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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Do not settle usufruct deals by blessing with one hand and then harming with the other

NO economy can thrive in the presence of outdated bureaucratic complexities and a lack of proper planning. Therefore, one of the first steps the Cabinet must take, particularly the ministers responsible for planning, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Commerce and Industry, and the State Minister for Municipality Affairs, is to recognize the current opportunity to start working on revitalizing several sectors that can contribute to the development of the national economy.

We direct our message today to these ministers, with the hope that they will read carefully and respond, especially now that ministerial positions have become stable. Unlike in past years, when initiatives were wasted and plans ignored due to ministers' fears of losing their positions, the situation has changed. In the past, ministers could be described as "anxious, as if the wind were beneath them," with pressure surrounding them from all sides.

Today, we hope the ministerial vision is clear. We urge everyone

in the Council of Ministers to disregard the rumors circulating on social media about withdrawing industrial or agricultural plots. These rumors, aimed at testing the pulse or increasing anxiety among industrialists, traders, and farmers, are the work of short-sighted individuals and negatively impact performance, leading to reduced production and damaging the economy.

It is inconceivable that any wise person would allow the influence of envious social media activists to control government decisions.

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Amir to lead flag-hoisting ceremony at Bayan Palace

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1, (KUNA): A flag-hoisting ceremony will take place at Bayan Palace at 10:00 am on Sunday under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Kuwait will officially begin its National Day celebrations on Sunday

with the flag-hoisting ceremony under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The flag-hoisting event marks the start of festivities commemorating Kuwait's 64th National Day and 34th Liberation Day, reflecting on the country's history, milestones, and achievements under its leadership.

This year's celebrations coincide with Kuwait's designation as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media 2025, providing an opportunity to showcase the country's accomplishments in culture, media, and the arts, and to highlight its role in fostering cultural dialogue among nations.

The Kuwaiti flag, which has undergone several transformations, was adopted in its current form on September 7, 1961, through an Amiri Decree issued by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. The new flag was officially raised for the first time on November 24,

1961, during a nationwide ceremony, symbolizing national pride. Before the current flag, Kuwait's flags included various designs, such as a crescent and star or a red flag with the word Kuwait in white, before

evolving into its current form with black, white, red, and green colors. Flag-hoisting ceremonies will be held across Kuwait's six governorates, officially kicking off national celebrations, and streets and government buildings will be adorned with images of the Amir, the Crown Prince, and the Kuwaiti flag, reflecting the festive atmosphere.

Kuwait also commemorates the 34th Liberation Day, reflecting on the country's freedom from the Iraqi invasion and honoring the contributions and sacrifices of the martyrs who worked to secure its independence. These occasions serve to reinforce national unity and inspire Kuwaitis to uphold the values of solidarity and dedication to the nation's continued growth and prosperity.

Hawk black box recovered

Amir, Crown Prince, Premier condole US leader over crash

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1, (Agencies): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday sent a cable to U.S. President Donald Trump, expressing heartfelt condolences over the tragic plane crash near Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C., which claimed all lives

Similarly, 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 sent cables to President Trump, conveying their deepest sympathies to the victims' families.

Meanwhile, police boats combed the banks of the Potomac River on Friday, slowly scanning the shoreline in the rain as investigators sought clues into the midair collision that killed 67 people and raised questions about air traffic safety around the nation's capital. The black box from the Army Black Hawk helicopter that collided with

a commercial jetliner and crashed into the Potomac River has been recovered, investigators announced. They are reviewing that flight data recorder along with two recovered earlier from the jet. No one survived the Wednesday night collision. The remains of 41

people had been pulled from the river as of Friday afternoon, including 28 that had been positively identified, Washington, D.C., Fire Chief John Donnelly Sr. said at a news conference. He said next of kin notifications had been made to 18 families, and he expects all the remains to be re-

The wreckage of the plane's fuselage will probably have to be pulled from the water to get all the bodies, he said.

"This is heartbreaking work," Donnelly said, noting that more than 300 responders were taking part in the effort at any one time, including teams of divers and two U.S. Coast Guard cutters, at least one of which carries a crane. "It's been a tough response for a lot of our people."

It was unclear how long the recovery operation would take.
"We're working as fast as we can," Donnelly said. "We need your patience.'

The American Airlines jet was carrying 60 passengers and four crew members. The helicopter had three soldiers on board.

Although Ronald Reagan National Airport reopened, two of its three runways remained closed to keep aircraft from flying over the crash scene, said Terry Liercke, the airport's vice president and manager. Roughly 100 flights were canceled Friday.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait steady reforms not enough to lift credit rating

Private sector growth crucial for boost



A temple from the Dilmun civilization, dating back to the second millennium BC (2000-4000 BC), has recently been discovered on Failaka Island. - See Page 2

PAFN confirms Coca-Cola products in Kuwait 'safe'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition has reassured consumers in Kuwait that Coca-Cola products available in the country are safe, following reports of product withdrawals in some European nations due to elevated levels of chlorate, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The authority clarified that the affected Coca-Cola products were manufactured in Europe and have not entered the Kuwaiti market. It further emphasized that all Coca-Cola products in Kuwait are produced locally, adhering to stringent food safety regulations.

Additionally, the authority reaffirmed its ongoing monitoring efforts to ensure consumer safety and pledged to keep the public informed of any further developments related to the issue.

Calls grow for regulating withdrawals for \$1T Fund

Kuwait poised to re-enter debt market

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: About ten days after Finance Minister Noura Al-Fassam confirmed at the World Economic Forum in Davos that "Kuwait expects to activate the public debt law soon to enable

the state to borrow from the markets," Bloomberg reported that "Kuwait may soon be able to issue debt securities for the first time in eight years.'

The agency stated that Kuwait might soon sell bonds for the first time in eight years, as the Cabinet is expected to approve a new debt law that could allow

borrowing of 20 billion dinars (approximately 65 billion dollars) over 50 years to finance public debt.

While the agency indicated that the draft law for issuing debt securities would allow Kuwait to issue traditional bonds

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A man distributes rice to people gathering outside the Umayyad Mosque during Friday prayers in Damascus, Syria, Friday Jan. 10, 2025. (AP)

Al-Sharaa vows unity, justice post-Assad era

Kuwait congratulates Syria's new leader amid transition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1, (Agencies): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to President Ahmad Al-Sharaa, on the occasion of his assumption of the power of the Syrian Arab Republic in the transitional phase.

In his cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations to President Al-Sharaa, wishing him all success in his mission for achieving interests and restoring stability of the sisterly Arab country and directing all his power to meet the aspirations of the Syrian people's for growth, progress and prosper-

His Highness Sheikh Meshal added that the State of Kuwait is looking forward to strengthening relations with the Syrian Arab Republic and expanding cooperation in various domains

His Highness the Amir also wished the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic and its people all progress and prosperity and good health and wellness for President

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to President Ahmad Al-Sharaa on the occasion of his assumption of the power of the Syrian Arab Republic in the transitional phase.

In his cable, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his sincere congratulations to President Al-Sharaa, wishing him all success and good health and wellness, and for the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic and its people progress and prosperity.

Continued on Page 5

Unemployment among Kuwaitis hits 33,307

Kuwaiti workforce in private sector drops

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The latest statistics from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) reveal a decline in the number of Kuwaiti citizens working in the private sector from 72,231 at the end of December 2023 to 70,756 by December

2024, which is a decrease of 1,475 employees. As of the end of December 2024, there were 39,418 Kuwaiti men and 31,338 Kuwaiti women in the private sector.

In contrast, the government sector witnessed a rise in national employment, reaching 400,815 as of the end of December 2024.

Continued on Page 5

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, accompanied by an official delegation, on Saturday left for Egypt as part of a tour that will also take him to **Jordan** and **Oman**. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy said it began maintenance of power transformers across the six gover-

norates, which will lead to partial outage.

The outage will continue in some areas, according to a set schedule, from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 midday, local time, between Feb 1 and 8. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Ministry of Interior announced temporary closure of both exits of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan Expressway (the 5th ring road) from

Al-Jahran to Al-Surrah and Al-Salam neighborhoods. The exits of the same road will be closed for motorists coming from Al-Salmiya to Qurtoba and Al-Seddiq neighborhoods from the early hours of Saturday, the Ministry's General Department of Traffic said in a statement. (KUNA)

By Najeh Bilal Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: Kuwait's economic and financial reforms are progressing steadily, albeit without the fanfare that typically accompanies ma-

jor transformations. This quiet progression is happening amidst a storm of political debate centered around national identity and citizenship issues, wnich often oversnadow the im portance of these reforms.

In recent years, calls for economic and financial reforms, whether from international organizations or local institutions, were largely ignored, overshadowed by populist rhetoric in the National Assembly and threats against reformist ministers.

However, since September, when Noura Al-Fassam was appointed as the Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, a series of reform laws have been swiftly passed, addressing key financial and economic areas.

These include the introduction of a tax on multinational companies, repricing of government services and the appointment of leaders to vacant economic positions.

Despite this progress, the question remains: when will these reforms reflect positively on Kuwait's sovereign credit rating?

Economic experts assert that while raising public service fees, imposing taxes and issuing a public debt law are important steps, these alone will not suffice to improve Kuwait's credit rating.

The country's rating depends on

broader efforts, including continued economic reform, business environment improvements, foreign investment attraction and diversification of

Continued on Page 5



National Bank of Kuwait welcomes the second cohort of 'NBK **Tech Academy'**

ABK Capital wins 'Most Innovative **Multi-Asset Fund Management Co'** award

Gulf Bank to host AlDanah **Millionaire Grand** Draw on Feb 13, 2025

07

Expected weather for next 24 able wind to light to moderate

By Day: Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-

By Night: Cold with light vari-

Weather

Bubyan northwesterly wind, with speeds Jahra 23 Failaka Island 10 of 10-32 km/h. Salmiyah 15 Max Exp Ahmadi **Kuwait City** 21 Jal Aliyah Kuwait Airport 07 Nuwaisib

Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr condoles demise of Saudi Arabian Prince





Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is in Saudi Arabia to offer condolences over the demise of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, President of the Kuwait and Asian Aquatics Federations, visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to offer his condolences following the passing of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

Station

Abdaly

Al-Badr explained that the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has bid farewell to one of its most virtuous sons, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, a distinguished man and prominent Arab and Islamic figure whose stances and contributions will always be remembered.

History has recorded in golden letters the courageous stances of the late prince during the time when Kuwait was exposed to the brutal Iraqi invasion. He strongly condemned the invasion, supported Kuwait's legitimacy, and stood by the leadership and citizens of Kuwait to help overcome the ordeal and advocate the right to return Ku-

The deceased (May God have mercy on him) played a pivotal role in implementing the directives of the wise leadership of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the time. He worked tirelessly to ensure all obstacles were removed to receive the people of Kuwait who went to Saudi Arabia, and all forms of support were provided to them. The late prince's honorable stances will never be forgotten.

Al-Badr stressed that words sometimes fall short in conveying the depth of sadness over the loss of such a dear person, one who was loyal and devoted to his country, as well as to the Arab and Islamic world, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

He concluded by saying, "All we can do is pray and implore God Almighty to have mercy on him, grant him a place in Paradise, and bestow patience and solace upon his family and loved ones."

France top Schengen destination for Kuwaitis

Rejection rate very low; 36,000 visas processed: Ambassador Gauvin

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The Ambassador of France to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin says France is the top Schengen destination for Kuwaitis, which reflects the long-standing friendship between the two countries. He highlighted that the large number of Kuwaitis who choose France for their holidays demonstrates the vitality of economic and cultural exchanges.

Speaking at a press conference marking the reopening of the newly renovated Capago Center at Al-Rayah Center in the presence of a number of ambassadors and representatives of European diplomatic missions, Ambassador Gauvin affirmed that France retained its position as the world's most popular travel destination in 2024, after receiving more than 100 million visitors.

He revealed that the consular section processed 36,000 visa applications in 2024, with the embassy's consular team handling approximately 150 applications daily, a number that could increase to 300 during the summer.

Ambassador Gauvin said "We are committed to providing a highquality experience for Kuwaiti citizens who wish to visit France"

Highlighting the services offered by Capago to visa applicants, he said, "The contract for the Capago branch in Kuwait, which was established in 2012, has been renewed for another five years. This reflects the continued confidence of the French administration. The Kuwait City visa center has undergone a complete renovation to enhance the user experience and improve the comfort and well-being of visa applicants.'

Ambassador Gauvin explained that the new design has modern elements, including more spacious waiting areas and upgraded facilities. The number of counters has increased from nine to ten in the standard area and from three to four in the VIP area, thereby boosting the center's processing capacity.

New tailored services will soon be introduced to offer personalized solutions for each applicant. Among these services, pre-checking of documents before appointments will ensure complete applications, and reduce processing time to under five minutes at the center.

On September 8, 2023, the European Commission took a decision to implement the "Cascade Visa", marking an important step in facilitating travel for Kuwaiti citizens to Europe. The "Cascade Visa" is only available to Kuwaiti citizens for short-term tourist purposes. Applicants of other nationalities must apply for a separate visa for each stay in France.

Ambassador Gauvin said, "For the first application for a short-term tourist visa, Kuwaiti citizens will receive a multiple-entry visa valid for five years. Applicants must complete the visa procedures at the embassy of the Schengen country where they plan to spend the majority of their first stay.

After the initial trip, subsequent stays can be made in any Schengen country, as long as each stay does not exceed 90 days within a 180-day period. For each trip, the visa holder must provide proof of residence, an insurance certificate covering the duration of the stay, proof of means of subsistence, and a copy of the round-trip flight ticket.

A visa cannot be issued with a validity longer than the remaining period of the passport. To obtain a five-year visa, the passport must have at least five years of validity left.

If the passport's validity is shorter, the visa will be issued for a duration matching the passport's validity, ranging from six months to four years. The visa's expiration date will be set to ensure it expires three months before the passport's expiration".



Photo by Mohammad Morsi Ambassador of France to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin talking to

Kuwaiti archaeological finds offer gateway to bygone era civilizations



Pottery shards from the Subiya region dating back to the Ubaid culture period 7,000 years ago.

A temple from the Dilmun civilization period was recently discovered on Failaka Island, dating back to the second millennium BC (2000 BC - 4,000



Assistant Secretary General Mohammad bin Redha and Dr. Hassan Ashkanani with the Danish mission and a discussion about the latest discoveries of the Dilmun Temple

antiquities and museums depart-

ment Mohammad bin Redha cited

the discoveries of a joint Kuwaiti-

Danish mission, most notably a

Bronze Age temple dating back to

the Dilmun civilization, a fact that

sheds more light on ancient human

settlement in Failaka Island, sub-

sequently highlighting its cultural,

commercial and social role in the

Discussing ongoing endeav-

ors, the official told KUNA that a

joint Kuwaiti- Polish excavation

team is currently carrying out

operations in Subiya area, where

the oldest and largest settlement

in the Arabian Peninsula during

the slavery period dating back to

5700 BC has been found, he said.

mulgated the discovery of a

courtyard in Subiya used for jew-

elry construction and the making

of other shell-like adornments,

while a rare, finely crafted clay

head with an elongated skull was

touted as the first of its kind in

The team had previously pro-

region.

By Shahad Kamal

KUWAIT CITY, Feb (KUNA): Though diminutive in its geographical size, buried underneath Kuwait's scorching soil are riveting tales of civilizations dating back thousands of years, a testament to the country's rich cultural heritage which is tantamount to a lesson on the history of the region that links the pres-

ent to the past. Upon closer inspection of the archaeological discoveries of the existence of ancient civilizations that have inhabited its land over the course of history, it becomes abundantly clear that its strategic location had provided a pivotal route of communication between vast civilizations and cultures that had co-existed here.

Archaeological missions that have passed through Kuwait go back to the year 1958 when a team of Danish explorers landed in Kuwait by way of an invitation extended by the Kuwaiti government a year earlier, an event which set in motion a string of similar endeavors to have followed suit.

Kuwait's Failaka Island, at one point linked to the Dilmuns, an ancient East Semitic-speaking civilization in Eastern Arabia, is among the most illustrious archaeological locations in the country given its strategic location on the global maritime trade route, bringing together the civilizations of Mesopotamia and the southern Arabian Peninsula.

Running over 12 kilometers in length and six kilometers in width, Failaka island tells a tale of ancient settlements dating back to the second millennium BC, where its landscape is dotted with residential buildings, temples and palaces, in addition to other settlements overlooking a harbor believed to have been the island's ancient port.

As time continued to elapse, the history of civilization on the island had transformed after the fall of Dilmun civilization paved the way to archeological discoveries that reveal Hellenistic influence, one of the epochs of ancient Greek history, as evidenced by the castles, watchtowers, temples and residential buildings that were seen in the Gulf Arab

As for the inaugural archeological discovery made on the island, one has to go back to the year 1937, after a boulder with Greek inscription emblazoned on it was found, that if translated into English reads, "Sotilus, the Athenian citizen and the soldiers presented this to Zeus the Savior, Poseidon and to Artemis the Savior," a reference to Greek mythology.

Another prominent archaeological side is Kuwait's northern region of Sabiya, which at one point was the subject of intense scrutiny by international archaeological missions that unearthed the existence of ancient civilizations, chief among them the prehistoric Mesopotamian Ubaid civilization, which lived during the period running from 4500 to

Other important discoveries were found after excavation work in "Tal Al-Bahitha" in Kuwait City, which also point



A human head made of clay from the site of Bahra in the Subiya area north of Kuwait Bay, dating back to the sixth millennium BC (5500 BC -7,500 years ago).

to the existence of ancient settlements seen in villages where rare antiquities were uncovered, including coins, house remains and pottery tools, in addition to the relics

of the second wall of Kuwait, which reveal the early signs of the formation of modern-day Kuwait City.

Archaeological reports show the omnipresence of cultural centers dating back to pre-Islamic his-

while the remains of

seal in the world. tory in various areas in the Gulf

riveting discoveries that offer The largest circular Dilmun zational and Arab region, including Wadi Al-

broader insight into its civilicultural history over the years. Batin, Umm Al-Aish and Kazma, On more recent discoveries, NC-



san Ashkanani conduct a chemical analysis of a Neolithic building dating back more than 7,000 years.

buildings and walls were seen in central Jahra area in a telling sign of ancient life and commercial activities back then. While more than six de-

the Arab Gulf region. cades have passed On the significant history of since archaeologi-Failka island, the chief of the excavations Danish archaeological mission began in Kuwait, to Kuwait Stephen Laursen said the country's that it formed a "pivotal trade National Counroute" linking ancient Babylon cil for Culture, and the Indian Ocean, where the Arts and Letters Dilmuns during the third mil-(NCCAL) conlennium BC had built a port and tinues to report temples, alongside other places

of worship across the island. He went on to hail the discovery of a Bronze Age temple measuring 11 x 11 meters as an "extraordinary" milestone that reveals interesting information on the religious practices of the CAL acting assistant chief for the Dilmun civilization, underlining

that ongoing excavations promise to offer never before known facts about Kuwait's history in the prehistoric period.

On endeavors in the works, Dr. Hassan Ashkanani, professor of archeology and anthropology at Kuwait University and advisor to the NCCAL, said that a French team will arrive in Kuwait soon to carry out restoration work on the remains of a Hellenistic citadel, an initiative he described as an effort to "protect the archaeological discoveries" made in previous years.

Kuwait is also cooperating with a mission from Sapienza University of Rome to conduct an archaeological survey in the country's northern areas, while a delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency in has also visited as part of plans to employ cutting-edge laboratory techniques to examine Kuwaiti antiquities, he said.

Dishing out statistics, he said that in 1957, the Kuwait National Museum was inaugurated in Dasman area, while the exhibits on display were moved in 1976 to the traditional Al-Bader House, ahead of the opening of an Islamic antiquities center in 1983 that sought to promote and boost awareness about Islamic findings and teach-

ings, added the professor. Kuwaiti legislation firmly supports the protection of rare antiquities and archeological sites, where rigid laws actually criminalize any form of tampering or destruction, while the smuggling of antiquities faces stiff penalties in a bid to ensure the protection of cultural heritage, he said.

Kuwaiti groups in airport 'fisticuffs'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1 The Ministry of Interior has

launched an investigation to determine the circumstances surrounding a violent altercation involving eight

Kuwaiti nationals near the arrivals gate at Terminal 4 of Kuwait International Air-

port, reports Al-Anba daily.
An official source confirmed that one of the individuals involved in the fight

was taken by ambulance

to the Farwaniya Hospital,

while the other seven were

taken to the Jleeb Al-Shuy-

oukh police station for ques-

tioning to know the cause of

The authorities are in-

vestigating whether the al-

tercation started onboard a

Kuwaiti flight coming from

an Arab country or if it occurred after the flight landed

at the Kuwait International

According to the source,

the Operations Department

of the Ministry of Interior

received a report of the fight

and immediately the public

security patrols were dis-

patched to the scene. Upon

arrival, it was revealed that

five of individuals involved in the fight are from the same

family (siblings and cousins), while the other three

were from a different family.

Preliminary investiga-tions suggest that all parties involved were passengers on

the same flight and the alter-cation occurred in front of

Bid to check fire

the arrivals hall.

the dispute.



A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Need to overcome loopholes seen in judicial reforms draft

"THE recent circulation of a draft decree-law proposing amendments to the Judicial Organization Law has sparked significant discussion. While the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Council are considering these amendments to improve the iudiciary's role and performance, it is crucial to evaluate their impact critically," columnist Dr. Mohammad Hussein Al-Dallal wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"Drawing from our previous experience as a member of the National

Assembly, we have long advocated for judicial reforms and now find to express observations on the proposed changes.

mendable



Dr. Al-Dallal

amendments is the enhancement of electronic systems in court operations, as outlined in Article 13. The integration of modern technology is a necessary step forward for improving efficiency and accessibility in the judicial

"Another vital improvement is the implementation of term limits for supervisory and administrative positions within the judiciary. This governance measure ensures fresh perspectives and accountability, as reflected in several articles of the draft law.

"Furthermore, Article 25's introduction of a judicial code of conduct is a welcome initiative. Establishing clear ethical guidelines will strengthen the credibility and integrity of judicial proceedings.

"The draft also proposes the establishment of a social security fund for judges and prosecutors under Article 71. While the fund itself is a positive step, it falls short in addressing the critical issue of judicial accountability and the right to litigate against judicial misconduct.

"Additionally, the amendment aims to reinforce Kuwaitization within the judiciary, a long-standing demand that aligns with national workforce policies. However, the draft lacks a clear timeline and actionable steps to implement this goal effectively.

"Another promising amendment is Article 28, which mandates the inclusion of both majority and minority opinions in judicial rulings. This approach enhances legal reasoning and transparency in verdicts.

"Further, expanding judicial inspections to include Court of Appeal advisors, rather than limiting them to General Court judges, is a meaningful step toward improving oversight and accountability.

"Finally, allowing judiciary members and prosecutors to pursue postgraduate studies, as per the new proposals, fosters continuous professional development and specialization in legal fields.

"Despite these positive changes, several aspects of the proposed amendments require serious reconsideration. The draft maintains numerous provisions that undermine judicial independence, contradicting Article 163 of the Kuwaiti Constitution, which explicitly states that judges must operate free from external influence.

"For instance, Article 36 grants the Minister of Justice supervisory authority over the judiciary, while Article 62 subordinates the Public Prosecutor to the Minister.

"Additionally, Articles 12, 17 and 75 reinforce ministerial control over judicial appointments, budget allocations and administrative affairs. These provisions compromise the judiciary's independence and should be revised to align with constitutional guarantees.

"Another problematic amendment is Article 19, which adds the requirement that judges be 'Kuwaiti by origin.' This clause raises constitutional concerns, particularly regarding Article 29, which upholds equality among citizens. By restricting judicial appointments to only those with original Kuwaiti lineage; the amendment risks excluding highly qualified candidates and fostering unnecessary social and professional divisions.

"Furthermore, the proposed amendments fail to introduce clear mechanisms for litigating against judicial misconduct. While judges and prosecutors receive expanded protections, there is no corresponding framework to hold them accountable for legal errors or misconduct. Islamic jurisprudence and international legal standards advocate for mechanisms that ensure judicial accountability while respecting the independence of the judiciary

"Article 20 introduces a perplexing restriction by requiring a waiting period before a judge can assume a higher supervisory position.

