



Finance minister presents new Financial Intelligence leadership to Amir

## Amir receives First Deputy PM, Investigations Director General and deputies



Left: His Highness the Amir receives First Deputy PM, Director General of the General Department of Investigations and his newly-appointed deputies. Right: His Highness the Amir receives Minister of Finance, Financial Intelligence Unit chief and deputy.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Monday at Bayan Palace First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and Director General of the General Department of Investigations Major General Dr. Faisal Al-Mukrad.

Dr. Al-Mukrad introduced to His Highness the Amir his newly-appointed deputies Saad Al-Mutairi, Reem Al-Mousa, Bassam Al-Mashouh, where they took oath.

Several senior officials attended the meeting.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received Monday Minister of Finance and State Minister for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam.

Minister Al-Fassam introduced to His Highness the Amir the newly-appointed Chief of Financial Intelligence Unit, Dr. Hamad Al-Mekrad and his deputy Yousef Al-Omar.



### Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

### Time-saving strategies pave way for progress

THE fruits of development are beginning to be seen in Kuwait, and we can feel some of them now. However, we must admit that there is still a lot of work and effort ahead. The past era left many challenges due to political and electoral favoritism, as well as sale of projects through corrupt deals.

To be honest, since liberation, Kuwait has not seen any real strides toward sustainable development that would secure a good future for the upcoming generations. Instead, there has been a hesitant approach, merely signaling, "We are still here." Many projects ended up costing far more than their actual value, while others were intentionally delayed so that some parties could benefit from inflated profits through the so-called "variation orders". As a result, the country is lagging behind in keeping pace with the rapid development seen throughout the region.

It is understood that the real value of any project lies in the speed of its completion. The ultimate goal is not the construction itself, but the well-being of society and the prompt delivery of services to citizens. Delays only worsen the losses. Therefore, countries aiming for sustainable development invest more in development projects to save time.

Many countries have relied on the private sector for development, entrusting it with major sectors such as health, education, tourism, and services. Through the build-operate-transfer (BOT) system, these countries have managed to save on public budgets, and

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# Kuwait slashes private health insurance for 11 gov't bodies

Coverage expands to families, driving unsustainable cost growth

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: In an effort to curb government expenditures, the Kuwaiti Council of Ministers has instructed 11 government entities to refrain from renewing or issuing new health insurance contracts for their employees, adhering to the relevant legal provisions, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The directive targets the following government bodies – the Audit Bureau, General

Secretariat of the National Assembly, the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Competition Protection Agency, the Capital Markets Authority, the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, the Public Institution for Social Security, the Kuwait Ports Authority, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Kuwait News Agency and the Insurance Regulatory Unit.

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## Kuwait makes bold strides to become tourism powerhouse

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait is taking agile strides on the path toward substantial development of the tourism sector, as part of the broad development strategy.

Relevant authorities, already developing the tourist facilities, in addition to updating the sector's infrastructure and working out policies to back up the businesses of travel, entertainment and culture.

Kuwait has recently established partnerships with local and foreign tourist and entertainment companies, some fruits of which materialized with the launch of the Winter Wonderland entertainment complex, opening Al-Sabahiya park and developing "shateea Alblajat" (the beach area) in Salmiya district.

Authorities are preparing to diversify activities during the coming national occasions to draw tourists from the Gulf region. For example, "Ya Hala" shopping festival that kicked off on January 21 (due until March 31) had been planned as part of the

new approach to boost the sector, along with the commercial sphere.

The Permanent Committee for Celebrating Eids and National Occasions plan to increase tourist expenditures during the festival by 15-25 percent compared to the corresponding period in 2024, when it reached KD 170.1 million.

The festival is also aimed to serve other objective at this level; trimming spending on travel and external tourism that had soared to KD 4.39 billion in 2023.

In tandem with the approach for tourism development, Kuwait has also drawn up schemes to improve the business environment and the service economy competitiveness in the Gulf.

Kuwait posted a 41.9 percent growth of the international tourism (foreign tourists) in 2019 with a value estimated at USD 1.7 billion while the number of the tourists from the GCC countries reached 20,000.

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Vibrant purple and white petunias line the Gulf Road, transforming the landscape into a colorful canvas of nature's beauty.

Lawyers warn against falling for fake asylum

## Fake ads lure women with revoked citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: A recent wave of fraud that has emerged is reminiscent of the notorious 'real estate fraud' cases that caused an estimated 890 million dinars in losses, as reported by the Audit Bureau.

This time, the Al-Seyassah daily, says the victims are women whose citizenship were revoked under Article 8 of the former Nationality Law.

Fraudulent advertisements have surfaced on social media, offering false promises of restoring revoked citizenship or facilitating asylum applications to Western countries in exchange for money.

Following the Cabinet's decision to revoke the citizenship of naturalized Kuwaiti wives, scammers began targeting these women through social media ads.

The promoters claim they can restore citizenship or file asylum applications

for sums as high as 10,000 dinars. Legal experts have issued warnings about these fraudulent schemes, emphasizing that victims often struggle to recover money paid to these scammers.

Lawyer Salah Al-Alaj highlighted the Ministry of Interior's announcement of mechanisms to ensure a dignified life for affected women, treating them as Kuwaiti citizens despite the revocation.

He cautioned against falling for fraudulent claims, stating, "Restoring citizenship is a right solely vested in His Highness the Amir."

Al-Alaj also warned about advertisements offering asylum in the UK, urging women to avoid being deceived by such scams.

