



cricket Page 15



KUWAIT PROSECUTION SEEKS DEATH IN INFANT'S TRAGIC DEMISE
Mental evaluation ordered for Filipino

Inmates shifted to new detention center amid 2,000 expulsions

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Criminal Court has decided to refer the Filipino domestic worker, who allegedly killed an infant in a washing machine, for a psychiatric evaluation.

Earlier, the accused had denied the charges, stating that the child was found drowned in a bucket of water.

The Public Prosecution, in its pleadings, called for the issuance of a death sentence against the accused for her actions.

The forensic report confirmed that there were no fractures on the infant's body.

According to the investigative report, the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior had received

a report that a one-and-a-half-year-old infant was referred to the hospital in an unconscious state.

After conducting initial tests on the child, it was found that he was in a coma. Efforts were made to revive him, but he sadly passed away. Upon investigating with the family, they stated that they heard the child screaming, and rushed to see that their domestic worker had placed the child inside the washing machine.

The Public Prosecution, represented by Dr. Walid Al-Azmi from the Public Prosecutor's Technical Office and Taiba Al-Ansari, Deputy Prosecutor of the Capital, Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, presented before the Criminal Court the case of the infant's murder by the domestic worker in Sabah Al-Salem suburb.

In its plea, the Public Prosecution called for the execution of the accused as punishment for the heinous crime she committed.

Continued on Page 5



HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

A free woman was enslaved but she refused to be controlled

The scholar was so absorbed in his studies that he had no time for himself.

He saw the beautiful maid and could not bring himself to leave her.

The slaver wanted to slap her back, but the young man prevented him from doing so.

The slaver begged the young man to return the enslaved woman at any price.

He figured out why the woman slapped the slaver but did not tell her.

Her new master prepared a bath for her and brought perfume, so she perfumed herself.

She left the young man as a slave, but soon returned as a free woman to marry him.

She brought a sheikh and two witnesses, and said, "Foolish is the one who abandoned you."

3



Crown Prince Diwan photo
His Highness the Crown Prince delivers a speech at the 28th session of the GCC Consultative Authority.

HH Crown Prince at GCC session, highlights unity

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah visited the venue of the first meeting of the 28th session of the Consultative Authority of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Wednesday.

Continued on Page 5



KUNA photo
Kuwait Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, GCC Secretary General Jassim Al-Budaiwi, and members of the Advisory Board for the 28th session pose for a group photo during the meeting in Kuwait, highlighting regional cooperation and integration efforts.

GCC advisory board sets strategic priorities

Kuwait FM stresses cooperation amid global shifts

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya stressed, Wednesday, the importance of cooperation to confront political, economic and security transformations in the region and worldwide, noting that Kuwait's presidency of the 45th session of the Supreme Council of the GCC comes at a critical stage that requires strengthening Gulf integration.

During the first meeting of the 28th session of the Advisory Board of the GCC Supreme Council in Kuwait, Al-Yahya said that this meeting represents a prominent station in the path of cooperation and integration between the Council countries and reflects the commitment of the member states.

The Minister also affirmed that the GCC has proven throughout its successful journey its ability to withstand and adapt to these challenges, indicating that the advisory body is a fundamental pillar in supporting the decision-making tributary within the Cooperation Council.

He conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his wishes for the success of the meeting, praising the support of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for the tasks of the Advisory Board.

Minister Al-Yahya expressed thanked the Chairman of the Advisory Board in its 27th session, Dr. Mohammad Al-Sada, for his sincere efforts that yielded constructive results, stressing the pivotal role played by the Board in providing in-depth studies and strategic recommendations that support the Gulf integration process.

In turn, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Jassim Al-Budaiwi, stressed the importance of the Advisory Board in supporting the decisions of the Supreme Council.

Al-Budaiwi referred to the new assignments issued by the 45th Gulf Summit hosted by Kuwait last December, which

include unifying Gulf efforts to confront natural disasters, developing unified Gulf policies and legislation to use artificial intelligence, and addressing obstacles to the integration of services between the GCC countries.

For his part, the Chairman of the 27th session of the Advisory Board, Dr. Mohammad Al-Sada, said that the Advisory Board concluded the work of its previous session, where it submitted its views and recommendations to the Supreme Council in its 45th session held in Kuwait.

He expressed his thanks and appreciation to Minister Al-Yahya, for his generous hosting of the meeting.

He also praised the continuous efforts made by the Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council in supporting the work of the Council and enhancing cooperation between member states.

Continued on Page 5

Flag-raising Feb 2

Cabinet evaluates key development projects

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet reviewed recommendations of the economic ministerial committee, with Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Mahmoud Busheri briefing the council with the ministry's procedures regarding the 'white certificate', concerning the country's transformation in energy consumption.

The aforementioned statement was made by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereedah Abdullah Al-Mousherji after the weekly Cabinet meeting, chaired by His Highness

Continued on Page 5

Youth among hardest hit

Kuwait traders lose KD 40m in single day to crypto scam

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: With the allure of quick profits, the number of victims falling prey to electronic fraud is steadily increasing.

A recent case in Kuwait underscores the growing threat, as traders in the country suffered collective losses amounting to approximately 40 million Kuwaiti dinars within just 24 hours.

The financial setback came after they invested in a newly introduced cryptocurrency named "Bitcoin Kuwait," which was created and promoted by an anonymous developer.

Dr. Safaa Zaman, a Professor of Computer Science at Kuwait University and the President of the Kuwait Society for Information Security, first broke the alarming news on her account on the "X" platform.

She revealed that "Bitcoin Kuwait" had collapsed almost immediately after its launch and that the developer, who meticulously orchestrated the fraud over a span of three years, had disappeared after amassing \$40 million from unsuspecting investors. Dr. Zaman raised critical questions: "Where is the oversight, where is the legislation and where is the fraudster?"

Continued on Page 5

Dr Dina Al-Mailem becomes Kuwait University's second female director

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: After a lengthy period of administrative vacuum, which lasted approximately five years, the Council of Ministers has appointed Dr. Dina Al-Mailem, a distinguished faculty member in the College of Science, as the new Director of Kuwait University.



Dr. Al-Mailem

This appointment makes Dr. Al-Mailem the second woman to hold this

prestigious position, following in the footsteps of Dr. Faiza Al-Kharafi. According to informed sources within the university, Dr. Al-Mailem is expected to officially commence her duties at the beginning of the second semester, starting next Sunday.

Dr. Dina Al-Mailem is recognized for her exceptional academic qualifications and contributions to Kuwait University. She holds a PhD in Microbiology from the University of Bath in the United Kingdom, which she completed in 2006.

Prior to that, she earned her Master's degree in the same field from Kuwait University in 1998, following her Bachelor's degree in 1995. Throughout her academic career, Dr. Al-Mailem has held several key supervisory and

Continued on Page 5

Customs foils massive drug smuggling plot, thousands of narcotics seized across Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior announced that the General Administration of Customs, in collaboration with the Search and Investigation Department, successfully intercepted several attempts to smuggle narcotics into the country, which included attempts to conceal large quantities of illicit substances in parcels that arrived from multiple countries.

In a press release issued on Wednesday, the ministry explained that around 35,000 capsules of Lyrica were confiscated. Of these, 33,800 capsules were found in two air freight shipments - one containing 32,000 capsules, and the other 1,800 capsules.

Also, customs officers at the Abdali border crossing also intercepted 1,067 capsules from an individual who was attempting to cross the border.

Furthermore, the ministry re-

ported the discovery of 35 kilograms of 'Chemical' drug in a parcel that arrived from a European country.

In two separate parcels, 1,474 grams of cannabis were found, of which a parcel containing 1,074 grams arrived from Europe and another with 400 grams from Asia.

At the Nuwaiseeb border crossing, a person displaying abnormal behavior was arrested, with 2.3 grams of methamphetamine, locally known as Shabu, found in his possession.

All arrested individuals were referred with the seized items to the concerned authorities for necessary legal action.

The Ministry of Interior reaffirmed its commitment to protecting the country from such narcotic-smuggling operations, and highlighted its continued efforts to uphold the safety and security of society.



Mol photo

Some of the contraband seized by Kuwait's General Administration of Customs, including narcotics and illicit substances, intercepted in recent operations.

Day by Day

THE Japanese government has decided to officially implement a four-day workweek, allowing employees three days off to manage their personal affairs without disrupting the work productivity.

This decision undoubtedly reflects the strength of Japan's economy, characterized by high productivity and heavy reliance on technology and artificial intelligence -- almost as if AI, rather than human intelligence, is doing the work.

Many here might wish for Japan's work system to reach us -- working only four days a week and spending the remaining three catching up on sleep.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Committee revokes citizenship from 11

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Supreme Committee for Nationality Investigation has issued two decisions revoking the Kuwaiti nationality of 11 individuals citing dual citizenship, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The first decision, published in the official gazette Kuwait Alyawm, stripped citizenship of two women under Article 10 of Amiri Decree No. 15 of 1959 of the Nationality Law and its amendments.

The second decision affected nine individuals, whose nationality was revoked based on Article 11 of the same decree.

This development highlights Kuwait's strict stance on dual citizenship, reinforcing existing regulations that prohibit holding another nationality alongside Kuwaiti citizenship.

News watch

RIYADH: Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Ambassador Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Du'aj Al-Sabah discussed with President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission Dr. Hala Al-Tuwajiri ways to enhance cooperation and exchange expertise related to human rights.

The meeting was held at the Commission's headquarters during Sheikhha Jawaher's visit to Saudi Arabia, according to a statement by the Foreign Ministry.

Sheikhha Jawaher also met with Undersecretary of the Saudi Foreign Ministry for International Multilateral Affairs Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Rassi where she stressed the importance of the deep-rooted historical relations between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. (KUNA)

2 GCC railway project to bear fruition by end of year 2030



8 NBK completes special needs training program at Dasman Bilingual School



9 KFH expands global presence with Egypt rebrand

10 ABK secures landmark \$1 bln syndicated loan

16 Kuwait Club extends Super Cup legacy

Prayer Timings			
Fajr .....	05:17	Asr .....	15:02
Sunrise ..	06:39	Maghrib ..	17:23
Zohr .....	12:01	Isha .....	18:43

# Local

## Weather

**Expected weather for next 24 hours:**

**By Day:** Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-38 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**By Night:** Cold with light to

moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	21	12
Kuwait Airport	21	09

Weather	Abdaly	06
	Bubyan	07
	Jahra	10
	Failaka Island	13
	Salmiyah	14
	Ahmadi	09
	Jal Aliyah	08
	Nuwaisib	10

## Kuwait deserves to be at forefront: Dr Al-Humoud

### 'State award augments responsibility, encourages efforts'

Interview by Shahad Kamal

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): Dr. Mouddhi Al-Humoud, Member of Abdullah Al-Salem University's Founding Board, stated that the honor of winning the state's appreciation award augments sense of responsibility and encourages work in serving the country, sharing expertise and empowering the youth.

Al-Humoud, who won the state's appreciation award for social services in 2024 for her exceptional contributions in field of academia and her notable role in education, sat down with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) for an interview on Wednesday.

She voiced her pride and gratitude for this recognition and for the appreciation of all those who worked diligently for the service of the homeland.

She said this is part of a whole chain of numerous times Kuwait provided great opportunities whether through receiving education or working in the field, as she served as Minister of Education and oversaw establishment of second public university.

She talked of her passion for education and

academia, since she graduated from university as an honor student with a degree of Business Administration, and sought to attain higher degrees of masters and PhD.

She went on from there to teach at KU, moved up the ranks until she became vice president of the university and president of open Arab university.

Dr. Al-Humoud touched on her interest in social and volunteer work, especially concerning women right and empowerment within the workspace, saying she able to provide her services through her work as Education Minister and Minister of Residential Affairs and State Minister of Planning.

Al-Humoud stated that given the choice, she would choose to advance education in all its stages and establish a strong foundation for active development, ensuring a better future and achieving strategic goals, as Kuwait deserves to

be at the forefront.

Al-Humoud, who has participated in multiple councils and committees, highlighted the importance of women empowerment, noting that the challenges facing women are numerous, whether in the workplace, social services, or other fields.

She pointed out that with the opening of job opportunities and the political leadership's trust, Kuwaiti women have achieved many successes, making them more involved in all fields, including both professional and political decision-making.

She also stressed the need to empower people with disabilities by ensuring education, training, and job opportunities, as well as recognizing their skills and potential.

Al-Humoud highlighted the significance of participating in volunteer work as much as possible, as it helps shape a positive and constructive character within society.

She also stressed that self-confidence and perseverance are key to success, and failure is a motivation for future achievements in life and career.



Dr. Al-Humoud

# GCC railway project to bear fruition by end of year 2030

Kuwait races against time to complete its part

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: A government report revealed that the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) has specified 11 goals for the economic feasibility of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) railway project.

These goals include the following:

- Develop trade and economic exchange between GCC countries in the field of land transportation for people and goods,
- Develop the local and Gulf economies,
- Open investment areas,
- Strengthen social ties between GCC countries,
- Reduce the cost of transporting goods and people,
- Reduce the cost of road maintenance and sustainability by limiting the movement of passenger and cargo transport vehicles,
- Reduce carbon emissions by trimming down the number of trucks for transporting goods,

- Prevent traffic accidents by reducing the number of passenger and cargo trips on the roads,

- Open labor markets and transportation services between GCC countries,

- Develop areas adjacent to the railway track,
- Generate job opportunities for citizens and achieve the goals of 2035 Kuwait Vision.

The report explained that the tender for the study, detailed design and preparation of the railway tender documents, which a Turkish company recently won to implement at a cost of KD 2.4 million, will take 12 months and includes the first phase of the Kuwait section of the GCC railway project with a length of 111 kilometers out of 265 kilometers -- the total length of the project in Kuwait, which will be offered at a later stage.

It pointed out that the total length of 265 kilometers divided into two -- 111 kilometers for the first phase and 153 kilometers for the second phase -- in order to avoid delays in offering and implementing the project. This is part of the commitment to move forward in parallel with the project schedule within the GCC countries, which is expected to be completed

in late 2030.

It disclosed that the first phase starts from Nuwaiseeb and ends in Shaddadiya, southwest of the new Kuwait airport. It will consist of four stations, the first of which is the main station for passengers. Approval has been obtained from the Municipal Council to allocate the site. Second is the maintenance station for passenger trains, third is for the maintenance of freight cars, and fourth is a dry port for loading and financing.

It stated that the second phase of the project, which is included in the plan of PART, consists of the railway line reaching Mubarak Port on Bubiyan Island, to complete the length of 265 kilometers in Kuwait; in addition to future tracks linking Shuaiba and Shuwaikh ports. It added that if an agreement is reached with the northern countries, there will be a link between Abdally and Umm Qasr Port in Iraq.

It said the project's path will start from Kuwait in the North to Muscat in the Sultanate of Oman in the South, with a length of 2,177 kilometers, passing through all the Gulf countries as per the specified lengths for their territories.

## 68,000 people with disabilities benefiting: Al-Muhanna

### PADA working to enhance integrity, combat corruption

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Wafaa Al-Muhanna, Director General of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) -- persons suffering from disabilities, announced that the number of files of individuals with disabilities benefiting from the Authority's services has reached 68,000.

She also noted that 826 disability certificates were temporarily suspended due to the failure to update documents and submit them to the committees.

In a press statement following the signing of a memorandum of cooperation with the Kuwaiti National Integrity Society, Al-Muhanna explained that the Authority had set a two-

month deadline for data updates, and notifications were sent via the Sahel application, SMS, and WhatsApp.

However, some individuals failed to comply, prompting the Authority to suspend their files temporarily, in line with regulations and laws.

She highlighted that under the guidance of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, the

Authority is focused on promoting integrity, combating corruption, and implementing preventive measures to build transparency in its

processes.

As part of this effort, the memorandum of cooperation with the Kuwaiti National Integrity Society was signed to implement an integrity enhancement project within two key sectors of the Authority: medical, psychological, and social services, including care home centers, and educational and rehabilitation services.

Al-Muhanna emphasized that this initiative aligns with the Authority's commitment to civil society and partnerships with public benefit organizations to achieve its goals.

The project aims to review and strengthen procedures and transactions to enhance integrity and transparency, identify and control potential corruption risks, and implement preventive measures to fortify the PADA sectors.



Al-Muhanna



Road repairs underway in a residential area.

KUNA photo

## Kuwaitis falsify attendance records

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Criminal Investigation Division for Forgery and Counterfeiting arrested four Kuwaiti citizens for participating in a scheme to falsify attendance records, reports Al-Anba daily.

The suspects reportedly took turns in "clocking in" for each other using forged fingerprints, with one person fingerprinting not only for themselves but also for their three colleagues who did not attend work.

Initial investigations revealed that each of the four employees worked only one week per month, spending the

remaining three weeks at home.

The actions of the employees were classified as theft and forgery, which are punishable by law and they could face imprisonment as well as potential financial penalties.

According to a security source, information was received about employees who were rotating attendance at a government facility in the Ahmadi Governorate. Upon verifying the information, the investigators obtained an arrest warrant from the Public Prosecution and took them into custody.

## Remove cars from roads under repair: MoI, MPW

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, has called on citizens and residents to cooperate by removing their vehicles parked at road maintenance sites in residential areas, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This is to ensure the smooth progress of major maintenance work and its timely completion. To facilitate this, the "Sahel" application is being used to send notifications to residents, detailing the locations of maintenance work and related alerts.

Moreover, flyers are being distributed to homes to inform residents of the scheduled maintenance times, allowing them to take the necessary steps to move their vehicles in advance.

The Ministry of Interior has warned that if vehicle owners fail to remove their vehicles from maintenance sites, the relevant authorities will take action and remove the vehicles.

The Ministry of Public Works emphasized the importance of paying attention to notifications sent via the "Sahel" app and official channels.

They urged residents to follow the instructions provided by the relevant authorities to ensure the smooth execution of the maintenance work.

## Crackdown continues

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Security campaigns by rescue patrols continued in all governorates to arrest wanted individuals and lawbreakers.

These campaigns resulted in the arrest of 15 individuals in possession of suspected narcotic substances in the past week, along with nine intoxicated individuals who were referred to the relevant authorities. According to weekly statistics, 183 individuals who were wanted for residency law violations, reported as absconding, and other offenses were arrested.

## Other Voices

### Traders need their 'voice' back

By Ahmad alsarraf

A year ago, the Minister of Commerce, Mr. Abdullah Al-Jouan, acting upon a Cabinet decision and in accordance with Law No. 122 of 2023 concerning the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), dissolved the Chamber's Board of Directors.

Established 65 years ago, the Chamber had long served as a pillar of Kuwait's economic landscape. In its place, a transitional committee was formed to assume the board's responsibilities.

This committee, led by constitutional expert Mr. Muhammad Al-Feely, includes key government officials -- the MCI Undersecretary, the Director of the Public Authority for Industry, the Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Social Affairs and a representative of the Small Projects Company.

The committee was tasked with overseeing all administrative and financial operations of the Chamber until a new board is elected.

Additionally, it was authorized to take control of the Chamber's headquarters, manage relevant documents, draft the executive regulations and submit them to the Minister of Commerce for approval. The committee was also responsible for issuing necessary decisions and regulations to facilitate its work.

The primary goal of this interim body was to preserve the integrity of the Chamber and ensure its continued service to Kuwait's business community.

According to its founding directive, the committee was also charged with developing a comprehensive framework for the Chamber's governance and presenting its recommendations to the government for final approval.

However, while the committee's role in maintaining the Chamber's functions is acknowledged, it is crucial that the Chamber's leadership be reinstated to experienced professionals in commerce and economic affairs.

With due respect to the chairman and members of the transitional committee, their oversight should not be prolonged indefinitely.

The Chamber's purpose is to represent and defend the interests of mer-

chants and businesses -- an essential function in any thriving economy.

It is unreasonable that various professional groups, such as beekeepers and bike drivers, have dedicated organizations advocating for their rights, while Kuwait's business community -- historically integral to the nation's development -- remains without a fully functioning and elected board to represent its interests.

The Chamber must be restored to its original role, ensuring that it continues to support and guide Kuwait's commercial sector with the expertise and leadership it deserves.

It is well understood among those closely involved with the Chamber, particularly the members of the interim committee, that Law No. 122 of 2023 -- under which the Chamber's Board of Directors was dissolved and the interim committee was appointed -- addressed several critical aspects.

However, given the hurried manner in which it was enacted, similar to other laws passed during that period, it inevitably contained numerous flaws.

While the Constitutional Court ultimately dismissed the appeals challenging the law, it simultaneously provided legal interpretations to ensure that its provisions remained in compliance with the Constitution.

Given these circumstances, incorporating these judicial interpretations into the executive regulations is not only justified but necessary. It is both logical and imperative to consider them in any forthcoming amendments to the law.

To facilitate this process, the Minister of Commerce may need to request the interim committee's insights and observations on the law, ensuring that any revisions are well-founded and effectively implemented.

Several key issues require clarification. For instance, the decision to appoint the interim committee stated that it would remain in place until a new Board of Directors for the Chamber is elected.

However, this raises important questions: Does the committee itself have the authority to call for new elections? If so, on what legal basis? When and through what mechanism should these elections be conducted?

Addressing these ambiguities through legislative amendments will be essential to ensuring a clear and legally sound framework for the Chamber's governance moving forward.

□ □ □

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

## UK-Kuwait trade on rise: envoy

### Lord McNicol appointed new British trade envoy to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The British government has appointed a new 'global growth team' of UK trade envoys, with the aim of driving UK exports and investment.

Among them is Lord Iain McNicol of Kilbride, who has been appointed Trade Envoy to Kuwait, Jordan and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, says a press release issued by the British Embassy in Kuwait.

On this occasion, Jonathan Reynolds, Secretary of State for Business and Trade, said "Trade and investment are key to delivering economic growth. That's why I have launched a new team of Trade Envoys, who will use their experience, expertise and knowledge to unlock new markets around the world for British businesses and drum up investment into the UK."

This announcement comes as the UK prepares to launch its new Trade Strategy

in Spring, which will prioritize rebuilding our relationship with the EU and seizing opportunities to access new markets further afield.

Alongside bolstering exports, attracting investments, and removing trade barriers, the British government is also resuming trade talks with Free Trade Agreement partners, including -- so far -- the GCC, Switzerland and South Korea.

Belinda Lewis, British Ambassador to Kuwait, and Naz Demir, Country Director Trade, British Embassy Kuwait, added, "This is an exciting time in our bilateral trade and investment partnership, with UK-Kuwait trade reaching \$5.9 billion in the 12 months to 30 June 2024 -- an increase of 14.8 percent (or £762 million) on the previous year."

"We are also continuing negotiations on the UK-GCC Free Trade Agreement, and the United Kingdom remains a hugely popular destination for both private and institutional Kuwaiti investors."

"We warmly welcome Lord McNicol to his new role and look forward to exploring the many opportunities to expand our close economic ties with Kuwait."



Lord McNicol

## Over 27,000 new e-books are available at university library

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Libraries Department at Kuwait University announced the provision of more than 27,000 new e-books through its electronic library, in cooperation with the Science Direct platform affiliated with the academic publisher Elsevier; indicating these books are available to university members until the end of September 2026.

In a press statement, the department revealed that the collection includes a diverse and comprehensive range of e-books like encyclopedias, specialized guides, book series and reference works. It added these books cover multiple fields like Science, Technology, Medicine, Social Sciences, Agriculture and Food Biology, Biochemistry and Genetics, Mathematical Sciences, Material Science, Health Sciences, Pharmacology and Toxicology, Pharmaceutical Sciences and others.

The books of this academic publisher provide high-quality scientific content that has been reviewed by experts; which solidifies its position as an essential tool for researchers, academicians and students to support innovation and cognitive enrichment.

