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Opinion

Countries flourish and stabilize when their leaders follow up their development

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

PEOPLE always talk about the national economy, the need to diversify the sources of national revenues, and the search for alternative revenues to strengthen the national product.

We hear a lot of explanations and talks in this regard; yet the core of the issue remains unaddressed

either due to a lack of seriousness or the absence of a clear vision, particularly when it comes to the capital cycle and rectifying existing shortcomings. In truth, diversifying income sources is the basis of development.

However, all our troubles will persist unless we open the taps to allow for well-calculated expenditures. Otherwise, we will remain trapped in a fantasy world filled with slogans and statements that are disconnected from reality. When income sources run dry, the economy begins to suffer from an accumulated deficit, leading to contraction and a decrease

in the national product, which negatively impacts society.

Undoubtedly, strengthening the economy protects the state from many problems and crises, especially if capital is recycled wisely.

To better understand how expenditure can drive national economic growth, the following story about a concept known as Quantitative Easing (QE) could perhaps be useful:

In a small, struggling town that was facing severe economic difficulties, everyone was drowning in debt and relying on borrowing.

One day, a tourist arrived in that town and headed straight to the only modest hotel to book a room. The first thing he did was place \$100 on the reception counter before heading upstairs to inspect the rooms.

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Photo by Mohammad Morsi
Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Al-Yahya (right), seen during a gathering of several ambassadors and diplomats at Azayez Farm.

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Kuwaitis lead population growth surge at 1.57 mln

Indians hit 1 million mark; Filipino numbers plummet 16.3%

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: As of the end of 2024, the Kuwaiti population reached 1,567,983, making it the top nationality in the country through an increase of 21,775 (1.3 percent) compared to their population of 1,546,202 at the end of 2023.

According to the latest statistics from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), the Indian community came second with a population of 1,007,961, with an increase of 0.7 percent from approximately 1,000,726 at the end of 2023.

The Egyptian community came in third, with 657,280 at the end of 2024, compared to 644,042 the previous year, with an increase of 2 percent.

In fourth place is the Bangladeshi community which witnessed a rise of six percent. Their population reached 292,810 by the end of 2024, compared to 274,974 in 2023.

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Flag bearers Mohammed Al-Duaj and Fatima Abdul Latif of Kuwait lead their contingent during the parade of athletes at the opening ceremony of the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China, Friday, Feb. 7, 2025. (AP) — See Page 16

Grid repairs set

4-hour power cuts to last until Feb 15

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has announced that maintenance work will be carried out on several power transformer stations across the six governorates, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

As a result, 26 areas will experience partial power outages, including the Al-Sabah Partial Area. The power outage will last for seven days, starting Sunday, February 9, until February 15, from 8:00 am for a duration of four hours each day.

In other news, the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy signed last Monday a memorandum of understanding with a company to establish a 300-megawatt power generation station under the 'independent supplier' system.

This marks the first agreement of its kind in Kuwait, allowing the private sector to play a role in energy production and easing the financial burden on the state. However, the agreement has raised concerns among some experts regarding the potential future control of electricity and water pricing by the private sector.

Despite these concerns, there has been positive feedback from experts like former Minister of Electricity and Water Mohammad Bushehri.

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Trade reaches \$350 million

Iran-Kuwait relations rooted in history, says ambassador

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Kuwait Mohammad Totonji stated that the relations between the two countries have deep roots stretching back centuries, with Iranian builders playing a major role in the develop-

ment and modernization of Kuwait.

He expressed hope that, under the leadership 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, a qualitative leap in their brotherly relations will

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Newswatch

New Lebanese gov't formed under Salam

BEIRUT, Feb 8, (KUNA): Lebanese President Gen. Joseph Aoun signed on Saturday a decree endorsing a 24-member Cabinet led by Prime Minister Nawaf Salam.

Earlier today he accepted the resignation of outgoing prime minister Najib Mikati's government, according to the National News Agency.

The new cabinet, announced by Secretary General of the Council of Ministers Mahmoud Makiya, is made up of the following:

- Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Mitri,
- Minister of Defense Michel Mnassah,
- Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Youssef Rajji,
- Minister of Telecommunications Charles Hajj,
- Minister of Energy and Water Joseph Sadi,
- Minister of Interior Ahmed Al-Hajjar,
- Minister of Justice Adel Nassar,
- Minister of Finance Yassin Jaber,
- Minister of Public Health Rakan Nassereddine,
- Minister of Culture Ghassan Salemeleh,
- Minister of Industry Joe Issa Al-Khoury,

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Arab forum aims for unified action plan

Kuwait takes lead in regional disaster risk strategy

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah has highlighted the significance of the 'Sixth Arab Regional Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction,' set to be hosted in Kuwait on Sunday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The forum, running until February

12, aims to enhance disaster preparedness and recovery efforts, building a safer future for the region.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef emphasized the forum's focus on improving knowledge of disaster risks, strengthening governance, and encouraging investments in resilience.

Under the theme "Building Resilient Arab Societies: From Understanding to Action," the forum will culminate in the Kuwait Declaration, a political declaration aimed at reducing disaster risks and accelerating the implementation of the Sendai Framework and the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

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KUNA photo
Kuwait's Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi in a group photo during the ninth meeting of the Gulf Ministerial Committee for Food Safety.

Food safety key to community health and growth: Al-Awadhi

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi said food safety is not just a regulatory issue, but a health responsibility and strategy as well; because safe food is one of the basic pillars of community health and sustainable development.

He made the statement when he chaired the opening session of the ninth meeting of the Gulf Ministerial Committee for Food Safety; with GCC Secretary General Jassim Al-Budaiwi, ministers

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Jewelry sales slump, bullion demand rises

Gold rush fades in Kuwait as prices hit highs

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: In 2024, the volume of gold purchases in Kuwait saw a decline of approximately 6.12 percent compared to the previous year, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The demand for gold in Kuwait dropped to 18.4 tons, down from 19.6 tons in 2023, which had marked the highest level of demand in the last decade.

According to data from the World Gold Council, there was a noticeable decrease in demand for jewelry, which fell to 12.3 tons in 2024, compared to 14.3 tons in 2023.

On the other hand, demand for gold bullion rose to 6.1 tons in 2024, compared to 5.2 tons the previous year.

Further insights from the World Gold Council revealed that during the fourth quarter of 2024, Kuwait's demand for gold amounted to about 4.9 tons, an increase from 4.2 tons in the third quarter.

However, the fourth quarter of 2024 showed a slight decrease from 5.1 tons in the same period in 2023. The breakdown of demand in Kuwait during the fourth quarter showed that 1.4 tons were for bullion,

while 3.5 tons were for jewelry.

At the regional level, the demand for gold in the Middle East during the fourth quarter of 2024 increased to 68.4 tons, up from 65.5 tons in the same period of the previous year and 59 tons in the third quarter of 2024.

Globally, gold demand in the fourth quarter of 2024 reached 872.5 tons, up from 729.5 tons in the previous quarter but down from 936.1 tons in the fourth quarter of 2023.

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'InvestGB' launches Lulwa KD Money Market Fund according to Islamic Sharia Principles



A strategic partnership between Markaz & Loyac to nurture and develop young talents

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:12	Asr	15:09
Sunrise ..	06:32	Maghrib ..	17:32
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:50

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Rather cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear later on.
By Night: Cold to very cold with

Weather
 to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for frost forming over agricultural and desert areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	19	11

Kuwait Airport	19	05
Abdaly	20	06
Bubyan	19	07
Jahra	19	08
Failaka Island	22	11
Salmiyah	18	13
Ahmadi	18	06
Nuwaisib	21	08

SHEIKH ALI HOSTS AMBASSADORS AT 'AZAYEZ FARM'

Kuwait to reopen embassy in Syria soon

Arab Summit to be held in Egypt; Al-Sharaa visit foreseen: FM Al-Yahya



Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya with ambassadors and diplomats.

Photos by Mohammad Morsi



Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya with members of the royal family.



Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah talking to the Saudi and Bahraini ambassadors.



US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara talking to a guest at the gathering.

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya revealed a plan to hold an Arab summit in Egypt at the end of February or the beginning of March.

Speaking at 'Azayez Farm' recently in the presence of several ambassadors and diplomats, Minister Al-Yahya said, "I do not believe that the issue of displacement is up for discussion at the summit. The right to self-determination belongs to the Palestinian people, and they alone should decide their fate. We continue to support this position in both the Gulf and the Arab world."

He affirmed that the summit will take place in Cairo, based on an agreement among the participating countries.

The minister said, "We support this direction and will continue to do so. However, it will depend on the agreement of all countries involved."

Minister Al-Yahya emphasized that statements from Gulf and Western nations are contrary to the issue of displacement.

He reiterated that the two-state solution stated in the Arab Initiative remains the basic guiding principle.

The minister said, "While the summit is currently being proposed, regional groups may also join the discussions, with details still being worked out."

Displacement

Regarding the general stance on the displacement issue, Minister Al-Yahya stated: "All positions are aligned in one direction. We have heard statements from countries through international and global media supporting the Palestinian cause, especially concerning displacement or settlement. All positions are positive for Palestine, and we in Kuwait are moving in the same direction. We are working with both Arab and international partners to uphold what has already been agreed upon."

He affirmed that there are no current communications between Kuwait and the U.S. on this matter.

When asked whether there are strong pressures preventing President Trump from implementing his plan, Minister Al-Yahya said, "The pro-

cess is moving forward positively, and all reactions are in support of the Palestinian cause. We hope that this proposal will be reconsidered, and the results of the ongoing efforts will be evident at the summit. The Arab and international position will be stronger and clearer."

When asked about U.S. President Trump's statements against Iran and if they signal the start of regional calm, he replied, "We are waiting and observing."

Regarding the reopening of the Kuwaiti embassy in Syria, the minister confirmed that the embassy will be reopened soon.

Security

He revealed that, "The security situation will dictate the timing of the decision. We have no reservations about reopening the embassy. While we have been busy in recent days, preparations are moving forward at full speed."

A Kuwaiti ambassador to Lebanon and a Chargé d'Affaires in Syria will be appointed in the coming days. The committee for selecting ambassadors and heads of missions meets daily, and it is expected that all appointments will be finalized within the next ten days."

Regarding sending aid to Syria, the minister affirmed that, "Aid to Syria is ongoing and will not stop. There is Gulf and Arab coordination to ensure no duplication in the aid efforts. A meeting at the senior official level will be held, and a plan will be presented on March 6 at the ministerial meeting in Makkah."

In response to a question about the Arab plan to rebuild Gaza, Minister Al-Yahya indicated that, "The plan is still in its initial stages, and outlined in bullet points. Detailed proposals are coming from multiple directions, and we will be part of this initiative."

There is a meeting scheduled in Paris on February 13, followed by a summit in Cairo, with the first major event being the meeting in Mecca on March 6. We are proceeding with a balanced approach to all these developments."

When asked about the possibility of inviting Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa to visit Kuwait, he said, "During my meeting with President Ahmad Al-Sharaa, he expressed a desire to visit Kuwait. Although the details have not been specified yet, God willing, we will be honored by his presence in Kuwait."

Mubarak Al-Kabeer educational zone unveils plan for 2025-2030

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone has launched its strategic plan for the years 2025-2030 with 15 important projects aimed at enhancing educational outcomes, expanding digital transformation, and boosting competitiveness.

The acting Director of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone Nada Al-Mutairi explained that the strategy, which was prepared in December, is now being implemented. It divides the work performance into four main areas - the financial dimension, customer relations, operational efficiency, and the development of capabilities and skills.

During a press briefing on the plan in the presence of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Bader Al-Salem and the acting Assistant Undersecretary for General Education Affairs Mansour Al-Dhafiri, Al-Mutairi explained that the team responsible for preparing the strategy conducted a thorough analysis of the educational environment. Using three clear scientific and methodological tools, they identified the strengths, weaknesses, and existing gaps in the system.

The 15 projects are distributed in a

performance card, with each project covering four dimensions, and each dimension containing three to five strategic objectives aimed at achieving the region's goals. Some projects have already entered the implementation phase, including the indicators board project, which will be shared with superintendents, supervisors, and department heads within the educational zone.

All the data have been translated into easy-to-understand numbers, and provides a clear overview for stakeholders.

She revealed that the Mubarak Educational Zone currently has 45,132 male and female students in all educational stages, as well as 473 students from special categories.

Al-Mutairi emphasized that the governor Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah requested a comprehensive 185-page document detailing the strategic plan.

She said the plan is tailored specifically to the Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate, and is developed from a deep sense of responsibility, especially in light of the ongoing improvements in government agencies' performance, adding that this shift requires the involvement of skilled professionals in strategic planning, analysis, decision-making, and continuous engagement with the field.

US Embassy launches 2nd round of educational drive

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: In celebration of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days, the US Embassy in Kuwait is proud to announce the second season of its educational campaign, 'You Are the Future of Kuwait' ('Ento Mustaqbalha'), says a press release issued by the US Embassy in Kuwait.

Running from Feb 9 to 20, the campaign will offer an exciting lineup of activities designed to inspire Kuwaiti youth and facilitate their educational journeys, including educational fairs, TV and radio interviews with experts on studying in the United States and obtaining student visas, Instagram live events with US universities, private school visits and much more.

"We are thrilled to continue this campaign in 2025, highlighting the achievements of Kuwaiti students who have studied in the US and showcasing the transformative power of education," said Inga Litvinsky, Cultural Attaché at the US Embassy.

"By offering access to these resources, we hope to inspire Kuwaiti youth to pursue their dreams, broaden their horizons, and contribute to a brighter, sustainable future for Kuwait," added Litvinsky.

The US Embassy remains committed to providing expert Consular guidance and support to help students navigate the path to studying in the United States. Outreach efforts will be available both in-person and virtually, ensuring students and their families have the tools they need to embark on their educational journeys.

The US Embassy's EducationUSA team invites all students and parents to attend the Q8 EduEx Fair at Mishref Fair Grounds (Hall 4A) on Feb 10 and 11 from 9:00 am - 12:30 pm and 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm, as well as a US University Fair on Feb 12 at the Mourjan Ballroom, Crowne Plaza Hotel in Farwaniya from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Both events will provide an invaluable opportunity to connect with US university representatives, explore scholarship options, and learn more about the admissions process.



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah visits the UAE Government Cyber Security Council, Sheikh Zayed International Airport, and the old Abu Dhabi Airport.

1st Dy PM visits cybersecurity council, airports, leaves UAE

ABU DHABI, Feb 8, (KUNA): Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah concluded his visit to the UAE with a tour of the Cybersecurity Council, and the two international airports of Sheikh Zayed and Abu Dhabi.

During his visit to the CSC, he was briefed by head of the council Dr. Mohammad Al-Kuwaiti on the CSC mandate in protecting the UAE information infrastructure against cyber risks, according to

a statement from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior.

At the two airports, Sheikh Fahad was apprised of the big strides made by the UAE in using the state-of-the-art technology to protect the airport security and ensure the safety of passengers.

Sheikh Fahad, accompanied by a delegation of senior security officials, arrived at Kuwait International Airport, concluding a trip to Egypt, Jordan, Oman and the UAE.

Kuwait offers Sweden condolences over school shooting

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf of the friendly Kingdom of Sweden over the recent deadly shooting at a school in the central city of Orebro.

In his cable, His Highness the Amir extended sincere, heartfelt condolences to families of the victims of the mass shooting in which over a dozen of people were killed and several others were injured.

His Highness the Amir invoked Almighty Allah to grace families of the victims with patience and solace and wished the injured speedy recovery.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable of condolences to His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf of the friendly Kingdom of Sweden over the recent deadly shooting at a school in the central city of Orebro.

In his cable, His Highness the Crown Prince extended sincere, heartfelt con-

dolences to families of the victims of the mass shooting.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah then sent a cable of condolences to His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf of the friendly Kingdom of Sweden over the deadly shooting at a school in the central city of Orebro.

His Highness the Premier expressed his condolences to families of the victims.

MoH to implement staff rotation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Ministry of Health (MoH) intends to implement a comprehensive staff rotation soon, reports Al-Anba daily.

The ministry explained that the above-mentioned step will be taken in stages and it will be applicable to the directors of health districts and hospitals, heads of medical bodies, heads of medical departments, heads of primary healthcare centers and heads of health centers; as well as those occupying technical and administrative po-

sitions like the health district supervisors, heads of engineering affairs offices, heads of medical engineering units, nursing staff, and heads of radiology and laboratory technicians.

This is considered a qualitative step towards restructuring the health sector, enhancing its efficiency and improving performance -- a reflection of the commitment to develop the administrative and technical structures of the ministry in order to keep pace with the latest health standards.

Kuwait must adopt steps to tackle 'Chicken War' effects

"AFTER World War II, chicken consumption in Western Europe saw a dramatic rise, with the United States becoming the primary supplier," columnist Prof Dr Abdul Latif Bin Nakhi wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"This influx of American chicken threatened local producers, prompting the European Economic Community (the precursor to the European Union) to impose hefty tariffs on US chicken imports.



Dr. Bin Nakhi

"In retaliation, the US imposed a 25 percent tariff on the import of European pickup trucks, resulting in a sharp decline in their sales due to the higher prices. This trade standoff came to be known as the 'Chicken War.'

"Many critics of tariff hikes have since cited the Chicken War as an example of the long-term negative effects of imposing tariffs -- most notably, the increased cost of goods and the widening economic deficit.

"The US tariffs on European trucks, for example, led not only to a drop in demand for foreign trucks but also caused a reduction in demand for domestic trucks, as their prices also climbed due to the temporary surge in demand.

"Now, more than half a century later, the US has found itself embroiled in another form of tariff war, this time targeting Mexico, Canada, and China. The motivation behind these new tariffs primarily centers around combating the smuggling of fentanyl (a potent synthetic opioid drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use as an analgesic -- pain relief -- and anesthetic), that has contributed to tens of thousands of overdose deaths in the US each year.

"China, the leading producer of fentanyl and its precursor chemicals, has been accused of selling these substances to Mexican drug cartels, which then funnel the drugs into the US. Mexico is also under fire for allegedly supporting these cartels by providing safe havens for their operations.

"Similarly, Canada is facing increasing scrutiny for being a base for the manufacture and export of fentanyl and related drugs to the US and beyond.

"In response, the US President decided to delay tariff imposition on Mexico and Canada for a month, while continuing the trade war with China. This move followed announcements from the Mexican and Canadian governments that they would step up efforts to curb fentanyl trafficking.

"Mexico recently deployed 10,000 National Guard soldiers to its border with the US to tackle the issue, while Canada pledged to appoint an official dedicated to addressing fentanyl trafficking and vowed to treat Mexican fentanyl cartels as terrorist organizations.

"Despite this, tensions with China have remained high. Shortly after the US imposed new tariffs, China retaliated by implementing its own tariffs on US goods, launching an antitrust investigation into Google, and filing a complaint with the World Trade Organization over the tariffs.

"Analysts believe that neither the US nor China wants to escalate the situation further, as both sides are wary of the economic and geopolitical consequences. However, this renewed trade confrontation is expected to bring more shocks to the global market.

"Given the inter-connectedness of global trade, it is essential for local economies to consider the potential impact of such international disputes.

"As the Kuwaiti economy is closely tied to global demand, particularly for oil, it is crucial for the Council of Ministers and the Kuwait Economic Society to take appropriate measures to mitigate the direct and indirect effects of the 'Chicken War' on the country's economic landscape.

"God, show what is the truth, and grant us the ability to follow it."

Also:

"It seems that the euphoria over his victory as President of the United States of America once again made him go beyond the norm in all his moral and political actions, and even human logic in general, up to the point that he surprised his stinking beggar guest, the son of stinking Netanyahu, with proposals and facilities that he had never dreamed of, and were not on his begging agenda, and his usual schedule of demands, not the least of which was his proposal to annex the West Bank to the usurping entity, and displace its people and the people of honorable Gaza, to sites that call for nausea." Kuwaiti writer **Abdulrahman Khaled Al-Hamoud** wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"While immersed in his euphoria, he believed that he had become the ruler of this planet, messing with it as he pleases. This prompted the greatest terrorist of the era, the stinking Netanyahu, to respond to him, using the bullying language. He said: You, Mr. President, are our greatest ally and supporter in the history of the White House (may Allah cover him with black). This was after he found criminal solutions

and a package of crazy decisions that the professional terrorist could not have thought of.

"Once again, this confirms that there is no longer an excuse for any Arab leader or official looking for the 'Nobel Peace Prize', just thinking about recognizing or normalizing ties and coexisting with this criminal entity. This entity has not ceased to terrify them and it has revealed its fragility, with all its power, through the heroes of Gaza -- men, women and children -- who have proven to the entire world that despite their small number and the modesty of their weapons and capabilities, they are the invincible force as they have armed themselves with faith mixed with Divine certainty. Thus, the Lord of Glory and Majesty did not let them down, and achieved a clear victory for them.

"I am fully aware that many Arab Zionists, whom Allah made deaf, will ask what victory I am talking about. I want to tell them this is after they got rid of the dignity of the legendary steadfastness of Gazans, the latter's production of blessed weapons mixed with faith; forcing more than a million Zionist dogs to return to where they came from and stopping future migration to this vanishing entity, God willing.

"This is in addition to the elimination of the huge number of members of the 'invincible' army, which all the Arab armies, individually and collectively, were unable to achieve, not to mention the collapse of the economy of this enemy, in all its aspects. The sympathy shown by all the peoples of this world for the people of Gaza, and the Palestinian cause in general, is a matter of pride, especially those who have gone beyond this sympathy to enter our true religion. Due to the faith and acceptance of the people of Gaza and the leader of the Mujahideen of this era, the martyred hero -- Yahya Sinwar -- who was proud enough, such that, before his martyrdom, he purified his movement from sectarian impurities, particularly the false claim that it is the main founder of this movement, and its innocence from those who have mercy on the killers whom they likened to the martyrs of Jerusalem, and that Jerusalem is innocent among them!

"Finally, may Allah be with you, O arrogant president, as you willingly entered the hornet's nest in Canada, Mexico, Panama and many other surrounding countries."



"Before talking about the 'crazy president', we will tell you a story. One day, before the end of the shift, a worker in a fish freezing and preservation factory entered the fish preservation refrigerator to complete his work, the refrigerator door closed suddenly and he was trapped inside," **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The worker tried to open the door, but he could not, so he started screaming at the top of his voice; asking for help from his colleagues, but the shift already ended and no one remained in the factory.

"After about five hours, the worker was on the verge of death due to the severe cold, and then the guard opened the refrigerator door and saved him. The manager asked the guard how he knew that the worker was inside the factory and did not leave with his colleagues.

"The guard replied: I have been working in this factory for 30 years. Hundreds of employees enter and exit the factory every day. None of them greeted me every day and asked about my condition except that worker. At the end of the work day, I did not hear from him and I missed him when all the other workers left. I knew then that he was still in the factory, so I looked for him until I found him.

"God Almighty said 'speak to people kindly', so the worker's kind words saved him.

"US President Donald Trump's policies provoked other countries, because he embraced the idea of the 'crazy president' -- the idea that by acting in a very volatile manner, the head of State can intimidate opponents and push them to make concessions, that is, intimidate other countries to achieve gains. The heads of states practiced this over the past decades.

"Yesterday, Trump threatened to impose tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China. He later postponed the imposition for a month. He then threatened to annex Canada as a US state, which is dangerous, because China might find a justification for invading and occupying Taiwan. China has been wanting to do this for a long time, and it could threaten the situation in Southeast Asia. If he imposes tariffs on other countries, they will impose tariffs on US imports as well, so the prices will increase and the demand will decrease. Trump's policies are destabilizing the international situation. He is a good president, but he is provocative."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes/
Mahmoud Attiyeh



KUNA photo

Graduation ceremony of the second batch of 'pilots and shooters' for the Bayraktar TB2 system.

Kuwaiti airmen conclude Bayraktar TB2 system course

ANKARA, Feb 8, (KUNA): A second batch of Kuwaiti Air Force personnel have completed a four-month training course on operating the Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2, the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army said on Friday.

