses, that there is a specific virus strain or H5N1 genotype, B3.13, circulating in cows and poultry. Subtle changes over time in the genetic makeup of the virus points to a single spillover event. This means the virus likely spread from wild birds to a cow in Texas, and then spread from cow to cow. We also know that there is a separate H5N1 genotype, D1.1, that is currently circulating in wild birds and domestic poultry.

Researchers in our College of Veterinary Medicine are working with federal and state officials and farmers to determine how long cows produce infectious milk. The goal is to understand how cows are becoming infected within and across herds so that we can better mitigate the spread.

Influenza viruses affect many animals including humans, pigs, dogs and horses.

There are four types of influenza viruses: A, B, C and D, which are loosely defined by the species they can infect. Avian influenza viruses are considered influenza A viruses. Interestingly, influenza D viruses are the ones that primarily infect cattle. But the current H5N1 circulating in dairy cattle is the same influenza A virus as seen in the ongoing outbreak in birds.

Pandemics

This is of particular concern, as only influenza A viruses have been associated with human pandemics.

Avian influenza viruses circulate in wild birds but don't typically cause them significant disease. While many avian influenza viruses can infect poultry, their behavior in those hosts classifies the virus as either highly pathogenic or low pathogenic. It's important to note that this classification doesn't necessarily indicate how easily it spreads or the likelihood that the virus will jump to other species.

The currently circulating strain is classified as highly pathogenic avian influenza, or HPAI, based on the high mortality it causes domestic poultry. One of the many unusual characteristics of the current outbreak is the high mortality seen in wild birds; as a result, we have seen many species of young carnivores and scavengers infected by the virus.

Infection in other species often requires exposure to a large amount of virus, or a compromised or underdeveloped immune system. These are typically "dead-end

hosts." They become infected but do not play a role in virus spread because either the animal dies or it becomes infected but not infectious.

The current outbreak of HPAI H5N1 has been ongoing since 2021. The outbreak is notable for its duration, wide geographic spread and unusual impact on nonpoultry species as well. It has caused significant illness and death in wild birds like ducks and geese, as well as mammals exposed to infected bird carcasses like cats and skunks.

However when the USDA unexpectedly confirmed that H5N1 was the cause of significant disease in dairy cattle in early 2024, it marked the first time that the virus was detected in US dairy cattle.

Most cows infected with H5N1 recover on their own without treatment. Symptoms include fever and sluggishness. There is also decreased appetite and a significant drop in milk production in lactating cows, as the virus is concentrated in the mammary glands and milk.

There are three reasons to care about the ongoing H5N1 outbreak in dairy cattle: First, the drop in milk production and the virus's infectious nature create challenges for farmers to control the infection and lead to economic losses. In addition to the production losses, there are additional labor and supply costs to manage the outbreak in the herd, including separation and supportive care of sick cows. Workers also need to use personal protective equipment to prevent spread of the virus to healthy animals and to protect themselves from potential infection.

Second, dairy cows produce large amounts of the virus in milk, which is highly infectious. While pasteurization kills the virus, raw milk remains a major infection risk. Significant numbers of wild mammals and domestic cats on dairy farms have died from the virus after consuming raw milk. It also poses a risk to dairy workers.

The virus has also spread from dairy farms to poultry facilities, causing high bird mortality. Experts are exploring the possibility that clothing, shoes, trucks, equipment and other items that have been contaminated with raw milk containing the virus can lead to inadvertent, and lethal, exposure for poultry.

Third, prolonged circulation in cattle increases the risk of the virus adapting to mammals, including humans.

To monitor this risk, all H5N1-positive samples are sent to the USDA for genetic sequencing to identify mutations that may increase the virus's ability to infect mammals and to provide important information about how the virus spreads within and between populations.

Biosecurity for poultry and dairy facilities is more critical than ever. Biosecurity measures include limiting visitors to farms and facilities; disinfecting tools, footwear and equipment; avoiding contact between infected and noninfected species; and isolating sick animals. (AP)

'Innovating for a better future'

Next-gen innovators breathe fresh life into China's technology scene

BEIJING, Jan. 20, (Xinhua): In a rapidly advancing world, a new wave of Chinese innovators are pushing the boundaries of science and technology. These pioneers are not just imagining the future -- they're making it happen.

Chen Xinlong, 33, has spent his life chasing a bold vision: revolutionizing farming through science and technology. Now, in the bustling municipality of Chongqing in southwest China, his lifelong aspirations have taken root.

Inspired by Yuan Longping, the "father of hybrid rice," Chen has achieved remarkable results in rice breeding and potato disease resistance by skillfully integrating advanced technologies into his research.

While studying genetics at Southwest University, Chen found the plant DNA extraction process slow and cumbersome, with some reagents being toxic and corrosive. This inspired him to develop a safer, more efficient method.

Later he developed a "magical toolbox," a biological breeding toolbox which contains a variety of biological breeding tools and kits for gene editing and transgenic technology, allowing for precise gene manipulation and significantly shortening the breeding cycle.

"It's like a car repair toolkit for 'fixing plants,'" Chen explains. "Tasks that once took four or five students a whole day can now be completed in minutes." Chen is among a new-generation of scientists driving China's scientific exploration and innovation.

Yin Hejun, minister of science and technology, once noted that many leading teams in major sci-tech missions, such as the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System and lunar exploration programs, have an average age in their thirties.

"Young people are the most creative and have the greatest potential for innovation," Yin emphasized, recog-



This photo taken with a mobile phone shows Chen Xinlong observing the expression of potato proteins through a microscope at Southwest University in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, Jan. 16, 2025. (Xinhua)

nizing their crucial role in propelling China toward its goals of high-quality development and modernization.

Magical Toolbox

Chen later joined the Integrative Science Center of Germplasm Creation in Western China (CHONGQING) Science City, and is currently focused on combating late blight, a devastating disease that threatens potato crops globally.