Meanwhile, acting Vice President for Academic Support Services Dr. Mohammed Al-Mulla said "the department always supports scientific research and provides distinguished academic resources that enhance the status of the university and the aspirations of its members. We, in the Academic Support Services Sector, are committed to providing the best scientific resources that contribute to developing the educational and research process and providing an integrated knowledge environment."

He affirmed these e-books are currently available to all university members; including faculty members, academic support staff, graduate students, undergraduate students, and employees.

## HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



# A free woman was enslaved but she refused to be controlled

WHEN a free man is enslaved, he cannot forgive the slaver, for the Lord Almighty had created people to be free. Those who seek to enslave others will never find peace, as sooner or later, the slave will seek revenge.

The following story contains many morals and lessons about freedom and the benefits it brings to individuals.

It is the story of a scholar who traveled to a city and grew fond of it. He became acquainted with its people, purchased a house, furnished it, and decided to settle there. He divided his time between his work and studies, leaving little room for managing personal affairs like laundry and cooking. Due to his busy schedule, he decided to buy a slave to serve him and handle the household chores.

One day, the scholar visited the slave market and searched until his eyes fell upon a beautiful maid whose face resembled the full moon and whose body was like Venus.

Unable to resist her charm, he approached the slaver to negotiate a price. After settling the terms, he paid the price and received the ownership document. Just as the maid was about to leave with her new master, she took everyone by surprise. She returned to the slaver and slapped him so forcefully that it seemed his jaw would break.

Amidst the astonishment of onlookers, the slaver became furious and tried to take revenge by slapping her back. However, the young man stepped in between them and informed the slaver that she was no longer his property and that he was now her new master.

The slaver begged the young man to re-

● The scholar was so absorbed in his studies that he had no time for himself.

● He saw the beautiful maid and could not bring himself to leave her.

● The slaver wanted to slap her back, but the young man prevented him from doing so.

● The slaver begged the young man to return the enslaved woman at any price.

● He figured out why the woman slapped the slaver but did not tell her.

● Her new master prepared a bath for her and brought perfume, so she perfumed herself.

● She left the young man as a slave, but soon returned as a free woman to marry him.

● She brought a sheikh and two witnesses, and said, "Foolish is the one who abandoned you."

turn the maid at any price, even double what he had paid. The young man refused, telling him that the maid was not for sale. He advised the slaver to forget about it, warning that the story of the slap could spread and turn the slaver into a public joke.

The young man then escorted his maid home, where he prepared a bath for her. He also brought her perfume, with which she perfumed herself. Shortly after, she discovered that he had prepared a delicious meal for her.

She sat with him at the dining table and ate greedily while looking at him with relief and an innocent smile on her face. After a while, the feelings of suspicion, doubt, and confusion between them faded. She began to chat with him and asked, "Why didn't you ask me why I slapped the slaver?"

He replied, "I didn't need to wait for the answer because I already know. I am sure you slapped him not out of aggression, but for revenge."

She said, "You are absolutely right, but do you know what I was seeking revenge for?"

He answered, "A free woman was enslaved but she refused to be tamed. As a result, she was severely tortured and harmed."

She looked at him in astonishment, "You are right. I swear by God, I have never met anyone like you. How did you know all this?"

He said, "Knowledge that I benefit from, sophisticated roots that raise me high, and the ethics and values that I embrace."

She asked, "Did these three things teach you about the pain of slavery and the humiliation of servitude?"

The young man replied without hesitation, "You are free, and you can leave if you wish."

She left as a free woman. Shortly after, she returned, accompanied by a sheikh and two witnesses.

"Foolish is the one who abandons someone like you. I want to marry you," she told the young scholar.

■ "Foolish is the one who abandons someone like you. I want to marry you," she told the young scholar.



■ Soon, we will need national craftsmen, as the skilled craftsmen currently are expatriates.



■ The evil soul is one that commands its owner to follow his desires and indulge in forbidden lust.



■ Bernard Shaw once said, "A woman is the shadow of a man; she should follow him, not lead him."



■ Never lose someone who made you happy in your difficult times, supported you when you were defeated, tolerated you when you were angry, and defended you in your absence.



■ Until today, the documentation procedures in Kuwait Municipality remain long, frustrating, and disruptive to the buying and selling process.



■ Some ministers are required to work day and night. Kuwait is in urgent need for extraordinary efforts to be exerted, as the country has endured a long period of devastation.



■ Desert people say, "Enjoy your money before you say goodbye to it." So, hurry up and develop the infrastructure. Investing the Kuwaiti fund within Kuwait is far more beneficial than investing it abroad.

## Asian gang busted for stealing, dismantling, reselling vehicles

Expats leaving for good exploited in crime

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Personnel from the Sabah Al-Salem Investigation Department have arrested a three-man gang of criminals who had devised a new method for stealing luxury vehicles and then reselling them as scrap, reports Al-Anba daily.**

The process involved the buyer dismantling the vehicle in Kuwait and transporting it to a third country, for the car to be reassembled.

The authorities are currently investigating the number of cases the gang members have committed by reviewing complaints from rental offices about individuals who rented vehicles but failed to return them.

According to a security source, the Sabah Al-Salem Investigation officers received information that three expatriates had encouraged another expatriate to rent a luxury four-wheel-drive, valued at approximately 14,000 dinars, two weeks ago.

They gave the expatriate, who rented the car in his name, 1,000 dinars and the cost of a flight ticket in exchange for his cooperation. The investigations revealed the suspects then attempted to sell the vehicle that was rented in the expatriate's name.

The source stated: "The investigators contacted the suspects pretending to be interested in purchasing the vehicle. The officers met with them, posing as car dealers and expressed interest in buying the vehicle. The suspects agreed to sell it for 7,000 dinars, which was 50 percent of its actual value."

The source added, at this point the three men

were arrested after the officers learned they were at a café in the Salimiya area.

They were then taken for interrogation, during which they revealed their new method of theft. They explained that they would search for expatriates planning to leave the country for good.

After completing all the necessary procedures and receiving their dues, they would be taken to a rental office days before their departure and offered money to rent a car for 10 days.

The expatriate would leave the country immediately and during the rental period, the gang would sell the vehicle, ensuring it was not used within the country. The car would then be dismantled and smuggled out of the country.

The suspects revealed that the vehicle was in their possession that had been rented in the name of an expatriate who had left the country a few days earlier. The expatriate was given 1,000 Kuwaiti dinars and had his flight ticket paid for.

### Grocery worker robbed at gunpoint

## Court acquits Coast Guard officer accused of drug peddling

By Jaber Al-Humoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Criminal Division at the Court of First Instance acquitted an individual and an officer working at the Coast Guard Sector in the Ministry of Interior of smuggling hashish and psychotropic substances from Iraq with the intent to trade due to lack of incriminating evidence.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendants with smuggling hashish for trading. One of the defendants was previously subjected to a final felony penalty.

They were also accused of smuggling methamphetamine, alprazolam, diazepam, carboxamide-indazole derivatives, tramadol and flunitratepam with the intent to trade.

They were charged with smuggling the nar-

cotic substances mentioned in the first and second charges, with the intent to use them without proving that they are legally authorized to do so. One of

the accused was charged with possessing amphetamine and benzodiazepine with the intent to use them.

Lawyer of one of the accused, Attorney Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan, argued in court that the charge against his client was not proven and there were no elements of crime against him, in addition to the lack of connection to the seized items.

Al-Qattan added that the case papers were completely devoid of any evidence or indication that the accused smuggled the narcotic substances, whether for trading or consumption and that the papers were devoid

of any valid indication or evidence proving his client's connection to the seized items.



**Armed robbery probed:** Personnel from the Jahra Criminal Investigation Department are investigating the case of an unknown individual who robbed a worker at a mobile grocery store under the threat of a knife, reports Al-Anba daily. The case also involves theft and destruction of property.

The complainant has provided details about the vehicle used by the suspect, confirming that it had no license plates but offered a precise description. The complaint has been filed with the Mutla'a Police Station.

The victim, born in 1993, reported that around 4:00 am, a black pickup truck without license plates pulled up outside the store and the driver asked for groceries, which the worker provided, totaling 10 dinars.



Al-Qattan

SAYING HI 🙋, HELLO 🙋, AND SHARING EMOJIS 😊  
on social media is not enough

OUR 2025 INITIATIVE  
Elevating Family 👨👩👧 and Friend Bonds 🤝

Call now and grab your voucher  
to enjoy **BIG** discounts!

**25% OFF FAMILY**

Hurry, it's a limited-time offer  
SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY

**MUGHAL MAHAL** SINCE 1985

FOR MORE DETAILS ON OUR OFFERS, CONTACT US.  
📞 1800188 / 55011985

Available on the App Store and Google Play. Includes a QR code for more information.

# Minister Al-Mutairi announces launch of annual Kuwait Media Award 'Sheraa'

National initiative to recognize excellence in journalism

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Tuesday announced the launch of the annual Kuwait Media Award 'Sheraa', reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

The award is designed to honor innovators across various media fields and encourage the production of purposeful and sustainable media content.

Minister Al-Mutairi highlighted

that the launch of the award comes at a time when Kuwait is celebrating its national holidays and is officially recognized as the capital of Arab culture and media.

This reflects the ministry's commitment to supporting media professionals and motivating them to produce distinguished work that contributes to enhancing public awareness.

Al-Mutairi emphasized that the



Al-Mutairi

award is part of the ministry's broader efforts to foster positive change, driven by the ongoing support of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Mishal 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 Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The award spans individual and group competitions across various media sectors, aiming to provide a platform that nurtures creativity and supports young media talents in Kuwait.

The award also has an Arab dimension, with members of the arbitration committees from other Arab

countries contributing to the evaluation process, ensuring the advancement of media standards.

The Minister further revealed that the full details of the award, including its categories and application criteria, will be announced next week.

He expressed his gratitude to the Higher Committee overseeing the award and to all those who have contributed to organizing the event.

Al-Mutairi encouraged media professionals and institutions in Kuwait to participate in this prestigious national event, highlighting its role in strengthening the national media scene and reinforcing Kuwait's status as a leader in media thought and creativity.

## Crown Prince, PM extend wishes

### Kuwait HH Amir congratulates Belarusian Prez on re-election

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA):** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a cable to the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, congratulating him on his re-election.

His Highness the Amir wished the president good health, his country and people further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a

cable to the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, congratulating him on the re-election.

His Highness the Crown Prince wished the president good health, his country and people further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also sent on Wednesday a cable to the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, congratulating him on his re-election.

Over 164,000 meters installed

## MEW outlines strategic plans for smart meters and water projects

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** During his meeting with the assistant undersecretaries of all sectors in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the Undersecretary of the ministry Dr. Adel Al-Zamel discussed customer services, the billing system, and the smart electricity meter installation project through which over 164,000 smart electricity meters have been installed.

Work is ongoing to install an additional 500,000 smart meters, with completion expected within three years. Also, the contractual procedures for smart water meters have been completed, and the total amount collected from April 2024 to January 2025 reached KD 530 million.

A presentation was given on the

operation and management of the water system, and the current and future needs were addressed to ensure the continuity of water services.

The discussion also covered the plans for connecting the northern and southern parts of the country to enhance flexibility in water transfer in all regions.

The installed water production capacity stands at 687.8 million imperial gallons per day, with a current production rate of 464,750 million imperial gallons per day, consumption at 465,755 million imperial gallons per day, and a storage capacity of 4,782 million imperial gallons.

Al-Zamel reviewed the tasks of the committee responsible for preparing strategies to rationalize electricity and water consumption, as well as the committee's objectives and the work carried out by its sub-teams, and the media campaigns carried out by the media and awareness team to promote rationalization during the summer of 2023 and 2024.

The meeting also covered current and future water projects, including the expansion of the water network and related facilities.



Dr. Al-Zamel

## Farwaniya Governor meets environmental activist

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received in office in the governorate's general diwan this morning the environmental activist Saad Al-Hayyan, who is the founder of the initiative to number and preserve old trees in Kuwait, and determine their age.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, recent environmental activities and the main achievements of various environmental initiatives and activists were discussed during the meeting.

Al-Hayyan affirmed that environmental conservation is a societal responsibility, particularly when it comes to preserving Kuwait's environmental heritage.

He stressed the significance of these efforts for improving Kuwait's standing in global environmental indicators, especially



Governor Sheikh Athbi with environmental activist Saad Al-Hayyan.

through the protection of old trees.

Al-Hayyan shared his plan to establish the first private garden in Kuwait dedicated to protecting

old trees.

He said the initiative involves numbering old trees in various parts of Kuwait based on a specific

mechanism, determining their approximate age, and collecting data about them, which will help reshape Kuwait's environmental image and enhance its global reputation.

Governor Sheikh Athbi expressed his great interest in such environmental initiatives and commended the efforts of Kuwaiti activists dedicated to preserving the country's environmental heritage.

He assured Al-Hayyan of his continued support for initiatives that promote environmental work, which he believes will positively impact Kuwait's ranking in global environmental performance indicators.

At the end of the meeting, Al-Hayyan thanked the governor for his warm reception, his interest in environmental matters, and his ongoing support for environmental activists. He also praised the progress and development seen in the governorate in all fields.

Six-month review deadline set

## Municipal Committee pushes for clear mechanism on abandoned properties

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** The Technical Committee of the Municipal Council has recommended returning to the executive body the proposal submitted by member Fahd Al-Abduljader regarding abandoned properties.

The committee has requested the executive body to provide a detailed mechanism for monitoring dilapidated properties, the number of cases to be reviewed within six months of the committee's meeting, the criteria for determining the grace period for warnings, and the procedures to follow if an owner fails to respond.

Also, the reason for setting the time frame set for the committee, which ends in 2025, was not directly tied to resolving the issue of dilapidated, abandoned, and deteriorating buildings.

During its meeting yesterday chaired by Munira Al-Amir, the committee retained in its agenda the executive body's response to Vice President Khaled Al-Mutairi's question regarding the metro project and the obstacles hindering its implementation.

In its response to Al-Mutairi's question,

the municipality clarified that it is not the entity responsible for the metro project. The project falls under the development

initiatives overseen by the Public-Private Partnership Authority, with implementation carried out in collaboration with the transportation sector of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation. The final study of the project's route and area will be prepared in coordination with the municipality.

The committee also reviewed a proposed amendment to Table No. 16 attached to ministerial resolution No. 278/2021, which pertains to the organization of construction work and the attached tables with the addition of some proposed activities.

It is worth noting that the municipality previously announced the formation of the Committee for Dilapidated, Abandoned, and Deteriorating Properties, pursuant to the administrative decision issued on June 23.



Al-Abduljader

## New platform simplifies applications

### PAAET introduces digital shift with new promotions system

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam announced the launch of the electronic promotions system for faculty members in applied colleges for the second semester of the 2024-2025 academic year.

He explained that this program marks a qualitative shift in the academic and scientific fields of PAAET, as it simplifies the promotion application process through the official website [www.paaet.edu.kw](http://www.paaet.edu.kw).

In a press statement issued yesterday, Dr. Al-Fajjam highlighted that the electronic system will promote fairness in the electronic submission process, ensure transparency, and create an organized academic

framework that aligns with modern academic standards while enhancing the professional development of faculty members.

He explained that this system supports the implementation of resolution No. 1818/2024, issued on July 18, 2024, which aims to ensure adherence to promotion timelines, encourage faculty members to improve their academic performance, and actively participate in departmental, college, and authority work.

The system also seeks to activate scientific production and strengthen its connection to the labor market and community service for contributing to the development of state institutions.

An instructional video will be sent to all faculty members to guide them on how to access and apply through the new system.

Dr. Al-Fajjam revealed that PAAET is one of the first institutions to introduce such a system, stating that this initiative is in line with the directives from the Council of Ministers and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal to stay in step with digital development and expedite the processing of transactions in various ministries and state agencies.



Dr. Al-Fajjam



# FEBRUARY

## Room Promotion



**One Night Stay in a Queen Cabana**  
for 2 persons with inclusive of breakfast  
was BHD 76.230

Now **BHD 49.550** Net



**One Night Stay in a 2 Bedroom Chalet**  
for 4 persons inclusive of breakfast  
was BHD 170.247 Net

Now **BHD 110.661** Net

Promo period from 1<sup>st</sup> February to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Terms & conditions apply\*

Tel: +973 17701201 - Ext. 351 | Email: [reservation@albander.com](mailto:reservation@albander.com) | [www.albander.com](http://www.albander.com) | [@albanderhotelandresort](https://www.facebook.com/albanderhotelandresort)

## CSC introduces new service on Sahel

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** The Civil Service Commission has introduced the 'Request an Instant Certificate' service through the Sahel government application, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This service allows employees working in government institutions that implement the instant certificates feature to print various important documents

directly.

The available certificates include the salary detail certificate, salary transfer continuity certificate, career progression certificate and the 'To Whom It May Concern' certificate.

This new initiative aims to streamline administrative processes and enhance convenience for government employees.

## LOCAL

Continued from Page 1

## Mental evaluation

It stressed that there would be no leniency in applying the law and that the case is being followed with great interest and keenness to achieve justice, protect rights, and enhance security in society.

In other news, the Deportation Prison Administration has relocated inmates from the old detention facility in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh to a new and modern facility in Sulabiya that meets international and humanitarian standards, reports Al-Seyassah daily quoting security sources.

The administration continues to deport violators of residency laws, with approximately 2,000 deportees of various nationalities leaving the country this month.

It is committed to ensuring the smooth departure of deportees while ensuring their humanitarian needs are met during detention.

Approximately 77,000 residency law violators were deported in 2023 and 2024.

## HH Crown

He was welcomed by Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, GCC Secretary General Jasem Al-Budaiwi, and chairman and deputy chairman of the current session Nasser Abdullah Al-Rawdhan and Dr. Mohammad bin Saleh Al-Sadeh, respectively.

His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed to the conferees the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He highlighted the importance of strengthening the sisterly relations among the GCC member countries and realizing the aspirations of their peoples for prosperity.

## Dr Dina

administrative positions, including Assistant Dean for Research and Laboratories Affairs and Assistant Dean for Planning, Consulting and Training at the College of Science.

The position of Director at Kuwait University has seen instability since 2019, with the role briefly held by Dr. Yousef Al-Roumi for only eight months before his resignation in November 2022.

The last period of real administrative stability occurred under the leadership of Dr. Hussein Al-Ansari, whose term ended in 2019, after which the administrative vacuum persisted until Dr. Al-Maillem's appointment.

## Kuwait FM

Al-Sada also congratulated the new Chairman of the Board, Nasser Al-Roudhan, on his selection as Chairman of the Advisory Board for the new session, stressing that the previous session witnessed great effort that resulted in the preparation of comprehensive strategic visions that were presented to the Supreme Council and officially approved.

In turn, the new Chairman of the Authority, Nasser Al-Roudhan, said that this meeting confirms the importance of the role played by the Authority in studying the vital issues that concern the GCC citizens and enhancing the sustainable development process of the Council countries.

The Advisory Body was established by a decision of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its 18th session in Kuwait in December 1997, based on a proposal submitted by the late Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with the aim of expanding the base of consultation and intensifying communications between member states.

## Cabinet evaluates

The Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on Tuesday.

Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Mahmoud Bushehri also informed the Cabinet about his ministry's signing of a memorandum of understanding on Monday with ABC Transco Limited Energy and its strategic partner General Electric Vernova to establish a gas-powered electricity-generating station with a total capacity of up to 3,000 megawatts.

The MoU inked in implementation of the directives of the political leadership and government's strategic vision and efforts to engage the private sector in development projects, particularly in power generation, under the independent supplier system.

On the occasion of the flag-raising ceremony that will be held at Bayan Palace on Sunday, February 2, 2025, marking the beginning of the state celebrations of the Independence Day and Liberation Day, the cabinet extends its sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the honorable Kuwaiti people.

Meanwhile, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam, who represented His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the World Economic Forum in Davos, which was held during the period from 20 to 24 January, informed the Cabinet of the outcome of her participation in the international event.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the current session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Member States Abdullah Al-Yahya briefed the Cabinet about his recent visit to Lebanon, accompanied by the GCC Secretary-General Jasem Al-Budaiwi, and the content of his meetings with the Lebanese President General Joseph Aoun, Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri, the Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Prime Minister-designate Dr. Nawaf Salam and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Abdullah Bou Habib.

Minister Al-Yahya noted that he had reiterated the Lebanese officials the commitment of the GCC countries to support Lebanon's sovereignty, security, stability and

territorial integrity, and GCC calls for the Lebanese institutions to implement necessary, comprehensive political and economic reforms to overcome the current crises.

The Cabinet also reviewed the reports of the financial controllers for the fiscal years (2023/2024-2024/2025) and decided to refer them to the Government Performance Follow-up Agency to coordinate with the relevant government agencies to draw upon its recommendations and take the necessary measures to achieve public interest.

The Cabinet debated a number of topics on the agenda and approved some of them and referred some others to the relevant ministerial committees to study and submit reports on them.

The Cabinet approved the minutes of the Supreme Committee for the Investigation of Kuwaiti Citizenship, which included cases of loss, withdrawal and revocation of Kuwaiti citizenship from some individuals, in accordance with the provisions of Decree Law No. (15) of 1959 regarding Kuwaiti nationality and its amendments.

## Kuwait traders

In a statement to Al-Seyassah, Dr. Zaman highlighted the lack of regulatory safeguards against cryptocurrency fraud in Kuwait.

Despite the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's refusal to grant licenses for Bitcoin trading and purchasing, there remains no effective oversight to shield the public from deception and fraudulent schemes.

She noted with concern that the majority of those affected were teenagers and young adults who lacked sufficient awareness of the risks associated with such speculative investments.

Dr. Zaman strongly advocated for the enactment of legislation criminalizing transactions involving encrypted digital currencies.

She emphasized that the Central Bank of Kuwait already prohibits dealings with these virtual assets, which are typically controlled by anonymous individuals with dubious intentions.

Additionally, she called for accountability measures against intermediaries who played a direct or indirect role in facilitating the entry of "Bitcoin Kuwait" into the market. Those who contributed to the currency's promotion over the past three years, whether through direct endorsement or indirect facilitation, should also be held responsible.

She also criticized newspapers and electronic media platforms that had, over the years, published articles encouraging young Kuwaitis to invest in Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. Expressing her disappointment.

Dr. Zaman lamented the role of prominent media outlets that fueled public enthusiasm for what ultimately turned out to be a fraudulent scheme. She pointed out that the mastermind behind "Bitcoin Kuwait" managed to operate for three years before vanishing with millions, leaving behind a trail of financial devastation.

Drawing comparisons to past incidents, Dr. Zaman stressed that people fail to learn from historical financial scams. She cited the example of a major Chinese bank that engaged in Bitcoin trading and subsequently suffered enormous losses, ultimately leading to its bankruptcy two years ago.

Moreover, she questioned why authorities permitted the creation of "X" platform accounts for Kuwaiti groups promoting Bitcoin trading, despite widespread regulatory opposition.

Dr. Zaman noted that, despite existing religious fatwas prohibiting transactions in cryptocurrencies, many young Kuwaitis continue to be deceived. Alarming, even well-educated and cultured individuals in the country have fallen victim to such scams but choose to remain silent out of embarrassment.

She pointed out that while there are over 1,000 different cryptocurrencies worldwide, Bitcoin remains the most well-known due to its initial promise of high returns, which ultimately entices investors into fraudulent schemes involving large sums.

The professor attributed the rise in cryptocurrency fraud to a legislative vacuum that leaves Kuwaiti youth particularly vulnerable. She revealed findings from a recent study she conducted on Bitcoin, which indicated that approximately 60 percent of cryptocurrency traders in Kuwait were young people and gambling enthusiasts. This demographic, she warned, is especially susceptible to financial manipulation and deception.

