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# KUWAIT EXPRESSES SORROW IN WAKE OF U.S. AVIATION TRAGEDY

## All feared dead in midair collision

### Bodies pulled from Potomac River after airspace horror

ARLINGTON, Va., Jan 30, (Agencies): Everyone aboard an American Airlines jet carrying 60 passengers and four crew members that collided with an Army helicopter was feared dead in what was likely to be the worst U.S. aviation disaster in almost a quarter century, officials said Thursday.

Meanwhile, Kuwait voiced sympathy and solidarity with the U.S. over the collision between a commercial plane and a military helicopter at Reagan National Airport in Washington D.C. earlier in the day, which claimed multiple casualties.

In a press release, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Kuwait offers heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and

wishes a swift recovery of those injured in the crash, while hoping that rescue efforts would result in finding more survivors.

At least 28 bodies were pulled from the icy waters of the Potomac River after the midair collision Wednesday night when the helicopter apparently flew in the path of the jet as it was landing at Ronald Reagan National Airport near Washington, D.C., officials said.

Crews were still searching for other casualties but did not believe there were any survivors, which would make it the deadliest U.S. air crash in nearly 24 years.

"We are now at the point where we are switching from a rescue operation to a recovery operation," said John Donnelly, the fire chief in the nation's capital. "We don't believe there are any survivors."

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Search and rescue efforts are seen around a wreckage site in the Potomac River from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, early Thursday morning, Jan. 30, 2025, in Arlington, Va. (AP)



5 India's Republic Day reception celebrates sovereignty, national pride

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12 Omani frankincense, an economic jewel and national icon

Project awaiting transport strategy revamp

## Metro future in limbo as gaps persist

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Various State agencies have been reviewing the 'Kuwait Metro' project over the past two decades and it has undergone many stages; including global consultation, feasibility studies, countless meetings, and the establishment of numerous committees; Municipal Council member Alia Al Farsi stated at the council's Technical Committee meeting on Tuesday.

This is in response to the question of Deputy Chairman of the council Khaled Al-Mutairi, about the project.

Al-Farsi pointed out that she does not

interpret the decision as a cancellation of the project, but a suspension until the issuance of a new law and mechanism to propose it without the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) system.

Discussions also showed that the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation did not implement the rapid transit system management or transportation management within its organizational structure.

The authority previously stated that the country needs a central body to manage its transportation systems to achieve comprehensive planning and coordination.

The committee said that "development goals cannot be achieved if each

of the involved party conducts separate studies and strategies for the transportation systems without collaboration and a comprehensive perspective. Discussions revealed that PART and the Municipality have their own transportation strategies. This duplication is a waste of time, effort and public funds. Kuwait is a small country with the best planning, such as ring and radial roads. It is more appropriate to manage its transportation systems in a better way. The bus system needs to be restructured and developed at the drop-off and loading points and bus stops. The taxi system needs specific official drop-off and loading points."

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## Chilly nights, mild daytime temps expected over weekend in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30, (KUNA): Kuwait's Meteorological Department has forecasted moderate daytime temperatures and cold nights for the upcoming weekend, influenced by an air rise extension. Winds will be northwesterly, ranging from light to moderate, occasionally becoming active in coastal areas.

According to department director Dirar Al-Ali, Friday will remain moderate, with winds between 8 and 35 km/h and highs of 20-22°C. At night, temperatures will dip to 7-9°C, with lighter winds between 6 and 30 km/h.

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Photo by Samer Shiqer  
People soak in the serene atmosphere at Marina Crescent, relishing the perfect weather on Thursday.

## Kuwait forms task force to curb energy and water use

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Minister of Electricity, Dr. Mahmoud Bushehri, is set to announce the formation of a High Committee for Rationalization, which he will personally chair.

Most committee members will be experts from outside the ministry, representing key entities involved in energy conservation across the country.

According to informed sources, the committee will be tasked with developing national policies to curb excessive electricity and water consumption, enhancing overall energy efficiency management. The formation is expected soon, with procedural steps likely to begin next week.

Additionally, subcommittees within the ministry will be formed to complement the existing rationalization strategy committee.

Meanwhile, MEW has referred the tender for five reinforced concrete fresh water tanks (each with a 55-million imperial gallon capacity) in Al-Mutlaa (Phase 2) to the Audit Bureau for review and approval.

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## New law aims to 'fix' Kuwait housing crisis

By Iman Al-Hashash

Real Estate Legal Consultant

Kuwait is taking significant steps to address its housing crisis by restructuring the real estate finance sector.

The government has proposed a new draft law aimed at transforming real estate financing and providing innovative solutions to reduce the waiting lists for housing.

This initiative comes at a time when pressure is mounting on the Public Authority for Housing Welfare and the Kuwait Credit Bank, both struggling to meet the housing needs of citizens.

Real estate financing enables individuals to secure loans for purchasing or constructing real estate, with the property serving as collateral.

The loan is repaid through monthly installments that include both the principal and interest. If payments are missed, the lender can reclaim the property.

In Kuwait, the proposed real estate financing plan offers up to 200,000 dinars in funding, with 70,000 dinars guaranteed by the government and the remaining 130,000 dinars provided by banks, secured by a mortgage on the property.

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### NewsWatch

RIYADH: Representative of 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, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah offered condolences to the royal family of sisterly Saudi Arabia on Wednesday afternoon for the demise of Prince Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

Sheikh Hamad Jaber leads a delegation made up of Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Sheikh Meshal Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Sheikh Feras Saud Abdullah Al-Malek Al-Sabah and Sheikh Talal Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Mahmoud Abdulaziz Bushehri met US Ambassador Karen Hideko Sahahara to explore ways for greater cooperation in the energy and water desalination.

Both sides commended "the fruitful and constructive cooperation" in the current and future projects of the ministry, according to a statement released by the ministry on Thursday. (KUNA)

## Kuwait's illiteracy rate drops to all-time low of 2.22 percent

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Statistics released by the Ministry of Education reveal a decline in illiteracy rates among the population of Kuwait to approximately 2.22 percent. Among Kuwaitis, the illiteracy rate is even lower, at just 1.18 percent.

The statistics revealed that the total population of Kuwait is 4,736,878, with 3,219,367 non-Kuwaitis and 1,517,511 Kuwaitis.

The number of illiterate individuals is 105,090, of which 17,939 are Kuwaiti, including 16,705 women and 1,234 men. Among non-Kuwaitis, 87,151 people are illiterate, comprising 33,626 women and 53,525 men.

The overall illiteracy rate stands at 2.22 percent, with a higher rate of 2.71 percent among men and a lower rate of 1.90 percent among women.

For Kuwaitis, the illiteracy rate is significantly lower at 1.18 percent, with 0.17 percent among men and 2.16 percent among women. Among non-Kuwaitis, the rate is higher at 3.09 percent, with 2.51 percent among men and 3.71 percent among women.

The population over 15 years of

age in Kuwait totals 3,869,986, of which 2,848,093 are non-Kuwaitis and 1,021,893 are Kuwaitis. In this age group, 146,310 individuals are illiterate, including 53,066 Kuwaitis (50,366 women and 2,700 men) and 93,244 non-Kuwaitis (90,574 women and 2,670 men).

The illiteracy rate for the population over 15 years old is 2.72 percent, with 3.50 percent among men and 2.25 percent among women. Among Kuwaitis, the rate is 1.76 percent, with men at 0.25 percent and women at 3.15 percent.

**Decline in illiteracy rates**  
The statistics show a significant decline in illiteracy rates, as the overall illiteracy rate was previously 2.98 percent, and now 1.80 percent among Kuwaitis. This decline highlights Kuwait's ongoing efforts to promote education and raise awareness of its importance in sustainable development.

The percentage of educated Kuwaiti males has reached 99.83 percent, with illiterate men comprising just 0.17 percent. Among women, 97.84 percent are educated, and 2.16 percent are illiterate. Among non-Kuwaiti men, 97.49 percent are educated, and 2.51 percent illiterate.

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Crackdown nets 461 violators

## 505 deported in 5 days

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior said on Thursday that 461 lawbreakers were arrested and 505 others deported in 24 extended security operations from January 19-23.

The security operations, which came under the direction of First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Ministry Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, is part of ongoing efforts to maintain security nationwide and arrest lawbreakers, the ministry said in a press release.

It underlined that it would not be lenient in applying law and arresting violators.

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:17 Asr ..... 15:03  
 Sunrise .. 06:39 Maghrib .. 17:24  
 Zohr ..... 12:01 Isha ..... 18:44

# Local

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

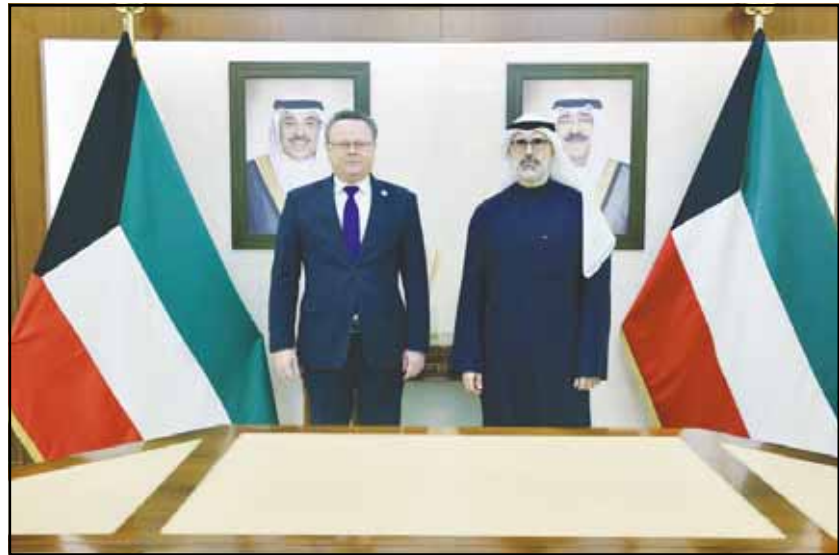
**By Day:** Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h.

**By Night:** Cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind to

## Weather

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	21	12
Kuwait Airport	21	11
Abdaly	22	07

Bubyan	23	09
Jahra	22	12
Failaka Island	24	12
Salmiyah	20	14
Ahmadi	23	09
Jal Aliyah	20	08
Nuwaisib	22	13



KUNA photo  
 Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives his Polish counterpart Andrzej Szejna.

## Kuwait, Poland hold political talks

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30, (KUNA): Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah hosted his Polish counterpart Andrzej Szejna for a fourth round of political consultations on Wednesday.

Both sides discussed ways to enhance the

friendly relations in various areas as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

The cordial talks showed that both countries hold similar views on various issues and share the desire to push the bilateral relations to a new height.

## Kuwait reiterates support to Arab security initiatives

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30, (KUNA): The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf, emphasized the country's dedication to supporting Arab security initiatives and highlighted the significance of the Prince Nayef Award for Arab Security in fostering innovation and excellence in the field.

Lieutenant General Al-Nawaf said this on his return to Kuwait Wednesday evening after leading the Kuwaiti delegation at the Board of Trustees meeting for the Prince Nayef Award, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The discussions focused on enhancing Arab security cooperation and recognizing outstanding contributions to community safety and crime prevention.

The Ministry of Interior stated that the meeting reviewed the award's activities and nominations. On the sidelines, Saudi Minister of Interior and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef Al Saud, received the board members in his office.

He reviewed the General Secretariat's report on the award's achievements and expressed his appreciation for the ongoing efforts of the Trustees.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health has announced that the Central Sterilization Section of the Infection Prevention and Sterilization Department has earned the prestigious ISO 9001 International Quality Certificate. This global standard highlights the Ministry's dedication to implementing best practices in infection prevention and sterilization systems.

In a statement released on Thursday, the Ministry emphasized that this achievement is the result of its ongoing efforts to enhance medical sterilization services, ensuring a safe environment for both patients and healthcare workers. By adopting precise and effective systems, the Ministry aims to improve performance and operational efficiency.



KUNA photo  
 Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi listens to an explanation about the devices used in the archiving process.

## Minister opens digital archive of Kuwait's historical images

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30, (KUNA): Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi inaugurated the Ministry of Information's digital photo archive, which houses nearly 3 million historical images of Kuwait across various fields.

Jamal Al-Badeh, Acting Director of the Public Relations Department, told KUNA that the launch of the digital archive aligns with the ministry's strategy for digital transformation and infrastructure improvement, ensuring the preservation and protection of

this historical heritage, while keeping the original paper photos and film negatives.

The project, which started six months ago, involved sorting and digitizing old photos, Al-Badeh added.

Approximately 600,000 images have been converted so far, with the ongoing effort to complete the remaining photos, he said.

The archive includes images dating back to 1958, and a catalog has been created to facilitate image searches, while ensuring proper storage and backup copies.

# Major repair of Jaber Al-Ahmad roads underway: Dr Al-Mashaan

Priority for severely damaged areas: minister

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan announced the start of radical maintenance work in Jaber Al-Ahmad as part of the new contracts, affirming the continuation of road maintenance projects in all areas with full commitment to ensure quality as per the international standards to develop an advanced infrastructure.**

In a press statement on Thursday, Al-Mashaan revealed that the concerned teams inspected the area before carrying out the necessary maintenance and repair works, indicating the maintenance work will start in the most affected areas and then the least affected under the supervision and close monitoring of the ministry's teams.

She affirmed that the concerned teams are distributed to various areas throughout the country to follow up and address the road network issues and deal with any problem in the internal areas and public roads. She added her

ministry is keen on providing the best services through its sectors as per their specializations.

She explained the road maintenance projects are part of the strategic plan to improve the road network and provide a safe and sustainable environment for citizens and expatriates, and to cover the urban development and growing transportation needs.

She also confirmed the ministry's commitment to closely follow up all stages of implementation -- from design to completion, while adhering to internationally approved quality standards and technical specifications to ensure the highest level of performance and durability of roads.

She stated that her directive to quickly complete the maintenance work is based on the recommendation of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah within the framework of the government's keenness to maintain and repair the national infrastructure, pointing out that the infrastructure of any country is the main pillar of its economic vision.



Dr. Al-Mashaan

She underscored the need for coordination to resolve outstanding issues related to road maintenance work, calling on the implementing companies to quickly complete the work with the required quality and efficiency according to the approved technical specifications and adhere to the timetable.

She added that the road maintenance and repair file is the priority of the political leadership, praising the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah -- may Allah protect them, and their support for road maintenance projects that will be the pillar of advanced infrastructure within the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

On the other hand, Eng. Abdullah Al-Mutie from the Maintenance Engineering Sector-Capital Governorate Project-First Zone revealed that the work includes scraping the surface layer and treating cracks, if any, in addition to the expansion joints and traffic planning.

He urged road users to follow the General Traffic Department to be updated on road closures in order to avoid traffic congestion, calling on everyone to be patient and cooperate with the concerned authorities to complete the maintenance work within the specified period.

## PADA staff affected

# 370 'disabled' persons nationality withdrawn

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The acting Director General of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) Wafaa Al-Muhanna says the disbursement of financial allocations is ongoing for the wives of Kuwaiti citizens who were affected by the recent decisions related to citizenship withdrawal, and those involved in forgery, whose benefits have been suspended. This step is based on the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defense Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the signing of a memorandum of cooperation with the Kuwait National Integrity Society to implement the integrity enhancement project, Al-Muhanna explained that citizenship of 370 individuals with disabilities has been revoked, along with 601 caregivers, 310 women caring for the disabled, and 21 employees of PADA.

The number of people with disabilities benefiting from PADA's services currently stands at 68,000. A total of 826 disability certificates were temporarily suspended due to the failure to update their documents and present them to the relevant committees. PADA granted a two-month grace period for individuals to update their files, and sent notifications through the Sahel application, SMS, and WhatsApp. However, despite these efforts, many failed to update their records, which prompted PADA to temporarily suspend their files in accordance with regulations and laws.

In line with the directives of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah to enhance integrity and combat corruption, PADA has taken all necessary preventive measures to promote transparency. This includes signing a memorandum of cooperation with the Kuwait National Integrity Society to implement an integrity enhancement project in two key sectors of PADA - the medical, psychological, and social services sector and the educational and rehabilitation services sector.

This initiative reflects PADA's belief in the role of civil society organizations and its partnership with public benefit associations to achieve common goals, enhance institutional growth, and reinforce PADA's ongoing efforts to promote integrity, transparency, and the fight against corruption.

Al-Muhanna affirmed that the collaboration with the Kuwait National Integrity Association, which is a public benefit association that is specialized in integrity, was necessary for the success of the initiative.

She explained that the initiative aims to thoroughly study and analyze PADA's procedures and transactions to develop them, raise the levels of integrity and transparency, and conduct a comprehensive review to identify, evaluate, and deal with any potential instances of corruption in order to activate preventive measures that will enhance integrity in all sectors of PADA.

## Increase in rental fees of halls mullied

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Ministry of Social Affairs is set to increase the rental fees for community development halls during official holidays and weekends, following the issuance of decisions to allow their operation during these times, reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources from the ministry.

They explained that community development halls are in high demand from citizens for events such as social gatherings and weddings. However, these halls are currently only available during regular working days and are closed on official holidays and weekends. In response to the growing demand, the ministry is consider-

ing operating these halls during weekends and official holidays in order to pave the way for boosting its revenues and meeting the needs of the citizens.

Operating these halls during holidays and weekends would require extending employee working hours. As a result, the ministry is evaluating the possibility of raising the rental fees for these periods compared to regular working days.

In addition, the ministry is preparing maintenance and service contracts for the halls to ensure they can accommodate the increasing demand and continue to meet the needs of citizens.



Kuwaiti and UAE delegations meet on exchanging expertise in the education field.

## Kuwait, UAE to up education ties

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei yesterday held a meeting with a delegation from the Ministry of Education of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), headed by Undersecretary Mohammad Al-Qasim and Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Curriculum and Evaluation Sector Amina Al-Saleh, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During the meeting, they discussed developing educational collaboration between the two countries, and exchanging expertise on common educa-

tional issues.

The Ministry of Education revealed in the press statement that the meeting was attended by several senior officials, including acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Affairs Mansour Al-Dhafiri, acting Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Research and Curricula Affairs Maryam Al-Enezi, acting Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Facilities and Planning Affairs Mohammed Al-Khalidi, and Director of Curriculum Development Department Anwar Al-Hamdan.

## Man jailed for swindling Kuwaiti

# Mabrouk, you have won a lottery!

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Misdemeanor Court has acquitted two people and decided to imprison another for swindling a citizen by making the latter believe that he won a lottery through WhatsApp, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Public Prosecution had earlier charged the defendants with deceiving the victim and forcing him to hand over money by making him believe that he won the grand prize in the form of a treasure.

Case files indicate that while the victim was in an Arab country, he was defrauded by the accused and another unknown person. He received a call from an African country through WhatsApp, stating he won a treasure and asked him to transfer money to the other accused in Kuwait. When he requested for a refund, another accused contacted him and asked him to accompany the accused to his residence in order to return the money, but he got afraid and did not go with him.

When one of the accused was

interrogated, he denied the accusations and insisted that he has no relationship with the other accused. He said he received part of the amount through a call from the other accused. He then requested his relative -- an African, to get the money from the accused in Kuwait and transfer it to a person residing in Senegal whom he did not know. When asked about the benefit he got, he asserted that he merely provided the service and had no benefit from the transaction.

Attorney Bashar Al-Nassar, lawyer for one of the accused, argued that there was no material element of fraud; stressing his client did not take any action to deceive the victim into handing over the money.

He added his client was not involved, emphasizing that the other accused just asked his client to receive the money from another person and transfer the amount to him. He based his final argument on his client's lack of knowledge of the supposed fraud.

## Asian held for selling foul foodstuff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Security officers from Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Police Station arrested an Asian for selling spoiled food and cleaning materials, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source said that while patrolling in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh as part of the security plan to impose the rule of law and arrest those proven to have committed violations and wanted persons, the officers noticed the Asian sitting in front of a table in a dirt yard where he displayed food

items and cleaning materials for sale. When he noticed the police patrol, he tried to escape, but the officers chased and arrested him.

During the initial interrogation, the officers found out that the Asian was selling spoiled food products and cleaning materials. He and the confiscated items were referred to the Residence Affairs Investigation General Department at the Ministry of Interior in preparation for his deportation.

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Trump and fallacy of American power ... allies vital for survival

"IN HIS inaugural address, which lasted less than thirty minutes, former President Donald Trump conveyed a strikingly aggressive stance toward various parts of the world," columnist Dr. Noura Saleh Al-Majim wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"His speech contained a series of provocative and controversial declarations, including an explicit commitment to using military force to reclaim the Panama Canal, an insistence on re-naming the Gulf of Mexico to re-inforce American sovereignty, and direct threats to annex both Canada and Greenland.