Baykar, the private manufacturer of unmanned combat aerial vehicles, held a graduation ceremony for the Kuwaiti crews of the UCAV at its flight training and test center in Kesan city, Edirne Province, south Turkiye.

The Kuwaiti Army decided to purchase Bayraktar TB2 due to its unrivalled technical feature, the General Staff said in a statement, noting that the aircraft made a record unstoppable flight for 27 hours in tough climatic conditions.

Banks submit 77% money-wash, terror funding reports in 1 year

FIU reveals 2,570 notifications received

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: A recent government report revealed that the Financial Investigations Unit (FIU) received 2,570 notifications about suspected money laundering or financing terrorism within a year, as Article 16 of the executive regulations of the Anti-Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism Law mandates financial institutions and non-financial businesses and professions to notify the unit about suspicious transactions and relevant information within two business days at the latest, reports Al-Anba daily.

This is the ninth report issued by the unit and the daily obtained a copy. It is stated that the banking sector submitted the highest number of notifications with 1,977 or 77 percent of the total, followed by money exchange companies with 566 or 22 percent, electronic payment companies with 20, financial brokerage companies with five, and

then companies trading in precious metals and gemstones and financing companies with one each.

The unit has the power to obtain any information or document it deems necessary in performing its duties from the concerned authorities, notified entities and counterpart units in accordance with Article 18 of Law No. 106/2013.

According to the report, the unit requested information from the concerned authorities to complete its report for fiscal 2023/2024 to complement the data it received from the notified parties and for it to make the right decision; considering the received information a reasonable evidence of suspicion.

The number of information requests that the unit submitted to five competent authorities reached 581 with the Ministry of Interior accounting for the largest percentage at 34 percent or 199 requests, followed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry at 21 percent or 122 requests, Ministry of Justice at 18.4 percent or 107 requests, Kuwait Clearing Company with 87 requests, and Kuwait General Administration of Customs with 66 requests.

As per the law, the unit has the right to notify the Public Prosecution if it has reasonable

evidence to suspect that funds are derived from a crime or linked to, related to, or can be used to carry out money laundering or financing terrorism operations in accordance with Article 19 of Law 106/2013; in addition to the possibility of referring relevant information to the concerned authorities.

Moreover, the unit submitted 101 reports to the prosecution, including 61 notifications, information referrals and international cooperation referrals; as well as 99 to the concerned authorities; including 22 notifications, information referrals and international cooperation referrals. These referrals include a report with more than one notification.

In terms of cooperation with counterpart units, international cooperation is carried out through a mechanism for exchanging information on combating money laundering and financing terrorism in terms of requesting and receiving information with counterpart units or making it available as per the established procedures and the principles of Egmont Group.

The number of received information requests reached 33, while the number of referral requests totaled 16 and the number of information requests reached six -- a total of 55.

Body found in sea near Jaber Bridge; manhunt for one

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The marine rescue team of the Kuwait Fire Force has recovered a body floating near Jaber Bridge, after it was spotted by a fisherman.

The body has been handed over to the Coast Guard and investigations are underway to determine the identity of the deceased.

The KFF is also continuing the search for a

missing Kuwaiti citizen who disappeared at sea two weeks ago following a collision between two boats, an incident in which his two brothers were rescued.



Delivery food stolen?: Al-Seyassah has learned that personnel from the Criminal Investigations Department in the Sa'ad Al-Abdullah area have arrested three individuals accused of stealing food orders from delivery workers, following multiple

complaints from citizens, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The security sources confirmed that the suspects have been referred to the relevant authorities for further investigation.



Wedding reveler held: The Ministry of Interior has announced the arrest of a driver following a viral video that showed his reckless behavior during a wedding ceremony, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Scribe ruling Feb 13

Court sets April 10 date to hear 'Al-Khalidi' plea

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Criminal Court, presided over by Counselor Abdullah Al-Asimi, has set April 10, 2025, to look into the case of Salman Al-Khalidi's objection to in absentia imprisonment sentence issued against him in a state security case.

The ruling has been rescheduled to allow time for the defense to be reviewed and presented.

Al-Khalidi is accused of deliberately challenging the authority of the Amir through his account on the (X) platform and other social media. He has denied the charges.

In court, Al-Khalidi's appointed lawyer requested a delay in order to review the case and photograph relevant documents before proceeding.



Scribe ruling Feb 13: The Criminal Court has set Feb 13, to issue a verdict in the case of media personality Fajr Al-Saeed, who stands accused of broadcasting false news.

During today's session, Al-Saeed denied the accusations related to her alleged calls for normalization relations with Israel.

The Ministry of Interior had filed a complaint against Al-Saeed, accusing her of harming Kuwait's interests and violating the Unified Law for Boycotting Israel (No. 21 of 1964).



Expatriate mugged in Hawally: The Hawally Investigations Unit at the Criminal Security Sector in the Interior Ministry has started the search for two unidentified persons who allegedly robbed an expatriate of KD1,000 cash and KD500 check, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to the case file, an expatriate born in 1979, filed a report stating that while he was walking in Block 11 in Hawally -- in front of a men's salon -- two unidentified persons in an American quad stopped him and asked for his identification card. When he took out his identification card from his pocket, one of the accused handcuffed him and forced him to get into their vehicle where he was robbed of the above-mentioned amounts.

The expatriate added that the accused, who claimed to be detectives, threatened to deport him and cause him serious harm if he asked for help from passersby. He provided police with a detailed description of the vehicle.

A felony case was registered, and investigations are ongoing to identify the accused and question them to validate the expatriate's report.

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KUNA photo
UAE Vice President Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan receives Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al Sabah at Al Watan Palace in the capital, Abu Dhabi.

UAE Vice-Pres welcomes Kuwait's First Deputy PM

ABU DHABI, Feb 8, (KUNA): Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister, and Chief of the Presidential Court of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan received on Thursday at Al Watan Palace in the capital, Abu Dhabi Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al Sabah.

In a press statement, the Kuwaiti Interior Ministry said that the meeting discussed fraternal relations between Kuwait and the UAE and ways to enhance them in all fields for the benefit of the two countries and peoples in addition to reviewing several topics of common interest.

MoCI, MoH form health task force

Water gun ban imposed

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

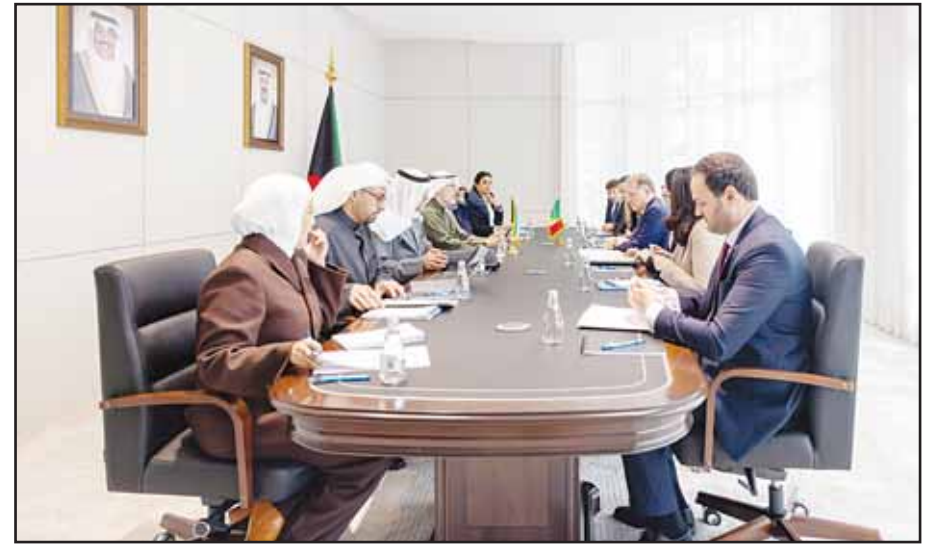
KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has prohibited the sale and distribution of water guns and water-filled balloons from December to March each year. This decision was issued under Administrative Resolution No. 108 of 2025.

In a separate initiative reflecting joint government efforts, the Ministry of Health has formally requested the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to form a joint task force to monitor violations in women's and men's health parlors and institutes.

Informed sources told Al-Seyassah that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, through its Commercial Control Department, has nominated five specialized inspectors to serve on the joint health-commercial committee.

The committee, chaired by the Director of the Commercial Control Department, Faisal Al-Ansari, aims to ensure that health institutes and establishments comply with approved health standards and legal regulations at all levels.

The committee will also oversee adherence to health requirements when issuing or renewing licenses for health institutes. It will focus on infection prevention, sterilization standards, and compliance with radiation protection regulations, particularly for devices such as tanning and laser equipment.



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti and Italian Foreign Ministers hold fourth round of political consultations.

Kuwait, Italy strengthen bilateral ties in 4th round of political talks

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8, (KUNA): Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah headed on Thursday the fourth session of political consultations with his Italian counterpart Edmondo Cirielli. During the meeting, both sides explored

ways to strengthen the bilateral relations, and discussed regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The Deputy Foreign Minister hosted a luncheon in honor of the guest and his accompanying delegation.

30th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival launches exhibition with 10 prize winners

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8, (KUNA): Kuwait's 30th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival on Thursday launched their exhibition with more than 53 artists taking part.

During the ceremonial opening of the exhibition, Assistant Secretary-General for the Arts Sector at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters Musaed Al-Zamil at the Museum of Modern Arts said that the exhibition is one of the most important events in this festival as it stand as a hub for schools and artists to meet.

"This year we celebrate the Kuwait is the capital of Arab Culture and Media 2025, which is encompassed with literary, artistic, cultural, musical, and theatrical events inside and outside the State of Kuwait," he said, announcing the spring collections will also be part of the event as requested by our artists.

In a statement to KUNA, Superintendent of galleries in the Theater Administration and Fine Arts, Wael Al-Jaber said the Arts Department of the National Council is keen on partaking in the activities of this festival's comprehensive Youth events, considering it one of the most important in Kuwait.



KUNA photo
Opening of the comprehensive Al-Qurain Fine Arts Exhibition within the activities of the Al-Qurain Cultural Festival.

He also mentioned Issa Saqr prize of creativity for the best works presented, to say, "It means a lot to us and the artists, as it bears the name of the late Kuwaiti artist who had a clear imprint in fine arts and was known as 'Sheikh of Sculptors.'"

Adding, the team judging the prizewinners involves Amira Ashkanani, Nawaf Al-Armeli, Ali Darwish, Issa Al-Alban and Dr. Walid Sarab.

The exhibition coordinator Sarah Khalaf said the Al-Qurain Festival is a prominent event for our fine arts arena, as it highlights multiple aspects of the field and reflects the spirit of artistic creativity in the country.

All participants of all ages gather every year at this event, she added, giving us an opportunity to appreciate the different styles and routes of fine art available in Kuwait observed as a panorama for those seeking such fine arts.

She also mentioned at the end of the opening ceremony the prize winners of the Issa Saqr prize were announced; Ahmad Al-Husseini, Fatima Al-Fadhli, Saad Al-Balushi, Abdul-Rahman Al-Hamli, Ahmad Al-Ayoub, Abdullah Al-Jiran, Israa Kalender, Dr. Fatima Al-Azmi, Dalal Al-Shatti, and Abdul-Rida Baqir.

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MoSA refutes co-op ownership claims

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Ministry of Social Affairs has denied recent social media claims regarding the transfer of ownership of certain cooperative societies, emphasizing the importance of verifying information and obtaining

news from official sources, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement, the ministry urged citizens to refrain from spreading rumors and reassured that any official updates or changes will be publicly announced once approved.

AI-driven medical advances in focus

KU to host 'Next Generation Healthcare' forum under new president's patronage

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Faculty of Allied Medical Sciences at Kuwait University has announced that a conference titled "Next Generation Healthcare... Integrating Imaging and Informatics for Collaborative Care" will be organized on February 12-13 under the patronage of new President of Kuwait University Dr. Dina Al-Mailem, reports Al-Jarida daily.

During a press conference held at the college building, the Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies at the Faculty of Medical Sciences and Chair of the conference Dr. Ilham Al-Dousari explained that the conference aims to strengthen cooperation between professionals in the fields of medical imaging and medical informatics. It will focus on the role of innovation and artificial intelligence in enhancing healthcare in Kuwait. It will include many scientific lectures on joint professional innovations, as well as exhibitions in which both government and private institutions will present services related to allied medical professions. A First Aid workshop will be held as part of the conference.

She affirmed the importance of artificial intelligence, and its important role in analyzing medical images and enabling the detection of diseases with greater accuracy at early stages.

Meanwhile, the acting Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences Dr. Mohammad Nazr stated that the conference will

host leaders from various countries.

He explained that the conference is in line with the developments in technology, which will greatly enhance medical services. Technology and artificial intelligence offer greater accuracy than human doctors. Their use in radiology will contribute to improving the process of discovering and diagnosing diseases.

In addition, Head of the scientific committee for the conference Dr. Laila Ghazanfar said the

Faculty of Medical Sciences is committed to staying at the forefront of developments in technology used in the Radiology Department and is trying to benefit from these technologies to develop radiological diagnostic methods.

Dr. Ghazanfar highlighted that scientific papers will be presented at the conference by an elite group of Gulf nationals from various universities, and government and private hospitals.

She said the conference will address the current developments in health informatics and the organization of complex big data, which requires cutting-edge technological tools.



Dr. Al-Mailem

Adan Hospital's pediatric unit moves to new women and children hospital

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The official spokesman for the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad announced that patients from the Pediatric Department at Adan Hospital will be transferred to the new Women and Children Hospital, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Sanad explained that this move is part of ongoing efforts to develop health services and make specialized medical care more ac-

cessible to families.

The new hospital has 14 floors with a total of nine specialized wards, nine operating rooms, and two delivery rooms, each equipped with 20 beds. It also has one of the largest IVF units in Kuwait.

The hospital is fully equipped with modern technologies, devices, tools, and supplies for surgical procedures, and to ensure the health and well-being of women and children.

MoSA reiterates adherence to donation laws

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Ministry of Social Affairs has emphasized on the necessity of adhering to laws and regulations governing donation collections, stating that it has referred some violations to the relevant authorities for investigation, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This is part of the ministry's commitment to regulating charity work and ensuring that all procedures align with legal frameworks.

In a statement released on Friday, the

ministry highlighted that the donation collection law is designed to promote transparency and regulate the collection and distribution of donations in a manner that achieves the intended humanitarian goals.

The ministry also reaffirmed its collaboration with relevant authorities to ensure full compliance with the applicable laws.

The statement further called on charitable organizations to adhere to all requirements and procedures for donation collection.

Continued from Page 1

Countries flourish

Meanwhile, the hotel owner took advantage of the situation by quickly grabbing the \$100, and rushing to the butcher to pay off his debt. The butcher accepted the money and went to the livestock dealer to settle part of his debt. The livestock dealer then paid the \$100 to the animal feed trader, who in turn used it to pay the truck driver that brings feed from a distant town. The truck driver, upon receiving the money, hurried to the hotel where he usually stays during his trips to town and used the \$100 to pay off what he owed to the hotel owner.

When the tourist came back down from the upper floor, he found no suitable room, decided to leave, and took back the \$100 from the counter.

In the end, none of the townspeople made any profit, but everyone managed to pay off their debts.

This sequence, in economic terms, is known as Quantitative Easing (QE). However, in reality, the result was zero because the money eventually returned to the tourist, who represents the state. Through the real capital cycle, the money flowed back to him, thus strengthening the financial cycle on one hand, and reviving the economy and boosting the national product on the other.

This story is a simplified example of how countries operate in a similar manner. When a state suffers from mismanagement and poor decision-making, it faces deficits due to a lack of expertise in proper governance or, at times, as a result of envy-driven decisions.

On the other hand, some countries prioritize expenditure on developing projects, promoting citizen welfare, and building partnerships with international institutions or other countries to strengthen their national economies.

Last week, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, met with the Chairman and CEO of BlackRock, Larry Fink.

During the meeting, His Highness the Amir stressed the importance of supporting investment and economic opportunities, creating a competitive environment, and enhancing strategic cooperation with foreign companies. He also stressed the need to diversify the production base to transfer and localize knowledge, attract capital, and support the development of Kuwaiti human resources for strengthening the national economy.

A few days ago, it was announced that the assets of the Kuwait Sovereign Fund had exceeded one trillion US dollars. This news calls for optimism in bringing about a healthy environment for the national economy, especially if it leads to increased expenditure on service, entertainment, and production projects that help industries overcome obstacles inherited from the previous era.

If the efforts to combat corruption bear fruit, and if the planned steps continue to progress as intended, this will require, first, greater transparency and, second, a significant increase in expenditure to revitalize the economy. Currently, we hear about many important projects in the works. Some of them were signed between Kuwait and other countries, and others involved international companies.

It is good to hear that the public debt law is set for imminent amendment. However, the most important step is to invest a large portion of sovereign funds in national projects, which will boost national production in the long term and push the economy forward. Many of these projects will generate revenue, either through collected fees or potential taxes.

Most countries invest their sovereign wealth domestically, which strengthens the economy, raises the per capita income, and shields the country from crises.

On the other hand, countries that restrict expenditure see higher corruption rates and rising poverty. As the saying goes, poverty is the root cause of many societal diseases.

Food safety

and representatives of GCC countries in attendance. They discussed food safety issues and ways to strengthen Gulf cooperation in this vital field, taking into consideration the global food safety challenges.

He pointed out that the rising number of health and food challenges the world is currently facing means the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries should intensify joint efforts to develop food legislation, improve control systems and achieve the highest level of community awareness to ensure the provision of safe food for the public and to protect public health.

He affirmed that the meeting is considered an opportunity to unify visions, take decisions and present recommendations for building a sustainable Gulf food system; which could keep pace with rapid global changes and respond flexibly and effectively to emerging challenges. He stressed that enhancing Gulf integration in the field of food safety requires permanent cooperation between member states, as it is the cornerstone of joint achievements and raising food and health standards in the GCC countries.

Meanwhile, Al-Budaiwi believes that the health of Gulf citizens and the expatriates is on top of priorities; indicating the food safety sector is a strategic investment in public health, as proven by the GCC countries.

He cited the prestigious position of GCC countries in all fields at the regional and international levels. He

added "our countries are comparable to many other countries around the world. They occupy the highest rank in many sectors, specifically the commitment of GCC countries the highest food safety rate." He emphasized that the GCC countries' efforts in this sector are crucial to their regional and international prestige.

He revealed that the meeting agenda consists of vital topics requiring decisions to further enhance joint Gulf work in food safety. "This builds on the committee's tremendous efforts regarding the Unified Food System Law for the GCC countries, Gulf Guide for Controlling Imported Food, and Gulf Center for Food Risk Assessment," he asserted.

Chairperson of the Board of Directors and Director General of the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Dr. Reem Al-Fulajj asserted that the meeting is regarded as a major station for strengthening cooperation between the GCC countries and to continue the development of control systems in line with the latest global practices in the field of food safety.

She confirmed the discussion of many pivotal topics related to food safety, most importantly the draft Unified Food Law (System) for the GCC countries, which aims to unify the laws and legislation related to food safety in the GCC countries and improve health protection for consumers.

She added the attendees reviewed the Gulf Guide for Controlling Imported Foods, Gulf Center for Food Risk Assessment and the newly developed food assessment mechanisms with the aim of ensuring that Gulf systems are compatible with the best global practices.

She went on to say that they also discussed the evaluation of food control systems in GCC countries as a prerequisite for improving trade exchange, as the mechanism for imposing and lifting the ban on importing foods of animal origin and their products was discussed to guarantee protection for Gulf consumers without compromising the trade requirements between member states.

She stressed the importance of continuing Gulf cooperation in the field of food safety and to develop integrated control mechanisms that guarantee the highest standard of health and food safety; thereby, improving food security and consumer protection in Gulf countries.

Kuwaitis lead

The Filipino community came in fifth place, with a population of 223,482 at the end of 2024, showing a significant decrease of 16.3 percent from 267,259 at the end of 2023.

The Syrians ranked sixth, with 183,103 people, up from 161,439 in 2023, reflecting an increase of 11.8 percent.

The Sri Lankans came in seventh, with 170,251 members, an increase of 14.4 percent from 145,633 at the end of 2023.

The Saudis ranked eighth with 142,760, showing a growth of 2.3 percent from 139,481 in 2023.

The Nepalese community came in ninth, with 140,441 by the end of 2024, marking a huge increase of 23.4 percent from 107,489 the previous year.

Lastly, the Pakistanis ranked tenth, with 94,749 members, with an increase of three percent from 91,058 in 2023.

Kuwait takes

The forum, organized in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the League of Arab States, will bring together 22 Arab countries.

It aims to foster collaboration, share expertise, and adopt a unified strategy for disaster risk reduction, with the outcomes contributing to key international platforms such as the 2025 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva.

4-hour power

He highlighted the economic benefits of involving independent suppliers in energy production, such as reducing state expenditures on building power stations and ensuring quicker implementation of projects.

Renewable energy expert Suad Al-Husseini emphasized the importance of the independent supplier system, particularly for solar energy.

She argued that accelerating the approval of the energy purchase law from independent solar energy providers could positively impact the labor market, creating new job opportunities in electrical engineering and renewable energy sectors.

Both experts emphasized the importance of ensuring the involvement of the private sector is aligned with clear legal and regulatory frameworks, in line with Kuwait's development plans and Vision 2035.

New Lebanese

Minister of Economy and Trade Amer Al-Bsat,

Minister of Agriculture Nizar Hani, Minister of Information Paul Morcos,

Minister of Social Affairs Hanin Al-Sayed,

Minister of Public Works and Transport Fayeze Rasamny,

Minister of Displacement (Minister of State for Technology Affairs) Kamal Shehadeh,

Minister of Labor Mohamad Haider,

Minister of Youth and Sports Nora

Bayraktarian,

Minister of Tourism Laura El Khazen Lahoud,

Minister of Administrative Development Fadi Makki,

Minister of Education and Higher Education Rima Karamah,

And Minister of Environment Tamara El-Zein.

Outlining the priorities of his government, Salam said it would seek "to restore confidence between citizens and the state, between Lebanon and its Arab surroundings, and between Lebanon and the international community."

"The government will have to work with the Parliament Council to complete the implementation of the Taif Agreement and proceed with financial and economic reforms," NNA quoted him as saying.

Gold rush

In terms of annual demand, the Middle East experienced a decline in gold demand, dropping to 266.5 tons in 2024 from 285.6 tons in 2023.

Total demand for gold in 2024 at the world level amounted to approximately 3.06 thousand tons, a decrease from 3.30 thousand tons in the previous year.

In addition to the decrease in demand, average gold prices in Kuwait rose by over 27 percent during 2024, contributing to the shift in purchasing behavior and impacting overall gold demand.

Iran-Kuwait

occur, driven by the wisdom of both Iran and Kuwait's leadership.

Speaking at a press conference held at the embassy on the occasion of his country's celebration of the 46th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Ambassador Totonji highlighted the recent official visits between the two countries, the most prominent of which were the meeting of the Iranian Coast Guard delegation in Kuwait and the joint consular committee meeting in Tehran.

Regarding the pending issues between the two countries, he indicated that consultations are ongoing, with some matters already addressed and others still under review, affirming that his country is committed to resolving all outstanding issues.

Ambassador Totonji expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation to the concerned parties for their cooperation in the transfer of Iranian prisoners to Tehran, stressing that this collaboration will continue under the judicial cooperation agreement signed between the two countries.

He also expressed the desire to develop land and sea transportation between the two countries, highlighting that it would enhance trade cooperation.

The ambassador revealed plans to establish land transportation from Iran's Shalamchep port to Iraq's Safwan port, and then to Abdali, which would help reduce shipping costs.

Regarding the ongoing restrictions on issuance of visas for Iranians and their families, Ambassador Totonji acknowledged that there are still obstacles in the issuance of entry visas for members of the Iranian community.

He assured that efforts are being made with the relevant authorities to ease these procedures and remove obstacles, especially considering the good reputation of the Iranian community in Kuwait.