Dr. Zaman also shed light on the perils of digital stocks, sharing the story of a Kuwaiti engineer who lost 300,000 dinars to fraudulent digital trading schemes.

The financial disaster forced him to sell off most of his assets. She urged caution against even minimal experimentation with Bitcoin or digital stocks, warning that fraudsters employ sophisticated tactics to steal bank account information from unsuspecting investors.

"The risks of Bitcoin investment should not be underestimated because the financial fallout could be even more severe than anticipated," she cautioned. She also warned against the dangers of online gambling platforms proliferating through mobile applications.

Emphasizing the role of authorities, Dr. Zaman called on Kuwait's Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority to take action by blocking fraudulent websites.

She explained that fraud methods are continuously evolving, incorporating new technologies to deceive victims. Cybercriminals now use fake links, hacked social media accounts and even celebrity endorsements to make their scams appear legitimate.

She further pointed out that the reluctance of many victims to report cases of electronic fraud emboldens fraudsters and perpetuates the cycle of cryptocurrency-related deception.

To curb these growing threats, she advocated for revising and strengthening relevant laws, including the General Authority for Communications and Information Technology Law, the Electronic Media Law and the Anti-Information Technology Crimes Law.

Such amendments, she argued, are essential to closing loopholes that allow malicious actors to exploit digital platforms for fraudulent activities, spread misinformation and incite hate speech without facing consequences.

## Ambassador emphasizes future collaboration

## Japanese envoy Kenichiro Mukai makes first official visit to The Scientific Center

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Scientific Center, one of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Centers, welcomed Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Mr. Kenichiro Mukai, on his first official visit since taking office. The visit aimed to strengthen scientific and environmental ties between Kuwait and Japan.

Mr. Mukai was welcomed by Engineer MUSAAD AL-YASEEN, General Manager of the Scientific Center, and Mr. MOHAMMAD AL-SANOUSI, Deputy General Manager for Visitors Engagement, along with other senior officials. During the visit, the ambassador toured the center's interactive exhibits and educational facilities, which are designed to inspire innovation and foster a deeper understanding of environmental and scientific



Ambassador Kenichiro Mukai during his visit at The Scientific Center.

concepts. Engineer Al-Yaseen emphasized the significance of the partnership between The Sci-

entific Center and the Japanese Embassy, referencing past collaborations such as the marine turtle rehabilitation project. He expressed hope for further joint initiatives that would contribute to sustainability and innovation.

The ambassador highlighted the center's efforts in delivering advanced educational programs and promoting environmental awareness within the community. He also emphasized on the opportunities for future collaboration in fields such as sustainable education and technological advancement.

The visit concluded with both parties affirming their commitment to continued dialogue and collaboration, highlighting the role of The Scientific Center as a hub for advancing science, education, and environmental stewardship in Kuwait.

## KNPC plans 20 new fuel stations

## Company targets 6 mln liters by 2027

By Najeh Bilal  
Al-Seyassah/ Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: **Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) intends to boost its annual profits by increasing the number of car fuel stations to augment its sales of gasoline in the local market to reach about six million liters by 2027.**

Sources said the company offers various types of gasoline in the local market; indicating the company sold 4,860,000 liters last year. The largest share was for Premium 91 gasoline, which achieved the highest percentage in sales -- more than three million liters, while Special 95 gaso-

line reached more than 1.8 million liters and a small percentage of Ultra 98 -- more than 33,000 liters, sources added.

Sources confirmed that Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of KNPC Wadha Al-Khatib is closely following up the file of increasing the number of fuel stations in light of the population increase witnessed by the country, in addition to the rising number of residential areas.

Sources said the company is currently coordinating with the Kuwait Municipality, Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), Ministry of Electricity and Water, and Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) to allocate sites where more fuel stations will be established in order to obtain approvals.

Sources explained that the total number of fuel stations has

reached 79; including six mobile stations; indicating that the plan of KNPC is to establish 20 fuel stations until 2027, to reach 100 fuel stations by 2040.

Sources affirmed the company is keen on protecting the environment in general; hence, the establishment of many facilities at its fuel stations aimed at protecting the surroundings of the stations, including a unit for recovering volatile vapors by installing advanced devices.

Meanwhile, KNPC also revealed that it recently opened a new fuel filling station in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak -- the second over the past two months, as it opened a similar station last November.

The new station is located in Block One and bears the number 157. It has a modern design and uses solar energy to produce clean energy, which will provide about 30 per-

cent of the station's electricity needs.

It also contains a vapor recovery unit that has the ability to absorb vapors while filling the car's tank with fuel, condense them and return them to the tank to reduce environmental pollution.

The station will provide parallel services to its customers like a mini central market, an ATM and car maintenance; in addition to providing various options for paying the fuel value through advanced and easy-to-use electronic technologies and applications.

The opening of this station comes within the framework of a strategic plan to build new stations in various parts of the country, especially in new residential areas; for the company to meet the needs of the residents in these areas for petroleum derivatives and to keep pace with the urban expansion witnessed by the country.

## Sheikha Dr Hessa appointed as President of Arab Businesswomen Council &amp; West Asia Coordinator

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The International Federation of Business and Professional Women announced the appointment of Her Excellency Sheikha Dr. Hessa Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah as the President of the Arab Businesswomen Council and Coordinator for the West Asia and Arab Countries Region.

According to a press release by the Kuwait Union of Professionals for Small and Medium Enterprises, this appointment comes in recognition of Sheikha Dr. Hessa's profound contributions to women empowerment in the Arab world. Her exceptional legacy in uniting businesswomen and leaders in the Arab world as a pioneer in women's economic empowerment has been marked by her support for initiatives that create an enabling environment for women's participation in economic development.

Her unwavering advocacy, transformative programs, and leadership have inspired generations of Arab women to realize their potential and



H.E. Sheikha Dr. Hessa Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah

break barriers in both professional and business spheres.

During her tenure as President of the Arab Businesswomen Council, Sheikha Dr. Hessa has led many

initiatives aimed at uniting businesswomen, promoting collaboration, mentorship, and networking among Arab women.

Her efforts have led to significant achievements that have not only improved the economic status of women in the Arab world but also elevated their role in shaping sustainable development and gender equality policies.

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women, which is the world's largest organization of business and professional women, was founded in 1930 and operates in over 100 countries across five continents.

With consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Federation of Business and Professional Women is a powerful network dedicated to advancing women's professional, leadership, and entrepreneurial potential. Through mentoring, networking,

skills building, and empowerment programs, it continues to fulfill its mission of supporting women's economic empowerment globally.

The selection of Sheikha Dr. Hessa as the Regional Coordinator for West Asia and the Arab States is a testament to her extraordinary contributions to women empowerment. Her wise leadership embodies the values and mission of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women.

Her appointment marks a major step toward strengthening the federation's network and amplifying the voices of women in the Arab world.

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women is committed to inclusivity, diversity, and promoting the economic empowerment of women worldwide.

It celebrates the remarkable achievements of Arab women and recognizes their vital role in shaping the future of global business and professional networks.

## PAAET schedules English placement test on Feb 2

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Deanship of Admission and Registration at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has announced the schedule for the English language placement test for students accepted into its colleges for the second semester of the 2024-2025 academic year.

The test for students accepted into the College of Nursing will be held on Sunday, February 2. Male students will take the test in the boys' building, and female students will take it in the girls' building, both located at the College of Nursing in Shuwaikh.

Students accepted into the Colleges of Basic Education, Business Studies, Technological Studies, and Health Sciences will take the test on February 3, 4, or 5 at the College of Business Studies buildings in Ardiya.

The Deanship emphasized that students must attend the test on the date specified in the Bushra app and bring their civil ID. Mobile phones are prohibited in the examination halls.

## KJA urges members to attend Feb 10 general assembly meet

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Kuwait Journalists Association has invited members who have paid their subscriptions as of the end of the working day today, in accordance with articles 25 and 27 of the association's bylaws, to attend the regular general assembly meetings, during which the administrative and financial reports for the years 2023 and 2024 will be discussed, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The regular general assembly meetings are scheduled to be held on the evening of Monday, February 10, at the association's temporary headquarters in Shuwaikh Industrial, Al-Sahafa Street opposite Khalidiya, Al-Balagh building, second floor.

If the required legal quorum is not met, the meeting will be postponed for 30 minutes and will proceed with any number of attendees, as per Article 29 of the association's bylaws.

**ARAB TIMES**  
Kuwait's No.1 English Newspaper

**For Subscriptions  
and Complaints**

Please Call

**51508991  
51526559**



## INTERNATIONAL

'Whole goal of this bill is to help Trump do his job'

## Florida lawmakers pass immigration bill to help with crackdown

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., Jan 29, (AP): Florida lawmakers passed a sweeping immigration bill Tuesday, setting aside half a billion dollars in public funds to help carry out President Donald Trump's crackdown on those in the country illegally.

In a state where roughly one in every five residents is an immigrant, the legislation would require every level of government - as well as government contractors - to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement "to the fullest extent possible."

Following more than four hours of deliberations on Tuesday, Florida's Republican-dominated Legislature passed the measure largely along party lines. The passage sets up a showdown between Republican Gov Ron DeSantis and state legislative leaders, who have sparred over whose proposals would better carry out Trump's immigration crackdown. DeSantis has called the bill "weak."

"The whole goal of this bill is to help President Trump do his job," said Republican Sen. Gruters, one of the bill sponsors and a Trump ally who said he spoke with the president while shepherding the measure. "He wants maximum coordination with local government."

Lawmakers pushed the 80-plus



Law enforcement officers process a group of migrants and several suspected smugglers arrested in Coral Gables, Florida on Jan 28. (AP)

page bill - titled the Tackling and Reforming Unlawful Migration Policy, or TRUMP Act - through in a special session, when it's harder for the public to engage in the legislative process. Republican lawmakers filed the bill after rejecting immigration proposals by DeSantis, a rebuke to the lame duck governor who was once floated as Trump's successor.

Notably, one Republican in the

House and six in the Senate voted against the measure, leaving the bill short of a veto-proof majority.

"I appreciate the attempt," said Republican Sen. Blaise Ingoglia, an ally of the governor. "I cannot vote for this because it is nowhere near strong enough for my taste."

Ahead of the floor debate on Tuesday, Senate President Ben Albritton

and House Speaker Daniel Perez announced additional provisions, after they "requested and received technical assistance from the Trump Administration", the leaders said.

The amendments included enhancing penalties for all crimes committed in the state by people in the country illegally, and requires that those convicted of capital offenses receive the death penalty. But the Republican sponsors declined to include some of DeSantis' provisions, like restrictions on sending money overseas by people in the country illegally and a measure that would have created a legal presumption that people in the country illegally are a flight risk.

Now DeSantis must weigh whether to sign a proposal he's bashed in public as "toothless" and "watered-down" or veto it. He could also decline to sign the bill, allowing it to become law.

The measure passed by lawmakers Tuesday would create a new state immigration enforcement office with more than 140 employees under the direction of a newly minted chief immigration officer, a post to be taken by the state's commissioner of agriculture, and would cede emergency immigration enforcement powers from the governor to the state immigration officer.

## South Carolina's McMaster now longest serving governor

COLUMBIA, SC, Jan 29, (AP): Wednesday is a big day for South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster. Yes, he's giving his eighth State of the State address. And he's become the Palmetto State's longest serving governor at 2,927 days, thanks in large part to his evolving political instincts over 40 years in politics and a boost from President Donald Trump.

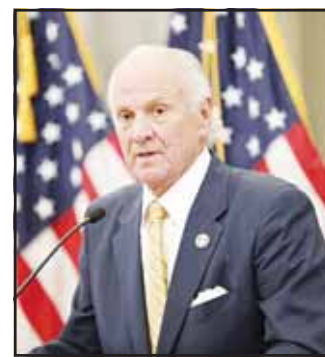
It's another bit of history for the 77-year-old Republican who also is the oldest governor in South Carolina's 249 years as a state.

Chances are that McMaster mentions the milestone in Wednesday night's speech before the General Assembly, it will be just in passing. His staff has politely waved off requests for a big retrospective. A reporter did ask him last week how it felt to be on the cusp of such an achievement.

"Well, all you have to do is stay alive," McMaster said.

South Carolina originally had two-year terms for governor, and they could not seek reelection. That was later extended to four-year terms and not until 1980 did the state allow a governor to serve two consecutive terms.

Since then, three governors have made it all eight years, and thanks



South Carolina Gov Henry McMaster speaks at a news conference revealing his proposal for the state budget on Jan 13, in Columbia, SC. (AP)

to the quirk of the calendar and inauguration dates Democrat Dick Riley served eight years plus four days from 1979 to 1987.

McMaster should blow well past the Riley record because he took over for Gov. Nikki Haley in 2017 when Trump appointed her U.N. ambassador during his first term. McMaster finished the last two years of that term and has been reelected twice. His final term runs out in January 2027.

## Some Republicans critical, most supportive

## Trump makes moves to expand power and possible constitutional crisis

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP): Just a little over a week into his second term, President Donald Trump is taking steps to maximize his power, sparking chaos and what critics contend is a constitutional crisis as he challenges the separation of powers that have defined American government for more than 200 years.

The new administration's most provocative move came this week, as it announced it would temporarily halt federal payments to ensure they complied with Trump's orders barring diversity programs. The technical-sounding directive had enormous immediate impact before it was blocked by a federal judge, potentially pulling trillions of dollars from police departments, domestic violence shelters, nutrition services and disaster relief programs that rely on federal grants.

Though the Republican administration denied Medicaid was affected, it acknowledged the online portal allowing states to file for reimbursement from the program was shut down for part of Tuesday in what it insisted was an error.

Legal experts noted the president is explicitly forbidden from cutting off spending for programs that Congress has approved. The U.S. Constitution grants Congress the power to appropriate money and requires the executive to pay it out. A 50-year-old law

known as the Impoundment Control Act makes that explicit by prohibiting the president from halting payments on grants or other programs approved by Congress.

"The thing that prevents the president from being an absolute monarch is Congress controls the power of the purse strings," said Josh Chafetz, a law professor at Georgetown University, adding that even a temporary freeze violates the law. "It's what guarantees there's a check on the presidency."

Democrats and other critics said the move was blatantly unconstitutional.

"What happened last night is the most direct assault on the authority of Congress, I believe, in the history of the United States," Sen. Angus King, an independent from Maine, said Tuesday.

While some Republicans were critical, most were supportive.

"I think he is testing the limits of his power, and I don't think any of us are surprised by it," said Sen. Kevin Cramer, a North Dakota Republican who is close with Trump.

At first blush, the Trump administration appears to be following the correct procedures in identifying potential spending cuts, and the Impoundment Control Act outlines a procedure for how they could become permanent, said Rachel Snyderman, a former official at the Office of Management and



US President Donald Trump speaks about the economy during an event at the Circa Resort and Casino in Las Vegas on Jan 25. (AP)

Budget who is now at the Bipartisan Policy Center.

Congress must eventually sign off on any cuts the administration wants to make, Snyderman said, though she noted that no president since Bill Clinton, a Democrat, has been successful in getting that done, Congress did not act on \$14 billion in impoundment cuts Trump proposed during his prior term, she said.

"We have to see what the next steps are," Snyderman said.

hires, challenged the constitutional guarantee of birthright citizenship and is moving career staff out of key positions at the Department of Justice to ensure his loyalists control investigations and prosecutions.

On Tuesday evening, the new administration made its latest move, trying to prune the federal workforce by offering pay until the end of September for those who agree to resign by the end of next week.

The Trump actions have all led to a cascade of court challenges contending he has overstepped his constitutional bounds. A federal judge in Seattle has already put on hold Trump's attempt to revoke birthright citizenship, calling it a blatant violation of the nation's foundational legal document. On Tuesday, nonprofit groups persuaded a federal judge in Washington to put the administration's spending freeze order on hold until a fuller hearing on Feb 3.

Democratic attorneys general also rushed to court to block the order. New Mexico Attorney General Raul Torrez, a Democrat, said the swiftness of the court action against Trump's spending freeze demonstrates the "carelessness" of the order.

"My hope is that the president, working with Congress, can identify whatever his priorities are and can work through the normal constitutional order that is well established that limits

the power of Democratic and Republican presidents," he said.

The grant freeze - administration officials described it as a "pause" - fits with a long-sought goal of some Trump allies, including his nominee to run the Office of Management and Budget, Russell Vought, to challenge the constitutionality of the Impoundment Control Act. They contend the president, as the person in charge of distributing funds, should be able to have some control over how the money goes out.

Though there's little doubt the new administration wanted a court fight over its power to control spending, experts agree that this was likely not the way they hoped to present it.

"This is a really sloppy way of doing this," said Bill Galston, of the Brookings Institution, adding that he thought it was an administration error. "This is just classic Trump. He believes it's better to be fast and sloppy than slow and precise."

In her first press conference, Trump's new press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, on Tuesday urged organizations that need the grants to call the administration and show how their operations are "in line with the president's agenda."

"It's incumbent on this administration to make sure, again, that every penny is accounted for," Leavitt said.

## America

**Fine to replace Waltz:** Florida state Sen Randy Fine, a self-described "conservative firebrand," won the Republican primary in the special election to replace former rep Mike Waltz in Florida's 6th Congressional District.



Fine

Fine, who was endorsed by President Donald Trump, fought off challenges from two other Republicans in the race for the seat that includes Daytona Beach and communities south of Jacksonville.

Fine will advance to the April 1 general election to face Democrat Josh Weil, a public school teacher from Orlando.

The 6th District seat opened up after Trump tapped Waltz to be his national security advisor. (AP)

**Senators warned:** Calling Robert F. Kennedy Jr a "predator" who is addicted to power, Caroline Kennedy urged the US Senate in a Tuesday letter to reject the nomination of her cousin to be President Donald Trump's health secretary.

In a letter to Senators, Ms. Kennedy, who previously served as a US ambassador to Australia and Japan and is the daughter of former President John F. Kennedy, etched a damning sketch of her cousin, the latest condemnation Robert F. Kennedy Jr has received from members of his own, prominent Democratic family.

Several denounced her cousin's bid for the presidency last year. The letter, obtained by The Associated Press, was first reported by The Washington Post. (AP)

## Western officials warn Ukraine over arms procurement dispute

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 29, (AP): Western officials have warned Ukraine that an escalating rift between the defense minister and procurement chief may jeopardize trust in the country and urged the government to resolve the situation quickly so as not to disrupt weapons supplies.

The conflict began last week when the Defense Procurement Agency's board unanimously voted to extend director Maryna Bezrukova's contract for another year.

However, Defense Minister Rustem Umerov overruled the decision, refusing to renew her contract. He accused her of poor performance and failing to deliver weapons and ammunition to front-line troops.

The decision provoked an outcry from lawmakers and anti-corruption watchdogs who said the minister's move was illegal because Bezrukova had her contract extended by the agency's supervisory board in January. They also came to Bezrukova's

defense, saying she has been instrumental in creating greater transparency and reforms within the DPA, which has long faced corruption allegations.

Under Ukrainian law, Umerov's decision to go ahead with her dismissal is illegal.

The incident comes at a politically sensitive time for Ukraine as the country's leadership is eagerly watching the Trump administration's next moves, and as Ukrainian troops continue to face challenges in holding the line in the east amid fierce Russian attacks.

In a statement posted Monday on social media platform X, the ambassadors representing Group of Seven nations urged the government to resolve the situation "expeditiously and focus on keeping defense procurement going."

"Consistency with good governance principles and NATO recommendations is important to maintain the trust of the public and international partners," they said.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, rescuers carry the body of a civilian who was killed when a Russian drone hit a city food factory in Mykolaiv, Ukraine on Jan 29. (AP)



In this photo released by Belarus' Presidential Press Service, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, (center), takes part in an industry award ceremony in Minsk, Belarus, on Jan 23. (AP)

## China, Belarus have great prospects for cooperation: Lukashenko

China and Belarus have great prospects for cooperation in various fields such as culture, automobiles and biotechnology, Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko told Xinhua. Unlike the West, China has opened its "doors and windows" to

Belarus for cooperation, the Belarusian leader said.

Lukashenko said Belarus can maintain its high level of technological development today thanks to China. The president invited Chinese companies to cooperate with

Belarus. Lukashenko said the all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership between Belarus and China has a bright future, and the two countries will confidently move along this path. (Xinhua)

## Scholz's challenger brings tough migration plans to German parliament

BERLIN, Jan 29, (AP): Chancellor Olaf Scholz's main challenger in Germany's upcoming election plans to put proposals for a tougher migration policy to parliament on Wednesday, a maneuver aimed at piling pressure on the governing parties that has brought accusations that he's breaking commitments to shun the far right.

Opposition leader Friedrich Merz put migration in the focus of the campaign following a knife attack a week ago in the Bavarian city of Aschaffenburg by a rejected asylum-seeker, which left a man and a 2-year-old boy dead.

Germans will vote for a new parliament on Feb. 23 after Scholz's three-party governing coalition collapsed. Polls show Merz's mainstream center-right Union bloc in the lead with around 30% support, the far-right Alternative for Germany second with about 20%, and Scholz's center-left Social Democrats and the environmentalist Greens further back.

Migration was already a significant election issue alongside Germany's



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz attends the cabinet meeting at the chancellery in Berlin, Germany on Jan 29. (AP)

struggling economy. Merz's aim appears to be to make the Union look decisive in seeking a tougher approach, which also has been a central call of

Alternative for Germany, or AfD, while making Scholz and the Greens look weak. It's uncertain whether the move will bolster his position.

## Italian PM probed for repatriating Libyan warlord

MILAN, Jan 29, (AP): Rome prosecutors have opened an investigation against Premier Giorgia Meloni and two government ministers for repatriating a Libyan warlord wanted by the International Criminal Court in the Hague, the premier announced Tuesday.

Meloni revealed the investigation over allegedly aiding and abetting Oussama Anjem, also known as Oussama al-Masri, in a video posted on social media. She said her justice and interior ministers and an under-secretary are also targeted in the investigation.

Meloni's government has been under fire from the opposition, human rights groups and the ICC itself for releasing al-

Masri on a technicality after he was arrested in the northern city of Turin on a warrant from the international court.

Meloni said she presumes that the investigation was prompted by a complaint from an opposition politician. In Italy, prosecutors must launch investigations based on complaints, and it is up to a preliminary hearing judge to decide whether charges are filed or not. The process can take months if not longer.

Italy arrested al-Masri in Turin, where he had attended a soccer match, on Jan. 19, the day after the ICC's arrest warrant was issued. He was expelled on a government plane on Jan. 21, after a court failed to confirm his arrest.



In this undated photo provided Jan 29, 2025, by the North Korean government, its leader Kim Jong Un, second right, inspects a facility that produces nuclear material at an undisclosed location in North Korea. (AP)

## Pyongyang pressures Trump administration

### N.Korean leader Kim inspects nuclear facility

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 29, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspected a facility that produces nuclear material and called for bolstering the country's nuclear fighting capability, state media reported Wednesday, as the North looks to increase pressure on the United States following the inauguration of President Donald Trump.

Kim's visit suggests a continued emphasis on an expansion of North Korea's nuclear arsenal, though Trump has said he's willing to talk to Kim again to revive diplomacy. Many analysts view North Korean weapons moves as part of a strategy to win sanctions relief and political concessions from the United States.

The official Korean Central News Agency reported that Kim visited the nuclear-material production base and the Nuclear Weapons Institute. It didn't say where those facilities are located, but North Korean photos of Kim's visit indicated that he likely visited a uranium-enrichment facility that he went to last September. That visit was North Korea's first disclosure of a uranium-enrichment facility since it showed one to visiting American scholars in 2010.

During the latest visit, Kim said North Korea reported "amazing" results in its production of nuclear material last year and underlined the need to exceed this year's production goal to strengthen "the nuclear shield of the country," according to KCNA.