Dr. Noura Al-Majim

"Additionally, Trump issued severe warnings to US allies, threatening them with substantial tariffs if they failed to align with his administration's economic and geopolitical agenda. His address also underscored a confrontational posture toward China, further cementing his adversarial approach to global affairs.

"While these statements may have been intended as a form of strategic posturing -- consistent with Trump's well-documented brinkmanship style -- they nonetheless pose serious risks with potentially far-reaching consequences.

"Such rhetoric not only fuels geopolitical tensions but also reflects Trump's deeply ingrained belief in American exceptionalism and the preservation of US global dominance at any cost.

"His speech suggested an attempt to revive a form of unilateral supremacy, a stark contrast to the multi-polar world that has gradually emerged over the past two decades.

"A growing number of American policymakers and analysts have long recognized that the United States has been experiencing a relative decline in global influence since the financial crisis of 2008.

"The once-unquestioned unipolar order is now giving way to an increasingly multipolar system, in which emerging powers -- particularly China -- are reshaping the geopolitical landscape.

"However, rather than passively accepting this shift, the US has sought to maintain its global hegemony through alternative means, adapting its strategies to a changing world.

"The transition away from America's self-appointed role as the world's policeman can be traced back to the Obama administration, which marked a pivotal moment in US foreign policy.

"This shift was not merely rhetorical but reflected a growing realization within Washington that unchecked military interventions had become unsustainable.

"The high costs of prolonged conflicts, coupled with the rising economic and military power of adversaries such as China, forced the US to reassess its priorities.

"Consequently, unlimited defense spending and large-scale military interventions -- except in cases deemed absolutely necessary -- were deprioritized. Instead, Washington increasingly focused its strategic efforts on the Asia-Pacific region, where China's influence posed the most significant challenge to US interests.

"As a direct consequence of this shifting global dynamic, the United States has come to rely more heavily on alliances to maintain its geopolitical leverage.

"Washington has recognized that preserving even the perception of American hegemony necessitates a strong and cohesive network of allies.

"This is particularly true in the context of countering China, whose military and economic strength has surged to near-parity with that of the United States.

"The era in which the US could single-handedly dictate global affairs has ended, and any attempt to confront China without a coalition of allied nations would be futile.

"This is where Trump's miscalculations become most apparent. His speech reflected a fundamental misunderstanding of the realities of contemporary American power, particularly its military and economic limitations.

"While the US military remains formidable in certain aspects, its dominance is no longer absolute. The rapid modernization of China's armed forces, combined with its technological advancements and economic growth, has altered the global balance of power in ways that make traditional military interventions both impractical and highly risky.

"This new reality is exemplified by the failure of American military power to achieve decisive victory in Afghanistan, where, despite two decades of engagement, the US was unable to subdue the Taliban -- an insurgent force that relied primarily on guerrilla tactics and light weaponry.

"The lesson from Afghanistan, as well as other prolonged conflicts, is that brute military strength alone is insufficient in modern warfare. The evolving nature of conflicts, the integration of advanced military technologies, and the economic constraints on prolonged engagement have all reshaped the calculus of US military strategy.

"Should Trump persist in his aggressive and unilateralist approach to global affairs, the consequences for the United States could be disastrous. Rather than restoring American dominance, his policies could accelerate its decline by undermining the

very alliances that have historically sustained US influence.

"One of the greatest threats to American hegemony is not only the rise of rival powers but also the potential fragmentation of its coalition of allies -- a scenario that Trump's rhetoric and policies could hasten.

"During his first term in office, Trump's antagonistic approach toward allies had already pushed several nations to seek alternative partnerships. His confrontational trade policies and unilateral withdrawal from key agreements weakened trust in US leadership.

"For instance, Italy, a long-standing US ally, moved closer to China by joining the Belt and Road Initiative, while several European countries deepened their energy and security cooperation with Russia. In the Asia-Pacific region, Trump's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) prompted traditional US allies such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia to align more closely with China-led economic frameworks, diminishing American influence in one of the world's most strategic regions.

"If Trump were to resume such policies, the ramifications could be even more severe. Many of America's historical allies might feel compelled to forge stronger ties with China, seeing it as a more stable and reliable partner.

"This would represent a significant setback for the United States, as its ability to counter China's growing influence hinges on the strength of its alliances.

"It is imperative that Trump -- or any future US leader -- acknowledge the realities of America's evolving global position.

"The notion that the United States can unilaterally impose its will on the world is outdated and counterproductive. Instead, safeguarding what remains of American power and effectively managing the challenge posed by China will require a renewed commitment to multilateralism and strategic partnerships.

"To this end, Trump would greatly benefit from advisors who understand that alliances are not a sign of weakness but rather a strategic necessity in an era of intensifying great-power competition.

"The United States must recognize that the key to sustaining its global influence lies in diplomacy, economic cooperation, and collective security arrangements, rather than in the hollow bravado of unilateral threats and reckless confrontations.

"If Trump continues to disregard these geopolitical realities, he risks not only weakening America's standing on the world stage but also accelerating the very decline he seeks to prevent.

"The most dangerous outcome of his approach would be the irreversible erosion of America's global leadership, paving the way for a world in which US influence is no longer the defining force in international affairs."

### Also:

"The Israeli aggression on the Palestinians in Gaza stopped after destroying people and homes. Palestinians paid a heavy price, considering the number of martyrs and the wounded. Gaza Strip almost turned into a devastated area that is difficult to live in, as most of the houses are either demolished or damaged. Entire neighborhoods have turned into ruins and the infrastructure with all its services are severely damaged, while health centers and hospitals do not offer even the most basic health services," Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Despite this, the Palestinians remain steadfast on their land, on their soil. They are neither moving nor accepting displacement, as it is their land. Palestine is their homeland.

"The truth is that we cannot underestimate the role of Arab support for Gaza during the aggression, even if this support is minimum, and according to the available capabilities and potentials.

"In contrast, Gaza today is in dire need of maximum support, not only from Arab countries, but also from the international community. This must be an urgent move to alleviate the suffering of the people of Gaza, in light of the destruction left by the Israeli aggression.

"In my opinion, the fastest move in this context could be within the framework of an international donors conference for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, in which all donors in the world will participate, provided that it includes a short-term urgent reconstruction program addressing the living conditions and alleviating the impact of the aggression on Palestinians, as well as medium and long-term programs for comprehensive reconstruction.

"It is important to encourage the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in the context of all Arab countries shouldering their responsibilities in organizing, participating and providing support, each according to their ability.

"The Palestinian brothers are in a delicate and dangerous phase in the history of their struggle for their legitimate rights. They are in dire need of the support of their Arab and Muslim brothers, not only in Gaza, but throughout Palestine."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes/  
Mahmoud Attiyeh



KFF and army personnel pictured during the drill.

KFF photo

### KFF holds drill on tackling army aircraft fires

The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), represented by the Airports Fire Department, carried out a drill on handling military aircraft fires on Wednesday morning.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the exercise, which

was designed for members of the Kuwait Army, was aimed at dealing with military aircraft fire incidents and the use of the latest equipment to enhance the readiness and capabilities of personnel in managing such situations.

# 2 years jail for X platform admin in public defiance of ruler move

Blogger jailed 4 years in defamation suit

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/ Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30:** The Court of Appeals, headed by Judge Dr. Fahad Bouslaib, upheld the ruling of a lower court that sentenced the administrator of a fictitious 'X' platform account -- 'Salty Cheese' -- to two years in prison with hard labor for publicly challenging the rights of HH the Amir after the dissolution of the National Assembly and he was arrested by the State Security officers.

The Public Prosecution charged the accused based on the fact that on Sept 2, 2024, when he was in the State Security Department, he challenged the rights and author-

ity of HH the Amir publicly and in writing. He criticized the Amiri entity and insulted the position of HH the Amir by writing the phrases indicated in the papers and publishing them on his account (Salty Cheese) on the social networking site 'X' on the international information network (the Internet).

He also intentionally misused his mobile phone by committing the crimes stated in the previous charge, as indicated in the investigations.

**Blogger jailed 4 years:** The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling to imprison an 'X' platform user for four years for insulting the position of HH the Amir, challenging his rights and authority, publishing false news, and insulting the rulers of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia.

The Public Prosecution charged the accused with insulting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, defaming the Amir by publishing certain phrases on his social media account, and intentionally misusing a means of communication

(his mobile phone).

**Court sets Feb 12 verdict:** The Criminal Court set Feb 12, 2025 for its verdict in the case of insulting the Palestinian President filed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs against former MP Saleh Al-Mullah.

Al-Mulla's lawyer appeared before the court, confirming that he did not commit any crime; hence, demanding for his client's acquittal.

In the second case, the court also decided to release Al-Mullah after he denied challenging the rights and powers of His Highness the Amir and adjudged it for review.

The Public Prosecution previously decided to release Al-Mullah after completing the investigation with him on bail of KD1,000 in a State security case on charges of challenging the powers and authorities of His Highness the Amir and misusing the mobile phone through his post on 'X' platform in May last year.

However, Al-Mullah denied all the charges against him.

## Man gets 1 year jail, 3 acquitted in drug peddling charges

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30:** The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Saud Al-Sanea, issued a ruling on the case filed against four citizens who were accused of possessing and trafficking narcotics and psychotropic substances. The first defendant was sentenced to four-year imprisonment and imposed a fine of KD 2,000, while the other three were acquitted.

The Public Prosecution charged the four individuals with possession, use, and trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances. The second accused was also charged with possessing

two firearms and ammunition without a license.

According to the case file, the incident officer received information from a confidential source that an individual was in possession of narcotics and psychotropic substances intended for trafficking and personal use. After conducting a week-long investigation and confirming the information, the officer sought and obtained legal permission from the Public Prosecution to arrest and search the accused.

The officer then went to the residence of the first suspect, accompanied by a team of detectives. After arranging a controlled purchase between the first accused and the undercover agent, the officer arrested the first suspect, along with

the second, third, and fourth suspects, who were all present at the scene. During a search of the suspect, the officer discovered bags containing capsules and suspicious tablets in their pockets.

In court, Lawyer Bashar Al-Nassar, representing the third defendant, stressed that the arrest and search procedures were invalid. He stated that the prosecution's permission to arrest the first defendant did not extend to the others present at the scene. Lawyer Al-Nassar affirmed that there was no evidence to support the claim of possession for trafficking purposes, as the 3rd accused had not appeared in any of the investigations conducted by the incident officer before the Public Prosecution's permission was obtained.

## Man accused of swindling Kuwaiti woman acquitted

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30:** The Court of Appeals has upheld the acquittal of a citizen who was accused of 'stealing' 12,000 dinars from a retired woman by misleading her into believing that she was investing in a profitable project.

In her lawsuit the 'victim' claimed that she was contacted by the defendant after responding to an advertisement for an investment company, where she was instructed to download a program and authenticate her details.

Subsequently, 12,000 dinars were deducted from her account, which turned out to be the equivalent of six salaries.

The Public Prosecution charged the accused with forging bank documents and fraudulently obtaining the victim's money.

However, the defendant's lawyer, Ena'am Haidar, argued that there were no criminal intentions or elements of the crime present.

She also contended that the arrest and subsequent legal procedures were improperly carried out.

## Gulf citizen perishes in Abdally Road accident

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30:** A young male Gulf national died while his companion was injured when the vehicle they were riding overturned on Abdally Road, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source revealed that the Operations Unit at the Interior Ministry received information about the accident at Kilometer 72, Abdally Road.

When the paramedics arrived at the scene, they discovered that the young Gulf national had already succumbed to his wounds, while his companion was transported by air ambulance to Jahra Hospital.

The latter is said to have sustained moderate injuries.

On the other hand, a run-over accident occurred in the Capital involving an expatriate who was crossing the road. He was rushed to Amiri Hospital.

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Partnership drives research and innovation in Kuwait

# KISR, WHO sign MoU to boost collaboration

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the World Health Organization (WHO) office in Kuwait to establish a framework for collaboration and advance joint research efforts, says a press release issued by the WHO office in Kuwait.**

This partnership aims to drive research and innovation in science, technology, and health-related fields to enhance public health and social well-being.

The MoU was signed by Dr. Assad Hafeez, WHO Resident Representative to Kuwait, and Dr. Faisal Al-Humaidan, Acting Director-General of KISR, in the presence of experts and specialists from both organizations.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Assad Hafeez emphasized that WHO considers KISR a key national partner due to its expertise in research and development. "KISR is a leading institution in its field and plays a vital role in scientific research, innovation, and national development.

Its extensive knowledge of Kuwait's development challenges and opportunities makes it an ideal partner for specialized research projects," he stated.



Photo during the MoU signing ceremony.

Dr. Hafeez also highlighted that WHO established its Kuwait office in 2021 to strengthen its presence in the country and collaborate with the Kuwaiti government, UN agencies, and national institutions to improve public health and well-being at both national and regional levels.

Dr. Faisal Al-Humaidan, Acting Director-General of KISR, expressed the institute's pride in this partnership and underscored its commitment to leveraging its research expertise in support of WHO's mission. He stated, "This MoU reflects KISR's dedication

to advancing health-related research and contributing to global health initiatives."

He further emphasized that WHO is the world's leading health organization, playing a critical role in setting global health standards and ensuring that high-quality healthcare reaches people everywhere. KISR aims to align its research efforts with WHO's objectives to support sustainable development and promote the concept of 'One Health' -- an integrated approach that recognizes the interconnection between human, animal, and environmental health.

Dr. Al-Humaidan noted that while

WHO's office in Kuwait has partnerships with various governmental entities, this MoU represents a unique collaboration focused on research and development. Under this agreement, KISR's research centers -- especially the Environment and Life Sciences Research Center -- will work closely with WHO on projects in the following areas:

- Food and Nutrition Research: including studies on obesity and chronic diseases related to diet.
- Epidemic Control with a focus on zoonotic diseases (those transmitted between animals and humans).
- Antimicrobial Resistance Research: addressing the growing challenge of drug-resistant infections.
- Climate Change and Environmental Health: examining the impact of environmental factors on public health.
- Occupational Health: promoting workplace safety and well-being.

Dr. Al-Humaidan stressed that part of this collaboration will involve implementing WHO's evidence-based public health initiatives in Kuwait, leveraging their proven success in other countries. A structured evaluation mechanism will also be put in place to assess the effectiveness of these initiatives locally.

Additionally, the partnership will include training programs for researchers in scientific fields of mutual interest, further strengthening the country's research capabilities.



The Ambassador of India to Kuwait, HE Dr Adarsh Swaika called on HE Dr Nader Abdullah Mohammed Al Jallal, Minister of Higher Education of Kuwait. Discussions focused on enhancing bilateral collaboration and exchanges in the field of Higher Education.

## Al-Huwailah's efforts praised for strengthening Jleeb Cooperative

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Chairman of Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Cooperative Society, Fahid Eid Al-Hateetah, expressed his gratitude to the Minister of Social Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, for her dedicated efforts in addressing the society's challenges, leading to stability and enhanced services for residents and shareholders, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

In a press statement, Al-Hateetah praised the Ministry's role in swiftly reconstituting the Board of Directors, ensuring service continuity and rein-

forcing the cooperative's operations.

He highlighted Minister Al-Huwailah's commitment to developing cooperative societies, emphasizing the Ministry's pivotal role in advancing community development and resolving issues that directly impact citizens.

Al-Hateetah also outlined the Board's strategic plan aimed at strengthening the cooperative's financial position, diversifying its services, improving administrative efficiency, and stimulating sales growth.

## Sheikha Bibi all praise for ownership rights approval

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Sheikha Bibi Al-Yousef, Head of the Women's Housing Affairs Team, commended the Cabinet's approval of the decree granting real estate ownership rights to the children of Kuwaiti women of Arab backgrounds, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

Sheikha Bibi stated that this decision will help promote family stability and safeguard the rights of citizenship for Kuwaiti women and their families. She emphasized that the Women's Housing Affairs Team will continue its efforts to advocate for and support women's housing rights in alignment with existing laws and regulations.



Sheikha Bibi Al-Yousef

# New access point proposed

Jleeb's pollution problem under scrutiny

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Municipal Council members Dr. Hassan Kamal and Nasser Al-Jadaan on Wednesday submitted a proposal to establish an entrance to Rumaithiya from Abdulaziz Al-Saud Road (30), specifically on**

**Al-Shafei Street opposite Block 12; taking into account the slow movement of vehicles when designing the entrance, as shown in the plan attached to the proposal, in addition to emphasizing the need for prior coordination with the Ministry of Interior, Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), and other concerned government agencies.**

Kamal and Al-Jadaan indicated in the preamble of their proposal that Rumaithiya residential area is one of the high-density areas; and traffic jams in the area and its surroundings are increasing.

They justified their proposal by pointing out the reduction of the duration and number of trips required to enter the area, and the need to address the traffic congestion in the area.

They concluded their proposal by emphasizing the commitment of the executive body to study the possibility of implementing it or not within the legal period set for studying the proposals of council members -- within two months of submitting the proposal.

On the other hand, Chairperson of the Environmental Affairs Committee in the council Alia Al-Farsi sent official invitations to all government agencies that participated in the workshop, "Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Environmental System - Community Participation between Evaluation and Solutions," held last November, to join the field visit to Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh that the committee will organize on Feb 19.

She urged all initiators and interested parties to participate in the tour with all their tools and devices for measuring pollution to accurately assess the current situation in the area.

The committee decided to organize the field visit to an area suffering from environmental and health deterioration and dilapidated infrastructure. It is the first of eight recommendations resulting from the committee's November workshop, which aimed to address the urgent need for environmental and infrastructural improvements in the area.

The Minister of State for Municipal Affairs has approved these recommendations, acknowledging their importance in revitalizing the area that has become a significant obstacle to urban development despite its strategic location and proximity to key landmarks like Kuwait University and Kuwait International Airport.



Dr. Kamal

## Academic funding

CSC asks ministry's mission, study plan

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has asked the Ministry of Information to specify its needs within the mission and study leave plan for fiscal 2025/2026.**

Reliable sources revealed that the CSC asked the ministry to provide the number of seats needed according to the actual manpower needs in eight tracks, in addition to the required specializations for various academic degrees.

Sources revealed the plan includes several tracks like the mission plan for academic diploma and bachelor's degrees in and outside the country (paid or unpaid), and the mission plan for bachelor's degree and nursing diploma (paid) within the national program for the advancement of the nursing staff.

Sources added the CSC requested the ministry to specify the seats for the following:

- Postgraduate studies plan (unpaid) in and outside Kuwait,
- Delegation plan (paid) for the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain,
- Delegation plan for the best universities for bachelor's and post-graduate studies; the cost of which is paid in accordance with the decisions and list of universities issued by the Ministry of Higher Education and the National Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education,
- Delegation plan for people with disabilities that covers their academic diploma and bachelor's degree with full funding,
- Delegation plan for postgraduate studies (unpaid) for people with disabilities.

Sources said the Administrative Affairs Sector at the ministry has instructed the concerned departments to specify their needs for academic specializations, in preparation for sending the response to the CSC as per the approved procedures.



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## KFAS opens applications for 2025 Jaber Al-Ahmad Award for Young Researchers

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences has announced that it receives applications for the 2025 Jaber Al-Ahmad Award for Young Researchers, starting on February 1, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

The award, which will honor researchers in six distinct fields with a prize of 10,000 dinars each, aims to foster competition and support among Kuwaiti scholars holding doctoral degrees.

Applications will be accepted until May 31, 2025. Established in 1988 as the "Scientific

Production Award," the initiative recognizes significant contributions in fields such as natural sciences, engineering, biological sciences, medical and allied medical sciences, social and human sciences and administrative and economic sciences.

Nominees must be Kuwaiti citizens, under the age of 45, and possess an accredited doctorate or fellowship degree.

Only one nomination per candidate is allowed, and applicants must not have previously won in any of the Jaber Al-Ahmad Award categories.

## Kuwait halts use of palm trees and artificial grass

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Eng. Naser Taqi affirmed that the cultivation of palm trees as ornamental plants in all areas of Kuwait has been halted, and will be replaced with sustainable species that are better suited to the Kuwaiti environment, reports Al-Rai daily.**

He also announced that the use of artificial grass will be discontinued.

Taqi clarified that planting palm trees is costly and requires large amounts of water, in addition to being prone to various diseases, which require a lot of time and effort to control.

He highlighted the keenness of PAAAFR to increase green spaces in Kuwait in a way that is compatible with the local environment, which will improve Kuwait's standing in relevant global environmental indexes.

## Ministry 'revokes' real estate clause

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Ministry of Justice has issued a new circular, revoking Clause 'First' from its previous directive published on the X platform Tuesday afternoon, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

The clause originally pertained to the prohibition of issuing irrevocable real estate agencies.

However, the Ministry has retained the remaining provisions related to the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Sector, which mandates amendments to the data of real estate agencies that are irrevocable.

The circular also includes conditions and documents related to issuing real estate ownership documents for individuals holding such agencies.



Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah poses for a group photo with the Indian Ambassador.



Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah poses for a group photo with the Indian Ambassador.