On economic and trade relations between the two countries, Ambassador Totonji stated that efforts are underway to enhance trade exchange and establish stable markets for Iranian products in Kuwait.

He revealed that trade exchange between the two countries has reached \$350 million.

Concerning Iran's position on the current developments in Gaza and the ceasefire agreement, Ambassador Totonji said, "It is important to honor the memory of the martyrs of the resistance."

He stressed that the ceasefire is the result of the resistance, courage, and steadfastness of the Palestinian people in Gaza, who faced one of the largest massacres and forced displacements in history.

Ambassador Totonji said, "Regarding the exchange of prisoners, we have clearly seen who the victor is and who the loser is."

He expressed hope that the agreed-upon procedures would be fully implemented with the help of the international community and the active involvement of global leaders, as this would end the war and destruction in Gaza, launch reconstruction efforts, and alleviate the suffering of the resilient people.

When asked about the new Trump administration and its stance, particularly in light of recent developments, Ambassador Totonji said, "We have been informed of the new positions, and our colleagues in Tehran are studying them. I hope we will see serious initiatives from the current U.S. administration that go beyond mere statements. There must be practical initiatives, and they must be implemented on the ground."

Regarding the axis of regional policy, he affirmed that the priority is strengthening relations with neighboring countries and enhancing political and economic ties both within the region and with countries abroad.

Ambassador Totonji highlighted that the strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran revolves around dialogue, understanding, and the promotion of diplomacy and mutual respect to establish common ground with other countries, particularly the GCC nations, adding that this approach aims to usher in a new phase of prosperity in Iran's relations with the GCC countries.

New law on Cooperative Societies sparks tension

Citizenship issues disrupt profits

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: Recent discussions surrounding Kuwait's Cooperative Societies Law have introduced proposals to restructure the composition of cooperative society boards.

One notable suggestion is to set the total number of board members at seven, comprising three elected members and four appointed representatives from government entities.

The proposed government representatives would hail from the Ministries of Finance, Social Affairs, Commerce and Industry, and Kuwait Municipality.

However, the exact number of government-appointed members may be adjusted based on ongoing studies

before the finalization of the new law.

In a recent television interview, Ghraib Al-Adhan, Chairman of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies, highlighted that the draft law presented by Minister Amthal Al-



Al-Adhan

Fatwa and Legislation Department.

He also mentioned hearing about potential amendments suggesting four appointed and three elected members,

expressing concerns about the management structure under such an ar-

rangement.

Al-Adhan stated his intention to resign from his position if the law is enacted in its current form.

In other news, several cooperative societies have ceased distributing profits to female members whose Kuwaiti citizenships have been revoked.

The prevailing laws prevent these individuals from receiving such disbursements, as they no longer meet the membership criteria.

The Ministry of Social Affairs has instructed these cooperatives to automatically terminate memberships of individuals who have lost their citizenship, citing the loss of a fundamental membership requirement.

It's noteworthy that the profits in question pertain to purchases made in the year preceding the revocation of citizenship.

The cooperative societies are awaiting directives from the ministry before proceeding with any profit distributions to these former members.



KUNA photo

The participating delegation of Kuwaiti officials in a specialized workshop in the field of planning and preparing future leaders.

Envoy highlights program's global impact

CSC enhances leadership skills

PARIS, Feb 8, (KUNA): Kuwait's Civil Service Commission (CSC) held a contractual program (a specialized workshop on planning and preparing future leaders) in France, with several Kuwaiti officials attending, as part of international cooperation and exchanging expertise promotion.

The CSC said, in a statement on Saturday, that the workshop came in the context of a memo of understanding signed with the National Institute for Public Service in France.

The participating delegation visited the headquarters of the National Institute for Public Service where they were briefed on the work mechanisms at the institute and the rehabilitation and

training programs it provides to develop government leaders.

The delegation members also listened to introductory presentations on the French experience in public administration and methods of preparing leaders and decision-makers, which contributed to enhancing the benefit from the best international practices in this field.

Kuwait's Ambassador to France Abdullah Al-Shaheen visited the participants in the workshop where he highlighted the importance of these programs in developing national competencies and enhancing their readiness to keep pace with global developments and changes.

MC to review Mangaf fire, railway plans

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Municipal Council, headed by Abdullah Al-Mahri, will discuss a number of items in its agenda for the regular session on Monday.

The most important items in the agenda include the response to the question of member Walid Al-Dagher about the results of investigations and recommendations of the investigation committee formed pursuant to Ministerial Resolution No. 329/2024 on the

Mangaf fire incident and the procedures followed, as well as the response to the question of member Alia Al-Farsi on the national railway network project called 'Kuwait State Train'.

Other items in the agenda are as follows:

- Amendment of the decision that the council took on June 24, 2024 regarding the modern water analysis laboratory building in Shuwaikh, affiliated with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy;
- Proposal of member Dr. Hassan Kamal on the design and construction

of longitudinal parking lots for Dasma Cooperative Society, Block Five;

■ Bidding for the management and operation of the Irrigation Achievement Market;

■ Proposal of members Dr. Hassan Kamal and Nasser Al-Jadaan to establish an entrance to Rumaitiyya along Road 30.

■ Proposal of member Munira Al-Amir to refer all transactions that the Kuwait Municipality need from the Central Tenders Agency to the Legal Department in order to ensure the implementation of the council's decision in this regard.

Sanitation boost

Crack down on road violations

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Public Relations Department at the Kuwait Municipality has announced the achievements of the Public Sanitation and Road Occupancy Department at the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Municipality branch in 2024; including the removal of abandoned cars, registration of violations, issuance of pledges and putting warning stickers, reports Al-Anba daily.

In this context, the Public Sanitation and Road Occupancy Department at the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Municipality branch confirmed that the inspectors carry out campaigns round the clock to uncover violations related to road occupancy and abandoned cars on the streets and squares. It explained that this move is aimed at preventing encroachments on public properties and violations of the Public Sanitation and Road Occupancy Law.

It has been revealed that last year's intensive inspection campaigns focused on the removal of abandoned and scrap cars, leading to the impoundment of 886 abandoned and scrap cars; placing 8,394 warning stickers on abandoned cars, and removal of 53,573 waste paths.



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Shogan dismissed as archivist of United States

US President Trump ends Biden's classified intelligence briefings in payback move

PALM BEACH, Fla., Feb 8, (AP) — US President Donald Trump said Friday that he's revoking former president Joe Biden's access to government secrets and ending the daily intelligence briefings he's receiving in payback for Biden doing the same to him in 2021.

Trump announced his decision in a post on his social media platform shortly after he arrived at his Mar-a-Lago home and private club in Palm Beach for the weekend.

"There is no need for Joe Biden to continue receiving access to classified information. Therefore, we are immediately revoking Joe Biden's Security Clearances, and stopping his daily Intelligence Briefings," Trump wrote. "He set this precedent in 2021, when he instructed the Intelligence Community (IC) to stop the 45th President of the United States (ME!) from accessing details on National Security, a courtesy provided to former Presidents."

The move is the latest in a vengeance tour of Washington that Trump promised during his campaign. He has previously revoked security clearances from more than four dozen former intelligence officials who signed a 2020 letter saying that the Hunter Biden laptop saga bore the hallmarks of a "Russian information operation." He's also revoked security details assigned to protect former government officials who have criticized him, including his own former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, who faces threats from Iran, and former infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Biden didn't immediately comment on the move.

Biden ended Trump's intelligence briefings after Trump helped spur efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election and incited the Jan 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. At the time, Biden said Trump's "erratic" behavior



US President Donald Trump, (from left), gestures as he walks with first lady Melania Trump to send off former president Joe Biden and Jill Biden to board a Marine helicopter en route to Joint Base Andrews after the 60th Presidential Inauguration on Jan 20 at the US Capitol in Washington. (AP)

should prevent him from getting the intel briefings.

Asked in an interview with CBS News what he feared if Trump continued to receive the briefings, Biden said he did not want to "speculate out loud" but made clear he did not want Trump to continue having access to such information.

"I just think that there is no need for him to have the intelligence briefings," Biden said. "What value is giving him an intelligence briefing? What impact does he have at all, other than the fact he might slip and say something?"

In 2022, federal agents searched Trump's Florida home and seized boxes of classified records. He was indicted on dozens of felony counts accusing him of illegally hoarding classified records and obstructing FBI efforts to get them back. He pleaded not guilty and denied wrongdoing. A judge dismissed the charges, ruling the special counsel who brought them was

illegally appointed, and the Justice Department gave up appeals after Trump was elected in November.

In a related matter, Trump dismissed Colleen Shogan as the archivist of the United States, White House aide Sergio Gor posted on X Friday night.

Trump had said in early January that he would replace the head of the National Archives and Records Administration. The government agency drew his anger after it informed the Justice Department about issues with Trump's handling of classified documents. Shogan, the first woman in the post, wasn't the archivist of the United States at the time the issue emerged.

In his post on Biden, Trump cited the special counsel report last year into his handling of classified documents, saying, "The Hur Report revealed that Biden suffers from 'poor memory' and, even in his 'prime,' could not be trusted with sensitive information."



This photo provided by the US Coast Guard on Feb 7, 2025, shows a small commuter plane that crashed in western Alaska on a flight that was bound for the hub community of Nome. (AP)

Missing Alaska plane found, 10 people dead

Just hours after finding 10 people dead in western Alaska from one of the deadliest plane crashes in the state in 25 years, authorities raced to recover their remains and the wreckage of the small commuter plane from unstable sea ice before expected high winds and snow.

"The conditions out there are dynamic, so we've got to do it safely

in the fastest way we can," Jim West, chief of the Nome Volunteer Fire Department, said Friday.

The Bering Air single-engine turboprop plane was traveling from Unalakleet to the hub community of Nome when it disappeared Thursday afternoon. It was found the next day after an extensive search with all nine passengers and the pilot dead.

As the community tried to process the deadly event, crews worked swiftly on unstable, slushy sea ice to recover the bodies and the wreckage with less than a day before bad weather was expected. Officials said a Black Hawk helicopter would be used to move the aircraft once the bodies were removed. (AP)

Trump signing up local law officers to help with immigration enforcement

WASHINGTON, Feb 8, (AP) — For years, the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office in suburban Indianapolis has wanted to partner with federal immigration authorities to identify and detain immigrants who are in the US illegally and facing charges.

President Joe Biden's administration never returned its calls, the sheriff's office said. But as President Donald Trump cracks down on illegal immigration, Hamilton County deputies soon could become the first in Indiana empowered to carry out federal immigration duties and one of many nationally that Trump's administration hopes to enlist.

"We definitely are joining," Chief Deputy John Lowes told The Associated Press. "We want to collaborate with ICE to make sure we keep our community safe."

Under Trump, US Customs and Immigration Enforcement is reviving and expanding a decades-old program that trains local law officers to interrogate immigrants in their custody and detain them for potential deportation. The 287(g) program - named for a section of the 1996 law that created it - currently applies only to those already jailed or imprisoned on charges.

But Trump's border czar, Tom Homan, recently told sheriffs that he wants to expand it to include local task forces that can make arrests on the streets, reviving a model that former President Barack Obama discontinued amid concerns about racial profiling. It's unclear whether



US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers enter a residence looking for a suspect on Jan 27 in Takoma Park, Md. (AP)

that could allow local officers to stop people solely to check their immigration status.

On Friday, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis announced that the Florida Highway Patrol had struck an agreement with ICE to interrogate, arrest and detain immigrants suspected of being in the country illegally and deliver them to federal authorities.

The arrangement will help "fulfill the president's mission to effectuate the largest deportation program in American history," DeSantis said.

Advocates for immigrants, meanwhile, are raising alarm about new

pacts that put local law officers on immigration enforcement.

"All of these agreements, in practice, have the same track record of racial profiling, of sweeping in U.S. citizens or people who have lawful status, of having a chilling effect in terms of communities reporting crime to local law enforcement agencies," said Nayna Gupta, policy director at the nonprofit American Immigration Council.

In the early 2000s, many of the initial participants in the 287(g) program had agreements that allowed them to enforce immigration laws in their communities, not just their jails. But problems arose in several places, including Arizona.

In 2011, a civil rights investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice found that deputies in Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix, had engaged in a pattern of racial profiling, unlawful stops and arrests of Latinos. The Department of Homeland Security ended its agreement with the county.

The program became "the hallmark of far-right, anti-immigrant sheriffs" as a means "to feed people on the basis of their ethnicity into the deportation machine," asserted Lena Graber, senior staff attorney at the nonprofit Immigrant Legal Resource Center.

In recent years, ICE has offered two types of 287(g) agreements to law enforcement agencies. One model requires four weeks of training and allows local officers to question suspected noncitizens who are jailed on other charges and detain them for ICE.

Trump wants to negotiate about Ukraine

WASHINGTON, Feb 8, (AP) — Nearly three years after President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, his troops are making steady progress on the battlefield. Kyiv is grappling with shortages of men and weapons. And the new US president could soon halt Ukraine's massive supply of military aid.

Putin is closer than ever to achieving his objectives in the battle-weary country, with little incentive to come to the negotiating table, no matter how much US President Donald Trump might cajole or threaten him, according to Russian and Western experts interviewed by The Associated Press.

Both are signaling discussions on Ukraine -- by phone or in person -- using flattery and threats.

Putin said Trump was "clever and pragmatic," and even parroted his false claims of having won the 2020 election. Trump's opening gambit was to call Putin "smart" and to threaten Russia with tariffs and oil price cuts, which the Kremlin brushed off.

Trump boasted during the campaign he could end the war in 24 hours, which later became six

months. He's indicated the U.S. is talking to Russia about Ukraine without Kyiv's input, saying his administration already had "very serious" discussions.

He suggested he and Putin could soon take "significant" action toward ending the war, in which Russia is suffering heavy casualties daily while its economy endures stiff Western sanctions, inflation and a serious labor shortage.

But the economy has not collapsed, and because Putin has unleashed the harshest crackdown on dissent since Soviet times, he faces no domestic pressure to end the war.

"In the West, the idea came from somewhere that it's important to Putin to reach an agreement and end things. This is not the case," said Fyodor Lukyanov, who hosted a forum with Putin in November and heads Moscow's Council for Foreign and Defense policies.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says Putin wants to deal directly with Trump, cutting out Kyiv. That runs counter to the Biden administration's position that echoed Zelenskyy's call of "Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine." "We cannot let someone decide something for us," Zelenskyy told AP, saying Russia wants the "destruction of Ukrainian freedom and independence."

He suggested any such peace deal would send the dangerous signal that adventurism pays to authoritarian leaders in China, North Korea and Iran.



Putin

ICC condemns sanctions by WH

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, Feb 8, (AP) — The International Criminal Court on Friday called on member states to stand up against sanctions imposed by US President Donald Trump, describing the move as an attempt to harm an indispensable global court to administer justice and protect the lives of millions of innocent people.

The embattled court quickly received support in Europe from traditional allies of the US.

"Sanctioning the ICC threatens the court's independence and undermines the international criminal justice system as a whole," said European Council President Antonio Costa, who heads the summits of the European Union's 27 leaders. It was the toughest direct criticism by a senior EU official to a decision by Trump since his return to office last month.

The White House issued the executive order against the ICC on Thursday in response to what it called "illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America".

Trump's order was a response to the arrest warrant that the ICC issued last year for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over alleged war crimes in Gaza. The US and Israel aren't members of the court and don't recognize its authority.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians, including children, have been killed during the Israeli military's response to Hamas' attack on southern Israel that killed around 1,200 people in October 2023. The casualty figure of Palestinians killed is provided by Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between fighters and civilians.

The Hague-based ICC said that it "condemns" the move by the Trump administration. ICC President Judge Tomoko Akane called the US move "only the latest in a series of unprecedented and escalatory attacks aiming to undermine the Court."

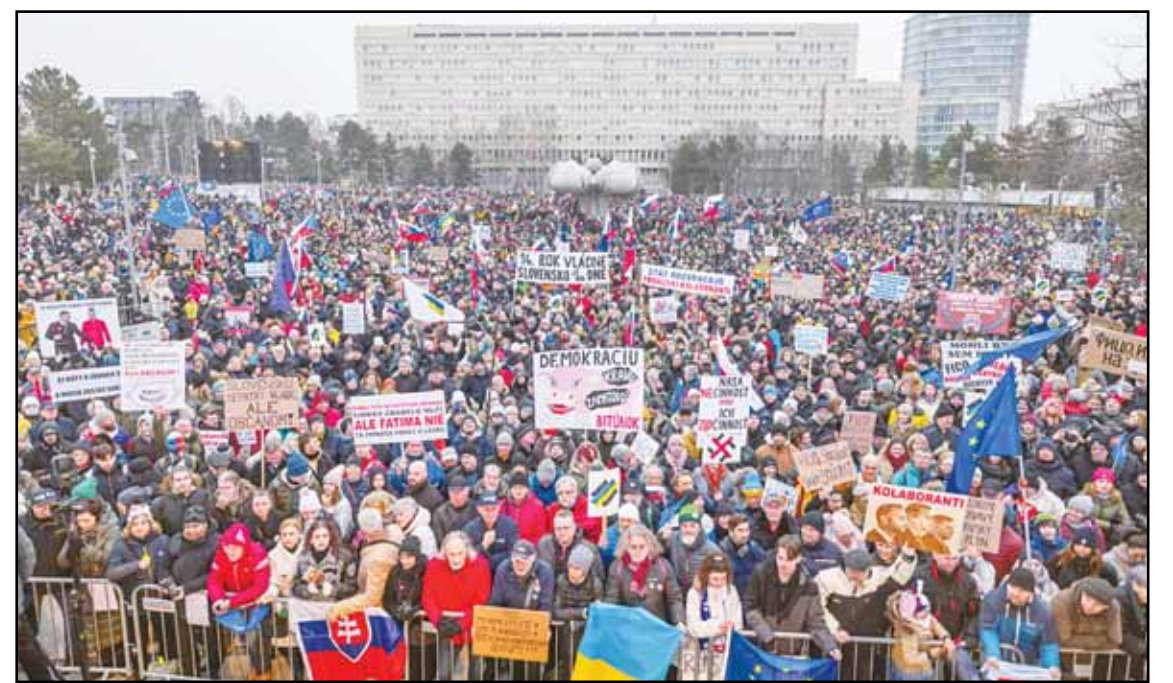
"As atrocities continue to plague the globe affecting the lives of millions of innocent children, women and men, the Court has become indispensable," she said.

She called for all "to stand united in the Court's defense: our 125 States Parties, civil society and all nations of the world."

France immediately stepped up and said that it "will mobilize to ensure that the court can continue fulfilling its mission in an impartial and independent way," according to its foreign ministry spokesman Christophe Lemoine.



Costa



People gather to oppose the policies of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico in Bratislava on Feb 7. (AP)

Slovakia protesters call on Fico to resign

Huge crowds gathered in dozens of cities and towns across Slovakia on Friday to mount vocal protests against the pro-Russian policies of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico.

The latest wave of anti-government rallies was fueled by Fico's recent trip to Moscow for talks with Russian

President Vladimir Putin, a rare visit to the Kremlin by a European Union leader since Moscow's all-out invasion of Ukraine began on Feb. 24, 2022.

Fico's recent remarks that Slovakia's foreign policy orientation could involve leaving the European Union and NATO contributed to the anger

of protesters. "Resign, resign," was the clear message to the premier. "Slovakia is Europe," they chanted.

The latest rallies took place in 41 locations in Slovakia, up from 28 two weeks ago, and in another 13 cities abroad, organizers said. (AP)

Trudeau says Trump's talk of making Canada a US state 'a real thing'

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Feb 8, (AP) — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday said President Donald Trump's talk of making Canada the 51st US state is "a real thing" and is linked to the country's rich natural resources, local media reported.

Trudeau's comments to business and labor leaders in a closed-door session were mistakenly carried by a loudspeaker, Canada's public broadcaster CBC reported.

"Mr. Trump has it in mind that the easiest way to do it is absorbing our country and it is a real thing. In my conversations with him on...," Trudeau said of making Canada a U.S. state before the microphone cut out, according to CBC.

"They're very aware of our resources, of what we have and they very much want to be able to benefit from those," Trudeau reportedly said.

Trudeau's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In a post on social platform X, Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labor, confirmed what Trudeau said.

"Yes, I can confirm that Trudeau



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addresses a Canada-US economic summit in Toronto on Feb 7. (AP)

said his assessment is that what Trump really wants is not action on fentanyl or immigration or even the trade deficit, what he really wants is to either dominate Canada or take it outright," McGowan wrote.

Trump has repeatedly suggested

Canada would be better off if it agreed to become the 51st US state.

In public comments Friday, Trudeau said Canada must think "tactically and strategically" on how to deal with Trump's threats to impose hefty tariffs on all Canadian imports.

Europe

Grenfell to be demolished: The UK government on Friday announced plans to dismantle the remains of London's Grenfell Tower, almost eight years after the deadliest fire in Britain since World War II swept through the high-rise apartment building, killing 72 people.

Some of those who lost loved ones in the fire that broke out in the early morning of June 14, 2017, have criticized the decision because they wanted to preserve the building's charred skeleton as a monument to those who died.

Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner, who also heads the



Rayner

government's housing and local government ministry, conducted a series of meetings with survivors and family members before deciding what to do with Grenfell, the government said. She met with them again on Wednesday to give them advance notice of the decision that was announced on Friday. (AP)

Santorini restricts traffic: Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis visited earthquake-struck Santorini on Friday, as the Aegean island imposed more precautionary measures amid intense seismic activity.

During his visit, Mitsotakis inspected emergency preparedness facilities and announced a 3 million euro (\$3.1 million) funding package for constructing an emergency evacuation route in the southern part of the island.

"We are preparing for the worst while hoping for the best. That's what a serious and organized state must do," Mitsotakis said during a meeting with local officials. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

Protests and NZ leader's absence overshadow day marking founding treaty with Maori

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Feb 8, (AP): It's often a day marked by spirited politics and at times boisterous protest. But the anniversary of New Zealand's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi, passed in muted fashion with Prime Minister Christopher Luxon absent from the main commemorations, amid rancor over an unpopular proposed law redefining the treaty's promises.

On Feb. 6 1840, representatives of the British Crown and 500 Maori tribal leaders signed a treaty at Waitangi, in New Zealand's far north, agreeing to the terms of their relationship.

In modern times, annual events attended by lawmakers and Indigenous leaders at the treaty grounds have allowed the groups to speak face to face, even at times of racial discord.

It has also supplied a litmus test for governments and Maori about the state of the treaty partnership - and sometimes prompts scenes of protest and conciliation. This year, the mood was reflected in a sermon at Waitangi's annual church service.

"To renegotiate the terms of a marriage usually requires both spouses," Te Aroha Rountree of the Methodist church said. "It seems our spouse, the Crown, has filed for divorce."

The bitterness centers on a proposed law which has become a flashpoint at a critical moment in the conversation about how New Zealand should honor its pledges to Maori when the country



New Zealand Maori activists march into the Waitangi Treaty House grounds ahead of Waitangi Day celebrations in Waitangi, northern New Zealand on Feb 5, 2024. (AP)

was colonized.

The Treaty of Waitangi was drafted in two versions -- one in English and the other in Maori. But the documents dramatically differed - the Maori version promised Indigenous sovereignty - and the Crown soon began to breach both.

It resulted in the near loss of the Indigenous language and deprivation for Maori on almost every metric.

Over the past five decades, tribes

have painstakingly clawed back the treaty's promises - which are constructed through legal judgements and billion-dollar settlements with government that return stolen land and other resources to their original owners.

A minor libertarian political party helped Luxon's government to power in 2023 on a platform of redefining the way the treaty's principles are understood by rigidly interpreting them in law to ensure Maori are not unduly

avored. Detractors say the bill would dramatically reverse Maori rights in a country that has in recent years started to embrace them.

The bill's architect, David Seymour, met with protests at Waitangi marae - a Maori meeting house - during speeches by political leaders on Wednesday, as he made a fresh pitch for the law. The measures are widely derided and prompted tens of thousands of people to march on Parliament in Wellington last November.