Kim said that further boosting the country's nuclear counteraction posture is "our invariable noble task" to cope with intensifying challenges posed by "hostile forces," an apparent reference to the U.S. and South Korea.

The start of Trump's second term raises prospects for the resumption of diplomacy between the United States 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 U.S.-led economic sanctions on North Korea, and Kim has since significantly dialed up weapons testing activities. During a Fox News interview broadcast Thursday, Trump called Kim "a smart guy" and "not a religious zealot." Asked whether he will reach out to Kim again, Trump replied, "I will, yeah."

North Korea hasn't yet directly responded to Trump's overture as it continues its belligerent rhetoric against the U.S. along with weapons testing activities. Many experts say Kim could eventually sit down for talks with Trump and would likely think he now has greater leverage than before because of his enlarged nuclear arsenal and deepening military ties with Russia.

On Sunday, North Korea said 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.

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 United States and South Korea have expanded their military exercises in response to North Korea's advancing nuclear program.

## Japan vows to strengthen communication with China

TOKYO, Jan 29, (Xinhua): Japanese Prime Minister **Shigeru Ishiba** on Tuesday pledged to enhance communication with China and comprehensively advance the strategic relationship of mutual benefit between the two countries.

During a plenary session of the House of Councillors, Ishiba emphasized the importance of strengthening communication with China across a wide range of fields, reducing challenges and increasing collaboration.

Both sides will work together to build constructive and stable bilateral ties, he said.

Meanwhile, Ishiba's Cabinet approval rating remains at 35.7 percent, slightly down from 36.5 percent last month, while disapproval rose to 49.2 percent, according to a Kyodo News survey.

Economic concerns dominated, with 84.3 percent of respondents expressing worry over the potential impact of US President Donald Trump's planned tariffs on Japan's economy, particularly its auto industry.

The survey also found that 59.4 percent of respondents support allowing married cou-

ples to have different surnames.

Regarding political party support, 26 percent back the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) for proportional representation in the upcoming upper house election, with overall support for the LDP at 29.6 percent.

The survey, conducted over the weekend, collected responses from 429 household members and 635 mobile phone users.

In another development, Japan saw a record-high 36.78 million foreign visitors in 2024, a 42-percent increase from the previous year, government data showed Friday.

The figure exceeds the previous record of 31.19 million set in 2019 and marks the highest number since statistics began in 1950, according to Japan's Immigration Services Agency.

The agency highlighted the resumption of international flights, a weakened yen, and a strong post-pandemic recovery trend as key factors contributing to the surge.

Short-term visits for purposes such as tourism accounted for the majority of arrivals. Other categories included study and technical internships.

By country or region, South Korea accounted for the largest number of visitors, with approximately 8.63 million arrivals. This was followed by China's Taiwan with around 5.69 million, Chinese mainland with approximately 5.49 million, the data showed.



Ishiba



Mayor of Busan Park Heong-joon and other officials visit the site where an Air Busan airplane caught fire at Gimhae International Airport in Busan, South Korea on Jan 29. (AP)

### Passenger plane catches fire at S.Korean airport; all 176 people on board evacuated

A passenger plane caught fire before takeoff at an airport in South Korea late Tuesday, but all 176 people on board were safely evacuated, authorities said.

The Airbus plane operated by South Korean airline Air Busan was preparing to leave for Hong Kong when its rear parts caught fire at Gimhae International Airport in the southeast, the Transport Ministry said in a statement.

The plane's 169 passengers, six crewmembers and one engineer were evacuated using an escape slide, the ministry said.

The National Fire Agency said in a release that three people suffered minor injuries during the evacuation. The fire agency said the fire was completely put out at 11:31 pm, about one hour after it deployed firefighters and fire trucks at the scene.

The cause of the fire wasn't immediately known. The Transport Ministry said the plane is an A321 model.

Tuesday's incident came a month after a Jeju Air passenger plane crashed at Muan International Airport in southern South Korea, killing all but two of the 181 people on board. It was one of the deadliest disasters in South Korea's aviation history. (AP)



Rwanda security officials check people crossing from Congo in Gisenyi, Rwanda on Jan 29, following M23 rebels' advances into eastern Congo's capital Goma. (AP)

## Rwanda's Kagame joins calls for ceasefire

### M23 rebels expand control of Goma in E.Congo

GOMA, Congo, Jan 29, (AP): Rwanda-backed rebels captured large parts of Goma, the biggest city in eastern Congo, including its airport, the United Nations said, as Rwanda's president on Wednesday joined calls for a ceasefire in the decadeslong conflict amid mounting international pressure.

Much of Goma was calm after a day during which thousands of fleeing people hunkered down by roadsides as missiles flew overhead, and injured people streamed to overwhelmed hospitals.

While government forces still control pockets of Goma, residents who spoke to The Associated Press by phone on Tuesday said that the M23 rebel group was in control of much of the city.

The M23 rebels, who said that they captured the city on Monday after a weeklong advance, are one of about 100 armed groups vying for a foothold in mineral-rich eastern Congo.

The conflict escalated with the rebels' advance into Goma, which left bodies on the streets and drove hundreds of thousands of already displaced people to flee once again.

After clashing with government forces, the rebels took control of the airport, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said at a briefing on Tuesday, warning of "risks of a breakdown of law and order in the city given the proliferation of weapons."

Rwandan President Paul Kagame said on X that he spoke with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on "the need to ensure a ceasefire and address the root causes of the conflict once and for all."

His government denies supporting M23, despite reports from UN experts who estimate there are up to 4,000 Rwandan forces in Congo. Rwanda has accused Congo of enlisting Hutu rebels and former militiamen whom it blames for the 1994 genocide.

The East African Community, whose members include both Rwanda and Congo, are scheduled to discuss the conflict at a meeting on Wednesday. Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi won't be able to participate in the virtual summit, a spokesperson said, without providing further details.

Pope Francis called for the cessation of hostilities and the protection of civilians.

## Brazil to set up deportee reception center after contentious flight from US

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 29, (AP): The Brazilian government Tuesday said it will create a reception center for deported migrants from the United States following controversy over conditions on a recent deportation flight.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva gave the green light to establish a humanitarian reception post at Confins, a municipality in Minas Gerais state, Brazil's Minister of Human Rights and Citizenship Macacé Evaristo told journalists in the capital Brasília.

That decision was made because of the possibility that more flights will follow the arrival of an initial flight to Brazil under the new Trump administration with 88 deportees on board this weekend. That followed dozens of flights during the Biden administration.

Local media reported that government officials were disturbed by the fact that Brazilians were kept handcuffed after an unscheduled stop in the Amazon's biggest city, Manaus, prompted by technical problems with the plane.

A Brazilian military plane brought them to their destination, the city of Belo Horizonte in Minas Gerais, on Saturday afternoon.

The next day, Brazil's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it was seeking answers from Washington regarding the "degrading treatment" of nationals during the recent flight. It



Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva poses for a photo after his first cabinet meeting of 2025, at the Granja do Torto country residence, in Brasilia, Brazil on Jan 20. (AP)

cited "the use of handcuffs and chains, the poor condition of the aircraft, with a broken air conditioning system, among other problems."

The U.S. Embassy declined to comment and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency didn't respond to an email request for comment.

It was unclear whether the 88 Brazilian deportees were taken into custody during the tenure of President Don-

ald Trump, who took office Jan. 20, or former President Joe Biden.

There have been almost four dozen deportation flights from the U.S. to Brazil over the past three years. Brazil has no desire to interrupt them and held talks with the American charge d'affaires on Monday, according to a government source with knowledge of the matter. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.

## At least 30 people dead and many injured in India after stampede at festival: police

PRAYAGRAJ, India, Jan 29, (AP): At least 30 people were killed and many more injured in a stampede at a gathering early Wednesday, police said, as millions of pilgrims rushed to dip in waters during the Maha Kumbh festival in northern India.

Police officer Vaibhav Krishna in Prayagraj city said another 60 injured were rushed to hospitals.

Authorities expected a record 100 million devotees to engage in a bath at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna and Saraswati rivers. The stampede happened when pilgrims tried to jump barricades, Uttar Pradesh state's top elected official, Yogi Adityanath, said in a televised statement.

Indian authorities took more than 16 hours to release casualty figures, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledged the loss of lives, calling the incident "extremely sad" and extending his condolences.

"Suddenly there was pushing in the crowd, and we got trapped. A lot of us fell down and the crowd went uncontrolled," the Press Trust of India news agency quoted pilgrim Sarojini as saying. "There



Hindu devotees try to cross a barricade to take a holy dip in the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna and Saraswati rivers, on 'Mauni Amavasya' or new moon day during the Maha Kumbh festival in Prayagraj, India on Jan 29. (AP)

was no chance for escape, there was pushing from all sides," she said.

Distressed families lined up outside a makeshift hospital, desperate for news of missing loved ones. Clothes, blankets and backpacks were strewn around the site of the stampede.

Millions continued to throng the 4,000-hectare (15-square mile) pilgrimage site despite the stampede, even as police urged them over megaphones to avoid the confluence. Adityanath urged people to take baths at other riverbanks instead.

## ECOWAS pledges to keep door open

ABUJA, Nigeria, Jan 29, (AP): The junta-led West African nations of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso have formally withdrawn from the regional bloc known as ECOWAS, the body said Wednesday.

The previously announced withdrawal, which marks the culmination of a yearlong process during which the group tried to avert an unprecedented disintegration, "has become effective today," ECOWAS said in a statement.

The bloc, however, said that it has also decided to "keep ECOWAS' doors open," and requested member nations to continue to accord the trio their membership privileges, including free movement within the region with an ECOWAS passport.



Members stand for the arrival of dignitaries at a joint press conference by African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) electoral observers in Abuja, Nigeria on Feb 27, 2023. (AP)

## Kuwait oil price falls to \$80.84 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti crude oil price lost 63 cents during Tuesday's trading to reach USD 80.84 per barrel (pb), compared with USD 81.47 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) said Wednesday.

Brent futures rose by 41 cents to hit USD 77.49 pb and West Texas Intermediate (WTA) went up by 60 cents to USD 73.77 pb.

# Business

First Kuwaiti bank to offer sign language services

## NBK completes special needs training program at Dasman Bilingual School

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced the successful completion of a training program in 2024 for students with special needs at Dasman Bilingual School. The initiative aimed to inspire and empower students by offering them hands-on training and the opportunity to gain valuable insights into the banking sector.

The two-week program, held within the local branches department, was meticulously designed to provide participants with an in-depth understanding of bank branch operations, including key banking mechanisms and operational procedures. Beyond this, the program created an inclusive and nurturing environment for students with special needs, offering them valuable real-world insights and the opportunity to develop essential skills. This experience not only broadened their knowledge but also enhanced their preparedness for future success in an ever-evolving labor market.

The program saw active participation from students in a range of carefully curated activities and tasks, designed to align with their abilities and interests. This hands-on approach allowed them to gain valuable practical experience in managing the Bank's local branches.

Throughout the program, the NBK team collaborated closely with the students, offering consistent guidance and support to ensure a comprehensive learning experience. This approach aimed to deepen their understanding of the banking industry while fostering their confidence and adaptability within a professional work environment.

The participating students from Dasman Bilingual School visited the bank to receive their certificates of completion for the training course. The ceremony, attended by members of the executive management, celebrated the students' enthusiasm, determination, and notable progress throughout the program.

Marking this special occasion, Gadeer Al-Kooheji, Head of Talent Acquisition- Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We take immense pride



Emad Al-Ablani and Gadeer Al-Kooheji with students of Dasman Bilingual School.

in hosting students with special needs from Dasman Bilingual School, providing them with opportunities to learn, grow, and gain valuable skills that support their future ca-

reer aspirations."

She emphasized that NBK takes the lead in supporting individuals with special needs by continually enhancing

**Al-Kooheji:** The program underscores our dedication to offering equal opportunities for all segments of society. We are committed to providing comprehensive support for individuals with special needs, empowering them in their pursuit of knowledge as part of our core social responsibility.

its services and equipping select branches with the necessary tools to ensure accessibility. This includes ATMs fitted with Braille keyboards and earphones, enabling customers with visual impairments to independently access banking services, such as cash withdrawals.

"We strongly believe in the potential of every individual in our community. This program underscores our commitment to fostering inclusivity and creating equal opportunities for all segments of society, particularly those who hold a special place in our hearts," she added.

She highlighted that NBK is the first bank in Kuwait to assign employees across all its branches to offer services in sign language for customers with hearing disabilities. Additionally, the bank provides iPads equipped with speech-to-text features for customers with visual impairments and offers wheelchairs to facilitate branch access. Dedicated parking spaces with clear, designated signage for people with special needs further reinforce NBK's commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

The bank also implements a dedicated policy for employing individuals with special needs, in collaboration with the Public Authority for Disability Affairs and the Public Authority for Manpower. This initiative reflects NBK's commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace and empowering individuals of all abilities to contribute meaningfully to the workforce.

PMI, project awards, and real estate sales reach multi-year highs

## Kuwait's non-oil sector shows strong growth in Q4 2024

By National Bank of Kuwait

A range of indicators painted a picture of improving non-oil sector conditions in Q4 2024. The PMI activity gauge signaled firm expansion, project awards and real estate sales both hit multi-year highs, while bank credit growth closed the year at a solid rate – well up on a year earlier. On the downside, bank card transaction data show that consumer spending eased further to minimal rates in Q3, despite a potential boost from Kuwait's hosting of the Arabian Gulf Cup football tournament in December. But this aside, broadly improving indicators painted an upbeat picture and contrasted preliminary data showing that non-oil GDP growth had turned negative in Q3.

On policy, government reform efforts picked up, with more than 30 draft laws reportedly being considered, including on liquidity management, mortgage financing and privatization. It has also moved ahead with fiscal reforms, with implementation of the corporate tax on multinationals in January while flagging an increase in fees for government services. These are the first major revenue-raising measures introduced in years.

**Non-oil GDP unexpectedly shrinks in Q3 2024**  
Preliminary official data show that non-oil GDP fell by 2.5% y/y in Q3, declining from a downwardly revised 2.5% (4.2% previously) in Q2. (Chart 1.) The decline in non-oil activity was broad-based but especially marked in manufacturing (-10.8%). Meanwhile, growth in the oil sector remained negative in Q3 for the sixth consecutive quarter (-5.3% y/y), constrained by the extension in Q3 of OPEC+ voluntary cuts.

The release also came with significant revisions to the historical data: Kuwait's non-oil economy is now shown to have escaped recession in both 2022 and 2023, though growth was downgraded for 2021. Large non-oil sectors including 'public administration & defense', 'electricity, gas & water', and construction, were revised higher, pushing non-oil growth to 1.6% (from -0.1% previously) in 2022 and to 1% (from -2.9%) in 2023.

**PMI signals solid non-oil activity growth in Q4**  
The news from the more up-to-date PMI gauge of non-oil private sector activity, however, is more upbeat. The index strengthened in Q4, with the PMI averaging 54.2, up from Q3's reading of 50.5. (Chart 2.) Non-oil activity was strong throughout the quarter as the output, new orders and new export orders subcategories all posted their highest average readings on record. Meanwhile, employment growth was unchanged and staffing costs increased quarter-on-quarter, though firms appeared not to pass on the higher costs to consumers. Business optimism about the near-term outlook remained strong.

**Oil prices gained in Q4 as OPEC extended output cuts**

Kuwait Export Crude closed Q4 2024 up 2% q/q to \$75.8/bbl, buoyed by OPEC's December decision to extend voluntary output cuts to end-March 2025 and return supply at a slower pace thereafter. Bullish tailwinds from OPEC's repeated voluntary cut extensions failed to offset the bearishness associated with weak Chinese oil demand growth especially and robust non-OPEC supply gains. Due to OPEC+ cuts, Kuwait's crude output in 2024 was the lowest since 2010 at 2.411 mb/d, though should begin rising in April at the rate of 7 kb/d per month (+63 kb/d by year-end).

**The government steps up pace of fiscal reform**  
As 2024 drew to a close and heading into 2025, the government increasingly signaled its intention to push ahead with initiatives and measures designed to improve the revenue and expenditure sides of the public ledger as well as general liquidity management. Revenue steps delivered or approved include higher traffic

- Official data showed non-oil GDP growth at -2.5% y/y in Q3 24, but other recent indicators are more upbeat.
- Real estate activity climbed strongly in Q4 24, building on earlier signs of a recovery from 2023 softness.
- Project awards logged their best quarter since Q2 2016 on strong construction and power & water awards.
- Bank credit growth rose to a solid 3.7% y/y in December, led by gains in the corporate segment.
- On the other side, cards data show that consumer spending slowed further in Q4.
- We look for 2-3% non-oil growth in 2025, with signs of improving momentum providing upside potential.

finances and fees for government services as well as a new corporate income tax in accordance with the OECD base erosion and profit shifting framework. The latter, which went into law in January following publication in the official gazette, will see a 15% top-up levy introduced on all foreign and domestic multinational businesses operating in Kuwait that generate profits of EUR750 million or more. More detailed by-laws are expected in June, but the Ministry of Finance estimates that the new tax will generate an additional KD250 million in revenues for the public purse – easily exceeding existing tax revenues of KD160 million (FY24/25 budget). Other initiatives being discussed include the VAT and excise tax laws, in line with the GCC unified tax framework, an amended privatization law and a law for the development of the Northern Economic Zone. Other significant draft laws reportedly in the final stages include the public debt and the regulation of FGF withdrawal law.

**Consumer spending growth continues to slow**

Consumer spending activity in Q4 2024, proxied by card transaction data (by value) published by the Central Bank of Kuwait, continued its slowing growth trajectory more than three years after peaking in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Growth in card spending in Kuwait eased to a post-pandemic low of 0.8% y/y (KD11.0 billion) from 4.6% in Q3.

Running counter to seasonal norms, spending in Q4 came in lower than in Q3 (-0.6% q/q), which is the first time that has happened since 2015. That said, we think the bulk of the spending growth slowdown has run its course, with 2025 potentially stable or even showing a modest increase in line with improving economic activity prospects, steady employment, moderating inflation and potentially lower interest rates.

**Real estate sales tick up in Q4 to highest in 2.5 years**

Real estate sales in Q4 reached their highest since Q2 2022 at KD1,082 million (28% q/q; 40% y/y), hinting at an accelerated pace of market recovery from the softness recorded in 2023. By segment, the improvement was across-the-board but led by the investment segment (36% q/q), followed by the commercial sector (32%) then residential (19%). Total sales reached KD3.5 billion in 2024, up 23% on the previous year's figure but still below 2021-2022 levels.

Meanwhile, real estate prices (excluding the commercial segment), according to the NBK index of prices, rose in Q4 by 3.8% q/q, logging their highest increase since Q3 22. Price rises were strongest in the investment segment, which admittedly have been volatile through the year, while residential prices saw a quarterly increase of 1.2% in Q4, but remain notably

down in year-on-year terms. Looking ahead, and given recent signs of momentum, real estate activity should see further improvement in 2025, in line with broad trends in the non-oil economy, potentially lower interest rates and the prospective approval of the government's mortgage law.

**Project activity accelerates in Q4; logs an impressive year**

Project awards jumped in Q4 2024 to KD1.2 billion, which was the best quarterly performance since Q2 2016. The construction sector accounted for half of all awards, with the Public Authority of Housing Welfare making progress on various housing projects including the affordable housing project in Al-Nayem area and the power & water sector notching up KD370 million in contract awards. Kuwait Oil Company's project to drill 141 wells helped push awards in the oil and gas sector.

For 2024 as a whole, KD2.7 billion worth of projects were awarded, a 44% increase on 2023 and the highest figure since 2017. Activity was boosted by the power & water and construction sectors, as the government pushed ahead with residential housing and strengthening the domestic electricity grid.

The near-term outlook remains constructive, especially with the government expected to re-emphasize in its forthcoming economic agenda speedier implementation of Vision 2035 infrastructure development goals. MEED Projects sees KD7.8 billion worth of projects coming through the pipeline in 2025, 60% of which are power & water-related. Prospects for the Al-Zour North IWPP Phases 2&3 (KD1.2 billion) look brighter as the project enters the bid evaluation phase. Meanwhile, the oil and gas sector could see a rise in activity, with the tender for KNPC's Al-Mutlaa project (KD225 million) scheduled to be awarded in Q1 2025 and as KOC pushes to raise oil output capacity to 3.2 mb/d.

**Inflation slowed to multi-year low in 2024**

Consumer price inflation gained slightly in December, rising to 2.5% y/y (+0.4% m/m) from 2.4% the previous month on an uptick in food and housing rental price inflation especially. Core inflation trended down to a more-than-two-year low of 2.6%.

Nevertheless, the broad trend in 2024, as in 2023, was deceleration, with headline inflation slowing to an average of 2.9% from 3.6% the year before. We expect inflation to average lower in 2025 amid lower imported inflation, the absence of stimulative fiscal policy and still relatively tight monetary conditions.

**Improving business and household credit growth**

Domestic credit growth strengthened to 3.7% in 2024, more than double the 1.7% increase recorded in 2023. The rebound in business credit in 2024 has been stronger than household credit, standing at 4% in 2024 up from 0.8% in 2023. The construction and trade sectors remained in the lead, in line with 2022-2023, up 7.9% and 7.3%, respectively. The recovery in household credit continued, and while the yearly growth stood at 3% (versus 1.5% in 2023), annualized growth over the past six months is a stronger 4.2%. Looking ahead, credit growth should witness a further slight improvement in 2025, benefiting from the ongoing pick-up in project awards and any incremental drop in policy rates.

Meanwhile, resident deposits finished the year growing by 3.6%, similar to the 3.9% recorded in 2023. However, the growth in private sector deposits rebounded to 4.5% in 2024 from 1.1% in 2023. In contrast, the increase in government deposits decelerated sharply to 5.7% in 2024 after a 37% surge in 2023. Within private-sector KD deposits, CASA decreased by a limited 1.1% in 2024 while time deposits increased by 8.5%, a much narrower differential compared with 2023.

## Al-Fassam stresses importance of cooperation for economic growth

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Noura Al-Fassam, has expressed her eagerness to collaborate with the Economic Association for the benefit of national economy, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This statement was made during her reception of the association's members,

whom she congratulated on earning the confidence of the General Assembly.

Al-Fassam wished them success as they move forward into the next phase of their work.

She emphasized the importance of cooperation between the ministry and the association to drive economic growth and strengthen Kuwait's financial and investment sectors.

'Kuwait's business ecosystem thrives'

## TBY unveils Kuwait 2025 report

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Business Year (TBY) is on the brink of unveiling its highly anticipated eighth annual report, The Business Year: Kuwait 2025. This comprehensive publication delves into Kuwait's key economic sectors, capturing insights and trends shaping the nation's future. As TBY nears the conclusion of its in-depth research, we speak with Agustina Dal Fabbro, Country Manager for TBY, about their findings and the significance of their work.

**The Business Year (TBY) is currently working on its eighth edition on Kuwait. What benefits does TBY bring to Kuwait through its reports?**

In emerging markets like Kuwait lack of information is often a challenge, data may be outdated, unavailable, or only available in Arabic. That's where TBY comes in – we provide a comprehensive platform that gathers and showcases key information about the trends, challenges, and opportunities across the main sectors of the economy. Our reports also highlight the key players in the market, showcasing their operations, innovations, and insights into industry trends. Beyond being a source of information, we also give a human face to the largest companies, fostering trust and credibility.

TBY actively facilitates dialogue between stakeholders through initiatives like the "Kuwait Innovation Forum," which connects key players to exchange ideas. In London, we organized the "Kuwait Investment Outreach" to mark 125 years of bilateral relations. This year, our Thought Leadership Event Series brought public and private leaders together to foster collaboration and align strategies, marking a milestone for TBY and KDIPA.