Late blight has posed a relentless challenge to scientists due to the rapid mutation of its pathogen. A discovery by Chen's team, which uncovered key regulatory mechanisms, would lay the foundation for developing long-lasting resistance strategies.

During this process, Chen upgraded his "magical toolbox," which helped increase the success rate of genetic

transformation from approximately 30 percent using traditional methods to over 90 percent. It enabled researchers to create transgenic potato materials more efficiently and reliably.

Moreover, the upgraded toolbox could support precise control over gene expression intensity within a range of 0.001 to 1000 times, a capability that opens new frontiers in potato genetic research and breeding, he noted.

"Young researchers have become one of the main forces in China's scientific community," he said, adding that over 80 percent of the 100-plus team where he works are under 35.

"More and more young people are dedicating themselves to agricultural sci-tech research, which is both our good fortune and the nation's hope," Chen said.

Phones disrupt classroom focus: teachers

More US states rush to ban cellphones in schools amid mental health concerns

LITTLE ROCK, Ark., Jan 20, (AP): Arkansas' Republican Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders and California's Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom have little in common ideologically, but the two have both been vocal supporters of an idea that's been rapidly gaining bipartisan ground in the states: Students' cellphones need to be banned during the school day.

At least eight states have enacted such bans over the past two years, and proposals are being considered in several more states this year.

Here is a look at the push by states for such bans.

The push for cellphone bans has been driven by concerns about the impact screen time has on children's mental health and complaints from teachers that cellphones have become a constant distraction in the classroom.

Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, who has called on Congress to require warning labels on social media platforms about their effects on young people's lives, has said schools need to provide phone-free times.

Nationally, 77% of US schools say they prohibit cellphones at school for non-academic use, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. But that number is misleading. It does not mean students are following those bans or all those schools are enforcing them.

Kim Whitman, co-founder of the Phone Free Schools Movement, said the



A student uses a cell phone after unlocking the pouch that secures it from use during the school day at Bayside Academy, Aug. 16, 2024, in San Mateo, Calif. (AP)

issue is catching on because parents and teachers in both red and blue states are struggling with the consequences of kids on mobile devices.

"It doesn't matter if you live in a big city or a rural town, urban or suburban, all children are struggling and need that seven-hour break from the pressures of phones and social media during the school day," she said.

At least eight states - California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Ohio, South Carolina and Virginia -

have enacted measures banning or restricting students' use of cellphones in schools.

The policies range widely. Florida was the first state to crack down on phones in school, passing a 2023 law that requires all public schools to ban cellphone use during class time and block access to social media on district Wi-Fi.

A 2024 California law requires the state's nearly 1,000 school districts to create their own cellphone policies by July 2026.

Marburg disease confirmed in remote Tanzania

ARUSHA, Tanzania, Jan 20, (AP): Tanzania's president said Monday that one sample from a remote part of northern Tanzania tested positive for Marburg disease, a highly infectious virus which can be fatal in up to 88% of cases without treatment.

President Samia Suluhu spoke in Dar es Salaam, the commercial capital, alongside World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

WHO was the first to report on Jan. 14 of a suspected outbreak of Marburg that had killed eight people in Tanza-

nia's Kagera region. Tanzanian health officials disputed the report hours later, saying tests on samples had returned negative results. Suluhu said Monday that further tests had confirmed a case of Marburg. Twenty-five other samples were negative, she said.

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TCU ends Baylor winning streak

Bueckers reaches 2,000 career points as UConn rolls past Seton Hall

STORRS, Conn., Jan 20, (AP): Paige Bueckers scored 18 points to surpass 2,000 in her career and No. 6 UConn cruised to a 96-36 win over Seton Hall on Sunday.

Bueckers scored points No. 2,000 and 2,001 on a jumper with 8:05 remaining in the first half. Bueckers reached the mark in her 102nd game, breaking the program record of 108 games by Maya Moore. Bueckers is the 12th UConn player to hit that milestone.

Freshman Sarah Strong had 23 points and 11 rebounds and Azzi Fudd also scored 18 points for UConn (17-2, 8-0 in the Big East).

Jada Eads had 14 points for Seton Hall (13-5, 5-2).

Strong had nine points in a 16-2 run for UConn to put the Huskies ahead 26-7 with 1:16 left in the first quarter.

Seton Hall was playing without Savannah Catalon and

Connecticut native Shailyn Pinkney. It was the ninth straight game that Pinkney missed while Catalon was out for the eighth consecutive game.

Brendan Wenzel made a 3-pointer from the left corner with six seconds left and TCU, after overcoming a double-digit deficit in the second half, beat 25th-ranked Baylor 74-71 to end the Bears' 10-game home winning streak.

Ernest Udeh Jr. had a career-high 16 points and season-high 15 rebounds for the Horned Frogs (10-7, 3-3 Big 12), and his fourth blocked shot was on Jayden Nunn's attempted 3-pointer to end the game. Vasean Allette and Noah Reynolds both had 13 points.

Norchad Omier had 20 points for Baylor (11-6, 3-3). VJ Edgecombe had 18 points and Jeremy Roach 11.

Nunn's 3 with 25 seconds left tied the game at 71 right

after Roach got hurt when forcing a turnover on an inbound pass by TCU. Edgecombe had made three free throws before Roach dove at Allette's inbound pass and knocked it off Wenzel out of bounds as they collided.

Baylor led by 12 points before halftime and was up 48-38 on a 3 by Omier with 16:42 left.

TCU got its sixth road win against a ranked opponent in the past seven seasons, after only one before that. The Frogs had 11 turnovers in the first half that Baylor converted into 16 points and a 39-32 lead. They finished with 17 turnovers.

PJ Haggerty scored 18 points, Tyrese Hunter added 15 points and No. 18 Memphis used a strong first half to set the tone in a 77-68 win over Charlotte.