As Seymour - who is Maori - spoke, women stood as one and silently turned their backs to him. Lengthy portions of his speech were rendered inaudible as demonstrators twice approached him and quietly removed both his microphone and its stand.

Those scenes perhaps explained why Luxon, the prime minister, spent the day far from Waitangi, attending commemorations on the South Island at Onuku Marae, where southern chiefs signed the Treaty months after tribes in the north.

There, he was optimistic about a path through the current animus. Seymour's treaty bill is not expected to pass and Luxon opposes it - although he agreed to usher it through a first vote as part of the deal with Seymour's party that made him prime minister.

"Looking ahead, the ability to resolve differences and build bridges will be at the heart of New Zealand's success," Luxon said.



This photo taken on Feb 8, 2025, shows the site of a landslide in Jinping Village, Junlian County in the city of Yibin, southwest China's Sichuan Province. (Xinhua)

About 200 relocated after China landslide

Approximately 200 people have been evacuated to safety after a landslide buried 10 houses and left over 30 people missing in southwest China's Sichuan Province on Saturday.

The landslide occurred at 11:50 am in Jinping Village, which is located in Junlian County of the city of Yibin, according to local authorities.

A Level I geological disaster emergency response, the highest level, was initiated in the province at 3:30 pm on Saturday.

Emergency rescue, fire, public security, transportation, medical, telecommunications, electricity and other forces quickly rushed to the

scene to carry out or assist the rescue efforts. Two people were rescued in the afternoon.

Chinese rescuers searched for some 30 people after a landslide in southwestern Sichuan province.

The Ministry of Emergency Management deployed hundreds of rescuers including firefighters following the landslide in a village in Junlian county.

A villager told BeijingNews that rocks were frequently seen rolling down the mountain since the second half of 2024, in some cases making sounds similar to firecrackers. (Agencies)

Philippine VP prepares for impeachment battle

MANILA, Philippines, Feb 8, (AP): Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte said Friday that her lawyers were preparing for a legal battle in her upcoming impeachment trial but refused to say if resignation was an option so she could preempt a possible conviction that would bar her from running for president in the future.



Duterte

Duterte was speaking for the first time since the House of Representatives impeached her Wednesday on a raft of criminal charges, including plotting to have President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. assassinated, which she again denied. Marcos was her running mate in the 2022 elections but they have had a bitter falling out.

At the news conference, she underscored economic hardships

and said the lives of Filipinos have become "much worse" due to skyrocketing costs of living.

"God save the Philippines," Duterte said and asked her supporters to turn to social media to express their sentiments instead of holding street protests to avoid disrupting their lives.

A potential conviction and ban on Duterte holding office would be a major setback to one of the country's most prominent political families that has been perceived as veering toward China.

The impeachment complaint focused on the alleged threats to Marcos, irregularities in the use of office funds and Duterte's failure to stand up to Chinese aggression in the disputed South China Sea, according to proponents of the petition. The Senate is to take up the case when it reconvenes in June.

Marcos has boosted defense ties with Washington, Manila's longtime treaty ally, as the Philippines faced China's increasing aggressive actions in the contested waters.

Canada, Philippines in final negotiations for defense pact to boost joint military exercises

MANILA, Philippines, Feb 8, (AP): Canada and the Philippines are in the final stages of negotiating a key defense pact that would allow their forces to hold larger military drills, said the Canadian ambassador to Manila while raising concerns over China's "provocative and unlawful actions" in the region.

Canada has been reinforcing its military presence in the Indo-Pacific region and has committed to help promote the rule of law and expand trade and investment.

That dovetails with Philippine efforts under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to broaden defense ties with friendly countries to bolster his country's external defense as it faces an increasingly assertive China in the disputed waters.

Canadian Ambassador David Hartman said Friday night that his country and the Philippines were "in the final stages of the negotiations of our status of forces visiting agreement that will enable us to have even more substantive participation in joint and multilat-



In this handout photo provided by Public Affairs Office Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Navy personnel watch the Canadian vessel HMCS Montreal (FFH336) during the Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity being held in the West Philippine Sea, on Aug 7, 2024. (AP)

eral training exercises and operations with the Philippines and allies here in the region."

Hartman spoke before Philippine national security officials, foreign ambassadors and defense attaches aboard

the HMCS Ottawa, a Royal Canadian Navy Halifax-class frigate on a port visit to Manila. The vessel will take part in a joint exercise off the Philippines next week, he said.

The Philippine military has staged multinational patrols and drills since last year with counterparts from the U.S., Japan, France, Australia and Canada, including in the South China Sea, infuriating China.

China claims virtually the entire sea passage, a key global trade route, and has deployed coast guard and naval fleets and other vessels to guard what it says is its territory.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan also lay claims that clash with China's and territorial confrontations have flared particularly between Beijing and Manila in the last two years.

In August last year, Canada joined the United States, Australia and the Philippines in air and naval maneuvers to promote the rule of law and unhindered passage in the South China Sea.

We will not be bullied: Ramaphosa

Trump orders freeze of aid to South Africa

WASHINGTON, Feb 8, (AP): US President Donald Trump signed an executive order Friday formalizing his announcement earlier this week that he'll freeze assistance to South Africa for a law aiming to address some of the wrongs of South Africa's racist apartheid era - a law the White House says amounts to discrimination against the country's white minority.

"As long as South Africa continues to support bad actors on the world stage and allows violent attacks on innocent disfavored minority farmers, the United States will stop aid and assistance to the country," the White House said in a summary of the order. The White House said Trump is also going to announce a program to resettle white South African farmers and their families as refugees.

Trump was responding to a new law in South Africa that gives the government powers in some instances to expropriate land from people. The White House said the law "blatantly discriminates against ethnic minority Afrikaners."

The Expropriation Act was signed into law by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa last month and allows the government to take land in specific instances where it is not being used, or where it would be in the public interest if it is redistributed.

It aims to address some of the wrongs of South Africa's racist apartheid era, when Black people had land



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa gestures for the national anthem from the steps of Cape Town's city hall before delivering his annual state of the union address on Feb 6. (AP)

taken away from them and were forced to live in areas designated for non-whites.

Elon Musk, a close Trump ally and head of Trump's new Department of Government Efficiency, has highlighted that law in recent social media posts and cast it as a threat to South Africa's white minority.

The order also references South Africa's role in bringing accusations of genocide against Israel before the International Court of Justice.

The halt in foreign aid to South Africa comes amid a broader pause to most

US overseas assistance under Trump, as he looks to shift to what he calls an "America First" foreign policy.

Meanwhile, Ramaphosa appeared to respond to threats from Trump by saying in his annual speech to the nation Thursday that his country would "not be bullied."

"We are witnessing the rise of nationalism and protectionism, the pursuit of narrow interests and the decline of common cause," Ramaphosa said at Parliament in Cape Town. "This is the world that we, as a developing economy, must now navigate."



Cargo containers sit stacked as cranes load and unload containers from cargo ships at the Cristobal port, operated by the Panama Ports Company, in Colon on Feb 4. (AP)

Panama's president denies making deal that US ships can transit canal for free

PANAMA CITY, Feb 8, (AP): Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino denied the US State Department's claim that his country had reached a deal allowing US warships to transit the Panama Canal for free.

Mulino said he had told US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth on Wednesday that he could neither set the fees to transit the canal nor exempt anyone from them and that he was surprised by the US State Department's statement suggesting otherwise late Wednesday.

"I completely reject that statement yesterday," Mulino said during his weekly press conference, adding that

he had asked Panama's ambassador in Washington to dispute the State Department's statement. He was scheduled to speak with US President Donald Trump on Friday.

On Wednesday evening, the US State Department said via X that "US government vessels can now transit the Panama Canal without charge fees, saving the US government millions of dollars a year."

The Panama Canal Authority put out its own terse statement later Wednesday night saying it had "not made any adjustments" to the fees.

Mulino said the US statement "re-

ally surprises me because they're making an important, institutional statement from the entity that governs United States foreign policy under the president of the United States based on a falsity. And that's intolerable."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who met with Mulino and canal administrators and visited the critical trade route earlier this week, said on Thursday from the Dominican Republic that he had no confusion about his discussions with Panama, but "I respect very much the fact that Panama has a process of laws and procedures that they need to follow."

PM Modi's party wins most seats in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, Feb 8, (AP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party won the most seats in the high-stakes state legislature election in India's federal territory, including New Delhi, according to official data on Saturday, for the first time in over a quarter-century.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party won 40 seats in the 70-member assembly that includes India's capital of 20 million people, ousting the Aam Aadmi Party, or AAP, that ruled New Delhi since 2015. The AAP won 17. Counting was still ongoing in the 13 other seats.



Modi

In a major upset, the AAP founder and its top leader, Arvind Kejriwal, and his deputy Manish Sisodia, lost their seats, despite their party having built widespread support with its welfare policies and anti-corruption movement.

Supporters of the BJP, waving party flags and Modi's posters, chanted slogans and danced outside its headquarters in the capital as vote results began trickling with most exit polls predicting the party's win.

Amit Shah, India's powerful home minister and the BJP leader, said in a statement that his party's victory signified that "people can't be misled with lies every time."

"Our victory is a sign of the people's faith in Prime Minister Modi's vision of progress," he said.

Over 60% of more than 15 million eligible people voted to elect the local government on Wednesday.

UN rights body condemns Rwanda's support of M23

GENEVA, Feb 8, (AP): The UN's top human rights body on Friday condemned Rwanda's support of rebel fighters across the border in eastern Congo and ordered a team of experts to examine rights violations in the region.

The decision by the Human Rights Council was requested by Congo and agreed to by consensus, meaning no vote was taken. It culminated an urgent session on the spiraling violence in a region where Rwanda-backed M23 rebels recently captured the key city of Goma. Some 3,000 people have been killed and nearly as many injured since late January.

The area holds vast deposits of minerals critical to the manufacture of much of the world's technology, including mobile phones.



Anna, 13, daughter of Zawadi Sifa, carries her young sibling in her latest displaced camp in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo on Feb 5. (AP)

US seizes second plane of Maduro

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic, Feb 8, (AP): The Trump administration on Thursday seized a second plane belonging to Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government that is currently in the Dominican Republic.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio watched as American officials affixed the seizure warrant to the plane during a visit to Santo Domingo, the last stop of his five-nation tour of Latin America.

Carrying out the seizure required that Rubio sign off on a waiver to a freeze that President Donald Trump imposed on foreign aid to pay more than \$230,000 in storage and maintenance fees, according to a State Department document obtained by The Associated Press.



Maduro

Kuwaiti oil price rises to \$78.31 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti oil price rose by 45 cents to USD 78.31 per barrel (pb) on Friday, compared with USD 77.86 pb the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Saturday.

At the global level, the Brent crude went up by 37 cents to USD 74.66 pb, and the West Texas Intermediate rose by 39 cents to USD 71 pb.

Business

With a variable capital of up to a maximum of KD 500 million

'InvestGB' launches Lulwa KD Money Market Fund according to Islamic Sharia Principles

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: Gulf Capital Investment Company, "InvestGB", the investment arm of Gulf Bank, has announced the launch of its first money market fund, the Lulwa KD Money Market Fund According to Islamic Shariah Principles. This launch reinforces the company's leading position in the investment sector, reaffirming its commitment to meeting the investment needs of its clients and providing competitive solutions aligned with their aspirations.

The Lulwa KD Money Market is managed by a skilled team of financial experts using the latest investment strategies. The fund provides a distinctive investment opportunity and offers an array of competitive advantages, including weekly flexible liquidity, enabling investors to manage their funds in a seamless manner. With a low minimum subscription amount of 1,000 Kuwaiti Dinars, the fund is accessible to a wide range of clients. It is designed to cater to clients seeking secure and stable investment opportunities with low risk. Clients can subscribe to the fund through Gulf Bank's branches, acting as the selling agent, or at InvestGB's headquarters in AlHamra Tower.

The announcement was made during a press conference attended by Mr. Hani Al-Awadhi, Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at InvestGB, Mr. Bader Al-Ali, Acting General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, and Mr. Talal AlKhamis, Director of Regional Equities and Fixed Income at InvestGB.

Enhancing Investment Opportunities with Innovative and Accessible Options

During the press conference, Mr. AlAwadhi, stated: "The launch of the Lulwa KD Money Market Fund is intended to provide exceptional investment opportunities for our clients, expand our investor base, and offer



Group photo of Bader Al-Ali, Hani Al-Awadhi and Talal AlKhamis.

- Hani Al-Awadhi: "We aim to provide exceptional investment opportunities for our clients and offer them well-studied investment options."
- Bader Al-Ali: "The fund reflects Gulf Bank and InvestGB's commitment to meeting the banking and investment needs of clients."
- Talal AlKhamis: "An ideal option for clients seeking a Sharia-compliant investment and a way to save their funds in deposits with weekly liquidity."

well-studied investment options tailored to their needs, goals, and expectations." He highlighted that the fund's low subscription threshold of 1,000 Kuwaiti Dinars makes it a distinctive investment opportunity.

Mr. AlAwadhi also showcased InvestGB's achievements since its establishment in 2023, noting a series of successes that have solidified its position as a leading company in the investment sector. These achievements complement Gulf Bank's accomplishments in investment

services and represent a noticeable leap in providing innovative investment solutions for their clients.

He added: "Partnerships with leading firms including Investcorp, Avaloq, and Ares Wealth Management Solutions have provided clients access to diversified real estate portfolios, advanced digital platforms for wealth management, and top-tier alternative investment products. These achievements reflect InvestGB's commitment to driving growth, supporting the investment



Hani Al-Awadhi speaking during the press conference, with Bader Al-Ali on his left and Talal AlKhamis on his right.



Group photo of Bader Al-Ali, Hani Al-Awadhi and Talal AlKhamis.

sector in Kuwait, and delivering exceptional value to its clients." A Reflection of Our Commitment to Client Investment Goals

From his end, Mr. Al-Ali, stated: "We are proud to announce the launch of the Lulwa KD Money Market Fund According to Islamic Shariah Prin-

ciples, with the appointment of Gulf Bank as the selling agent. This reflects the commitment of both Gulf Bank and InvestGB to meet the banking and investment needs of their clients, aligned with our strategy to focus on wealth management for individuals. We always strive to provide

financial solutions that offer our clients competitive returns with flexibility in managing their funds."

Lulwa KD Money Market Fund: Sharia-Compliant Investment with Competitive Returns and Flexible Liquidity

Mr. AlKhamis stated: "The Lulwa KD Money Market Fund is specifically designed to comply with Islamic Sharia principles, making it an ideal choice for clients seeking investments aligned with Sharia standards while aiming for attractive returns. The fund offers weekly liquidity, allowing investors flexibility in managing their funds."

Al-Khamis stated: "The Lulwa KD Money Market Fund is a variable investment fund with a capital ranging from a minimum of 2,000,000 Kuwaiti Dinars to a maximum of KD 500,000,000 Kuwaiti Dinars. The fund is open to subscription by individuals, whether Kuwaiti or non-Kuwaiti, residents or non-residents, as well as Kuwaiti, GCC, and foreign companies and institutions both inside and outside Kuwait."

He further added: "The fund will invest in deposits with banks and high-quality, low-risk short-term Sukuk issued by GCC governments, as well as corporate sukuk, government treasury instruments, or banks all in compliance with Islamic Sharia principles. We are committed to providing a seamless and comprehensive investment experience for our clients while ensuring their financial goals are met with the highest standards of quality and transparency."

Clients can subscribe to the fund and review the subscription prospectus, the fund's articles of association, and all other details by visiting any Gulf Bank branch, as it acts as the subscription agent, or through the headquarters of "InvestGB" located in Al Hamra Tower.

Other Voices

Oil revenue set at KD 15 billion

Kuwait approves budget with KD 6 billion deficit for FY 2025

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

THE government has approved the budget for the next fiscal year starting from April 1, with total revenues estimated at KD 18 billion and total expenses at KD 24.5 billion, resulting in a deficit of KD 6 billion.

The budget is based on an estimated price of \$68 per barrel FOB Kuwait, which is conservative in comparison to our expenses. To break even and fully recover all of our expenditure, the price would need to be \$90 per barrel.

A closer look reveals that salaries and subsidies account for roughly 80 percent of the budget, leaving little room for capital investments. The government has allocated only KD 2.2 billion for capital expenditure, which is two percent lower than last year's budget.

Meanwhile, oil revenues are expected to reach KD 15 billion, or approximately \$45 billion, based on an oil price of \$78 per barrel. However, Kuwait's crude oil is currently being sold in the spot market at around \$75 per barrel, which still falls short by about \$15 per barrel from the breakeven point of \$90. Oil market analysts predict that prices will likely remain between \$70 and \$75 per barrel.

We are facing another year of budget deficit, and we have to find solutions, likely involving tough decisions. If there are any remaining financial reserves, we may need to dip into them due to the ninth consecutive year of deficits. Alternatively, the government may consider international borrowing, which it has yet to explore. Another option could be to utilize profits from its overseas global investments,

which could be the quickest and most cost-effective approach.

Another possible route is to privatize some government-owned companies, either in the oil sector or other commercial sectors where the government holds 100% ownership. However, this approach would take time, possibly years, before it comes to fruition. Once implemented, it could result in the privatization of many government-owned companies, which seems to be the case, as many of these companies, especially in the oil sector, were originally established by private Kuwaiti entities in the early 1960s.

One observation of the upcoming budget is the nine-percent increase in non-oil revenue, which is projected to reach KD 3 billion above the budget of the fiscal year until the end of March.

It is no surprise that the government is embarking on 90 new projects in various sectors, including roads, education, health, and infrastructure. For example, two new football stadiums are planned in the new cities in the northern parts of Kuwait, at a total cost of KD 1.7 billion.

While the budget is ambitious, we need projects that provide long-term benefits, help maintain our competitive edge, and create job opportunities for the estimated 25,000 new graduates entering the workforce each year.

With oil prices expected to remain around \$70 per barrel for the remainder of the year, it may be time for the government to reconsider its spending priorities. Reducing expenses and focusing on privatization could be important steps in freeing the government from non-core activities. The private sector should be allowed to take over these areas, as it is generally more efficient and capable of managing investments, and offering a professional approach to managing their resources.

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Al-Harami

Issuer now fully responsible for disclosure accuracy

CMA issues new resolution on securities disclosure

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: As part of its ongoing efforts to develop the regulatory framework for securities activities, the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) issued resolution No. 27/2025 on Thursday, February 6.

According to a press release issued by CMA, the resolution adds the following phrase to disclosure appendices No. 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14 in chapter 10 "Disclosure and Transparency" of the executive regulations of law No. 7/2010:

"The person issuing this disclosure bears full responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, and correctness of the information contained therein. The issuer

acknowledges having exercised due care to avoid any misleading, incorrect, or incomplete information, and accepts that CMA and the Kuwait Stock Exchange bear no responsibility for the contents of this disclosure. This includes disclaiming any responsibility for damages caused to any party as a result of publishing or permitting publication through their electronic systems or websites, or from using this disclosure in any other way."

This decision is aimed at enhancing the principles of disclosure and transparency, and ensuring that those issuing disclosures are reminded of their responsibility for the accuracy of the information they provide.

Financial and banking awareness

KFH enhances financial literacy in support of Diraya campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues its efforts to raise awareness of its latest services and products, as well as financial fraud, while simultaneously enhancing customer financial literacy. These efforts are part of KFH's support for the Diraya financial and banking awareness campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) and local banks.

This campaign aims to enhance customer awareness of available banking services and solutions, while promoting financial inclusion across all segments of society.

KFH successfully utilizes all its e-channels on social media platforms and its website, mobile app to disseminate awareness content.

These endeavors amassed a significant interaction with customers due to the distinctive and useful contents of KFH's advanced services and products.

In conjunction with the rolling out of its new digital services, KFH has released several



KFH logo & Diraya logo

awareness contents. These services include the first-of-its-kind instant credit and prepaid cards

printing, WAMD instant payment in collaboration with KNET, transfers via Western Union network, AFAQ instant transfer service.

KFH's awareness efforts also encompassed explanatory videos on how to register a new user on the mobile app, cardless cash withdrawals, ATMs services in addition to how to benefit from KFHonline financial solutions.

These videos among other awareness posts are available on KFH's social media channels (@KFHgroup).

In line with the continued awareness efforts, KFH is committed to participating in initiatives and forums that focus on raising banking awareness.

These include its participation in the 5th Gulf Conference and Exhibition for Cybersecurity Challenges titled "A Secure Digital Environment".

During its participation, KFH shed light on the concept of fraud in general, with a specific focus on cyber fraud, explaining the various methods of fraud that pose a threat to both individuals and the community.

Kuwaiti-Tajik joint ministerial committee concludes its 4th session

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The fourth session of the Kuwaiti-Tajik Joint Ministerial Committee for Economic, Commercial, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation concluded on Wednesday. The session was held on February 4-5 under the chairmanship of the Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Sulaiman Al-Fassam.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance, the Tajik delegation was led by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade Zogi Zogi Zadeh. Present in the session were the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance Aseel Al-Saad Al-Munifi, the Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Dr. Zubaydullah Zubaydov, and several representatives from relevant authorities in both countries.

In her speech during the committee meeting, Minister Al-Fassam said the discussions reflect the growing bilateral relations between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Tajikistan. She highlighted the progress they are making in various sectors.



Kuwaiti-Tajik committee signs key agreements to boost cooperation.

She affirmed the significance of the meeting between His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Excellency the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon during his visit to Kuwait in November 2024. The meeting served as a key platform for launching a future-focused partnership between

the two friendly countries.

Al-Fassam also discussed the ongoing efforts between the Gulf Cooperation Council and Central Asian countries to strengthen economic cooperation, trade, and investment relations.

She stressed the keenness of Kuwait to diversify its national economy and achieve mutual interests, as well as look forward to working with Tajik specialists on a number of promising sectors in Tajikistan that serve Kuwait's strategic goals, including achieving food security.

Al-Fassam concluded by stating, "The government of Kuwait is committed to creating a favorable investment climate for the private sector, which we believe will drive economic development."

She encouraged the business communities in both countries to explore the available opportunities and capabilities, and to work together to establish mutually beneficial trade relations.

At the end of the meetings, the minutes of the fourth session of the Kuwaiti-Tajik Joint Ministerial Committee were signed.

Empowering youth and shaping impactful leaders in society

Conversation

Trump pushes for US sovereign wealth fund

By Patrick J. Schena
Tufts University

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



Could the United States soon be joining the likes of Norway, Kuwait and Mongolia in having a national reserve to invest on projects of strategic interest? If President Donald Trump gets his way, then perhaps so.

On Feb. 3, 2025, Trump issued an executive order calling for the creation of a U.S. sovereign wealth fund.

This was not entirely unexpected. After all, the idea had been floated in September 2024 not only by the Trump team, but also by President Joe Biden's Treasury Department.

Many at the time, including myself, deemed it far-fetched at best. But with the initiative now gaining traction, the time is certainly ripe to imagine what a U.S. sovereign wealth fund might look like.

In their most basic form, sovereign wealth funds are pools of government savings, usually accumulated over many years through the sale of commodities, traded goods, government-owned companies and land-use rights, among other sources.

They share a variety of objectives, such as stabilizing government finances, ensuring the funding of retirement or education programs, saving for future generations or even managing state-owned corporations.

They generally diversify investment across assets, geographies and sectors, including some, such as sports and entertainment in the case of Saudi Arabia, that are aligned with national development goals.

Sovereign wealth funds are usually associated with great wealth - Norway's "oil fund" is estimated to be worth US\$1.7 trillion. With regard to scale, Norway is hardly alone. And Norway's fund is typical in another respect: sovereign wealth funds are often based in smaller countries with outsized natural resources, like Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, or even tiny Guyana in the Caribbean.

Modest

In reality, most sovereign wealth funds are more modest in size relative to their gross domestic products.

Sovereign wealth funds are hardly new. The so-called modern era of sovereign wealth funds dates to the early 1950s with the creation of the Kuwait Investment Board.