Dr. Faisal Al-Otaibi advised women to follow the official complaint procedures outlined by the Ministry of Interior, emphasizing that such deci-

sions are handled carefully to avoid injustice.

He warned against trusting fictitious individuals or companies, stating, "The law does not protect the fool." Al-Otaibi called on authorities to monitor and block these misleading advertisements from circulating online.

Attorney Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan explained that while there is no judicial route to appeal citizenship revocations due to their classification as sovereign decisions, affected individuals can file grievances with the Minister of Interior or submit a memorandum to His Highness the Amir.

He emphasized the importance of providing strong evidence to demonstrate that a revocation decision was arbitrary or based on incorrect information.

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day praised the humanitarian efforts made by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in helping people in need.

This came in a statement for KUNA after Al-Maghames meeting with ICRC-GCC head Mamadou Sow.

During the meeting, both sides discussed ties, cooperation and means to enhance those relations in the field of humanitarian aid.

Al-Maghames noted that a presentation to highlight Kuwaiti efforts in aiding the people in Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Sudan, was shown. (KUNA)

CAIRO: Chairman of Arab Human Rights Committee (AHRG), Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi emphasized the importance of bolstering Arab human

rights efforts and enhancing coordination among countries, national human rights institutions, and civil society organizations.

During the 27th session of the Arab Charter Committee on Human Rights, held at the headquarters of the Arab League to discuss the UAE's second periodic report, Al-Mutairi highlighted the need for collective efforts to address regional challenges and promote the principles of justice, equality, and human dignity.

Al-Mutairi stated that the meeting reflects the members' commitment to advancing and protecting human rights in the Arab world, and that it serves as a platform to monitor the commitments of state parties under the Arab Charter on Human Rights. (KUNA)

Around 70 people killed

## Kuwait slams attack on Saudi hospital in Sudan's El-Fasher

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27, (Agencies): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the drone attack that targeted earlier on Sunday the Saudi Hospital in El-Fasher City in Sudan's Darfur region, which left scores of casualties and injuries among civilians.

A ministry statement said the attack is a clear violation of international humanitarian law, stressing the necessity to protect civilians, healthcare institutions and vital centers.

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## IAEA delegation on official Kuwait visit

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: A delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is visiting Kuwait today for an official visit that will last until Thursday. The purpose of the visit is to assess and review the integrated nuclear security support plan for Kuwait.

The Executive Commissioner for International Cooperation at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and National Liaison Officer with the IAEA Dr. Nader Al-Awadhi explained that the visit includes a series of technical meetings and a specialized workshop organized in collaboration with the Radiation Protection Department at the Ministry of Health over a period of four days.

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## Day by Day

THE speech delivered by Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi during the press conference with Kuwaiti journalists, marking Kuwait's celebration as the Arab Capital of Culture and Information, demonstrates a clear understanding of his responsibilities. Even more encouraging is the sense of stability in the ministerial position under his leadership.

Minister Al-Mutairi faces numerous tasks, some of which have been disclosed, while others remain undisclosed or have surfaced through leaks.

Despite this, it is evident that he is well-prepared and transparent in his approach, with no intentions of withholding information.

While we eagerly anticipate positive developments under his leadership, I would like to address the Minister directly: 'Stay ahead of the times, for if you don't, the times may surpass you.'

... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



8 NBK concludes successful participation in KFAS innovation challenge

9 Zain Group's MSCI rating for ESG upgraded to 'BBB'



10 KFH pledges KD 15 mln for cardiac diseases and research center at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital

## Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: Chairman of the Central Agency for Remedying Status of Illegal Residents Saleh Al-Fadhala received on Monday Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya.

A Central Agency press release said that Al-Fadhala and Al-Yahya stressed the importance of cooperating with all ministries and state institutions. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Chairperson of Kuwait Red Crescent Society Ambassador Khaled Al-Maghames on Mon-





## LOCAL

# Council upholds Al-Mishari's objections on major projects

Labs, parking lots, land rules gain nod

By Enaas Awad

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27: During its first meeting after the holiday, the Municipal Council approved all objections raised by the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Abdul Latif Al-Mishari, against decisions made during prior meetings.**

Notable among these objections were the National Council's request concerning the Jableh Cultural Project and the requirements and specifications for agricultural and livestock development areas linked to the building works regulation.

Additionally, Minister Al-Mishari objected to the failure to approve the letter from the Director General of the Kuwait Municipality regarding the Injaz Market

project.

The Capital Governorate Committee of the Municipal Council, chaired by Dr. Hassan Kamal, approved two of nine items on its agenda.

The approved items include the technical opinion on establishing modern water analysis laboratories in Shuwaikh under the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.



Al-Mishari

This is in addition to a proposal by Dr. Hassan Kamal to design and construct longitudinal parking lots for the Dasma Cooperative Society branch in Block No. 5.

The committee forwarded two other items for further review by the executive body -- a letter from the Public Authority for Sports regarding the design contract for the Kuwait Club football stadium pro-

ject.

And also a letter from the Public Facilities Management Company requesting to manage, operate and maintain surface parking lots near the former Kuwait Credit Bank, adjacent to the municipality's multi-storey parking lots.

The Municipal Council endorsed a proposal by member Munira Al-Amir to issue a regulation to organize the procedures for privatization, following approval by the technical committee.

The proposal aims to consolidate all decisions and actions related to land allocation for projects into one regulation, enhancing transparency and ensuring effective oversight.

The approved regulation consists of four chapters. The first chapter addresses the pre-allocation stage, detailing the necessary documents and studies to be submitted, as well as the allocation request process leading to the Municipal Council's decision.

