



**basketball**  
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Amiri Diwan photo

HH the Amir receives UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

### Amir welcomes UN Chief's Iraq envoy

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

Mohammad Al-Hassan at Al-Seif Palace on Sunday on the occasion of his visit to Kuwait. Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya attended the meeting. (KUNA)

### Amir hosts Crown Prince, Premier, First Deputy PM

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Sunday morning at Seif Palace.

His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace.

Additionally, His Highness the Amir met with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

Also on Sunday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Al-Seif Palace.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.



Crown Prince Diwan photo

HH the Crown Prince receives former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

### Crown Prince receives former UK PM

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Sunday, at Al-Seif Palace former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair and the accompanying delega-

tion on the occasion of his visit to Kuwait. The meeting was attended by Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs at the Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince, Mazen Al-Issa. (KUNA)



## Opinion

### Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

# Administrative corruption is worse than financial corruption

ACCORDING to the philosophy of management, one of the biggest barriers to progress is administrative corruption. A nation with a corrupt government cannot advance and will remain stagnant until it collapses.

At a time when the state is working on opening a new airport, which officials claim can handle 70 million passengers a year, seven international airlines have pulled out of the Kuwaiti market due to a misguided administrative decision. Meanwhile, more businesses are attempting to close their offices in Kuwait.

This raises a few important questions: How will the state attract companies to use the new airport? Are cumbersome administrative procedures driving them away? Does this hinder investment?

It is widely known that a management error is a form of corruption, and the individual responsible should be held accountable for their actions, as they violate the law and act against the interests of the nation.

In countries that respect their laws, corruption is not only seen as someone misappropriating public funds, but also as the result of wrong choices made by individuals. These poor decisions are considered deliberate sabotage of the administration, as they keep the system stuck in a vicious cycle.

In the past, decisions were made that harmed the country's interests, such as the decision to prevent expatriates over the age of 60 from renewing their residency. This had major repercussions, including the inability of many Kuwaitis to even find a tailor to sew their "dishdashas."

This is just one example of decisions cooked up in diwanis, where officials may align with influential friends or figures, while the nation pays the price. It is as if Kuwait's institutions have become farms for certain people.

It is known that in 2006, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation took an important step in developing the Kuwaiti air transport market by implementing the policy of opening the skies to increase air traffic.

This was important for stimulating passenger traffic, but a few years later, this policy was undermined by poor decisions that led companies to exit the Kuwaiti market.

In the past, Kuwait was an open market for transit, particularly for airlines from around the world, which is why many international carriers chose to operate here. The procedures were easier than what we see today, and ticket prices were more affordable.

When these same companies left Kuwait, they found many incentives in neighboring countries that made it easier for them to work. These countries have administrations that prioritize national interests rather than serving the needs of influential individuals or operating on outdated bureaucratic systems.

The most dangerous form of corruption, however, lies in decisions and procedures that do not serve the national interest. When companies, not just airlines but many others, exit the Kuwaiti market, it means more confusion for the national economy and a decline in overall performance.

How can investments be attracted to the country when investors are given no incentives or face constant obstacles in their work? From this perspective, those who undermine the administration must be held accountable, as their actions harm the country more than they help.

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## MANDATORY PREMARITAL TEST STARTS APRIL 1

# 'I do' now tied to health check

Kuwait aims for safe marriages with new rules



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Participants are seen during an exhibition for Kuwaiti retirees, who own small enterprises, on the occasion of the National Day in Mubarakia Market on Sunday. — See Page 5

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Ministry of Health in Kuwait has approved the executive regulations for Law No. 31 of 2008, which governs premarital medical examinations for individuals wishing to marry. These regulations, issued under Ministerial Resolution No. 23 of 2025, will take effect on April 1, 2025, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Key Provisions of the Executive Regulations:

■ Premarital Examination: A medical examination to detect genetic and infectious diseases, aimed at advising individuals about potential risks of transmitting diseases to the partner or future children.

■ Premarital Medical Examination Center: Centers run by the Ministry of Health where individuals undergo their premarital medical examination.

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## Behavioral cases among students surge by over 32,000 in 2023/2024

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The annual report of the Department of Social and Psychological Services for the 2023/2024 academic year revealed that the number of behavioral cases that were dealt with in various educational stages - primary, intermediate, and secondary - increased by 32,241 cases compared to the previous year.

According to the report, cases of violence among students topped the list, followed by cases of smoking, vandalism, and public quarrels. Some behaviors, such as gender identity disorder, showed lower rates.

Girls outnumbered boys in cases of verbal violence. Boys recorded higher rates of smoking, quarrels, and vandalism compared to girls.

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### NewsWatch

## 4,135 women lose citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: A decree has been issued to withdraw the Kuwaiti citizenship from 4,135 women, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The decree will be published tomorrow in the official gazette Kuwait Alyawm.

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait Ministry of Health announced Sunday that Dr. Turki Al-Otaibi was elected as president of the Middle East Regional Board at the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) on the sidelines of ISN World Congress held in India.

A ministry statement said Dr. Al-Otaibi is the first Kuwaiti ever to be elected to this position since ISN's establishment, reflecting the professional excellence of the Kuwaiti medical talent on international level. (KUNA)

## Kuwait rejects Israeli occupation's statements against Saudi

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (Agencies): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned and rejected the Israeli Prime Minister's recent statements against Saudi Arabia, expressing support for the Kingdom in safeguarding its stability and sovereignty.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the ministry also reiterated its rejection of any attempts to displace the Palestinian people.

It commended Saudi Arabia and other nations for their efforts in securing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of an independent state along the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi strongly condemned and denounced, on Sunday, the statements issued by Israeli occupation against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and their demand to establish a Palestin-

ian state within Saudi territory.

In a press statement, Al-Budaiwi stated that these dangerous and irresponsible statements confirm the approach of the Israeli occupation forces in their lack of respect for international laws and treaties, as well as the sovereignty of nations.

He reaffirmed the firm and steadfast stance of Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries in supporting the Palestinian people in obtaining their legitimate rights, and the significant and valuable efforts exerted in regional and international forums to support the Palestinian cause.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia appreciated on Sunday the condemnation, disapproval and total rejection announced by countries towards Israeli occupation Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remarks on the displacement of the Palestinian people from their land.

A press release by the Saudi Foreign Ministry, it affirmed that it values the positions emphasizing the

centrality of the Palestinian issue to Arab and Muslim countries, stressing its categorical rejection of such statements.

These statements, read the press release, aim to divert attention from the continuous crimes committed by the Israeli occupation against Palestinians in Gaza, including the ethnic cleansing they are subjected to.

It also pointed out that this extremist mentality does not understand what the Palestinian land means to the people of Palestine and their emotional, historical and legal connection to it, and reaffirmed the Palestinians' right to their land.

The occupation with its disregard for Palestinian lives, has completely destroyed Gaza Strip, killed and injured more than 160,000 people most of them children and women, without the slightest human feeling or moral responsibility.

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## Israeli forces withdraw from key Gaza corridor

## Jordanian minister praises Kuwait's digital services during visit



Left: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister receives Jordanian Interior Minister and his accompanying delegation at the Kuwait International Airport on Saturday evening. Right: Jordanian Interior Minister listens to an explanation during his visit to the General Directorate for Citizenship and Travel Documents on Sunday.



KUNA photos

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah received Jordanian Interior Minister Mazen Al-Farrayeh and his accompanying delegation at the Kuwait International Airport on Saturday evening.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Interior said the Jordanian Minister visits Kuwait to partake in the Sixth Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to be held during the period February 9-12.

It added said the Jordanian guest was also welcomed at the airport by Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait Sinan Al-Majali and a number of senior Kuwaiti security leaders.

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2 | Al-Jarallah: A treasure trove of information and experience



8 | Warba Bank receives JP Morgan's Elite Quality recognition



## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:11    Asr ..... 15:10  
 Sunrise .. 06:32    Maghrib .. 17:33  
 Zohr ..... 12:02    Isha ..... 18:51

# Local

**Expected weather for next 24 hrs:**  
**By Day:** Rather cold and clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate northerly wind to moderate northwesterly wind to variable wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h.  
**By Night:** Cold and partly

**Weather**  
 cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h.  
**Station**    **Max Exp**    **Min Rec**  
 Kuwait City    17    10  
 Kuwait Airport    17    08

Abdaly    17    06  
 Bubyana    19    08  
 Jahra    18    08  
 Failaka Island    19    12  
 Salmiyah    18    12  
 Ahmadi    18    07  
 Jal Aliyah    19    06  
 Nuwaisib    19    09

## Al-Jarallah: A treasure trove of information and experience



Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Media figure Mansour Al-Ajmi (right) interviews the Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah.



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah poses for a picture with Mansour Al-Ajmi and staff from the TV channel.



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah's interview in progress at the Arab Times and Al-Seyassah offices. Photos by Rizk Tawfiq

### Editor-in-Chief to appear in 'Idah' program on Al-Akhabar channel

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah will be a guest in 'Idah' program, which will be broadcasted on Kuwait's Al-Akhabar channel during the holy month of Ramadan.

The program, which is hosted by Mansour Al-Ajmi, is in collaboration with Khamis Al-Ajmi under the direction of Maitham Fakhreddine. It will document the careers of influential figures in various fields in Kuwait, the Gulf and the Arab world.

The program is a qualitative addition to the channel, which was launched by the State of Kuwait as an official platform that reflects the development of Kuwaiti

media and sheds light on influential individuals who left an indelible mark in their fields of work.

Media figure Mansour Al-Ajmi said "hosting Al-Jarallah -- a great media figure -- is an important moment in the program's path. One episode is not enough to narrate the rich history of this unique media figure. He is a treasure trove of information and experience."

Al-Ajmi revealed that they talked about the career of Al-Jarallah -- from the beginning of his journalistic work until today, and his role in the Arab media scene; while highlighting the importance of Kuwaiti media and its position in the Arab

arena.

They also touched on the selection of Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Culture and Media for the year 2025, and its importance in boosting Kuwait's cultural and media role at the regional and global levels.

It is worth mentioning that the program continues to provide documentary and dialogue contents, enriching viewers with valuable information about personalities that made a difference in their respective fields. It is presented within the framework of a new media vision reflecting the development of the media scene in Kuwait.

## Visa exemption between Russia, Kuwait pondered

13,900 visited Moscow in 9 months; 8 flights/week

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Head of the Moscow City Tourism Committee Yevgeny Kozlov announced that 2024 witnessed an unprecedented surge in the number of Kuwaiti tourists visiting Moscow, with approximately 13,900 tourists entering the city during the first nine months of the year. This figure is ten times higher than that of the same period in 2019.**

In a press conference held yesterday, Kozlov explained that 98 percent of these visitors came for tourism and entertainment purposes. The eight direct flights per week between Kuwait and Moscow have significantly facilitated travel. Discussions are underway for a potential visa exemption agreement between Russia and Kuwait, although

electronic visas are still available.

Kozlov indicated that tourists from Kuwait view Moscow as a fresh and exclusive destination, offering luxury experiences such as high-end shopping experience and five-star accommodations.

He highlighted the prominent role played by Kuwaiti travelers in the expansion of Moscow's tourism sector.

The Moscow Tourism Committee has announced the organization of a strategic tour as part of its efforts to strengthen partnerships within the tourism sector in the Middle East, with a particular focus on Kuwait.

Recognizing Kuwait's prestigious status as a major tourism market, the initiative aims to increase the number of visitors, enhance cooperation, and position Moscow as a leading tourist destination for travelers from the region.

Meetings were held by the committee in Kuwait City to showcase Moscow's tourism appeal, highlight cultural exchange, host exclusive events, and offer tailored travel experiences that cater to the aspirations of Kuwaiti visitors.

The most popular tourist categories among Middle Eastern visitors include group tours, fam-

ily vacations, business tourism, medical tourism, and sports tourism, with each category offering distinctive, immersive experiences.

Moscow is continuing to strengthen its position as an exceptional global destination, with a particular focus on building strategic partnerships with Kuwait. The city is preparing to offer innovative tourism packages, immersive cultural experiences, and expanded guided tours to attract more visitors from both Kuwait and abroad.

There is a new system for transferring money for Gulf tourists, which allows transfers from real banks to virtual banks and from credit cards to virtual cards. The tourism administration has been asked to test this system, which is set to launch this month. If successful, it is expected to be officially rolled out next summer.

Kozlov expressed satisfaction with the increase in the number of Kuwaiti tourists over the past two years, noting that the introduction of direct flights between Moscow and Kuwait, along with the launch of the electronic visa system, has played a key role in boosting tourist numbers.

However, he denied any confirmations so far about the potential launch of a direct flight from Kuwait to Moscow via Kuwait Airways.

## Kuwait prioritizes medical training to bolster health sector

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Kuwait's Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, has emphasized that investment in human capital is fundamental to the development and sustainability of the healthcare system.

He highlighted that the ministry's commitment goes beyond basic medical education, encompassing all healthcare professionals to ensure the system's resilience in handling emergencies and health crises. Speaking at the launch of the 9th Medical Education Conference for Trainee Doctors, organized under the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties' training programs, Dr. Al-Awadhi reaffirmed the ministry's strategic focus on continuous education.

He expressed pride in Kuwait's ability to train

national talents locally, thanks to the introduction of new specializations accredited by international institutions.

He stressed that the specialized education and training system overseen by the institute forms a cornerstone of Kuwait's healthcare infrastructure. Efforts are ongoing to expand training program capacities, allowing newly graduated doctors to join structured programs with clear objectives and evaluation criteria.

He also noted the need for medical education to go beyond keeping pace with global training curricula, incorporating psychological safety as an essential component of medical training.

Dr. Al-Awadhi announced that the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties has successfully

secured institutional and programmatic accreditation for several training programs in collaboration with international royal colleges. The Emergency Medicine Training Program has been accredited by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, with applications for Anesthesia and Urology program accreditation currently under review.

Conference chairman Dr. Maitham Hussein highlighted that the three-day event addresses key issues for trainee doctors, training program directors, and examination committee heads. The conference includes discussions on mental health and well-being during medical training, featuring experts from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and the Royal College of Dentists.

### Other Voices

## Traditions still going strong as Feb 10 marks 'Diplomats' Day'

By Vladimir Zheltov

Russian Ambassador to Kuwait

Russian diplomacy has centuries-old long standing traditions. Every year on the 10th of February Russian diplomats mark their professional day -- Diplomats' Day to commemorate the founding of the Russian Diplomatic Service back in 1549.

This commemorative date, which was established not long ago, in 2002, is closely associated with the history of Russia's first foreign affairs office -- the Ambassadorial Department (or "Posolsky Prikaz" in Russian). On February 10, 1549 the Ambassadorial Department, established by Czar Ivan IV, was first mentioned in official chronicles.

Of course, the Russian diplomatic traditions date back to more distant times.

For instance, the 'Agreement on Peace and Love' between ancient Russia and Byzantine Empire was signed in 860, and the envoys of Russian principalities were frequent guests in the states of medieval Europe.

But in 1500s, after the creation of the strong united Russian State, the necessity of a special diplomatic department to carry out foreign policy became vital. In 1549 the diplomatic service turned to be an integral part of the Russian statehood and received a special status.

The Ambassadorial Department successfully managed the Russian foreign policy throughout XVI-XVII centuries (with first permanent Russian diplomatic missions abroad opened in 1600s), when in 1718-1720 it was gradually transformed into the Collegium of Foreign Affairs by Emperor Peter the Great.

This went in line with the emergence of the Russian Empire and the establishment of Russia as a Great European

power. The constellation of talented diplomats serving within the Collegium laid down the basic principles and methods of the Russian diplomacy.

Finally, in 1802, the modern form of foreign policy management -- the Ministry of Foreign Affairs -- was established by the manifesto of Emperor Alexander I.

By 1914 Russia had a wide network of diplomatic and consular representations all over the world.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in 1917-1946 -- the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs) upheld state interests at every turning point of the Russian and world history. Our diplomacy made crucial contributions to the strengthening of the anti-Hitler coalition during World War II and the creation of the United Nations Organization, bolstered the UN authority in governing International relations, struggled for peace and disarmament.

Today the Russian diplomacy plays a significant role within the UN, BRICS, G20, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, and other global and regional forums, promotes ties of friendship and cooperation with other states.

A diplomat in our times is completely different from the one of the past centuries. Modern diplomacy has become by far diverse and dynamic. It requires a wider range of knowledge in various fields including environmental issues and climate change, arms control, fighting terrorism and many others. While its method evolves towards multi-vector net-working, the chief task remains the same -- ensuring the favorable external conditions for domestic development.

But the best fundamental traditions of the Russian diplomacy are still going strong, and among them -- high professional culture and skills including high linguistic abilities and profound knowledge of International relations, commitment to their own country and respect for the countries of posting.



Vladimir Zheltov



# 'Need to rethink policy on work attendance routine'

"THE issue of government employees adhering to official working hours -- attendance, work duration, and departure -- has long been a challenge. In August 2024, the government introduced fingerprint scanning to enforce discipline, which then evolved into eye-tracking technology," columnist and former Deputy Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.



Iqbal Al-Ahmad

"Now, a 'third fingerprint' system using facial recognition has been introduced to ensure employees are present at their workplaces during official hours.

"To make the process more convenient, mobile applications have been developed, allowing employees to confirm their attendance without having to move to designated fingerprint devices within their offices.

"So far, so good. But should such a system be applied universally to all employees, regardless of their profession? This one-size-fits-all approach fails to account for the nature of certain jobs, particularly in the medical field.

"Take surgeons, for example. A doctor in the middle of a complex operation is expected to remove their mask and scan their face just to meet the attendance requirements.

"This is not only impractical but could also compromise the safety and sterility of the surgical environment.

"Moreover, not all government entities have the necessary technological infrastructure to support seamless fingerprinting or facial recognition. Slow internet speeds can lead to multiple failed attempts, causing unnecessary disruptions.

"There are jobs where attendance tracking is necessary -- those that require employees to remain at their desks for specific hours.

"But applying the same standard to professionals who operate under different circumstances is absurd. A surgeon cannot be expected to interrupt a delicate procedure just to complete an attendance check.

"Imagine a scenario where a doctor, deep into a critical surgery, must stop, remove their protective mask, and scan their face -- potentially more than once if the system fails on the first attempt.

"It's an unnecessary complication that adds stress to an already high-pressure job. One of the biggest mistakes we make in Kuwait is drafting laws that apply indiscriminately across all sectors, without considering the unique demands of different professions.

"A rigid attendance system might work for office employees, but it makes little sense for doctors, emergency responders, or other professionals whose work is defined by urgency and precision.

"It's time to rethink this policy and introduce exemptions where necessary. Discipline is important, but practicality should not be sacrificed in the process."

**Also:**

"This budget analysis highlights a critical truth: Kuwait is heading toward an unsustainable financial future unless comprehensive economic reforms are enacted," columnist **Ahmad Yaqoub Baqer** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"The country's dependence on oil revenues, estimated at 15 billion dinars -- equal to the wage bill -- makes it vulnerable to global market fluctuations. If oil prices drop, Kuwait faces a stark choice: withdraw from its financial reserves or borrow from international markets, both of which come with long-term risks.

"The challenges are clear. Expenses will rise sharply due to a growing influx of government job seekers, with 25,000 graduates entering the workforce annually. The private sector, in its current state, cannot absorb them.

"Meanwhile, critical infrastructure projects -- including new hospitals, airport expansion, and major development projects like Mubarak Port and new housing initiatives -- demand significant funding. The looming deficit in the Social Insurance Institution, exceeding 20 billion dinars, adds further pressure, especially as early retirement costs rise.

"Additionally, geopolitical uncertainties, such as potential US demands for increased Gulf defense spending or post-war reconstruction in Gaza and Lebanon, could further strain Kuwait's finances. The bottom line: Kuwait cannot afford to rely on oil alone. Borrowing is risky, and depleting reserves jeopardizes future generations.

"The only viable path forward is bold economic reform -- restructuring employment to align with productivity, coordinating education and training with market needs, rationalizing public spending, and maximizing the economic potential of state lands.

"Expanding the private sector is not just an option, it is an urgent necessity. Without decisive action, Kuwait risks financial instability that could hinder its long-term development."



"The government, as a legislative authority, has started issuing a number of decrees-laws to address the legislative shortcomings it sees in some laws -- cancellation and addition, such as the Nationality Law, the Traffic Law that

we are about to comment on and others," Legal Advisor **Dr. Kazem Bou Abbas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The first thing that draws attention in this decree-law, which was previously rejected by the National Assembly when it was submitted as a draft law, is the exaggeration of penalties. The exaggeration of fines, imprisonment period or both is undesirable!

"It seems the number of traffic accidents has led to this trend, the 'pharaohism' of some drivers and the failure to follow road instructions or use safety measures, which resulted in serious accidents.

"It is natural for countries to review their legislative system from time to time, provided this does not disrupt the balance and justice between the interests of society and the interests of individuals, or between appropriate action and reaction, without exaggeration or deviation, or disrupting the balance of justice.

"The law left room for reconciliation in the event that the fine is paid directly or resorting to the court that deliberates on the dispute, in addition to balancing the magnitude of the violation and the specified penalty (proportionality). This is the practice in international law, the law of war and comparative law.

"It could be inferred from the amendments to the law in general that the amount of fine has been exaggerated. This is an undesirable severity, not to mention the prison sentence for some violations without manslaughter, such as running a red light without justification. We are not exaggerating in reacting to the exaggeration in terms of collecting fines and reconciliation orders, but the driver is forced to pay; instead of waiting for the court schedule that could take long!

"This is in addition to indirect violations recorded by cameras or a police officer who may abuse his authority, prompting the driver to commit a violation. This is what we are afraid of.

"In Italy, the new traffic law was issued in December 2024, and the debate about intensifying the penalties is intense, as some support it and others do not see the point of toughening the penalty. In France and Switzerland, the penalties are harsher, but the roads are clean and paved, while accidents are limited.

"The goal of proportionality in criminal and traffic laws is more evident in the court rulings on violations mentioned in the law, such as using a mobile phone by hand while driving or failure to put the seat belt. One might have done so due to certain circumstances and the judge must understand these cases. However, the law set the matter for reconciliation and direct payment, which are exaggerated amounts!

"When the legislator reviews the legislative texts, he takes all of this information into account, and the picture becomes clearer in practical application. His goal is to ensure the safety of members of society from road accidents, but without burdening the people by imposing fees or taxes in the form of fines!

"In return, the State and its institutions must work to provide safety means on dilapidated roads, which is a common complaint among the public. Everyone suffers due to flying gravel, potholes and unsafe streets. They have suffered damage to their bodies and properties, yet the State has not batted an eyelid to compensate for their injuries.



Dr. Kazem Bou Abbas

"We are facing a dilemma. On one hand, there is exaggeration in punishment in the form of fines or imprisonment, or both, and a directive to reconcile while people are driven to accept it for the sake of safety! The jurisprudential rule states, 'the loss is the gain.'

"Start by repairing the roads, then hold people accountable for their mistakes. Here, justice is achieved. The State seeks to achieve justice and this is its duty.

"The Kuwaiti Penal Code has been satisfied with establishing responsibility on the existence of awareness, which is the person's knowledge of what he is doing -- good or evil, and the presence of the will. (See this in our professor's -- Dr. Abdul Wahab Humaid -- Explanation of the Kuwaiti Penal Code - General Section - 1972).

"The amended Traffic Law added to the heavy burdens of citizens and expatriates. Fines have doubled in a way that is not commensurate to the level of income and the high cost of living for segments of society in general.

"We do not deny that the State should punish the negligence and recklessness of some drivers who endanger lives and properties. It should be strict in punishing them, as this is its right.

"One last issue remains -- treating the elderly as disabled in parking spaces and allocating parking spaces for them in accordance with Law No. 18/2016.

