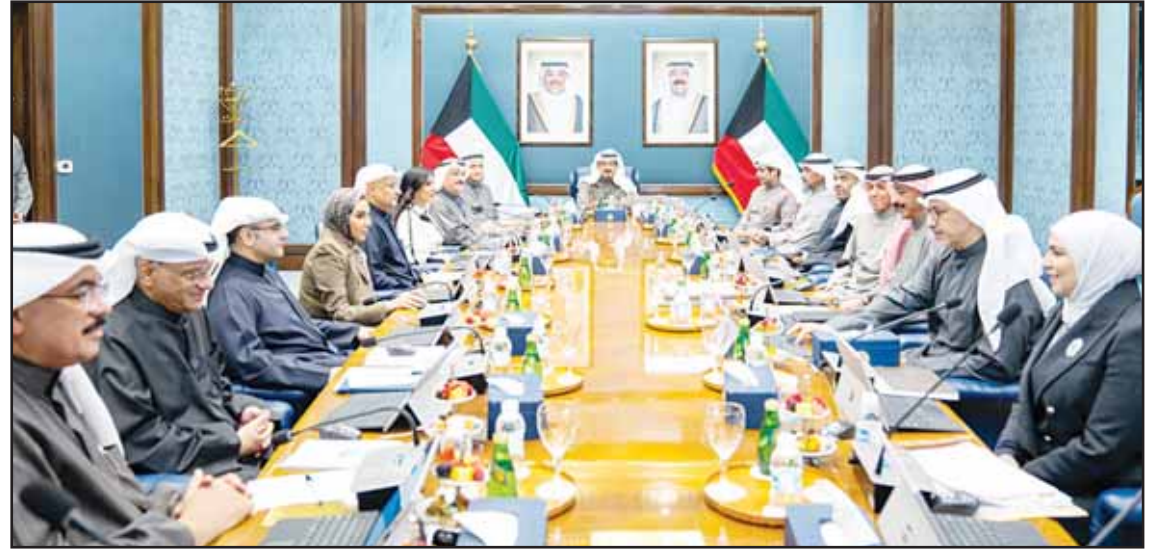




Soccer
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Feb 25-27 public holiday: Cabinet



PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.



His Highness the Amir, alongside His Highness the Crown Prince, receives His Highness the Prime Minister, and the newly-appointed Defense Minister, as the latter takes the oath of office.



Amiri Diwan photos
Newly-appointed Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah takes the constitutional oath before His Highness the Amir.

New defense minister sworn in before Amir

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Tuesday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who presented the newly-appointed Defense Minister.

The newly-appointed Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah took the constitutional oath.

The ceremony was attended by several state officials.

An Amiri order was published Tuesday amending the appointment of Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah as First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, and appointing Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as Minister of Defense.

The Prime Minister shall implement this decree, it shall be published in the official Gazette and be effective from the date of its issuance.

Kuwait resumes work March 2

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): Kuwait Cabinet on Tuesday declared February 25, 26 and 27 a public holiday on the occasion of the National and Liberation Days.

Regular working schedule is to resume on Sunday March 2.

The public holiday is for government bodies, authorities, and institutions, but entities with singular working hours are to decide their own holidays.

Kuwait sovereign wealth fund surpasses \$1 trln for first time

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund, managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), has exceeded the \$1 trillion mark for the first time in its history, according to data from the Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute (SWFI), reports Al-Seyassah daily.

With total assets reaching \$1.029 trillion, Kuwait's fund now ranks as the fifth-largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, up from its previous level of \$980 billion.

Leading the global ranking is Norway's sovereign wealth fund, which manages \$1.74 trillion in assets, followed by the China Investment Corporation (CIC) with \$1.33 trillion.

The China State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) takes third place with \$1.09 trillion, while Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) ranks fourth at \$1.06 trillion.

Reports from 2024 indicated that the Kuwaiti sovereign wealth fund was on track for one of its best financial years, driven by strong global market performance, which significantly boosted its returns and pushed its total assets past the \$1 trillion milestone.

Kuwait sets global standard in cancer treatment, awareness

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): As the world marks World Cancer Day on Tuesday, Kuwait reaffirms its commitment to raising awareness, supporting cancer patients, and providing the latest medical treatments to combat the disease.

Every year on February 4, countries intensify their efforts to show solidarity with cancer patients and improve access to treatment, recalling the World Summit Against Cancer, held in Paris on February 4, 2000, which led to the adoption of the Paris Charter.

This charter established World Cancer Day to promote research, prevention, and treatment efforts globally.

Since then, the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), the largest global organization dedicated to cancer prevention, has been coordinating international efforts to mark this day.

Kuwait remains dedicated to enhancing awareness and delivering high-quality healthcare services to combat cancer and support those affected.

In line with this commitment, Kuwait established the Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC) in 1968, a leading facility that provides specialized care to over 2,000 patients annually.

In 2016, the center's nuclear medicine department received the European certificate of quality, making it the first specialized center in the Gulf and Middle East to achieve this recognition.

In 2018, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) honored KCCC for its outstanding contributions in cancer treatment and research, and its effective collaboration with the IAEA in nuclear medicine advancements.

Continued on Page 5

Pioneering role shines on World Cancer Day

CITRA, telecom firm deal moves forward

KD 16.4m pact

By Mohammed Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) is preparing to sign a contract with a telecommunications company to lease a site for ten years with total revenues of KD 16.4 million, pending approval from the relevant regulatory authorities.

According to informed sources, CITRA's Board of Directors approved the contract during its meeting No. 11/2024. The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers confirmed in a letter dated December 17, 2024 that signing the contract falls within CITRA's jurisdiction.

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KUNA photo
Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq receives Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

Oman's Sultan receives Kuwait First Deputy PM

MUSCAT, Feb 4, (KUNA): Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq received Tuesday Kuwait First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, on the occasion of his visit to the Sultanate.

In a statement, the Interior ministry said that Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef conveyed during the meeting the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, to Sultan Haitham and for the brotherly Omani people further progress and prosperity.

During the meeting, both sides touched on the solid fraternal relations between Kuwait and Oman, as well as ways to enhance them in various fields, especially in the military and security aspects, in a way that serves the interests of the two countries.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of Kuwait to the Sultanate Dr. Mohammad Nasser Al-Hajri.

Experts urge smarter waste management solutions

Kuwait advances green initiatives at third Gulf sustainability forum

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Under the patronage of the Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mishaan, the Third Gulf Forum for Development and Sustainable Projects Management was launched yesterday, in the presence of representatives from ministries, government agencies, and experts, and will continue for two days.

On behalf of the ceremony's sponsor, the Assistant Undersecretary for Planning and Development Affairs at the Ministry of Public Works Eng. Ahmed Al-Saleh said, "The tremendous technological progress in various fields has led to an increase in waste production, and exacerbated the problem of environmental pollution, something that many countries, particularly in the Arab world, suffer from.

One of the biggest dangers of this phenomenon is its contribution to the spread of diseases, as well as its impact on the ecosystem, and the resulting climate change, desertification, and global warming."

Eng. Al-Saleh stressed that the problem of environmental pollution requires efforts to improve the waste management system, raise awareness, and highlight the latest methods in waste management, energy production, and recyclable materials.

He affirmed the importance of community participation in preserving the environment, encouraging investment in renewable energy and clean water, and establishing sustainable projects.

Eng. Al-Saleh affirmed that the forum reflects Kuwait's great interest in sustainable development, focusing on waste recycling, reducing waste quantities, reusing materials, generating energy, and creating green smart cities.

He highlighted the importance of ensuring quality work outputs and a strong system for managing risks and safety, in line with the State of Kuwait's strategy and the "New Kuwait 2035" vision.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Director General of Kuwait Municipality Eng. Maisa Boushahri affirmed that Kuwait Municipality is dedicated to advancing Kuwait City to the forefront of global capitals and cities that integrate the elements and requirements of smart and sustainable cities, while preserving its historical and cultural heritage, in line with the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad.

Continued on Page 5



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq
Assistant Undersecretary for Planning and Development Affairs at the Ministry of Public Works Eng. Ahmed Al-Saleh speaks during the forum.

CAPT clears KD 12mn for T2 digital systems

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Central Agency for Public Tenders has approved the reserve amount of KD12.095 million for information and communications technology (ICT) works for sections 27 and 28 of the contract for package two service buildings and roads leading to the new passenger terminal and parking lots at Kuwait International Airport.

It can be recalled that the newspaper published a report on Jan 28, 2025, stating that the Ministry of Public Works referred the activation of the abovementioned reserve amount to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for auditing, study and approval.

Sources affirmed that the implementation of the specified works within the communications and information technology network has commenced.

This is one of the components of the new passenger terminal project (T2), which aims to electronically link all entities that will operate at the airport after its completion and handover to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The ministry obtained approval from CAPT to activate the reserve amount of KD6 million for the information and communications technology related to the contract, as well as the allocation of an additional amount of KD 6.018 million; hence, the total cost of the required works now stands at KD12.095 million.



8 Kuwait Airways increases flights to London to 16 flights per week



8 Ahli Bank of Kuwait sponsors 2025 Porsche Club Kuwait Festival



9 Zain strategic partner of Kuwait CyberChamps Competition



9 Gulf Bank leads session at LOYAC's 'The Influencer' program



10 NBK celebrates graduation of Moody's credit certificate trainees

News watch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a letter from French President Emmanuel Macron regarding bilateral relations and means to strengthen them.

It also included an invitation to His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince to visit France.

Deputy Foreign Minister, Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Sabah, received the letter on Tuesday, during his reception of French Ambassador to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Amiri Diwan on Tuesday issued the following statement: "In the name of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the gracious Al-Sabah family, the Amiri Diwan extends deep gratitude to citizens and residents of the country, who offered condolences on the demise of Sheikh Duaij Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah." (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held a banquet in honor of BlackRock Chairman and CEO Larry Fink, GIB Chairman and Managing Director Adebayo O. Gunlesi and their accompanying delegation on the occasion of their visit to the country.

His Highness the Prime Minister stressed the government's keenness to enhance the role of foreign investment and develop the economic environment within the framework of achieving the country's ambitious development goals. (KUNA)

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:15	Asr	15:07
Sunrise ..	06:36	Maghrib ..	17:28
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:47

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild to warm and partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-55 km/h causing rising dust over open areas.

By Night: Rather cold to cloudy

Weather

with light to moderate freshening over coastal areas southeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-50 km/h with a chance for suspended dust with a chance for scattered light rain.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	23	11

Kuwait Airport	23	07
Abdaly	24	06
Bubyan	23	08
Jahra	24	09
Failaka Island	24	13
Salmiyah	21	15
Ahmadi	24	09
Jal Aliyah	21	09



KUNA photo
Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah speaking at the 55th regular session of the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights.

Support urged for permanent Gaza ceasefire

Kuwait keen to promote, protect human rights

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed Kuwait's keenness to promote, protect and advance human rights, believing in the importance of respecting them and their close connection to sustainable development.

This came during his opening speech of the 55th regular session of the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights, hosted by Kuwait kicked off Tuesday with the attendance of concerned government agencies in the member states.

Sheikh Jarrah said that Kuwait looks forward to submitting its second national report to the Arab Charter on Human Rights Committee and reviewing its fourth national report within the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, which

confirms Kuwait's keenness to develop the national human rights system.

Kuwait's hosting of this meeting comes within the framework of its humanitarian diplomacy, which is a fundamental pillar of Kuwaiti foreign policy and its commitment to supporting human rights issues in conjunction with its membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2024-2026, he added.

Sheikh Jarrah addressed the current challenges facing the region, including the humanitarian crises resulting from armed conflicts, such as the tragic conditions experienced by the brotherly Palestinian people.

He also called on the international community to take immediate action to support the permanent ceasefire and the full implementation of its provisions and to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid,

reiterating Kuwait's historic and principled position in support of the Palestinian people and their right, like other peoples, to live in dignity and freedom and establish their independent state on their land on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In turn, the Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi, affirmed Kuwait's commitment to promoting and protecting human rights at the national, regional and international levels by hosting the 55th regular session of the Committee.

He stressed the keenness of the member states on the importance of Arab solidarity to confront the current challenges, especially in light of the developments witnessed by the Arab region, with a focus on the serious violations to which Palestine is exposed, which are inconsistent with all international norms and laws.

Drilling in 'Jazza' new oilfield likely to spill out big reserves

Results expected during first half of 2025

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) is expected to announce the results of drilling and exploration operations in Jazza offshore field during the first half of 2025 soon, say sources from the oil sector, hoping that the company's efforts will be crowned with success in discovering huge quantities of oil and gas in this field.

Sources pointed out that the initial results of studies conducted by the company before starting operations in the first phase showed that 'Jazza', which is located in Kuwaiti waters, contains good quantities of hydrocarbon materials. "Therefore, there are aspirations for this field to join the train of success, along with the Nokhatha and Julai'a fields, consider-

ing the company is optimistic about the drilling work in its first plan, which includes drilling six wells," sources explained.

Sources confirmed that the completion of the drilling work for the first phase of offshore exploration, which includes drilling six wells, will be at the beginning of 2027. They said the drilling work for the first phase had tremendous unexpected achievements, as two wells out of six wells were discovered -- a manifestation that the first phase has succeeded by 100 percent so far.

Sources revealed that the start of the second phase of drilling operations in the marine areas is being prepared for the second half of 2026.

In response to a question about the delay in drilling operations for the second phase, sources stressed that focus is better than dispersion in marine exploration operations, especially the Kuwaiti marine areas, which constitute a third of the area of Kuwait. "Thus, the company is working hard to discover about 16 wells, but the early discovery of Nokhatha and Julai'a raised hopes for expanding drilling operations in the future; perhaps, more than what was announced will be explored.

Sources wish that the exploration attempts for the six wells in the first phase will reach 100

percent, indicating that reaching 70 to 80 percent is also a success, taking into consideration that oil experts throughout the world confirmed that marine exploration is not an easy matter as is the case for exploration in land areas.

Sources hinted on the possibility of increasing the production capacity of Julai'a field, which is currently estimated at about 800 million barrels of medium-density oil, in addition to 600 billion standard cubic feet of associated gas, to reach the same level as the offshore Al-Nokhatha field, whose reserves are estimated at about 2.1 billion barrels of light oil and 5.1 trillion standard cubic feet of gas. "This could be done in the future and it is one of the plans that the company is taking into consideration. For example, the beginning of the discovery of oil in the Burgan field was modest until it became the largest oil-producing field in the world," sources asserted.

Sources said the company is intensifying its efforts to bring Nokhatha Al-Bahri and Julai'a into the production line as soon as possible to enhance its strategy to increase oil production to four million barrels. KOC recently announced the discovery of large commercial quantities of hydrocarbon resources in the offshore Nokhatha field, which is the second of its kind in the Kuwaiti marine region.

Amir, Crown Prince, PM felicitate Sri Lanka leader on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations Tuesday to President of Sri Lanka Anura Kumara Dissanayake, on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the president a long healthy life, hoping for Sri Lanka further prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable of con-

gratulations to President of Sri Lanka Anura Kumara Dissanayake, on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

His Highness the Crown Prince wished the president a long healthy life, hoping for Sri Lanka further prosperity.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah then sent a similar cable to President of Sri Lanka Anura Kumara Dissanayake, on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

50% women in ten new dept heads in Commerce Ministry

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: In a significant administrative move, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has promoted 10 department heads, with an equal representation of men and women in the new appointments.

Among those promoted are official spokesperson Abdullah Al-Harz and Fatima Al-Rasheed, previously a supervisor in the minister's office, who has now been appointed as Director of Public Relations and Advertising.

The list of newly promoted directors

includes Marahib Al-Jarallah, Khaled Al-Adwani, Marwa Al-Juaidan, Khuloud Johar, Abdullah Al-Failakawi, Ibrahim Al-Sultan, Shatha Al-Athari, and Athari Abbas.

Meanwhile, the Commercial Control Department has intensified market inspections to monitor prices ahead of Ramadan, ensuring compliance with national trade regulations.

According to Faisal Al-Ansari, Director of Commercial Control, Mondays will be dedicated to inspections of cooperative societies to ensure fair pricing and adherence to consumer protection laws.

Other Voices

World in awe as high stakes technological war unfolds

By Ahmed alsarraf

China has made a significant and alarming breakthrough in its competition with the United States in the field of artificial intelligence.

Its relatively small and semi-anonymous company, DeepSeek, has disrupted the long-standing dominance of American firms in the AI market.

Despite US efforts to restrict China's access to advanced chips from the world's leading manufacturers, DeepSeek has managed to provide AI-powered services at an exceptionally low cost and with far lower energy consumption.

This development has sent shock waves through the American AI industry, contributing to a staggering \$1 trillion loss in the market value of US tech companies.

What makes this achievement even more remarkable is the efficiency with which DeepSeek has reached this level of competitiveness.



alsarraf

While companies like OpenAI have spent around \$100 million solely on training their AI models, DeepSeek claims to have accomplished similar results for less than \$6 million.

Moreover, its models operate with just 2,000 chips -- significantly fewer than their American counterparts -- making the technology not only cost-effective but also accessible enough to be offered to users for free.

In response, major US tech companies have taken aggressive measures to maintain their lead, constructing digital barriers around their AI ecosystems and enforcing sweeping sanctions to prevent chip makers from supplying China with crucial technology.

These restrictions initially hampered Chinese AI development, with DeepSeek's founder, Liang Wenfeng, describing access to advanced chips as the biggest hurdle in their progress.

However, China's rapid advancements have forced a dramatic response from the US government. The Trump administration allocated hundreds of billions of dollars to fortify America's position in AI, particularly by investing in the infrastructure of AI data centers -- an advantage few other nations can match.

Despite these efforts, DeepSeek's progress

has not only challenged American supremacy but also reinvigorated European and British companies, which had all but lost hope of playing a meaningful role in the AI race.

Yet, this technological rivalry comes with its own risks. If users of American AI systems were to migrate en masse to their Chinese counterparts, it could overwhelm the latter's limited computing resources.

This scenario has already played out: DeepSeek was forced to halt new registrations, and its services slowed under the strain -- an issue that American companies, with their vast computing power, do not face.

Predicting the outcome of this race remains difficult. The landscape is evolving at a breathtaking pace, and while US dominance is still underpinned by superior infrastructure, a breakthrough granting China access to supercomputers could completely shift the balance of power.

Amid this high-stakes technological battle, much of the world remains on the sidelines, watching and waiting -- perhaps endlessly, like the characters in Beckett's Waiting for Godot.



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Program launched to promote AI, foster creativity, innovation

By Abdulrahman Al-Shimmari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Dr. Hassan D. Al-Fajjam, Director-General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, has emphasized the importance of initiatives that improve the educational environment and foster creativity and innovation.

His remarks came during the launch of the "Seventh Training Oasis Week," organized by the Higher Institute of Communications and Navigation in collaboration with the Ibn Al-Haytham Center for In-Service Training.

The event aims to highlight the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing education and training through the latest innovative tools and methods. Abbas Al-Samak, Director of the Communications Institute, explained that the

"Training Oasis" seeks to sustain knowledge and strengthen communication with specialists by attracting a distinguished group of experts to lead the training workshops and lectures throughout the week.

He commended the spirit of collaboration among the event organizers and the success of their partnership.

Abdullah Al-Mutawa, Head of the Computer Department and Leader of the Training Oasis Team, underlined the importance of continuously investing in human skill development to keep pace with technological advancements.

He pointed out that artificial intelligence has become a crucial tool in enhancing individual competencies and addressing emerging needs.

Al-Mutawa called for strengthening collaboration between the public and private sectors to support innovation and human capital development.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah and Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi visit a stall.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah visits a medical sector stall at the exhibition.

Farwaniya Governor joins National, Liberation Day festivities

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah participated in the national celebrations organized by the Farwaniya Health Zone at Farwaniya Hospital on Monday on the occasion of the 64th National Day and the 34th Liberation Day of Kuwait.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the event was held in the presence of the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Director of the Farwaniya Health Zone Dr. Mohammad Rashid Al-Rashidi, Director of Farwaniya Hospital Dr. Ali Al-Mutairi, and several officials from various health sectors.

The event included a health and awareness ex-

hibition, with 42 different agencies participating. These organizations provided a range of health and community services, and offered the public valuable guidance and resources.

Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi warmly welcomed Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser, and expressed gratitude for his presence at the celebration and his continued support for the health sector in Farwaniya Governorate, affirming that the Ministry of Health deeply values these efforts.

During an inspection tour, the Farwaniya Governor and the Minister of Health were briefed on the latest developments in medical specialties and

healthcare developments in Kuwait.

At the conclusion of the event, Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser praised the excellent organization of the exhibition.

He highlighted its importance as a health event that contributes to spreading health awareness and enhancing a culture of disease prevention within the community.

The governor also commended the Minister of Health for his dedicated efforts in supporting the development of health services, improving the health system in Kuwait, and ensuring that healthcare services align with global health advancements.

Trio jailed 3 yrs in test paper leak

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Criminal Court postponed the issuance of its ruling on Salman Al-Khalidi's objection to his five-year prison sentence until next month. This move aims to allow more time for the review of the court's appointment of a lawyer for Al-Khalidi, after other lawyers excused

themselves from the case.

Meanwhile, the Misdemeanor Court sentenced the former head of the secret printing press at the Ministry of Education, an employee and a teacher to three years in prison for leaking high school exams and money laundering.

Last month, the court also handed down sentences of up to 10 years to other defendants in the same case.

diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Empowering Kuwaiti women step toward dynamic future'

"FOR some time now, the government institutions in Kuwait have faced an unprecedented administrative vacuum, with leadership positions — ranging from undersecretaries to assistant undersecretaries — remaining vacant for extended periods," columnist **Asrar Jowhar Hayat** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"While such vacancies can stall progress, they also present a unique opportunity: a chance to appoint highly qualified individuals rather than relying on politically motivated placements that have, in some cases, hindered effective governance.



Asrar J. Hayat

Recently, there has been some movement toward filling these vacant positions. Although the pace has been slow, the hope remains that appointments will be made with precision, ensuring that these critical roles are entrusted to capable Kuwaiti professionals who can drive progress and development forward.

"This transitional phase presents an even greater opportunity — one that extends beyond administrative efficiency. It is a moment to empower Kuwaiti women by recognizing their potential and granting them leadership roles that align with their skills and expertise.

"For too long, appointments have largely favored men, despite the constitutional principle of equality. Now is the time to correct this imbalance and ensure that competence, not gender, becomes the sole criterion for selection.

"Encouragingly, the government has begun appointing qualified women in various sectors, a move that deserves strong support. Kuwaiti women have consistently demonstrated their capabilities, excelling in leadership, innovation, and development. Their contributions are not just a source of national pride but a testament to the country's rich pool of talent.

"By prioritizing merit-based appointments and increasing female representation in leadership, Kuwait stands to benefit on multiple fronts. Strengthening women's participation in governance will not only enhance institutional performance but also improve Kuwait's global standing in gender equality — a key factor in shaping the nation's international reputation.

"Empowering Kuwaiti women is not just an administrative necessity; it is a step toward a more progressive, inclusive, and dynamic future. The time to act is now."