**76th anniversary marks growing India-Kuwait partnership**

**India's Republic Day reception celebrates sovereignty, national pride**

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: India's Republic Day reception, held at the Regency Hotel in Salmiya on Jan 29, was a grand celebration of India's sovereignty and national pride. The event gathered diplomats, dignitaries, and members of the Indian community in Kuwait to mark the 76th anniversary of the Indian Republic.

The attendees were treated to an evening of cultural performances befitting the occasion, India's commitment to democracy, diversity and development. The occasion also reflected the enduring bond between India and Kuwait, acknowledging the close ties shared by the two nations across various sectors, including trade, culture and diplomacy.

The event not only commemorated India's Republic Day but also served as a reminder of the deep connections and friendship between the people of India and Kuwait, further cementing the growing cooperation between the two countries.

The guest of the evening was HE Dr. Mahmoud Abdulaziz Bushehri, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy of the State of Kuwait who also highlighted the close ties shared by Kuwait and India.

In his remarks, the Ambassador of India to Kuwait HE Dr. Adarsh Swaika thanked Dr. Bushehri for gracing the occasion with his presence.

"I also express my heartfelt gratitude to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, for their unwavering support and patronage of the strong India-Kuwait partnership.

"As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of India's Republic Day when our Constitution was adopted, India has largely fulfilled the promises outlined in the Constitution, securing justice, liberty, equality, and equity for all its citizens.

"This journey of progress and prosperity has also fostered unity and integrity within our diverse democratic framework.

"In line with the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make India a developed nation by 2047, we continue our path forward with determination, building on our past achievements. Today, India's developmental journey remains a subject of global attention, and I would like to highlight some key aspects of modern India," said the Indian envoy.



Minister Dr. Mahmoud Bushehri and Indian Ambassador during a symbolic cake cutting during the ceremony.

Speaking of India, Dr Swaika said India is the largest democracy on earth with a stable political regime; world's most populous country with 65 percent of population under 35 years of age that makes it world's largest working pop-

ulation; 5th largest global economy and poised to become 3rd largest soon; first in lowest manufacturing costs globally; preferred global foreign investment destination with FDI of \$710 bn in the last 10 years; world's 3rd largest Startup Ecosystem (with 115 unicorns; 1 unicorn in India out of 10 globally); Global Pharmacy of the world; 4th largest renewable energy installed capacity of over 200 GW; 50% of all global digital payments take place in India on real-time basis; extraordinary pace of infrastructure development - from 70 airports in 2014 to 150 airports in 2024, 28 kms of highways and 12 kms of railway track are being constructed every day; 6th largest globally in patent filing (103000 patents last year) and so on.

Dr Swaika went on to say, "the Indian foreign policy is deeply rooted in our ancient philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', meaning 'the world is one family'.

"We consistently advocate for peaceful conflict resolution through dialogue and diplomacy, and proudly represent the global south as a reliable development partner. India's foreign policy is guided by two principles: national interest and global good.

"Our active participation in multilateral forums such as the Quad, BRICS, SCO, and BIMSTEC reflects this approach. India has also led numerous pro-plan initiatives like the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and the Global Biofuels Alliance, fostering global cooperation and understanding.

"Our bilateral relations with Kuwait are historically strong, with mutual understanding at both bilateral and multilateral levels.

"The recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kuwait in December 2024 marked a new chapter in our partnership, leading to the elevation of our ties to a 'Strategic Partnership'.

"This visit also saw the signing of a Defence Cooperation MoU and the conferring of Kuwait's highest national award, 'The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer', on Prime Minister Modi. Trade and investment between India and Kuwait continue to grow, with India being one of Kuwait's top trading partners and Indian companies contributing significantly to infrastructure projects.

"The Indian community in Kuwait, now over a million strong, serves as a bridge between our two nations. We look forward to further strengthening our ties, both at the government and people-to-people levels, especially under Kuwait's GCC Presidency."

He concluded his remarks by saying 'Long live India-Kuwait friendship!'



British Ambassador poses for a group photo with the Indian Ambassador.



Canadian Ambassador poses for a group photo with the Indian Ambassador.



EU Ambassador poses for a group photo with the Indian Ambassador.

**Continued from Page 1**

**Metro future**

In conclusion, the committee stressed the need for a specialized central authority in the State. "This authority will utilize modern programs to analyze, develop and modify traffic light operations at intersections, which are crucial at this juncture. The metro is vital a mode of mass transportation in the country; considering its positive impact on the environment, sustainability, traffic safety and congestion. It is closely tied to the recovery of the country's economy," the committee added.

**Kuwait forms**

The 1.752 million dinar project aims to ensure uninterrupted fresh water supply to residents in new residential areas, particularly Al-Mutla'a City, while bolstering the nation's strategic water reserves.

The ministry had already secured approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders, selecting the contractor with the best financial and technical bid.

All water projects in Al-Mutla'a are being carried out in coordination with the Public Institution for Housing Care, which oversees the establishment of new cities.

**Kuwait's illiteracy**

The literacy rate among non-Kuwaiti women is 96.91 percent, while 3.09 percent are illiterate.

Sources suggest that these figures confirm Kuwait's success in reducing illiteracy rates, which reflects the country's commitment to developing the education sector and enhancing public awareness of its importance. It also confirms that illiteracy is now a limited problem, particularly among citizens, due to government efforts and educational initiatives aimed at less-educated groups.

To maintain this positive trend, sources stressed the need to strength-

en educational initiatives and expand literacy programs, especially for expatriate workers, who exhibit higher illiteracy rates compared to citizens.

There is also a recommendation to focus on digital education and lifelong learning programs to ensure education reaches all segments of society.

**New law**

The following are the advantages of the new financing system

**Reducing Government Pressure** — By involving banks in financing a large portion of property values, the financial strain on the Public Authority for Housing Welfare and the Kuwait Credit Bank will ease, allowing them to focus on more urgent housing needs or strategic projects.

**Shorter Waiting Periods** — Instant mortgage financing allows citizens to purchase homes without enduring long waiting times on housing welfare lists.

**Boosting the National Economy** — Increased activity in the real estate, construction, and building sectors will stimulate the Kuwaiti economy, as these industries rely on extensive supply chains.

**Payment Flexibility** — Citizens will benefit from extended repayment periods (up to 25 years) and higher permissible installment limits (up to 50 percent of income).

The following are the potential drawbacks and challenges

**Rising Real Estate Prices** — The surge in demand resulting from accessible financing may lead to inflated property prices, potentially burdening citizens and creating a real estate bubble.

**Increased Individual Debt** — Heavy reliance on real estate financing could result in debt accumulation, particularly for those unable to meet monthly repayments.

**Risk of Losing Property** — Defaults on payments could lead to the loss of property, a scenario that may cause social challenges. Given that Kuwaiti law protects a citizen's primary residence, any implementation

of this financing system would require legislative changes to balance the bank's right to reclaim property with the protection of citizens' housing rights.

**Bank Pressure** — If not properly managed, banks may struggle with loan collections and defaults.

**How the Law Benefits the Government**

**Reduced Costs** — Banks will shoulder much of the financing burden, diminishing the need for fully government-backed housing loans.

**Enhanced Public-Private Partnerships** — The law encourages collaboration between the government and banks, facilitating innovative financing solutions such as shared interests or guarantees.

**Chilly nights,**

On Saturday, conditions will stay similar, with highs of 20-22°C and light to moderate winds shifting between variable and northwesterly directions. Some high clouds may appear. The night will be cold, with lows of 7-9°C, light to moderate winds, and calm seas.

**All feared**

The body of the plane was found upside down in three sections in waist-deep water. The wreckage of the helicopter was also found. Donnelly said first responders on Thursday were searching an area of the Potomac River as far south as the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, roughly 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) south of the airport.

There was no immediate word on the cause of the collision, but officials said flight conditions were clear as the jet coming from Wichita, Kansas, with U.S. and Russian figure skaters and others aboard, was making a routine landing when the helicopter flew into its path.

"On final approach into Reagan National it collided with a military aircraft on an otherwise normal approach," American Airlines CEO Robert Isom said. "At this time we don't know why the military aircraft came into the path of the ... aircraft."

Three soldiers were onboard the helicopter during a training flight, an Army official previously said.

Images from the river showed boats around the partly submerged wing and the mangled wreckage of the plane's fuselage.

Investigators will try to piece together the aircraft's final moments before their collision, including contact with air traffic controllers as well as a loss of altitude by the passenger jet.

"I would just say that everyone who flies in American skies expects that we fly safely," Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said. "That when you depart an airport, you get to your destination. That didn't happen last night and I know that Presi-

**dent Trump, his administration, the**

FAA, the DOT, we will not rest until we have answers for the families and for the flying public. You should be assured that when you fly, you're safe."

Reagan Airport will reopen at 11 a.m. Thursday, the Federal Aviation Administration announced. The FAA previously said it would be closed until 5 a.m. Friday.

Duffy, just sworn in earlier this week, was asked if he could reassure Americans that the United States still has the safest airspace in the world.

"Can I guarantee the American flying public that the United States has the most safe and secure airspace in the world? And the answer to that is, absolutely yes, we do," he said.

The night was clear, the plane and helicopter were both in standard flight patterns and there was standard communication between the aircraft and the tower, Duffy said.

"We have early indicators of what happened here," Duffy said, though he declined to elaborate further pending an investigation.

It was not unusual to have a military aircraft flying the river and an aircraft landing at the airport, he said. Asked if the plane was aware that there was a helicopter in the area, Duffy said he would say that the helicopter was aware that there was a plane in the area.

Asked about President Donald Trump suggesting in an overnight social media post that the collision could have been prevented, Duffy said, "From what I've seen so far, do I think this was preventable? Absolutely."

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth did not appear at the Thursday morning press conference.

If everyone aboard the plane was killed, it will make it the deadliest U.S. airline crash since Nov. 12, 2001, when an American Airlines flight just after takeoff crashed into a residential area of Belle Harbor, New York, killing all 260 people aboard.

The last major fatal crash involving a U.S. commercial airline occurred in 2009 near Buffalo, New York. Everyone aboard the Bom-

**barrier DHC-8 propeller plane was**

killed, including 45 passengers, two pilots and two flight attendants. Another person on the ground also died, bringing the total death toll to 50. An investigation determined that the captain accidentally caused the plane to stall as it approached the airport in Buffalo.

Passengers on Wednesday's flight included a group of figure skaters, their coaches and family members who were returning from a development camp that followed the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Wichita.

"We are devastated by this unspeakable tragedy and hold the victims' families closely in our hearts," U.S. Figure Skating said in a statement.

Two of those coaches were identified by the Kremlin as Russian figure skaters Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov, who won the pairs title at the 1994 world championships and competed twice in the Olympics. The Skating Club of Boston lists them as coaches and their son, Maxim Naumov, is a competitive figure skater for the U.S.

The FAA said the midair crash occurred before 9 p.m. EST in some of the most tightly controlled and monitored airspace in the world, just over 3 miles south of the White House and the Capitol.

American Airlines Flight 5342 was inbound to Reagan National at an altitude of about 400 feet (122 meters) and a speed of about 140 mph (225 kph) when it suffered a rapid loss of altitude over the Potomac River, according to data from its radio transponder. The Canadian-made Bombardier CRJ-701 twin-engine jet, manufactured in 2004, can be configured to carry up to 70 passengers.

A few minutes before landing, air traffic controllers asked the arriving commercial jet if it could land on the shorter Runway 33 at Reagan National and the pilots said they were able. Controllers then cleared the plane to land on Runway 33. Flight tracking sites showed the plane adjusting its approach to the new runway.

The last major fatal crash involving a U.S. commercial airline occurred in 2009 near Buffalo, New York. Everyone aboard the Bom-

## INTERNATIONAL



US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., joined by Rep Richard Hudson, R-NC, Chairman of the National Republic Congressional Committee and Majority Whip Tom, R-Minn, touts Republican wins as he meets with reporters on the steps of the Capitol in Washington on Nov 12, 2024. (AP)

## Ex-sen Menendez gets 11 years in jail

NEW YORK, Jan 30, (AP): Former US Sen **Bob Menendez** was sentenced Wednesday to 11 years in prison for accepting bribes of gold and cash and acting as an agent of Egypt - crimes his lawyer said he's been mocked for as "Gold Bar Bob."

The judge delivered the sentence after Menendez tearfully addressed the court, saying he'd lost everything he cared about, except his family. The Democrat resigned last year after becoming one of only a handful of U.S. senators ever convicted while in office.

"You were successful, powerful, you stood at the apex of our political system," U.S. District Judge Sidney H. Stein told Menendez in a packed Manhattan courtroom. "Somewhere along the way, and I don't know when it was, you lost your way and working for the public good became working for your good."

The ex-senator was convicted of selling his once-considerable clout for bribes worth a fortune. FBI agents who searched his house found \$480,000, some of it stuffed inside boots and pockets of clothing, and gold bars worth an estimated \$150,000.

Prosecutors said that in exchange for the loot, which also included a luxury car, Menendez did corrupt favors for three New Jersey businessmen. They said he tried to protect associates from criminal investigations, helped two of them in business deals with foreign powers.



Menendez

## Trump signs Laken Riley Act, first enacted law of presidency

WASHINGTON, Jan 30, (AP): US President Donald Trump on Wednesday signed the Laken Riley Act into law, giving federal authorities broader power to deport immigrants in the US illegally who have been accused of crimes. He also announced at the ceremony that his administration planned to send the "worst criminal aliens" to a detention center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The bipartisan act, the first piece of legislation approved during Trump's second term, was named for Riley, a 22-year-old Georgia nursing student who was slain last year by a Venezuelan man in the U.S. illegally.

"She was a light of warmth and kindness," Trump said during a ceremony that included Riley's parents and sister. "It's a tremendous tribute to your daughter what's taking place today, that's all I can say. It's so sad we have to be doing it."

Trump has promised to drastically increase deportations, but he also said at the signing that some of the people being sent back to their home countries couldn't be counted on to stay there.

"Some of them are so bad that we don't even trust the countries to hold them because we don't want them coming back, so we're gonna send 'em out to Guantanamo," Trump said. He said that he'd direct federal officials to get facilities in Cuba ready to receive immigrant criminals.

"We have 30,000 beds in Guantanamo to detain the worst criminal aliens threatening the American people," the president said.

The White House announced a short time later that Trump had signed a

presidential memorandum on Guantanamo. Migrant rights groups quickly expressed dismay.

"Guantanamo Bay's abusive history speaks for itself and in no uncertain terms will put people's physical and mental health in jeopardy," Stacy Suh, program director of Detention Watch Network, said in a statement.

Trump said the move would double US detention lockup capacities, and Guantanamo is "a tough place to get out of."

The Guantanamo facility could hold "dangerous criminals" and people who are "hard to deport," said a Trump administration official speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said his department can set up a detention center "very rapidly" and called Guantanamo Bay "a perfect spot."

"We don't want illegal criminals in the United States, not a minute longer than they have to be," he said Wednesday evening on Fox News' "Jesse Watters Primetime." "Move them off to Guantanamo Bay, where they can be safely maintained until they are deported to their final location, their country of origin."

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said the administration would seek funding via spending bills Congress will eventually consider.

The U.S. military base has been used to house detainees from the U.S. war on terrorism for years. But authorities have also detained migrants at sea at a facility known as the Migrant Operations Center on Guantanamo, a site the U.S.

## Republicans craft Trump's big bill hit familiar roadblock: How to pay for it

DORAL, Fla., Jan 30, (AP): After four years of criticizing growing government deficits under Joe Biden, Republicans now have a math problem of their own - how to offset the multitrillion-dollar cost of extending and expanding the tax cuts they passed in President Donald Trump's first term.

House Republicans attending their annual retreat at a Trump-owned golf resort this week put up a united front, insisting they are moving quickly toward House votes in the coming weeks to kickstart work on Trump's tax cut and border security package.

But behind the scenes, it was clear that the bill remains a work in progress, with Republicans holding widely divergent views on how much the price tag of Trump's bill should be offset with spending cuts elsewhere.

It's a divide with major ramifications for the taxpayers, the country and for Trump, who has said he wants a "big, beautiful bill" to sign that fulfills many of his campaign promises. Seeking to rally support in a speech Monday evening, Trump exhorted Republicans to stick together because "we have a chance to win like never before."

Here's what to know about the debate among House Republicans and

how it might play out:

With Republicans controlling Congress and the White House, fiscal hawks say the time is now to change the nation's fiscal trajectory. Steep cuts to Medicaid spending are among their priorities as they push for a major overhaul of government spending.

But other Republicans are wary of steep cuts and want more details before pledging their support.

GOP leaders have to bridge the divide. With Republicans holding the barest of majorities in the House - a 218-215 majority - they need virtual unanimity to pass the legislation that nearly all Democrats are likely to oppose.

Rep. Nicole Malliotakis, R-N.Y., said she did not want to be asked to vote for a top-line number in a budget plan without a better handle on how it will be paid for. She said New York is a state that relies heavily on Medicaid and she has concerns about some of the proposed changes for the program.

"There's certain things I've found concerning and I've expressed that," Malliotakis said. "I want to have a more general understanding than 'we're going (with) this top-line number and figure it out later.' That's not

comfortable to me."

Extending the Trump tax cuts for the next 10 years is something Republicans broadly agree upon - and it isn't cheap.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has projected that extending the Trump tax cuts for the next 10 years would add \$4.6 trillion to federal deficits.

But Trump wants a lot more in the bill than that.

Trump wants to exclude taxes on Social Security, overtime and tips. He's looking to increase the cap on state and local tax deductions. And he wants to increase border security personnel and infrastructure, among other priorities. The price tag, once all those things are added, is expected to be enormous.

Rep. Andy Harris, R-Md., the chairman of a group of fiscal hardliners in the House Freedom Caucus, said at a minimum the package should not add to the deficit, but it should also go beyond that to reduce deficits "to send a signal to the financial markets." He said greater economic growth could help pay for some of the package, but that Freedom Caucus members were also looking for about \$3 trillion in deficit reduction over 10 years.

## WH plans to send 'worst criminal aliens' to Guantanamo



US President Donald Trump holds the document after signing the Laken Riley Act during an event in the East Room of the White House on Jan 29, in Washington. (AP)

has long leased from the Cuban government. Many of those housed there have been migrants from Haiti and Cuba.

The U.S. has leased Guantanamo land from Cuba for more than a century. Cuba opposes the lease and typically rejects the nominal US rent payments. Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said Trump wanting to ship immigrants to the island is "an act of brutality."

"The U.S. government's decision to imprison migrants at the Guantanamo Naval Base, in an enclave where it created torture and indefinite detention centers, shows contempt for the human condition and international law," Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez wrote in a post on X.

The Supreme Court ruled in 2008 that enemy combatants in the war on terror held without charge at the military prison at Guantanamo had the right to challenge their detention in federal court. But the justices did not decide whether the president had the authority to detain people at all.

Before Trump took office, the Democratic administrations of Barack Obama and Joe Biden worked to reduce the number of terrorism suspects held at Guantanamo.

Laken Riley was out for a run in February 2024 when she was killed by Jose Antonio Ibarra, a Venezuelan national who was in the country illegally. Ibarra was found guilty in November

and sentenced to life without parole.

Ibarra had been arrested for illegal entry in September 2022 near El Paso, Texas, and released to pursue his case in immigration court. Federal officials say he was arrested by New York police in August 2023 for child endangerment and released. Police say he was also issued a citation for shoplifting in Georgia in October 2023.

The act quickly passed the newly Republican-controlled Congress with some Democratic support even though opponents said it possibly could lead to large roundups of people for offenses as minor as shoplifting.

The swift passage, and Trump's quickly signing it, adds to the potent symbolism for conservatives. To critics, the measure has taken advantage of a tragedy and could lead to chaos and cruelty while doing little to fight crime or overhaul the immigration system.

Riley's mother thanked Trump while holding back tears.

"He said he would secure our borders and he would never forget about Laken and he hasn't," she said.

Several top Republican lawmakers and Noem attended the signing ceremony, as did Democratic Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, a cosponsor.

Under the new law, federal officials would have to detain any immigrant arrested or charged with crimes such as theft or assaulting a police officer, or offenses that injure or kill someone. State attorneys general could sue the U.S. government for harm caused by federal immigration decisions - potentially allowing the leaders of conservative states to help dictate immigration policy set by Washington.



Outgoing British Columbia Lieutenant Governor Janet Austin and Premier David Eby stand on the B.C. Legislature steps as the Royal Canadian Navy Naden Band play during a farewell ceremony for her, in Victoria, British Columbia on Jan 29. (AP)

## Canada inquiry found no evidence of 'traitors' in parliament, warns against disinformation

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Jan 30, (AP): A public inquiry on foreign interference in Canada concluded Tuesday that while some foreign entities tried to interfere in the country's elections, its democratic institutions remain "robust," but warned against the danger of misinformation.