"Our Lord, do not hold us accountable if we forget or make a mistake."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes/ Mahmoud Attiyeh



The Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali Al-Sabah reviews the final preparations for the graduation ceremony.

## Minister inspects final drill for graduation ceremony

The Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali Al-Sabah reviewed the final preparations for the graduation ceremony of the 50th batch of students from Ali Al-Sabah Military College. He was accompanied by Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad, along with several senior military officials.

According to the General Staff, the Minister was briefed on the arrangements for the ceremony, which will take place under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The graduation is scheduled for Wednesday, February 12, 2025.

# Abide by law in donation collection, charities told

'Global efforts vital to cut cash fraud'

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Ministry of Social Affairs has referred violations related to the collection of donations to the competent authorities for investigation, emphasizing the need for strict adherence to laws governing charitable work, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

In a statement, the ministry reaffirmed that the donation collection law aims to enhance transparency and regulate the process of collecting and distributing funds to ensure they serve their intended humanitarian and charitable purposes.

It also stressed its commitment to cooperating with relevant authorities to enforce legal frameworks and regu-

lations effectively.

The ministry highlighted that compliance with legal guidelines is essential for maintaining the sustainability of charitable work and reinforcing public trust in organizations operating in this sector. It urged charitable associations to adhere strictly to all regulations and procedures to avoid legal consequences.

While praising the role of charities in supporting those in need and executing development projects through official channels, the ministry expressed its hope for continued cooperation to strengthen Kuwait's standing as a leader in humanitarian and charitable efforts.

**Call for global efforts:** Deputy Director of the Kuwait Institute for Studies, Adnan Al-Jasser, has emphasized that money laundering and terrorist financing pose significant challenges to legal and economic systems, requiring

global and local cooperation to combat these threats effectively, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Speaking at the "Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing: Concepts and Applications" workshop -- organized by the Institute in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) -- Al-Jasser highlighted the need for enhancing skills and knowledge on the latest mechanisms and legislation to address financial crimes.

He stressed that investing in human capital is crucial for achieving effective justice, strengthening the rule of law, and safeguarding the national economy from security and stability risks.

He also reaffirmed the Institute's commitment to hosting specialized training programs in partnership with leading international organizations to ensure knowledge exchange based on global best practices and standards.

## Automatic guns seized in raids for drugs in 2024

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9:** A total of 77 various types of firearms, mostly machine guns, were confiscated during the anti-drugs campaigns carried out by the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) at the Interior Ministry last year, reports Al-Anba quoting a security source from DCGD.

The source disclosed that these campaigns also led to the confiscation of tons of narcotics, millions of sedative pills and a large quantity of ammu-

nition. He explained that the department carefully dealt with some drug dealers, who have firearms in their possession, to ensure they do not use these weapons. He stated that persons, who were caught with firearms in their possession, were referred to the judiciary in two separate cases -- one for the possession of drugs for the purpose of trafficking and second for the possession of unlicensed firearms, which warrants a penalty of up to five years in prison.

It is worth mentioning that Law No. 6/2015 stipulates the penalty for possessing unlicensed weapons according to the regulation on the collection of weapons, ammunition and explosives as follows: Anyone who possesses or acquires unlicensed weapons, ammunition or explosives shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years and fined not exceeding KD10,000 or one of these two penalties once the period stated in Article Six of the law ends.



Senior Mol officers at the site.

## Mol conducts traffic and security raid in Al-Raqqa

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9:** The Ministry of Interior, under the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, conducted a wide-ranging security and traffic campaign in the Al-Raqqa area, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The joint efforts of the traffic and operations sector and the private security sector resulted in the issuance of 1,243 traffic violations; arrest of 3 individuals without proof of identity; arrest of 8 individuals violating residence and labor laws; arrest of 10 individuals wanted in connection with various cases and arrest of one individual found in an abnormal state.

## 'No violations found in Al-Mangaf fire mishap'

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9:** Kuwait Municipality has confirmed that there were no violations at the residential building where the "Mangaf Fire" incident occurred, reports Al-Jarida daily.

It affirmed that a field inspection conducted by the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department revealed the building is an investment residence comprising a ground floor, a garage, six floors, and a roof.

In response to a question from the Municipal Council member Walid Al-Dagher regarding the findings and recommendations of the investigation committee established under ministerial Resolution No. 329/2024 concerning the Mangaf Fire incident, the municipality explained that the building's owner had rectified the violations specified in the violation Report No. 08257 dated June 12, 2024, specifically concerning the door to the roof. The property is now in full compliance with License No. 693/2003.

The municipality stressed that the legal department has not initiated an investigation in this matter.

## Former MPs go to court

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9:** Former MPs Mohammad Al-Mutair and Bader Al-Dahoum are set to stand trial in the Criminal Court today, Feb 9.

Al-Mutair is charged with insulting the Kuwaiti leadership and judiciary, and Al-Dahoum is charged with insulting the judiciary during a press conference. Both former MPs have previously appeared in court and had denied the charges against them.



**Traffic citations:** Traffic campaigns carried out by the General Traffic Department last week in all governorates resulted in the issuance of 43,760 traffic citations, the seizure of 41 vehicles, and the referral of 47 juveniles to juvenile prosecution, reports Al-Seyassah.

The weekly statistics also revealed the seizure of 43 motorcycles, the detention of 28 reckless drivers, the confiscation of 65 vehicles, and arrest of 33 violators of the residency law. The department also responded to 1,420 traffic accidents, which resulted in 256 injuries.

## Customs launches service on 'Sahel'

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9:** The General Administration of Customs announced the launch of a new service for the cancellation of travel permits and authorizations through the unified government application for electronic services (Sahel), reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press release, it explained that this service allows individuals who have issued travel permits or authorizations to others to easily cancel them. The service is in line with Kuwait's strategy for digital transformation and simplifying procedures, thus improving the efficiency and accessibility of customs services without requiring visits to customs offices.

The new service aims to save time and effort for the public and is part of ongoing efforts to elevate the customs department to the forefront of digital transformation.



**Media wonders:** Following the circulation of a video showing the poor condition of a major street in Kuwait, the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport (PART) swiftly addressed the issue, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In response to public concerns, the authority confirmed that the necessary repairs had been completed, ensuring that the street no longer poses any danger to vehicles.

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MPW secures final approvals to enhance digital connectivity at new terminal

# T2 Airport ICT works get green light with KD 12.095 mln boost

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff  
KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Ministry of Public Works has confirmed the activation of the reserve amount for Information

and Communications Technology (ICT) within the second package of the T2 Airport project, which amounts to 12.095 million dinars.

This follows the publication in Al-Seyassah on January 28, re-

porting that the reserve amount for the ICT network in the new passenger terminal project had been referred to the Audit Bureau for approval.

The Central Agency for Tenders has given its approval for the acti-

vation of the reserve amount, and the works related to the ICT network are set to begin.

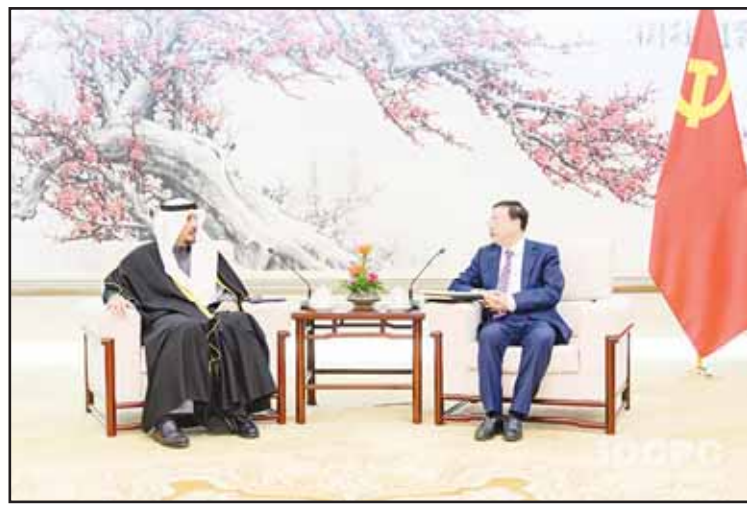
These works are part of the larger T2 Airport project, which is designed to link all relevant parties electronically once the new

passenger terminal is completed and handed over to the General Administration of Civil Aviation (GACA), which will oversee and manage the facility.

The Ministry of Public Works initially requested the activation of

6 million dinars for the ICT-related works within the contract.

Additionally, the ministry secured approval for an additional 6.018 million dinars, bringing the total allocated amount to 12.095 million dinars.



KUNA photo  
Kuwait's Ambassador to China Jassim Al-Najem with Assistant Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Jin Xin.

## China confirms keenness to enhance co-op with Kuwait

TOKYO, Feb 9, (KUNA): A Chinese official on Saturday underlined his country's keenness to promote co-operation with the State of Kuwait in various domains.

This came during a meeting between Assistant Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Xin Jin and Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Jassem Al-Najem.

The Chinese official confirmed his country's interest in working with Kuwait to enhance practical cooperation between both countries in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, and strengthen strategic partnership in order to achieve long-term stable devel-

opment.

For his part, the Kuwaiti ambassador congratulated the Chinese official on assuming his new post, stressing the depth of firm historical relations between Kuwait and China.

He underlined Kuwait's keenness on promoting cooperation with China in various fields to serve both countries' interests.

He noted that bilateral relations have greatly developed at different levels, pointing out the recent high-level visits between both nations' senior officials.

The Kuwaiti diplomat added that joint mega projects are expected to bear fruit in the future for the common interest of both friendly nations.

# Education Ministry plans overhaul of schoolbooks

MoE pushes for digital-first approach

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The assistant undersecretary for General Education Affairs, along with the Curricula Sector and the Educational Technology Department, held discussions on the executive plan for printing school books in the coming years.

The plan, which was presented by the director of the Curricula Department, aims to reduce the burden on students, enhance digital education, and improve the quality of textbooks.

The main components of the plan include:

- Developing and improving school books by using lighter paper and integrating exercise notebooks into some subjects to reduce the number of books.
- Reducing the number of pages in certain books by focusing on basic skills and removing unnecessary content.
- Enhancing digital education by uploading all school books in interactive formats to the ministry's website and providing electronic devices to both teachers and students.
- Expanding the use of smart-boards in classrooms.

- Improving the school learning environment by banning large notebooks, reducing the number of notebooks per subject, and installing book cabinets in classrooms.



Al-Subaih

The goals of the executive plan are to lighten the load for students, support digital transformation, and improve the overall quality of education.

Meanwhile, educational sources revealed that the Ministry of Education is reconsidering a project from 2008, which was initiated during the era of former minister Nouriya Al-Subaih and aimed at installing book cabinets inside classrooms.

Although the previous project was unsuccessful, the ministry hopes to avoid past mistakes by implementing a new plan. This includes reducing the number of notebooks per subject, uploading books electronically, and increasing the use of technology in classrooms.

Some educators believe the project's success will require clear implementation procedures, including daily follow-up to ensure effective use of the cabinets. There will be a need to prepare schools and provide alternative solutions for students if the project cannot be implemented efficiently.

### 3 items on hold

Council approves Jabriya proposals

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: During the meeting of the Hawally Committee of the Municipal Council headed by Nasser Al-Jadaan, two out of 11 items on its agenda were approved.

The approved items are:

- The Amiri Diwan's request for allocating an area of Hind Intermediate School for Girls in Jabriya

- The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy's request for a site to build the secondary transformation station No. 1 in Jabriya Block 10.

However, the committee disapproved of a proposal from the Kuwait Society for the Development of the Educational System to use an unused vacant plot in Salmiya as its headquarters.

The committee decided to retain three items in its agenda for further discussion. They are:

- A proposal from Nasser Al-Jadaan to construct a pedestrian bridge on Taawoun Street between Salwa and Anjafa Beach, until a response is received from the Ministry of Interior.

- Al-Jadaan's question about private schools in Salwa.

- The Environment Public Authority's request to add a commercial activity (cafe) in the Environmental Pollutants Building in Salmiya Block 1. The committee retained for future review a letter from the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), and a letter from the Ministry of Interior regarding Hawally Committee's meetings.

### BRI continues to grow

## Kuwait and China commemorate 60 years of diplomatic excellence

By Bassam Al-Qassas

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Kuwait and China celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations this year.

Both countries have witnessed remarkable development over the past decades; making them a model for strong bilateral relations based on mutual understanding and economic, commercial and strategic cooperation.

The roots of Kuwaiti-Chinese relations go back to 1965, when His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah paid a historic visit to China in his capacity as Minister of Finance, Commerce and Industry.

At the time, Kuwait was one of the first Gulf countries to open up to China. Sheikh Jaber met with Chinese President Liu Shaoqi and Premier of the State Council Zhou Enlai. He affirmed Kuwait's support for the 'One China' principle, a position that contributed to consolidating political relations between the two countries.

Six years after this visit -- on March 22, 1971, the agreement to establish diplomatic relations between Kuwait and China was officially signed, making Kuwait the first Gulf State to recognize and establish relations with the People's Republic of China. This strengthened Kuwait's pioneering role in the region and reflected its strategic vision towards diversifying its international partners.

Bilateral relations have witnessed remarkable development in the po-

litical, economic, cultural and security fields under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; particularly towards expanding strategic cooperation, as China has become one of Kuwait's most important trade and investment partners.

No one denies the pivotal role played by Kuwait in China's Belt and Road Initiative, as it is viewed as a strategic point in linking the East and the West, especially with projects such as developing Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port as well as the port and transportation infrastructure.

As Kuwaiti-Chinese relations enter the seventh decade, the future looks promising for this partnership; because Kuwait moves to strengthen its role as a link in the Belt and Road Initiative, while China benefits from Kuwait's strategic location in the Gulf region.

Global developments and economic challenges also require the two countries to strengthen cooperation in the fields of technology, green economy and renewable energy; which are expected to be the focus in the coming years.

Therefore, the relationship between Kuwait and China is a successful model of bilateral ties based on mutual respect and common interests. With the passage of 60 years of this partnership, Kuwait and China remain committed to strengthening cooperation in various fields in order to achieve sustainable development and prosperity for their people.



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KUNA photo  
The Kuwait Relief Society distributes 100 tons of food in cooperation with the Al-Ihsan Society in eastern Sudan.

### KSR distributes aid to IDP in eastern Sudan

PORT SUDAN, Feb 9, (KUNA): Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR) handed out 100 tons of food relief to the internally displaced people (IDP) in Kassala State, eastern Sudan, on Saturday, in collaboration with the Sudanese charity El-Ehsan.

The aid, including 2,000 food parcels, were distributed in a ceremony attended by Kassala Deputy-Governor Omar Othman Adam, the State's Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid Edris Ali and El-Ehsan Director Edris Hamed.

Adam expressed gratitude for the continuous support by the government and people of Kuwait, and the humanitarian role of the Kuwaiti aid organizations.

He praised the fraternity and deep-rooted relations between Sudan and the State of Kuwait.

On a similar note, Kassala Commissioner and El-Ehsan Director extolled the KSR food parcels' initiative as a timely response to the needs of the Sudanese IDP who suffer from the ordeal of the civil war.



## LOCAL

## 60 pavilions showcase diverse products in Mubarakiya

## PIFSS organizes exhibition for Kuwaiti retirees

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) on Sunday organized an exhibition for Kuwaiti retirees, who own small enterprises, on the occasion of the National Day in Mubarakiya Market.

PIFSS Director General Ahmed Hamad Al-Thunayan opened the exhibition, which will continue until Feb 13.

In his speech, Al-Thunayan stated: It is our pleasure that the institution provides such an opportunity for Kuwaiti retirees to showcase their products and engage in commercial activities under the roof of one of the most important, oldest and most vibrant markets in the country."

He disclosed that the exhibition, which includes 60 pavilions for retirees, witnessed a huge turnout of visitors from all walks of life on the first day. He affirmed this is a good indication of the success of the event due to several factors, the most important of which is the



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

PIFSS Director General with the Governor of the Capital and other officials during a tour of the exhibition.

diversity of products and activities; which contributed to attracting the public in a distinctive way.

He also cited the vital location of the exhibition, as it is taking place in one of the most important Kuwaiti markets that is a destination for Kuwaitis, expatriates and tourists; where various products

are displayed to deliver them to the largest possible number of visitors, including shoppers.

He stressed this event is a manifestation of the institution's interest in the retirees -- one of the important categories under it and in support of their enterprises that vary between the manufacture of

perfumes, clothing, luxury goods, food, handicrafts and other commercial activities. He said this is part of the social responsibility of PIFSS towards the Kuwaiti society and its competencies that deserve such opportunities.

He stated that due to the success of the event, which is the first of its kind, PIFSS will organize more activities in the future; including exhibitions and others for the benefit of Kuwaiti retirees.

He asserted this is the social responsibility of the institution in the interest of retirees in particular, and the Kuwaiti society in general.

"We extend our sincere thanks to all parties that are participating and contributing to the success of this event, especially Governor of the Capital Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Ali, Chairperson of Volunteer Work and Mubarakiya Beautification and Development Committee Sheikhha Amthah Al-Ahmad, acting Director General of Kuwait Municipality Eng Manal Al-Asfour, and the Ministry of Defense represented by Kuwaiti Army Brass Band," he concluded.



Crown Prince Diwan photo

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad bin Awad Al-Hassan.

## Crown Prince hosts UN Chief's Special Representative for Iraq

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Sunday UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Mo-

hammad Al-Hassan at Al-Seif Palace on the occasion of his visit to Kuwait.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya and Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs at the Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince, Mazen Al-Issa, attended the meeting.

## Governor lauds Diwaniya's heritage role

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Naser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received his office in the General Diwan of the governorate Thursday morning the pioneers of the Diwaniya of Dr. Saad Al-Hamlan for the First Generation in Khaitan.

According to a press release issued

by Farwaniya Governorate, present at the meeting were Dr. Saad Al-Hamlan, Walid Al-Dakhil, Khalifa Al-Asfour, and Khalaf Al-Otaibi.

At the start of the meeting, the governor warmly welcomed the esteemed guests. Dr. Al-Hamlan informed the governor that the 'First Generation Di-

waniya' is a social diwaniya that preserves national identity and promotes integration, solidarity, and the revival of heritage, with the spirit of cooperation that Kuwaitis are accustomed to through national and volunteer work.

In the same context, Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser affirmed during the meeting that the governorate will spare no effort to support the aspirations of the people of Farwaniya Governorate.

He highlighted the importance of the First Generation Diwaniya as an integral part of Kuwaiti heritage, explaining that the diwaniya serves as a gathering place and forum for the elderly, promotes social cohesion and offers an opportunity to introduce Kuwait's guests to Kuwaiti customs and traditions. It also helps in cultural exchange and strengthens bonds of love and unity among different communities.

At the end of the meeting, the guests expressed their gratitude to the Governor of Farwaniya for his warm reception, and praised his unwavering commitment to improving services for the people of the governorate, which they witnessed firsthand during the meeting.



Photo by Farwaniya Governorate

Farwaniya Governor with Dr. Saad Al-Hamlan, Walid Al-Dakhil, Khalifa Al-Asfour, and Khalaf Al-Otaibi.

## Municipal Council examines railway project's integration

Routes unchanged, TOD planned for stations

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Municipal Council, in its session scheduled for Monday, will discuss the executive body's response to the question of member Alia Al-Farsi regarding the national railway network project called, 'Kuwait State Train'.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the Kuwait Municipality's statement about the abovementioned question and acting Director General of the Municipality Manal Al-Asfour has approved the statement.

According to the Municipality, the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), represent-

ing the Ministry of Public Works, prepared the project. It then indicated that its role in the project is to incorporate the railway right-of-way into the entire State plan and study the extent of its conflict with various land uses, while confirming its coordination with PART and the Survey Department in this regard.

On Al-Farsi's question about the recommendation of the fourth master plan with the project's stakeholders to establish a public transport authority in the future to be able to manage the project after its completion and apply the principle of governance, the Municipality con-

firmed that the railway project was taken into consideration in the master plan of the State. It elaborated that the suggestion to establish an authority to manage integrated transport operations was included in the report on the fourth master plan. The recommendation also stipulates the establishment of a public transport authority that has power over all passenger services operating in the country, including taxis.

The Municipality added that the railway network project's routes are the same as those proposed by the Ministry of Public Works, while the locations of the railway stations have not been modified and no new station has been created. It pointed out that the presence of public transport stations creates a system for developing the surrounding area -- the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) system -- in the vicinity of the stations.



Al-Farsi

Continued from Page 1

## 'I do'

■ Safe Marriage: A marriage where the premarital examination results are free from any medical issues.

■ Unsafe Marriage: A marriage where the results of the medical examination indicate potential health risks.

■ Electronic Platform: A digital system for facilitating premarital medical examination procedures through approved applications like the Sahl and Kuwait Health apps.

Required Medical Examinations: Those wishing to marry must undergo tests for:

■ Infectious diseases: AIDS, Hepatitis B and C, Syphilis.

■ Hereditary blood diseases: Thalassemia, Sickle Cell Anemia.

■ The Minister of Health may add other diseases as necessary for public health.

Examination Procedures:

■ Applicants must visit a premarital medical examination center to submit necessary documents and fill out forms confirming the accuracy of their data.

■ If any applicant acknowledges genetic diseases, they will be referred to the Genetic Diseases Center.

■ Blood samples will be taken from both parties, with results typically available after five working days.

Results of the Medical Examination:

■ If the results are clear of diseases, a certificate will be issued confirming that the marriage is safe.

■ If any health issues are identified, the concerned individuals will be provided with medical advice. If they choose to proceed with the marriage despite the risks, they will sign a declaration of consent acknowledging the health risks involved. This declaration must be submitted with the marriage documents to the Ministry of Justice.

General Provisions:

■ A marriage contract cannot be completed without undergoing the premarital medical examination.

■ In the case of inaccurate test results, consent from minors will not be accepted without parental representation.

■ Kuwaiti embassies abroad will not authenticate marriage contracts unless premarital medical exams are completed.

■ The validity of the medical examination certificate is six months; a new examination is required if the individuals change.

■ The Ministry of Health will set up a higher committee to oversee and ensure proper implementation of these regulations and policies.

These regulations aim to safeguard public health by ensuring that those planning to marry are fully aware of potential genetic and infectious risks, contributing to the creation of healthy families in Kuwait.

## Jordanian minister

On Sunday, Jordanian Interior Minister Mazen Al-Farayeh emphasized the importance of collaboration and exchange of expertise with the Kuwaiti interior ministry.

He highlighted that such step is crucial for boosting efficiency and achieving digital transformation in public service department.

A ministry statement said; following a visit by Minister Al-Farayeh to the General Directorate for of Citizenship and Travel Documents earlier on Sunday, that Al-Farayeh was briefed on the process for renewing passports through the ministry's official website. He also observed the passport delivery and collection devices and the method for adding a newborn and issuing certificates through the government's e-services application, Sahel; among other services, along with a visual presentation outlining the latest developments and services provided by the department.

## Behavioral cases

Certain behaviors such as gender identity disorder and psychological problems were relatively less common in comparison to more prevalent issues.

Despite the efforts of relevant departments, the report reflects ongoing behavioral challenges that require further intervention by school administrations and social services. This could include more awareness programs and stricter procedures to reduce negative phenomena among students.