This provision unnecessarily limits the pool of qualified candidates for leadership roles within the judici-

"Moreover, Article 38 assigns the Public Prosecution the authority to investigate judicial misconduct. Given the inherent conflict of interest, it would be more appropriate for an independent judicial committee to handle such cases.

"Article 69, which authorizes the Minister of Justice to appoint administrative and financial staff for the judiciary, also raises concerns. Instead of being managed by the Ministry of Justice, administrative affairs should be overseen by an independent secretariat within the Judicial Council to reinforce judicial autonomy.

"Finally, Article 76, which mandates the preparation of an annual judicial report, lacks enforcement mechanisms. The experience of past years suggests that these reports often remain uncirculated or ignored. To ensure transparency, these reports should be made available to the public and submitted to the National Assembly for review.

"While the proposed amendments include commendable initiatives, they also contain provisions that could hinder judicial independence and accountability.

"It is imperative that lawmakers address these concerns to ensure that the judiciary remains a truly independent and effective constitutional authority. By refining the draft amendments with these considerations in mind, we can advance the rule of law and strengthen public confidence in the judicial system."

"While the new traffic law is undeniably strict in its penalties, its primary aim is to curb reckless driving, disregard for road etiquette and noncompliance with traffic rules -- factors that have resulted in countless fatalities and significant damage to property," columnist Dr. Abdulhadi Al-Saleh wrote for Al-Anba daily.

"It is commendable that the Ministry of Interior has taken steps to raise awareness about the law before its enforcement, educating the public on its provisions and warning of the new penalties.

"However, the ministry has yet to address several underlying issues that compel motorists to violate traffic laws out of necessity rather than negligence. This oversight needs urgent attention. Consider the following examples:

"Unmarked Speed Bumps -- Many speed bumps lack proper signage or reflective markings, catching drivers off guard and leading to physical injuries, collisions and vehicle wear and tear.

"Inadequate Parking Facilities --Many institutions, including hospitals, clinics and banks, do not have sufficient parking spaces to accommodate visitors. Worse yet, most



Dr. Al-Saleh

Nearby sidewalks and open areas could be repurposed for public parking, with minimal fees, as seen in many European cities.

available spac-

es are reserved

for employees.

"Distracting Digital Billboards -- The proliferation of bright, animated advertisements along roadsides diverts drivers' attention as much as the use of

mobile phones -- ironically, a behav-

ior that the law strictly prohibits. "Lack of Enforcement on Public Transport Violations -- When I asked a traffic officer why public transport buses frequently violate traffic rules -- stopping indiscriminately, disregarding speed limits and creating chaos -- he responded that they are exempt from penalties. This raises concerns about selective en-

"Neglect in Road Maintenance --Overgrown tree branches obstruct visibility, especially at intersections, creating hazardous conditions. Similarly, traffic signs are often placed too close to turns, leaving drivers

with insufficient time to react. "Inefficiencies in Traffic Checkpoints -- When residential areas are sealed off for inspections, congestion builds up, leading to frustration. A designated lane should be allocated for individuals with urgent needs, including the elderly, those with disabilities and emergency cases, to prevent unnecessary hardship.

"If the objective of the new traffic law is truly to enhance road safety, then addressing these structural issues is just as critical as imposing fines. Laws alone will not improve road conditions unless the root causes of violations are acknowledged and resolved."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Chief of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi signing the joint cooperation protocol.

KFF, National Guard ink cooperation protocol

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: Chief of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammed Al-Roumi signed the schedule for activating the joint cooperation protocol between KFF and the National Guard for the year 2025.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the signing ceremony was attended by the acting Deputy Chief of the Firefighting Sector Brigadier General Ahmad Haif Hamoud, Head of the Firefighting Department of the National

Guard Colonel Eng. Butti Jassim Mohammad, Head of the Technical and Administrative Support Department Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Qassim Mohammad, and First Staff of Protocols Lieutenant Colonel Saud Ali Hithal.

Mol blames Municipality for worsening traffic rush

Sabah Al-Salem land 'misused

By Inaas Awadh Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The

Ministry of Interior has held Kuwait Municipality responsible for the worsening traffic congestion in Sabah Al-Salem, stating that the municipality changed the land uses and issued investment and commercial licenses without consulting the General Traffic Department or obtaining its approvals.

This lack of coordination has negatively impacted the capacity of the streets in the area and contributed to severe traffic congestion in the area and on the roads leading to it.

In response, the municipality submitted a statement to the Municipal Council regarding a proposal submitted by the council member Dr. Hassan Kamal to evaluate and update the traffic study for

Blocks 1, 2, and 3 of Sabah Al-Salem.

The statement, which was approved by the acting Director General of Kuwait Municipality Manal Al-Asfour, explained that the municipality's Structural Plan Department emphasized the need for a consultative traffic study for Sabah Al-Salem, similar to those conducted in Hawally and Salmiya. This study aims to address the ongoing traffic congestion in the area. In October 2024, the municipality

officially reached out to the Ministry of Interior's General Traffic Department to review the proposal from a traffic perspective and provide a technical In turn, the Ministry of Interior informed Kuwait Municipality that Sa-

bah Al-Salem is characterized by high population density, which has been further exacerbated by its appeal due to the large number of schools, hospitals, public facilities, and commercial activities. This has led to a significant increase in traffic at the area's entrances and exits.

The ministry highlighted that the

and the issuance of investment and commercial licenses, without consulting the General Traffic Department or obtaining its approval, have negatively impacted the capacity of the area's streets, resulting in severe traffic congestion both in the blocks and on the surrounding roads. In its statement, the Ministry of In-

municipality's changes to the land use

terior referred to the municipality's letter dated November 21, 2023, in which the municipality requested the cancellation of the General Traffic Department's role. This request was made in violation of Cabinet's Resolutions No. 965 and No. 1450, which mandate coordination between the municipality and the Ministry of Inte-rior's General Traffic Department on matters that affect traffic movement in the country

The Ministry of Interior concluded its statement by urging the municipality to instruct the relevant authorities to update the structural plan in line with future developments, including the necessary road expansions and amendments.

safety measures KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The

Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality revealed that the supervisory team of the Capital Municipality's Safety Department recently conducted an intensive field tour to ensure all safety measures were in place for investment, commercial, and industrial properties, reports Al-Anba daily.

The department explained that the supervisory team's tours in Shuwaikh Industrial resulted in the issuance of two citations for non-compliance with safety regulations and the threat of structural deformation, as well as the absence of a safety license at the site. Also, 15 warnings were issued for safety regulation violations and deformation issues.

The department urged property owners to take immediate action in complying with safety measures and municipal regulations, including promptly removing construction debris by the contractor and property owner to avoid legal penal-

The supervisory team of the Safety Department will not hesitate to take legal action against any violations.

'Issue ownership docus to divorcee'

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

First Instance has ordered the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) and the Real Estate Registration Department at the Ministry of Justice to issue a home ownership document to a divorced Kuwaiti woman even though they had initially refused to do so. The court confirmed the citizen's right to receive the ownership document without the need for approval from her ex-husband.

The plaintiff filed the lawsuit through her legal counsel Lawyer Alı Al-Wawan to challenge the Director General of PAHW and the assistant undersecretary for Real Estate Registration and Documentation at the Ministry of Justice, and request a ruling that would allow her to proceed with the necessary steps for the issuance of the ownership document for the plot shared equally between her and her ex-husband

without requiring his signature.

In this context, Lawyer Al-Wawan clarified that his client was married to the first defendant under a valid legal contract and has children with him. They had applied for housing care from the second defendant (the Justice Agent), and the plot was received in 2004. However, due to the defendant's negligence in issuing the ownership document, and his arbitrary refusal to do so, the plaintiff filed the lawsuit.

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4 hurt in house fire

No casualties reported in Wafra chalets blaze

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: Firefighters from Wafra and Nuwaiseeb fire stations successfully controlled a fire that broke out early Saturday morning in chalets that were used as labor accommodation on a farm in Wafra.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), the teams managed to extinguish the blaze, and no deaths or casualties were reported.

4 hurt in house fire: Firefighters from Al-Sour and Tahrir fire stations controlled a blaze that engulfed a house in Jaber Al-Ahmad Residential early Saturday morning, which resulted in injuries and burns to four individuals.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force, firefighters evacuated the house and successfully extinguished the fire. The four casualties were handed over to paramedics, and no deaths were reported.

Asian expatriate run over, dies in Ishbiliya accident

By Munif Naif Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: An Asian man in his forties died after being run over on the Sixth Ring Road opposite Ishbiliya. His body was referred to the Forensic Medicine Department, and a case was registered.

According to a security source, when the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room received a report of a run-over accident on the Sixth Ring Road near Ishbiliya, securitymen and paramedics rushed to the location, and they confirmed the death of the man due to his injuries.

Kuwait pushes for stronger ties with **Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

Ambassador underscores commitment to regional peace and security



Kuwait's Ambassador to China, Jassim Al-Najem, with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's newly appointed Secretary-General, Nurlan Yermekbayev, while delivering a congratulatory message from Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya on his appointment.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to China, Jassim Al-Naiem, affirmed on Saturday Kuwait's keenness to enhance cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in various political and security fields.

This came during a meeting between Ambassador Al-Najem and the organization's new Secretary-General, Nurlan Yermekbayev, at the organization's headquarters in the Chinese capital, Beijing.
In a statement to the Kuwait News

Agency (KUNA), Ambassador Al-Najem said he delivered a congratulatory message from Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya to Yermekbayev on his appointment as Secretary-General of the organization for the next three years, wishing him success in his duties.

He noted that the meeting discussed joint relations between Kuwait and the organization, as well as Kuwait's accession to it as a "dialogue partner" in

In this context, Al-Najem praised the participation of the organization's former Secretary-General, Zhang Ming, in the fourth high-level conference on "Enhancing International Cooperation in Combating Terrorism and Building

Flexible Border Security Mechanisms," held in Kuwait last November.

He emphasized Kuwait's commitment to achieving peace, security, and combating terrorism, which are among the main pillars of the organization's

For his part, Yermekbayev expressed his appreciation for Kuwait and its active role at the regional and international levels, praising its continuous participation in the organization's programs and activities inside and outside China. He stressed that the organization al-

ways welcomes Kuwait's effective contributions and expressed hope that the next stage will witness more fruitful cooperation between the two sides to serve their common interests and goals.

It is noteworthy that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) aims to promote peace, security, and stability in the region, combat terrorism and extremism, and enhance cooperation among member states.

The organization was established in 2001 and includes 10 member states: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Iran, and Belarus.

Afghanistan and Mongolia hold "observer" status in the organization, while 14 countries have "dialogue partner" status: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Egypt, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Myanmar.

Kuwait stands by martyrs' families

'We will not rest until every fallen hero returned home'

By Mohammad Ghanem Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The Director General of the Martyr's Office Salah Al-Awfan highlighted the keenness of the political leadership to provide all forms of support and assistance to ensure a decent life for the families of martyrs in recognition of the heroism and sacrifices of the martyrs for the sake of Kuwait and its sovereignty.

In an interview with the daily, he said, "We will not rest until the remains of all prisoners from the brutal Iraqi invasion are returned. Out of 557 prisoners, Kuwait has received the remains of 293.

Coordination is ongoing between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Kuwait Red Crescent Society, and the Red Cross Society in

Iraq.
In the event that mass graves are discovered, the remains will be examined through forensic analysis in Kuwait, and DNA samples

will be matched with those taken from the families of the martyrs. If the samples match, the Martyr's Office will coordinate with the families to inform them of the identification of remains.



Despite complexity of the process after 34 years, Kuwait is prioritizing this issue because these martyrs loved Kuwait, and Kuwait honors them. Therefore, it is only fitting for them to rest under

Al-Awfan stressed the keenness of the Martyr's Office to provide the necessary care for the families of 1,342 martyrs, comprising 3,583 individuals (wives, children, mothers, and fathers), in line with Decrees 38/1991 and 325/2011. Such forms of care are varied, including social, health, educational, and legal

He explained that the office also provides healthcare for the wives and mothers of martyrs, especially since they are at an age group now that requires more medical attention. To address this, the Ministry of Health has been contacted to prioritize their admission to health institutions and ensure they receive the necessary treatment, particularly those suffering from chronic illnesses

Educational support is also provided to the children of martyrs, which extends from kindergarten to scholarships both within Kuwait and abroad. After 34 years, the children of the liberation martyrs are no longer in their

The children here refers to the children of martyrs who lost their lives in the line of duty in the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait Army, National Guard, and Kuwait Fire Force. These are 154 martyrs who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend the security and stability of the homeland.

As a result, the political leadership made it a priority to include their families under the office's support, and ensure they receive comprehensive care.

In addition to providing a retirement salary, the office also offers several other forms of assistance to the families of these martyrs, such as priority in housing allocation and the cancellation of all government loans related to housing, electricity, water, and more. The office also coordinates with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to give priority in employment for these families.

Al-Awfan revealed the office's preparations for the upcoming National Day celebrations marking the 34th anniversary of Liberation Day and the 64th anniversary of Independence Day. As part of the festivities, the office will organize the "The Most Precious Homeland" exhibition at The Avenues on February 17-18 from

10:00 am to 10:00 pm.

He explained that the exhibition will be interactive, and will incorporate augmented reality technology that allows visitors to explore the stories behind the paintings using their mobile phones. Each painting will be accompanied by a video that narrates Kuwait's journey from February 1991, highlights the hardships during and after the brutal Iraqi invasion, and shows how the country has become even more magnificent and beautiful

The exhibition will also honor the heroism of 1,342 martyrs who are sons and daughters of Kuwait who sacrificed their lives for the country.

The exhibition will be open to both citizens and residents of Kuwait, with a particular focus on engaging the youth, who make up approximately 65 percent of the Kuwaiti population. It aims to educate them about the sacrifices made by the martyrs for the homeland.

Al-Awfan revealed that the office's sponsorships extend to 14 nationalities besides Kuwaiti citizens, marking an unprecedented inclusion of martyrs from other nationalities, adding that this reinforces the idea that Kuwait is a center for humanitarian work, and anyone who sacrifices their life for Kuwait is treated as a Kuwaiti, regard-

less of their nationality.

He went on to explain that the activities organized by the office for the National Day celebrations include a collaboration with the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NC-CAL) to hold a four-month exhibition from February to May at the National Museum.

The office will also participate in various activities in cooperation with both government and non-government organizations that requested the office's participation in their National Day celebrations, including the Ministry of Education, which will organize activities in its schools.

The office is preparing to release a new documentary film titled "Symbol and Pride," which will showcase the history of the office since its establishment in 1991 by Decree No. 38 from the era of the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad (May Allah bless his soul), until the current era of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad (May God protect him). The film will highlight the office's history and the exceptional care it has provided to the families of martyrs.

Also, the grand reopening of the Martyr's Museum will take place inside the office building in February on the occasion of the National Days, and the media will be invited to cover the event. This permanent museum and its exhibits tell the story of the heroism of the martyrs and the Kuwaiti resistance during the seven months of the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

Among the museum's displays is a section featuring scenes of the burning oil wells after the liberation. Also, a character will be presented to visitors using hologram technology to guide them through the events during and after the invasion, and highlight the role played by the 34 countries that supported Kuwait. The flags of these countries will be proudly displayed in the museum as a gesture of appreciation for their historical role. The museum will also feature a cinema showing documentaries about the acts of

The office organizes a major ceremony every year to honor the outstanding children of martyrs. A dedicated team is formed to receive the certificates of the honorees, which are certified by the Ministry of Higher Education, particularly for foreign qualifications. The ceremony will take place from April 1 to June 1, with the announcement of academic results. Between 100 and 120 exceptional students will be honored, ranging from kindergarten pupils to PhD graduates, all of whom have earned excellent or very good grades. Every year, efforts are made to improve the ceremony, both in its format and its content.

Regarding the operations within the Martyr's Office, Al-Awfan explained that the office is overseen by a Board of Trustees, chaired by the Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, and consists of 12 members including the Chairman, Vice Chairman, the Secretary (who is the Director General of the Martyr's Office), and representatives of relevant state agencies such as the Kuwait Army, Ministry of Interior, National Guard, Kuwait Fire Force, Public Authority for Minors Affairs, and the

Ministry of Social Affairs.

The board also has three members who are children of martyrs, now of mature age, which enable them to effectively represent their families, express their needs, and contribute to the development and modernization of the office's work mechanisms.

The Board of Trustees holds two meetings a year, one every six months, to review the office's achievements and the proposals from members. These proposals are directed to the executive management for implementation, in accordance with the Amiri Decree that grants the Board the authority to set policies for commemoration and distinguished sponsorships it deems appropriate.

The developments and the needs of the families of martyrs are also discussed and approved during these meetings, and then the executive body of the Board is responsible for implementing the decisions issued accord-

The Secretariat of the Board includes committees that specialize in the adoption of martyrs, as there is no other entity in Kuwait tasked with this responsibility except the Martyr's Office, as stipulated in the Amiri Decree.

PAFN cracks down on violators in Farwaniya

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition conducted an inspection tour in the Farwaniya Governorate, led by Acting Deputy Director

General for Inspection and Control Affairs, Dr. Saud Al-Humaidi Al-Jalal.

The inspection targeted food establishments, restaurants, central markets and food transport and delivery vehicles.

The authorities found that some vehicle owners lacked the necessary licenses and some workers did not possess the health certificates.

Dr. Al-Jalal emphasized the importance of compliance with food safety regulations and affirmed that legal action will be taken against violators without



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the area. The sources indicated that there is ongoing coordination between the ministry and the Public Authority for

Electricity, Water, and Renewable En-

and sterilizing the water network for

South Abdullah Al-Mubarak Residen-

They said water is expected to be

supplied to this block on Thursday, making it the first to receive water in

tial, Block 5, reports Al-Rai daily.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: According to Housing Welfare (PAHW) regarding informed sources from the Ministry of the schedule for delivering water to the remaining blocks, based on the occuergy, the ministry has finished washing pancy rates in each area.

Water network sterilization completed

Meanwhile, in continuation of the series of meetings held by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel with the ministry's sectors, he held a meeting recently with the sectors responsible for water and the Committee for Preparing Strategies for Rationalizing Electricity and Water Consumption.

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Continued from Page 1

Do not

On the contrary, industrial, commercial, and agricultural facilities represent valuable commercial assets that should be encouraged. They need additional incentives, along with revisions to the usufruct law to ensure development and stability.

Let us take Shuwaikh Industrial Area as an example. Most of the facilities there were established over fifty years ago and continue to experience active commercial activity. It is important for this area to become more stable and transform into a major market, similar to the Mubarakiya Market, due to its proximity to residential areas.

To enhance stability and functionality, beneficiaries should be allowed to own the plots, either industrial, agricultural, or commercial. This would help achieve three goals - firstly, securing industrial and agricultural incentives for self-sufficiency, secondly, ensuring long-term stability, and thirdly, boosting exports and reducing reliance on imports, on which Kuwait currently depends for around 90 percent of its needs.

It is well-known that the value of a plot is determined by the value of the facility built on it and the production it generates.

When the owner of an establishment owns the plot, they are more likely to invest their efforts into developing it. However, if usufruct fees continue to rise, the owner may seek a cheaper plot in more remote areas, increasing costs, which in turn negatively impacts consumers and contributes to higher inflation.

Clearly, this situation calls for an upgrade to the relevant laws to ensure that targeted areas are subject to beautification and smart planning. Many of these areas in Kuwait are neglected, either due to outdated legislation or because of the complexities and inconsistency with which inspectors, who hold judicial authority, enforce regulations. In some cases, establishments are shut down over minor violations or even personal issues with the inspector responsible for issuing the citation.

Countries that aim to develop their economies offer various incentives to industrialists and traders. These countries reject the mentality of envy, hatred, intentional obstruction of projects. Some even provide plots for free or exempt project owners from fees for a few years. Some other countries offer plots for ownership at affordable prices, with taxes only being imposed on the beneficiary's net gains after a certain period. Many also facilitate partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Unfortunately, this approach is non-existent in Kuwait, as previous overlaps in powers between successive governments and the National Assembly, coupled with political blackmail, have led to deep-rooted issues in the national economy. These problems have only grown more complex over time and can only be overcome through innovative, out-of-the-box solutions.

In Kuwait, we hear daily about new decisions that further complicate the challenges faced by the private sector, and restrict project owners, particularly concerning usufruct, which has become a major issue for investors. No project can thrive under the constant presence of a sword hanging over the investor's neck in terms of uncertainty of an annual or biennial contract renewal. How can investors be expected to work in such conditions?

It is very easy to create an enemy, but very difficult to get rid of one. The concerned ministers must rise to the responsibility of fulfilling the vision of the new era leadership. They should focus on winning everyone over, which is not difficult, instead of creating enemies.

In conclusion, they should start working, and then later impose taxes. We do not need them to lead by offering blessings with one hand and then bringing harm with the other. The government must realize that economic prosperity and engaging the people in business activities is the way to achieve national security, stability, and unity.

Kuwait steady

The goal is to empower the private sector and reduce dependency on oil, focusing on industries such as financial, banking, technological services and small and medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, strict control of public finances is essential for sustainable development.

Qais Al-Shatti, CEO of the Future Foresight Center for Consulting and Studies, pointed out that Kuwait's current credit rating stands at 'AA-' as per Fitch Ratings.

This reflects the country's reliance on oil and sovereign assets. Al-Shatti stressed the need to address government spending, particularly in salaries and criticized the private sector's dependence on government tenders, likening the country's economic model to a socialist approach.

a socialist approach.

He emphasized that the solution lies in reducing state control over the economy and focusing on enhancing local investment, infrastructure and human resources, while keeping up with technological advancements.

Mohamed Ramadan, another economic expert, shared his view that raising Kuwait's credit rating hinges on the issuance of two crucial laws: one regulating public debt and the other governing withdrawals from the Future Generations Reserve.

Ramadan highlighted that raising Kuwait's credit rating would allow the country to borrow internationally at lower interest rates, benefiting both the government and Kuwaiti banks.

However, he stressed the importance of regulating withdrawals from the Future Generations Reserve, currently valued at \$1 trillion. Proper

management of this reserve is necessary to avoid potential risks associated with public debt.

Kuwait's credit rating is also influenced by its fiscal stability, as well as the diversification of its economy. Experts believe that the country's strong general budget and liquidity position, coupled with stable macroeconomic conditions, position it well for future upgrades. However, rating agencies such as Moody's have noted that the Kuwaiti economy remains vulnerable due to its dependence on oil.

Salah Al-Jimaz, an economic expert, discussed how Kuwait's ongoing economic reforms align with the criteria for raising its credit rating.

These include financial and political stability, debt repayment history, GDP growth, business environment and investment policies.

Al-Jimaz acknowledged that Kuwait has already made significant progress in these areas, particularly with the implementation of fee increases and taxes, as well as efforts to boost tourism. He noted that the success of hosting events like the Gulf Cup demonstrated Kuwait's ability to attract tourists, further enhancing its economic outlook.

Al-Jimaz also highlighted the government's efforts to combat corruption, citing high-profile trials of ministers and senior officials. He argued that political stability, following the dissolution of the National Assembly, would facilitate further economic progress and eventually lead to an improved credit rating.

Additionally, the issue of withdrawing citizenship from fraudsters and dual nationals is seen as a positive step in reinforcing the state's rule of law, which is crucial for boosting investor confidence.

Another key area identified by experts is Kuwait's fight against money laundering. Al-Jimaz emphasized that the government focus on anti-money laundering measures, particularly in real estate, gold sales and banking transactions, would play a critical role in raising the country's credit rating.

Digital transactions and greater oversight are expected to strengthen Kuwait's financial integrity and attract more foreign investment.

Kuwait's path to a higher credit rating hinges on a multifaceted approach, combining fiscal discipline, legal reforms, diversification of income sources and a continued commitment to fighting corruption and money laundering

dering.

If these reforms continue at their current pace, Kuwait may soon see the fruits of its quiet but steady economic transformation reflected in its sovereign rating.

Kuwait poised

and Islamic sukuk, it hinted that the ceiling for debt securities might be raised in the final version of the law, as previous proposals for the draft law set a maximum borrowing limit of 30 billion diners.

In this context, the agency cited informed sources confirming that the government would only resort to debt markets when necessary, noting that the last issuance of debt securities was valued at 8 billion dollars in March 2017, just days before the previous debt law expired.