The final report of the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference found "no evidence of traitors" in the country's parliament, but Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue warned that one of the biggest threats to democracy was foreign actors sowing disinformation in both the traditional media and social media.

"Distinguishing what is false is becoming increasingly difficult and the consequences are extraordinarily harmful," Hogue told a news conference in Ottawa where she did not take questions. The Canadian government established the public inquiry in September 2023 to investigate whether China, Russia and other countries interfered in Canadian federal elections in 2019 and 2021 that re-elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals.

The report said China is the "most active perpetrator" of foreign interference in Canada and accused India of being the second most active.

Relations between Canada and India have been strained since Trudeau and the RCMP accused the Indian government of being involved in the murder of Canadian Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, B.C., in June 2023. India has denied those allegations.

Four Indian nationals living in Canada were charged with Nijjar's killing and are awaiting trial.

Russia, Pakistan and Iran are also considered foreign interference threats in Canada.

Ronald Au-Yeung, a fellow with the political science department at the University of Notre Dame, said the rules surrounding Canadian federal elections are strong, but added that the report failed to adequately address the threat of foreign interference when political parties select their candidates.

He explains that foreign governments can purchase memberships during a nomination race to help prevent its critics from receiving a party's

nomination to run for government.

In the report, Hogue encouraged parties to adopt "more stringent rules who is entitled to vote in nomination and leadership contests."

The report includes seven volumes and lays out 51 recommendations for the federal government, nearly half of which she says should be considered before the next election.

The report comes as Canada's Liberal Party is selecting a new leader to replace Trudeau who announced his resignation Jan. 6. He will remain prime minister until a new Liberal Party leader is chosen on March 9.

The next Liberal leader could be the shortest-tenured prime minister in the country's history. All three opposition parties have vowed to bring down the Liberals' minority government in a no-confidence vote after parliament resumes on March 24 which would trigger a spring election.

Among the report's recommendations are calls to improve federal preparedness, foster transparency, shore up electoral integrity and counter threats against diaspora communities.

## 'Tough new migration rules'

## Merkel criticizes German front-runner Merz

BERLIN, Jan 30, (AP): Former German chancellor Angela Merkel on Thursday issued rare public criticism of her successor as the country's center-right leader, the front-runner in Germany's election next month, for putting to parliament proposals for tough new migration rules that only passed with the help of a far-right party.

Germany's center-left governing parties have cast doubt on whether conservative leader Friedrich Merz can still be trusted not to bring the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, into government after Wednesday's events.

Merz, determined to underline his center-right Union bloc's commitment to cutting irregular migration after a deadly knife attack last week by a rejected asylum-seeker, put a nonbinding motion calling for Germany to turn back many more migrants at its borders to a vote, although it might need AfD's votes to pass. The measure passed by a three-vote margin thanks to the far-right party's support.

Polls show Merz's mainstream center-right Union leading with around 30% support, while Alternative for Germany is second with about 20%, and Chancellor Olaf Scholz's center-left Social Democrats and their remaining coalition partners, the Greens,



Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel delivers a speech during a reception of the North Rhine-Westphalian Christian Democratic Union, CDU, in Duesseldorf, Germany, Jan 18, 2025, ahead of the federal elections in February. (AP)

are further back.

Merkel, a former leader of Merz's Christian Democratic Union, noted in a rare statement that Merz had said in November that no measures should be passed with AfD's support before the Feb. 23 election.

She said she supported that position but "I think it was wrong no longer to feel committed to this proposal and, on Jan. 29, to enable with open eyes for the first time a majority with votes from AfD in a vote in the German parliament."



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, rescuers search for civilians who were killed when a Russian drone hit an apartment building in Sumy, Ukraine on Jan 30. (AP)

## Russia drone attack kills four in Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 30, (AP): A Russian drone blasted a hole in an apartment building in northeastern Ukraine during a nighttime attack, killing at least four people and injuring nine others, officials said Thursday.

The Shahed drone blew out a wall and surrounding windows in the apartment block in Sumy, a major city, just after 1 a.m., the Sumy regional administration said. Four people were rescued from the rubble, and a child was among the injured, it said, adding that 120 people were evacuated.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called it "a terrible tragedy, a terrible Russian crime."

The war between Russia and Ukraine, which enters its fourth year next month and shows no signs of ending, has killed more than 10,000 Ukrainian civilians, according to the United Nations.



This image made from video provided by TVBS shows damaged cars in Tainan, Taiwan on Jan 30 following an earthquake. (AP)

### Quake shakes Taiwan buildings

A magnitude 5.6 earthquake shook buildings in Taiwan on Thursday morning, as a series of tremors hit the island, causing little damage but possibly portending more seismic activity in the near future.

The biggest of the quakes hit at 10:11 a.m. (0211 GMT) in Chiayi county's Dapu township at a depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles), according to the Central Weather Agency and the U.S. Geological Survey. The epicenter was about 250 kilometers (155 miles) south of the capital, Taipei, where buildings swayed slightly.

That was followed shortly afterward by at least a dozen smaller quakes in Dapu. All were after-

shocks from a magnitude 6.4 earthquake that struck Dapu on Jan. 21 and sent 15 people to the hospital with minor injuries, as well as damaging buildings and a highway bridge.

No injuries were reported from Thursday's quake, although crews were dispatched to clear away tiles and signage that had been shaken off buildings.

Train service was also suspended for 70 minutes on the island's north-south high-speed rail while safety checks were conducted, and speeds on slower trains were also reduced.

Thursday was a major travel day during the weeklong Lunar New Year festival. (AP)

## Protesters pelt Malaysian embassy with eggs over Indonesian migrant worker shooting

JAKARTA, Indonesia, Jan 30, (Agencies): Dozens of Indonesians, angered over the fatal shooting of an Indonesian migrant worker in neighboring waters, threw eggs on Thursday at the Malaysian embassy in Indonesia's capital.

A 50-year-old migrant worker was shot dead and four others wounded on Jan. 24 after the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, or APMM, opened fire on their boat for alleged trespassing in the waters off Tanjung Rhu Beach in Selangor state.

Indonesian authorities in Riau province on Wednesday received the man's body. Nearly 100 demonstrators from various rights groups and labor unions gathered Thursday outside the embassy, on a major street in downtown Jakarta. Eggs covered the state symbol of Malaysia at the mission's gate, and the building itself appeared to have egg stains and cracked shells on it.

Protesters held signs saying, "Prosecute and jail Malaysian police who shot dead Indonesian migrant worker."

Indonesia's Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement on Jan. 25, a day after the incident, that the fatal shooting occurred as the five Indonesians were attempting to leave Malaysia illegally. The ministry has since demanded a thorough investigation, specifically into the possible use of excessive force by the APMM.



Protesters throw eggs during a demonstration in front of the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia on Jan 30, following a fatal shooting of an Indonesian migrant worker in neighboring waters. (AP)

The shooting caused a national outcry in Indonesia after a video from one of the victims went viral on social media last week. It showed several Indonesian migrants slumped with gunshot wounds near a boat. Their faces also look pale from holding back the pain next to the body of a colleague.

The incident was just another in a long list of deaths among Indonesian

migrant workers allegedly at the hands of Malaysian authorities, said Wahyu Susilo, executive director of Migrant Care, an advocacy group for Indonesian migrant workers.

Migrant Care said its records showed at least 75 such killings since 2005. The group urged Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto not to turn a blind eye to migrant deaths for

fear of straining relations with Kuala Lumpur.

Subianto on a recent visit to Malaysia promised to work together with the Malaysian government to solve problems surrounding migrant workers.

"We will resolve our bilateral issues, including those surrounding manpower. We have agreed to increase cooperation in all sectors," Subianto said in a joint statement with Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, during his state-visit on Monday, just three days after the fatal shooting in Selangor.

Meanwhile, six crews of a cargo ship were rescued, while the captain was missing after their vessel capsized in the coastal area of Sarawak in the northern Borneo state, the Malaysian coast guard said on Tuesday.

The vessel, which lost contact on Monday night, was located at 6:30 a.m. local time on Tuesday, and the six crew members were recovered soon after, Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency Labuan's director Izwanhadi Idros told reporters in a press briefing.

"We immediately rescued the six crew members, two of whom sustained minor injuries, while the other four are in stable condition," he said, adding that a scuba diving team is searching for the missing skipper, who is believed to be trapped inside the partially submerged vessel.

Highly dangerous move and extremely irresponsible choice: Mao

## Marcos offers deal to China: Stop sea aggression, I'll return missiles to US

MANILA, Philippines, Jan 30, (Agencies): Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr offered on Friday to remove a US missile system from the Philippines if China halts what he called its "aggressive and coercive behavior" in the disputed South China Sea.

The US Army installed the Typhon mid-range missile system in the northern Philippines in April last year to support what the longtime treaty allies described as training for joint combat readiness.

China has repeatedly demanded that the Philippines remove the missile system, saying it was "inciting geopolitical confrontation and an arms race."

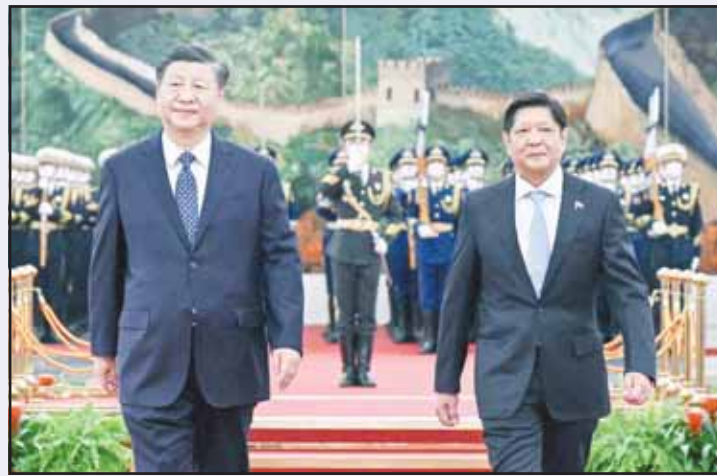
Asked by reporters about China's criticism of the missile system, Marcos said he did not understand the Chinese position because the Philippines does not comment on China's missile systems which "are a thousand times more powerful than what we have."

"Let's make a deal with China: Stop claiming our territory, stop harassing our fishermen and let them have a living, stop ramming our boats, stop water cannons our people, stop firing lasers at us and stop your aggressive and coercive behavior, and we'll return the typhoon missiles," Marcos told reporters in central Cebu province.

"Let them stop everything they're doing and I'll return all of those," he said. Chinese officials did not immediately comment on the Philippine leader's remarks.

The US Army's mobile Typhon missile system, which consists of a launcher and at least 16 Standard Missile-6 and Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles, was repositioned about two weeks ago from the northern Philippines to a strategic area nearer the capital, Manila, in consultation with Philippine defense officials, a senior Philippine official told The Associated Press.

The Philippine official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss the sensitive issue in public, said the US missile system is now nearer an area where Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy forces have been involved in increasingly tense faceoffs in the South China Sea. Tomahawk missiles can travel over 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers), which



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese President Xi Jinping and visiting Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. appear together during a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Jan 4, 2023. (AP)

puts parts of mainland China within their range. The missile system will remain in the Philippines indefinitely, the Philippine official said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said last week that the Philippines is "creating tensions and antagonism in the region and inciting geopolitical confrontation and an arms race" by allowing the US missile system to be positioned in its territory.

"This is a highly dangerous move and an extremely irresponsible choice," Mao said.

Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro has rejected China's demand that the missile system be removed as interference in Philippine internal affairs.

The US and the Philippines have repeatedly condemned China's increasingly assertive actions to press its territorial claims in the South China Sea, where hostilities have flared over the past two years with repeated clashes between Chinese and Philippine coast guard forces and accompanying vessels.

Aside from China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims in the busy waterway, a key shipping route which is also believed to be sitting atop large undersea deposits of gas and oil.

Meanwhile, two people were killed in a fire that razed a condominium building in the Philippines' Chinatown before dawn on Wednesday, the Chinese New Year, the Bureau of Fire Protection said.

The bureau said the victims were women household helpers trapped in a burning unit on the 35th floor of the 56-story condominium when the fire broke out around 3:41 a.m. local time in Manila City's Binondo district.

Six other residents managed to sprint out of the burning unit. However, firefighters failed to save the victims, who were fast asleep while the fire raged.

Firefighters extinguished the fire less than an hour later, preventing it from spreading to other units. Firefighters are investigating the cause of the fire that allegedly started from the helpers' room.

In another development, Philippines penalized 2,765 police officers in 2024, with 903 dismissed from service, the Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief General Rommel Francisco Marbil said Sunday.

Among the punished police officers, Marbil said 1,112 received suspensions, including a colonel, 19 lieutenant colonels, 29 majors, 30 captains and 22 lieutenants. Marbil said 903 officers were dismissed, including five lieutenant colonels, six majors, 12 captains and five lieutenants.

## Trump administration revokes deportation protections for 600,000 Venezuelans

WASHINGTON, Jan 30, (AP): Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said Wednesday that the Trump administration has revoked a decision that would have protected roughly 600,000 people from Venezuela from deportation, putting some at risk of being removed from the country in about two months.

Noem signed a notice reversing a move by her predecessor, Alejandro Mayorkas, in the waning days of the Biden administration to extend Temporary Protected Status. The change is effective immediately and comes amid a slew of actions as the Trump administration works to make good on promises to crack down on illegal immigration and carry out the largest mass deportation effort in U.S. history.

"Before he left town, Mayorkas signed an order that said for 18 months they were going to extend this protection to people that are on Temporary Protected Status, which meant that they were going to be able to stay here and violate our laws for another 18 months," Noem told "Fox and Friends."

"We stopped that," Noem said. Experts and advocates said the immediate impact among those affected would be uncertainty and fear.

"I'm scared even though I'm here legally and I arrived legally," said Caren Añez, a 41-year-old single mother who requested TPS in 2023 and received it in 2024, after arriving in the U.S. on a tourist visa. "I am distraught, seeing how else I can stay here legally."

Añez said she left Venezuela because she feared being arrested for



Caren Añez, center, with her 10-year-old son Lucas Tello, (right) and her mother, Carmen Valbuena, pose for a picture at her apartment on Sept 27, 2023, in Orlando, Florida. (AP)

working as an independent news reporter for a Venezuelan site. She now works as office manager in Texas and said returning home is not an option.

"I cannot enter Venezuela because my life is in danger," she said. More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have left their home country since 2013, when its economy unraveled and President Nicolas Maduro took office. Most settled in Latin America and the Caribbean, but after the pandemic, migrants increasingly set their sights on the U.S.

Venezuelans' desire for better living conditions and their rejection of Maduro and his policies are expected to keep pushing people to emigrate.

Ahead of the presidential elec-

tion last year, a nationwide poll by Venezuela-based research firm Delphos showed about a quarter of the population thinking about emigrating if Maduro was re-elected. Earlier this month, Maduro was sworn in for a third six-year term despite credible evidence that he lost July's election by a two-to-one margin.

Under the Biden administration extension, protections for Venezuelans were extended until October 2026. That now reverts to two separate designations - one that expires this April and one in September.

Venezuelans would lose their ability to work in the U.S. and be at risk of being deported.



Former South African president Jacob Zuma, speaks as his daughter Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, (right), listens, during a press conference in Soweto, South Africa on Dec 16, 2023. (AP)

### Zuma's daughter held on terrorism charges

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 30, (AP): A daughter of former South African President Jacob Zuma has been arrested and is expected to appear in court on Thursday to face terrorism charges.

Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, who is also a member of the South African Parliament, is accused of inciting violence during riots in July 2021 which led to the deaths of more than 350 people.

Zuma-Sambudla handed herself over to police on Thursday to face charges under the Protection of Constitutional Democracy against Terrorist and Related Activities Act and incitement to commit violence, police said.

"The arrest is as a result of a meticulous investigation by the Durban Crimes Against the State unit of the Serious Organized Crime Investigation, following the unrest that brought the country to a standstill in 2021," police spokesperson Brigadier Thandi Mbambo said.



M23 rebels release captured Romanian mercenaries, who were fighting alongside Democratic Republic of Congo army (FRDC), at Gisenyi border point in Congo, on Jan. 29 after the M23 rebels advanced into eastern Congo's capital Goma. (AP)

### Bid to fight Rwanda-backed rebels

## Congo calls for massive military mobilization

GOMA, Congo, Jan 30, (AP): Congo's leader called on young people to massively enlist in the army to help fight Rwanda-backed rebels who were attempting to seize more territory in the country's east as a crucial meeting of neighbors asked the Congolese government to talk with the rebels. Rwanda's leader also threatened to "deal" with any confrontation from South Africa regarding the conflict.

In his first public remarks since the M23 rebels advanced into eastern Congo's largest city, Goma, on Monday, President Félix Tshisekedi late Wednesday vowed "a vigorous and coordinated response" to push back the rebels while reaffirming his commitment to a peaceful resolution. "Enlist massively in the army because you are the spearhead of our country," he urged young people.

The M23 rebels in eastern Congo are backed by some 4,000 troops from neighboring Rwanda, according to U.N. experts, far more than in 2012 when they first captured Goma. They are one of more than 100 armed

groups vying for control in Congo's mineral-rich east with vast deposits, estimated to be worth \$24 trillion and critical to much of the world's technology.

A summit of the regional East African bloc, meanwhile, called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in eastern Congo and "strongly urged" Tshisekedi's government to hold talks with the rebels. Tshisekedi was conspicuously absent from the virtual summit attended by Rwanda, also a member.

After capturing much of Goma, a humanitarian hub critical for the more than 6 million people displaced by the conflict in eastern Congo, the rebels were advancing deeper into South Kivu by Thursday morning as fighting raged. The Congolese military has been weakened after hundreds of foreign military contractors withdrew and handed over their arms to the rebels. The rebels, who have already captured several towns in South Kivu, were marching towards the center of the province on Thursday morning, witnesses told The Associated Press.

## 'Bangladesh interim govt fails to protect minorities'

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Jan 30, (AP): Bangladesh's largest minority rights group accused the country's interim government on Thursday of failing to protect religious and ethnic minorities from attacks and harassment, a claim the government has denied.

The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council said the government headed by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus is also using state institutions to suppress minority groups. Yunus took over after a student-led uprising last year in which hundreds of people died forced former

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee to India on Aug 5, ending her 15-year rule.



Yunus

of the incidents were caused by "political reasons" and not by communal issues.

Traditionally, Hindus and other members of minority groups have been seen as supporters of Hasina's Bangladesh Awami League party.

In a news conference on Thursday, the council reiterated its claim of earlier attacks and said 174 new incidents of communal violence had taken place between Aug. 21 and Dec. 31 last year in which 23 members of minority groups were killed and nine women were raped.





# BUSINESS

## Lower jet fuel prices boost profit outlook

### Wall St expects airlines to see strong travel demand in 2025

NEW YORK, Jan 30, (AP): Airlines expect a strong tailwind from travel demand in 2025, even though carriers could be hedged in by capacity issues.

United Airlines, Delta Air Lines and several other U.S.-based carriers have all given investors strong forecasts for the year. Wall Street expects major airlines to increase revenue and profit in 2025. Lower jet fuel prices have also helped brighten those forecasts.

Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian said the airline is already on track for the best "financial year" in its history.

"The U.S. consumer is financially healthy and continues to prioritize spending on experiences," he said, following the airline's latest quarterly earnings report.

Consumer spending remained strong across most goods and services in 2024. Air transportation was among the stronger categories, with spending increasing each month through November, according to the data on personal consumption expenditures.

#### Gainers

Airlines were among 2024's biggest gainers on Wall Street, with Delta's stock rising 50% and United Airlines more than doubling. Most airline stocks have continued gaining ground into 2025, along with expectations for profit growth.

Still, the industry faces supply chain problems that have crimped capacity.

"The capacity challenges of 2024 will continue into 2025 and indeed through to 2026 as airlines struggle with the fallout from maintenance, repair, and overhaul issues and production delays from major aircraft manufacturers," said John Grant, chief analyst at

travel data company OAG.

Airlines and airplane makers face broad supply chain delays for parts. Boeing remains one of the biggest drags for the sector. The beleaguered airplane maker continues to face production issues and said it incurred nearly \$3 billion worth of charges in the fourth quarter of 2024. It faced a strike by the machinists that halted production at several facilities.

#### Growth

Those supply issues kept capacity growth in check in 2024 and will continue to do so in 2025, according to the International Air Transport Association, or IATA. The organization expects global passenger capacity to grow 7.5% in 2025, with 2.8% growth in North America. That would mark a continued slowdown from 2024.

"This is limiting growth opportunities and driving up several cost areas, including aircraft leasing and maintenance," the IATA said in a forecast for 2025.

Crimped capacity growth has weighed down passenger traffic growth. The IATA expects global growth of 8% in 2025, with 3% growth in North America.

