



Soccer  
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## Opinion

**Ahmed Al-Jarallah**

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

### New path requires Kuwait to return to leadership

ONCE again, we affirm that we are entering a new era that is different from the one we experienced in the past 60 years.

While Kuwait has experienced various eras marked by significant events, some of which were criticized and others praised, in political, social, economic, innovative, artistic, and cultural fields, it stood out from other regional and Arab nations.

However, following the brutal Iraqi invasion, this distinction turned into political and social chaos, causing

many to lose their compass and become disoriented. Instead of maintaining a patriotic stance and healing the wounds

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## Amir receives UAE Accountability Authority chief

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the visiting President of the UAE Accountability Authority Humaid Obaid Abush-ibs at Al-Seif Palace on Sunday.

Chairman of the State Audit Bureau Essam Al-Roumi and several senior state officials attended the reception.

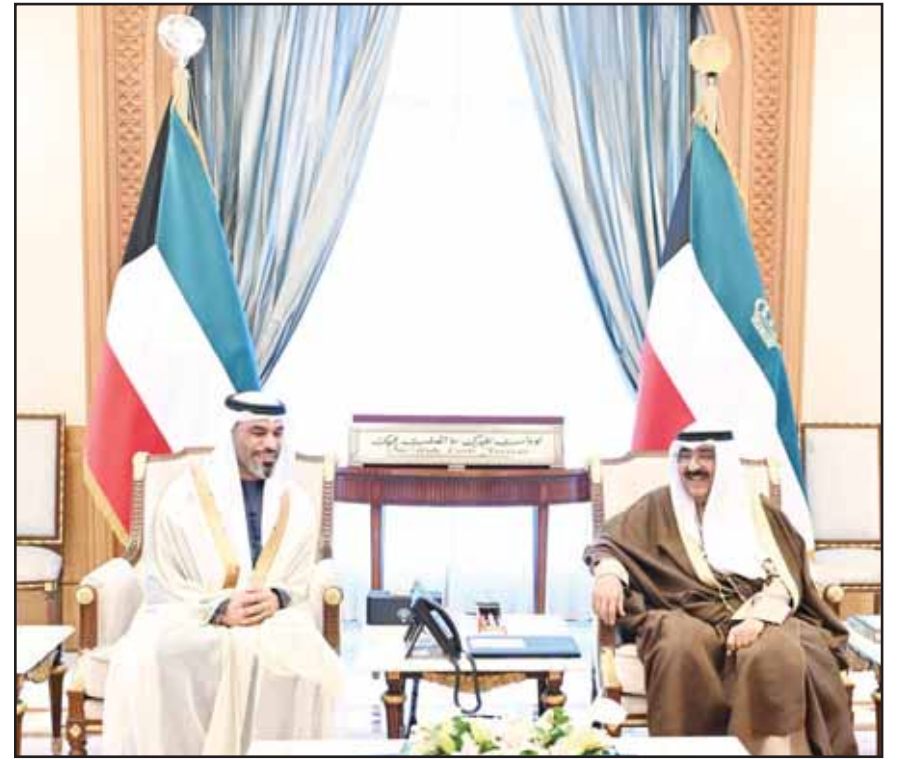
### Amir hosts Crown Prince, Premier, First Deputy PM

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Al-Seif Palace on Sunday.

His Highness the Amir also received separately His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

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

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



HH the Amir receives visiting president of the UAE Accountability Authority. Amiri Diwan photo.

## Al-Jarallah highlights media challenges

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah expressed his concerns about the state of media in the country, highlighting the challenges posed by outdated media laws and the lack of government support.

Al-Jarallah made the statement at a press conference Sunday; during which he pointed out that while media outlets used to receive some form of government support, they are now left to navigate a complex legal landscape on their own. He touched on the financial burdens of newspapers, indicating that they do not receive State funding and often incur annual expenses exceeding KD1 million.

He also called for action against fake accounts, which have proliferated and are causing harm to individuals.

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Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah with Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Badah Al-Mutairi. Photo by Rezk Tawfiq



Left: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah delivers remarks during the press conference. Right: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Badah Al-Mutairi participates in a panel discussion during a press conference announcing the launch of Kuwait's activities as the Capital of Arab Culture and Media.



Photos by Rezk Tawfiq

A section of attendees at the press conference announcing the launch of Kuwait's activities as the Capital of Arab Culture and Media.

### Info minister praises Kuwaiti media as regional leader

## 'New media regulation law nears completion'

By Medhat Allaam  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Badah Al-Mutairi says the media regulation law will see the light soon and will play a major role in promoting responsible freedom of expression. Acts of aggression against the divine entity, prophets, and the sovereign will be the only transgressions subject to penalty.

Al-Mutairi said this during a press conference held yesterday morning at the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers in Shaab to announce the launch of the activities of Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Culture and Media, and in response to remarks from the Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah, who was present at the event.

Al-Mutairi praised Kuwaiti media, describing it as a leading force in the Gulf and Arab media arena.

He highlighted the contributions of the pioneering figures in Kuwait who shaped the nation's media legacy, which is

rooted in art, freedom, and culture, with its influence reaching far beyond regional borders.

Al-Mutairi explained that Kuwait is proud to be chosen as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media for 2025, an honor granted annually by the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization and the Council of Arab Information Ministers in appreciation of the contributions countries make to culture and media both regionally and internationally.

The title of Arab Capital of Culture is awarded to the city that showcases its role in promoting culture, arts, and literature, and also reflects Arab heritage through cultural programs held throughout the year. It is also granted to the city that plays a major role in developing the Arab media scene, enhancing media diversity, and supporting the modern media infrastructure.

Kuwait's selection for this title represents recognition of its leadership in both culture and media, and affirms its commitment to advancing cultural and media content that reflects its national identity and rich cultural heritage.

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# Major drug raid nets 21 dealers

Bust yields cash, ammo, narcotics

## KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior said Saturday that 21 culprits in 17 psychotropic drug charges have been arrested and referred to investigators.

During the 21 arrests, members of the General Administration for Drug managed to seize 6.213 kg of hashish, 8.16 kg of marijuana, and 3.11 kg of 'shabu' (methamphetamine), according to a statement from

the Ministry's General Directorate of Security Relations and Media.

The psychotropic seizures also include 153 gm of cocaine, 550 gm of 'chemical,' 10 gm of heroin, 100 gm of psilocybin (magic mushrooms), 20 mg of marijuana oil (THC), 12,042 Lyrica capsules, 400 Captagon tablets, and 147 other psychotropic tablets.

They also include nine bullets and cash amounting to KD 20,825 (USD 67,550) in revenue of the drug trade, the statement added.

## Ministry ensures meat and food prices stable ahead of Ramadan

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Director of the Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Faisal Al-Ansari confirmed the stability of meat and food prices in the wholesale market, and the continuation of the

Livestock Trade and Transport Company in offering its meat at the usual normal prices.

Al-Ansari said this in a press statement issued yesterday following the first inspection tour conducted by the emergency team from the Commercial

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Sheikha Shaikha Ali Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi

### India honors Sheikha Al-Sabah

Government of India has conferred the Padma Shri, one of the most coveted civilian awards of India, on Sheikha Shaikha A. J. Al-Sabah, for promoting yoga in Kuwait and the

region. The Embassy of India in Kuwait conveyed its heartiest felicitations to Sheikha Al-Sabah for this award, the first to a Kuwaiti citizen.



Embassy of India marks 76th Republic Day



Gulf Bank launches phase two of transforming branch network into eco-friendly spaces

### NewsWatch

KD 413K transferred to bank accounts

## Social aid restored to 485 women following Kuwait Amir directives

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Confirming details published in Al-Seyassah daily, Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi, announced the resumption of social aid disbursement to 485 women, including widowed wives of Kuwaiti citizens and divorcees whose nationalities were revoked under "Article 8."

The move comes in response to the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad to ensure a dignified life for this category, as instructed by the Council of Ministers.

Dr. Al-Ajmi revealed that the total amount transferred to beneficiaries' bank accounts was 413,718,336 Kuwaiti dinars, covering 485 eligible cases.

He commended the Family Care Department for its efficiency in expediting the disbursement process, which eased the burden on beneficiaries and contrib-

uted to their stability. The Ministry of Interior announced this was done during the first 14 working days in coordination with relevant authorities.

Additionally, the Public Authority for Civil Information announced the activation of the "My Identity" application starting January 12, 2025, specifically for individuals whose nationalities were withdrawn.

Employees were stationed in Hall No. (2) at the Authority's headquarters to assist those facing difficulties in activating the app or updating required data, such as personal photos or passport copies.

In emergency cases, the office successfully processed seven instances and facilitated travel procedures with ease.

The office also demonstrated effective outreach, responding to approximately 150 calls daily, while 2,429 forms were registered via a link shared through WhatsApp.

## PACI 'removes' 554 addresses

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) announced that it has removed the residential addresses of 554 individuals from its records, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decision was based on building demolitions or declarations from property owners.

PACI emphasized that affected individuals must visit its office to register their new addresses within 30 days, providing the necessary supporting documents.

**MAYS AL-JABAL, Lebanon:** Israeli forces in southern Lebanon on Sunday opened fire on protesters demanding their withdrawal in line with a ceasefire agreement, killing at least 15 and injuring more than 80, Lebanese health officials reported.

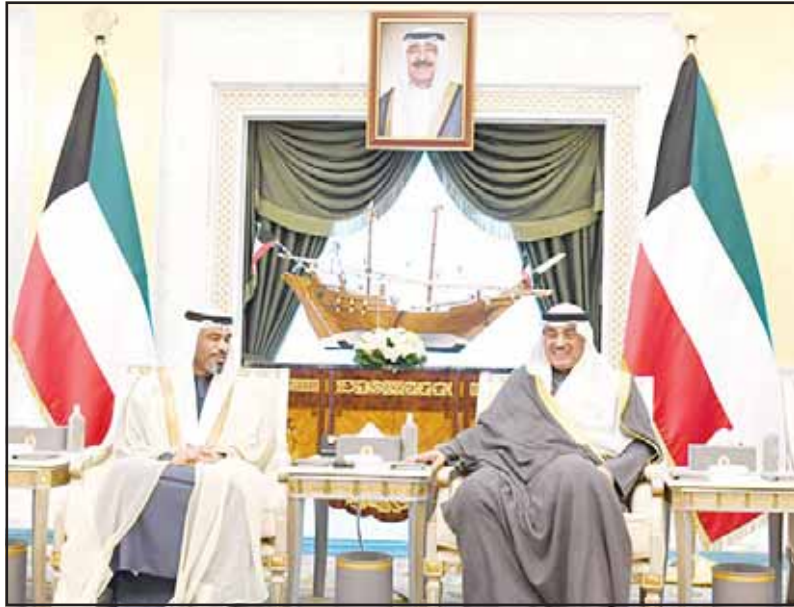
The dead included two women and a Lebanese army soldier, the Health Ministry said in a statement (AP)

**Prayer Timings**

|            |       |            |       |
|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Fajr ..... | 05:18 | Asr .....  | 15:00 |
| Sunrise .. | 06:41 | Maghrib .. | 17:21 |
| Zohr ..... | 12:01 | Isha ..... | 18:41 |

# Local

|                  |                                   |  |   |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Weather</b>   | Expected weather for next 24 hrs: | partly cloudy with light to moderate variable wind to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h.   | Bubyana 19<br>Jahra 24<br>Failaka Island 22<br>Salmiyah 17<br>Ahmadi 20<br>Jal Aliyah 21<br>Nuwaisib 23 |
|                  | <b>By Day:</b>                    | Mild and partly cloudy with light to moderate variable wind to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain. |   |
| <b>By Night:</b> | Cold to very cold and             |  |   |
| <b>Station</b>   | <b>Max Exp</b>                    | <b>Min Rec</b>   |   |
| Kuwait City      | 19                                | 12   |   |
| Kuwait Airport   | 22                                | 10   |   |
| Abdaly           | 25                                | 09   |   |



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives the Chairman of the Emirates Accounting Authority in the United Arab Emirates, Hamid Obaid Abu Shabas.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs of the Republic of Yemen, Dr. Shaye Mohsen Al-Zindani.

## Leadership felicitates India on Republic Day

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday sent a cable to Indian President Droupadi Murmu, congratulating her on the occasion of her country's Republic Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the President of India lifelong wellness and her country and its friendly people more progress and prosperity. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Sunday sent a cable to Indian President Droupadi Murmu, congratulating her on the occasion of her country's Republic Day, and wishing her lifelong wellness.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Sunday sent a cable to Indian President Droupadi Murmu, congratulating her on the occasion of her country's Republic Day.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Sunday a cable to the Governor-General of Australia Samantha Mostyn, congratulating her on the country's National Day. His Highness the Amir wished the Governor-General good health, her country and people further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also sent congratulatory cables to the Governor-General of Australia Samantha Mostyn on her country's National Day.

## Crown Prince receives UAE official, Yemeni FM

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received President of UAE Accountability Authority Hamid Obaid Abu Shabas at Al-Seif Palace on Sunday.

The meeting was attended by Chairman of the State Audit Bureau Essam Al-Roumi and several senior state officials.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad

Al-Sabah also received visiting Yemeni Foreign Minister Dr. Shaye Mohsen Al-Zindani and his accompanying delegation at Al-Seif Palace on Sunday.

Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, His Highness the Crown Prince's Office Director Jamal Al-Theyab, Undersecretary of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan for Foreign Affairs Mazen Al-Issa and Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ambassador Ahmad Al-Baqer were present at the meeting.

# Kuwaiti-Omani Duqm Refinery revenues climb to \$5b in 2024

15% increase in production eyed by 2026

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The revenues of the Kuwaiti-Omani Duqm Refinery from its operations over the past year are expected to range from \$4.5 to \$5 billion, especially since its 2023 revenues exceeded \$2 billion, say sources from the Omani oil sector.**

Sources revealed the management of the refinery intends to increase its production capacity by 15 percent during 2026, explaining that it was possible to increase production by about 10 percent last year, but the Kuwaiti-Omani management decided to take it slow, especially since the refinery was at the beginning of its operations and international organizations always advise against increasing the production capacity of refineries in their first operational year.

Sources said the Duqm Refinery Administration will re-experiment with the Omani Sohar Refinery, which was completed in 2007, with a refining capacity of 116,000 barrels per day. "In recent years, its refining capacity increased

to 198,000 barrels after spending more than \$2.5 billion to increase its daily refining capacity," sources added.

Sources pointed out that the entry of the Duqm Refinery, which has a refining capacity of 230,000 barrels per day of Kuwaiti and Omani crude, into the production line of Omani refineries has contributed to raising the refining capacity in the Sultanate to 534,000 barrels per day; considering that the refining capacity of Mina Al-Fahal Refinery is 106,000 barrels per day and that of Sohar Refinery is about 198,000 barrels per day.

Sources confirmed that Duqm Refinery sales were tremendously active during the past year, considering many countries rushed to buy its products due to its strategic location -- overlooking the southeastern coast of Oman, as this unique location makes it overlook the most important international shipping lines in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea.

Sources stated: The fact that this location is far from geopolitical tensions in other international shipping routes, which witnessed tension in the past year indicates that among the reasons for the rush to buy Duqm products is that these products are compatible with global environmental requirements like jet fuel, liquefied petroleum gas and diesel.

Sources affirmed that Duqm Refinery will remain the largest joint strategic project between Kuwait and Oman, and it is the largest Gulf project among joint Gulf investments.

Sources added the Duqm Refinery recently won Best Company Award in the refining sector for the year 2024 within the awards of the International Finance Organization; while Chief Executive Officer (CEO) David Baird won the Best CEO Award in the refining sector for the year 2024.

At the same time, sources indicated that Kuwait Petroleum International Company and the Omani OQ Company are currently preparing to celebrate the anniversary of the official operation of the joint Duqm Refinery, which took place on Feb 7, 2024.

Sources said OQ Company benefited from the experience of the Kuwaiti side in the excellence, development and leadership of the joint Duqm Refinery; adding that a delegation from the leaders of the Duqm Refinery in Oman recently visited the Mina Abdullah Refinery to exchange experience and ideas in the interest of the joint cooperation between Oman and Kuwait in the refinery sector, as well as strengthening relations between Kuwait National Petroleum Company and Duqm Refinery Company.

## Wisdom, leadership lauded

# Pope Tawadros congratulates Kuwait Amir on assuming rule

**By Bassam Al-Qassab**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff



Pope Tawadros II

wait as their second home.

Reflecting on his 2017 visit to Kuwait, Pope Tawadros described the country as a model of generosity and hospitality, adding that he cherished the warmth and admiration he witnessed firsthand.

While circumstances have delayed a return visit, he expressed his deep affection for Kuwait and its leadership, commending the Al-Sabah family's guidance toward a bright and stable future.

On regional and international challenges, the Pope reaffirmed his prayers for the preservation and stability of Gulf countries, including Kuwait, recognizing their efforts in promoting peace and security through diplomacy.

Pope Tawadros also spoke about the unity of Egyptians, Christians and Muslims, following the visit of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, during Christmas celebrations. The Pope expressed his appreciation for this fraternal spirit and the shared national fabric of Egypt.

Additionally, he lauded Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's attendance at Christmas celebrations, describing it as a testament to the strong bonds of unity and a source of immense joy for Christians in Egypt and beyond.

"With his presence, the holiday became two holidays," he remarked, emphasizing the unmatched love and solidarity of the Egyptian people in overcoming challenges together.

Pope Tawadros concluded by commending the Egyptian government's efforts under Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly, particularly the progress in industrial projects, calling them a 'very beautiful thing.' He emphasized that Egypt's strength lies in its shared affection and unwavering unity.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: As Kuwait prepares for its National and Liberation Day celebrations and approaches the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad assuming leadership, Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church extended heartfelt congratulations to His Highness.

In his message, the Pope praised the Amir's wisdom, virtuous conduct and leadership, saying:

"With our hearts, we congratulate Your Highness on your first year of assuming this responsibility, which you fulfill with love and construction, filling the history books with your efforts for peace in the world. We pray to God to protect you as you continue your journey for Kuwait and the world, as an example of love and tolerance."

The Pope highlighted the Amir's dedication to raising Kuwait's status and fostering unity, emphasizing his commitment to the nation's prosperity.

He also lauded the enduring and fruitful cooperation between Egypt and Kuwait during His Highness's tenure, underscoring their shared history, mutual respect and close coordination in Arab, regional and international forums.

Pope Tawadros recalled the historical warmth of Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations, noting Kuwait's pioneering role in hosting an Egyptian church, making it a symbol of co-existence and tolerance. He emphasized the love and security experienced by the Egyptian community in Kuwait, referring to Ku-



Selling vegetables at the market.

KUNA photo

# Qout Market kicks off in Mishref Oasis; thousands throng venue

**By Khaled Al-Jalis**

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26, (KUNA): Qout Market launched its 11th season on Saturday in Mishref Oasis, amidst a large audience and the participation of more than 130 local businesses.

Budour Al-Qassar, one of the founders of Qout Market initiative, told KUNA that what distinguishes this season is the presence of the market in the middle of a residential area, making it an attractive point for families.

She explained that the market has provided great support to small businesses over the past years as a platform to display their projects, introduce them to the public, and motivate them to contribute to the development of national economy.

She added that the activities include farmers market, handicraft projects, culinary experiences and cafes, with a section

dedicated to businesses targeting children entertainment.

Al-Qassar pointed out that the public turnout exceeded 20,000 visitors, noting that previous seasons witnessed more than 30,000 visitors to each event.

For her part, market participant Ragha Al-Janaei said that her project is to create interactive sensory books with brightly colored fabric with the aim to engage children from one to eight years old.

Participant Nada Bin Najj explained that her project aims to enhance the Arab identity of children by making entertaining characters from cotton and environmentally friendly tools with Arabic names, stressing the importance of her first participation in local exhibitions that support Kuwaiti youth.

Nour Al-Saif and her father participated in the market with 'Sidr' honey and honey-based products, as well as locally-made olive oil and shea butter.

## Registration for AMP opens

# MoH links staff evaluation with biometrics attendance

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The Ministry of Health has officially launched the annual employee evaluation process, integrating it with the activation of a smart fingerprint application to improve administrative efficiency and modernize the working system, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Abdul Rahman Al-Fares, the Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative Affairs, urged all employees to promptly activate the application to ensure their inclusion in the annual evaluation.

This initiative is part of the Ministry's broader strategy for digital transformation and the modernization of its administrative systems in line with international best practices.

In a significant update, the Ministry confirmed that fingerprint and facial recognition devices will be phased out within the next week, with the smart fingerprint system taking full responsibility for documenting attendance and departure.

This move reflects the Ministry's commitment to improving operational processes and enhancing efficiency.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Higher Education has announced the opening of registration for the Advanced Medicine Program (AMP), which aims to provide a Bachelor's degree in Advanced Human Medicine, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This four-year program is available for those holding a Bachelor's degree. Registration began, Sunday and will remain open until 12:00 noon on Thursday, April 24. Interested applicants can complete the registration process through the Ministry's official website.

## Work on port project gains momentum after gov't nod

**By Mohammad Ghanem**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Following the Cabinet's approval last Tuesday of the Chinese State Construction and Transportation Corporation Limited to implement, manage and operate the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port ambitious project, work has gained significant momentum.

The Ministry of Public Works received 'conditional approval' from the Audit Bureau last Thursday to enter a direct contract worth 3.1 million dinars for the study, design and pre-implementation services necessary for the project.

## Power outages in 26 areas

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has announced that maintenance work on several power transformers begins Saturday and continues until Feb 1, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This scheduled maintenance will result in temporary power outages affecting 26 areas across various governorates. The outages are expected to occur daily from 8:00 am and last for approximately four hours.

The Ministry has stated that the maintenance is essential to enhance the reliability and performance of the electrical infrastructure. Residents and businesses in the affected areas are encouraged to take necessary precautions to minimize inconvenience during the outages.

## Other Voices

# New project ... vague goals?

**By Ahmed alsarraf**

Sources in the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, which would have preferred to be called Religious Affairs (this reflects the reality of its role), stated that a 'development' project had been included to boost the country's economy, due to the decline in the country's resources as a result of fluctuating oil prices, by converting mosques to become environmentally friendly, within ten years!!

The project is set to cost 33 million dinars, and its implementation will lead to significant reductions: a 40 percent decrease in electricity consumption, a similar 40 percent reduction in water usage, and a 50 percent decrease in maintenance costs.

Environmentally, the project will deliver substantial benefits, cutting carbon emissions by 5,478,600 kilograms (per every 100 mosques), improving air quality, reducing waste, and increasing recycling opportunities.

Additionally, it will recycle gray water to help green the areas surrounding the mosque buildings, which covers approximately one hectare.

The project will also generate financial savings, amounting to 5 million and 235 thousand dinars in electricity and water costs across all mosques, while reducing annual carbon emissions by about 93,136 kilograms.

A key outcome of the project will be the creation of job opportunities for local and national talent in the field of sustainable buildings, with local companies benefiting as well.

This will not only enhance employment prospects but also drive economic returns, contributing positively to the country's investment climate (God is Great).

We appreciate the Ministry of Is-

amic Affairs for its detailed presentation of the project's advantages and accurate figures.

However, the citizen has the right to express some reservations, as many of the ministry's previous projects, which have cost the state hundreds of millions of dinars, have resulted in little to no tangible outcomes, such as the moderation of the Holy Quran and other initiatives.

It can be reasonably argued that the impressive numbers provided above might have been derived from a 'make-up hectare' study -- designed to satisfy the needs of government decision-makers and often created by well-known research offices with a vested interest, tailored to meet the ministry's requirements.

If the ministry officials truly believe in the integrity and significance of the study, it would be beneficial for them to publish it on the ministry's website for public scrutiny.

Many senior specialists and stakeholders involved with the ministry harbor genuine doubts about the study's credibility, as it seems based on assumptions that are far from realistic.

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs is aware that the cost of this project could be halved if cooperative societies were invited to contribute to implementing the study's recommendations, in line with their role in community service.

Alternatively, allowing companies and individuals to sponsor one or more mosques could help offset costs.

Unfortunately, such proposals are often not in the 'interest' of many ministry officials, which raises concerns about the project's long-term value and the broader commitment to financial efficiency.

Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister, is said to have said: Whenever I hear the word 'intellectual' I reach for my gun!

Whenever I hear an official announce a new project with vague goals, I put my hand on my heart, fearing for my money.

e-mail: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

### Shine or decline ... Trump leading America into uncharted waters

“IN MY opinion, the election of Donald Trump to a second term could mark a significant turning point in America’s role on the world stage, as Susan Thornton, a former US diplomat, suggests,” columnist **Dr Abdullah Sahar** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

“The shift could be more drastic than many expect, accelerating the decline of American hegemony. Unlike past empires that crumbled slowly over time, Thornton argues that Trump’s approach -- characterized by his aggressive tactics, disdain for international commitments and a preference for tariffs -- will speed up this process.



Dr. Sahar

“She points out that Trump’s rhetoric, including his claim of being against wars, paradoxically might ignite conflicts by instilling fear in both adversaries and allies.

“Thornton also envisions a post-American world, one where the United States, while still powerful and wealthy, no longer holds the global dominance it once did.

“I believe this aligns with Trump’s broader intentions: a shift away from the liberal trade system established in 1947. His protectionist policies, such as imposing steep tariffs on Chinese, Canadian and Mexican exports and taxing US companies that outsource production, could challenge the core principles of global free trade.

“His stance on punishing countries that circumvent the dollar further exemplifies his confrontational approach to global trade dynamics.

“Moreover, Trump’s preference for bilateral agreements over multilateral ones further isolates the US from traditional alliances.

“His tactics, which favor short-term gains over long-term strategy, suggest a volatile foreign policy. In the Middle East, his relationships with the Zionist elite and his openness to negotiating with Iran reflect the complexity and unpredictability of his approach.

“Trump’s presidency is emblematic of an ‘exceptional president,’ one who could either rejuvenate the US to reclaim its dominance or lead it into a period of severe decline and internal division. Historical examples of such exceptional leaders -- like Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler -- serve as cautionary tales.