Also:

"The latest update on our national financial situation is straightforward: our total revenues — both oil and non-oil — amount to 18. I won't specify whether this is in billions or trillions because, as experience has shown, many seem unable — or unwilling — to grasp the reality of numbers," columnist **Abdul Latif Al-Duaij** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"From this revenue, government salaries alone consume 15, leaving just three. However, this isn't surplus or savings; it is immediately absorbed by subsidies, aid, and essential services.

"In reality, the government must spend an additional six to sustain free and semi-free services for citizens. This leaves us with a clear and undeniable fact: a budget deficit of six billion.

"For decades, a misleading narrative has been pushed by the so-called opposition, claiming that corruption and merchant exploitation are the root of our financial woes.

"The truth is far from this simplistic accusation. There is no grand theft by merchants, nor is there an economic conspiracy draining our resources.

"Every dinar of our national revenue is allocated to public spending, primarily on a population that has depended on the state since the discovery of oil.

"The opposition's attacks on merchants were never about fighting corruption but rather an attempt to dismantle the national and democratic movement that merchants historically represented.

"This, in turn, facilitated the rise of a tribal-religious alliance, championed by anti-democratic forces within the regime.

"The real corruption in Kuwait lies in nepotism, favoritism, and document forgery — practices that have thrived within the political framework of the National Assembly, particularly among opposition MPs.

"Unfortunately, many well-meaning citizens have been misled by these narratives, failing to recognize the true nature of Kuwait's economic crisis.

"The problem is crystal clear: we have a deficit because the state spends more than it earns. Yet, what is even more evident is that cost-cutting and financial austerity alone will not resolve this crisis. A modern society cannot sustain itself through bare-minimum survival strategies.

"The cost of living and the expect-

tations of citizens continue to grow, making spending cuts an impractical and insufficient solution.

"The only viable path forward is to transform the Kuwaiti citizen from a dependent consumer into an active producer. Kuwaitis must take on a greater role in economic productivity, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

"Without this shift, we risk continuing down an unsustainable path — one where financial deficits widen, and economic opportunities diminish.

"The time for action is now. A nation cannot thrive on oil wealth alone, nor can it sustain a system of endless expenditure without a solid foundation of productivity.

"The future of Kuwait depends on its people stepping up to build, create, and contribute — moving from passivity to participation, from consumption to production."

"I am not writing in vain, that is, without insight. Studies indicate that arranging goods in cooperative societies is an 'art'. However, it seems the cooperatives do not follow it. When the consumer enters the cooperative, bread and daily newspapers are supposed to be immediately on his right, but some cooperatives put them in the last corner. Once, Al-Khalidiya Cooperative Society put water bottles inside — at a distance of about half a kilometer from the entrance. I was very upset, so I told the manager: 'Put the water bottles near the cashier at the entrance of the cooperative, because people are thirsty and want to drink water, especially in the hot summer. They do not want to go half a kilometer inside the cooperative to do so.' I told him twice, so they brought the water bottles to the location I pointed out and put them in a container similar to a refrigerator," **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"There is something very wrong with some cooperative societies' administrations. For example, if they see a cart half full of purchases near the elevator or escalator; they order the customer's cart to be pulled away, without thinking about the customer who spent time on purchases, let us say half an hour. The administration pulls this cart without the customer's knowledge. His purchases disappear, as he went up to the first floor to use the bathroom, buy from a store there or to eat on this floor. Yesterday, I bought apples and put them in the cart, then I went to another store to buy bed linen. When I came back, the cart disappeared.

"I was a little tired when I entered the cooperative, but I did not find any chair to sit on, so I went to the manager's office and told him: 'You had earlier placed a comfortable sofa and two metal chairs next to the elevator. Why did you remove them and put boxes of Kleenex? Did you not think about the tired lady or an old man who wants to sit for a while to rest?' The manager did not pay attention to us, so how do cooperatives hire such people as a manager?"



Ahmad Al-Dawas

"O, Ministry of Social Affairs, dismiss this person and others like him. Let the position of manager be taken by a Kuwaiti who loves his country, because if the Kuwaiti is in an Arab country, they will throw him out of the store. He would never imagine that he would get a job in an Arab country, but he would be exposed to insult and abuse; while the Arab here in Kuwait is honored and respected, it is easy for him to get a job, and he does not pay taxes.

"Yesterday, news was published about the government's intention to 'Kuwaitize' the workers selling vegetables in cooperatives. This is a good move, because young Kuwaiti graduates stand in queues for a long time, waiting to get a job; while the doors are opened for expatriates to work in the public and private sectors. What injustice is this?"

"Other Gulf countries noticed the swelling number of expatriates in the government and preceded Kuwait in correcting the defect. In the United Arab Emirates, the responsibility of finding jobs for Emiratis falls on the shoulders of the Emiratization Council, which imposes 'Emiratization' and obliges all sectors to employ citizens. In the Sultanate of Oman, there is an 'Omanization' policy that began 32 years ago, where the government developed training programs for citizens in order to employ them, instead of expatriates. When Saudi youths could no longer find jobs due to the increase in population, Saudi Arabia laid down huge employment programs and expelled thousands of expatriate workers from its territory on April 1, 2013, following the implementation of a new law regarding foreigners. These are procedures aimed at giving employment preference to Saudis in accordance with the 'Saudization' policy, if I may say so."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes/
Mahmoud Attiyeh



KUNA photo
Jordanian Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Dr. Jafar Hassan receives Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah.

Kuwait, Jordan in military ties talk

AMMAN, Feb 4, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah on Monday met with Jordanian Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Dr. Jafar Hassan to discuss ways of strengthening military cooperation.

Kuwait's Defense Ministry said that the meeting between Jordanian Prime Minister and 1st deputy Prime Minister and the delegation accompanying them, had discussed such topics concerning

military cooperation as part of his official visit to the Jordanian Kingdom.

Also adding, both sides mentioned the exchange of experiences, training, and field research in order to enhance their preparedness and strengthen defense capabilities.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yusuf also assured the close relations and these efforts are another step to expand the prospect of cooperation in various fields, especially in enhancing aspects of military cooperation between both armed forces.

Ex-minister appeals

Saudi gets 7 years jail in nationality forgery

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Kuwaiti Court of Cassation, led by Counselor Abdullah Jassim Al-Abdullah, has sentenced a Saudi national to seven years in prison for forging the Kuwaiti citizenship.

The man, employed as a correspondent in the Ministry of Justice, was found guilty of impersonating the son of a Kuwaiti citizen who has gone missing since 1995.

He unlawfully obtained approximately 498,000 Kuwaiti dinars in benefits, including 62,000 dinars in salaries from the Ministry of Justice, 5,750 dinars from the Credit Bank, 20,000 dinars from the Public Authority for Manpower, and 17,000 dinars from Housing Care.

The court also imposed a fine equivalent to the amount fraudulently acquired.

Ex-minister appeals: The Court of Cassation has set Feb 17, 2025, to look into the appeal filed by former Minister Mubarak Al-Harees against the verdict issued by the Ministers Court which put him behind bars for four years with hard labor and ordered him to pay 400,000 dinars in fine for exploiting his position to embezzle public funds.

Death ruling appeal on Feb 18

Al-Mufrej gets 3 years jail, bail till final ruling

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Court of Appeal has scheduled a hearing for February 18 in the case of the murder of Ahmed Al-Jalal.

The Criminal Court had earlier sentenced the accused, a Kuwaiti citizen, to death for killing Al-Jalal last August in the Hadiya area.

During earlier court proceedings, the accused confessed to the crime, but his lawyer argued that he was unaware of his actions at the time, leading the court to appoint a medical committee to assess the defendant's mental state.

Al-Mufrej gets 3 years: The Criminal Court sentenced Abdullah Al-Mufrej to three-year imprisonment with hard labor, imposed a fine of KD 1,000, and granted a bail of KD

500 to suspend the execution of the sentence until the final ruling is issued. The court had previously granted Al-Mufrej release on bail of KD 2,000.

He was charged with broadcasting false news on the X platform and misusing his phone. However, Al-Mufrej denied the charges.

He had been arrested earlier at Kuwait International Airport upon his return from abroad based on a complaint filed by the Ministry of Interior.

MoH worker reinstated: The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of the Court of First Instance, which canceled the decision issued by the undersecretary of the Ministry of Health to terminate the services of an employee because she was absent from work for 15 consecutive days and was hence considered resigned.

The court ruled to reinstate the employee after it was determined that she had not been

absent from work.

During the court session, Lawyer Mohammad Al-Sayegh, representing the plaintiff, stated that his client, who is an employee of the Ministry of Health in one of the hospitals, was surprised by the ministry's decision to terminate her services. The decision was based on her alleged resignation due to 15 consecutive days of absence, and a six-month period was deducted from her service for this absence.

A complaint was filed against the decision, but the administrative authority failed to respond or take any action, which prompted her to file a lawsuit.

Lawyer Al-Sayegh presented a document portfolio to the court to prove his client's presence at the workplace and her completion of the tasks assigned to her, all signed by her.

He demanded the cancellation of the contested decision, along with all the consequences that would follow, most notably her reinstatement to her job.

Litigant qualified, has right to teaching, says court

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Administrative Court of Cassation has denied the Ministry of Higher Education and Kuwait University's request to suspend the enforcement of a Court of Appeal ruling that annulled the appointment of a teaching assistant at the College of Administrative Sciences for the 2022-2023 academic year.

The case, represented by Attorney Moham-

mad Ahmad Taleb on behalf of a civil engineer applicant, challenged the exclusion of his client from the teaching assistant position in the Department of Information Systems, Operations Management, and Supply Chain, despite meeting all required qualifications.

The applicant held a Master's degree in civil engineering from the Kuwait University with a GPA of 3.97 out of 4, had lectured internationally, possessed over 11 years of experience, and had been accepted unconditionally by two universities.

Initially, the Administrative Court dismissed the lawsuit. However, upon appeal, the Court of Appeal overturned this decision, citing procedural errors and invalidities in the selection committee's formation and decisions.

The Ministry and University subsequently sought to halt the implementation of this ruling, but the Administrative Court of Cassation's recent decision has affirmed the annulment, reinforcing the applicant's right to the position.

KFF detects violations in South Khaitan raid

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Based on the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, under the direct supervision of Chief of Kuwait Fire Force Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi, and in the presence of the acting Director General of Kuwait Municipality Eng. Manal Al-Asfour, an inspection campaign was held in South Khaitan on Monday morning.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), the campaign was carried out with the cooperation of the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait Municipality, Environment Public Authority, Public Authority for Manpower, and the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy. It was aimed to monitor buildings and facilities for compliance with safety and fire prevention regulations.

Several facilities were found in violation of KFF and other regulatory requirements, leading to the issuance of citations and administrative closures.

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LOCAL

Kuwait to host forum on education quality

Academic excellence in focus

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Dr. Jassim Al-Ali, Director General of the National Authority for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance, has announced the upcoming forum titled "Good Practices and Future Challenges for Education Quality."

The event will be held under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, and will feature the presence of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Nader Al-Jalal.

The forum is organized in strategic partnership with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and in collaboration with the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.



Dr. Al-Ali

Dr. Al-Ali emphasized that the forum aims to promote a culture of quality and academic accreditation, seeking innovative solutions to ensure the sustainability and enhancement of higher education in alignment with Kuwait's development vision.

He highlighted that the event will convene a distinguished group of officials, academics, experts, and decision-makers, serving as a vital platform for exchanging experiences among members of local, regional, and Arab academic institutions.

The two-day forum will feature five specialized sessions dedicated to discussing the latest global practices in quality assurance.

These discussions are expected to contribute to developing pioneering models for advancing educational institutions and improving education quality. The goal is to address future challenges in higher education, particularly in light of rapid changes in labor market demands and the digital revolution.

During the forum, a memorandum of understanding will be signed between the Gulf Network for Quality Assurance in Education in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

The event will also include various workshops aimed at furthering collaboration and knowledge sharing in the field of education quality assurance.

Tunisian Embassy celebrates cultural bonds with musical tribute in Kuwait

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohamed Karim Boudali disclosed that the diplomatic concert organized by the Tunisian Embassy at Yarmouk Cultural Center on Monday has a number of connotations, considering it coincides with the upcoming celebration of Kuwait's national holidays.

He added: "We convey a message of love laden with sincere greetings and wish for blessings on this glorious occasion. I am pleased to meet you here this evening to listen to Tunisian music performed by Tunisian artiste Mohamed Omrani.

This is a diplomatic musical event presented by the embassy in cooperation with Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah."

He thanked Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah for fully cooperating with the embassy in organizing the event, believing in the role played by cultural diplomacy as a basic lever to strengthen cooperation between peoples.

He pointed out another connotation -- the fact that this event keeps pace with the momentum characterizing the relations and works to contribute to strengthening the bridges of cultural communication between the two countries, especially since Kuwait is this year's Arab Capital of Media and Culture.

Capital Governor praises Ministry of Health's significant role

Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Center marks World Hearing Day with call for early detection



Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah inaugurates the awareness day exhibition.



Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah during a tour of the exhibition.



Group photo with the Governor of the Capital, Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah.

Photos by Mohammad Morsi

By **Marwa Al-Bahrawi**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Center for Speech, Hearing and Balance Therapy celebrated World Hearing Day, emphasizing the importance of hearing health and preventive measures.

The event was attended by Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali and Sheikhaw Awrad Al-Ahmad, along with representatives from various governmental and civil organizations.

Governor Al-Ali highlighted Kuwait's commitment to enhancing healthcare services, ensuring they meet the highest quality standards.

He praised the Ministry of Health's continuous efforts and the significant role played by Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi. The governor also commended the staff of the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Center for establishing it as a leading health institution both locally and regionally.

Dr. Maryam Al-Kandari, a consultant in hearing and balance disorders and head of the Speech and Hearing Department at the Ministry of Health, noted that the center serves approximately 3,000 patients monthly.

She emphasized the importance of early detection and treatment of hearing and speech issues in children to prevent negative impacts on their academic performance and future productivity.

Dr. Al-Kandari also highlighted the center's annual performance of 50 to 60 cochlear implants for citizens, with support from charitable organizations and the private sector for non-Kuwaitis.

Sheikha Awrad Al-Ahmad underscored the significance of World Hearing Day as an opportunity to promote safe listening practices and prevent hearing loss.

She emphasized the need for early diagnosis and intervention to ensure individuals with hearing impairments can reach their full potential. The event featured participation from various public and private institutions, all aiming to raise awareness about hearing health and the importance of preventive measures.

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KUNA photo
Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

Kuwait, Slovenia strengthen bilateral ties

Political discussions were held, Monday, between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait and Slovenia, on ways to develop bilateral relations in various fields, as well as latest regional and international developments.

The Kuwaiti side was headed by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, while the Slovenian side was headed by State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Marko Stucin. (KUNA)

KU extends heartfelt congratulations to Dr Al-Mailem on Amiri trust recognition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Council of Ministers has issued a decree to appoint Professor Dr. Dina Musaed Al-Mailem, a faculty member in the Department of Biological Sciences at the College of Science, as the President of Kuwait University.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait University, this decree follows the decree-law No. 156/2024 issued two months ago and amends certain provisions of law No. 76/2019 regarding public universities. The decree specifies that the university president is appointed for a four-year term, renewable only once, based on the proposal of the

Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

It is worth highlighting that Professor Dr. Dina Al-Mailem has held many leadership roles at the College of Science, including serving as Assistant Dean for Research and Laboratories Affairs and Assistant Dean for Planning, Consulting, and Training. She has also been an active participant in various committees at the department, college, university, and national levels.

In recognition of her contributions, she was awarded the Scientific Production Award for 2015 in the field of life sciences by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences.

On this occasion, Kuwait University extends its heartfelt congratulations to Professor Dr. Dina Al-Mailem for earning the Amiri trust and wishes her success in fulfilling her new responsibilities.



Dr. Al-Mailem

Tardiness calculated manually

CSC app excludes fingerprint attendance

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The proof of fingerprint attendance for State employees is excluded from the new smartphone application and automated services of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

According to the sources, the electronic application provides more than 12 services for employees in agencies automatically linked to the integrated systems of the CSC using their smartphones; but the proof of fingerprint attendance is not among these services.

Asked about the calculation of the minutes in case the employees are tardy for the proof of fingerprint attendance, sources clarified that each entity has its own application and the data are used in cooperation with the CSC for a specific period, like a month for example. Then, the data is transferred to the CSC to upload them in the integrated systems; so the CSC could calculate tardiness by minute starting Jan 5, 2025, sources added.

In another development, sources said the CSC has instructed the government agencies to submit a report in case they reject any citizen appointed for employment as per their manpower needs.

Sources explained this step aims to enhance transparency and for the candidates to know the reasons behind the rejection in order to help them improve their chances in the future; such that they will be motivated to develop their skills in a manner that suits the manpower needs of government agencies, in addition to boosting the citizens' confidence in the government employment system and to guarantee equal opportunities for everyone.

Sources added this step ensures justice for everyone in terms of employment, prevents arbitrary or unjustified decisions in rejecting candidates, and enables the regulatory authorities to ensure that appointment decisions are made according to clear and fair standards.

Initiatives help refine policies

Kuwait pushes for greater outer space utilization amid UN committee talks

VIENNA, Feb 4, (KUNA): Kuwait on Tuesday said it aims to bolster its use of outer space in line with a relevant UN committee on the matter, underlining the "long history" of the space industry at home.

Kuwait's foray into the use of outer space began in earnest back in 1963, when it formally joined the UN's International Telecommunication Union, followed by the launch of its first domestic communications satellite, the chief of the country's national space research center Dr. Hala Al-Jassar told a gathering of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space's (COPOUS) scientific and technical subcommittee.

The official went on to emphasize



KUNA photo
Dr. Hala Al-Jassar

size Kuwait's commitment to international space treaties and con-

ventions, chief among them the UN'S Outer Space Treaty and the multilateral moon treaty, while its membership in COPOUS has been instrumental its ability to better manage the use of outer space, she added.

Kuwait has ratcheted up its national space research, which in turn, led to the launch of its first satellite into space in 2023, an initiative hailed as a step forward in honing national space exploration skills, which are firmly backed by the country's political leadership, said the official.

COPOUS convenes on an annual basis in a bid to further its mission of promoting and monitoring international cooperation on the peaceful use of outer space.

Continued from Page 1

CITRA, telecom

The contract does not fall under the category of contracts that aim to achieve public benefit, which means it is not subject to the provisions of article 17 of decree law No. 105/1980.

The State Audit Bureau, after reviewing the matter and following up with CITRA, expressed its approval of the contract, which is expected to generate annual revenues of KD 1,641,465. The validity period of the contract approval is set at 90 days.

The sources indicated that CITRA is working on strengthening cooperation with the private sector to create a favorable investment environment that supports the development of communications and information technology services in Kuwait.

They affirmed that CITRA remains committed to enhancing the communications sector's infrastructure and encouraging investments that contribute to the growth of the national economy.

Kuwait advances

She stressed the need to develop the waste management system and raise awareness about sustainability.

Eng. Boushahri highlighted the importance of promoting the latest methods in waste management, energy production, and recyclable materials, supporting community participation in environmental preservation, and encouraging invest-

ment in the fields of renewable energy and clean water.

In addition, the CEO of United Facilities Management Company Ibrahim Abdullatif stated that the forum sheds light on the latest developments and innovations in the field of sustainable projects and smart facility management in the region.

He explained that the forum comes in response to the growing demands of the rapidly expanding project management and services sector, particularly amid the many new construction projects in the region and the Gulf countries. The event also serves as a platform for relevant institutions to offer consultations and advice to project developers, which helps in saving huge costs for project and facility owners in the long term.

Kuwait sets

In October 2024, the Ministry of Health announced plans to open a new Kuwait Cancer Control Center, which is set to enhance Kuwait's healthcare system by incorporating new technology in radiation therapy and other cancer treatments.

Over the years, the ministry has launched several cancer awareness campaigns, including the national program for early detection of breast cancer, introduced in 2014, which targets women over 40, offering early detection services through five specialized centers across Kuwait.

As part of Kuwait's efforts to support and develop scientific research and improve the level of health services in the world, Kuwait has allocated the State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, to enhance regional cooperation in the eradication of diseases and to recognize people who have made outstanding contributions in the fields of prevention, control or research in those diseases.

Among the major awareness initiatives, is the National campaign for Cancer Prevention (CAN), launched in 2006, which focuses on educating the public about different types of cancer, encouraging early detection, and training healthcare professionals in cancer diagnosis.

Al-Sidra Association for Psychological Care of Cancer Patients, founded in 2012, plays a crucial role in providing emotional support and a positive environment for cancer patients, and the Patients Helping Funding Society, established in 1979, provides financial and medical support to cancer patients in Kuwait and abroad.

Beyond its national initiatives, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) actively supports healthcare institutions in various countries to curb the spread of cancer by providing appropriate treatments and supporting people with the disease, especially Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.



Part of the opening ceremony

Music, art and ideas unite

Minister Al-Mutairi inaugurates 30th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival

By Shahad Kamal

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): Representative of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi inaugurated on Monday the 30th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival with a concert titled "From Kuwait."

The launch of this year's Qurain Festival coincides with the start of national celebrations and the Kuwait Capital of Culture and Arab Media 2025 activities, which reflect Kuwait's role in supporting Arab culture, explained Al-Mutairi during his speech.

Kuwait is a pioneer in supporting cultural initiatives and creative projects that strengthen its position at the Arab and international levels, launching several Arab magazines alongside other creative cultural projects. Al-Mutairi stressed the keenness of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) to continue supporting thought, creativity, and cultural exchange that highlight Kuwaiti culture, art, and history.

The festival's activities will continue until February 12, and will combine arts, music, literature, and intellectual seminars.



Minister of Information delivers a speech.

KUNA photos

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SEVERANCE OF EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

ALERT AND WARNING



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This is a constitutional crisis we are in today: Murphy

Trump and Musk move to dismantle USAID, igniting battle with Democrats

WASHINGTON, Feb 4, (AP) - The Trump administration and billionaire ally Elon Musk moved to eradicate the agency that provides crucial aid that funds education and fights starvation, epidemic and poverty overseas, sparking a showdown with congressional Democrats who blasted the effort as illegal and vowed a court fight.

In one of the most dramatic efforts to push back on President Donald Trump's bid to slash and reshape the federal government, some Democrats sought Monday to enter the headquarters of the U.S. Agency for International Development. They were blocked by officers from even broaching the lobby, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he was the acting administrator of the agency despite it being an independent body for six decades.

While Trump has spent the first three weeks of his new presidency making broad changes to the federal government, the fast-moving developments at USAID have emerged as a particularly controversial flashpoint with Democrats who argue it symbolizes the massive power Musk is wielding over Washington. "Spent the weekend feeding USAID into the wood chipper," Musk boasted on X.

In the space of a few weeks, in fact, much of the agency was dismantled - work and spending ordered stopped, leadership and staff gutted by furloughs, firings and disciplinary leaves, and the website taken offline. Lawmakers said the agency's computer servers were carted away.