Dain Dainja added 14 points and nine rebounds for the

Tigers (14-4, 4-1 American Athletic Conference), which bounced back from a loss to unranked Temple 88-81 on Thursday night. Haggerty, who had 21 points in the loss to the Owls, finished 7 of 14 from the field.

Jaehshon Thomas had 18 points to lead Charlotte (7-12, 0-6), which has lost seven straight.

Memphis shot 58% in the first half and ran out to a 41-25 lead at the break behind a 20-3 run. The Tigers got hot from deep early, making 7 of 14 3-pointers to start the game.

The 49ers would show some fight, cutting the Memphis lead to 10 early in the second half after Thomas knocked down back-to-back 3s, forcing a Tigers timeout. But Memphis would push the lead to 20 getting four points from Dainja during a 10-0 run.



Los Angeles Clippers guard Norman Powell, left, shoots as Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

Jokic records triple-double as Nuggets stay hot on the road

Bucks sweep 76ers, Clippers dominate Lakers

ORLANDO, Fla., Jan 20, (AP): Nikola Jokic had 20 points, 14 rebounds, 10 assists and three blocks without playing the fourth quarter and the Denver Nuggets rolled to a 113-100 win over the Orlando Magic on Sunday night.

Christian Braun added 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Nuggets, who won their six straight road game. Jamal Murray scored 19 points and Michael Porter Jr. had 15 points and six rebounds.

Wendell Carter Jr. led Orlando with 16 points and 13 rebounds. Anthony Black came off the bench with 14 points and five assists.

Heat 128, Spurs 107
In Miami, rookie Kel'el Ware scored 25 points to match his season high, Duncan Robinson added 21 on 5-of-7 3-shooting and Miami beat San Antonio.

Jimmy Butler had eight points and seven assists in his second game since returning from a seven-game suspension for "conduct detrimental to the team."

Terry Rozier had 20 points, Tyler Herro scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half and Nikol Jovic added 14 to help the Heat snap a three-game losing streak.

Miami closed the first half with an 11-0 run to take a five-point lead at 46-41, then opened the second with a 25-8 run. Jovic's 3-pointer with 5:45 remaining in the third period ended the spurt and put the Heat ahead 71-52.

Devin Vassell scored 23 points and Victor Wembanyama added 21 for the Spurs. They have lost three straight.

Thunder 127, Nets 101
In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 27 points and 10 assists in three quarters, and Oklahoma City beat Brooklyn.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the NBA's leading scorer, sat out Friday's loss at Dallas with a sprained right wrist. He looked fine against the Nets - he made 8 of 14 field goals and all 10 of his free



Denver Nuggets forward Aaron Gordon, right, loses control of the ball as Orlando Magic guard Anthony Black (0) defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Orlando, Fla. (AP)

throw attempts. He also had four steals.

Isaiah Joe scored 24 points and made eight 3-pointers for the Thunder.

The Thunder have the best record in the Western Conference, and the victory clinched Oklahoma City coach Mark Daigneault's spot as an All-Star head coach. He will coach one of the four All-Star teams and an assistant coach from his staff will be the head coach for another team.

Cam Johnson and Tyrese Johnson each scored 15 points for the Nets, who have lost eight of nine.

Bucks 123, 76ers 109
In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 34 points and 15 rebounds to help Milwaukee beat short-handed Philadelphia.

Damian Lillard added 25 points for Milwaukee, which completed a 4-0 homestand. Khris Middleton had 13 points and eight assists in 25 minutes off the bench. Brook Lopez added 12 points, and Taurean Prince had 11.

Tyrese Maxey led the 76ers with 37 points and seven assists. Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 19 points, Ricky Council IV had 13 and Eric Gordon 10. Playing for the second consecutive night, Philadelphia has lost six straight and nine of 11.

The 76ers (15-26) were once again

missing several key players - Joel Embiid, Paul George, Kyle Lowry and Guerschon Yabusele among them - due to injuries, but hung with the Bucks until fading late. Milwaukee moved to a season-high seven games above .500 at 24-17.

Clippers 116, Lakers 102
In Inglewood, Norman Powell scored 22 points, James Harden added 21 points and 12 assists and the Los Angeles Clippers defeated LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers in the Lakers' first visit to the new Intuit Dome.

Kawhi Leonard had 19 points and Ivica Zubac had 21 points and 19 rebounds for the Clippers in the first meeting of the season between the former hallway rivals at Crypto.com Arena in downtown Los Angeles.

James had 25 points and 11 assists and Rui Hachimura added 19 points. Anthony Davis had 16 points and 10 rebounds in his return after missing a game with plantar fasciitis. The Lakers two-game winning streak ended.

Leonard tied his season high playing 24 minutes but none in the fourth as he continued under a minutes restriction in his fifth game of the season. He scored eight in a row to surpass 14,000

career points in the third, when the Clippers built their biggest lead of 26 points.

Trial Blazers 113, Bulls 102
In Portland, Scoot Henderson had 25 points and Portland snapped five-game losing streak with a victory over Chicago.

Zach LaVine had 27 points for the Bulls. They have lost five straight.

Portland stretched its lead to 97-82 on Shaedon Sharpe's 3-pointer with 7:36 left. Patrick Williams' dunk got the Bulls within single digits at 110-102 with 1:26 left. Deni Avdija answered with a layup for Portland to end the threat.

Sharpe came off the bench for the Blazers after coach Chauncey Billups told him his defense needed to improve to return to a starting role. Sharpe finished with 23 points.

The Bulls led by as 15 points in the first half. Henderson made back-to-back 3-pointers that got the Blazers to 43-42.

Portland tied it at 45 on Jerami Grant's 3 and it was even at 53 going into the break.

Kings 123, Wizards 100
In Sacramento, Domantas Sabonis had 29 points and 18 rebounds, and Sacramento beat Washington.

DeMar DeRozan added 24 points, Malik Monk had 23 and Keon Ellis scored 18 on 6-for-8 shooting on 3-pointers. De'Aaron Fox had 12 points and a season-high 13 assists to help Sacramento win for the ninth time in 10 games.