“While they initially succeeded, their eventual downfalls highlight the dangers of unchecked ambition and flawed strategies.

“Trump’s challenge to both the political elite and the capitalist system is also noteworthy. By embracing a more mercantile and protectionist model akin to 19th-century Britain, Trump risks repeating the mistakes of past powers.

“Britain’s exploitation of its colonies eventually led to its weakened global position and similarly, Trump’s policies could erode America’s international standing in the long run.

“In short, Trump is steering the US into uncharted waters, where the outcome could reshape global power structures and define the next phase of international relations.

“The question remains whether his unconventional approach will reignite America’s influence or push it toward irrelevance in the coming years.”

**Also:**

“Anyone who observes the actions of the honorable people of Kuwait towards their employees, including workers of various nationalities, will recognize the truth of the virtuous morals inherent in the people of this blessed land,” columnist **Dr. Abdul Mohsen Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

“These qualities are deeply rooted in their true religion and the noble teachings of their revered Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace. Among the most notable of these qualities are loyalty and kindness towards those who call this land their home and live among them.

“Kuwait, blessed with prosperity and grace bestowed by Almighty God, is a land many people from all over the world, both East and West, come to in search of work and a better life. It is only natural to find workers from all corners of the globe, contributing their skills in various sectors, whether in public or private institutions.

“A particular story shared with me by my esteemed brother, Mr. Adel Yousef Al-Saad Al-Munifi, recounting the kind actions of a respected citizen, Mr. Saeed Mohammad Saeed Al-Naqeb, beautifully illustrates the loyalty and kindness

of the Kuwaiti people toward their workers. In this story, Mr. Saeed shares:

“We had an employee of Filipino nationality who was diligent and sincere in his work. I must admit that with God’s grace, and his dedication, the institution thrived and continued to progress. After several years, this employee wished to return to the Philippines, and we made sure his request was fulfilled.

“Ten years later, I had business in the Philippines, and my father recalled this employee. He advised me to find out how he was doing and to show him kindness. I went through the company files and eventually managed to gather some details.

“I traveled to the Philippines and began my search based on this information. By the grace of God, I was able to locate the city where he lived, about two and a half hours from the airport. I continued my search there until I reached his home.

“The moment he saw me, he was overcome with emotion, tears streaming down his face. He recognized me from my regular visits to the company, but what struck me was his inability to move easily -- he had become physically impaired. I comforted him, relayed my father’s greetings, and offered him a gift that my father had sent, as his financial situation warranted it.

“It was God’s will that guided me in this task. Despite the challenges of navigating an unfamiliar country and the difficulty of gathering enough information to locate him, God facilitated everything.

“My father had remembered this hardworking employee, and I was honored to fulfill his wish. This visit became an unexpected blessing for the employee, who was in great need of such kindness, both morally and financially. All praise is due to God, the Lord of the Worlds.”

“This story exemplifies the generous spirit of the Kuwaiti people: noble, loyal, and kind. They value their relationships, protect friendships, and perform good deeds. May God bless them, for they are true men of integrity and compassion.”

□ □ □

“Among other things, the recent Gulf Cup was distinguished by the Gulf fans who attended and spontaneously expressed the spirit of Gulf brotherhood and love for Kuwait and its people -- a love that the Kuwaiti people reciprocated,” **Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“While talking to our Gulf brothers, their admiration for Kuwaiti culture caught my attention, along with its various components, theater, arts, drama, music and Kuwaiti songs. Their focus on the past caught my attention as well; that is, the 1970s and 1980s when the elements of Kuwaiti culture were distinguished and its stars shone in the Gulf and the Arab worlds. However, they no longer focused on the succeeding eras. Did we lose distinction after that?”

“The slippery path, fate, distinguished purposeful plays, our participation in the World Cup, fine arts exhibitions, distinguished journalism, and how much we listened in the houses of Allah to the devout religious sheikhs, all of that is a little of the much which distinguished Kuwait. Kuwaiti stars shone in all fields, such that there is no room to mention all of them, so the country deserved to be called the ‘Pearl of the Gulf’.

“A culture rose and then stopped, stars shone and then disappeared, and national cultural production advanced and then declined. No one filled the void after that. Memories of the past remained in our minds and that of our brothers.

“The reasons are many, including the transformation of cultural elements into a source of profit and benefit, so the aesthetics got lost, then collective work was transformed into divisions and disagreements. The will to give and offer was disrupted. I am not exaggerating if I say this affected most of our activities. The most affected is the sports movement, which recorded a noticeable decline over the past decades.

“Kuwait must return to being the ‘pearl’ that it was, as everyone knew it and as the Gulf sports fans talked about. They always enjoyed Souk Al-Mubarakiya in a way they did not enjoy anywhere else. It is an extension of that era. May Allah the Almighty grant us success and protect Kuwait... God willing.”

— Compiled by **PFX Fernandes/ Mahmoud Attiyeh**

## 2 Kuwaitis accused of peddling and consuming drugs acquitted

### Media person fined KD50,000 for inciting sedition

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The Criminal Court, presided over by Counselor Mohammad Al-Sanea, acquitted two Kuwaiti citizens accused of trafficking and consuming hashish.**

The court found that the arrest and search warrant issued by the Public Prosecution was invalid due to lack of serious investigations.

The case involved allegations that the accused were in possession of narcotics for the purpose of trade and use.

Following secret investigations, the anti-narcotics officers executed a search and arrest operation on February 14.

The evidence, including narcotics and psychotropic substances, was reportedly seized from their residences in Abu Fatira, Egaila and Hawalli.

Lawyer Ali Haider, representing the accused, argued that the arrest and search procedures were invalid because they were not supported by serious investigations, as required by Court of Cassation precedents. The court agreed, ruling that the invalid warrant rendered all evidence obtained inadmissible.

The ruling underscores the critical legal standard that investigations must meet to ensure the validity of warrants and subsequent

legal actions.

□ □ □  
**Media personality fined:** The Criminal Court has imposed a fine of 50,000 Kuwaiti dinars on media personality Aisha Al-Rasheed for inciting sedition and insulting Shiite citizens via her video clips during the holy month of Muharram.

Following her indictment for violating the National Unity Law and insulting a segment of society via her YouTube channel, the Public Prosecution had released Al-Rasheed on 500 dinars bail.

This case underscores Kuwait’s commitment to preserving national unity and holding individuals accountable for content that threatens social harmony.

### Kuwaitis in traffic brawl

## Two young men perish as car skids, collides with lamppost

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: A tragic accident in the Saad Al-Abdullah area claimed the lives of two young men after their vehicle skidded and collided with a lamppost, reports Al-Rai daily.**

Emergency services, including police patrols and ambulances, responded promptly to the scene following a report of the incident. Upon arrival, paramedics confirmed that both individuals in the vehicle had succumbed to their injuries.

Authorities have registered the case as a collision resulting in fatalities. The bodies of the victims were transferred to the forensic medicine department after receiving the necessary directives from the investigator on-site.

Further investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances surrounding the accident.

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**Weekly GTD statistics:** The weekly report of the Rescue Police, covering Jan 12 to Jan 18, show 10,127 traffic violations were issued and 15 vehicles were impounded, reports Al-Anba daily.

This is in addition to officers dealing with 198 traffic accidents.

During the campaigns conducted by the Rescue Police, 172 individuals were arrested, including 95 expatriates reported absconding and wanted in connected with theft and 38 individuals for not holding identification documents.

Furthermore, 39 expatriates of various nationalities were arrested for violating the residency laws and were handed over to the General Directorate of Residency Affairs Investigation.

The operations also led to the seizure of 43 vehicles wanted for legal issues.

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**Kuwaitis in traffic brawl:** A Kuwaiti citizen, born in 1962, has filed a complaint at the Shamiya Police Station, accusing a compatriot of assaulting him over a dispute, reports Al-Anba daily.

The complainant stated that the accused grabbed him by his collar during the altercation, which occurred inside the premises of a well-known company.

He mentioned that the company’s surveillance cameras may have captured the incident. A case has been filed.

In a separate incident, a traffic dispute escalated into a physical altercation between two Kuwaiti citizens.

According to a security source, a citizen born in 1987 accused another, born in 1988, of assaulting him following a traffic disagreement in the suburb of Hawalli.

Both parties were referred to the competent authorities after completing the investigation.

□ □ □

**Kuwaiti hurt in accident:** A collision and subsequent rollover of a vehicle on Subbiya Road Saturday evening resulted in injury to a Kuwaiti citizen who is believed to be in his forties, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily said the man rushed to the Jahra Hospital and admitted to the intensive care unit.

The daily added, after the Operations Department of the Ministry of Interior received a report emergency medical services personnel promptly rushed to the site of the mishap.



Hashish and drug related items found in possession of Kuwaiti citizen.

## Kuwaiti held for carrying drug-laced cigarette, hash

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Authorities have referred a 32-year-old citizen to the General Department for Drug Control after discovering a cigarette infused with a narcotic substance, a piece of hashish, drug paraphernalia, and rolling papers in his possession, reports Al-Anba daily.**

According to a security source, a patrol unit conducting routine rounds in the Ahmadi area grew suspicious of a driver displaying erratic behavior. The individual was stopped, and officers confirmed that he was under the influence of narcotics. A precautionary search of his vehicle led to the discovery of the aforementioned items.

The case has been handed over to the appropriate authorities for further investigation.

□ □ □

**Abused on phone:** The investigator at the Faiha Police Station is looking for an unknown person who is said to have verbally abused and threatened to cause harm to a Kuwaiti citizen, reports Al-Anba daily.

The complainant, born in 1985, reported receiving a WhatsApp call from an unknown number while he was in the parking lot of his residence in the Al-Nuzha area last Thursday.

The citizen told police he does not know the caller.

## KD 100 stolen from rented car; company rejects blame

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The Ministry of Interior has started investigations into the report filed by a citizen; claiming that money was stolen from a vehicle he rented from a car rental company in Al-Rai, while the company officials vehemently denied having knowledge about the money, reports Al-Anba daily.**

A security source disclosed that a citizen born

in 1995 filed a complaint at a police station, stating he was robbed of KD100. He told the investigators that he put the money in the upper section of the vehicle designated for sunglasses, indicating he was surprised as the vehicle was not in the place where he parked it.

The complainant narrated: “I immediately contacted the car rental company to inquire about the legal

action that should be taken. They informed me that they located the car using a GPS device and towed it, because I did not pay the amount I owe. I went to their office to take my personal belongings and the money, but I did not find the money and informed them about it. They told me they did not know anything about the money, so I registered a case and it was referred to the investigation authority.”



A missing child with special needs was found in Qairawan.

## Inform family if anyone knows missing child: Mol

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The Ministry of Interior announced that a missing child with special needs has been found in the Qairawan area today, Sunday and has been taken to the area police station, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

The authorities have called on the general public to inform the child’s family should anyone recognize him.

## Abdali farms will not get treated water for 6 days

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The Ministry of Public Works has announced the suspension of pumping treated water to Abdali farms for six days, starting from Jan 25; due to the periodic maintenance of treated water distribution networks, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.**

Sources affirmed this maintenance work is included in the periodic plans of the ministry to ensure the efficiency of the networks and the sustainability of services. Sources said this step aims to maintain the quality of water and prevent malfunctions that might affect the distribution process in the future.



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President Murmu's message resonates with hope

# Embassy of India marks 76th Republic Day

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Unfurling the Indian 'Tricolor' at the Indian embassy in Kuwait on the 76th anniversary of India's Republic Day, the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait His Excellency Dr Adarsh Swaika extended his greetings to all Indians in Kuwait and millions of Indian Diaspora abroad and billions of India's friends across the globe.

The Indian envoy after hoisting the Tricolor read the Republic Day Eve message of the Indian President Smt Droupadi Murmu, who in her address paid homage to "Our soldiers who laid down their lives protecting our borders."

The message highlighted the progress and pride of India as a nation over the past 75 years since the Constitution came into effect.

The Constitution, she said, was adopted on November 26, 1949, and came into force on January 26, 1950. The President emphasized the contributions of freedom fighters, including lesser-known heroes like Bhagwan Birsa Munda, and celebrated India's rich democratic heritage.

Justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, she said, rooted in India's civilization, form the foundation of the Republic. The President lauded the diverse and inclusive composition of the Constituent Assembly, including contributions by women leaders.

On the economic front, she said, India has transitioned from poverty to being an influential global economic player. Economic reforms, digital infrastructure, and financial inclusion initiatives have contributed to this transformation, creating jobs and reducing poverty.



The Indian Ambassador addressing the gathering.



Ambassador paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi.



View of the audience.

She also highlighted the efforts to empower marginalized communities, promote education, and improve basic infrastructure like housing and water access. Financial and educational initiatives for SC/ST communities and youth were also emphasized.

Innovations in space exploration, biotechnology, and digital systems were celebrated, including the Genome India Project, advancements in artificial intelli-

gence, and ISRO's achievements in space.

The President also acknowledged the government's focus on preserving and revitalizing India's linguistic and cultural diversity was acknowledged, along with initiatives like classical language recognition and the creation of cultural museums.

On youth and education she said, enhanced investment in education, regional language promotion, and vocational training

were praised for shaping future generations.

The President also touched on the successes in international sports, including the Olympics and Paralympics, which she said, reflect India's rising confidence and potential.

The President urged citizens to reflect on the nation's journey, express gratitude to the framers of the Constitution, and work collectively towards greater progress.

# Heritage Village back on agenda

## PPP law may unlock project

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The Heritage Village project, which has been delayed for years, is once again a point of discussion at the Municipal Council's upcoming regular session.

Dr. Hassan Kamal, a council member, raised the issue of the delay and the municipality has provided a detailed response.

According to their statement, the project was initially awarded to 'International Investor' company following a decision by the committee in charge of executing the Municipal Council's powers.

The original contract was signed in November 2004 between the Ministry of Finance, the Heritage Village Company and the International Investor Company.

An annex to the contract was signed by the Ministry of Finance and the Heritage Village Company in December 2014. However, in 2019, the Ministry of Finance took steps to vacate the project investor administratively.

The project then took another turn in August 2023, when the Cabinet issued Resolution No. (826), directing the Ministry of Finance to work with the Ministry of Public Works, the Municipality and other relevant parties to continue the nec-

essary construction and technical work for the development of Abdullah Al-Ahmad Street and the Heritage Village. The goal is to preserve the surrounding heritage buildings while moving forward with the project.

In February 2024, the Ministry of Finance informed the Municipality that it had received the project on September 20, 2023 and expressed its intent to offer it through a bidding process.

To ensure legal compliance, the Ministry requested information from the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority (PPP) regarding the application of Law No. (116) of 2014, which governs public-private sector partnerships.

On May 6, 2024, the PPP Authority confirmed that the Heritage Village project falls under the scope of this law, which doesn't preclude it from being offered under other applicable systems.

The Municipality also highlighted the ongoing coordination with the Central Bank and the Ministry of Interior to address any requirements for completing the project through private sector involvement. Multiple meetings have been held on this matter, with the latest in October 2024.

The municipality will submit a technical report to the Municipal Council to request the allocation of the project, enabling it to proceed with further steps in coordination with relevant government bodies.

This update underscores the ongoing complexity of the Heritage Village project, which has faced several administrative and procedural hurdles. It will be interesting to see how the Municipal Council addresses these concerns and if the project will finally move forward with the involvement of the private sector.



Dr. Kamal

## 20 winners each week

# Warba Bank launches 2025 Sunbula account campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Warba Bank announced the launch of the 2025 campaign of its Sunbula account, marking a significant milestone in the account since it first launched in 2016 and becoming one of the most rewarding savings accounts in Kuwait.

Building on the bank's new identity and its slogan, "Let's Own Tomorrow," this year's campaign offers an innovative, entirely different approach. Rather than focusing solely on large prizes, Warba Bank aims to be the bank that rewards the highest number of winners in Kuwait through the Sunbula account.

Speaking of this year's campaign, Mr. Muhanad Burhama, Director of Product Development and Customer Segments at Warba Bank, said: "We are proud of what the Sunbula account has achieved since its launch. We believe our customers deserve more chances to win, which is why the 2025 campaign is completely different, not only in the value of the prizes but also in providing more winning opportunities. With more than 1,000 winners each year, we reaffirm our commitment to placing customers at the heart of everything we do."

This year's campaign offers customers the opportunity to participate in both weekly and grand draws. Every week, 20 winners are selected electronically, each receiving KD 1,000. Over 50 weeks, the total number of winners will reach 1,000. The bank has also retained the highest individual prize value of KD 250,000 from last year, while increasing the number of winners in the grand draws to 3 per draw in response to customer feedback.

"The Sunbula account is not just a savings account; it's a journey towards excellence and innovation," Burhama added. In line with Warba Bank's vision as a leading Islamic bank providing advanced digital solutions, customers can easily open an account via the bank's advanced mobile app. The app delivers an ex-

ceptional banking experience, facilitating account management, tracking draw entries, and accessing a range of digital services designed to meet diverse customer needs seamlessly and conveniently."

To encourage more savings and increase winning chances, the Sunbula account offers a variety of incentives that enhance participants' monthly draw opportunities. For instance, maintaining a full month's balance without withdrawals earns extra chances for the following month. Customers can also significantly boost their opportunities by activating the standing order feature from any other Warba Bank account, making saving both convenient and sustainable. Additionally, annual rewards are given on the anniversary of opening the account, as well as increasing the balance with fresh deposits, allowing customers to enjoy more entries in the draws based on their commitment to saving. These incentives are designed to reward loyal savers while increasing their chances of securing fantastic prizes throughout the year.

Regarding transparency and oversight, Warba Bank places high importance on transparency at every stage of the draw process. Weekly draws are conducted electronically under the direct supervision of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representatives. As for the grand draws, they undergo thorough audit and review, ensuring the Ministry of Commerce and Industry confirms both data accuracy and the integrity of the draw mechanism.

Why Choose Sunbula? The Sunbula account reflects Warba Bank's commitment to meeting its customers' aspirations and delivering innovative solutions that cater to their evolving needs. Since its launch, the bank has solidified its reputation as one of Kuwait's most technologically advanced Islamic banks, offering cutting-edge digital products and services consistent with Sharia principles. The 2025 Sunbula account campaign not only provides chances to win but also represents another stride toward fulfilling the bank's vision as a reliable banking partner dedicated to helping customers achieve their goals and aspirations.



Burhama

## Awqaf eases school costs for needy kids

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: The Secretariat General of Awqaf continues to support educational initiatives by contributing to the payment of school fees for orphaned students and children from needy families, reports Al-Anba daily.

This contribution was made in collaboration with the Student Committee at Al-Najat Charitable Society.

Khaled Al-Kandari, Director of the Student Committee, expressed his gratitude for the generous donation; praising the Secretariat General of Awqaf for its commitment to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds complete their education.

Al-Kandari highlighted that the Student Sponsorship Project, implemented by the committee, benefits orphaned students, children of low-income families, victims of family breakdowns, children of patients, and those without financial support.

# JANUARY

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Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Recall Information

Acura Model: MDX + TLX  
Model Year: MDX (2018 - 2019 - 2020), TLX (2015 - 2018 - 2019 - 2020), Total Vehicles Involved: MDX (428), TLX (200)

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Recall Reason</b> | Increased friction between the journals and their bearings due to improper connecting rod journal dimensions. |
| <b>Remedy:</b>       | Connecting rod bearings replacement or engine block assembly replacement.                                     |
| <b>Contact:</b>      | Please call to confirm recall eligibility of the vehicle to serve you better: 1822872<br>www.acurakw.com      |

This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42, 43, 44, 46 and 47) of no.39/2015 Issuing the executive by laws of law no.39/2014 on Consumer Protection

**New path**

caused by this aggression, which disrupted the balance within society, corruption took root in its ugliest forms, and some constitutional institutions were severely damaged.

As a result, we witnessed the majority of MPs of the successive terms of the National Assembly being more focused on their personal interests, regardless of whether they are in the best interests of Kuwait and its people. These MPs justified their actions under the guise of freedom and democracy, as if Kuwait is the only democratic country in the world.

Under this pretext, laws were created to benefit certain MPs or specific groups of people, often at the expense of the vast majority of the people. Many opposed these laws, but their voices were too faint to be heard. Meanwhile, a group worked tirelessly to defend these legislations, which only served to entrench corruption.

Furthermore, since 1962, Kuwait has seen around 47 successive governments, with the ministerial position proving to be unstable. Some ministers held their positions for no more than seven or eight

hours, while others left within a month or two. This instability was often due to fears of grilling motions or the lack of competence among some ministers to take up political-executive roles, which require both astuteness and integrity. For some, the title of "former minister" seemed to be the only objective of holding the position.

Ministerial stability is essential in every country, even in long-established democracies, as countries prioritize ensuring that ministers serve a fixed term, free from political and parliamentary blackmail.

This flawed path continued to harm institutions, solidify corruption, and became a norm until the arrival of a new era. This shift has led both the people and the region to recognize that Kuwait now has an efficient leader with a clear vision and who prioritizes the country's interests above all else.

Everyone is reminded of the saying of Caliph Othman ibn Affan (May God be pleased with him): "God deters by power whoever is not deterred by the teachings of the Quran."

The reform process began in response to the people's demands concerning the developments which have

already started showing positive results, and in other areas being actively worked on for improvement.

It is important to emphasize that true reform begins with updating outdated laws. As we have mentioned before, there are 900 laws that need to be upgraded, with some requiring complete annulment. The majority, however, should be amended for the better, especially those related to services and bringing about more openness.

It is true that Kuwaitis have embraced the vision of the new era, whether in terms of renewing the national identity or working to restore Kuwait's leadership position.

However, we must highlight that achieving these goals requires accelerating openness, even though we should expect some challenges along the way. Let these challenges serve as motivation for development, not as a reason for Kuwait to revert to a path of decline. The leadership of the new era is listening well, constantly evaluating progress, and reviewing all developments in a way that avoids any negative consequences.

Indeed, Kuwait must return to a position of leadership, as it possesses all the capabilities needed to achieve

this goal. The country is not lacking in wealth, intelligence, or initiative. What Kuwait needs most is to streamline processes to fulfill the ambitions of the new era, which is the same ambition of the Kuwaiti people

**Ministry ensures**

Control Department and the Technical Authority for Supervising Goods and Determining Their Prices. The team visited wholesale markets in Shuwaikh to monitor the prices of meat, food, and basic commodities in preparation for the upcoming holy month of Ramadan.

He highlighted that the inspection team had monitored the prices of meat and basic commodities in the Shuwaikh wholesale market, and obtained pledges from company and store officials not to raise prices.

It is worth noting that the Commercial Control Department recently held a meeting with the Technical Authority for Supervising Goods and Determining Prices to assess the readiness of markets for Ramadan. The ministry also discussed plans to monitor central

markets, cooperative societies, meat and date shops, restaurants, sweet shops, and mills ahead of the holy month.

**'New media**

He said, "This event reflects the strong patronage that the media and culture sectors receive, as well as the continuous support of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah. This support has led to cultural and media successes that have strengthened Kuwait's position both regionally and internationally."

In line with this high-level support, we launched the Ministry of Information's 2021/2026 strategy under the vision of "Sustainable Media - Pioneering in the Production of Meaningful Content". We also introduced the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters Strategy 2023/2028, with a vision of "Sustainable Cultural Development and an Environment that Stimulates Creativity".

As a result of these efforts, and the

integration of strategies between culture and media, Kuwait was selected as the Capital of Culture for 2025 by the Executive Council of the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization, and as the Capital of Arab Information for 2025 by the Council of Arab Information Ministers.

**Al-Jarallah**

He stressed that the Ministry of Information has the power to address this issue and criticized the harshness of the media law, which allows for lawsuits to be filed within three years and imposes severe prison sentences.

In a nostalgic mood, he talked about previous exhibitions and events that used to be a source of cultural and economic vitality in the country. He cited the cinema, arts exhibitions and sports festivals as examples of initiatives that benefited the country both financially and culturally.

In response to Al-Jarallah's remarks, the Minister of Information expressed appreciation for his enthusiasm and optimism; assuring him that positive developments are on the horizon.

**Kuwait Investment Authority - Debts Purchased for the State's Account Settlement and Management Office Announces:**



**Summary Report on the Bankruptcy Proceedings and the Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Gulf Agricultural Development Company (WLL)**  
Guarantor of the Bankruptcy Company: **Agricultural Investments Company (Fawzi Musa'ed Al-Saleh & Partners WLL)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **315-318/2007 C/1 on 07/02/2012**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The company's share of debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 2,158,098.660  
(2) The company's share of debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 5,543,025.676  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Gulf Bank: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.W 5,543,025.676, representing the company's share of the debt guaranteed by the bankrupt Agricultural Investments Company, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
**Third:** Debts the Authority Considers Excludable  
Gulf Bank: K.D 2,635,308.548 according to the bank's letter dated 02/05/2012, attached with Ruling No. 2541/1985 dated 17/03/1990, affirmed by Appeal No. 557/1990 C/2. However, the claim has lapsed due to the statute of limitations as per Article 118 of the Commercial Code, since no evidence was provided to show that execution procedures were undertaken from the date of the claim until the date of debt submission.