Breakdown of behavioral cases

1. Violence among male and female students:  
Verbal and physical violence topped the list with 12,782 cases, including: 5,039 cases among boys (4,746 records, 293 files); 7,743 cases among girls (7,353 records, 390 files)

Physical violence amounted to 9,588 cases: 5,982 cases among boys (5,399 records, 583 files); 3,606 cases among girls (3,365 records, 241 files)

2. Smoking

The total number of smoking cases in schools was 1,361, including: 1,266 cases among boys (1,226 records, 40 files); 95 cases among girls (62 records, 33 files)

3. Vandalism and quarrels

A total of 1,719 cases were recorded, including: 1,502 cases among boys (1,015 records, 487 files); 217 cases among girls (112 records, 105 files)

4. Other behaviors with lower rates  
Psychological problems (depression, autism, anxiety): 98 cases (82 among boys, 16 among girls)

Gender identity disorder: 11 cases (10 among boys, 1 among girls)

Disruptive behavior disorder: 5 cases (3 among boys, 2 among girls)

Total cases by gender

Boys: 17,427 cases (16,272 records, 1,155 files)  
Girls: 14,814 cases (13,907 records, 907 files)

Total cases of violence of all kinds: 14,692

Boys: 8,897 cases

Girls: 5,795 cases

Behavioral cases among students

1. Verbal and physical violence

against students

Total: 12,782 cases

Boys: 7,743 cases

Girls: 5,039 cases

2. Verbal and physical violence against teachers

Total: 1,910 cases

Boys: 1,154 cases

Girls: 756 cases

3. Destruction of public property

Total: 9,588 cases

Boys: 5,982 cases

Girls: 3,606 cases

4. Smoking

Total: 1,719 cases

Boys: 1,207 cases

Girls: 512 cases

5. Theft

Total: 297 cases

Boys: 182 cases

Girls: 115 cases

6. Alcohol and drug use

Total: 19 cases

Boys: 17 cases

Girls: 2 cases

7. Skipping classes

Total: 3,702 cases

Boys: 2,038 cases

Girls: 1,664 cases

8. Absence from school

Total: 444 cases

Boys: 377 cases

Girls: 67 cases

9. Domestic violence

Total: 305 cases

Boys: 182 cases

Girls: 123 cases

10. Psychological problems such as depression and anxiety

Total: 98 cases

Boys: 82 cases

Girls: 16 cases

11. Gender identity disorder

Total: 11 cases

Boys: 9 cases

Girls: 2 cases

12. Behavioral disorder

Total: 5 cases

Boys: 3 cases

Girls: 2 cases

Total number of behavioral cases recorded: 32,241

Boys: 18,414 cases

Girls: 13,827 cases

## Kuwait rejects

Saudi Arabia reiterated that the right of the Palestinian People will remain firmly established, and asserted that lasting peace will not be achieved except by adopting reason and accepting peaceful coexistence through the two state solution.

In latest developments, Israeli forces withdrew from a key Gaza corridor on Sunday, Israeli officials and Hamas said, part of Israel's commitments under a tenuous ceasefire deal with Hamas that is moving ahead but faces a major test over whether the sides can negotiate its planned extension.

Israel agreed as part of the truce to remove its forces from the 4-mile (6-kilometer) Netzarim corridor, a strip of land that bisects northern Gaza from the south that Israel used as a military zone during the war.

## Kuwait's 20th, 21st relief planes reach Syria

DAMASCUS, Feb 9, (KUNA): The 20th and 21st relief planes from the Kuwaiti airlift arrived at Damascus International Airport on Sunday, carrying 46 tons of food aid, including flour.



KUNA photo

The arrival of the Kuwaiti Air Force plane to Damascus International Airport, carrying food aid.

The 20th relief plane, organized by the Kuwaiti Zakat House, carried 36 tons, while the 21st relief plane, carrying 10 tons, was organized by the Kuwait Relief Society with the participation of several Kuwaiti charitable societies and in cooperation with official bodies, including the ministries of Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Defense, represented by the Kuwaiti Air Force.

The technical crew of the Kuwaiti Air Force, supervising the two planes, delivered the food aid to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, which, in turn, handed it over to the Syrian General Company for Mills. The company distributes it directly to bakeries in Syrian governorates to meet the urgent need for flour.

The current focus on food supplies, particularly flour, follows a request from the Syrian Red Crescent after it was previously announced that Syria's daily flour consumption amounts to approximately 5,000 tons across all governorates. In addition to flour, other urgent aid includes shelter supplies, medical and therapeutic equipment, and other essential items.

The total amount of Kuwaiti aid sent to Syria has now reached 581 tons as part of the country's humanitarian campaign "Kuwait by Your Side." This initiative, carried out with the participation of several Kuwaiti associations, organizations, and official bodies, is in line with high-level directives aimed at assisting the most vulnerable groups.

## Kuwaiti scientist 1st Arab woman to join elite ARA

By AbdulRahman Al-Shimmari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Dr. Badriya Al-Hulaili from the Energy and Building Research Center at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) has been elected as a member of the American-Roman Academy of Arts and Sciences (ARA).

She is the first Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab woman to receive this prestigious international recognition.

Al-Hulaili's election followed a rigorous two-month voting process by the Scientific and Academic Committee, in acknowledgment of her distinguished scientific achievements.

The Academy anticipates her contributions in exchanging insights and presenting leadership ideas that will help shape its future vision and goals.

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## INTERNATIONAL



Los Angeles Riot Police officers declare an illegal gathering after high school students got into a fist fight at a rally to stop US President Trump's mass deportations and demand immigration reform in downtown Los Angeles on Feb 7. (AP)

## California OKs \$50m to protect immigrants, defend state against Trump administration

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Feb 9, (AP): California Gov Gavin Newsom signed laws setting aside \$50 million to help the state protect its policies from challenges by the Trump administration and defend immigrants amid the president's mass-deportation plans.

One of the laws allocates \$25 million for the state Department of Justice to fight legal battles against the federal government, and another sets aside \$25 million in part for legal groups to defend immigrants facing possible deportation. During his first presidency, Trump sparred with California over climate laws, water policy, immigrant rights and more, and the state filed or joined more than 100 legal actions against the administration. The same fights are reemerging in the early days of Trump's second term.

"Californians are being threatened by an out-of-control administration that doesn't care about the Constitution and thinks there are no limits to its power," said Democratic Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, in a statement earlier this

week. "That is why we are delivering legislation that will allocate resources to defend Californians from this urgent threat."

The move comes a day after the Democratic governor returned from Washington, where he met with Trump and members of Congress to try to secure federal disaster aid for the devastating Los Angeles-area wildfires that ripped through neighborhoods in January, killing more than two dozen people.

Newsom signed a \$2.5 billion package for fire relief into law last month to help fund the state's disaster response including evacuations, sheltering survivors and removing household hazardous waste. His administration has said they expect the federal government to reimburse the state.

Republican lawmakers have criticized the funding for lawsuits, saying the focus on Trump is distracting as the Los Angeles area recovers from the fires.

"This slush fund isn't about solving any real problems - it's a political stunt

designed to distract from the urgent issues our state faces and it won't bode well for fire victims," Republican Senate Minority Leader Brian Jones said in a statement earlier this week.

Critics have also said the legislation doesn't ensure that funding wouldn't be used to defend immigrants without legal status who have been convicted of serious felonies.

After signing the funding into law, Newsom said the money wasn't intended to be used for that purpose, and he encouraged lawmakers to pass subsequent legislation if clarifying that is needed. He said in a statement that the funding will assist legal groups in "safeguarding the civil rights of California's most vulnerable residents."

Newsom announced the plan to safeguard the state's policies days after Trump's election in November. He convened the Legislature in a special session to pass the bills.

The state is used to taking the federal government to court over Trump actions.

'Govt workers struggling all across the country'

## Trump chops away at government, fallout felt in Virginia governor's race

RICHMOND, Va., Feb 9, (AP): The Trump administration's aggressive push to cut government jobs is reverberating in the early stages of this year's race for governor in Virginia.

The fast-moving effort by Republican President Donald Trump to overhaul the federal workforce could have a sweeping impact in the state, home to some 145,000 federal employees and many more government contractors. Virginia, which along with New Jersey is picking a new governor in 2025, is already regarded as something of an early indicator of voter attitudes between presidential elections and seems certain to attract closer attention as the contest takes shape.

"Government workers are struggling all across the country - and there's a large density of federal workers in Virginia," said Kevin Cooper, political director with the American Federation of Government Employees, in a statement. "These folks are dedicated civil servants who are being put out of work, and I have no doubt that they'll

be looking to the upcoming elections to see who speaks out in their defense and is willing to champion pro-worker, pro-union issues."

Whether that view is widely shared will be tested in Virginia, where a former Democratic congresswoman, Abigail Spanberger, and the Republican lieutenant governor, Winsome Earle-Sears, are the leading contenders for governor. The primaries are in June.

Earle-Sears said taxpayers do not want to pay more than is needed for their government, and that what Trump is doing should come as no surprise.

"The president was elected fully explaining what he was going to do," she said. "He didn't hide anything from anyone."

The new administration has offered financial incentives to federal workers as part of a deferred resignation program orchestrated by Trump adviser Elon Musk. It has begun layoffs around the world and, only after court intervention, rescinded a plan for a broad pause on federal grants and



Lt Gov Winsome Earle-Sears, Republican and Jamaican immigrant and the state's first female lieutenant governor goes through papers on her desk in Richmond, Va, on Jan 28. (AP)

loans. Legal challenges continue to changes that have affected community health centers and other essential ser-

vices in Virginia.

In Richmond, Democrat Don Scott, the state House of Delegates speaker,

said a new bipartisan House committee will size up the impact on the federal workforce. He said political leaders should use "every tool in our toolbox to combat this chaos and protect Virginians' livelihoods."

Earle-Sears, meanwhile, said she backed Trump's effort to take inventory of federal spending.

"The president, if I'm understanding right, what he's doing is he's assessing," she said in an interview. "He's making an audit of who's doing what, how are they doing it, where are they doing it and how are they supposed to be doing it? Is it according to the law? Can we make some savings?"

That aligns with a recent comment by Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin that voters had backed Trump's campaign promises and he was now working to fulfill them.

State Republican lawmakers widely share that sentiment.

In a heated Senate debate after Trump's temporary spending freeze, Republican Mark Obenshain railed against Trump's critics.

"Cry me a river if you want, but I am not persuaded that the world is coming to an end or the Earth is going to stop spinning on the axis upon which it is spinning," Obenshain said.

Democrats are quick to point out that Trump has never carried Virginia in his three runs for the White House. And dating to 1977, every time a new president has been elected, the following year Virginia has voted in a governor from the opposite party.

Spanberger, who left Congress to run for governor and has built up a fundraising advantage, said Trump had contempt for federal jobs and that will cause damage across the state.

"Not only have I heard from federal employees in Virginia who are worried about their livelihoods and their ability to take care of their families, but I've also heard from business leaders, contractors, and small business owners who are rightfully nervous about what these attacks mean for the stability of our Commonwealth's economy," Spanberger said in a statement.

## Europe far-right leaders applaud Trump, downplay threat of possible US tariffs

MADRID, Feb 9, (AP): Europe's far-right leaders applauded US President Donald Trump's agenda and spoke of the turning point it presented Europe at an event Saturday organized by Spain's Vox party in Madrid under the banner "Make Europe Great Again."

Those gathered included Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Italy's Deputy Premier Matteo Salvini, French National Rally party leader Marine Le Pen and others.

Salvini and Vox president Santiago Abascal downplayed Trump's threat to hike tariffs on European imports, saying that the European Union's taxes and regulations are a bigger danger to Europe's prosperity.

"The great tariff is the Green Deal and the confiscatory taxes of Brussels and socialist governments across Europe," said Abascal.

Salvini referenced the "historic opportunity" ahead of Germany's Feb. 23 election, in which the far-right Alternative for Germany party is polling in second place, behind center-right opposition leader Friedrich Merz's Union bloc.

"The engine of Europe has come to a halt in the face of the most disastrous government of the post-war period," Salvini said of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government.

The defense of Europe's borders against illegal immigration was another



Participants of the far-right Patriots for Europe summit stand on the stage at the end of the event in Madrid, Spain on Feb 8, 2025. From left: Andre Ventura, leader of Portugal populist right wing party Chega, Dutch far right wing politician Geert Wilders, French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, Spanish far-right VOX party leader Santiago Abascal and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. (AP)

topic touched on by every speaker at the two-day event, even though irregular border crossings into the European Union fell sharply in 2024, according to data collected by the bloc's border control agency Frontex.

Le Pen said that Trump's election triumph put Europe before a "real change," and said that the EU had left

the continent at the margins of ongoing technological revolutions in artificial intelligence and other realms.

She also said that it was the European leaders present at the gathering, whose Patriots for Europe group has 84 seats in the European Parliament, who had the best chance of communicating and working with Trump.

## Foreign aid dwindles

## Kosovo votes for new parliament

PRISTINA, Kosovo, Feb 9, (AP): Kosovars cast their votes Sunday in a parliamentary election considered a key test for Prime Minister Albin Kurti as talks on normalizing ties with rival Serbia remain stalled and foreign funding for one of Europe's poorest countries in question.

Kurti's left-wing Vetevendosje!, or Self-Determination Movement Party, is seen as the front-runner but is not expected to win the necessary majority to govern alone, leaving open the possibility the other two contenders join ranks if he fails to form a Cabinet.

The other challengers are the Demo-

cratic Party of Kosovo, or PDK, whose main leaders are detained at an international criminal tribunal at The Hague accused of war crimes, and the Democratic League of Kosovo, or LDK, the oldest party in the country that lost much of its support after the death in 2006 of its leader, Ibrahim Rugova.

The parties made big-ticket pledges to increase public salaries and pensions, improve education and health services, and fight poverty. However, they did not explain where the money would come from, nor how they would attract more foreign investment.

Kurti has been at odds with Western powers after his Cabinet took several steps that raised tensions with Serbia and ethnic Serbs, including the ban on the use of the Serbian currency and dinar transfers from Serbia to Kosovo's ethnic Serb minority that depends on Belgrade's social services and payments. The U.S., the European Union and the NATO-led stabilization force KFOR have urged the government in Pristina to refrain from unilateral actions, fearing the revival of inter-ethnic conflict.

This is the first time since independence in 2008 that Kosovo's parliament has completed a full four-year mandate. It is the ninth parliamentary vote in Kosovo since the end of the 1998-1999 war between Serbian government forces and ethnic Albanian separatists that pushed Serbian forces out following a 78-day NATO air campaign. Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's independence.

The vote will determine who will lead the Kosovo in negotiations with Serbia, which stalled again last year. The EU has suspended funding for some projects and set conditions for their gradual resumption, linked to Kosovo taking steps to de-escalate tensions in the north, where most of the Serb minority lives.

Kosovo is also suffering after Washington imposed a 90-day freeze on funding for different projects through the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has been key in promoting the country's growth.



A woman casts her ballot as Kosovo holds a parliamentary election considered a key test for Prime Minister Albin Kurti whose governing party achieved a landslide win four years ago, in Pristina, Kosovo on Feb 9. (AP)



US President Donald Trump and Britain's Queen Elizabeth II inspect a Guard of Honour, formed of the Coldstream Guards at Windsor Castle in Windsor, England on July 13, 2018. (AP)

## Britain navigates rough transatlantic waters as Trump roils 'special relationship'

LONDON, Feb 9, (AP): Ever since Winston Churchill coined the phrase in the wake of World War II, politicians have extolled the "special relationship" between the United States and Britain.

Under President Donald Trump's second administration, Britain will settle for a merely functional relationship with its former colony turned most important ally. As Trump threatens to slap tariffs on America's neighbors, mulls buying Greenland and suggests the US could "take over" and reconstruct Gaza, Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government is racing to bolster its diplomatic and economic defenses for a turbulent new transatlantic era.

"We're in such uncharted waters that anyone who claims to know what in the hell is going on is just lying," said Kathleen Burk, emeritus professor at University College London and an expert on US-UK relations.

British officials say Starmer hopes to

visit Washington in the coming weeks, but he has yet to receive an invitation from Trump.

In the meantime, a heavy burden rests on Britain's new ambassador to Washington, Peter Mandelson. A towering figure in Starmer's Labour Party who served in the governments of former Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, Mandelson replaces veteran diplomat Karen Pierce, who was widely respected by both Democrats and Republicans in Washington.

It's rare for a politician, rather than a career civil servant, to be given a key UK ambassadorial post. The center-left former lawmaker is not an obvious emissary to the Trump administration. Mandelson once called Trump a "danger to the world" - words he now says were "ill-judged and wrong."

But some analysts see Mandelson as a canny choice. A controversial figure who twice resigned from government over allegations of financial or ethical

impropriety, he has - like Trump - repeatedly bounced back. His mastery of political intrigue brought him the nickname "Prince of Darkness."

Jill Rutter, a senior fellow at the Institute for Government, said Mandelson is "a considerable political talent" with economic expertise from his time as the EU's trade commissioner between 2004 and 2008.

"He's also very comfortable with very rich people," Rutter said. "He's very well connected. He will give very classy parties."

In addition to diplomatic clout, Britain plans to deploy another key asset: the royal family. Trump, whose mother was born on Scotland's remote Isle of Lewis, owns two Scottish golf courses and is a fan of the royals. He praised the late Queen Elizabeth II, who hosted him at Buckingham Palace during a 2019 state visit, and said he had a "great talk" with Prince William when the two men met in December.

## Europe

**Protesters rally in Munich:** More than 200,000 protesters rallied in Munich, Germany, on Saturday against far-right extremism ahead of the country's general election.

The far-right, anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany, or AfD, is in second place in recent polls and has prompted widespread protests across the country before voters cast their ballots on Feb 23.

The protest at Munich's Theresienwiese - where Oktoberfest takes place each year - brought a significantly larger crowd than expected, according to the German dpa news agency. The event's organizer estimated the crowd could be up to 320,000 people, many of whom carried signs against the AfD with slogans like, "Racism and hatred

is not an alternative." (AP)

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**'Ukrainian offensive in Kursk':** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed a new Ukrainian offensive in Russia's Kursk region and said that North Korean troops were fighting alongside Russian forces there.



Zelenskyy

day address, adding, "Russia has once again deployed North Korean soldiers

alongside its troops."

According to Zelenskyy, a "significant number" of enemy troops were destroyed. He gave no details but said the losses were in the hundreds.

Russia said Friday its forces had captured the mining town of Toretsk in their latest breakthrough in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region, where Ukrainian defenses are creaking. Ukrainian officials did not confirm the report.

South Korea's military said last month that it suspected North Korea was preparing to send additional troops to Russia after its soldiers suffered heavy casualties. North Korea has been supplying a vast amount of artillery and other conventional weapons to Russia, and last October it sent about 10,000-12,000 troops as well, according to U.S., South Korean and Ukrainian intelligence. (AP)



## Asia

**Rescuers search for 28 people in China landslide:** Emergency teams in China's southwestern Sichuan province raced against time Sunday to locate 28 people after a landslide triggered by rains killed one person and buried homes.

Nearly 1,000 personnel were deployed following the landslide in the village of Jinping in Junlian county on Saturday. Some officers navigated through the remains of collapsed buildings, using drones and life-detection radars to locate any signs of life with the help of locals who were familiar with the area, state broadcaster CCTV said.

Two injured people were rescued and about 360 others evacuated after 10 houses and a manufacturing building were buried, CCTV reported.

At a news conference Sunday, authorities said preliminary assessments attributed the disaster to heavy rainfall and local geological conditions. They said these factors transformed a landslide into a debris flow about 1.2 kilometers (more than half a mile) long, with a total volume exceeding 100,000 cubic meters (3.5 million cubic feet).

The rescue operation was hampered by continuous rainfall and more landslides. According to preliminary estimates, the collapsed area was about 16 football pitches in size and many houses were carried far by the debris flow. (AP)

**Heavy snow continues across Japan:** A powerful cold air mass and winter pressure patterns have brought continuous snowfall to coastal and mountainous areas along the Sea of Japan, significantly increasing snow accumulation that caused widespread disruptions to people's lives.

While the peak of heavy snowfall has passed in western Japan and the Kanto-Koshin region, intermittent snow is expected to continue in northern and eastern Japan, particularly on the Sea of Japan side.

As of noon, six-hour snowfall totaled 16 cm in Minakami Town, Gunma Prefecture and 15 cm in Hinoemata Village, Fukushima Prefecture, according to national broadcaster NHK.



A white-eye bird flies over blossoms on a street of Guiyang City, southwest China's Guizhou Province on Feb 8. (Xinhua)

Forecasts predict additional snowfall by the morning of Monday, with strong winds and high waves, particularly in northern and eastern Japan.

The Japan Meteorological Agency continues to warn residents about road hazards, blizzards, avalanches, power outages due to snow accumulation, and coastal hazards from high waves. (Xinhua)

**Lightning strikes kill one in Sydney:** One woman has died and another has

been hospitalized after they were hit by debris from a tree that was struck by lightning in southwest Sydney.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation quoted emergency services as saying on Sunday that they were called to a property in Cawdor, about 55 km southwest of central Sydney, at 5:30 p.m. local time on Saturday following reports of two people being injured by tree fragments.

A woman in her 40s was treated at the scene by ambulance paramedics but could not be revived.

A second woman, also in her 40s, was taken to a nearby hospital, where she remained in a stable but serious condition on Sunday. Australia's 9News network reported that she was left with a partially amputated finger and a broken jaw.

The Sydney Morning Herald quoted David Kynaston from the ambulance service in New South Wales (NSW) saying on Sunday that it was a "freak incident".

"Both women sat six meters from a large tree, and this has been struck by a lightning bolt, which literally caused the tree to explode, sending debris all over the place," he said. "This is a very traumatic and tragic incident for the family involved but also very confronting for emergency services."

He said that young children witnessed the incident. NSW Police said a report would be prepared for the coroner. (Xinhua)

**3 dead after boat sinks off S. Korea:** Three people were confirmed dead, and six others went missing after a fishing boat with 14 crew members on board sank off southern South Korea early Sunday, according to Yonhap news agency.

It was reported that the 139-ton trawler from the country's southeastern port city of Busan disappeared from radar in waters off Yeosu, some 380 km south of the capital Seoul, at about 1:41 a.m. local time (1641 GMT Saturday).

The Coast Guard rescued seven crew members together with other fishing boats belonging to the same fleet.

Of three South Koreans and four foreigners who were rescued, all the South Korean sailors, including a captain, were confirmed dead. (Xinhua)



In this undated photo provided on Oct 6, 2024, by the North Korean government, its leader Kim Jong Un, (center), visits an artillery exercise at an undisclosed place in North Korea. (AP)

## N. Korea's Kim slams US-South Korea-Japan partnership, vows to boost nuke program

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 9, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said an elevated US security partnership with South Korea and Japan poses a grave threat to his country and vowed to further bolster his nuclear weapons program, state media reported Sunday.

Kim has previously made similar warnings, but his latest statement implies again that the North Korean leader won't likely embrace President Donald Trump's overture to meet him and revive diplomacy anytime soon.

In a speech marking the 77th founding anniversary of the Korean People's Army on Saturday, Kim said the US-Japan-South Korea trilateral security partnership established under a US plot to form a NATO-like regional military bloc is inviting military imbalance on the Korean Peninsula and "raising a grave challenge to the security environment of our state," according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

"Referring to a series of new plans for rapidly bolstering all deterrence including nuclear forces, he clarified once again the unshakable policy of more highly developing the nuclear forces," KCNA said.

Amid stalled diplomacy with the US and South Korea in recent years, Kim has focused on enlarging and modernizing his arsenal of nuclear weapons. In response, the United States and South Korea have expanded their bilateral military exercises and trilateral training involving Japan. North Korea has lashed out at those drills, calling them rehearsals to invade the country.

Since his Jan. 20 inauguration, Trump has said he would reach out to Kim again as he boasted of his high-stakes summit with him during his first term.

During a joint news conference with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Friday, Trump said that "We will have relations with North Korea, with Kim Jong Un. I got along with him very well, as you know. I think I stopped the war."

During a Fox News interview broadcast on Jan. 23, Trump called Kim "a smart guy" and "not a religious zealot." Asked whether he will reach out to Kim again, Trump replied, "I will, yeah."

Trump met Kim three times in 2018-19 to discuss how to end North Korea's

nuclear program in what was the first-ever summit between the leaders of the US and North Korea. The high-stakes diplomacy eventually collapsed because Trump rejected Kim's offer to dismantle his main nuclear complex, a partial denuclearization step, in return for broad sanctions relief.