The second chapter outlines the laws and procedures following the allocation decision, covering the actions taken by state agencies.

## West Funaitees water station tender cleared

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27:** In confirmation of the article published on January 9, the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has received approval from the State Audit Bureau to proceed with the tender for the construction, completion, and maintenance of a new water filling station in West Funaites at a total cost of KD 1.495 million.

According to informed sources, the ministry, after receiving the bureau's approval, will contract with the winning contractor and begin work in accordance with the agreed contractual requirements.

The new station is planned to serve as an alternative to the existing freshwater filling station in Mishref. The project has been part of the ministry's long-term plans to provide fresh water to surrounding areas and solve the ongoing issues in Mishref.

The relocation of the station will help alleviate the challenges faced by this high-density residential area, including traffic congestion and accidents caused by tanker trucks passing through.

The move is expected to improve road safety and reduce the damage to infrastructure, as the current station's operations have contributed to road wear and the risk of water spillage from tankers, further affecting the quality of roads and asphalt.

Students explore cultural landmarks, regional projects

## KFAED's 'Be Outstanding' program wraps up educational tour across Togo, Benin, Bosnia

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27:** Secondary school students participating in the 'Be Outstanding' program, organized by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, have concluded their educational and cultural visits to the Republics of Togo, Benin and Bosnia and Herzegovina, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The program ran from January 17 to 25 and featured a variety of activities showcasing development projects and cultural heritage.

Saleh Al-Taqi, the supervisor of the Togo and Benin delegation, noted that students were engaged in cultural and recreational tours, including visits to 'House of Brazil' or 'House of Memory' in Ouida, Benin, a museum documenting the history of the slave trade.

This is in addition to exploring the 'Gate of No Return', a poignant memorial representing the final departure point for enslaved individuals.

The delegation also toured Cotonou, including the Amazon of Dahomey Statue and the Venice of Africa village of Janvi.

The students also visited infrastructure projects supported by the Kuwait Fund, such as The Ouidah-Alada road improvement project and the Bahou-Toury link, enhancing regional connectivity.

The Cotonou East Coast Protection Project is aimed at mitigating coastal erosion and its environmental and economic impacts.

During their visit, the delega-



Students visit to the Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Benin, Marie Akou.



KUNA photos

One of the recreational visits for the students.

tion met with Mary Ako, Deputy Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Benin, who expressed gratitude for the Kuwait

Fund's contributions to development projects and for selecting Benin as a destination for the program.

## PAHW clarifies plot size misinformation

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27:** The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has rubbished rumors suggesting that its Board of Directors has approved the distribution of residential plots with an area of 250 square meters instead of the standard 400 square meters, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement, the PAHW urged the public to exercise

caution in sharing information and emphasized the importance of relying on official sources for accurate updates.

This clarification comes in response to misinformation circulating across various platforms. The institution reaffirmed its commitment to transparency and keeping citizens informed through its official channels.

### Employees' financial and job rights at risk

## Education Ministry faces backlash over delayed promotion decisions

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27:** Educational sources expressed their dissatisfaction with the delay in issuing the job promotion bulletin for the 2024/2025 academic year, which is hindering the formation of work teams in educational zones.

The sources explained that this delay could have been avoided by forming intensive work committees and issuing decisions progressively based on specific priorities for ensuring that all procedures are completed before the end of March.

The implementation of promotion decisions through integrated systems was scheduled to begin on January 1 and continue until March 31, with the goal of completing the procedures before the start of the new fiscal year, thus preventing any delays that could affect the job and financial rights of those entitled.

Preparing the promotion files for eligible employees, in cooperation with educational zones, requires the forma-

tion of a specialized technical committee. This procedure was supposed to begin on January 1 and include a large number of employees from both the Ministry of Education's headquarters and educational zones, as well as teachers and administrators.

Delaying the issuance of promotion decisions could prevent those entitled from receiving their financial and job rights on time, especially with the fiscal year nearing its end.

The sources stressed the need to expedite the formation of work teams in educational zones to complete the promotion procedures within the specified time frames.

They highlighted the importance of immediate coordination between the Ministry of Education and the educational zones to address the delay, minimize its negative impact on eligible employees, and expedite the issuance of the job promotion bulletin, as this will ensure that the rights of all workers in the educational and administrative sectors are protected.

## PIFSS secures CAPT approval for ILO contract

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 27:** The Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) has received approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders to directly contract the International Labor Organization (ILO) for the provision of services related to the sixteenth actuarial examination of the institution's financial posi-

tion and the fourth examination of the Unemployment Insurance Fund, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The total value of the contract is \$480,640 (approximately 148 thousand dinars), as per clauses (6 and 3) of Article (18) of the Public Tenders Law No. (49) of 2016.

### News in Brief

#### Transformer maintenance starts:

The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy began maintenance work on several secondary transformer stations in all six governorates today, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The ministry announced that the maintenance work will continue until February 1, with power outages expected in certain areas according to the specified schedule.

Maintenance will begin at 8:00 am and will last for four hours, with the duration subject to change based on the nature of the work at each station.

In a related context, informed sources revealed that maintenance work on power and water distillation stations is progressing as planned, with over 80 percent of the work expected to be completed by the end of March.

#### KALD launches new program:

In a step that reflects the commitment of the civil and educational society to provide a comprehensive educational and developmental environment, the Kuwait Association for Learning Differences (KALD) announced the launching of the second version of the integrated educational program for students with learning differences, learning difficulties or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; as the program aims to improve the academic, psychological and social skills of these students in order to guarantee equal opportunities for them

in the fields of education and life in general, reports Al-Anba daily.