**Summary Report on the Bankruptcy Proceedings and the Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Al-Tukhaim International Company (Ahmed Fahad Suleiman Al-Tukhaim & Partners WLL)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **3282/2008 Commercial Appeal/7 dated 16/04/2009**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 2,170,695.169  
(2) Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 13,865,758.523  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy Ruling amount to: K.D 130,120.906  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Kuwait Finance House (formerly Al-Ahli United Bank): Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 13,865,758.523, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on the Bankruptcy Proceedings and the Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Mohammad Deeb Mohammad Kaskeen**  
Guarantor: **Zahra & Kaskeen Ready-Made Garments and Accessories Company (Zahra Hassan Al-Wazzan and Mohammad Deeb Kaskeen WLL)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **5/2012 General Debt Bankruptcy/1 dated 22/02/2012**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The bankrupt's share of debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 81,276.500  
(2) The bankrupt's share of debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 603,711.911  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Commercial Bank of Kuwait:  
Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 603,711.911, representing the bankrupt's share of the debt guaranteed for Zahra & Kaskeen Ready-Made Garments and Accessories Company (Zahra Hassan Al-Wazzan and Mohammad Deeb Kaskeen WLL) in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on the Bankruptcy Proceedings and the Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Zahra Hassan Ali Al-Wazzan**  
Guarantor: **Zahra & Kaskeen Ready-Made Garments and Accessories Company (Zahra Hassan Al-Wazzan and Mohammad Deeb Kaskeen WLL)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **5/2012 General Debt Bankruptcy/1 dated 22/02/2012**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The bankrupt's share of debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 81,276.500  
(2) The bankrupt's share of debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 602,886.679  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling amount to: K.D 20,857.775  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Commercial Bank of Kuwait:  
Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 602,886.679, representing the bankrupt's share of the debt guaranteed for Zahra & Kaskeen Ready-Made Garments and Accessories Company (Zahra Hassan Al-Wazzan and Mohammad Deeb Kaskeen WLL) in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on the Bankruptcy Proceedings and the Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Khaled Shlshaq Ab Al-Shammari**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **248/2003 General Debt Bankruptcy/1 dated 23/12/2003**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 540.767  
(2) Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 2,072.359  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy Ruling amount to: K.D 132.883  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
National Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 2,072.359, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on the Bankruptcy Proceedings and the Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Ruslan Youssef Al-Sartawi**  
Guarantor: **Ali & Al-Sartawi Furniture, Curtains, and Carpets Company (Qasim Jafar Mohammed Ali, Ruslan Youssef Yaseen Al-Sartawi, and Partners WLL)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **48/2009 C/1 dated 15/07/2009**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The bankrupt's share of debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 126,806.411  
(2) The bankrupt's share of debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 775,581.049  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling amount to: K.D 130.969  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Commercial Bank of Kuwait:  
Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 775,581.049, representing the bankrupt's share of the debt guaranteed for Ali & Al-Sartawi Furniture, Curtains, and Carpets Company, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on the Bankruptcy Proceedings and the Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Zaki Mubarak Ali Al-Mubarak**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **269/2003 General Debt Bankruptcy /1 dated 06/01/2004**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 358.319  
(2) Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 1,351.649  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling amount to: K.D 2,112.436  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
(1) Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 1,351.649, as per Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
(2) Al Al-Sayed Imran Al-Moussawi: Debt of K.D 2,255.000, as per the creditor's letter dated 11/07/2004, Ruling No. 1205/2003 Leases/ First Instance Ahmadi /1 dated 03/05/2004, the no-Appeal certificate dated 11/07/2004, and the execution certificate issued by the General Department of Execution dated 11/07/2004.  
(3) Gulf Bank: Debt of K.D 22,212.578, as per the bank's letters dated 24/10/2016 and 11/03/2019, and Payment Order No. 2169/2007 issued on 26/06/2007.  
(4) Kuwait Finance House (Commercial Sector): Debt of K.D 8,430.625, as per the bank's letter dated 24/12/2018, and Payment Order No. 460/1997, in addition to expenses.  
**Third:** Debts the Authority Considers Excludable  
Mobile Telecommunications Company: Debt of K.D 204.189, as per the company's letter dated 24/05/2004. However, supporting documents proving

the validity of the debt were not provided.  
**Summary Report on the Bankruptcy Proceedings and the Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Sons of Saud Al-Salem General Trading & Contracting Company (Waleed Saud Al-Salem & Partners, WLL)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **90/2005 General Debt Bankruptcy /1 dated 28/03/2006**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 719,266.728  
Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 3,227,197.734  
Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Kuwait Finance House (formerly Al-Ahli United Bank): Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 3,227,197.734, as per Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Gulf First Real Estate Company (Kuwaiti Closed Shareholding Company)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **27/2009 General Debt Bankruptcy dated 15/07/2009**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 11,330,531.571  
Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 70,668,531.131  
Amounts collected: K.D 72,877.445  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Kuwait Commercial Bank: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 70,668,531.131, as per Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
Stock Installment Transactions Liquidation Office:  
An outstanding balance of K.D 35,692.232 as per Payment Order No. 585/1998 issued on 17/03/1998, affirmed by the Ruling issued in Case No. 1069/1998 Commercial First Instance/10 and the Ruling issued in Appeal No. 385/1999 C/7, based on the office's letter dated 19/08/2009.  
**Third:** Debts the Authority Considers Excludable  
Arab International Bank of Bahrain: Debt of K.D 5,596,501,000, as per the bank's letter dated 03/06/2010. However, the bank failed to submit the legal documents proving the validity of the debt.  
Arab International Bank of Bahrain: Debt of K.D 2,800,000,000, as per the bank's letter dated 03/06/2010, supported by the Ruling issued in Case No. 7974/1985 Commercial First Instance/5 dated 25/06/1986 and the Ruling issued in Appeal No. 1086/1986 Commercial/1 dated 09/11/1987. However, the bank did not demonstrate that legal actions were taken from the issuance of the final Ruling until the submission of the debt. Accordingly, the claim is time-barred under Article 118 of the Commercial Law.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Ali & Sartawi for Furniture, Curtains, and Carpets (Qassem Jafar Mohammad Ali, Ruslan Youssef Yassin Sartawi, and Partners W.L.L.)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **48/2009 C/1 dated 15/07/2009**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 319,403.435  
Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 1,953,553.382  
Amounts collected after the bankruptcy Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Kuwait Commercial Bank:  
Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 1,953,553.382, as per Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
**Third:** Debts the Authority Considers Excludable  
Al-Ahliya Insurance Company:  
Debt of K.D 2,236,300, as per the company's representative's letter dated 07/10/2009, attached with the Ruling No. 5798/1994 dated 24/04/1995. However, the company failed to provide evidence of taking legal action from the issuance of the final Ruling until the submission of the debt. Accordingly, the claim is time-barred under Article 118 of the Commercial Law.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Al-Othman & Qanbar Trading Co. W.L.L. (Under Liquidation)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Appeal Case No. **1198/2005/1198 C/7, dated 30/11/2005**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 88,666.754  
(2) Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 320,789.171  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy Ruling: K.D 203,524.132  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Gulf Bank:  
Debt purchased by the State amounts to 320,789.171, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
Kuwait Plastic Products Co. W.L.L.:  
Debt amounts to K.D 265.450, as per the creditor company's letter submitted to the authority on 22/04/2007 and Ruling No. 913/1998 Commercial Civil Partial / Capital 21 dated 16/11/1999. This is exclusive of legal interest from the date of the claim until the date of the bankruptcy declaration, as well as attorney fees and expenses.  
**Third:** Debts the Authority Considers Excludable  
Khalil Issa Bouhamra:  
Debt of K.D 50,205.000, as per the liquidator's letter (Khalil Issa Bouhamra) submitted to the authority on 07/04/2010. However, no supporting documents verifying the validity of the debt were provided.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Al-Alamein Trading Equipment and Contracting Co. W.L.L. (Rashed Awad Al-Juwaisari & Partner)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **2002/90 General Debt Bankruptcy/1, dated 20/05/2003**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 529,190.846  
(2) Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 1,871,448.613  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 1,871,448.613, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
**Third:** Debts the Authority Considers Excludable  
(1) Credit Balances: Debt of K.D 28,032.000, based on the financial position prepared by the Public Prosecution. However, no supporting documents verifying the validity of the debt were provided.  
(2) Other Credit Balances: Debt of K.D 1,437.000, based on the financial position prepared by the Public Prosecution. However, no supporting documents verifying the validity of the debt were provided.  
(3) Current Account of an Affiliated Company: Debt of K.D 51,837.000, based on the financial position prepared by the Public Prosecution. However, no supporting documents verifying the validity of the debt were provided

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **National Light Metal Manufacturing Co. K.S.C.C.**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **298/2003 General Debt Bankruptcy/1, dated 28/06/2005**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 1,720,547.495  
(2) Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 7,466,614.865  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
(1) Commercial Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 7,466,614.865, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
(2) Saad Munir Al-Muhanna: Debt of K.D 84,605.403, based on Ruling No. 3185/2008 C.C.FI.H2, dated 04/03/2013, and Appellate Rulings Nos. 1505, 1546/2013 C/2, dated 10/06/2013, upheld by the Cassation Ruling No. 1150/2013 Civil/2, dated 13/11/2022, excluding costs and attorney fees.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Essam Sobhi Sukkar**  
Guarantor of **Hassan Al-Fares & Sukkar Company for Ready-to-Wear Garments, Fabrics, and Shoes, W.L.L.**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **31/2010, General Debts Bankruptcy/1, dated 02/06/2010**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The bankrupt's share of debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 29,777.500  
(2) The bankrupt's share of debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 197,897.400  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Commercial Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 197,897.400, representing the guarantor's share of the guaranteed debt for Hassan Al-Fares & Sukkar Company for Ready-to-Wear Garments, Fabrics, and Shoes, W.L.L., in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Zahra & Kaskeen Co. for Ready-made Garments and Accessories (Zahra Hassan Al-Wazzan and Mohammad Dib Kaskeen W.L.L.)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **2010/31 General Debt Bankruptcy/1, dated 02/06/2010**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 162,553.000  
(2) Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 1,206,598.589  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Commercial Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 1,206,598.589, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
Commercial Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 395,794.801, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Mohammad Sadeq & Mohammad Shraim Co. for Garments, Shoes, and Accessories (Mohammad Sadeq Abdulrasool and Mohammad Jameel Shraim W.L.L.)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **27/2010 General Debt Bankruptcy/1, dated 09/06/2010**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 87,404.143  
(2) Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 568,825.494  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Commercial Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 568,825.494, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Adel Hanna Rizk**  
Guarantor of the Deceased Bankrupt: **Saleh Rashid Nasser Boursli**  
Owner of **Al-Rabia Trading & Contracting Establishment (Sole Proprietorship)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **69/2006 General Debt Bankruptcy/1, dated 16/12/2006**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The bankrupt's share of debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 182,849.963  
(2) The bankrupt's share of debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 952,133.077  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
National Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 952,133.077, representing the bankrupt's share of the guaranteed debt for the deceased bankrupt Saleh Rashid Nasser Boursli, owner of Al-Rabia Trading & Contracting Establishment (Sole Proprietorship), in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Adnan Youssef Al-Sartawi**  
Guarantor of **Ali & Al-Sartawi Company for Furniture, Curtains, and Carpets (Qasim Jafar Mohamed Ali, Ruslan Youssef Yaseen Al-Sartawi, and Partners, W.L.L.)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **48/2009 C/1, dated 15/07/2009**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The bankrupt's share of debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 3,097.317  
(2) The bankrupt's share of debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 18,943.849  
Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
National Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 18,943.849, representing the guarantor's share of the guaranteed debt for Ali & Al-Sartawi Company for Furniture, Curtains, and Carpets, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Essam Sobhi Sukkar**  
Guarantor of **Hassan Al-Fares & Sukkar Company for Ready-to-Wear Garments, Fabrics, and Shoes, W.L.L.**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **31/2010, General Debts Bankruptcy/1, dated 02/06/2010**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The bankrupt's share of debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 29,777.500  
(2) The bankrupt's share of debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 197,897.400  
(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling: None  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Commercial Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 197,897.400, representing the guarantor's share of the guaranteed debt for Hassan Al-Fares & Sukkar Company for Ready-to-Wear Garments, Fabrics, and Shoes, W.L.L., in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Ghazi Saud Salem Al-Salem**  
Guarantor of the Company: **Sons of Saud Al-Salem for General Trading and Contracting (Walid Saud Al-Salem and Partners W.L.L.)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **90-92/2005, General Debts Bankruptcy/1, dated 28/03/2006**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The bankrupt's share of debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 638,552.952  
(2) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy declaration Ruling: K.D 20,894.061  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
Commercial Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 638,552.952, representing the guarantor's share of the guaranteed debt for the Sons of Saud Al-Salem for General Trading and Contracting Company (Walid Saud Al-Salem and Partners W.L.L.), in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
(2) Commercial Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 335,020.413, representing the personal guaranteed debt of the bankrupt, Walid Saud Salem Al-Salem, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
(3) Kuwait Credit Bank: Debt amounts to K.D 28,742.000, as Stated in the bank's letter dated 04/09/2024.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Faisal Saud Fayez Al-Dabbous**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **34/2003, General Debts Bankruptcy/1, dated 27/05/2003**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) Debt as at 01/08/1990 amounts to: K.D 10,076,231.565  
(2) Debt as per Article 13 amounts to: K.D 34,823,938.285

(3) Amounts collected after the bankruptcy Ruling amounts to: K.D 8,820,580.691  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable  
(1) Burgan Bank: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 34,823,938.285, representing personal debt in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.  
(2) Industrial Bank of Kuwait: Debt purchased by the State amounts to K.D 1,547,210.079, representing the bankrupt's share of the guaranteed debt for Al-Dabbous and Al-Ayyoub for Stocks and Real Estate, in accordance with Article 13 of Law No. 41 of 1993.

**Summary Report on Bankruptcy Proceedings and Provisional Debt List**  
For the Bankruptcy of: **Qasem Jafar Qasem Mohammad**  
Guarantor of **Ali and Al-Sartawi Company for Furniture, Curtains, and Carpets (Qasem Jafar Mohamed Ali, Ruslan Youssef Yaseen Al-Sartawi & Partners W.L.L.)**  
Submitted to the Bankruptcy Department in Case No. **48/2009/ C/1, dated 15/07/2009**

**First:** Financial and Accounting Procedures  
(1) The bankrupt's share of debt as at 01/08/1990: K.D 123,709.094  
(2) The bankrupt's share of Debt as per Article 13: K.D 756,637.199  
(3) Amounts Collected After the Bankruptcy Ruling: K.D 93,000.852  
**Second:** Debts the Authority Considers Acceptable

'Federal oversight laws violated'

## Trump fires 17 independent inspectors general at government agencies

WASHINGTON, Jan 26, (AP): The Trump administration has fired about 17 independent inspectors general at government agencies, a sweeping action to remove oversight of his new administration that some members of Congress are suggesting violated federal oversight laws.

The dismissals began Friday night and were effective immediately, according to two people familiar with the actions. They spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details that have not been made public. Neither confirmed the exact number of firings, but an email sent by one of the fired inspectors general said "roughly 17" inspectors general had been removed.

Trump confirmed the move in a conversation with reporters aboard Air Force One on Saturday, claiming, "it's a very common thing to do." He said he would "put good people in there that will be very good."

Congress was not given the legally required 30-day notices about the removals - something that even a top Republican is decrying.

"There may be good reason the IGs

were fired. We need to know that if so," Sen Chuck Grassley, chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said in a statement. "I'd like further explanation from President Trump. Regardless, the 30 day detailed notice of removal that the law demands was not provided to Congress," said Grassley, R-Iowa.

The role of the modern-day inspector general dates to post-Watergate Washington, when Congress installed offices inside agencies as an independent check against mismanagement and abuse of power. Though inspectors general are presidential appointees, some serve presidents of both parties. All are expected to be nonpartisan.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., acknowledged that the firings violated statutes but shrugged it off: "Just tell them you need to follow the law next time," he said.

Democrats and watchdog groups, however, used the dismissals to raise alarm that Trump was making it easier to take advantage of the government.

"Inspectors General are the cops



US President Donald Trump speaks to reporters aboard Air Force One as he travels from Las Vegas to Miami on Jan 25. (AP)

on the beat preventing bad things from happening," Max Stier, president and CEO of the nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service, said in a statement. "Their work saves the taxpayer tens of billions of dollars

every year."

The White House did not comment on Saturday. President Donald Trump was in Las Vegas for a speech focused on his campaign promise to end federal taxation on tips.

But the moves were consistent with the president's first week back in the White House, which has featured a series of steps to remake the federal government. Trump has done everything from using executive orders to impose hiring freezes and crack down on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, to suggesting that he wants to shutter the Federal Emergency Management Agency and leave disaster recovery up to individual states affected by major emergencies.

"Yesterday, in the dark of night, President Trump fired at least 12 independent inspector generals at important federal agencies across the administration," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Saturday on the chamber's floor. "This is a chilling purge and it's a preview of the lawless approach Donald Trump and his administration are taking far too often as he's becoming president."

Schumer said the dismissals are "possibly in violation of federal law" and help demonstrate that the move "is a glaring sign that it's a golden

age for abuse in government and even corruption."

The Washington Post, which first reported the firings, said that many were appointees from Trump's first term. Among those inspectors general reportedly removed included those for the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense and Education.

In a lengthy statement Saturday, Hannibal Ware, the chairman of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, an independent entity that represents the interests of government watchdogs, noted that inspectors general conduct their "oversight in a strictly non-partisan manner. They are appointed, by law, without regard to their political affiliation and, during their tenures, they work effectively across Administrations and with Congress, without regard to political party."

He suggested that the firings violated the legal requirements that presidents notify Congress 30 days before firing an inspector general and provide a detailed rationale for the decision.

### Trump immigration crackdown begins

## Democratic states weigh more support for immigrants

WASHINGTON, Jan 26, (AP): As President Donald Trump tightens the nation's immigration policies, lawmakers in Democratic-led states are proposing new measures that could erect legal obstacles for federal immigration officials and help immigrants lacking legal status avoid deportation.

The resistance efforts in California, New York and other states are a counterpoint to the many Republican-led states advancing measures to aid Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration, highlighting a national divide.

In just his first week in office, Trump's administration has halted refugee arrivals; fast-tracked deportations; sent military troops to the southern border; lifted longtime rules restricting immigration enforcement near schools, churches and hospitals; attempted to end birthright citizenship; and ordered federal prosecutors to investigate state or local officials who they believe are interfering with his crackdown on illegal immigration.

Hundreds of bills on immigration already have been introduced in states and more action is expected next week. Republican Govs. Ron DeSantis of Florida and Bill Lee of Tennessee have called special legislative sessions to begin Monday to support Trump's immigration agenda.

Meanwhile, Democrats in states such as Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington are backing measures to



This photo provided by the US Dept of Defense, US Customs and Border Protection agents guide undocumented immigrants onto a C-17 Globemaster III at the Tucson International Airport, Arizona on Jan 23. (AP)

expand health care and higher education for immigrants, restrict landlords from inquiring about immigration status or block government agreements to open new immigrant detention centers.

Many U.S. adults support stronger security at the southern border and deporting immigrants in the U.S. illegally who have been convicted of violent crimes, according to a survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. But some actions have less consensus. About 4

in 10 American adults support deporting all immigrants living in the U.S. illegally while a similar share are opposed.

Unlike in criminal courts, there is no constitutional right to a government-funded attorney in immigration courts. As Trump ramps up deportation efforts, some state measures would help pay for attorneys to defend people facing immigration proceedings.

One leader of such efforts is New York Assemblywoman Catalina Cruz, who came to the U.S. at age 9 from

Colombia and remained without legal status for over a decade before gaining permanent residency and becoming a U.S. citizen and a lawyer.

Cruz has filed more than a half-dozen bills to aid immigrants. One would assert a right under state law to legal counsel in immigration proceedings in New York, or elsewhere if the immigrant was living in New York. Another would authorize state grants for organizations to hire, train and equip staff to provide legal aid to people facing deportation.

"In a world where the threat of mass deportations is imminent," the legislation "gives people an opportunity to fight their case, to fight for their families, to fight for their rights," Cruz said.

Cruz estimates 60% of the residents in her New York City legislative district are noncitizens, adding, "People are terrified."

New York is among several states that already fund legal aid for immigrants. But advocates want about twice as much money as Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul has proposed.

"This is a moment where investing in due process and fairness for immigrants at risk in New York is of fundamental importance," said Shayna Kessler, director of a universal representation initiative at the nonprofit Vera Institute of Justice.

Some legislative proposals also would fund attorneys who could help immigrants obtain legal residency.



San Diego firefighters knock down a small brush along a hillside over the Mission Valley Shopping Mall in San Diego on Jan 21. (AP)

### S. California rain helps firefighters

After weeks of windy and dry weather, rain has fallen in parched Southern California and is expected to aid firefighters who are mopping up multiple wildfires. But potentially heavy downpours on charred hill-sides could bring new troubles such as toxic ash runoff.

Los Angeles County crews spent much of the past week removing vegetation, shoring up slopes and reinforcing roads in devastated areas of the Palisades and Eaton fires, which reduced entire neighborhoods to rubble and ash after breaking out during powerful winds Jan. 7.

Most of the region was forecast to get around an inch (about 2.5 centimeters) of precipitation

over several days, but "the threat is high enough to prepare for the worst-case scenario" of localized cloudbursts causing mud and debris to flow down hills, the National Weather Service said on social media.

"So the problem would be if one of those showers happens to park itself over a burn area," weather service meteorologist Carol Smith said. "That could be enough to create debris flows."

Rainfall that began late Saturday was expected to increase Sunday and possibly last into early Tuesday, forecasters said. Flood watches were issued for some burn areas, while snow was likely in the mountains. (AP)

### Zelenskyy enjoys conversations with Trump

## 'US has not stopped military aid to Ukraine'

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 26, (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday the US has not stopped military aid to Ukraine after newly sworn in US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced he would pause foreign aid grants for 90 days.

Zelenskyy did not clarify whether humanitarian aid had been paused. Ukraine relies on the US for 40% of its military needs. "I am focused on military aid; it has not been stopped," he said at a press conference with Moldovan President Maia Sandu.

The two leaders met in Kyiv on Saturday to discuss the energy needs of Moldova's Russian-occupied Transnistria region, which saw its natural gas supplies halted on Jan. 1 due to Ukraine's decision to stop Russian gas transit. Ukraine has said it can offer coal to the Transnistrian authorities to make up for the shortfall.

The future of US aid to Ukraine remains uncertain as President Donald Trump begins his second term in office. The American leader has repeatedly said he wouldn't have allowed Russia's invasion of Ukraine to start if he had been in office, although he was president as fighting grew in the east of the country between Kyiv's forces and separatists aligned with Moscow, ahead of Putin sending in tens of thousands of troops in 2022.

On Thursday, Trump told Fox News that Zelenskyy should have made a



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, (left), shakes hands with President of Moldova Maia Sandu in Kyiv, Ukraine on Jan 25. (AP)

deal with Putin to avoid the conflict. A day earlier, Trump also threatened to impose tariff and sanctions on Russia if an agreement isn't reached to end the fighting in Ukraine.

Speaking in Kyiv on Saturday, Zelenskyy said he had enjoyed "good meetings and conversations with President Trump" and that he believed the

U.S. leader would succeed in his desire to end the war.

"This can only be done with Ukraine, and otherwise it simply will not work because Russia does not want to end the war, and Ukraine does," Zelenskyy said.

With Trump stressing the need to quickly broker a peace deal, both Moscow and Kyiv are seeking battlefield successes to strengthen their negotiating positions ahead of any prospective talks.

For the past year, Russian forces have been waging an intense campaign to punch holes in Ukraine's defenses in the Donetsk region and weaken Kyiv's grip on the eastern parts of the country. The sustained and costly offensive has compelled Kyiv to give up a series of towns, villages and hamlets.

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed Friday that Russian troops had fought their way into the center of the strategically important eastern of Velyka Novosilka, although it was not possible to independently confirm the claim.

Elsewhere, three civilians were killed Saturday in shelling in the Russian-occupied area of Ukraine's Kherson region, Moscow-installed Gov Vladimir Saldo said.

He urged the residents of Oleshky, which sits close to the frontline in southern Ukraine, to stay in their homes or in bomb shelters.



People gather to protest against the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD party, and right-wing extremism in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany on Jan 25. (AP)

### Thousands in Germany protest rise of far right

Tens of thousands of Germans on Saturday protested in Berlin and other cities against the rise of the far-right, anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party ahead of the Feb 23 general election.

At Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, a huge crowd blew whistles, sang anti-fascist songs and carried banners denouncing AfD. Activ-

ists said they hoped the rally also would draw attention to other far-right parties in Europe and the new administration of US President Donald Trump.

"Those who fuel racism and attack climate protection are not just campaigning, they are endangering lives," Luisa Neubauer with the Fridays for Future climate group

told the crowd, which police estimated at 35,000. Police estimated the crowd at the Cologne rally at 40,000.

Europe's largest economy has been shaken after Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three-party governing coalition collapsed late last year in a dispute over how to revitalize amid stagnation. (AP)

### Election a sham, says opposition

## Belarus strongman set to win seventh term

MINSK, Jan 26, (AP): The smiling face of President Alexander Lukashenko gazed out from campaign posters across Belarus on Sunday as the country held an orchestrated election virtually guaranteed to give the 70-year-old autocrat yet another term on top of his three decades in power.

"Needed!" the posters proclaim beneath a photo of Lukashenko, his hands clasped together. The phrase is what groups of voters responded in campaign videos after supposedly being asked if they wanted him to serve again.

But his opponents, many of whom are imprisoned or exiled abroad by his unrelenting crackdown on dissent and free speech, would disagree. They call the election a sham - much like the last one in 2020 that triggered months of protests that were unprecedented in the history of the country of 9 million people.

The crackdown saw more than 65,000 arrests, with thousands beaten, bringing condemnation and sanctions from the West. His iron-fisted rule since 1994 -



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko speaks to the media after casting his ballot at a polling site during voting in presidential elections in Minsk Belarus on Jan 26. (AP)

Lukashenko took office two years after the demise of the Soviet Union - earned him the nickname of "Europe's Last Dictator," relying on subsidies and political support from close ally Russia.

He let Moscow use his territory to invade Ukraine in 2022, and even hosts some of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons, but he still campaigned with the slogan "Peace and security," arguing he has saved Belarus from being drawn into war. "It's better to have a dictatorship like in Belarus than a democracy like Ukraine," Lukashenko said in his characteristic bluntness.

His reliance on support from Russian President Vladimir Putin - himself in office for a quarter-century - helped him survive the 2020 protests.

Observers believe Lukashenko feared a repeat of those mass demonstrations amid economic troubles and the fighting in Ukraine, and so scheduled the vote in January, when few would want to fill the streets again, rather than in August. He faces only token opposition.



Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, center, arrives before the 60th Presidential Inauguration in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Jan 20. (AP)

## INTERNATIONAL

## S.Korean prosecutors indict Yoon over martial law

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 26, (AP): South Korean prosecutors on Sunday indicted impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol on rebellion in connection with his short-lived imposition of martial law, news reports said, a criminal charge that could put him to death or jail for life if convicted.