North Korea hasn't directly responded to Trump's recent overture, as it continues weapons testing activities and hostile rhetoric against the US. Many experts say Kim is now preoccupied with his dispatch of troops to Russia to support its war efforts against Ukraine. They say Kim would still eventually consider returning to diplomacy with Trump if he determines he would fail to maintain the current solid cooperation with Russia after the war ends.

In his Saturday speech, Kim reaffirmed that North Korea "will invariably support and encourage the just cause of the Russian army and people to defend their sovereignty, security and territorial integrity." Kim accused the US of being behind "the war machine which is stirring up the tragic situation of Ukraine."

## Ecuador votes for president, with conservative incumbent and leftist lawyer in lead

GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador, Feb 9, (AP): Ecuador's presidential election Sunday is shaping up to be a repeat of the 2023 race, when voters chose a conservative young millionaire over the leftist protégé of the country's most influential president this century.

President Daniel Noboa and Luis González are the clear front-runners among the pool of 16 candidates. All promised voters to reduce the widespread crime that pushed their lives into an unnerving new normal four years ago.

The spike in violence across the South American country is tied to the trafficking of cocaine produced in neighboring Colombia and Peru. So many voters have become crime victims that their personal and col-

lective losses will be a determining factor in deciding whether a third president in four years can turn Ecuador around or if Noboa deserves more time in office.

Voting is mandatory in Ecuador. More than 13.7 million people are eligible to vote. On Thursday, thousands of inmates who await sentencing cast ballots at voting centers set up in more than 40 prisons.

To win outright, a candidate needs 50% of the vote or at least 40% with a 10-point lead over the closest opponent. If needed, a runoff election would take place on April 13.

Noboa defeated González in the October 2023 runoff of a snap election triggered by the decision of then-President Guillermo Lasso to dissolve the National Assembly and

shorten his own mandate as a result. Noboa and González, a mentee of former President Rafael Correa, had only served short stints as lawmakers before launching their 2023 presidential campaigns.

Noboa, 37, is an heir to a fortune built on the banana trade. His political career began in 2021, when he won a seat in the National Assembly and chaired its Economic Development Commission. He opened an event organizing company when he was 18 and then joined his father's Noboa Corp., where he held management positions in the shipping, logistics and commercial areas.

Under his presidency, the homicide rate dropped from 8,237, or 46.18 per 100,000 people, in 2023 to 6,964, or 38.76 per 100,000 people, last year. Still, it remained far higher than the 1,188 homicides, or 6.85 per 100,000 people, in 2019.

González, 47, held various government jobs during the presidency of Correa, who led Ecuador from 2007 through 2017 with free-spending socially conservative policies and grew increasingly authoritarian in his last years as president. He was sentenced to prison in absentia in 2020 in a corruption scandal.

González was a lawmaker from 2021 until May 2023, when Lasso dissolved the National Assembly. She was unknown to most voters until Correa's party picked her as its presidential candidate for the snap election.

## Nujoma, Namibia's fiery freedom fighter and first president, dies

OSHAKATI, Namibia, Feb 8, (AP): Sam Nujoma, the fiery white-bearded freedom fighter who led Namibia to independence from apartheid South Africa in 1990 and served as its first president for 15 years, and became known as the father of his nation, has died. He was 95.

Nujoma's death was announced Sunday by current Namibian President Nangolo Mbumba, who said Nujoma died on Saturday night after being hospitalized in the capital, Windhoek.

"The foundations of the Republic of Namibia have been shaken," Mbumba said in a statement. "Over the past three weeks, the Founding President of the Republic of Namibia and Founding Father of the Namibian Nation was hospitalized for medical treatment and medical observation due to ill health."

"Unfortunately, this time, the most gallant son of our land could not recover from his illness," Mbumba added.

Mbumba said Nujoma "marshalled the Namibian people dur-

ing the darkest hours of our liberation struggle."

Nujoma was revered in his arid, sparsely populated homeland in southwestern Africa as a charismatic father figure who steered it to democracy and stability after long colonial rule by Germany and a bitter war of independence from South Africa.

He spent nearly 30 years in exile as the leader of its independence movement before returning for Parliamentary elections in late 1989, the first democratic vote in the country. He was elected president by lawmakers months later in 1990 as Namibia's independence was confirmed.

Nujoma was the last of a generation of African leaders who brought their countries out of colonial or white minority rule that included South Africa's Nelson Mandela, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere and Mozambique's Samora Machel.

Many Namibians credited Nujoma's leadership for the process of national healing and reconciliation after the deep divisions caused by the independence war and South Africa's policies of dividing the country into ethnically based regional governments, with separate education and health care for each race.



Nujoma

## Earthquake hits Caribbean Sea

MEXICO CITY, Feb 9, (AP): A magnitude-7.6 earthquake shook the Caribbean Sea south of the Cayman Islands Saturday, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Several islands and countries urged people near the coastline to move inland but authorities in most places later lifted the tsunami alerts.

The quake struck at 6:23 pm local time in the middle of the sea and had a depth of 10 kilometers, the USGS said. Its epicenter was located 130 miles (209 kilometers) south-southwest of George Town in the Cayman Islands.

The US National Tsunami Warning Center said there was no tsunami alert for the U.S. mainland but issued a tsunami advisory for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, which was later cancelled.

Hazard Management Cayman Islands urged residents near the coast to move inland and to higher ground, warning that wave heights of 0.3 to 1 meter were expected. The Cayman Islands government later issued on "all clear" on its Facebook site.

Puerto Rico Gov Jennifer González Colón said in a statement she is in contact with emergency agencies after the tsunami advisory, but did not recommend anyone leave the coast.



Colón



Soldiers unload election materials at a polling station in preparation for Sunday's general election, in Quito, Ecuador on Feb 8. (AP)

## Subcontinent

### Power outage in Sri Lanka:

Sri Lankan authorities have been working to restore power following a nationwide outage that occurred on Sunday, the state-owned electricity producer and supplier, Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), announced.

Local media, citing Energy Minister Jayakody, reported that the outage was triggered by a group of monkeys that entered the substation and caused damage. (Xinhua)

### India forest combat kills 33:

At least 31 suspected Maoist rebels and two police officials were killed on Sunday in the deadliest combat so far this year in central India, police said.

Hundreds of police and paramilitary soldiers launched an operation in the forests of the Indravati area of Chhattisgarh state. (AP)

## Brazilian president says Trump not elected to 'rule the world'

BRASILIA, Feb 9, (Xinhua): Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said that US President Donald Trump was elected to govern the United States, not "to rule the world."

In an interview with two radio stations based in the northeastern state of Bahia, Lula said, "I respect the election of President Trump who was elected by the American people to govern the United States," but "he was not elected to rule the world."

The US president has to maintain "democratic and civilized" relations with the rest of the world, Lula noted, with reference to Trump's intention to relocate Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

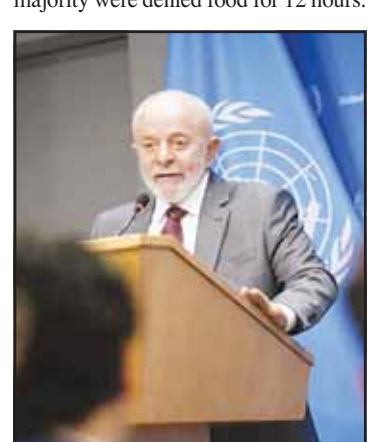
Trump said Tuesday at a press conference that the United States will take ownership of the Gaza Strip and redevelop it after Palestinians are relocated elsewhere.

The Brazilian president also criticized the United States for promoting itself as "a symbol of democracy and 'sheriff' of the world," describing Trump's statements on the occupation of certain countries and territories as "provocations."

Meanwhile, the authorities of Ceara, a northeastern state in Brazil,

announced on Friday that they are investigating potential human rights violations during the repatriation of Brazilian migrants by the United States.

They reported that among the 111 Brazilian migrants deported by the United States, several were handcuffed and shackled during the flight, and the majority were denied food for 12 hours.



Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks during a news conference on Sept 25, 2024 at UN headquarters. (AP)

KAMPALA, Uganda, Feb 9, (AP): Leaders from eastern and southern Africa on Saturday called for an immediate ceasefire in eastern Congo, where rebels are threatening to overthrow the Congolese government, but also urged Congo's president to directly negotiate with them.

Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi, who attended the summit in the Tanzanian city of Dar es Salaam by videoconference, has previously said he would never talk to the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels he sees as driven to exploit his country's vast mineral wealth.

A communique at the end of talks urged the resumption of "direct negotiations and dialogue with all state and non-state parties," including M23. The rebels seized Goma, the biggest city in eastern Congo, following fighting that left nearly 3,000 dead and hundreds of thousands of displaced, according to the U.N.

The unprecedented joint summit included leaders from the East African Community bloc, of which both Rwanda and Congo are members, and those from the Southern African Development Community, or SADC, which includes countries ranging from Congo to South Africa.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame attended the summit along with his South African counterpart, Cyril Ramaphosa, who has angered the Rwandans by de-

ploying South African troops in eastern Congo under the banner of SADC to fight M23.

Rwanda has blamed the deployment of SADC peacekeepers for worsening the conflict in North Kivu, a mineral-rich province in eastern Congo that's now controlled by M23. Kagame insists SADC troops were not peacekeepers because they were fighting alongside Congolese forces to defeat

the rebels.

The rebels are backed by some 4,000 troops from neighboring Rwanda, according to U.N. experts, while Congolese government forces are backed by regional peacekeepers, U.N. forces, allied militias and troops from neighboring Burundi. They're now focused on preventing the rebels from taking Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province.



Kenyan President and East African Community (EAC) Chairman William Ruto, (left), and Zimbabwe President and Southern African Development Community (SADC) Chairman Emmerson Mnangagwa, (centre left), attend a joint summit to address conflict in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on Feb 8. (AP)



## Tajikistan proposes joint airline venture with Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan revealed the country's proposal to establish joint aviation ventures with Kuwait, according to an official report from the Central Asia News Agency, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The announcement came during a meeting between an official Tajik delegation, led by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Zavqizoda Zavqi Amin, and Kuwaiti officials, headed by Sheikh Hamoud Al-Mubarak, Director General of Civil Aviation, and Daij Al-Ateibi, in Kuwait City.

# Business

Maintains excellence in banking operations and direct money transfers

## Warba Bank receives JP Morgan's Elite Quality recognition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: For the fifth consecutive year, Warba Bank received three Elite Quality Awards from JP Morgan, recognizing its excellence in complying with sustainable practices in direct payments.

The achievement also reflects the bank's consistency in maintaining exceptional efficiency in processing financial transactions, particularly in straight-through processing (STP) of direct money transfers in both US dollars and euros.

The bank achieved industry-leading STP rates for both individual and corporate direct payments, positioning itself among the select few banks in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to receive this prestigious recognition for both customer and interbank transfers.

The awards reaffirm Warba Bank's leadership and commitment to global banking standards, as assessed by JP Morgan, one of the world's largest financial institutions by market value, with operations in over 100 countries. Warba Bank was recognized for achieving an outstanding 99.75% STP rate in individual direct payments in US dollars and 99.68% in commercial payments in US dollars, qualifying for the Elite Award.

Additionally, Warba Bank is the first and only bank in the GCC to receive JP Morgan's Elite Award for Quality Recognition for achieving an exceptional 99.26% STP rate in individual euro payments for the third consecutive year.

### Commitment to Quality Standards

Commenting on this achievement, Layali Mustafa AlFahad, Chief Operations Officer at Warba Bank, said: "We are proud that Warba Bank has been ranked among the top-performing banks in this field, particularly by JP Mor-



Warba Bank team.

gan, a global benchmark in the financial sector.

This recognition is clear evidence of Warba Bank's commitment to providing the highest standards of financial services while highlighting the expertise of our teams and the dedication of our operations department in delivering innovative financial solutions tailored to our

customers' diverse needs."

AlFahad emphasized that Warba Bank prioritizes ensuring customer transactions are completed on time, with the highest levels of security. This success is a result of the bank's strong focus on quality, automated STP processes, and the adoption of advanced payment

technologies, ensuring seamless, efficient and secure transactions.

### Sustainable Practices

AlFahad reiterated Warba Bank's commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles, which form an integral part



Elite Quality Award from JP Morgan.

of the bank's strategy. Warba has automated its operations by implementing advanced technological systems, reducing paper usage, enhancing transparency, and boosting operational efficiency. These initiatives align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Kuwait Vision 2035, reinforcing Warba's future-focused approach to providing modern financial services that adhere to Islamic Sharia principles while contributing to a sustainable economy.

### Leading the Future of Digital Banking

Warba Bank has achieved significant milestones in a short period, establishing itself as a leader in Islamic digital banking services. With one of the largest shareholder-base among local banks, Warba Bank remains deeply connected to all segments of society.

Winning JP Morgan's Elite Award for the fifth consecutive year further reinforces Warba Bank's position as a trusted banking partner, recognized for combining innovation and social responsibility in delivering best-in-class financial services and products.

## Boursa Kuwait closes up 0.30%

Index hits 7,919.09 points

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Sunday with its general index rising by 23.70 points or 0.30%, settling at 7,919.09 points.

Trading activity saw a total of 655.2 million shares exchanged through 19,817 transactions, with a total market value of KD 195.7 million (approximately \$602.7 million).

The Main Market Index recorded the highest gain, rising 72.58 points or 0.99% to 7,415.82 points.

A total of 517.9 million shares were traded through 13,821 transactions, amounting to KD 148.9 million (about \$458.6 million). The Premier Market Index increased by 12.52 points or 0.15%, reaching 8,435.57 points, with 137.3 million shares traded across 5,996 transactions, valued at KD 46.8 million (approximately \$144.14 million).

Meanwhile, the Major 50 Index surged 136.64 points or 1.86%, closing at 7,475.72 points. Trading volume reached 456.2 million shares, processed through 9,194 transactions, totaling KD 139.6 million (about \$429.9 million).

## KOC expands green energy efforts, cuts CO2 emissions

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) revealed that the company has made significant strides in adopting green energy and reducing its environmental footprint. In collaboration with the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), KOC has installed solar panels at various project sites across southern and northern Kuwait, particularly in areas involved with the United Nations program for reclaiming lands that were contaminated during the Iraqi invasion, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting reliable KOC sources.

This initiative has successfully reduced carbon dioxide emissions by more than 16 tons and boosted the use of renewable energy for these projects.

In northern Kuwait, the renewable energy contribution has reached 36 percent, while in southern Kuwait, it stands at 15 percent.

Additionally, the source confirmed that KOC has begun conducting specialized technical studies on the condition of oil reservoirs in its fields. These studies are aimed at aligning the production capacities of these reservoirs with the facilities' capabilities to process the oil and gas produced.

In a separate development, the source highlighted that KOC is renewing previous contracts with the same contracting companies for current and future projects. This decision, made in accordance with a unanimous agreement, is expected to result in significant savings.

## Global food prices dip in Jan

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), global food commodity prices saw a decline in January, driven primarily by sharp decreases in sugar and vegetable oil prices, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks the prices of the world's most widely traded food commodities, averaged 124.9 points in January, down

from 127 points in December. Despite this monthly decrease, the index remained 6.2 percent higher than the same time last year.

Key price movements  
Sugar: Prices fell by 6.8 percent month-on-month and 18.5 percent year-on-year, driven by improved global supply prospects, particularly due to favorable weather conditions that have supported production.

## Oil revenue exceeds estimates, but budget challenges persist

## Kuwait's 2025/2026 budget approved with KD 6.3 billion deficit, reports Al-Shall

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Al-Shall Economic Report has analyzed Kuwait's general budget for the fiscal year 2025/2026 following its approval by the Council of Ministers on February 2.

Unlike previous years, where the budget was presented as a draft for discussion, this year's budget is considered final. Consequently, any discussions about its components will not lead to changes in its numbers.

The budget allocates public expenditures of 24.538 billion dinars, which is approximately 17 million dinars less than the current fiscal year's projected 24.555 billion dinars -- indicating a largely stable expenditure level over the two fiscal years.

The assumptions used to estimate revenues for the 2025/2026 budget remain similar to the previous fiscal year, with oil production projected at 2.5 million barrels per day and an oil price of \$68 per barrel, compared to 2.548 million barrels per day and \$70 per barrel in 2024/2025.

This has resulted in an estimated budget deficit of 6.307 billion dinars, compared to the 5.636 billion dinars deficit in the current fiscal year -- a 11.9 percent

increase. The break-even price for oil has slightly risen from \$89.8 to \$90.5.

The report highlights some structural characteristics of the upcoming budget:  
■ Current spending dominance: A marginal increase in spending, especially on salaries and subsidies, which account for approximately 80 percent of total expenditures.

■ Decline in public revenues: With only a small increase in non-oil revenues, leading to a growing deficit.

■ Unemployment rate: The Public Authority for Civil Information recently reported an increase in national unemployment from 6 percent in 2023 to 6.6 percent in 2024, and a decrease in the number of workers in the private sector, which contradicts Kuwait's economic targets and reform objectives.

Experts argue that the absence of a clear government vision or program coupled with declining oil production and prices signals that Kuwait is losing valuable time in its reform efforts. As the costs of reform rise and its chances of success decrease, it becomes increasingly urgent for the government to adopt

more proactive measures.

As of January 2025, oil revenues have exceeded expectations. The average price of Kuwaiti oil in January was \$80.7 per barrel, about \$10.7 higher than the assumed price in the budget of \$70. This is an increase from the average price of \$84.4 per barrel in the previous fiscal year.

Assuming consistent production and prices, oil revenues for the entire fiscal year are expected to reach 18.442 billion dinars, 2.208 billion dinars higher than the budget estimate of 16.234 billion dinars.

With non-oil revenues expected to contribute 2.684 billion dinars, total revenues are projected to reach KD 21.126 billion. However, with expenditures at 24.555 billion dinars, the 2024/2025 budget is expected to record a deficit of 3.429 billion dinars.

In conclusion, despite some improvements in oil revenue projections, the budget still faces significant structural challenges, particularly in public spending, unemployment, and the long-term sustainability of economic reform efforts.

## Bank of England cuts interest rates by 25 bps to 4.5%

## Central banks face uncertainty amid mixed data and potential US tariffs

By National Bank of Kuwait

### United States

#### Manufacturing Strengthens Amid Trade Uncertainty

The US ISM Manufacturing PMI climbed to 50.9 in January, surpassing the neutral 50 mark for the first time since 2022, driven by strong gains in new orders and production. The data was collected before President Trump announced tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China, though Canada and Mexico secured a 30-day delay in exchange for stricter border controls. Global trade uncertainty remains high, with Trump also threatening tariffs on the European Union and signalling further economic and immigration measures.

#### Job Market Softens as JOLTS Openings Decline

The US JOLTS report shows job openings fell by 556,000 to 7.6 million in December 2024, signalling a cooling in the labor market, while hiring remained steady at 5.462 million. Economists had expected 8.01 million openings. Layoffs stayed at 1.8 million, while companies showed reluctance to add workers after the post covid hiring surge. The data comes following a decision from the Federal Reserve to keep interest rates unchanged in January at 4.25%-4.5%.

#### US Services Sector Faces Slower Growth

The ISM Services PMI for the US dropped to 52.8 in January 2025 from 54.1 in December, below the expected 54.2, signalling a slower expansion in the services sector. Business activity (54.5 vs 58) and new orders (51.3 vs 54.4) grew at a weaker pace, while inventories remained in contraction (47.5 vs 49.4). However, employment (52.3 vs 51.3) and new export orders (52 vs 50.1) improved, and price pressures eased (60.4 vs 64.4). Poor weather and concerns over potential U.S. tariffs were noted, though their immediate business impact was minimal.

#### Private Sector Hiring Beats Expectations

In January 2025, the U.S. private sector added 183K jobs, surpassing December's revised 176K and beating forecasts of 148K. The hiring momentum from Q4 continued, though manufacturing lagged. Consumer-facing industries drove job growth, while business services and production were weaker. The service sector added 190K jobs, led by trade/transportation/utilities (56K) and leisure/hospitality (54K). The goods sector lost 6K jobs, with manufacturing (-13K) offsetting gains in natural resources/mining (4K) and construction (3K). Annual pay growth was 4.7% for job-stayers and 6.8% for job-changers.

#### Labor Market Faces Headwinds as NFP Growth Slows

In January, U.S. Nonfarm Payrolls (NFP) rose by 143,000, below the 169,000 market expectation, following an upwardly revised 307,000 gain in December. The Unemployment Rate fell to 4%

### Highlights

- US ISM Manufacturing PMI climbs to 50.9, services PMI drops to 52.8.
- US JOLTS job openings fall to 7.6 million.
- US non-farm employment change at 143K, vs previous of 307K.
- Eurozone inflation at 2.5% y/y, previous was 2.4%.
- Bank of England cuts interest rates by 25 bps to 4.5%.
- New Zealand unemployment rate at 5.1%, up from previous of 4.8%.

from 4.1%, while Labor Force Participation edged up to 62.6%. Wage inflation, measured by Average Hourly Earnings, increased 4.1%, surpassing the 3.8% forecast. Revisions to prior data showed November and December payrolls 100,000 higher than initially reported. The US Dollar Index responded by rising 0.15%, last seen at 107.85, with the USD performing strongest against the Swiss Franc.

The US Dollar index closed the week at 108.04.

### Europe

#### Eurozone Inflation Increases, Adding Uncertainty to the ECB's Upcoming Policies

Eurozone inflation rose to 2.5% year-over-year in January, exceeding expectations as energy costs surged, according to preliminary data from Eurostat. Economists had predicted inflation would remain at December's 2.4%. Core inflation, which excludes volatile items like food and energy, held steady at 2.7% since September, while services inflation edged down slightly to 3.9% from 4% in December. Energy prices saw a sharp annual increase of 1.8%, up from just 0.1% in December. Last week, the ECB cut interest rates by 25 basis points, bringing the deposit facility rate to 2.75%. It is expected to implement further reductions

throughout the year, with markets anticipating three more rate cuts by year-end.

The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.0327.

### United Kingdom

#### Bank of England Cuts Rates by 25bps

The Bank of England reduced its benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points to 4.5% in February 2025, marking its third rate cut since August of the previous year. The decision was unanimous among all nine Monetary Policy Committee members, despite earlier expectations of an 8-to-1 vote. Two members, including Catherine Mann, supported a larger 50bps cut. The Bank reaffirmed its gradual approach to monetary easing, citing concerns over economic growth and persistent services inflation. Additionally, it revised its growth forecast downward, acknowledging that economic activity has fallen short of expectations since November. This signals a shift toward a more dovish stance, balancing the risks between economic growth and inflation. The GBP/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.2409.

### Asia-Pacific

#### New Zealand Labor Market Weakens

New Zealand's unemployment rate increased to 5.1% in Q4 2024, up from 4.8% in the previous period, marking the highest level since September 2020 and aligning with market expectations. The number of unemployed individuals rose by 7,000 to 156,000. Meanwhile, the labor force participation rate slightly declined to 71% from 71.1%. Additionally, the underutilization rate, which includes both unemployed and underemployed individuals, edged up to 12.1% from 11.6% in the previous quarter, indicating a modest rise in labor market slack. The NZD/USD currency pair closed the week at 0.5660.

### Kuwait

#### Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30840.

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0286	1.0142	1.0442	1.0327	1.0210	1.0400	1.0375
GBP	1.2390	1.2246	1.2550	1.2409	1.2300	1.2490	1.2408
JPY	154.93	150.93	155.88	151.40	150.00	152.00	149.89
CHF	0.9114	0.8999	0.9196	0.9094	0.9040	0.9200	0.9003



Under patronage and attendance of H.E. Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei

# Zain joins in honoring winners of Kuwait CyberChamps Competition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Zain participated in honoring the winners of the Kuwait CyberChamps Competition as part of its strategic partnership with the event. The competition was organized by IDRAC Training and Consultancy at Kuwait University in collaboration with the Public Education Sector of the Ministry of Education, represented by the General Supervisory of Computing, and with the support of the National Cybersecurity Center. The contest came under the patronage and attendance of H.E. the Minister of Education, Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei.