Trump told reporters Monday that shutting down USAID "should have been done a long time ago." Asked whether he needs Congress to approve such a measure, the president said he did not think so.

Congressional Democrats, cheered by a few hundred supporters, vowed to act outside USAID headquarters, where federal officers and yellow tape blocked both employees and lawmakers from entering hours after Musk declared, "We're shutting it down." "This is a constitutional crisis we are in today," Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy said.

Added Maryland Democrat Jamie Raskin: "We don't have a fourth branch of government called Elon Musk. And that's going to become real clear."

Showing the extraordinary power of Musk and his budget-slashing Department of Government Efficiency, thousands of USAID employees have been laid off and programs shut down around the world in the two weeks since



The flag of the United States Agency for International Development, or USAID, right, flies alongside the American flag in front of the USAID office in Washington on Feb 3. (AP)

Trump became president and imposed a sweeping freeze on foreign assistance.

The US is the world's largest provider of humanitarian aid, and the moves have upended decades of U.S. policy that put humanitarian, development and security assistance in the center of efforts to build alliances and counter adversaries such as China and Russia. Trump, Musk and Republicans in Congress have made the U.S. foreign assistance program a special target, accusing it of waste and advancing liberal social programs.

The US spends less than 1% of its budget on foreign assistance, a smaller share overall than some other countries. Trump accused the Biden administration of fraud, without giving any evidence and only promising a report later on.

"They went totally crazy, what they were doing and the money they were giving to people that shouldn't be getting it and to agencies and others that shouldn't be getting it, it was a shame, so a tremendous fraud," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

Lawmakers sought to enter USAID offices in Washington, saying they wanted to speak to any staffers remaining about the dismantling of the agency. Department of Homeland Security officers and men identifying themselves as USAID employees blocked them. "Elon Musk's not here," one told the lawmakers.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland called it an "illegal power grab" and said it was "a corrupt abuse of power that is going on."

"It's not only a gift to our adversaries, but trying to shut down the Agency for International Development by executive order is plain illegal," he said.

Democrats said court challenges already were in the works and pledged to try to block approval of Trump's State Department nominations until the shutdown is reversed. Democrats are in the minority in the House and Senate after last November's elections, leaving them with reduced leverage.

Musk announced the closing of the agency early Monday as Rubio was out of the country on a trip to Central America.

Rubio told reporters in San Salvador that he was now the acting administrator of USAID but had delegated his authority to someone else. In a letter to lawmakers obtained by The Associated Press, Rubio designated Peter Marocco, a political appointee whose short stint at USAID in the first Trump administration generated unusual staff protests for pushing program cuts and investigations that ambassadors and other senior officials complained slowed work to a crawl.

In his remarks, Rubio stressed that some and perhaps many USAID programs would continue in the new configuration but that the switch was necessary because the agency had become unaccountable to the executive branch and Congress.

Conservative Republicans have long sought to roll back USAID's status as an independent agency, while Democrats traditionally back its status as an independent agency. President John F. Kennedy created USAID in 1961 at the height of the United States' Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union, seeking a more efficient way to counter Soviet influence abroad through foreign assistance, and viewing the State Department as frustratingly bureaucratic at that.



Crews pull up a part of a plane from the Potomac River near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport on Feb 3 in Arlington, Va. (AP)

Salvage crews recover engine, large portion of jet after air collision

Salvage crews have recovered an engine and large pieces of fuselage and are working to retrieve a wing from the wreckage of a commercial airliner involved in last week's midair collision near Washington's Reagan National Airport, officials said Monday.

They also recovered more human remains from the Potomac River, although they declined to offer specifics, reiterating only that 55 of the 67 victims have been found and identified since the crash Wednesday.

Authorities have said the operation to remove the plane will take several days and they will then work to remove the military helicopter involved. The crash between the American Airlines jet and an Army helicopter over Washington D.C. was the deadliest U.S. air disaster since 2001.

More than 300 responders were taking part in the recovery effort at any given time, officials said. Two Navy

barges were also deployed to lift heavy wreckage.

Washington, D.C. Fire Department Assistant Chief Gary Steen told a news briefing that officials are confident all of the victims would be found.

Divers and salvage workers are adhering to strict protocols and stopped moving debris at times when human remains were being recovered, said U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Col. Francis Pera. The "dignified recovery" of remains takes precedence over all else, he said.

Portions of the two aircraft that collided over the river Wednesday night near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport - an American Airlines jet with 64 people aboard and an Army Black Hawk helicopter with 3 aboard - are being loaded onto flatbed trucks and will be taken to a hangar for investigation. Crews hoped to recover the jet's cockpit on Tuesday, Pera said. (AP)

ACLU sues over Trump administration shutting down asylum access at southern border

WASHINGTON, Feb 4, (AP) - Immigration advocacy groups sued the Trump administration over its ban on asylum access at the southern border, saying the sweeping restrictions illegally put people who are fleeing war and persecution in harm's way.

The decision outlined in one of President Donald Trump's immigration-related executive orders is "as unlawful as it is unprecedented," the groups - led by the American Civil Liberties Union - said in the complaint, filed in a Washington federal court.

"The government is doing just what Congress by statute decreed that the United States must not do. It is returning asylum seekers - not just single adults, but families too - to countries where they face persecution or torture, without allowing them to invoke the protections Congress has provided," lawyers wrote.

The ACLU and other groups filed the complaint on behalf of Arizona-based Florence Project, El Paso-based Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center and Texas-based RAICES.

The Department of Homeland Security said in a statement that it does not comment on pending legislation. The White House defended the president's actions.

"President Trump was given a re-sounding mandate to end the disregard and abuse of our immigration laws and secure our borders. The Trump administration will continue to put Americans and America First," said White House spokesman Kush Desai.

In an executive order, Trump declared that the situation at the southern border constitutes an invasion of America and that he was "suspending



A migrant family from Michoacan, Mexico wait for transportation after entering the United States through Ciudad Juarez, Mexico through the Paso del Norte bridge, on Jan 20 in El Paso, Texas. (AP)

the physical entry" of migrants until he decides it's over. The executive order also suspended the ability of migrants to ask for asylum.

In the executive order, Trump argued that the Immigration and Nationality Act gives presidents the authority to suspend entry of any group that they finds "detrimental to the interests of the United States."

It was the latest blow to asylum access that began under the Biden administration, which severely curtailed the ability of people who entered the country between the official border crossings to qualify for asylum. But they also had a system by which 1,450

people a day could schedule an appointment at an official crossing with Mexico to seek protection in America.

Trump ended that program on his first day in office as part of a wide-ranging strategy aimed at carrying out mass deportations of immigrants in the country illegally, overturning policies from former President Joe Biden that offered some immigration pathways and protections and locking out immigration access at the southern border.

Advocates say the right to request asylum is enshrined in the country's immigration law and that denying migrants that right puts people fleeing war or persecution in grave danger.

Critics have said relatively few people coming to America seeking asylum actually end up qualifying and that it takes years for overloaded immigration courts to come to a determination on such requests. People seeking asylum must demonstrate a fear of persecution on a fairly narrow grounds of race, religion, nationality, or by belonging to a particular social or political group.

In the lawsuit, the groups argued that immigration "even at elevated levels" does not constitute an invasion and noted that the number of people entering the country between the ports of entry had fallen to lows not seen since August 2020. The groups argued that Trump's declaration was an "extreme example of presidential overreach." They said the government is "summarily expelling noncitizens" - often in just a few hours - without giving them the opportunity to apply for asylum or other forms of protection they're legally entitled to and without giving them the opportunity to make a phone call.

'Trump threats amount to serious test of unity'

EU leaders scramble to avoid friction with US

BRUSSELS, Feb 4, (AP) - After three years spent trying to deter Russia from destroying Ukraine, European Union leaders grappled on Monday with how to respond to a major ally who appears determined to start a trade war or even seize part of their territory.

It would "be a cruel paradox if, during the time of this direct Russian threat and Chinese expansion," the EU

and the United States might end up in a "conflict among allies," said Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, whose country currently holds the EU's rotating presidency.

Since taking office last month, US President Donald Trump has threatened to impose tariffs on EU imports and refused to rule out military force to take control of Greenland, an auton-

omous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

Trump has also mystified Europeans by showing little sign of how he intends to end the war in Ukraine within six months as promised, led alone in a day, as he boasted while campaigning last year. "We have to do everything to avoid this totally unnecessary and stupid tariff war or trade war," the Polish prime minister told reporters in Brussels, where EU leaders met for talks on boosting and improving military spending and ramping up Europe's defense industry.

Tusk said Trump's threats amount to "a serious test" of European unity, and "in a very strange context, because it's the first time where we have such a problem among allies."

French President Emmanuel Macron said the EU is "a power that stands its ground" and that if hit with tariffs, the 27-nation bloc "would have to make itself respected." He said Trump's threats are "pushing Europeans to be more united, more active in addressing their collective security challenges."

Trump slapped tariffs on European steel and aluminum during his first term, and EU leaders have already been in contact with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau since Canada imposed retaliatory duties on US goods in response to a 25% tariff levied by Trump.

Dozens of people jailed in Georgia

TBILISI, Georgia, Feb 4, (AP) - Jailed journalist Mzia Amaglobeli gets weaker every day as her hunger strike has reached three weeks in Rustavi, a town near the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, her lawyer says. Now the 49-year-old is having difficulty walking the short distance from her cell to the room where they usually meet, and human rights officials, colleagues and family fear for her life.

As it sought to cement its grip on power, Georgian Dream has cracked down on freedom of assembly and expression in what

the opposition says is similar to President Vladimir Putin's actions in neighboring Russia, its former imperial ruler.

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze defended the actions of his government, accusing the protesters of seeking "to inflict harm on the state" and trying to stage a revolution akin to the uprising in Ukraine in 2014 that ousted a pro-Kremlin leader.



Putin

Stoltenberg returning to govt in Norway as finance minister

OSLO, Norway, Feb 4, (AP) - Former NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Tuesday that he is returning to government in his native Norway as finance minister.

Stoltenberg led NATO from 2014, until he handed over to current Secretary-General Mark Rutte at the beginning of October. Before leading NATO, Stoltenberg was Norway's prime minister. His term at NATO was repeatedly extended to keep a steady hand at the helm after Russian launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, thwarting plans for Stoltenberg to take over as head of Norway's central bank.

He is returning to government after Norway's governing coalition split last week with the junior partner, the Center Party, announcing its departure, in a dispute over European Union energy market regulations.

That left current Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, the leader of Stoltenberg's center-left Labor Party, with several Cabinet posts



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg makes statements during a transition ceremony at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium on Oct 1, 2024. (AP)

to fill, among them that of outgoing Finance Minister Trygve Slagsvold Vedum, the leader of the Center Party.

Stoltenberg and Gahr Store appeared together at an event in Oslo on Tuesday, where the prime minister was presenting his new team, but Gahr Store didn't explicitly mention Stoltenberg's new job.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, (left), European Council President Antonio Costa, (center), and Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk arrive at the European Council building after an EU summit in Brussels on Feb 3. (AP)

France's govt expected to survive as far-right leader doesn't support no-confidence motion

PARIS, Feb 4, (AP) - The head of France's far-right National Rally party said Tuesday he doesn't support a no-confidence motion filed against the government, making it more likely that the prime minister will remain in office and a 2025 budget will be adopted.

A no-confidence vote is scheduled Wednesday in the National Assembly and needs at least half the 577 votes to pass. Hard-left France Unbound, Communist and Green lawmakers are expected to vote in favor but don't have the numbers on their own to bring down the centrist government.

Jordan Bardella, president of the

National Rally, the biggest group in the National Assembly, said "in the current period, the French ... would not benefit from a new period of instability."



Bardella

The leftist Socialist party said earlier it wouldn't back the no-confidence motion because "it's time to give France a budget."

On Monday, Prime Minister François Bayrou

used special constitutional powers to get the 2025 budget approved without a vote by lawmakers. Under France's Constitution, the budget will automatically be considered as adopted if the no-confidence motion is rejected.

In December, a similar no-confidence motion triggered by budget disputes forced Prime Minister Michel Barnier to resign after only three months in office.

This time, Bayrou sought more stability for his minority government through intense negotiations with the Socialists aimed at reaching a non-aggression deal.

5 shot at adult education center in Sweden

OREBRO, Sweden, Feb 4, (AP) - Five people were shot at an adult education center in Sweden on Tuesday, police said.

The Swedish news agency TT reported, without providing its sources, that the perpetrator died by suicide. Police didn't immediately confirm that reporting, but scheduled a news conference for 1430 GMT.

The adult education center is on the outskirts of the city of Örebro, which is located about 200 kilometers (125 miles) west of Stockholm.

The school, called Campus Risbergska, serves students who are over age 20, according to its website. Primary and upper secondary school courses are offered, as well as Swedish classes for immigrants, vocational training and programs for people with intellectual disabilities.

It wasn't immediately clear whether police were counting the perpetrator among the five shot. The extent of the victims' injuries also wasn't immedi-

ately clear. Police said that no officers were shot during the violence.

Video from the scene showed a large police presence and other emergency vehicles. Students were sheltering in nearby buildings. Other parts of the

school were evacuated following the shooting. "The reports of violence in Örebro are very serious. The police are on site and the operation is in full swing," Justice Minister Gunnar Strömmer told TT.



Police at the scene of an incident at Risbergska School, in Örebro, Sweden on Feb 5. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

US, Philippine fighter aircraft jointly patrol disputed shoal region guarded by China

MANILA, Philippines, Feb 4, (AP): US and Philippine fighter aircraft staged a joint patrol and training Tuesday over a disputed South China Sea shoal where Chinese fighter jets fired flares last year to drive away a Philippine aircraft, Philippine officials said.

The joint patrol and air-intercept drills over the hotly disputed Scarborough Shoal off the northwestern Philippines were the first by the longtime treaty allies since US President Donald Trump took office again.

Trump's "America First" foreign policy thrust has sparked concerns among Washington's allies in Asia about the scale and depth of US commitment to the region in his new term. His predecessor, Joe Biden,

had moved to strengthen an arc of security alliances in the region to counter China's increasingly assertive actions.

Two US Air Force B-1 bomber aircraft and three Philippine Air Force FA-50 fighter jets joined the brief patrol and training, which involved practicing how to intercept a hostile aircraft, Philippine air force spokesperson Maria Consuelo Castillo said in a news briefing.

It was not immediately known if the joint patrol encountered any challenge from Chinese forces guarding the Scarborough Shoal.

"The exercises focused on enhancing operational coordination, improving air domain awareness and reinforcing agile combat employment capabilities between the two air forces," the Philippine Air Force said.

In August last year, two Chinese air force aircraft flew close then fired flares in the path of a Philippine air force plane on routine patrol over the Scarborough Shoal in actions that were strongly condemned and protested by the Philippine government, military officials said.

All those aboard the Philippine air force NC-212i turbo-prop transport plane were unharmed, the Philippine military said.



Two Philippine Air Force FA-50 fighter jets fly with two U.S. Air Force B-1 bomber aircraft during a joint patrol and training over the South China Sea on Feb 4. (AP)



Emergency alerts have been issued for multiple areas in and around Townsville, with floodwaters rising for the past three days. Queensland's Premier David Crisafulli has said more flooding is likely. (AP)

Floods kill 2 and wreak havoc in Australia's Queensland

Monsoon rains unleashed flooding in Australia's Queensland that have claimed the lives of two people as the week-long deluge dropped months of rainfall in a few days, devastating small rural towns on the state's north coast.

The body of an 82-year-old woman was found on Tuesday in a paddock near the North Queens-

land town of Ingham. It followed the death of a 63-year-old woman on Sunday when the rescue boat she was traveling in struck a tree and flipped.

The rain drove hundreds from their homes, washed out an important bridge and blocked drinking water supplies to the worst-hit area. Queensland's north coast is reg-

ularly battered by tropical storms, but the destruction caused by this week's downpour was "quite frankly incredible," said the state premier David Crisafulli.

A few hundred people remained in evacuation centers on Tuesday as the flooding subsided; it was not yet known how many homes were damaged beyond repair. (AP)

'We can send them and he will put them in his jails'

El Salvador offers to accept deportees from US of any nationality, says Rubio

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador, Feb 4, (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said late Monday that El Salvador's president has offered to accept deportees from the US of any nationality, including violent American criminals now imprisoned in the United States.

President Nayib Bukele "has agreed to the most unprecedented, extraordinary, extraordinary migratory agreement anywhere in the world," Rubio said after meeting with Bukele at his lakeside country house outside San Salvador for several hours.

"We can send them and he will put them in his jails," Rubio said of migrants of all nationalities detained in the United States. "And, he's also offered to do the same for dangerous criminals currently in custody and serving their sentences in the United States even though they're US citizens or legal residents."

Rubio was visiting El Salvador to press a friendly government to do more to meet President Donald Trump's demands for a major crackdown on immigration.

Bukele confirmed the offer in a post on X, saying El Salvador has "offered the United States of America the op-

portunity to outsource part of its prison system." He said his country would accept only "convicted criminals" and would charge a fee that "would be relatively low for the US but significant for us, making our entire prison system sustainable."

Elon Musk, the billionaire working with Trump to remake the federal government, responded on his X platform, "Great idea!!"

After Rubio spoke, a US official said the Trump administration had no current plans to try to deport American citizens, but said Bukele's offer was significant. The US government cannot deport American citizens and such a move would be met with significant legal challenges.

The State Department describes El Salvador's overcrowded prisons as "harsh and dangerous." On its current country information webpage it says, "In many facilities, provisions for sanitation, potable water, ventilation, temperature control, and lighting are inadequate or nonexistent."

Rubio arrived in San Salvador shortly after watching a US-funded deportation flight with 43 migrants leave from Panama for Colombia. That came a day after Rubio delivered a warning to Panama that unless the government



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, (right), and El Salvador's Foreign Minister Alexandra Hill Tinoco sign a memorandum of understanding regarding civil nuclear cooperation between their countries at the Intercontinental Real Hotel in San Salvador, El Salvador on Feb 3. (AP)

moved immediately to eliminate China's presence at the Panama Canal, the US would act to do so.

Migration, though, was the main issue of the day, as it will be for the next steps on Rubio's five-nation Central

agency. Trump's administration prioritizes stopping people from making the journey to the United States and has worked with regional countries to boost immigration enforcement on their borders as well as to accept deportees from the United States.

The agreement Rubio described for El Salvador to accept foreign nationals arrested in the United States for violating US immigration laws is known as a "safe third country" agreement. Officials have suggested this might be an option for Venezuelan gang members convicted of crimes in the United States should Venezuela refuse to accept them, but Rubio said Bukele's offer was for detainees of any nationality.

Rubio said Bukele then went further and said his country was willing to accept and to jail US citizens or legal residents convicted of and imprisoned for violent crimes.

Human rights activists have warned that El Salvador lacks a consistent policy for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees and that such an agreement might not be limited to violent criminals.

Manuel Flores, the secretary general of the leftist opposition party Farabun-

do Martí National Liberation Front, criticized the "safe third country" plan, saying it would signal that the region is Washington's "backyard to dump the garbage."

After meeting with Bukele, Rubio signed a memorandum of understanding with his Salvadoran counterpart to advance U.S.-El Salvador civil nuclear cooperation. The document could lead to a more formal deal on cooperation in nuclear power and medicine that the U.S. has with numerous countries.

The deportation flight Rubio watched being loaded in Panama City was carrying migrants detained by Panamanian authorities after illegally crossing the Darien Gap from Colombia. The State Department says such deportations send a message of deterrence. The U.S. has provided Panama with financial assistance to the tune of almost \$2.7 million in flights and tickets since an agreement was signed to fund them.

Rubio was on the tarmac for the departure of the flight, which was taking 32 men and 11 women back to Colombia. It's unusual for a secretary of state to personally witness such a law enforcement operation, especially in front of cameras.

Modi's ruling party looks to topple corruption crusader in Delhi poll with graft allegations

NEW DELHI, Feb 4, (AP): The resurgent Hindu nationalist party of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is eyeing a state legislature election in Delhi where it is looking to unseat the governing movement which has led the Indian capital for over a decade but has recently been embroiled in graft allegations.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, which failed to secure a majority of its own in last year's national election but formed the government with coalition partners, has gained some lost ground by winning two state elections in northern Haryana and western Maha-

rashtra states. It is up against the Aam Aadmi Party, or AAP, led by Arvind Kejriwal, that runs Delhi and has built a huge support base on the back of its popular welfare policies.

Delhi, a city of more than 20 million people, is a federal territory which Modi's party has not been able to win for over 27 years, despite having a sizeable support base in the capital.

The polls open on Wednesday, with results due on Saturday.

Both Modi and Kejriwal have offered to revamp government schools, free health services and electricity, and

a monthly stipend of over 2,000 rupees (\$25) to poor women.

Modi's party, in particular, is hoping to better its tally from the previous election after last week's budget that slashed income tax on the salaried middle class, one of its key vote block.

Kejriwal's party won 62 out of 70 seats in the last election, held in 2020.

"Publicity wise, the BJP seems ahead of the AAP because it has more significant resources," said Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, a political analyst, who added that it will be difficult for the BJP to dislodge the AAP because of its popularity among voters.

India's main opposition Congress party is also in the Delhi race, but many poll experts believe it has run a lackluster campaign and is expected to fare poorly.

Claiming himself to be an anti-corruption crusader, Kejriwal is Delhi's former top elected official and a fierce critic of Modi. He formed the AAP in 2012 after tapping into public anger against the then Congress party government over a series of corruption scandals. His pro-poor policies have focused on fixing state-run schools and providing cheap electricity, free health care and bus transport for women.

Kejriwal was, however, arrested last year along with two key leaders of his party ahead of national elections on charges of receiving bribes from a liquor distributor. The accusations have been consistently denied as part of an alleged political conspiracy. The Supreme Court allowed the release of Kejriwal and other ministers on bail.



Supporters of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) carry brooms, their party's symbol, during a show of their party's national convener Arvind Kejriwal as they campaign for Delhi state election, in New Delhi, India on Feb 3. (AP)

Rwanda-backed rebels declare unilateral ceasefire

GOMA, Congo, Feb 4, (AP): The Rwanda-backed rebels who seized eastern Congo's key city of Goma announced a unilateral ceasefire in the region Monday for humanitarian reasons, following calls for a safe corridor for aid and hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

The M23 rebels said the ceasefire would start Tuesday. The announcement came shortly after the U.N. health agency said at least 900 people were killed in last week's fighting in Goma between the rebels and Congolese forces.

The city of 2 million people is at the heart of a region home to trillions of dollars in mineral wealth and remains in rebel control. The M23 were reported to be gaining ground in other areas of eastern Congo and advancing on another provincial capital, Bukavu.

But the rebels said Monday they did not intend to seize Bukavu, though they earlier expressed ambition to



Red Cross personnel load bodies of victims of the fighting between Congolese government forces and M23 rebels in a truck in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo on Feb 3 as the UN health agency said 900 died in the fight. (AP)

march on Congo's capital, Kinshasa, a thousand miles away.