This is the latest blow to Yoon, who was impeached and arrested over his Dec. 3 martial law decree that plunged the country into huge political turmoil, shaking South Korean politics and financial markets as well as its international image.



Yoon

Separate from criminal judicial proceedings, the Constitutional Court is now deliberating whether to formally dismiss Yoon as president or reinstate him.

South Korean media outlets, including Yonhap news agency, reported that the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office indicted Yoon over rebellion. Calls to the prosecutors' office and Yoon's lawyers went unanswered.

Yoon, a conservative, has steadfastly denied any wrongdoing, calling his martial law a legitimate act of governance meant to raise public awareness of the danger of the liberal-controlled National Assembly which obstructed his agenda and impeached top officials. During his announcement of martial law, Yoon called the assembly "a den of criminals" and vowed to eliminate "shameless North Korea followers and anti-state forces."

After declaring martial law on Dec 3, Yoon sent troops and police officers to the assembly, but enough lawmakers still managed to enter an assembly chamber to vote down Yoon's decree unanimously, forcing his Cabinet to lift it.

The martial law imposition, the first of its kind in South Korea in more than 40 years, lasted only six hours. However, it evoked painful memories of past dictatorial rules in the 1960s-80s when military-backed rulers used martial laws and emergency decrees to suppress opponents.

South Korea's constitution gives the president the power to declare martial law to keep order in wartime and other comparable emergency states, but many experts say the country wasn't under such conditions when Yoon declared martial law.

'War deterrence capabilities being perfected more thoroughly'

## N.Korea tests cruise missiles, vows tough stance on US

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 26, (AP): North Korea said Sunday it tested a cruise missile system, its third known weapons display this year, and vowed "the toughest" response to what it called the escalation of U.S.-South Korean military drills that target the North.

The moves suggested North Korea will likely maintain its run of weapons tests and its confrontational stance against the US for now, even though President Donald Trump said he intends to reach out to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The official Korean Central News Agency said Kim observed the test of sea-to-surface strategic cruise guided weapons on Saturday.

The term "strategic" implies the missiles are nuclear-capable. KCNA said the missiles hit their targets after traveling 1,500-kilometer (932-mile)-long elliptical and figure-eight-shaped flight patterns, but that couldn't be independently verified.

KCNA cited Kim as saying that North Korea's war deterrence capabilities "are being perfected more thoroughly" and affirming that his country will make "strenuous efforts" to defend stability "on the basis of more powerfully developed



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, its leader Kim Jong Un, (right), inspects testing of sea-to-surface strategic cruise guided weapons at an undisclosed location in North Korea on Jan 25. (AP)

military muscle."

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea had launched "several" cruise missiles toward its western waters from an inland area at around 4 p.m. on Saturday. It said South Korea maintains a readiness to "overwhelmingly" repel any provocations by North Korea in conjunction with its military alliance with the US.

In a separate statement carried by KCNA on Sunday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry criticized the US for

committing "serious military provocations aiming at" North Korea with a series of military exercises with South Korea this month.

"The reality stresses that the DPRK should counter the US with the toughest counteraction from A to Z as long as it refuses the sovereignty and security interests of the DPRK and this is the best option for dealing with the US," the Foreign Ministry statement said.

DPRK stands for the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea, the abbreviation of its formal name. The Foreign Ministry warning was in line with Kim's vows to implement the "toughest" anti-U.S. policy during a year-end political meeting.

North Korea views US military training with South Korea as invasion rehearsals though Washington and Seoul have repeatedly said their drills are defensive in nature. In recent years, the U.S. and South Korea have expanded their military exercises in response to North Korea's advancing nuclear program.

The start of Trump's second term raises prospects for the revival of diplomacy between the US and North Korea, as Trump met Kim three times during his first term. The Trump-Kim diplomacy in 2018-19 fell apart due to wrangling over US-led economic sanctions on North Korea. During a Fox News interview broadcast Thursday, Trump called Kim "a smart guy". Asked whether he will reach out to Kim again, Trump replied, "I will, yeah."

Many experts say Kim likely thinks he has greater bargaining power than in his earlier round of diplomacy with Trump because of his country's enlarged nuclear arsenal and deepening military ties with Russia.

## India celebrates Republic Day with Indonesian president as chief guest

NEW DELHI, Jan 26, (AP): India celebrated its 76th Republic Day on Sunday with a colorful parade displaying its military might and cultural diversity on a boulevard in the heart of country's capital. Indonesian president was the guest of honor.

Tens of thousands of people lined the road on a cold Sunday morning to watch the long parade to mark the anniversary of the official adoption of India's Constitution on Jan 26, 1950, nearly three years after independence from British colonial rule.

Soldiers from India's military and paramilitary, along with their bands, marched as the country's leaders and other guests watched. Various floats displayed India's cultural diversity with one showcasing the Maha Kumbh festival, the ongoing massive Hindu festival touted as the world's largest religious gathering.

The parade took place on Rajpath Avenue, built by India's former British rulers and lined by huge lawns, canals and rows of trees. The avenue was redeveloped as part of the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of Indian independence and renamed Kartavya Path, or the Boulevard of Duty, in 2022.

Visiting Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto attended the event as the chief guest and was flanked by India's president and prime minister. A 342-member band and marching contingent from the Indonesian National Armed Forces joined the parade, the first time the ASEAN country's troops have joined any foreign parade.

India traditionally invites foreign leaders to witness the spectacle. French President Emmanuel Macron was the guest of honor last year and former US President Barack Obama in 2015. Ten Southeast Asian leaders watched the parade in 2018.



Indian defense forces march through the ceremonial Kartavya Path or the Boulevard of Duty during India's Republic Day parade celebrations in New Delhi, India on Jan 26. (AP)

Sukarno, Indonesia's first president and the leader of the country's independence struggle, was the chief guest at India's first Republic Day celebration in 1950.

Thousands of men and women in colorful costumes danced marches, performed traditional dances and pulled motorbike stunts during the 90-minute parade. It also showcased India's domestically built defense equipment and military systems, including tanks, infantry combat vehicles, radar systems and missile systems.

Some 5,000 artists, carrying traditional props like spears, swords and drums, performed over 40 dance forms from different parts of India in a cultural performance that lasted about 10 minutes. The parade ended with a fly-past by air force fighters, including Rafale jets, transport planes and heli-

copters.

The parade was broadcast live by television networks. Republic Day parades also took place in state capitals and other cities across India amid massive security arrangements.

In Srinagar, the main city of disputed Kashmir, armed police and soldiers patrolled as regional officials celebrated Republic Day. Hundreds of people braved winter chills to witness the parade amid additional security, with police and soldiers checking vehicles and frisking pedestrians.

India and Pakistan each administer a part of Kashmir, but both claim the territory in its entirety. Militants in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir have been fighting New Delhi's rule since 1989.



The Sydney Opera House is lit with an Outback design as Australia Day celebrations begin in Sydney on Jan 26. (AP)

## Australians celebrate and protest anniversary of British colonization

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 26, (AP): Australians celebrated and protested across the country on Sunday as Australia Day drew attention to political differences over Indigenous rights months out from a federal election.

Australia Day marks a British colony being established at Sydney Cove on Jan. 26, 1788, which eventually led to Britain claiming the entire country without a treaty with its Indigenous inhabitants.

Indigenous rights advocates call Jan 26 "Invasion Day" and protest rallies have been held in major cities. Many argue that Australia's national day should not commemorate such a divisive event.

Australia Day is usually a public holiday and because it fell on a Sunday this year, Monday has been declared a holiday.

Acknowledging the hurt that Australia Day causes many Indigenous Australians, the most disadvantaged ethnic group that accounts for 4% of the population, many businesses refer to the "January long weekend" rather than the "Australia Day long weekend."

Australia Day has in recent decades been the date on which immigrants became Australian citizens in public ceremonies. But several local government councils have chosen to hold citizenship ceremonies on different dates due to the controversy.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's center-left Labor Party government has attempted to accommodate differing views of Australia Day since it won elections in 2022.

The government in 2023 decided to allow public servants to work on Australia Day and take another day off instead, reversing a previous conservative government order that they must not work on Jan. 26 when it falls on a week day.

Opposition leader Peter Dutton has said that all councils will be required to hold citizenship ceremonies on Jan. 26 if his party wins elections due by May 17.

"If the prime minister doesn't have the strength of leadership to stand up to mayors and others who don't want to celebrate Australia Day, then our country's in more trouble than we first realized," Dutton said two weeks ago.

Dutton has accused Albanese of "equivocating" on his support for Australia Day to appease the minor Greens party.

The Greens party opposes celebrations on Jan 26. Many observers, including Dutton, expect Labor will lose its parliamentary majority at the next election and may need the support of Greens lawmakers to form a minority government.

Albanese has accused Dutton of being divisive by declining an invitation to attend Australia Day events in the national capital Canberra.

Instead, Dutton attended a citizenship ceremony in his hometown of Brisbane.

"The national Australia Day event should be attended by both sides of the Parliament. They should be bipartisan," Albanese told reporters on Sunday.

"Why wouldn't you participate in national events if you want to be a national leader?" Albanese asked.

Australian National University historian Frank Bongiorno said both leaders were using Australia Day for their own political advantage.

"These figures will insist that they want it to be a day of unity, but they'll invariably behave in ways that promote disunity around the day. That's really how culture wars work," Bongiorno said.

The day began in Sydney with the sails of the Sydney Opera House illuminated at dawn with the art of Indigenous painter James P. Simon. In Melbourne, Indigenous activist Gary Foley told thousands of protesters who gathered at the steps of the state legislature that the greatest obstacle to a better future for the country was "Anglo-Australian racism born of fear and ignorance."

## 'Trump administration's plans will be catastrophic for Haiti'

ROME, Jan 26, (AP): The president of Haiti's transitional presidential council said the Trump administration's decisions to freeze aid programs, deport migrants and block refugees will be "catastrophic" for Haiti.

Leslie Voltaire made the comment in an interview with The Associated Press in Rome on Saturday following a meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican. He visited the pope to ask for help for Haiti.

"I'm knocking on the doors of people who love Haiti. The pope loves Haiti, and he is eager to help," Haiti's interim president said.

The pontiff and Voltaire discussed the dire situation in Haiti where gangs have killed civilians and operate across the Caribbean nation with impunity. Half of Haiti's 11.4 million people are already hungry, according to Voltaire, and losing humanitarian assistance will make the situation dramatically worse.

"Trump said that Haiti is a 'shithole,' so I don't think he will care about Haiti," Voltaire said, noting that thousands of people are already being repatriated from the Dominican Republic every week



Leslie Voltaire, the president of Haiti's Transition Council, arrives for an interview with the Associated Press in Rome on Jan 25. (AP)

and gangs are terrorizing the populace. With the new US policies, "the situation will be catastrophic."

During his first administration, President Donald Trump used bluntly vulgar language to question why the U.S. would accept immigrants from Haiti and "shithole countries" in Africa. At the time, the White House did not deny his remark but issued a statement saying Trump supports immigration policies that welcome "those who can contribute to our society."

## Congo severs ties with Rwanda

GOMA, Congo, Jan 26, (AP): Congo severed diplomatic ties with Rwanda as fighting between Rwanda-backed rebels and government forces raged around the key eastern city of Goma, leaving at least 13 peacekeepers and foreign soldiers dead and displacing thousands of civilians.

The M23 rebel group has made significant territorial gains along the border with Rwanda in recent weeks, closing in on Goma, the provincial capital of around 2 million people and a regional hub for security and humanitarian efforts. Congo, the United States and UN experts accuse Rwanda of backing M23, which is mainly made up of ethnic Tutsis who broke away from the Congolese army more than a decade ago. It's one of about 100 armed groups that have been vying for a foothold in the mineral-rich region, where a long-running conflict has created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises.

Rwanda's government denies backing the rebels, but last year acknowledged that it has troops and missile systems in eastern Congo to safeguard its security, pointing to a buildup of Congolese forces near the border. UN experts estimate there are up to 4,000 Rwandan forces in Congo.

"The Rwandan-backed M23 is clearly exploiting the presidential transition in the US to advance on Goma - putting thousands more civilians at risk," Kate Hixon, advocacy director for Africa at Amnesty International US, told the Associated Press.

The Congolese Foreign ministry said late Saturday it was severing diplomatic ties with Rwanda and pulling out all diplomatic staff from the country "with immediate effect." Rwanda did not comment immediately. The UN Security Council moved up an emergency meeting on the escalating violence in eastern Congo to Sunday. Congo requested the meeting, which had originally been scheduled for Monday.



Hixon

## Mexico says Trump labeling criminal organizations as terrorists doesn't help

MEXICO CITY, Jan 26, (Agencies): Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Friday that U.S. President Donald Trump's labelling criminal organizations as terrorists "does not help" to combat them.

The importance of combating criminal organizations is strengthening actions and prioritizing collaboration and respect between Mexico and the United States, she said at a daily press conference.

Noting that Mexican government does not want fentanyl to reach the United States or anywhere, Sheinbaum said: "We are fighting these criminal groups and what we want is collaboration and coordination. Unilateral decisions do not help."

In 1996, the US government enacted a law to allow itself to have the authority to designate a list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. On Monday, Trump signed an executive order moving toward designating drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations.

Sheinbaum said the Mexican government is conducting a legal analysis to evaluate the possible implications of the executive order.

Meanwhile, escorted by locals on bicycles and in cars that awaited his arrival outside his hometown in Mexico, Arturo Zacarias Meza returned home days after Houthi rebels in Yemen released him and his fellow crew mem-



Newly-sworn President Claudia Sheinbaum addresses supporters in the Zocalo, Mexico City's main square on Oct 1, 2024. (AP)

bers following more than a year in captivity.

In Misantla, a small town in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz with tile-roofed buildings facing a lush central square, a Norteño band belted out Zacarias' favorite song on Friday.

"A mother's prayer will never fail," Zacarias said upon his return home, where residents had been lighting candles for his safe release since November 2023.

On Nov. 19, 2023, Zacarias and much of the rest of the crew of the Galaxy Leader were resting in their quarters when Houthi rebels descended from a helicopter onto the ship transiting the Red Sea.

"Immediately the captain gave the order that we should surrender and not do anything," Zacarias said. "And thanks to that we're alive, because if we had done something more they would have given the order to shoot."

## Colombia offers \$700K reward for info on ELN rebel leaders

BOGOTA, Colombia, Jan 26, (AP): Colombia's government on Saturday announced a roughly \$700,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of four leaders of a rebel group, whose turf war with guerrilla dissidents in a coca-growing region



Petro

bordering Venezuela has left dozens of people dead. A social media post from the Defense Ministry detailed the reward for the heads of the National Liberation Army, known by its Spanish language acronym ELN.

The move followed President Gustavo Petro's decision on Friday to issue a decree giving him emergency powers to restore order in the affected region, including through curfews and other steps that would normally violate Colombians' civil rights or require congressional approval.

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Change Closing pts

# Business

## Kuwait's financial sector sees mixed performance

Assets rise by 4.84% yoy in Nov

By Mahmoud Shandi  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26:** In November 2024, bank financing for financial institutions (excluding banks), covering both residents and non-residents, experienced a significant monthly decline of 127.6 million dinars or 41.2 percent, bringing the total financing to 181.6 million dinars.

This marks a decrease from 309.2 million dinars recorded in October 2024. However, on an annual basis, the financing saw a substantial increase of 112 million dinars or 160 percent, compared to 69.7 million dinars in November 2023.

In terms of local banks' financing for financial institutions, there was a slight monthly decline of 0.2 percent or 7 million dinars, reducing the accumulated balance to 2.635 billion dinars in November, down from 2.642 billion dinars in October.

On a yearly basis, however, financing grew by 33 percent, or 656 million dinars, compared to 1.979 billion dinars in November 2023.

Throughout 2024, bank financing for financial institutions fluctuated monthly, starting at 188.6 million dinars in January, with a subsequent decrease in February to 165 million dinars.

Financing picked up in the following months, peaking at 309.2 million dinars in October before dipping to 181.6 million dinars in November.

In terms of local banks' overall assets, there was an annual increase of 4.84 percent, totaling 91.41 billion dinars by the end of November, up from 87.19 billion dinars in the same period in 2023.

This increase was attributed to factors such as a 12.67 percent rise in foreign assets, which reached 27.53 billion dinars and a 4.07 percent increase in claims on the private sector, now standing at 47.07 billion dinars.

Further breakdowns of assets revealed a 17.67 percent increase in other assets, totaling 3.33 billion dinars; a 5.72 percent decrease in claims on public institutions, which reached 3.46 billion dinars and a 10.84 percent drop in mutual deposits in the local interbank market.

As for credit facilities, they increased by 745 million dinars in November, totaling 57.118 billion dinars, compared to 56.373 billion dinars in October. Personal credit facilities alone amounted to 19.273 billion dinars.

Deposits in local banks also saw an increase in November, rising by 332 million dinars to 53.690 billion dinars, compared to 53.358 billion dinars the previous month.

However, private sector deposits in foreign currencies saw a slight decline by 0.1 percent, reaching 1.9 billion dinars (approximately \$6.3 billion).

On the other hand, local banks' claims on the Central Bank, represented by Central Bonds, decreased by 25.3 percent to 1.7 billion dinars (about \$5.6 billion).

This mixed performance in bank financing and local banks' assets highlights both challenges and growth in Kuwait's financial sector as the country navigates economic fluctuations.

General index climbs 1.32%

## Boursa Kuwait closes higher

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26, (KUNA):** Boursa Kuwait concluded Sunday's trading session with the general index climbing 100.94 points, or 1.32 percent, to close at 7,776.97 points. A total of 378.6 million shares were exchanged through 18,486 cash transactions, with a total value of 97.2 million Kuwaiti dinars (approximately \$299.3 million).

The Main Market Index edged up by 7.08 points, or 0.10 percent, to settle at 7,236.96 points. Trading volume reached 167.6 million shares through 8,458 transactions, valued at 29.3 mil-

lion dinars (about \$90.2 million).

The Premier Market Index posted a significant rise of 130.69 points, or 1.60 percent, closing at 8,295.71 points. It recorded a trading volume of 210.9 million shares across 10,028 transactions, amounting to 67.8 million dinars (approximately \$208.8 million).

Meanwhile, the Major 50 Index advanced by 45.53 points, or 0.63 percent, to end at 7,270.40 points. A total of 98.3 million shares were traded via 4,634 cash transactions, with a value of 20.3 million dinars (around \$62.5 million).

## Demand for digital infrastructure driven by 5G, AI, and cloud growth

## Digital revolution drives surge in infrastructure investment

By NBK Wealth

Digital and traditional infrastructure play complementary roles in our economies, both essential for ensuring seamless and efficient operations. Traditional infrastructure, encompassing roads, bridges, power grids, and water supply networks, provides the physical connectivity and resources fundamental for daily life. Digital infrastructure, on the other hand, comprises the technologies that support digital services, such as data centers, cloud computing, edge computing and networks, enabling the seamless flow of information.

Digital infrastructure, comprising both physical hardware and software technologies, enables the delivery of digital services and applications. Its main objective is to facilitate seamless data sharing for use and consumption.

As a critical enabler of digital transformation, it provides the foundational support to adopt and integrate advanced technologies. By facilitating the seamless flow of data, digital infrastructure enhances efficiency and enables scalability, both of which are crucial for adapting to evolving market demands and fostering growth.

### The Digital Revolution Reshapes Infrastructure Investing

Investors have recognized the utility-like characteristics of the digital infrastructure asset class, leveraging on its capacity to generate robust and stable cash flows, which are linked to its essential nature and the growing demand for digital services. As it serves as an inflation hedge, and provides diversification due to its low correlation with public markets, making it a valuable component of a balanced investment portfolio that aims to maximize returns while mitigating risk. The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the resilience of the asset class, emphasizing its role and importance in a diversified portfolio especially during unfavorable market conditions, further solidifying its value proposition for investors seeking long-term, stable growth.

Investment in digital infrastructure has grown significantly within the private infrastructure industry. Driven by growing economic changes, the accelerating shifts towards digitalization, and the increasing demand for AI, investors are capitalizing on the ongoing digital revolution, positioning themselves for strong, long-term returns. Digital infrastructure is being recognized as a resilient asset class with strong future potential.

The COVID-19 pandemic served



NBK Wealth logo

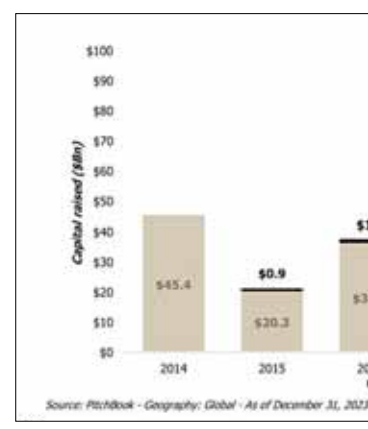
as a major catalyst, accelerating the rise in remote work, e-commerce, and video streaming. This surge in demand highlighted digital infrastructure's crucial role and its countercyclical, inflation-hedging characteristics, further fueling investor interest. Consequently, in 2023, fundraising in the digital infrastructure sector reached \$63.4 billion, with \$3.5 billion specifically channeled into specialist vehicles dedicated to the rapidly evolving digital infrastructure space.

### Risk and Return Profile of Digital Infrastructure Investments

The risk-return spectrum of digital infrastructure mirrors that of traditional infrastructure, spanning from core (low-risk, stable returns) to value-add (higher-risk, higher-return opportunities). The levels of risk and return in digital infrastructure depend on factors such as the type of assets, investment strategy, and rapid technological advancements.

This spectrum gives investors the flexibility to select assets and strategies that align with their specific investment goals and risk tolerance. While longer contracts offer stability and predictable cash flows, they also present certain drawbacks. To balance risk and reward in this fast-evolving space, investors must address challenges like technological obsolescence, cybersecurity threats, regulatory changes, and rapid market shifts.

### Key Challenges and Considerations



### Key takeaways:

- Digital Infrastructure is foundational to the modern world: Digital Infrastructure is essential for global connectivity, business operations, and economic stability.
- Private investment in digital infrastructure is surging: Investing in digital infrastructure has grown significantly within the private infrastructure industry.
- Digital infrastructure offers compelling financial benefits: Digital infrastructure generates robust and stable cash flows, serves as inflation hedge, and provides diversification due to its low correlation with public markets.
- Resilience is a key feature of digital infrastructure: Digital infrastructure is essential for ensuring stability, it helps minimize the effects of disruptions especially during global crises like pandemics.
- Sustainability is crucial for the future of the sector: The future of digital infrastructure will rely on adopting sustainable practices, to reduce environmental impact and support long-term growth.

As more devices and systems become interconnected, ensuring robust cybersecurity measures and protecting user privacy is paramount. Digital infrastructure must be scalable and flexible to keep up with evolving technology trends, to avoid obsolescence, constant upgrades and costly hardware investments. Additionally, some types of digital infrastructure consume substantial energy, making it challenging and costly to balance high energy demands with sustainable practices.

### The Future of Digital Infrastructure

While digital infrastructure has become an established asset class, it is still relatively early in its development compared to more traditional infrastructure sectors like transportation or utilities. This means that while the sector offers substantial growth potential, it also comes with the uncertainties and risks associated with emerging markets. The rapid pace of technological advancements, the increasing

demand for data, and the growth of emerging technologies like 5G, AI, and cloud computing continue to shape and expand the digital infrastructure sector. These technologies are not just driving demand but are also creating new investment opportunities.

As demand for digital infrastructure grows, there will be increasing pressure to make it more sustainable, as most digital infrastructure assets consume significant energy, impacting sustainability. The future of digital infrastructure will rely on adopting sustainable practices, with a focus on energy efficiency, and smart technologies to reduce environmental impact and support long-term growth. This includes innovations like liquid cooling for data centers, the use of AI to optimize energy consumption, and the development of greener construction materials.

Digital infrastructure remains in a phase of rapid evolution and growth, with significant opportunities and challenges ahead.

Euro fluctuates as Eurozone PMI improves, France still struggles

## Markets navigate policy shifts, data, and volatility as Trump takes office

By National Bank of Kuwait

This week, US markets saw significant volatility following President Trump's policy announcements after his inauguration. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, President Trump's speech solidified his protectionist stance on trade, and reiterated calls for tariffs on imports, lower interest rates, and reduced oil prices. This came as US unemployment claims rose only marginally, amidst mixed PMI data ahead of next week's FOMC meeting. In Canada, inflation eased to 1.8% y/y, and monthly retail sales remained flat, increasing expectations of a rate cut by the Bank of Canada this month. In Europe, this week's surge of data triggered fluctuations in the euro currency. Eurozone PMI showed modest improvement, with Germany's composite PMI returning to expansion, whilst France continued its contraction due to weak demand and political uncertainty. Meanwhile, the UK saw a rise in unemployment to 4.4%, despite strong wage growth. In Asia, the Bank of Japan raised its policy rate to 0.50%, the highest in 17 years, due to accelerating inflation. In contrast, the People's Bank of China kept its lending rates unchanged as the yuan weakened, signalling a cautious monetary stance. Overall, global markets remain volatile, driven by the flurry of political developments, economic data, and central bank stances.

### United States and Canada

#### Trump's Inauguration Triggers Market Shifts Amidst Policy Changes and Protectionist Measures

Donald Trump's inauguration as the 47th US President was marked by sweeping executive orders and market volatility. Key policy changes included the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization, reversals of nearly 80 Biden-era directives, and the suspension of birthright citizenship. Immigration reforms, declaring a 'national energy emergency', diversity programme eliminations, and hiring freezes underscored a shift toward protectionist policies, setting the stage for significant domestic and global challenges. Trump also ordered investigations into trade imbalances, without imposing immediate tariffs, though he suggested potential levies of 25% on Canada and Mexico, and 10% on China. On Friday, DXY fell to a one-month low after Trump said he would "rather not" use tariffs on China, dampening inflation expectations. DXY was last seen at 107.44.