Beyond publishing reports, we drive private sector growth by showcasing innovations and advancements, helping companies stay competitive. With operations in 35 countries and a global reach of 3.82 million, we attract foreign investors and business professionals, aligning with Kuwait Vision 2035 to support the country's transformation and long-term goals.

**How have you taken your collaboration with KDIPA to the next level this year?**

Our partnership with KDIPA is vital in delivering high-quality, reliable information to the business community and investors. Each year, we collaborate to highlight key trends and feature leading companies shaping Kuwait's economy.

This year, we deepened our engagement by focusing on the public sector, leveraging KDIPA's support to connect with key figures across industries. This has enabled us to analyze new regulations and initiatives, offering the private sector a clearer path to navigate recent changes.

Our Thought Leadership Event Series this year further exemplifies this collaboration. We brought together key figures like H.E. Omar Alomar, Minister of Communication Affairs, and leading private sector executives. These events facilitated direct conversations, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration between the public and private sectors.

**Which other partnerships would**



Agustina Dal Fabbro

**you highlight?**

We pride ourselves on building strong relationships with local institutions, combining their local expertise with our international perspective to create meaningful synergies. Among our valued partners are the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham), and the German Business Council of Kuwait (GBCK). These collaborations enhance our reach and deepen our understanding of the market, allowing us to create more impactful content and initiatives.

**What is the focus of The Business Year: Kuwait 2025?**

Our focus remains on documenting the evolution and strategies of companies across sectors, offering a comprehensive view of the market's trajectory and the progress of Kuwait Vision 2035.

For 2025, we emphasize two global trends: the adoption of advanced technologies, such as AI, automation, virtual reality, cybersecurity, blockchain, and robotics, which are driving efficiency and innovation, and the integration of ESG principles, with a focus on environmental sustainability.

We are also highlighting local success stories, particularly from startups, entrepreneurs, and smaller companies. We also showcase diversity, including and women and non-Kuwaitis in leadership roles.

Another key focus is assessing the impact of Kuwait's new political landscape. Changes following the parliamentary dissolution in May – such as project development, regulatory reforms, and governance improvements – are shaping the economy's direction, which we aim to analyze in depth.

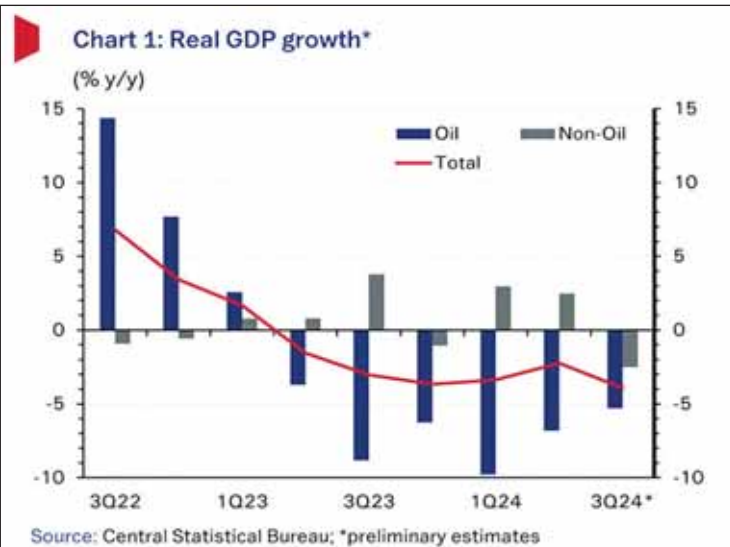
**How do you see Kuwait's business ecosystem and its future?**

Kuwait's business ecosystem is thriving, fueled by Vision 2035's ambitious goals, improved governance, and regulatory reforms that open the market to foreign investments. These efforts bring expertise, foster competition, and drive innovation.

Human capital plays a pivotal role in this progress. With a young population, Kuwait is integrating more nationals into the private sector and equipping them with future-ready skills, leveraging local talent as a key asset.

The country is also positioning itself as a regional digital hub, forging partnerships with major tech companies, investing in infrastructure like data centers, and prioritizing digitalization to drive a technology-focused future.

In summary, Kuwait's ecosystem is on a strong growth trajectory, driven by innovation, collaboration, and sustainability.





Customer deposits at KFH-Egypt surge 30% in 2024

# KFH expands global presence with Egypt rebrand

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Kuwait Finance House Group (KFH) has officially rebranded Ahli United Bank – Egypt to KFH – Egypt, following its acquisition of Ahli United Bank Group – Bahrain. KFH – Egypt now operates as a fully Sharia-compliant bank within the global KFH Group, which has a presence in 12 countries. KFH is a global leader in Islamic banking, recognized as the world’s second-largest Islamic bank and Kuwait’s largest bank by net profit and market capitalization.

Following the 2022 acquisition of Ahli United Bank Group – Bahrain by KFH Group and its subsequent conversion to a Sharia-compliant bank in December 2023, KFH-Egypt (formerly Ahli United Bank – Egypt) has offered complete range of Islamic banking products and services since September 2024.

KFH Group is the world’s second-largest Islamic bank by assets, with approximately \$120 billion. KFH maintains a strong presence in local, regional, and global markets, operating in 12 countries. Its extensive international network includes around 680 branches, 2300 ATMs, and a workforce of nearly 18,000 employees.

KFH Group’s mission is to deliver superior innovation and customer service excellence while protecting and enhancing the interests of all our stakeholders. Its vision is to lead the international development of Islamic financial services and become the most trusted and sustainably most technologically advanced Sharia-compliant bank in the world.

KFH-Egypt prioritizes digital transformation, creating cutting-edge services and products that enhance customer experience with quality, convenience, and robust security. The bank is driven by the expertise of the KFH Group, which recently unveiled a new visual identity under the ‘Beyond Horizons’ slogan to reflect its global expansion, achievements, and ambitious goals. The new identity reflects a commitment to continued technological advancement, development, and innovation in the digital age. It also underscores a dedication to enhancing leadership and achieving excellence in Islamic banking services.

**KFH Group Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq**

KFH Group Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said: “We are delighted to be in Egypt today to mark the beginning of a new era in Islamic banking with the unveiling of the new visual identity for Ahli United Bank – Egypt. Effective today, the bank will officially operate as KFH-Egypt, a historic milestone that will significantly contribute to Egypt’s Islamic banking sector and strengthen its national economy.”

He added: “KFH boasts exten-



Hala Sadek and Hamad Al-Marzouq during the press conference.



Hala Sadek and Hamad Al-Marzouq



Hamad Al-Marzouq



Hala Sadek



Fahad Al-Ghanem, Al-Marzouq, Hisham Youssef and Abdullah Al-Saif



Hala Sadek, Hamad Al-Marzouq, Abdulaziz Al Nafisi, Fahad Al-Ghanem, Abdullah Al-Saif and Ahmed Alkharji

sive expertise in Islamic banking and stands as the largest bank in Kuwait in terms of market cap. It is also the largest listed company on Boursa Kuwait at the private sector level, with a market value of approximately \$42 billion. Moreover, KFH has become the world’s second-largest Islamic bank, with a presence in 12 countries, most prominently Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkey, Egypt, Germany, and the United Kingdom. This undoubtedly strengthens the standing of KFH-Egypt as a trusted global brand with international reach, reinforcing our ambitious vision of placing KFH Group among the world’s top 100 banks.”

Al-Marzouq further stated: “Following the historic acquisition of Ahli United Bank Group – Bahrain in October 2022, we dedicated significant efforts at the Group level. By the grace

of Allah, we have successfully completed the conversion of Ahli United Bank – Egypt into a fully Sharia-compliant bank. With the launch of our new visual identity, the bank is now officially rebranded as KFH-Egypt, marking an expansion of our banking operations in the Egyptian market, a promising market with substantial growth opportunities.”

He affirmed that the new visual identity titled (Beyond Horizons) reflects KFH’s futuristic vision, growth strategy, and digital excellence, reinforcing its leadership in advancing global Islamic financial services. It is also a new chapter in the bank’s journey and a strategic shift towards achieving our forward-thinking plans, driving greater achievements to the future. The change will directly reflect performance levels and work methodologies, enhancing the banking experience to align

with our new identity.

“KFH will be a distinguished addition to the Egyptian banking sector. Additionally, KFH remains committed to its social responsibility efforts in all the countries where it operates. Recently, the bank donated \$10 million to the Misr El-Kheir Foundation in support of its charitable initiatives in Egypt,” added Al-Marzouq.

He extended his gratitude to all employees and the executive management of KFH-Egypt, wishing them success in the next phase. He also stressed the importance of maintaining leadership in Islamic banking by continuously offering superior financial services, products, and solutions that exceed customer expectations.

**Chief Executive Officer and Board Member of KFH – Egypt, Hala Sadek**

Chief Executive Officer and Board Member of KFH – Egypt,

Hala Sadek said that: “We are pleased to announce the official rebranding of Ahli United Bank-Egypt to Kuwait Finance House-Egypt (KFH-Egypt).”

She added that this change goes beyond mere rebranding or a visual identity shift. It represents a significant strategic step, reflecting our full integration into the KFH Group, a global leader in Sharia-compliant banking services.

“We remain committed to delivering exceptional banking services while enhancing our focus on providing innovative solutions that comply with Islamic principles, catered to the diverse needs of our customers. Building upon the strong financial solvency and competitive advantages of KFH Group, renowned for its leadership and quality in the banking sector, this step reflects our ambitious goals for expansion

**Al-Marzouq:**  
 ■ Egypt is a promising market, and KFH-Egypt is a distinguished addition to the regional Islamic banking industry

and growth, capitalizing on the Group’s expertise and capabilities,” she emphasized.

Sadek underscores KFH’s goal of attaining an Egyptian market share commensurate with the Group’s size and aspirations. This strategy aims to bolster the competitiveness of Islamic financial services, attract new clientele, and foster greater financial inclusion within the Egyptian market.

She pointed out that the Bank’s conversion to Sharia-compliant banking services enhances its growth opportunities, given the increasing demand for Islamic banking. Additionally, it contributes to achieving financial inclusion goals by attracting new customer segments interested in Sharia-compliant products and services.

She revealed that KFH-Egypt will offer its customers a comprehensive range of financial products and services that comply with Sharia requirements, including Murabaha, Wakala, and Ijarah. “The conversion of the Bank’s operations will not affect the previously agreed-upon commercial terms with customers until the financing’s maturity date, nor will it impose any burdens or costs on them as a result of this conversion,” Sadek added.

It is noteworthy that KFH-Egypt (formerly known as Ahli United Bank - Egypt) has achieved outstanding financial results in the first nine months of 2024. This reflects the steady growth of the bank’s activities, its customer base, and its geographical expansion across the Arab Republic of Egypt. The financial results demonstrated a consolidated net profit of EGP 4.73 billion by the end of September 2024, a 71% increase compared to the same period in the previous year.

The financial position statement showed a 26% increase in total assets, reaching EGP 142 billion by the end of September 2024. This growth reflects a strong capital base, high liquidity ratios, and high-quality assets. Furthermore, net financing income surged by 55.6%, reaching EGP 5.6 billion by the end of September 2024, while net fee and commission income reached EGP 725 million.

Customer deposits grew by 30%, reaching EGP 117 billion by the end of September 2024. Additionally, the financing portfolio increased to EGP 84.2 billion, representing a 25% growth. The Bank currently operates a network of approximately 44 branches distributed across the Arab Republic of Egypt.



Al-Marzouq announces a new launch for Kuwait Finance House Egypt.



Hala Sadek delivers a speech to the audience.

# ABK secures landmark \$1 billion syndicated loan

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), through its DIFC Branch, has successfully closed a landmark USD 1 billion global syndicated term loan facility for a period of over 3 years, marking its largest debt facility to date. This significant achievement affirms ABK's robust standing in the financial markets.

The syndication was initially

launched at USD 750 million; however, due to excessive oversubscription by 60%, the facility was upsize to USD 1 billion. This positive response highlights the strong liquidity position and confidence that both regional and international lenders, including those from the Middle East, US, Europe, and Asia, have in ABK.

"We are immensely proud to have secured this significant facility," said Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at ABK.



Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer

"This achievement reflects the trust and confidence that our lenders have in our financial stability and strategic vision. We are committed to utilizing these funds to enhance our service offerings and continue to foster sustainable growth."

The proceeds from the facility will primarily be utilized to replace an existing loan facility and meet general funding requirements. This strategic move positions ABK to better serve its clientele while supporting overall business development.

The facility was led by a consortium of financial institutions including Commerzbank, Doha Bank, Emirates NBD Capital, ICBC, and SMBC, who acted as Bookrunners and Mandated Lead Arrangers. SNB also joined as a Mandated Lead Arranger, with ADCB, HSBC, and NBF as Lead Arrangers. The syndicate was further supported by Bank of Baroda, China Construction Bank, Mashreqbank, Korea Development Bank, Banque Misr, Bank of NY Mellon, and Fubon Bank, as Arrangers, and Bankinter, Industrial Bank of Korea, and Citi Bank as Manag-

ers. Emirates NBD Capital acted as Documentation Bank and Emirates NBD as Facility Agent.

Al Sumait concluded, "At ABK, we remain dedicated to our growth ambitions and are pleased to have the support of our esteemed financial partners in this endeavour. Securing such a substantial facility demonstrates our resilience and commitment to innovation. We are keen on the opportunities this funding will create for ABK as we continue to enhance our service offerings."

## CITRA sees over KD 75m in revenues for H1-2024

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** The Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) said 2024 was a year of exceptional achievements, with the Authority focused on advancing digital infrastructure and strengthening its leadership role in supporting the digital economy, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Acting Chairman of the Board of Directors, Eng. Abdullah Al-Ajmi, highlighted the Authority's accomplishments during a recent press conference, where he also outlined its vision for 2025.

Al-Ajmi shared that the Authority achieved record revenues exceeding 75 million Kuwaiti dinars in the first half of the fiscal year (2024-2025), driven by improvements in operational performance and increased revenue from key sectors such as landing station licenses, telecommunications company number range licenses and revenues from leased international connection circuits.

In line with its goal of ensuring uninterrupted service, the Authority, he said, has launched a new regional corridor connecting Kuwait and Frankfurt, offering an alternative to traditional marine routes.

This corridor provides low delay times and ensures safe, efficient data traffic flow from Kuwait to Europe via Iraq, making it a reliable option for major companies and international service providers.

The CITRA also introduced groundbreaking telecommunications technologies, including the first phase of the direct extension registration service (kw.) and new frequency bands to pave the way for the deployment of advanced fifth-generation (5GA) technology.

In a significant step towards developing the IT sector, CITRA signed a land lease agreement with Google to establish modern data centers for cloud computing in Kuwait.

This project is expected to enhance

digital infrastructure and drive digital transformation in both public and private sectors, reinforcing Kuwait's position as a regional hub for data services and cloud computing.

Additionally, the Authority finalized a memorandum of understanding with Huawei to further develop the information and communications technology sector.

A strategic contract was also signed with Kuwait Telecommunications Company (STC) to lease land for constructing an administrative headquarters and multi-storey parking in the Capital Governorate, fostering cooperation between the public and private sectors and stimulating investments in the sector.

In 2024, CITRA also launched a new organizational structure, updating its sectors and creating new departments to improve the effectiveness of its operations.

One notable initiative was the introduction of the "Kashif" service, which displays the name and number of the calling party, helping reduce unwanted calls and increasing transparency in telecommunications.

Looking ahead to 2025, Al-Ajmi emphasized the continued commitment to developing the telecommunications and ICT sector, focusing on digital transformation, economic growth and strategic partnerships with the private sector to adopt best global practices.

The key achievement include record revenues and improved operational performance, launch of the Kuwait-Frankfurt regional corridor, introduction of the direct extension registration service (kw.); partnership with Google to establish cloud computing data centers, MOU with Huawei to advance the ICT sector, lease agreement with STC for new administrative headquarters, launch of the "Kashif" service to display caller details and New organizational structure to enhance sector effectiveness.

Reaffirming its commitment to providing clients secure financial solutions

## Burgan Bank renews strategic partnership with Visa



Mr. Manaf Al-Menaifi, Acting General Manager of Retail Banking at Burgan Bank.



Mr. Tony Daher, Group CEO of Burgan Bank, and Dr. Saeeda Jaffar, Senior Vice President and Group Country Manager for the GCC region at Visa, during the signing ceremony.

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** Burgan Bank announced the renewal of its partnership agreement with world leader in digital payments, Visa, confirming its commitment to collaborating with industry leaders to maintain and elevate the outstanding banking and payment experience it offers its clients. This comes as part of Burgan's mission to lead with innovation and deliver an excellent customer experience, as well as its robust digital transformation strategy.

"We are delighted to renew our strategic agreement with one of Burgan's most valued partners, Visa, whose vast experience in developing cutting-edge and secure payment solutions has contributed greatly to our success in delivering a world-class banking experience to our clients," stated Mr. Manaf Al-Menaifi, Acting General Manager of Retail Banking at Burgan Bank. "Leading in a competitive and ever-evolving market such as banking requires building a collaborative network of partners, who share our uncompromising commitment to not just service excellence, but also the relentless pursuit of constant innovation - and Visa is a prime example of that."

Mr. Al-Menaifi added: "As a trusted financial partner, our clients expect us not only to safeguard their hard-earned wealth but also to add ease, convenience,

and all-around safety to their everyday transactions and banking operations. Thanks to our partnership with Visa, we have been able to introduce a wide range of cutting-edge payment solutions that respond to our clients' evolving needs and aspirations and adopt the latest and safest payment technologies available worldwide."

Mohamed Reyad, Visa's Country Manager for Kuwait, commented: "We highly value our partnership with Burgan Bank, and we are excited to continue collaborating with them on developing bespoke digital

payment solutions that are tailored to Kuwaiti consumers and their dynamic lifestyle. Throughout our partnership with Burgan, our joint efforts to drive digital innovation and financial inclusion have contributed to growing the digital economy in Kuwait. We look forward to advancing this strategic partnership and celebrating future successes with Burgan and its community."

Under its fruitful partnership with Visa, Burgan Bank has introduced a wide range of innovative banking

cards that serve its clients' varying needs and lifestyles. These include the Elite Visa signature credit and debit cards, the co-branded Qatar Airways credit and prepaid cards, the signature reloadable x-change prepaid card, and Burgan's most exclusive, invite-only credit card. Each card comes with a myriad of benefits tailored to specific segments, from exclusive discounts and offers to reward points redeemable for flight miles and access to a world of luxury and ease.

## Kuwait's project awards surge 237% y-o-y in Q4-2024

GCC project awards hit record \$273.2 bln in 2024, up 9.6% y-o-y

By KAMCO Invest

The total value of contracts awarded in the GCC reached a new record in 2024. GCC project awards saw a 9.6% y-o-y increase in 2024, reaching USD 273.2 Bn, compared to USD 249.4 Bn in 2023. This growth in contract awards was primarily driven by the exceptional increase in project awards in Saudi Arabia, coupled with strong performance from the UAE despite recording a y-o-y dip in the value of contract awards. The Power and Oil sectors led the growth of project awards in the GCC during 2024, recording USD 67.0 Bn and USD 29.7 Bn in contract awards, respectively. Within the renewable energy sector, Saudi Arabia has signed contracts for 25 renewable energy projects, distributed across various regions that are collectively generating approximately 23 gigawatts of electricity during 2024. The growth in projects in the renewable space is attributed to the determination to fulfill the Vision 2030 goals that aim to achieve optimal energy mix for electricity generation in the Kingdom. On the other hand, the GCC Construction sector remained the largest sector with USD 75.4 Bn in contract awards during 2024.

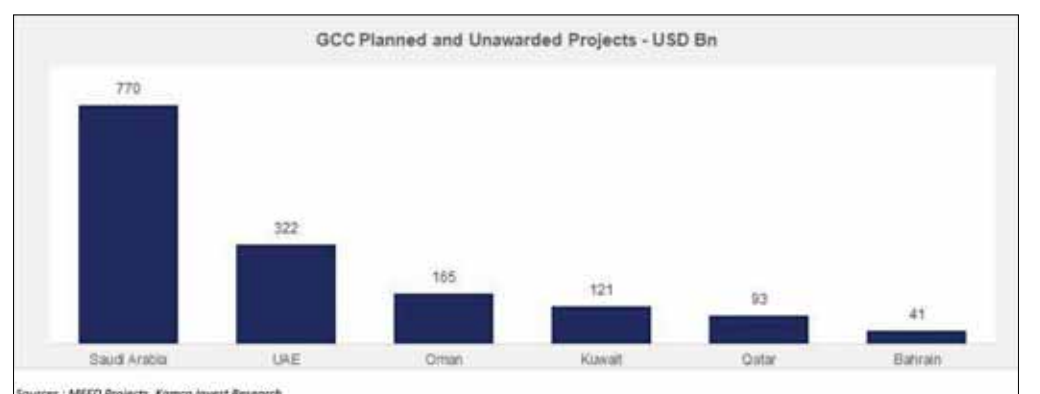
In terms of quarterly performance, total GCC project awards reached USD 74.8 Bn in Q4-2024, the highest quarterly mark in over six years. Total contracts awarded in Saudi Arabia increased by 16.3% y-o-y during Q4-2024 to reach USD 40.4 Bn, compared to USD 34.7 Bn in Q4-2023. On the other hand, aggregate projects awarded in Kuwait jumped by 237.4% y-o-y during Q4-2024 to reach USD 4.0 Bn, compared to USD 1.1 Bn in Q4-2023. Comparatively, contract awards in the UAE declined by 37.4% y-o-y in Q4-2024, reaching USD 20.9 Bn, down from USD 33.4 Bn in Q4-2023.

Growth in GCC contract awards was broad-based in 2024, with three of the six GCC countries experiencing at least double-digit y-o-y growth in the total value of contracts awarded, while four out of the six countries saw y-o-y increases in the value of projects awarded during the year. Kuwait witnessed the highest percentage growth in the region, recording 50.7% y-o-y growth in the total value of contracts awarded, reaching USD 9.5 Bn, up from USD 6.3 Bn in 2023.

The outlook for 2025 remains bright for the GCC projects market with more than USD 120 Bn worth of projects already in the bid evaluation stage, that would mostly translate into awards, according to MEED Projects. Near-term forecast also remains positive for the region mainly driven by Saudi Arabia's Construction and Power sectors mostly related to the NEOM giga projects.

### Kuwait

Total yearly projects awarded in Kuwait during 2024 reached the highest level in six years to reach USD 9.5 Bn vs. USD 6.3 Bn in 2023. Kuwait witnessed nearly 50% y-o-y gain in the value of contracts awarded during 2024, the biggest y-o-y percentage growth in aggregate contracts awarded among the GCC countries during the year. Growth in Kuwait's contract awards was mainly driven by infrastructure investment which are one of the key pillars in Kuwait's Vision 2035 plan led by projects to modernize the Oil, Power and Construction sectors. Aggregate value of projects awarded in the Construction sector jumped more than six times to reach USD 4.0 Bn in 2024 against USD 644 Mn in 2023 mainly fueling the robust growth in overall contracts awarded during the year. In context, the total sum of projects awarded in the Construction Sectors represented 42.5% of the total value of projects awarded in Kuwait during the year. Comparatively, total projects awarded in Kuwait's Power sector improved 23.9% y-o-y to reach USD 2.7 Bn



against USD 2.2 Bn in 2023 while Transport projects awarded during the same period fell 48.1% y-o-y to reach USD 1.4 Bn as compared to USD 2.7 Bn in 2023.