"It must be made clear that we have no intention of capturing Bukavu or other areas."

"However, we reiterate our commitment to protecting and defending the civilian population and our positions," M23 rebel spokesman Lawrence Kanyuka said in a statement.

There was no immediate comment from Congo's government.

The rebels' announcement came ahead of a joint summit this week by the regional blocs for southern and eastern Africa, which have called for a ceasefire. Kenya's President William Ruto said the presidents of Congo and Rwanda would attend.

Foreign ministers from the Group of Seven advanced economies, or G7, urged parties in the conflict to return to negotiations. In a statement on Monday, they called for a "rapid, safe and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians."



Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake, center, hoists the Sri Lankan national flag during the country's 77th Independence Day ceremony in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Feb 4. (AP)

New president pledges to rebuild country

Debt-stricken Sri Lanka marks independence day

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, Feb 4, (Agencies): Debt-stricken Sri Lanka marked its 77th independence anniversary on Tuesday with a military parade, while the country's newly elected president, Anura Kumara Disanayake, pledged to heal Sri Lanka's economic woes by the end of his five-year term.

Sri Lanka, which gained independence from Britain in 1948, suffered its worst economic crisis in 2022, forcing the island nation to declare bankruptcy. It also suspended repayments on some \$83 billion in domestic and foreign loans amid a foreign exchange crisis that led to a severe shortage of food, medicine, fuel and cooking gas,

and hourslong power cuts.

The economic crisis caused political upheaval and finally paved the way for Disanayake's party to win power four months ago.

On Tuesday, Disanayake said he would improve the living standards of all Sri Lankans during his tenure, giving them opportunities to enjoy modern scientific and technological innovations.

Addressing a ceremony in the capital, Colombo, he urged Sri Lankans to work together to win economic, social and cultural freedom, saying, "Everyone has a role to play in this struggle."

A military parade followed Dis-

sanayake's speech.

Under Disanayake's leadership, Sri Lanka is trying to emerge from bankruptcy by restructuring its staggering debt.

When Sri Lanka declared bankruptcy, it sought the help of the International Monetary Fund, which approved a \$2.9 billion four-year bailout package in 2023, under which Sri Lanka was required to restructure its debt.

In September, Sri Lanka announced it had concluded the debt restructuring process after reaching agreements with bilateral and multilateral creditors and private bond holders.

Sri Lanka is seeking to obtain \$17 billion in debt service relief.

charges. (AP)

Indonesia sends home Atlaoui: Indonesian authorities on Tuesday escorted an ailing French national who has been on death row in the Southeast Asian country to the airport in Jakarta, marking the start of his return to France under an agreement between the two nations.

Serge Atlaoui, who has spent almost 20 years in an Indonesian prison for drug offenses, won a last-minute reprieve from execution by a 13-member firing squad in 2015, after France's government stepped up pressure because Atlaoui still had an outstanding court appeal. (AP)

Asia

'I didn't intend to kill ex-PM':

A man who threw a homemade pipe bomb at former Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at a 2023 campaign event denied that he intended to kill the politician as his trial began Tuesday at a court in western Japan.

Ryuji Kimura, 25, is charged with attempted murder for the April 15, 2023 attack on Kishida at a small fishing port in the city of Wakayama, as well as four other charges including violations of laws controlling explosives and deadly weapons.



Kishida

The then-prime minister was unhurt, but two people sustained minor injuries. Kimura was arrested on the spot.

At Tuesday's trial at the Wakayama District Court, Kimura pleaded not guilty to attempted murder, saying he didn't intend to kill Kishida, according to Japan's NHK public television and other media. They said Kimura admitted to making the bombs and other

Kuwait oil price falls to \$79.41 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti crude oil price dropped 38 cents during Monday's trading to reach USD 79.41 per barrel (pb), compared with USD 79.79 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC)

said Tuesday.

Brent futures rose by 29 cents to hit USD 75.96 pb and West Texas Intermediate (WTA) went up by 63 cents to USD 73.16 pb.

Business

Civil Aviation Directorate supports Kuwait Airways flight boost

Kuwait Airways increases flights to London to 16 flights per week

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Kuwait Airways has announced a strategic move to strengthen its international network and meet the growing demand for flights between Kuwait and the United Kingdom, in cooperation with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. Kuwait Airways announced an increase in the number of flights to and from London by 16 flights per week. This increase in flight frequencies provides customers with more flexible and convenient options for traveling between the two countries.

The President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, Sheikh Eng. Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah emphasized the importance of increasing the number of flights to and from London due to the growing demand from travellers. He noted that this decision was made in coordination and cooperation with the civil aviation authorities at London Heathrow Airport, who facilitated all necessary procedures to support the increase in flight frequency between the two countries.

Al-Humoud stressed that the Directorate General of Civil Aviation is committed to providing all means of support to Kuwait Airways, the national carrier of the State of Kuwait, and to enhancing its reputation as a distinguished carrier in the region. He highlighted that the increase in the number of flights is part of the ongoing efforts to contribute to the development of the aviation system in the company.

Al-Humoud valued the strong and historic relations between the State of Kuwait and the United Kingdom across various levels, including economic, social, cultural, and others. He highlighted the longstanding and distinguished relationship between the two countries, particularly at the level of political leadership.

Al-Humoud pointed out that the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's recent tireless efforts to open up prospects for joint cooperation between the State of Kuwait and countries worldwide in the air transport sector, which enhances the presence of the State of Kuwait and develops its strategic relations with countries around the world.

On his part, Kuwait Airways Chairman, Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Al-Fagaan stated, "Kuwait Airways is committed to providing multiple



Al-Humoud and Al-Fagaan in a commemorative photo.

solutions and options to its valued passengers, in addition to expanding the scope of services, as well as enhancing the travel experience for its customers. The increase in flights to and from London is a significant achievement for the national carrier of the State of Kuwait, as it comes in response to the growing demand for flights between Kuwait and London."

Al-Fagaan added, "Kuwait Airways recognizes the importance of this destination to our valued passengers, whether they are businessmen relying on it to manage their operations, students pursuing their studies in

Al-Humoud: "Civil Aviation" is keen to contribute to developing the aviation system at Kuwait Airways

Al-Fagaan: Kuwait Airways is committed to providing multiple solutions and options for passengers

the United Kingdom, or even tourists visiting London as a preferred destination, or British citizens residing in Kuwait, especially those seeking comfortable and reliable travel options. With this increase in flights, the company will offer more options and flexibility to passengers, while continuing to enhance the level of service we take pride in."

Al-Fagaan emphasized that Kuwait Airways is dedicated to providing an integrated travel experience to its valued customers. The airline is continuously working to develop its services and provide innovative solutions that cater to the evolving needs of its customers.

Al-Fagaan praised the significant and tangible role of the political leadership's ongoing support for the national carrier, as well as the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, all relevant authorities in Kuwait, and the British Embassy in the State of Kuwait, for their effective cooperation and tireless efforts in increasing the number of flights. He expressed his deep appreciation to all parties involved for facilitating the necessary procedures to complete this initiative and looked forward to continued collaboration to further enhance the aviation sector and provide the best possible services to passengers.

Al-Fagaan concluded his statement by emphasizing that this initiative is part of Kuwait Airways' strategy to strengthen its position as a leading national carrier in the region. He highlighted the company's commitment to expanding its international operations and providing services that meet the highest standards of quality and comfort, all aimed at fulfilling the requirements of its valued customers.

Boursa Kuwait closes higher amid strong trading activity

Major 50 Index rises 0.67%

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Tuesday's trading session on a positive note, with the general index climbing 49 points, or 0.62%, to close at 7,903.96 points.

A total of 519 million shares were traded through 21,987 transactions, with a total market value of 123.3 million dinars (approximately \$379.7 million).

The Main Market Index gained 62.31 points, or

0.86%, reaching 7,274.87 points. It saw 350.9 million shares exchanged in 11,474 transactions, amounting to 60.7 million dinars (\$186.9 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index rose 47.83 points, or 0.57%, closing at 8,452.42 points, with 168.1 million shares traded through 10,513 deals worth 62.5 million dinars (\$192.5 million).

The Major 50 Index also recorded an increase of 48.86 points, or 0.67%, settling at 7,293.33 points. A total of 292.4 million shares changed hands in 6,968 transactions, with a trading value of 52.6 million dinars (\$162 million).



Kuwait Chamber welcomes Brazilian economic delegation.

Kuwait's vision 2035 aligns with Brazil's investment goals

KCCI hosts Brazilian economic delegation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: On Monday, February 3, the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) received a Brazilian economic delegation led by Secretary-General of the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce Muhammad Murad, in the presence of the Brazilian Ambassador to Kuwait Rodrigo Araújo Gabes and several prominent businessmen.

According to a press release issued by KCCI, it highlighted the longstanding Kuwaiti-Brazilian relations that extend over decades of mutual cooperation in various sectors.

KCCI affirmed Kuwait's contribution to enhancing Brazil's energy security through oil exports, adding that Brazil has played a key role in ensuring Kuwait's food security, making this economic partnership one with integrated strategic dimensions.

It stressed that joint efforts to explore broader areas of trade and investment have continued, which reflects the commitment of both countries to develop and strengthen their relationship.

KCCI explained that the presence of an elite group of representatives from Brazil's aviation, agriculture, renewable energy, and heavy industries sectors adds a new dimension to the partnership. This diversification is particularly timely, as Kuwait advances its vision "New Kuwait 2035", which aims to build a sustainable economy driven by diversification, innovation, food security, energy sustainability, and logistical excellence.

Kuwait's private sector is eager to explore international

partnerships that support these goals and create new opportunities for growth and development. KCCI is dedicated to providing full support to ensure the success of these partnerships and facilitate effective cooperation between Kuwaiti and Brazilian companies.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce Mohammed Murad stated that the event plays a major role in strengthening bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

He highlighted the vast potential for cooperation, particularly in the export of various products, in addition to the oil sector.

Furthermore, Director of the International Office of the Arab-Brazilian Chamber in Dubai Rafael Solimeo presented an overview of the KCCI's work and the services it provides to support Arab-Brazilian relations.

Tathian from the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrazil) also gave a presentation, in which she highlighted the agency's role as a link between decision-makers and business owners.

She emphasized the agency's focus on the Arabian Gulf region and its commitment to boosting trade within it.

The meeting also included presentations by the Investment and Trade Promotion Agency of the State of São Paulo, the airline company EMBRAER, and the agricultural research organization EMBRAPA.

776 Kuwaiti businesses thrive in Dubai

UAE-Kuwait trade reaches \$13.5 bln in '24

DUBAI, Feb 4, (KUNA): The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait's trade value reached USD 13.5 billion in 2024 in a growth rate worth nine percent as compared to the previous year, Minister for Foreign Trade Thani Al-Zeyoudi said on Monday.

The exponential growth in trade volume is part of a string of "positive developments" that ties Kuwait City and Abu Dhabi, the minister told the joint UAE-Kuwait week, an initiative patronized by Vice-President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum in a bid to shine light on such progress in relations.

Hailing the event as a "platform" to exchange viewpoints and ideas over plans to propel relations to greater levels, the UAE minister said that the gathering aims to ensure that ties remain on an upward trajectory, in line with the respective development strategies in the two Gulf Arab neighbors, he said.

The initiative also allows Abu Dhabi and Kuwait the opportunity to look into strategies aiming to ratchet up bilateral cooperation, he said, reiterating the words of the Dubai ruler in which he spoke of the "special place Kuwait holds in the hearts of Emiratis," a reference to the amity between the two Gulf Arab nations.

Praising the special "dynamics" of Kuwait and Abu Dhabi's economic relations, Dubai Chamber of Commerce chief Mohammad Lootah said that the volume of non-oil trade in the first nine months of last year reached USD 7.5 billion, a growth of 14 percent as compared to the same period a year earlier.

He went on to speak of the increasingly significant role of the Dubai-based Kuwaiti Business Council, which is comprised of some 776 registered Kuwaiti businesses, and how its crucial to "serve the best interests" of Kuwait-based firms operating in the bustling UAE metropolis.

Event participation reinforces customer-centric approach, says Albenali

Ahli Bank of Kuwait sponsors 2025 Porsche Club Kuwait Festival

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is thrilled to announce its continued support for the 2025 Porsche Club Kuwait festival for the fourth year consecutively showcasing its commitment to social responsibility and community engagement in sports and entertainment. This sponsorship aligns with ABK's strategic objectives to engage a diverse customer base and highlight its broad array of products and services.

The festival, hosted at Kuwait Motor Town, welcomed high-profile attendees including the German Ambassador to Kuwait, Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz, Porsche executives, and members of Porsche Club Kuwait, along with representatives from other Arab countries.

The event celebrated 71 years of collaboration between Porsche Kuwait and Porsche International, featuring thrilling races, rare Porsche vehicle exhibitions, and activities for families and car enthusiasts alike.

On this occasion, Sager Albenali, Chief Communications Officer at ABK, emphasized the Bank's dedication to community initiatives that resonate with its adaptable corporate social responsibility guidelines. Regarding the festival's appeal to car enthusiasts, he noted, "This event provides ABK with a unique opportunity to introduce its specialized banking solutions to distinct market segments."



Sager Albenali

ABK's interactive booth at the festival offered engaging activities and competitions with enticing prizes. Bank representatives were available to provide detailed information about the Bank's services and address varied customer needs.

Albenali also underscored the shared values between Porsche Club Kuwait and ABK, "We endeavour to focus on fostering community awareness and address the dynamic needs of customers, underlining our mutual dedication towards our customers."

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and

services.

ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 45 branches.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's "Let's Be Aware" awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

For more information about ABK, please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.



Crowd at ABK stand at event.



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the bank's pavilion.



Festival participants.

In partnership with IDRAK and MoE to empower students for the digital future

Zain strategic partner of Kuwait CyberChamps Competition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Zain has announced its strategic partnership with the Kuwait CyberChamps Competition, organized by IDRAK Training and Consultancy in collaboration with the Public Education Sector of the Ministry of Education, represented by the General Supervisory of Computing, and with the support of the National Cybersecurity Center. The competition aims to enhance the technological skills of middle and high school students, empowering them to tackle the challenges of the digital future.

The partnership was announced at Zain's headquarters in Shuwaikh, attended by Waleed Al-Khashti, Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer at Zain Kuwait; Ali Al-Jassem, Board Member of IDRAK Training and Consultancy; Dr. Muna Al-Salem, Director of the Information Systems Department at the Ministry of Education; and Saleh Bourizq, Director of Training at the National Cybersecurity Center.

This strategic partnership falls under Zain's Innovation Nation initiative, which encompasses all the company's efforts dedicated to fostering creativity, enhancing technical and digital skills, and empowering entrepreneurship within the community. It particularly focuses on STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), which have become essential for modern job



Al-Khashti, Al-Jassem, Al-Salem, and Bourizq with officials from the four partners.

markets, aiming to develop a generation of skilled youth capable of leading Kuwait's digital future with confidence.

The competition is designed to foster a sustainable cy-

bersecurity culture, raising awareness among passionate middle and high school students about the risks of fraud and cybercrime. It also aims to develop their skills across a wide range of technical disciplines, integrating education, competition, and innovation to create a launchpad for Kuwait's future cybersecurity experts.

Through a series of interactive activities, educational events, and training camps, participating students will be equipped with the tools and opportunities needed to nurture their digital talents. The competition also provides them with the chance to engage with industry experts from various fields, guiding them toward potential careers in cybersecurity. The competition will culminate in a hackathon and team pitches, followed by an awards ceremony to honor the winners.

Zain's numerous initiatives are centered on youth and education, aligning with the rapid shift of both the economy and education sector towards digital fields. The company has made the development of digital and programming skills among youth a top priority.

By supporting a wide range of programs and initiatives, Zain is committed to equipping the next generation of local talents with the skills demanded by modern job markets, such as programming, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and digital transformation applications, among others.

Public spending efficiency criticized

ESCWA warns of Kuwait's economic vulnerabilities

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Recent analyses have underscored significant concerns regarding Kuwait's economic sustainability and efficiency, reports Al-Seyassah daily. Al-Shall's weekly report emphasizes that Kuwait, traditionally a donor nation, is now facing critical evaluations from international institutions.

Notably, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) released a report in January 2023, titled "Fragile Trends in the Fields of Macroeconomics and Public Finance," which offers a candid assessment of Kuwait's economic situation.

ESCWA's report highlights Kuwait's heavy reliance on oil revenues, which constituted 91 percent of government revenues in 2023.

In contrast, non-oil revenues contributed a mere 8 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the same year.

This imbalance has led to persistent budget deficits, with nine out of the last ten fiscal years since 2015 experiencing deficits totaling 43.4 billion dinars.

The only exception was the fiscal year 2022/2023, which saw a surplus due to the exceptional circumstances of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The report also critiques the inefficiency of public spending, noting that it accounts for 50 percent of GDP, significantly higher than the global average of 37 percent.

Current expenditures alone make up about 93 percent of this spending, leaving little room for development projects.

ESCWA estimates that improving the efficiency of public expenditures could save 6.8 billion dinars and bring efficiency levels up to the global average.

ESCWA points out that despite allocating 12 percent of public expenditure to education — exceeding the global average — the performance of Kuwaiti students remains below par.

For instance, the average score in mathematics was 383, compared to the global average of 449, indicating a lag of 4.8 years in public education.

Similar concerns are raised about the health sector, where investments in human capital have not yielded proportional improvements.

The Kuwaiti government's intention to prioritize public debt legislation is acknowledged. While public debt can be a useful financial tool, ESCWA warns that without addressing the inefficiencies in public spending, it could lead to a repeat of past mistakes, such as the 2017 borrowing from global markets.

ESCWA advocates for a comprehensive public expenditure project with specific goals and timelines to enhance efficiency before considering increased public debt.

KPTC focuses on sustainability

Metro and railway projects set to transform transport

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Mansour Al-Saad, CEO of the Kuwait Public Transport Company, emphasized that the upcoming metro and railway projects will serve as a transformative leap for the country's transportation network, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These initiatives, he said, are expected to provide modern, efficient and environmentally friendly transportation options that will significantly improve regional connectivity within Kuwait and further enhance ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Saad highlighted the importance of these projects in supporting the country's ongoing urban development.

He noted that the projects are a crucial step in ensuring that the public transportation system evolves in tandem with the nation's rapid urbanization, offering residents and visitors a sustainable and integrated transport system.

Al-Saad was speaking following a meeting with transportation sector officials and experts, along with participation from the International Public Transport Union (IPTU).

The gathering was held to discuss

Kuwait's ambitious plans for upgrading and modernizing its public transport infrastructure. The discussions focused on ensuring the effective development of the system to meet the growing demands of the country's urban and economic growth.

Reflecting on the historical role of the Kuwait Public Transport Company, which was founded in 1962, Al-Saad acknowledged the company's significant contribution to developing public transport over more than six decades.

The company has provided advanced transportation services, including land-based mass transit within Kuwait and sea transport services linking the Kuwaiti islands.

He also emphasized the value of the long-standing strategic partnership with the IPTU, which has lasted for over 40 years.

This partnership has allowed the company to stay abreast of global best practices, learn from international experiences, and participate in knowledge exchange initiatives.

These efforts have played a vital role in boosting the efficiency and sustainability of Kuwait's public transport operations, setting the stage for future development.

KPC awards tender for energy devices to MBC

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has approved the awarding of a tender for supplying, installing, operating and maintaining the precautionary energy devices to MBC Electrical Installations Company; since it is the first company that offered the lowest price and conformed to the specifications for a total amount of KD9,872.

In response to the request of Kuwait Oil Tankers Company (KOTC), KPC announced its decision to sign a direct contract with a private company to update the operating system in Shuaiba liquefied gas filling station at a cost of KD244,772. It also disclosed in Kuwait Al-Youm that the contract period is 12 months, starting from the date of the directive to proceed with the project.

In addition, the Supreme Purchasing Committee for Tenders at KPC and its subsidiaries announced the following

upon the request of KOTC:

- Launching of a special tender for the construction, completion and maintenance of the new security building in Umm Al-Aish gas filling station; with March 25, 2025 as the closing date.
- Awarding of the tender for renting computers, printers and their accessories and providing maintenance and technical support services to Al-Diyar United Trading and Contracting Company for a total value of KD3,374,435.
- List of companies invited to participate in the tender for providing marine services with specialized labor for the Marine Agency Branch of KOTC.

Moreover, Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIIC) has announced the awarding of the tender for environmental monitoring and laboratory services for the Zour Refinery (LNG Project and related facilities) to the first bidder with the lowest prices and in compliance with the required terms and specifications, for a total amount of KD 248,988.

Bank trains future influencers in communication and leadership

Gulf Bank leads session at LOYAC's 'The Influencer' program

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: As part of Gulf Bank's commitment to empowering youth, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Mr. Abdullah Al-Mulaifi, led a session on the role of Corporate Communications and Marketing within the Bank. The lecture took place during the third week of The Influencer, a training program by the LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA), an affiliate of the non-profit organization LOYAC.

As part of Gulf Bank's strategic partnership with LOYAC, this initiative highlights the Bank's commitment to equipping young individuals aged 15 to 19 with valuable training opportunities. The Influencer program, running from January 20 to February 17, 2025, is designed to enhance participants' public communication and leadership skills.

The program provides a dynamic platform for young individuals to refine their communication skills through a series of interactive workshops and training sessions. Covering a range of topics — including effective communication strategies, leadership development, public speaking, photography and video editing, digital marketing, and podcasting — it equips participants with essential skills for personal and professional growth.

Led by experienced trainers and industry experts, these sessions provide participants with the essential skills and



Abdullah Al-Mulaifi gives the lecture.

knowledge to make a meaningful impact in their communities.

For the third year in a row, Gulf Bank proudly sponsors The Influencer program, reinforcing its commitment to social sustainability by supporting civil society organizations — especially those focused on youth development and employment.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's lead-

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

In alignment with Kuwait Vision

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

Transport overhaul could cut carbon by 40%

GCC logistics sector key to achieving net-zero goals, reports Strategy& Middle East



Maha Raad



Hamza El Mounhi

- Globally, T&L sector contributes approximately 25% of greenhouse gas emissions
- Regional commitment to decarbonize requires a meaningful, collaborative effort
- New research underscores a need for paradigm shift towards sustainable logistics operations

ally air and sea transport - emission targets are being set by supranational bodies such as the IMO and IATA. This requires GCC countries to adapt their regulations, such as vessel emission limits, and adjust or update infrastructure (e.g. alternative fuel bunkering in ports), to align with international standards, and potentially play a leading role in the global scene to accelerate the future of fuels agenda.

In domestic logistics, examples of shifts in practices include moving from the traditional just-in-time (JIT) model to a balanced supply chain management approach; transitioning from delivery schedules that prioritize speed to capacity optimization; and adopting multimodal delivery systems to integrate greener transportation modes.

The transition from JIT, which prioritizes efficiency and speed but often results in higher emissions, to a balanced approach allows for a recalibration of operations to achieve both economic and environmental goals. Similarly, optimizing capacity through strategies such as dynamic routing and load consolidation addresses inefficiencies while reducing underutilized vehicle trips. Integrating multimodal systems, including expanded use of rail and maritime transport in countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, offers significant

potential to reduce long-haul emissions while driving operational savings. These shifts are vital to achieving sustainable logistics.