Still, that's enough growth to help fuel forecasts for major airlines. Wall Street expects profit growth of 23% for Delta in 2025. Analysts expect United Airlines' profit to grow about 24% and American Airlines profit to rise 23%.

The industry in the U.S. also faces the potential for a friendlier regulatory climate under President Donald Trump. That could include an easing of oversight on airfare fee disclosures and penalties for flight delays.

## Reeves pushes for Heathrow expansion

### UK government backs third runway at Heathrow Airport

LONDON, Jan 30, (AP): The U.K. government is backing the construction of a third runway at London's Heathrow Airport, Treasury chief Rachel Reeves said Wednesday in a speech designed to signal to the business world that the new Labour government is serious about turning around the economy.

Another runway at the U.K.'s main airport, she said, will bolster the country's long-term economic growth potential by boosting investment, increasing exports, and making the U.K. more open and more connected to the rest of the world.

"We cannot duck the decision any longer," she said. "The case is stronger than ever."

Reeves said the government was inviting proposals over its construction by the summer and that it would then make a full assessment of the pros and cons of expanding Heathrow.

"This will ensure that the project is value for money and our clear expectation is that any associated service transport costs will be financed through private funding," she said.

For decades, campaigners have opposed a third runway on environmental concerns and Reeves' announcement will likely face vociferous opposition from campaigning groups, such as Greenpeace and Just Stop Oil, and from numerous fellow members of the Labour Party, including Mayor of London Sadiq Khan.

Khan confirmed that he remained opposed to a new runway because of the "severe impact it will have on noise, air pollution and meeting our climate change targets."

He said he will look at the new proposals carefully, including the impact it will have on people living in the area and the huge knock-on effects for our transport infrastructure.

#### Sustainable

"Despite the progress that's been made in the aviation sector to make it more sustainable, I'm simply not convinced that you can have hundreds of thousands of additional flights at Heathrow every year without a hugely damaging impact on our environment," he said.

In her speech, Reeves insisted the runway will be "delivered in line with our legal, environmental and climate objectives."

A third runway at Heathrow has been discussed since 1946 in the aftermath of World War II, but has never got off the ground because of many reasons, including changes of government as well as legal challenges. Meanwhile, other European hub airports, have grown. Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport has four runways, while Amsterdam's Schiphol has six.

Heathrow's plan to build a third

runway received parliamentary approval in June 2018, but has been delayed by legal challenges and the coronavirus pandemic. Heathrow's chief executive, Thomas Woldbye, has said that he wouldn't continue developing the project without the government confirming that it wants expansion.

Woldbye described Reeves' speech as "the bold, responsible vision the U.K. needs to thrive in the 21st century."

Reeves' support for a third runway came in a wide-ranging speech on boosting U.K. growth rates, which have been historically low since the 2008 global financial crisis for a variety of reasons.

#### Plans

She also outlined plans for the construction of nine new water reservoirs, pledged to create a Silicon Valley-like technology hub between the two university towns of Oxford and Cambridge, back the regeneration of the area around Manchester United's Old Trafford soccer stadium, as well as a "reset" of the U.K.'s post-Brexit economic relations with the European Union.

The Labour government badly needs growth to increase over the coming years, so it can lift living standards following the economic shocks of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, and to get money into ailing public services.

Since taking office in July, Reeves and Prime Minister Keir Starmer have been criticized for talking down the economy they inherited from the previous Conservative administration, and for increasing taxes on businesses, a combination that critics argue led to a growth downturn in the past few months and the sharp downturn in the government's ratings in opinion polls.

Though a third runway won't do much to bolster economic growth in the near-term as it would take a decade to build, Reeves hopes the announcement in itself will provide investors with a signal that the government is serious about turning the economy around.

"We want to do things now, to turn around the performance, and we want to give businesses and investors confidence that this is a country to start doing things, to start making things in again," she said.

The construction of a third runway would require more than 700 houses to be demolished and sections of the M25 motorway, which encircles London, to be moved into a tunnel.

The business world has long supported the creation of a third runway at Heathrow, which is operating at near full-capacity, which often means planes circling the capital before they can land.

# Federal Reserve holds interest rates steady despite economic uncertainty

## Trump criticizes Fed, proposes energy and trade reforms

WASHINGTON, Jan 30, (AP): The Federal Reserve left its benchmark interest rate unchanged Wednesday after cutting it three times in a row last year, a sign of a more cautious approach as the Fed seeks to gauge where inflation is headed and what policies President Donald Trump may pursue.

In a statement, the Fed said the job market is "solid," and noted that the unemployment rate "has stabilized at a low level in recent months." The Fed also appeared to toughen its assessment of inflation, saying that it "remains somewhat elevated." Both a healthier job market and more stubborn inflation typically would imply fewer Fed rate cuts in the coming months.

In a news conference Wednesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell largely deflected questions about recent comments from President Trump, including one from last week, when Trump said he would lower oil prices and then "demand" lower rates. He also said he would speak with Powell about it.

"I'm not going to have any response or comment on whatever the president said," Powell said. Asked if Trump had communicated his desire for lower rates directly to Powell, the Fed chair said he had "no contact."

Regarding the Fed's key rate, Powell conveyed a more deliberate approach, noting that the economy is mostly healthy - the unemployment rate is a low 4.1% and growth topped 3% at an annual rate in the fall.

"With ... the economy remaining strong, we do not need to be in a hurry to adjust our policy stance," Powell said.

Asked about the potential impact of the sharp policy changes Trump has proposed regarding tariffs, immigration, tax cuts, and deregulation, Powell said Fed policymakers are "waiting to see which policies are enacted."

"We don't know what will happen," he added. "We need to let those policies be articulated before we can even begin to make a plausible assessment of what their implications for the economy will be."

Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide Financial, said Powell's comments suggest the Fed won't cut rates again until the middle of this year.

"We are all in wait and see mode, including the Fed," she said.

The Fed reduced its rate last year to 4.3% from 5.3%, in part out of concern that the job market was weakening. Hiring had slowed in the summer and the unemployment rate ticked up, leading Fed officials to approve an outsized half-point cut in



Screens display a news conference by Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in New York, Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2025. (AP)

September. Yet hiring rebounded last month and the unemployment rate declined slightly, to a low 4.1%.

Powell has said it is harder to gauge where inflation is headed, in part because of increased uncertainty around what policies Trump will adopt and how quickly they will affect the economy. Higher tariffs and tax cuts could push inflation higher, while deregulation could possibly reduce it.

The Fed typically keeps interest rates high to slow borrowing and spending and cool inflation.

In December, Fed officials signaled they may reduce their rate just twice more this year. Goldman Sachs economists believe those cuts won't happen until June and December.

In November, inflation was just 2.4%, according to the Fed's preferred measure, not far from its 2% target. But excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices rose a more painful 2.8% from a year earlier. The Fed pays close attention to core prices because they are often a better guide to inflation's future path.

Powell said the Fed wants to see "real progress on inflation or ... some weakness in the labor market before we before we consider" making further cuts.

In a post to his Truth Social account late Wednesday, Trump criticized the Fed for failing to curtail inflation, saying he would do so by "un-

leashing American Energy production, slashing Regulation, rebalancing international Trade, and reigniting American Manufacturing."

During the news conference, Powell was also asked about Trump's executive orders intended to limit diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, which Powell has previously backed.

"As has been our practice over many administrations, we are working to align our policies with the executive orders as appropriate and consistent with applicable law," he said.

Powell also addressed the Fed's decision earlier this month to leave the Network for Greening the Financial System, an international group that sought to address how financial regulators and banks could address climate change. The Fed had joined the group in 2020.

Powell said the group's goals had expanded to things like addressing biodiversity that were "way beyond" the Fed's mission.

"I think that the activities of the NGFS are not a good fit for the Fed, given our current mandate," he said.

Most other central banks in developed countries are cutting their interest rates. The European Central Bank, for example, is widely expected to reduce borrowing costs at its next meeting on Thursday. The Bank of Canada said Wednesday it has also cut its rate, and the Bank of England is also expected to do so next month.

## ECB expected to cut interest rates

# Eurozone economy stagnates in Q4-2024

FRANKFURT, Jan 30, (AP): Europe's economy stagnated at the end of last year as its former growth engine, Germany, finished a second straight year of shrinking output, officials said Thursday.

Gross domestic product was flat with a zero increase in the final quarter of 2024 in the 20-nation eurozone, the EU statistics agency Eurostat said.

The economy slowed from 0.4% growth in the third quarter as businesses were unsettled by possible trade disruptions under the new administration of U.S. President Donald Trump. Consumers remained cautious about spending after being stung by inflation, even though inflation has come down from its peak of 10.6% in October 2022.

Germany is laboring under multiple headwinds including the loss of cheap energy from Russia, choking bureaucracy and political paralysis in Berlin. Its economy contracted 0.2% in the fourth quarter.

The German economy, Europe's largest, also contracted 0.2% for all of 2024, the second straight year of declining output.

The outlook for this year isn't much better. The

government slashed its 2025 forecast on Wednesday to 0.3% from 1.1%.

Leading European economies Germany and France are both unsettled by political turmoil that has left businesses and consumers uncertain about what the future holds in terms of government spending, regulation and taxes. Germany's confusion could clear up after a national election on Feb. 23 following the collapse of Social Democratic Chancellor Olaf Scholz' governing coalition, which has been mired in months of bickering over what to do about the economy.

France may take longer to emerge from paralysis, since the parliament is deeply divided and a new election can't be held until July at the earliest. Political forces are at odds over how to address the country's large budget deficit.

Business prospects have been unsettled by the election of Trump, whose advocacy of new and higher import tariffs could hurt Europe's export-oriented economy. Slowing uptake of electric vehicles and Germany's cancellation of purchase subsidies for EVs has hurt demand for parts sup-

pliers.

The European Central Bank cut is expected to cut its key interest rate later Thursday, a step that could help boost growth.

The ECB faces a juggling act since lower rates help growth by making credit more affordable but also can worsen inflation, which has risen in recent months and was at 2.4% in December as energy prices rose.

Measures of consumer optimism such as the economic sentiment index compiled by the EU's executive commission indicate consumer are fretting over prices. It's unclear if they expect higher prices in the future, possibly due to the threat of tariffs from the new Trump administration, or if they are responding to recent price increases.

"But regardless of the reason, households expecting inflation to rise will add an additional headwind to the outlook for private consumption at a time when European households are already acting quite cautiously over their spending decisions," economists at Oxford Economics wrote in a report.

## Nikkei 225 up 0.2%, ASX 200 rises 0.6%

# Asia shares rise while some markets closed for holidays

TOKYO, Jan 30, (AP): Asian shares mostly rose Thursday after the U.S. Federal Reserve opted not to cut interest rates for the first time since it began trying to help the economy through easier rates in September.

Some Asia-Pacific markets remained closed for the Lunar New Year holiday.

Investors remain uncertain over the outlook for the U.S. economy and over what's ahead from the administration of President Donald Trump.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 0.2% to 39,499.10 in afternoon trading. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.6% to 8,493.70.

SoftBank Group's stock dipped 1.2% after reports it was in talks to possibly invest in OpenAI, while Nissan Motor's shares gained 1.3% after the Japanese automaker confirmed plans to reduce production in the U.S.

On Wednesday, the S&P 500 fell 0.5% to 6,039.31 following the Fed's widely expected decision. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 0.3% to 44,713.52, and the Nasdaq composite fell 0.5% to 19,632.32.

The Fed's decision could hint at rates staying on hold for a while following their swift drop at the end of 2024. Lower rates would help the economy by making it cheaper for U.S. households and companies to borrow, but the downside is they could also fuel more inflation.



A person looks at an electronic stock board showing Japan's Nikkei index at a securities firm Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, in Tokyo. (AP)

The yield on the 10-year Treasury held at 4.53%, where it was late Tuesday.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the U.S. central bank could cut rates if inflation slows further or if the job market suddenly weakens. But "right now, we don't see that, and we see things as in a really good place for policy and for the economy, and so we feel like we don't need to be in a hurry to make any adjustments."

While Wall Street would almost always prefer lower interest rates, "we would continue to focus on why the Fed won't cut anytime soon, specifically a strong economy and

labor, which bodes well for solid corporate earnings growth," said Sameer Samana, senior global market strategist at Wells Fargo Investment Institute.

Wednesday's relative calm offered some respite following two days of disruption driven by doubts about the artificial-intelligence boom.

A Chinese upstart, DeepSeek, has raised nearly existential questions for some of the AI industry after saying it developed a large-language model that can compete with the world's best without having to use top-flight chips.

That casts doubt on whether

AI development broadly will require as much spending on chips, vast data centers and electricity as Wall Street and Big Tech had assumed.

Nvidia, whose stock has almost become a symbol of the AI bonanza, fell 4% Wednesday after plunging nearly 17% Monday and then jumping nearly 9% Tuesday. It was the single heaviest weight dragging the S&P 500 lower, by far.

Big gains for Nvidia and other Big Tech companies were instrumental in the S&P 500's rallying to back-to-back yearly gains of more than 20% for the first time since before the millennium. Nvidia alone accounted for more than a fifth of all of the S&P 500's total return last year.

Elsewhere on Wall Street, Starbucks rose 8.1% after delivering a better profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. T-Mobile US rallied 6.3% after topping Wall Street's expectations for both profit and revenue in the last three months of 2024. It also said it expects to add between a net 5.5 million and 6 million in postpaid customers this year.

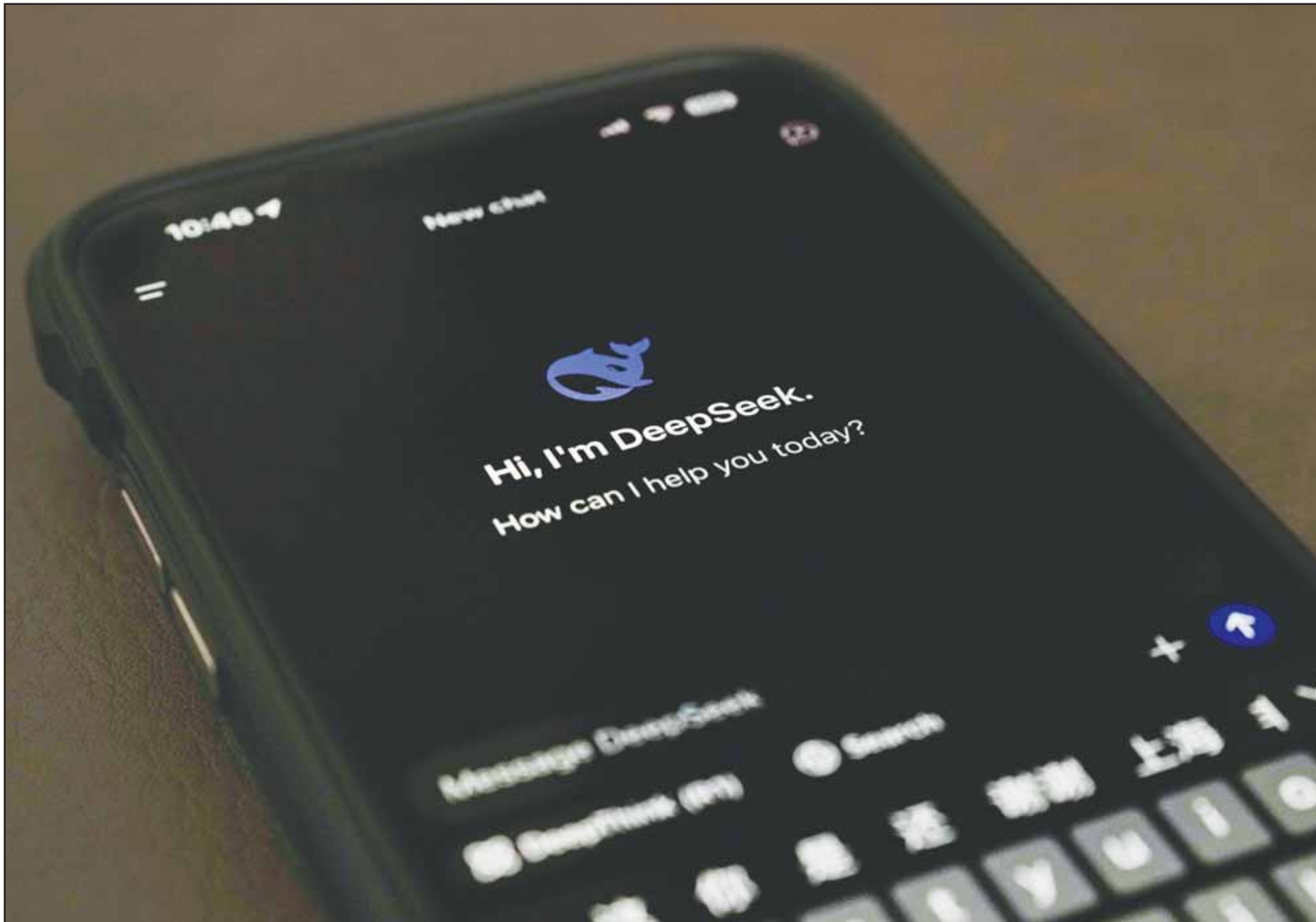
Trump Media & Technology Group rose after announcing it would be getting into the financial services business via a partnership with Charles Schwab. TMTG said more details would be released later this year, and what had been a double-digit gain for the notoriously volatile stock shrank to an increase of 6.8%.

# Business Plus



## AI startup from China achieves milestone despite export restrictions on GPUs

DeepSeek innovates with affordable AI models, challenging industry giants



The page for the smartphone app DeepSeek is seen on a smartphone screen in Beijing, Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025. (AP)

By Ambuj Tewari  
University of Michigan

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



State-of-the-art artificial intelligence systems like OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini and Anthropic's Claude have captured the public imagination by producing fluent text in multiple languages in response to user prompts. Those companies have also captured headlines with the huge sums they've invested to build ever more powerful models.

An AI startup from China, DeepSeek, has upset expectations about how much money is needed to build the latest and greatest AIs. In the process, they've cast doubt on the billions of dollars of investment by the big AI players.

I study machine learning.

DeepSeek's disruptive debut comes down not to any stunning technological breakthrough but to a time-honored practice: finding efficiencies. In a field that consumes vast computing resources, that has proved to be significant.

Developing such powerful AI systems begins with building a large language model. A large language model predicts the next word given previous words. For example, if the beginning of a sentence is "The theory of relativity was discovered by Albert," a large language model might predict that the next word is "Einstein." Large language models are trained to become good at such predictions in a process called pretraining.

Pretraining requires a lot of data and computing power. The companies collect data by crawling the web and scanning books. Computing is usually powered by graphics processing units, or GPUs. Why graphics? It turns out that both

computer graphics and the artificial neural networks that underlie large language models rely on the same area of mathematics known as linear algebra. Large language models internally store hundreds of billions of numbers called parameters or weights. It is these weights that are modified during pretraining.

Pretraining is, however, not enough to yield a consumer product like ChatGPT. A pretrained large language model is usually not good at following human instructions. It might also not be aligned with human preferences. For example, it might output harmful or abusive language, both of which are present in text on the web.

The pretrained model therefore usually goes through additional stages of training. One such stage is instruction tuning where the model is shown examples of human instructions and expected responses. After instruction tuning comes a stage called reinforcement learning

from human feedback. In this stage, human annotators are shown multiple large language model responses to the same prompt. The annotators are then asked to point out which response they prefer.

It is easy to see how costs add up when building an AI model: hiring top-quality AI talent, building a data center with thousands of GPUs, collecting data for pretraining, and running pretraining on GPUs. Additionally, there are costs involved in data collection and computation in the instruction tuning and reinforcement learning from human feedback stages.

All included, costs for building a cutting edge AI model can soar up to US\$100 million. GPU training is a significant component of the total cost.

The expenditure does not stop when the model is ready. When the model is deployed and responds to user prompts, it uses more computation known as test

time or inference time compute. Test time compute also needs GPUs. In December 2024, OpenAI announced a new phenomenon they saw with their latest model o1: as test time compute increased, the model got better at logical reasoning tasks such as math olympiad and competitive coding problems.

Thus it seemed that the path to building the best AI models in the world was to invest in more computation during both training and inference. But then DeepSeek entered the fray and bucked this trend.

Their V-series models, culminating in the V3 model, used a series of optimizations to make training cutting edge AI models significantly more economical. Their technical report states that it took them less than \$6 million dollars to train V3. They admit that this cost does not include costs of hiring the team, doing the research, trying out various ideas and data collection. But \$6 million is still an impressively small figure for training a model that rivals leading AI models developed with much higher costs.

The reduction in costs was not due to a single magic bullet. It was a combination of many smart engineering choices including using fewer bits to represent model weights, innovation in the neural network architecture, and reducing communication overhead as data is passed around between GPUs.

It is interesting to note that due to U.S. export restrictions on China, the DeepSeek team did not have access to high performance GPUs like the Nvidia H100. Instead they used Nvidia H800 GPUs, which Nvidia designed to be lower performance so that they comply with U.S. export restrictions. Working with this limitation seems to have unleashed even more ingenuity from the DeepSeek team.