Some of the notable projects awarded in the country during the year include the USD 142 Mn Kuwait substation contract awarded to the Kuwait branch of Saudi Arabia's National Contracting Company (NCC) to build 10 power substations in Sabah Al-Ahmad City. According to MEED Projects, the Sabah Al-Ahmad City project encompasses an area of 6,150 hectares and is located 70 kilometers south of Kuwait City. It is planned to accommodate 52 schools and 70 mosques, in addition to thousands of residential units, upon completion. Another contract awarded in the country during the year was the USD 146 Mn project for maintenance works in Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate awarded by Kuwait's Ministry of Public Works. According to MEED Projects, Kuwait's construction and infrastructure projects market recorded an impressive recovery during the first half of 2024, with the value of contract awards rising to over USD 2.1 Bn - more than double the approximately USD 1 Bn worth of contracts awarded in H1-2023.

### GCC Projects Market Outlook

The outlook for the GCC project market for 2025 is expected to remain strong. Following a record-breaking year for project market awards, the region is poised for another year of significant contract awards. There are a lot of positive factors in the GCC that are expected to support the project market activity in 2025. These include a thriving economic activity, government's resolve to execute projects before the deadlines, a supportive and strong banking sector, expected fall in interest rates, stability in regional geopolitical scenario, elevated oil prices and supportive government policies for private sector participation. However, concerns remain especially regarding global supply chain issues that are exacerbated by uncertain policies from the new US government regarding international trade and tariffs. In addition, there is the broader global concern about elevated interest rate levels and limit financing

and new investments. A virtual cap oil revenues is also a key concern, mainly led by the OPEC+ quotas, that is limiting the government's ability to invest in projects, especially in larger markets like Saudi Arabia.

Overall, there are approximately USD 1.5 trillion worth of contracts in the pre-execution stage within the GCC, with Saudi Arabia holding the majority. Some of these contracts are expected to be awarded over the next 6-12 months, suggesting that 2025 could match or exceed the contract award figures of 2024, according to analysis by MEED Projects. The largest proportion of these projects, approximately 35.3%, are in the design stage, while around 8% are in the bid evaluation stage. In terms of country-specific project pipelines, Saudi Arabia has an estimated USD 770.5 Bn of projects in the pre-execution stage, followed by the UAE (USD 322.5 Bn), Oman (USD 165 Bn) and Kuwait (USD 121.1 Bn), respectively.

In terms of opportunities in specific sectors, we believe that the Industrial sector would benefit from the efforts to increase regional materials processing and manufacturing capacity. There were reports that both TMSC and Samsung had expressed interest in building chip-manufacturing facilities in the UAE. Under capacity in the power sector should drive projects in the utilities sector in the near term. The sector could also see contract awards for capacity building for the water and wastewater treatment facilities. The region also intends to capture the emerging trends like AI and as a result, we expect to see announcements related to investment in related projects as well as data centers.

Some of the largest planned and un-awarded GCC projects out to bid during the first half of 2025 include the USD 5.0 Bn Taziz Industrial Chemicals Zone -Phase II project, the USD 3.7 Bn National Grid Battery Energy Storage Systems 2500 MW and the USD 3.0 Bn Taweelah C Combined Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) IPP 2500 MW. On the other hand, there are currently USD 56 Bn worth of projects currently in pre-execution status (bid evaluation, design, feed, main contract bid) led by the USD 5.0 Bn MadinatAl-Hareer (City of Silk) followed by the USD 4.0 Bn Kuwait City Metropolitan Rapid Transit (MRT).

Trade volume expected to reach \$2.3t

## GCC's growing role in global trade by 2033, reports BCG

**ABU DHABI, Jan 29:** Global trade patterns are transforming significantly as new economic corridors emerge and traditional relationships evolve. According to new research from Boston Consulting Group (BCG), world trade in goods is projected to grow at an average of 2.9% annually through 2033, with the GCC region playing an increasingly pivotal role in connecting major trade routes between East and West.

These insights are among the key findings of BCG's latest report, "Great Powers, Geopolitics, and the Future of Trade," which analyzes trade and economic data from more than 150 countries. The report comprehensively analyzes how shifting global trade dynamics will impact regional and international commerce through 2033.

**Strong Trade Growth Across Key GCC Corridors**

The BCG report reveals a robust outlook for GCC trade, with total trade volume set to reach 2.3T USD by 2033. This growth is supported by significant expansion across multiple trade corridors, with

China emerging as the largest growth market at 88B USD (5.7% CAGR), followed by Japan at 46B USD (9.4% CAGR). The analysis shows GCC's non-hydrocarbon trade will grow by 3.5% annually, highlighting the region's successful economic diversification efforts.

As global trade patterns shift, the GCC strengthens its position as a critical connector between East and West. This is evidenced by the broader transformation in global trade flows, where China's trade with the Global South is set to increase by \$1.25T and trade between developing nations is projected to grow by \$673B through 2033. The GCC's strategic location and expanding infrastructure position the region to capture value from these evolving trade dynamics.

Rami Rafih, Managing Director and Partner at BCG, said: "The reconfiguration of global trade flows presents a pivotal moment for the GCC. As trade routes transform, the region isn't just a geographic intermediary but a central orchestrator of new patterns. The GCC's deliberate investment in capabilities positions it to achieve greater success through developing proactive and risk-based options rather than defaulting to reactionary responses. The key is leveraging this foundation to shape emerging trade corridors, particularly as Global South commerce evolves."

**Global Trade Shifts Create New Opportunities**

The report identifies major transformations across key trading regions that will reshape global commerce. While North America solidifies as a resilient trade bloc with US-Mexico trade increasing by \$315B by 2033, ASEAN emerges as a significant beneficiary of global shifts with 3.7% annual trade growth. India's trajectory is particularly notable, with total trade expected to reach \$1.8T annually by 2033, driven by its increasing role as a global manufacturing hub.

The growing power of the Global South represents one of the most significant developments in global trade. Representing 18% of global GDP and 62% of the world's population, these 133 developing nations are set to expand their trade significantly.

Annual trade among Global South nations will grow by \$673B over the next decade, while trade between the Global South and developed economies is projected to reach \$1.67T annually by 2033.

To navigate these shifting trade dynamics and capitalize on emerging opportunities, BCG's report outlines several key imperatives for business leaders in the region:

**Key Recommendations for Business Leaders**

- Develop resilient and transparent supply chains by diversifying sourcing strategies and deepening relationships with key suppliers across emerging trade corridors

- Build geopolitical capabilities to better anticipate and respond to changing trade dynamics, particularly in rapidly evolving markets across Asia and Africa

- Expand presence in growth markets, focusing on opportunities in India, China, and other emerging economies where GCC trade is projected to grow significantly



Cristian Rodriguez



Rami Rafih

## Big discounts and prizes await customers

# LuLu Hypermarket joins Ya Hala Kuwait Festival with 'Shop More, Win More' offer

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: LuLu Hypermarket, Kuwait's leading retail destination is delighted to announce its participation in the highly anticipated 'Ya Hala Kuwait Shopping Festival', the annual premier shopping event that provides opportunities to shop, save and win more.

As part of the exciting shopping festival, the retailer is offering shoppers a chance to win big. For every KD10 spent at any LuLu outlet across Kuwait, customers will receive one coupon, increasing their chances to win spectacular prizes. With the festival's

slogan, 'Shop More, Win More,' LuLu invites everyone to enjoy an unparalleled shopping experience, offering a vast selection of high-quality products at competitive prices.

The Ya Hala Kuwait Shopping Festival spans an impressive 70 days of fun-filled shopping, featuring promotions, discounts, and a massive prize pool of \$7.7 Million.

Shoppers have the chance to win fabulous prizes, including from a lineup of 120 luxury cars and \$1 Million in cash being given away as prizes during

the festival.

LuLu Hypermarket's participation in Ya Hala Kuwait Shopping Festival aims to elevate the shopping experiences of customers by combining unbeatable deals like Big 5 Days, LuLu Shopping Festivals, TV Fest, a wide variety of products, and the excitement of participating in one of Kuwait's most celebrated shopping festivals.

Visit nearest LuLu Hyper and turn shopping into a chance to win big during the Ya Hala Kuwait Shopping Festival.



LuLu Hypermarket offers shoppers chance to win \$7.7M at Ya Hala Kuwait Festival.



A group photo from the event.

## Distinguished scholars lead engaging sessions

# IMA organizes workshop on Quran Retreat

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: IMA English Unit, an affiliate unit of the Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait, organized a two-day workshop and counseling program titled 'Qur'an Retreat' on January 17-18. The event took place at the serene and well-equipped premises of Rajdhani Restaurant, Khaitan.

The primary objective of this retreat was to raise awareness about the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and its expectations from humanity, inspiring participants to become conscientious, responsible individuals capable of making a positive impact on society.

The retreat featured two eminent speakers, Dr. Taha Mateen, a distinguished scholar of the Holy Qur'an and a dedicated social worker, and Fahad Sarwani, a renowned life coach and scholar of the Holy Qur'an. The event commenced with the recitation of the Holy Qur'an.

Fahd's engaging and easy-to-understand explanation made it a truly beneficial session. He explained how the Quran divides people into believers, disbelievers, and hypocrites. Believers and disbelievers are clear in their stance, but the hypocrites remain concealed. Therefore, the Quran provides detailed descriptions of their traits, particularly at the beginning of Surah Al-Baqarah. Hypocrisy manifests in various forms, including moral degradation, leading to what the Quran calls "diseases of the heart."

"In their hearts there is a disease, and Allah has increased their disease." (Surah Al-Baqarah: 10).

These diseases include envy, hatred, anger, despair, and arrogance, which fill the heart with darkness. To remove these, we need to read the Quran, which dispels

the darkness of such evils and illuminates the heart.

Dr. Taha Mateen, the main speaker of the program, delivered his lecture on the topic titled 'Who are we? What is our relationship with our Lord, and what purpose does the Quran define for us?'

He further emphasized on the importance of introspection, stating that we cannot recognize Allah unless we first recognize ourselves. He urged us to free ourselves from the enslavement of our own desires and modern-day advancements. Citing the example of Prophet Musa (AS) (PBUH) facing the magician's ropes that appeared as snakes, he drew parallels to today's technological advances, which may intimidate us. However, Allah reminds us to rely on Him, just as He instructed Musa (AS) to cast his staff.

### Future

The Quran liberates us from worldly dependencies and guides us toward servitude to Allah alone.

Dr. Taha Mateen reminded us that while we plan for our future, true decisions are made in the heavens. Success lies in aligning our will with Allah's will rather than relying solely on our intellect and efforts.

While the topics covered by Mr. Fahad Sarwani focused on the transformative power of the Qur'an in bringing positivity to one's life, Dr. Taha Mateen captivated the audience with his unique style, posing thought-provoking questions to encourage deeper reflection on what Allah SWT expects from us as per the guidance of the Holy Qur'an.

Both the speakers made the audience to realize that a strong connection with the Holy Quran can influ-

ence a person's life and his way of thinking in a constructive and a meaningful manner through real life examples and experiences.

They engaged the audience with their dynamic and energetic presentations, fostering an atmosphere of enthusiasm and inspiration. The session also included a fascinating Quran quiz. The retreat drew an impressive turnout, with approximately 150 participants attending across both days.

Attendees actively engaged in the sessions, making the event a memorable and impactful experience.

The program concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by Mr. Jafar Sadiq, General Secretary of the Indian Muslim Association (IMA), followed by the felicitation of the speakers and a group photo session with participants and organizers, marking the end of a successful event.

The program was convened by Brother Khazi Owais on the first day and Brother Syed Mateen on the second day. The Qur'an Retreat was a testament to IMA's commitment to fostering spiritual and personal growth within the community, highlighting the enduring relevance of the Qur'an's teachings in our lives.

IMA Kuwait, an Indian socio-religious organization, operates under the patronage of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Kuwait. It focuses on providing a platform for the spiritual and social enhancement of expatriates living in Kuwait through various programs and social gatherings. It looks forward to organizing more beneficial programs in the future, catering to the needs of the expatriate community, especially the Indian diaspora.



Some photos from the IMA's Quran Retreat.



Photos from the IBPC debate program.

## Event showcases art of argument and power of ideas

# IBPC Kuwait hosts thrilling debate, sparking minds and ideas

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) Kuwait hosted an intellectually stimulating debate event at Crowne Plaza, Farwaniya, captivating an audience of IBPC members, prominent business leaders, school principals and teachers from across Kuwait with the art of argument and the power of ideas. The event was graced by Dr. Manas Patel, First Secretary - Embassy of India, and Harit Shelat, Second Secretary - Embassy of India, alongside senior members of the Indian community in Kuwait.

The evening began with a warm welcome by Hon. Secretary, Suresh KP who then invited Hon. Chairman, Kaizar T. Shakir to deliver the opening remarks. In his address,

Shakir highlighted IBPC's commitment to increasing its membership base and enhancing visibility through a series of impactful events, such as the industrial exhibitions and seminars, L. Subramaniam concert, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations, the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kuwait, and now the debate event.

Hon. Vice Chairman, Gaurav Oberoi, lauded the participants for their enthusiastic preparation and praised the efforts of the organizing committee.

Moderated by the dynamic Ms. Alka Kumra, the debate showcased thought-provoking arguments between two teams. The affirmative team comprising Anees Saif, Deepak Bindal,

Karthik Ramodoss, and Sunilkumar Singh delivered compelling points, while the opposing team featuring Ketan Puri, Kashif Syed, Krishen Suryakant, and Sahil Chopra - countered with sharp rebuttals. The debate was lively, intellectually engaging, and a true testament to the power of ideas.

Timekeepers Vikram Joshi and Ms. Nayana Suresh ensured the event flowed seamlessly, keeping the teams on track and within the allocated time limits.

Adding an element of fun and excitement, spot prizes and raffle draws kept the audience engaged throughout the evening. Heartfelt thanks are extended to Al Mailem Group, Al Mezzan Holding, Mughal Mahal, and Al Hakimi Super-

market for their generous sponsorship of the raffles and spot prizes, which added a delightful touch to the event.

The evening concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by the Hon. Joint Secretary, Mr. Sunit Singh Arora, who expressed gratitude to the moderator, participants, sponsors, and the organizing team for their invaluable contributions.

The IBPC debate proved to be another successful initiative in fostering intellectual discussions and strengthening community bonds. With such vibrant events, IBPC continues to uphold its mission of promoting thought leadership, camaraderie, and meaningful engagement within Kuwait's business and professional community.

## Wahlberg, Dockery shine in high-flying comedy-thriller

# A thrilling, wild ride with a star-studded cast in 'Flight Risk'

LOS ANGELES, Jan 29. (AP): "Flight Risk" sounds like the setup for a joke: What do you get when you put a US Marshal, a fugitive and an uninged pilot in a small plane? We don't know but get out your barf bag.

Mark Wahlberg, Michelle Dockery and Topher Grace star in this truly forgettable thriller-comedy that earns its debut - or dump - in January among similar cinematic dreck. You've heard of slow-motion car crashes? Just substitute a plane.

In a sort of Dollar Store "Con Air," Dockery plays a federal agent transporting Grace's fugitive-turned-witness to testify against the mob. They need to get to Anchorage quick and enlist the help of a pilot - Wahlberg, a bro's bro. Of course, not everyone is as they seem. OK, it's Wahlberg. He's a nut job.

Each member of this unholy trio seems to be in a different movie.



This image released by Lionsgate shows Michelle Dockery in a scene from 'Flight Risk.' (AP)

Dockery is trying to be all Lara Croft, intense brave problem-solving under immense pressure, very serious. But Grace is in a sitcom, trying out one-liners as the sarcastic nerd in the back of the plane. And Wahl-

berg has gone full sneering Hannibal Lecter, constantly threatening sexual violence. ("We can play hide the hot dog.")

That means that everyone in the movie isn't flying in the same di-

rection and the tone is all over the place. Brutal shootings and cuffed beatdowns mix with terrible puns and jokes at the expense of Spirit Airlines. Hey, at least Spirit can land something.

Wahlberg is the most fascinating misfire. His character is listening to the New Order song "Happy Mondays" when we meet him and the fact that this sleazebag sociopath is enjoying a British New Wave classic wasn't expected. Later we learn that he's wearing a wig. What the filmmakers are saying here in both choices is unclear. Don't judge a book? Balding psychos can enjoy Kajagoogoo like the rest of us?

Screenwriter Jared Rosenberg has an obsession with scatological humor, using multiple public peeing moments and setting up one scene in which one of our heroes refers to having a "Museum of Modern Art in my pants" after a particu-

larly harrowing flying sequence. This may be the first Hollywood airborne thriller that namechecks Jackson Pollock.

Rosenberg has created an interesting scenario onboard: Killing the murderous pilot would seem to kill them all. But instead of tense, we get flabby dialogue. "You know the last thing that goes through your mind in a crash? Your ...," says Wahlberg at one point.

In a desperate attempt to keep our attention, Dockery's marshal during the movie's latter third uncovers a conspiracy at the very top of the government using just her cellphone and natural suspicion - while at the controls of a small plane she cannot fly, 3,000 feet over icy Alaska.

She also, bizarrely, starts a flirtatious relationship over the radio with a pilot who is asked to help bring them down safely - a meet-cute while, again, at the controls of a

small plane she cannot fly, 3,000 feet over icy Alaska.

The movie is an attempt to continue the cinematic rehabilitation of director Mel Gibson, and his return to the director's chair after nearly a decade is passable, mostly confined to the interior of a small cargo aircraft. His camera is lively, shifting between the claustrophobic interior and the expansive Alaska snow-capped vista outside. Sometimes the camera is just too close, especially on Dockery's mounting bruises.

But no one emerges unscathed from this funny-when-it-shouldn't-be mess. The movie's slogan is the weird "Y'all Need a Pilot?" but it should be "Y'all Need a Filmmaker?"

"Flight Risk," a Lionsgate released in theaters last Friday, is rated R for violence and language. Running time: 91 minutes. Zero stars out of four.

## Fashion

Italian maestro celebrates with emotional show

# Privé's 20-year milestone dazzles Paris

PARIS, Jan 29. (AP): Fashion maestro Giorgio Armani marked 20 years of his haute couture line, Armani Privé, with an elegant and emotionally charged show in Paris's chic 8th arrondissement on Tuesday.

At 90 years old, the designer presented a collection diving into the archives of craftsmanship and moving some guests to tears as he took his bow at the end.

"Haute couture is fashion when it becomes art," Armani said, describing the ethos behind Privé, the line he launched in January 2005. The name itself evokes rarity and exclusivity, serving as a platform for showcasing meticulous craft and timeless design, the house said.

This spring 2025 collection revisited iconic elements from Armani Privé's past - with unapologetically glamorous results.

A segmented black gown shimmered with silver threads that gleamed like oil, Asian-inspired fitted jackets sparkled with intricate embroidery, and full skirts encrusted with crystals added both texture and weight, swinging heavily and noisily as the models walked.

Pearls featured prominently throughout the collection, used as embellishments and symbolic references to serenity, a recurring Armani motif.

The show's setting, within the palazzo Armani and beneath gold-gilded ceilings, provided an intimate yet majestic backdrop for the celebration. Guests, including Demi Moore and Jessica Biel, were seen to tap their feet to the booming music.

While the collection embraced Armani's signature balance of creativity and restraint, some pieces leaned on familiar themes, reflecting the designer's adherence to his established aesthetic. Yet, this sense of continuity only heightened the timeless quality of the designs, reminding the audience why Privé remains a key part of the haute couture calendar.

The emotional highlight of the evening came at the finale when Giorgio Armani himself emerged to take his bow. Slowly walking the runway, the nonagenarian designer received a standing ovation from some in the audience, many of whom were visibly emotional by the moment.

## Chanel

Snaking traffic, screaming crowds, and a crush of photographers descended on the Grand Palais on Tuesday as Chanel unveiled its latest show before Matthieu Blazy's debut as creative director in the fall. Kylie Jenner led a constellation of stars, seated atop two giant interlocking C's raised like a bridge - perhaps a metaphor for the house's transition to its bold new chapter.

Critics expecting an underwhelming, designer-less show were swiftly proven wrong. Chanel's studio punched above its weight, delivering a collection of striking hues and diverse designs showcasing its couture ateliers' unrivaled artistry.

For a designer famous for revolutionizing fashion with the use of black, this collection went against the grain. Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel's lesser-known talent as a colorist took center stage, with joyful pastels, bold tones, midnight blue, and classic black following a complete cycle from day to night - something like a "greatest hits" collection on the eve of the reboot.

The runway pieces struck a balance between whimsy and drama. Beyond the house's bread-and-butter tweed skirt suits, leg-of-mutton sleeves brought historical grandeur, evoking a sense of Victorian elegance. Sequins and paillettes shimmered under the bright Grand Palais light. Silk trains in bold red injected a sense of drama. Playful neckties hinted at a 1970s influence.

A standout piece was a satin pas-



A model wears a creation as part of the Julien Fournie Haute Couture Spring Summer 2025 collection, that was presented in Paris, Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025. (AP)



Giorgio Armani accepts applause at the end of the Giorgio Armani Privé Haute Couture Spring Summer 2025 collection in Paris, Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025. (AP)

tel yellow gown with delicate buttons running down the front, exuding the glamour of old Hollywood while maintaining a fresh feel.

But the devil at Chanel couture is in the detail - the buttons.

Buttons in rock crystal, metal, and rhinestone ones adorned jackets, skirts, and dresses, adding a quiet brilliance to the vibrant collection.

The audience was a testament to Chanel's unmatched global power, boasting one of the most prestigious guestlists of Paris Fashion Week. And not just Kylie Jenner perched atop the double-C decor.

Global ambassadors Jennie, the K-pop superstar from BLACKPINK, G-Dragon, and Lily-Rose Depp sat alongside Dua Lipa, Marion Cotillard, and actresses Elsa Zylberstein and Antonia Desplat.

Among the star-studded crowd, Pamela Anderson, who's been seen at shows all week was flanked by teams of menacing security guards.

The chatter centered on the maison's impending creative shift. Virginie Viard, who succeeded Karl Lagerfeld in 2019, parted ways with Chanel last year following tepid reviews. One guest Tuesday summed up the mood bluntly: "Even the studio show seems better than what

Viard did," capturing the widespread belief that Chanel needed fresh vision.

Blazy, who arrives with a reputation for craftsmanship and innovation, was most recently the creative director at Bottega Veneta.

He reportedly inherits a maison in robust financial health, providing a solid foundation for his ambitious vision.

Despite the mixed reception, under Viard's tenure, Chanel saw record sales, with revenue reaching a reported \$19.7 billion in 2023, including a 23% increase in ready-to-wear sales.

As Chanel couture celebrates its 110th anniversary, the house released a special film giving an insider's look at its iconic Rue Cambon headquarters. Featuring Vanessa Paradis, Marion Cotillard, and Naomi Campbell, the film delves into the intricacies of couture craftsmanship.

"At Chanel, we take a minimum of 25-30 measurements," one seamstress revealed, showcasing how some garments require thousands of hours of meticulous handcrafting. Through intimate interviews with "les petites mains," the film highlighted the dedication that defines Chanel as a benchmark of couture



Models present Giorgio Armani Privé's creations. (AP)

## Julien Fournié

Julien Fournié pulled out all the stops Tuesday at the Théâtre Mogador, presenting "First Circus," a daring haute couture that provocatively blurred the boundaries between fashion and performance. It was a fantastical spectacle, equal parts wacky and spellbinding, and a fitting tribute to the designer's childhood imagination and flair for the theatrical.

Touches of Gothic lent the event a devilish edge, as seen in a figure-hugging checked gown segmented with black panels. The model, her face eerily painted and her hair jet black, strutted like a burlesque specter, embodying a fusion of couture drama and carnival mischief.

The whimsy continued with a model clad in a shiny suit jacket and a rabbit-face mask, who fired a glitter gun across the audience - a moment of chaotic, glimmering joy that epitomized the collection's freewheeling spirit. And just when the show seemed to reach peak madness, a woman in a giant pink tutu with a helmet and knee pads barreled down the runway, cementing Fournié's commitment to redefining haute couture through humor, audacity, and theatricality.