"For the GCC, composed of fast-growing, dynamic markets, meeting sustainability targets will be even more of an uphill battle than in other regions," said Hamza El Mounhi, Principal at Strategy& Middle East. "However, with the right focus on technology, innovation, and collaboration, the region can set a global standard for decarbonized logistics."

The role of stakeholders

At a policy level, governments can be critical to the success of this transformation. Policymakers can enforce international sustainability standards, incentivize green practices and green fleet deployments, and define acceptable emissions standards. On the infrastructure front, investments in green fuels and technologies, such as hydrogen and biodiesel, further present an opportunity to position the GCC as a global leader in sustainable logistics innovation.

Private sector stakeholders, including carriers, logistics service providers, and cargo owners, are equally pivotal. Carriers and logistics providers must adopt international standards, reconfigure logistics networks for greater efficiency, and deploy green technologies such as electric vehicles. Cargo owners

can embrace predictive analytics to optimize inventory management and operations while rethinking rapid delivery expectations to balance sustainability with performance.

Consumers also play a significant role in the broader shift toward greener logistics. By choosing products and services from companies that prioritize sustainable practices, their decisions amplify industry-wide efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

A vision for the future

The GCC's logistics sector has the potential to become a global leader in sustainability, contributing not only to the region's net-zero goals but also to broader economic resilience and competitiveness. With decisive action and collaboration, the sector can deliver transformative outcomes for the environment and the economy.

"As we look to the future, the path to net zero is not just about incremental change. It requires a rethinking of traditional approaches, driven by innovation and underpinned by collective commitment. The GCC has the vision and resources to make this transformation a reality," concluded Maha Raad, Partner at Strategy& Middle East.

About Strategy&

Strategy& is a global strategy consulting business uniquely positioned to help deliver your best future: one that is built on differentiation from the inside out and tailored exactly to you. As part of PwC, we're building the winning systems that are at the heart of growth every day. We combine our powerful foresight with this tangible know-how, technology, and scale to help you create a better, more transformative strategy from day one.

As the only at-scale strategy business that's part of a global professional services network, we embed our strategy capabilities with front-line teams across PwC to show you where you need to go, the choices you'll need to make to get there, and how to get it right.

The result is an authentic strategy process powerful enough to capture possibility while pragmatic enough to ensure effective delivery. It's the strategy that gets an organization through today's changes and drives results that redefine tomorrow. It's the strategy that turns vision into reality. It's strategy, made real.

Aligned with its strategy to advance excellence across the Group's workforce

NBK celebrates graduation of Moody's credit certificate trainees

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) proudly celebrated the graduation of its third cohort of trainees from the prestigious "Moody's Credit Certificates-2024" program. Organized in collaboration with the renowned global credit rating agency Moody's, this initiative underscores NBK's commitment to enhancing employee skills and elevating workforce quality.



Najla Al Sager

This initiative aligns with NBK's strategic commitment to developing and enhancing workforce capabilities across the Group by designing and implementing targeted training programs, workshops, and educational initiatives aimed at elevating employee skills and competencies.

The five-month program encompassed comprehensive modules on credit analysis, credit structuring, documentation, relationship management excellence, negotiation strategies, effective planning and implementation techniques, as well as advanced credit masterclass, ESG and business strategy.

Approximately 55 trainees participated in the program, divided into three groups at intermediate and advanced levels. Participants represented various departments across the bank, including the Consumer Banking Group, Risk Management Group, Private Banking Group, Corporate Banking Group, International



The Bank's Executive Management during the closing ceremony of the Moody's Credit Certificate Program.

Banking Group, and the Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance Group.

On this occasion, Najla Al-Sager, Head of Talent Management, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We are delighted to celebrate the graduation of a new cohort from the Moody's Credit Certificate Program. This initiative underscores the bank's commitment to fostering a culture of excellence and investing in human capital, while preparing qualified banking leaders in line with the highest international standards."

"Over the years, we have significantly enhanced the program's content to align with evolving industry demands and trends. The program's duration has been extended from two months to five months, incorporating approximately a month of in-class training and around 23 hours of e-learning courses. Additionally, we have integrated workshops focused on the practical application of skills throughout the program to further enrich the trainees' knowledge and capabilities," she added.

"We firmly believe that investing in our employees is a key strategic pillar for achieving sustainable growth and maintaining the bank's excellence and leadership. To this end, we are continuously committed to providing the best training and development programs in collaboration with renowned international institutions. Our goal is to build a flexible and dynamic workforce capable of adapting to future challenges and the ever-evolving banking landscape," she emphasized.

"We have a comprehensive plan designed to enhance the efficiency of our workforce. We are committed to continuously preparing our employees to navigate the challenges brought about by the evolving dynamics of the banking sector. By equipping them with the necessary tools and knowledge, we ensure their ability to drive ongoing success, maintain the bank's excellence, and uphold our position at the forefront of innovation and competitiveness," she highlighted.

Furthermore, Al-Sager stressed that NBK dedicates all its extensive resources to developing its human capital, enhancing the capabilities of its employees, and equipping them with the expertise and skills required to drive the bank's growth. This commitment plays a crucial role in building a highly skilled workforce that supports NBK's long-term objectives and strengthens the sustainability initiatives it champions.

The training partnership with Moody's embodies the bank's strategic plans to establish solid foundations for the professional development of NBK Group's employees. By collaborating with renowned universities and prestigious international educational institutions, this initiative aims to cultivate future banking leaders, equipping them with the expertise and experience necessary to tackle the evolving challenges of the banking industry.

Canada, Mexico retaliate

Starmer seeks strong US-UK trade relations amid Trump tariff threats

LONDON, Feb 4, (AP): British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Sunday that he would seek a strong trade relationship with the U.S. after President Donald Trump suggested he would slap Europe with tariffs after he hit America's biggest trading partners - Canada, Mexico and China - with import taxes.

Starmer spoke to reporters while hosting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at his country estate on the eve of a mission to improve relations with the European Union.

"In the discussions that I have had with President Trump, that is what we have centered on, a strong trading relationship," he said. "So it is very early days."

Canada and Mexico ordered retaliatory tariffs in response to Trump's announcement that the U.S. on Tuesday will stick a 25% levy on imports from Canada and Mexico and 10% on goods from China. Trump said he "absolutely" plans to impose tariffs on the EU.

The U.K. left the EU in 2020, following a referendum in 2016. Trump, who supported the Leave side in the Brexit vote, has not yet said whether he plans to target the U.K. with tariffs.

The tit-for-tat tariffs have triggered fears of a global trade war.

Impact

"Tariff increases really right across the world can have a really damaging impact on global growth and trade, so I don't think it's what anybody wants to see," British Home Secretary Yvette Cooper told the BBC.

Starmer is heading to Belgium to meet with EU chiefs Monday, where the U.K. leader is aiming for a relationship "reset".

While ruling out rejoining the EU trade bloc five years after Brexit, Starmer said he wants to forge a closer relationship on defense, energy and trade.

"I think that is certainly in the U.K.'s best interest, I do believe it's in the EU's best interest, and already I hope that in the last seven months there's been a manifest dif-

ference in approach, tone and relationship," he said.

Starmer hosted Scholz at Chequers, the prime minister's country residence in Buckinghamshire 30 miles (50 kilometers) northwest of London, where the two leaders discussed Ukraine and the Middle East, according to a Starmer spokesperson.

The prime minister spoke of their common approach to "key issues and challenges," including their shared commitment to Kyiv as the war with Russia enters its fourth year this month.

The two agreed that Russia's invasion had emphasized the need to beef up and coordinate defense production across Ukraine, according to a readout of the meeting from a Starmer spokesperson. The U.K. and Germany signed a defense pact in October, described by officials as the first of its kind between two NATO member countries, to boost European security amid rising Russian aggression.

The British government's strategic defense review later this year will include lessons learned in Ukraine and the need to outmaneuver Russian President Vladimir Putin's hostile acts across the continent, Starmer said.

Starmer thanked Scholz for visiting in the middle of a difficult reelection campaign. Scholz's center-left Social Democrats are lagging in the polls behind the center-right Christian Democratic Union and the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, with three weeks to go before the Feb. 23 vote.

"When I started as prime minister seven months ago now, I was determined to strengthen the relationship between our two countries - already very good, but I thought it could be stronger on a number of fronts," said Starmer, leader of the center-left Labour Party. "And thanks to your leadership, I think we've made real progress."

Scholz said the visit that included a walk around the grounds of the estate and a lunch was a "good sign of the very good relations between our two countries, and indeed between the two of us."

China replies to US tariffs with selective measures and antitrust probe on Google

Experts warn of global economic impact from rising US-China trade tensions

BEIJING, Feb 4, (AP): China countered President Donald Trump's across-the-board tariffs on Chinese products with tariffs on select U.S. imports Tuesday, as well as announcing an antitrust investigation into Google and other trade measures.

U.S. tariffs on products from Canada and Mexico were also set to go into effect Tuesday before Trump agreed to a 30-day pause as the two countries acted to appease his concerns about border security and drug trafficking. Trump planned to talk with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the next few days.

The Chinese response was "measured," said John Gong, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing. "I don't think they want the trade war escalating," he said. "And they see this example from Canada and Mexico and probably they are hoping for the same thing."

This isn't the first round of tit-for-tat actions between the two countries. China and the U.S. had engaged in a trade war in 2018 when Trump raised tariffs on Chinese goods and China responded in kind.

This time, analysts said, China is much better prepared to counter, with the government announcing a slew of measures that cut across different sectors of the economy, from energy to individual U.S. companies.

Implement

China said it would implement a 15% tariff on coal and liquefied natural gas products as well as a 10% tariff on crude oil, agricultural machinery and large-engine cars imported from the U.S. The tariffs would take effect next Monday.

"The U.S.'s unilateral tariff increase seriously violates the rules of the World Trade Organization," the State Council Tariff Commission said in a statement. "It is not only unhelpful in solving its own problems, but also damages normal economic and trade cooperation between China and the U.S."

The impact on U.S. exports may be limited. Though the U.S. is the biggest exporter of liquid natural gas globally, it does not export much to China. In 2023, the U.S. exported 173,247 million cubic feet of LNG to China, representing about



Visitors pass by a Google booth promoting Artificial Intelligence at a supply chain expo in Beijing, Wednesday, Nov. 27, 2024. (AP)

2.3% of total natural gas exports, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

China imported only about 700,000 cars overall last year, and the leading importers are from Europe and Japan, said Bill Russo, the founder of the Automobility Limited consultancy in Shanghai.

China announced export controls on several elements critical to the production of modern high-tech products.

They include tungsten, tellurium, bismuth, molybdenum and indium, many of which are designated as critical minerals by the U.S. Geological Survey, meaning they are essential to U.S. economic or national security that have supply chains vulnerable to disruption.

The export controls are in addition to ones China placed in December on key elements such as gallium.

"They have a much more developed export control regime," Philip Luck, an economist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and former State Department official, said at a panel discussion on Monday.

"We depend on them for a lot of critical minerals: gallium, germanium, graphite, a host of others," he said. "So ... they could put some significant harm on our economy."

The response from China appears calculated and measured, said Stephen Dover, chief market strategist and head of the Franklin Templeton Institute, a financial research firm. However, he said,

the world is bracing for further impact. "A risk is that this is the beginning of a tit-for-tat trade war, which could result in lower GDP growth everywhere, higher U.S. inflation, a stronger dollar and upside pressure on U.S. interest rates," Dover said.

In addition, China's State Administration for Market Regulation said Tuesday it is investigating Google on suspicion of violating antitrust laws. The announcement did not mention the tariffs but came just minutes after Trump's 10% tariffs on China were to take effect.

It is unclear how the probe will affect Google's operations. The company has long faced complaints from Chinese smartphone makers over its business practices surrounding the Android operating system, Gong said.

Otherwise, Google has a limited presence in China, and its search engine is blocked in the country like most other Western platforms. Google exited the Chinese market in 2010 after refusing to comply with censorship requests from the Chinese government and following a series of cyberattacks on the company.

Google did not immediately comment.

Unreliable

The Commerce Ministry also placed two American companies on an unreliable entities list: PVH Group, which owns Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfger, and Illumina, which is a biotechnology company with offices in China. The listing could bar them from engaging in China-related import or export activities and from making new investments in the country.

Beijing began investigating PVH Group in September last year over "improper Xinjiang-related behavior" after the company allegedly boycotted the use of Xinjiang cotton.

Putting these U.S. companies on the unreliable entities list is "alarming" because it shows that the Chinese government is using the list to pressure U.S. companies to take a side, said George Chen, managing director for The Asia Group, a Washington D.C.-headquartered business policy consultancy.

"It's almost like telling American companies, what your government is doing is bad, you need to tell the government that if you add more tariffs or hurt U.S.-China relations at the end of the day it'll backfire on American companies," Chen said.

Senate confirms Chris Wright as Energy Secretary amid Trump's 'energy dominance' agenda

WASHINGTON, Feb 4, (AP): The Senate on Monday confirmed fossil fuel executive Chris Wright to serve as energy secretary, a key post to promote President Donald Trump's efforts to achieve U.S. "energy dominance" in the global market.

Wright, CEO of Denver-based Liberty Energy, has been one of the industry's loudest voices against efforts to fight climate change. He says more fossil fuel production can lift people out of poverty around the globe and has promised to help Trump "unleash energy security and prosperity."

The Senate approved his nomination, 59-38. Eight Democrats - including both senators from Wright's home state of Colorado - voted in favor.

The centerpiece of Trump's energy policy is "drill, baby, drill," and he has pledged to dismantle what he calls Democrats' "green new scam" in favor of boosting production of fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas and coal that emit planet-warming greenhouse gases.

"President Trump shares my passion for energy," Wright said at his confirmation hearing last month, promising that if confirmed, he would "work tirelessly to implement (Trump's) bold agenda as an unabashed steward for all sources of affordable, reliable and secure American energy."

That includes oil and natural gas, coal, nuclear power and hydro-power, along with wind and solar power and geothermal energy, Wright said.

Trump's energy wishes are likely to run into real-world limits, including the fact that U.S. oil production is already at record levels. The federal government cannot force companies to drill for more oil, and production increases could lower prices and reduce profits.

Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, the second-ranking Republican, called Wright an innovator who "tells the truth about energy production."

While Wright "acknowledges that climate change is real, he knows more American energy is the solution - not the problem," Barrasso said, calling Wright's "energy realism" welcome news.

Sen. Mike Lee, a Utah Republican who chairs the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said Wright "understands that energy policies should focus on making energy abundant and affordable for families" and businesses.

"Our nation deserves a champion for American energy and innovation, and we've got the Wright guy for the job," Lee posted on X.

Colorado's two Democratic senators both supported their home-state nominee.

Dedicated

"Chris Wright is a scientist who has dedicated his life to the study and use of energy. He believes in science and supports the research that will deliver the affordable, reliable and clean energy" that will lower costs and make the country more secure, Sen. John Hickenlooper said.

"While we don't always agree, we will work together because none of us have four years to wait to act," Hickenlooper said.

Sen. Michael Bennet called Wright a successful Colorado entrepreneur with deep expertise in energy innovation and technology. He pledged to work with Wright to "ensure Colorado continues to lead the country in energy production and innovation."

While acknowledging that climate change is real, Wright said at his hearing that he believes "there isn't dirty energy or clean energy." Rather, he said, there are different sources of energy with different tradeoffs.

Wright, 60, has been chairman and CEO of Liberty Energy since 2011 and has no prior experience in government. He grew up in Colo-

rado, earned an undergraduate degree at MIT and did graduate work in electrical engineering at the University of California, Berkeley and MIT. In 1992, he founded Pinnacle Technologies, which helped launch commercial shale gas production through hydraulic fracturing, or fracking.

He later served as chairman of Stroud Energy, an early shale gas producer, before founding Liberty Resources in 2010.

As energy secretary, Wright will join Interior Secretary Doug Burgum as a key player on energy policy. Both will serve on a new National Energy Council that Burgum will chair.

The panel will include all executive branch agencies involved in energy permitting, production, generation, distribution, regulation and transportation, with a focus on "cutting red tape" and boosting domestic energy production, Trump said.

The council's mission represents a near-complete reversal from actions pursued by Democratic President Joe Biden, who made fighting climate change a top priority.

Wright said he would sever all ties across the energy industry if confirmed.

Lena Moffitt, executive director of Evergreen Action, an environmental group, said Democrats should have unanimously opposed Wright.

"Senate Republicans just handed Trump's Big Oil allies the keys to the Department of Energy," she said in a statement. "Chris Wright built his career expanding fossil fuels and denying climate science. Now, he'll be in a position to help Trump stall clean energy investments, hike energy prices 'and keep Americans addicted to expensive, volatile fossil fuels.'"

Now is the time, she added, "for Democrats to stand united and fight back against Trump's relentless push to rig the system for Big Oil."



Cheikha folk singer Mbarka 'Thouria' Moullablad gives a traditional performance known as Aita, in Sidi Yahya Zaer, south of the capital Rabat, Morocco, Monday, Jan. 27, 2025. (AP)



A music band prepares for a traditional performance known as Aita, in Sidi Yahya Zaer, south of the capital Rabat, Morocco, Monday, Jan. 27, 2025. (AP)

Cheikha singers are 'truth-tellers' of community

Moroccan folk singers break barriers, keep traditions alive

SIDI YAHYA ZAER, Morocco, Feb 4, (AP): Mbarka Moullablad's family frowned when she first told them she planned to make a living as a cheikha, singing about love, pain, and societal change to the melodies of her ancestors under the stage name "Thouria."

Women like her are the stewards of one of Morocco's most cherished oral traditions: a form of folk singing known as aita, which means a "cry" or "lament" in Arabic. From smoky bars and cabarets in Morocco's largest cities to the gatherings in the country's rural regions, they croon at weddings, festivals and private events and pub nights, hypnotizing audiences both humble and wealthy.

But despite aita's position in Moroccan culture, the genre's popularity does not always translate into acceptance for those who perform it. Cheikha are often stigmatized, eroticized, and pushed to society's margins. That was once a fear for Moullablad, but she says her community in Sidi Yahya Zaer, a farming town on Morocco's Atlantic plains,

has mostly accepted her.

"My family did not agree at first and I used to suffer from society's judgment, but now everything is good," Moullablad said on the sidelines of a recent performance south of Morocco's capital, Rabat. "I do it in order to earn money for my children."

A form of sung poetry, aita has long explored themes of societal triumphs, ironies, and unspoken struggles, including those related to relationships and economic hardship. Cheikha don heavy stage makeup, silk caftans, and golden takchita belts as they sing about their community's agonies and triumphs. They sway their hips to amplify emotion, dancing seductively or cheerfully depending on the context.

When Moullablad performs, men and women lean in as her voice softens, captivated as she climbs octaves into a full-throated howl. The beads wrapped around her sister Fatiha's belly shake as she dances. The band leader, another singer, backs her with his own poetry while a drum-

mer keeps the beat, a guitarist strums, and a violinist drags his bow in sync.

Those who come to hear them sing say cheikha can serve as a community's truth-tellers, singing about often unspoken dynamics related to marriage, agriculture or, historically, colonial resistance. Moullablad sings in Moroccan Arabic, embodying traditions specific to her community. But cheikha across the North African Kingdom also perform in the indigenous Amazigh language, adapting the music and lyrics to reflect their region.

The art form has inspired contemporary acts like the electro-infused "Aita, Mon Amour" and Kabareh Cheikhats, a troupe of male actors who pay homage, dress and sing in the tune of Morocco's most celebrated 20th century women folk singers. It is also the subject of Morocco's submission for this year's Academy Awards, "Everybody Loves Touda," which follows a single mother who leaves her town in the Atlas Mountains to pursue her dream of singing in bars,

cabarets, and hotels in Casablanca.

"I was always amazed by their strength and the power that they have toward people when they open their mouths. Whether they are modern or conservative people, they all stand up and get into a kind of trance like gospel," Nabil Ayouch, the film's director, said in an interview when the film premiered at the Marrakech Film Festival last year.

Morocco's music scene is increasingly embracing Middle Eastern pop and rap by North African artists from throughout the diaspora. And rural communities are shrinking amid the country's rapid development and urbanization. But though the future of aita may seem uncertain, its musicians and listeners remain confident that it will endure.

"Aita will not die because it is renewed by young people. Aita will remain in all times and is loved by old people and young people as well. It is developed and improved, but they preserve its origins," said Rachid Kadari, a Cheikha who also sings aita.

Variety

TAIPEI, Taiwan: Barbie Hsu, a Taiwanese actress who starred in the popular TV drama "Meteor Garden" that once swept Asia, died after contracting pneumonia triggered by the flu. She was 48.

Hsu, better known as "Da S" which means "Big S," caught the flu when she visited Japan with her family during the Lunar New Year, according to her younger sister, Dee Hsu, also a famed TV host. Dee Hsu said the pneumonia was a flu complication.

"I am grateful that in this lifetime I was able to be her sister, taking care of each other and being companions. I will forever be thankful for her and miss her!" Dee Hsu said in a statement on Monday, without specifying where and when her sister died.

The news about Barbie Hsu's sudden death shocked audiences in Taiwan and China, where many had watched her shows since her early career. In China, news of her death was trending on the social media platform Weibo. (AP)

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LOS ANGELES: This ain't just Texas - it's also the US and Europe. Starting this spring, Beyoncé will bring her Grammy-winning "Cowboy Carter" to stadiums on both continents.

She'll start in Los Angeles before making her way to Chicago, the New York metropolitan area, London, Paris, Houston, Washington and Atlanta.

A BeyHive presale begins Feb. 11 at 12 p.m. local time. General ticket sales will begin Feb. 14 at 12 p.m. local time.

The announcement arrived Monday morning, after the superstar won the Grammys' top prize - album of the year - for the first time. She is both the most awarded and nominated artist in Grammys history, and prior to Sunday night, had been up for the category four times before. Many felt she had been snubbed by its top honors in years prior.

In winning album of the year with "Cowboy Carter," Beyoncé has become the first Black woman to win the top prize in the 21st century. (AP)

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NEW YORK: Percival Everett's "James" is up for another literary award - the PEN/Faulkner Prize for fiction. Other nominees include Louise Erdrich's "The Mighty Red," Rachel Kushner's "Creation Lake" and Garth Greenwell's "Small Rain."

The awards long list of 10 was announced Monday by the PEN/Faulkner Foundation, which will narrow the finalists to five in March and reveal the winner - who receives \$15,000 - in April.

Everett's novel, a dramatic reworking of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," already has won the National Book Award, the Kirkus Prize and the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction. It was on the short list for the Booker Prize and is a finalist for a National Book Critics Circle award.

"Pemi Aguda's "Ghostsroots," Susan Muaddi Darraj's "Behind You Is the Sea" and Ruben Reyes Jr.'s "There Is a Rio Grande in Heaven" also are PEN/Faulkner nominees, along with Danzy Senna's "Colored Television," Ben Shattuck's "The History of Sound" and John Vercher's "Devil Is Fine." (AP)

Music

Has the awards show transformed?