Bloomberg pointed out that Kuwait's lack of a public debt law has led to withdrawals from the General Reserve Fund, stating that the government will mainly turn to international financial markets to finance major development projects and help bridge the fiscal deficit.

The report also highlighted that the political struggles that Kuwait has faced in the past have hindered the implementation of necessary financial reforms, considering that Kuwait is among the slowest in executing economic and financial reforms in the Gulf, lagging behind its neighbors in reducing subsidies, grants, and imposing taxes.

It mentioned that public sector salaries account for more than 89 percent of government spending, noting that Kuwait's debt-to-GDP ratio is around 7 percent, according to the International Monetary Fund, one of the lowest levels globally. In this context, several economic experts emphasized the urgent need for the issuance of a public debt law as one of the most important tools of fiscal policy.

tools of fiscal policy.

Qais Al-Shatti, CEO of the Future Insights Center for Consulting and Studies, stressed the necessity of addressing government spending, as salary expenditures continue to rise. He pointed out that the private sector relies solely on government tenders, making Kuwait appear to have a so-

cialist economy.

Al-Shatti warned of the "danger of borrowing through the issuance of a public debt law without clear plans for utilizing any forthcoming debt," emphasizing the need to use such funds for economic reforms to avoid risky debt management.

Meanwhile, economic expert Mohammed Ramadan stressed the need to issue two laws: the first being the public debt law and the second being a law regulating withdrawals from the Future Generations Fund.

Ramadan emphasized the necessity of issuing a law for organized withdrawals from the Future Generations Fund, especially since this reserve is estimated at one trillion dollars, indicating that the current opportunity is favorable for the government to issue both laws.

Kuwaiti workforce

This marks an increase of 3,125 employees from the total of 397,690 at the end of 2023. Of the total government workforce in 2024, 207,011 were women and 193.804 were men.

The statistics also revealed that the total number of unemployed Kuwaiti citizens reached approximately 33,307 as of the end of 2024.

Amir, Crown

The Federal Aviation Administration also heavily restricted helicopter traffic around the airport, the Department of Transportation said in a statement, hours after President Donald Trump claimed in a social media post that the Army Black Hawk had been flying higher than allowed.

Investigators have recovered the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder of the American Airlines jet-liner, which collided with the chopper as the plane was coming in for a landing at the airport, which is just across the Potomac from Washington.

The flight data recorder was in good condition and its information was expected to be downloaded shortly, National Transportation Safety Board member Todd Inman told reporters. He said water entered the cockpit voice recorder, and while that's not unusual, it adds to investigators' work.

The helicopter's data, contained in a single black box, was at NTSB headquarters and appears to be undamanged, Inman said.

Investigators are examining the actions of the military pilot as well as air traffic control, after the helicopter apparently flew into the jet's path. NTSB investigations normally take at least a year, though investigators hope to have a preliminary report within 30 days.

Military aircraft frequently conduct such flights in and around the capital to practice routes they would fly if key government officials had to be quickly moved during a major catastrophe or

Other potential factors in the crash, including the helicopter's altitude and whether the crew was using night vision goggles, are still under investigation, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told Fox News Channel.

On Friday the Army released the names of two of the soldiers who died: Staff Sgt. Ryan Austin O'Hara, 28, of Lilburn, Georgia, the crew chief; and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Loyd Eaves, 39, of Great Mills, Maryland. Eaves was one of the pilots on the heliconter.

But in an unusual move, the name of the third soldier is not being released for now at the family's request, the Army said.

Kuwait congratulates

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to President Ahmad Al-Sharaa on the occasion of his assumption of the power of the Syrian Arab Republic in the transitional phase.

Meanwhile, Al-Sharaa said that an announcement will be made in the coming days about a preparatory committee for the National Dialogue Conference, which will bring together all sectors of the Syrian people.

In his first speech, President Al-Sharaa announced the formation of a transitional government that "reflects the diversity of Syria, its men, women, and youth" and works to build Syria's new institutions until free and fair elections are held.

Additionally, following the decision to dissolve the Syrian People's Assembly a preparatory committee will be formed to choose a mini-legislature to help with the transitional period.

He disclosed that a constitutional declaration will be released to be the legal reference for the transitional period, indicating that priorities have been set for the next phase, with the forefront being achieving civil peace, and prosecuting criminals who committed massacres and crimes against the Syrian people.

He also said that a priority would be the unity of Syrian territories and imposing sovereignty over it under one authority, in addition to building strong state institutions without corruption or nepotism and laying down the foundations of the economy to restore Syria's regional and international status, to provide work opportunities and improve living conditions.

Formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani, al-Sharaa is the head of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which led the lightning offensive that toppled Assad in early December. The group was once affiliated with al-Qaida but has since denounced its former ties.

In recent years, Al-Sharaa has sought to cast himself as a champion of pluralism and tolerance and promised to protect the rights of women and religious minorities.

The United States had previously placed a \$10 million bounty on Al-Sharaa but canceled it last month after a U.S. delegation visited Damascus and met with him. Top U.S. diplomat for the Middle East, Barbara Leaf said after the meeting that Al-Sharaa came across as "pragmatic."

Speaking at Wednesday's meeting, Al-Sharaa, who was in military uniform, stressed the "heavy task and a great responsibility" that Syria's new rulers face.

"If the victor is arrogant after his victory and forgets the favor of Allah upon him, it will lead him to tyranny," he said, according to a video released hours later.

Among the priorities for rebuilding Syria, he said, will be "filling the power vacuum legitimately and legally" and "maintaining civil peace by seeking transitional justice and preventing revenge attacks" in the wake of Assad's disastrous reign.

Syrians took to the streets in Damascus and elsewhere to celebrate the announcement, honking car horns and in some cases firing in the air. Many expressed support for Al-Sharaa.

"This person is someone who is intelligent and has a good understanding and he was the leader of the battle that freed Syria," said Abdallah al-Sweid, who was among those celebrating at Umayyad Square in Damascus. "He is someone who deserves to be president."

Al-Mutairi calls for empowering Arab youth in Baghdad Summit

Agenda for sustainable future unveiled

BAGHDAD, Feb 1, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, stressed the need to invest in the energy and diverse potential of youth in building and developing their societies. Kuwait pays great attention to youth issues and sustainable development and believes that "our role as ministers of youth and sports is not limited to promoting sports and physical activity only, but extends to empowering youth at all levels," Al-Mutairi said in his speech before the 48th session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports in Baghdad.

From this standpoint, he said, "I see that our meeting today represents a golden opportunity to discuss fundamental issues related to the future of Arab youth." He added that the rapid developments and challenges facing our Arab countries require us, as officials responsible for the emerging youth sectors, to work hard to raise awareness of the importance of this vital sector.

He further noted that youth, who represent two-thirds of the Arab world's population, are the pillar of change and development. "We must direct their latent and apparent abilities and diverse potentials in the right direction for effective participation in building and developing their societies," he emphasized

Ål-Mutairi stressed that developing volunteer work is a top priority in the State of Kuwait due to its national and developmental importance. He added, "We must all adopt policies and programs that enhance the value of Arab volunteer work as a noble endeavor that contributes to building societies." He further indicated that encouraging youth to be creative and actively participate in development enhances the economic capabilities of our countries, allowing us to



KUNA photo Kuwaiti Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi during

his participation in the conference.
benefit from the soft power and great economic impact of

The minister also proposed establishing a unified system for Arab youth work that develops the performance of volunteers and their initiatives and consolidates the foundations for developing this work at the Arab level to achieve tangible results for our countries. He pointed out the need to highlight the importance of developing means that encourage youth to engage in activities related to the knowledge and creative economies—engines of development—in addition to enhancing youth participation in the green economy, thereby confirming our shared commitment to environmental and sustainability issues.

Finally, the minister reiterated "the firm position of the State of Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people, in support of the Palestinian cause at all regional and international levels and in all fields until the brotherly Palestinian people achieve their full rights under an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international references, foremost among which are the relevant Security Council resolutions."

Brazilian trade delegation holds talks with Kuwaiti counterparts

volunteer work

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: A trade mission, consisting of government officials and company representatives from Brazil, will hold a series of meetings with the Kuwaiti authorities and business leaders from February 2 to 4, says a press release issued by the Embassy of Brazil in Kuwait.

The mission is led by Mohamad Mourad, Secretary General of the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce, and includes representatives from Brazilian trade and investment promotion agencies as well as companies from key sectors such as agribusiness, aeronautics and infrastructure.

During the visit, the delegation is scheduled to meet with Kuwaiti officials at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the Ministries of Commerce and Industry, and Foreign Affairs, in addition to several other Kuwaiti government bodies and businesses. Ambassador of Brazil to Kuwait, H.E. Rodrigo d'Araújo Gabsch has expressed gratitude to the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait and KCCI for their partnership in organizing the mission.

He stated that he is confident the visit will help enhance

and diversify trade and investment between Brazil and Kuwait, benefiting both nations.

With bond quarters in Sec Paulo Brazil the Arch Brazilian

With headquarters in São Paulo, Brazil, the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce has been operating for over 72 years with the aim of connecting Brazilians and Arabs to promote economic, social and cultural development, and over the years it has played a key role in promoting the relationship between these two peoples. It is a member of the Union of Arab Chambers. Bilateral trade between Kuwait and Brazil totaled 985 million dollars in 2024. Brazil's exports, worth over 404 million dollars, included poultry, metal tubing, maize, beef, and coffee. Kuwaiti exports of over 580 million dollars included oil products and sulfur.

CONDOLENCES

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express heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of



Mr. Robert Benjamin Midgley (81)

MAY GOD REST HIS SOUL IN PEACE



First responders work the scene after a small plane crashed in Philadelphia on Jan 31. (AP)

Medical plane carrying child patient, 5 others crash in Philadelphia

A medical transport jet transporting a child who had just completed treatment for a life-threatening condition, her mother and four others crashed into a Philadelphia neighborhood shortly after takeoff Friday evening, exploding in a fireball that engulfed several homes.

Jet Rescue Air Ambulance, which operated the Learjet 55, said in a statement: "We cannot confirm any survivors." There was no immediate word whether anyone on the ground was killed, but at least six people were treated for injuries at a hospital.

Everyone aboard the flight was from Mexico. The child was being transported home, according to Jet Rescue spokesperson Shai Gold. The flight's final destination was Tijuana after a stop in Missouri. The patient and her mother were on board along

with four crew members. Gold said this was a seasoned crew and everyone involved in these flights goes through rigorous training.
"When an incident like this happens, it's shocking

and surprising," Gold told The Associated Press. "All of the aircraft are maintained, not a penny is spared because we know our mission is so critical.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro said at a news conference late Friday that officials expected fatalities in the "awful aviation disaster."

"We know that there will be loss," he said. (AP)

Pentagon prepares to deploy 1,000 more troops to bolster immigration crackdown

WASHINGTON, Feb 1, (AP): The Pentagon is readying orders for the deployment of at least 1,000 additional active duty troops to bolster President Donald Trump's expanding crackdown on immigration, U.S. officials said Fri-

day.

They said roughly 500 more soldiers

They said roughly 500 more soldiers

They said roughly 500 more soldiers - largely a headquarters unit from the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum in New York - will be sent to the southwest border. And about 500 Marines will go to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where some of the detained migrants

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because announcements have not been made, said there have been ongoing discussions about the deployments and the numbers could increase if additional details are worked out. The Pentagon has been scrambling to put in motion Trump's executive orders signed shortly after he took office on Jan. 20. The first group of 1,600 active duty troops deployed to the border last week.

The deployments reflect Trump's determination to expand the military's role in his campaign to shut down the border and send detained migrants back to their home countries.

Troops going to the border are expected to help put in place concertina wire barriers and provide needed transportation, intelligence and other support to the Border Patrol. Troops going to Guantanamo could help prepare the facility for an influx of migrants and do



US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, (center), is welcomed to the Pentagon by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr on Jan 27, in Washington. (AP)

other support duties. Speaking on "Fox and Friends" on Friday morning, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said he believes the U.S. can get "thousands of individuals in tents, secured in places at Guantanamo Bay.'

But he also said there's the possibility that hardened criminals or violent gang members could also be housed there. As a result, he said the Defense Department is preparing detention facilities at Guantanamo "that are basically supermax prisons" to be used to hold them temporarily.

Officials have been saying all week

that there are likely to be additional troop deployments to help secure the southern border - potentially rolling out rapidly in the coming days. The eventual total deployed could be as many as 10,000.

Before Trump returned to the White House, there were already about 2,500 Guard and Reserve forces consistently deployed to the border. Officials noted that given the length of the nearly 2,000mile border with Mexico, it will take additional forces to help put large rolls of concertina wire barriers in place and provide support to the Border Patrol.

Russian drone and missile attacks kill 6 in Kyiv

Trump says WH had 'serious discussions' with Russia about Ukraine war

WASHINGTON, Feb 1, (AP): US President Donald Trump said his administration has already had "very serious" discussions with Russia about its war in Ukraine and that he and Russian President Vladimir Putin could soon take "significant' action toward ending the grinding conflict.

"We will be speaking, and I think will perhaps do something that'll be significant," Trump said in an exchange with reporters in the Oval Office. "We want to end that war. That war would have not started if I was president.

Trump did not say who from his administration has been in contact with the Russians but insisted the two sides were "already talking."

Asked if he has already spoken directly with Putin, Trump was coy: "I don't

want to say that.' Trump has said repeatedly he wouldn't have allowed the conflict to start if he had been in office, even though he was president as fighting grew in eastern

Ukraine between Kyiv's forces and separatists backed by Moscow, ahead of Putin sending in tens of thousands of troops in 2022. Trump since returning to office has criticized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, saying he should have made a deal with Putin to avoid the conflict.

The president in a Fox News interview earlier in January ridiculed Zelenskyy

as "talking so brave," when Ukraine was so dependent on U.S. aid to fight its war. "They were brave, but we gave them billions of dollars," Trump said In a recent interview with Russian state television, Putin praised Trump as a

"clever and pragmatic man" who is focused on US interests. "We always had a business-like, pragmatic but also trusting relationship with the current U.S. president," Putin said. "I couldn't disagree with him that if he had been president, if they hadn't stolen victory from him in 2020, the crisis that

emerged in Ukraine in 2022 could have been avoided." The Russian's president's statement was also a blunt endorsement of Trump's refusal to accept his defeat in the 2020 election. Numerous federal and local officials, a long list of courts, top former campaign staffers and even his own attorney general have all said there is no evidence of the fraud he alleges.

Trump in his 2024 campaign vowed to bring a quick end to the war, and repeatedly criticized President Joe Biden's administration for spending billions in



US President Donald Trump talks with reporters as he signs executive orders in the Oval Office at the White House, on Jan 30 in Washington. (AP)

U.S. taxpayer money on military and economic aide for Kyiv to help it fight back

Trump's relationship with Putin has been scrutinized since his 2016 campaign for president, when he called on Russia to find and make public missing emails deleted by Hillary Clinton, his Democratic opponent.

Trump publicly sided with Putin over US intelligence officials on whether Russia had interfered in the 2016 election to help him, and Trump has praised the Russian leader and even called him "pretty smart" for invading Ukraine.

Meanwhile, at least six people died overnight as Russian drone and missile strikes pounded Ukraine's towns and cities, local officials said Saturday. Meanwhile, Moscow's troops continued their grinding advance through the country's east. A Russian missile strike on an apartment block in the Ukrainian city of Poltava killed at least four people and injured 10 more, Ukraine's emergency services

Some 21 people were rescued from the five-story building, which partially collapsed following the attack, said the Poltava region's acting governor, Volodymyr Kohut. Rescue teams remain at the site.

Elsewhere, a 60-year-old woman was killed by falling debris from a downed drone in the Kharkiv region, local Gov Oleh Syniehubov wrote on social media.

The bombardment comes as Russian forces continue their monthslong campaign to capture the key Donetsk strongholds of Pokrovsk and nearby Chasiv Yar, fighting their way across farm fields and woodland and engulfing small rural settlements. "Last night, Russia launched an attack on our cities using various types of weapons: missiles, attack drones, and aerial bombs," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on social media Saturday.

"Every such act of terror proves that we need greater support in defending against Russian terror. Every air defense system, every interceptor missile, means a life saved." The full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine, which began nearly three years ago and shows no signs of ending, has killed more than 10,000 Ukrainian civilians, according to the United Nations.

Many have been evacuated from areas along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (600mile) front line where Ukrainian defenses are straining to hold the bigger Russian

Civilians have also endured hardship caused by Russian attacks on the power grid that have denied them heating and running water. Saturday's missile attack prompted emergency power grid shutdowns in seven Ukrainian regions, including Poltava, state energy company Ukrenergo said.

Ukrainian strikes also hit Russia, with air defenses intercepting nine drones across the country's Bryansk, Belgorod and Saratov regions, Russia's Defense Ministry said in a statement Saturday morning.

German opposition's migration bill narrowly defeated

BERLIN, Feb 1, (AP): The German parliament narrowly rejected on Friday an opposition-sponsored bill calling for tougher rules on migration that risked becoming the first draft legislation to pass thanks to a far-right party and became a focus of a controversy about the attitude of the front-runner in Germany's upcoming election toward

Opposition leader Friedrich Merz has put demands for a more restrictive approach to migration at the center of his campaign for the Feb. 23 election since a deadly knife attack last week by a rejected asylum-seeker.

The way he has done so prompted opponents to accuse him of breaking a taboo and endangering mainstream parties' "firewall" against the far-right Alternative for Germany. He insists his position is unchanged and that he didn't and won't work with the party.

On Wednesday, Merz put a nonbinding motion to parliament calling for Germany to turn back many more migrants at its borders, insisting decisions are needed now regardless of who supports them. The measure squeaked through thanks to support from the far-right party, a first that draw a rare public rebuke from ex-Chancellor Angela Merkel, a former leader of Merz's party.

On Friday, months-old legislation proposed by Merz's center-right Union bloc that called for an end to family reunions for migrants with a protection status that falls short of full asylum went to a vote. It also would have given federal police increased powers to carry out deportations. The centerleft governing parties said they would



German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock speaks during a session of the German parliament 'Bundestag' in Berlin, Germany on Jan 31.

reject the so-called "influx limitation bill," while a combination of opposition parties including Alternative for Germany, or AfD, said they would

After an unusually heated debate delayed by long and unsuccessful negotiations on a compromise between mainstream parties, it was rejected by 350 votes to 338, with five abstentions Some lawmakers cheered and clapped as the result was announced.

This week's maneuvering has amplified a divide between Merz's bloc, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's center-left Social Democrats and their remaining coalition partners, the environmentalist Greens - parties he may need to form a governing coalition after the election.

Ex-German leader

Köhler dies at 81

BERLIN, Feb 1, (AP): Horst Köhler, a onetime head of the International Monetary Fund who became a popular German president before stunning the country by resigning abruptly in a flap over comments about the country's military, has died. He was 81.

Köhler, who was head of state from 2004 to 2010, died Saturday morning in



Berlin after a short illness, rounded by his family, the office of current German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said in a

Köhler was little known to most Germans and a stranger to frontline politics before he won the presidency. His nomination was greeted by the mass-circulation daily Bild with the headline "Horst

However, he built up high popularity ratings once in the job, something that he achieved in part by positioning himself as an outsider to the country's political elite.

He occasionally refused to sign bills into law due to constitutional concerns and didn't always make himself popular with the government of Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose choice he was for the presidency - a largely ceremonial job but often seen as a source of moral authority



People block the Varadin bridge during a protest over the collapse of a concrete canopy that killed 15 people more than two months ago, in Novi Sad, Serbia on Feb 1. (AP)

Lithuania backs Trump's NATO defense

spending goal amid ongoing Russia threat

Serbia's students blockade bridges and hold protest

Serbia's students led a mass street protest and began blockading three bridges over the River Danube in the northern city of Novi Sad on Saturday to mark three months since a concrete canopy crashed down at a train station there, killing 15 people.

The collapse on Nov. 1 of the huge concrete construction has sparked a wide anti-corruption movement and months of street student-led protests against the populist authorities in the Balkan country.

Many in Serbia believe that the collapse was essen-

tially caused by government corruption in a large infrastructure project with Chinese state companies.

Critics believe graft led to a sloppy job during the reconstruction of the Novi Sad train station, poor oversight and disrespect of existing safety regulations. The issue has come to symbolize a wider discontent over the rule of law in Serbia. Tens of thousands of people converged on in Novi Sad for the blockades, dubbed "Three Months - Three Bridges." The blockade of one of the bridges is set to extend until Sunday. (AP)

Italy takes back 43 migrants

SHENGJIN, Albania, Feb 1, (AP): An Italian navy ship on Saturday took migrants to Italy from asylum processing centers in Albania following a court decision in Rome. It was the third failed attempt by Giorgia Meloni's far-right government to process migrants in the non-EU country

A coast guard ship took 43 migrants from the port of Shengjin, 66 kilometers (40 miles) northwest of the capital, Tirana. They were among the 49 men who were transferred to Albania on an Italian naval ship Tuesday. Five of them were returned the same day - four because they were minors and the fifth because he was considered a "vulnerable" person.



Crew members of an Italian Coast Guard vessel stand at a promenade, ahead of a transfer operation of migrants from the asylum processing centers in Albania back to Italy, in Shengjin, northwestern Albania on Feb 1. (AP)

VILNIUS, Lithuania, Feb 1, (AP): Securing an end to the fighting in Ukraine must take place with Kyiv's full involvement and come with more defense spending by regional countries to avoid any future Russian aggression, according to Lithuania's president.

Gitanas Nausėda, the president of the Baltic coastal nation, told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday that a settlement negotiated without proper deterrent measures would allow Russia to consolidate its forces and prepare for further aggression in the region.

Nausėda said that even when a ceasefire is reached in Ukraine, "you cannot believe that the intentions of Russia will be just to stop and do noth-"They will use this break in order to

consolidate, to strengthen the military

capabilities and to strike again in the

Lithuania on Jan 30. (AP)



President Gitanas Lithuanian Nauseda speaks during an interview with The Associated Press at the president's palace in Vilnius.

future," he told the AP in Vilnius. "And then the main question is, what will be the next target of Russia? Ukraine, maybe. Baltic countries, maybe.'

Lithuania, which was occupied by the Soviet Union until 1990, is increasingly worried about the ongoing brutal war in Ukraine and the aggression of its neighbor Russia

Its geographical position - bordering Russia's Kaliningrad exclave to the west and Moscow's proxy Belarus to the east - make it vulnerable to a potential broader conflict launched from the Kremlin even after an eventual end to the war, Nausėda said.

The country recently became the first member of the NATO military alliance to commit to raising its defense spending to at least 5% of its overall national economic output, as called for by US President Donald Trump.

Country enters fifth year of crisis

Myanmar's military government extends mandate to rule another six months

BANGKOK, Feb 1, (AP): Myanmar's military government on Friday announced another six-month extension of its mandate to rule in preparation for elections it has said will be held this year, as the country enters its fifth year of crisis.

However, it did not announce an

exact date for the polls.

The military declared a state of emergency on Feb 1, 2021, when it arrested the country's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and top officials from her government in an army takeover which reversed years of progress toward democracy after five decades of earlier military rule.

The takeover sparked an armed resistance movement, with powerful ethnic minority militias and people's defense forces that support Myanmar's main opposition now controlling large parts of the country.

The military government is currently facing its greatest challenge since taking power and is on the defensive in much of the country. However, it is still able to hold onto much of central Myanmar and big cities including the capital, Naypyidaw.

State-run MRTV television reported on Friday that the National Defense and Security Council decided unanimously to grant an extension of emergency rule after Senior Gen. Ming Aung Hlaing, the head of the military government, argued that more time was needed to restore stability to the country to hold national elections.

The council is nominally a constitutional administrative government body, but in practice is controlled by

the military.
Under the army-drafted 2008 constitution, the military was able to rule the country under a state of emergency for one year, followed by two possible six-month extensions before holding elections. However, the extension on Friday was the seventh.

Tom Andrews, a special rapporteur with the UN Human Rights Office, said in a statement on Thursday that four years of military oppression, violence and incompetence have cast Myanmar into an abyss. The United Nations has estimated that more than 3.5 million people have been displaced by the conflict.