"This collection," Fournié said, "is a celebration of the imagination, a nod to the shy child I once was, who invented fantastical characters far from prying eyes."

Through this collection, Fournié brought to life an array of personalities - superheroes, aliens, and witches - all realized with artisanal craftsmanship and innovative techniques.

## People

### Rocky's accuser to testify

# Weinstein due in court over his #MeToo retrial

NEW YORK, Jan 29. (AP): Harvey Weinstein is due back in court Wednesday as a judge is set to decide when the disgraced movie mogul's #MeToo retrial will start and whether it will include an allegation involving a woman who wasn't in the original case.

Weinstein, 72, wants the extra charge thrown out, arguing through lawyers that Manhattan prosecutors only brought it to bolster their case with a third accuser after New York's highest court overturned his 2020 conviction on rape and sexual assault charges involving two women.

Judge Curtis Farber is expected to rule on that and other matters, including the trial date - a task that's been complicated by an increasingly crowded court calendar.

Weinstein's lawyer, Arthur Aidala, is representing conservative strategist Steve Bannon in a border wall fraud trial that's set to start March 4 before a different Manhattan judge. Meanwhile, Farber has a murder trial in March. Before Bannon's trial date was set last week, Aidala had suggested that Weinstein's trial go first in "the interest of humanity," citing the ex-studio boss' declining health.

Weinstein is being treated for numerous medical conditions, including chronic myeloid leukemia and diabetes.

"They know that Mr. Weinstein is dying of cancer and is an innocent man right now in the state of New York," Aidala argued in court last week. He pleaded to prosecutors: "Can I try this dying man's case first?"

Weinstein is being retried on charges that he forcibly sexually assaulted a movie and TV production assistant in 2006 and raped an aspiring actor in 2013. The additional charge, filed last September, alleges he sexually assaulted a different woman at a Manhattan hotel in 2006.

The Manhattan district attor-

ney's office said in court papers that the woman, who has not been identified publicly, came forward to prosecutors just days before the start of Weinstein's first trial but was not part of that case.

Prosecutors said they did not pursue the women's allegations after Weinstein was convicted and sentenced to 23 years in prison, but they revisited them and secured a new indictment after the state's Court of Appeals threw out his conviction last April.

A former friend of ASAP Rocky is set to testify Wednesday about the moment the hip-hop star allegedly fired a gun at him on a Hollywood street in 2021.

The trial's key witness, known by the name ASAP Relli, will provide what's likely to be the trial's most important piece of testimony when he gets back on the stand.

Rocky, whose legal name is Rakim Mayers, has pleaded not guilty two felony counts of assault with a semiautomatic firearm. His lawyer says the shots he fired were blanks from a starter pistol that he carried as a prop.

On Tuesday, Relli, born Terell Ephron, described the first part of the confrontation, and was on the verge of describing the alleged shooting itself when court ended for the day.

He said he and Rocky, members of ASAP, a crew of creators at a New York high school, had been close but their relationship eroded after fame came for Rocky.

He said their relationship had been strained for years and getting worse in the previous days, but he was still "furious" when Rocky pulled a gun on him after a scuffle that began the moment the two met up near the W Hotel.

"I told him to use it. Because mentally I couldn't believe it," Relli testified, with his old friend staring at him intently from the defense table. "I physically could not believe there was a gun in my face. That was the breaking point for me."

He said he had expected to argue but reconcile with his old friend, and the last thing he wanted to do was get into a fight that could ruin the modest music management business he had built.



Weinstein

## Variety

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron announced Tuesday that the "Mona Lisa" will get its own dedicated room inside the Louvre museum under a major renovation and expansion of the Paris landmark that will take up to a decade.

The renovation project, branded "Louvre New Renaissance," will include a wide new entrance near the Seine River, to be opened by 2031, Macron said in a speech from the room where Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece is displayed.

Macron didn't disclose an exact amount budgeted for the project to modernize the world's most visited museum, which is plagued with overcrowding and outdated facilities. But it's estimated to reach up to 800 million euros (\$834 million).

The Louvre's last overhaul dates back to the 1980s, when the iconic glass pyramid was unveiled. (AP)

NEW YORK: Former Secretary of State Antony Blinken has a book deal, billed by his publisher as a "rare glimpse" into the "challenging and often controversial" responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the war in Gaza and

other crises that broke out during his four years at the helm of the State Department under President Joe Biden.

Crown, an imprint of Penguin Random House, announced the book Tuesday. The title and release date are still to be determined.

"In this candid work, he will offer the first inside story from within the administration on what really transpired in the run up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the difficult choices that shaped American diplomatic and military support in the months that followed in a war that would bring the world as close to nuclear conflict as it had come in more than half a century," Crown's statement reads in part.

Crown promised Blinken's book would "take readers into the Situation Room and the Oval Office to hear the discussion about how to keep tensions with China from spiraling to dangerous levels." (AP)



Blinken

## HPV vaccine crucial for cervical cancer prevention: Dr. Al-Bahouh

## Health Ministry raises awareness on HPV, cervical cancer prevention

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The Ministry of Health, through its Health Promotion Department and in collaboration with the Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Department, organized an awareness day on the human papillomavirus (HPV) to enhance public health awareness across all segments of society.

During the event, Dr. Abeer Al-Bahouh, Director of the Health Promotion Department, emphasized the importance of raising awareness about cervical cancer, a disease strongly linked to HPV.

She explained that HPV infections can remain asymptomatic for up to two years before leading to the onset of cervical cancer.

The virus is known to cause skin or mucosal growths (warts), and in some cases, it contributes to cancers of the cervix, anus, penis, vagina, vulva, and the back of the throat (pharynx).

Dr. Al-Bahouh highlighted that HPV is primarily transmitted through skin-to-skin contact and that vaccination is an effective measure to protect against high-risk



Dr. Abeer Al-Bahouh, Director of the Health Promotion Department at the Ministry of Health.



A glimpse of the exhibition accompanying the awareness day.

virus strains responsible for genital and cervical cancers.

She noted that in some cases, HPV infections manifest as warts, which vary in appearance depending on the virus type.

Genital warts, for instance, may appear as small bumps or protrusions on the genitals, sometimes causing itching.

She stressed that nearly all cases of cervical cancer are caused by HPV, and early-stage infections often do not present noticeable symptoms.

This makes vaccination the most effective preventive measure against the disease. She further explained that 99% of cervical cancer cases are linked to HPV, a widespread virus transmitted primarily through sexual contact.

Providing statistical insight, Dr. Al-Bahouh stated that Kuwait recorded approximately 56 cases of cervical cancer in 2018, with 19 affecting Kuwaiti women.

On a broader scale, cervical cancer ranked as the sixth most common cancer among women in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and the fourth globally in 2020, with around 89,800 diagnosed cases and more than 47,500 deaths in the region.

## Mpox cases

## 1 in 3 seniors in US take aspirin daily

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (Xinhua): Nearly one in three Americans over the age of 60, roughly 19 million people, take aspirin daily, USA Today on Tuesday cited Annals of Internal Medicine.

Aspirin is an over-the-counter medication used for a variety of reasons. Aside from pain treatment, doctors may prescribe aspirin to patients who are at risk of heart attack or stroke, according to Harvard Health. These two serious health conditions occur when plaque forms in arteries, which can slow down blood flow in the body and cause small blood clots to form.

"Aspirin can reduce heart attacks and strokes, and to some degree other clots like those in the deep veins of the legs. In low doses, aspirin inhibits platelets and therefore reduces blood clots," Michael J. Blaha, director of Clinical Research for the Johns Hopkins Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease, was quoted as saying.

Thinning blood and therefore making clots less likely is a definite pro for those who are at higher risk of cardiovascular issues. But that doesn't make aspirin a prime candidate for everyone.

"In cardiovascular disease, we commonly prefer blood thinning because many cardiovascular diseases are the result of blood clots," Blaha said. "However, blood thinning is inevitably accompanied by an increased risk of bleeding."

**Mpox:** Zambia has recorded eight new mpox cases, bringing the cumulative total to 15, state media reported on Tuesday.

The eight new cases were reported in Lusaka, the country's capital, according to the Zambia Daily Mail, which quoted Paul Zulu, the mpox incident manager at the Zambia National Public Health Institute, a government agency responsible for major public health concerns in the country.

Zulu said the cases were reported in different residential areas of Lusaka and involved family members.

Health authorities in the capital have been responding to the mpox outbreak since Jan. 13, 2025, and a response mode has been activated, he added.

## Virus tied to 50,000 child deaths annually

## Your blood type may influence your vulnerability to norovirus

By Patricia L. Foster  
Indiana University

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

In the last few months, schools all over the US have closed because of outbreaks of norovirus. Also known as stomach flu, norovirus infections cause watery diarrhea, low-grade fever and, most alarming of all, projectile vomiting, which is an extremely effective way of spreading the virus.

Norovirus is very infectious and spreads rapidly through a confined population, such as at a school or on a cruise ship. Although most sufferers recover in 24 to 48 hours, norovirus is a leading cause of childhood illness and, in developing countries, results in about 50,000 child deaths each year.

Interestingly, not everyone is equally vulnerable to the virus, and whether you get sick or not may depend on your blood type.

I am a microbiologist, and I got interested in norovirus because, while norovirus symptoms are distressing under any circumstances, my encounter with the virus was particularly inconvenient. During a seven-day rafting trip down the Grand Canyon, the illness passed through the rafters and crew, one by one. Obviously, the wilderness sanitary facilities were not the best to cope with this outbreak. Luckily, everyone, including me, recovered quickly. It turns out that norovirus outbreaks on Colorado River rafting trips are common.

As debilitating as the illness it causes can be, the norovirus particle is visually beautiful. It is a type of virus known as "non-enveloped" or "naked," which means that it never acquires the membrane coating typical of other viruses, such as the flu virus. The norovirus surface is a protein coat, called the "capsid." The capsid protects the norovirus' genetic material.

## Control

The naked capsid coat is one factor that makes norovirus so difficult to control. Viruses with membrane coatings are susceptible to alcohol and detergents, but not so norovirus. Norovirus can survive temperatures from freezing to 145 degrees Fahrenheit (about the maximum water temperature in a home dishwasher), soap and mild solutions of bleach. Norovirus can persist on human hands for hours and on solid surfaces and food for days and is also resistant to alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

To make things worse, only a tiny dose of the virus - as few as 10 viral particles - is needed to cause disease. Given that an infected person can excrete many billions of viral particles, it's very difficult to prevent the virus from spreading.

When norovirus is ingested, it initially infects the cells that line the small intestine. Researchers don't know exactly how this infection then causes the symptoms of the disease. But a fascinating aspect of norovirus is that, after exposure, blood type determines, in a large part, whether a person gets sick.

Your blood type - A, B, AB or O - is dictated by genes that determine which kinds of molecules, called oligosac-

charides, are found on the surface of your red blood cells. Intestinal (cross head)

Oligosaccharides are made from different types of sugars linked together in complex ways.

The same oligosaccharides on red blood cells also appear on the surface of cells that line the small intestine. Norovirus and a few other viruses use these oligosaccharides to grab onto and infect the intestinal cells. It's the specific structure of these oligosaccharides that determines whether a given strain of virus can attach and invade.

The presence of one oligosaccharide, called the H1-antigen, is required for attachment by many norovirus strains.

People who do not make H1-antigen in their intestinal cells make up 20% of the European-derived population and are resistant to many strains of norovirus.

More sugars can be attached to the H1-antigen to give the A, B or AB blood types. People who can't make the A and B modifications have the O blood type.

## Variants

Norovirus evolves rapidly. There are 29 different strains currently known to infect humans, and each strain has different variants. Each one has different abilities to bind to the variously shaped sugar molecules on the intestinal cell surface. These sugars are determined by blood type.

If a group of people is exposed to a strain of norovirus, who gets sick will depend on each person's blood type. But, if the same group of people is exposed to a different strain of norovirus, different people may be resistant or susceptible. In general, those who do not make the H1-antigen and people with B blood type will tend to be resistant, whereas people with A, AB, or O blood types will tend to get sick, but the pattern will depend on the specific strain of norovirus.

This difference in susceptibility has an interesting consequence. When an outbreak occurs, for example, on a cruise ship, roughly a third of the people may escape infection. Because they do not know the underlying reason for their resistance, I think spared people engage in magical thinking - for example, "I didn't get sick because I drank a lot of grape juice." Of course, these mythical evasive techniques will not work if the next outbreak is a strain to which the individual is susceptible.

A norovirus infection provokes a robust immune response that eliminates the virus in a few days. However, the response appears to be short-lived. Most studies have found that immunity guarding against reinfection with the same norovirus strain lasts less than six months. Also, infection with one strain of norovirus offers little protection against infection from another. Thus, you can have repeated bouts with norovirus.

The diversity of norovirus strains and the impermanence of the immune response complicates development of an effective vaccine. Currently, clinical trials are testing the effects of vaccines made from the capsid proteins of the two most prevalent norovirus strains.

In general, these experimental vaccines produce good immune responses; the longevity of the immune response is now under study. The next phase of clinical trials will test if the vaccines actually prevent or reduce the symptoms of norovirus infection. (AP)



KUNA photo

India announces the successful launch of a new satellite to enhance regional navigation services.

## India launches NVS-02 satellite to enhance navigation services

NEW DELHI, Jan 29, (KUNA): India successfully launched a new-generation satellite, NVS-02, from Sriharikota in the south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh to boost navigation services.

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) said Wednesday in its official X account that the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F15) lifted off from Sriharikota carrying the NVS-02 at 6:23 AM local time. "The GSLV-F15/NVS-02 mission has been accomplished. India reaches new heights in space navigation," the ISRO said.

ISRO Chairman Dr. V. Narayanan said after the launch: "I am extremely

happy to announce from the spaceport of ISRO that the first launch of this year has been accomplished with the GSLV-F15 precisely placing the NVS-02 satellite into the intended orbit. This mission is our 100th launch from here. This is a significant milestone for our space programme."

The new satellite (NVS-02) will boost the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) which is India's independent regional navigation satellite system. NavIC is designed to provide accurate Position, Velocity, and Timing services to users in India and about 1,500 km beyond the Indian territory.

## First independent jet breaks sound barrier in California

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): A sleek white aircraft became the first independently developed jet to break the sound barrier, tearing through the air tens of thousands of feet above the Mojave Desert and a crowd of delighted on-lookers.

The XB-1 aircraft accelerated to Mach 1.05 within about 11 minutes of taking off, according to Boom Supersonic and live video of the test flight.

The flight at the Mojave Air & Space Port in Mojave, California, took place as the company works to revive supersonic passenger travel, which died with the grounding of the Anglo-French Concorde more than two decades ago.

Boom plans to focus next on the Overture airliner, which it says will

carry as many as 80 passengers while moving at about twice the speed of today's subsonic airliners.

"XB-1's supersonic flight demonstrates that the technology for passenger supersonic flight has arrived," Boom founder and CEO Blake Scholl said in a statement. "A small band of talented and dedicated engineers has accomplished what previously took governments and billions of dollars."

The aircraft, which flew for the first time in March, is made almost completely from lightweight carbon fiber. It uses an augmented reality vision system to help with landing, since its long nose and high-angle approach can make it difficult for pilots to see.

## MEDICAL CLASSIFIEDS

Take care of your health



To advertise in this page please call: 69994428 or E-mail: advt@arabtimesonline.com

For  
your  
ads on  
this page

Call: 69994428

E-mail: advt@arabtimesonline.com

## DEPARTMENT OF OPHTHALMOLOGY

مركز شفاء الجزيرة الطبي  
SHIFA AL JAZEERA MEDICAL CENTRE  
FAHAHEEL الفحاحيل



Dr. Sabitha Venkitesh  
MBBS, DNB  
(Ophthal)



Dr. Vivek P.S.  
MBBS, DO, DNB  
(Ophthal)



Dr. Reshma Ravindra  
MBBS, MS  
(Ophthal)

Special package for family available for eye check up

HOTLINE: 65 95 95 34

- ★ Comprehensive Eye screening
- ★ Paediatric visual assessment
- ★ Glaucoma screening
- ★ Diabetic Retinopathy Screening
- ★ Foreign Body removal

Mecca Street, Near Roundabout, Life Tower  
Fahaheel.  
Tel: +965 2391 9020  
www.shifaaljazeera.com.kw

Dupont returns: Can France reclaim Six Nations glory?

## Ireland chases historic three-peat amid tough competition

LONDON, Jan 29, (AP): Ireland is going for an unprecedented three-peat. France superstar Antoine Dupont is back after his sevens sabbatical. The Welsh? Well, they've never been this bad.

The Six Nations starts on Friday and the annual jamboree between the top rugby nations in the northern hemisphere isn't short of storylines for the 2025 edition.

Here are some of the big questions heading into a tournament that rarely fails to deliver:

The tournament has been going for 142 years, starting out as a contest between the home unions of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland before France was added in 1910 to make it a Five Nations, and Italy joined in 2000 for the modern-day Six Nations. Throughout, no country has ever won the title outright for three successive years. That's the task facing Ireland, which is the favorite of the British bookmakers. There are some red flags, though.

Ireland isn't being led by its head coach, Andy Farrell, because he's on a sabbatical so he can focus on his temporary role as coach of the British and Irish Lions for their tour of Australia this year. Farrell will be in the stadiums for matches during the tournament, just not in an Irish uniform. Then there are Ireland's performances in the autumn when they were ragged in losing to New Zealand before beating Argentina and Australia each by three points. Ireland is No. 2 in the world ranking, behind South Africa, so is in theory Europe's top team. Let's see if they play like it.

For many, France scrumhalf Antoine Dupont is the world's best rugby player. In 2021, he was player of the year in the 15-man game and has been player of the championship in the Six Nations a record-tying three times. France missed Dupont in last year's Six Nations, when he stepped away to focus on playing sevens for France at the Paris Olympics. Naturally, he starred in France's run to



In this file photo, France's Antoine Dupont makes a break during the Autumn Nations series rugby union match between France and Japan at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, outside Paris. (AP)

the gold medal but is back in the 15s and just led the French to a third straight win over the All Blacks. France will be a more fearsome prospect with the irrepensible Dupont but has a tough schedule, with away games against England

(Round 2) and Ireland (Round 4).

It wasn't long ago that Warren Gatland was regarded as one of the world's top rugby coaches. A disastrous second spell in charge of Wales is damaging his reputation, though. Under the New Zealander, Wales - a proud rugby nation - has just gone an entire calendar year without a win for the first time since 1937 and is on a record 12-match losing run. Five of those defeats came in last year's Six Nations, where the Welsh finished last for the first time since 2003. With Italy - the perennial wooden spoon winner - steadily improving under coach Gonzalo Quesada, Wales looks primed for another whitewash that could spell the end for Gatland. Italy hosts Wales in Round 2.

The Lions squad for the tour of Australia across June and July is expected to be announced in April so this is the last chance for hopefuls to make an impression on the international stage in front of Farrell, who is sure to be attending as many matches as he can in a neutral capacity. Farrell knows all about the Irish players - he has been Ireland's coach since late 2019 - so the onus is on the English, Welsh, and Scots to stand out. And performances in the Six Nations do matter: Just ask Jack Conan. The Irish back-rower was out of favor going into the 2021 Six Nations and missed the team's opening two games, only to be recalled for the final three rounds, star in the Round 5 dismantling of England, get a Lions call-up and start all three tests against South Africa.

Well, one thing splitting opinion is the introduction of 20-minute red cards, which were trialed in the autumn internationals and will be seen in the Six Nations for the first time. Rather than a red card reducing a team to 14 players permanently, those players sent off for technical offenses can be replaced by a teammate after 20 minutes have elapsed. It is an initiative designed to punish players, not teams. Referees can still award permanent red cards for deliberate and dangerous acts of foul play.

## Olsen leads Norwegian 1-2



Norway's Alexander Steen Olsen, center, winner of a men's World Cup giant slalom, poses on podium with second placed Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen, left, and third placed Switzerland's Marco Odermatt in Schladming, Austria. (AP)

### World champion Odermatt finishes 3rd

SCHLADMING, Austria, Jan 29, (AP): Alexander Steen Olsen led a Norwegian 1-2 finish ahead of Henrik Kristoffersen in a rain-affected men's World Cup night giant slalom, while defending overall champion Marco Odermatt finished third.

Odermatt had won the last three giant slaloms, and 15 of the last 18, but the Olympic and world champion struggled in tough conditions to find his rhythm in the opening run and had finished 0.90 behind in 12th.

The Swiss star then posted the fifth-fastest time in the second run to gain nine spots in a performance that resembled his achievement from last year in Schladming, when he finished the opening run 0.98 seconds off the lead but still managed to win the race with a frenetic final run.

"Not much went well in the first run, the second was better but also not perfect and I am on the podium with lots, lots, lots of luck," said Odermatt, who remained in the lead of both the overall and GS standings.

"I just didn't ski well. That can happen after two weeks of skiing down-

hills," he added, referring to winning two races at the classic speed events in Wengen and Kitzbuehel. Steen Olsen claimed his second win of the season after triumphing in the opener in Soelden in October, when he also won ahead of Kristoffersen.

On Tuesday, Steen Olsen screamed for joy after taking the lead in the race, then waited arm in arm with Kristoffersen for first-run leader Loic Meillard to finish.



Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen gets to the finish area after completing a men's World Cup giant slalom, in Schladming, Austria. (AP)

After the Swiss skier had dropped to fourth, one-hundredth of a second behind his teammate Odermatt, Steen Olsen celebrated by jumping on the protective boarding of the finish area.

"That was so extremely nice after a tough slalom period, finally get it, a super good day," said Steen Olsen, who was second after the opening run and beat teammate Kristoffersen by 0.39 seconds.

"I was thinking between the runs,

"I'm just going to give it my best, either it's possible or not," Steen Olsen said. "And I managed to just let go and ski my skiing and not think too much, so it was awesome."

It was the last GS before next month's world championships in Austria.

"I don't think so much about that now, I was focused on today. Right now, I'm extremely happy," Steen Olsen said.

Persistent rain weakened the course and low clouds in the upper part of the Planai forced organizers to lower the start gate, which reduced run times by about 14 seconds.

A night slalom on the same hill is scheduled for Wednesday.

Lucas Pinheiro Braathen, who switched from the Norwegian to the Brazilian federation this season, finished 12th. Pinheiro Braathen was fourth and second in the first two giant slaloms but hasn't finished in the top 10 again in his four races since.

Alexis Pinturault, a two-time Olympic bronze medalist in GS who crashed in a super-G and was airlifted from the course in Kitzbuehel last Friday, will likely miss the rest of the season. The French ski federation said that Pinturault sustained a fracture of the internal tibial plateau in his right knee and was expected to gradually start rehabilitation in six weeks' time.

### Colorado State sinks Air Force

## St John's downs Georgetown to maintain impressive form

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP): Kadary Richmond and Zuby Eji-efor had 13 points apiece as No. 15 St. John's rolled to a 66-41 victory at Georgetown on Tuesday night, extending its winning streak to seven games.

Eight players scored for the Red Storm, on their longest run of consecutive wins in Big East play since 2000. St. John's (18-3, 9-1) is off to its best start since opening the 1985-86 season 20-2 during the program's heyday under Hall of Fame coach Lou Carnesecca.

Tied with No. 9 Marquette atop the league standings, St. John's is 9-1 in conference games for the first time since the 1984-85 team was 14-0 on the way to an outright Big East regular-season title and a Final Four appearance.

This one was over early, with Rick Pitino's team jumping ahead by scores of 23-3 and 37-9 and leading by 30 late in the first half. Malik Mack had 13 points for Georgetown (13-8, 4-6), which cut the margin to 15 with 6:33 remaining but could not close the gap any further.