But some government investment funds, such as the Texas Permanent School Fund, established in 1854, long predate the Kuwait Investment Board.

As is evident in the case of Texas, there are many such funds already operating in the U.S., including those in Alaska, New Mexico and Wyoming - all of which identify as "sovereign wealth funds." These, of course, are state funds, but the term "sovereign" is generously applied.

Sovereign wealth funds often invest outside of their geographies, not only to diversify returns but to avoid stimulating higher inflation that may result from investing at home.

In fact, the U.S. has benefited from investments by other countries' sovereign wealth funds. Developed market economies like the U.S. are attractive destinations for investment, given the relative strength of their institutions and the scale and liquidity of their financial markets.

Still, over the last decade there has been a rapid expansion in the number of sovereign wealth funds investing domestically, particularly in support of strategic national goals. Some of these include funds in Ireland, India and Indonesia.

Their investment programs target critical sectors and national "champions," with a goal to mobilize foreign capital for co-investment in local markets.

What could a U.S. sovereign wealth fund look like? Would it be well funded? And if so, how? Through taxes, treasury bond proceeds, budget transfers, tariffs?

Would it invest globally or domestically? Could it be used to reinforce the Social Security system? Will it be used to tackle the dual deficits of budget and trade? Or will it have a strategic mandate - to enhance national security, energy security or climate security?

These are all fundamental questions that must be carefully examined; creating a sovereign wealth fund should not be a backroom exercise. It needs to be conducted openly, with expert input and public deliberation.

The process belies even more challenging organizational and governance decisions concerning the legal structure, ownership and management of the fund, the independence of its governing board, and its distance from government influence in its decisions.

After all, the history of sovereign wealth funds is not without failed attempts. Take Malaysia's IMDB, which was usurped for political and personal gain and became a multibillion-dollar corruption scandal, or Venezuela's macro-stabilization and development funds, which were both effectively exhausted.

Breakdown

In these cases - and others - the breakdown can be connected to failures in governance, both in design and culture, and ultimately traced back to politics.

It is interesting to note that it was George W. Bush's Treasury Department during the financial crisis in 2008 that was most influential in encouraging sovereign wealth funds to define a framework of governance practices and principles.

Known as the Santiago Principles, this set of 24 precepts, agreed to in 2008, are intended to ensure transparent and sound governance with adequate operational controls, risk management and accountability.

To be successful and in line with the Santiago Principles, a U.S. sovereign wealth fund would have to be grounded in a functional governance structure that allows investment projects to be evaluated based on commercial merit.

It would also need to be free of political interference and operate openly, transparently and at arm's length from any personal or professional interests of any related parties.

The next thing to consider is the fund's investment objectives and strategy. Trump has suggested that such a fund could be used to buy TikTok. But would that represent a strategic investment that advances the national competitiveness of the U.S.?

Perhaps instead, a sovereign wealth fund might be better placed investing a majority of its capital in private markets and core infrastructure in the U.S. under a focused strategic mandate that directs money to key national priorities.

Essential here is for the fund to be "additional." That is to say it would invest in projects that other investors would not be able to finance on their own due to scale, difficulty or duration. In essence, the fund would "crowd in" investors, rather than crowding them out.

Perhaps the most critical question still remains: Where will the money come from?

Increased taxes are a nonstarter due to political will and, of course, Trump's campaign commitments.

Treasury bond issuances would only increase U.S. indebtedness and likely lead to higher inflation. Allocations from the government's own budget also seem to be a non-starter, as U.S. budget deficits have long been well-entrenched.

The president has suggested that a fund could use tariff payments - but the reality of the tariff rollout is itself questionable and apparently open to negotiation.

A more practical option may be a take on the traditional private equity limited partnership. In this model, the U.S. serves as general partner and joins other institutional investors - including other sovereign wealth funds - to invest in the fund.

As general partner, the U.S. would appoint a management team that would select and manage the investments - for a fee, of course. Its mandate would be to target strong market returns, while advancing the strategic national interests of the U.S. (AP)

A strategic partnership between Markaz & Loyac to nurture and develop young talents

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: Reaffirming its active role in promoting corporate social responsibility, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" concludes 23 years of fruitful and ongoing partnership with Loyac, a local non-profit organization focused on youth development in Kuwait and other Arab countries. The partnership stems from Markaz's efforts to help enable the youth and nurture a new generation of leaders in alignment with the 'building human capacity' pillar of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy.

The annual partnership between Markaz and Loyac encompasses various key aspects of social and developmental programs with the aim to enhance the capabilities of the youth, both personally and professionally, helping ensure that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive and contribute effectively in the job market. Through Markaz's support, the Loyac team managed and completed over 60 initiatives within the year 2024.

Commenting on Markaz's pivotal role in this long-standing partnership, Mr. Diraar Y. Alghanim, Chairman at Markaz, said: "Markaz has continuously sought out key initiatives that are mission-driven and sustainable, and more importantly, reflect the values and beliefs of Markaz. Our continued support of Loyac, and the myriad of initiatives that we find imperative to the development of the youth and community stems from our shared belief in building human capacity and empowering the next generation of young leaders. We are proud to contribute to this mission through a variety of initiatives focused on community, education, culture, sports and entrepreneurship, and witnessing the impact it leaves behind."

Commenting on Markaz's approach to community engagement, Mr. Ali H. Khalil, Chief Executive Officer at Markaz, stated: "Our collaboration with Loyac represents a cornerstone of our vision to cultivate a society where youth are not only equipped with the necessary skills but empowered to redefine possibilities through a business-oriented mindset fostered during their participation in Loyac's programs. This partnership allows us to champion initiatives that nurture creativity, leadership, and resilience, ensuring that the next generation is ready to face the challenges of tomorrow, with a mindset that embraces confidence and purpose. It is through such endeavors that we reaffirm our commitment to building a legacy of impact and innovation."

Building on this shared commitment, Mr. Abdullatif Al-Nusif, Managing Director, Wealth Management and Business Development at Markaz, added: "Our commitment to being a partner in wealth creation extends to empowering future generations and promoting a culture of responsibility and innovation. Our partnership with Loyac showcases the profound impact of community-driven initiatives that inspire and equip youth to become agents of change. By supporting Loyac's impactful programs and actively contributing to the community, we aim to cultivate an environment where talent and purpose align to advance long-term societal development."

Ms. Fareah Al Saqqaf, Chairman at Loyac, said: "We take great pride in our long-standing partnership with Markaz, which began at the inception stage and reflects our shared vision through Loyac's journey. This partnership has been translated into several impactful programs that directly contribute to creating sustainable value for the youth within communities. Markaz plays a fundamental and pivotal role in empowering youth and the community through Loyac Kuwait and its branches."

Community Empowerment Initiatives

Markaz's partnership with Loyac in a diverse series of initiatives has significantly contributed to creating a positive social impact. Through programs such as the Winter Aid Distribution Initiative, Green Volunteering, Homes Program, Neqs at Ramadan, Service Is My Joy Program, and the LOYAC X NAEMATI community service initiatives, among others, Markaz has supported underprivileged communities, promoted environmental awareness, and fostered inclusive engagement for individuals with diverse needs.

Professional Empowerment Programs

On a professional level, Markaz supports various key initiatives by Loyac, one of which is the Al Jawhar Program, organized by Loyac Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA). The annual program aims to supply Kuwait youth with the tools needed to become successful media representatives and manage fruitful dialogues.



Markaz backs Loyac's media training & public speaking initiatives.



AC Milan Soccer School.

The program also celebrates iconic media personalities that have contributed to the formation of Arab culture at large to build stronger cultural bridges that connect generations. Several Markaz team members were part of the different seasons of the program. The Jawhar Podcast program was also launched as a professional platform to support in transitioning passionate young media enthusiasts from training to professional practice. This initiative helps empower them in the job market and provides them with an exceptional opportunity to reach audiences, marking a true launch of their careers in the media industry.

Additionally, Markaz collaborated through LAPA with the TV media presenter, Ms. Rania Barghout, to conduct a series of training carefully crafted for Markaz staff members, to develop their public communication and speech delivery skills. The intensive training included several key areas, such as the fundamentals of public speaking with a focus on using body language intelligently to enhance the message, breathing and relaxation techniques to manage nerves, crafting speech content tailored to the specific audience and their needs, skills for both prepared and impromptu speaking, overcoming the fear of public speaking, handling media interactions, managing questions, and effectively communicating during crises. Over 30 staff members from Markaz have successfully completed the training course.

Life Skills Empowerment Programs & Workshops

The two entities collaborated on several initiatives to develop life and personal skills, including workshops such as the 7 Habits for Highly Effective People and Teens Workshops, the Young Leaders Program (UK), the Kon Social Entrepreneurship Program, and the Photography Workshop have provided participants with

tools to enhance communication, leadership, and critical thinking.

By engaging in these programs, Markaz's employees and their families have embraced opportunities for self-improvement and active contribution to a culture of resilience, creativity, and community empowerment, reinforcing Markaz's commitment to sustainable development.

Health and Physical Empowerment

Markaz is a leading supporter of the Loyac AC Milan Soccer School, which aims to continue introducing world-class and innovative coaching practices within Kuwait, helping the youth within the nation to fine-tune their abilities and compete at a high standard.

Markaz continues its more than 15 years of endorsement of the activities of the academy, which has led to the training of more than 780 young players who have developed their skills on the field, learning from international experts, and providing a nurturing structure for youth and children in Kuwait to train and compete in both local and international tournaments, and unleashing their potential.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Markaz places sustainability at the heart of its vision, mission, and values, embodying its unwavering commitment to ethical practices, fairness, and responsible action. Through a comprehensive corporate social and economic responsibility strategy, Markaz actively contributes to community development and the advancement of a resilient and sustainable economy in Kuwait. This approach reflects Markaz's sense of responsibility toward society and the national economy, addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges with innovative, forward-thinking solutions.

Reminder Announcement

The Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting of Warba Bank's shareholders

The Board of Directors of Warba Bank is pleased to remind its esteemed shareholders to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) scheduled to be held - God willing - on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 12:30 p.m. at the Bank's headquarters located in Sharq, Omar Bin Al-Khattab Street, Arraya Tower, 13th Floor, to discuss the items of the agenda as follows

Agenda of the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting of Warba Bank's shareholders

- 1) Increase the Bank's authorized capital by 100% from the amount of KWD 218,360,000 (two hundred and eighteen million, three hundred and sixty thousand Kuwaiti Dinars) distributed over 2,183,600,000 shares (two billion, one hundred and eighty-three million, six hundred thousand shares), to the amount of KWD 436,720,000 (four hundred and thirty-six million, seven hundred and twenty thousand Kuwaiti dinars) distributed over 4,367,200,000 shares (four billion, three hundred and sixty-seven million, two hundred thousand shares), and authorize the General Assembly of the Board of Directors to call up the issued and paid-up capital within the limits of the authorized capital, with authorization of the Board of Directors to determine the amount and methods of the increase, the dates of its call, and all its terms and conditions, as well as to determine the issuance premium for the new shares.
- 2) Approval of the amendment of Article (7) of the Memorandum of Association and Article (6) of the Articles of Associations of the Company to read as follows

Article before amendment	The authorized, issued and paid-up capital of the company is set at KWD 218,360,000 (two hundred and eighteen million, three hundred and sixty thousand Kuwaiti dinars) distributed over 2,183,600,000 shares (two billion, one hundred and eighty-three million, six hundred thousand shares), the value of each share is 100 (one hundred) fils, and all shares are in cash.
Article after amendment	The authorized capital of the company is set at KWD 436,720,000 (four hundred and thirty-six million, seven hundred and twenty thousand Kuwaiti dinars) distributed over 4,367,200,000 shares (four billion, three hundred and sixty-seven million, two hundred thousand shares), and the issued and paid-up capital of the company is set at KWD 218,360,000 (two hundred and eighteen million, three hundred and sixty thousand Kuwaiti dinars) distributed over 2,183,600,000 shares (two billion, one hundred and eighty-three million, six hundred thousand shares) the value of each share is 100 (one hundred) fils, and all shares are in cash.

Shareholders who wish to attend the EGM online should visit the website of the Kuwait Clearing Company at www.Maqaqa.com, and complete their registration on the "eAGM Registration" portal to be able to participate and vote online on the meeting's agenda items.

Should the quorum required by law not be met, the EGM will not be held, and a second date will be scheduled for Sunday, March 2, 2025, at 12:30 p.m. at the same venue and with the same agenda. This invitation applied for the rescheduled EGM, which will take place should the shareholders of more than half of the issued and paid-up capital be present

Board of Directors

BUSINESS

'US customs overwhelmed'

Trump halts tariffs on small Chinese imports

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8, (AP) — President Donald Trump has paused imposing tariffs on small-value packages arriving from China, apparently to give federal agencies time to sort out how to process millions of such shipments that have come through the U.S. border every day without paying taxes.

The executive order, dated Wednesday, didn't say when the pause would end but said it would cease when the Department of Commerce could put in place "adequate systems" to "fully and expeditiously process and collect tariff revenue."

"It's just showing we're moving fast, and the implications are not fully understood when some of these regulations are put in place," said John Lash, group vice president of product strategy at the supply chain platform e2open, pointing out that Trump's order affected huge numbers of small packages, many in transit.

"The volumes are absolutely incredible," Lash said. "And all of a sudden, they go from not requiring filing (for tariffs) ... to actually requiring full filing, which is a complicated task."

Ending tariff exemptions on low-cost packages from China has broad bipartisan support in Washington, and Trump pulled the plug when he raised tariffs on Chinese goods by 10% earlier this week. Goods sent through duty-free packages became subject not only to existing tariffs - 25% for many Chinese products - but also the new 10%.

It marks another pause on Trump's policies weeks into his second administration, including orders to impose tariffs on Mexico and Canada that were suspended after the two allies took steps to appease his concerns about border security and drug trafficking.

The U.S. Postal Service, which would be burdened with collecting tariffs on small packages, on Tuesday announced it would not accept parcels from mainland China and Hong Kong, only to reverse the decision the next day. It said it would work with Customs and Border Protection to implement a collection process for the new tariffs.

"It's one of those things where you

put in any change so quickly it catches people unprepared," Lash said.

Introduced in 1938, the so-called de minimis exception was intended to facilitate the flow of small packages valued at no more than \$5, the equivalent of about \$106 today. The threshold increased to \$200 in 1994 and \$800 in 2016. But the rapid rise of cross-border e-commerce, driven by China, has challenged the intent of the decades-old customs exception rule.

Chinese exports of low-value packages soared to \$66 billion in 2023, up from \$5.3 billion in 2018, according to a report released last week by the Congressional Research Service. And the U.S. market has been a major destination.

In 2023, for the first time, more than 1 billion such packages came through U.S. customs, up from 134 million in 2015. By the end of last year, Customs and Border Protection said it was processing about 4 million small shipments a day, many of which came from China through online retail platforms such as Shein and Temu.

Critics said the practice had allowed not only tariff evasion, but also the flow of unsafe products such as counterfeit and illicit drugs into the U.S. Supporters argued that it helped keep prices affordable for U.S. consumers and small businesses.

After Trump threw out the exemption, some analysts noted that the policy shift could lead to higher prices and delivery delays as U.S. customs officials cope with an onslaught of packages to scrutinize.

"We are talking about millions of packages every week that currently just basically get treated like domestic shipping," said Neil Saunders, a managing director with research firm GlobalData.

He said Temu has already adjusted by increasing its warehousing capabilities in the U.S. during the past year and shipping products in containers.

Lash said the end to the de minimis exception rule would change the cross-border e-commerce model when tariffs and filing paperwork drive up costs, prompting overseas sellers to turn to bulk shipping.

US adds 143,000 jobs in January

Unemployment falls to 4%

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8, (AP) — U.S. employers added just 143,000 jobs last month, but the unemployment rate fell to 4% to start 2025.

The first monthly jobs report of Donald Trump's second presidency points to a solid but unspectacular labor market. January job creation dipped from the 261,000 added in November and 307,000 in December. Economists had expected about 170,000 new jobs in January.

The outlook is uncertain as Trump prepares to shake up economic policymaking by cutting federal jobs, imposing big taxes on foreign goods and deporting millions of undocumented workers. His tariffs and immigration crackdown could push up prices, potentially rekindling the inflation that turned many U.S. voters against President Joe Biden and helped return Trump to the White House.

For now, most Americans still enjoy unusual job security. But for those looking for work, the job hunt has been getting harder compared with the red-hot hiring days of 2021 to 2023.

Average hourly wages rose by 0.5% from December and 4.1% from January 2024, a bit hotter than forecasters had expected. That may be disappointing for the inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve. Still, some inflationary pressure from wage gains is being offset by U.S. productivity growth, which allows companies to pay more and earn fatter profits without raising prices.

"Employers are really maintaining their workforce, but they are not hiring significantly, nor are they laying off," said Gregory Daco, chief economist at the consulting firm EY Parthenon. Daco expects average job growth to slow to between 100,000 and 150,000 a month this year (down slightly from the 2024 average of 166,000 new jobs a month).

The Labor Department also revised payrolls for November and December up by a combined 100,000.

Citing the strong upward revisions from late 2024, Carl Weinberg and Mary Chen of High Frequency Economics wrote that "There is no cause for concern about the strength of the economy in today's employment report." But they added that hiring in recent months suggests the Fed will be in no hurry to cut interest rates after doing so three times in 2024.

January hiring was narrow. Healthcare (44,000 new jobs), retail (34,000) and government (32,000) together accounted for 77% of new jobs last month. Mines shed 8,000 jobs.

The Labor Department said the Los Angeles wildfires and a cold snap in the Northeast and Midwest had "no discernable" impact on the January jobs numbers.

The future is cloudier.

A federal judge on Thursday temporarily blocked President Donald Trump's plan to push out federal workers using financial incentives. A federal hiring freeze that Trump imposed Jan. 20 is a "negative for employment growth," Bradley Saunders, an economist at Capital Economics, wrote last week.



Hiring sign is displayed at a grocery store in Northbrook, Ill., Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2025. (AP)

Economists are also worried about Trump's threats of a trade war against other countries. He's already imposed a 10% tax on imports from China and is threatening tariffs on Canada, Mexico and the European Union and possibly, a universal levy on all imports.

Tariffs paid by U.S. importers, but typically passed along to customers, could heat up inflation - which has fallen from the four-decade high it reached in mid-2022 but is seemingly stuck above the Fed's 2% target. If tariffs push prices higher, the Fed may cancel or postpone the two interest-rate cuts it had forecast for this year. That would be bad for economic growth and job creation.

Employers also worry about the economic fallout from Trump's promises to deport millions of immigrants working in the United States.

Coastal Luxury Outdoors, a Florida pool, maintenance and landscaping company, is struggling to find workers.

"We're highly reliant on immigrant labor, to the point where even if we see reduced demand due to tariffs and other factors, we'll still need to boost our staffing levels," said Rafi Friedman, company president.

Friedman said the company has a core administrative staff of about a dozen people and a field service staff that fluctuates by the season. More than 80% of the field workforce is Hispanic, most of them foreign born. Friedman said the company verifies their immigration status before hiring them.

"Because our work is highly seasonal, we're always replacing at least some of our workforce from year to year, and in periods of high anti-immigrant sentiment, that turnover only gets more difficult to manage," he said.

The job market has already lost momentum. American payrolls increased by 2 million last year, down from 2.6 million in 2023, 4.6 million in 2022 and a record 7.2 million in 2021 as the economy recovered from COVID-19 lockdowns.

Employers are posting fewer jobs and monthly job openings have tumbled from a record 12.2 million in March 2022, to 7.6 million in December - still a decent number by historical standards.

Aujanique Star, 20, of Fife, Washington, is a pre-nursing student who has been trying to switch from her caregiving job to a position in retail for nearly a year. But after submitting as many as 20 applications, she just keeps facing rejections.

"It makes me feel more frustrated that I have all this work experience and all this loyalty towards my jobs. ... What am I missing?" she said.

As the labor market cools, American workers are losing confidence in their ability to find better pay or working conditions by changing jobs. The number of people quitting has fallen from a record 4.5 million near the height of the hiring boom in April 2022, to December's 3.2 million, which is below pre-pandemic levels.

In regular annual revisions, the Labor Department reported Friday that job creation from April 2023 through March 2024 wasn't as good as originally reported: 589,000 fewer jobs were created over those 12 months. Preliminary estimates, released in August, had suggested the downward revisions would be bigger - 818,000 jobs.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt on Friday said the economy during Joe Biden's presidency "was far worse than anyone thought."

Yet Trump is inheriting a healthy unemployment rate and stable economy, just not one that would necessarily make him happy.

Trump is banking on tax cuts and regulatory curbs to bolster the economy. But his freezes on federal funding could halt infrastructure projects and manufacturing. His tariffs could hurt the retail sector and his spending cuts could limit hiring in the health care and government sectors.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addresses a Canada-U.S. economic summit in Toronto, Friday, Feb. 7, 2025. (AP)

Canada plans \$109 bln retaliation

Trudeau discusses strategic response to US tariff threats

VANCOUVER, Feb. 8, (AP) — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Friday that Canada must think "tactically and strategically" on how to deal with U.S. President Donald Trump's threats to impose hefty tariffs on all Canadian imports.

Speaking in Toronto at the opening of a one-day summit on the Canada-U.S. economic relationship, Trudeau told the gathering of trade, business and labor experts the country must work with the U.S. to avoid tariffs.

He also said Canada needs to eliminate internal trade barriers and expand its trade with other nations.

"This is a moment," said Trudeau. "This is a time in our country's history that really matters."

Later, local media reported that Trudeau told business leaders at the summit that Trump's comments to make Canada the 51st state are "a real thing."

"Mr. Trump has it in mind that the easiest way to do it is absorbing our country and it is a real thing. In my conversations with him on..." Trudeau said, before the microphone cut out, Canada's public broadcaster CBC reported.

Trump on Monday agreed to a 30-day pause on threats to impose 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada, with another 10% tariff on Canadian oil, natural gas and electricity.

Trump had threatened the tariffs to ensure greater cooperation from the countries to stop illegal immigration and prevent fentanyl smuggling, but he has also pledged to use tariffs to boost domestic manufacturing and raise revenues for the federal government.

Trudeau said Canada can use the 30-day extension to show U.S. officials the country's increased spending on border security. Canada has announced a \$1.3 billion Canadian dollars (\$900 million) border security plan that includes drones, helicopters, more border guards and the creation of a joint task force.

Trudeau also has promised to appoint a new fentanyl czar, who will serve as the primary liaison between the Canadian and U.S. governments, even though less than 1% of the fentanyl and illegal immigrant crossings

into the U.S. come from Canada.

"We need to be very deliberate about how we continue to engage closely with the United States to make the case that Canada is responsible for a tiny part of the North American fentanyl problem, but that we are also bitterly touched by this tragedy," Trudeau said.

He added that Canada needs to be prepared if Trump decides to go ahead with the tariffs after 30 days.

"We need to be ready to respond robustly," he said. "We also have to be ready to support Canadians through the responses we're giving and through a difficult time of tariffs."

Canada had planned to retaliate to the U.S. action with 25% tariffs on \$155 billion Canadian dollars (\$109 billion) worth of American goods.

Trudeau said it's also time to have "genuine free trade in Canada," while strengthening its trade relationships with other countries.

Candace Laing, president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, said she is happy the meeting is focused on internal trade, trade diversification and responding to U.S. tariffs.

"It's clear that we can't just tinker around the edges with incremental steps right now," she said. "We've got to be bold so that businesses and communities can pivot to be more resilient and less reliant on what happens in the U.S.," Laing said in a statement.

The summit is being hosted by the government's newly created advisory council on Canada-U.S. relations, and includes business and labor leaders, Indigenous leaders and public policy experts. Several federal cabinet ministers are also attending.

Joining the Canadian Chamber of Commerce are representatives from the Global Automakers of Canada, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Canadian Manufacturing and Exporters plus the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak.

Dennis Darby, president and CEO of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, said he intends to tell the government that if tariffs are imposed, businesses and workers will need help in the form of direct government relief, tax relief or wage subsidies.