In this image provided by The Myanmar Military True News Information Team, Myanmar's military leader Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, (center), speaks during meeting with members of the National Defense and Security Council on Jan 31, in Naypyidaw, Myanmar. (AP)

"Junta forces have slaughtered thousands of civilians, bombed and burned villages, and displaced millions of people. More than 20,000 political prisoners remain behind bars. The economy and public ser-

vices have collapsed. Famine and starvation loom over large parts of the population," he said.

The United States, United Kingdom, European Union and others jointly condemned the military government's violence against civilians and the deprivation of their rights.

They said more than one-third of the population, 19.9 million people, need humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs, including food aid, and that up to 3.5 million people are displaced internally, an increase of nearly 1 million in the last year.

The joint statement marking the anniversary of the 2021 army takeover also expressed concern over increased cross-border crime in Myanmar such as drug and human trafficking and online scam operations, which affect neighboring countries and risk broader instability.

The current trajectory is not sustainable for Myanmar or the region," said the countries, which also included Australia, Canada, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland.

Myanmar's extended state of

emergency consolidates all legislative, judicial and executive powers of

government under Min Aung Hlaing. Under the constitution, the military must transfer government functions to the president at least six months

before elections are held. The military originally said elections would be held in August 2023, but has regularly pushed back the date and has recently said they would take place sometime in 2025.

Critics say the elections will nei-ther be free nor fair because there is no free media and most of the leaders of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party have been arrested. The plan is widely seen as an attempt to legitimize the military's rule by delivering a result that ensures the generals retain in control.

Moe Zaw Oo, a member of the opposition's shadow National Unity Government, said Wednesday that opposition groups are preparing to prevent the military-held election through nonviolent means. The NUG, which calls itself the country's legitimate government, serves as an opposition umbrella group.

Indonesia and France agree to deepen cooperation to maintain regional stability

JAKARTA, Indonesia, Feb 1, (AP): The defense ministers of France and Indonesia agreed Friday to work more closely to maintain regional stability, Indonesian officials said.

Visiting French Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu and his Indonesian counterpart, Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, agreed in a meeting that the two countries can collaborate through technology exchange and other forms of cooperation, Indonesian Defense Ministry spokesperson Brig. Gen. Frega Wenas

The French Embassy in Jakarta said earlier this week that France had deployed a carrier strike group to Indonesia for the first time. The Charles De Gaulle, France's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, made stops in Bali and Lombok, where it carried out a number of logistical activities as part of a six-month mission in the Pacific that started in November 2024.

The Charles De Gaulle also participated in a joint exercise with warships from eight countries in the Straits of Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok, the embassy said.

Last July, French air force planes made a stopover in Indonesia's capital as part of a visit to Southeast Asia that was meant to display France's commitment to security in the Indo-Pacific

region amid growing Chinese maritime activity there.

Military cooperation between Indonesia and France has grown in re-cent years, since President Prabowo Subianto was still serving as Indonesia's defense minister.

Last year, Indonesia purchased 42 Rafale and Dassault Aviation fighter jets and is expected to receive the first Rafale jets under the contract in 2026. It also announced the purchase of two French Scorpene Evolved submarines and 13 Thales Ground Control Interception radars. Five of the radar systems are expected to be installed in the country's new capital, Nusantara.

The purchases come as tensions are rising in the region, particularly in the disputed South China Sea, where China is asserting its expansive territorial claims. While Indonesia is not a claimant state, it has clashed with China over fishing rights near the Natuna Islands, which lie within its exclusive economic zone but are also claimed by China.

The South China Sea contains crucial shipping lanes, abundant fish stocks and undersea mineral resources. Efforts between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to establish a code of conduct to prevent conflicts have seen little progress.



France's Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu, (right), and Indonesian Defense Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin salute the national flags as they inspect honor guards during the welcoming ceremony prior to their meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia on Jan 31. (AP)



This photo released by Venezuela's presidential press office shows Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, center, with Richard Grenell, US President Donald Trump's special envoy, (left), at Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela on Jan 31. Behind, (right), is Jorge Rodriguez, president of the National Assembly. (AP)

Venezuela frees 6 Americans after meeting between President Maduro, Trump's envoy

CARACAS, Venezuela, Feb 1, (AP): Six Americans who had been detained in Venezuela in recent months were freed by the government of President Nicolás Maduro after he met Friday with a Trump administration official tasked with urging the authoritarian leader to take back deported migrants who have committed crimes in the United States.

US President Donald Trump and his envoy for special missions, Richard Grenell, announced the release of the six men on social media. The visit by Grenell came as a shock to many Venezuelans who hoped that Trump would continue the "maximum pressure" campaign he pursued against Maduro during his first term.

Grenell's hours long trip to Venezuela, according to the White House, was

focused on Trump's efforts to deport Venezuelans back to their home country, which currently does not accept them, and on the release of the detained Americans.

"We are wheels up and headed home with these 6 American citizens, Grenell posted on X along with a photo showing him and the men aboard an aircraft. "They just spoke to @real-DonaldTrump and they couldn't stop thanking him.

The meeting in Venezuela's capital took place less than a month after Maduro was sworn in for a third sixyear term despite credible evidence that he lost last year's election. The US government, along with several other Western nations, does not recognize Maduro's claim to victory and instead points to tally sheets collected by the opposition coalition showing that its candidate, Edmundo González, won by a more than a two-to-one margin.

Venezuelan state television aired footage of Grenell and Maduro speaking in the Miraflores Palace and said the meeting had been requested by the U.S. government. Signing an executive order in the

Oval Office on Friday, Trump was asked if Grenell being filmed meeting with Maduro lent legitimacy to a government that the Trump White House does not officially recognize.

"No. We want to do something with Venezuela. I've been a very big opponent of Venezuela and Maduro," Trump responded. "They've treated us not so good, but they've treated, more importantly, the Venezuelan people, very badly.

financial crimes and terrorism. (AP)

Landslide kills miners in Mali:

A landslide engulfed a group of mainly women gold miners in Mali, killing several of them, the governor's office of the Koulikoro region in the West African country said Thursday.

In a statement broadcast on Mali's national television, Koulikoro's governor, Col. Lamine Kapory Sanogo, said "the women (gold miners) were numerous at an excavation in search of gold, and the excavation was surrounded by a dike that gave way and water entered with mud and engulfed

Rubio off to Central America with Panama Canal and immigration top of mind

WASHINGTON, Feb 1, (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio embarks this weekend on his first foreign trip in office, heading to Central America to press President Donald Trump's top priority - curbing illegal immigration - and bring the message that the US wants to reclaim control over the Panama Canal despite intense resistance from regional leaders.

It's an unusual destination for the maiden voyage of America's top diplomat, whose predecessors have generally favored Europe or Asia for their initial outings. It reflects not only the personal interest that Rubio - the first Hispanic to hold the nation's most senior Cabinet post - has in the region but also the Trump administration's intent to focus much of its foreign policy energy close to home.

"It's no accident that my first trip abroad as secretary of state will keep me in the hemisphere," Rubio wrote in The Wall Street Journal on Friday.

Limiting immigration and fighting narcotics smuggling are major elements of that effort, but another key priority will be curbing China's growing influence in the Western Hemisphere, topped by reasserting U.S. control over the Panama Canal. The American-built canal was turned over to the Panamanians in 1999 and they object strongly to Trump's demand to hand it back.

Mass migration, drugs and hostile policies pursued by Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela have wreaked havoc, Rubio said in the Journal opinion piece. "All the while, the Chinese Communist Party uses diplomatic and economic leverage - such as at the Panama Canal - to oppose the US and turn sovereign nations into vassal states.'

Indeed, Rubio's first stop on the five-nation tour Saturday will be Panama, whose president, José Raúl Mulino, says there will be no negotiation with the United States over ownership of the canal. He said he hoped Rubio's visit would instead focus on shared in-



Secretary of State Marco Rubio greets State Department staff during a welcome event at the State Department on Jan 21 in Washington. (AP)

terests like migration and combating drug trafficking.

"It's impossible, I can't negotiate," Mulino said Thursday. "The canal belongs to Panama.

Yet Rubio said he will make clear Trump's intent. In an interview Thursday with SiriusXM host Megyn Kelly, he said Trump's desire to retake control of the Panama Canal is driven by legitimate national security interests stemming from growing concerns about Chinese activity and influence in Latin America.

"We're going to address that topic," he said. "The president's been pretty clear he wants to administer the canal again. Obviously, the Panamanians are not big fans of that idea. That message has been brought very clear."

Chinese investments in ports and other infrastructure and facilities at both the Pacific and Caribbean ends of the canal are a cause for major concern, leaving Panama and the critical shipping route vulnerable to China, he said.

Rubio added that "if China wanted

to obstruct traffic in the Panama Canal, they could," and that would be a violation of the 1977 treaty signed by former President Jimmy Carter under which the U.S. later ceded control.

Despite Mulino's rejection of any negotiation over ownership, some believe Panama may be open to a compromise under which canal operations on both sides are taken away from the Hong Kong-based Hutchison Ports company that was given a 25-year no-bid extension to run them. An audit into the suitability of that extension is already under way and could lead to a rebidding process.

What is unclear is whether Trump would accept the transfer of the concession to an American or European firm as meeting his demands, which appear to cover more than just operations.

"In some ways, Trump is pushing on an open door," said Ryan Berg, director of the Americas program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. "But it will depend on how his red lines are

A man walks by a house hit in recent fighting in Khartoum, Sudan, an area torn by fighting between the military and the notorious paramilitary Rapid Support Forces on April 25, 2023. (AP)

RSF kills 54 people in **Sudan open market**

CAIRO, Feb 1, (AP): Sudan's health authorities say a notorious paramilitary group fighting against the country's military has attacked an open market in the city of Omdurman, killing 54 people.

Saturday's attack by the Rapid Support Forces on the Sabrein Market also wounded at least 158 others, the Health Ministry said in a statement. There was no immediate comment from the RSF.

Khalid al-Aleisir, minister of culture and government spokesperson, condemned the attack, saying that the casualties included many women and children. He also said the attack caused "widespread destruction to private and

public properties.' "This criminal act adds to the bloody record of this militia," he said

Africa

2 associates of Talon get 20 yrs: Two associates of Benin's president have been sentenced to 20 years in prison, following their arrest last year on suspicion of plotting a coup in the small West African country.

Olivier Boko, a businessman and longtime friend of President Patrice Talon, and Oswald Homeky, a former sports minister, were found guilty of "conspiracy against state security" and "corruption of a public official" by the court for financial crimes and terrorism in the capital, Cotonou.

The sentence was handed down on

Thursday night. Both men were arrested in September after being accused of bribing the commander in

charge of the president's security to carry out a coup.

Homeky was caught while allegedly handing over six bags of money to the head of the presidential guard, accord-

ing to Elonm Mario Metonou, the special prosecutor at Benin's court for

the women." (AP)

Kuwaiti crude drops to \$79.79 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti crude oil price shed during Friday's trading to reach USD 79.79 per barrel (pb), compared with USD 80.84 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corpora-

tion (KPC) said Saturday.

Brent futures rose by 54 cents to hit USD 76.54 pb and West Texas Intermediate (WTA) went up by 73 cents to USD

Business

Other Voices

Energy policy faces challenges

US tariffs on oil imports may increase gas prices

By Kamel Al-Harami

Independent Oil Analyst

THE new U.S. administration has implemented a policy of imposing tariffs on countries that have trade relations with the U.S. for the import of goods and services. The best example is Canada and Mexico, from

which U.S. imports around million barrels of heavy oil daily four million barrels from Canada and the rest from Mexico.



Al-Harami However, these tariffs could inadvertently lead to higher oil prices for U.S. consumers at the petrol stations. As a result, the U.S. may end up importing this heavy oil from Venezuela.

Imposing tariffs on oil imports to the U.S. is not an effective way to reduce inflation or restore consumer confidence, especially when the country remains a major oil importer. The new U.S. administration may need to reconsider its energy policy, as tariffs are unlikely to achieve the intended economic benefits.

It is also worth noting that oil prices are currently decreasing and may continue to fall, partly due to the U.S. administration's push for OPEC to reduce prices by releasing more oil into the market. However, OPEC+ is holding back about six million barrels of oil to prevent a price collapse. The question remains: how can OPEC+ release more of this "prisoned" oil when global demand, particularly from China, is struggling, and the market can't absorb additional supply?

According to oil experts, oil prices are expected to remain in the \$74-\$75 range for this year, with little chance of surpassing \$80 unless an extraordinary event occurs. Even if prices do reach \$80, it is unlikely they will stay at that level for long.

For U.S. oil producers, particularly shale oil producers, prices below the mid-\$70s are not sustainable. In order to maintain the position of the U.S. as the world's largest oil producer at 13.5 million barrels per day currently, oil prices must remain relatively high. This is required for continuing to grow production toward the ultimate goal of 20 million barrels per day.

The new U.S. administration may not be fully aware about the cost of producing a barrel of oil in the U.S., which ranges between \$70 and \$80, including dividends. Given these costs, it is unlikely oil prices will drop below \$70.

Imposing tariffs on imported oil will not benefit the U.S. and certainly will not contribute to reducing inflation or the cost of living. Instead, reducing taxes and tariffs may offer a better path forward than the current ap-

proach. **Email:** naftikuwaiti@yahoo.com



Kuwait's exports to Japan slump 15.7% in December

crude oil exports to Japan in December 2024 declined 15.7 percent from a 16,000 barrels per day (bpd), down for the 15th straight month, government data showed Friday.

As Japan's third-biggest oil provider, Kuwait supplied 6.3 percent of its total crude imports, compared with 7.2 percent in the same month of last year, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report.

For the whole of 2024, Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan stood at 154,000 bpd, down 30.8 percent from the previous year, and took up 6.6 percent of total Japanese crude im-

TOKYO, Feb 1, (KUNA): Kuwait's in December fell 4.4 percent year-onyear to 2.54 million bpd, down for the 13th month in a row. Shipments from year earlier to 4.99 million barrels, or the Middle East accounted for 96.3 percent of the total, up 5.3 percentage points from the year before.

By country, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) returned to the top spot in December, with imports from the country jumping 28.6 percent from the year before to 1.16 million bpd, followed by Saudi Arabia with 1.00 million bpd, down 14.4 percent. Qatar ranked fourth with 110,000 bpd and Ecuador fifth with 45,000 bpd, respec-

For the full year 2024, Japan's crude oil imports shrank 8.5 percent on the year to 2.32 million bpd. Japan is the world's-third biggest oil consumer after China and the US.

Japan's overall imports of crude oil



Committed to investing in human capital and supporting national talent

National Bank of Kuwait welcomes the second cohort of 'NBK Tech Academy'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: In line with its unwavering commitment to investing in human capital and fostering national talents, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) proudly welcomed the second cohort of participants to NBK Tech Academy.

The NBK Tech Academy stands as the first of its kind in Kuwait, dedicated to advancing digital technologies and data systems. It features a professional training program designed to equip young national talents with the skills and qualifications needed to excel in the banking sector.

The Academy's comprehensive 6-month training program offers trainees an intensive curriculum covering a wide range of technical and professional skills essential for advancement in the banking sector. The participants receive intensive training covering a diverse range of critical skills, including FinTech, Data Analytics, Ethics in Technology, Cyber Security, Fundamentals of Digital Payments, Digital Innovation, Artificial Intelligence, Scripting and Programming, Fundamentals of Codifications, and Finance for Non-Finance Professionals.

Alongside technical expertise, the program also focuses on developing soft skills including, but not limited to: Teamwork and Team Building, Business Planning and Business Analysis, Writing Skills, Delivering Results, Meeting Customer Expectation and Customer Centricity, Presentation Skills, Productivity in the Workplace, Business Ethics, Principles and Values, Learning and Researching, Project and Change Management, and Customer Experience.

Candidates for the Academy were selected based on rigorous criteria, requiring them to be Kuwaiti university graduates with outstanding cumulative GPAs. Eligible applicants must hold degrees in

Najla Al-Sager:

- NBK Tech Academy embodies NBK's vision to align with the accelerated digital era
- The comprehensive 6-month program offers intensive training designed to meet international best practices
- NBK continues to strengthen its leadership in technological innovation within the banking sector

MIS, Information Security, Data Science, Computer Science, or Engineering, with up to four years of professional experience in these fields.

The new trainees will gain hands-on experience across various departments within the Bank, offering them valuable insights into the dynamic nature of the banking sector. Their training will encompass key areas such as the Digital Office, Robotic Process Automation, Information Technology, Weyay Bank, Digital Transformation, and the Data

On this occasion, Najla Al-Sager, Head of Talent Management, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We recognize the importance of fostering a digital society within the bank, as it plays a crucial role in enhancing our digital capabilities and facilitating interaction with content and events to drive continuous innovation. NBK Tech Academy truly embodies the bank's vision to keep pace with the evolving demands of the digital age and reflects our commitment to nurturing and developing top-tier digital

"We are not only preparing our workforce to tackle the challenges of the digital age, but also positioning the bank as a leader in technological innovation within the banking industry. The NBK Tech Academy aligns with NBK's strategy to attract national talent, supporting the bank's rapid digital growth, particularly in response to the increasing demand for digital expertise," she

She also emphasized that the Academy represents NBK's unwavering commitment to fostering innovation and nurturing national talent. It provides both fresh graduates and experienced professionals in technical fields with advanced training and development opportunities. This initiative will play a key role in shaping the future of banking and digital services, driving Kuwait to new heights in banking innovation.

NBK continues to reinforce its dominant position as a leader among private sector institutions, consistently attracting, developing, and honing the skills of national talent for key banking roles. The bank not only boasts the highest employee retention rates but also stands as the most coveted destination for Kuwaiti talent, offering unmatched opportunities for growth and development. In addition, NBK proudly holds the distinction of being the largest employer of national workers within Kuwait's private sector, further underscoring its commitment to fostering local talent and driving economic progress.

Shell mulls moving stock listing from London to NY

LONDON, Feb 1, (AP): Oil company Shell said Thursday that it was still mulling moving its stock market listing from London to New York. but that it wasn't a "live discussion" at the moment.

After announcing a 16% decline in full-year earnings of \$23.7 billion from \$28.3 billion, CEO Wael Sawan was asked if he was still considering moving Shell's listing. to close the valuation gap on its U.S. peers, notably ExxonMobil.

Speaking to CNBC, Sawan said the firm was "always reviewing headquarter listings and the like," but that "there is no live discussion at the moment on this in Shell because our No. 1 priority is to make sure that we unlock the full potential of this company. Last year, Sawan said that Shell's

listing was "under review" because of a persistent gap between the company's valuation on the stock market and its U.S. peers, which makes it relatively more expensive for it to tap capital markets for money. It's not the first time that Shell's

listing is a topic of discussion. In

2022, it ended its dual share struc-

ture that had dated back to the early 20th century, by ditching its listing in Amsterdam for a variety of reasons, that included tax considerations.

The return of U.S. President Donald Trump may be a factor in any future decision in light of his advocacy of fossil fuels, and his executive order that the U.S. will be leaving the 2015 Paris Climate Accord.

Shell, like others, has seen profits surge in recent years as oil prices spiked higher, notably after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly three years ago. In 2024, oil prices drifted lower, hence the decline in

Despite the profits decline, Shell increased its dividend by 4%, as it continues to attract investors to hold its stock. After its latest update, Shell's share price was up 0.5%.

Despite Trump's pro-oil agenda, the transition to net zero is moving forward in most parts of the world, though slower than many campaigners want. As a result, oil companies, including Shell, have sought to diversify their businesses.

Market's major indices show solid gains

Boursa Kuwait liquidity surges 31.8%

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: A recent economic report revealed that the liquidity of the Boursa Kuwait surged to approximately 1.729 billion dinars in January 2025, marking a notable increase of about 31.8 percent compared to December 2024, when liquidity stood at around 1.312 billion dinars, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The Al-Shall Consulting report highlights that the performance of the Stock Exchange in January was notably more active than in December, with a rise in all major price indicators.

Specifically the Premier Market Index increased by 5.9 percent, the Main Market Index saw a 5.1 percent rise, the General Market Index, reflecting the combined performance of both markets, rose by 5.7 percent and the Main Market 50 Index recorded a growth of 6.8 percent.

The report also noted that the average daily trad-

ing value for January 2025 reached approximately 91 million dinars, a rise of 52.6 percent compared to December's average of 59.6 million dinars.

This was also a 35.5 percent increase compared to the average daily trading value of 67.2 million dinars in January 2024.

However, despite the liquidity growth, the report also pointed out that half of the listed companies received only 2.8 percent of this liquidity, with 50 companies receiving just 0.8 percent, and three companies experiencing no trading at all.

Geopolitical shifts pose challenges for air cargo industry in 2025

Air cargo industry sets record with 11.3% growth in 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The air cargo industry achieved a record-breaking performance in 2024, driven by a surge in e-commerce and growing demand for air shipping services, reports Al-Seyassah

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), air cargo volumes rose by 11.3 percent, surpassing the previous record set in 2021, before the pandemic disrupted global economies.

Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General, highlighted that 'air cargo was the standout performer in 2024,' with airlines transporting more goods by air than ever before. E-commerce played a particularly crucial role in

driving this growth, as increased online shopping fueled the demand for fast and reliable shipping solu-Walsh also noted that various shipping restrictions

were being reinforced, further boosting the need for air cargo services However, Walsh cautioned that the air cargo sector

is facing uncertainty as geopolitical shifts could intro-

duce new challenges. "The air cargo sector will face a challenge in adapting to the unfolding geopolitical shifts," he warned, referring to the potential impacts

of a trade war and other global tensions. The outlook for the industry in 2025 remains clouded, with the possibility of trade disruptions impacting air cargo volumes.

Despite this, the record performance of 2024 serves as a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the sector in navigating complex global dynamics.

Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman follow UAE in Saudi trade

Saudi Arabia's non-oil exports to GCC jump 43% in November 2024

re-exports between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) went up by 43 percent, or SAR 2.844 billion (USD 760 million), on annual basis in November, 2024.

RIYADH, Feb 1, (KUNA): The total value of non-oil commodity exports and

The total value rose from SAR 6.624 billion (USD 1.77 billion) in November 2023 to SAR 9.469 billion (USD 2.52 billion) in last November, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Friday, citing the latest figures of the General Authority

The total commodity imports amounted to approximately SAR 5.663 billion (USD 1.51 billion). In November 2024, the Saudi non-oil trade balance recorded a surplus with the GCC states amounting to SAR 3.718 billion (USD 990 million), bringing the total

to SAR 3.805 billion (USD 1.01 billion). This marks an annual growth estimated at 4,277.7 percent compared to the same period in 2023, when the surplus was SAR86.9 million, according to the report.

The figures for non-oil commodity exports, including re-exports with GCC

or 6.4 percent of the total.

Bahrain followed in second place with SAR 929.7 million, representing 9.8 percent of the total. Kuwait came third with SAR 610.4 million (USD 162.75 milion)

countries, show that the United Arab Emirates ranked first with a value of SAR

7.176 billion, accounting for approximately 75.8 percent of the total.

Qatar came in fourth place with a value of SAR 395.8 million, making up 4.2 percent of the total, while Oman recorded SAR 356.4 million, representing 3.8 percent of the total.

Company honored at International Finance ceremony in Dubai

ABK Capital wins 'Most Innovative Multi-Asset Fund Management Co' award

DUBAI, Feb 1: ABK Capital, the investment arm of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait, received the 'Most Innovative Multi-Asset Asset Fund Management Company' award for the year 2024 during the annual ceremony organized by International Finance in Dubai. This recognition is in appreciation of the company's excellence in offering various new investment solutions in the market, consistently keeping up with developments in the investment sector, and continuously providing added value to all its clients.

The award was received during a ceremony, attended by representatives of investment companies, financial institutions, and banks from across the region. The event showcased the criteria for selecting the company for the award and confirmed its commitment to the various standards set by the judging panel in this regard.

On this occasion, Mr. Abdulaziz Jawad, Chairman of the Board, said, "ABK Capital has demonstrated its great ability to innovate new investment solutions and products that attract more clients, meeting their needs according to the highest developments in the sector. Winning this award reflects



Abdulaziz Jawad – Chairman of the Board at ABK Capital

Abdulaziz Jawad:

■ ABK Capital has demonstrated its great ability to innovate new investment solutions and products.

the great trust in our capabilities and performance by global institutions specializing in performance evaluation.