The new version of the program includes three main sections, each of which was designed by experts in the field of education and Psychology in a way that suits the different needs of students.

The academic section consists of individual lessons for students with learning difficulties in reading, writing and Mathematics; while the psychosocial section is an organized and studied group of various activities like sports and arts in order to support the student's psychological needs such as understanding feelings, reactions, etc., and social needs such as the individual's relationship with others and society, social values and cultural practices.

#### MoE begins promotion process:

The educational districts have started the job promotion procedures for employees and teachers in public, special education and religious education schools, in addition to the supervisors in private Arab schools, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources said the Education Ministry has formed teams tasked to sort the names of eligible employees in the educational districts, indicating the promotion process started at the beginning of January.

Sources added these teams are reviewing the employees' files to ensure the promotion conditions are met, according to the applicable systems and regulations.

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## JLo gets standing ovation for musical performance

# Condon, Lopez unveil musical thriller at Sundance

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 27, (AP): A lavish, MGM-style musical is not typical Sundance Film Festival fare. But Sunday night Bill Condon brought such a creation-well, part of one-to Park City, Utah, with his adaptation of "Kiss of the Spider Woman," starring Jennifer Lopez. Audiences broke out in spontaneous applause during the screening for Lopez's song and dance numbers. She plays an old Hollywood screen siren in a movie-within-the-movie. The packed Eccles Theater also gave Lopez, wearing a glittery spiderweb themed frock, a standing ovation after the show.

"I've been waiting for this moment my whole life," Lopez said.

The story, which revolves around the conversations between two cellmates in an Argentine prison, was first a novel by Manuel Puig in 1976 and has been adapted for stage and screen over the years. A 1985 film adaptation starred William Hurt and Raul Julia. Hurt won an Oscar for his performance. On Broadway, it won multiple Tony Awards.

Condon wrote and directed this new version, which is seeking a distributor. Diego Luna plays an imprisoned revolutionary Valentin Arregui, whose new cellmate Luis Molina (Tonatiuh) loves movies, celebrity and glamour and enthusiastically recounts the story of a favorite movie musical, called "Kiss of the Spider Woman" to Valentin, giving them and the audience a break from their bleak reality.

While the film has memorable moments of escapist spectacle, it also delves into serious topics of gender identity. Molina tells Valentin that they don't feel like a man or a woman-which Valentin finds odd at first but grows to understand.

Before the screening, Condon said that one of the things the movie is about is "the attempt to bridge the incredible differences that separate us so often." He quoted President Donald Trump's recent remarks about two genders as official policy.

"That's a sentiment I think you'll see that the movie has a different point of view on," said Condon.

After the film, the discussion of gender identity and tolerance continued. Tonatiuh said it was difficult growing up as a "femme queer Latin kid in a culture that doesn't necessarily praise those things" and was told that it would be limiting in an acting career.

"When I got this material, I knew this person spiritually," Tonatiuh said. "I understood someone who felt like a loser in their own life and learns how to be the hero of their own story. I got to show the entire spectrum from feminine to masculine and everything in between."

But most of all everyone was just excited to be in a real movie musical.

"I did write that line, 'I pity people who hate musicals,'" Condon said. "All the things that movies can do can happen in a musical."

Lopez said it was watching "West Side Story" every Thanksgiving on television that made her want to become a performer.

Condon, Lopez said through tears, "made my dreams come true."



Jennifer Lopez, a cast member in 'Kiss of the Spider Woman,' poses at the premiere of the film during the Sundance Film Festival on Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025, in Park City, Utah. (AP)

## 'Brutalist' expands

### Flight Risk soars to top box office

NEW YORK, Jan 27, (AP): Critics lambasted it and audiences didn't grade it much better. But despite the turbulence, Mel Gibson's "Flight Risk" managed to open No. 1 at the box office with a modest \$12 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

On a quiet weekend, even for the typically frigid movie-going month of January, the top spot went to the Lionsgate thriller starring Mark Wahlberg as a pilot flying an Air Marshal (Michelle Dockery) and fugitive (Topher Grace) across Alaska. But it wasn't a particularly triumphant result for Gibson's directorial follow-up to 2016's "Hacksaw Ridge." Reviews (21% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) and audience scores (a "C" CinemaScore) were terrible.

President Donald Trump recently named Gibson a "special ambassador" to Hollywood, along with Jon Voight and Sylvester Stallone.

Going into the weekend, Hollywood's attention was more focused on the Sundance Film Festival and on Thursday's Oscar nominations, which were twice postponed by the wildfires in the Los Angeles region.



Gibson

#### Nominations

The weekend was also a small test as to whether the once more common Oscar "bump" that can sometimes follow nominations still exists. Most contenders have by now completed the bulk of their theatrical runs and are more likely to see an uptick on VOD or streaming.

But the weekend's most daring gambit was A24 pushing Brady Corbet's "The Brutalist" a three-and-a-half-hour epic nominated for 10 Academy Awards, into wide release. Though some executives initially greeted "The Brutalist," which is running with an intermission, as "undistributable," Corbet has said, A24 acquired the film out of the Venice Film Festival and it's managed solid business, collecting \$6 million in limited release.

In wide release, it earned \$2.9 million - a far from blockbuster sum but the best weekend yet for "The Brutalist."

The audience was downright minuscule for another best-picture nominee: RaMell Ross' "Nickel Boys." Innovatively shot almost entirely in first-person POV, the Amazon MGM Studios release gathered just \$340,171 in 540 locations after expanding by 300 theaters.