DeepSeek also innovated to make inference cheaper, reducing the cost of running the model. Moreover, they released a model called R1 that is comparable to OpenAI's o1 model on reasoning tasks.

They released all the model weights for V3 and R1 publicly. Anyone can download and further improve or customize their models. Furthermore, DeepSeek released their models under the permissive MIT license, which allows others to use the models for personal, academic or commercial purposes with minimal restrictions.

DeepSeek has fundamentally altered the landscape of large AI models. An open weights model trained economically is now on par with more expensive and closed models that require paid subscription plans.

The research community and the stock market will need some time to adjust to this new reality. (AP)

## System needs more diverse training data for accuracy

# AI speech recognition systems struggle with linguistic diversity

By Roberto Rey Agudo  
Dartmouth College

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



The idea of a humanlike artificial intelligence assistant that you can speak with has been alive in many people's imaginations since the release of "Her," Spike Jonze's 2013 film about a man who falls in love with a Siri-like AI named Samantha. Over the course of the film, the protagonist grapples with the ways in which Samantha, real as she may seem, is not and never will be human.

Twelve years on, this is no longer the stuff of science fiction. Generative AI tools like ChatGPT and digital assistants like Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa help people get driving directions, make grocery lists, and plenty else. But just like Samantha, automatic speech recognition systems still cannot do everything that a human listener can.

You have probably had the frustrating experience of calling your bank or utility company and needing to repeat yourself so that the digital customer service bot on the other line can understand you.

Maybe you've dictated a note on your phone, only to spend time editing garbled words.

Linguistics and computer science researchers have shown that these systems work worse for some people than for others. They tend to make more errors if you have a non-native or a regional accent, are Black, speak in African American Vernacular English, code-switch, if you are a woman, are old, are too young or have a speech impediment.

Unlike you or me, automatic speech recognition systems are not what researchers call "sympathetic listeners." Instead of trying to understand you by taking in other useful clues like intonation or facial gestures, they simply give up. Or they take a probabilistic guess, a move that can sometimes result in an error.

As companies and public agencies increasingly adopt automatic speech recognition tools in order to cut costs, people have little choice but to interact with them. But the more that these systems come into use in critical fields, ranging from emergency first responders and health care to education and law enforcement, the more likely there will be grave consequences when they fail to recognize what people say.

Imagine sometime in the near future you've been hurt in a car crash. You dial 911 to call for help, but instead of being connected to a human dispatcher, you get a bot that's designed to weed out nonemergency calls. It takes you several rounds to be understood, wasting time and raising your anxiety level at the worst moment.

What causes this kind of error to occur? Some of the inequalities that result from these systems are baked into the reams of linguistic data that developers use to build large language models. Developers train artificial intelligence systems to understand and mimic human language by feeding them vast quantities of text and audio files containing real human speech. But whose speech are they feeding them?

If a system scores high accuracy rates when speaking with affluent white Americans in their mid-30s, it is reasonable to guess that it was trained using plenty of audio recordings of people who fit this profile. With rigorous data collection from a diverse range of sources, AI developers could reduce these errors. But to build AI systems that can understand the infinite variations in human speech arising from things like gender, age, race, first vs. second language, socioeco-

omic status, ability and plenty else, requires significant resources and time.

For people who do not speak English - which is to say, most people around the world - the challenges are even greater. Most of the world's largest generative AI systems were built in English, and they work far better in English than in any other language. On paper, AI has lots of civic potential for translation and increasing people's access to information in different languages, but for now, most languages have a smaller digital footprint, making it difficult for them to power large language models.

Even within languages well-served by large language models, like English and Spanish, your experience varies depending on which dialect of the language you speak.

Right now, most speech recognition systems and generative AI chatbots reflect the linguistic biases of the datasets they are trained on. They echo prescriptive, sometimes prejudiced notions of "correctness" in speech.

In fact, AI has been proved to "flatten" linguistic diversity. There are now AI startup companies that offer to erase the accents of their users, drawing on the assumption that their primary clientele would

be customer service providers with call centers in foreign countries like India or the Philippines. The offering perpetuates the notion that some accents are less valid than others.

AI will presumably get better at processing language, accounting for variables like accents, code-switching and the like. In the U.S., public services are obligated under federal law to guarantee equitable access to services regardless of what language a person speaks. But it is not clear whether that alone will be enough incentive for the tech industry to move toward eliminating linguistic inequities.

Many people might prefer to talk to a real person when asking questions about a bill or medical issue, or at least to have the ability to opt out of interacting with automated systems when seeking key services. That is not to say that miscommunication never happens in interpersonal communication, but when you speak to a real person, they are primed to be a sympathetic listener.

With AI, at least for now, it either works or it doesn't. If the system can process what you say, you are good to go. If it cannot, the onus is on you to make yourself understood. (AP)

editor's choice



‘ Open-source AI weights for customization and growth ’

‘ AI language models face obstacles in non-English languages ’

## Accuser takes the stand in key testimony day

# Rihanna's first court appearance in Rocky's trial

LOS ANGELES, Jan 30, (AP): Rihanna appeared for the first time at the trial of her longtime partner A\$AP Rocky, on the day of its most important testimony - the description by a former friend of the moment Rocky allegedly fired a gun at him.

The singer superstar, who has two toddler sons with the rapper Rocky, sat out of view of the courtroom's cameras, between Rocky's mother and sister, in the downtown Los Angeles criminal courthouse. Security brought her in surreptitiously to avoid crowds Wednesday morning.

Rocky, whose legal name is Rakim Athelston Mayers, has been standing trial on two felony charges that he fired a handgun at the former friend, who is known by the name A\$AP Relli and was born Terrell Ephron. If convicted, Rocky could get up to 24 years in prison.

Rihanna watched Wednesday as Relli testified about the moment Rocky allegedly fired a gun at him on a Hollywood street in 2021.

He had been shouting angrily at Rocky, who was walking away after an initial confrontation and scuffle, when Rocky pulled a gun from his waistband and held it in the air, Relli testified.

"He turned around and then it was like BOOM!" he told the jury. "The whole thing was like a movie, he kind of like pointed down and he shot the first shot."

He said "I felt my hand hot" and later added, "I was hit. Or I was grazed. I didn't have a hole or nothing."

The trial's key witness said he grabbed one of their mutual friends who were with Rocky after the first shot was fired and stood behind him for protection. He said he did not see Rocky fire the second shot, and Rocky ran away moments later.

### Connection

When jurors were being selected, prosecutors asked them whether Rihanna's connection to the case, especially if she appeared in court, would affect their ability to deliver a guilty verdict.

Nearly all those questioned had heard of her - far more than had heard of Rocky - and some described themselves as fans, but all said they felt it would not affect their decisions.

It was not clear whether they could see Rihanna or were aware of her presence as they watched the testimony. She wore a long black dress with buttons on the front that resem-

bled a winter overcoat, and had a pair of glasses on her head that she put on during the prosecution's questioning.

Earlier in the trial, which began on Jan. 21, Relli said he and Rocky, members of A\$AP, a crew of creators at a New York high school, had been close but their relationship eroded after Rocky became famous.

He said their relationship had been strained for years and was getting worse in the days leading up to the incident, 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. He dared him to use it.

When Rocky walked away, he testified that he followed and shouted after him, until the shots were fired.

Rocky's lawyer says the shots he fired were not even from a real gun - they were blanks from a starter pistol that he carried as a prop. The lawyer said Relli knew this, and that was why he was so fearless walking after him.

"Oh it was a real gun," Relli testified Wednesday, saying he knew because of his scraped hand.

He said he felt free to follow and shout at Rocky because "I felt like because he put it away and we're on a busy street in Hollywood. He's definitely not gonna shoot it."



Collaboration of the year honoree A\$AP Rocky, (right) and Rihanna attend the 38th annual Footwear News Achievement Awards at Cipriani South Street on Dec 4, 2024, in New York. (AP)

### Powerful exposé

## Sundance film lifts the veil on prison horrors

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 30, (AP): Incarcerated men in the Alabama prison system risked their safety to feed shocking footage of their horrifying living conditions to a pair of documentary filmmakers. The result is "The Alabama Solution," which premiered this week at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City.

Filmmakers Andrew Jarecki and Charlotte Kaufman became interested in Alabama prisons in 2019. Jarecki, the filmmaker behind "The Jinx" and "Capturing the Friedmans," and Kaufman first gained access to the restricted grounds through a visit with a chaplain during a revival meeting held in the prison yards. There men pulled them aside and whispered shocking stories about the reality of life inside: forced labor, drugs, violence, intimidation, retaliation and the undisclosed truths behind many prisoner deaths.

The Associated Press has written extensively about the problems in the state's prison system, including high rates of violence, low staffing, a plummeting parole rate and the use of pandemic funds to build a new supersized prison.

This process eventually led them to incarcerated activists Melvin Ray and Robert Earl Council (also known as "Kinetik Justice") who had for years been trying to expose the horrifying conditions and deep-seated corruption across the system. They helped feed dispatches to the filmmakers with contraband cellphones.

"We're deeply concerned for their safety, and we have been since the first time we met them," said Kaufman. "They've been doing this work for decades and as you see in the film, they've been retaliated against in very extreme ways. But there are lawyers who are ready to do wellness checks and visit them and respond to any sort of retaliation that may come."

On Tuesday at the first showing of the film, she had Council on the phone listening in. They put the microphone up to the cellphone so that Council could speak.

"We thank you all for listening, for being interested," Council said. "On behalf of the brothers of Alabama, I thank you all."

### Beaten

Several family members of their incarcerated subjects were also in the audience, including Sandy Ray, the mother of Steven Davis, who died in 2019 at William E. Donaldson Correctional Facility, his face beaten beyond recognition. Prison officials said Davis was killed in self-defense because he didn't put down his weapons. The prisoners tell a vastly different story.

Alelur "Alex" Duran, who spent 12 years in prison in New York, also helped produce the film. Jarecki said they wouldn't have taken on the subject without the expertise of someone who had been incarcerated.

"What you're seeing in this film is going on all over the nation," Duran said.

Also embedded in the story is Alabama's long history of contracting prisoners to do work at private companies from Burger King to Best Western, an issue that the AP investigated for over two years. The cheap, reliable labor force has generated more than \$250 million for the state since 2000 - money garnished from prisoners' paychecks, the AP wrote in December. Parole numbers have also plummeted in recent years.

"We want to show viewers the truth about a system that has been cloaked in secrecy," Jarecki said. "We hope the film sparks an effort to allow access for journalists and others so the public can have transparency into how incarcerated citizens are treated and how our tax dollars are being spent. We hope to inspire Alabama's leadership to acknowledge the crisis and to overhaul its prison system and its use of forced labor."

The film will have a theatrical release before it debuts on HBO sometime this year, but the specific dates and details are still being worked out. And while it is in its early days, the impact, Jarecki said, has already been seen, including in a class action labor lawsuit.

Meanwhile, access to the Sundance Festival doesn't require a trip to Park City, Utah, anymore - just an internet connection. Over half of the films that premiered this past week will be available to stream on the festival's online platform starting Thursday.

What started as a COVID-era necessity has become one of the festival's most beloved components, even for those who do brave the cold and the lines to see films in person.

"I think it's really great to be able to offer that opportunity to our audiences, but also to our artists. Sundance is a festival of discovery and each of the films coming to the festival is seeking that moment with audiences," said festival director Eugene Hernandez.



This image released by the Sundance Institute shows a scene from the documentary 'The Alabama Solution' by Andrew Jarecki and Charlotte Kaufman, an official selection of the 2025 Sundance Film Festival. (AP)

### Film



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Sophie Thatcher in a scene from 'Companion.' (AP)

### A bloody and witty sci-fi thriller

## 'Companion' explores humanity in the AI era

LOS ANGELES, Jan 30, (AP): "Iris, wake up!"

Early in "Companion," lovely Iris and her nerdy-nice boyfriend Josh are driving to a secluded lake house for a stay with friends. Iris wakes from a nap and lovingly tells Josh she was dreaming about him. They reminisce about how they first met at the supermarket. All those oranges tumbling onto the floor! Ha ha.

In 20 minutes, absolutely everything about this sweet scene will be turned on its head in a terrifying and sinister manner. You will be surprised and shocked. Unless you saw the trailer, which reveals the whole thing.

And so we begin with a dilemma, dear moviegoer. "Companion," an exceedingly clever and entertaining sci-fi-horror-thriller-comedy by Drew Hancock in his feature debut, has more twists and turns than a corkscrew. But it's utterly impossible to write about the film without revealing the first of those twists.

So if you like coming in totally cold to a movie, then we're sorry to see you go, but stop reading! Otherwise, stay with us - we promise there'll be more surprises to come.

Moving on: Iris (Sophie Thatcher) and Josh (Jack Quaid) arrive at the estate. A nervous Iris stops at the door, worried that Josh's friends won't like her. He urges her to simply brighten up and act happy.

Kat (Megan Suri), Josh's ex, greets them. She is gorgeous, and frosty to Iris. Eli (Harvey Guillén) and his

handsome boyfriend Patrick (Lukas Gage) are nicer. Then there's Sergey (Rupert Friend), Kat's aloof Russian boyfriend - sugar daddy, really - and owner of the house. The password to his devices is Stalin's birthday, which tells you something.

Things get dark, quickly. The next morning, someone dies. They will not be the first - this is a horror movie. And suddenly Iris, caked in blood, finds out what everyone else knows about her, but she did not: She's a robot. Well, a sex bot. A custom "companion" programmed by Josh to be as docile as he wants. He can even control the level of her intelligence.

### Scenario

Iris doesn't understand. "I feel things," she protests. Just the programming, Josh replies. Her tears? They come from a refillable reservoir in her body. But she has memories, she says - like when they met! Oh, that scenario was chosen from a drop-down menu, she's told.

But now that we're all on the same page, the action can really begin. For reasons we won't detail here, Iris ends up on the run. What are the odds of a sex bot escaping her pre-programmed limitations? Suffice it to say that whatever you expect to happen, does not.

The supporting cast is excellent - especially Gage, as a Patrick chock full of surprises - but the leads are especially well cast. Thatcher manages to be, while, like, not actu-

ally human, way more relatable than the actual humans. And she's able to convey subtle changes in programming, too - like becoming 60% more intelligent, a neat trick.

And Quaid, with his full-cheeked Quaid-ian good looks, is an ideal choice for a "nice guy" who grows more odious by the minute. One of his lower points comes when he explains to Iris how the world seems to be "rigged against people like me."

"I don't even own you," he rails - "you're a (expletive) rental! I deserve so much more than this."

Hancock is obviously exploring the fertile area of artificial intelligence - the movie is set in a "not-too-distant future" where bots are an acceptable relationship choice and cars drive themselves, but most everything else looks the same. Like it could be us, just a few years from now. Yikes.

The irony, though, is that it's not the cool futuristic flourishes but good old-fashioned human intelligence that makes the movie work. The humor and tone could have gone so wrong, but they didn't. Kudos to Hancock for making the film crackle along wittily, drawing in even those of us prone to shudder at movies with a fast-rising body count.

"Companion," a New Line Cinema release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association "for strong violence, sexual content, and language throughout." Running time: 97 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

### Variety

**NEW YORK:** Harvey Weinstein begged a judge Wednesday to hold his #MeToo retrial as soon as possible, telling him "I don't know how much longer I can hold on" with cancer, heart issues and harsh conditions at New York City's Rikers Island jail complex.

The disgraced movie mogul objected after Judge Curtis Farber said the retrial would start April 15, imploring him to swap with another, unrelated trial the judge has in March. "Everyday I'm at Rikers Island, it's a mystery to me how I'm still walking," Weinstein said at a hearing in state court in Manhattan.

"I'm holding on because I want justice for myself and I want this to be over with," he said.

Weinstein, 72, is being treated for numerous health conditions, including chronic myeloid leukemia, heart issues and diabetes. He complained to Farber that jail officers gave him the wrong pills Wednesday morning and failed to pick him up for court in a timely fashion.

"So many people suffering on Rikers Island," he said.

Weinstein arrived in court in a wheelchair more than a half-hour after the hearing's scheduled start time. At times as he addressed Farber, he sounded more like the imperious studio boss he once was.

"I'm asking and begging you, your honor, to move your trial," Weinstein said, suggesting that even a week's head start would be helpful.

Weinstein said that at times he finds himself gasping for air and predicted that he would soon be in a hospital again for treatment.

He quizzed the judge about his trial calendar, including jury selection in another matter that is set to begin Monday. Farber said he arrived at the April 15 date after consulting with prosecutors and Weinstein's lawyers but would look into possibly starting the trial a few days earlier, if time allows.

"I'm in a serious emergency situation. I am begging the court to move your date," Weinstein said, telling the judge he wanted to "get out of this hellhole as quickly as possible."

Weinstein's entreaty, a rarity for a criminal defendant, came after Farber issued a key ruling defining the scope of his retrial. The judge upheld a charge based on an allegation from a woman who wasn't in the original case.

Weinstein had wanted the extra charge thrown out, arguing through his lawyers that the Manhattan district attorney's office 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.

Scheduling the retrial was complicated by an increasingly crowded court calendar.

Weinstein's lawyer, Arthur Aidala, is representing conservative strategist Steve Bannon in a border wall fraud

trial set to start March 4 before a different Manhattan judge. (AP)



**TOKYO:** The president and chairperson of Japanese network Fuji Television have resigned over a widening sex assault scandal linked to one of Japan's top TV celebrities.

The scandal centers on Masahiro Nakai, a former leader of Japan's once-hugely popular boy band SMAP, and his costly settlement with a woman over the alleged sex assault at a 2023 dinner party.

The allegations surfaced in magazine articles in December and have since triggered claims of systematic cover-ups by Fuji TV executives. The public outrage over the lack of transparency and explanation at the network's earlier news conference this month have led to an avalanche of advertising losses at Fuji, one of the networks where Nakai worked.

Fuji Television Network President Koichi Minato and other company officials said Monday the case was mishandled and possibly had violated the woman's human rights. But they didn't provide new details, citing her privacy as well as the third-party investigation, during the more than 10-hour news conference while they at times faced yelling by frustrated reporters demanding clarifications.

"We are very sorry that we mishandled the case because of our lack of awareness about human rights and corporate governance ... and as a result our responses to the involved woman were inadequate," Minato said. "We are very sorry to have destroyed our credibility." (AP)



A frankincense tree in Dhofar Governorate.



A man is extracting Omani frankincense from a tree.



The method of extracting Omani frankincense from trees.

Omani frankincense  
KUNA photos

## Health and beauty boost demand for Omani 'Luban'

# Omani frankincense, an economic jewel and national icon

MUSCAT, Jan 30, (KUNA): Given its historic and economic significance, Omani frankincense, which grows in abundance in the scorching Dhofar desert, has become tantamount to a natural and economic treasure that is highly instrumental in keeping the Gulf Arab Sultanate's economy afloat.

Known in local vernacular as "Luban," frankincense is a solid, gum-like material that comes from the Boswellia tree, while its extracted oil is used in a wide variety of cosmetics including soaps, luxury perfumes and lotions, which makes it a very popular souvenir for tourists to take back home.

Besides its environmental and cosmetic value, the mystical scent the Omani frankincense produces is omnipresent in the Gulf Arab Sultanate, particularly in the

southernmost province of Dhofar, where you can find the purest and most unadulterated form of the Luban.

Discussing the significant use of the sap in cosmetic production, Dhofar University's research center chief Dr. Luai Rashan cited the "healing and health benefits" of this substance, as proven in extensive studies carried out by the center to examine the potency of Omani Luban.

The oil extracted from these grayish-white resins is believed to have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that can help boost the immune system and reduce inflammation, among other benefits including reducing stress and anxiety, boosting mood and mental clarity, supporting respiratory health, soothing inflammation and promoting spiritual growth, he told KUNA.

Dhofar University has contributed to the production

of Omani frankincense-based supplements, which range from general health to nutritional support, he explained, describing such local efforts including perpetual research on the matter, as aiming to further "reinforce" the "immense health benefits" of the Luban, he added.

On its role in ancient Omani history, journalist and writer Faisal Al-Alawi said that the Luban had been traded for thousands of years, with diverse civilizations such as the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, while its aromatic properties and use in religious rituals, medicine and perfumery is the subject of folklore.

Through generations, the "historic role" of Omani frankincense is in line with the Gulf Arab Sultanate's "broad economic vision," he underlined, saying that products derived from the famed sap have become a

commercial and trade "window" through which Muscat reaches out to different civilizations.

Regarded as a "national product," Omani Luban is renowned for its sublime quality, which explains the "global demand" for the product, particularly, from the high end perfume and cosmetic industry that relies on its use as a staple ingredient, according to merchant Maamar Al-Kahtairi, citing that the average price of a kilogram ranges from four to 50 Omani riyals.