Beyoncé, Lamar usher in new Grammys era

LOS ANGELES, Feb 4, (AP): The Grammy Awards have long been criticized over a lack of diversity, with a history of artists of color, women, and rap and R&B musicians being snubbed for top prizes. Sunday's edition suggests something may have shifted.

Beyoncé, the most awarded and nominated artist in Grammys history, finally won album of the year for her country-and-then-some album, "Cowboy Carter," furthering her dedication to recentering Black art in popular culture. Kendrick Lamar took home two of the top four prizes of the night, celebrating hip-hop on a show that has historically neglected the genre. The Grammys placed young pop performers in the spotlight at the moment of their ascent, meeting the contemporary music moment.

The Recording Academy has made concerted efforts to diversify in recent years. Could it be those strides have already paid off in a course correction? Or were the 2025 Grammys simply a one-off?

Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason Jr. appeared onstage to address "some real criticism" facing the organization behind the Grammys.

"Artists were pretty vocal with their complaints," he said, reaching back to 2020: "The Weeknd called out the academy for lack of transparency in our awards. He went so far as to announce he was boycotting the Grammys."

Five years can make a world of difference. At the end of his speech, Mason introduced The Weeknd as a surprise performer, making his first appearance at the Grammys since 2017.

His return suggested approval of a new voting class - several presenters took care to note that the awards were decided by more than 13,000 voting members.

Promote

Peter A. Berry, a music journalist with work in XXL and Complex, believes that reading might be too pat, though. "He performed to promote his new album," he said, referencing The Weeknd's "Hurry Up Tomorrow." That timing aligned with the Grammys' need to highlight its reform.

"I can't remove my cynical music industry lens," he says. "Time heals all wounds when you need promo."

Of the Recording Academy's current voting membership, 66% are men, 49% are white and 66% are over the age of 40. But the academy announced last year that 3,000 female voting members had been added since 2019. Two-thirds of the total voting body joined in the last five years. In that same time, the academy has increased the number of members who identify as people of color by 63%, with 100% growth in Asian American and Pacific Islander voters, 90% growth in Black voters



Beyoncé accepts the award for album of the year for 'Cowboy Carter' during the 67th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday, Feb. 2, 2025, in Los Angeles. Blue Ivy Carter looks on from right. (AP)

and 43% growth in Latino voters.

At the 2024 Grammys, women dominated the major categories and as a result, every televised competitive Grammy went to at least one woman. It appeared to reflect contemporary interest in female pop performers - Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus, Victoria Monét and Karol G, among them. In 2025, that trend continued. Women received every single televised award on Sunday night with the exception of Lamar's and one shared between Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars.

"They got it right this year," Berry says. "Maybe it is that the voting committee changed."

The nominations announced in November acknowledged the artists who led the conversation in

2024. Beyoncé was celebrated with 11 nominations, what Kinitra D. Brooks - an academic and author of "The Lemonade Reader" - says was the result of voters finally recognizing "this is clearly someone who deserves the respect of her peers."

Recognition

Chappell Roan and Sabrina Carpenter, experiencing breakout years, received six nods each. The ubiquitous, discourse-dominating "Not Like Us" from Lamar and Charli xcx's "BRAT" also received recognition.

And that translated to awards. There were a number of first-time award winners, many women and people of color like Doechii, Carin León and Sierra Ferrell. In the relatively new songwriter of the year,

non-classical category, Amy Allen became the first woman to take home the trophy.

"Not Like Us" was an early winner at the Grammys' Premiere Ceremony, receiving trophies for music video, rap song and rap performance. It marked his seventh time winning in that last category. But it was his presence during the main broadcast that really made a splash. One of the biggest global hits of 2024, his Drake diss track won song and record of the year - only the second hip-hop single to ever win record of the year. By the end of the night, "Not Like Us" had won all five awards for which it was nominated.

Lamar's recognitions arrived the year after Jay-Z criticized the Grammys for ignoring the rap legends

before him - those who brought hip-hop to the preeminent music award show, only to have rap categories not make the official broadcast.

"We want you all to get it right," Jay-Z said last year. "At least get it close to right."

Berry describes Lamar's wins as "a layup," a celebration of one of the great rap records of recent history.

And though Lamar's wins meant more hip-hop on the broadcast, Berry says the Grammys' hip-hop picks tend to be predictable. He says there's a "cookie cutter" formula for the kind of rappers the Recording Academy recognizes.

"The more esoteric and abstract rap," as well as "the mid-level street rap," goes largely ignored, he says.

Beyoncé's album of the year victory was widely thought long overdue. The superstar had four of her albums nominated in the category before winning on her fifth.

She seemingly alluded to it in her acceptance speech: "It's been many, many years," she said.

Album

"I Am... Sasha Fierce" lost to Taylor Swift for "Fearless" in 2010. In 2015, her self-titled album "Beyoncé" lost to Beck's "Morning Phase" and Harry Styles' "Harry's House" beat "Renaissance" in 2023. Perhaps most infamously, though, was the loss of "Lemonade" to Adele's "25."

"I can't possibly accept this award. And I'm very humbled, and I'm very grateful and gracious, but my artist of my life is Beyoncé," Adele said in her 2017 acceptance speech, holding back tears.

In winning album of the year Sunday, Beyoncé became the first Black woman to win the top prize in the 21st century. The last was Lauryn Hill with "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill," 26 years ago. Before her were Natalie Cole and Whitney Houston, and the list ends there.

Brooks believes "Beyoncé reflects that Black women can be excellent and still ignored in very particular ways - because this is a top honor in her field."

Emily Lordi, a Vanderbilt University professor whose focus is African American literature and Black popular music, describes "Cowboy Carter" as "an album with a capital A - one that explicitly aims to restore the Black roots and routes of country, a genre long coded as white. It is the kind of historic intervention the academy could not fail to recognize - it was undeniable."

Berry points to the fact that the record's country influence may have aligned with the academy's traditionalist voters - but also appealed to those inspired by its break with convention.

Even Grammys' host Trevor Noah couldn't help but acknowledge the milestone: "We finally saw it happen, everyone," he said. That, we did.

Swedish singer's voice a rare blend of hope and sadness

Sarah Klang's 'Beautiful Woman' is stunning

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Feb. 4, (AP) — In a clipped Nordic accent, Swedish indie folk singer Sarah Klang politely asked the soundboard operator at Nashville's Blue Room to turn up her microphone. The request, made recently during a rare US performance in the intimate music space attached to Jack White's Third Man Records, seemed entirely unnecessary.

Her voice could fill every crevice of the room, even if she used no microphone at all. Live, just as on record, her tone pins you down and holds you the moment she opens her mouth.

On her fifth album, "Beautiful Woman," out Friday, Klang worked for the first time with American producer Eric D. Johnson, known for his work with Bonny Light Horseman, the Fruit Bats and the Shins. It's a winning partnership that lands somewhere between folksy Americana and '90s jangle-pop, set apart not only by Klang's voice but also by her honesty.

"Practicing every night / How to dance in slow

motion," she sings on the title cut. "Writing in my diary, goals for the new year / 16 and alone in my room."

Klang leans into the song's chorus with characteristic directness. "When I grow up," she sings, "I want to be a beautiful woman."

If wistfulness had its own voice, it might sound like her. Klang manages to convey pain even when she is singing about finding happiness, as she does on several cuts here. Few singers blend hope and sadness into such a rare mix of intensity: Billie Holiday, Hank Williams, Judy Garland, Patsy Cline, Amy Winehouse. The list isn't long.

That may sound like hyperbole for a singer from Sweden who has gained a following in Europe but hasn't made her mark across the ocean yet. Still, it seems inevitable that she will.

On this album, Klang details body-shaming, motherhood and her own arduous journey in a world that holds women to impossible standards.

"Nothing tastes as good as feeling skinny / I

was told when I was young," she sings on "Other Girls," a not-so-subtle reference to a quote frequently attributed to supermodel Kate Moss.

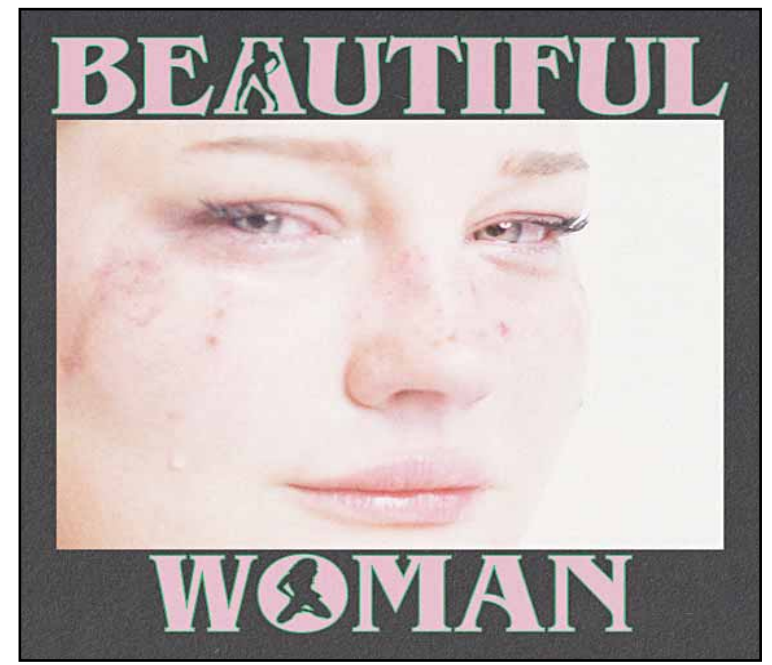
The words come slowly. Klang's voice sinks into her own rigorous journey to self-acceptance without seeming preachy or pedantic. It rises toward the majestic closing anthem, "I Have Everything," but every note she sings tells you the outcome is no sure thing.

"Could I wake up tomorrow/And put some music on," she sings, "I would smile at my daughter and tell the sorrow I'll be gone / 'Cause you see I have everything I want."

My path to Klang's music started with my 20-something daughter, who included some of Klang's earlier work on a couple of Spotify playlists. The first few times her songs came up, I inevitably asked: "Who is that? Where is she from?"

The answers are all right here.

Her name is Sarah Klang. She comes from Sweden. And she has arrived.



This cover image released by Network Music Group shows 'Beautiful Woman' by Sarah Klang. (AP)

Super Bowl

New Orleans gears up for Super Bowl festivities

Stars, athletes bring buzz into the Big Easy

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 4, (AP) — The Super Bowl isn't just a game on Sunday. It'll involve a nearly week-long spectacle taking over New Orleans with non-stop entertainment leading up to the big showdown between the Kansas City Chiefs and Philadelphia Eagles.

While the Chiefs and Eagles gear up for their championship rematch, the Big Easy will be the epicenter for star-studded concerts, exclusive parties, a comedy show and guest lists filled with A-listers. From Post Malone, Cardi B to Shaquille O'Neal, the city will be buzzing long before Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs attempt a monumental three-peat.

"It's going to be fun. It's going to be different than other Super Bowls," said Shaquille O'Neal, who will host his popular carnival-themed Shaq's Fun House on Friday night. It's a hot ticket - starting at \$199 - for the NBA legend's over-the-top festival event featuring headline performances from Ludacris, John Summit and O'Neal under his stage name DJ Diesel.

O'Neal's event will feature several attractions including a Ferris wheel, circus performers and premium bar. This will be somewhat of a homecoming week for O'Neal, who played college hoops at Louisiana State University and visits Louisiana about four times a year.

For Flavor Flav, he wants to help lift up morale in New Orleans following the aftermath of the terror attack that killed 14 people on New Year's Day.

"This is going to be special. I'm here to uplift spirits," said Flav, who will perform at Guy Fieri's Flavortown Tailgate along with Diplo and Cowboy Mouth on Sunday afternoon. It's free for general admission with paid upgraded experiences for \$49.99 and \$349 for a VIP ticket.

"I'm getting on the turntables to make people party and have a good time," he said.

Along with those events, here's a look at some of the invite-only and public events during a busy Super Bowl week:

Fanatics party

Michael Rubin's Fanatics Super Bowl party is impossible to get into without an invite. The star-studded affair on Saturday afternoon is strictly for the who's who of sports and entertainment.

Rubin, the founder and CEO of Fanatics, will likely be front and center, taking in performances from Post Malone, Travis Scott, Don Toliver and many more.

The expected attendees include big names such as Kim Kardashian, Justin Bieber, Lil Baby, Tiffany Haddish and Tom Brady.

Madden Bowl

Just like EA Sports' iconic phrase, "It's in the game," Jelly Roll, Chris Stapleton and Shaboozey will literally be in the game at the Madden Bowl.

The trio is set to separately take the stage Friday night, bringing the hype before the some competition kicks off.

"I can't wait to keep this party going," Shaboozey said.

Along with performances, the event will include the Madden NFL 25 Championship Series in front of a live audience - where two of the world's best players will travel to New Orleans for their share of the \$1 million prize pool.

Double up for some, Triple duties for Post Malone & Diplo



Muni Long performs 'Made For Me' during the 67th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday, Feb. 2, 2025, in Los Angeles. Muni Long is among the Super Bowl Soulful Celebration lineup of events. (AP)



Shaboozey performs during the Pre-Grammy Gala on Saturday, Feb. 1, 2025, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif. Shaboozey will literally be in the game at the Madden Bowl. (AP)

The Madden Bowl won't be the only stage where Stapleton will showcase his powerhouse vocals. The country star is set to headline the SiriusXM and Pandora concert on Thursday night.

Stapleton's performance will air on SiriusXM's Chris Stapleton Radio, an exclusive channel curated and presented by him and his band. Pandora listeners can access the Chris Stapleton Radio station.

After Ludacris takes the stage at Shaq's Fun House on Friday, the rapper will perform Sunday at On Location's Super Bowl pre-game party. He'll be joined by rock band The Revivalists at the Club 67 and Touchdown Club just outside the Caesars Superdome for One Location - a premium hospitality provider of the NFL.

Post Malone will be making moves

too. He's scheduled to perform at three different events. Along with Fanatics, the superstar artist will hit the stage at the Bud Light Backyard Tour on Friday, then he's set to headline the YouTube Tailgate Concert on Sunday near the Superdome.

Diplo will perform at parties for Sports Illustrated and Maxim along with Guy Fieri's tailgate event.

Gospel celebration

Bill Bellamy and Roci Diaz will bring some gospel flavor to the Big Easy.

The tandem will host the Super Bowl Soulful Celebration on Wednesday night. The lineup includes some of music's best from The Isley Brothers, Muni Long, Yolanda Adams, Tori Kelly and Jonathan McReynolds.

Other performances include New

Orleans natives Master P, Big Freedia, Lucky Daye and Trombone Shorty. The NFL Players Choir will also participate.

"Hosting the Super Bowl Soulful Celebration is like hitting the trifecta: music, faith, and football all in one show," Bellamy said. "I'm excited to bring some laughs, some energy and to be part of this incredible night with an amazing lineup."

Michael Strahan, an NFL Hall of Famer and "Good Morning America" co-anchor, will receive the Lifetime of Inspiration award. He called the honor "truly special."

New Orleans Saints player Cameron Jordan will be given the community award while Los Angeles Rams star rookie Jared Verse will be honored with the rising star award.

knife that day, Hadi Matar.

Jury selection is scheduled to begin Tuesday. Matar, 27, of Fairview, New Jersey, has pleaded not guilty to charges of attempted murder and assault.

Under different circumstances, Rushdie's book, which details his account of that day and his recovery, might offer important evidence in the Aug. 12, 2022, attack that left the 77-year-old blind in his right eye and his hand permanently damaged.

But "this isn't a back alley event that occurs unwittingly in a dark alley," said Chautauque County District Attorney Jason Schmidt following a pretrial hearing. "This is something that was recorded, it was witnessed live by thousands of people."

Jurors will be shown video of the attack, as well as still pictures and documentation, Schmidt has said. An estimated 15 witnesses are expected to take the stand over the course of a trial that is projected to last several weeks, he said. (AP)

only shot blanks.

Deputy District Attorney Paul Przelomic showed Relli texts from after the incident in which he told Rocky "U try killing me" and that Rocky had tried to take him from his daughter.

"At any point did he respond to your text messages to tell you it was a fake gun?" The prosecutor asked Relli, who testified his knuckles were grazed in the incident. (AP)

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MAYVILLE, N.Y. In 2022, Salman Rushdie was about to deliver a lecture before a live audience in western New York when a man ran towards him and plunged a knife into the author's hand as he raised it in self-defense.

"After that there are many blows, to my neck, to my chest, to my eye, everywhere," Rushdie recalled in a memoir that followed. "I feel my legs give way, and I fall."

In the coming weeks, Rushdie is expected to return to the same New York county to recount the experience as one of the first witnesses in the trial of the man charged with wielding the

People

Author denies charges

Woman 'sues' Gaiman alleging sexual assault

MADISON, Wis., Feb. 4, (AP) — A woman from New Zealand has filed three civil lawsuits against best-selling British author Neil Gaiman and his wife, accusing Gaiman of repeatedly sexually assaulting her while she was working as the couple's babysitter and nanny.

Scarlett Pavlovich filed the lawsuits in federal court in Wisconsin, Massachusetts and New York on Monday.

The Associated Press doesn't identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted unless they publicly identify themselves. Pavlovich identified herself in an interview with New York Magazine, which published an article in January detailing allegations of assault, abuse and coercion leveled by eight women.

Pavlovich alleges in the lawsuits that she was homeless and living on a beach when she met Gaiman's wife, Amanda Palmer, in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2020. Pavlovich was 22 years old at the time.

According to the lawsuits, Palmer invited Pavlovich to the couple's home on Waiheke Island. Pavlovich began running errands for the couple, babysitting

their son and helping with chores, eventually becoming the couple's nanny.

Gaiman first sexually assaulted her the night they met in February 2022, according to the lawsuits. The assaults continued but she kept working for the couple because she was broke and homeless and Gaiman had told her he would help her writing career, according to the lawsuits.

When she told Palmer about the assaults, Palmer told her that more than a dozen women had told her in the past that Gaiman had sexually abused them, according to the lawsuits.

The assaults didn't stop until Pavlovich told Palmer she was going to kill herself, the lawsuits said. She left the family and became homeless again, although the documents say Gaiman eventually paid her for her work caring for the couple's child and helped cover her rent for a few months.

Palmer knew of Gaiman's sexual desires and presented Pavlovich to him knowing he would assault her, according to the lawsuits. Pavlovich alleges Gaiman and Palmer violated federal human trafficking prohibitions and seeks at least \$7 million in damages.

After the New York Magazine article was published, Gaiman released a statement in January denying he had ever engaged in non-consensual sex. The allegations of four of the women were previously broadcast in July in a Tortoise Media podcast.



Neil Gaiman



French actor Adele Haenel arrives at the courthouse in Paris, Monday, Feb. 3, 2025, for the trial of filmmaker Christophe Ruggia. (AP)

Historic #MeToo case

French director found guilty of sexual assault

PARIS, Feb. 4, (AP) — A Paris court found a filmmaker guilty of sexual assault on French actor Adele Haenel when she was between 12 and 15 in the early 2000s, in the country's first big #MeToo trial.

Filmmaker Christophe Ruggia was sentenced Monday to two years under house arrest with an electronic bracelet plus a two-year suspended sentence. Ruggia had denied any wrongdoing.

Haenel, now 35, was the first top actor in France to accuse the film industry of turning a blind eye to sexual abuse after the #MeToo movement broke out. In 2019, she accused Ruggia of having repeatedly touched her inappropriately during and after filming of the movie "Les Diables," or "The Devils," in the early 2000s.

Haenel appeared relieved, breathing deeply, as Monday's verdict was being released. She was applauded by some women's rights activists as she left the courtroom.

The court ruled that Ruggia "took advantage of the dominant position" he had on Haenel at the time. "During quasi-weekly meetings at your home for over three years you had sexualized gestures and attitudes," as Haenel was "gradually isolated" from

her loved ones, the court said in a statement.

Ruggia's lawyer said her client would appeal.

He "maintains that he has never touched Adele Haenel," the lawyer, Fanny Colin, said. "Sentenced in these conditions and on the sole basis of her words seems to us not only unjustified but dangerous."

Haenel, star of the 2019 Cannes entry "Portrait of a Lady on Fire," has in recent years vocally protested what she's called an insufficient response to sexual abuse in French filmmaking.

At the César Awards in 2020, she walked out of the ceremony after Roman Polanski won best director. Polanski is still wanted in the United States decades after he was charged with raping a 13-year-old girl in 1977.

In 2023, Haenel, announced she was quitting the French film industry that she denounced for "complacency toward sexual aggressors." She published an open letter in which she said Cannes and other pillars of the French film industry are "ready to do anything to defend their rapist chiefs."

While #MeToo initially struggled to find traction in France, some other actors and film industry workers have since spoken out.

Variety

LOS ANGELES: A former friend who alleges rapper A\$AP Rocky fired a gun at him in 2021 testified Monday that no one involved in the incident gave him any indication the firearm might have been fake - as the defense contends - until the day Rocky's trial started two weeks ago.

The testimony from the trial's key witness, who goes by A\$AP Relli, came at the end of a long, frustrating slog on the stand in a Los Angeles courtroom that drove him to shout, "You're annoying, bro!" and much more at the lead defense attorney.

In its re-direct questioning on Monday, the prosecution pushed back against the idea that for security Rocky carried a starter pistol that



Rocky

UK asks for views on safe regulation of new cancer therapies

Study finds no link between mobile phones, cancers

CANBERRA, Feb. 4, (Agencies): Research led by Australia's nuclear and radiation safety agency has found no link between mobile phone use and various cancers.

The research, commissioned by the World Health Organization (WHO) and published on Tuesday, found no association between radio wave exposure from mobile phones and various cancers, including leukemia, lymphoma and cancers of the thyroid and oral cavity.

It was the second WHO-commissioned systematic review undertaken by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA).

The first review, published in September 2024, explored the association between mobile phone use and brain and other head cancers and found no link.

Ken Karipidis, the lead author of both studies and assistant director of Health Impact Assessment at ARPANSA, said the new research assessed all available evidence on the association between mobile phones, mobile phone towers and cancers.

He said that the researchers found no link between radio wave exposure and the various cancers but that the team cannot be as certain of the results compared to the review on brain cancers.

"This is because there is not as much evidence on the association between these cancers and exposure to radio waves from wireless technology," Karipidis said.

Rohan Mate, an ARPANSA scientist who contributed to the study, said the findings would "add to the body of knowledge to inform the public about wireless technology and cancer".

The two systematic reviews will inform an updated assessment on the health effects from radio wave exposure currently being prepared by the WHO.

Cancer vaccines: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has launched a consultation on regulatory guidance for individualised mRNA cancer im-

munotherapies (colloquially referred to as cancer vaccines).

The eight-week consultation was launched Monday and will run until March 31, 2025. The MHRA is asking all stakeholders, including developers of these medicines, to provide comments, after which the guidance will be updated. The UK regulator also welcomes comments from members of the public, including people affected by cancer.