Coming off one of the lowest Martin Luther King Jr. weekends in years, no new releases made a major impact.

Steven Soderbergh's "Presence," a well-reviewed horror film shot from the perspective of a ghost inside a suburban home, debuted with \$3.4 million in 1,750 locations. The film, released by Neon and acquired out of last year's Sundance, was made for just \$2 million.

The top spots otherwise went to holdovers. The Walt Disney Co.'s "Mufasa: The Lion King," in its sixth weekend of release, scored \$8.7 million to hold second place. After starting slow, the Barry Jenkins-directed film has amassed \$626.7 million globally.

## Film



Lili Reinhart, a cast member in 'Hal & Harper' poses at the premiere of the film during the Sundance Film Festival on Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025, in Park City, Utah. (AP)

## Sundance film sparks debate on photo authorship

# 'Stringer' probes iconic 'napalm girl' photo

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 27, (AP): After a half-century of public silence, a freelance photographer from Vietnam has asserted he took one of the most renowned and impactful photos of the 20th century - the image of a naked girl fleeing a napalm attack in South Vietnam that has long been credited to a staff photographer from The Associated Press.

Nguyen Thanh Nghe claimed authorship of the Pulitzer Prize-winning "napalm girl" photograph in the new documentary "The Stringer" and on the sidelines of its premiere Saturday night at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah.

The AP conducted its own investigation and said it has no reason to conclude that no one other than the long-credited photographer, Nick Ut, made the picture. The news agency said it was "surprised and disappointed" that filmmakers portrayed it as having reviewed the film's materials and being dismissive. The AP said it saw the film for the first time at Sundance.

Nghe joined the filmmakers for the post-screening Q&A where he said, through a translator, "I took the photo." The audience cheered enthusiastically. He did not say why he waited so long to make the claim. The AP said it would review the material but wants to speak to contributors who signed non-disclosure materials for the filmmakers, including Nghe. "We cannot state more clearly that The Associated Press is only interested in the facts and a truthful history of this iconic photo."

Nguyen says he took the iconic photo of Kim Phuc on June 8, 1972. Nghe said he went to the town of Trang Bang that day as a driver for an NBC news crew and captured the image of Phuc running down the street, crying and naked with arms outstretched. He said he sold his image to the AP for \$20, and they gave him a print of the photo that his wife later destroyed.

Representatives for the AP, who saw the film for the first time Saturday at the premiere, are contesting the film's implication that

the company reviewed their findings and dismissed them.

"As recently as December, we reiterated our request to see the filmmakers' full materials and they did not respond, nor did they include AP's full response in the film," Lauren Easton, an AP spokesperson, said Sunday. "We were surprised and disappointed that the film portrayed AP as having reviewed the film's materials and being dismissive of the allegations, which is completely false."

The film's investigation was led by husband-and-wife team of Gary Knight, founder of the VII Foundation, and producer Fiona Turner. Bao Nguyen, a Vietnamese American filmmaker, directed.

### Responsibility

"I'm not a journalist by any stretch of the imagination," Nguyen said. "I had a healthy skepticism, as I think anyone would, going against a 53-year-old truth... But as a storyteller and a filmmaker, I thought it was my both or my responsibility and my privilege to be able to uplift the story of individuals like Nghe."

Before having seen the film, the AP conducted its own investigation over six months and concluded it had "no reason to believe anyone other than Ut took the photo." Now, the AP is calling on the filmmakers to lift the non-disclosure agreements they placed on their subjects to allow the company to investigate more fully.

"AP stands ready to review any and all evidence and new information about this photo," Easton said.

Knight and Turner met with AP in London last June about the allegations. According to the AP, filmmakers requested the news organization sign a non-disclosure agreement before they provided their evidence. AP would not. The film suggests that evidence was presented to the AP, which the AP says is not true.

A primary source in the film is Carl Robinson, then an AP photo editor in Saigon, who was overruled in his judgment not to use the picture by Horst Faas, AP's Saigon chief of photos. Robinson says in the film

that Faas instructed him to "make it staff" and credit Ut for the photo. Both Faas and Yuichi "Jackson" Ishizaki, who developed the film, are dead. Robinson, 81, was dismissed by the AP in 1978.

On Saturday, a Sundance Institute moderator asked why he wanted to come forward with the allegations now. "I didn't want to die before this story came out," Robinson told the audience after the screening. "I wanted to find (Nghe) and say sorry."

A variety of witnesses interviewed by AP, including renowned correspondents such as Fox Butterfield and Peter Arnett and the photo's subject herself, Phuc, say they are certain Ut took the photo. Robinson was one such person the AP attempted to speak to during their investigation but "were told we could only do so under conditions" that they said would have prevented them from "taking swift action if necessary."

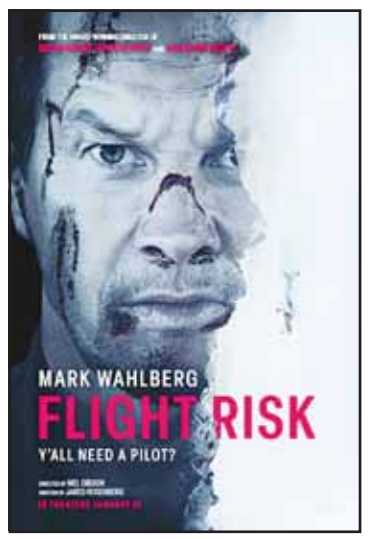
The film's investigation took over two years. The journalists enlisted a French forensics team, INDEX, to help determine the likelihood of whether Ut had been in a position to take the photo. The forensics team concluded that it was highly unlikely that Ut could have done it.