Zain joined in honoring the top three winning teams in the competition: Team MPSG, which secured first place; Team Zero Day Hunters, which came in second; and Team Security Champs, which took third place. Each team comprised five students, and Zain Kuwait's Enterprise Risk Management Department Manager, Faisal Al-Ali, participated as a judge in the competition's evaluation panel.

The competition saw the participation of 100 students from various public and private schools across the middle and high school levels. It aimed to enhance students' technological skills and empower them to face future digital challenges.

In his speech at the closing ceremony, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, Waleed Al-Khashti, expressed his pride in Zain's support to the competition. He stated: "I am honored and proud of Zain's strategic partnership with the Kuwait CyberChamps Competition. Through this initiative, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting outstanding educational endeavors that empower the next generation with the skills and capabilities needed to overcome the challenges of our fast-paced world."

He added: "I would like to extend my gratitude to IDRAC, the Ministry of Education, and the National Cybersecurity Center for their tremendous efforts in making this initiative a success. Their dedication reflects Kuwait's strong commitment to digitally empowering youth. This partnership serves as a remarkable example of effective collaboration



Minister Al-Tabtabaei honors Waleed Al-Khashti in recognition of Zain's support.



Honoring Faisal Al-Ali for his role in the judges panel.



Al-Tabtabaei and Al-Khashti with the organizers and winning students.

between the public and private sectors in advancing the nation's developmental goals."

Al-Khashti further elaborated: "This partnership falls under our Innovation Nation initiative, which en-

compasses all our efforts in supporting creativity and fostering technical skills, with a focus on building a ca-

pable generation that can efficiently lead Kuwait's digital future."

He continued: "Today, it is cru-

cial to have educational programs that cultivate a sustainable societal culture about the risks of fraud and cybercrime, especially among students. With the rapid advancement of modern technologies such as artificial intelligence, our world has become increasingly vulnerable to cyber threats. Instilling cybersecurity awareness in our youth will better prepare them to assume future responsibilities and address challenges effectively."

He concluded: "At Zain, many of our initiatives focus on youth and education, aligning with the accelerating shift of the economy and education sectors toward digital fields. That is why developing programming and digital skills among youth is a top priority for us. We commend the organizers of this competition for delivering it in such an exceptional manner and wish all participants and winners a bright future ahead."

This strategic partnership falls under Zain's Innovation Nation initiative, which encompasses all the company's efforts dedicated to supporting innovation, technical skill development, and entrepreneurship in society. It particularly focuses on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, which have become essential for modern job markets. The initiative aims to build a highly skilled generation capable of leading Kuwait's digital transformation efficiently.

The competition aimed to foster a sustainable culture of cybersecurity awareness among middle and high school students passionate about programming, cybersecurity, and technological innovation. It also sought to develop their skills across various technical fields, integrating education, competition, and innovation to create a platform for nurturing Kuwait's future cybersecurity experts.

Through interactive activities, educational events, and training camps, students were provided with the tools and opportunities needed to enhance their digital talents. The competition also allowed them to engage with industry experts, helping them explore potential career paths in cybersecurity.



KUNA photo Anne Bouverot – French President Emmanuel Macron's special envoy to the AI Summit.

## Experts to discuss sustainable AI solutions

### 'AI Summit' kicks off in Paris with global leaders & experts

PARIS, Feb 9, (KUNA): Paris is set to host the Summit for Action on Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Monday in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's Representative, Minister of State for Communication Affairs Omar Al-Omar.

The AI summit due on February 10 and 11 at the Grand Palais in Paris is a significant opportunity for a large number of countries, including the U.S. and China, along with several partners from all continents involving Africa, to have dialogue about AI technology.

Co-chaired by France and India, the gathering will draw on the expertise of a steering committee bringing together some 30 countries and international institutions to ensure inclusive and diverse contributions.

Organizers said in a press release that AI is more than a mere industrial and technological revolution, given that it could create a deep transformation in societies through numerous domains, including knowledge, labor, information, culture and language.

They added that this revolution knows no limits so AI is a scientific, economic, cultural, political and civil cause that requires intensive international dialogue to be attended by governments, scholars, companies, creative professionals and civil society in a bid to ensure a more cooperative future.

Accordingly, France will play host to the Summit for Action on Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Monday to promote open and comprehensive progress in the AI field, focusing on sovereignty and strategic independence in conclusive technologies of societies and economies.

On 10 and 11 February 2025, Paris will become the artificial intelligence (AI) capital of the world on the occasion of the AI Action Summit. This event will bring together heads of State and Government, international organizations and companies of all sizes, representatives from academia, researchers, non-governmental organizations, artists and other members of civil society from across the globe.

The AI Action Summit mainly aims to collectively establish scientific foundations, solutions and standards for more sustainable AI working for collective progress and in the public interest.

#### Also:

**PARIS:** The Summit for Action on Artificial Intelligence (AI) due in Paris on February 10 and 11 mainly aims to promote collective solutions to make the best use of AI and cut risks, primarily ones pertinent to power concentration and unequal access, said the French presidential envoy to the summit.

In an exclusive interview to KUNA, Anne Bouverot, French President Emmanuel Macron's special envoy to the AI Summit, said AI provides great potential to shift numerous societal domains, including knowledge, labor, information, culture and language.

She added that it could also create new opportunities for useful innovations, solve complicated problems such as global warming, improve people's daily life by means of making many services more accessible and efficient.

Bouverot underlined that it is essential to capitalize on AI to serve the public interest and ensure social access to it in a fair way, pointing out President Macron's insistence on allowing everyone across the world to make use of this technology.

On the Paris-hosted AI summit, she said that it would bring together heads of State and Government, international organizations and companies as well as civil society from across the globe.

She elaborated that the gathering would contribute to greatly enabling the largest possible number of people to gain access to AI, closing the digital divide, and stimulating and spurring AI to serve humanity and public interests.

The French presidential envoy added that it is also intended to give easy access to resources, data and training, given that this collective framework aims at promoting joint solutions to make the best use of AI and cut relevant risks down to size.

# Trump's push for lower oil prices sparks concern in Gulf economies

Kuwait faces growing oil revenue deficits

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The former US President Joe Biden administration's focus on alternative energy and reducing reliance on fossil fuels over its eight-year tenure led to a decline in oil exploration investments, limiting many countries' ability to increase production.**

However, with Donald Trump re-entering the White House, his statements on oil prices starkly contrast those of his predecessor.

Trump has called for lower oil prices, which would require oil-producing nations to ramp up supply -- a challenge after years of underinvestment in exploration, with few exceptions like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Trump's comments about pressuring OPEC+ to reduce oil prices and imposing taxes on production have raised concerns about the economic impact on Gulf countries.

Experts warn that such policies could disrupt national budgets and emphasize the need for the region to hedge against unexpected crises, given the potential negative effects on their financial stability.

Oil refining and marketing expert Abdul Hamid Al-Awadhi stressed that Trump's statements on oil prices and taxation could significantly impact the global economy.

The US remains a dominant force in the energy sector, producing about 13 million barrels per day and operating 132 refineries. Even a minor increase in gasoline prices sparks public discontent in the US, highlighting the sensitivity of oil-related policies.

Al-Awadhi noted that Trump's push for in-

creased US oil production -- both on land and offshore -- is feasible, as he seeks to restore America's dominance in oil and technology. He warned against underestimating Trump's stance, given that oil drives 60 percent of the global economy.

Al-Awadhi linked Trump's statements to his strategic outreach to Saudi Arabia. While the Kingdom exports 11 million barrels daily, it has a production capacity of 13 million barrels.

Trump may be leveraging lower oil prices to secure expanded Saudi investments in the US.

He also referenced Saudi Arabia's 1973 oil embargo, which had a profound impact on global trade, causing oil prices to surge from \$3 to \$15 per barrel. Since then, the US has sought to mitigate future supply disruptions through strategic energy policies.

Discussing the economic implications for Gulf states, Al-Awadhi pointed out that the region holds over 44 percent of the world's proven oil and gas reserves.

He questioned whether Trump's focus on Gulf oil is a return to historical policies of leveraging oil dollars or an extension of long-standing economic strategies dating back to oil discoveries in the Arabian Peninsula.

He emphasized that Gulf nations must learn from past experiences and adopt precautionary measures, including Unified Gulf oil policies for production, refining, and transportation, integrated economic policies for trade and investment, expansion of oil and gas projects through regional and global partnerships and development of international refineries to diversify revenue streams.

Former Chevron consultant Dr. Ali Al-Hababi argued that Trump's demand for lower oil prices would necessitate significantly increased oil output.

However, OPEC is unlikely to accommodate such requests, as it struggles to enforce production limits among member states. Moreover, oil extraction costs have risen in recent years, mak-

ing it difficult for OPEC+ countries to accept price reductions without harming their national budgets.

Oil expert Kamel Al-Harami warned that Trump's insistence on lowering oil prices could backfire, ultimately harming the American economy. The US produces about 13.5 million barrels per day, and lower prices could reduce domestic revenues while placing financial strain on American citizens.

Al-Harami suggested that a more effective approach to lowering oil prices would be diplomatic, such as resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict. If successful, this could drive prices below \$70 per barrel. He also stressed the importance of diversifying Gulf economies to reduce dependence on oil price fluctuations.

Professor of Economics and Oil Expert Dr. Abdullah Al-Enezi expressed concern over Kuwait's continued reliance on oil revenue, despite its vulnerability to political and market shifts. He highlighted the country's financial deficits:

- 2023-2024: Oil revenues of 21.528 billion dinars, deficit of 1.6 billion dinars.
- 2024-2025: Oil revenues dropped to 16.234 billion dinars, deficit widened to 5.6 billion dinars.
- 2025-2026 (Projected): Oil revenues estimated at 15.3 billion dinars, deficit expected to reach 6.3 billion dinars.

Dr. Al-Enezi urged Kuwait to prepare for future economic challenges by diversifying revenue sources and reducing its overreliance on oil. He emphasized that financial stability depends on broadening income streams, particularly in light of unpredictable global energy policies, such as Trump's push for lower oil prices or potential restrictions on oil exports.

As the world watches Trump's evolving energy policies, Gulf nations must take proactive steps to shield their economies from market volatility, ensuring long-term financial security in an uncertain global landscape.

## AEO pushes for stronger legal policies in energy sector

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9, (KUNA):** Secretary-General of the Arab Energy Organization (AEO), formerly known as OAEPEC, Jamal Al-Loughani emphasized on Sunday that specialized legal professionals in the oil and gas sector were fundamental to the industry's future.

He told KUNA following the inauguration of a specialized training course on the legal and historical frameworks of the global petroleum system and industry developments, Al-Loughani highlighted the significant role legal experts play in drafting contracts, managing legal disputes, and navigating environmental and regulatory legislation, as well as international environmental framework agreements.

He stressed the importance of developing legal expertise to address future legislative and legal challenges facing the oil and gas industry, particularly in light of the rapid developments on both regional and global levels.

He pointed out that oil and gas were not just energy sources but also essential drivers of national economies and key elements in international relations and geopolitics.



KUNA photo Secretary General of the Arab Energy Organization (AEO), Jamal Al-Loughani.

With advancements in technology and growing sustainability challenges, understanding the legal and regulatory frameworks governing the sector has become crucial to balancing economic benefits with environmental protection.

He added that the AEO aims to develop policies

that support diversified investments across all energy sectors, striving for an optimal clean energy mix and sustainable development, and that AEO seeks to enhance innovation and strengthen Arab cooperation to tackle the challenges posed by the global energy transition.

The three-day training course provides participants with an in-depth understanding of the legal framework governing the oil and gas industry, its challenges, and the analytical and practical skills needed to handle legal issues within the sector.

Al-Loughani further emphasized that the energy sector was facing unprecedented challenges, ranging from shifts in global markets to evolving environmental regulations and the transition toward a green economy, and preparing specialized legal professionals was essential to navigating these changes.

This course is not merely an educational opportunity but a gateway to forecasting the future and contributing to the formulation of legal policies that will shape the Arab and international energy sector, he added.



# What's On

'The Battle at Lake Changjin' screened for Chinese New Year celebration

## Chinese Association in Kuwait hosts Chinese Movies Month

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Chinese Association in Kuwait organized Chinese Movies Month by screening "The Battle at Lake Changjin". This movie was presented by Chinese Association in Kuwait on the occasion of Chinese New Year with cooperation of Wednesday Studio and Cineclub under the Umbrella of National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL).

In the Welcome Speech, President of Chinese Association in Kuwait Ms. Wang Wei welcomed the esteemed guest on this occasion. Counsellor Liu Xiang from Chinese Embassy in Kuwait also participated in the event. In his speech, he mentioned that Kuwait and China are cooperating not only in the business sector but in the cultural and social prospective as well. Over the five decades since the

establishment of diplomatic relations, bilateral relationship has maintained sound and stable growth.

The movie shows the journey of cultural exploration and film enjoyment, showcasing the wonders of the Chinese hinterland. Children showcased the Lion Dance.

The holding of the "China Film Culture Month" represents the harmonious integration of art and culture, bringing audiences from different backgrounds of Chinese together to appreciate the rich connotation of Chinese films. Through the lens of these films, audience will be transported thousands of miles away to China, immersed in compelling narratives, and resonate with audiences from all over the world.



Photos from the screening.

## Qur'an Hifz, essay, calligraphy, and quiz competitions held across Kuwait

## IMA-Ladies Wing completes month-long Qur'an campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Indian Muslim Association-Ladies Wing an affiliate unit of the Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait, successfully completed a month-long Qur'an campaign from 26th Dec, 2024 to 24th Jan, 2025 under its central theme "The Character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the Qur'an".

Inspired by the profound Hadith narrated by Ummul Momeeneen Ayesha (RA), where she described the character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a living embodiment of the Qur'an.

IMA-Ladies Wing, throughout the Campaign, sought to inspire individuals and communities to align their lives with Quranic morals and values, fostering a society rooted in the noble characteristics of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which are profoundly outlined in the Holy Qur'an.

The Primary objective of this Campaign was to revive the Spiritual connection of the Muslim Ummah with the teachings of Qur'an. It emphasized not only the recitation of the Qur'an but also the importance of understanding its meaning and applying its wisdom in daily life. Special focus was placed on learning the Qur'an with Tajweed, ensuring both proper pronunciation and deeper understanding.

Throughout the Campaign, Members of Ladies Wing organized close neighborhood gatherings and conducted Door-to-Door visits in their respective areas, sharing the essence of the Quranic teachings. This initiative was a heartfelt endeavor to

rekindle the love for the Qur'an, encouraging individuals to embrace its teachings as a way of life and a source of light in their daily conduct.

Booklets, Pamphlets and stickers of Quranic reminders were distributed during the Campaign. Simultaneously, Video clips of Children were released on social media throughout the month under the theme: "The Man desired by the Qur'an".

The Campaign was not only designed for the Public but it also aimed to enhance the ethical values of IMA members, encouraging them to fulfill their responsibilities towards community development with even greater dedication. To strengthen this aspect, the IMA-Ladies Wing invited a renowned scholar from India, Dr. Mubashera Firdos Khan (Alima & Ph.D. in Child Psychology) to revive the teachings of Qur'an and Hadith.

She delivered an insightful lectures on parenting, the role of Women in Islam and the importance of community service, reminding attendees of their responsibilities in nurturing the Ummah.

"A Teachers Meet" was also organized with the Teachers of Qur'an Tafseer, Tajweed, Seerah and Hadith from different organizations in Kuwait such as IFFC, IEC, ICK and others. Dr. Mubashera Firdos Khan addressed the teachers and reminded them about their responsibilities towards the community. Nearly 25-30 teachers attended the session.

Various competitions were held during the Campaign such as Qur'an

Hifz Competition, Essay writing Competition, Calligraphy Competition, Quiz Competitions and Exhibition on Models, Chart and Qur'an Journaling etc. followed by a prize distribution ceremony for the winners & runners in each competition at Masjid Al Kabear in the Concluding Program.

Quran Hifz Competition was organized both for Women and Girls of age group 11 Yrs to 23 Yrs. The Competition was held in 3 different areas of Kuwait Jeeb Al-Shuyoukh, Salamiya and Mangaf. Nearly 34 women and 32 girls were participated in the competition. The winners were felicitated with Trophies and Certificates.

Essay Writing Competition was organized as well in English, Roman Urdu and Urdu language on the topic "The Man desired by the Qur'an".

Calligraphy Competition was also organized for girls and Women and participants displayed beautiful Calligraphic talent and design; it was a challenging task for the Judges to select the winners.

A Quran Quiz was conducted at different locations in Kuwait. Winners of the Preliminary round participated in Final Quiz round on concluding day of the Qur'an Campaign at Masjid Al-Kabeer. Participants and audience appreciated the idea of reviving Qur'anic aspects through various competitions.

"A Quranic Exhibition" was organized on the Concluding day by "Pearls of Islam Team" a Youth Wing of girls under the patronage of IMA-Ladies Wing. Many Models, Charts

and Qur'anic Journaling posters were prepared based upon the theme of different Quranic aspects and Surah from Qur'an.

"The Concluding Program" of this Campaign was organized in Masjid Al-Kabeer on 24th Jan 2025, started with the recitation of Holy Qur'an followed by Guest speaker speeches. The Guest speakers were Mrs. Ameena Tamimi - A Kuwaiti Daiyya in foreign relationship dept - Awqaf and Mrs. Sameena Malik - an Indian business woman.

Dr. Mubashera Firdos Khan, the main speaker of the Concluding Program delivered a thought provoking speech on the topic "Qur'an-The path of Salvation for humanity".

The Program was concluded with the heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by one of the executive members, making the end of a successful event. About 180-200 Women and Children attended the event.

The Final day event was telecasted on KTV-2 as well with an appreciation for the step taken by Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait.

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

## \$2 trillion flows into clean energy

Clean energy advocates embrace 'economic angle' to drive change

WASHINGTON, Feb 9, (AP): Saving the planet is so 2024. Clean energy leaders across the globe are now tailoring their messages to emphasize the greener side of green: wealth-building. It's an idea that sells far better in the new world of nationalism and tycoon leaders.

Messaging from the U.S. renewable energy industry and the United Nations on climate change has typically focused on the urgent need to cut greenhouse gas emissions for the sake of environmental and human health. To bolster the argument, they cite record-shattering heat around the world, the frequent climate disasters costing billions of dollars and the human toll of it all.

But a sharper emphasis on profit potential has become evident as President Donald Trump stormed into office with a flurry of rollbacks to clean energy initiatives and an emphatic declaration of plans to "unleash" oil, gas and mining. In a lobbying blitz in Washington this week, solar, wind, hydropower and other clean-energy interests touted their role in a "robust American energy and manufacturing economy" and sported lapel pins that said "American energy dominance" - a favorite Trump phrase.

Meanwhile, in a major policy speech Thursday in Brazil, the U.N.'s top climate official played up the \$2 trillion flowing into clean-energy projects and recalled a friend telling him that appealing to people's "better angels" only goes so far.

That friend, according to U.N. Climate Executive Secretary Simon Stiell, added: "In the great horse race of life ... 'always back self-interest ... what's in it for me.'"

It's not that clean energy backers haven't made the case before. But a different landscape, especially in the U.S., stands to make it more potent.

"It's a very winning message for outreach to conservatives because it's really true," said former U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis, a South Carolina Republican who founded the conservative climate group RepublicEN.org. "If we play your cards right and lead the world to this, we can create a lot of wealth, create a lot of jobs here in America."

Inglis pointed to Elon Musk's empire-building on electric cars, solar panels and batteries.

"When right-of-center people hear, 'you know, you can make a profit at this' then it makes sense. Otherwise, it's like, why are people giving stuff away?" Inglis said.

Jobs especially have long been a big selling point for solar and wind energy and electric cars, but there's a push to not think of self-interest as a dirty word - and instead to harness it, United Nations officials said. When

Stiell mentioned the \$2 trillion in his speech for clean energy, he called it "unstoppable because of the colossal scale of economic opportunity it presents."

Princeton University climate scientist Michael Oppenheimer, who is also a professor of international affairs, said climate change is such a difficult problem, "if some people feel the need to cater to narrower self-interests which can be bundled into a solution to the problem, why not?"

In letters and at more than 100 congressional meetings this week, industry leaders from the Solar Energy Industries Association, Oceanic Network and other organizations appealed to keep crucial tax incentives in place so their projects can be globally competitive.

The appeal targets lawmakers who might dismiss climate change but be open to an economic rationale, said Jessie Stolark, executive director of the Carbon Capture Coalition, which spearheaded a letter.

"In the past administration, obviously, we emphasized the common interest around climate mitigation," Stolark said. "The messaging with this current administration and with the Republicans is shifting more to that energy piece, the economic piece, the jobs piece."

"I think you want to meet an audience where they are, what's important to them, what's going to drive the conversation forward."

Liz Beardsley, senior policy counsel at the U.S. Green Building Council that was part of the sweeping lobbying effort, said the economy has always been a core component of its messages, and that "doing good is also good for business."

To Lisa Sachs, director of the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, messaging that climate efforts were strictly for the planet was actually disingenuous.

"The honesty and coherence of the business and financial sectors in making the economic case for the transition is refreshing, at least, after years of doublespeak, greenwashing and confusion," Sachs said. "It's not a perfect strategy from a climate or social perspective, as the private sector cannot on its own fully decarbonize the economy ... But under this administration, it's probably our best bet for progress."

President Trump may not be reachable, but his Energy and Interior secretaries are and they have power, said Frank Maisano, a longtime Washington spokesman for energy interests from oil and gas to wind and batteries.

It's time for a change, said Joanna Depledge, a climate historian at Cambridge University in England: "Banging on about the catastrophic climate crisis is obviously doing no good at all."



Photos during the event.

A bold new chapter in hospitality: Khalaf Al Habtoor

## Grand opening of Al Habtoor Palace Budapest celebrated in ErzsébetTér

BUDAPEST, Feb 9: In a landmark moment for the global conglomerate, Al Habtoor Group has officially launched its ultra-luxury brand, Al Habtoor Palace Budapest, marking the debut of an Emirati luxury hospitality brand in Europe. This grand opening celebration, held at the hotel's prestigious location in ErzsébetTér in the heart of the Hungarian capital, brought together diplomatic dignitaries, business leaders, industry professionals, and international media to witness the unveiling of this exceptional property.

The launch of Al Habtoor Palace Budapest is a strategic milestone for Al Habtoor Group, aligning with its 55th anniversary and reinforcing its global expansion strategy. The new ultra-luxury hotel represents a harmonious fusion of Dubai's legendary hospitality standards with Budapest's rich European heritage, bringing a new level of refinement to the city's luxury hospitality landscape.

### A Vision for Luxury Beyond Borders

The Al Habtoor Hospitality story began in 1979 with the launch of the Metropolitan Hotel in Dubai, marking the birth of homegrown hospitality in the UAE. As Dubai evolved into a global hub for luxury, innovation, and bespoke experiences, so did Al Habtoor Hospitality, setting new standards in excellence and refinement. Over the decades, the Group has continued to expand, shaping Dubai's hospitality sector with landmark properties, including Al Habtoor Palace Dubai, Al Habtoor Grand Resort, and the iconic Al Habtoor City - a lifestyle destination redefining ultra-luxury hospitality in the region.

Today, Al Habtoor Hospitality operates 14 hotels worldwide, spanning the United Arab Emirates, the UK, the USA, Austria, Hungary, and Lebanon. With this foundation, Al Habtoor Hospitality became the first pioneering Arab hospitality brand in Dubai, leading the way in world-class service, iconic developments, and groundbreaking hospitality concepts. Now, with the launch of Al Habtoor Palace Budapest, it also becomes the first Arab hospitality brand to enter the European market, bringing its signature Arabian warmth, impeccable service, and unparalleled luxury to the heart of Central Europe.

Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor, Founding Chairman of Al Habtoor Group commented: "The launch of Al Habtoor Palace Budapest is not just the opening of a new hotel - it marks a bold new chapter in our Group's hospitality brands' expansion into Europe and beyond. This is a strategic move that underscores our long-term vision to grow Al Habtoor Group's global footprint and bring our legacy of excellence to new markets."

He added, "For over five decades, we have built more than just businesses - we have built institutions that set new standards. The launch of Al Habtoor Palace Budapest is a testament to our commitment to pioneering Arab excellence on the world stage. This is just the beginning, as we continue to explore opportunities for further investment and expansion in Budapest and beyond."

"Al Habtoor Palace Budapest is a milestone in the evolution of our hospitality arm, a reflection of our belief in growth, innovation, and luxury without compromise. It is the dawn of a new era for Habtoor Hospitality, and I look forward to seeing our vision take shape in the years to come."

Mohammed Al Habtoor, Vice-Chairman & CEO of Al Habtoor Group remarked: "Al Habtoor Palace Budapest is more than just a luxury hotel - it represents a new standard of hospitality, blending the finest elements of our Dubai-born heritage with Budapest's storied charm. Our mission has always been to deliver exceptional experiences, and with this launch, we are bringing the renowned warmth and service of Al Habtoor Hospitality from Dubai to Europe."



(L to R): Saurabh Rai, Executive Vice President of South Asia, Middle East, and Africa for Preferred Hotels & Resorts; Khalaf Al Habtoor, Founding Chairman of Al Habtoor Group; Brenda Collin, Executive Vice President of Europe for Preferred Hotels & Resorts; Mohammed Al Habtoor, Vice Chairman & CEO of Al Habtoor Group.



A distinguished gathering at Al Habtoor Palace Budapest, celebrating the hotel's grand launch.

"This is a defining moment for our hospitality division, as we introduce a brand that embodies personalized service, world-class amenities, and a commitment to excellence. We are thrilled to welcome our guests to experience the pinnacle of luxury at Al Habtoor Palace Budapest."

### A Unique Blend of Culture and Hospitality

Nestled in one of Budapest's most prestigious squares, Al Habtoor Palace Budapest is a masterpiece of early 20th-century architecture that now stands as a symbol of timeless luxury reimagined for the modern era. The property's design seamlessly blends sophisticated European grandeur with contemporary Arabian opulence, offering guests a truly distinctive and refined experience.

### Preferred Hotels & Resorts Partnership

In a move that further solidifies its position as a world-class luxury destination, Al Habtoor Palace Budapest announced that it is officially joining the Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Legend Collection - the highest tier in the brand's portfolio, which features some of the most iconic and sought-after independent hotels globally.

This exclusive partnership grants guests access to the 'I Prefer Hotel Rewards program', the world's largest loyalty programme for independent hotels, allowing them to enjoy exclusive member benefits, upgrades, and VIP services across Preferred Hotels & Resorts properties worldwide.

Rahim Abu Omar, General Manager of Al Habtoor Palace Budapest, commented: "Becoming part of the Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Legend Collection is a testament to the unparalleled quality and experience we offer at Al Habtoor Palace Budapest. This partnership will allow us to reach discerning travellers who seek the highest standards of luxury and personalized service. We are proud to join this distinguished Collection and look forward to welcoming global travellers to experience the sophistication and warmth that define our brand."

"We are honoured to welcome Al Habtoor Palace Budapest as the newest member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts' esteemed Legend Collection, following the inclusion of its sister property, Al Habtoor Palace Dubai, last October," said Lindsey Ueberthor, CEO of Preferred Hotels & Resorts. "This marks the continuation of a successful partnership, united by our shared passion for creating extraordinary, independent hospitality experiences."

Brenda Collin, Executive Vice President of Europe for Preferred Hotels & Resorts, added: "This partnership further strengthens our expansion in Central Europe, seamlessly blending the region's rich heritage with the world-class service of Al Habtoor Group, setting a new standard of luxury. Al Habtoor Palace Budapest is a valuable addition to our global portfolio, elevating the travel experience for discerning guests around the world."

### A Benchmark for Luxury Hospitality in Budapest

With Budapest's growing reputation as a luxury travel destination, Al Habtoor Group has identified the city as the ideal gateway for expanding its ultra-luxury brand into Europe. The Group has been invested in Hungary since 2012, making it one of the largest Arab and foreign investor groups in the country.

Al Habtoor Palace Budapest distinguishes itself through: Personalised luxury - Featuring bespoke butler service, curated guest experiences, and unparalleled hospitality.

Culinary excellence - The signature Ottimo restaurant combines Arabic and Italian cuisine with international fine dining.

Unrivaled guest benefits - guests can enjoy exclusive promotions at both Al Habtoor Palace Budapest and Al Habtoor Palace in Dubai, ensuring a seamless global luxury experience. With this expansion, Al Habtoor Group is redefining what it means to stay in Budapest, introducing a transformative hospitality experience that celebrates both heritage and modern luxury.



## Museum



Ruby slippers from the 1939 film 'The Wizard of Oz' are pictured on display as part of the 'Color in Motion: Chromatic Explorations of Cinema' exhibit on Oct. 29, 2024, at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. (AP)

### Ruby-red shoes shine

## Academy Museum show explores color in cinema

LOS ANGELES, Feb 9, (AP): In the hit movie "Wicked," those famous magical shoes are silver. But if you want to see them in all their ruby-red glory from "The Wizard of Oz," there's no place like home - their current home, that is, at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles.

There, Dorothy's shoes, worn by Judy Garland, are now on display as part of a sweeping exhibit on the history of color in cinema. It's a history in which the sequined slippers play a key role.

While the 1900 novel by Frank L. Baum described them as silver, filmmakers in 1939 wanted to pack as much color as possible into the scene where Dorothy steps from sepia-toned Kansas into the shimmering color of the Land of Oz, where Glinda gives her the shoes off the feet of the Wicked Witch of the East. They were showing off a new technology: Technicolor.

The exhibit, "Color in Motion: Chromatic Explorations of Cinema," running through July 13, is timely not only because everything Oz is new again.

It also highlights the largely unsung role that women played in the development of color in Hollywood, not only on screen but off, where labor-intensive jobs like hand-coloring and stenciling gave them a foothold in a male-dominated industry.

There's also a fanciful interactive installation where your own body creates cinematic explosions of color, on the spot.

Here are some highlights:

Those glistening slippers nestled against a wall - rather unobtrusively, given their iconic status - began their life as white silk pumps. "The Wizard of Oz" costume designer Adrian (known by his first name) dyed them red and embellished them with nearly 5,000 sequins.

#### Fanfare

One of four known pairs used for the film that still exist, they were secured with great fanfare and help from luminaries like Leonardo DiCaprio, and were displayed when the museum opened in September 2021.

"They're certainly one of the biggest treasures we have in our collection," says Jessica Niebel, curator of the color show. "Ever since they came down, we've gotten regular visitor feedback asking to see the ruby red slippers back on display. This was the perfect opportunity."

The shoes are silver in both Baum's 1900 novel and in Gregory Maguire's 1995 book "Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West," on which the Broadway show and movie are based.

Some nine years after "The Wizard of Oz," another movie put a pair of red shoes front and center. They were ballet pointe shoes, and the film, fittingly, was "The Red Shoes."

The sad story of a young ballerina forced to choose between her career and a romance, the movie, by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, starred Moira Shearer, a real-life ballerina. Its tragic 17-minute dance sequence tells a story within a story - a young woman who dances in the red shoes until she dies.

Curators placed these prized red point shoes front and center because, Niebel says, "The Red Shoes" highlights both the magical nature of red and the role color plays in the expression of physical movement through dance.

Poignantly, the point shoes are not perfect, but worn - just as the character's white dress turns gray and dirty as she is gradually consumed.

Silent films were in black and white, right?

Well, no, actually. In this gallery, silent film excerpts show that many were in color. "In the 1920s, most films, 80-90%, we think, were in color," Niebel says. "They only became black and white with the arrival of sound."

Before that, the majority of films were tinted and toned, curators say, meaning an entire filmstrip is submerged in one color, often a bright one like yellow or pink or red or blue.

Curators went to four film archives in Europe and the U.S. and scanned their filmstrips. "In this gallery, for the first time, you can see how these colors authentically looked in the 1920s without any digital manipulation," Niebel says.

Another section describes a phenomenon many know nothing about: leader ladies. These were women who appeared in the lead frame of a film reel to be processed in a color lab. They were invisible to audiences, but used to calibrate and process the color in a film.

The display raises the issue that this process, which has disappeared with the digital age, largely excluded people of color.

#### Materials

"Predominantly they used to be white women," Niebel says. "So film stock and film materials were calibrated towards white skin predominantly. We wanted to tell this story as well - the story of these women who are never named, who the public never saw, but also the story of how film stock was developed particularly to depict white skin."

The show begins with images of Loïe Fuller and the Serpentine Dance she invented, where colored light was reflected onto a flowing costume, changing the colors. An American dancer, Fuller experimented in the early 20th century with fabric, movement, and color techniques like gels and chemical salts.

But many other women toiled in obscurity. There were, for example, the women at Disney, as the studio made a transition to color. We learn that under the leadership of Walt Disney's sister-in-law Hazel Sewell, the studio's ink and paint department became the animation industry's first all-female unit.

And the French production company Pathé employed young women to hand-paint films - frame by frame - early in the 20th century. These young women earned less than their male counterparts. Still, it was more than they were able to earn in other professions.

As kids know from finger painting, there's nothing more fun than making color yourself - especially color that moves. That's the takeaway from a final gallery in which your own physical movement creates cascades of color.

"Body Paint," by artist Memo Akten, allows you to stand in front of a screen, spread your arms, jump up and down or move any which way you want as a camera translates the moves into color.

"Now it's time for visitors to become animators of colors themselves through their own bodies," Niebel says. She's seen people stop and perform full-on dances at the installation.

## Oscar presenters to include Emma Stone, Cillian Murphy

# What to expect from 97th Academy Awards

LOS ANGELES, Feb 9, (AP): After devastating wildfires tore through Los Angeles, the 97th Academy Awards are going forward.

Like the Grammys and other awards shows this year, the ceremony will be transformed by the fires and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has pledged to help its members and the broader film community recover.

Here's everything you need to know about this year's show:

**When are the Oscars?:** The Academy Awards will be held on Sunday, March 2 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. The show, to be broadcast live by ABC, is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. ET/4 p.m. PT.

**Are the Oscars streaming?:** For the first time, the Oscars will be streamed live on Hulu. You can also watch via Hulu Live TV, YouTubeTV, AT&T TV and FuboTV. With authentication from your provider, you can watch on ABC.com and the ABC app.

**Who's hosting the Oscars?:** For the first time, Conan O'Brien is hosting the Academy Awards. O'Brien, the late night host turned podcaster and occasional movie star, said upon the announcement: "America demanded it and now it's happening: Taco Bell's new Cheesy Chalupa Supreme. In other news, I'm hosting the Oscars."

**How have the wildfires altered the show?:** The wildfires that consumed large parts of Los Angeles in early January led some to call for the cancellation of the Academy Awards. The academy twice postponed the announcement of nominations but never pushed the March 2 date of the ceremony. Academy leaders have argued the show must go ahead, for their economic impact on Los Angeles and as a symbol of resilience.

Organizers have vowed this year's awards will "celebrate the work that unites us as a global film community and acknowledge those who fought so bravely against the wildfires."

Still, the fires have curtailed much of the usual frothiness of Hollywood's awards season. The film academy canceled its annual nominees luncheon.

For many involved in the Oscars, the fires have been felt acutely. O'Brien's Pacific Palisades home survived but his family has been unable to go back to it. O'Brien's assistant and podcast co-host Sonja Movsesian lost her home.

"I know so many people who lost their homes and I'm just, was ridiculously lucky," O'Brien told The Associated Press. "So we want to make sure that that show reflects what's happening and that we put a light on the right people in the right way."

**Who's presenting at the Oscars?:** The academy announced last Wednesday that last year's acting winners — Emma Stone, Robert Downey Jr., Cillian Murphy, Da'Vine Joy Randolph Joy — will all return to the Oscar stage. Though the academy initially said it would bring back the "fab five" style of presenting the acting awards, with five previous winners per category, organizers have reportedly abandoned those plans for this year's ceremony.

**Will there be any performances?:** The academy has announced that unlike previous years, the original song nominees will not be per-

formed this time. That doesn't mean there won't be music, though. "Wicked," one of the biggest box-office hits of 2024, could feasibly figure into the Oscar plans. (Its songs weren't eligible for best song since, hailing from the Broadway musical, they aren't original to the movie.)

**What's nominated for best picture?:** The 10 nominees for best picture are: "Anora"; "The Brutalist"; "A Complete Unknown"; "Conclave"; "Dune: Part 2"; "Emilia Pérez"; "I'm Still Here"; "Nickel Boys"; "The Substance"; "Wicked"

**How can I watch the Oscar-nominated films?:** Some of the nominees are still in theaters, but many of this year's Oscar nominees are streaming on various platforms. The AP has this handy guide to help with Oscar cramming.

**Who are the favorites?:** More than most years, that's a tricky question. The best picture race is seen as unusually wide open, with "Conclave," "The Brutalist," "A Complete Unknown," "Anora" and "Emilia Pérez" all with legitimate hopes of winning. In the acting categories, Demi Moore ("The Substance") is favored for best actress, Adrien Brody ("The Brutalist") is most likely in best actor. Zoe Saldana ("Emilia Pérez") is the supporting actress frontrunner and Kieran Culkin ("A Real Pain") is the favorite for best supporting actor. None of those awards, however, are considered definite locks.

Jacques Audiard's "Emilia Pérez," a narco-musical about a Mexican drug lord who undergoes gender affirming surgery, comes in with a leading 13 nominations. The film, at one point, seemed like Netflix's best chance yet to land the streamer its first best picture nomination. Its star, Karla Sofia Gascón, made history by becoming the first openly trans actor nominated for an Oscar.

## Film



This image released by Netflix shows, (from left), Lizze Broadway, Jillian Bell, Amy Schumer, Brianne Howey and Urzila Carlson from the film 'Kinda Pregnant.' (AP)

### A ridiculous but relatable satire on pregnancy and lies

# 'Kinda Pregnant' is kinda good

LOS ANGELES, Feb 9, (AP): We have by now become accustomed to the lengths some movie characters will go to keep a good comedy lie going. But it's still a special kind of feat when Amy Schumer, playing a baby-mad single woman who fakes a baby bump in "Kinda Pregnant," is so desperate to maintain the fiction that she shoves a roast turkey up her dress.

You might be thinking: This is too ridiculous. The stuffing, alone. But if we bought "Some Like it Hot" and "Mrs. Doubtfire," I see no reason to quibble with the set-up of "Kinda Pregnant," a funny and often perceptive satire on motherhood, both real and pretend.

"Kinda Pregnant," which debuted Wednesday on Netflix, is a kinda throwback comedy. Like "40-Year-Old Virgin" and "Wedding Crashers," you can basically get the movie just from its title.

But like any good high-concept comedy, "Kinda Pregnant" is predominantly a far-fetched way for its star and co-writer, Schumer, to riff frankly on her chosen topic. Here, that's the wide gamut of pregnancy experience — the body changes, the gender reveal parties, the personal jealousies — all while mixing in a healthy amount of pseudo-pregnant pratfalls.

It's been a decade since Schumer was essentially launched as a movie star in the 2015 Judd Apatow-directed "Trainwreck." But "Kinda Pregnant," which Schumer wrote with Julie Paiva, almost as adeptly channels Schumer's comic voice — the one that made the sketch series "Inside

Amy Schumer" so great.

The movie's opening flashes back to Lainy (Schumer) as a child playing with dolls and imagining herself a mother-to-be. So committed is she to the role that Lainy, in mock-labor, screams at her friend and then politely apologies: "Sorry, but the expectant mother often lashes out at her support system."

But as middle age approaches, Lainy, a high school teacher in Brooklyn, isn't close to her dream. At the dinner where she suspects — no, is so certain that she tears open the dessert looking for a ring — that her longtime boyfriend (Damon Wayans Jr.) is going to pop the question, he instead asks her to join a threesome. Back at school, Lainy's school lesson on "Romeo and Juliet" turns darkly cynical.

#### Married

Things are even worse when Lainy's married best friend (Jillian Bell) divulges that she's pregnant. "Get rid of it!" blurts Lainy before apologizing. When the pair later go clothes shopping, Lainy absentmindedly tries on belly padding. The saleswoman is instantly nice to her, offering a burrito and a foot rub. "Who's the father?" she asks. "Doordash," responds Lainy before adding, "driver."

Much of the fun in "Kinda Pregnant" is watching Lainy come up with increasingly ridiculous lies as she tries to pull off the pregnant act. (After accidentally picking Thanksgiving as her time of inception, Lainy digs a deeper hole by suggesting

it happened at "a Black Friday Eve sale.")

But the ruse becomes more difficult when she, during a pregnant workout class, meets a woman (Brianne Howey, refreshingly authentic) she genuinely likes and wants to be friends with. Even more complicated: Lainy starts falling for another guy she first meets at a coffee shop (Will Forte).

In a movie filled with funny people (others include Urzila Carlson as a guidance counselor, and Alex Moffat as an idiotic father-to-be), Forte is an especially good presence in "Kinda Pregnant." For a performer of such madcap absurdity, Forte fits in remarkably naturally in a more rom-com setting. He's also got a wonderfully ridiculous occupation, even by rom-com standards, driving a Zamboni in Central Park.

You can probably guess how "Kinda Pregnant" goes from here. Director Tyler Spindel, nephew to Adam Sandler (a producer on the film), doesn't do anything to advance the movie comedy, a languishing proposition in recent years with few big-screen exceptions. But he crucially gives his performers plenty of space to be themselves, and Lainy's desperate desire to have a family comes across as both over-the-top and genuine. If "Knocked Up" captured the comedy of getting unexpectedly pregnant, "Kinda Pregnant" embodies the pain of wishing you were.

"Kinda Pregnant," a Netflix release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for sexual content, language throughout and drug use. Running time: 97 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

## Variety

**NEW ORLEANS:** Nelly brought his signature St. Louis swagger to a New Orleans institution, turning a nearly seven-decade-old restaurant into a Super Bowl week party.

The multi-Grammy winner packed Brennan's on Friday night, delivering a hit-filled set at the hwood "Homecoming" concert with DraftKings. As fans rushed the stage, Pro Football Hall of Famer Shannon Sharpe and actor Flavor Flav kicked back in the VIP area, while Flavor Flav enjoyed the show from a prime onstage spot.

Chainsmokers went on before Nelly, performing a number of their hits from "Closer" to "Roses."

Before Nelly's appearance, attendees mingled for a few hours at the invite-only event. Once he arrived,

many flocked toward the stage and pulled out their phones to capture his set.



Nelly

The Homecoming concert show was a part of a night filled with other concerts across the New Orleans area before the Kansas City Chiefs face off against

the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday. (AP)

**BELGRADE:** The Hubei Performing Arts Group brought a vibrant showcase of Chinese folk arts to Belgrade, on Saturday evening with a flash performance at Galerija Shopping Mall, as part of Serbia's Spring Festival celebrations.

The "Charming Hubei" program kicked off with a suona solo, "Snow Lantern Festival," immediately drawing a crowd. This was followed by a mesmerizing display of Wudang martial arts, which earned enthusiastic applause. The highlight of the evening was a face-changing opera performance, where enthusiastic children and teenagers eagerly interacted with the performer.

The 30-minute show concluded with a series of traditional and classical Chinese folk music performed on Chinese instruments, including the guzheng, pipa, and erhu. (Xinhua)



## Books

## Christie Brinkley has a memoir out in April

## 'Hold Strong' sets a love story amid the horror of WW II

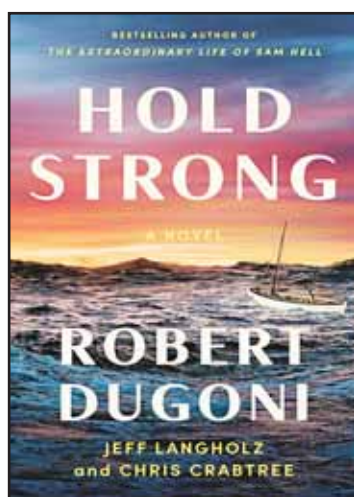
NEW YORK, Feb 9, (AP): This year the world will mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day, when Japan formally surrendered to the Allies and ended the horrors of World War II. Eight decades later, "Hold Strong," a work of historical fiction by Robert Dugoni, written in partnership with academic researchers Jeff Langholz and Chris Crabtree, proves those horrors are still fertile storytelling ground.

"Hold Strong" is the story of Sam Carlson and Sarah Haber, young sweethearts in Eagle Grove, Minnesota, when the story begins. He joins the Army at the tail end of the Great Depression and quickly rises in rank to become a leader of men. Taken prisoner by the Japanese in 1942, he survives a series of atrocities, from the Bataan Death March in the Philippines to captivity in a Japanese "hell ship," the Arisan Maru. She's "the smartest girl in

class," who is recruited while studying mathematics at Mankato State Teachers College to become a code breaker, eventually joining the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) and playing a critical role in helping turn the tide of war.

Sam and Sarah are fictional, but the events they find themselves in are not. Langholz and Crabtree provide more than 100 pages in the Afterword and Notes sections citing sources and detailing the facts that ground the story. Readers can ignore them or take a deep dive.

Do the 424 pages before that stand up on their own without the historical context? They do. "Hold Strong" is cinematic in its scope, and written in a way that could easily be adapted, telling Sam's story, then going back in time and recounting what Sarah was up to while Sam was overseas. It's well paced, with developed characters be-



This cover image released by Lake Union Publishing shows 'Hold Strong' by Robert Dugoni. (AP)

yond just sweethearts Sam and Sarah. There's Father Tom, whose unshakable faith keeps Sam alive during his darkest moments, and Grace Moretti, who befriends Sarah in the Navy and tells her to use her mind "to get what you want."

The book really takes off in the final 150 or so pages, becoming something straight out of a Tom Clancy novel, with submarines and secret codes and war-altering decisions made at a heavy cost. It's thrilling stuff, made all the more so by its grounding in history.

□ □ □

Christie Brinkley will have a memoir out this spring, tracing "every adventure and twist of fate" from her rise to becoming a supermodel to her acting career to her marriage to Billy Joel. And, yes, she's calling the book "Uptown Girl."

"I wrote 'Uptown Girl' to inspire readers to create the life they want,

which is what I've always tried to do, not through fortune or fame, but by saying yes to adventure and trying to find the magic in every moment, no matter how big or how small," Brinkley said in a statement last Tuesday released through Harper Influence, which will publish her book on April 29.

Brinkley, who turned 71 this week, has been a celebrity for half a century, since she was discovered in Paris by photographer Errol Sawyer. Her image has appeared on hundreds of magazine covers, from Sports Illustrated to Vogue. She's also known for such films as "National Lampoon's Vacation," her turn on Broadway as Roxie Hart in "Chicago," and her cameo in the 1983 video of Joel's "Uptown Girl," a top 10 hit widely associated with her. (Joel has cited Brinkley and fellow supermodel Elle McPherson as inspirations.)

Brinkley has been married four

times, most recently to Peter Cook, whom she divorced in 2008. According to Harper Influence, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, she will reflect on "her whirlwind career, her four tumultuous marriages - including her heartbreaking divorce from Billy Joel - and the harrowing experiences (a 1994 helicopter crash) that almost cut her life short."