Jawad emphasized, "At the heart of our success is a team whose commitment, innovation, and pas-



ABK Capital awarded 'Most Innovative Multi-Asset Asset Fund Management Company' in Kuwait for 2024.

sion drive every achievement, setting high standards in the investment industry.

Their relentless pursuit of excellence and client-focused approach ensures that we consistently deliver top-tier asset management solutions.

This award would not have been possible without the tireless efforts and exceptional talent of our employees, who truly are our greatest asset.

Jawad added that the award reflects the company's keenness in offering noteworthy asset management and encourages customers to embark on their investment journey and obtain suitable returns through its diverse solutions, which cater to all local and regional market investment needs.

He added that the company continuously works on developing its investment and strategic plans to provide returns for investors in its funds, portfolios, and various investment solutions.

He explained that it offers asset management and investment while



Husayn Shahrur - CEO of ABK Capital

Husayn Shahrur:

■ The new award adds to our distinguished track record in meeting customers' needs.

noting that the company is developing its digital services as part of its digital transformation plan.

On his part, Dr. Husayn Shahrur, CEO of ABK Capital, said, "The new award adds to our distinguished track record throughout 2024. This

comes after ABK Capital forged numerous partnerships, most notably with global players like Blackstone and BlackRock, to offer leading global solutions to investors in the Kuwaiti market, in accordance with the regulatory standards and requirements set by the Capital Markets Authorityin Kuwait's investment sector.'

Shahrur revealed that ABK Capital introduced several new solutions including funds and portfolios for clients in 2024 as part of its ongoing commitment to meet their growing needs and help them diversify their investment strategies.

This has helped increase their confidence and attract them to engage with the company, establishing it as a trusted investment partner in the local market.

He stated that ABK Capital works on informing investors about the latest developments and main trends in local, regional, and global markets, enabling them to make sound investment decisions that suit their needs

He concludedthat the company's team is ready to serve customers, respond to their inquiries, and provide them with appropriate

Firms forge £550 mln home finance deal

Gatehouse Bank and ColCap UK reveal home finance partnership

LONDON, Feb 1: Gatehouse Bank plc ("Gatehouse Bank"), which is majority owned by Kuwait shareholders, has announced a new partnership with Col-Cap Financial UK Limited ("ColCap

The Bank, which has a head office in London, offers residential property finance in England and Wales for UK Residents, UK Expats and International home buyers and landlords and Shariah-compliant ethical savings products for UK customers.

ColCap UK is a subsidiary of the ColCap Financial Group, a privately owned, non-bank established in Australia specialising in residential home finance. As of 31st December 2023, ColCap Financial Group's portfolio totalled over £7.4 billion. În 2022, ColCap incorporated its UK entities and began offering residential property finance in the UK.

The partnership between Gatehouse Bank and ColCap UK involves a forward flow arrangement to originate in excess of £550 million of Shariahcompliant home finance for ColCap UK over an initial two-year term. In addition, Gatehouse Bank will continue to generate its own originations onto its balance sheet through its own home finance proposition for UK Residents, UK Expats and International Residents.

The agreement also includes a sale of circa £100 million of Gatehouse Bank's beneficial interest in its existing home finance portfolio. As of 31st December 2023, the Bank's home finance portfolio totalled over £1.2 bil-

There will be no impact on the Bank's customers, who will continue to be customers of and serviced by Gatehouse Bank.

Fahed Boodai, Chairman of Gatehouse Bank, commented: "We are delighted to be embarking on this partnership with ColCap UK, which high-



Fahed Boodai - Chairman of Gatehouse Bank

lights the Bank's credibility as a leading Islamic finance provider in the UK. This will provide Gatehouse Bank with further means of fulfilling our growth potential, allowing the Bank to continue to meet the strong appetite from both UK and overseas customers for Shariah-compliant products.

"Ultimately, Gatehouse Bank's goal remains to help more people seeking Shariah-compliant finance to achieve their aspirations.

Andrew Chepul, ColCap Financial Group CEO stated: "Our partnership with Gatehouse Bank further supports our UK team's growth in this important market.

"Gatehouse is a trusted leader in Shariah-compliant financing and to-gether we're well-positioned to meet the increasing demand for responsible financial solutions in the UK and bevond.

Esther Morley, ColCap UK's Executive Director and COO, added: "Our collaboration with Gatehouse Bank allows ColCap UK to diversify and expand into new market segments. This forward flow arrangement positions us to meet the growing demand for Shariah-compliant financing. Combining Gatehouse's and ColCap's expertise. we're confident this collaboration will deliver significant value and reinforce ColCap UK's leadership in ethical fi-

German economy shrinks again

ECB slashes key interest rate to stimulate growth

FRANKFURT, Feb 1, (AP): The European Central Bank cut its key interest rate on Thursday to boost an economy that's struggling to grow as consumers burned by inflation warily eye price tags and businesses try to navigate political turmoil in leading economies France and Germany.

The cut comes a day after the U.S. Federal Reserve held off on reducing rates, underlining the contrast between more robust growth in the U.S. economy and stagnation in Europe, which recorded zero growth at the end of last year.

The ECB's governing council lowered its benchmark rate by a quarter percentage point to 2.75% at a meeting at its skyscraper headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany.

ECB President Christine Lagarde said that "the disinflation process is well on track" and that inflation would fall to the bank's 2% target "in the course of this year."

She said ECB rate cuts would sup-

port growth. "The economy is still facing headwinds but rising real incomes and the gradually fading effects of restrictive monetary policy should support a pick-up in demand over time,' she said. Thursday's was the fourth rate cut in a row, and the fifth from the record benchmark high of 4%.

Worries about growth have overtaken overtaking anxiety about inflation. Inflation is down from its peak of 10.6% in October 2022, although it is still somewhat above target at 2.4% in

December on higher energy prices. Europe's economy stagnated at the end of last year as its former growth engine, Germany, finished a second straight year of shrinking output. Gross domestic product in the 20-country eurozone showed a zero increase in the final quarter of 2024, the EU statistics agency Eurostat said. For the full year, the economy grew 0.7%.

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. By contrast the U.S. economy grew 0.6% in the fourth quarter for an annual rate of 2.3%

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. And 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 political confusion could clear up after a national election on Feb. 23 following the collapse of Social Democratic Chancellor Olaf Scholz' governing coalition, which had 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.

US GDP grows 2.3% in Q4, led by strong consumer spending

Business investment drops, but US economy shows resilience

WASHINGTON, Feb 1, (AP): A humming American economy ended 2024 on a solid note with consumer spending continuing to drive growth, and ahead of what could be a significant change in direction under a Trump administration.

The Commerce Department reported Thursday that gross domestic product - the economy's output of goods and services - expanded at a 2.3% annual rate from October through December.

For the full year, the economy grew a healthy 2.8%, compared with 2.9% in 2023.

The fourth-quarter growth was a tick below the 2.4% economists had expected, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm

Consumer spending grew at a 4.2% pace, fastest since January-March 2023 and up from 3.7% in July-September last year. But business investment tumbled as investment in equipment plunged after two straight strong quarters.

Wednesday's report also showed persistent inflationary pressure at the end of the 2024. The Federal Reserve's favored inflation gauge called the personal consumption expenditures index, or PCE - rose at a 2.3% annual pace last quarter, up from 1.5% in the third quarter and above the Fed's 2% target. Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core PCE inflation was 2.5%, up from 2.2% in the July-September quarter.



Young shoppers look over a row of large-screen televisions on display in a Costco warehouse Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024, in Denver. (AP)

A drop in business inventories shaved 0.93 percentage points off fourth-quarter growth.

But a category within the GDP data that measures the economy's underlying strength rose at a healthy 3.2% annual rate from July through September, slipping from 3.4% in the third quarter. This category includes consumer spending and private investment but excludes volatile items like exports, inventories and government

Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics, said that figure "suggests the economy remains strong, particularly given the fourth-quarter disruptions," including a strike at Boeing and the aftermath of two hurricanes.

President Donald Trump has inherited a healthy economy. Growth has been steady and unemployment low - 4.1% in December.

The economy has proven remarkably resilient after the Fed's inflation fighters raised rates 11 times in 2022 and 2023 to combat the biggest surge in consumer prices since the 1980s. Instead of sliding into a recession, as most economists predicted, GDP kept expanding. Growth has now topped 2% in nine of the last 10 quarters.

On Wednesday, the Fed left its benchmark interest rate unchanged after making three cuts since September. With the economy rolling along, Fed Chair Jerome Powell told reporters, "we do not need to be in a hurry" to make more cuts. The Fed is also cautious because progress against inflation has stalled in recent months after falling from four-decade highs hit in mid-2022.

The European Central Bank cut its benchmark rate by a quarter point Thursday, underlining the contrast between more robust growth in the U.S. economy and stagnation in Europe, which re-corded zero growth at the end of

The U.S. economic outlook has become more cloudy, however. Trump has promised to cut taxes and ease regulations on business, which could speed GDP growth. But his plan to impose big taxes on imports and to deport millions of immigrants working in the United States illegally could mean slower growth and higher prices.

Trump said last week that he ould lower oil prices and then "demand" lower interest rates a topic he said he'd take up with Powell. But the Fed chair deflected questions about Trump's comments Wednesday and said he'd had no contact with the president.

Trump has also tried to reshape the federal government, offering buyouts to workers and issuing a memo Monday night freezing federal grants, then rescinding the memo Wednesday after a public outcry.

Citing the "squeeze" on the federal government, Ashworth wrote in a commentary, "we wouldn't be surprised to see a reversal in the first quarter. As a starting point, we expect first-quarter GDP growth to slow marginally below 2%."

Thursday's GDP release was the first of three Commerce Department estimates of October-December growth.

Core inflation holds steady at 2.8%

US inflation rises slightly to 2.6% in Dec

WASHINGTON, Feb 1, (AP): An inflation gauge closely watched by the Federal Reserve rose slightly last month, while some underlying prices pressures showed signs of The latest inflation figures arrive as President

Donald Trump has threatened to impose big import taxes on goods from Canada and Mexico, potentially affecting everything from autos to avocados, which could push prices higher in the coming months. Friday's report from the Commerce Depart-

ment showed that consumer prices rose 2.6% in December from a year earlier, up from a 2.4% annual pace in November and the third straight increase. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices increased 2.8% compared with a year ago, the same as in November and October.

There were some positive signs in Wednesday's report, however. When measured in shorter time frames, inflation is slowing: In December, core prices ticked up 0.2% from the previous month, a pace that is nearly consistent with the Fed's annual target. Economists - and Fed officials - pay close attention to core prices because they provide a better read on where inflation is headed.

The figures arrive just two days after Federal Reserve officials, led by Chair Jerome Powell, decided to pause their interest rate cuts in part because inflation has largely been stuck at about 2.5%, above their 2% target, for the past six

In the past three months, core prices have risen at an annual rate of just 2.2%, down from 2.6% in November.

Many businesses raise prices at the start of the year, which could push up inflation a bit when January's figures are released next month. But the Fed's preferred gauge should decline steadily in the next few months, economists say, as higher inflation readings early last year fall out of the year-over-year

"Beyond that, however, the growing risk that Trump will impose tariffs a little earlier than we are assuming presents an upside risk to inflation," Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics, a forecasting firm, said in a written note.

Overall inflation climbed 0.3% in December from the previous month, driven higher by a jump in gas prices. Monthly increases at that level, if they continued, would exceed the Fed's

The Commerce Department's report also showed consumer spending rose a healthy 0.7% in December from the previous month, fueled in part by steady wage gains and higher stock prices and home values. Incomes rose 0.4%, the government said. With spending outpacing incomes, the savings rate fell to 3.8% from 4.1%.

Americans specifically ramped up spending on goods, such as electronics and furni-

ture, likely a sign that consumers are buying more manufactured products, many of which are imported, before the potential imposition of tariffs that Trump has threatened to imple-

Underlying trends point to lower inflation ahead. Apartment rental prices and other housing costs are slowly moderating. And a sluggish labor market has meant wage growth has slipped, which means companies are under less pressure to raise prices to offset higher labor

"We seem to be set up for further progress," Powell said Wednesday at a news conference, referring to inflation. "But being 'seem to set up for' it is one thing, having it is another. So we're going to want to see further progress on inflation.'

Until then, Powell suggested, the Fed is likely to keep its key rate at about 4.3%, down a full percentage point from a twodecade peak last year before three cuts at the end of 2024. The Fed expects higher borrowing costs will weigh on spending and bring inflation down further.

Consumers, meanwhile, powered strong growth in the final three months of last year, when the economy expanded at a solid 2.3% annual rate. Growth was stronger in the July-September quarter, at 3.1%, but the fourth-quarter expansion was held back by a sharp reduction in business inventories, which should reverse in coming quarters.

Bank expands AlDanah prizes

Gulf Bank to host AlDanah Millionaire Grand Draw on Feb 13, 2025

2025.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: Gulf Bank is set to host its highly anticipated annual AlDanah Millionaire Grand Draw on Thursday, February 13, 2025, at Al-Khiran Mall. The event will announce the lucky winner of the world's largest cash prize linked to a bank account, valued at KD 2 million.

The draw will be broadcast live on 360 FM, under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young. The celebration will begin at 4 PM and run until 8 PM, with the highly anticipated draw taking place between 7 PM and 8 PM.

Although the deadline to deposit and qualify for this grand draw was November 30, 2024, Gulf Bank continues to offer exciting draws and cash prizes, giving customers multiple opportunities to win all year round.

Gulf Bank's 2025 prize schedule for the AlDanah Millionaire account offers an array of exciting rewards. Leading the lineup is the grand prize of KD 2 million, followed by a semiannual draw with a KD 1 million prize. Additionally, two quarterly draws, each worth KD 100,000, will reward 100 winners with KD 1.000 each. The monthly draw also grants KD 1,000 to 10 winners each month, contributing



AlDanah Millionaire Grand Draw.

to a total of 322 AlDanah winners in

The AlDanah Millionaire account is one of Kuwait's leading savings accounts, known for its regular draws, generous prizes, and exclusive benefits for account holders. Gulf Bank has raised the grand prize from KD 1.5 million to KD 2 million, earning a second Guinness World Record

for the largest cash prize linked to a bank account. Additionally, the quarterly prize format has been updated to distribute KD 100,000 among 100 winners, replacing the previous format

with two prizes totaling KD 3 million.

where a single winner took home the full amount

KD1,000

Last Date to Deposit & Qualify January 31, 2025

April 17, 2025

Last Date to Deposit I Ownfy June 30, 2025

■ CA total of 322 winners will be announced

■ 100 winners will be chosen in the semi-annual

draw, which takes place twice a year, and 120

winners will be selected in the monthly draws.

■ Each year, two new millionaires will join the list,

in Gulf Bank's AlDanah Millionaire draws in

KD1,000

Last Date to Deposit & Qualify 7 days before the draw

One of the many benefits enjoyed by AlDanah account holders is that it is the only account in Kuwait that carries over their chances of winning from the previous year to the next, as part of a customer loyalty and reward program by Gulf Bank.

To increase their chances of winning, customers should maintain a minimum balance of KD 200 in their account, or increase their deposit to gain more opportunities to win and continue participating in the monthly, quarterly, and annual draws.

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

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

Lulu hosts retail shop visit for CESK students

CESK acknowledges Lulu Hypermarket's contribution to special needs education

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The Conductive Education School Kuwait (CESK) proudly presented a token of appreciation to the top management of Lulu Hypermarket. This gesture, led by Cisal Geo, Principal of CESK, acknowledges the invaluable opportunity provided to CESK students through the Retail Shop Visit Training and Development session.

CESK is a premier educational institution dedicated to supporting students with diverse abilities, ages 6 to 21. The school caters to students with conditions such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, global developmental delay, and more. CESK employs a multidisciplinary approach to education, enhancing both academic and functional skills through various programs, including ASDĂN.

ASDAN is an internationally recognized awarding organization that offers accredited programs and regulated certifications. These programs are designed to develop life



CESK thanks Lulu Hypermarket for retail shop visit training opportunity.

and vocational skills for students, particularly those with special needs, enabling them to achieve both academic and professional success. The focus is on practical and educational training activities that help students acquire essential skills for daily life and work, such as communication, teamwork, time management, and problem-solving. The goal is to boost students' self-confidence and their ability to tackle everyday chal-

lenges.
The community's role in providing opportunities for students to gain practical experience is crucial. Many CESK students are engaged in ASDAN programs that develop vocational skills such as independent living, everyday living, money management, meal preparation, and cooking. Training in shopping and handling money has become an essential part of the program.

The Retail Shop Visit Training and Development session at Lulu Hypermarket offered students an excellent start to their training. The staff at Lulu, being well-oriented to the needs of the students, created a conducive environment for their

The management and parents at CESK are delighted with the op-

portunity provided and look forward to continued cooperation with Lulu Hypermarket for the benefit of the

'Quranic teachings are key to true progress & success'

IMA Kuwait hosts Quran campaign with leading scholars

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: "True progress and real success are only possible when we incorporate the teachings of the Quran and that of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) into our lives. Without this, material achievements remain hollow and insignificant"were the opening remarks of DrTahaMateen, the visiting renowned Scholar from India while speaking on the transformative power of the Quran, highlighting how it turned nomadic Arabs into great leaders who redefined civilizations and shaped the history.

Dr. TahaMateen was addressing to Dignitaries Program organized by Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait at Rajdhani Palace, Khaitan, as part of its one month-long Quran Campaign on January 20, 2025 where IMA invited the Indian Dignitaries & Heads of prominent Muslim Associations in Kuwait together to promote the central message of the Quran-connecting Muslims with its teachings and encouraging practical implementation in daily life.

Dr. Mateen pointed out that many of the

world's greatest legal frameworks and constitutions are rooted in Quranic teachings, demonstrating the timeless relevance and wisdom of the Quran. He further emphasized that real change begins with a personal understanding of Allah's supremacy, complete obedience to Him, and the recognition of our dependence on

Addressing the pursuit of worldly gains, Dr. TahaMateen warned against chasing temporary desires while forgetting the eternal nature of the Hereafter. He reminded attendees that the Quran is the ultimate guide to success in both this life

Presidents & Office Bearers of 16 esteemed Muslim Associations in Kuwait& several Dignitaries of Kuwait attended & graced the Event with their presence.

Mr. Moĥammed Umar Falahi, IMA President, in his keynote, stressed that the purposes and objectives of this Quran Campaign is to reconnect Muslims with the Quran through its recita-

tion, comprehension, and practical application. He highlighted that the Quran offers timeless solutions to humanity's challenges, serving as a comprehensive roadmap for spiritual and moral upliftment.

The program commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Hafiz Mohammed Fazil, convened by Mohammad SamoilFalahi and concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by IMA Vice President, Mr. Arshad Habib.

IMA Kuwait expresses its heartfelt gratitude to all dignitaries and guests who contributed to the success of the event, reinforcing the importance of collective efforts to promote the Quran's mes-

IMA Kuwait, an Indian socio-religious organization, operates under the patronage of the Ministry of Awgaf and Islamic Affairs Kuwait. It remains dedicated to providing platforms for the spiritual and social development of expatriates in Kuwait, with a particular focus on the Indian

Photos during the campaign.









The Conversation

'Media amplifies fear'

Study finds Gen Z prioritizes safety over fun & popularity

By Yalda T. Uhls University of California, Los

Angeles

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

After many years of partisan politics, increasingly divisive language, finger-pointing and inflammatory speech have contributed to an environment of fear and uncertainty, affecting not just political dynamics but also the priorities and perceptions of young people.

As a developmental psychologist who studies the intersection of media and adolescent mental health, and as a mother of two Gen Z kids, I have seen firsthand how external societal factors can profoundly shape young people's emotional well-being.

This was brought into sharp relief through the results of a recent survey my colleagues and I conducted with 1,644 young people across the US, ages 10 to 24. The study was not designed as a political poll but rather as a window into what truly matters to adolescents. We asked participants to rate the importance of 14 personal goals. These included classic teenage desires such as "being popular," "having fun" and "being kind."

None of these ranked as the top priority. Instead, the No. 1 answer was "to be safe."

The findings are both illuminating and heartbreaking. As a teenager, I did countless unsafe things. My peers and I didn't dwell on harm; we chased fun and freedom.

Whereas previous generations may have taken safety for granted, today's youth are growing up in an era of compounded crises - school shootings, a worsening climate crisis, financial uncertainty and the lingering trauma of a global pandemic. Even though our research did not pinpoint the specific causes of adolescent fears, the constant exposure to crises, amplified by social media, likely plays a significant role in fostering a pervasive sense of worry.

Despite data showing that many aspects of life are safer now than in previous generations, young people just don't feel it. Their perception of danger is further shaped by events like the recent fires that devastated Los Angeles, reinforcing a belief that danger, possibly caused by global crises like climate change, lurks everywhere.

This shift in perspective has profound implications for the future of this generation and those to come.

Adolescence, like early childhood, is a pivotal period for brain development. Young people are particularly sensitive to their surroundings as their brains evaluate the environment to prepare them for independence.

This developmental stage when the capacity to regulate emotions and critically assess information is still maturing makes them especially vulnerable

to enduring impacts. Studies show that adolescents struggle to put threats into context. This makes them particularly vulnerable to fear-driven messaging prevalent in both traditional and social media, which is further amplified by political rhetoric and blameshifting. This vulnerability has implications for their mental health, as prolonged exposure to fear and uncertainty has been linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression and even physical health issues.

So when the media that Gen Z consumes are dominated by fear - be it through headlines, social media posts, political rhetoric or even storylines in movies and TV - it could shape their worldview in ways that may reverberate for generations to come.

Historical events have long been shown to shape the worldview of entire generations.

For instance, the Great Depression primarily impacted the daily lives of the Silent Generation, those born between 1928 and 1945. Moreover, its long-term effects on financial attitudes and security concerns echoed into the Baby Boomer generation, influencing how those born between 1946 and 1964 approached money, stability and risk throughout their lives.

Similarly, today's adolescents, growing up amid a series of compounded global crises, will likely carry the imprint of this period of heightened fear and uncertainty well into adulthood. This formative experience could shape their mental health, decision-making and even their collective identity and values for decades to come.

In addition, feelings of insecurity and instability can make people more responsive to fearbased messaging, which could potentially influence their political and social choices. In an era marked by the rise of authoritarian governments, this susceptibility could have far-reaching implications because fear often drives individuals to prioritize immediate safety over moral or ideological ideals.

As such, these dynamics may profoundly shape how this generation engages with the world, the causes they champion and the leaders they choose to follow.

Interestingly, "being kind" was rated No. 2 in our survey, irrespective of other demographics. While safety dominates their priorities, adolescents still value qualities that foster connection and community.

This finding indicates a duality in their aspirations: While they feel a pervasive sense of danger, they also recognize the importance of interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being.

Our findings are a call to look at the broader societal context shaping adolescent development. For instance, the rise in school-based safety drills, while intended to provide a sense of preparedness, may unintentionally reinforce feelings of insecurity. Similarly, the apocalyptic narrative around climate change may create a sense of powerlessness that could further compound their fears and leave them wanting to bury their heads in the sand.

Understanding how these perceptions are formed and their implications for mental health, decision-making and behavior is essential for parents, storytellers, policymakers and researchers.

I believe we must also consider how societal systems contribute to the pervasive sense of uncertainty and fear among youth. Further research can help untangle the complex relationship between external stressors, media consumption and youth well-being, shedding light on how to best support adolescents during this formative stage of life. (AP)

Features



Obituary

Rolling Stones muse

Marianne Faithfull, music legend dies

NEW YORK, Feb 1, (AP): Marianne Faithfull, the British pop star, muse, libertine and old soul who inspired and helped write some of the Rolling Stones' greatest songs and endured as a torch singer and survivor of the lifestyle she once embodied, has died. She was 78.

Faithfull passed away Thursday in London, her music promotion company Republic Media said.

"It is with deep sadness that we announce the death of the singer, songwriter and actress Marianne Faithfull," a company spokesperson said in a statement. "Marianne passed away peacefully in London today, in the company of her loving family. She will be dearly missed."