Third straight weekly decline

US 30-year mortgage rates fall to 6.89 pct

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8, (AP) — The average rate on a 30-year mortgage in the U.S. eased for the third week in a row, a smidgen of relief for prospective home shoppers getting into the market before the busy spring homebuying season starts.

The average rate fell to 6.89% from 6.95% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. A year ago, it averaged 6.64%.

Borrowing costs on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, popular with homeowners seeking to refinance their home loan to a lower rate, also retreated this week. The average rate fell to 6.05% from 6.12% last week. A year ago, it averaged 5.9%, Freddie Mac said.

Mortgage rates are influenced by several factors, including how the bond market reacts to the Federal Reserve's interest rate policy decisions. The average rate on a 30-year mortgage briefly fell to a 2-year low just above 6% last September, but has been mostly rising since then, echoing a sharp rise in the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide for pricing home loans.

The yield, which was at 3.62% in mid-September, reached 4.79% three weeks ago amid fears inflation may remain stubbornly higher than the Fed's 2% target. A solid U.S. economy and worries about tariffs and other policies potentially coming from President Donald Trump have also helped push bond yields higher.

The 10-year Treasury yield was at 4.43% in mid-day trading Thursday.

Elevated mortgage rates, which can add hundreds of dollars a month in costs for borrowers, have discouraged home shoppers, prolonging a national home sales slump that began in 2022.

While sales of previously occupied U.S. homes rose in December for the third month in a row, 2024 was the worst year for home sales in nearly 30 years, worse than 2023, which had been the worst in decades.

New data on pending home sales points to potentially further declines in coming months. The Nation-

al Association of Realtor's pending home sales index fell 5.5% in December from the previous month, ending a four-month streak of increases.

A lag of a month or two usually exists between when a contract is signed and when the home sale is finalized, which makes pending home sales a bellwether for future completed home sales.

For those hoping that mortgage rates will retreat significantly, economists say that's unlikely.

Forecasts mostly call for the average rate on a 30-year mortgage to remain above 6% this year, with some economists including an upper range as high as 6.8%.

The Federal Reserve left its benchmark interest rate unchanged last week after cutting it three times in a row to close 2024, a sign of a more cautious approach as the Fed seeks to gauge where inflation is headed and what policies the Trump administration will pursue.

Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia detach from Soviet-era grid

Baltic states sever final energy ties with Russia

VILNIUS, Feb. 8, (AP) — The flow of electricity between the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Russia was officially severed Saturday morning after officials switched off the Soviet-era grid's transmission lines and prepared to join the rest of Europe on Sunday.

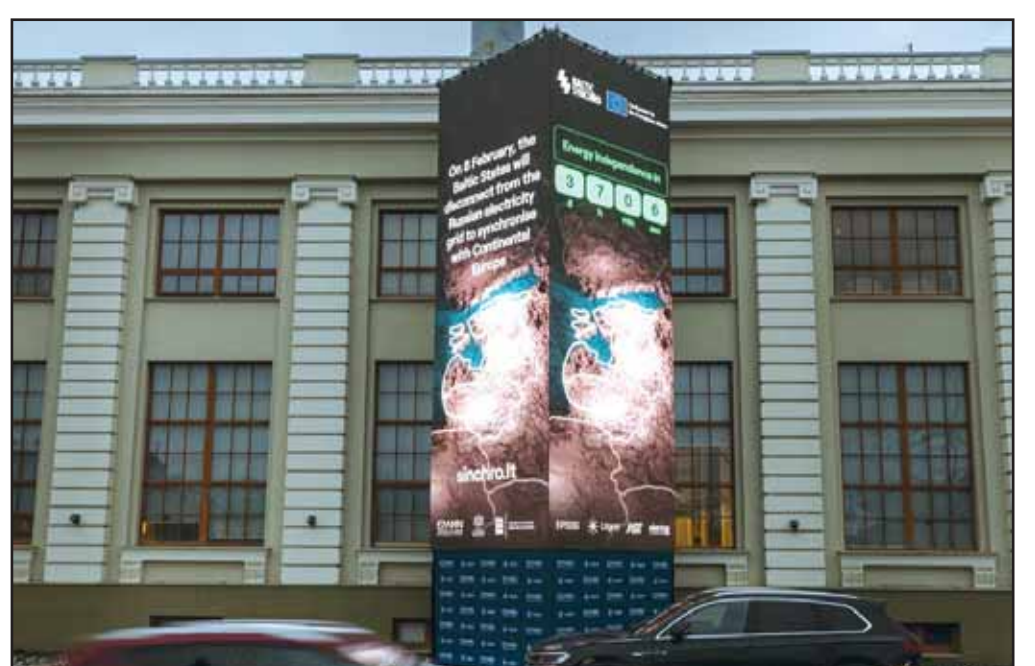
This came more than three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, ending the Baltics' final ties to oil- and gas-rich Russia. For the three countries, as well as the rest of Europe, the move was steeped in geopolitical and symbolic significance.

"The Baltic energy system is finally in our hands, we are in full control," Lithuania Energy minister Zygimantas Vaiciunas told reporters.

On Saturday, all remaining transmission lines between them and Russia, Belarus and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, wedged between EU members Poland and Lithuania and the sea, were switched off one by one. Lithuania first - where a specially-made 9-meter (about 29-foot) tall clock in downtown Vilnius counted down the final seconds - then Latvia a few minutes later, followed by Estonia.

For 24 hours after detaching from the Soviet-era grid, the Baltic Power System will operate independently. If all goes as planned, the power system will merge with the European energy networks on Sunday afternoon through several links with Finland, Sweden and Poland.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, as well as the presidents of Poland and the Baltic states, are expected for a ceremony in Vilnius on Sunday evening along with other dig-



A screen near the Energy Museum and Mindaugas Bridge indicates that on February 8 the Baltic States will disconnect from the Russian electricity grid to synchronize with Continental Europe, in Vilnius, Lithuania, Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2025. (AP)

nities. The Baltic countries, which are all NATO members, have often had chilly ties with Russia since de-

claring independence from the USSR in 1990 - and relations soured further over Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Rap megastar's hip-hop roots to shine at NFL's halftime show

Lamar vows to bring raw storytelling to Super Bowl

NEW ORLEANS, Feb 8, (AP): Kendrick Lamar aims to infuse his Los Angeles hip-hop flavor into New Orleans while staying true to his storytelling roots during Sunday's Super Bowl halftime performance.

"Being in the now and being just locked-in to how I feel and the energy I have now, that's the L.A. energy for me," he said Thursday at a press conference hosted by Apple Music. "That's something I wanted to carry over to New Orleans and for the world to see. This is me. This is Kendrick Lamar, 37 years old, and I still feel like I'm elevating, I'm still on a journey."

The rap megastar will take the Super Bowl stage fresh off a Grammy triumph, where he claimed two of the night's biggest awards - song and record of the year - for his diss track "Not Like Us."

When asked what viewers can expect, Lamar answered: "Storytelling. I think I've always been very open about storytelling through all my catalog and my history of music. And I've always had a passion about bringing that on whatever stage I'm on."

Lamar will be bringing hip-hop back to the NFL's championship game, where he performed as a guest artist with Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Mary J. Blige, 50 Cent and Eminem in

2022. On Sunday, he becomes the first solo hip-hop artist to headline the halftime show.

"It reminds me of the essence and the core response of rap and hip-hop and how far it can go," he said. "It puts the culture at the forefront, where it needs to be and not minimized to just a catchy song or verse. This is a true art form, so to represent it on this type of stage is like everything that I've worked for and everything that I believe in as far as the culture."

SZA will join him but few other details about the performance were revealed, bowing to a tradition in which headliners keep their plans secret. Rihanna waited until her Super Bowl performance in 2023 to reveal she was pregnant with her second child.

The Super Bowl will be held Sunday at the Caesars Superdome, with the two-defending champions Kansas City Chiefs facing off against the Philadelphia Eagles in a championship rematch.

The Super Bowl pregame will have some Louisiana flavor: Jon Batiste will hit the stage to sing the national anthem, while Trombone Shorty and Lauren Daigle are slated to perform "America the Beautiful."

Batiste said he'll be thinking of his grandfather, a veteran

who recently died.

"I think about a lot of people in my life who have represented what I believe this song is about and should be about at its highest aspirational level," he said. "When I channel that, it makes it feel like it's me. But it's way bigger than me. I'm just a vessel for that energy in the world to continue. If that can happen, I might get choked up."

Ledisi will perform "Lift Every Voice and Sing" as part of the pregame performances.

The national anthem and "America the Beautiful" will be performed by actor Stephanie Noguera in American sign language. Otis Jones IV will sign "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and the halftime show will be signed by Matt Maxey.

The pregame performers are all Louisiana natives.

In just a week, Lamar will go from dominating the Grammys with five wins in all his categories to taking center stage at the Super Bowl halftime show.

Fresh off releasing his highly-acclaimed album "GNX," Lamar is also gearing up for a major tour alongside SZA, his former Top Dawg Entertainment labelmate. The Grand National Tour kicks off April 19 in Minneapolis and concludes June 18 in Washington, D.C.

"I'm honored to be next to her talent," Lamar said of SZA.



Apple Music Super Bowl LIX Halftime Show performer Kendrick Lamar poses for photographers after a news conference, Thursday, Feb. 6, in New Orleans ahead of the NFL Super Bowl 59 football game between the Philadelphia Eagles and the Kansas City Chiefs. (AP)

People

Film

Friend testifies

'Rocky fired a prop gun'

LOS ANGELES, Feb 8, (AP): A\$AP Rocky's longtime friend and collaborator testified at his Los Angeles trial Friday that the hip-hop star fired a starter pistol that he carried as a prop during a scuffle with a former friend on a Hollywood street in 2021.

The testimony from the man who goes by A\$AP Twelvyy - who was part of the same A\$AP Mob crew as both the accuser and the defendant dating back to high school - is essential to Rocky's defense against two felony counts of assault with a semiautomatic

firearm. A conviction could mean up to 24 years in prison.

"He walked around with a prop, like a starter pistol," Twelvyy said, looking at the jury. "I seen it on several occasions."

Rocky's partner, the singing superstar Rihanna, returned to court for the last stretch of the day as she had Thursday, and for the first time they left the courthouse together. The two walked arm-in-arm and climbed into a waiting SUV past a small group of cameras.

Twelvyy's testimony suggested Rocky's accuser, their mutual friend who goes by A\$AP Relli, knew the pistol was real when Rocky first pulled it out.

"He told him to shoot that fake-ass gun," Twelvyy said under defense questioning.

Deterrent

Twelvyy testified that when Rocky did fire the gun, it was only to deter Relli from attacking a fourth crew member at the scene, A\$AP Illz.

Deputy District Attorney John Lewin seized on this during his cross examination.

"Can you explain to me," he asked, "how pulling out a prop gun that Relli knew was fake was going to act as a deterrent to anything?"

"The sound," Twelvyy answered.

"The sound," Lewin repeated back incredulously. "Can you explain how the sound of a gun that somebody knows is phony and not real is going to scare anybody?"

Twelvyy replied, "It's so loud that you would think it was a real gunshot and move away."

The A\$AP Mob was a crew of musicians and other creators that formed at a New York high school nearly 20 years ago.

But just one member, Rocky, became a major mainstream success starting in the early 2010s with a pair of No. 1 albums. He has since been nominated for three Grammys, but has become known as much for his dealings in fashion as his music, and for his relationship with Rihanna, with whom he has two toddler sons.

Twelvyy, a rapper whose legal name is Jamel Phillips, has acted as an on-stage hype man for Rocky and appeared in his music videos.

He said that he saw Rocky with the starter pistol three times, first on a New York music video shoot in July 2021, then at a Harlem block party in September of that year, and then in Los Angeles shortly before the Nov. 6 incident.

"This is still like COVID era so he didn't have security," Twelvyy said. "And that was basically his line of defense."

Lewin later asked him how he could've known it was a prop gun in the first place, and how he might have known that the one he pulled out in Los Angeles was the one he'd seen earlier.



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Ariana DeBose in a scene from 'Love Hurts.' (AP)

A bloody and cartoonish mess

Quan, DeBose lead action-comedy 'Love Hurts'

LOS ANGELES, Feb 8, (AP): Ke Huy Quan plays a happy-go-lucky real estate agent named Marvin Gable whose past life as a hitman comes back to haunt him in "Love Hurts." The action-comedy goes hard on elaborately choreographed fight sequences and violent, bloody deaths. Anything from a boba straw to a cookie cutter is fair game in these gruesome showdowns.

But while the derivative and cartoonish spectacle can be fun and impressive at times, "Love Hurts" just doesn't work in the end, hampered by a lack of directorial vision, comedic pacing and an ensemble of caricatures instead of characters. "Love Hurts" may only run 83 minutes, but if you've seen the 2:41 trailer, you've kind of seen it all.

It had a lot going for it too, including two recent Oscar winners in Quan and "West Side Story's" Ariana DeBose in the lead roles, a fine premise and a hoard of fun actors in the ensemble. Sean Astin plays Quan's boss at the real estate agency, a stumpy, nostalgic play for "Goonies" fans that actually gives the film a rare, touching, authentic moment, and Marshawn Lynch, who is proving himself to be a comedic gem no matter the material. But there's something immensely off about the tone, which isn't clever or silly enough to be funny, and its ham-fisted attempts to tie it to Valentine's Day with various subplots about love,

from the jaded assistant who falls for a poetry-writing goon to another hired thug who is trying to get his wife (who we never meet) back.

Poor Quan is the one who must do all the cringey voiceover, though he mostly comes out unscathed. As audiences saw in "Everything Everywhere All at Once," he's great at switching believably between debonair fighter and tame nice guy, and he is undeniably compelling as a lead. He just needs a better movie around him.

DeBose, on the other hand, has only a barely-there character to play with. Rose Carlisle is a thinly drawn femme fatale in heels and leopard print coats with a penchant for laughing maniacally and drawing mustaches on Marvin's real estate billboards. She was supposed to be dead after a deal gone wrong, but Marvin spared her because of love, I guess. Now she wants her life back, and, presumably, Marvin, though their chemistry might suggest otherwise. Basically, she needs to kill his crime lord brother Knuckles (Daniel Wu, whose defining character trait is sinisterly drinking boba) to be free. There's a lot of talk about "hiding ain't living" which sounds fine in theory but never quite syncs up - Marvin likes his new, non-violent life.

Like "John Wick," "The Fall Guy" and other less memorable

movies, "Love Hurts" is the latest in a string of films directed by guys who cut their teeth as stuntmen. This is a tale as old as cinema, but most recent efforts usually seem to have a common denominator in David Leitch, who has a producer credit on this one. Directing responsibilities on "Love Hurts" went to Jonathan Eusebio, who was a fight coordinator on "John Wick," and perhaps needed a bit more help here - a better script, sharper editing that could help the comedic moments work better and a coherent vision.

Artificiality as an aesthetic is all fine and good, but "Love Hurts" feels a little too much like the charmless, ripped-from-the-Magnolia-showroom homes that Marvin is hawking to perky yuppies around Milwaukee. It may seem good enough in a Zillow photo or a movie trailer, a facsimile of what we think homes and films of a certain quality should look like. But spend a little time with the plastic-y sliding barn door, or the goon whose only zinger seems to be calling Rose the B-word, and you come to realize that it's all hollow underneath - a "Truman Show" set without the real world behind it.

"Love Hurts," a Universal Pictures released in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "strong, bloody violence and language throughout." Running time: 83 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

Variety

NEW ORLEANS: Police are investigating the death of a television reporter who was in New Orleans to cover the Super Bowl and on Friday announced the arrest of a woman they say used his credit card.

Adan Manzano, 27, an anchor and reporter for Telemundo in Kansas City, Missouri, was found dead Wednesday in his hotel room in Kenner, a suburb just outside New Orleans, police said. Police on Thursday evening arrested Louisiana resident Danette Colbert, 48. She is facing four felony charges, as well as a misdemeanor fraud and theft charge, Kenner Police Deputy Chief Mark McCormick said.

She also faces a state felony charge of possession of a stolen firearm, but Kenner Police do not believe it's related to Manzano's case, St. Tammany Sheriff's Office Lt. Suzanne Carboni said.

Colbert was seen on security video footage arriving with Manzano at his hotel room around 5 a.m. the day of his death and then leaving without him about an hour later, police said. She used Manzano's credit card at several stores in the area and authorities later located Manzano's credit card and cellphone at Colbert's residence in Slidell, northeast of New Orleans they said. (AP)

NEW YORK: Tony Roberts, a versatile, Tony Award-nominated theater performer at home in both plays and musicals and who appeared in several Woody Allen movies - often as Allen's best

friend - has died. He was 85.

Roberts' death was announced to The New York Times by his daughter, Nicole Burley.

Roberts had a genial stage personality perfect for musical comedy and he originated roles in such diverse Broadway musicals as "How Now, Dow Jones" (1967); "Sugar" (1972), an adaptation of the movie "Some Like It Hot," and "Victor/Victoria" (1995), in which he co-starred with Julie Andrews when she returned to Broadway in the stage version of her popular film. He also was in the campy, roller-disco "Xanadu" in 2007 and "The Royal Family" in 2009.

Roberts also appeared on Broadway in the 1966 Woody Allen comedy "Don't Drink the Water," repeating his role in the film version, and in Allen's "Play It Again, Sam" (1969), for which he also made the movie.

Other Allen films in which Roberts appeared were "Annie Hall" (1977), "Stardust Memories" (1980), "A Midsummer Night's... Comedy" (1982), "Hannah and Her Sisters" (1986) and "Radio Days" (1987).

In Eric Lax's book "Woody Allen: A Biography," Roberts recalled a complicated scene in "A Midsummer Night's ... Comedy" that Allen shot over and over - even after the film had been edited - to get his intended effect.

"When you go back to see (Allen's work) two, three, four times, you begin to see the amazing amount of art in it, that noth-



Roberts

ing is accidental," Roberts said.

Among his other movies were "Serpico" (1973) and "The Taking of Pelham One Two Three" (1974).

He was nominated twice for a Tony Award - for "How Now, Dow Jones" and "Play It Again, Sam," when he was billed as Anthony Roberts. (AP)

NEW YORK: Irv Gotti, the boisterous, smiley music mogul who founded Murder Inc. Records and was behind major hip-hop and R&B artists, has died. He was 54.

Def Jam Recordings, which was the parent company of Murder Inc., announced Gotti's death in a statement late Wednesday night. It did not give a cause of death.

Gotti, whose real name was Irving Lorenzo, created the iconic hip-hop and R&B imprint with his brother in the late 1990s, with the label gaining worldwide prominence through platinum-selling artists Ashanti and Ja Rule. Gotti also worked with some of rap's most legendary artists like Jay-Z, Nas and DMX, among other huge names in the genre.

"His creative genius and unwavering dedication to the culture birthed countless hits, defining an era of music that continues to resonate with fans worldwide," the statement from Def Jam read.

Murder Inc.'s blazing run in the early 2000s produced some of music's biggest crossover records, usually involving his two biggest stars, like Ja Rule and Ashanti's "Always On Time," "I'm Real" by Jennifer Lopez and Ja Rule, "Foolish" by Ashanti and "What's Luv" by Fat Joe featuring Ja Rule and Ashanti. (AP)



Violinist Stefan Jackiw plays the 1714 Joachim-Ma Stradivarius at Sotheby's auction house in New York on Monday, Feb. 3, 2025. (AP)

Misses \$18 million estimate

1714 Stradivarius violin sells for \$11.3m at auction

NEW YORK, Feb 8, (AP): A violin made in 1714 by the legendary luthier Antonio Stradivari sold for \$11.3 million at an auction in New York on Friday, short of estimates that would have made it the most expensive instrument ever sold.

Sotheby's auction house had estimated that the "Joachim-Ma Stradivarius" violin could sell for between \$12 million and \$18 million, with the higher end of the range potentially eclipsing the record-breaking \$15.9 million someone paid for another Stradivari violin at auction more than a decade ago.

The "Joachim-Ma Stradivarius" is regarded as one of Stradivari's best works, built during his "Golden Period" at the height of his craftsmanship and acoustic mastery, according to the auction house.

Adding to the intrigue, the violin is believed to have influenced legendary composer Johannes Brahms when he wrote the famed "Violin Concerto in D Major" and

was actually played during the concerto's 1879 premiere.

"This extraordinary violin represents the pinnacle of craftsmanship and classical music history, its unparalleled sound and storied provenance captivating collectors and musicians alike," Mari-Claudia Jimenez, chair at Sotheby's. "The Joachim-Ma Stradivarius garnered global attention, achieving one of the highest prices ever for a musical instrument - an acknowledgment of its rarity and historical importance."

Bidding at Sotheby's began at \$8 million and within seconds shot up to \$10 million, as auctioneer Phyllis Kao scanned the room, looking for someone to put up \$10.5 million.

"Am I selling? At \$10 million," she said, looking to potential bidders.

The room was quiet.

"Last chance, at \$10 million," she said.

"I can sell, and I will, at \$10 million, unless

you go on."

"Sold. \$10 million," she said, banging a gavel.

The final price includes auction house fees.

The name of the instrument comes from two of its famous violin virtuoso owners, Joseph Joachim of Hungary and Si-Hon Ma of China. Ma's estate gifted the violin to the New England Conservatory in Boston after his death.

The conservatory will use the proceeds to fund student scholarships.

"The sale is transformational for future students, and proceeds will establish the largest named endowed scholarship at New England Conservatory," said Andrea Kalyn, president of New England Conservatory. "It has been an honor to have the Joachim-Ma Stradivari on campus, and we are eager to watch its legacy continue on the world stage."

Fashion

Chinese high-end brand JUZUI shines at NYFW

Siriano showcases a glamorous fashion ride

NEW YORK, Feb 8, (Agencies): In glistening gowns with sleek constructed lines, designer Christian Siriano pulled inspiration from his shared love of cars with his father for his latest New York Fashion Week collection Thursday.

Models strutted past rose beds and a bright red and black Toyota parked on the runway as fashion industry onlookers documented everything on their phones and a group of Siriano's starry celebrity friends clapped and cheered for his latest looks. Breaking away from the masculinity associated with cars, Siriano said he crafted a collection of feminine and glamorous looks.

"The lines of a car to me look like the lines of a corset," Siriano said.

For his latest collection, Siriano playfully shaped fabrics to resemble elements of car design. Models walked to pulsing techno beats in jersey fabric made to look like oil slicks, embroidery designed like tire tracks and bell bottoms lined with a pattern similar to the leather of a tire.

"I was like, who doesn't love that iconic, sexy red car?" he said. "But who doesn't love that iconic, sexy red dress? And how do they kind of go together?"

In a contrast between masculine and feminine, longtime Siriano model Coco Rocha posed in a black tuxedo blazer mini dress draped with a red silky fabric down one of her legs. The dress colors perfectly matched the Toyota parked inside. In true Siriano fashion, models of all sizes and genders walked the catwalk.

Male models walked the runway baring their abs under glossy cropped jackets and wide leg pants.

Singer Adam Lambert arrived just before the show began wearing Siriano's dark brown long line blazer coat.

In the front row, actors and celebrities cheered for their favorite looks throughout the show. Actor Katie Holmes sat between Julianne Hough and Whoopi Goldberg. Actress Tiffany Haddish said she feels beautiful in all of Siriano's clothes.

Bravo celebrity Bronwyn Newport posed for pictures in her baby pink tulle dress from Siriano's last runway show. "The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City" star said as Siriano's close friend she thought it was his best show yet.

"I wanted every look," she said.

Siriano transformed the Chelsea industrial space for his New York Fashion Week show - filling the room with red from red draped walls, red gift bags and a red carpet.