"In 'Uptown Girl,' she chronicles the unexpected, unexplainable ways her life has unfolded," last Tuesday's announcement continues, "embracing every adventure and twist of fate along the way: traveling the world as a supermodel at the height of the model wars, living life on the road with her rock star husband and their baby, starring in blockbuster movies, riding horses with cowboys, training with world-champion boxers, and even stepping into the spotlight on Broadway."

## Culture



A large gathering of Lepa Lepa boats adorned with colors and flags, surrounded by wooden houses reflecting the Bajau culture.



A woman in traditional attire performs a heritage dance next to a man in traditional clothing, with the festival's colorful backdrop.



Lepa Lepa boats decorated with colorful patterns and flags, with children and men sitting on them, surrounded by a festive atmosphere.

## Malaysia's Lepa Lepa Festival

## Where nature meets heritage

SEMPORNA, MALAYSIA, Feb 9. (KUNA): Lepa Lepa Festival is a unique cultural icon in East Malaysia where traditional boats decorated with colorful motifs and colourful flags sail to tell the story of the Bajau people in an annual event that combines the beauty of nature with the depth of heritage.

The festival in Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia, includes events that celebrate the spirit of creativity and heritage, in addition to presenting traditional dishes, shows and dances in an event that expresses the unique harmony between man and nature, as the sea redraws life to the rhythm of its calm and majestic waves.

The festival, which has been an official national event in Malaysia since 2003, attracts thousands of tourists annually, contributing to supporting the local economy and enhancing Sempornas position as a global destination for diving and marine culture enthusiasts, especially since it is a gateway to the famous tropical islands for diving and exploring the depths of the sea.

## Television

## El Moussa, Christina Haack reunite for reality show

## Exes make good competition on 'Flip Off'

NEW YORK, Feb 9, (AP): There's conscious uncoupling and then there's conscious collaborating. Exes and TV personalities Tarek El Moussa and Christina Haack have reunited for a new reality competition show, "The Flip Off," on HGTV.

El Moussa and Haack (then known as Christina Hall) were first introduced to viewers in 2013 as married co-stars of the HGTV series "Flip or Flop," which aired for 10 seasons. When their marriage ended in 2017, they continued to film together - with some tension - until the series finale in 2022.

Now, El Moussa has teamed with his new wife, Heather Rae El Moussa, a real estate agent also known for Netflix's "Selling Sunset," to compete against Haack on "The Flip Off." Each side scouts a house to buy, redo and sell. One room is tackled at a time and is critiqued by a guest judge. In the end, the winner with the larger flip profit gets a paid vacation and bragging rights.

"There might have been some spying. Like, 'How is she designing? What is she doing? How much should we spend? Is she really not spending a lot of money?'" says Heather El Moussa.

All three real estate agents are also co-producers on "The Flip Off," which airs Wednesdays at 8 p.m. ET/PT, and "we all knew it was going to be TV gold," says Haack.

The series has had some drama on screen and off. Haack began filming with her now estranged husband, Josh Hall, as her teammate. The two split shortly thereafter and some of their tension is visible on "The Flip Off." When Hall exited, Haack was joined by friends she's worked with behind-the-scenes on projects. Her second ex-husband, TV personality Ant Antstead, even makes an appearance.

The El Moussas and Haack spoke with The Associated Press about the show and working together. Answers are edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: Heather, it's not easy to date and marry a man who's working with his ex-wife. Are you surprised you're all collaborating now?

Heather El Moussa: I came into a lot of chaos when I first met this man because they were filming "Flip or Flop." One day they like each other, the next day they don't, so it was a lot for me to take on... But it's been such a great relationship that we've all built, and especially Christina and I throughout this.

AP: Do you ever think back to those moments when you weren't getting along and wonder how you got to where you are now?

Haack: Tarek and I both have a very quick bounce-back effect. We could be in an argument, but then the cameras would be rolling and we can create a great scene and be over it. I like making good TV. I think it's fun.

AP: What were some of the challenges of the new show?



Heather El Moussa, from left, Tarek El Moussa and Christina Haack pose for a portrait to promote 'The Flip Off' on Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Haack: The biggest amount of pressure is trying to out-design each other. Normally with a house flip, you're just designing it for the neighborhood and you know, you can paint or knock down some walls, but like you're not trying to overdo it. During the process, we got so competitive with each other, we definitely all overspent.

AP: Tarek, you often refer to your-

self on the show as the king of flipping houses. Why?

Tarek El Moussa: I've learned a lot of lessons through experience. You know, I've done about 1,000 deals at this point. And every time you make a mistake, every time you lose a dollar, every time you get burned, it's a lesson. And you keep stacking those lessons. I am so excited about the future because

all those lessons are paying off.

Heather El Moussa: He always says to keep the emotion out of it because I think you can get so stuck on when things go wrong with a flip. In the beginning, I would be so mad if one thing went wrong. Tarek's like, "You have to move on. You can't dwell on the small things. Take emotion out of the flip."

## Variety

BEIJING: The animated juggernaut "Ne Zha 2" has become the most-watched film ever by total viewers in Chinese box office history, surpassing 160 million admissions (including presales), according to data from ticketing platform Maoyan.

On Sunday, the sequel dethroned the 2017 actioner "Wolf Warrior 2," which had long held the record with 159 million admissions, to claim the title of China's most-watched film in box office history.

The milestone comes just a day after "Ne Zha 2" shattered another record, becoming the first film globally to cross the 1-billion-U.S. dollar mark in a single market on Saturday, according to box office tracker Beacon.

The film had already overtaken "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" to become the highest-grossing film ever in a single market, amassing over 6.79 billion yuan (about 947 million U.S. dollars) in China by 9:11 p.m. Friday.

A follow-up to the 2019 animated sensation "Ne Zha," the sequel has captivated audiences with its breath-

taking visuals, rich storytelling, and deep cultural resonance.

The record-breaking run makes "Ne Zha 2" not just a box office titan but a cultural phenomenon, further underscoring China's ability to produce homegrown blockbusters that strike a chord with domestic audiences.

Industry analysts are now watching closely to see if "Ne Zha 2" can sustain its momentum and set even higher benchmarks in the days ahead. Maoyan has revised its domestic box office forecast for the film upward to over 10.87 billion yuan, setting it on course to become the first Chinese film ever projected to surpass the 10-billion-yuan threshold. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

NEW YORK: The "Saturday Night Live" 50th anniversary special will include guest appearances by Steve Martin, Sabrina Carpenter, Bad Bunny, John Mulaney, Dave Chappelle and numerous other stars who've been associated with the show over the years.

Scarlett Johansson, who is married to Weekend Update co-host Colin Jost, will appear on the "SNL50: The Anniversary Special"

that will air Feb. 16. It's a three-hour live telecast honoring "SNL's" 50th anniversary.

Other guests announced by NBC on Thursday include Adam Driver, Ayo Edebiri, Paul McCartney, Tom Hanks, Miley Cyrus, Robert De Niro, Martin Short and Kim Kardashian.

The special will air two days after the "SNL50: The Homecoming Concert" livestreams on Peacock. Bad Bunny and Cyrus are scheduled to perform during that show. The show will be hosted by Jimmy Fallon, and other performers include Lady Gaga, Post Malone, Chris Martin, David Byrne, Eddie Vedder and more. (AP)

□ □ □

KATHMANDU: Artists from China made performances for overseas Chinese in the Nepali capital on

Thursday evening to mark the Chinese New Year or Spring Festival.

The debut show in Nepal featured songs and dances, acrobatics, magic show, instrumental music, Peking Opera and face-changing, an ancient Chinese dramatic art of Sichuan Opera, drawing frequent outbursts of applause from over 700 spectators present.

Many used their mobile phones to record what impressed them most or turned on flashlights to echo the performers.

"Today's performances are a grand event for us to get together with overseas Chinese in Nepal, a grand gathering for us to express our nostalgia as well as inherit our culture, and also a grand gathering for China-Nepal people-to-people friendship," said Guo Qihua, an official from the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, which co-hosted the show with the Chinese Embassy in Nepal.

"The art troupe has brought the party and the country's sincere greetings to overseas Chinese, and also added new splendor to our New Year celebrations," Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song said on the occasion. (Xinhua)



Carpenter



## Chinese experts show FMD boosts anti-tumor immunity

## Chinese study offers hope for painless blood glucose test

BEIJING, Feb 9, (Xinhua): Chinese researchers have developed an innovative blood glucose monitoring technology that allows for blood readings without piercing the skin, offering a painless and non-invasive solution for people with diabetes.

A research team from Shanghai has developed a user-friendly technology that allows people to measure their blood glucose levels by simply placing their palm on a testing device.

The device uses an optical measurement technique called "multiple  $\mu$ -spatially offset Raman spectroscopy," which can precisely detect blood glucose signals at various skin depths.

According to a study published

online in the journal Nature Metabolism earlier this week, the new technology allows people to say goodbye to the conventional blood glucose testing method that involves painful needle pricks.

The global population of individuals living with diabetes has now exceeded 500 million, with the prevalence rate among adults in China reaching 12 percent. Effective and regular blood glucose tests are fundamental to managing the disease. However, invasive testing methods make it difficult for patients to adhere to long-term monitoring. Exploring non-invasive testing methods has become a research focus in the field of glucose sensing worldwide.

The researchers emphasized the re-

markable testing accuracy achieved in the study. They noted that the new technology was effective for people of all ages, skin colors and body types, laying a strong foundation for future large-scale applications.

Members of the research team include clinicians from prestigious Ruijin Hospital, affiliated to the Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and scientists from the Shanghai Photonic View Technology, an enterprise specializing in integrated circuit chip and biotechnology.

Lead researcher Wang Weiqing, from Ruijin Hospital, said that the technology "represents an achievement in medical-industrial collaboration." He expressed confidence that this innovation would greatly

improve the life quality for diabetes patients and revolutionize diabetes management.

A photo posted on many media platforms shows the innovative device resembles a printer.

"Currently, the testing device appears somewhat bulky, but we plan to make it smaller that enough to fit in the palm or even integrated into a watch, enabling users to monitor their blood glucose levels anytime, anywhere," Wang explained to the media. Enditem

Meanwhile Researchers from Zhongshan Hospital affiliated with Fudan University in east China's Shanghai have recently unveiled a new mechanism by which the Fasting-Mimicking Diet (FMD) enhanc-

es anti-tumor immunity.

The FMD is a short-term, low-calorie diet designed to mimic the effects of fasting while still allowing limited food intake. This approach aims to trigger metabolic switching, promote cellular repair, reduce inflammation and potentially offer benefits such as improved metabolic health and longevity, without the challenges of complete fasting.

Researchers found that the FMD can enrich B.pseudolongum, which induces the generation of memory CD8+T cells -- thereby suppressing colorectal cancer, according to a research paper published in the journal Gut.

The study not only confirms that the FMD exerts significant anti-tumor

effects by modulating gut microbiota, but also provides an in-depth revelation of the new mechanism through which microbial metabolism regulates immune cell function.

This innovative discovery offers a theoretical foundation for the application of FMD in the treatment of colorectal cancer, and provides insights into perioperative dietary interventions for colorectal cancer patients.

The incidence and mortality rates of colorectal cancer -- a malignant tumor with a high global prevalence -- continue to rise in China, with the number of cases in the country accounting for one-third of the global total. Poor dietary habits are considered a significant risk factor.



A rainbow appears in the sky on Oct. 28, 2024, in Honolulu. (AP)

## Nature's majestic masterpiece

## What makes Hawaii the rainbow capital of world

HONOLULU, Feb 9, (AP): Hawaii's regular sunshine, short rain showers and clean air come together to create some of the planet's best conditions for viewing rainbows. They're such a frequent sight that a University of Hawaii professor calls the state the "rainbow capital of the world."

Right now it's the winter rainy season in the islands, which means the odds of seeing a rainbow are even higher than usual.

Rainbows emerge so often in Hawaii they've become popular symbols of island life. Pictures of them adorn buildings, the sides of public buses and appear on standard vehicle license plates. University of Hawaii sports teams are even named after rainbows.

"For me, rainbows really signify hope and new beginnings," said Liane Usher, the president of the Children's Discovery Center in Honolulu, which features rainbows on its exterior wall and in its exploration rooms. "I can't ever help but smile whenever I see a rainbow after the rain."

Here are some things to know about rainbows in Hawaii.

Rainbows form when raindrops refract sunlight into a spectrum of colors. The brighter the sun, the clearer the rainbow.

Look for them when it is both sunny and raining at the same time. They will appear opposite the sun. They will seem larger and higher in the sky in the early morning and late afternoon, when the sun is lower on the horizon.

Steven Businger, professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, says the archipelago's trade winds bring many small showers with enough blue sky between them for the sun to shine through.

Hawaii's clean air also helps. Other places tend to have more air particles from dust, pollen and cars. Conditions improve further during Hawaii's rainy season, which lasts from October through April.

"Hawaii has maybe the best rainbows on the planet," Businger said.

Businger created an app called RainbowChase to help people find rainbows in Hawaii.

Rainbows are so prevalent that there are about 20 names for them in the Hawaiian language, according to a Manoa website, including distinct words for rainbow fragments and those that sit low on the horizon.

Rainbows represent divine or supernatural power in Native Hawaiian tradition.

Sam 'Olu Gon III, senior scientist and cultural adviser at The Nature Conservancy in Hawaii, said rainbows are considered a symbol of Kōne, one of the four main gods in Hawaiian tradition. Traditionally, the closer one got to a rainbow, the more likely they were to encounter a supernatural force, or an extremely powerful or chiefly person, he said.

In one centuries-old story, a rainbow appears over the secluded home of a Hawaiian princess for four straight days. Another emerges above the ocean when her suitor arrives, a man so strong his punch pierces an opponent's chest like a spear.

To Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, a teacher and Native Hawaiian cultural practitioner, a rainbow signals an "aumakua," which is a deified ancestor or a family or personal god.

Rainbows let her know spiritual protection is present and that she is loved and watched over, said Wong-Kalu, who is also known as Kumu Hina.

## Seniors turn to exercise to battle disease

## Fitness club in a cemetery aims to outpace death one step at a time

HARARE, Zimbabwe, Feb 9, (AP): At dawn, 65-year-old Nelly Mutandwa swapped her pajamas for leggings, a T-shirt and sneakers. She grabbed a bottle of water before heading to an unconventional workout spot: a cemetery in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare.

Surrounded by rows of graves, she joined other members of the Commandos Fitness Club in an hour-long session of squats, lunges and stretches as upbeat music blared. For Mutandwa, the daily routine is more than exercise. It's her lifeline in managing diabetes.

"They are resting," she said, pointing to the graves. "I just don't want to join them yet. That means I have to do the hard work here."

With limited fitness facilities such as gyms in their neighborhoods, older Zimbabweans are exercising wherever they can to combat Africa's growing problem of non-communicable diseases like heart problems, high blood pressure and diabetes. Other groups exercise along highways or disused railway lines.

Globally, non-communicable diseases, which are conditions that cannot be directly passed from person to person, are the leading cause of death, responsible for 41 million, or 74%, of annual fatalities, according to the World Health Organization.

Non-communicable diseases currently account for about 40% of deaths annually in Zimbabwe, according to its ministry of health and child care.

In Zimbabwe and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, non-communicable diseases are set to overtake communicable diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and cholera as the leading cause of death or illness by 2030, according to WHO.

Previously associated with older people, non-communicable diseases are increasingly spreading to children and young adults due to smoking, frequent alcohol use, unhealthy diets and lack of physical activity.

This has sparked huge concern among experts and governments on a continent that is experiencing the



Nelly Mutandwa, 65, exercises with the Commandos Fitness Club at the Warren Hills cemetery in Harare, Zimbabwe, Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025. (AP)

world's fastest population growth and is home to its youngest population.

Dr. Johannes Marisa, a public health specialist in Harare and president of the Medical and Dental Private Practitioners of Zimbabwe Association, said doctors are witnessing "a rapid change" as more children and young people are diagnosed with NCDs.

He attributed it partly to sedentary lifestyles as many people spend much of their time glued to their smartphone screens at the expense of physical movement, as well as growing substance abuse and unhealthy diets.

While climate change-induced droughts have left many rural people in Zimbabwe scrounging for food, traders in urban areas are racing to get a piece of the fast food market that's widely blamed for obesity.

In Harare and other urban areas, franchises such as KFC compete with a mushrooming number of cheaper local restaurants and informal roadside stalls, public markets and even homes where one can grab a fried piece of chicken, a burger or a fries-and-sausage combo

for a dollar.

In response, Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube in the 2025 national budget imposed a "modest" 0.5% tax on sales of doughnuts and other foods including tacos, pizza, hot dogs, shawarma, fries, chicken and burgers by retailers to encourage "healthier dietary choices" and mitigate the prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

Meanwhile, some older Zimbabweans are taking up physical exercise.

For Mutandwa and her Commandos Fitness Club crew, the surroundings of the cemetery suffice. Coached by Joseph Nekati, whose mother's stroke in 2023 inspired him to help others, the free club has become a sanctuary for older fitness buffs. Eight of the club's roughly 20 members are older people, Nekati said.

"I weighed 86 kilograms (189 pounds) and struggled to stand up. I would struggle to breathe just walking in my house. Now, I'm down to 76 kilograms (167 pounds) and I can walk long distances," said Susan Gomo, a 64-year-old grandmother managing high blood pressure and arthritis.

## Avian flu suspected in over 15 NY zoo bird deaths

NEW YORK, Feb 9, (AP): At least three and possibly up to 15 birds have died of avian flu at two New York City zoos, according to the organization that operates the facilities.

The Wildlife Conservation Society said three ducks at the Queens Zoo died after contracting the virus, and lab tests are pending on three ducks and nine wild birds that died at the Bronx Zoo after possible exposure.

"As a precaution, over the last two weeks, we have moved vulnerable bird species to protected areas in our parks," officials said in a statement.

On Friday, state officials ordered bird markets in the metropolitan area to close for a week after seven cases of avian flu were detected during routine inspections in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. Gov. Kathy Hochul said there was no immediate threat to public

health and the temporary closures were done out of an abundance of caution.

Avian flu has hit farms nationwide, leading to the slaughter of millions of birds and driving up egg prices.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said the virus poses low risk to the general public. The agency said there have been 67 confirmed cases of bird flu in humans in the US, none of them in New York.

## Early diagnosis

## Hair test helps detect autism

NORTH BRUNSWICK, N.J., Feb 9, (AP): LinusBio, a leader in precision exposome medicine, has announced ClearStrand-ASD, a first-of-its-kind diagnostic aid for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ClearStrand-ASD is a biochemical test that identifies a molecular signature predictive of autism in a strand of hair. It is designed to help physicians rule out the condition in children between one and 36 months of age when autism is a concern. The test provides a negative predictive value (NPV) of 92.5% and can help providers identify children who are unlikely to be on the autism spectrum. Results may help inform decisions to refer a child for early intervention and for diagnostic evaluation by an autism specialist.

ClearStrand-ASD performance validation data was presented at the Metabolomics and Human Health Conference GRC. The abstract, titled "A biochemical rule-out test for autism spectrum disorder," was presented on February 2-7, 2025.

"With the rise in autism prevalence, earlier diagnosis and intervention in children's formative years have become critical public health priorities," said Manish Arora, Ph.D., CEO and founder of LinusBio. "Families today often endure exhausting journeys to secure a diagnosis for their child, and this is what we aim to change. Caregivers now have access to an objective autism biomarker test that, in collaboration with their health care providers, may help them plan the next steps for their child earlier than ever before."

ClearStrand-ASD is a first-in-class biomarker test that analyzes an individual's metabolism of essential and non-essential elements over time. LinusBio's platform analyzes a single strand of hair using proprietary robotics and lasers in a state-of-the-art CLIA-regulated facility. Thousands of data points are generated for each patient, and with the help of AI and machine learning, it becomes possible to identify whether a patient has the molecular signature -- a biomarker -- associated with ASD.

"In the US, the median age of a patient receiving an ASD diagnosis is about four years old -- a delay that leaves many families waiting far too long for answers.

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## Davis makes winning debut with Mavericks

## Butler gets off to good start as Warriors rally past Bulls

CHICAGO, Feb 9, (AP) — Stephen Curry scored 34 points and tied a season high with eight 3-pointers, Jimmy Butler added 25 points in his Golden State debut and the Warriors rallied to beat the Chicago Bulls 132-111 on Saturday night.

Curry scored 24 of his points and made five 3s in the third quarter as the Warriors went from trailing by 24 to leading by three.

Butler, who played his first six seasons in Chicago, made a big impact in his first game since a trade-deadline deal from Miami following a messy split with the Heat. The six-time All-Star made 11 of 13 free throws and had four assists.

Quinten Post scored 18 points and Brandin Podziemski added 16 points and seven assists.

Coby White led Chicago with 27 points and made six 3s. Jalen Smith added 15 points and matched a career high with four 3-pointers. Rookie Matas Buzelis scored 16 as the Bulls lost for the 11th time in 14 games.

## Mavericks 116, Rockets 105

In Dallas, Anthony Davis had 26 points, 16 rebounds, seven assists and three blocks in his Mavericks debut but left the game late in the third quarter with a lower-body injury as Dallas beat the Houston Rockets.

Max Christie, who was acquired with Davis from the Los Angeles Lakers a week ago in the trade that sent superstar Luka Doncic to L.A., added 23 points for the Mavericks after playing twice for Dallas on the road this week.

Davis, who had not played since Jan. 28 because of an abdominal strain, assisted on the Mavericks' first field goal four seconds in, scored six of Dallas' first 14 points and had a double-double before halftime. He played 31 minutes.

Davis said he felt tightness in his groin and quadriceps, and part of the reasoning for not returning was him still recovering from the abdominal strain. He said the injury isn't serious.

## Thunder 125, Grizzlies 112

In Memphis, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 32 points and Aaron Wiggins added 26 points and 11 rebounds as the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Memphis Grizzlies in a showdown of the top two teams in the Western Conference.

The Thunder dominated the Grizzlies on the boards, outrebounding them 55-40. That includes 21 offensive board leading to 32 second-chance points. Isaiah Hartenstein grabbed 14 rebounds. Jalen Williams scored 25 for the Thunder, who won their fifth straight and stretched their conference lead to 7 1/2 over second-place Memphis.

Desmond Bane led the Grizzlies with 20 points, while Jaren Jackson Jr. finished with 19 points. Santi Aldama added 18 points as Memphis saw the end of its four-game winning streak.

## Celtics 131, Knicks 104

In New York, Jayson Tatum scored 40 points and the Boston Celtics easily handled the New York Knicks for the second time this season.

Payton Pritchard added 25 points off the bench for the Celtics, who rebounded from their loss to Dallas on Thursday in an NBA Finals rematch to win for the fifth time in six games and move 2 1/2 games ahead of the Knicks for the No. 2 seed in the Eastern Conference.

## Lakers 124, Pacers 117

In Los Angeles, Austin Reaves scored a career-high 45 points and the streaking Los Angeles Lakers beat the Indiana Pacers without LeBron James or Luka Doncic.



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Isaiah Joe, left, and Memphis Grizzlies guard Luke Kennard, right, reach for the ball in the first half of an NBA basketball game in Memphis, Tenn. (AP)

Rui Hachimura scored 24 points for LA on his 27th birthday. The Lakers have won five straight and 11 of 13.

Los Angeles jumped to a 25-point lead in the first half, and Reaves scored 14 points in the fourth quarter while the Lakers held off Indiana, the fourth-place team in the Eastern Conference, even without their two superstars.

## Nuggets 122, Suns 105

In Phoenix, Nikola Jokic had 28

points, 11 rebounds and nine assists to just miss a triple-double before sitting out the fourth quarter and the Denver Nuggets won their season-best sixth straight game, beating the Phoenix Suns.

Jokic made 11 of 13 shots in 28 minutes. Jamal Murray had 30 points for the Nuggets, who played without starters

Russell Westbrook and Michael

Porter Jr., both sidelined with left hamstring injuries.