The blonde, voluptuous Faithfull was a celebrity before turning 17, homeless by her mid-20s and an inspiration to peers and younger artists by her early 30s, when her raw, explicit "Broken English" album brought her the kinds of reviews the Stones had received. Over the following decades, her admirers would include Beck, Billy Corgan, Nick Cave and PJ Harvey, although her history would always be closely tied to the Stones and to the years she dated Mick Jagger.

"I am so saddened to hear of the death of Marianne Faithfull," Jagger wrote on Instagram. "She was so much a part of my life for so long. She was a wonderful friend, a beautiful singer and a great actress."

Breakthrough

One of the first songs written by Jagger and Keith Richards, the melancholy "As Tears Go By," was her breakthrough hit when released in 1964 and the start of her close and tormented relationship with the band.

She and Jagger began seeing each other in 1966 and became one of the most glamorous and notorious couples of "Swinging London," with Faithfull once declaring that if LSD "wasn't meant to happen, it wouldn't have been invented." Their rejection of conventional values was defined by a widely publicized 1967 drug bust that left Jagger and Richards briefly in jail and Faithfull identified in tabloids as "Naked Girl At Stones Party," a label she would find humiliating and inescapable.

"One of the hazards of reforming your evil ways is that some people won't let go of their mind's eye of you as a wild thing," she wrote in "Memories, Dreams and Reflections," a 2007 memoir.

Jagger and Richards often cited bluesmen and early rock 'n rollers as their prime influences, but Faithfull and her close friend Anita Pallenberg, Richards' longtime partner, also opened the band to new ways of thinking. Both were worldlier than their boyfriends at the time, and helped transform the Stones' songwriting and personas, whether as muses or as collaborators.

Faithfull helped inspire such Stones songs as the mellow tribute "She Smiled Sweetly" and the lustful "Let's Spend the Night Together." It was Faithful who lent Jagger the Russian novel "The Master and Margarita" that was the basis for "Sympathy for the Devil" and who first recorded and contributed lyrics to the Stones' dire "Sister Morphine," notably the opening line, "Here I lie in my hospital bed." Faithfull's drug use helped shape such jaded takes on the London rock scene as "You Can't Always Get What You Want" and "Live with Me," while her time with Jagger also coincided with one of his most vulnerable love songs, "Wild Horses."

On her own, the London-born Faithfull specialized at first in genteel ballads, among them "Come Stay With Me," "Summer Nights" and "This Little Bird." But even in her teens, Faithfull sang in a fragile alto that suggested knowledge and burdens far beyond her years. Her voice would later crack and coarsen, and her life and work after splitting with Jagger in 1970 was one of looking back and carrying on through emotional and physical pain.

nonal and p Memoirs

She had become addicted to heroin in the late '60s, suffered a miscarriage while seven months pregnant and nearly died from an overdose of sleeping pills. (Jagger, meanwhile, had an affair with Pallenberg and had a baby with actor Marsha Hunt). By the early '70s, Faithfull was living in the streets of London and had lost custody of the son, Nicholas, she had with her estranged husband, the gallery owner John Dunbar. She would also battle anorexia and hepatitis, was treated for breast cancer, broke her hip in a fall and was hospitalized with COVID-19 in 2020.

She shared everything, uncensored, in her memoirs and in her music, notably "Broken English," which came out in 1979 and featured her seething "Why'd Ya Do It" and conflicted "Guilt," in which she chants "I feel guilt, I feel guilt, though I know I've done no wrong." Other albums included "Dangerous Acquaintances," "Strange Weather," the live "Blazing Away" and, most recently, "She Walks in Beauty." Though Faithfull was defined by the 1960s, her sensibility often reached back to the pre-rock world of German cabaret, and she covered numerous songs by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, including "Ballad of the Soldier's Wife" and the "sung" ballet "The Seven Deadly Sins."

Her interests extended to theater, film and television. Faithfull began acting in the 1960s, including an appearance in Jean-Luc Godard's "Made In U.S.A." and stage roles in "Hamlet" and Chekhov's "Three Sisters." She would later appear in such films as "The Girl on a Motorcycle," "Marie Antoinette" and "The Girl from Nagasaki," and the TV series "Absolutely Fabulous."

Faithful was married three times, and in recent years dated her manager, Francois Ravard. Jagger was her most famous lover, but other men in her life included Richards ("so great and memorable," she would say of their one-night stand), David Bowie and the early rock star Gene Pitney. Among the rejected: Bob Dylan, who had been so taken that he was writing a song about her, until Faithfull, pregnant with her son at the time, turned him down.



British singer and actress Marianne Faithfull performs on the Miles Davis Hall stage at the 43rd Montreux Jazz Festival, in Montreux, Switzerland, late Monday, July 13, 2009. (AP)

Indian drama 'Sabar Bonda' bags top world cinema prize

'Atropia' and 'Twinless' win top prizes at Sundance

PARK CITY, Utah, Feb 1, (AP): The war satire "Atropia," about actors in a military role-playing facility, won the grand jury prize in the Sundance Film Festival's US dramatic competition, while the Dylan O'Brien movie "Twinless" got the coveted audience award. Juries and programmers for the 41st edition of the independent film festival announced the major prizewinners Friday in Park City, Utah.

Other grand jury winners included the documentaries "Seeds," about farmers in rural Georgia and "Cutting Through the Rocks," about the first elected councilwoman in an Iranian village. The Indian drama "Sabar Bonda (Cactus Pears)," about a city dweller mourning his father in the western Indian countryside, won the top prize in the world cinema competition.

"It's for my dad," said writer and director Rohan Parashuram Kanawade. His late father, he said, was the one who encouraged him to pursue filmmaking.

Audiences also get to vote on their own awards, where

Audiences also get to vote on their own awards, where James Sweeney's "Twinless," about the bromance between two men who meet in a twin bereavement support group, triumphed in the US dramatic category. O'Brien also won a special jury award for his acting.

special jury award for his acting.

The US documentary audience award went to "André is an Idiot," a life-affirming film about dying of colon cancer.



This image released by the Sundance Institute shows Alia Shawkat in a scene from 'Atropia.' (AP)

Other audience picks were "Prime Minister," about former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and "DJ Ahmet," a coming-of-age film about a 15-year-old boy in North Macedonia.

Mstyslav Chernov, the Oscar-winning Associated Press journalist, won the world cinema documentary directing award for his latest dispatch from Ukraine, "2000 Meters to Andriivka," a joint production between the AP and PBS Frontline.

"Here's to all documentary directors who are risking their lives in Ukraine trying to tell the stories of people who protect the land that I call home," Chernov said onstage.

Others singled out for directing include Geeta Gandbhir for "The Perfect Neighbor," a documentary about a murder in Florida told through the use of police body camera footage, and Rashad Frett for "Ricky," a drama about life post-incarceration.

The world cinema documentary jury also gave special prizes to "Coexistence, My ...!" about a comedian who creates a one-woman show about the struggle for equality in Israel and Palestine, and "Mr. Nobody Against Putin," in which a Russian teacher goes undercover to expose what's happening in his school during the invasion of Ukraine.

"Our programming team is so thrilled to have introduced these moving and impactful works to our audiences this Festival, and we look forward to following the journeys of each of these talented artists and their projects," said festival programming director Kim Yutani.

The Sundance Film Festival runs through Sunday.

Film



This image released by Amazon Prime Video shows Reese Witherspoon, (left), and Will Ferrell in a scene from 'You're Cordially Invited.' (AP)

'You're Cordially Invited' revives early 2000s comedy spirit

Ferrell, Witherspoon collide in wedding comedy

LOS ANGELES, Feb 1, (AP): Are you with the bride or the groom? Hold on, scratch that. Are you with Reese Witherspoon or Will Ferrell?

"You're Cordially Invited," a new comedy directed by Nicholas Stoller, brings together two stars whose movie worlds are nearly as divided as wedding guests on separate sides of the aisle. Ferrell is most closely associated with broad comedies and Witherspoon the more romantic variety. And while both have expanded beyond their wheelhouses, they are each A-list refugees from movie genres - laugh-out-loud comedies, rom-coms - that have largely faded from theaters in recent years.

"You're Cordially Invited," which debuted Thursday on Prime Video, unites these two once-ubiquitous box-office forces in a streaming-only wedding comedy that cross-pollinates "Father of the Bride" with "Wedding Crashers." The combination works well enough, though it'd be fairer to deem "You're Cordially Invited" a funnier-than-average wedding movie than it would be a top-grade Ferrell comedy.

It's been two decades since, in "Wedding Crashers," Ferrell so gently called to his mother, "Hey, Mom! Can we get some meatloaf!" But a whole era has passed. "You're Cordially Invited" is an attempt to rekindle some of the spirit of those early '00s comedies while growing it up a little, and roping in a new generation of funny people. Here, Ferrell plays the overly doting father to Jenni (Geraldine Viswanathan). He's a widower whose happiness rests to an unsound degree on his daughter. Jim steams her clothes and styles her hair. He's not crashing the wedding this time; he's baking the cake.

When Jenni returns home with a ring on her finger and her now-fiancé (Stony Blyden) in tow, Jim experiences the

happy news more like a nightmare. Still, he gathers himself together and books a destination wedding on the small Geor-

gia island where he and his wife were married.

Meanwhile, we're introduced to Margot (Witherspoon) a high-powered reality TV executive in Los Angeles whose younger sister (Meredith Hagner) is getting married to her boyfriend (Jimmy Tatro). Her abiding issue is a disconnect with her Atlanta-era family and their disapproving mother (Celia Weston), a fissure that the wedding, which Margot opts to plan herself, quickly exacerbates.

When, a year later, these two groups arrive on the island, Jim and Margot eye each other suspiciously right up until they each attempt to check in at the same time. Thanks to the untimely death of the inn's longtime owner, the place has been double-booked for the weekend - a particularly awkward situation given the island can only accommodate one wedding at a time. The supporting roles throughout "You're Cordially Invited" are well cast, including the inn's new, very apologetic manager, played by Jack McBrayer.

Hesitation

After some hesitation, Margot and Jim resolve to share the venue. This, of course, is the not particularly subtle concept of "You're Cordially Invited." The arrangement is momentarily copacetic but gradually devolves into an all-out war between Margot and Jim, while the two very different wedding parties - one a multicultural DJ-ing crew, the other longtime Southerners - mingle congenially.

The main deficiency of "You're Cordially Invited," also scripted by Stoller ("Neighbors," "Forgetting Sarah Marshall"), is that everything about it proceeds from its concept. The characters feel engineered to suit it, and everything in its plot is orchestrated to serve the rival wedding feud. Nothing

in how things evolve will surprise you or feel particularly organic. For a not especially long movie, "You're Cordially Invited" drags, a byproduct of its artificial conception. This is the kind of film where the post-credits sing-along feels

That said, there's a wide array of comic talent throughout Stoller's film that enlivens it. That includes Keyla Monterroso Mejia, Rory Scovel, Leanne Morgan and even, briefly, Peyton Manning. This should be a showcase for Viswanathan, the talented star of "Blockers" and "Bad Education," but her character, while primary, doesn't give her much to work with beyond shedding an overly dependent dad. The highlight of the cast, really, is Weston, who is so good as a hard-to-impress matriarch that you could just as easily drop her into a family drama.

Ferrell, who has made unadjusted fathers a specialty since "Saturday Night Live," finds more ways to make Jim a compelling comic character than most anyone could. Having the chance to see him in a big studio comedy has gotten so foolishly infrequent that "You're Cordially Invited" is worth RSVP'ing to for that too-rare

opportunity, in itself.

Somewhat surprisingly, "You're Cordially Invited" doesn't culminate in a big comic set piece but puts much - maybe too much - of its energy into talking through Jim and Margot's hang-ups. There's a clever, self-aware theme of honesty: too little of it in Jim and Jenni's performative dynamic, and too much of it in Margot's cynical family relationships. That all of this hangs together is a testament, most of all, to Witherspoon deftness as a performer. In a movie in which Ferrell wrestles an alligator and Nick Jonas cameos (winningly) as a singing pastor, you don't doubt Witherspoon for a moment.

Variety

NEW YORK: A former Fox Sports reporter and anchor filed a lawsuit Friday against the network and top executive Charlie Dixon, saying he sexually assaulted her after coaxing her up to his hotel room to discuss Super Bowl plans in 2016 and was later pushed out of her job for

fighting back.

Julie Stewart-Binks said in her complaint, filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court, that she was inspired to speak up after a former hairstylist for Fox Sports filed a lawsuit on Jan. 5 saying a former host had made repeated unwanted sexual advances toward her and that Dixon had groped her.

groped her.
Andrew Fegyveresi, a spokesperson for Fox, said in an email that the claims had been addressed.

claims had been addressed.

"These allegations are from over eight years ago," his email said. "At the time, we promptly hired a third-party firm to inves-

tigate and addressed the matter based on their findings."

Fegyveresi did not respond to a request to elaborate on what the investigation found or how their findings were addressed. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Actor Jon Hamm, who rose to fame as ad executive Don Draper on the AMC series "Mad Men" and more recently appeared in "Fargo" and "Landman," was honored Friday night as the 2025 Man of the Year by Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals.

The theater group, which dates to 1844 and claims to be the world's third-oldest still operating, said Hamm will receive his Pudding Pot award at a celebratory roast. Afterward, he will attend a performance of Hasty Pudding Theatricals' 176th production, "101 Damnations."

"I can't believe there are so many people here," Hamm said after accepting his Pudding Pot award. "Did you all seriously think I was dead? This is such a wonderful honor."

Before accepting the Pudding Pot, Hamm endured a roasting at the hands of two members of the Hasty Pudding Theatricals. They mocked his height, poked fun at the fact he had not won an Academy Award and suggested many previous winners were better looking. To make their point, they even had him take part in a

contest with someone wearing a Paul Rudd mask, the 2018 winner of the award. Hamm also participated in a trivia contest with an piece of deli meat on a table - who the presenters suggested had won the 2017 Academy Award for production design.

The best bit, though, was making Hamm channel his "Mad Men" character, Don Draper, and pitch several items. Among them was selling car insurance to a baby driver and a pen to a woman who had just landed her dream job and was promptly fired. Then, there was selling a lifetime voucher for bath time with Harry Potter.

with Harry Potter.

"Hi, do you love Daniel Radcliffe? How about Harry Potter?" Draper asked an excited woman on stage. "I would say let's sit in a tub together but that sounds like, A, terrifying, and B. marrically illegal."

and B, marginally illegal."

Afterwards at a press conference, Hamm credited Saturday Night Live" creator Lorne Michaels with bringing out his funny side and said Don Draper was the most challenging and fun character that he has ever played. He also cast doubt on the prospect of his character Monty Miller on "Landman"

being resurrected.

"Usually when you're surrounded by your loved ones on a hospital bed and they're crying and the machine has a flat line on it, it's not great," he joked. (AP)

Grammy weekend festivities start with gala fundraiser

Grateful Dead honored as MusiCares Persons of the Year

LOS ANGELES, Feb 1, (AP): Colorful dancing bears during cocktails. Tie-dye clothing mixed with black-tie. Oh yeah, the Grateful Dead was in the house to kick off Grammy weekend.

The legendary jam band was honored for its musical achievements and philanthropic efforts as MusiCares Persons of the Year on Friday night, two days before the Grammy Awards.

The band's iconic skull logo was prominent in the ever-changing graphics on stage. Their well-known dancing bears posed for photos with attendees.

Devoted Deadhead Andy Cohen hosted the 2 1/2-hour show at the Los Angeles Convention Center. He recounted convincing his parents to let him drive from St. Louis to Wisconsin to catch his first Dead concert as a teenager.

"I venture to say they are the great American band," Cohen said. "What a wonder they are."

So what if the Dead owns just two Grammys, for lifetime achievement in 2007 and best music film in 2018. They made their mark with a unique style and long improvisations blending such genres as rock, blues, jazz, folk



Bobby Weir, (from left), Justin Kreutzmann, Trixie Garcia, and Mickey Hart accept the 2025 MusiCares Persons of the Year award during the MusiCares Persons of the Year gala honoring the Grateful Dead on Friday, Jan. 31, 2025, in Los Angeles. Woody Harrelson looks on from right. (AP)

and psychedelia.

"Longevity was never a major concern of ours," 77-year-old guitarist Bob Weir said, drawing laughs. "Spreading joy through the music was

all we ever really had in mind and we got plenty of that done.

Drummer Mickey Hart paid homage to the band's free-spirited fans.

"The Deadheads have kept the

tinue to take this music into the next century," he said. "Before the world even knew what to make of us, our community lifted us up and kept us going. Without support there would be no Grateful Dead. Actor Woody Harrelson told a few

long-winded tales about his adventures with the band, including "going drugless to Thailand with Bobby, which is not easy for either of us."

Weir and Hart were joined on-stage to accept the award by three of their bandmates' offspring: Grahame Lesh, Trixie Garcia and Justin Kreutzmann.

Message

Lesh's father, Phil, died in October at age 84. Garcia's father, Jerry, died in 1995 at age 53. Kreutzmann's father, Bill, didn't attend and instead gave his thanks in a video message.

"I can feel his spirit in the house," the 81-year-old Hart said of Bill Kreutzmann. "He's in the music, he's in the rhythm, the heartbeat of everything we built together all these years.

Grahame Lesh was busy all night playing guitar as part of the backing

band led by musical director Don Was. He sang with The War on Drugs during "Box of Rain," composed by his

Weir opened the show on guitar backed by an orchestra. They soon gave way to The War and Treaty performing "Samson and Delilah" with Stewart Copeland and Mick Fleetwood taking turns on drum solos.

Technical difficulties briefly affected performances by My Morning Jacket and John Mayer, who rebounded for an extended jam with Was and Jeff Chimenti on "Terrapin Station." Hart kept looking offstage as he drummed during Dead & Company's finale of "Sugar Magnolia" and "Touch of Grey" until a technician appeared to bring him in-ear monitors.

Eaerlier, Hart was on his feet pumping his right arm to Sammy Hagar's version of "Loose Lucy."

"Bobby, Mick, love you brothers," Hagar said.

Two of the quieter moments were in-the-round performances by Norah Jones on "Ripple" and Bruce Hornsby doing "Standing on the Moon

Wynonna Judd performed "Ramble On Rose.'

"I love you Robert Weir," she said from the stage. "You are my family of choice. You showed up when my

momma died." Wearing a crown of red roses, Grammy nominee Sierra Ferrell teamed with Lukas Nelson on "It Must Have Been

the Roses. Dwight Yoakam had the crowd on its feet dancing during "Truckin." Grammy nominee Noah Kahan sang "Friend of the Devil" featuring three guitars, banjo and bass.

Weir's wife, Natascha, and their daughters, Shala and Chloe, spent much of the night out of their seats dancing at their table near the stage.

Now in its 35th year, the dinner and auction raised money for programs and services supporting musicians in need with an emphasis this year on helping those affected by the recent wildfires in Los Angeles.

"What we have here in Southern California these days is a rebuild that's going to take some time and effort and an immense amount of teamwork,' Weir said.

Event combines top acts and stories of loss

FireAid unites music legends for LA wildfire relief

INGLEWOOD, Calif., Feb 1, (AP): Pop stars, first responders, rock stars and those who've lost everything in the devastating LA-area wildfires came together for FireAid, a massive benefit concert Thursday that combined spectacular performances with moving storytelling from survivors and reminders of the destruction.

In a night full of surprises, a reunion of Nirvana - fronted by St. Vincent, Kim Gordon and Joan Jett in the place of the late Kurt Cobain - tops the list. They launched into "Breed," "School" and "Territorial Pissings" respectively, inspired and unexpected choices.

Drummer Dave Grohl's daughter, Violet, then emerged on stage for "All Apologies.

Closer Lady Gaga, after powering through the Oscar-award winning "Shallow" and "Always Remember Us This Way" from "A Star Is Born," played a new song on the piano. "It's just for tonight, it's just for you," she said of the song she wrote with fiancé businessman Michael Polansky. 'Time is a healer.'

"All I need is time," she sang in the folk-y pop chorus. "To heal my broken wings and then I'll soar."

Green Day kicked off the massive show by launching into "Last Night on Earth" at the Kia Forum and were soon joined by Billie Eilish for the first surprise of the night. The lyrics are surprisingly astute: "If I lose everything in the fire / I'm sending all my love to you.'

After their set, Green Day frontman Billie Joe Armstrong hugged actor Billy Crystal, who was there to welcome to the crowd at the Kia Forum.

"Our goal is simple tonight, to spend more money than the Dodgers spent on free agents," he joked. He told the audience U2 offered the first big donation of the night: \$1 million

Crystal said he was wearing the clothes he had on when he evacuated. He lost his home in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood that he lived in for 46 years.

Surprise

Is there any band more Southern California in spirit and geography than the Red Hot Chili Peppers? Bassist Flea did a handstand on stage wearing only a Speedo before they launched into one of their countless odes to the state: "Dani California," "Californication" and "Under the Bridge.

The first true-blue Los Angeles moment came from a surprise performance by Dr. Dre. The progenitor of West Coast hip-hop tackled "Still D.R.E." with Anderson .Paak and Sheila E. before pivoting to Tupac

and Dre's classic "California Love." It was followed by the figurehead of Laurel Canyon folk, a moving set

of "Both Sides Now" by Joni Mitchell. Later in the night, the recently reunited, Orange Country ska punk legends No Doubt launched into



Katy Perry performs during the FireAid benefit concert on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, at Intuit Dome in Inglewood,

"I'm Just a Girl," "Don't Speak" and "Spiderwebs," led by frontwoman Gwen Stefani.

Katy Perry was joined by the Pasadena Chorale for "Rise" before launching into "Roar" and "California Gurls." She paraded across the stage with the California state flag in

And Eilish and her brother Finneas, who've called Los Angeles home for their entire lives, performed beautiful acoustic versions of her recent hits "Wildflower," "The Greatest" and "Birds of a Feather."

FireAid spread its performances between two venues, the Kia Forum and Intuit Dome, providing a near

seamless stream of music for nearly six hours. Behind early performances, images of firefighters and the devastation brought forth by the fires appeared on screen.

Olivia Rodrigo, Stevie Wonder, Sting and Pink provided memorable

Stevie Nicks did "Edge of Sev-

enteen," "Stand Back" and "Landslide," and told the story of evacuating her Pacific Palisades home that miraculously did not burn down. Her home is mostly wood, built in 1938, and she theorized its loss would have destroyed the whole street. Earth, Wind & Fire did a med-

ley of their biggest hits: "That's the Way of the World," "Shining Star" and "September." The Black Crowes backed up John Fogerty for "Have You Ever Seen the Rain?" Then the band was joined by Slash. Lil Baby offered a rare hip-hop

break in the night of mostly pop and rock, with his hits "So Sorry" and "Emotionally Scarred."

Survivors

Tate McRae performed her 2020 cut "You Broke Me First" and a cover of Crowded House's "Don't Dream It's Over." Jelly Roll brought country music to the event, performing his hit "I Am Not Okay" and a cover of Bob Seger's "Hollywood Nights" with Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker.

Between sets, survivors telling stories of losing their homes were broadcast throughout the arena, both

in person and in video packages. Non-celebrities brought heart. four daughters and their mother, took the stage and discussed losing four homes in Altadena, California. They introduced the folk rock band Dawes, whose members also were directly affected by the Eaton fire.

Dawes' Taylor Goldsmith lost a portion of the Altadena house he shares with actor-singer Mandy Moore and his home recording studio and instruments were destroyed. Goldsmith's brother and bandmate, Griffin Goldsmith, and his pregnant wife also lost their home in the fire.

Spirits were high. "We're appreciative of this moment. I hope people remember this concert forever," said Scott Jones, 54, who brought his daughter to the concert at the Kia Forum. The Los Angeles-resident and his daughter wore black T-shirts with "First Responders" written across their chests.

"I hope some of the firefighters who are able to attend can come and decompress a little," Jones said. 'They needed it. I'm supportive of what they have done for this city.'

Throughout the show, viewers and attendees were encouraged to donate via FireAidLA.org.

Los Angeles Clippers owner Steve Ballmer and his wife Connie pledged to match all donations made during the live broadcast, doubling the proceeds. Crystal noted that because of their announcement, U2's million dollar donation was worth twice that

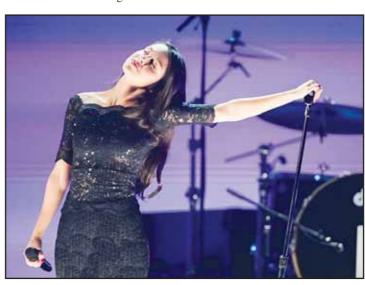
All of the proceeds will go to those affected. A 501(c)(3) was set up, and contributions to FireAid will be distributed under the Annenberg Foundation, which with FireAid has assembled a small committee to advise.