The future remains bright for this mystical seed thanks in part to skyrocketing global demand coupled with extensive research that has proven the health benefits of both the internal and external use of the Luban, he added, expecting that Omani frankincense trade would further flourish in the coming years.

## Fashion

Valentino's new designer showcases history, drama

# Sernin gives bold twist to Gaultier's couture

PARIS, Jan 30, (AP): Fashion designer Ludovic de Saint Sernin stepped in to design Jean Paul Gaultier haute couture Wednesday at Paris Couture Week, reinterpreting the house's legacy with a collection steeped in his signature aesthetic of eroticism, queer-musing, and fetish-inflected detailing.

The evening show honored Gaultier's enduring themes - gender subversion, body-conscious silhouettes, and provocation - while layering in Saint Sernin's own stripped-down vision.

The opening look set the tone: Gaultier's iconic corseted bustier was reimagined with sharper, harsher lines, its corset ties and metal eyelets gleaming under the lights, adding an unmistakable kink to the house's vocabulary. A model with grungy, tousled hair reinforced the subversive spirit.

Saint Sernin, whose work is rooted in queer identity and nightclub sensuality, pushed these themes further through meticulously constructed pieces that blurred the lines between seduction and restraint.

Since stepping away from the runway in 2020, Jean Paul Gaultier has invited a rotating cast of guest designers to reinterpret his couture house each season. Saint Sernin joins the likes of Chitose Abe, Glenn Martens, Olivier Rousteing, Haider Ackermann, and Simone Rocha in taking on this challenge - each bringing their own aesthetic while working within Gaultier's codes. For his turn, de Saint Sernin immersed himself in the archives at Gaultier's storied Rue Saint-Martin atelier.

A silk caramel gown, fluid yet constricting, was wrapped with rope detailing across the bust-evoking a sense of gentle bondage. Another model appeared with rope encircling her arms, the imagery oscillating between elegance and entrapment. These elements, central to Saint Sernin's visual language, felt at home in the world of Gaultier, a designer who famously challenged notions of masculinity and femininity decades before gender fluidity became mainstream in fashion.

### Valentino

Alessandro Michele's Valentino couture debut was the most anticipated ticket of Paris Couture Week, and the designer didn't disappoint with a lavish spectacle at the Palais Brongniart, a fittingly historic backdrop for his past-meets-present storytelling.

Known for his "more is more" aesthetic, Michele delivered a VIP-filled show on Wednesday brimming with historical reverence, theatricality, and his signature offbeat twists.

Michele, who previously spent nearly eight years redefining Gucci with his eclectic, gender-fluid maximalism, has long drawn inspiration from history. It's an obsession that traces back to his childhood in Rome, where he would rummage through his mother's closet, captivated by the textures of bygone eras.

His tenure at Gucci transformed the brand into a powerhouse of



A model presents creation by Elie Saab in Paris. (Xinhua)



A model wears a creation from Viktor&amp;Rolf Haute Couture Spring Summer 2025 collection, in Paris, Jan 29. (AP)



A model wears a creation by Elie Saab. (AP)



A model presents a creation by Elie Saab. (Xinhua)

layered nostalgia and offbeat opulence, making his appointment at Valentino - a house steeped in aristocratic elegance - both a natural evolution and a challenge.

His arrival was a significant shift from Valentino's former designer Pierpaolo Piccioli, who was celebrated for his pared-down romanticism.

The opening look set the tone: a harlequin-patterned gown of enormous proportions, fusing the whimsy of the circus with regal splendor.

Full skirts billowed with 18th-century grandeur against a stark black runway, while '70s-inspired ruffles added his distinctive vintage-inflected edge. A standout floral gown, evocative of Marie Antoinette, received the New Romanticism treatment, a nod to the late '70s and early '80s era that has long fascinated the designer.

Though the collection largely played to Michele's strengths, with exuberance tempered by couture-

level precision, some elements felt overdone. A polka dot jacket with an oversized bow veered into twee territory, an example of how his fondness for embellishment can sometimes tip into excess. Yet, the overall balance leaned toward refinement, with a relative restraint compared to his past work at Gucci.

The show featured models of diverse ages and backgrounds, maintaining Valentino's commitment to inclusivity - a theme central to Piccioli's tenure and which Michele continues under his creative direction.

Michele's couture debut reaffirmed his reputation as a designer who finds beauty in historical excavation.

### Elie Saab

The sounds of spring, with babbling brooks and birdsong, set a serene yet surreal tone Wednesday as Elie Saab unveiled his latest couture collection inside the soaring Palais de Tokyo in Paris. It was punctuated only by whoops

and clicking camera shutters as Eva Longoria swept in.

While the setting evoked pastoral bliss, the collection was a study in high-drama couture, as Saab's signature opulence met a new architectural precision.

This season, the Lebanese designer, a red carpet mainstay, tempered his signature cascades of embroidery with an almost armor-like structure. Sweeping architectural flourishes curved around shoulders and hips, recalling the grandeur of Art Deco but with a modern sheen. Geometric bands of sparkles reinforced the sculptural intent, carving out silhouettes that felt more commanding than Saab's typical fluid romance.

Models emerged on three parallel runways framed by classical white arches, wearing gowns drip-

ping with jewels and embroidered feathers that echoed foliage. The effect was cinematic, an invitation into a world of 1920s glamour - Gatsby decadence reimagined with Saab's unerring eye for fantasy. But in a world of uncertainty, the excess took on a different weight, a reminder that fashion has long been a glittering escape from reality.

Saab's touchstone aesthetic - luxurious embellishment, silhouette-flattering cuts and red carpet allure - was intact, but there was an added sense of structure, a couture boldness that gave the collection its edge. The designer has never strayed far from his core of femininity and grandeur, yet here was a whisper of something stronger: a woman draped in fantasy, but armored for the future.

## 'AI copyright'

### Portal to certify human content

NEW YORK, Jan 30, (AP): The Authors Guild has set up an online portal for members to certify that their books "emanated from the human intellect" and not from artificial intelligence.

The guild, a nonprofit that includes thousands of writers, is calling the initiative "Human Authored."

"The Human Authored initiative isn't about rejecting technology - it's about creating transparency, acknowledging the reader's desire for human connection, and celebrating the uniquely human elements of storytelling," guild CEO Mary Rasenberger said in a statement Wednesday. "Authors can still qualify if they use AI as a tool for spell-checking or research, but the certification connotes that the literary expression itself, with the unique human voice that every author brings to their writing, emanated from the human intellect."

According to the guild, authors can have their work certified by logging into the portal, entering information about their book and signing a licensing agreement that will enable them to use a specially designed logo on "book covers, spines, or promotional materials."

The guild plans to register the "Human Authored" logo with the US Patent and Trademark Office and eventually open the system to nonmembers.

Artists can copyright works they made with the help of artificial intelligence, according to a new report by the US Copyright Office that could further clear the way for the use of AI tools in Hollywood, the music industry and other creative fields.

The nation's copyright office, which sits in the Library of Congress and is not part of the executive branch, receives about half a million copyright applications per year covering millions of individual works. It has increasingly been asked to register works that are AI-generated.

And while many of those decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, the report issued Wednesday clarifies the office's approach as one based on what the top U.S. copyright official describes as the "centrality of human creativity" in authoring a work that warrants copyright protections.

"Where that creativity is expressed through the use of AI systems, it continues to enjoy protection," said a statement from Register of Copyrights Shira Perlmutter, who directs the office.

An AI-assisted work could be copyrightable if an artist's handiwork is perceptible. A human adapting an AI-generated output with "creative arrangements or modifications" could also make it fall under copyright protections.

The report follows a review that began in 2023 and fielded opinions from thousands of people that ranged from AI developers, to actors and country singers.

It shows the copyright office will continue to reject copyright claims for fully machine-generated content. A person simply prompting a chatbot or AI image generator to produce a work doesn't give that person the ability to copyright that work, according to the report. "Extending protection to material whose expressive elements are determined by a machine ... would undermine rather than further the constitutional goals of copyright," Perlmutter said.

## Event to focus on diagnosis, treatment protocols

## Kuwait to hold hemophilia awareness day for healthcare workers

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Hemophilia and Hereditary Bleeding Committee is organizing its fourth awareness day next Saturday to raise awareness among medical staff about hemophilia and hereditary bleeding disorders.

All hematology units in public hospitals will participate in the event to shed light on the treatment protocols and pro-

vide practical insights for healthcare providers in this field.

Director of the National Bank of Kuwait Specialized Hospital for Children and Consultant in Hematology and Pediatric Cancer Dr. Ali Mulla Ali explained that the event will review the latest therapeutic advancements that will help healthcare providers offer better care for patients with hemophilia and other bleeding disorders. It will also highlight the

unique challenges in accurately diagnosing and caring for women with bleeding disorders.

The event will feature specialized scientific lectures delivered by a group of expert doctors, followed by an interactive session to answer any inquiries from healthcare providers in the audience.

Dr. Ali affirmed that the goal is to equip healthcare providers with the latest protocols and practical approaches for treating

hemophilia and other bleeding disorders, and ensuring they are provided with the necessary tools and expertise to improve the quality of care for these patients.

He stated that the treatment of hemophilia patients in Kuwait follows the latest international protocols, in line with the recommendations of the World Federation of Hemophilia.

Dr. Ali explained that hemophilia is a blood clotting disorder where affected in-

dividuals experience prolonged bleeding due to the inability of their blood to clot naturally. It is a genetic condition that primarily affects children.

He said the prevalence of hemophilia in Kuwait and the Gulf region is about half of the rates seen in Europe.

Dr. Ali reiterated that the Ministry of Health is fully committed to providing the latest treatments, including long-term intravenous therapies.

## Kyrgyzstan's measles acute

## Nurse in Uganda dies from Ebola virus, first since 2023

KAMPALA, Uganda, Jan 30, (Agencies): A nurse in Uganda has died of Ebola, a health official said Thursday, in the first recorded fatality since the last outbreak ended in 2023.

The 32-year-old male nurse was an employee of Mulago Hospital, the main referral facility in the capital, Kampala, Diana Atwine, permanent secretary of the health ministry, told reporters Thursday.

After developing a fever, he was treated at several locations in Uganda before multiple lab tests confirmed he had been suffering from Ebola. The man died on Wednesday and the Sudan strain of Ebola was confirmed following postmortem tests, Atwine said.

At least 44 contacts of the victim have been identified, including 30 health workers and patients at Mulago Hospital, according to Uganda's Ministry of Health.

The health authorities are "in full control of the situation," Atwine said, urging Ugandans to report suspected cases.

Tracing contacts is key to stemming the spread of Ebola, and there are no approved vaccines for the Sudan strain of Ebola. Uganda's last outbreak, discovered in September 2022, killed at least 55 people before it was declared over in January 2023.

Confirmation of Ebola in Uganda is the latest in a trend of outbreaks of viral hemorrhagic fevers in the east African region. Tanzania declared an outbreak of the Ebola-like Marburg disease earlier this month, and in December Rwanda announced that its own outbreak of Marburg was over. The ongoing Marburg outbreak in northern Tanzania's Kagera region has killed at least two people, according to local health authorities.

Ebola, which is spread by contact with bodily fluids of an infected person or contaminated materials, manifests as a deadly hemorrhagic fever. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and at times internal and external bleeding.

Scientists don't know the natural reservoir of Ebola, but they suspect the first person infected in an outbreak acquired the virus through contact with an infected animal or eating its raw meat. Ugandan officials are still investigating the source of the current outbreak. Uganda has had multiple Ebola outbreaks, including one in 2000 that killed hundreds. The 2014-16 Ebola outbreak in West Africa killed more than 11,000 people, the disease's largest death toll.

Ebola was discovered in 1976 in two simultaneous outbreaks in South Sudan and Congo, where it occurred in a village near the Ebola River, after which the disease is named.

**Measles:** The measles situation in Kyrgyzstan remains acute, the official Kabar news agency reported on Thursday, citing the country's health

ministry.

The capital city of Bishkek reported the highest increase in cases, where the virus is actively spreading among contacts, the ministry said.

According to data from the health ministry, 1,104 cases have been recorded from the beginning of this year to date in the country.

A total of 7,046 cases of measles were registered in the country by the end of 2023, and 14,380 cases in 2024, the ministry added.

Unvaccinated children are at risk of contracting the infectious disease, the ministry said.

**Flu epidemic:** The number of flu cases in the Netherlands has been rising rapidly, prompting the Netherlands Institute for Health Services (Nivel) to officially declare the start of a flu epidemic on Wednesday.

A flu epidemic is officially recognized when at least 53 out of 100,000 people report flu symptoms to their doctor for two consecutive weeks. Last week, 76 out of 100,000 people in the Netherlands reported flu symptoms, up from 58 the week before.

According to Nivel, these figures mark the official beginning of this year's flu epidemic. Last year, the epidemic also began in late January and lasted until the end of March.

The outbreak is causing disruptions across the country. In some hospitals, routine care has been scaled back due to high rates of staff sick leave. Schools are also affected, with many classrooms empty and lessons canceled as teachers call in sick.

**Infectious diseases:** The recurrence of infectious diseases such as Ebola, mpox and Marburg in Africa calls for enhancing the resilience of the continent's public health systems through sustainable funding, technology adoption, improved surveillance and community engagement, officials said Tuesday at a forum in Kenya's coastal city of Mombasa.

Africa remains vulnerable to disease outbreaks that are being fueled by climate change, pollution, unregulated human mobility across borders and limited access to diagnostics and essential medicine, said the officials and experts attending the East Africa Regional Global Health Security Summit 2025.

The summit that runs from Jan. 28-30 was convened by Kenya's Ministry of Health and partners and aims to chart a new pathway for enhancing preparedness and response to pandemics in the region.

In addition, delegates from governments, academia, civil society, donors, industry and regional blocs attending the three-day forum will discuss novel ways to boost biosecurity, advance health equity, and ramp up the adoption of technologies and innovations in the health sector.



This image made from a NASA live stream shows NASA astronauts Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore during a press conference from the International Space Station on Friday, Sept. 13, 2024. (AP)

## NASA's stuck astronauts take first spacewalk

NASA's two stuck astronauts took their first spacewalk together Thursday, exiting the International Space Station almost eight months after moving in.

Commander Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore floated out to perform maintenance work and wipe the station's exterior for evidence of any microbes that might still be alive after launching from Earth and escaping through vents. "Here we go," Wilmore said as he emerged 260 miles (420 kilometers) above Spain.

The pair expected to stay just a week when they arrived at the space station last June. But their brand new

Boeing's Starliner capsule, encountered so much trouble that NASA decided to return it empty.

That left the two test pilots, both retired Navy captains, in orbit until SpaceX can bring them home. That won't happen until late March or early April, extending their mission to 10 months because of a SpaceX delay in launching their replacements.

Williams performed a spacewalk two weeks ago with another NASA astronaut. It marked Wilmore's first time outside this trip. Both racked up spacewalks during previous space station stays. (AP)

## Are we all aliens?

## Asteroid samples hold signs of life

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Jan 30, (AP): Asteroid samples fetched by NASA hold not only the pristine building blocks for life but also the salty remains of an ancient water world, scientists reported Wednesday.

The findings provide the strongest evidence yet that asteroids may have planted the seeds of life on Earth and that these ingredients were mingling with water almost right from the start.

"That's the kind of environment that could have been essential to the steps that lead from elements to life," said the Smithsonian Institution's Tim McCoy, one of the lead study authors.

NASA's Osiris-Rex spacecraft returned 122 grams (4 ounces) of dust and pebbles from the near-Earth asteroid Benu, delivering the sample canister to the Utah desert in 2023 before swooping off after another space rock. It remains the biggest cosmic haul from beyond the moon. The two previous asteroid sample missions, by Japan, yielded considerably less material.

Small amounts of Benu's precious black grains - leftovers from the solar system's formation 4.5 billion years ago - were doled out to the two separate research teams whose studies appeared in the journals Nature and Na-

tive Astronomy. But it was more than enough to tease out the sodium-rich minerals and confirm the presence of amino acids, nitrogen in the form of ammonia and even parts of the genetic code.

Some if not all of the delicate salts found at Benu - similar to what's in the dry lakebeds of California's Mojave Desert and Africa's Sahara - would be stripped away if present in falling meteorites.

## Discovery

"This discovery was only possible by analyzing samples that were collected directly from the asteroid then carefully preserved back on Earth," the Institute of Science Tokyo's Yasuhito Sekine, who was not involved in the studies, said in an accompanying editorial.

Combining the ingredients of life with an environment of sodium-rich salt water, or brines, "that's really the pathway to life," said McCoy, the National Museum of Natural History's curator of meteorites. "These processes probably occurred much earlier and were much more widespread than we had thought before."

NASA's Daniel Glavin said one of the biggest surprises was the rela-

tively high abundance of nitrogen, including ammonia. While all of the organic molecules found in the Benu samples have been identified before in meteorites, Glavin said the ones from Benu are valid - "real extraterrestrial organic material formed in space and not a result of contamination from Earth."

Benu - a rubble pile just one-third of a mile (one-half of a kilometer) across - was originally part of a much larger asteroid that got clobbered by other space rocks. The latest results suggest this parent body had an extensive underground network of lakes or even oceans, and that the water evaporated away, leaving behind the salty clues.

Sixty labs around the world are analyzing bits of Benu as part of initial studies, said the University of Arizona's Dante Lauretta, the mission's chief scientist who took part in both studies.

Most of the \$1 billion mission's cache has been set aside for future analysis. Scientists stress more testing is needed to better understand the Benu samples, as well as more asteroid and comet sample returns. China plans to launch an asteroid sample return mission this year.

## Concerns raised

## CDC ordered to halt WHO work

NEW YORK, Jan 30, (AP): US public health officials have been told to stop working with the World Health Organization, effective immediately.

A US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention official, John Nkengasong, sent a memo to senior leaders at the agency on Sunday night telling them that all staff who work with the WHO must immediately stop their collaborations and "await further guidance."

Experts said the sudden stoppage was a surprise and would set back work on investigating and trying to stop outbreaks of Marburg virus and mpox in Africa, as well as brewing global threats. It also comes as health authorities around the world are monitoring bird flu outbreaks among U.S. livestock.

The Associated Press viewed a copy of Nkengasong's memo, which said the stop-work policy applied to "all CDC staff engaging with WHO through technical working groups, coordinating centers, advisory boards, cooperative agreements or other means - in person or virtual." It also says CDC staff are not allowed to visit WHO offices.

## Withdrawing

President Donald Trump last week issued an executive order to begin the process of withdrawing the US from WHO, but that did not take immediate effect. Leaving WHO requires the approval of Congress and that the US meets its financial obligations for the current fiscal year. The US also must provide a one-year notice.

His administration also told federal health agencies to stop most communications with the public through at least the end of the month.

"Stopping communications and meetings with WHO is a big problem," said Dr. Jeffrey Klausner, a University of Southern California public health expert who collaborates with WHO on work against sexually transmitted infections.

"People thought there would be a slow withdrawal. This has really caught everyone with their pants down," said Klausner, who said he learned of it from someone at CDC.

"Talking to WHO is a two-way street," he added, noting that the two agencies benefit from each other's expertise. The collaboration allows the US to learn about new tests, new treatments and emerging outbreaks - information "which can help us protect Americans abroad and at home," Klausner said.

The CDC details nearly 30 people to WHO and sends many millions of dollars to it through cooperative agreements.

The US agency also has some of the world's leading experts in infectious diseases and public health threats, and the two agencies' staffers are in daily contact about health dangers and how to stop them.

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# Australia batting blitz rewrites records

Sri Lanka on the ropes

**GALLE, Sri Lanka, Jan 30, (AP): Sri Lanka was starting down the barrel at 44-3 after Australia achieved its largest ever total in Asia - 654-6 declared - on day two of the first test on Thursday.**

Fatigued after spending five and a half sessions under the scorching sun, Sri Lanka's batting resistance was minimal.

Oshada Fernando was the first to fall for 7, trapped leg before by Matthew Kuhnemann, setting the tone for a challenging evening.

Former captains Dimuth Karunaratne and Angelo Mathews didn't last long either, both victims of Australia's exceptional fielding.

Karunaratne fell on 7 to a spectacular catch at gully off Mitchell Starc, and Mathews was dismissed for 7 in stunning fashion - caught off bat-pad



Australia's Usman Khawaja celebrates after scoring a double century during day two of the first test cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)

to Nathan Lyon's off-spin.

Dinesh Chandimal and Kamindu Mendis weathered some testing moments to reach stumps as Sri Lanka remain precariously placed at 610 runs down with three days to go on a deteriorating pitch.

Steve Smith, who became the 15th man and fourth Australian to reach 10,000 test runs on day one, pushed on to a masterful 141 off 251 balls. His 266-run stand with Usman Khawaja stands as the highest third-wicket partnership in tests between the teams.

They eclipsed the previous best stand of 200 between Adam Gilchrist and Damien Martyn in Kandy in 2004.