It was the fewest points allowed by St. John's in a Big East game and its stingiest defensive performance overall since an 82-39 rout of Drake in November 2010.

Nique Clifford's 22 points helped Colorado State defeat Air Force 79-58.

Clifford added 11 rebounds and seven assists for the Rams (14-7, 8-2 Mountain West Conference). Jalen Lake scored 14 points while going 5 of 9 (2 for 6 from 3-point range). Jaylen Crocker-Johnson shot 5 for 9, including 2 for 3 from beyond the arc to finish with 13 points.

Ethan Taylor led the Falcons (3-18, 0-10) in scoring, finishing with 22 points and two steals. Jeffrey Mills added nine points and six rebounds for Air Force. Kyle Marshall finished with seven points and six rebounds. The Falcons prolonged their losing streak to 11 straight.

The game was close going into the half, as Colorado State held a one-point lead, 38-37. Lake paced their team in scoring through the first half with 10 points. Colorado State took the lead just over two minutes into the second half and did not relinquish it. Clifford helped his team pull away for the victory with 13 second-half points.

Magoon Gwath's 24 points helped San Diego State defeat San Jose State 71-68.

Gwath added seven rebounds for the Aztecs (14-5, 7-3 Mountain West Conference). Miles Byrd went 5 of 10 from the field (3 for 6 from 3-point range) to add 13 points. Nicholas Boyd shot 4 of 10 from the field, including 1 for 3 from 3-point range, and went 2 for 3 from the free-throw line to finish with 11 points, while adding nine rebounds and five assists.

The Spartans (10-12, 3-7) were led in scoring by Latrell Davis, who finished with 23 points. Josh Uduje added 21 points and four steals for San Jose State. Donovan Yap also recorded 11 points.

Gwath scored 14 points in the first half and San Diego State went



St. John's Kadary Richmond goes to the basket during the second half of NCAA basketball game against Georgetown. (AP)

into halftime trailing 41-29. San Diego State outscored San Jose State by 13 points in the second half. Byrd led the way with 13 second-half points.

Gabe Madsen scored seven of his 18 points in the final two minutes, Keanu Dawes added 12 points and nine rebounds and Utah beat Cincinnati 69-66.

Ezra Ausar scored 11 points for Utah. The Runnin' Utes (12-8, 4-5 Big 12) shot 53% (26 of 49) from the field and limited Cincinnati to 39% (22 of 56) shooting but Utah committed 19 turnovers, which the Bearcats turned into 21 points.

Aziz Bandaogo threw down an alley-oop dunk before Josh Reed made two free throws to cap an 8-0 Cincinnati spurt that made it 62-41 with 3:12 remaining. After the teams traded turnovers, Madsen hit a pull-up jumper and followed with two free throws that made it 66-62 with 1:30 to go.

Madsen made 3 of 4 from the free-throw line from there and Simas Lukosius missed a potential tying 3-point shot in the closing seconds.

Markus Burton scored 26 points and Braeden Shrewsbury scored 15 points and Notre Dame took the lead for good late and held off Georgia Tech for a 71-68 win.

Naithan George scored 20 points, reserve Duncan Powell scored 18 points and Baye Ndongo 10 for Georgia Tech.

The Irish (10-10, 4-5 ACC) have now won three of four following a four-game losing streak.

Burton's 3-pointer with 1:49 remaining gave Notre Dame the lead for good and was part of a 13-0 run that started with 5:23 left and ended with 18 seconds remaining. Shrewsbury made a 3 and Burton sank consecutive 3s as part of the run.

Zhuric Phelps had 15 points, Henry Coleman III added 14 and No. 13 Texas A&M held on for a 75-68 win over Oklahoma.

Texas A&M (16-5, 5-3 Southeastern Conference) led by four with about 2 1/2 minutes left when a three-point play by Wade Taylor IV extended the lead to 68-61.

Brycen Goodine scored all five Sooners points in a 5-2 spurt that cut it to 70-66 with less than a minute to go. But then Coleman made four free throws to secure the victory.

## Warriors to retire Andre Iguodala's No. 9 jersey

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 29, (AP): As Andre Iguodala moves around town in the Bay Area these days, he is regularly stopped by fans eager to praise him for how he carried himself while playing for the Golden State Warriors.

For his grit and his drive. For doing all the little things many never saw.

Some even share how his example influenced the way they raise their own kids - because that's how much he has meant to big-time basketball both on the court and off it.

"I'm used to getting stopped a lot but now it throws me off because I don't play basketball anymore," Iguodala said. "You can see a good fan versus a bad fan from a mile away, and so I'm able to see, OK, this is a decent human being, and this is a genuine interaction. I think the folks that I'm running into in the Bay are of high value and morals, and so 99% are really good interactions.

"You walk away feeling a little bit better about yourself, actually, because you realize it's bigger than you."

Now, Iguodala will give them more to celebrate

and cheer about.

The Warriors announced Tuesday that Iguodala is becoming the seventh player to have his number retired by the franchise - set to join Rick Barry (24), Wilt Chamberlain (13), Nate Thurmond (42), Al Attles (16), Chris Mullin (17) and Tom Meschery (14).

Golden State will honor Iguodala and hang his No. 9 jersey following an afternoon game against Dallas on Feb. 23, meaning former teammate Klay Thompson will have the chance to be there.

"Andre will go down as one of the smartest, shrewdest and most unique and successful players ever to wear a Warriors uniform," owner Joe Lacob said.

Iguodala retired in October 2023 after 19 NBA seasons and four championships with Golden State, including an NBA Finals MVP award in 2015. Shortly after announcing he was done playing, Iguodala became the acting executive director of the National Basketball Players Association.

The 41-year-old Iguodala was the No. 9 overall pick in the 2004 NBA draft out of Arizona and

played in 1,231 career games. He spent eight seasons with the Philadelphia 76ers, one in Denver, six with the Warriors, two in Miami and the last two back for Golden State. He was part of NBA champions in 2015, '17, '18 and 2022.

A defensive stopper who took on a variety of roles, Iguodala not only mentored teammates at the end of his career but also provided insight to coach Steve Kerr.

It was Kerr who trusted Iguodala to perform on the big stage that the coach moved him into the starting lineup trailing 2-1 to the Cavaliers in the 2015 Finals and gave him the assignment of guarding then-Cleveland star LeBron James.

"A lot of those things go unnoticed," the retired swingman said. "I constantly get stopped by folks and they say, 'You know, you really helped me raise my children in terms of bringing a proper approach, to whatever it is that you do, respecting what you do, doing it at a high level, teamwork, discipline. Sacrifice is probably the biggest thing that they use in regards to me, with sometimes less is more, but knowing when to be ready for the big moments.'"

## Wrexham comeback falls short

WREXHAM, Wales, Jan 29, (AP): Wrexham lost ground in the promotion race after a 3-2 home defeat to Stevenage in England's third division.

Wrexham is attempting to earn its third straight promotion under the ownership of actors Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney.

The visitors grabbed an early 2-0 lead at the Racecourse Ground on goals by Dan Kemp and Jamie Reid. Wrexham's Oliver Rathbone cut the deficit in half before Jake Young restored Stevenage's two-goal advantage.

Max Cleworth's header in the 90th minute gave Wrexham hope but Paul Mullin's shot went over the bar deep

into stoppage time.

Wrexham hadn't lost a League One home game all season. It remains in third place, six points behind second-place Wycombe, which won Tuesday. Both teams have 18 games remaining. Birmingham retained its league lead after a 1-0 victory over fourth-place Huddersfield. NFL great Tom Brady is a minority shareholder of Birmingham, which leads Wycombe by two points with two games in hand.

"HUGE win today boys," Brady said in a social media post.

The top two teams earn automatic promotion to the Championship, and the next four enter a playoff for one other promotion spot.

# Salwa Al-Sabah Club wins Super Cup ahead of international women's volleyball championship

Tournament kicks off under patronage of Sheikh Sabah Badr Al-Sabah

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** The second edition of the friendly international championship for women's volleyball, hosted by Salwa Al-Sabah Club, kicks off today under the patronage of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Badr Al-Sabah. The tournament features eight teams from Arab and international clubs, divided into two groups.

Group A includes Salwa Al-Sabah Club, Geneva Club from Switzerland, Akkad Ankaw from Iraq, and Fatima Bint Mubarak Academy from the UAE.

Group B consists of the Tunisian national team, the Qatari national team, Al-Shabiba Al-Bouchrieh Club from Lebanon, and Al-Ula Club from Saudi Arabia. The competition will run until February 5th.

The opening match will take place today at 6:00 pm between Salwa Al-Sabah Club and Fatima Bint Mubarak Academy, at the club's hall in Al-Qurain.

Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of Salwa Al-Sabah Club, expressed her warm welcome to the participating Arab and foreign delegations, considering Kuwait their second home. She highlighted the success of the tournament's first edition in terms of technical organization, audience support, and the participation of Gulf and Arab teams. The current edition, featuring the inclusion of Geneva Club from Switzerland, marks the tournament's growing international appeal.

Sheikha Naima added, "The Board of Directors of Salwa Al-Sabah Club has devoted significant attention to this tournament, with committees working diligently in preparation to ensure a successful event and a memorable experience for women's volleyball."

She also extended her sincere appreciation to the Public Authority for Sports and the Kuwait Volleyball Federation for their invaluable cooperation in organizing the event, which aligns with Kuwait's ongoing commitment to supporting sports under the guidance of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, and His Highness the Prime Minister.

In a related development, Salwa Al-Sabah Club's volleyball team recently claimed the Super Cup title for the current season, defeating Al-Fatma Club 3-0. The match was held at the Volleyball Association Hall at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, where Dr. Jaber Al-Marri, President of the Volleyball Association, presented the Super Cup trophy to the Salwa Al-Sabah volleyball team.



Super Cup champion Salwa Al-Sabah Club.

## Sheikh Adthbi Al-Sabah commends Tariq Al-Shammari's soccer legacy

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** Sheikh Adthbi Abdullah Al-Sabah praised the distinguished career of former Kazma Club and Kuwait national team player Tariq Al-Shammari, highlighting his significant contributions to football. He described

Al-Shammari as a role model, both in terms of sportsmanship and technical skill.

This recognition came during Sheikh Adthbi Al-Sabah's reception of Al-Shammari, attended by his son, Sheikh Jarrah Adthbi Al-Sabah, and former National Assembly member Badr Sayyar Al-Shammari. The gathering was held in honor of Al-Shammari's retirement, which took place on February 27 during the Kazma vs. Kuwait match in the Zain Premier League.

They emphasized that competing in such a prestigious tournament helps elevate their performance, especially given the dominance of Asian players in the sport.

Khaled Al-Dulaimi highlighted the mental and physical coordination required in table tennis, describing it as an enjoyable and strategic game. He expressed his delight after securing a hard-fought 3-2 victory over a player from the Turkmenistan national team.

He added that facing international opponents enhances technical skills and provides valuable experience, particularly when competing against top-tier Asian players.

Meanwhile, Mishaan Muhammad celebrated his 3-1 win over an Egyptian national team player, noting that the championship offers a great opportunity to engage with players from around the world. He credited his success to rigorous training and strong commitment, which contributed to his positive performance in the tournament.

Similarly, Zain Al-Ali expressed her excitement about competing in the championship, emphasizing her determination to achieve a strong result and represent Kuwait with pride.

She also acknowledged the presence of highly skilled players in the tournament, stating that competing

## Kuwaiti table tennis team gains valuable experience in Qatar



Players in action during the championship.

her excitement about competing in the championship, emphasizing her determination to achieve a strong result and represent Kuwait with pride.

She also acknowledged the presence of highly skilled players in the tournament, stating that competing

against them is an invaluable experience that will aid in future competitions.

The championship commenced two days ago with preliminary qualifiers for the Under-11 and Under-13 categories and will continue until January 30.



Al-Shammari presents a commemorative shield to Sheikh Adthbi Abdullah Al-Sabah in the presence of Sayyar and his brother Falah.

## Australia in command

### Smith, Khawaja punish Sri Lanka on rain-hit opening day

**GALLE, Sri Lanka, Jan 29, (AP):** Australia's batters feasted on Sri Lanka's bowling, racking up milestones and dominance on a rain-curtailed opening day of the first test in Galle on Wednesday.

The tourists finished on a commanding 330-2 with Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith both posting unbeaten centuries to set the platform for a formidable first-innings total.

Smith etched his name in the record books by becoming only the 15th player in history - and the fourth Australian - to surpass 10,000 Test runs, joining the elite company of Allan Border, Steve Waugh, and Ricky Ponting. Walking in with 9,999 runs to

his name, he nudged a single off Prabath Jayasuriya to reach the milestone.

Sri Lanka had a golden chance to remove Smith early, but Jayasuriya spilled a return catch - an error that proved costly. The Australian stand-in captain made him pay, hammering an unbeaten 104, laced with 10 boundaries and a six, while forging a mammoth 195-run unbroken stand with Khawaja for the third wicket.

Khawaja, looking at ease throughout, remained unbeaten on 147, striking 10 fours and a six. His fluent innings made his recent struggles against India - a series in which he managed just one half-century - seem like a dis-

tant memory.

With only 81.1 overs possible due to rain, Australia will be eager to pile on the runs on day two. Holding a three-spinner advantage, it is well-placed to put Sri Lanka under immense pressure on a pitch expected to deteriorate. A victory in this test would be enough for Australia to retain the Warne-Murali Trophy.

Earlier, Travis Head provided an electric start, smashing 57 off just 40 balls, peppering the boundary 10 times and clearing it once. The Australian vice-captain looked to dominate Jayasuriya but perished trying to clear long-on, ending a 92-run opening wicket stand with Khawaja.

Leg-spinner Jeffrey Vandersay, playing his first test in two years, managed a breakthrough by dismissing Marnus Labuschagne, caught at slip. But from there, Smith and Khawaja took control, ensuring Australia dictated terms.

Sri Lanka's bowling lacked discipline, and its use of reviews proved costly. The hosts missed an opportunity to dismiss Head on 23, failing to challenge an LBW decision, and then Khawaja on 74, when he edged behind - another review left unused.

Australia, well on top, now have the perfect opportunity to bat Sri Lanka out of the contest.



Australia's Usman Khawaja plays a shot during day one of the first test cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)



Australia's Steven Smith celebrates his century during day one of the first test cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)

## Hayat highlights success of Kuwait Int'l show jumping championship

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** The President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, Masoud Hayat, highlighted the distinction of this season, marked by the organization of several major international championships. These events saw participation from female riders across Gulf, Arab, and European countries, significantly elevating the technical level of the sport.

Masoud Hayat also announced that Kuwait will host a three-star international championship next week, serving as a qualifier for the World Cup.

He expressed his deep gratitude to all sponsors who have supported Kuwaiti equestrianism and to the Kuwaiti fans who continue to show their passion by attending and cheering on the riders at these important events.

The competitions will begin with a 115cm round, followed by 120, 130, and 140cm rounds. The event will resume tomorrow, Friday, at 9:00 am, with additional rounds at 115, 120, 130, and 140cm. The final



The President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, Masoud Hayat.

day, Saturday, will feature the highly anticipated Grand Prix round, set at a height of 145cm.

## Neymar returns to Santos

**RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 29, (AP):** Neymar has agreed to return to Santos nearly 12 years after he left the Brazilian team, club president Marcelo Teixeira said Tuesday.

The Brazil striker confirmed earlier that his contract with Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal had been terminated by mutual consent. He had an injury-marred spell at Al-Hilal, where he played only seven matches and scored once.

Neymar won six titles with his boyhood club Santos, including a Copa Libertadores trophy in 2011. Santos is a beachfront city outside São Paulo.

"It is the time (to come back), Neymar. It is time for you to come back to your people. To our home, to the club in our hearts," Teixeira said in his social media channels. "Welcome, our

boy Ney! A boy of Vila (Belmiro, Santos' stadium). Come back to be happy again with the white and black shirt. The Santos nation awaits you with open arms."

Neymar, once hailed as one of the world's best players, spent much of his time in Saudi Arabia on the sidelines due to an ACL injury he picked playing for Brazil in October 2023.

São Paulo media reported that the former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star is expected to return to Brazil this week and reintroduce himself to Santos fans within days.

Neymar became the most expensive player in soccer history when he transferred from Barcelona to PSG for 222 million euros (then \$262 million) in 2017.



Utah Jazz guard Collin Sexton, left, races toward the ball against Golden State Warriors guard Dennis Schroder during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

# Sports



Kuwait Club players celebrate after winning the Super Cup.

## Kuwait Club extends Super Cup legacy

Sheikh Al-Yousef congratulates Whites after beating Al-Qadsiya on penalties

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Football Association, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, congratulated Kuwait Club on securing the Super Cup title for the eighth time in its history. He extended his best wishes to Al-Qadsiya and all other teams for success in the upcoming tournaments. Kuwait Club triumphed over Al-Qadsiya 7-6 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in a thrilling final held at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

Sheikh Al-Yousef remarked, Al-Qadsiya was the better team overall, but Kuwait Club's experience, particularly that of its professional players, was key in clinching the title.

He highlighted the electric atmosphere of the

match, emphasizing that the turnout exceeded 22,000 spectators. Sheikh Al-Yousef also praised the efforts of various organizing committees and the "Kuwaiti Youth" for orchestrating a successful and distinguished final. He noted that the efficiency of Kuwaiti cadres in managing the event bodes well for their role in future finals.

Discussing the venue change, Sheikh Al-Yousef explained that Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium was chosen due to its advanced lighting facilities and greater capacity, making it a more suitable location for the final compared to Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium.

Kuwait Club President Khaled Al-Ghanim expressed his delight at his team's Super Cup victory, describing the achievement as reinforcing its status as "Leader and Super Champion."

He credited the team's experience for their success and commended the players, technical staff, administrative personnel, and medical team for their collective efforts. Al-Ghanim congratulated the club's honorary president, Marzouq Al-Ghanim, and wished Al-Qadsiya's players and fans success in future competitions.

"The match was challenging against Al-Qadsiya, but Kuwait Club's experience in finals played a crucial role in securing the victory, even if the performance was not at its best throughout the game," he stated.

Dismissing any immediate changes to the team, Al-Ghanim affirmed that the squad, including both the technical staff and professional players, remains stable. He emphasized that Kuwait Club's performance in local tournaments continues to be strong and consistent.

Adel Aqla, acknowledged that Kuwait Club faced a determined opponent in Al-Qadsiya. However, he credited the team's confidence and experience in deciding the title despite their rival's advantage at times during the match.

Aqla also dismissed any attempts to downplay the tournament's significance, stressing that every competition held under the Federation's umbrella holds great value. He criticized those who underestimate such achievements, reminding them of the extensive efforts made by club administrations throughout the season.



Sheikh Al-Yousef hands the Cup to Harmoud in the presence of Al-Ghanim, Osama, Mubarak and Al-Ayoub.

Blues end campaign with win over Japan

## Kuwait handball team returns with 27th place finish at the World Cup

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**ZAGREB, Jan 29:** The Kuwaiti national handball team is set to return to this morning at 5:00 am after completing its participation in the 29th World Handball Championship, currently taking place in Croatia, Denmark, and Norway. The tournament will conclude on February 2.

The team finished in 27th place, securing a 37-32 victory over Japan, the Asian champion, in the match that determined the rankings for 27th and 28th places. Saif Al-Adwani, the standout player for Kuwait, was named the best player of the match, marking his second consecutive individual accolade after being named "Man of the Match"

against Algeria during the World Cup's "President's Cup" competition.

This marks Kuwait's return to the World Cup after a 15-year absence, with the team's ninth participation in the prestigious event.

Qaed Al-Adwani, Secretary of the Kuwait Handball Federation and head of the national team delegation at the World Cup, praised the players for their impressive performance and high morale. Despite facing a challenging group in the preliminary rounds, the team gave it all, securing a well-deserved 27th-place finish.

"While we were placed in a tough group during the preliminary round, our players performed admirably and represented Kuwaiti handball with pride," Al-Adwani stated. "Reaching

the 27th position at the World Cup is a significant achievement, and it provides the team with great motivation for future success."

Al-Adwani, on behalf of the Kuwait Handball Federation, also expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the players for their dedication and sacrifice, which helped elevate Kuwait's name on the global stage.

The Secretary of the Handball Federation extended special thanks to Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, for his ongoing support of Kuwaiti sports, including handball. He also expressed gratitude to the Sports Authority and to the loyal Kuwaiti fans that supported the team throughout the competition.



Kuwaiti players after beating Japan to finish 27th.

Maxey scores 43 to lift 76ers past Lakers

Rockets avoid late collapse against Hawks

**ATLANTA, Jan 29, (AP):** Jalen Green scored 12 of his 25 points in the third quarter and the Houston Rockets avoided a late collapse to beat the Atlanta Hawks 100-96 on Tuesday night.

Alperen Sengun added 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Rockets, who led 96-80 after Green's steal and layup with 5:41 remaining before Atlanta closed within two in the final minute.

Dillon Brooks and Amen Thompson each finished with 11 points for the Rockets, who followed their victory in Boston on Monday with their fourth straight win.

Trae Young had 21 points and nine assists for Atlanta, which dropped its season-high sixth straight.

Houston has won 10 of 12 and moved 1 1/2 games ahead of Memphis for the No. 2 seed in the Western Conference.

Atlanta has not won since beating the Celtics 119-115 in overtime on Jan. 18.

The Hawks cut the lead to 98-96 with 46 seconds to play. De'Andre Hunter missed a potential go-ahead 3-pointer with 12 seconds left and the ball bounced over the backboard, giving the Rockets the ball with 10 seconds left. Sengun broke free on the ensuing Houston inbounds pass and his dunk sealed the win.

The Hawks shot 11 of 47 from 3-point range. After hitting three of its first seven 3-pointers, Atlanta went 8 of 40 the rest of the game.

**76ers 118, Lakers 104**  
In Philadelphia, Tyrese Maxey scored 43 points to lead a Philadelphia 76ers team without injured Joel Embiid and Paul George to a 118-104 win over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Last season's NBA Most Improved Player, Maxey continued his recent hot scoring streak as he tries to keep the Sixers within striking



Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James, bottom goes up for a shot against Philadelphia 76ers' Adem Bona during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

distance of the play-in tournament. Maxey had averaged 30.4 points over the last 10 games and he blew past the mark in the third quarter, finishing with 41 headed into the fourth. Maxey hit four 3-pointers and made 15 of 26 shots overall from the floor. He extended his career-best streak of 25-point games to 11 straight to the delight of a handful of NFC champion Eagles who sat court-side.

**Warriors 114, Jazz 103**

In San Francisco, Dennis Schroder scored 23 points with five 3-pointers. Brandin Podziemski contributed 20 points off the bench with Stephen Curry sitting out to rest his troublesome knees, and Golden State beat stumbling Utah.

Collin Sexton matched his season high with 30 points on 12-of-19 shooting for Utah, which lost its seventh straight game and 10th of 11 overall.

Andrew Wiggins added 19 points and Golden State capitalized with 12 first-quarter points off Utah's six

turnovers and 26 in all from Jazz miscues.

Podziemski also had seven rebounds and six assists, helping carry the point guard load without Curry. Kevon Looney grabbed 11 rebounds.

**Trail Blazers 125, Bucks 112**

In Portland, Deni Avdija scored a season-high 30 points and Portland bested former teammate Damian Lillard with a victory over Milwaukee.

Anfernee Simons added 25 points for Portland, which has won five of its last six. The Blazers led by 19 points in the final quarter.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 39 points and 12 rebounds for the Bucks, who had won nine of their last 11 but were playing their third game in four nights.  
The game marked Lillard's second trip to Portland since he was traded to the Bucks ahead of last season. Lillard, who spent 11 seasons with the Blazers, finished with 20 points.