Billie Eilish, left, performs with Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day during the FireAid benefit concert. (AP)



John Fogerty performs during the FireAid benefit concert. (AP)



Olivia Rodrigo performs during the FireAid benefit concert at Intuit Dome in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

Variety

LOS ANGELES: In a stretch of questioning crucial to the defense of A\$AP Rocky, his lawyer on Friday challenged the account of his accuser, who said he suffered a hand injury when the hip-hop performer fired a gun at him in 2021.

Superstar singer Rihanna, Rocky's partner and the mother of their two children, watched from by A\$AP Relli, a former friend of Rocky

Rocky, underwent a second day crossexamination at the Los Angeles trial that left him visibly frustrated and at times angry. S h slipped into

third

about

court for a

Rihanna

minutes into the testimony and sat next to Rocky's mother after coming in through a public entrance. After the lunch break, she entered the courtroom together with Rocky for the first time. She left separately and climbed into an SUV outside the courthouse, saying "I'm good, thank you" when a reporter asked how she was holding up. She had been brought in

secretly on her two previous visits. Relli had testified under prosecution questioning that his hand felt hot when Rocky fired at him on a Hollywood street and his hand was grazed. A photo was shown of scrapes that had torn the skin on his knuckles. (AP)

VATICAN CITY: The Vatican's Apostolic Library tapped Dior's creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri, Italian singer Jovanotti and Icelandic illustrator Kristjana S Williams for an exhibition exploring world tours of the late 19th century.

The exhibition, titled "En Route," is the sixth in a series of events intended as a dialogue between the Vatican library's heritage, dating to the 4th century, and contemporary art.

The library enlisted Chiuri, Jovanotti and Williams to explore the stories of selected travelers, and the contemporary meaning of a recently discovered collection of 1,200 newspapers gathered from remote corners of the world by the diplomat and scholar Cesare Poma during the late 19th and

early 20th centuries. Chiuri focused on six Victorian-era women who defied conventions by traveling the world on their own. She worked with the Chanakya School of Craft in India to create tapestries depicting the routes they traveled. (AP)

NEW YORK: CBS says it will turn over an unedited transcript of its October interview with Ka-mala Harris to the Federal Com-munications Commission, part of President Donald Trump's ongoing fight with the network over how it handled a story about his opponent.

Trump sued CBS for \$10 million over the "60 Minutes" interview, claiming it was deceptively edited to make Harris look good. Published reports said that CBS' parent company, Paramount, has been talking to Trump's lawyers about a settlement.

The network said Friday that it was compelled by Brendan Carr, Trump's appointee as FCC chairman, to turn over the transcripts and camera feeds of the interview for a parallel investigation by the commission. "60 Minutes" has resisted releasing transcripts for this and all of its interviews, to avoid second-guessing of its editing process.

The case, particularly a poten-

tial settlement, is being closely watched by advocates for press freedom and by journalists within CBS, whose lawyers called Trump's lawsuit "completely without merit" and promised to vigorously fight it after it was filed.

The Harris interview initially drew attention because CBS News showed Harris giving completely different responses to a question posed by correspondent Bill Whitaker in clips that were aired on "Face the Nation" on Oct. (AP)

Conference to feature over 50 lectures, 10 workshops

Radiology Conference to focus on AI, diagnosis advances

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: The 2025 Radiology Conference will start next Thursday and will continue until Feb 8, 2025 with the theme, "A Vision for the Future," under the patronage of Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi.

In a press statement, Head of the Radiology and Radiotherapy Departments Council Dr. Buthaina Al-Kandari revealed "this year's conference comes at a time when the radiology sector is witnessing unprecedented developments, especially in the fields of artificial intelligence and advanced

applications in diagnostic and therapeutic radiology. The theme of the conference reflects our vision characterized by great progress in radiology technologies, which opens new horizons in the accurate diagnosis of diseases in their early stages and improve the quality of health care.'

She said the conference reflects an ongoing commitment to develop this specialization; affirming the importance of exchanging expertise and scientific knowledge to develop health services. She pointed out that investing in training national competencies and supporting innovations are essential parts of the role of the Radiology Departments Council in leading the specialization towards a more advanced and innovative future.

Meanwhile, Chairperson of the conference Dr. Khalida Al-Asousi disclosed that this year's conference focuses on head and neck imaging; thereby, highlighting the role of modern technologies, including artificial intelligence, in achieving higher accuracy in diagnosis and effective treatment.

She stated that the scientific program includes more than 50 scientific lectures and 10 specialized workshops, with the participation of international experts and lecturers from Arab and Gulf countries.

She indicated that the conference is distinguished by dedicated scientific tracks, including the doctors' track, which covers diagnostic and therapeutic aspects using modern radiology techniques; in addition to the radiology technicians' track, which focuses on developing technical skills and enhancing practical efficiency, and the board doctors' track that presents lectures and workshops within the continuing education system.

She clarified that the conference is not limited to being a platform for exchanging knowledge, as it also seeks to strengthen the link between medical specializations, which is positively reflected on the quality of health care.

She called on all those interested in the field of radiology and related specializations to participate in this renowned event, and benefit from the scientific and training opportuni-

First in 20 years

US approves painkiller to fight opioid addiction risk

WASHINGTON, Feb 1, (AP): Federal officials on Thursday approved a new type of pain pill designed to eliminate the risks of addiction and overdose associated with opioid medications like Vicodin and OxyContin.

The US Food and Drug Administration said it approved Vertex Pharmaceuticals' Journavx for short-term pain that often follows surgery or injuries.

It's the first new pharmaceutical approach to treating pain in more than 20 years, offering an alternative to both opioids and over-the-counter medications like ibuprofen and acetaminophen. But the medication's modest effectiveness and lengthy development process underscore the challenges of finding new ways to manage pain.

Studies in more than 870 patients with acute pain due to foot and abdominal surgeries showed Vertex's drug provided more relief than a dummy pill but didn't outperform a common opioid-acetaminophen combination

"It's not a slam dunk on effectiveness," said Michael Schuh of the Mayo Clinic, a pharmacist and pain medicine expert who was not involved in the research. "But it is a slam dunk in that it's a very different pathway and mechanism of action. So, I think that shows a lot promise."

The new drug will carry a list price of \$15.50 per pill, making it many times more expensive than comparable opioids, which are often available as generics for \$1 or less.

Vertex began researching the drug in the 2000s, when overdoses were rocketing upward, principally driven by mass prescribing of opioid painkillers for common ailments like arthritis and back pain. Prescriptions have fallen sharply in the last decade and the current wave of the opioid epidemic is mainly due to illicit fentanyl, not pharmaceutical medicines.

Chemical

Opioids reduce pain by binding to receptors in the brain that receive nerve signals from different parts of the body. Those chemical interactions also give

rise to opioids' addictive effects. Vertex's drug works differently, blocking proteins that trigger pain signals that are later sent to the brain.

"In trying to develop medicines that don't have the addictive risks of opioid medicines, a key factor is working to block pain signaling before it gets to the brain," Vertex's Dr. David Altshuler, told The Associated Press last

Commonly reported side effects with the drug were nausea, constipation, itching, rash and headache.

"The new medication has side effect profiles that are inherently, not only different, but don't involve the risk of substance abuse and other key side effects associated with opioids," said Dr. Charles Argoff of the Albany Medical Center, who consulted for Vertex on the drug's development.

The initial concept to focus on pain-

signaling proteins came out of research involving people with a rare hereditary condition that causes insensitivity to

Vertex has attracted interest from Wall Street for its ambitious drug pipeline that involves winning FDA approval for multiple drugs across several forms of chronic pain, which generally represents a bigger financial opportunity than acute pain.

But the Boston drugmaker's share price plummeted in December when Vertex reported disappointing midstage results in a study of patients with chronic nerve pain affecting the lower back and legs. The drug didn't perform significantly better than placebo, the re-

Biotechnology

"We believe the data reflect a near worst-case scenario for this key pipeline program," biotechnology analyst Brian Abrahams said in a research note to investors, adding that the results jeopardized estimates that Vertex's pipeline could be worth billions across multiple forms of pain.

Still, Vertex executives said they plan to move forward with a new, latestage study of the drug, theorizing that a different trial design could yield better results and pave the way for FDA approval in chronic pain.

In another development, an arrest warrant has been issued for a New York doctor indicted on Friday by a Louisiana grand jury for allegedly prescribing abortion pills online to a pregnant minor in the Deep South state, which has one of the strictest near-total abortion bans in the country.

Grand jurors at the District Court for the Parish of West Baton Rouge unanimously issued an indictment against Dr. Margaret Carpenter; her company, Nightingale Medical, PC; and the minor's mother. All three were charged with criminal abortion by means of abortion-inducing drugs, a felony.

In addition to Carter, an arrest warrant was issued for the mother, who has not been publicly identified to protect the identity of the minor. District Attorney Tony Clayton told The Associated Press that the mother turned herself in to police on Friday

The case appears to be the first instance of criminal charges against a doctor accused of sending abortion pills to another state, at least since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022 and opened the door for states to have strict anti-abortion

"We expect Dr. Carpenter to come to Louisiana and answer to these charges, and if 12 people (a jury) think she's innocent then, let it go," Clayton said.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a video posted on social media, "I will never, under any circumstances, turn this doctor over to the state of Louisiana under any extradition requests,' signaling a potential legal battle between the states.



KUNA photo

A group photo from the Gastroenterology and Liver Association conference.

Minister highlights Kuwait's commitment to medical progress

Kuwait makes major strides in digestive, liver disease care led by national medics

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: Kuwait has made significant strides in the treatment of digestive system and liver diseases, driven by the dedication of national medical professionals and strategic collaboration with international institutions, reports Al-Sevassah daily.

Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi highlighted these achievements in his opening address at the third conference of the Gastroenterology and Liver Association, held on Friday. The event aims to showcase the latest

advancements in research, diagnosis and treatment methodologies for digestive and liver diseases, reinforcing Kuwait's commitment to medical progress.

Dr. Al-Awadhi emphasized the pivotal role of the Haya Al-Habib Digestive System Center at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital, which has become a hub for research and medical studies.

Over the past five years, the center has published more than 30 scientific studies in internationally recognized conferences and journals, solidifying its reputation as a center of excellence in Kuwait's healthcare sector.

Another notable milestone is the Thunayan Al Ghanim Digestive System Center at Al Amiri Hospital, which received prestigious international accreditation as the first Middle East training center for inflammatory bowel disease diagnosis by the International Bowel Ultrasound Organization (IBUS).

This accreditation highlights Kuwait's leadership in advanced medical training and research.

Kuwait has also made remarkable progress in liver transplantation. The Liver Transplant Unit at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital has successfully performed more than 123 liver transplants in coordination with international medical institutions.

This achievement underscores Kuwait's ability to provide world-class healthcare services while collaborating with global medical experts.

Dr. Al-Awadhi also highlighted the advancements at the Gastroenterology Department at Jahra Hospital, which specializes in minimally invasive procedures. The hospital has conducted over

2,000 complex interventional endoscopic surgeries in the past year alone, including precision colon tumor removal procedures that eliminate the need for traditional surgical intervention. Additionally, 1,200 ultrasound-guid-

ed cases have been performed, showcasing Kuwait's adoption of cutting-edge medical technologies.

The minister credited these achievements to the unwavering support of Kuwait's leadership and the Ministry of Health's vision to enhance medical services. He emphasized that collaboration with leading local and international institutions will further bolster Kuwait's position in global healthcare. By integrating advanced technologies and research-driven practices, Kuwait

continues to provide innovative, highquality medical care. Meanwhile, Dr. Hiba Al-Farhan,

head of the organizing committee, underscored the conference's goal of unifying medical efforts to achieve excellence in digestive and liver disease treatment. The three-day event includes specialized workshops designed to enhance doctors' scientific and practical skills, covering critical topics such as:

■ Scientific research design and preparation

■ Liver stiffness measurement and fibrosis detection using state-of-the-art techniques

■ Advanced gastrointestinal bleeding management ■ New diagnostic methods for function-

al movement of the digestive tract

As Kuwait continues its journey of medical advancement, the conference reaffirms its commitment to fostering innovation, enhancing medical expertise and providing top-tier healthcare services.

Dark chocolate, almonds lower 'bad' cholesterol

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: A recent study indicates that incorporating dark chocolate and almonds into your diet may help reduce low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, commonly known as "bad" cholesterol, within just four weeks

The research published in the Journal of the American Heart Association, conducted by researchers from Pennsylvania State University and Tufts University in Boston, involved 48 overweight and obese

participants aged 30 to 70.

The objective was to assess the impact of dark

Glaucoma screening

Foreign Body removal

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening

chocolate, cocoa, and almonds on risk factors for coronary heart disease, a leading cause of death worldwide.

Over the course of the study, participants followed a controlled diet with four distinct phases:

Control Phase: No consumption of the study foods Almond Phase: Daily intake of 42.5 grams of al-

Dark Chocolate and Cocoa Phase: Daily consumption of 43 grams of dark chocolate combined with 18 grams of cocoa powder

Combined Phase: Daily intake of both almonds and dark chocolate with cocoa powder

The findings revealed that consuming almonds alone led to a 7 percent reduction in LDL cholesterol

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Philadelphia 76ers' Adem Bona, right, and Denver Nuggets' Julian Strawther reach for a loose ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)



Golden State Warriors guard Moses Moody (4) shoots against Phoenix Suns center Mason Plumlee during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

Suns blow out Warriors as Curry goes cold from deep

Cunningham celebrates All-Star selection with 40 points

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb 1, (AP): Devin Booker had 31 points and 11 assists, Kevin Durant scored 19 points against his former team and the Phoenix Suns ran away from the Golden State Warriors for a 130-105 victory Friday night.

Nick Richards added 14 points and 16 rebounds and Bradley Beal had 21 points off the bench for Phoenix.

Warriors star Stephen Curry didn't score until hitting a short jumper 7:38 before halftime on just his second shot of the game and finished with 14 points - going 1 for 6 from 3-point range. He missed his initial four tries from deep before connecting with 11:12 remaining in the game.

Moses Moody came off the bench to score 17 points for Golden State, hoping to build momentum from an impressive 116-109 victory over Western Conference-leading Oklahoma City on Wednesday night.

Pistons 117, Mavericks 102

In Detroit, Cade Cunningham scored 40 points a day after being selected as an All-Star reserve, helping the Detroit Pistons beat the Dallas Mavericks.

Cunningham matched a season high for points on 17-of-30 shooting. He added six rebounds and four assists while falling three points of his career-best 43 points.

Detroit snapped a three-game losing streak. Tobias Harris added 17 points and Jalen Duren had 16 points and 13

Clippers 112, Hornets 104

In Charlotte, Norman Powell scored 27 points, Kawhi Leonard added 21 points and nine rebounds, and the Los Angeles Clippers held off the pesky Charlotte Hornets

All-Star James Harden finished with 14 points and 10 assists for the Clippers, while Ivica Zubac had 14 points and 11 rebounds. The Clippers built a 10-point lead in the third quarter but couldn't completely shake the Hornets (12-33) until late in the game.

Bulls 122, Raptors 106

In Toronto, Coby White scored 25 points, Nikola Vucevic had 21 points and 12 rebounds and the Chicago Bulls beat the Raptors 122-106 to end Toronto's season-best winning

Jalen Smith added a season-high 17 points, Josh Giddey

had 15 and Matas Buzelis added 12 to help the Bulls win their third straight north of the border.

Scottie Barnes had 20 and 10 rebounds, RJ Barrett scored 19 points and Immanuel Quickley added 14 for the Raptors,

who came in having won seven of eight. Nuggets 137, 76ers 134

In Philadelphia, Nikola Jokic made the tie breaking 3-pointer with 39 seconds left, Jamal Murray had 31 points and 11 assists, and the Denver Nuggets overcame Tyrese Maxey's 42 points to beat the Philadelphia 76ers.

Jokic finished with 28 points, 13 assists and nine rebounds, just missing what would have been his NBA-leading 22nd triple-double.

Michael Porter Jr. scored 24 points and Julian Strawther had 18 off the bench as Denver ended a three-game losing streak. Maxey also had nine assists, but it wasn't enough to extend the 76ers' four-game winning streak. Guerschon Yabusele set a career high with 28 points and Kelly Oubre Jr. added 27

Spurs 144, Bucks 118

In San Antonio, Victor Wembanyama had 30 points, 14 rebounds and six blocks and the San Antonio Spurs had a season

Six-month contract signed with Santos

high in points to overcome 35 points and 13 rebounds from Giannis Antetokounmpo and beat the Milwaukee Bucks.

Keldon Johnson added 24 points and Stephon Castle had 20 as San Antonio snapped a two-game skid and won for just

the second time in seven games. Damian Lillard had 22 points for Milwaukee. Khris Middleton added 21.

Wembanyama was 9 for 20 from the field in an dynamic showing one day after being named to his first All-Star Game as a Western Conference reserve.

Celtics 118, Pelicans116 In New Orleans, Jayson Tatum's jumper with 0.7 seconds left gave the Boston Celtics a 118-116 victory over the shorthanded New Orleans Pelicans.

Jaylen Brown scored 28 points and Tatum had 27 as the Celtics handed the Pelicans their fifth straight loss. New Orleans lost Dejounte Murray to a lower right leg injury in the first quarter.

Tatum had 22 points through three quarters before being held in check for much of the fourth. But the Celtics went to him after CJ McCollum's tying basket with 24 seconds left and he hit the eventual winner over McCollum from the left wing.

NBA trade deadline is approaching

Butler and Fox possibly available for teams looking to make a deal

MIAMI, Feb 1, (AP): Jimmy Butler remains part of the Miami Heat, for now. De'Aaron Fox is still with the Sacramento Kings, for now. And Golden State coach Steve Kerr seemed to indicate that the Warriors are seriously weighing their options.

It's NBA trade deadline countdown

There could be chaos. There might not be much of anything. By Thursday afternoon's deadline, there will be answers - although perhaps not the answers some fans are looking for from their teams.

"We don't have enough to separate ourselves from the rest of the West," Kerr said Friday before Golden State played Phoenix. "The point is, we're not in a position where we can just say, 'No, we're good. Let's stand pat.' That's the reality of where we are.

Butler wants a trade out of Miami and the Heat are trying to accommodate him; Golden State is believed to be one of the places where he'd like to land. Another is Phoenix, a team still looking to move out of the Western Conference's play-in range and secure one of the six guaranteed playoff

"The front office, regardless of your record, is always trying to make your team better, trying to find ways to improve," Suns coach Mike Budenholzer said Friday. "They have the same mindset of our team, of our players - we're always trying to get better. I'm happy with the group. We feel like we've got a very good team. Gonna coach them up and if there's any changes, then I think it's going to be made to improve us. I don't really have any idea if anything will happen.

Fox's future has been a talking point in Sacramento for the last several days, and Kings teammate DeMar DeRozan told FanDuel on Friday that the uncer-

tainty of it all is weighing on his mind. "Not knowing the future of that, it does make it tougher," DeRozan said.

This much is certain: San Antonio star Victor Wembanyama is not getting traded by the Spurs before Thursday's

The Spurs have been mentioned as a possible suitor for Fox, the Sacramento point guard who could be on the move. But the whole notion - trading players is still something that seems odd to Wembanyama.

"Every team has made trades," Wembanyama said Friday night after San Antonio downed Milwaukee. "It's still something hard to realize that you can be traded, kind of like an object. It's super weird."

The Heat left Miami for a four-game road trip on Friday that won't bring them back home until after the trade deadline. Butler wasn't on the trip he's still serving an indefinite suspension that will last at least three more games - but it remains entirely possible that the names of those players on the flight Friday and the names of players who land in Miami when the trip ends will be different.

"We've got all the chaos going on," Heat captain Bam Adebayo said. "But these are the times where we go on the road and get that collective grit and huddle together and depend on one another.'

Kerr said he and Warriors general manager Mike Dunleavy speak daily about what's happening. Warriors guard Stephen Curry is still one of the game's best players, and there have been times this season - like a win over Oklahoma City earlier this week - when Golden State shows its potential. There have also been plenty of times when it seems like Curry and the Warriors need help to get back to title contention.

"Mike's doing his due diligence, doing his job," Kerr said. "If there's something that makes sense, he's going to do it. And if not, then I'm very comfortable going forward with this team because I know what we're capable of and I believe in the guys.'

Neymar returns to boyhood club, and everyone's celebrating

SANTOS, Brazil, Feb 1, (AP): A tearful Neymar was welcomed back to his boyhood club on Friday by thousands of Santos fans and a concert in the home stadium beneath an electronic sign saying, "The prince is back.'

The 32-year-old signed a sixmonth contract, which he said could be extended.

Nevmar later admitted his return was also due to his feeling unhappy at Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal earlier this year as he struggled to get playing time. He said he would be ready to play for Santos at least 30 minutes in a match scheduled for Saturday if he was given the go-ahead by local soccer authorities.

About 20,000 raucous Santos fans filled their Vila Belmiro Stadium in the rain outside Sao Paulo to celebrate the Brazilian's return.

His evening arrival highlighted by fireworks capped a three-hour fiesta which also featured local singers.

"I am very happy. We lived great moments here. There's still a lot that could come," Neymar said on the

Neymar said at a media conference that he and his family had adapted well to Saudi Arabia, but his lack of playing time since his return from an ACL injury - he hasn't played since November - forced his move.

"Some decisions are not about soccer logic," Neymar said. "I started getting sad in training sessions (at Al-Hilal), and it wasn't good for my head. So there was the chance to come back and I did not think twice. Since the first day I decided I wanted to come back, I told my father (and agent) and it all worked.

The striker signed his contract upon arrival and added it is "too soon to speak" about extending his deal until the 2026 World Cup, which he says will be the last he will play in his career. He also said his return home is a "rescue" for his own

"Santos gave me the chance to come back. I gave away a lot of things to be here. It was a perfect marriage at an unimaginable moment for both parts. Still, it happened," Neymar said. "We have a six-month contract that can obviously be extended. Two weeks ago I didn't even think I would

Neymar also said he has "one more thing to win, a mission that will be the

"I am going after this World Cup trophy in any way I can. I have goals," said Neymar, who is Brazil's all-time top goal scorer with 79 goals in 125 matches.

Shortly before, Neymar greeted his future teammates and club executives at the Santos training ground.

Neymar's private jet landed in the Sao Paulo state countryside from Saudi Arabia in the morning but he requested a few hours of rest before being flown into Santos by helicop-

Banners reading "The prince is back" were selling for 10 reais (\$1.50) outside the 20,000-seat Vila Belmiro Stadium.

Graffiti inspired by artificial intelligence outside the stadium showed Neymar looking more mature and with a crown on his head - no small feat in a city where Pelé was king for decades until he died in December 2022 at age 82.

Video posted by Santos on social owed Neymar not wearing the No. 11 that was his during his first spell from 2009-13. He will wear Pelé's No. 10.

"It will be an honor to wear this jersey," Neymar said in the video.

Saudi club Al-Hilal terminated Neymar's contract with mutual consent this week, six months early, after playing only seven matches and scoring once since September 2023. The ACL injury sidelined him for a year until October. Al-Hilal said Neymar could no longer perform like he used

Neymar also left Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain to criticism, even though he delivered silverware and goals. On Thursday, he said he hopes to get some love back home, where he is revered.

Former teammates appeared in a video to congratulate Neymar on the move, including Luis Suárez, Gianluigi Buffon, Andres Iniesta and Ro-

Neymar played 225 matches for Santos in his first spell. He scored 138 goals, many of them key to winning six titles at the Brazilian giant, which was relegated in 2023 and returned to the top division last year.

"For us, Neymar's return is a rebirth," said Victor Hugo Arantes, 45, an event producer in Santos. "We weren't expecting this. Neymar could play anywhere else, he has the level to be in top leagues. I think his heart spoke louder.'