After Smith was trapped leg before by Jeffrey Vandersay, Khawaja remained unruffled, rotating the strike superbly and punishing loose deliveries with precision. He went on to register his maiden double century and Josh Inglis became the 21st Australian to score a century

on debut.

Opener Khawaja's eight-hour-plus knock of 232 off 352 balls was historic - the first Australian to score a double hundred in Sri Lanka. His is the highest individual score in tests between the nations. He edged behind slow left-armer Prabath Jayasuriya.

Inglis, meanwhile, wasted no time asserting himself, taking on the bowlers and racing to his century off just 90 deliveries. His attacking approach, combined with Khawaja's measured brilliance, saw the pair put on 146 runs for the fourth wicket, cementing Australia's dominance.

Inglis made 102 off 94 balls, also edging Jayasuriya behind.

While Australia made merry on a placid surface, signs of turn emerged late on day two, offering a glimmer of hope for the spinners. The pitch is expected to deteriorate further, making survival increasingly difficult - especially with Australia boasting three specialist spinners.



Australia's Josh Inglis plays a shot during day two of the first test cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)

## Kuwait Club takes sole lead in league

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Kuwait Club's first basketball team claimed the top spot in the general league standings after a dominant 98-70 victory over Kazma. The match, held at the Basketball Federation Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, saw "Al-Abyad" break the tie for first place with the Orange, moving ahead with 14 points, while Kazma dropped to second place with 13 points.

In another exciting clash, Al-Qadisiya cruised past Al-Arabi with a commanding 88-57 win, extending their tally to 12 points from six matches.

With the season progressing, the competition remains fierce as teams battle for the top positions.



Kuwait Club player shoots past an opponent during league game between Kuwait Club and Kazma.

## Kuwait's Al Hazza faces Zayed at ONE 171: Qatar

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Kuwait's Brazilian jiu-jitsu star Jarrah Al Hazza is set to face UAE's Zayed Alkhatheeri at global martial organization ONE Championship's upcoming show ONE 171: Qatar.

Al Hazza and Alkhatheeri will clash in a highly anticipated flyweight submission grappling match inside the Lusail Sports Arena on Thursday February 20.

Al Hazza, who is set to become the first Kuwaiti to fight in a ONE Championship event, is an established Brazilian jiu-jitsu fighter with impressive wins against top opponents and accolades on his resume, including a medal at the Asian Games.

On the other hand, Alkhatheeri is the first Emirati to win gold as BJJ black belt (-56KG) at Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Pro (ADWPJJC). His accolades include the 2023 IBJJF Pan Jiu-Jitsu Championships.

Alkhatheeri and Al Hazza join Morocco's kickboxing star Ilias Ennahachi on the captivating ONE 171: Qatar fight card. Ennahachi takes on Thai legend Petchanong Petchfergus in a pivotal bantamweight contest which could decide the next contender for the ONE Bantamweight Kickboxing world title.

After making its Qatar debut last March, ONE Championship's second event in the country features two world title matchups as Jonathan Haggerty defends his ONE Bantamweight Kickboxing world title against Chinese veteran Wei Rui in the main event while world champion Joshua Pacio and interim Jarred Brooks collide in a ONE Strawweight MMA world title unification bout.

ONE 171: Qatar kicks off at 5:00 PM AST on Thursday, February 20, 2025.

### Best of the Rest

**Stanway out for months:** England midfielder Georgia Stanway will be sidelined for "several months" after damaging right knee ligaments in training this week. The Bayern Munich player underwent an operation on Wednesday to repair a lateral collateral ligament tear, the German club said.

Her absence is a major blow to England's preparations for the Women's European Championship in July.

Although Bayern did not give a timeframe for the 26-year-old Stanway's recovery, it places doubts over her ability to return in time for the Euros in Switzerland. (AP)

**Norman set to join board:** Greg Norman is set to link up with organizers of the Brisbane 2032 Olympics.

Norman, a two-time British Open champion and the only player to lose all four majors in a playoff following 72 holes, has recently been replaced as CEO of LIV Golf by Scott O'Neil ahead of tour's fourth season starting next month.

News Corp. reported Thursday that Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese had picked Norman to replace a retiring politician on the 24-person organizing board for the 2032 Olympics.

The Games will be held in Norman's home state of Queensland, Australia. "As a proud Queenslander, it is an honor and privilege to help shape the Brisbane Games," Norman told Brisbane's Courier-Mail newspaper. (AP)

'Ending the contract was right for all parties'

## What does Neymar's departure mean for Saudi league?

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Jan 30, (AP): Neymar's move from Al-Hilal to Brazilian club Santos means the Saudi Pro League has lost one of its most high-profile players.

The Brazilian attacker was among the global stars who transferred to Saudi clubs in 2023 when Cristiano Ronaldo joined Al-Nassr and Karim Benzema left Real Madrid for Al-Ittihad.

But unlike the latter two, Neymar was injured too often to make much of an impact in the desert kingdom after his 90 million euros (\$94 million) transfer from Paris Saint-Germain. He played just seven games before Al-Hilal released him this week by mutual consent.

Analysts say his exit is not likely to have a big impact on the Saudi league's international standing as long as other big names remain.

"Neymar's departure does not damage the brand. If the other stars start leaving then it is different, but that does not look like it's happening," said Sasi Kumar, a former Singapore international and founder of Spain-based sports investment company 28 Ventures. "He went there, got injured and the timing was unfortunate. I am sure Hilal and other clubs will go and make more signings, as the ambitions

are still there."

Once one of the world's top players, Neymar spent much of his time in Saudi Arabia sidelined by an ACL injury from playing for Brazil in October 2023.

"He didn't make a big impression but could never show his real quality because

of the injuries," said Roel Coumans, a former assistant coach with Saudi Arabia and head coach of three clubs in the country. "It was bad luck as he is a player that suited Al-Hilal's attacking style and a pleasure to watch."

Coumans agreed with Al-Hilal boss Jorge Jesus, who said on Monday that

the league leader and defending champion would not struggle without Neymar.

"They are still a massive team in Asia whether Neymar is there or not," Coumans said.

Al-Hilal fans are disappointed to see the 32-year-old Brazilian go, but Riyadh-based supporter Ayman Al-Hotawi said ending the contract was right for all parties.

"Hilal is a big club that can't be patient with a player who can't perform at the level he was known for," Al-Hotawi said. "It is a strong indicator that the league is no picnic."

Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior and Liverpool's Mohamed Salah have been names thrown about in speculation about possible replacements for Al-Hilal before it participates in the Club World Cup in the United States in June. The club hasn't commented.

"(Al-Hilal) have lots of ambitions and want world stars and they need to do so if they want to become a top five or six league in the world," Kumar said.

Meanwhile, Neymar is likely to receive a hero's welcome at Santos, his boyhood club, where he won six titles before joining Barcelona in 2013.



In this file photo, Brazil's Neymar waves to fans during a training session in Cuiaba, Brazil. (AP)

## Accessible games for title contenders in La Liga

MADRID, Jan 30, (Xinhua): Real Madrid travels to play Espanyol, while Atletico Madrid faces an out-of-form Mallorca and FC Barcelona is at home to Alaves in the 22nd round of La Liga matches this weekend.

Vinicius Jr is back after suspension as Real Madrid takes on the side currently ranking third from bottom and desperately needing points to escape the relegation zone.

Madrid had few problems against bottom side Real Valladolid last weekend, and also won 3-0 in Brest on Wednesday, although it still faces a potentially difficult UEFA Champions League playoff round and also has a Copa del Rey quarterfinal next week in Leganes.

Real Madrid has traditionally done well against Espanyol, while Saturday could give David Alaba the chance for more game time as he continues his recovery from a serious knee injury.

Atletico Madrid cruised into the last 16 of the Champions League with a 4-1 win at Red Bull Salzburg on Wednesday, but has only taken one point in the past two

league matches, conceding top spot to Real Madrid.

Diego Simeone's side entertains a sixth-placed Mallorca, who will be without the suspended Omar Mascarell for Saturday's game.

Atletico visits Real Madrid next weekend, and striker Julian Alvarez will have to be careful as he has picked up four yellow cards this season and another one would see him miss the trip to the Santiago Bernabeu.

Barcelona recovered its league form with last weekend's 7-1 spanking of Valencia, and Hansi Flick's side is at home against relegation-threatened Alaves.

Alaves' decision to replace former coach Luis Garcia with Eduardo Coudet has yet to pay off, although the team has registered four draws in their last six games.

The round of matches kicks off on Friday night with a derby as Leganes hosts Rayo Vallecano. A seven-game unbeaten run has carried Rayo up to seventh in the table, but Leganes has shown in recent games that they are tough to beat, keeping clean sheets against Atletico Madrid and Athletic Bil-

bao in their last two games.

Following a goalless draw with Leganes, Athletic Bilbao has a six-point gap over fifth-placed Villarreal, and the Yellow Submarine will expect to close that gap to three points when it hosts rock-bottom Valladolid on Saturday.



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe controls the ball during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Brest and Real Madrid at Roudourou stadium in Guingamp, France. (AP)

Athletic has a difficult trip to Real Betis on Sunday after its final Europa League group match on Thursday. Betis has one week to prepare for the game and is expected to give a debut to Brazilian winger Antony, who has joined on loan from Manchester United.

Getafe's win over Real Sociedad last weekend helped lift them away from the danger zone, and it faces Sevilla, who will be without the suspended Isaac Romero and Adria Pedrosa.

Valencia can expect a hostile reception from its own fans for a vital home game against Celta Vigo after its display in Barcelona last week. Valencia remains second from bottom, while Celta has slipped towards danger with three defeats and a draw in its last five matches.

Osasuna entertains Real Sociedad looking to end a run of nine games without a win, in a match that is a dress rehearsal for the Copa del Rey quarterfinal between the two sides next Thursday.

The round of matches finishes on Monday with Girona at home to Las Palmas.



Atalanta's Raoul Bellanova, left, fights for the ball with Barcelona's Raphinha during a Champions League opening phase soccer match between Barcelona and Atalanta at the Lluís Companys Olympic stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

# Sports

## City, PSG survive Champs League drama

New format shakes up giants

**GENEVA, Jan 30, (AP):** Manchester City stayed in the Champions League, barely. Paris Saint-Germain saved its elite status in style.

Both had risked embarrassing exits before winning, grateful to be among the 24 teams in the knockout stage. In the new playoffs-round draw Friday, they will also find defending champion Real Madrid or Bayern Munich who finished in mid-table after the 36-team standings were finalized.

City flirted with a disaster before rallying to beat Club Brugge 3-1 in a must-win game. Trailing 1-0 at halftime, and then sitting 26th in the live standings, the 2023 title-winner was sparked by substitute Savinho to avoid elimination.

"In the second half we let our souls and hearts free," said City manager Pep Guardiola, who had an anguished evening on the sidelines and was shown a yellow card.

City finished 22nd but relief turns to the realization that its playoff round opponent will be either Madrid or Bayern, which slotted into the bracket possibilities in, respectively, 11th and 12th place.

PSG started play in 22nd before cruising to a 4-1 win at Stuttgart, fired by Ousmane Dembélé's hat trick, that eliminated the German club.

The French champion impressed again after a crucial 4-2 comeback win over Man City one week ago and rose to 15th place. Still, that puts PSG on a path to meet either Liverpool or Barcelona in the round of 16 in March if it wins an all-French playoff against either Monaco or Brest.

Liverpool topped the standings despite a 3-2 loss with a weakened team at PSV Eindhoven, and Barcelona ended runner-up after a 2-2 draw with Atalanta.

Only the top eight teams go directly to the round of 16 and that excludes Madrid, which won 3-0 at Brest, and Bayern, a 3-1 winner against Slovan Bratislava.

Inter Milan, Arsenal, and Atletico Madrid sealed top-eight finishes as expected with low-key wins. Inter beat Monaco 3-0, Arsenal won 2-1 at Girona and Atletico won 4-1 at Salzburg, which had a woeful campaign.

Bayer Leverkusen, Lille - which thrashed Feyenoord 6-1 - and Aston Villa completed the top eight.

Stuttgart dropped to 26th place and was eliminated along with Dinamo Zagreb, despite its 2-1 win over AC Milan whose United States playmaker Christian Pulisic had leveled the game. Milan can face Juventus in the playoff round.

Brugge took the 24th qualification place ahead of Dinamo on the tiebreaker of goal difference.

An unprecedented Champions League night of 18 games playing at the same time - completing the new 144-game opening phase format - ended with no shock exits through final standings that defied expectations.

Three English teams finished in the top eight but not Man City.

Two Spanish teams finished in the top eight but not Real Madrid.

The one German team in the top eight is not Bayern, and the one French team is not PSG.

Those four wealthy powers of European soccer found the new eight-game format trickier than expected. They now have the burden of two extra games on



Bologna's Giovanni Fabbian, left, jumps for the ball with Sporting's Goncalo Inacio during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Sporting CP and Bologna FC at the Alvalade stadium in Lisbon. (AP)

back-to-back midweeks in February to earn a round of 16 places that were routine in the old group-stage format.

Villa joined Liverpool and Arsenal in the top eight by beating Celtic 4-2 to rise to 16 points - the cut that meant avoiding the playoffs.

UEFA's preseason prediction of eight points to enter the knockout phase proved

far off the mark.

Dinamo scored 11 points but was still eliminated, ensuring no team from Eastern Europe will advance to the knockout phase.

The lowest-ranked country in Friday's playoffs round draw is Scotland, whose champion Celtic finished 21st, one place and one point above Man City.

## Abdullah praises Kuwait World Cup performance

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: The Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports, Bashar Abdullah, hailed the participation of Kuwait in the 2025 Handball World Cup as a success by all standards. He highlighted the team's significant leap in the International Handball Federation rankings and praised the players' outstanding performances during the tournament. However, he acknowledged that minor details played a role in the team's exit against Austria.

Abdullah's remarks came during the team's early-morning reception following the conclusion of their participation in the 29th World Cup, which is currently being held in Croatia, Denmark, and Norway and will wrap up tomorrow. The team was welcomed by Bashar Abdullah, alongside Kuwait Handball Federation President Fouad Al-Balushi, Treasurer Khaled Talib, Assistant Secretary Abdullah Al-Dhiyab Talib, and board members Talal Al-Otaibi and Mishaal Al-Qabandi.

Kuwait secured 27th place in the World Championship, surpassing Japan and Bahrain. Treasurer Khaled Talib commended the squad for delivering a strong performance on the international stage, winning three matches—their best-ever World Cup showing. He also expressed gratitude



The handball team welcomed by officials upon arriving from the World Cup.

to the Public Authority for Sports and Bashar Abdullah for their unwavering support in overcoming challenges.

Similarly, Assistant Secretary Abdullah Al-Dhiyab described the team's participation as positive, stating that while the goal was to achieve a higher ranking, finishing 27th remains a notable accomplishment for Kuwaiti handball, which had been absent from this global event for years. He emphasized

the importance of preparing for upcoming international competitions across different age groups.

Players Abdulaziz Al-Shammari, Abdulaziz Al-Dhafiri, and Mishaal Taha reaffirmed that the entire delegation was committed to raising the Kuwaiti flag and showcasing the nation's handball prowess. They called for continued support to ensure the national teams maintain their competitive edge

in future international tournaments.

In a related development, goalkeeping coach Ali Al-Khadher completed his World Cup stint with the Brazilian national team, which delivered an impressive performance, securing victories over Chile, Spain, and Sweden in the main round. This version enhances readability, flow, and structure while maintaining the original details. Let me know if you'd like any adjustments!

## Al-Qadsiya signs Al-Dhafiri

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: Al-Qadsiya Club has officially signed Saudi midfielder Abdulrahman Al-Dhafiri on a two-and-a-half-year contract to strengthen its midfield ranks.

Born on May 20, 1999, in Kuwait, Al-Dhafiri began his football journey in the youth divisions of Kuwait Club. He later played for Al-Nasr Saudi Club's U-23 team before being loaned to several clubs, including Al-Batin (2018), Al-Ain and Al-Khaleej (2019), Al-Hazm (2020), and Al-Orouba (2022). In 2023, he joined Al-Arabi.

Al-Dhafiri made a strong impact at Al-Arabi, establishing himself as a key player in the starting lineup and contributing significantly to the team's victories. However, he stopped training at the beginning of the current season due to financial disputes and eventually filed a complaint with FIFA's Dispute Resolution Committee, which ruled in his favor to terminate his contract.

Following his move to Al-Qadsiya, Al-Dhafiri shared his excitement on social media, stating:

"I signed my contract with Al-Qadsiya, where glory, history, pre-



In this file photo, Al-Dhafiri vies for the ball with Al-Qadsiya player.

sent, and future lie.

Al-Qadsiya has faced challenges in midfield in recent years due to the departure of key players like Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, Saif Al-Hashan, Sultan Al-Enezi, and Reda Hani. Additionally, club veteran Bader Al-Mutawa's advancing age (41) has impacted the team's performance in this crucial area.

The club hopes Al-Dhafiri's arrival will provide much-needed stability and creativity in midfield as it aims to regain its competitive edge.

## Yarmouk and Khaitan in a relegation battle

## Al-Qadsiya aims to rebound from Super Cup loss against Al-Salmiya

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 30: After a 10-day pause for the Super Cup, the Zain Premier League returns to action with the 13th round kicking off today. The opening match features Yarmouk (4 points) taking on Khaitan (6 points) at 5:55 pm at Abdullah Al-Khalifa Stadium.

The action continues tomorrow with two fixtures: Kazma (11 points) faces Al-Tadamon (14 points) at 5:55 pm at Al-Sadaka and Al-Salam Stadium, while Al-Qadsiya (20 points) visits Al-Salmiya (23 points) at 8:10 PM.

The round concludes the day after tomorrow, with league leaders Kuwait (33 points) meeting Al-Nasr (6 points) at 5:55 PM at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium, and Al-Arabi (6 points) traveling to face Al-Fahahel (20 points) at 8:10 PM at Al-Shabab Stadium.

The most anticipated match of the round is the showdown between third-

placed Al-Salmiya and fourth-placed Al-Qadsiya. Both teams are battling to maintain their position in the top tier



A file photo of players challenging for the ball.

and keep their slim title hopes alive.

Al-Salmiya aims to hold onto third place and replicate its first-leg vic-

tory over Al-Qadsiya. Meanwhile, Al-Qadsiya is eager to bounce back from its Super Cup final defeat against Kuwait Club and take revenge against Al-Salmiya. A win would allow it to share third place with the "Sky Blues" and boost morale ahead of its crucial Gulf Club Championship clash against Qatari Al-Arabi on February 5.

In today's match, bottom-ranked Yarmouk is desperate for a win to keep its slim survival hopes alive, while Khaitan shares the same objective to stay out of the danger zone.

Kazma will take the field under new Bosnian head coach Rosimir Sveko, replacing Tunisian Belkacem Chabbi. The team is determined to avenge its first-leg loss against Al-Tadamon, and cement its position among the league's top six. On the other hand, Al-Tadamon hopes to complete the season double over Kazma, gain a crucial morale boost, and widen the gap from the relegation-threatened teams.

## Best of the Rest

**Gerrard leaves Saudi club Al-Ettifaq:** Former Liverpool and England midfielder Steven Gerrard has left his role as manager of Al-Ettifaq in Saudi Arabia after 18 months in charge, the club said on Thursday.

Al-Ettifaq said in a statement on X that it was a mutual decision. In January, Gerrard signed an extension to his contract to stay at the team until 2027.

Gerrard leaves with Al-Ettifaq in 12th place in the 18-team Saudi Pro League. In his first season in charge, the team finished in sixth place.

"Sometimes things don't go as planned," Al-Ettifaq said, "but the firm foundations he helped build will guarantee a bright future in the long term. He changed the club for the better and that will never be forgotten."

Gerrard previously coached at Rangers in Scotland and Aston Villa in England. He retired from playing in 2016, having been at Liverpool for 17 years, followed by 1 1/2 seasons with LA Galaxy in Major League Soccer. (AP)



**Simons joins Leipzig from PSG:** Leipzig completed the signing of Netherlands midfielder Xavi Simons from Paris Saint-Germain on Thursday.

He's contracted to 2027. Neither Leipzig nor PSG disclosed the fee.

"We've been working for a long time to make this transfer, which is a great one both in a sporting and financial sense, a reality," Leipzig managing director for sport Marcel Schafer said. "We're pleased to have the clarity of knowing that Xavi is now our player - we now hold all the trump cards."

The 21-year-old Simons has been on loan at Leipzig since 2023 and scored 15 goals in 60 games.

"I've always said that I feel extremely at home in Leipzig and that I'm honored by the appreciation shown towards me by the club," he said. "Over the coming weeks and months, I will be able to freely pursue our joint aims of qualifying for the Champions League for the seventh straight season, and of reaching the (German Cup) final in Berlin - those are the only things that matter right now!" (AP)