Jonas Valanciunas had 23 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Wizards, who have lost 10 straight.

After allowing Washington to score the first six points, Sacramento never trailed again and built a double-digit lead in the second quarter. The Kings were up by 24 points in the second half.

Sacramento went up by 14 at half-time. Sabonis had 18 points and 11 rebounds at the break, including a stretch of eight straight points on back-to-back 3s and a steal that led to a dunk, helping the Kings take a lead after the game was tied 15-15 in the first quarter.

Lower matches best finish

Straka cruises to 2-shot win over Thomas at The American Express

LA QUINTA, Calif., Jan 20, (AP): Sepp Straka won The American Express by two shots over Justin Thomas, finishing his third career PGA Tour victory at 25-under 263 with a final-round 70.

Straka, the first Austrian to win on the tour three years ago, comfortably marched to victory after taking a four-shot lead into the final round at the venerable Coachella Valley tournament. He didn't have a bogey in the four-day event until making two in the final three holes, but his competitors couldn't mount a charge to make it uncomfortable.

The 31-year-old Straka looked cool and collected on PGA West's Stadium Course - but he wasn't.

"Nerves, just complete nerves," Straka said. "Stomach in a knot, the whole nine. So, yeah, just really excited about the way I handed the pressure today."

Thomas shot a 66 to finish at 23 under, one shot ahead of Justin Lower (69) and Australia's Jason Day (69) in third. Lower matched the best finish of his tour career.

Patrick Cantlay and Charley Hoffman were 20 under.

Hitting greens regularly and putting capably, Straka was three holes away from becoming the first tour player since 2022 to play 72 bogey-free holes in a victory - until he sprayed his second shot on the 16th into the far right rough behind a berm. His third shot didn't reach the green, and he barely missed a 17-foot par putt.

Straka's first major mistake made no difference, nor did his next: He put his approach shot into a bunker on the 18th and then missed a 23-foot par putt, but he buried his 4-foot bogey putt and celebrated with a minimal fist pump.

"This golf course, you can't really let up," Straka said. "You've still got to make really aggressive swings, because you're one swing away from a double bogey. I think that was the biggest challenge today was keeping aggressive on my targets."

Thomas, who finished in a third-place tie at The American Express last year, made six birdies on his first 11 holes in the final round to briefly trim Straka's lead to three shots. The two-time PGA Championship winner ran out of steam on the back nine in



Sepp Straka holds the trophy after winning the American Express golf tournament in La Quinta, Calif. (AP)

his quest for his first tour victory since 2022, finishing his round with seven consecutive pars.

"I had a chance," Thomas said. "It wasn't, obviously, a great one on the back nine, but I was proud of myself. I did what I needed to do on the front nine today to at least be making some noise and moving up the leaderboard. It was unfortunate to kind of stall there after 11. Really, really played some great golf today."

Day, another former PGA Championship winner, has just one victory since 2018. He failed to mount a charge while playing in the final group with Straka, and a bogey on the 15th pushed him out of range. Day shot 69.

Hoffman also was in the final group, and he joined Thomas and Day at three shots back before he put two tee shots into the water on the par-3 13th, eventually posting a triple bogey.

Straka began Sunday in the lead heading into a final round for the first time in his career. He played with confidence early, burying a 12-foot birdie putt on the opening hole. He put his tee shot on the fourth hole inside 13 feet for another birdie, and he added another with an exceptional approach shot at the seventh.

Straka also saved par on No. 5 after putting his drive in the rough, and he did it again on No. 8 after his tee shot dropped in the right bunker.

Alli joins Serie A side Como in attempt to revive career

COMO, Italy, Jan 20, (AP): Dele Alli joined Serie A struggler Como on Sunday in the latest attempt to revive his career.

Alli has signed an 18-month contract, with an option to extend for an additional 12 months, and the 28-year-old could make his debut against Udinese.

"The club believes in Dele's potential and is committed to helping him rediscover his best form," Como coach Cesc Fabregas said. "His experience and leadership qualities will undoubtedly benefit the squad."

Alli was one of English soccer's biggest talents, a member of the England team that reached the World Cup semifinals in 2018 after a period when he was a star of Mauricio Pochettino's young Tottenham side that nearly won the Premier League.

However, the attacking midfielder's career has derailed in recent years and he spent six weeks in rehab in the United States in 2023 in a bid to deal with mental-health problems stemming from a traumatic childhood and after getting addicted to sleeping pills.

Alli did not play at all last season for Everton before his contract expired in June 2024. His last appearances were during a loan spell at Turkish club Besiktas the previous campaign.

"The club recognizes his exceptional talent and is excited to bring



In this file photo, Tottenham's Dele Alli celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during the English League Cup quarter final soccer match against Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium in London. (AP)

him into the team," Como said. "The focus will be on providing Dele with a supportive environment where he can gradually integrate into the squad."

"While there will be no immediate performance expectations, the club is confident that he will make a significant contribution both on the pitch and as a mentor to the club's young talents."

Como is 17th in the 20-team Italian league.

Change Name

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Second place Marseille held by Strasbourg in French league

PARIS, Jan 20, (AP): Second-placed Marseille lost further ground on leader Paris Saint-Germain by drawing 1-1 with Strasbourg in the French league.

Facing a well-organized and lively visiting side, Marseille struggled to develop its attacking moves in the first half and relied on a penalty converted by Mason Greenwood after the interval to secure a point.

Marseille has a five-point lead over

third-place Lille in the race for Champions League spots. It's now lagging nine points behind PSG, which won 2-1 at Lens.

Emanuel Emegha made the most of Marseille's passivity to put the visitors in front in the 23rd minute. The Dutch forward was set up by the unmarked Andrey Santos in the back of the high defensive line and rushed toward goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli, finishing off the move with a chipped finish.