The guidance aims to streamline pathways for bringing these therapies through to patients, without compromising on robust safety principles, noted a government statement.

Microplastics: Microplastics are making their way into human brains, with potentially dangerous effects on people's health and mental acuity, according to a paper published on Monday in Nature Medicine.

"The tiny fragments of plastic are passing the blood-brain barrier and into human brains, and the amount of microplastics in the brain appears to be increasing over time," said

The Washington Post in its report about the finding. "There were 50 percent more fragments in brains analyzed in 2024 than in 2016."

The scientists also examined the brains of 12 deceased patients diagnosed with dementia, and found that they had three to five times more microplastics than normal brains.

Microplastics are tiny pieces of plastic, less than 5 millimeters in size, or smaller than a pencil eraser, that are either manufactured or slough off of plastic objects. Nanoplastics are even smaller, and can be a fraction of the width of a human hair.

In recent years, scientists have realized that many plastic items (plastic bags, water bottles, tires, polyester or synthetic clothing) can shed small fragments or fibers that make their way into air, food and water. Many of those particles are burrowing deep into the human body. Microplastics have been identified in the liver, placenta, blood, testicles, even certain arteries that lead to the heart.

Trial marks key milestone in public health emergency

Uganda starts Ebola vaccine trial after new outbreak kills 1, infects 2

KAMPALA, Uganda, Feb 4, (Agencies): Ugandan authorities on Monday began a clinical trial of a vaccine against the Sudan strain of Ebola that has killed one person in the outbreak declared last week.

Health workers and others exposed to the Ebola strain are being targeted in the study, which began four days after Uganda announced the death of a nurse in the capital, Kampala. Two more cases were confirmed on Monday in relatives of the first victim.

Officials are investigating the source of the outbreak. Ebola is spread by contact with bodily fluids of an infected person or contaminated materials. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and at times internal and external bleeding.

Responding to this outbreak could prove difficult because Kampala has a highly mobile population of about 4 million. The nurse who died had sought treatment at a hospital just outside the capital and later traveled to Mbale in the country's east, where he was admitted to a public hospital. Health authorities said he also sought the services of a traditional healer.

At least 234 contacts in this outbreak have been identified, according to the Ministry of Health.

Health authorities have access to more than 2,000 doses of a candidate vaccine against the Sudan strain. IAVI provided the vaccine.

The trial "marks a major milestone in public health emergency response and demonstrates the power of collaboration for global health security," Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO director for Africa, said in a statement.

This is the first Ebola outbreak since the Trump administration's decision last week to withdraw from the U.N. health agency, and since Trump's order for a freeze on foreign assistance.



Health workers prepare to administer vaccines against the Sudan strain of Ebola, during a trial at Mulago Referral Hospital, in Kampala, Uganda, Monday, Feb. 3, 2025. (AP)

Uganda has had multiple Ebola outbreaks, including one in 2000 that killed hundreds. Tracing contacts is key to stemming the spread of Ebola, which manifests as a viral hemorrhagic fever.

A trial vaccine known as rVSV-ZEBOV, used to vaccinate 3,000 people at risk of infection during an outbreak of the Zaire strain of Ebola in eastern Congo between 2018 and 2020, proved effective in containing the spread of the disease there.

The confirmation of Ebola in Uganda is the latest in a series of outbreaks of viral hemorrhagic fevers in the east African region. Tanzania declared an outbreak of the Ebola-like Marburg disease last month, and Rwanda in December announced that its own outbreak of Marburg was over.

Scientists don't know the natural reservoir of Ebola, but they suspect the first person infected in an outbreak ac-

quired the virus through contact with an infected animal or eating its raw meat.

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

WHO welcomes Ebola vaccine trial in Uganda

The ongoing Ebola vaccine trial in Uganda is an achievement in the fight against the disease, the World Health Organization (WHO) has said.

In a statement posted on its website late Monday, the WHO said the trial, which began with contacts of the index Ebola case in the country, aims to assess the clinical efficacy of a candidate vaccine against the Sudan strain of the Ebola virus.

According to the UN agency, this is the first-ever vaccine trial for the Sudan strain of Ebola.

WHO, GAVI partner to control outbreak

Zambia to launch cholera vaccine campaign

LUSAKA, Feb 4, (Xinhua): Health authorities in Zambia will commence an oral cholera vaccination campaign in Chililabombwe Town in Copperbelt Province currently hard-hit by a cholera outbreak, a senior government official said Monday.

The government has initiated discussions with the World Health Organization, Gavi, and other partners to address the cholera outbreak in the province, Minister of Health Elijah Muchima said during an update press briefing on the cholera situation.

He said that about 129,000 doses of vaccines have been

earmarked for the district, and the vaccination exercise is expected to commence on Feb. 7.

"Vaccination remains a cornerstone of our cholera response strategy," he said, adding that training to prepare facilities for the exercise and public sensitization about the disease have started.

According to him, a multisectoral stakeholder program has been initiated to control the outbreak and prevent further spread, with the United Nations Children's Fund expected to increase the number of community-based volunteers to 150 from the current 50.

Journey from nerd to tech titan in 'Source Code'

Gates explores making of internal operating system in new memoir

NEW YORK, Feb 4, (AP): As he prepares to turn 70 later this year, Microsoft founder Bill Gates' new memoir explores how his childhood quirks, upbringing, friendships and experiences coalesced into shaping his internal operating system.

In "Source Code: My Beginnings," the first installment of a trilogy retracing his journey from an often misunderstood kid to a polarizing technology titan to an influential philanthropist, Gates dissects his brain's unusual wiring, delves into the emotional trauma of his best friend dying while they were both in high school, and revisits the birth of Traf-O-Data, a startup that he launched in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with another childhood friend, Paul Allen.

Traf-O-Data, conceived to create software for the groundbreaking Altair computer made Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems, became Microsoft in 1975 - a year it booked \$16,005 in revenue while Gates and Allen were making \$9 per hour.

By 1977, Microsoft had become successful enough to embolden Gates to drop out of Harvard University. In 1979, he had decided to move Microsoft to the Seattle area where he grew up. Although Gates stepped down as Microsoft's CEO 25 years ago, the Windows operating system and other software created under his reign remain the main pillar in a company that now generates \$212 billion in annual revenue, boasts a \$3.1 trillion market value, and accounts for most of Gates' \$100 billion personal fortune.

"Source Code" ends with Gates' drive back to Seattle in 1979, meaning it doesn't touch upon his 1994 marriage to Melinda French, nor their 2021 divorce.

Reflective

"I am being reflective, which is not my normal mode, but it's kind of time," Gates said during an interview about the book with The Associated Press. "As we went back and got teacher's comments or people I worked with at Harvard, it was fascinating. I had confused myself into thinking I got straight A's in ninth grade."

That might not sound like much of a revelation, but it was a surprise to the cerebral Gates, who paints himself in the book as a "bratty smartass" prone to dismissively sneering, "That's the stupidest thing I ever heard," about remarks that seemed nonsensical to him.

Gate's self-portrait is that of a nerd nicknamed "Trey" by his card-playing grandmother because he was the third male on this father's side of the family



Bill Gates stands for a photo after an interview with The Associated Press in Indian Wells, Calif., Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025. (AP)

to be named Bill. He was a pipsqueak who had difficulty making friends and preferred living in his own head before he discovered computers, which became like slot machines that rewarded him for writing elegant lines of code.

When he did talk, the young Gates rocked back and forth like a metronome setting a rhythm for his brain - a habit that surfaced during parts of his 45-minute interview with the AP.

Attention

"It was a little weird because it was hard to direct my attention," Gates recalled during the interview. "I had one year in school where they said, 'Oh we should put you ahead a couple grades.'"

Although he didn't realize it as a boy, Gates has no doubt he was and still is neurodivergent who channeled that anomaly into learning to program computers at the right time in the right place with the patient support of his late parents (the book is dedicated to them, along with his sister, Kristi and Libby).

"It wasn't until I was an adult that there was this idea that there are kids that have this kind of unique ability to concentrate but less social skills. I certainly would be included in that," Gates said. "I encourage people who have strengths and deficits to kind of map their ambition onto something that plays to their strengths. Being able to think just about programming and how you do it better ended up being invaluable for me."

Gates also had the advantage of growing up in a family that could

afford to pay for him to attend a private high school in Seattle. Still, that privilege didn't insulate him from the trauma he experienced when his best friend, Kent Evans, died in a mountain climbing accident in May 1972 - a year before they were going to graduate.

Evans' death occurred while he and Gates were preparing to spend much of the summer working on a program for their school, but what hurt far more was the loss of someone who understood him and helped give him a sense of purpose for the first time in his life.

"I had no notion of a friend just being gone. It was the only negative thing in my childhood," Gates said. "It shapes you, that someone can just disappear - somebody you loved and would have done things with. He would have been part of whatever I ended up going on to do. I give Kent credit, along with Paul (Allen), for setting the direction that I ended up going down."

Reconnect

Evans' death provided the impetus for Gates to reconnect with Allen, who was already attending college, to help him with his programming projects. Allen, three years older than Gates and a passionate fan of legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix, did more than just help with the coding. He also offered Gates some LSD in an attempt to lure his partner down a more psychedelic path.

Gates rebuffed Allen at first but decided to drop acid with a group of high school friends shortly before his 1973 graduation, according to the book.

It wasn't a pleasant experience, a reaction that Gates thought might have been related to the dental surgery he underwent the day after his LSD trip. He tried LSD again with Allen in October 1974 while they were watching an episode of the old "Kung Fu" series on TV, and decided he would be better off without psychedelic drugs even though Apple co-founder Steve Jobs contended Microsoft would have created better products had Gates taken more acid.

"I thought maybe I'd seem cool if I took it, but that didn't happen," Gates said during the interview. "I would say Steve was definitely more hip than I was. He took a lot more acid than I did. He had a sense of style. I had some charisma in terms of motivating engineers and saying this great thing (with personal computers) would happen, but Steve had natural speaking and charisma capabilities, even beyond mine. So I always envied him for the things he did."

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SPORTS

Wizards edge Hornets despite Bridges' historic triple-double



Denver Nuggets forward Hunter Tyson (5) reaches for the ball as New Orleans Pelicans guards Jordan Hawkins (24) and Trey Murphy III (25) defend in the first half of an NBA basketball game in Denver. (AP)

Thunder dominate short-handed Bucks

CHARLOTTE, N.C., Feb 4, (AP): Bilal Coulibaly had 26 points, Corey Kispert scored 25 off the bench on five 3-pointers and the Washington Wizards handed the Charlotte Hornets their fifth straight loss 124-114 on Monday night.

Miles Bridges had his first career triple-double for the Hornets, finishing with 24 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. LaMelo Ball and Brandon Miller were both out with injuries.

Nick Smith Jr. scored 24 points and Mark Williams overcame a sluggish first half to finish with 23 points and 14 rebounds for the Hornets.

The Wizards outscored the Hornets 46-25 in the second quarter behind Kispert, who had 18 points in the quarter on four 3s and led by 26 in the first half.

Kyle Kuzma chipped in with 22 points and Jonas Valanciunas added 14 points and 17 rebounds for the Wizards, who have won two straight since snapping a 16-game losing streak.

Thunder 125, Bucks 96

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 34 points in 22 minutes, and Oklahoma City routed short-handed Milwaukee.

Milwaukee was without injured stars Giannis Antetokounmpo, Damian Lillard, Brook Lopez and Khris Middleton, turning what could have been an exciting rematch of the NBA Cup final that Milwaukee won into a blowout.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the NBA's leading scorer, showed no mercy. He scored 21 points on 9-for-11 shooting in the first quarter as the Thunder took a 39-22 lead. He scored 30 in the first half as the Thunder took a 78-44 lead. He left the game for good with 6:17 remaining and the Thunder ahead 96-54.

Ousmane Dieng finished with 21 points and seven rebounds and Isaiah Joe added 18 points for the Thunder, who improved to 39-9 despite all-star Jalen Williams sitting out with a sprained right wrist.

Warriors 104, Magic 99

In San Francisco, Andrew Wiggins scored 25 points and Stephen Curry added 24, leading Golden State to a win over Orlando.

Wiggins shot 7 of 14, made 10 free throws and passed Hall of Famer Chris Mullin to take seventh place on the Warriors' career list for 3-pointers.

Moses Moody added 17 points while rookie center Quinten Post had seven points and seven rebounds in his third consecutive start to help Golden State get back above .500.

Cole Anthony had 26 points and five rebounds for the Magic. Franz Wagner added 21 points and five assists and Paolo Banchero scored 18.

Trail Blazers 121, Suns 119, OT

In Portland, Deandre Ayton had 25 points and 20 rebounds, and Portland edged Phoenix in overtime

for their fourth consecutive victory.

Deni Avdija scored 24 points for Portland, which also beat Phoenix 127-108 on Saturday night. Toumani Camara made five 3-pointers and scored 17 points.

The Blazers had a 120-117 lead when Avdija fouled Devin Booker on a 3-pointer with 4.4 seconds left. Booker made the first two free throws but missed the third, which Ayton grabbed for his 20th rebound.

Anfernee Simons had 13 points and 10 assists for Portland.

Booker scored 34 points while becoming the franchise's career scoring leader. Kevin Durant had 27 points for the Suns, and Bradley Beal finished with 25.

Hawks 132, Pistons 130

In Detroit, Trae Young made a 23-foot fadeaway with 1.6 seconds left and scored 17 of his 34 points in the fourth quarter, lifting Atlanta to a win over Detroit.

Young helped the Hawks end an eight-game losing streak.

Cade Cunningham had 30 points and 14 assists for the Pistons, who failed to attempt a shot on their final possession.

Atlanta's De'Andre Hunter had 20 points and rookie Zacharie Risacher added 17 points.

Detroit's Tobias Harris scored 22, Jalen Duren had 18 points and nine rebounds and Malik Beasley scored 18.

Knicks 124, Rockets 118

In New York, Jalen Brunson had 42 points and 10 assists, breaking a tie with Carmelo Anthony for third on the franchise list with his 18th 40-point game with the Knicks, and New York beat Houston.

Brunson scored 17 points in the fourth quarter to bring the Knicks back in a game they trailed by 11 after three. He ended up with his 12th game with at least 30 points and 10 assists since coming to New York, passing Hall of Famer Richie Guerin for most in franchise history.

Karl-Anthony Towns and Mikal Bridges each added 22 points for the Knicks. Josh Hart had 19.

Amen Thompson had 25 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists in his third career triple-double for the Rockets, who have lost three in a row for the first time all season. Cam Whitmore added 18 points off the bench.

Grizzlies 128, Spurs 109

In Memphis, Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 31 points, GG Jackson added a season-high 27, and Memphis defeated San Antonio.

Ja Morant, returning after a two-game absence to nurse a sore right shoulder, finished with 25 points and 11 assists as Memphis won its ninth in the last 10. The victory, coupled with Houston's 124-118 loss to the New York Knicks, gave Memphis a 1 1/2-game advantage over the Rockets for second place in the West.

Victor Wembanyama led the Spurs with 27 points, 10 rebounds and two blocks. Stephon Castle finished with 21 points as San Antonio lost its fourth in the last five.

Kings 116, Timberwolves 114

In Minneapolis, DeMar DeRozan scored 33 points, and Sacramento edged Minnesota after finalizing their trade for Zach LaVine.

Malik Monk had 26 points for the Kings, who closed out a 2-6 road trip. Keegan Murray added 19 points.

Sacramento traded De'Aaron Fox to San Antonio as part of a three-team trade that put LaVine on the Kings. LaVine likely will play in his first game with his new team on Wednesday.

Naz Reid led Minnesota with a season-high 30 points, including 16 in the first quarter. Jaden McDaniels added 22, and Anthony Edwards finished with 21 points.

Minnesota was without forward Julius Randle for the second straight game. Randle was sidelined with a groin injury.

Nuggets 125, Pelicans 113

In Denver, Michael Porter Jr. scored a season-high 36 points, Nikola Jokic added 27 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists, and Denver overcame a career-high 41 points from Trey Murphy III to defeat New Orleans.

Jamal Murray had 20 points and eight assists while Julian Strawther scored 15 points off the bench for Denver. In his first start of the season, Zeke Nnaji, filling in for the injured Aaron Gordon, had a season-high 12 points.

The triple-double was Jokic's NBA-best 23rd of the season and ninth in his past 11 games.

Murphy scored 39 of New Orleans' first 85 points, helping the Pelicans, who trailed by as many as 20 points in the second half, get within eight entering the fourth quarter. Murphy made 13 of his 21 shots, including eight of his 12 3s, while the rest of his team shot just 37.3% from the field.

CJ McCollum scored 30 points and Zion Williamson added 14 for the Pelicans.

Pacers 112, Jazz 111

In Salt Lake City, Pascal Siakam scored 10 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter to help Indiana beat Utah for their fourth straight win.

Tyrese Haliburton scored 18 for the Pacers, who played without Myles Turner after the center was a late scratch due to an ankle injury. Obi Toppin and Aaron Nesmith each had 13 points.

John Collins and Jordan Clarkson both scored 21 for the Jazz (11-37), who have dropped nine of 10.

Utah guard Collin Sexton sprained his left ankle in the opening minutes and did not return. Isaiah Collier and Keyonte George combined for 27 points and 21 assists but made errors down the stretch that showed their inexperience.

The Jazz led 101-89 on Collier's 3-pointer with 6:52 to play, but were outscored 23-10 down the stretch as the Pacers turned up the pressure.

UAB fends off North Texas

Kansas shuts down Iowa State in desperation game for both teams

LAWRENCE, Kan., Feb 4, (AP): Kansas had just turned the ball over in the first half against Iowa State on Monday night when it suddenly popped loose again along the sideline, and Jayhawks guard Dajuan Harris Jr. made perhaps the hustle play of the game.

With a textbook baseball slide, Harris managed to corral the ball and throw it from his rear to teammate Hunter Dickinson, who in turn tossed the ball ahead to David Coit. After a couple of dribbles, Coit unloaded a pass from the midcourt line that KJ Adams leaped into the air and slammed for a dunk that seemed to shake the rafters of Allen Fieldhouse.

It was a play that underscored a rare fact about the Jayhawks at this point in the season.

They were playing with a sense of desperation.

Zeke Mayo scored 17 points and Dickinson added 14 points and nine rebounds as the No. 16 Jayhawks roared to a 69-52 win over eighth-ranked Iowa State. But it was the defense, which nearly shut down the Cyclones' prolific backcourt, and the hustle on both ends of the floor that allowed Kansas to remain in the regular-season Big 12 title hunt.

Kansas (16-6) moved into a tie with Iowa State (17-5) at 7-4 in the league, 2 1/2 games back of Houston and Arizona.

The Jayhawks held Iowa State to just 3-for-21 shooting from beyond the 3-point arc. And while the Cyclones only turned the ball over seven times, just about all of them - like that alley-oop dunk by Adams - turned into fast-break points.

While the Jayhawks, who blew a 19-point halftime lead at Baylor last weekend, thrived with their backs against the wall, Iowa State lost its third consecutive game while struggling without injured forward Milan Momcilovic in the lineup.

Momcilovic, who hurt his non-shooting hand last month, went through pregame warmups and could be back soon.

Tamin Lipsey, Keshon Gilbert and Joshua Jefferson were held to 11 points apiece by Kansas, and it took a whole lot of shots for them to get there. The trio of Cyclones was 13 of 42 from the field and 2 of 14 from beyond the 3-point arc.

Meanwhile, leading scorer Curtis Jones was held to seven points on 3-for-11 shooting.

Yaxel Lendeborg scored 17 points to help UAB hold off North Texas 64-61.

Lendeborg also grabbed 13 rebounds and had three steals for the Blazers (15-8, 8-2 American Athletic Conference). Christian Coleman had 13 points and eight rebounds.

The Mean Green (16-6, 7-3) were led by Jasper Floyd with 15 points and three steals. Brenen Lorient had 12 points and Moulaye Sissoko pitched in with 10 points, 11

rebounds and two steals.

Alejandro Vasquez scored all 10 of his points in the first half to help UAB to a 32-31 advantage at the break. Johnathan Massie scored the last six points for UAB to close out the win.

Langston Reynolds finished with 19 points and 12 rebounds to power Northern Colorado to an 86-72 victory over Idaho State.

Isaiah Hawthorne also scored 19 on 7-for-11 shooting with two 3-pointers for the Bears (17-6, 9-1 Big Sky Conference). Jaron Rillie hit two 3-pointers and scored 17.

The Bengals (10-11, 5-5) were led by Jake O'Neil with 21 points and 10 rebounds. Dylan Darling added 20 points, four assists and two steals. AJ Burgin scored 12.

Omar Croskey scored a career-high 27 to propel South Carolina State to an 89-66 victory over Howard.

Croskey added eight rebounds and three steals for the Bulldogs (10-12, 4-3 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference). Drayton Jones added 15 points and eight rebounds. Jayden Johnson hit two 3-pointers and scored 14.

Cameron Shockley-Okeke and Marcus Dockery both scored 18 to lead the Bison (8-14, 3-2). Blake Harper had 17 points, six rebounds and four assists.

Keionte Cornelius scored 14 points to guide Alcorn State to a 60-53 victory over Grambling on Monday night.

Cornelius went 5 of 10 from the field (4 for 7 from 3-point range) for the Braves (5-17, 5-4 Southwestern Athletic Conference). Jalyye Gaines-Wyatt shot 4 for 7, including 2 for 3 from beyond the arc to add 10 points. Mike Pajaud pitched in with eight points and seven rebounds.

The Tigers (6-16, 3-6) were led in Kintavious Dozier, who finished with 12 points and two steals. Ernest Ross added 11 points and seven rebounds. Mikale Stevenson had 10 points and six steals.

Blaise Threatt scored a career-high 34 to offset a career-best 35 points from Trent McLaughlin, helping Weber State hold off Northern Arizona 77-73.

McLaughlin hit a 3-pointer with 34 seconds left to give Northern Arizona a 73-72 lead. Viljami Vartiainen answered with a 3-pointer 12 seconds later to put Weber State in front. Trevor Hennig made two free throws with two seconds left for a two-possession lead.

Threatt also grabbed 10 rebounds for the Wildcats (9-15, 3-7 Big Sky Conference). Henning added 14 points and Vartiainen scored 10.

McLaughlin added four assists and two steals for the Lumberjacks (13-10, 4-6). Diego Campisano had 12 points and Jayden Jackson pitched in with 10 points, five assists and two steals.

Best of the Rest

Ramos nears Monterrey move: Sergio Ramos is close to joining Monterrey on a free transfer, according to widespread media reports in Mexico.

The 38-year-old center-back underwent a medical examination in Madrid under the observation of Monterrey staff on Monday, newspaper El Universal reported.

It said that Ramos' representatives and Monterrey officials were finalizing contractual terms, adding that an official announcement confirming the move was "imminent".

Ramos has been without a club since parting ways with Sevilla last June. His distinguished 22-year professional career has included four Champions League trophies with Real Madrid and a World Cup title with Spain.