Ut's attorney, James Hornstein, had this to say Sunday after the premiere: "In due course, we will proceed to right this wrong in a courtroom where Nick Ut's reputation will be vindicated."

Knight referenced AP's investigation Saturday, telling the audience that the company's statement is available online. "They said they're open always to examining the truth. And I think it was a very reasonable thing to say," Knight said. "Our story is here and it's here for you all to see."

He added: "Things happen in the field in the heat of the moment... We're all stronger if we examine ourselves, ask tough questions, and we're open and honest about what goes on in our profession. Now more than ever, I would argue."

"The Stringer" does not yet have distribution plans.



This image released by Lionsgate shows promotional art for 'Flight Risk.' (AP)

## Variety

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.:** You could say that Taylor Swift's championship era has reached its second consecutive season.

The 14-time Grammy Award-winning superstar returned to Arrowhead Stadium on Sunday night to watch her boyfriend, Travis Kelce, and the rest of the Kansas City Chiefs beat the Buffalo Bills 32-29 for a spot in their third consecutive Super Bowl.

As confetti rained down on the field afterward, Swift and Kelce kissed in celebration. Swift gave Chiefs coach Andy Reid a big hug, and she continued the party with Kelce's mother, Donna, and some 80,000 fans who simply refused to leave their seats.

"I'm very thankful that I'm here in Kansas City, playing with the guys and everybody in this building," said Kelce, who had just two catches for 19 yards as the Bills refused to let him beat them single-handedly. "It's a special, special place. We feel that every single day and we just try to take advantage of it and not let it slip out of our hands."



Swift

Swift began her high-profile romance with Kelce last season, when he invited the "Anti-Hero" singer to watch him in a September matchup with the Bears. And their relationship only seemed to blossom into the playoffs last season, with Swift celebrating on the field with Kelce after the Chiefs had beaten the Ravens in Baltimore for the AFC championship.

Then came the Super Bowl, and Swift's much-watched dash from a concert in Tokyo for kickoff of the big game in Las Vegas.

She made it with plenty of time to spare, of course, and Swift became the focus of attention in her own right, winning what appeared to be a beer-chugging contest, partying with celebrity suite mates such as Blake Lively, Ice Spice and Lana Del Rey, and standing next to Kelce's mother, Donna, while he held aloft the Lombardi Trophy following the 25-22 win over the 49ers.

On Sunday, Swift walked toward her usual suite about 90 minutes before kickoff against Buffalo. And while she was decked out in Chanel for their divisional-round win over Houston, Swift opted for a sleek black-and-gold Louis Vuitton look for the AFC title game, including a jacquard knit jacket that retails for \$5,000 and a stocking cap with a list price of \$830.

Modest fare compared to what suite prices for the Super Bowl will probably run, Swift will almost certainly be in New Orleans with her celebrity friends when the Chiefs go for an unprecedented

ed third straight Lombardi Trophy against the Eagles on Feb. 9. They got a big game from Patrick Mahomes - no surprise there - and some key stops from their defense to end the Bills' season for the fourth time in the last five years. (AP)

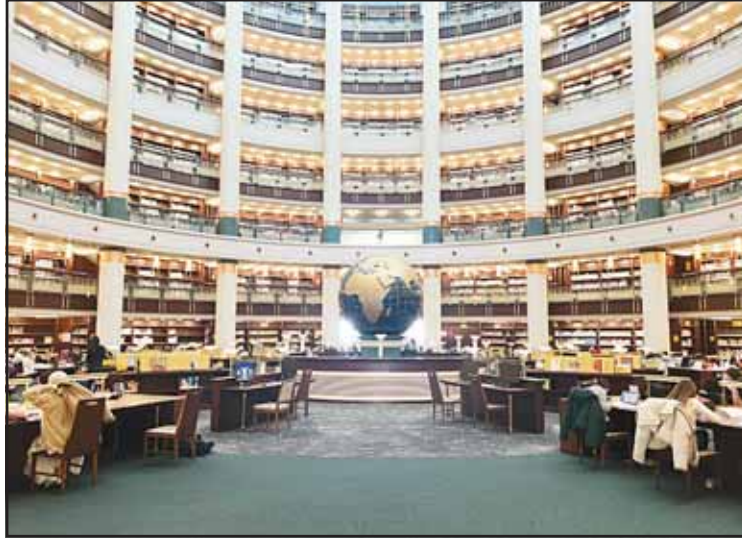
**UCKLAND, New Zealand:** Chinese sculptor Xu Hongfei has been showcasing his celebrated "Chubby Women" sculptures in the Auckland city center.

"Happiness and humour are the common languages of the world," Xu said. Through "Chubby Women" sculptures, he aims to share China's stories with the world.

The Auckland exhibition particularly featured the sculptor's latest artworks of a rugby team to celebrate the success of the New Zealand women's rugby sevens team as Olympic champions at the 2024 Olympic Games.

Hailing from Guangzhou in Guangdong Province, Xu is one of China's leading contemporary sculptors. His "Chubby Women" series has gained him international fame as the works celebrate body positivity, joy, and self-expression.

The exhibition, from Jan. 26 to Feb. 16, is part of the Chinese New Year celebrations in Auckland supported by the Auckland Council and city center. (Xinhua)



The Nation's Library in the Turkish capital, Ankara.

KUNA photos

## Nation's Library in Ankara ... colossal cultural architectural edifice

The Nation's Library in Ankara is considered a huge cultural architectural edifice spanning 125,000 meters, which was inaugurated by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in February 2020.