Strasbourg's intense press posed many problems for the hosts. Marseille played better in the second half and was rewarded by a penalty in the 66th minute when Robinho Vaz was fouled. Greenwood converted with a low shot past Djordje Petrovic, who had picked the right side but could not block the shot.

Both teams had their chances in the second half, and Strasbourg wasted the best of them with 20 minutes left after

Marseille defenders were once again surprised by a through ball. Sebastian Nana-si found Emegha, who shot past Rulli but his strike hit the post.

Both Saint-Etienne and Nantes are part of French soccer aristocracy, having respectively won 10 and eight league titles. But their past glory has long vanished. This season, they have each mustered 17 points from 18 matches and are both in danger of being de-

moted.

Saint-Etienne sits 16th in the 18-team standings - the relegation playoff spot - just behind Nantes which has a better goal difference.

Nantes thought that it would bring back three crucial points from its trip to Stade Geoffroy Guichard until the 86th minute, when substitute forward Augustine Boakye snatched a late equalizer for the hosts with a long-range curled strike.

SPORTS

Sinner, Swiatek progress to Australian Open quarters

Several players wilt under searing conditions

MELBOURNE, Jan 20, (Xinhua): Defending men's champion Jannik Sinner and women's second seed Iga Swiatek had contrasting fourth round victories on Monday as several players wilted under searing conditions at the Australian Open.

Australia's title hope Alex de Minaur also progressed, but former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina crashed out.

In hot and sunny conditions on Rod Laver Arena, top seed Sinner overcame adversity to battle past gutsy 13th seed Holger Rune.

Having dropped the second set, an ailing Sinner's title defence appeared to be hanging by a thread when he required medical treatment in the third set.

Sinner looked exhausted and was visibly shaking before he won 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 in a see-sawing match lasting three hours and 13 minutes.

The two-time Grand Slam champion will next play de Minaur, who beat 20-year-old Alex Michelsen 6-0, 7-6 (5), 6-3.

"It was very, very tough. I knew he had some tough matches and I tried to stay connected with my serving and returning game," Sinner said.

Veteran Lorenzo Sonego reached his first Grand Slam quarterfinal after beating 19-year-old qualifier Learner Tien 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 6-2.

The 29-year-old was unstoppable on serve and handled the stifling conditions better than Tien, whose breakout tournament was highlighted by an upset of fifth seed Daniil Medvedev in round two.

Sonego will next play 21st seed Ben Shelton, who progressed after 38-year-old Gael Monfils pulled the



Jannik Sinner of Italy plays a forehand return to Holger Rune of Denmark during their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

pin as his gruelling run finally took its toll.

Shelton led 7-6 (3), 6-7 (3), 7-6 (2), 1-0 after almost three hours as Monfils succumbed having in his previous match impressively defeated fourth seed Taylor Fritz in four sets.

But it was better news for 28th seed Elina Svitolina, Monfils' wife, who was the first women's player

through to the last eight.

She overcame a slow start to power past Russia's Veronika Kudermetova 6-4, 6-1 in one hour and 23 minutes.

It's been a resurgence for former world No.3 Svitolina, who reached the quarterfinals in Melbourne for a third time but first since 2019.

"I was just trying to fight," said the 30-year-old Svitolina. "The only

thing I can do when things are not going your way, you just try to really put your head down and get back to work." Svitolina next plays 19th seed Madison Keys, who beat Rybakina 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 in a nerve-jangling clash on Margaret Court Arena.

Former US Open finalist Keys is on a surge and riding a nine-match winning streak after lifting the title in Adelaide.

But it was a bitter disappointment for sixth seed Rybakina, who was a finalist at the Australian Open in 2023.

"Obviously a pretty good first set, and I think I finished the third set really well," Keys said. "There are some things that I can take and learn from the middle of the match, but, overall, really happy with how I was able to finish and close out

that match." Five-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek blasted past Eva Lys 6-0, 6-1 in the night session on Rod Laver Arena.

She ruthlessly ended Lys' bid to become the first 'lucky loser' - after earning late qualification when 13th seed Anna Kalinskaya withdrew - to reach the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam tournament.

"There's a lot to improve. I don't feel like I'm at my peak yet," said Swiatek, who is striving to win an elusive Australian Open title. "For sure, matches like that give me confidence and I feel like I'm playing a good game." Swiatek is within sight of reaching the semifinals in Melbourne for a second time but will first need to play eighth seed Emma Navarro, who fended off No.9 Daria Kasatkina 6-4, 5-7, 7-5.

Meanwhile, China's Zhang Zhizhen and his Czech partner Tomas Machac fell at the third round of the men's doubles after losing to 15th seeds Hugo Nys and Edouard Roger-Vasselin 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

But China's Zhang Shuai and France's Kristina Mladenovic upset fifth seeds Chan Hao-Ching of Chinese Taipei and Lyudmyla Kichenok of Ukraine 7-6 (3), 6-2 to advance to the women's doubles quarterfinals.

Chinese pairing Zheng Saisai and Wang Xinyu lost to Kamilla Rakhimova and Sara Sorribes in a tense three-set women's doubles match.

Quarterfinal action starts on Tuesday headlined by a men's blockbuster between third seed Carlos Alcaraz and 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic.

Second seed Alexander Zverev faces 12th seed Tommy Paul.

Defending women's champion Aryna Sabalenka will be strong favorite against 27th seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, while third seed Coco Gauff has an intriguing quarterfinal against 11th seed Paula Badosa.

Lazio eases past relegation-threatened Hellas Verona

Inter keeps pace with leader Napoli

MILAN, Jan 20, (AP): Inter Milan's goals are coming from an unusual source.

Defender Denzel Dumfries was again on target as Inter beat lowly Empoli 3-1 to keep pace with Serie A leader Napoli.

Inter captain Lautaro Martínez netted the opener to help the Nerazzurri move to within three points of Napoli, which won 3-2 at third-placed Atalanta on Saturday. Inter has a match in hand.