Monterrey are prioritizing the signing of a center-back after Carlos Salcedo suffered a serious knee injury in his first training session with the club last month. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Dragusin to have surgery: Tottenham defender Radu Dragusin has sustained anterior cruciate ligament damage to his right knee and will undergo surgery.

The 23-year-old Dragusin was injured in Spurs' Europa League game against Elfsborg last week.

Tottenham did not add on Tuesday when he was likely to return to action, but it can take up to a year for players to fully recover from ACL injuries.

"Radu will be assessed by our medical team to determine when he can return to training," the club said in a statement.

Spurs already has key players injured including Cristian Romero and Dominic Solanke. (AP)

Transfer deadline day

Man City, PSG and Aston Villa go big in the winter window

LONDON, Feb 4, (AP): Manchester City and Aston Villa made big moves just before the midseason transfer window closed on Monday.

Four-time defending Premier League champion City secured a late deal for Porto midfielder Nico Gonzalez for a reported \$61.8 million, while three-time Champions League winner Marco Asensio joined Villa on loan to the end of the season.

Uncertainty over Bayern Munich forward Mathys Tel finally ended when he completed a loan move to Tottenham

with the option of a permanent deal in the summer. Paris Saint-Germain was one of the most active clubs during the window by signing Khvicha Kvaratskhelia from Napoli, and releasing several players.

The Columbus Crew completed the permanent transfer of MLS All-Star forward Juan Camilo "Cucho" Hernandez to Real Betis for an undisclosed fee.

City usually makes its moves in the offseason. But in a bid to rescue a campaign that unraveled at the end of last year and was derailed again in a 5-1 loss at Arsenal, City spent big in January on five new signings. Gonzalez took its outlay past \$200 million.

City signed Egypt forward Omar Marmoush for \$73 million and defenders Abdou Diallo and Khusanov from Lens and Vitor Reis for a combined \$77 million. Christian McFarlane, an 18-year-old left back, joined from sister club New York City FC while captain Kyle Walker left for AC Milan.

Gonzalez's arrival finally gives City a defensive midfielder in the mold of Rodri - the Ballon d'Or holder who was ruled out for the season in September because of an ACL injury.

The Premier League title seems well beyond City, which is 15 points behind leader Liverpool, and a Champions League bid has been made extra difficult after being drawn against holder Real Madrid in the playoffs. But City manager Pep Guardiola will hope the new additions can return the club to the Champions League next season.

Paris Saint-Germain has lost much of its star appeal in recent years following the departures of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappé. A shift in strategy has seen the Qatar-backed club focus more on younger and French talents rather than superstar names.

But the Kvaratskhelia deal for a reported fee of around \$72 million represents another marquee signing.

The Georgia forward isn't at the level of Messi and Ney-



Porto's Nico Gonzalez shields the ball from Olympiacos' Ayoub El Kaabi, left, during the Europa League opening phase soccer match between FC Porto and Olympiacos at the Dragao stadium in Porto, Portugal. (AP)

mar but he has long been among the most sought-after players in Europe with thrilling, match-winning qualities. PSG offloaded striker Randal Kolo Muani - a \$101 million signing last season - to Juventus on loan, and central defender Milan Skriniar to Fenerbahce, and Asensio.

Through to the Champions League last 16, Aston Villa boosted its attacking options in the form of Marcus Rashford and Asensio.

Rashford was one of the big stories of the window after falling out of favor at Manchester United. Despite being linked with clubs across Europe, as well as Saudi Arabia, he secured a loan to Villa for the rest of the season.

If Unai Emery can get the best out of the former England international, he could prove to be an inspired signing in terms of Villa's Champions League campaign and push for a top four finish. Meanwhile, in former Real Madrid midfielder Asensio, Villa has a player with Champions League-winning knowhow.

Neymar's high-profile move to the Saudi league was cut short last week when the Brazil great's contract was terminated by Al-Hilal and he left for boyhood club Santos.

Along with Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema, the former Barcelona and PSG superstar was a standout signing as the Saudi league launched a recruitment drive to lure the world's top players. But injury meant Neymar was reduced to seven games for Al-Hilal following his 2023 move for a reported \$98 million and his departure brought an underwhelming end to his time there.

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FC 2025 PlayStation tournament for Hesabi customers in progress.

Event in collaboration with Kuwait Esports Committee

KFH organizes FC 2025 PlayStation tournament for Hesabi customers

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) organized, in collaboration with Kuwait Esports Committee, a PlayStation tournament (FC 2025) exclusively for Hesabi account holders aged 15 to 25.

Held in the KFH Zone at Winter Wonderland, thirty-two players, divided into sixteen teams, fiercely competed in a knock-out tournament, displaying both intense competition and great enthusiasm.

The winners were honored at the end of the tournament. The first-place winner received KD 1000 and the opportunity to represent the Kuwait Esports team in external competitions. Second place received KD 500, and third place received KD 250.

This event reaffirms KFH's keen interest in the youth segment, particularly Hesabi account holders. It is also part of the bank's commitment to enhancing customer experience by organizing exclu-

sive events, offering new rewards, and launching various campaigns that exceed their aspirations and strengthen their satisfaction.

The FC 2025 PlayStation tournament is a distinguished addition to the array of activities which KFH offers to Hesabi holders, aligning with its youth and social responsibility strategy.

Hesabi account benefits
Among the many benefits offered through Hesabi accounts for youth aged 15 to 25 are the following: automatic enrollment in KFH Rewards program, one of the best rewards programs in Kuwait; 24/7 banking services; exclusive offers and discounts from a wide range of merchants; a free Hesabi prepaid card; free online banking services; eligibility to open an Al-Hassad account, allowing them to win from over 400 prizes annually; and eligibility to open an Al-Rabeh account with a wide range of benefits.



Great interaction at KFH Zone.

Real visits Leganes in Copa amid refereeing controversy

Madrid woes on defense compounded by new Alaba injury

MADRID, Feb 4, (Agencies): Real Madrid travels to play Leganes in the quarterfinal of the Copa del Rey on Wednesday with the club surrounded in a controversy over refereeing decisions that have gone against them.

Real Madrid's 1-0 defeat to Espanyol on Saturday night came after they failed to take a host of chances, with Espanyol left back Carlos Romero scoring the only goal of the game six minutes from time.

Madrid, however, was furious the full back was still on the pitch after only seeing a yellow card for a lunge at Kylian Mbappe from behind around 15 minutes before the goal.

Romero looked to stop Mbappe counter-attacking and his challenge was high, late and caught Mbappe with his studs, meaning he should have seen a red card leaving Espanyol with 10 men and probably changing the outcome of the game.

The La Liga leader sent an official complaint to the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) complaining about the "culmination of a system of refereeing that has lost all credit, in which decisions against Real Madrid have reached a level of manipulation and adulteration of the competition."



Real Madrid's Aurelien Tchouameni, left, challenges for the ball with Espanyol's Roberto Fernandez during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Espanyol and Real Madrid at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

The club's letter ignores the fact that Madrid has been given 10 penalties in La Liga this season (more than any side) with zero given against them, and forgets recent refereeing mistakes that have favored the club, such as the failure to give Celta Vigo a clear penalty in the last round of the Copa del Rey, at the start of a move that ended with Mbappe scoring the first goal of the game, where Celta also had a goal ruled out for a dubious offside.

The RFEF has responded with a communique in which they "deeply

lament the tone and the seriousness of the accusations, which question the honor of referees and the functioning of the competition." The controversy means Javier Alverola Rojas will be under huge pressure when he referees Wednesday's game in the Butarque Stadium.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti will probably make some rotations to his starting 11 with half an eye on Saturday's vital Madrid derby in La Liga at home to Atletico Madrid, where the leadership is in play. That game is then

followed by a visit to play Manchester City in the first leg of their Champions League play-off.

Brahim Diaz and Arda Guler will probably start, while Ancelotti has to find a reliable defensive partnership after Antonio Rudiger's hamstring injury, with Raul Asencio likely to partner or Aurelien Tchouameni in the back four, with Fran Garcia at left back and Lucas Vazquez on the right.

Real Madrid's problems on defense have been compounded by a muscle injury to David Alaba.

Alaba has "an adductor injury in his left leg," the club said on Tuesday.

Spanish media said Alaba was expected to be out for two to three weeks, meaning he is likely to miss key matches against Atletico Madrid in La Liga on Saturday and Manchester City in the Champions League next week.

Alaba returned to action only last month after being sidelined for more than a year because of a knee injury.

His latest injury comes a day after the club said fellow central defender Antonio Rudiger has a right leg muscle injury that is also expected to keep him sidelined for up to three weeks.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti already can't count on central defender Eder Militao and right back Dani Carvajal because of injuries. Youngster Raul Asencio is the only central defender fit and available. Ancelotti has been improvising midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni in the middle of the defense.

Hunting and Equestrian Club approves 25 Cup races for the upcoming season



Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser receiving Alaa Hamad Al-Roumi.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Hunting and Equestrian Club management has approved an initiative proposed by Arabian horse owners and enthusiasts to organize 25 cup rounds within the club's races for the upcoming 2025-2026 sports season. The total prize pool for the winners will exceed 55,000 dinars.

Breeder Alaa Hamad Al-Roumi, representing the horse owners, confirmed the approval in a press statement during his attendance at the 14th meeting races at the Hunting and Equestrian Club. Speaking after his meeting with the club's Secretary-General, Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser, Al-Roumi stated: "The Hunting and Equestrian Club has approved the initiative submitted by owners and lovers of Arabian horses with Egyptian blood to organize 25 cup rounds as part of the

club's races next season."

Al-Roumi highlighted the remarkable progress the Hunting and Equestrian Club has made in recent years under the leadership of Sheikh Dhari Al-Fahad and the Board of Directors. He noted that the club's races now feature intense competition among horse owners and an increase in prize values, further motivating equestrian enthusiasts to contribute to the sport.

"In support of Kuwaiti equestrianism and Egyptian Arabian horses," a meeting was held with Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser to discuss the proposal submitted by the owners and breeders of Egyptian Arabian horses," Al-Roumi added. "This initiative reflects our commitment to preserving and promoting this cherished sport, which is deeply rooted in Kuwait's heritage."

Cambodia sends athletes to AWG for 1st time

Gu withdraws from Harbin Asian Winter Games

HARBIN, Feb 4, (Xinhua): China's Winter Olympic champion Gu Ailing announced her withdrawal from the upcoming 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin on Tuesday due to injuries.

Gu said on social media platform Weibo that she suffered a "severe contusion" after a fall in the freestyle street event at the 2025 Winter X Games in Aspen last month. In her post on Tuesday, she revealed that she sustained another injury during recent training, forcing her to pull out of the competition.

"After my injury in the X Games Aspen 2025, I tried to recover and prepare for the following World Cup events, but unfortunately, I got injured again in training.

"It is with a heavy heart that I have to withdraw from the Harbin Asian Winter Games, which I had long been looking forward to. I wish all Chinese athletes the best of luck. I will work closely with my doctors on rehabilitation and strive to return to competition as soon as possible this season," 21-year-old Gu wrote.

The opening ceremony of the Harbin Asian Winter Games is scheduled to be held on Friday, and the Games will conclude on February 14.

Gu claimed gold medals in the women's big air and halfpipe and a silver in slopestyle at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, becoming the first freestyle skier to win three

medals in three different events at a single Winter Olympics.

Last month, Gu won the slopestyle title at the FIS Freeski World Cup in Laax, Switzerland, before she got injured in the X Games Aspen.

A send-off ceremony was held for Kazakhstan's national Alpine ski team as they departed from Almaty to Harbin on Monday to participate in the 2025 Asian Winter Games.

Kazakhstan has produced strong alpine skiers who have competed in various international events, includ-

ing past Asian Winter Games and the Winter Olympics. The team aims to build on this legacy in Harbin.

"Right now, we are determined to bring home medals," stated head coach, Alexander Kostrov.

"As I see it, I have been preparing for this my entire life. I approach each competition with the goal of achieving strong results for our country," said athlete Ksenia Berezhnaya.

The 9th Asian Winter Games will be held from February 7 to 14, in Harbin, northeast China's

Heilongjiang province. Thirty-four countries and regions are expected to participate in the event. Enditem The National Olympic Committee of Cambodia (NOCC) has sent athletes to participate in the Asian Winter Games for the first time, said an NOCC news release on Tuesday.

A total of nine delegates, including coaches and athletes, will take part in the luge competition, the news release said.

"This is the first time for Cambodia, as a tropical and hot country, to have a sports team to participate in the Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China," NOCC's Secretary General Vath Chamroeun said.

Chamroeun said the participation also went in line with the policy and vision of the International Olympic Committee, which encouraged countries and regions with hot weather or with no snow or ice to participate in the Winter Games.

He said Cambodian athletes had trained in South Korea prior to the games.

The ninth Asian Winter Games will take place in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang province from Feb. 7 to 14. Over 1,270 athletes from 34 countries and regions across Asia will participate, making this edition the largest in terms of participating delegations and athletes.



In this file photo, Gu Ailing of China competes during the women's halfpipe qualification at FIS Freeski World Cup 2025 in Zhangjiakou, north China's Hebei Province. (Xinhua)

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Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry, bottom, shoots against Orlando Magic guard Anthony Black during the first half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. Warriors won 104-99. (AP) — See Page 14

Sports

Al-Ettifaq takes on Al-Riffa

Al-Qadisiya's path to semifinals on the line against Qatar's Al-Arabi

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Al-Qadisiya will face a decisive match today when it hosts Qatar's Al-Arabi at 6:15 pm at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium in the fifth round of the Gulf Club Championship's second group. At 8:15 pm, Al-Ettifaq of Saudi Arabia will face Bahrain's in the same group.

Al-Qadisiya currently occupies second place in the group with five points, while Al-Arabi is at the bottom with just one point. Al-Ettifaq has already qualified for the semi-finals, sitting at the top of the group with 12 points. Al-Riffa, from Bahrain, holds third place with four points.

Al-Qadisiya can secure qualification today with a win over Al-Arabi, provided Al-Riffa loses. Any other result will delay the announcement of the second team to advance to the semi-finals, with the final decision set for the sixth and final round on February 18.

In its first-leg encounter, which ended in a 1-1 draw, Al-Qadisiya was denied a deserved victory after a controversial referee decision disallowed a valid goal, while Al-Arabi's goal came from a ball that crossed the field line. Other decisions from the referee negatively impacted Al-Qadisiya's performance.

Locally, Al-Qadisiya has been experiencing a period of inconsistency. The team managed to hand defending Zain Premier League champion Kuwait Club first defeat this season but then drew 1-1 with bottom-placed Al-Yarmouk. The team suffered a tough 2-4 loss to traditional rival Al-Arabi, despite being 2-0 up at halftime. However, Al-Qadisiya bounced back, defeating Al-Arabi in the Super Cup semi-finals before narrowly losing the final to Kuwait Club on penalties (7-6, after a 1-1 draw). Recently, Al-Qadisiya secured a 2-1 win over Al-Salmiya in the league.

Despite these mixed results, Al-Qadisiya has shown strong performances, with Montenegrin coach Zeljko Petrovic making a clear impact. The team's strength has been bolstered by the inclusion of professional Algerian defender Hussein Dhiri and Abdulrahman Al-Dhafri, who were both registered in the Gulf list.

Al-Qadisiya will be without star player Eid Al-Rashidi, who underwent tests revealing a tear in his anterior muscle. The injury will require treatment for two to three weeks. Al-Rashidi is expected to travel to Dubai for therapeutic training.

Al-Arabi knows that it must win today and in its final match, while hoping for an Al-Riffa loss or draw. It will be missing several key players, including Italian Marco Verratti, Spanish duo Wassim Qadari and Rodrigo Sanchez, French player Ishaq Al-Hajji, and Jordanian Yazan Al-Naimat.

The match will be officiated by an Omani refereeing crew led by referee Omar Al Yaqoubi, assisted by Nasser Al Busaidi, Hamoud Al Shaibi, and fourth official Saeed Al Muzaini. The video assistant referee (VAR) will be Saqr Al Zaabi from the UAE, with assistance from Hamad Al Ghafri of Oman.



Al-Qadisiya player makes a tackle during a match.

Kuwait veteran's team kicks off training

KFA Secretary-General decision expected soon: Sheikh Al-Yousef

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, Chairman of the Kuwait Football Association (KFA), reaffirmed his unwavering support for the Blue Veterans Team, expressing his readiness to back the team fully, whether through organizing an internal or external training camp ahead of the Gulf Legends Championship.

The Kuwait veteran's team began its training at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium in preparation for the championship, which will take place in Kuwait from February 20 to 24. The Blues' sessions are being led by Coach Mohammed Ibrahim, assisted by Coach Hani Al-Saqr, with 24 players present out of the initial 28 selected. The team will eventually be reduced to 20 players in accordance with the tournament's regulations.



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef

ment and witness the legendary players of the Gulf region.

Addressing media inquiries, Sheikh Al-Yousef clarified that the appointment of the Secretary-General of the Federation is the prerogative of the Federation President and that the name will be announced soon.

Regarding the latest progress on Kuwait's bid to host the 2031 Asian Cup, Sheikh Al-Yousef mentioned that the KFA is collaborating with major international companies to advance the process. He emphasized that securing government support is crucial for the successful completion of the bid, noting that Kuwait meets all the necessary logistical and infrastructure requirements, including transportation and accommodation. He also stated that new stadiums must have a capacity of at least 38,000 spectators. Sheikh Al-Yousef expressed his sur-

prise that Al-Fahaheel Stadium, which can only accommodate 10,000 spectators, would be considered for hosting Asian Cup matches, suggesting that it may instead serve as a training ground. The same concern was raised regarding Al-Sulaibikhat Stadium.

He revealed that several meetings with government officials will take place in April to discuss the hosting details in greater depth.

Additionally, Sheikh Al-Yousef reiterated his strong support for the technical and administrative staff of Kuwait's national football team and confirmed their continued commitment as they prepare for the upcoming Asian qualifiers against Iraq and Oman in March for the 2026 World Cup.

In closing, he shared that FIFA has allocated a budget of \$7.5 million for the construction of a new KFA headquarters, which will be built near Jaber Stadium.

Curtain falls on 2nd international women's volleyball championship

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The curtain falls on the second friendly international championship of Salwa Al-Sabah Club for Women's Volleyball, which saw participation from Salwa Al-Sabah Club, Geneva (Switzerland), Acad Ankoa (Iraq), Al-Shabiba Al-Bouchrieh (Lebanon), Al-Ula (Saudi Arabia), Fatima Bint Mubarak Academy (UAE), along with the Tunisian and Qatari national teams. The event was held under the patronage of Sheikh Sabah Badr Al-Sabah, Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer.

Organized for the second consecutive year by Salwa Al-Sabah Club, led by Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad, this championship saw Salwa Al-Sabah's Volleyball Team claiming the title in its first edition.

The quarter-finals, saw Salwa Volleyball triumph over the Qatari national team 3-0. Similarly, Geneva defeated Al-Ula 3-0, the Tunisian national team overcame Fatima Academy 3-1, and Al-Shabiba Al-Bouchrieh defeated Acad Ankoa.

Ghadeer Youssef, supervisor of the Qatari women's volleyball team, praised the Salwa International Championship as one of the best organized and technically sound tournaments. She shared that the Qatari women's team is participating for the first time in an external tournament, featuring young players under 14 and 16 years old who are gaining valuable experience. She also commended the Qatar Volleyball Association, led by Ali Al-Kuwari, for its ongoing support and efforts in overcoming obstacles for the women's team.



Players battling for the ball during the tournament.

Youssef expressed gratitude to Salwa Al-Sabah Club and Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad for their warm reception and hospitality, providing the teams with all the comforts needed to perform at their best. She added that Qatar would certainly participate in the tournament's third season and mentioned that the Qatar Volleyball Association is considering organizing a similar tournament in Doha.

In the men's general volleyball league, Al-Nasr defeated Al-Yarmouk 3-1, and Burqan triumphed over Al-Sulaibikhat 3-0. The current standings are as follows: Kazma, Al-Shabab, and Al-Nasr each with 9 points; Al-Arabi and Al-Qadisiyah with 6 points; Burqan, Kuwait, and Al-Sulaibikhat with 3 points; Yarmouk with 2 points; Al-Sahel with 1 point; and Al-Tadamon with no points.

Chelsea edges West Ham in pulsating London derby

Blues move into top four

LONDON, Feb 4, (AP): Chelsea came from behind to beat West Ham 2-1 in a pulsating London derby at Stamford Bridge in the Premier League.

Chelsea's second win in eight games lifted the home side into fourth place in the table, two points above Manchester City and four behind third-placed Nottingham Forest. West Ham remained 15th.

England forward Jarrod Bowen missed the last six games with a foot injury but he made his presence felt three minutes before halftime when he gave West Ham the lead.

Levi Colwill's back pass from the touchline was woefully short, and the talismanic captain steadied himself before steering a left-foot shot into the bottom corner past goalkeeper Filip Jörgensen, who replaced the out-of-form Robert Sanchez.

Chelsea hit back in the 64th just as West Ham looked to be taking control.

Enzo Fernandez's shot was blocked on the line but the rebound fell kindly for substitute Pedro Neto to lash in. The goal was given after a long review and amid loud protests by West Ham players who claimed Bowen was fouled in the buildup.

Chelsea won thanks to Cole Palmer's insistence and a large dollop of luck. With 16 minutes left, Palmer's cross from a tight angle on the left was deflected into his own net by West Ham defender Aaron Wan-Bissaka.

"Just disappointed to be leading and lose the game," Bowen said. "We left everything out there. We came to a side who are pushing for top four,



Chelsea's Reece James, top and West Ham's Emerson Palmieri challenge for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and West Ham United at Stamford Bridge stadium in London. (AP)

pushing for the title. On another day, I think it could have been a different result."

The defeat marked an unhappy return to the

Bridge for recently appointed West Ham coach Graham Potter. Potter was fired in April 2023 after less than seven months in charge of the Blues.

China's Olympic champs carry torch for Asian Winter Games

HARBIN, Feb 4, (Xinhua): China's Olympic champions, including Sheng Lihao, Wu Dajing, and Sui Wenjing, participated in the torch relay for the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin. They praised the event's preparations and extended their best wishes to the athletes.

Wu Dajing, a short-track speed skater and two-time Winter Olympic gold medalist at PyeongChang 2018 and Beijing 2022, expressed his excitement about seeing young talent shine.

"It's my honor to participate in the torch relay," Wu said. "As a veteran, I admire the younger generation of skaters and want to wish them good luck in the competition," the 30-year-old added.

Sheng Lihao, who won two gold medals at Paris 2024, shared advice on handling nerves with the young athletes set to compete.

"I always manage tough situations by focusing on myself. I hope all Chinese athletes can showcase their best at the Asian Winter Games," Sheng told Xinhua.

When Olympic champion swimmer Wang Shun took the torch, the last torch-



Torch bearer, Shen Xue greets audience during the 2025 Asian Winter Games Torch Relay in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

bearer of the Hangzhou Asian Games opening ceremony ignited a wave of excitement among the Harbin crowd.