#### Trump Pushes Federal Reserve to Cut Rates, and Escalates Tax Policy Amidst Economic Concerns

Ahead of the Federal Reserve's meeting next week, President Trump ramped up pressure for interest rate cuts, criticising Fed Chair Jay Powell's cautious stance. The central bank is expected to hold rates at 4.25%-4.5% after three consecutive cuts totalling 100bps since September 2024. Economists have expressed concerns that Trump's policies—especially tariffs, tax cuts, and immigration reforms—could undermine inflation control, which remains above the 2% target. Meanwhile, President Trump threatened to double tax rates for foreign nationals and corporations. This measure targets perceived discriminatory international tax policies, particularly against US multinationals. The administration also withdrew support for the OECD global tax pact, which was expected to generate \$192B annually in tax revenues.

#### US Unemployment Claims Rise to 223K as Continu-

| Currencies | Previous Week Levels |        |        |        | This Week's Expected Range |         | 3-Month Forward |
|------------|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------------|---------|-----------------|
|            | Open                 | Low    | High   | Close  | Minimum                    | Maximum |                 |
| EUR        | 1.0273               | 1.0266 | 1.0521 | 1.0495 | 1.0400                     | 1.0680  | 1.0542          |
| GBP        | 1.2169               | 1.2161 | 1.2502 | 1.2483 | 1.2360                     | 1.2650  | 1.2479          |
| JPY        | 156.30               | 154.78 | 156.75 | 155.99 | 153.70                     | 156.90  | 154.42          |
| CHF        | 0.9150               | 0.9028 | 0.9152 | 0.9060 | 0.8885                     | 0.9150  | 0.8967          |

#### ing Claims Hit a Three-Year High of 1.9M

Initial unemployment claims in the US rose by 6K to a seasonally adjusted 223K for the week ending January 18, 2025, higher than the expected 219K. Continuing claims, a proxy for long-term unemployment, reached 1.9M, the highest since November 2021, suggesting greater challenges for job seekers. Despite these figures, initial claims remain near pre-pandemic averages, indicating a resilient labour market. Nonfarm payrolls had grown by 256K in December, contributing to a 2.2M job increase in 2024. Economists note potential distortions from seasonal factors, extreme weather, and the Trump administration's pro-business policies, including federal employment cuts, which could shape the labour market in the coming months.

#### US Composite PMI Falls 9-Month Low of 52.4; Manufacturing Hits 50.1, Services Drops to 52.8

In January, the US private sector showed mixed signals of economic activity. The S&P Global Composite PMI fell to 52.4 from 55.4 in December, marking a nine-month low. The Manufacturing PMI improved to 50.1, up from a revised 49.4, reaching a seven-month high and indicating a slight return to expansion. Meanwhile, the Services PMI declined significantly to 52.8 from 56.8, also a nine-month low. Business optimism remains strong, bolstered by expectations of growth-friendly policies under the new administration. However, inflationary pressures have resurfaced, driven by supplier price hikes and wage increases, with broad-based cost growth across goods and services posing potential challenges for monetary policy adjustments.

#### Canada's Inflation Rate Eases to 1.8% y/y as CPI Contracts 0.4% m/m, Core Inflation Nears BoC Target

Canada's Consumer Price Index (CPI) eased to 1.8% y/y in December 2024, down from 1.9% in November, reflecting the impact of a sales tax break that began mid-month. On a monthly basis, CPI contracted 0.4% in December, driven by lower prices for alcohol (-1.3%), restaurant food (-1.6%), and children's clothing. The tax relief affected approximately 10% of the CPI basket and is expected to have a more pronounced effect in January. Core inflation metrics, CPI-median and CPI-trim, edged down to 2.4% and 2.5% respectively, approaching the midpoint to the Bank of Canada's target range of 1 to 3%. Markets now anticipate an 93% likelihood of a 25-basis-point rate cut on January 29. USD/CAD was last seen at 1.4341.

#### Canada's Retail Sales Flat in November at CAD 67.57B, Motor Vehicles Offset Sectoral Declines

Canada's retail sales were unchanged in November at CAD 67.57B (\$46.7B), as declines in six of nine subsectors, including food and beverage (-1.6%) and general merchandise (-1.0%), offset a 2% rise in motor vehicle and parts sales, according to Statistics Canada. Excluding automotive sales, retail sales fell 0.7%. Economists attribute the muted figures to delayed Black Friday effects and mid-December tax holidays. Retail sales, a key GDP indicator, contribute nearly 40% to consumer spending, which underpinned Q3 economic growth. Preliminary data suggest a 1.6% rise in December.

### Europe and the United Kingdom

#### Eurozone PMI Composite Hits 50.2 Amidst Marginal Growth in Services

Eurozone PMI data for January highlighted cautious economic improvement, with the PMI Composite rising to 50.2 from 49.6, indicating marginal growth after five months of contraction. Manufacturing PMI climbed to 46.1, its highest in eight months, though still contracting, while services PMI dipped slightly to 51.4 but remained expansionary. Germany's PMI Composite rose from 48.0 to 50.1, marking a return to growth, while France continued to contract with a PMI Composite of 48.3. Inflationary pressures persisted, as input prices in manufacturing rose for the first time in four months, driven by a weaker euro and higher CO2 taxes, with markets assigning a 97% probability of a 25bps cut by the ECB next week. EUR/USD was last seen at 1.0495.

#### Europe Prepares for Potential US Tariffs Amid Trade Tensions and 1% GDP Surplus

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde has warned Europe to prepare for potential US trade policy shifts under President Donald Trump, who has hinted at selective tariffs targeting EU goods. Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Lagarde noted that Europe's trade surplus with the US, almost 1% of GDP in 2023, underscores its reliance on key sectors such as chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Lagarde questioned the feasibility of US domestic manufacturing substituting EU imports, citing the US economy's full capacity and historically low unemployment. She emphasised Europe's need to remove internal trade barriers, enhance competitiveness, and implement urgent reforms to strengthen its position in global trade negotiations.

#### UK Unemployment Rises to 4.4% in November as Job Growth Slows and Wages Climb 5.6%

The UK's unemployment rate edged higher to 4.4% in

the three months to November 2024, exceeding the forecasted 4.3%, according to the Office for National Statistics. Employment growth slowed significantly, with a net increase of 35K jobs, compared to October's 173K. Claimant count data also reflected weaker labour market momentum, with a modest rise of 0.7K in December 2024, following a revised decline of 25.1K in November. Wage growth remained robust, as average earnings, both with and without bonuses, rose 5.6% y/y in the same period, consistent with market expectations. These figures underscore the UK labour market's softening amidst broader economic headwinds, impacting employment prospects and wage dynamics. GBP/USD was last seen at 1.2483.

#### UK Composite PMI at 50.9; Services at 51.2 and Manufacturing at 48.2 Signal Mixed Growth

The UK S&P Composite PMI increased to 50.9 in January, up from 50.4 in December, marking a three-month high and narrowly indicating growth. The Services PMI edged higher to 51.2 from 51.1, while Manufacturing PMI improved to 48.2 from 47.0 but remained in contraction. Despite these gains, employment fell at its fastest rate since 2009 (excluding the pandemic), as businesses cited higher social security costs following payroll tax hikes in October 2024. Inflationary pressures intensified, with input and output prices at their highest levels since mid-2023. Business optimism hit its lowest point since late 2022, underscoring challenges for the Bank of England ahead of its February 6 rate decision.

### Asia-Pacific

#### BOJ Raises Policy Rate to 0.5%, Upgrades Inflation Projections in Boost for Yen

The Bank of Japan (BOJ) raised its key policy rate by 25bps to 0.5%, the highest level in 17 years, citing stronger-than-expected inflation and stable global financial conditions. The BOJ's latest outlook report revised up its inflation projections to 2% or higher for the first time, with Japan's core consumer prices (excluding fresh food) rising 3% in December 2024. The yen strengthened by 0.8% against the US dollar, reaching a high of 154.85, while 10-year Japanese government bond yields rose 2bps to 1.225%. This marks the third rate hike under Governor Kazuo Ueda, reflecting the BOJ's gradual tightening strategy as wage growth and currency stability remain pivotal to future policy adjustments. USD/JPY was last seen at 155.99.

#### China Keeps Benchmark Lending Rates at 3.1% and 3.6% Amid Yuan Weakness

China's central bank kept its benchmark lending rates unchanged for the third consecutive month in January 2025, with the one-year loan prime rate (LPR) at 3.1% and the five-year LPR at 3.6%. This decision aligns with expectations and reflects the challenges posed by a weakening yuan, which has constrained the scope for further monetary easing. While the economy met the government's 5% growth target in 2024, reducing the urgency for immediate stimulus, the depreciation of the yuan and banks' narrowing interest rate margins limit the effectiveness of further rate cuts. Market expectations for imminent rate reductions have diminished, with a more cautious monetary stance anticipated considering the currency pressures.

### Kuwait

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30825.



Eco-friendly Gulf Bank branches feature solar panels, energy efficiency

## Gulf Bank launches phase two of transforming branch network into eco-friendly spaces

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: In its ongoing efforts to promote sustainability, Gulf Bank has announced the completion of the first phase of transforming its network of over 50 branches into eco-friendly spaces, redesigning in line with the Bank's new identity. The first phase included the renovation of six branches: Al-Ghazali, Al-Zahra, Abdullah Al-Salem, Al-Shaah, Al-Jabriya, and Al-Nuzha.



Basel Al-Assad

Gulf Bank launched its initiative to transform its branches into eco-friendly spaces with the official opening of its first fully sustainable branch in the Sabah Al-Ahmad residential area back in February 2024. This project aligns with the Bank's five-year strategy and Kuwait's 2035 vision, which aims to foster a sustainable economy and reduce carbon emissions.

Mr. Basel Al-Assad, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking Services at Gulf Bank, announced the

shift to phase two, which includes the expansion of additional branches in the network. He highlighted that the renovated branches boast modern designs and advanced banking services, integrating the latest technologies to improve customer experience and stay in line with global banking trends.

Mr. Al-Assad further explained, "The newly renovated branches feature

### Basel Al-Assad:

"We are committed to a clear strategy focused on enhancing our customers' experience."

a unique design that prioritizes comfort, convenience, and efficiency for customers, while being entirely sustainable and eco-friendly. These branches adhere to green building standards, focusing on reducing electricity consumption, incorporating solar panels, maximizing natural light, and using sensors to minimize electricity usage. In addition, the branches will include electric car charging stations in selected branches and expanded green spaces both inside and outside."



A photo of one of the new eco-friendly branches.

He continued, "At Gulf Bank, we are committed to a clear strategy focused on enhancing our customers' experience. Whether through our user-

friendly mobile banking app, which is the easiest and fastest in the banking sector, or through our branch visits and ATM machines, we are consistently

updating our customer service center and interactive voice response system to provide the best possible service."

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.

## US economy shows strong growth with low unemployment & elevated inflation

Jobless claims rise modestly to 223,000

WASHINGTON, Jan 26, (AP): Jobless claims applications ticked up modestly last week, but the total number of Americans collecting unemployment benefits rose to their highest level in more than three years.

Applications for jobless benefits rose by 6,000 to 223,000 for the week ending January 18, the Labor Department said Thursday. Analysts were expecting 219,000 new applications.

Weekly applications for jobless benefits are considered a proxy for layoffs.

The total number of Americans receiving unemployment benefits for the week of January 11 climbed by 46,000 to 1.9 million, the most since November of 2021.

The rising level of continuing claims, the total number of Americans collecting jobless benefits, suggests that some who are receiving benefits are finding it harder to land new jobs. That could mean that demand for workers is waning, even as the economy remains strong.

The four-week average of continuing claims is about 100,000 higher than it was a year ago.

Though some signs of labor market weakness surfaced in 2024, jobs are still plentiful and layoffs historically low.

Earlier this month, the Labor Department reported that job growth in December surged and unemployment fell. Employers added 256,000 jobs last month and the unemployment rate ticked down to 4.1%.

The final jobs report of 2024 underscores that the economy and hiring were able to grow at a solid pace even with interest rates much higher than they were before the pandemic. As a result, the Federal Reserve could be much less likely to cut



In this Dec. 18, 2020 file photo, a runner passes the office of the California Employment Development Department in Sacramento, Calif. (AP)

borrowing costs again in the coming months after issuing three cuts late in 2024.

Overall, the solid jobs figures suggest the economy is entering a post-COVID period of steady growth, higher interest rates, low unemployment, and slightly elevated inflation.

Though layoffs remain healthy by historical standards, several high-profile companies have an-

nounced job cuts in the past few months.

Facebook parent company Meta announced earlier this month that it was laying off 5% of its staff and spirits giant Brown-Forman - the maker of Jack Daniel's - said it's reducing its global workforce by about 12%.

Late in 2024, GM, Boeing, Cargill and Stellantis all announced layoffs.

### Mortgage rates and home shortage drive sales slump

## US home sales fall to 30-year low for 2nd consecutive year

LOS ANGELES, Jan 26, (AP): The latest evidence that homeownership is becoming increasingly less accessible to many Americans: Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes fell last year to a nearly 30-year low for the second time in as many years.

Elevated mortgage rates, a years long shortage of homes on the market and record-high home prices continued to stymie prospective home shoppers, especially first-time buyers.

That led existing home sales to fall 0.7% last year to 4.06 million - the weakest showing for home sales since 1995 and edging out the terrible year for sales in 2023, the National Association of Realtors said Friday.

Even in the midst of a sales slump, a dearth of homes on the market and rising mortgage rates gave sellers an edge over buyers, helping drive up the national median home price for all of last year to an all-time high \$407,500, an increase of 4.7% from a year earlier.

"How is it possible that home sales can be this low, considering that the U.S. population has increased by more than 70 million over this time period from 1995 to today?" asked Lawrence Yun, the NAR's chief economist. "One can partly answer that question because of the affordability issue. Record-high home prices, mortgage rates having risen, but also lack of inventory."

The U.S. housing market has been in a sales slump dating back to 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows. The average rate on a 30-year mortgage surged to a 23-year high of nearly

8% in October 2023 and briefly fell to a 2-year low last September, but has been mostly hovering around 7%, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac.

The buying power of Americans now facing higher costs to borrow money for homes that have soared in value has been significantly stunted. With so few homes up for sale, millions of would-be homebuyers have found themselves on the sidelines.

At the end of December, there were just 1.15 million homes on the market, NAR said. While that was up 16.2% from a year earlier, the inventory remained well below the annual historical average of about 1.98 million, according to data going back to 1999.

The available inventory at the end of last month amounts to a 3.3-month supply, going by the current sales pace. In a more balanced market between buyers and sellers, there is a 4- to 6-month supply.

"This means that the problems in the U.S. housing market continue to worsen in terms of availability of homes for sale and the upward pressure on home prices," Eugenio Aleman, chief economist at Raymond James, wrote in a research note.

Many factors have contributed to the housing shortage, including more than a decade of below-average new home construction and homeowners hanging on to their properties longer. And while President Donald Trump made increasing the housing supply one of his election campaign platforms, there are no quick fixes.

"Over the past decade, the U.S. has averaged about 5.2 million home sales annually," said Lisa Sturtevant, chief economist at Bright MLS. "It is going

to take years before we are back at that level, maybe not even until the 2030s. The lack of inventory is the key constraint."

A sharp drop in the mortgage rate boosted the purchasing power of Americans in 2020 and 2021. While many economists predict that the average rate on a 30-year mortgage will ease this year, they generally don't expect it to fall below 6%, about twice what it was five years ago.

When mortgage rates ease, they can encourage home shoppers. A pullback in rates last fall helped home sales increase on a monthly basis in the last three months of the year.

Home sales in December rose 2.2% from the previous month on a seasonally adjusted basis to a 4.24 million annual pace, NAR said. That topped the 4.2 million pace forecast by analysts polled by FactSet. Sales rose 9.3% in December versus the same month last year.

The median home sales price rose for the 18th consecutive month in December to \$404,000, up 6% from a year earlier.

Limited inventory, especially in the more affordable price range of a given market, helps drive prices higher. That's one reason many first-time homebuyers, who don't have any home equity to put toward their down payment, continue to struggle.

They accounted for 31% of all homes sold last month, up from 30% in November and 29% in December 2023. However, the annual share of first-time buyers was 24%. It's been 40% historically.

### 'Avoid suspicious ads'

## ABK urges customers to be cautious of financial fraud

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: In line with its ongoing commitment to customer awareness and the protection of personal data, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is pleased to support the 'Let's Be Aware' financial awareness campaign in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association.

Recently, Ali Bu Hamad, Head of Complaints and Customer Protection Unit, appeared as a guest on Marina FM to discuss the critical topic of banking and financial fraud.

During the interview, Bu Hamad highlighted the importance of caution when conducting transactions, especially with untrustworthy parties and unknown individuals. He also discussed the Central Virtual Room which was established based on the directives of the Central Bank of Kuwait in cooperation between local banks and the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice.

Bu Hamad urged customers to verify information, thoroughly read the content of one-time password (OTP) messages regarding transaction amounts and merchant names, and only conduct banking operations through official and reliable websites and applications.

He also emphasized the dangers of engaging with suspicious advertisements on social media or search engines and stressed the importance of never sharing the OTP or card PIN with anyone.

During the interview, Bu Hamad stressed ABK's keenness to strengthen the efforts made to protect customers and provide advice on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, he pointed out that the Central Virtual Room involves the participation of more than one party to monitor suspicious transactions. It supports in taking immediate action when a customer communicates with the Bank so that it may protect them by taking the necessary action to stop the card and alert them about any suspicious transactions taking place on their bank accounts.

This initiative aims to efficiently handle customer reports around the clock through clear procedures among all participating entities, ul-



ABK Logo



Diraya Logo

timately enhancing coordination between local banks and official entities in Kuwait.

The Central Virtual Room aims to enhance coordination between local banks and official bodies, including the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice, which contributes to providing a safer banking environment for customers. Through it, suspicious accounts are monitored and restricted, and funds are tracked and seized. This is in addition to raising awareness in order to limit electronic fraud operations.

As part of its commitment to customer safety, ABK continuously provides informative content on its social media pages about protecting bank accounts. Customers are encouraged to contact the Bank immediately if they fall victim to fraud or suspect any unauthorized transactions.

Recognized as a leading and responsible banking institution in Kuwait, ABK is dedicated to adopting the highest security standards to safeguard customer data from breaches and fraud attempts. The Bank consistently updates its systems to align with developments in the banking industry and offers guidance to customers through its branches, website, and mobile application. This includes information about various banking products, clients' rights and obligations, and other important topics related to the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign.



Part of the interview.

## Trump claims victory over inflation, but no direct action in first week

WASHINGTON, Jan 26, (AP): Two months ago, in his first network television interview after the election, Donald Trump said he owed his victory to Americans' anger over immigration and inflation, specifically the rising cost of groceries.

"When you buy apples, when you buy bacon, when you buy eggs, they would double and triple the price over a short period of time," he told NBC's "Meet the Press." "And I won an election based on that. We're going to bring those prices way down."

But in Trump's first week back in the White House, there was little in his initial blitz of executive orders that directly tackled those prices, besides directing federal agencies to start "pursuing appropriate actions." He is taking steps to lower energy costs, something that Trump hopes will have ripple effects throughout the economy. Otherwise, his focus has been clamping down on immigration, which he described as his "No. 1 issue" shortly after taking the oath of office.

"They all said inflation was the No. 1 issue. I said, 'I disagree,'" Trump said. "I talked about inflation too, but how many times can you say that an apple has doubled in cost?"

Trump is banking on voters giving him a pass and continuing to blame former President Joe Biden for high prices. The Republican's comments reflect the reality that presidents have almost no levers to reduce inflation quickly without causing collateral damage to other parts of the economy.

There is more that Trump can do on energy. He is pushing to reduce regulations and increase the amount of land available for drilling. He is trying to persuade domestic and foreign oil producers to potentially sacrifice their own profits by pumping more.

During a rally Saturday in Las Vegas, Trump went after his Democratic predecessor for allowing prices to rise under his watch, and promised to take care of the problem quickly.

"When I think of Biden, I think of incompetence and inflation," Trump said.

Inflation peaked at a 9.1% annual rate in June 2022 during worldwide supply chain problems after the economic shock of the coronavirus pandemic. Overall consumer prices have fallen since then, but have ticked up in recent months, from 2.4% in September to 2.9% in December, the latest figures available. Economists have warned that Trump's plans for tariffs and tax cuts could create new inflationary pressures and keep interest rates elevated.

Vice President JD Vance, in an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation" airing Sunday, defended the White House's work so far.

"Prices are going to come down, but it's going to take a little bit of time, right?" he said. He added, "Rome wasn't built in a day."

Trump's relative shift away from addressing costs could create an opening for Democrats to say he is not helping working-class voters, hoping that argument could offer the party a path back to power in Washington.

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said Trump preferred to distract people from inflation with talk of adding Greenland to the United States or seizing the Panama Canal.

"It's catnip and it causes everybody to stop paying attention to their actual economic agenda, which has nothing to do with lowering costs and everything to do with rigging the economy to help the Mar-a-Lago crowd," he said.

During an interview on Fox News this past week, host Sean Hannity struggled to get Trump to focus on the economy.

"Let me get to the economy," Hannity said at one point. "I'm running out of time."

"The economy is going to do great," Trump insisted.

When Trump did talk about inflation in the interview, he noted how low it was during his first term and insisted prices would not have jumped up if he had president after the 2020 election, even though higher inflation was a global trend coming out of the pandemic.

It is not clear how Trump would persuade oil companies and foreign countries

to quickly increase production, possibly costing them profits.

The Energy Information Administration reported that domestic oil production has grown at an annual rate of roughly 8.4% over the past two years to an average of nearly 13.5 million barrels a day in October. Some Trump aides suggest that could increase by an additional 3 million barrels a day.

It would be difficult to achieve that much additional production in a single year without serious changes to the global market. The International Energy Agency estimates that the oil supplied to the entire world will increase by 1.8 million barrels per day to 104.7 million barrels a day. He also has expressed opposition to climate-friendly wind and solar energy, putting more pressure on the U.S. economy to rely on fossil fuels.

EJ Antoni, a research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, said the potential increase in energy production under Trump would ultimately flow through the economy in the form of lower prices.

"If you're going to bring down the cost of energy, you're going to bring down the cost of all kinds of goods and services," he said.

But there is a risk that some of Trump's plans taken as a whole could raise - not reduce - prices. Deporting migrants who are in the United States illegally could deprive companies of lower wage workers. The cost of tariffs, which are taxes placed on foreign imports, could be passed on to consumers.

Trump said that his strategy also might ultimately involve publicly pressuring the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates, saying in Davos that he would "demand" lower rates from central banks. The Fed sees its political independence as key for making tough choices to stabilize prices. Biden saw the independence as worth protecting, whereas Trump sees it as problematic.

The Fed raised its benchmark rates starting in 2022 to make it more expensive to borrow and succeeded enough in reducing inflationary pressures that it could trim rates late last year. Trump believes that greater oil production will put him in a position to tell the Fed what to do.

# Business Plus



**Zuckerberg claims workplaces have been 'neutered,' calls for more aggression**

Research shows masculinity contest culture can harm workers and companies



Mark Zuckerberg arrives before the 60th Presidential Inauguration in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Monday, Jan. 20, 2025. (AP)

**By Adam Stanaland**  
University of Richmond

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



When Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg appeared on a Jan. 10, 2025, episode of "The Joe Rogan Experience," he lamented that corporate culture had become too "feminine," suppressing its "masculine energy" and abandoning supposedly valuable traits such as aggression.

The workplace, he concluded, has been "neutered."

Perhaps not surprisingly, Zuckerberg has also embraced stereotypically masculine pursuits in his personal life. He's become a mixed martial arts aficionado and has shared his affinity for smoking meats. On his expansive Hawaii compound, he's even taken up bow-and-arrow pig hunting.

He's come a long way from the

geeky image of his youth.

But is Zuckerberg right? Do workplaces in the U.S. need to embrace a more diesel-fueled, street-fighting, meat-eating mentality?

As a social psychologist who studies masculinity and aggression, I think it's important to evaluate what the science says about Zuckerberg's claims - and to consider what it means for the future of workplace culture in the U.S.

In 2018, sociologist Jennifer Berdahl and her colleagues coined the term "masculinity contest culture" to describe workplaces rife with cut-throat competition, toxic leadership, bullying and harassment.

Integrating decades of prior research on masculinity in the workplace, Berdahl and her collaborators were able to map how masculinity contest cultures operate, as well as show how they affect organizations and individual employees.

In her experiments, she had participants agree or disagree with statements such as "expressing any emotion other than anger or pride

is seen as weak," based on their perceptions of their own organization. Using advanced statistical techniques, Berdahl's team was able to distill masculinity contest cultures down to four components: "showing no weakness," "strength and stamina," "putting work first" and "dog eat dog."

Then they were able to show how these cultures are tied to a host of negative outcomes for workers and companies, such as burnout, turnover and poor well-being. And at the organization level, they can foment a dysfunctional office environment, toxic leadership and even bullying and harassment.

Based on this research, then, it seems like promoting rigid masculinity in the workplace is not the best solution for an arguably already struggling Meta.

What, then, led Zuckerberg to claim that the workplace has been neutered and must be infused with masculine energy? Has the American office really gone full "Legally Blonde"?

Zuckerberg's own company isn't exactly a paragon of parity: Its total workforce, as of 2022, was nearly two-thirds male, while its tech workforce was three-quarters male. Furthermore, according to psychologists Sapna Cheryan and Hazel Markus, workplaces in the U.S. still reflect what they call "masculine defaults" - cultures that reward characteristics or behaviors generally associated with men.

This can range from how companies describe themselves - for example, as places that are "aggressive" and "unrestrained" - to hosting events catering to traditionally male pursuits, such as golf outings.

Although Cheryan and Markus' analysis centers on how masculine defaults make it harder for women to carve out their professional paths, they can harm everybody, including men.

My research, for example, has shown that when men feel pressured to fulfill certain masculine expectations, they can develop fragile masculine identities, which are linked

with aggression and anxiety.