Inter found it hard to get past a resolute Empoli defense but Lautaro broke the deadlock in stunning fashion 10 minutes into the second half when he curled a powerful shot into the top right corner from 20 yards (meters).

Dumfries headed in Inter's second in the 79th for his fourth goal in five matches.

Sebastiano Esposito held up his hands in apology after pulling one back for Empoli four minutes later. The 22-year-old - who has been in prolific form with 10 goals this season - is on loan at Empoli from Inter.

Marcus Thuram sealed the result with one minute remaining.

Empoli remained a point above the drop zone.

Lazio put an embarrassing week behind it to ease past relegation-threatened Hellas Verona 3-0 for its



Empoli's Mattia Viti, left, and Inter Milan's Denzel Dumfries challenge for the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Inter Milan and Empoli at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy. (AP)

first victory of the year.

Lazio had started 2025 with a loss in the derby against Roma and then drew at home to relegation-threatened Como last weekend. It began the week by firing the man who handled the club's eagle mascot after he posted explicit photos online of his penis implant.

However, Lazio got off to the perfect start in Verona as Samuel Gigot headed in a corner with less than two minutes on the clock.

Boulaye Dia doubled Lazio's

lead with an impressive counter-attack in the 21st minute as he sprinted forward from inside his own half, took on three Verona defenders, and fired into the bottom left corner.

Mattia Zaccagni, who progressed through the ranks at Verona before joining Lazio in 2021, sealed the win early in the second half.

Verona midfielder Ondrej Duda was sent off in the final minute after he received a second yellow card. Lazio moved fourth, four points

behind Atalanta and 11 points behind Napoli.

Verona - which was bought by American firm Presidio Investors on Wednesday - remained in the relegation zone, level on points with 17th-placed Como.

Cagliari crushed 10-man Lecce 4-1 to leapfrog a point above its opponent into 13th place.

It was nevertheless only two points above the relegation zone in a tight bottom half of the table.

Parma was only a point above the bottom three after drawing 1-1 against Venezia, which was four points from safety.

Fiorentina stayed sixth but was loudly jeered off the field after it could only draw 1-1 at home to Torino, which played with 10 men for most of the match.

Fiorentina has not won in the league for more than a month, with four losses and two draws.

It seemed as if matters were about to change when Torino defender Ali Dembélé was sent off in the 33rd minute after two yellow cards in six minutes.

Moise Kean headed Fiorentina in front five minutes later but substitute Gvidas Gineitis made the most of a defensive howler from the home side to snatch a point for Torino in the 70th minute.



The flame is displayed after being lit during the Harbin 2025 Asian Winter Games Flame Lighting Ceremony at the Sun Island Scenic Area in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

Flame for Asian Winter Games lit

HARBIN, Jan 20, (Xinhua): The flame for the Harbin 2025 Asian Winter Games was lit at the Sun Island Scenic Area here on Monday, with 18 days to go before the opening of the Games.

The flame was lit at 11:14 am local time after a brief ceremony opened by a choir of 90 children.

The torch, measuring 735mm in height, features a top diameter of 115mm and a grip diameter of 50mm. Its design, themed "Surging," is inspired by the dynamic energy of nature and life. The design takes the form of a blossoming lilac, integrating colors such as China Red, Lilac Purple, and Snow White, symbolizing the sincerity, warmth, openness, and inclusivity of Heilongjiang Province and the charac-

teristics of the host city, Harbin.

Wang Zheng, the chief director of the ceremony, introduced that the whole event emphasized the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. The stage design was centered around respecting nature, blending the icy landscapes with rich cultural charm.

The event saw the launch of an online torch relay on the same day, which allows more people to take part in this grand sports and cultural event regardless time and space. The offline torch relay will start on Feb. 3.

The capital city of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, Harbin will host the Games for the second time from Feb. 7 to 14, having previously hosted the event's third edition in 1996.

Liverpool hosts Lille and Barcelona is at Benfica

CL makes January debut with high-stakes clash of struggling PSG & Man City

GENEVA, Jan 20, (AP): The first Champions League games to be played in January include one with shocking possible consequences in an unpredictable debut season for the 36-team format.

Paris Saint-Germain vs. Manchester City on Wednesday is a clash of super-wealthy state-backed teams currently a barely believable 25th and 22nd in the standings.

If the 2020 beaten finalist and 2023 champion play to a draw at Parc des Princes, both could start the 18-game final round on Jan. 29 outside the top-24 places that qualify for the knockout stage.

The new format that replaced the traditional groups - now with eight games instead of six, facing eight different opponents, and two in January - is unknown territory even for UEFA, whose preseason prediction that eight points should ensure advancing likely will fall short.

However, few imagined what would play out in the first six rounds.

Man City and PSG have struggled, Real Madrid has lost half its games in 20th place despite adding Kylian Mbappé to a title-winning team, and lowest-ranked debutant Brest has cruised to four wins and seventh in the standings, just ahead of Lille.

"It would have been impossible to list these eight clubs as being in

the top eight positions," Giorgio Marchetti, the UEFA deputy general secretary, told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "There is a lot of new fresh air."

"I think the format has an impact," Marchetti said, pointing to comments by Inter Milan coach Simone Inzaghi that it is more difficult to prepare for eight different opponents instead of three. "It is more of a challenge."

The top eight in the standings on Jan. 29 advance directly to the round of 16 that starts in March. They will likely include current leader Liverpool and second-place Barcelona which are the only two teams already certain to finish in the top 24. Liverpool is the only team to win all six games.

Teams placed from ninth to 24th go into the new knockout playoffs round. Nos. 9-16 will be seeded in the draw on Jan. 31 and will play the second leg at home. Teams placing 17 to 24 host the first legs.

Nos. 25-36 in the standings are eliminated and do not transfer to the Europa League. Already out are Leipzig, Slovan Bratislava and Young Boys which each lost all six games.

Liverpool hosts Lille and Barcelona is at 15th-place Benfica. Atletico Madrid in 11th place can rise above visiting Bayer Leverkusen, which is

in fourth place with just one point more.