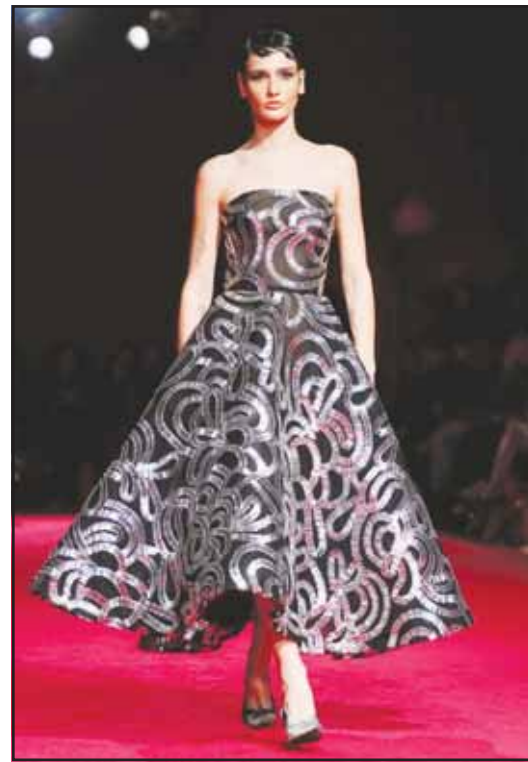
Siriano is no stranger to the red carpet. The designer has made a name for himself transforming red carpet looks by embracing body positivity and inclusivity.

"Over the years, as my body has changed, Christian has always been supportive and had something fabulous for me to wear," Laverne Cox told The Associated Press. "Like he has such a diverse range as a designer."

Siriano famously dressed actor Billy Porter in a velvety tuxedo ball gown for the 2019 Oscars. He



A model walks the runway during the Christian Siriano Fall/Winter 2025 fashion show at Chelsea Industrial during New York Fashion Week on Thursday, Feb. 6, in New York. (AP)



A model presents Christian Siriano's creation during New York Fashion Week. (AP)



A model walks the runway during the Christian Siriano's fashion show. (AP)



A model presents a creation of JUZUI during the New York Fashion Week 2025 on Feb. 7, 2025. (Xinhua)



A model wears a creation of Christian Siriano. (AP)



A model presents a creation of Vivienne Hu during New York Fashion Week. (Xinhua)



A model presents Christian Siriano's creation during New York Fashion Week. (AP)

turned to the runway with its breathtaking Fall/Winter 2025 collection, "Winter Blooms Whispering," captivating audiences at the Glasshouse in New York City on Friday.

Maye Musk closed the show with her signature poise, embodying the collection's message of timeless elegance and resilience.

JUZUI's Chairman and President Zheng Anzheng described the event as a defining moment for the brand's global aspirations, saying, "Our participation in New York Fashion Week reaffirms our commitment to bringing high-quality Chinese fashion to the international stage."

Chief Designer Taoray Wang highlighted the collection's inspirations, explaining, "With

raised money by selling his own paintings and donating money from ticket sales to his New York Fashion Week show to the cause. "We had people buy tickets that aren't even attending, which was so wonderful," he said. "Nobody needs me to donate clothes."

JUZUI

Lighting up the New York Fashion Week stage, Chinese high-end brand JUZUI re-

Variety

BERLIN, Germany: Conductor Daniel Barenboim says he has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

The 82-year-old issued a statement Thursday on Instagram.

He has appeared more frail since 2022, canceling scheduled performances that included a new production of Wagner's Ring Cycle in Berlin.

"I am planning to maintain as many of my professional commitments as my health permits," he wrote. "As ever, I consider the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra my most important responsibility. It is essential for me to ensure the orchestra's long-term stability and development. I will continue to conduct the Divan whenever my health allows me to. At the same time, I will take an active role in ensuring that the Divan has the opportunity of working with excellent conductors going forward. I have been navigating this new reality of mine and my focus is on receiving the best available care."

A child prodigy pianist who made his Carnegie Hall debut at 1957 at age 14, Barenboim has been chief conductor of the Orchestre de Paris (1975-89) and music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1991-2006) and Milan's Teatro alla Scala (2011-14) and general music director of the Berlin State Opera (1992-2023). (AP)

Barenboim

HONOLULU: Jim Becker, a world-traveling journalist who covered Jackie Robinson's big-league baseball debut and the US Army's retaking of Seoul during the Korean War, died Friday. He was 98.

He died of natural causes at a Honolulu hospital, said his goddaughter Carla Escoda Brooks.

Becker served as an Associated Press bureau chief in Manila, New Delhi and Honolulu and covered Margaret Thatcher as a freelance journalist in London. But he said his most important story was about an underdog Hawaii high school football team that won a league championship, a tale he told as a Honolulu Star-Bulletin columnist.

Becker joined the AP in 1946 fresh out of the Army when he walked into the wire service's New York headquarters without an appointment and was hired to start the next day.

He watched Robinson become the first Black player on a Major League baseball team when editors sent him to the trailblazing athlete's first game as a Brooklyn Dodger.

Nearly half of Robinson's teammates had signed a petition because they didn't want to play with a Black man. But the stadium crowd was supportive of Robinson, Becker said, adding that half of Brooklyn was Jewish "and they knew a little something about prejudice." (AP)

NEW YORK: The next novel by Ian McEwan will be a post-apocalyptic story, set in part in the 22nd century and centered on a scholar's immersion into a poem written during happier times.

McEwan, the Booker Prize-winning British author, is calling "What We Can Know" a work of science fiction "without the science."

"I've written a novel about a quest, a crime, revenge, fame, a tangled love affair, mental illness, love of nature and poetry, and how, through all natural and self-inflicted catastrophes, we have the knack of surviving," McEwan said in a statement released Friday through Alfred A. Knopf, which announced the book will be published Sept. 16.

"In our times, we know more about the world than we ever did, and such knowledge will be hard to erase. My ambition in this novel was to let the past, present and future address each other across the barriers of time."

The 76-year-old McEwan has previously imagined disasters and disruptions - and how we respond - whether the threat of climate change in "Solar," a radiation cloud in "Lessons" or artificial intelligence in "Machines Like Me." Knopf publisher and editor-in-chief Jordan Pavlin said in a statement that "What We Can Know" is an exploration of the "limits of our knowledge," whether of other people or the arc of the past.

"As the title suggests, the book calls into question the limits of our knowledge about our most intimate companions, and about history itself," Pavlin said. "How many irrecoverable secrets and stories are lost to the past? McEwan's genius in this novel is to recover, in an exquisite feat of storytelling, a long-lost secret." (AP)



Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi delivers his speech during the conference.



Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Health Minister, officially opens the conference.



Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi poses for a group photo during the conference. KUNA photos

Kuwait keen to develop medical devices, treatments, medical cadres

Kuwaiti Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi stressed on Friday the ministry's commitment to providing the latest treatments and medical devices with the aim of improving the efficiency of medical cadres.

Speaking at the opening of the annual Radiology and Radiotherapy Conference, Minister Al-Awadhi explained that the conference is an opportunity to review the great progress witnessed by the radiology sector in applying the latest medical developments and diagnostic and therapeutic techniques, and

enhances cooperation between specialists in the field of radiology.

The minister added that the introduction of artificial intelligence programs in examinations, holding conferences and training platforms, as well as opening new qualitative radiology departments equipped with the latest devices have enhanced the capacity of these departments.

For her part, Head of the Radiology Departments Council at the Ministry of Health Dr. Buthaina Al-Kandari said that the conference slogan (A Vi-

sion for the Future) is a collective commitment to adopt the latest technologies and international standards, improve the level of health services, and achieve quality and excellence.

The Conference Chair Dr. Khalida Al-Asousi explained that the conference will host a group of international experts and specialists to present latest developments radiology, discuss the best advanced technologies, and exchange experiences. (KUNA)

ISS-bound items

Axiom crew prep for space mission

WARSAW, Poland, Feb 5, (AP): What do a wedding necklace, Polish savory dumplings and a photo of Hungary's first astronaut have in common?

They will all be among personal items taken by astronauts journeying to the International Space Station (ISS) in the spring. The date has not yet been set.

The four members of the Axiom mission hail from the US, India, Hungary and Poland and will travel on the Space X Crew Dragon spaceship.

At a news conference Wednesday, three of the astronauts said they were having the time of their lives, training hard for their travel as well as preparing for the medical and technological experiments they will conduct during the nearly two weeks they will spend in space.

"We have to remind ourselves that space flight is a risky and serious business but it's also fun and, next to space flight, the training for a space flight is the next best thing, so we are having a time of our lives," mission pilot Tibor Kapu said in English.

Slawosz Uznaski-Winiewski said the hardest parts of the training were the "waiting and the uncertainty" as well as being away from home and not having "too much family time."

The head of the European Space Agency, Josef Aschbacher, stressed that space research was "strategic" for many reasons, including security.

Crew members will take with them items of national and personal significance.

Retired U.S. astronaut Peggy Whitson, the mission commander, who has a doctorate in biochemistry, is taking the necklace that she wore at her wedding, along with photos of the crew and her family.

Uznaski-Winiewski is taking freeze-dried Polish traditional pierogi, or dumplings, along with poems by Wislawa Szymborska, a Nobel literature laureate; music by Frédéric Chopin; a piece of amber; and some salt from the historic Wieliczka salt mine. He will also have a small national white-and-red flag that Poland's first man in outer space, Miroslaw Hermaszewski, wore on his suit in 1978.

Over 310,000 hospitalizations recorded

Flu season in the US is the most intense it has been in 15 years

NEW YORK, Feb 8, (AP): The US winter virus season is in full force, and by one measure is the most intense in 15 years.

One indicator of flu activity is the percentage of doctor's office visits driven by flu-like symptoms. Last week, that number was clearly higher than the peak of any winter flu season since 2009-2010, when a swine flu pandemic hit the nation, according to data posted Friday morning by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Of course, other viral infections can be mistaken for flu. But COVID-19 appears to be on the decline, according to hospital data and to CDC modeling projections. Available data also suggests another respiratory illness, RSV, has been fading nationally.

The flu has forced schools to shut down in some states. The Godley Independent School District, a 3,200-student system near Fort Worth, Texas, last week closed for three days after 650 students and 60 staff were out Tuesday.

Jeff Meador, a district spokesman, said the vast majority of illnesses there have been flu, plus some strep throat. He called it the worst flu season he could remember.

So far this season, the CDC estimates, there have been at least 24 million flu illnesses, 310,000 hospitalizations and 13,000 deaths - including at least 57 children. Traditionally, flu season peaks around February.

Overall, 43 states reported high or very high flu activity last week. Flu was most intense in the South, Southwest and western states.



An employee cleans empty cages as customers arrive to buy chickens inside a poultry store on Friday, Feb. 7, 2025, in New York. (AP)

In Rochester, New York, the flu season has been intense but not necessarily worse than at the peak of other years, said Dr. Elizabeth Murray, a pediatric emergency medicine doctor at the University of Rochester Medical Center.

She said there's a lot of flu, but there's also still a lot of RSV and a surprising number of babies with COVID-19.

"All of the respiratory illnesses are around, with a vengeance," Murray added.

The CDC declined to let an Associated Press reporter speak to an agency flu expert about recent trends. The Trump administration ordered a

temporary "pause" on health agency communications and has continued to refuse interview requests that were routinely granted in the past.

Late Friday afternoon, a CDC spokesperson acknowledged that the new data shows "the highest absolute value" of flu-like illness when compared with other seasons, but added that the statistic is complicated: That value references a baseline estimate for doctor's office visits, but the baseline is recalculated every year. In late January, the CDC was describing the season as "moderate" in severity.

US health officials recommends that everyone 6 months and older get an annual flu vaccination.

South Sudan confirms first case of mpox

JUBA, Feb 8, (Xinhua): South Sudan on Friday confirmed its first mpox case, with authorities pledging heightened vigilance to prevent further transmission.

Acting Minister of Health James Hoth Mai said the National Public Health Laboratory confirmed the case in a Ugandan national who had recently traveled to his home country, where an active outbreak is ongoing.

"This outbreak has been declared following confirmation by the National Public Health Laboratory on Thursday using real-time polymerase chain reaction testing of skin lesion samples collected from a 31-year-old male, a Ugandan national," Mai told reporters in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

He said the health ministry has activated the Public Health Emergency Operations Center to coordinate the response,

leveraging existing incident management systems currently addressing cholera and other public health emergencies.

The minister added that the confirmed case is under isolation at Gudele Hospital, where a team of experts from the government and partner organizations has been mobilized to conduct a detailed field investigation, trace contacts, and ensure close monitoring.

Meanwhile, a total of 107 people have been killed in the ongoing mpox outbreak in Africa since the beginning of 2025, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). More than 13,500 mpox cases have been reported in 12 African countries, of which 3,683 were confirmed, Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya told an online media briefing Thursday.

Argentina to exit WHO

WHO warns of Gaza's critical health needs as hospitals shut

NEW YORK, Feb 8, (Agencies): The World Health Organization (WHO) said that the health needs of the Gaza Strip are enormous as many hospitals and health centers are out of service.

In a virtual press briefing from Gaza late Thursday, WHO Representative in the West Bank and Gaza Rik Peepkorn said Al-Awda Hospital is the only partially functional medical facility in northern Gaza and Kamal Adwan Hospital has been completely destroyed and the Indonesian Hospital is out of service.

He added that in southern Gaza, the three main hospitals, notably the Kuwaiti Hospital, Al-Emirati Field Hospital and Al-Najjar Hospital, are not functional.

He emphasized that 12,000 and 14,000 patients, including at least 5,000 children, are in need of medical evacuation out of Gaza.

As the Rafah frontier crossing has been opened for evacuations, he regretted that it is not sufficient.

"We need to expedite (medical evacuations). There should be more patients going through Rafah into Egypt. But we also want other medical corridors," he said.

On the health situation in the West Bank, the WHO representative said the WHO is trying to provide all sup-

plies for main hospitals and medical facilities there.

Meanwhile, Argentina's president has ordered the country's withdrawal from the World Health Organization due to "profound differences" with the UN agency, a presidential spokesman said Wednesday.

President Javier Milei's decision echoes that of his ally, US President Donald Trump, who began the process of pulling the United States out of WHO with an executive order on his first day back in office on Jan. 21.

The loss of another member country will further fracture cooperation in global health, though Argentina was expected to provide only about \$8 million to WHO for the agency's estimated \$6.9 billion 2024-2025 budget.

Argentina's decision is based on "profound differences in health management, especially during the (COVID-19) pandemic," spokesperson Manuel Adorni told a news conference in Buenos Aires. He said WHO guidelines at the time led to the largest shutdown "in the history of mankind."

Argentina will not allow an international organization to intervene in its sovereignty "and much less in our health," he added.

Uganda implements Ebola screening to prevent spread

KAMPALA, Feb 8, (Xinhua): Uganda has started screening departing travelers for Sudan Ebola virus disease (SVD) at the East African country's border points to prevent the exportation of the virus.

Travelers departing through Uganda's 53 designated border points and Entebbe International Airport, the country's main international gateway, are being screened for the deadly viral hemorrhagic fever, Henry Kyobe Bosa, incident commander at the Ministry of Health, told Xinhua by telephone.

Bosa said a thermal scanner has been deployed at the Entebbe airport for departing travelers for high-temperature detection, and sanitization measures have also been instituted.

"We have heightened active surveillance. We have instituted exit

screening starting fully at Entebbe airport, and we are rolling the same across the entire 53 designated border points," said Bosa. "If the temperature is detected high, then that individual will be refused to exit and linked to the isolation. This is to ensure that we localize the Ebola outbreak within the country without spreading it out."

Uganda last week declared an Ebola outbreak after a 32-year-old nurse succumbed to the disease. The country's Ministry of Health said two relatives of the index case have tested positive for the virus and 234 people who had contact with the deceased have been identified and isolated.

With the World Health Organization and other partners, Uganda is currently carrying out a clinical efficacy trial for a vaccine for the Sudan variant of the Ebola virus.

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Heat's offense stalls in loss to Brooklyn



Atlanta Hawks guard Trae Young (11) dribbles the ball past Milwaukee Bucks guard Andre Jackson Jr. (44) during the first half of an NBA basketball game, in Atlanta. (AP)

Fueled by England and Saudi Arabia

Record January transfers in men's soccer valued at \$2.35b with almost 6,000 deals

ZURICH, Feb 8, (AP): Fueled by England and Saudi Arabia, clubs spent a record \$2.35 billion on international transfer deals in a booming January trading period for men's soccer, FIFA said.

The 5,863 international transfers — those between clubs in different countries that are processed by FIFA — also was 900 more than the previous highest, which was recorded last year.

In January 2024, only one transfer — Gonçalo Ramos confirming a permanent move to Paris Saint-Germain from Benfica — was reportedly valued at more than 30 million euros (\$31 million).

There were 10 such transfer fees agreed last month, including four to Manchester City, and topped by Colombia forward Jhon Durán's \$80 million move from Aston Villa to join Cristiano Ronaldo at Saudi club Al Nassr.

English clubs collectively spent the most with a \$621.6 million outlay on transfer fees and recouped just \$186 million selling players to clubs in other countries.

The next biggest deficit was Saudi Arabia, where clubs spent more than \$160 million above what they earned. The spending of \$202 million was mostly fueled by Al Nassr, Al Hilal and other clubs all owned



Sevilla's Sergio Ramos gestures during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Sevilla and FC Barcelona at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in Seville, Spain. (AP)

with sovereign wealth by the Public Investment Fund.

German clubs spent \$295.7 million, which was mostly offset by earning \$226.2 million in transfer sales.

French clubs took in the highest total of transfer fees, \$371 million, and spent just \$209.7 million to make a collective profit of more than \$160 million.

Clubs in Portugal made sales of \$176.4 million and spent only

\$40.2 million for a combined profit of \$136 million.

In the United States, clubs spent \$145 million and took in \$125 million in transfer fees, according to FIFA research.

Eight months after his last competitive match, Spanish defender Sergio Ramos will resume his illustrious career on another continent.

Ramos, who will turn 39 in

March, will play for Monterrey of Liga MX in Mexico where he will have a chance to play in the next edition of the FIFA Club World Cup.

The veteran, who won the World Cup in South Africa 2010, has not played an official match since May of last year when he was playing for Sevilla in the Spanish league.

Monterrey, one of the most economically powerful clubs in Mexico, did not reveal the details of the agreement.

"We have been trying to sign him since last summer, but we did not come to terms and we tried again in this new window," said Monterrey's team president Jose Antonio Noriega. "The team needs him, he has quality, enormous experience, enormous personality and he is an undisputed leader."

Monterrey, commonly known as Rayados, are one of three Mexican teams that will participate in the first edition of the expanded Club World Cup set to be played in the U.S. next summer. The other two are León and Pachuca.

Ramos also won Euro 2012 with Spain and five Spanish League titles and four Champions League titles with Real Madrid, where he played for 16 seasons.

Short-handed Suns rally past Jazz

NEW YORK, Feb 8, (AP): Cam Johnson scored 18 points, D'Angelo Russell had 17 and the Brooklyn Nets limited Miami to nine points in the fourth quarter of its first game since trading Jimmy Butler, beating the Heat 102-86.

Miami shot 2 for 21 (9.5%) in the fourth quarter and was outscored 31-9 after leading by six through three quarters.

The Heat didn't have Andrew Wiggins, Kyle Anderson or Davion Mitchell, the three players they acquired in what became a five-team deal when they sent Butler to the Golden State Warriors. Terry Rozier scored 20 points off the bench for the Heat and Bam Adebayo added 18.

Nic Claxton had 12 points, 10 rebounds and four blocks for Brooklyn.

Suns 135, Jazz 127

In Phoenix, Devin Booker scored a season-high 47 points, Grayson Allen hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer to force overtime and the short-handed Phoenix Suns rallied to beat the Utah Jazz.

With 0.8 seconds left in regulation, Allen caught an inbound pass and hit the 3-pointer from the right wing to tie it at 122. Allen opened the extra period with another 3 and the Suns scored the first eight points of overtime to pull away and snap a three-game losing streak.

John Collins led Utah with 21 points. Lauri Markkanen added 20.

The Suns led 111-98 with 5:31 left in regulation, and the Jazz responded with a 13-0 run to tie it. Utah led 120-116 with 4.7 seconds left, but Allen hit two 3-pointers in the final five seconds for an improbable rally.

Allen finished with 21 points, hitting seven 3-pointers.

Thunder 121, Raptors 109

In Oklahoma City, Jalen Williams scored 27 points, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 25 and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Toronto Raptors in Chet Holmgren's return from injury.

Holmgren, the runner-up for rookie of the year last season, played for the first time in three months after recovering from a pelvic fracture. The 7-foot-1 forward had four points, five rebounds and four blocks in 22 minutes.

Aaron Wiggins added 18 points for the NBA-best Thunder (41-9), who won their fourth straight.

Scottie Barnes scored 21 points and Grady Dick added 17 for the Raptors, who lost their third in a row.

Cavaliers 134, Wizards 124

In Washington, Donovan Mitchell scored 33 points, Evan Mobley added 27 and the Cleveland Cavaliers pulled away late for a 134-124 victory over the Washington Wizards.

Darius Garland added 23 points and Jarrett Allen had 12 points and 12 rebounds to help the Eastern Conference leaders win for the sixth time in their last seven games.

Jordan Poole scored a career-high 45 points for the NBA-worst Wizards, who were trying to extend a



Detroit Pistons forward Tobias Harris, front left, drives to the basket against Philadelphia 76ers guard Kyle Lowry, right, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Detroit. (AP)

season-best winning streak to four games.

Hornets 117, Spurs 116

In Charlotte, Miles Bridges knocked down a 3-pointer from the corner off a wraparound feed from LaMelo Ball with 1.4 seconds left to lift Charlotte to a victory over the San Antonio Spurs and snap a six-game skid for the Hornets.

De'Aaron Fox appeared to respond with a winning 3 at the buzzer, but referees gathered after the play and ruled he did not get the shot off in time.

Bridges finished with 25 points on 10-of-18 shooting and Ball had 24 points and 10 assists for Charlotte after missing the last five games with an ankle injury. Nick Smith Jr added 19 points for the Hornets - his fourth straight game with at least that many - and Moussa Diabate was strong on the offensive glass, finishing with 15 rebounds after taking over as the starting center.

Hawks 115, Bucks 110

In Atlanta, Trae Young had 24 points and seven assists and the Atlanta Hawks overcame a 21-point deficit to beat the Milwaukee Bucks.

Mouhamed Gueye had 15 points, 11 rebounds and four blocks - all season highs - and Dyson Daniels had 15 points and 10 assists. Atlanta ended a five-game home losing streak and won for only the second time in 11 games overall.

Bobby Portis had 26 points and 15 rebounds for Milwaukee, with All-Star Giannis Antetokounmpo missing his third straight game because of tightness in his left calf. Damian Lillard had 23 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds. The Bucks have lost five of six.

Pistons 125, 76ers 112

In Detroit, Malik Beasley scored a career-high 36 points and Detroit Pistons built a 34-point lead and beat the Philadelphia 76ers.

Tobias Harris added 22 points and nine rebounds for the Pistons, who led 78-49 at halftime. Ausar Thompson had 14 points, eight rebounds and six assists, and Jalen Duren finished with 13 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists despite battling foul trouble.

Princeton edges Pennsylvania

St. John's extends winning run with comeback victory

STORRS, Conn., Feb 8, (AP): RJ Luis Jr. scored six of his 21 points in the final 2:16 to help No. 12 St. John's extend its winning streak to 10 games with a 68-62 comeback victory over No. 19 UConn on Friday night.

Kadary Richmond scored all 13 of his points in the second half and Simeon Wilcher added 12 for St. John's (21-3, 12-1 Big East).

Liam McNeely had 18 points for UConn (16-7, 8-4). Solo Ball had 13 points, while Tarris Reed Jr. had 12 points and 15 rebounds.

McNeely, who missed the previous eight games with an ankle injury, had four points in a 6-0 run by UConn to put the Huskies up by six with 11:16 left in the second half. The Huskies couldn't build on it as St. John's regained the lead on back-to-back jumpers by Luis and Richmond.

Ball and Stewart scored eight points each as UConn jumped out to an early 21-8 lead. With the Huskies up by 14, Deivon Smith had a four-point play to begin an 8-0 run by St. John's. The Red Storm took the lead for the first time on a basket by Wilcher with 2:29 left in the first half.