Although the pervasiveness of masculinity norms can give men an upper hand in the workplace, I wonder whether men are contorting themselves to fit into outdated molds of who succeeds at work. Indeed, research shows that successful organizations promote a healthy mix of stereotypically masculine and feminine qualities.

In other words, it's best when people of all genders feel comfortable showcasing traits such as cooperation and agency, qualities that don't necessarily fall into one gender camp.

If many workplaces still possess dog-eat-dog cultures and celebrate masculinity - with evidently poor outcomes - you might wonder why billionaire corporate leaders would advocate for them.

The most generous explanation is ignorance. Zuckerberg could simply be unaware that most offices in the U.S. still possess competitive environments and traits associated with traditional masculinity.

Although this could be the case, I think there could be two other explanations for Zuckerberg's promotion of rigid masculinity norms.

There could be an economic motive. Perhaps Zuckerberg thinks that promoting his company as an arena of high-stakes competition and aggression is the best way to attract talent and spur innovation in a field already dominated by men. It's often thought that competition drives innovation. So "Meta needs to be more masculine" could actually be code for "Meta needs to breed more internal competition, which will spur innovation and turn a profit." This assumption is also misguided: Recent research has shown that internal competition may actually stifle innovation.

There could also be a psychological motive. I've found in my research that men are most likely to cling to notions of rigid masculinity when they feel pressure to "man up" and are insecure about themselves.

Perhaps Zuckerberg sees diversity efforts as a challenge to his power. Maybe he thinks aligning himself with President Donald Trump's version of masculinity will help him gain and retain power, especially as he faces challenges from other tech giants. So his promotion of an aggressive workplace, along with his slashing of policies that could make him look "weak," are moves to reinforce his status as a leader, as an innovator and as a man.

This isn't to say that activities such as hunting and mixed martial arts are inherently bad, or even inherently masculine: There are plenty of female hunters and UFC fighters. Nor is it to say that certain masculine characteristics in the workplace are inherently bad.

But when I see middle-aged billionaires - Zuckerberg isn't the only one - exhibiting the signs of fragile masculinity that I've observed among young adult men and adolescent boys, I can't help but wonder what the country's future holds. (AP)

70% of employees still value office community post-pandemic

## Post-pandemic office-forward strategy focuses on community building

**By Radostina Purvanova**  
Drake University

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



It's been five years since the pandemic lockdowns of 2020 disrupted the traditional office workplace. For a while, it seemed COVID-19 killed the office.

Companies are now returning to the office in ever greater numbers. As professors who have researched remote work and collaboration for decades, we have our counterarguments. But there are lessons to be learned from what we are calling an "office-forward" approach, where companies are encouraging employees to work from the office most of the time.

We studied an office-forward company headquartered in the Midwest with multiple satellite offices across the U.S. before the pandemic, during lockdown, and as it navigated the return-to-office landscape. We embedded ourselves within the company for just over two years and conducted field observations, focus groups and one-on-one interviews with a total of 56 employees. We were struck by how employees talked about their place of work:

"This is my place. I feel very taken care of here."

"Every time I come in, I feel welcomed."

"It is such a welcoming place to come back to work every day."

These comments speak to the positive culture of this company. But they also hint at something really interesting: Employees may see the office space as a welcoming place to be.

This is significant because research across disciplines - from anthropology to organizational science - has shown that people develop attachment to places, not spaces. Think about a house versus a home. A house is a structure; a home is a place of community.

And so, while the office is not a home, we learned that an office-forward strategy can be successful if employers transform their workspaces into workplaces, or into places of community. Here are three transformation tactics we discovered:

**Can the office support community? Can the workspace be a workplace?**

Our research shows that employees see the office as a positive place when it meets their needs. The more goals people can accomplish in a space, the more attached they feel to it. As one employee told us: "If you want to work independently, there's a space for that. If you want to collaborate with others, there are spaces for that. If you want to eat lunch with 50 people, you can do that. Or, if you just want to have, like, a one-on-one, you can do that as well. There is flexibility, just depending upon your mood, and maybe what you need to accomplish that day."

We think this shows the value of redesigning "spaces" as "places" that meet multiple work-related and human needs.

We also documented the importance of providing a workstation for every employee. It's simple: Humans are territorial. If you can't put a picture of your family on your desk, you feel stripped of your humanity. An employee shared: "I know a lot of companies make you bounce around. Sounds terrible to me. Here, I have my little cubicle, and I love that."

Not to mention the huge inconvenience of having to truck your stuff - even your mug and your mouse - to and from the office every day. Desk-sharing is antithetical to place attachment because it treats people like cogs.

People are the ones who turn spaces into places. To accomplish this, some critical mass of people must use the physical infrastructure together.

The company we studied imagined its office as a social - not just a work - arena. It dreamed up all sorts of engagement opportunities. It hosted breakfasts and lunches, had movie nights, invited food trucks and ice cream vans, threw silent dance parties, and more.

Employees told us they enjoyed both "the informal, organic interactions when I go down to get coffee in the morning" and the "energy I feel when there are events in the office." Infusing social opportunities of all shapes and sizes into the office means people are making memories in the office together. And this means they are building community.

But this company went further. It passed the place-making baton. Employees could personalize the space. One team installed a mini-golf course;

another painted a mural on an office wall in the center of the building. Employees used the space how and when they wanted to. Some did walking meetings on the treadmills; others played video games after lunch.

Most importantly, employees hosted their own activities in the office. We don't just mean baby showers and such; we mean inviting the board of a nonprofit for a meeting at the office or inviting a group of students for an office tour. Turning space-users into place-makers means people develop a sense of shared ownership of the space-turned-place. No wonder we kept on hearing possessive language: "There's a lot of pride in the fact that this is our place" and "This is a building of the people, to put it in a slogan-y way." The office had become a place of community.

Technology is an integral part of the post-pandemic workplace. With increased flexibility, employees aren't in the office all the time, even in companies with in-person policies. Since 2022 a number of companies - some recent examples include Amazon, AT&T, Tesla and others - have implemented strict in-person requirements, suggesting that technology is disruptive to office community. But technology can be a place-maker. It can virtually extend the sense of community from the company office to the home office.

The company we studied ensured that employees continued to feel a connection to the office when working from home during the pandemic. Executives created videos, human resources staff created newsletters and mailed company swag and treats to

employees' homes, and team leaders hosted virtual events and games to keep everyone connected.

Even after the pandemic, the company built Zoom rooms conducive to hybrid team meetings where all employees could feel present. It created branded virtual backgrounds and added branding to their virtual meeting rooms and software systems to remind of the office. It even hired an intern to post updates on company happenings on the company's social media channels. The result? We heard this: "I feel welcome in this virtual office, too!"

Place-making works, but it doesn't work for everyone. In our research, most employees were what we call "place-attached" before the pandemic. But after the pandemic, some had lost their sense of connection to the office and the sense of community they used to feel there. These place-detached employees felt "I'm just there to be there" and "The touchy-feely is not where I get my value from."

We estimate that about 30% of the post-pandemic workforce at this company now feels disconnected from the company culture and the emphasis on being in the office for work.

But considering how many people discovered during the pandemic that they prefer to work from home, 30% is actually quite a low number.

The surprise - for us, at least - was that about 70% of employees in the company we studied remained attached to their office space in 2025. In other words, 7 in 10 continue to find community in the office. Our research unpacks this abstract concept further: (AP)

‘Internal competition in workplaces may stifle innovation’

‘Creating meaning and purpose through office culture’

## Rose Byrne's gripping role in 'If I Had Legs I'd Kick You'

### Byrne, O'Brien thriller is hottest ticket at Sundance

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 26, (AP) — Rose Byrne plays a mother in the midst of a breakdown in the experiential psychological thriller "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You."

Anticipation was high for the A24 film, which will be released sometime this year. Its premiere Friday at the Sundance Film Festival was easily the hottest ticket in town, with even ticketholders unable to get in. Those who did make it into the Library theater were treated to an intense, visceral, inventive story from filmmaker Mary Bronstein that has quickly become one of the festival's must-sees.

Byrne plays Linda, who is barely hanging on while managing her daughter's mysterious illness. She's faced with crisis after crisis, big and small - from the massive, gaping hole in their apartment ceiling that forces them to move to a dingy motel, to an escalating showdown with a parking attendant at a care center. The cracks in her psychological, emotional and physical well-being are becoming too much to bear.

"I'd never seen a movie before where a mother is going through a crisis with a child but our energy is not with the child's struggle, it's with the mother's," Bronstein said at the premiere. "If you're a caretaker, you shouldn't be bothering with yourself at all. It should all be about the person you're taking care of, right? And that is a particular kind of emotional burnout state that I was really interested in exploring."

Byrne and Bronstein went deep in the prepara-

tion phase, having long discussions about Linda with the goal of making her as real as possible before the quick, 27-day shoot. Byrne said she was obsessed with figuring out who Linda was before the crisis. The film was in part inspired by Bronstein's experience with her own daughter, but she didn't want to elaborate on the specifics.

"That's her story to tell," Bronstein said.

Part of Linda's story involves her therapist, played by Conan O'Brien, who joked that he didn't realize he was in a movie.

#### Scripts

"I'm not looking out for movie scripts or anything. But when I got a call from A24 that they wanted me to read something, I'm not stupid," O'Brien said. "I showed it to my wife, who is one of the smartest people I know, and she read through it and she said, 'I didn't know they made movies like this anymore.'"

He was particularly in awe of his director and co-star, saying he felt like a fraud standing beside them.

"It was an amazing experience, one of the best experiences of my life, just to be with them and watch them work," O'Brien said. "I don't know how (Byrne) did that and not check into a hospital afterwards, because I haven't seen any actor, man or woman, sustain that level for an entire movie."

"I feel like I have to go to a hospital now, because this was the first time I watched it," he

added. "I'm a mess."

A\$AP Rocky also co-stars, as a man Linda meets at the motel, but was not in Park City for the premiere. He is currently on trial, charged with firing a gun at a former friend.

The film is full of ambiguity, metaphor and just plain artistic expression that Bronstein hesitated to explain, from the name itself to the hole in the ceiling, which takes on a somewhat supernatural quality.

"When we have nothing left to give, we have an emptiness inside of us," Bronstein said. "And that emptiness is actually not empty: It's filled with all the darkness and self-hate and doubt and fear and dread and regret and everything... That to me is what the hole is."

Some of it, she said, she doesn't even fully understand. The point is the experience, and critics and Sundance audiences are already fully on board.

Bronstein, a bit of a cult figure in the film world, made her directorial debut in 2008 at the SXSW festival with "Yeast," which featured a pre-fame Greta Gerwig and was hailed by by New Yorker critic Richard Brody as a "mumblecore classic."

"If I Had Legs I'd Kick You" is only her second feature.

"This is the first time that anybody else has paid for me to make art," Bronstein said. "I'm proud to say that this is the film that came directly from my head to the screen."



Rose Byrne attends the premiere of 'If I Had Legs I'd Kick You' during the Sundance Film Festival on Friday, Jan. 24, at Library Theatre in Park City, Utah. (AP)

#### Variety

**LOS ANGELES:** Soprano Lise Davidsen is pregnant with twins and is canceling her performances from mid-March through the end of the year.

"I'm very excited about their arrival, and my new life with them," she said in a statement Friday. "I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the leaders of the opera houses I was due to sing at, and my colleagues who I was due to be performing with: thank you for your kind words, understanding and support."

Davidsen, a Norwegian singer who turns 38 on Feb. 8, is currently in Vienna starring in Strauss' "Ariadne auf Naxos" through Jan. 31. Her remaining schedule includes recitals in San Francisco on Feb. 4 and Los Angeles on Feb. 11, and a production of Beethoven's "Fidelio" at New York's Metropolitan Opera from March 4-15.

Cancellations include Sieglinde in Wagner's "Die Walküre" at London's Royal Opera (May 1-17) and the Vienna State Opera (June 2 and 22), Strauss' "Der Rosenkavalier" in Vienna (June 9-17), a concert in Barcelona, Spain (July 2) and a concert performance of Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana" at Switzerland's Verbier Festival (July 24).

Davidsen remains scheduled for a new production of Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" at the Met opening on March 9, 2026. (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** Prosecutors said Friday that they will not file charges against Marilyn Manson after a years-long investigation of allegations of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman said the allegations are too old under the law and the evidence is not sufficient to charge the 56-year-old shock rocker whose legal name is Brian Warner.

"We have determined that allegations of domestic violence fall outside of the statute of limitations, and we cannot prove charges of sexual assault beyond a reasonable doubt," Hochman said. "We recognize and applaud the courage and resilience of the women who came forward to make reports and share their experiences, and we thank them for their cooperation and patience with the investigation."

Nearly four years after the investigation began, then-District Attorney George Gascón said on Oct. 9 that his office was pursuing new leads that added to the "already extensive" file that authorities had amassed.

LA County sheriff's detectives said early in 2021 that they were investigating Manson for incidents between 2009 and 2011 in West Hollywood, where Manson lived at the time. The probe included a search warrant that was served on his West Hollywood home. The case was initially turned over to prosecutors in September 2021, but the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office requested more evidence-gathering and the investigation resumed. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** US reality TV couple Heidi Montag and Spencer Pratt are suing the city of Los Angeles after losing their Pacific Palisades home in the wildfires that have torn through Southern California in recent weeks.

The couple, who rose to stardom on "The Hills," a spin-off of "Laguna Beach," filed the lawsuit on Tuesday along with more than 20 other property owners and residents who were affected by the Palisades fires, according to The Associated Press.

The complaint blamed Los Angeles and its municipal water department for the water issues that hampered fire-fighting efforts and said it ultimately led to the damage to their properties.

The Eaton and Palisades fires, ignited by strong winds during one of the region's driest years on record, have killed 28 people and destroyed more than 12,000 structures, putting them among the most destructive fires in California history. (Xinhua)

#### Film



This image released by A24 shows Guy Pearce in a scene from 'The Brutalist.' (AP)

### Actor brings depth to dark roles

## 'The Brutalist' doesn't work without Pearce

**NEW YORK, Jan 26, (AP) —** Over the years, Guy Pearce has been good in most all things. But he's been particularly good at playing characters with a refined disposition who harbor darker impulses underneath.

That was true of his breakout performance in "L.A. Confidential" as a squeaky-clean police detective whose ambitions outstrip his ethics. It was true of his dashing upper-class bachelor in "Mildred Pierce." And it's most definitely true of his mid-Atlantic tycoon in "The Brutalist."

"I'm really aware of how precarious we are as human beings," Pearce says. "Good people can do bad things and bad people can do good things. Moment to moment, we're trying to just get through the day. We're trying to be good. And we can do good things for ourselves and other people, but pretty easily we can be tipped off course."

That sense of duality has served Pearce's characters well, especially his men of class who turn out to have less of it than they seem. His Harrison Lee Van Buren in "The Brutalist" may be Pearce's most colossal two-faced concoction yet. If Brady Corbet's film, which was nominated for 10 Oscars on Thursday, is one of the best films of the year, it's Pearce's performance that gives the movie its disquieting shiver.

Pearce's Van Buren is a recognizable kind of villain: a well-bred aristocrat who, at first, is a benevolent benefactor to Adrien Brody's architect László Tóth. But what begins as a friendship - Tóth, a Holocaust survivor is nearly destitute when they meet - turns increasingly ugly, as Van Buren's patronage, warped by jealousy and privilege, turns into a creeping sense of ownership over Tóth. The psychodrama eventually boils over in a grim, climactic scene in which Van Buren pronounces Tóth "just a lady of the night."

"What was great to discuss with Brady is that he is actually a man of taste," said Pearce in a recent interview. "He's a man of class and a man of sophistication. He's not just a bull in a China shop. He's not just about greed, taking, taking, taking. It's probably as much of a curse as anything that he can recognize beauty and he can recognize other people's artistry."

For his performance, the 57-year-old Pearce on Thursday landed his first Oscar nomination - a long-incoming and perhaps overdue honor for the character actor of "Memento," "The Count of Monte Cristo" and "The King's Speech." For

the Australian-born Pearce, such recognitions are as awkward as they are rewarding. He long ago decided Hollywood stardom wasn't for him.

"I get uncomfortable with that, to be honest," he says. "I'm really happy with doing a good performance. I can genuinely say within myself I've done a good job. Equally, I know when I've done a (bad) job. But I'm also well aware of how a performance can appear good purely because of the tone of the film. I might have done exactly the same performance in another movie with not such a good director, and people might have gone, 'That was full-on but whatever.' Whereas in this film, we are all better than we actually are because the film has integrity to it that elevates us all."

Like F. Murray Abraham's Salieri in "Amadeus," Pearce's Van Buren has quickly ascended the ranks of great cinema villains to artists. The character likewise has some basis in reality, albeit extrapolated from a much different time and place. Corbet and Mona Fastvold, who are married and wrote "The Brutalist" together, were fueled by their hardships with financiers on their previous film, 2018's "Vox Lux."

#### Complicated

"We didn't have a Van Buren but we certainly had our fill of complicated relationships with the people who hold the purse strings," says Fastvold. "There's a sense of: I have ownership of the project because I'm paying for it, and I almost have ownership of you."

Pearce has been around the movie business long enough to shake hands with plenty of wealthy men putting money toward a film production. But he says none of his own experiences went into "The Brutalist."

"There's always this slew of producers at a higher level than us who come and visit the set," Pearce says. "I'm polite and I go, 'Hi, nice to meet you. Thanks.' But I'm a little caught up with what I'm doing. Then three years later you'll meet someone who says, 'You know, I was a producer on "L.A. Confidential." Ah, were you?'"

Pearce, who lives in the Netherlands with his partner, actor Carice van Houten, and their son, has generally kept much of Hollywood at arm's length. In conversation, he tends to be chipper and humble - more interested in talking Aussie rules football than the Oscar race. "Any chance to have a kick, I'll

have a kick," he says with smile.

That youthful spirit Pearce tends to apply to his acting as well. Pearce, who started performing in the mid-'80s on the long-running Australian soap opera "Neighbors," doesn't like to be precious about performing.

"If I'm hanging on to it all day, it's exhausting," Pearce says. "The thing that still exists for me is using our imagination, which is kind of a childlike venture. I think there's something valuable about that even as adults. I think you can be all ages at all times."

Pearce compares receiving the script from Corbet to "The Brutalist" to when Christopher Nolan approached him 25 years ago. Both times, he went back to watch the director's earlier films and quickly decided this was an opportunity to pounce at.

In digging into Van Buren, Pearce was guided less by real-life experience than the script. The hardest entry way to the character, he says, was the voice. "Thankfully," Pearce says, "I'm friends with Danny Huston and he's got a wonderfully old-fashioned voice." He and Corbet didn't speak much about the director's hardships on "Vox Lux."

"I know that it was troubled. Brady is going to have trouble on every film he makes, I reckon, because he is such a visionary," says Pearce. "I know on this there were producers trying to get him to cut the time down. Of course, all those producers now are going, 'I was with him all the way.'"

To a certain degree, Pearce says, he doesn't fully understand a performance while he's doing it. He's more likely to understand it fully afterward while watching. Take that "lady of the night" scene. "While filming, Pearce felt he was saying that line to put Tóth in his place. "But when I watched it, I went: 'I'm just telling myself. I'm purely telling myself,'" he says. "There's something even more distasteful about it."

It's ironic, in a way, that Van Buren, a man bent on control, is played so indelibly by an actor who seeks to impose so little of it, himself.

"There's a performative element to Van Buren. He exhausts himself because he's trying to dominate, to be the one in charge, be Mr. Charming," Pearce says. "I don't think he can ever enter a room without being self-conscious. That's an exhausting way to be, I reckon."



Marlee Matlin attends the premiere of 'Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore' during the Sundance Film Festival on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2025, at Eccles Theatre in Park City, Utah. (AP)

## 'Not Alone Anymore' earns tears, applause at Sundance

# Matlin gets honest about life as a deaf actress

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 26, (AP): Marlee Matlin gives an unflinchingly honest account of her experiences as a deaf actor in the funny and revelatory documentary "Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore." The film kicked off the 41st Sundance Film Festival Thursday, as the first major premiere in the Eccles Theater in Park City, Utah.

After the screening audiences in the theater, some wiping tears away, greeted Matlin with a standing ovation when she took the stage.

The film delves into all aspects of her life, personal and professional: Her childhood and how her family handled learning she had become deaf at 18 months; her experience winning the best actress Oscar for her first movie role in "Children of a Lesser God" and her allegedly abusive romantic relationship with her co-star, the late William Hurt, which he denied; and her experiences in an industry not equipped to accommodate deaf actors.

The film was directed by Shoshanna Stern, who also is deaf. Matlin specifically requested that Stern take on the project when American Masters approached her about doing a documentary.

Matlin has written about her experiences before, including her volatile relationship with Hurt and drugs, in a memoir, "I'll Scream Later." But before the #MeToo movement, she felt her allegations were largely dismissed or glossed over.

Interviews from the book's press tour show journalists were more interested in the "amazing sex" she said she had with Hurt than the stories of the alleged physical and verbal abuse. One interviewer asked her why she waited "so long" to come forward with the claims.

The documentary isn't just a portrait of Matlin, but a broader look at deaf culture and how Matlin was thrust into the spotlight at a young age as a de facto spokesperson for all deaf causes.

In addition to being the first, and until Troy Kotsur won for "CODA" in 2022, only deaf actor to win an Academy Award, she helped lobby Congress for closed captioning and delved into the Gallaudet University protest about hiring hearing people to preside over the university, which is the subject of another Sundance documentary, "Deaf President Now!"

Matlin also faced backlash when she spoke while

presenting the best actor Oscar the year after she won, an experience that she said made her distance herself from deaf causes.

It features moving interviews from her longtime translator and other important figures in her life such as Henry Winkler, who met her when she was a student at age 12.

Winkler watched her perform a song during a school production after she wrote him a fan letter. Later, she stayed in his home for two years after her breakup with Hurt and had her wedding there. In the film, Matlin said she never would have pursued acting if it weren't for Winkler, although he disagreed.

The film is closed captioned and includes verbal translations for hearing audiences. In a unique approach, the subjects were interviewed by Stern with an earpiece, allowing them to hear translations from another room.

Matlin said she has struggled occasionally to convince the industry to let her play roles that aren't necessarily written for a deaf actor. Aaron Sorkin, who wrote a part for her in "The West Wing," dispelled the notion it is difficult to write for deaf actors.

## Variety

**NEW YORK:** Barbra Streisand, Kate McKinnon and Elton John are among the nominees for the 30th annual Audie Awards, presented by the Audio Publishers Association.

Streisand's self-narrated "My Name Is Barbra" is a finalist for best audio book and for best memoir/autobiography. Other best audiobook nominees include an ensemble adaptation of George Orwell's "1984" that features Andrew Garfield and Cynthia Erivo; Dan Slepian's self-narrated "The Sing-Sing Files"; Claire Oshetsky's "Poor Deer," narrated by Sophie Amoss; and Richard Powers' "Playground," with narrators including Robin Siegeman and Eunice Wong.

On Wednesday, the publishers association announced nominees in 28 categories, from drama to fantasy to humor. Winners will be revealed during a March 4 ceremony, hosted by Amy Sedaris.

"This year's finalists represent the very best in storytelling, and we couldn't be more excited to celebrate their achievements," association president Sean McManus said in a statement. "We're also thrilled to have Amy Sedaris as our host - her wit, charm, and unmistakable sense of humor will bring a unique spark to the evening."

Memoir/autobiography nominees also include Elton John's "Farewell Yellow Brick Road," Salman Rushdie's self-narrated "Knife" and Kelly Bishop's self-narrated "The Third Gilmore Girl." McKinnon's "The Millicent Quibb School of Etiquette for Young Ladies of Mad Science," narrated by McKinnon and Emily Lynne, is a humor nominee. The late Lisa Marie Presley's memoir, "From Here to the Great Unknown," narrated by Julia Roberts and Presley's daughter Riley Keough is a finalist for multi-voiced performance.

Two Percival Everett novels were cited. "Erasure," the publishing satire that was the basis for the Oscar-nominated "American Fiction," is a humor finalist. Everett's prize winning "James," as read by Dominic Hoffman, is a nominee for best fiction narrator, and for literary fiction/classics. (AP)

**PORTLAND, Ore.:** A resident of the central Oregon city of Bend says he was the person behind some of the googly eyes that appeared on sculptures around the city in recent months and sparked a viral sensation widely covered by news outlets.

Jeff Keith, founder of a Bend-based nonprofit called Guardian Group that works to combat human trafficking, said Friday that he used duct tape to attach googly eyes to two sculptures. He said he has carried out similar pranks on other Bend sculptures before - such as adorning them with hula skirts and leis - and that they serve as a respite from the emotional toll of his work.

"It is a place for me to cope with some pretty heavy stuff," he told The Associated Press, noting that many of the trafficking victims he has worked with have been through "unimaginable trauma."

The city shared photos of the googly eye installations on social media in early December, saying the adhesives can damage the art. One photo shows googly eyes placed on a sculpture of two deer - which Keith described as his handiwork - while another shows them attached to a sphere. City officials at the time said eight sculptures were affected and that it cost \$1,500 to remove the googly eyes. (AP)

**AUCKLAND, New Zealand:** The Symphony Kukui has been staged in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, showcasing the life of Kukui, a prominent symbol of cultural exchange, through a moving musical performance by both Chinese and New Zealand musicians.

In his speech before the Friday performance, Auckland Mayor Wayne Brown said that he is delighted to see this event bringing together cultures in such a positive way and taking place in Auckland.

Zhou Li, cultural consul of the Chinese consulate general in Auckland, noted in his remarks that Kukui serves as an exemplary figure of mutual learning between civilizations. Today, when China is promoting the Global Civilization Initiative, it is believed that civilization is colorful because of exchange and civilization is enriched by mutual learning, said Zhou.