Aston Villa, the 1982 European Cup winner, can qualify for the round of 16 with a win at 16th-place

Monaco.

Stuttgart, in 26th place, is favored to win at Slovan and move to 10 points, which would put pressure on PSG and Man City.

Real Madrid hosts struggling Salzburg, and third-place Arsenal can secure its round of 16 entry - and do Man City a favor - by winning at home against 24th-place Dinamo

Zagreb.

Sixth-place Inter Milan goes to Sparta Prague, and Bayern Munich, in a surprising 10th place with 12 points, travels to Feyenoord which is 18th with 10 points.

Brest goes to Schalke's stadium in neutral Germany to face Shakhtar Donetsk, which has four points and likely must win to stay in contention.

For the money, mostly. The most influential clubs wanted a bigger and more lucrative Champions League and got two extra midweek matches for all. The congested calendar for soccer left few options.

Historically, European club competitions took a midwinter break until March. Then February was occupied in 2001 by the Champions League when a new format with a second group stage started. February stayed on the calendar when the round of 16 started in 2004, and for the next two decades.

So when UEFA decided in 2022 on this eight-game league phase, January was needed even though some leagues in Nordic countries do not start until March, and others are still on midwinter breaks.

Austrian champion Sturm Graz, which plays at Atalanta on Tuesday, has not played a domestic game since Dec. 7 and will not resume until Feb. 1.



Ipswich Town's Leif Davis, right, is challenged by Manchester City's Matheus Nunes during the English Premier League soccer match between Ipswich Town and Manchester City at Portman Road stadium in Ipswich, England. (AP)



Australia's Beth Mooney, right, attempts a sweep shot in front of England's Amy Jones during their Women's Ashes T20 cricket match in Sydney, Australia. (AP)

Sports

Al Arabi turns the tide on Al Qadsiya

Players celebrated with cash reward

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: Al Arabi had a thrilling night, overturning a two-goal deficit against traditional rival Al Qadsiya in the 12th round of the Zain Premier League. Played at Al Qadsiya's home stadium, Al Arabi delivered a remarkable performance, turning the match around to secure a 4-2 victory. This win added three crucial points to their tally, bringing them to 33 points and reigniting its hopes of reclaiming the championship title after a three-season drought. On the other hand, Al Qadsiya, with only 20 points, saw its chances of competing for the title diminishes significantly.

The match began modestly for Al Arabi, but the team's fortunes changed dramatically thanks

to coach Nasser Al Shatti's strategic substitutions. He relied on young players who stepped up to the challenge and proved their worth. Their energy and determination allowed Al Arabi to dominate the match, scoring four goals to seal a valuable victory and improve its chances of competing for the title.

Al-Arabi's professionals also played a pivotal role, showing excellent levels of performance that made a significant impact on the outcome. Despite bringing in several professionals at the start of the season, the club's management and coaching staff deserve credit for their quick decisions to replace underperforming players with better options before it was too late.

Following the victory, Al Arabi Club President Abdul Aziz Ashour congratulated his players for their fighting spirit and dedication. He rewarded each player with 1,000 dinars and lifted penalties previously imposed on some players.

Meanwhile, the mood in the Al Qadsiya camp was one of frustration. Fans who had celebrated a strong first half were left disappointed as their team faltered in the second half. Al Qadsiya's management, including Montenegrin coach Zeljko Petrovic, came under fire from fans and some players for the team's decline

in performance.

Despite their impressive first half, Al Qadsiya struggled in the second half, succumbing to Al Arabi's relentless attacks. Petrovic made substitutions, bringing in Bader Al-Mutawa for Athbi Shehab, but this did not improve the situation. Shehab's absence exposed gaps in the midfield, allowing Al Arabi to take full control and secure the victory.

Al Qadsiya also faced issues with its choice of professionals. While Mohammed Soula and Ismail Khafi performed well, the likes of Daniel Jibola and Mahdi Barahma failed to make an impact. Barahma, in particular, struggled to adapt to different positions, which affected his overall performance. Moreover, the midseason departure of Igor and ongoing injuries to key players, including Khaled Ibrahim, Khaled Sabah, and Faisal Al-Shatti, weakened the team further. Despite bringing in Haitian Jean Jairo, sources confirmed that he had been dismissed, and another professional was sought.

The lack of suitable replacements for injured players further exposed Al Qadsiya's vulnerabilities. In contrast, Al Arabi's reliance on their strong bench, coach's tactical approach, and the team's fighting spirit proved decisive. Al Qadsiya's struggles were compounded by absences and a lack of depth in its squad.



Strong performance from Kuwait against Qatar.

Kuwait begins President's Cup campaign after elimination

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

ZAGREB, Jan 20: Kuwait plays its opening match in the International Handball Federation (IHF) President's Cup, a tournament for teams eliminated in the preliminary round of the 29th edition of the 2025 World Handball Championship. The championship is currently taking place across Croatia, Denmark, and Norway. It faces Guinea at 5:30pm; followed by Poland on Wednesday at 8:00 pm. Kuwait will conclude its campaign against Algeria on Saturday.

Kuwait participated in Group Two of the World Handball Championship, where it faced tough competition, losing all three matches to Austria, France, and Qatar. These results placed Kuwait in fourth place, eliminating it from contention for the main round and moving it to the consolation rounds of the President's Cup.

Despite the early exit, the Blues displayed promising performances and competitive spirit. However, the lack of experience among the team, many of whom are debuting at the World Cup, proved to be a decisive factor. The team's development was further hampered by a nearly four-year international suspension of Kuwaiti sports, followed by disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The players have expressed their apologies to Kuwaiti fans and have pledged to deliver stronger performances in the future.

Kuwait's handball team has shown resilience in recent years, winning the bronze medal at the Asian Games in China last year after a long absence from the podium. It also secured fourth place in the Asian qualifiers for the World Cup, held in January in Bahrain.