The library can host nearly 5,500 people and houses four million printed books, 550,000 electronic books, more than six million online publications and numerous scientific sources. Situated at the Presidential Complex, the

uniquely designed facility is deemed the largest in Türkiye's history as it contains thousands of rare books and manuscripts in different languages and across various domains of knowledge. (KUNA)

## Books

### Fedarko honored

## Everett's 'James' wins 2025 Carnegie Medal

NEW YORK, Jan 27, (AP): For author Percival Everett, libraries have long been a source of knowledge and discovery and pleasure, even of the forbidden kind.

"I remember making friends at age 13 with the librarian at the University of South Carolina, and she used to let me go through the stacks when I wasn't supposed to," Everett, who spent part of his childhood in Columbia, said during a telephone interview Sunday.

"One of the wonderful things about libraries is that when you're looking for one book, it's surrounded by other books that may not be connected to it. That's what you get (online) with links, but (in libraries) no one's decided what the links are."

Everett's latest honor comes from the country's public libraries. On Sunday, the American Library Association announced that Everett's "James" was this year's winner of the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, which includes a \$5,000 cash award. Kevin Fedarko's "A Walk in the Park: The True Story of a Spectacular Misadventure in the Grand Canyon" was chosen for nonfiction.

Everett's acclaimed reworking of Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" from the perspective of Jim, Huck Finn's enslaved companion, has already received the National Book Award and the Kirkus Prize and is a finalist for a National Book Critics Circle award. "James" has even topped The New York Times fiction hardcover list, a rare feat in recent years for a literary work that wasn't a major book club pick or movie tie-in.

### Masterpiece

"Percival Everett has written a modern masterpiece, a beautiful and important work that offers a fresh perspective from the eyes of a classic character," Allison Escoto, chair of the award's selection committee, said in a statement. "Kevin Fedarko's unforgettable journey through the otherworldly depths of the Grand Canyon shows us the triumphs and pitfalls of exploration and illuminates the many vital lessons we can all learn from our precious natural world."

Fedarko is a former Time magazine correspondent whose work also has appeared in The New York Times and Esquire. A Pittsburgh native fascinated by distant places, Fedarko has a long history with libraries - Carnegie libraries. He remembers visiting two while growing up, notably one in the suburb of Oakmont near the hairdressing salon his parents ran. He would read biographies of historical figures from George Washington to Daniel Boone, and otherwise think of libraries as "important threads running through his life," windows to a "wider world."

Now a resident of Flagstaff, Arizona, Fedarko says that he relied in part on the library at the nearby Northern Arizona University campus for both "A Walk in the Park" and its predecessor, also about the Grand Canyon, "The Emerald Mile."

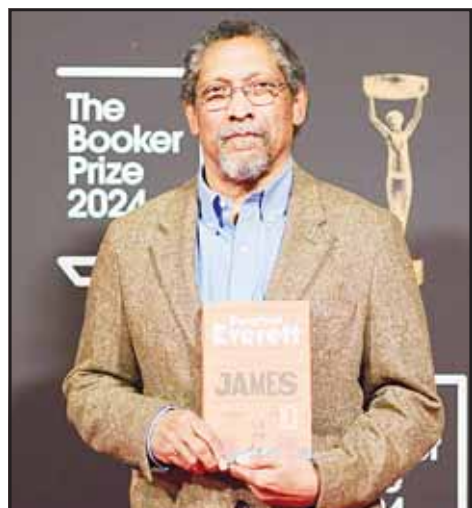
"The library has an important and unique collection about the Grand Canyon, and it's the backbone of the kind of history that helps form the framework of both books," he says. "Neither of them could have been done without the library."

Previous winners of the medals, established in 2012 with a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, includes Donna Tartt's "The Goldfinch," Colson Whitehead's "The Underground Railroad" and Doris Kearns Goodwin's "The Bully Pulpit."

This year's finalists besides "James" in the fiction category were Jiaming Tang's "Cinema Love" and Kavin Akbar's "Martyr!"

Adam Higginbotham's "Challenger: A True Story of Heroism and Disaster on the Edge of Space" and Emily Nussbaum's "Cue the Sun! The Invention of Reality TV" were the nonfiction runners-up.

All three fiction nominees were published by Penguin Random House and all three nonfiction finalists by Simon & Schuster.



Percival Everett arrives at the Booker Prize award dinner in London, Tuesday, Nov. 12, 2024. (AP)

## Fashion



A model wears a creation for the women's Lanvin Fall-Winter 2025-2026 collection, that was presented in Paris, Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025. (AP)

### Kenzo finds its groove

## Sacai brings wild nostalgia to Paris

PARIS, Jan 27, (AP): Sacai, Japan's biggest fashion powerhouse, brought the wild side to Paris Fashion Week with Sunday's collection that reimagined childhood nostalgia through a lens of cutting-edge design.

Inspired by the 1963 children's picture book "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendak, Chitose Abe delivered a playful, untamed vision that blended beastly textures with her trademark precision, resulting in a spectacle both bold and innovative.

The show leaned into functionality and whimsy, with shaggy faux-knit pelts adorning utility olive suits, oversized scarves, and knit blouses that channeled the spirit of untamed creatures. Faux fur trims added flair to skirts and reimagined outerwear, while nostalgic nods to Maurice Sendak's iconic illustrations brought a touch of whimsy.

Collaborations added an extra edge, with workwear staples elevated into fashion statements, rugged boots offering a wild twist, and polished footwear tying together the

refined evening looks.