Symphony Kukui, composed by renowned Chinese composer Zou Ye, was presented in the Southern Hemisphere for the first time. Conducted by British maestro Derek Morgan, the Auckland Philharmonia performed the symphony, joined by the choir of Central Conservatory of Music from China and the choir from the Music Association of Auckland. (Xinhua)

## Fashion



Models wear creations for the men's Hermes Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection, that was presented in Paris, Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025. (AP/Xinhua)

## At Paris show, Hermes menswear has a dash of jockey-style boldness

PARIS, Jan 26, (AP): Hermes illuminated a gloomy Paris afternoon with its fall men's collection Saturday, as Veronique Nichean turned to the racetrack for inspiration. Jockeys' vibrant racing silks became her muse, a dynamic counterpoint to the French maison's storied equestrian roots. "I wanted this collection to be strong and energetic," Nichean explained, her palette pivoting from deep browns and dark teals to flashes of tomato red and lemon yellow.

The collection radiated warmth, both in spirit and texture. Fuzzy mohair coats, velvet varsity jackets and plush sheepskin outerwear

wrapped models in an embrace that seemed designed to counter winter's chill. Layering was less pronounced this season, a deliberate move to retain sleek, streamlined silhouettes. Even gray pinstripe suits - pared back to essentials - eschewed bulk, echoing Nichean's vision of men unencumbered as they race through life.

Sweaters emerged as the collection's unsung heroes. Their bold chevrons and geometric patterns were lifted directly from the vibrant stripes of racing silks, a playful nod to Palais d'Iéna's soaring, angular architecture. A standout turtleneck, with its patchwork of triangles, rectangles, and squares in canary yellow,

seemed to channel a nostalgic love for trigonometry. Elsewhere, a jacket with a shawl collar mirrored the same graphical bravado, rendered in cool tones of blue, black and white.

Though grounded in classic tailoring, the collection celebrated irreverence. Nichean's juxtaposition of tradition and innovation captured Hermès' ethos with a quiet confidence. Here, functionality was imbued with a touch of whimsy, proving once again that the maison's refinement can still surprise and delight. In a season steeped in nostalgia and geometry, Hermès delivered a collection that was, quite literally, off to the races.

## British Museum partially closed after sabotage

# Paul McCartney says he fears AI will rip off artists

LONDON, Jan 26, (AP): **Paul McCartney** urged the British government not to make a change to copyright laws that he says could let artificial intelligence companies rip off artists.

The government is consulting on whether to let tech firms use copyrighted material to help train artificial intelligence models unless the creators explicitly opt out.

McCartney told the BBC that would make it harder for artists to retain control of their work and undermine Britain's creative industries.

"You get young guys, girls, coming up, and they write a beautiful song, and they don't own it, and they don't have anything to do with it. And anyone who wants can just rip it off," the 82-year-old former Beatle said in an interview to be broadcast Sunday. An extract was released Saturday by the BBC.

"The truth is, the money's go-

ing somewhere. When it gets on the streaming platforms, somebody is getting it, and it should be the person who created it. It shouldn't be some tech giant somewhere."

Britain's center-left Labour Party government says it wants to make the UK a world leader in AI.

In December, it announced a consultation into how copyright law can "enable creators and right holders

to exercise control over, and seek remuneration for, the use of their works for AI training" while also ensuring "AI developers have easy access to a broad range of high-quality creative

content."

Publishers, artists' organizations and media companies, including The Associated Press, have banded together as the Creative Rights in AI Coalition to oppose weakening copyright protections.

"We're the people, you're the government. You're supposed to protect us. That's your job," McCartney said. "So you know, if you're putting through a bill, make sure you protect the creative thinkers, the creative artists, or you're not going to have them."

The British Museum, the country's most popular tourist attraction, was partially closed to the public on Saturday after an employee who had been fired broke in and shut down computer systems, museum management said.

The museum in central London, which attracts almost 6 million visitors a year, closed its temporary exhibitions and part of its permanent collection after the alleged attack on Thursday.

"An IT contractor who was dismissed last week trespassed into the museum and shut down several of our systems," the museum said in a statement on Friday. "Police attended and he was arrested at the scene."

"We are working hard to get the museum back to being fully operational but with regret our temporary exhibitions have been closed today and will remain so over the weekend - ticket holders have been alerted and refunds offered."

The Metropolitan Police force said officers were called on Thursday evening "to reports that a man had entered the British Museum and caused damage to the museum's security and

IT systems." It said a man in his 50s was arrested on suspicion of burglary and criminal damage. He has been released on bail while inquiries continue.

The 266-year-old museum has had a rocky few years. It is still trying to track down some of more than 1,800 objects believed to have been stolen by a former curator and offered for sale online. **Peter Higgs**, who worked in the museum's Greece and Rome department for 30 years, was fired in July 2023 and is being sued by the museum. He denies the allegations.

Museum director **Hartwig Fischer** resigned in August 2023, acknowledging the institution's management failed to heed warnings that artifacts including gold jewelry, semi-precious gems and antiquities dating to the 15th century B.C. were being stolen from its collection and sold on eBay.



McCartney

## Some health benefits of light therapy may be overhyped

## Red light therapy effective for pain relief, inflammation

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

By Praveen Arany  
University at Buffalo

Red light therapy is increasingly viewed as a promising treatment for wrinkles, acne, psoriasis, scars and sun-damaged skin, and as a supportive therapy for some kinds of cancer. But does red light therapy live up to the hype that it's practically a panacea for all sorts of ailments?

Treatment with red light therapy involves exposure to red light at a very low dose in a hospital or clinic. It's also called low-power laser therapy, soft laser therapy, cold laser therapy and nonthermal LED light therapy.

The umbrella term is called photobiomodulation therapy, which covers other colors, or wavelengths, that have health benefits. These light wavelengths span the visible to the near-infrared spectrum.

Red light is easily the most popular of the photobiomodulation therapies. That's primarily due to its availability - the treatment has been around more than three decades.

While it's true that other colors are also clinically and commercially available, researchers are still studying them to determine exactly how effective they are. That said, green light therapy is generally used to treat migraines; yellow light for depression; and blue light to kill resistant strains of bacteria, like MRSA infections, and to treat seasonal affective disorder, a depression that typically onsets in late fall and continues through winter.

Put simply, red light stimulates the cells in your body, energizing them while initiating blood flow to the affected area. That, in turn, spurs healing, similar to

how your body responds to a cut by clotting the blood to heal a wound.

The treatment is simple and painless. The patient, either seated or lying comfortably, is exposed to the red light for three to 15 minutes. They may experience a feeling of warmth during treatment, but it should not be uncomfortable or hot. The clinician will likely recommend eye shields.

Used correctly, red light therapy is very safe. Overdosing - staying under the light too long or receiving treatments at very high power - does not necessarily cause harm, but it might reduce or slow benefits. However, just as some people are more prone to sunburn than others, some patients may be more sensitive to this light and might see redness in the skin. Those patients should receive lower light doses during treatment.

## Diseases

Randomized, controlled clinical trials show that red light therapy can reduce pain, inflammation and tissue damage. Because all of these things are prevalent in many illnesses, photobiomodulation may be a powerful adjunct for treating a wide range of diseases.

One example is cancer. There's now strong evidence that red light therapy can lessen pain and inflammation from radiation, chemotherapy and bone marrow stem cell transplants. Red light therapy has also reduced other complications from cancer treatment, including oral ulcers, scars and fibrosis.

Other recent human clinical studies show that photobiomodulation helps heal diabetic and burn wounds, as well as some types of ulcers. However, this therapy should not replace good wound care treatment, such as disinfection. Photobiomodulation has also worked for patients with neck and back pain and tennis elbow.

Although not proven to be effective by randomized controlled trials with large samples, which is the gold standard of research, red light therapy has been shown

to benefit patients with Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, arthritis, macular degeneration, myopia and autism in clinical case reports and lab research studies.

A word of caution, however: Red light therapy may not work for all the medical conditions that proponents say it does. Red light therapy is also used for cardiovascular health, elevating mood, relieving anxiety, improving muscle performance and recovery from sports injuries, and providing anti-aging benefits to the skin. While there's some evidence to support these types of treatments, rigorous research studies are still missing.

This is a rapidly evolving field. Both LED and laser devices - beds, lamps, helmets and face masks - are readily available in clinical and nonclinical settings, such as medical spas, gyms and beauty salons. They're also available for at-home use.

Laser devices are more powerful and are typically found at a hospital, clinic or doctor's office. An LED, or light-emitting diode, is less powerful and more often used in commercial or home settings.

The general consensus is that LEDs are OK to use in commercial establishments like beauty salons and medical spas, provided practitioners receive the appropriate training. But the use of laser devices should be relegated to clinical specialists. That's because lasers, in untrained hands, have the potential to do more damage than LEDs.

As for some home products, their quality and reliability may be questionable; they might not meet minimum quality standards of output power or wavelength.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration appears to be moving toward more rigorous evaluations of these products, especially with lasers, but there is a critical need for a certifying agency or body to take this on. These agencies would test the devices to make sure they're actually meeting specifications. That hasn't happened yet, but as it stands now, several scientific and professional organizations are exploring the possibilities. (AP)

Here's a primer, with a caveat

## Which style of yoga is right for me?

NEW YORK, Jan 26, (AP): To some people, the word "yoga" evokes ritualistic chanting, long breaths and slow movement. To others, it means contorting your body into ever more complicated positions until sweat drips onto the mat.

In reality, it can be both - with a lot of variation in between. It depends on the teacher, who could be trained in several of numerous yoga styles: hatha, vinyasa, Iyengar, ashtanga, yin and more.

Though all styles involve poses (asanas), they differ in significant ways. Even classes within the same style can range from calming to vigorous.

So what is the best type of class for a beginner?

"The best is the one that works for you," said Tim Senesi, who has been teaching yoga in Orange County, California, for 22 years. "There are many different paths leading toward the same aim."

Here's a primer on some of the most popular styles, followed by a big caveat.

The term "yoga," which is derived from the Sanskrit for "union," actually encompasses an entire discipline that includes movement, meditation and lifestyle. Hatha, meaning "force," technically is any kind of yoga class involving asanas. If you've ever heard of a sun salutation, for instance, that is a foundational sequence of 12 asanas that begin many types of classes.

When it comes to classes listed as hatha, however, they generally are gentler with more focus on breathing



Yogi Stephanie Rodriguez practices yoga on the Edge sky deck at 30 Hudson Yards in the borough of Manhattan in New York on May 24, 2023. (AP)

exercises (pranayama). Poses are held for a few breaths and students usually move more slowly.

Hatha can be good for beginners who are looking to relax while improving flexibility and balance.

Another style, yin, is even more focused on recovery by working to stretch the muscles' connective tissue. Students hold poses for 5 minutes or more, allowing the body to settle into a pose rather than pushing it.

A more vigorous, flowing form of yoga, vinyasa coordinates movement with breath over a progression of asanas. Some higher-level vinyasa classes move at a pace of one movement per breath.

Often they will be called Flow or

Power classes. They can be appropriate for people who are more athletic, but teachers still recommend that those students start with a beginner level.

"I wouldn't really encourage them to start in a higher level vinyasa flow class because they're not going to have the foundation to move safely through that," said Anne Van Valkenburg, of Lanai, Hawaii, who has been training yoga teachers in a blend of styles for 18 years.

Another style, ashtanga, is similar except that it involves a set series of poses that students repeat day after day, often going at their own pace. As students get stronger, they advance to a higher series with more challenging poses, something akin to belt levels in martial arts.

This style involves the same poses as vinyasa but classes usually move at a slower pace - although they are not necessarily easier. The focus is more on precisely aligning parts of the body through small adjustments. Poses are held for longer and students rely more often on props including cushions, blocks or straps.

Iyengar is particularly good for people recovering from injuries, or for people who are already active but want to get the foundation of yoga before moving into different styles.

These days, most teachers blend various styles in their classes, and many classes aren't billed with these terms. The few words describing the class should give you an idea of what to expect, but don't be afraid to ask questions at the studio or reach out to individual teachers.



Participants at the Cosmetic Dentistry workshop.

## Workshop highlights digital innovations in cosmetic dentistry

Dr. Dalal Boudi, Head of the Continuing Education Office at the Department of Dentistry, shared insights into the recent 'Cosmetic Dentistry' workshop, which was aimed at specialist dentists across various departments, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The workshop emphasized cutting-edge innovations in digital dentistry, particularly in the realm of cosmetic treatments.

The participants were introduced to the applications of digital technology in delivering integrated dental care, enabling highly precise and swift completion of dental implants and prosthetics.

These advancements significantly enhance the efficiency and quality of dental procedures, offering improved outcomes for patients.

High food insecurity, housing struggles

## Women's cancer testing declines globally

DAVOS, Switzerland, Jan 26, (AP):

Women's cancer testing has declined globally, according to the latest Hologic Global Women's Health Index, one of the largest collections of data on women's health and well-being.

Hologic, Inc., a leading women's health innovator, partners with Gallup to create the Index. Now in its fourth year, the Index raises new concerns about declining trends in women's health. For the first time in the history of the Index, women's cancer testing declined: Only 10% of women surveyed worldwide said they were tested for any type of cancer in the past year, down two percentage points from the first two years of the Index.

This year's Index will be released recently during an event convened by Goals House, a community focused on driving progress toward the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) alongside the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The event will feature a panel including Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Dr. Sania Nishtar, CEO, Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance and Elissa Miolene, Global Development Reporter, Devex.

"Today's data reveal a worsening trend in women's health," said Stephen P. MacMillan, Chairman, President and CEO of Hologic. "The shocking decline in cancer testing is a wake-up call. Business as usual is not working. Innovative strategies and collaborative efforts are needed to make sustained improvements in women's health and well-being around the world."

## Key findings from this year's Index:

- Cancer screening among women declined: Only 10% of women said they underwent any type of cancer testing in the past year, reflecting a decrease of two percentage points from the first two years of the survey.
- Women are struggling more to meet basic needs: A staggering 38% of women reported being unable to afford food at some point in the past year, marking the highest level of food insecurity in nearly two decades. And 32% of women said they could not afford adequate shelter.
- More women are worried and sad: More women reported feeling worried (42%) and sad (30%) compared to Year 1 of the Index. And over one third (35%) said they felt unsafe in their communities.

■ Ongoing physical pain and health issues: 34% of women reported experiencing significant pain the previous day, while 26% indicated that health problems impacted their ability to engage in everyday activities.

■ HIV testing rates for women are alarmingly low: The Index assessed women's HIV testing for the first time and found concerning disparities: Less than 0.5% of women were tested in certain countries, primarily those in the Middle East and North Africa, and no country scored above 41%. Globally, the percentage is much lower. Just 6% of women - regardless of whether they visited a healthcare professional or were tested for STIs - said they were tested for HIV in the past year.

■ Signs of hope - some countries are making progress: 28 countries saw meaningful increases in their Index scores since the first year of the Index, including Kazakhstan, Kenya, Poland and Venezuela.

The Index assigns a women's health score to each country or territory based on survey responses on five dimensions of health. Overall, the world scored 53 out of 100 on the Index in Year 4, reflecting no significant change since the Index started.

## 20,682 Mongolian kids receive HPV vaccine

## People with ADHD die earlier than peers

NEW YORK, Jan. 26, (Xinhua): A study of more than 30,000 British adults diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) found that, on average, they were dying earlier than their counterparts in the general population -- around seven years earlier for men, and around nine for women.

The study, which was published on Thursday in The British Journal of Psychiatry, is believed to be the first to use all-cause mortality data to estimate life expectancy in people with

ADHD.

"Previous studies have pointed to an array of risks associated with the condition, among them poverty, mental health disorders, smoking and substance abuse," reported The New York Times on the development.

The authors cautioned that ADHD is substantially underdiagnosed and that the people in their study, most of them diagnosed as young adults, might be among the more severely affected.

Mongolia has so far vaccinated at

least 20,682 children aged 11 against human papillomavirus (HPV) as part of a nationwide campaign, according to a report released on Friday by the National Center for Communicable Diseases (NCCD).

Launched in November 2024, the vaccination campaign aims to combat cervical cancer, a significant public health concern in the country.

Hospitals nationwide are offering free HPV vaccines to 11-year-old girls and boys, provided parental or guardian consent is obtained.

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## SPORTS



Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum (0) and Dallas Mavericks guard Quentin Grimes (5) reach for the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Dallas. (AP)



New York Knicks' Cameron Payne, right, dribbles the ball against Sacramento Kings' Devin Carter, left, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in New York. (AP)

## Curry goes scoreless in 2nd half, Warriors fall to Lakers

Rockets beat East-leading Cavaliers for second time in week

**SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 26, (AP): Anthony Davis had 36 points and 13 rebounds, LeBron James added 25 points and 12 assists, and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Golden State Warriors 118-108 on Saturday night.**

Andrew Wiggins led the Warriors with 20 points. The Lakers held Stephen Curry scoreless in the second half as he went 0 for 8 from the field after halftime. Curry finished with 13 points and nine assists.

The game marked the 25th regular-season meeting between James and Curry. James' team has won 13 of the 25.

Los Angeles improved to a season-best seven games over .500 at 25-18. The Lakers have won three in a row and five of their past six games.

Golden State fell a game under .500 at 22-23. With forwards Draymond Green (calf strain) and Jonathan Kuminga (sprained ankle) still sidelined, Golden State is in a rough stretch.

### Rockets 135, Cavaliers 131

In Cleveland, Amen Thompson had his second career triple-double, Alperin Sengun and Jalen Green scored 26 points apiece and the Houston Rockets beat the Eastern Conference-leading Cleveland Cavaliers.

Thompson finished with 23 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists, and Fred VanVleet had 20 points and six assists for Houston. The Rockets beat Cleveland for the second time in four days, winning 109-108 at home Wednesday.

### Suns 119, Wizards 109

In Phoenix, Kevin Durant scored 29 points, Nick Richards added 20 points along with a career-high 19 rebounds and the Phoenix Suns held off the Washington Wizards.

The Suns have won eight of 11. Bradley Beal scored 20 points and Devin Booker added 18 despite missing all eight of his 3-point attempts.

The Wizards are an NBA-worst 6-38. Their last victory came on Jan. 1. Kyle

Kuzma scored a season-high 30 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, and Jordan Poole added 19 points.

### Grizzlies 125, Jazz 103

In Memphis, Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 28 points, Zach Edey added 19 points and four blocks and the Memphis Grizzlies won their sixth straight by beating the Utah Jazz.

Desmond Bane finished with 17 points, eight rebounds and six assists, while Jaylen Wells added 16 points.

Collin Sexton led the Jazz with 20 points, while Svi Mykhailiuk had 16 points. Four Jazz players finished with 11 points each as Utah lost its fifth straight and for the eighth time in its last nine games.

### 76ers 109, Bulls 97

In Chicago, Tyrese Maxey had 31 points and nine assists, Kelly Oubre Jr. added 22 points and 12 rebounds and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Chicago Bulls for their second straight victory.

The injury-depleted Sixers ended a seven-game losing streak Friday night at East-leading Cleveland. Philadelphia pulled out this one after forward Paul George left in the second quarter with a left finger injury after scoring nine points.

### Magic 121, Pistons 113

In Orlando, Franz Wagner scored 25 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter, Paolo Banchero had 32 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, and the Orlando Magic beat the Detroit Pistons.

Jalen Suggs contributed eight points in 16 minutes in his first game back after missing 10 games with a strained back. Wendell Carter finished with 11 points and 11 rebounds for Orlando.

Cade Cunningham led the Pistons with 35 points and 11 assists. Malik Beasley added 18 points for Detroit.

### Knicks 143, Kings 120

In New York, OG Anunoby scored 33 points, Josh Hart added 20 points, 18 rebounds and 11 assists in his sixth triple-double of the season and the New York

Knicks beat the Sacramento Kings.

Mikal Bridges had 27 points and Jalen Brunson finished with 25 points and 11 assists for the Knicks, who fell two points short of their season high. Karl-Anthony Towns had 16 points and 15 rebounds.

Malik Monk led Sacramento with 31 points, while Domantas Sabonis finished with 25 points, 13 rebounds and 12 assists.

### Raptors 117, Hawks 94

In Atlanta, Scottie Barnes had 24 points and 11 rebounds and the Toronto Raptors swept a two-game set in Atlanta for their season-high third straight victory, beating the Hawks.

RJ Barrett and Chris Boucher added 23 points each for Toronto. The Raptors beat Atlanta 122-119 on Thursday night.

### Hornets 123, Pelicans 92

In Charlotte, LaMelo Ball scored 25 points, Miles Bridges had 22 and the Charlotte Hornets beat the New Orleans Pelicans.

Seth Curry had 16 points on 4-of-6 3-point shooting. The Hornets had a 27-8 first-half run and led 63-45 at the break.

Zion Williamson had 28 points and 11 rebounds for New Orleans. Trey Murphy III added 16 points and Jordan Hawkins had 14.

Dejounte Murray, who led the Pelicans with 26 points Friday night in a loss in Memphis, sat out because of right elbow bursitis and a sprained finger.

### Heat 106, Nets 97

In New York, Tyler Herro scored 25 points, Bam Adebayo had 17 points and 16 rebounds, and the Miami Heat beat the Brooklyn Nets.

Nikola Jovic had 17 points, six rebounds and four assists, and Duncan Robinson had 15 points and seven rebounds for the Heat (22-22), who snapped their two-game losing streak and won for just the second time in the past six games.

D'Angelo Russell had 22 points and six assists, Keon Johnson scored 22 points and Jalen Wilson had 12 points, nine rebounds and eight assists. Brooklyn (14-32) lost its sixth straight and for the 22nd time in its past 27 games.

## Monaco climbs to third

## Reims frustrates PSG as Khvicha stars on debut

PARIS, Jan 26, (AP): New signing Khvicha Kvaratskhelia set up a goal on debut for Paris Saint-Germain and it was not enough as the Ligue 1 leader drew at home to Reims 1-1.

The Georgia winger collected the ball just outside the penalty area and dribbled past three players before passing to Ousmane Dembélé, whose slightly deflected shot flew past goalkeeper Yehvann Diouf in the 47th minute.

Kvaratskhelia joined from Napoli last week in a deal worth 70 million euros (\$73.5 million) and was paraded before fans at Parc des Princes before Saturday's game, holding up the No. 7 jersey in the driving rain.

Reims usually causes PSG problems and did so again when Japan winger Keito Nakamura finished off a smart team move in the 56th.

Defending champion PSG remains unbeaten in Ligue 1 but has drawn five of 19 games and second-placed Marseille can move within seven points with a victory at fifth-



PSG's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, left, is challenged by Reims' Aurelio Buta during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Reims at Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. (AP)

placed Nice on Sunday.

Earlier, Maghnes Aklouché scored a spectacular goal and set up an easy one as Monaco beat Rennes

3-2 to move up to third place.

Aklouché put the home side ahead in the 16th minute with a brilliant overhead kick from Vander-

son's cross. But right back Mahamadou Nagida equalized just before the break.

Shortly after Mika Biereth scored his first goal for Monaco in the 52nd, latching onto a pass from Lamine Camara and slotting through the legs of the goalkeeper, Aklouché's pass gave Aleksandr Golovin an open goal for 3-1.

Amine Gouiri pulled a goal back for struggling Rennes, starting and finishing the move.

Lille needed to win at Strasbourg to reclaim third spot from Monaco, but lost 2-1 despite taking an early lead through Moroccan striker Osame Sahaoui.

Brazilian midfielder Andrey Santos equalized in the 70th with a powerful strike from outside the penalty box and Dutch striker Emmanuel Emegha headed home four minutes later for Strasbourg, which climbed into eighth.

Coach Bruno Genesio's Lille was unbeaten in Ligue 1 since losing at Saint-Etienne on Sept. 13.

## White Abarrio wins Pegasus World Cup at Gulfstream

HALLANDALE BEACH, Fla., Jan 26, (AP): White Abarrio won the \$3 million Pegasus World Cup by 6 1/4 lengths at Gulfstream on Saturday.

He ran 1 1/8 miles in 1:48.05 under jockey Irad Ortiz Jr., who earned his third career Pegasus victory.

Sent off at 5-2 odds, White Abarrio paid \$7.60, \$3.80 and \$3.

Locked returned \$3.20 and \$2.40, while Skippylongstocking was a neck back in third and paid \$4.40.

Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan finished ninth in the 11-horse field, making him 0 for 4 since his biggest win last May.

White Abarrio hit the apex of his career in 2023, when he won the \$6 million Breeders' Cup Classic as well as the Whitney at Saratoga for trainer Rick Dutrow. The horse won the Florida Derby at Gulfstream in 2022.

The horse had been transferred when his Florida-based trainer Saffie

Joseph Jr. was barred from racing at Churchill Downs and in New York

after two of his horses died suddenly 48 hours apart in races at Churchill

in the weeks leading up to the 2023 Kentucky Derby.

White Abarrio's owners wanted to run him in the Met Mile at Belmont, so they chose the New York-based Dutrow to oversee him. Joseph was cleared and the horse went back to his barn last June.

"Today he was spectacular," said a teary-eyed Joseph, who also trains Skippylongstocking. "I'm just thankful."

In the \$1 million Pegasus Turf, Spirit of St Louis edged Integration by a neck.

The 6-year-old gelding ran 1 1/8 miles on turf in 1:44.50, just off the track record of 1:44.45 set by last year's winner Warm Heart. He paid \$17.80 to win at 7-1 odds.

Spirit of St Louis was ridden by Tyler Gaffalione and trained by Chad Brown, who won the Eclipse Award as the nation's outstanding trainer earlier in the week.

Chasing the Crown was third.



Jockey Irad Ortiz Jr. holds the trophy after riding White Abarrio to win the Pegasus World Cup horse race at Gulfstream Park in Hallandale Beach, Fla. (AP)



Madison Chock, left, and Evan Bates, right, acknowledge the crowd after winning the ice dance competition at the U.S. figure skating championships in Wichita, Kan. (AP)

## 'It means honestly the world'

## Chock, Bates match ice dance record with sixth national title

WICHITA, Kan., Jan 26, (AP): Madison Chock and Evan Bates have been the best American ice dancers for years.

Best in the world, too.

They only served to underscore that fact on Saturday, when they won their fourth consecutive title at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships and their sixth overall, matching the record held by long-time standard-bearers Meryl Davis and Charlie White.

Chock and Bates followed up their sublime rhythm dance with a winning free dance, totaling 223.52 points to easily outdistance second-place Christina Carreira and Anthony Ponomarenko. Caroline Green and Michael Parsons finished third.