Meanwhile, in the ongoing Handball Activation Championship, Al-Nasr will face Al-Qurain at 5:00 pm, followed by a clash between Al-Sulaibikhat and Al-Fahaheel at 6:30 pm.

Kuwaiti artistic gymnastics team heads to Baku for training camp

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 20: The Kuwaiti youth artistic gymnastics team has embarked on a 10-day training camp in Baku, Azerbaijan, starting today. This camp is part of the team's long-term preparation plan for the 2026 Youth Olympic Games, set to take place in Dakar, Senegal.

The team delegation departed Kuwait yesterday afternoon en route to Baku. The delegation includes team administrator Khaled Al-Madhen, Ukrainian coach Vitaly Arsenyev, and players Abdullah Behbehani, Musa Al-Sahaf, and Saud Al-Rudaini.

The training camp, organized in collaboration with the Kuwait Olympic Committee and the Gymnastics Federation, aims to equip the players

with the skills and experience needed to excel in the Olympics.

Fahad Al-Soula, Chairman of the Gymnastics Federation, expressed gratitude to Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser, Chairman of the Olympic Committee, Bashar Abdullah, Acting Director of the Public Authority for Sports, and Fatima Hayat, Chairwoman of the Women's Sports Committee. He acknowledged their continuous support for gymnastics, a sport that has gained significant recognition in international championships. Al-Soula emphasized the Federation's commitment to advancing both the technical and rhythmic aspects of gymnastics to establish it as one of Kuwait's leading sports.



The Kuwaiti gymnastics delegation.

France leads medals table after 6 days

TURIN, Italy, Jan 20, (Xinhua): France and Germany maintained their 1-2 placings on both the gold medal and medals tables at the Torino 2025 FISU World University Winter Games after six days. France already grabbed 17 gold, eight silver and nine bronze medals to top both standings, while Germany remained second with six gold, nine silver and seven bronze.

Finland occupied the third place with 5-3-2, but their 10 medals in total were only placed them sixth on the medal standing. Spain (4-7-2) was third in the medal standings with 13 medals, but only ranked fifth on the gold medal table. Even the eighth-placed Kazakhstan (3-4-

4) have a chance to be ranked higher as they won 11 medals in total, the same as the fourth-placed Poland (5-2-4).

Japan, Switzerland and Italy each pocketed eight medals as the contest will be more competitive among the top 10 teams.

France won three gold medals as Victoire Tillier's first run got the best 91.00 points, which was good enough for her to win the women's freeski big air. bRemi Cantan finished first in the men's ski mountaineering vertical race by 13 minutes and 22.5 seconds, while Margot Ravinel added the third gold for France in the women's race, timing 16:01.5.



Al Arabi and Al Qadsiya players challenging for the ball.

Burgan records first win of Arab Club Volleyball Championship

Kuwait Club edges Zamalek for Group Two top spot

DOHA, Jan 20: The Kuwait Club volleyball team secured a crucial 3-2 victory over Zamalek in the second round of the 43rd Arab Club Volleyball Championship, currently taking place in Doha with the participation of 15 teams.

The "Brigadier" had previously triumphed over Libya's Al-Hilal in the opening match of Group Two, bringing its total to five points and placing it at the top of the group.

Elsewhere, Qatar's Al-Shorta defeated Bahrain's Dar Kulaib 3-0, Egypt's Al-Ahly overcame Iraq's Erbil 3-1, and Al-Seeb claimed a 3-0 victory against Libya's Al-Hilal.

Meanwhile, Burgan recorded its first win of the championship, edging out Gaza of Palestine 3-2. This victory placed Burgan third in Group Four. As per the tournament rules, only the top two

teams from each group advance to the second round.

Muhammad Al-Faraj, Vice Chairman of Burgan Club and Head of the Delegation, praised the team's performance and expressed hope for success in the consolation round. Buggan is set to play against the third-place team in Group Two on Wednesday, under the leadership of Argentine coach Alejandro Grossi.

Notably, this is the first time Qatar is hosting the Arab Volleyball Clubs Championship since its inception in Libya in 1978. Libya's Al-Suwaihlil was the defending champion, having claimed the title in Jordan in 2024.

In other news, within the Women's Volleyball League, Al-Fatma Club will face Salwa Al-Sabah Club today at 6:00 pm at Salwa Club Hall.



Alejandro Grossi gives instruction to Burgan players.

Best of the Rest

Australia retain Women's Ashes: It has taken just nine days for Australia's cricketers to retain the Women's Ashes.

The Australians won a fourth straight game in the multi-format series with a 57-run victory in the first of the three T20s between the rivals.

They had previously won all three one-day internationals, so have powered into an unassailable 8-0 lead. There are only eight points still on offer in the series.

It means Australia just has to win or draw either of the two remaining T20s or the series-closing test match to clinch the series outright.

The Australians have held the Ashes since 2015, when they won the multi-format series on English soil.

In the first T20 at Sydney Cricket Ground, Australia made 198-7 mainly thanks to Beth Mooney's 51-ball 75.

England lost both of its openers in the first seven balls and was

dismissed for 141 in the 16th over. (AP)



Hamilton arrives in Maranello: Seven-time Formula 1 champion Lewis Hamilton arrived at Ferrari's headquarters, Maranello, on Monday to get down to work with his new team.

First up was a short visit to the Fiorano track followed by a meeting with Piero Ferrari and then "a day-long total immersion program," the team said.

"There are some days that you know you'll remember forever and today, my first as a Scuderia Ferrari HP driver, is one of those days," Hamilton said. "I've been lucky enough to have achieved things in my career I never thought possible, but part of me has always held on to that dream of racing in red. I couldn't be happier to realize that dream today."

The 40-year-old Hamilton is expected to drive a 2022 or 2023 Ferrari car over the next few days at Fiorano.

Hamilton announced last year that he was leaving Mercedes for Ferrari. (AP)