St. John's led 37-35 at halftime. Jackson Hicke was fouled as time expired and his two free throws lifted Princeton to a 61-59 win over Pennsylvania.

Dalen Davis knocked down a 3 to put Princeton in front, 59-58, but Nick Spinoso tied the game with 19 seconds left by hitting the first of two free throws.

CJ Happy had 13 points and grabbed eight rebounds for the Tigers (16-6, 5-2 Ivy League). Xaivian Lee scored 11 points and added nine

rebounds. Hicke had 11 points and shot 3 of 7 from the field, including 1 for 3 from 3-point range, and went 4 for 4 from the line.

Spinoso led the way for the Quakers (6-14, 2-5) with 12 points. Pennsylvania also got 12 points and three steals from Sam Brown. AJ Levine had nine points and four steals.

Tyson Degenhart scored 22 points as Boise State beat San Jose State 79-52.

Degenhart had six rebounds for the Broncos (17-7, 9-4 Mountain West Conference). Alvaro Cardenas added 16 points while going 5 of 9 from the floor, including 2 for 5 from 3-point range, and 4 for 4 from the line while they also had six rebounds and nine assists. Emmanuel Ugbo had 12 points and went 5 of 8 from the field.

Latrell Davis finished with 14 points for the Spartans (12-13, 5-8). Josh Uduje added eight points for San Jose State. Robert Vaihola had six points and seven rebounds.

Erik Reynolds II's 25 points helped Saint Joseph's (PA) defeat Saint Louis 76-63.

Reynolds shot 10 for 15, including 5 for 9 from beyond the arc for the Hawks (14-9, 6-5 Atlantic 10 Conference). Xzayvier Brown scored 20 points while going 7 of 14 from the floor, including 3 for 7 from 3-point range, and 3 for 3 from the line and added nine rebounds and five assists. Rasheer Fleming had 11 points and went 4 of 13 from the field (1 for 3 from 3-point range).

Kobe Johnson led the Billikens (14-10, 7-4) in scoring, finishing with 21 points and two steals. Kalu Anya added 11 points for Saint Louis. Robbie Avila had nine points and two steals.

Kvaratskhelia scores first goal

Unbeaten PSG routs Monaco to go 13 points clear

PARIS, Feb 8, (AP): New signing Khvicha Kvaratskhelia scored his first goal for Paris Saint-Germain when the unbeaten Ligue 1 leader routed third-placed Monaco 4-1 to go 13 points clear.

The Georgia winger joined from Napoli for a reported 70 million euros (\$72 million) and with a big reputation for skill and clinical finishing. He showed a bit of both in the 54th minute, controlling a quick pass with his right foot, cutting cleverly inside Christian Mawissa and scooping the ball off balance over goalkeeper Radoslaw Majecki.

That made it 2-1 and, three minutes later, Ousmane Dembélé added the third goal after combining well with Désiré Doué. He tapped in from close range in the last minute following a counterattack to extend his league-leading tally to 16 goals.

PSG led in the sixth minute when Vitinha curled a free kick into the bottom right corner. But he was helped by a major positional error from Majecki, who left a huge gap.

PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma was easily beaten at the near post when captain Denis Zakaria ran onto a smart pass from Soungoutou Magassa.

For all its attacking flair — especially the technically gifted Maghnes Aklouché — Monaco's weaknesses were poor composure and erratic defending, and it will drop



PSG's Nuno Mendes, left, challenges Monaco's Soungoutou Magassa during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Monaco at Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. (AP)

to fifth if Lille and Nice win this weekend.

Marseille will stay second regardless but must win at Angers on Sunday to remain 10 points behind PSG.

Imposing striker Ludovic Ajorque and midfielder Pierre Lees-Melou scored as Brest won at Nantes 2-0 to climb into seventh spot.

Nantes' three losses in its last 11

games have all been against Brest — with the other in the French Cup.

Brest hosts PSG on Tuesday in the first leg of their Champions League playoff match.

Victory for Yazeed Al Rajhi and Timo Gottschalk

Toyota dominates Dakar Rally with double one-two victories



Toyota drivers celebrate on the vehicle podium at the end of the Dakar Rally.

RIYADH, Feb 8: The 2025 Dakar Rally witnessed an outstanding victory for Toyota, with Saudi Arabia's Yazeed Al Rajhi and co-driver Timo Gottschalk clinching the win in their No. 201 Toyota GR DKR Hilux Evo. TOYOTA GAZOO Racing's Henk Lategan and Brett Cummings crossed the finish line just minutes later in their No. 211 Toyota GR DKR Hilux Evo, securing a remarkable one-two finish for Toyota.

Team Land Cruiser Toyota Auto Body (TLC) also secured their 12th consecutive Production Car (Stock) category victory at Dakar Rally. These impressive results are thanks to the performance of Akira Miura and co-driver Jean-Michel Polato, who claimed first place in their No. 500 Land Cruiser 300 GR Sport, with Ronald Basso and co-driver Jean-Pierre Garcin taking second in the No. 501 Land

Cruiser 300 GR Sport. The victory also marks the Land Cruiser 300's final participation year in the Dakar Rally, in the wake of vehicle regulation changes.

Akio Toyoda, TGR Chairman, also known as Morizo, commented: "Happy New Year to everyone who has finally reached the finish line of the Dakar Rally. Thank you very much for your hard work on the 7500km long, 15-day drive. To all those who challenged the Dakar Rally with hydrogen-engine buggies: Last year you completed the rally by running 90% of the distance. This year you completed 100% of the roads and finished the Dakar in the truest sense of the word. I believe that you were able to show the evolution of the hydrogen engine to the world again this year. Let's create a future together where everyone can be excited by the sound of engines. Thank you so

much for another year of crazy challenges!"

The Dakar Rally, held in Saudi Arabia for the sixth consecutive year, began in the southwestern town of Bisha. The course was designed to wind through varying terrains such as the dunes of the Empty Quarter, craggy mountains, and wide plains, culminating at the goal in Shubaytah. For Saudi Arabia's Al Rajhi, it was a dream come true to win the Dakar Rally on home soil.

Lategan and Cummings also fought bravely for the top spot throughout the rally, holding onto the lead for eight straight stages, before briefly relinquishing it to Al Rajhi for one stage.

The South African duo regained the lead on the next stage, but this put them at a disadvantage in terms of road position for the penultimate and deciding leg of the rally. In the end, they settled for second place, giving

Toyota a coveted one-two finish at the world's toughest rally-raid event. This was a powerful performance by the brand, underscoring the quality, durability and reliability for which the Toyota Hilux is famous.

The No. 201 and No. 211 crews competed in the latest iteration of the race-proven Toyota GR DKR Hilux Evo. While staying true to its trusted core design, which has delivered multiple victories, the 2025 version features meticulous refinements that further enhance its quality, durability, and reliability—key values of Toyota's approach. These upgrades reflect Toyota's Kaizen philosophy of continuous improvement, with each iteration building on past successes to create a vehicle capable of conquering the toughest terrains.

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including



Top and above: Toyota driver in action during the Stage 12 of the Dakar 2025 around Subaytah, Saudi Arabia.

Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nürburgring 24 hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established TGR, to consolidate all of its motorsports activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota's belief that "the roads build the people, and the people build the cars," TGR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to make "ever-better" cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, TGR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, ad-

venture, and joy of driving to everyone.

Final Standings

No. 201 Toyota GR DKR Hilux Evo (Yazeed Al Rajhi and co-driver Timo Gottschalk)

Position: 1st

No. 211 Toyota GR DKR Hilux Evo (Henk Lategan and Brett Cummings)

Position: 2nd

Production Cars Category
No. 500 Land Cruiser 300 GR Sport (Akira Miura and Mayeul Barbet)

Position: 1st

No. 501 Land Cruiser 300 GR Sport (Ronald Basso and Jean-Michel Polato)

Position: 2nd

Al-Qadsiya aims to rebound against Al-Arabi in West Asian Volleyball Clubs Championship

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

RIFFA, Bahrain, Feb 8: Al-Qadsiya is set to play its second match in the 3rd West Asian Men's Volleyball Clubs Championship, currently taking place at Isa bin Rashid Hall in Riffa, Bahrain, concluding on February 18.

Al-Qadsiya will face Qatar's Al-Arabi at 4:30 pm, followed by a match between Iraq's North Refineries and Oman's Al-Salam at 7:00 pm.

In the tournament opener, Al-Qadsiya suffered a 0-3 defeat to Qatar's Al-Rayyan, with set scores of 16-25, 16-25, and 21-25. On the same day, Al-Arabi secured a 3-1 victory over Al-Salam, and Bahrain's Al-Ahli triumphed 3-0 against North Refineries.



Al-Qadsiya player spikes the ball as Qatar's Al-Rayyan players defend.

A loss for Al-Qadsiya today would diminish its title aspirations, especially with a crucial match against host team Al-Ahli scheduled for Tuesday, followed by a final game against North Refineries on Saturday. The club also recently signed Bulgarian professional Branimir Grozdanov.

Reflecting on the match against Al-Rayyan, Al-Qadsiya's Nasser Abdul Samad acknowledged the difficulty, noting that despite leading in certain sets, the team faced strong serves and blocking from its opponent. He emphasized the importance of minimizing errors in today's game.

The championship follows a single round-robin format, with teams competing once against each other.

Kuwait Club secures Khalil's signature for Championship

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, Feb 8: Kuwait Club has secured Egyptian Zamalek handball star Shadi Khalil to bolster their squad for the 41st Gulf Clubs Championship, scheduled in Oman from February 15 to 24. Khalil joins existing professionals Frankis Marzo and Angel Hernandez from the Qatari team.

The tournament draw places Kuwait Club in Group B, alongside Qatar's Al-Arabi, Oman's Oman Club, and the UAE's Dibba Al-Hisn.

Currently, Kuwait Club is conducting a training camp in Doha, Qatar, where Khalil will integrate with the squad. Today, it faces Al-Duhail in a friendly match, followed by a game against Qatar SC on February



Shadi Khalil

12, before departing for Muscat on February 13.

Handball Director Sameh Al-Hajri commended the Doha camp's progress and the players' adherence to the coaching staff's directives. He noted the team's readiness for the Gulf Championship, with the exception of winger Saleh Al-Moussawi, who sustained an injury during the World Cup in Croatia. The medical team is actively working on Al-Moussawi's rehabilitation to ensure his availability for the championship.

Al-Hajri expressed gratitude to the Kuwait Club Board, led by President Khaled Al-Ghanim, for its unwavering support in overcoming challenges and adequately preparing the team to represent Kuwaiti handball competitively in the Gulf arena.

Man City survives Orient scare

Man United beats Leicester in dramatic FA Cup

LONDON, Feb 8, (AP): Manchester City survived a scare against third-division Leyton Orient on Saturday to advance to the fifth round of the FA Cup.

Orient threatened to pull off a famous upset when it led 1-0 at half-time against Pep Guardiola's four-time defending Premier League champion.

But City fought back after the break with goals from substitutes Abdou Diallo and Kevin De Bruyne.

"That's why this competition is unbelievable," Guardiola said.

Orient went ahead in spectacular fashion when Jamie Donley's shot from just past the halfway line hit the bar and rebounded off the back of City goalkeeper Stefan Ortega into the back of the net in the 16th minute at Brisbane Road.

It was officially credited as an own goal, but Donley took the congratulations as he celebrated wildly in front of the home fans. He was also rewarded with the player-of-the-match award.

But the goal wasn't enough to hold off City's fightback.

Rico Lewis' effort deflected of Khusanov in the 56th to level the match and De Bruyne flicked a shot past Josh Keeley in the 79th to seal victory.

It wasn't all good news for Guardiola, however, with \$61.8 million midfielder Nico Gonzalez injured and sub-

stituted after 22 minutes of his debut. Leeds, top of division two, was knocked out Millwall - losing 2-0 at home.

Harry Maguire scored a controversial injury time winner as Manchester United came from behind to beat Leicester 2-1 and move into the last 16 of the FA Cup.

United went behind to a Bobby De Cordova-Reid goal four minutes before halftime. Joshua Zirkzee equalized in the 68th minute and Maguire grabbed the late winner.



Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne, right, scores his side's second goal during the English FA Cup fourth round match between Leyton Orient and Manchester City at the Gaughan Group Stadium in London, England. (AP)

There was a heated debate over whether the England center half was in an offside position but there is no VAR in the FA Cup and the goal stood.

"This (loss) wasn't necessary," an unhappy Leicester coach Ruud van Nistelrooy told broadcaster ITV.

"This was half a meter (offside). Then extra time, stay in the game, you never know what happens. We deserved to go into extra time and maybe penalties. Decisions like these in our level are hard to swallow."

The result marked the first time in

United's history that the club has won three times at home against the same team in the same season. United beat Leicester 5-2 in the League Cup and 3-0 in the Premier League at Old Trafford.

The result was a boost for new coach Ruben Amorim and a bitter letdown for Van Nistelrooy, who was the interim manager at United before being moved on and taking charge at Leicester.

Leicester, a one-time FA Cup champion, was 1-0 up at the break. Manuel Ugarte was dispossessed near the touchline and Bilal El Khannouss' low cross was hit goal-bound by Wilfred Ndidi but deflected in off De Cordova-Reid.

The introduction of substitutes Alejandro Garnacho and Zirkzee lifted United in the second half and Zirkzee got the equalizer with the simplest of finishes after good work from the Argentine player down the left flank.

Then, just as the game looked like going into extra time, Bruno Fernandes threw a long ball into the box for Maguire to head the winner.

"(It was a) great finish to the game," Maguire said. "The second half we played a lot better. The first half was nowhere near good enough, we played at a slow tempo and we didn't really get going."

"He (Garnacho) made a big impact. He always does that when he comes off the bench, so credit to him, he's ready, he's focused."

Australia on the brink of series sweep after dominant third day

GALLE, Sri Lanka, Feb 8, (AP): Australia put on a clinical display on the third day of the second test against Sri Lanka, leaving the hosts teetering at 211-8 and holding a slender lead of just 54 runs on Saturday.

The visitors will try to wrap up the Sri Lankan innings early on the fourth morning and chase down the target in a bid to complete a 2-0 series sweep.

At 81-4, Sri Lanka seemed destined for yet another crushing innings defeat inside three days. However, Angelo Mathews dug deep, forging a 48-run stand with Dhananjaya de Silva and a further 70-run partnership with Kusal Mendis.

Mathews played a gutsy knock of 76, his first half-century of the series, offering a glimmer of hope. Sri Lanka had pinned their hopes on him to set

Australia a respectable target, but his defiance ended just before stumps when he attempted a sweep off Nathan Lyon, only to be brilliantly caught by Beau Webster at fine leg.

Australia continued to tighten the screws, picking up two more wickets before stumps. Left-arm spinner Matthew Kuhnemann was the chief tormentor, finishing with four wickets and taking his match tally to seven. He was well supported by Lyon, whose three-wicket haul saw him turn the ball square on a deteriorating surface.

"Kuhnemann been exceptional," Lyon said. "He deserves all the praise he gets, and I hope he gets a lot of it. The way he broke his thumb three weeks ago and show the courage to come out here and bowl. I know it's hurting him, but he's bowling exceptionally well."



Australia's Beau Webster plays a shot during day three of the second test cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)



Stuttgart's Angelo Stiller, left, goes for the header with Dortmund's Julian Ryerson during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and VfB Stuttgart at the Signal-Iduna Park in Dortmund, Germany. Stuttgart won 2-1. (AP)

Sports



Flag bearers Mohammed Al Duaij and Fatema Abdulateef of Kuwait lead their contingent during the opening ceremony of the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China. KUNA photo



Saudi Arabia's flag bearers lead their contingent during the opening ceremony of the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China. (AP)



A general view of performers rehearsing ahead of the opening ceremony of the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China. (AP)

Kuwait set to make mark, Asian Winter Games opens

Excitement soars in Harbin

HARBIN, China, Feb 8, (Agencies): Chinese President Xi Jinping officially opened the Ninth Asian Winter Games (Harbin 2025) in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, northeast China. The event features nearly 1,500 athletes from 34 Asian countries, including a 55-member delegation from Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti athletes are competing in five sports: ice hockey, curling, snowboarding, speed skating, and figure skating.

The opening ceremony showcased a vibrant folklore performance themed "Dream of Winter, Love among Asia."

Following the lighting of the cauldron and the parade of national flags, Vice-President of the Olympic Council of Asia, Timothy Tsun Ting Fok, delivered a speech welcoming the participants.

Ali Al-Merri, head of the Kuwaiti delegation, expressed gratitude for the support from 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.

He emphasized the Kuwait Olympic Committee's commitment to promoting sports through participation in such

continental events, highlighting the significance of the Asian Winter Games as the second-largest multi-sport event in Asia after the Asian Summer Games.

The Kuwaiti athletes are competing in five sports: ice hockey, curling, snowboarding, speed skating, and figure skating.

Over 8,000 spectators at the Harbin International Conference, Exhibition and Sports Center burst into cheers as Xi officially declared the Games open in the presence of visiting dignitaries including International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach.

A record 34 countries and regions are competing in Harbin 2025, surpassing the previous high set at the 8th Asian Winter Games in Sapporo, Japan in 2017. Over 1,200 ath-

letes are participating in ice events in Harbin and snow events in Yabuli, marking an increase from the previous record of 1,147 at the Sapporo Games.

Amid roaring cheers from the venue audience, star speed skater Ning Zhongyan and skier Liu Mengting, who made history by winning the women's big air gold at the FIS Freeski World Cup in January, bore the Chinese national flag during the athletes' parade.

The Chinese delegation is composed of 257 members, including 170 athletes. Five Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic champions, Xu Mengtao, Qi Guangpu, Gao Tingyu, Fan Kexin and Liu Shaoang headline the squad of 85 men and 85 women that cover 64 events across six disciplines.

Kuwait junior squash team departs for Championship



The Kuwaiti squash delegation.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Kuwait junior squash team departed recently for Hong Kong to participate in the 22nd Asian Championships, scheduled from February 12 to 16, 2025.

Prior to the tournament, the team will engage in a four-day training camp to prepare.

The delegation is led by Board Member Adel Al-Gharib and comprises players Abdulrahman Al-Maghrabi, Jassim Al-Gharib, Khaled Al-Fawzan, and Abdulrahman Al-Sanea, along with coaches Ahmed Sabaei and Falah Fayez.

In the group stage, Kuwait is placed in Group A, alongside teams from South Korea and Sri Lanka. The 15 participating teams are divided into four groups, competing in a round-robin format. The top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinals, which will follow a knockout format.

Before its departure, the Blue Squash team held a two-phase internal training camp. The initial phase focused on physical conditioning under fitness coach Ahmed Al-Sayed, while the subsequent phase emphasized technical training.

Johnson crowns comeback with gold

SAALBACH-HINTERGLEMM, Austria, Feb 8, (AP): Breezy Johnson crowned her comeback season to skiing after a 14-month suspension with a gold medal on Saturday, winning the downhill at the Alpine world championships.

The American finished 0.15 seconds ahead of silver medalist Mirjam Puchner of Austria. Czech skier Ester Ledecka came 0.21 behind in third to take bronze.

It's Johnson's first medal from a major event and came two months after she returned from a ban for three "whereabouts" violations of anti-doping rules.

"I was thinking about it this morning and I was like, it's a privilege to be able to play the game, to be able to be

here," Johnson said. "When you know that, going in, you have a little bit of freedom, because no matter what happens, you've got the chance to try."

Lauren Macuga, who has had a breakout World Cup season and led her teammate Johnson after two splits, came 0.38 behind in fifth, while Lindsey Vonn trailed by 1.96 seconds in 15th.

Vonn smiled after finishing and waved and blew a kiss to the spectators, then hugged Johnson in the leader seat.

The first starter, Johnson led the race from start to finish, mainly thanks to a near-perfect second half of her run, where she posted the fastest split times in three of the four sections.

Opportunity for former players to reunite and relive past memories Kuwait announces squad for Legends Championship

Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff
KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Kuwait veterans' football team resumed training today at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium's subsidiary field, preparing for the Gulf Cup Legends Championship scheduled in Kuwait from February 20 to 24.

Team director Muhammad Binyan announced that Coach Muhammad Ibrahim has selected 20 players for the tournament roster, including:

Ahmed Ajab, Obaid Al-Shammari, Badr Haji, Ahmed Jassim, Nawaf Al-Khaldi, Hussein Hakim, Jamal Mubarak, Hussein Fadel, Fahad Awad, Muhammad Jarrah, Yaqoub Al-Taher, Nahir Al-Shammari, Saleh Al-Buraiki, Walid Ali, Malik Al-Qallaf, Abdulrahman Al-Musa, Jarrah Al-Atiqi, Nawaf Al-Mutairi, Khaled Khalaf, Faraj Lahib

The delegation also includes:



Mohamed Ibrahim follows the players in training.

Wael Suleiman (President), Muhammad Binyan (Director), Adel Yousef and Ali Mahmoud (Admin-

istrators), Muhammad Ibrahim (Coach), Hani Al-Saqr (Assistant Coach), Ali Al-Shamali (Doctor), Abdulmajeed

Al-Bannai (Physiotherapist), Joseph (Masseur), Ali Mahmoud (Referee)

Hassan Musa (Media Coordinator)

The Gulf Cup Legends Championship aims to celebrate Gulf football heritage by featuring prominent former football stars from the region. The tournament was initially planned to coincide with the 26th Gulf Cup but was rescheduled to align with Kuwait's annual national festival in February.

The Vice President of the Oman Football Association, Mohsen Al-Masroori, emphasized that the Legends Championship provides an opportunity for former players to reunite and relive past memories, highlighting the tournament's positive moral message and the importance of maintaining connections between generations.

Kuwait's commitment to hosting and organizing the Gulf Cup Legends Championship underscores its dedication to honoring the contributions of veteran players and promoting the rich football heritage of the Gulf region.

South Korea claims 1st gold of Harbin 2025

China marks 100th gold in AWG history

HARBIN, Feb 8, (Xinhua): South Korea won the short track speed skating 2,000m mixed team relay to take the first gold medal of the 2025 Asian Winter Games (AWG) on Saturday, while Li Lei took China's historic 100th gold in the Games' history by triumphing in the cross-country skiing women's sprint classic final.

Anticipation was high in the Heilongjiang Ice Sports Center, as host China was among the four 2,000m mixed team relay final contenders for the Games' first gold medal. There was a winning sign for China until the last two laps when Lin Xiaojun tumbled off the ice on the curve right after taking over the lead from Liu Shaoang.

China eventually finished fourth, while South Korea clocked two minutes and 41.534 seconds to cross the finish line first.

Within two hours, Lin stepped on the men's 1,500m final track with high hopes. In a nail-biting sprint, Lin finished 0.029 seconds behind to settle for the second place, while Park Ji-won of South Korea claimed gold in

two minutes and 16.927 seconds.

It didn't take long for Lin to bounce back, as the 28-year-old broke through under pressure from South Korean skat-

ers in the men's 500m final, clocking 41.150 seconds to take the gold. South Korea's Park and Jang Sung-woo took the silver and bronze respectively.



Ning Zhongyan of China competes during the men's 1500m final match of the speed skating event at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

In other short track speed skating races, Kim Gil-li of South Korea won the women's 1,500m final, with China's Gong Li and Zang Yize taking silver and bronze respectively. Choi Min-jeong of South Korea pocketed the women's 500m gold.

China took three of four speed skating gold medals on Saturday. Ning Zhongyan, one of the Chinese delegation's flag-bearers at the opening ceremony, won the men's 1,500m race, while Chinese skaters swept the women's 1,500m podium, with Han Mei bagging the gold. China's Olympic champion Gao Tingyu took the men's 100m gold, while Lee Na-hyun of South Korea won the women's 100m race.

Several Chinese skiers put on remarkable performances on snow at the Yabuli Ski Resort.

Li Fanghui secured the host nation's first gold medal at the Harbin Games, triumphing in the women's freeski halfpipe event. The 21-year-old led the competition with a score of 95.25 points, with compatriot Zhang Kexin claiming silver with 89.25.