Neymar was the most expensive player in soccer history when he transferred from Barcelona to PSG for 222 million euros (then \$262 million) in 2017. He was sold to Al-Hilal in 2023 for 90 million euros (\$94 mil-

Anderson Souza, 43, lives in Santos and is not a supporter of the club. But he is one of those who believes Neymar will put the city back on the map after some tough times.

"Pelé died, the team was relegated, there was a lot of gloom. I hope he is bringing some energy back, people need it," Souza said. "But he needs to know that people will want him to perform, to make an effort for them, to be at his best. Santos fans love him, but they are not fools.'

Neymar said soccer fans like Souza do not need to worry.

"I am not here to take a stroll, I didn't come to stay home on my couch," Neymar said. "I came after my happiness as a soccer player and to help Santos.'



Neymar waves to fans during his presentation ceremony after signing a six-month contract with Santos FC at Vila Belmiro Stadium in Santos, Brazil. (AP)

Required for Academic Year 2025-26 at Private American School

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- Interested applicants may apply through our website at the following link: https://www.abs.edu.kw/careers/abs

TALLINN, Estonia, Feb 1, (AP): Niina Petrokina fell, got back up, and complet-

ed the skate of her life. A freak fall on a transition between

jumps threatened to derail Petrokina's bid for the European figure skating title but she recovered with a program that otherwise bordered on flawless to win a surprise gold medal on Friday.

It was a highlight for figure skating fans at an event which has largely been overshadowed by the deaths of skaters, coaches and their families in a mid-air collision between a passenger jet and military helicopter near Washington,

It was a big moment, too, for the small country of Estonia, which had never won a major figure skating title before and now has a gold on home ice.

Before Friday's free skate, the standout achievement of Petrokina's career was a bronze at Skate America over a year ago. She will head to the world championships in Boston in March as an unexpected medal contender.

As she skated to the soundtrack of the movie "Dune," the cheers from

Petrokina's home crowd grew louder with each successful jump. After completing the skate, Petrokina knelt on



Petrokina wins surprise European figure skating gold

Gold medalist Niina Petrokina of Estonia, centre, silver medalist Anastasiia Gubanova of Georgia, left, and bronze medalist Belgium's Nina Pinzarrone pose with their medals during the victory ceremony for women free skating competition in the ISU European Figure Skating Championships, Tallinn, Estonia. (AP)

the ice before waving to the crowd. Then she had to wait for the last skater, short-program leader Anastasiia Gubanova, to finish. When Petrokina's victory was confirmed, she shook her head in disbelief.

Petrokina said she was feeling "really, really big happiness," and paid tribute to the crowd. "Thank you everyone who come here and support me and all skaters. We did a big job today.'

Asked when she knew she was on track to win, Petrokina said with a smile: "After falling."

Georgian skater Gubanova, the 2023 European champion, took silver for the second year running on 198.61 and Belgium's Nina Pinzarrone the bronze on 191.44. Last year's champion Loena Hendrickx missed the event with injury.

The International Skating Union president, Jae Youl Kim, told The Associated Press on Friday there would be plans to honor those who died in the crash when Boston hosts the world championships.

Sheikh Sabah Badr Al-Sabah welcomes delegations to second Friendly International Volleyball Tournament

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Badr Al-Sabah warmly welcomed the delegations participating in the second Friendly International Tournament of Salwa Al-Sabah Club for Women's Volleyball, which kicked off last Thursday and will run until February 5.

Sheikh Al-Sabah expressed his delight over the participation of Gulf, Arab, and international teams in this tournament, now in its second

He highlighted the success of the first edition, which underscores the exceptional efforts of the Board of Directors of Salwa Al-Sabah Club, led by Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad. These efforts contribute significantly to the development of women's volleyball and provide players with valuable experience through interactions with diverse international and Arab volleyball schools.

This statement was made during the opening ceremony of the tournament, attended by the President and members of Salwa Al-Sabah Club, led by Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad, Ali Al-Kuwari, President of the Qatari and West Asian Volleyball Federations, Dr. Jaber Al-Marri, President of the Kuwaiti Volleyball Federation, Assistant Secretary Nayef Al-Khamili, and several Kuwaiti ambassadors and heads of

On his part, Dr. Jaber Al-Marri, President of the Kuwaiti Volleyball Federation, affirmed that the Federation has committed all necessary resources to ensure the tournament's success, including providing experienced referees and offering support to Salwa Club. He emphasized that the Federation is determined to make the tournament a success, especially since it is being hosted in Kuwait.

On the first day of the tournament, Salwa

Club defeated the Emirati Fatima Bint Mubarak Academy 3-0. On the second day, the Tunisian national team triumphed over Saudi Al-Ula Club 3-0, while Lebanon's Al-Shabiba Al-Bouchrieh beat the Qatari national team 3-0, and the Swiss Geneva Club won 3-1 against Iraq's Akada Ankawa.

Saudi Al-Ula defeat the Qatari national team 3-1, and Al-Shabiba Al-Bouchrieh beat the Tunisian national team 3-0.

Today's Fixtures

Akada Ankawa vs. Fatima Bint Mubarak Academy

Al-Shabiba vs. Al-Ula

Tunisian national team vs. Qatari national

Salwa Al-Sabah vs. Swiss Geneva The tournament continues to showcase intense competition, with teams from around the world vying for top honors.



Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Badr Al-Sabah opens the tournament in the presence of Sheikha Naima Al Ahmad

Dupont shines, France routs Wales in Six Nations opener

Ntamack red card overshadows big win

PARIS, Feb 1, (AP): Superstar scrumhalf Antoine Dupont conducted France's clinical dismantling of Wales by 43-0 to begin its quest for the Six Nations title.

Dupont played only 50 minutes, by which point France was out of sight of the overwhelmed Welsh on the scoreboard.

He set up three of their four first-half tries for a 28-0 lead at the break, and France went on to score seven in total in the drizzle at the Stade de France. Wales, a 28-point underdog, had its national record losing streak extended to 13 tests since the 2023 Rugby World Cup, and its seventh consecutive loss

in the tournament equaled its Six Nations era record from 2002-03. Plus, the Welsh failed to score a point in the tournament for the first time in

27 years, when France won 51-0 at Wembley Stadium.

The only blemish for France was a late red card for flyhalf Romain Ntamack, playing his first test in 17 months. Ntamack shoulder-charged the head of already-tackled Wales back Ben Thomas and looks set to miss at least next weekend's visit to England.

Dupont was back at the Six Nations after his successful sevens sabbatical and created two tries for right winger Theo Attissogbe in a first half that ended with him creating left winger Louis Bielle-Biarrey's second try and the bonus-point fourth right on halftime.

He's the only player in the Six Nations era to assist on at least three tries twice, according to Opta statistics. He set up four against Italy in 2021.

With victory well in hand, Dupont and the entire tight five in the pack were replaced with 30 minutes to go.

Five minutes later, replacement hooker Julien Marchand dotted down following a well-worked lineout drive. Center Emilien Gailleton, who had only just replaced Thomas Ramos,

added the sixth try when he was set up by a Ntamack cross-field kick. Even with a player less, the French bullied Wales and back-rower Gregory

Alldritt's late pick-and-go try completed a miserable night for Wales. Ramos converted the first four tries and moved past Christophe Lamaison into second place all-time on France's list of scorers with 387 points. He

could overtake Frederic Michalak's record of 436 in this tournament. A desperate Wales goes to Italy next Saturday. France is on the road for its next three games, and Dupont expects a torrid

time in England then in Ireland in Round 4. From a quick tapped penalty, Dupont was held up over the line by Tom Rogers in the fourth minute. But he unlocked the defense in the 18th, dum-

mying and then floating a cross-field kick perfectly into Attissogbe's arms. Moments later, Ramos capped a sweeping move by popping a smart pass to the prolific Bielle-Biarrey.

After Wales center Owen Watkin suffered an apparent leg injury and need-

ed help limping off in the 26th, things got worse for the visitors when hooker Evan Lloyd was yellow-carded for a high tackle.

It's hard enough to stop Dupont at full strength, let alone a man down. The inspirational captain showed his explosive running ability when he spotted a gap, broke a tackle, side-stepped into space, and looped a pass to give Attissogbe his second try in the right corner. Dupont then passed from a try-line ruck to give Bielle-Biarrey his second try.



France's Nolann Le Garrec, try to gather the ball during the Six Nations rugby union match between France and Wales at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, outside Paris. (AP)

'Highly motivated to compete'

UAE athletes gear up for 9th Asian Winter Games



This aerial photo taken on Jan. 27, 2025 shows Harbin Ice Hockey Arena in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

HARBIN, China, Feb 1, (Xinhua): Athletes from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are gearing up to compete in the 9th Asian Winter Games, scheduled to be held in Harbin, China, from February 7-14.

Abdullah Al-Rashid, a member of the UAE national skiing team, told Xinhua that he has been undergoing intensive training for the past two months and aims to achieve top rankings in Harbin.

"I hope to raise my country's flag at the 9th Asian Winter Games in China, which is one of the most important global competitions," Al-Rashid said.

Sultan Al-Kindi, another national team member, affirmed his readiness to compete in freestyle skiing events at the Games, describing it as the most significant international competition he has ever participated

Al-Kindi expects tough competition due to the presence of high-caliber international athletes in the event.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Balushi, a slalom skiing champion on the UAE national team, highlighted the benefits of a recent training camp in Georgia, saying it has significantly strengthened the athletes' prepa-

"We used the Georgia training camp to better prepare ourselves for the Asian Winter Games in China, and we hope to achieve positive results," Al-Balushi said.

Ibrahim Ali Khadim, a board member of the UAE Winter Sports Federation, emphasized that the athletes' rigorous training in recent months has positioned them well to compete for medals.

"Ôur players possess a strong competitive spirit and are determined to achieve impressive results in the most important winter sports event in our region," he said.

The UAE delegation for the Games consists of seven athletes specializing in freestyle and slalom skiing, competing in both individual and synchronized events.

Mohammed Moulai, head coach of the UAE skiing team, noted that training sessions will continue until the day before the team departs for Harbin.

"The athletes are highly motivated to compete at a high level, and they recognize that the 9th Asian Winter Games are a crucial milestone in their sporting careers,' Moulai said. He also expressed confidence that China would deliver a world-class tournament that would leave a lasting impression on all participants.

The 9th Asian Winter Games will feature ompetitions in six sports, with 11 disciplines and 64 events.

With a week to go before the opening ceremony of the 2025 Asian Winter Games in Harbin, the Main Media Center (MMC) was officially put into operation.

Located in the Harbin International Conference, Exhibition and Sports Center, the MMC consists of the Main Press Center (MPC) and the International Broadcasting Center (IBC).

The volunteers in the MMC have been ready to provide language and guiding services for registered media and broadcasters, and the foreign currency exchange outlets in the venue are also available. At the official merchandise store of the 9th Asian Winter Games, various kinds of souvenirs including the adorable tiger mascots "Binbin" and 'Nini" of Harbin 2025 are eye-catching.

"The MMC will be in 24-hour operation with a full coverage of the IPTV, or Internet Protocol TV, during the Games," introduced Lyu Zhuangzhi, media operation director of

Coaches see red for blocking VAR monitor in Lens victory

Pierotti scores brace as Lecce moves out of drop zone

enough.

MILAN, Feb 1, (AP): Santiago Pierotti scored twice in the second half and Lecce won at Parma 3-1 to move out the Serie A relegation zone for the first time since early November.

The win followed two heavy defeats for Marco Giampaolo's side and lifted it from 18th to 13th place in the 20-team table.

Lecce showed admirable resilience after seeing a goal disallowed from Nikola Krstović in the 24th minute and then going behind to another video-assisted decision, this time a penalty award that was dispatched by Emanuele Valeri.

But Krstović got the goal his hard work deserved two minutes later and then his assist allowed Argentina-born striker Pierotti to put the visitors ahead after 63 minutes.

A second half substitute, Pierotti made sure of all three points - and only Lecce's second win since mid-December - with a clinching goal in the third minute of stoppage time. The result extended Parma's grim

run of just one league win in its last nine matches. It dropped to 18th.

The coaches of Montpellier and Lens were both sent off for blocking the referee's view of the video review monitor during a turbulent 2-0 win for high flying Lens in Ligue 1.

With 26 minutes gone and visit-

ing Lens 1-0 up, the referee showed a red card to Jean-Louis Gasset and Will Still as they blocked his path to the pitch-side monitor to disallow a second Lens goal. The unusual decision appeared to

confuse both men but it made little difference to the result as Montpellier's recent revival came to a halt. A first-minute strike from An-

golan striker M'Bala Nzola - the fastest in Ligue 1 this season - and

The result lifted them above Lyon and Lille into fifth place, equal on points with the team above it, Nice. Montpellier remained second from bottom, two points above Le Havre, which plays Angers on

Lens' second from debutant Jer-

emy Agbonifo after an hour were

Lecce's Balthazar Pierret and Parma's Mandela Keita, right, in action during the Serie A soccer match between Parma and Lecce at Ennio Tardini Stadium in Parma, Italy. (AP)

A first-half red card for captain Sergio González proved decisive for Leganes as its recent good run ground to a halt in 1-0 home loss to Rayo Vallecano in La Liga.

Leganes had not lost since before Christmas in a five-game run that included a win at home over Atletico Madrid and a point away at Athletic Bilbao. But it was on the back foot for much of the first half and its fortunes were hit seconds before halftime when González pulled down Nteka on the edge of the box and was shown a straight red.

The big center back has one of the best disciplinary records in La Liga this season, with only two yellow cards in 24 games, and the award was harsh. It allowed **Rayo** to push further forward in the second half and the winner came 13 minutes from time through Pathé Ciss.

The Senegal international needed two attempts to score in a goalmouth scramble but he hit the target and Rayo extended its unbeaten league run to eight matches.

There was last-minute drama when the referee awarded a penalty to Leganes but although Valentin Rosier followed up to score after Augusto Batalla saved from Miguel de la Fuente, the referee demanded the kick be retaken.

Hero Batalla saved again to guarantee all three points for Rayo and lift it into sixth. Leganes was



16

The Australian team celebrates after defeating England in Melbourne to win the Women's Ashes cricket series. (AP)

Kuwaiti sports official commends record presence at Harbin 2025

HARBIN, China, Feb 1, (Agencies): Kuwait is set to participate in the 9th Asian Winter Games, held in Harbin, China, from February 7-14, with the largest Arab delegation, according to Fahed Al-Ajmi, Chief of the Kuwaiti mission.

Kuwaiti athletes will compete in four sports: ice hockey, figure skating, speed skating, and curling, Al-Ajmi stated in a press release.

He also confirmed that the Kuwaiti ice hockey team has already arrived in Harbin, the host city of the prestigious pan-Asian event, and is set to face Kyrgyzstan in its opening match.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's curling team will take on Mongolia and Thailand in their respective matchups on Tuesday.

Al-Ajmi highlighted that the tournament will feature over 1,500 athletes from 34 countries, making it one of the most competitive editions of the Asian Winter Games.

A new batch of tickets for the upcoming 2025 Harbin Asian Winter Games went on sale at 3 p.m. on Saturday, according to the organizers.

The initial batch of tickets has been available since January 11 for the public and major clients including the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) family members, national and regional Olympic committees, athletes, broadcasters, and spon-

As the Games approaches, the organizers announced that refunded tickets and those not claimed by major clients within the validity period will be released for public sale.

Tickets on sale include 94 sessions of ice events, including ice hockey, speed skating, short track speed skating, figure skating, and curling. Starting at the same time on Saturday, tickets for all 12 sessions of snow events, including



A group photo of the ice hockey team after its training.

cross-country skiing, freestyle skiing aerials, and half-pipe, will also be available for free. However, spectators will need to reserve them on a first-come, first-served

Purchases for ice event tickets and reservations for snow events can be completed on the official ticketing website (https:tickets.harbin2025.

com) or via the official WeChat ticketing mini-program. Ticket offices at the ice event venues are set to begin

operations on Saturday. The first event of the Games is scheduled to begin on Monday with ice hockey, before the opening ceremony on February 7. The Games will conclude on February 14.

Over 1,270 athletes from 34 coun-

tries and regions across Asia will compete, making this edition of the Winter Games the largest in terms of participating delegations and ath-

Forest moves level on pts with Arsenal after stunning 7-0 win

Chris Wood scores hat trick

LONDON, Feb 1, (AP): Nottingham Forest and striker Chris Wood continued their remarkable seasons in a 7-0 rout of Brighton in the Premier League on Saturday.

Wood, the 33-year-old New Zealand international, scored a hat trick to move to 17 goals in the most prolific Premier League campaign of his career. Only Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (19) and Manchester City's Erling Haaland

(18) have more goals this season. Morgan Gibbs-White, Nec Morgan Gibbs-White, Neco Williams and Jota Silva also scored after an own-goal by Lewis Dunk set the ball rolling at the City Ground for third-place Forest, which is the surprise of the Premier League this season and moved level on 47 points with secondplace Arsenal.

It was Forest's biggest win since the Premier League was formed in 1992.

Forest battled to avoid relegation last season but now has a great chance of qualifying for the Champions League, which would put the club back in Europe's elite - where it was a generation ago when winning the European Cup in 1979 and 1980.

Sunday's big attraction is at the Emirates Stadium where Arsenal takes on Manchester City in what promises to be a grudge game.

City striker Erling Haaland and Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta had to be separated after a late equalizer saved City



Brighton and Hove Albion's Danny Welbeck and Nottingham Forest's Murillo, right, battle for the ball during the Premier League match between Brighton and Nottingham Forest at the City Ground, Nottingham, England. (AP)

a point in the 2-2 draw in Manchester earlier this campaign, which saw Rodri suffer his serious knee injury.
With City's defense still a huge

cause for concern despite its vital Champions League win over Bruges in midweek, Arsenal has to view this game as a chance to show that it has overtaken Pep Guardiola's side in the Premier League pecking order.

Manchester United is at home to Crystal Palace, as Ruben Amorim's side aiming to build on its solid Europa League display in Bucharest on Thursday, with whether Marcus Rashford will leave United on loan still a major topic of conversation.

Tottenham's youngsters guided it to a Europa League win over Swedish side Elfsborg on Thursday, but a visit to Brentford will be a return to Premier League reality for Ange Postecoglou's side, whose defense will suffer against Yoane Wissa and Bryan Mbeumo.

The round of matches ends on Monday with what is always a feisty London derby between Chelsea and West Ham United, which sees new West Ham coach Graham Potter with something to prove as he returns to face the club where he lasted less than

Aston Villa coach Unai Emery said that England striker Ollie Watlins is committed to the club and he is happy

After Villa secured direct qualification for the last-16 of the Champions League, the main topic surrounding the club has been Arsenal's interest in signing Watkins before the transfer window closes on Monday.

Reports suggest that Villa has rejected Arsenal's offer of approximately 60 million pounds (around 75 million U.S. dollars) for Watkins, who has scored 81 goals in 201 appearances since joining from Brentford in 2020.

'Some players prefer to leave and some accept to stay here and commit with our challenges. One of them is Ollie Watkins," Emery told the press before the weekend match away to Wolverhampton rivals. Wanderers.

"He is happy to stay. We asked him how he is feeling every day he is here with Villa and he is happy here, " the Spaniard noted.

The commitment of Ollie Watkins with us is a huge commitment. He appreciates a lot how Villa have always supported him and helped him. Now we need him, like he needed Aston Villa in the last years," continued the coach, who said he was in close contact with the striker.

"I speak to him a lot, he is always adapting to the circumstances we have," commented Emery, who has seen Colombian striker Jhon Duran move to Saudi Pro League side, Al Nassr in a deal that could be worth around 90 million dollars.

Al-Ghanim covers treatment costs for injured Kuwaiti handball stars

By Khaled Al-Enezi Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 1: Kuwait Club Chairman Khaled Al-Ghanim has taken responsibility for the medical treatment of Kuwait handball stars Saleh Al-Moussawi and Fawaz Al-Shammari after they sustained injuries during the 29th World Cup, which concludes this evening with the final match between Croatia and Denmark at the "Unity Arena" hall in Norwav

The Chairman and members of the Kuwait Handball Federation's Board of Directors expressed their sincere gratitude to Al-Ghanim for his generous initiative in supporting the players' recovery following their injuries during the 2025 World Cup.

Meanwhile, two matches are scheduled today as part of the activation tournament for public handball teams. Fahaheel will face Al-Tadamon at 5:00 pm, followed by Al-Qurain against Al-Sulaibikhat at 6:30 pm. Both matches will take place at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex

Al-Sulaibikhat currently leads the standings with 8 points, followed by Al-Qurain with 6 points. Fahaheel and Yarmouk each have 2 points, while Al-Tadamon and Al-Nasr re-

main at the bottom with no points. The showdown between Al-Qurain and Al-Sulaibikhat is expected to be the most intense of the day. Al-Sulaibikhat aims to maintain its undefeated streak after winning all four of its previous matches, while Al-Qurain, having won all three of its games so far, seeks to secure a victory and join Al-Sulaibikhat at the top of the standings.

Denmark and Croatia are set to clash in the final of the 29th IHF Men's World Championship in Norway on Sunday, in a showdown that promises to either make history or fulfill a long-awaited dream.



Khaled Al-Ghanim

For the first time in the tournament's history, the championship was hosted across three nations - Croatia, Denmark, and Norway - kicking off on January 14.

Denmark has been dominant throughout the competition, securing victories over Algeria, Tunisia, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Chile, and Brazil in the group stage before defeating Portugal in the semifinals. The reigning champions are on the verge of making history by claiming their fourth consecutive title, a feat never before achieved in the tournament.

However, Croatia stands in their way, determined to pull off an upset and claim their second world title. Croatia impressed in the group stage with wins over Bahrain, Argentina, Cape Verde, Iceland, and Slovenia, though they suffered a setback against Egypt. They secured their spot in the final with thrilling victories over Hungary in the quarterfinals and France in the semifinals, where they triumphed 31-28 in Zagreb.

Croatia last lifted the World Championship trophy in 2003 in Portugal, when they defeated Germany 34-31. Now, they aim to replicate that success and bring the title home once

Australia hands Sri Lanka biggest loss in test cricket

GALLE, Sri Lanka, Feb 1, (AP): Australia wrapped up the first test against Sri Lanka with a session and a day to spare, handing the hosts their biggest defeat in test cricket on Saturday.

Sri Lanka was skittled out for 247 in their second innings, succumbing to an innings-and-242-run drubbing. Their previous heaviest test defeat was an innings-and-239-run loss to India in Nagpur in 2017. Spinners Matthew Kuhnemann and Nathan Lyon ran

riot, sharing 16 wickets between them as they dismantled Sri Lanka's fragile batting lineup in both innings. Kuhnemann, who had already snared a five-wicket haul in the first innings, finished with figures of nine for 149 - his best in test cricket.

"We started off well with the openers setting the tone," Australia captain Steven Smith said. "Usman (Khawaja) was amazing with that double hundred. He put lot of pressure on the bowlers. Getting 650 allowed us to dictate terms.

"The first day didn't quite reflect the score," Smith added. "It took some spin and we batted exceptionally well. I thought we bowled really well. The thing of having three spinners is that you can keep them fresh and next guy can come and make an impact.

Sri Lanka's resistance was feeble at best. They lost eight wickets in a session before lunch and another seven between lunch and tea, as the defending world champion Australians stamped their authority with smart bowling and exceptional fielding.

Sri Lanka had allowed Australia to rack up a commanding first innings of 654 for six declared. Khawaja's double century, Josh Inglis' debut hundred, and Smith's second test century propelled the visitors into a position of absolute command.

Dinesh Chandimal was the lone warrior in Sri Lanka's first innings, scoring 72, while Jeffrey Vandersay, batting at number nine, brought up a counterattacking half-century in the second innings. His blistering 53 off 47 balls, laced with seven fours and two sixes, was a stark reminder that the pitch had no demons - application was all that was required.

Sri Lanka had hoped Vandersay would delay the inevitable and help them avoid their worst defeat, but with just four runs needed to surpass that unwanted record, he perished recklessly. Sri Lanka's batting lacked partnerships, discipline,

and smart shot selection.

With just two half-centuries in the entire game, Sri Lanka's fragile batting unit is bound to face serious questions. Changes are expected ahead of the second test, which begins in Galle on Thursday.

Advertising:



Australia's Matthew Kuhnemann bowls a delivery during day four of the first test cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)



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