Accessories like branded water bottles and utility bags infused the show with a modern, outdoorsy aesthetic, capturing the thrill of untamed creativity and leaving the audience enthralled.

Meanwhile, Kenzo brought an electrifying jolt to Paris Fashion Week with a collection that blended nostalgia, cultural exchange and sharp tailoring under the leadership of Nigo.

With the graffiti artist Futura as a collaborator, the collection offered a fresh take on the brand's signature aesthetic, fusing archival motifs with urban edge. The creative partnership channeled decades of shared influences, layering Kenzo's heritage with the raw energy of 1990s street culture.

Bold patterns and thoughtful craftsmanship defined the runway. Futura's iconic atom logo appeared reimagined with Kenzo's florals on bombers, wide-leg pants, and tailored jackets.

Accessories, inspired by every-

day objects like shopping bags and bouquet wraps, played with Japanese calligraphy and nostalgic cultural tags, adding tactile depth to the collection. These pieces reflected the era of cross-cultural exchange between Tokyo and New York, a key theme throughout the show.

The collection unveiled on Friday also showcased archival references with a contemporary twist. Train motifs, a nod to Kenzo's late 1990s designs, appeared on suits and outerwear, while refined paisleys were integrated into modern workwear.

Weathered denim and six-button jackets brought a touch of sophistication to the nostalgic energy, blending vintage charm with precise tailoring. The collection's footwear - chunky loafers and revisited Mary Janes - added playful contrast, grounding the designs in an approachable yet avant-garde aesthetic.

The atmosphere in the venue echoed the creative energy on display, with notable guests from fashion and music worlds contributing to the buzz.

## Music

### Relief efforts

## Carpenter, Eilish to rock the Grammys

NEW YORK, Jan 27, (AP): The 2025 Grammy Awards are right around the corner, which means it is time to get those viewing party plans in action. Allow us to help.

The 67th annual Grammy Awards will still take place Sunday, Feb. 2, at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles - though the Recording Academy has refocused its aim to support relief efforts following the devastating Los Angeles-area wildfires.

Here's what you need to know about watching the 2025 Grammys, including how to stream and where you can see music's biggest stars walking the red carpet.

The main show will air live on CBS and Paramount+ beginning at 8 p.m. Eastern. Paramount+ with Showtime subscribers can also watch live and on demand.

Benson Boone, Billie Eilish, Chappell Roan, Charli xcx, Doechii, RAYE, Sabrina Carpenter, Shakira and Teddy Swims will perform at the Grammys.

Comedian Trevor Noah will host the show for the fifth consecutive time.

The only other people to host five or more Grammy telecasts were musical artists: Andy Williams hosted seven shows, followed by John Denver with six and LL Cool J with five.

The Grammys can also be watched through live TV streaming services that include CBS in their lineup, like Hulu + Live TV, YouTube TV and FuboTV.

Paramount+ subscribers will be able to stream the Grammy Awards the day after the ceremony.

The Associated Press will stream a three-hour red carpet show with interviews and fashion footage. It will be streamed on YouTube and APNews.com.

### Most nominated

Beyoncé leads the Grammy nods with 11, bringing her career total to 99 nominations. That makes her the most nominated artist in Grammy history.

As of 2023, she's also the most decorated artist, having earned 32 trophies across her career.

Post Malone, Billie Eilish, Kendrick Lamar and Charli XCX follow with seven nominations.

Taylor Swift and first-time nominees Sabrina Carpenter and Chappell Roan boast six nominations each.

The 2025 Grammy Awards will go on as planned but will focus its attention on wildfire relief efforts.

Each year, the Recording Academy hosts a multitude of events to welcome the music industry during Grammy week; record labels do the same. However, many institutions have canceled their plans - Universal Music Group, BMG and Warner Music Group among them - and instead are allocating resources to Los Angeles-area wildfire relief and rebuilding efforts.

On Wednesday, the Recording Academy announced it had condensed pre-Grammy week plans to just four events, each featuring a fundraising element.

Events like the annual pre-Grammy Black Music Collective event, Grammy advocacy brunch, and others scheduled to take place at the immersive pop-up Grammy house have been canceled. In all, at least 16 pre-Grammy events sponsored by the Recording Academy have been canceled.

"We understand how devastating this past week has been on this city and its people. This is our home, it's home to thousands of music professionals, and many of us have been negatively impacted," Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason jr. said in a statement.

Last week, the Recording Academy and Music Cares launched the Los Angeles Fire Relief Effort with a \$1 million donation. According to the letter, thanks to additional contributions, they've already distributed \$2 million in emergency aid.

Spotify has canceled all of its Grammy week events, including its annual Best New Artist showcase. "We've decided that the most impactful approach is canceling all our Grammy Week events, including our annual Best New Artist party, and redirecting funds to support efforts to reach local fans and charitable organizations," Spotify's Global Head of Music Partnerships & Audience Joe Hadley wrote in an announcement.

Universal Music Group, one of the big three major record labels, has canceled all of its Grammy-related events. Those include its annual artist showcase, held on Saturday, and its after-party on the Sunday of Grammy week. Instead, it will redirect those funds to wildfire relief.

BMG will no longer host its pre-Grammy party and a representative for Warner Music Group confirmed to The Associated Press that the major label will not host a party this year and are instead "redirecting funds to support efforts." Earlier this week, WMG and the Blavatnik Family Foundation Social Justice Fund pledged \$1 million to Los Angeles area fire relief and rebuilding efforts.

Sony Music Group confirmed it has canceled its events during Grammy week and after the ceremony and will instead redirect efforts and money to local relief efforts.



Carpenter