"It means honestly the world," Bates said. "The U.S. championships is always an event that we hold near and dear to our hearts. I think it's because it's the competition that we grew up coming to every January, watching every year on TV as kids. It's what made us fall in love with the sport. There's something incredibly magical about this event."

Earlier in the day, two-time defending U.S. champion and reigning world champion Ilija Malinin scored 114.08 points for his short program to take a big lead into Sunday's free skate. Andrew Torgashev was 20 points back in second and Jimmy Ma in third.

In the pairs competition, Alisa Efimova and Misha Mitrofanov managed to hold their free skate together while their biggest rivals collapsed, allowing them to do one better than their silver medal from a year ago and stand atop the podium Saturday night.

Efimova and Mitrofanov scored 211.90 points for their program, set to "Je Suis Malade" by Serge Lama. Katie McBeath and Daniil Parkman also took advantage of mistakes by defending champs El-

lie Kam and Danny O'Shea and 2023 runner-ups Emily Chan and Spencer Howe to capture the silver medal after a marathon day at INTRUST Bank Arena.

O'Shea and Kam erred on nearly every big element - their triple toe loops, throw triple lutz and throw triple toe loop. Their triple salchow into an axel was deemed invalid, and they got no points at all for a final lift on which both skaters fell.

Kam and O'Shea wound up third with 189.57 points. Chan and Howe were fourth with 183.95.

Chock, who was dealing with a food-related stomach bug all week, nevertheless joined Bates in a rollicking rhythm dance set to music from the 1950s, '60s and '70s with her longtime partner on Friday night. Chock and Bates had 92.16 points, putting them nearly 10 points clear of second-place Carreira and Ponomarenko heading into the free dance.

With Chock still dealing with her illness Saturday, they still managed to pad their lead, and confirm their status as favorites not just for the upcoming world championship in Boston but also the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy.

"Maddie has had a tough couple of days. Wasn't really able to fuel much," Bates said. "She's so tough. She's never not going to go out there and not give it her best. It took all the little energy that she had. I just tried to give the love and support to her."

Carreira and Ponomarenko finished with 210.79 points for their second consecutive silver medal, while Green and Parsons took bronze after they had been tied on 82.13 points with Emilea Zingas and Vadym Kolesnik after the rhythm dance.

In the men's short program, the 20-year-old Malinin did exactly what he's become known for: nailing quads. He opened with a quad flip, breezed through a triple axel, then hit a quad lutz in combination with a triple toe loop.

## Best of the Rest

**Betis takes Antony on loan:** Spanish side Real Betis has agreed a deal to take Manchester United's Brazilian winger Antony on loan for the rest of the season.

Antony joined United from Ajax in 2022 at the request of former United coach Erik ten Hag for 96 million U.S. dollars, becoming the club's second most expensive signing after Paul Pogba.

However, despite a bright start, the 24-year-old has failed to live up to expectations, with just one goal in the Premier League since April 2023.

This season he has played only a minor role for the club, with eight substitute appearances totaling just 133 minutes in the Premier League.

"Everybody at United would like to wish Antony the best of luck for his spell in

Seville," commented the United website. (Xinhua)

**Meizhou Hakka announces new signings:** Chinese Super League (CSL) club Meizhou Hakka announced that it has signed four new players for its upcoming 2025 campaign.

According to a statement released by the Meizhou side on Saturday, Serbian midfielder Branimir Jovic has linked up with the CSL club as a free agent.

The statement said Jovic can cover a wide area in defense with excellent tactical awareness, outstanding running ability and rich experience gained from playing in Serbian top-flight league. He will wear number 4 jersey in the new season, the statement wrote. Meizhou Hakka said it also signed defenders Wen Da and midfielders Zhong Haoran, Liu Yun alongside Jovic. (Xinhua)

## SPORTS

'We are committed to delivering exceptional value to our customers'

## Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar announces participation in Ya Hala Festival 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar is delighted to announce its participation in the Ya Hala Festival, which started yesterday, January 21, and runs until March 31, 2025. This exciting 70-day event promises exclusive offers, discounts, and promotions across various sectors, making it one of the most prominent shopping festivals in Kuwait.

The Ya Hala Festival coincides with key occasions such as Kuwait's National Days and Ramadan, offering exceptional value to customers and exciting opportunities to win incredible prizes. For every 10 KD spent, shoppers will receive a coupon to enter the festival's grand draw, where they can win:

- Over \$7,700,000 in cash prizes
- 120 luxury cars
- And many other exciting

prizes!

Mr. Ashish Tandon, General Manager of the Kuwait Automotive Imports Company (Alshaya & Alsagar), stated: "At Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar, we are committed to delivering exceptional value to our customers. Our participation in the Ya Hala Festival reflects this commitment as we join one of Kuwait's most anticipated events to enhance our customers' shopping experience."

Excitingly, Peugeot genuine spare parts and services are also part of the Ya Hala Festival! If you want to repair or service your car, now is the perfect time to take advantage of exclusive offers and ensure your vehicle is in top condition.

We invite everyone to visit Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar showrooms during the festival period to explore our exclusive offers on our premium range of vehicles. Don't miss the opportunity to drive in style and experience the excitement with chances to win grand prizes!

For more information, visit Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar's showroom in Al Rai or follow us on social media.

Let's kick off the celebrations with Ya Hala Festival and Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar!



Peugeot logo

'One of the most prominent events in Kuwait'

## Mazda Alshaya & Alsagar announces participation in Ya Hala Festival 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Mazda Alshaya & Alsagar is proud to announce its participation in the highly anticipated Ya Hala Festival 2025, running from January 21 to March 31. This 70-day event offers an exceptional opportunity to enjoy a unique shopping experience filled with exclusive promotions and remarkable discounts across various sectors, making it one of the most significant festivals of the year in Kuwait.

The Ya Hala Festival coincides with key occasions such as Kuwait's National Days and Ramadan, offering customers incredible opportunities to win grand prizes. For every 10 KD spent, customers will receive a coupon to enter the grand draw, with prizes including:

- Over \$7,700,000 in cash prizes
- 120 luxury cars
- And many other exciting rewards!

Mr. Ashish Tandon, General Manager of Kuwait Automotive



Mazda logo

Imports Company (Alshaya & Alsagar), said: "We are thrilled to participate in the Ya Hala Festival, one of the most prominent events in Kuwait. This participation reaffirms our commitment to providing exceptional experiences and unique opportunities to our customers through our exclusive offers during

the festival period."

Excitingly, Mazda genuine spare parts and services are also part of the Ya Hala Festival! If you want to repair or service your car, now is the perfect time to take advantage of exclusive offers and ensure your vehicle is in top condition.

We invite you to visit Mazda Alshaya & Alsagar showrooms during the Ya Hala Festival to explore the latest offers and take advantage of these incredible opportunities to win big. Make this season even more exciting with Mazda Alshaya & Alsagar, and don't miss the chance to join in the celebrations of the Ya Hala Festival.

For more information, visit Mazda Alshaya & Alsagar's showroom in Al Rai or follow us on social media platforms.

Celebrate excellence and seize amazing opportunities with the Ya Hala Festival and Mazda Alshaya & Alsagar!

## West Indies spinners frustrate Pakistan pursuit of tricky target



West Indies Kraigg Brathwaite, right, plays a shot as Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan watches during the day-two of the second cricket test match between Pakistan and West Indies, in Multan, Pakistan. (AP)

Argentina retains men's title

## Australia ends home rugby sevens title drought

PERTH, Australia, Jan 26, (AP): Australia edged New Zealand 28-26 in another sensational women's rugby sevens final and won its first title at home in seven years on Sunday.

In 2018, Australia won the women's and men's titles in Sydney but couldn't repeat the Australia Day feat in Perth.

The men were thrashed in the final by defending champion Argentina 41-5.

The women entered their final as slight underdogs without two of their best players after Maddison Levi (broken thumb) and Faith Nathan (concussion) were injured in the quarterfinals on Saturday.

New Zealand, which stormed into the final averaging nearly 43 points, opened the try-scoring through Michaela Brake after just 30 seconds.

In a back-and-forth thriller, Australia teen Heidi Dennis scored then made the break for Tia Hinds' try. On halftime, Sarah Hirini's charge led to New Zealand teammate Kelsey Teneti running away to tie it at 14-14.

Charlotte Caslick broke from her own 22 to send Australia ahead again, only for Brake to tear free down the left sideline a minute later. Her 254th try in world series history put her within two of the



Heidi Dennis

women's all-time record of another New Zealand great, Portia Woodman-Wickliffe.

Dennis scored her second of the final, too, backing up a tiring Teagan Levi, and New Zealand struck back again through captain Risi Pouri-Lane in the penultimate minute.

But Pouri-Lane suffered the first missed conversion of the final and Australia survived the last 40-odd seconds of the 29th cup final between the trans-Tasman neighbors.

"Couldn't really have scripted it much better," Australia captain Bella Nasser said. "Haven't won

at home for a really long time, and for a lot of the girls it was their first time playing at home."

The Australian men ran out of gas to reach their first final in the series since Perth a year ago, when Argentina won 31-5. The Australians knocked out Olympic champion France in the quarterfinals and South Africa in extra time in the semifinals.

Argentina had already beaten Australia in pool play on Friday, and was too slick in the final.

Marcos Moneta scored the opening try on a switch play, then Luciano Gonzalez took advantage of an Australia knock-on at the restart. Santiago Alvarez crossed after a scrum tighthead - rare for sevens - and it was 17-0 at halftime.

When Australia's second half kickoff didn't go 10 meters, Gonzalez scored his second try. Matteo Graziano finished with a hat trick that was interrupted by Australia's lone try to teen Hadley Tonga.

The third different winner in three legs of the series meant Fiji, Argentina and surprising Spain topped the standings with the same points, and were separated only by points difference.

The series goes to Vancouver on Feb. 21-23.

MULTAN, Pakistan, Jan 26, (AP): West Indies stayed in the hunt for its first test win in Pakistan in 35 years after its batters came good on a turning wicket to set up a tricky target of 254 runs in the second test on Sunday.

Pakistan's top-order stuttered for the second successive time on its own engineered spin wicket and limped to 76-4 at stumps on Day 2.

Saud Shakeel was not out on 13 and nightwatchman Kashif Ali was unbeaten on 1 with Pakistan still needing a further 178 runs for an increasingly improbable victory on a turning pitch.

West Indies lost the first test by 127 runs inside three days.

Wicketkeeper Tevin Imlach missed out on an opportunity late in the final session when he couldn't hold on to a sharp chance from Shakeel that could have further punished the home team.

Meanwhile, premier batter Babar Azam's (31) lean run of form at home of well over two years continued when off-spinner Kevin Sinclair (2-41) had him caught close to the wicket late on Day 2.

Earlier, West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite (52) finally hit a half century in his fourth innings of the series before West Indies frustrated Pakistan for two sessions before getting bowled out for 244 to give it an overall lead of 253.

Left-arm spinner Noman Ali (4-80) and Sajid Khan (4-76) once again

Hosts in trouble at 76-4

shared the bulk of the wickets as Ali ended up with a match haul of 10 wickets after claiming a hat-trick in his first-innings figures of 6-41.

Imlach (35), debutant Amir Jangoo (30) and Sinclair (28) made meaningful contributions as the West Indies' countercharge against the spinners worked well with Brathwaite setting the tone of brisk scoring in the morning session.

The West Indies lead was 154 when it lost the sixth wicket of Justin Greaves (10), who reverse swept to Abrar Ahmed early after lunch, but Sinclair and Imlach shared a 51-run stand and swelled the tourists' lead.

Brathwaite had stretched West Indies' lead to 101 with nine second-innings wickets in hand but the tourists lost four wickets in the hour before lunch.

It was in sharp contrast to a chaotic Day 1 that saw 20 wickets fall and Pakistan concede a slender nine-run lead after it was bowled out for 154 in reply to West Indies score of 163.

Brathwaite's counterattacking approach against spinners paid off on Day 2 as he completed his half century off 57 balls with four boundaries and two big sixes against Ali and Khan.

Brathwaite used his feet well against both spinners and even swept well as he raised his team's 50 inside the first hour with opening partner Mikyle Louis. Brathwaite and debutant Amir Jangoo (30) then added a further 42 runs before the tourists lost four wickets for 37 runs.



Pakistan's Noman Ali, center, celebrates with teammate after taking the wicket of West Indies Mikyle Louis during the day-two of the second cricket test match between Pakistan and West Indies, in Multan, Pakistan. (AP)

Lindsey Vonn finishes 13th

## Gut-Behrami gets first World Cup win of season

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany, Jan 26, (AP): Swiss ski star Lara Gut-Behrami has finally found a way back to winning ways, with next month's world championships looming.

The defending overall World Cup champion overcame challenging course conditions Sunday to win the last super-G before the worlds for her first victory of the season, while Lindsey Vonn placed 13th.

Gut-Behrami mastered the tricky turns in the middle part of the Kandahar course to earn career win No. 46, which put her in joined fifth place on the all-time female winners list.

"It's nice. I was skiing well since a while, still missing something, so it's great to be able to win again," Gut-Behrami said.

"It's a challenging slope, it's not the conditions where I ski the best. It was a little bit slippery, a little bit soft. Sometimes when you don't have the perfect conditions for yourself, you stop thinking."

The worlds take place in Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Austria on Feb. 4-16. The first individual race is the women's super-G on Feb. 8.

The technically outstanding Gut-Behrami was especially clean in a passage that caused many racers problems - a jump followed by a sharp turn left.



Second placed Norway's Kajsa Vickhoff Lie, celebrates with the team after an alpine ski, women's World Cup super G, in Garmisch, Germany. (AP)

podiums at a super-G in Garmisch-Partenkirchen four years ago.

Federica Brignone was three-hundredths further back in third, a day after the Italian won the downhill on the same hill.

Sofia Goggia, who was runner-up to Brignone in Saturday's race, placed fourth, ahead of teammates Laura Pirovano and Marta Bassino, as the Italian team finished with four racers in the top six.

Keely Cashman shared sixth place with Bassino for the American's career-best result.

Vonn finished 1.4 seconds off the

pace in 13th, just behind her American teammate Lauren Macuga, after failing to finish her previous two races. The American standout skied out of Saturday's downhill when she missed a gate, but avoided falling.

Vonn returned to ski racing in December after nearly six years of retirement with a new titanium knee.

Last week, Vonn told The Associated Press that she plans to retire again after next year's Milan-Cortina Olympics.

Last year, Gut-Behrami overtook leader Mikaela Shiffrin in the overall standings in the last two months

of the season when the American five-time champion was out nursing a knee injury.

The Swiss skier then had a slow start to the new campaign after missing the season-opening race in October. However, the defending overall champion then racked up three second places in Super-G before winning Sunday.

"It's been a weird start of the season, obviously I was struggling a little bit," Gut-Behrami said. "I had to find the confidence back, the way to push in the skis again."

Gut-Behrami has now won at least one World Cup race in 11 of the past 12 seasons, with 2018-19 the only exception. She closed the gap to leader Brignone in the overall season standings to 70 points.

Shiffrin has been out for two months with an abdominal injury that required surgery, but the American is expected to race again in a night slalom in France on Thursday, the final women's race before the worlds.

The start of Sunday's race was delayed for 15 minutes as organizers needed more time to prepare the course after overnight snowfall and rain in the hours leading up to the race.

Ariane Raedler had a nasty tumble when she came off the course and lost balance over a patch of softer snow, but the Austrian got up quickly and appeared to have avoided injury.

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AC Milan's Strahinja Pavlovic is fouled by Parma's goalkeeper Zion Suzuki during a Serie A soccer match between AC Milan and Parma, at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy. Milan won 3-2. (AP)

# Sports

## All eyes on Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium for Al-Qadsiya and Kuwait Club showdown

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 26: Al-Qadsiya and Kuwait Club have concluded their preparations for the highly anticipated Super Cup final, scheduled for tomorrow at 7:15 pm at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. The Kuwait Football Association recently moved the match from Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium, and a foreign refereeing team will oversee the game.

Al-Qadsiya enters the match with a nearly complete squad, with the exception of Moaz Al-Dhafiri, who sustained a muscle injury during the warm-up before last Friday's derby. Al-Dhafiri is expected to be sidelined for 10 days. However, Khaled Ibrahim made a partial comeback, appearing in the final minutes of the semi-final against Al-Arabi, while Khaled Al-Rashidi has fully recovered from his previous absence and is ready for action under the guidance of Montenegrin coach Zeljko Petrovic.

The team's morale has significantly improved after their victory against Al-Arabi in the semi-finals, avenging their 4-2 defeat in the Zain Premier League. Al-Qadsiya now aims to secure its first domestic title this season, compensating for their struggles in the league, where they trail by 13 points behind league leaders Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi.

In the Kuwait Club camp, striker Ibrahim Kamil has been ruled out for two months after tests confirmed a hamstring tear sustained during its 4-1 victory over Al-Salmiya in the semi-finals. Kamil scored one of the team's goals in that match. Additionally, Tunisian forward Yassin Al-Khenisi has been dealing with muscle strain and was rested from training to prevent further aggravation.



Players in action.

His participation in the final depends on the results of a medical examination scheduled for today.

Despite these challenges, Montenegrin coach Nebojsa Jovic remains confident, emphasizing the team's depth and ability to compensate for any absences. The squad has been undergoing uninterrupted training, with key players being given additional rest to avoid potential injuries.

The final match's press conference will take place today at 12:30 PM in the conference hall at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, with a coach and player from both teams in attendance. Both teams are eager to clinch the Super Cup title and solidify their standing in Kuwaiti football.

Stay tuned for an exciting clash as Al-Qadsiya and Kuwait Club face off for glory in one of the most anticipated matches of the season.

## A commendable fighting spirit: Al-Adwani

### Kuwait handball team shows promise at World Cup

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

ZAGREB, Jan 26: The Secretary-General of the Kuwait Handball Federation and head of the national team delegation at the 2025 World Cup, Qaed Al-Adwani, expressed satisfaction with the team's performance in the tournament being held across Croatia, Denmark, and Norway. Despite intense competition in a challenging preliminary group featuring France, Austria, and Qatar, Al-Adwani described the participation as positive, praising the players for their impressive efforts.

In a statement to Al-Seyassah, Al-Adwani noted that Kuwait's national team boasts one of the youngest rosters in the 2025 World Cup. This marks their first appearance on such a prominent international stage, and despite their inexperience, the players displayed a commendable fighting spirit. "We were keen to ensure that the players gain valuable experience by competing against world-class teams," Al-Adwani stated. "Interacting with European schools of handball in highly competitive matches will help us shape the team into the caliber we aspire to in the future."

He further explained that the Federation's Board of Directors has a clear vision and plan to enhance the team's capabilities. This includes integrating young, talented players and experienced veterans to build a stronger



Kuwait head coach gives instructions to the players.

squad for future competitions.

The team recently secured a decisive 38-31 victory over Algeria in the group stage of the "President's Cup," a secondary competition within the 2025 World Cup. With four points, Kuwait currently holds second place in Group One behind Poland. It is set to face the second-placed team from Group Two—which includes the United States, Bahrain, Japan, and Cuba—to determine the 27th and 28th rankings among the tournament's participants.

In other handball news, Al-Arabi Club has signed Japanese professional

Shinosuke Tokuda to strengthen its squad for the remainder of the season. Tokuda replaces Croatian Luka, whose contract was recently terminated.

Tokuda is no stranger to Kuwaiti handball, having played for Al-Qadsiya during the 2022-2023 season. His extensive career also includes stints with Qatar's Al-Duhail and Saudi Arabia's Al-Khaleej.

Currently, Al-Arabi is fourth in the general league standings, trailing second-placed Al-Kuwait and third-placed Al-Salmiya on goal difference. The league will resume on March 2.

## Sinner dominates Zverev to secure back-to-back Australian Open titles



Jannik Sinner of Italy holds the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup after defeating Alexander Zverev of Germany in the men's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

### Italian extends record-breaking run

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 26, (AP): There's all sorts of ways beyond merely the score to measure just how dominant Jannik Sinner was while outplaying and frustrating Alexander Zverev during the 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-3 victory Sunday that earned the 23-year-old Italian a second consecutive Australian Open championship.

The zero break points Sinner faced. Or the 10 he accumulated. The 27-13 advantage in points that lasted at least nine strokes. Or the way Sinner accumulated more winners, 32 to 25, and fewer unforced errors, 27 to 45. The way Sinner won 10 of the 13 points that ended with him at the net. Or the way he only let Zverev go 14 of 27 in that category, frequently zipping passing shots out of reach.

Well, here's is one more bit of evidence: what Zverev said about Sinner.

High praise from a guy who is, after all, ranked No. 2. Sinner has held the No. 1 spot since last June and is not showing any signs of relinquishing it. This was the first Australian Open final between the men at No. 1 and No. 2 since 2019, when No. 1 Novak Djokovic

defeated No. 2 Rafael Nadal - also in straight sets.

The "things" include being the youngest man to leave Melbourne Park with the trophy two years in a row since Jim Courier in 1992-93, and the first man since Nadal at the French Open in 2005 and 2006 to follow up his first Grand Slam title by repeating as the champion at the same tournament a year later.

Sinner was asked later whether he felt more relief or excitement when he raised

his arms after the last point was his.

Go to the start of 2024, and take stock. In that span, Sinner has won three of the five major tournaments, including the U.S. Open in September, meaning he now has claimed three straight hard-court Slams. His record is 80-6 with nine titles. His current unbeaten run covers 21 matches.

The only thing that's clouded the past 12 months for Sinner, it seems, is the doping case in which his exoneration was appealed by the World Anti-

Doping Agency. He tested positive for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid twice last March but blamed it on an accidental exposure involving two members of his team who have since been fired. Sinner initially was cleared in August; a hearing in the WADA appeal is scheduled for April.

While he became the eighth man in the Open era (which began in 1968) to start his career 3-0 in Grand Slam finals, Zverev is the seventh to be 0-3, adding this loss to those at the 2020 U.S. Open and last year's French Open.

Those earlier setbacks both came in five sets. This contest was not that close. Not at all.

Just before Zverev began speaking into a microphone during the trophy ceremony, a voice cried out from the stands, making reference to two of the player's ex-girlfriends who accused him of physical abuse.

During the match, there truly was only one moment that contained a hint of tension. It came when Zverev was two points from owning the second set at 5-4, love-30. But a break point - and a set point - never arrived.

A year ago, Sinner went through a lot more trouble to earn his first major, needing to get past Novak Djokovic - who quit one set into his semifinal against Zverev on Friday because of a torn hamstring - before erasing a two-set deficit in the final against 2021 U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev.



Alexander Zverev of Germany plays a forehand return to Jannik Sinner of Italy during the men's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

## Atletico draws

### Mbappé scores first hat trick for Madrid

BARCELONA, Spain, Jan 26, (AP): Kylian Mbappé tucked the ball under his shirt as he raised both hands to return the applause to the Real Madrid fans who savored his first hat trick for his new club.

The France star had just led a 3-0 victory at struggling Valladolid, keeping it in position to retain the title just after the midway point of the campaign.

Gone was the inconsistent play and missed penalties from Mbappé during his first months with Madrid following his move from Paris Saint-Germain. The France captain has started pouring in goals with back-to-back multi-goal games and has Madrid in pole position with Atletico Madrid and Barcelona stalled.

"I'm very happy for the hat trick but even happier for the win," Mbappé said in fluent Spanish. "It was very important to win after Atletico's result because that gave us a bit more pressure to take advantage of it."

Madrid's fourth straight triumph in the league combined with Atletico Madrid's 1-1 draw with Villarreal let Carlo Ancelotti's side open a four-point gap over its city rival.

Madrid trailed then-leader Barcelona at one point, but since getting blown away in a 4-0 clasico debacle, it has found its stride and is in championship mode.

"My adaptation to the team is over. I feel comfortable on the field and you can see that from the way I am playing with my teammates," Mbappé said. "This gives us confidence, but you know that until the 38th round this is not over. We have to keep winning because there is a long way to go."

The game between the front-runner and the bottom side fit its billing as a mismatch.

Valladolid could draw only one save from Thibaut Courtois in the opening moments. It was all Madrid the rest of the way even though Vinicius Júnior didn't play as he completed a two-game suspension.

Mbappé swept in Madrid's first goal on the half-hour mark after a flowing team attack of quick passes to weave the ball through a packed Valladolid area that culminated in Jude Bellingham's assist for the France star.

He made it a double in the 57th by finishing off a three-against-two counter-attack after Federico Valverde intercepted a Valladolid pass. Mbappé took a pass by Rodrygo and rifled in a low strike from the left side of the box.

Valladolid finished with 10 men after Mario Martín got a second booking in the 90th for a foul on Bellingham, sending Mbappé to the spot for his third.

That made it four games in a row with a goal across all competitions for Mbappé. In La Liga, Mbappé has 15, second only to Robert Lewandowski's 16 for Barcelona. He also scored twice last weekend against Las Palmas in a 4-1 win.

"Mbappé is giving us a lot. He has found his rhythm over the last couple of months and that is obviously a boost for us," Ancelotti said.

Valladolid was five points from safety.

Atletico's stalemate with Villarreal came a week after a shock 1-0 loss at Leganes.

Gerard Moreno, Villarreal's top scorer in club history, made it 120 goals for the Yellow Submarine in the 25th minute after the striker converted a penalty he earned when fouled by Reinildo.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone rested Antoine Griezmann and midfielder Rodrigo de Paul for the first half. Then he made three changes at halftime, sending on De Paul and winger Samu Lino to kickstart his sluggish attack.

The moves paid off as the hosts pressed Villarreal into its box, and Lino rammed in a 58th-minute equalizer.

Simeone sent Griezmann on immediately after and the action stayed in Villarreal's area except for two chances for Villarreal's Ayoze Pérez, who replaced Gerard. But Griezmann's header that bounced just wide in the 86th was the closest Atletico came to snatching a winner.



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe, right, duels for the ball with Valladolid's Luis Perez, left, during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Valladolid and Real Madrid at the Jose Zorrilla stadium in Valladolid, Spain. (AP)