## Clippers 130, Jazz 110

In Inglewood, Norman Powell and Ivica Zubac scored 26 points apiece, James Harden added 23 and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Utah Jazz to snap a three-game losing streak.

Zubac, who was 13 of 16 from the field, had a season-high in points as well as 15 rebounds. Harden dished

out a season-high 17 assists.

## Magic 112, Spurs 111

In Orlando, Paolo Banchero's 15-foot shot put Orlando ahead with 24.7 seconds left in a game they played mostly from behind and Victor Wembanyama missed a mid-range jumper in the final seconds as the Magic held on for a win over the San Antonio Spurs.

## Timberwolves 114 Trail Blazers 98

In Minneapolis, Jaden McDaniels had 30 points, 10 rebounds and four assists. Naz Reid scored 11 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter and the short-handed Minnesota Timberwolves overcame a 15-point deficit to beat the Portland Trail Blazers.

Minnesota played without All-Star guard Anthony Edwards for the second time this season after he was held out as a precaution because of soreness in his right hip. The Timberwolves also were missing Mike Conley (sprained right index), Julius Randle (strained right groin) and Donte DiVincenzo (sprained left big toe).

## Hawks 125, Wizards 111

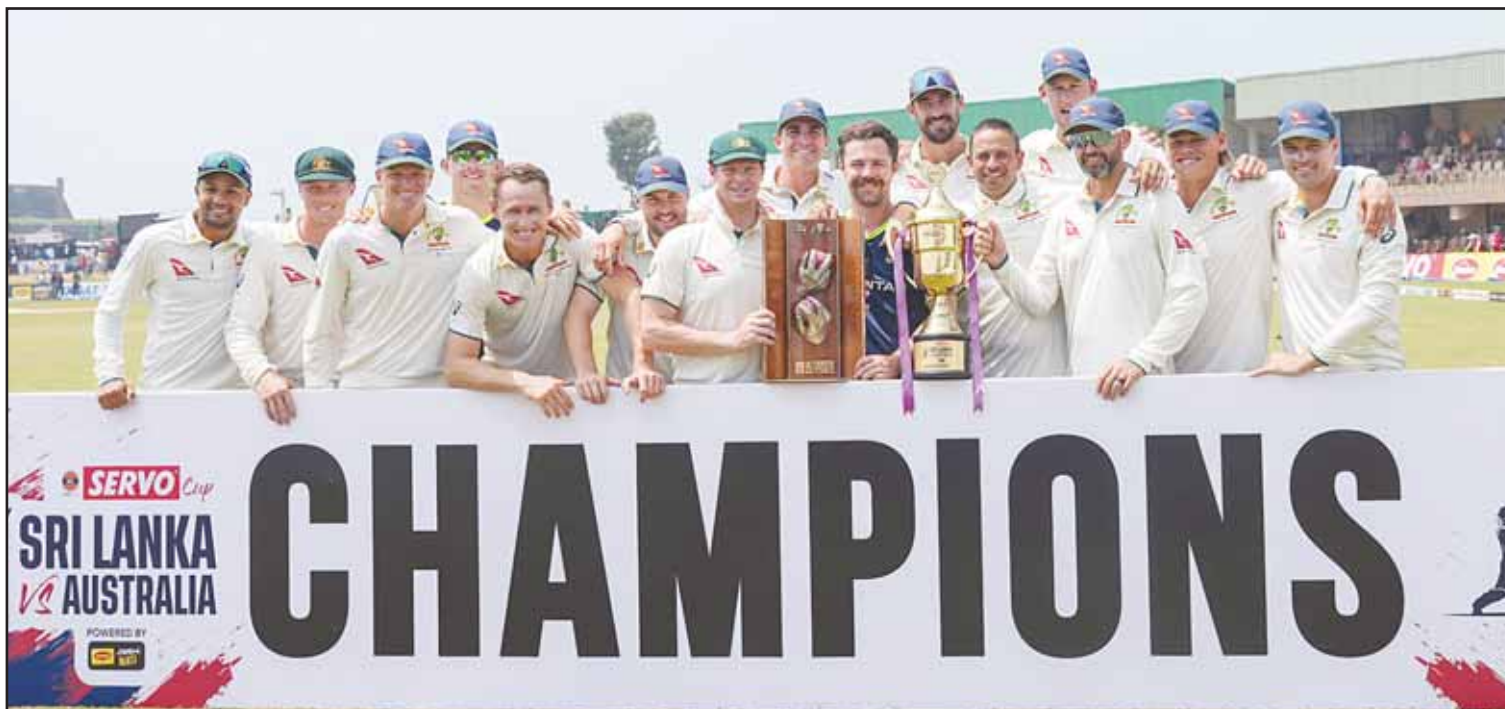
In Washington, Trae Young scored 35 points and had 14 assists to help the Atlanta Hawks to a victory over the Washington Wizards.

Zacharie Risacher added 18 points as Atlanta completed back-to-back wins for the first time since winning three straight from Jan. 14-18.

## Kings 123, Pelicans 118

In Sacramento, Domantas Sabonis had 27 points and 16 rebounds for his NBA-leading 46th double-double of the season and the Sacramento Kings overcame a 20-point deficit for a 123-118 victory over New Orleans that extended the Pelicans' losing streak to eight games.

## Aussies secure 1st test series victory in Sri Lanka since 2011



Australia's team members pose with the Warr-Muralitharan trophy at the end of the second test cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Galle, Sri Lanka. (AP)

## Australia seals second test with commanding nine-wicket win

GALLE, Sri Lanka, Feb 9, (AP) — Australia wrapped up a comprehensive 2-0 series victory over Sri Lanka, sealing the second test with a commanding nine-wicket win in Galle on Sunday.

Top order batter Marnus Labuschagne flicked a delivery from retiring Sri Lankan player Dimuth Karunaratne to mid-wicket to complete the triumph, just 15 minutes before lunch on the fourth day.

It's Australia's first test series win on Sri Lankan soil since 2011.

It's last success here came under Ricky Ponting's captaincy, a 1-0 victory in 2011. However, it suffered a 3-0 whitewash in 2016 under Steve Smith's leadership, and the 2022 series ended in a 1-1 draw. This time,

with Smith standing in as captain for Pat Cummins, the victory was a welcome redemption.

"I thought it was a real good series and we played well from the outset," said Australia captain Steve Smith, who was named Player of the Series after his consecutive hundreds. "Everyone had their methods and stuck to it over a long period and to score that many runs was great.

"All our spinners and lone quick Mitchell Starc did quite well. Been a great series win."

Australia approached the series with meticulous planning - including a training camp in Dubai - and executed its strategies with precision.

The batters laid the foundation with big hundreds, allowing the bowlers to dictate terms with attacking fields. Meanwhile, the spinners displayed remarkable discipline and variety, putting relentless pressure on Sri Lanka

and paving the way for a resounding 2-0 series win.

The tourists had set the tone early, winning the first test by an innings and 242 runs - Sri Lanka's heaviest-ever test defeat. They remained clinical in the second match, ensuring there was no way back for the hosts.

Sri Lanka resumed Sunday on 211-8, holding a slender lead of just 54 runs, with much riding on vice-captain Kusal Mendis, who had remained unbeaten overnight.

Mendis brought up his second half-century in the game by guiding Nathan Lyon to deep cover but perished in the same over, caught at short square leg by Steve Smith.

The dismissal was a milestone moment - Smith's 200th Test catch, a feat previously achieved by only four players: Jacques Kallis, Mahela Jayawardene, Rahul Dravid, and Joe Root. Beau Webster wrapped up the in-

nings soon after, leaving Australia with a modest target of 75 runs.

Sri Lanka briefly found hope when Prabath Jayasuriya removed Travis Head (20) early, caught behind. However, Usman Khawaja (27 not out) and Marnus Labuschagne (26 not out) calmly guided the visitors home with an unbroken 37-run stand.

Alex Carey was named Man of the Match for his outstanding 156 and four dismissals behind the stumps. His innings stands as the highest score by an Australian wicketkeeper in Asia.

This victory marks Australia's fourth consecutive test win, having also won the final two matches of its recent 3-1 home series against India. It plays South Africa in the final of the World Test Championship at Lords in June.

Sri Lanka slumped to its fourth straight defeat, marking a disappointing end for 36-year-old opener Karunaratne in his 100th and final test.

## Zhang earns unanimous decision

## Du Plessis successfully defends belt in rematch with Strickland

SYDNEY, Feb 9, (AP) — Dricus Du Plessis didn't like the way his first meeting with Sean Strickland ended in a split decision a little more than a year ago, so he made sure there was no doubt on Sunday at UFC 312 in Sydney.

In a rather lackluster rematch, Du Plessis retained his middleweight belt with a dominating unanimous decision over a bloodied Strickland.

"This was a big proving point for me, (but) I don't want to make it a habit of these decisions," Du Plessis said. "The game plan here was stay calm, because (my coach) said, 'You know you can knock somebody out. We know you have that dog (in you). Try and stay calm.' Because it was really hard once I saw him grabbing at his nose."

It was the second title defense for the 31-year-old Du Plessis (23-2) after defeating Israel Adesanya with a fourth-round submission on Aug. 17 in Perth, Australia.

The first round saw Strickland (29-7) trying to establish his jab, while Du Plessis stayed aggressive with an array of kicks.

Strickland continued to approach his attacks cautiously in the second round, attempting to pick his spots. Other than a strong right hand early in the round, it was Du Plessis who won the significant-strikes battle, 28-17.

The third drew more boos than it did action through the first half of the round, until an overhand right and later a spinning back fist by Du Plessis landed.

The fourth round saw the most action, with the champion breaking Strickland's nose with a hard right punch and then applying nonstop pressure on his challenger. While the first three rounds were extremely close, Du Plessis dominated the fourth.

Du Plessis continued to pepper Strickland's nose in the final round, while staying on the attack to confirm the win.

In the co-main event, women's strawweight champion Zhang Weili (26-3-0) overcame a rough first round and controlled more than 21 minutes of her title defense against No. 1 contender Tatiana Suarez (11-1-0) to earn a unanimous decision to retain her belt.

Zhang has won her past four title defenses, three by unanimous decision and the other by second-round submission.

## From the undercard:

Heavyweight Tallison Teixeira (8-0-0) made his UFC debut by scoring a first-round TKO over Justin Tafa (7-5-0). That made it eight straight bouts Teixeira has ended in the first round, this one lasting just 35 seconds.

In an action-packed light heavyweight bout, Jim Crute (12-4-2) and Rodolfo Bellato (12-2-1) both turned in impressive performances. Crute dominated the first round, while Bellato was better in the second. A very close third left the judges turning in a majority draw.

In a three-round welterweight bout, Jake Matthews (21-7-0) defeated Francisco Prado (12-3-0) by unanimous decision



Zhang Weili (right) of China and Tatiana Suarez of the United States compete during the women's strawweight championship at the UFC 312 in Sydney, Australia. (Xinhua)

## Giménez scores for Milan in Serie A debut

## Retegui nets four as Atalanta crushes Verona

ROME, Feb 9, (AP) — Mateo Retegui scored four goals to lead Atalanta's 5-0 demolition of Hellas Verona on Saturday, while Santiago Giménez scored in his Serie A debut for AC Milan.

Italy striker Retegui took his league-leading tally to 20 goals for the season after scoring a first-half hat trick before adding his fourth after the break. The second-leading scorer is Fiorentina's Moise Kean with 15 goals.

Retegui found the net in the 21st, 25th, 44th and 56th minutes. Ederson made it 3-0 in the 37th.

The lopsided win lifted Atalanta to within one point of Inter Milan in second. Leader Napoli is four points ahead of third-placed Atalanta.

Giménez started making good on the 30 million euros (\$31 million) plus bonuses Milan reportedly paid Feyenoord for the Mexico striker.

Giménez took a pass from Christian Pulisic, put the ball on his left foot and drilled in his team's second goal in a 2-0 win over Empoli. Rafael Leão opened the scoring with a header.

Both sides finished with 10 men. Milan defender Fikayo Tomori saw a second yellow in the 55th, but Empoli's advantage only lasted 10 minutes before Luca Mariani scored a direct red.

Giménez made his club debut earlier in the week when

he had an assist in a 3-1 win over Roma in the Italian Cup.

Torino and Genoa drew 1-1.

Four days after its humiliating French Cup exit, Lille completed a week to forget with a 2-1 loss at home to last-placed Le Havre in the French league.

Goals in each half from Egypt forward Kouka and Senegalese striker Issa Soumaré - his first for the club - helped Le Havre end its nine-game winless run across all competitions and climb off the bottom of the table until Sunday at least, when fellow struggler Montpellier visits Strasbourg.

Lille substitute Chuba Akpom scored on his league debut in the seventh minute of stoppage time but it was too little, too late for the home team.

Lille has exceeded expectations in the Champions League, where it last week thrashed Feyenoord 6-1 to qualify directly for the knockout phase. It followed that by rallying from a goal down to beat St. Etienne 4-1 in the French league's 20th round last weekend.

On Tuesday, the team squandered a 2-0 lead against second-tier Dunkerque in the French Cup, before losing the penalty shootout.

Earlier, Nice capitalized on Monaco's defeat the night before to move third with a 2-0 win over 10-man Lens.

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The detailed Tender Document along with its Annexure may be downloaded from Central Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in/cppp/> and also the official website of the Embassy of India, Kuwait from <https://indembkuw.gov.in/whats-new.php>. (please scan QR)

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## Swiss team sweeps the men's speed events

## Von Allmen clinches downhill gold at world championships

SAALBACH-HINTERGLEMM, Austria, Feb 9, (AP): Franjo von Allmen won gold in the downhill at the Alpine skiing world championships on Sunday as the Swiss team swept the men's speed events.

Competing in his first worlds, the 23-year-old Von Allmen crowned his meteoric rise in the sport by winning the marquee event of the championships, two days after star teammate Marco Odermatt won gold in the super-G where he placed 12th.

Von Allmen beat silver medalist Vincent Kriechmayr by 0.24 seconds. The Austrian won the world title in both downhill and super-G four years ago.

His Swiss teammate Alexis Monney was 0.31 behind in third to take the bronze, while defending champion Odermatt was fifth.

Switzerland has dominated the downhill on the World Cup circuit this season, with four wins and five second places from five events, and Von Allmen said sharing the podium with Monney on Sunday underlined the strength of the Swiss team.

Von Allmen has yet to win a downhill on the World Cup circuit but finished runner-up three times this season and won a super-G in Wengen.

Von Allmen, who is a trained carpenter and still works on construction sites in the offseason, saw his skiing career teeter on the brink at age 17 when his father died and he lacked the financial means to continue.

Von Allmen set up a crowd-funding project that gathered a reported 16,000 Swiss francs (\$17,600).

He made the national C team the fol-

lowing year and next won three silver medals, including one in downhill, at the 2022 junior world championships in Canada.

Vitus Luond, a former World Cup skier who is a long-term coach with the Swiss team, said Von Allmen's rise has been "incredible."

Racing in partly cloudy conditions and with temperatures slightly higher than during the three training runs earlier this week, Von Allmen was not clean in the first part and his skis rattled over the bumps.

Reaching a top speed of over 121 kph (75 mph), Von Allmen mastered two spectacular jumps where racers soared up to 45 meters (49 yards).

Von Allmen made the V-sign and pretended to bite his nails when he sat in the leader seat, but no racer came close to beating his time, not even

Odermatt, who started a few minutes later.

Italian veteran Dominik Paris was 0.45 behind in fourth, and Bryce Bennett was the best American finisher in 10th.

The marquee event of the worlds was attended by 22,500 spectators, with 15,000 in the sold-out stands around the finish area.

Several standouts missed the race due to injury, most notably former overall World Cup champion Aleksander Aamodt Kilde of Norway and French speed specialist Cyprien Sarrazin.

The next event at the worlds is the new women's team combined, in which one racer competes in the downhill and a teammate races the slalom run with both times to be added, that is scheduled for Tuesday.



Switzerland's Franjo von Allmen is airborne during a men's downhill race, at the Alpine Ski World Championships, in Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Austria. (AP)

# Atletico and Real share points in thrilling derby



Real Madrid's Federico Valverde, left, vies for the ball with Atletico Madrid's Samuel Lino during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. (AP)

## Mbappé scores in his first capital derby

MADRID, Feb 9, (AP): Kylian Mbappé scored in his first capital derby against Atletico Madrid as Real Madrid fought back for a 1-1 draw and kept its slim lead in the Spanish league.

Next up for Mbappé and Madrid is a trip to Manchester City on Tuesday for the first leg of their Champions League knockout round playoff.

Julian Alvarez put Atletico ahead from the penalty spot in the 35th minute. Mbappé equalized in the 50th for the hosts, which stayed one point ahead of Atletico in the standings.

Jude Bellingham hit the crossbar with a header as Madrid searched for a second goal. Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak made saves to deny Rodrygo, Vinicius Junior, and Mbappé to split the points at the Santiago Bernabeu.

"We knew how to hang in there and had our chances," Alvarez said. "We are in the fight and will stay in it right to the end." Atletico, which spent big last summer to acquire Alvarez and other reinforcements, is trying to add to league titles in 2021 and 2014 under coach Diego Simeone.

Barcelona is in third place. Mbappé had missed the first Atletico derby of the season, a 1-1 draw in September, because of injury.

A spate of injuries left Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti relying on a makeshift backline of Lucas Vázquez, regular midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni, youth player Raul Asencio, and Fran



Atletico Madrid's Clement Lenglet vies for the ball with Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappé, right, during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. (AP)

García. A reckless stretch of his boot by Tchouaméni that ended up tripping Samuel Lino was spotted by a video review referee and sent Alvarez to the penalty spot.

The former Man City striker gently stroked his penalty down the middle as Thibaut Courtois dived to his left.

Antoine Griezmann showed again his great value to Atletico with precision passing even under duress. The French midfielder twice placed perfectly weighted balls that left Alvarez and Lino in a good position to get off shots inside the area, but clumsy touches by both ruined the opportunities.

Rodrygo sparked the Madrid comeback just after halftime when he dribbled past Javi Galan and Lino on the

right side and slipped a ball to Bellingham in the heart of the box. Bellingham's scuffed shot hit a defender and fell to Mbappé to rifle home for his first goal against Atletico.

Mbappé had missed the first Atletico derby of the season, a 1-1 draw in September, because of injury.

Madrid poured forward searching for a second goal with Atletico rattled. Vinicius dribbled down the left side and scooped the ball for Bellingham, who smashed a header off the woodwork.

Someone changed both his full backs with Reinildo and Nahuel Molina in the 63rd, but Oblak still had to come to Atletico's rescue on three occasions.

Ancelotti hinted that he will make changes to his starting 11 for City, most likely in midfield since he has few op-

tions in defense other than including Ferland Mendy, and will find it hard to touch his attack. That means that Dani Ceballos could likely make way for Eduardo Camavinga or Luka Modric.

Former Madrid defender Marcelo was honored before kickoff after he announced his retirement this week.

Oihan Sancet scored a hat trick to lead fourth-placed Athletic Bilbao's 3-0 rout of Girona as the Basque club moved to within one point of Barcelona.

Ernesto Valverde's Athletic, which only fields players from or near the Basque Country region of northern Spain, hasn't lost in 14 consecutive rounds, dating back to a defeat at Girona on Oct. 6.

Antony scored his first goal since joining Real Betis on loan from Manchester United, but Celta Vigo rallied from two goals down to earn a thrilling 3-2 comeback victory.

Antony deftly curled in a shot from inside the box to put Betis ahead before Diego Llorente headed in a second goal in the 22nd.

Betis twice hit the woodwork before Fran Beltran started Celta's fightback with a powerful strike from outside the area in the 63rd. Javi Rodriguez scrambled in the equalizer before Williot Swedberg got the 87th-minute winner.

Alejandro Baena and Ayoze Pérez scored in Villarreal's 2-1 win at Las Palmas.

The teams stopped playing momentarily in the 20th minute to join the fans in applauding Kirian Rodriguez, who wears No. 20, in a show of support for the Las Palmas midfielder. Rodriguez announced this week that he will be stepping away from soccer for a second time to treat recurring cancer.

## Brits stretch overall lead

# Britain comes from behind to beat Canada & Australia

SYDNEY, Feb 9, (AP): Great Britain lost the lead and regained it to beat Canada and Australia in a thrilling three-boat final in the Sydney leg of SailGP, stretching its overall lead after podium finishes in the first three events of the season.

Australia came into Sunday's final as favorite after winning the previous event in Auckland and winning three of seven fleet races in Sydney to top the points table with 63 points ahead of Britain with 51 and Canada with 43.

Britain had a win and two seventh placings in the three fleet races on the second day of the event Sunday and Canada had a second and two fourth placings to claim an unexpected finals place.

Australia had set the pace in its home event with exceptional performances off the start line, winning two of four races on day one.

But the Australians incurred a start line penalty in the final, were forced to drop back behind Britain and Canada and were unable to recover. Britain hit the start line at pace and led at the top gate.

Canada picked up a shift on leg 2, passing Britain to lead by comfortable margins at the second, third and fourth gates, looking set for a shock victory.

But Britain found a shift in the lee of Shark Island, the rocky outcrop in the middle of the racecourse, to pass Canada on the fifth leg and hold on for the win.

"Absolutely buzzing to get the win," England driver Dylan Fletcher said. "We won the start and after that we made mistakes but it was a great race."

Canada driver Giles Scott had mixed feelings after the race, happy with his team's performance throughout the Sydney event but disappointed a win in the final had slipped away.

"I think we've had an amazing day today. We have to be super happy with second place," Scott said.

"I'm certainly sitting here with a few what-ifs. We were obviously in a great spot with an amazingly big lead almost all of that race but that final upwind the Brits did a great job of picking up a big shift on that right-hand side."

Britain now leads the overall series standings with 27 points from Australia with 24 and Spain and New Zealand with 20. New Zealand improved after a disastrous first day in Sydney to post first, second and fifth placings on Sunday.

The SailGP series now moves on to events in Los Angeles and San Francisco next month, Brazil in May and New York in June.

SailGP teams race identical 50-foot foiling catamarans. The foils allow the boats to "fly" across the surface of the water at speeds of up to 90 kmh (55 mph). Sydney was expected to see the first-ever race involving 12 boats but only 11 boats were able to race because the United States withdrew after incurring damage in a capsizing in practice.



Hannah Mills, strategist of Emirates Britain SailGP Team, lifts the trophy on the podium after the team won the final race on Race Day 2 of the KPMG Australia Sail Grand Prix in Sydney, Australia. (AP)

## Leverkusen counting cost of slip-up before Bayern visits

BERLIN, Feb 9, (AP): The Bundesliga title race appears to be run already before the contenders meet next weekend.

Defending champion Bayer Leverkusen was unable to keep pace with league leader Bayern Munich on Saturday as it was held scoreless in Wolfsburg less than 24 hours after Bayern eased to a 3-0 win over Werder Bremen.

It leaves Leverkusen eight points behind Bayern before it hosts the Bavarian powerhouse for a top-two meeting next Saturday. Leverkusen had been hoping to use that game to cut the gap to three points, but the slip-up at Wolfsburg means it will take an unprecedented collapse from Bayern for Leverkusen to defend its first ever league title.

No team has ever made up such a gap at this stage of the Bundesliga season to become champion.

"The gap has become far too big, unfortunately," Leverkusen goalkeeper Lukáš Hrádecký said. "That's the difference from last season - the games that we're drawing now, we won last year. That's where the eight-point gap comes from, unfortunately. After this weekend, it won't be any easier to reach our goal, our dream again."

Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso faced questions about why he made eight changes to the team that played against Cologne in the German Cup on Wednesday, and why star player Florian Wirtz was only introduced for the final half hour in Wolfsburg.

"It's easy to analyze a game after it," the Spanish coach said. "But yeah, he played a big game over 120 minutes (against Cologne). We wanted to help Flo. The idea was we needed him in the second half, his impact was good."

Asked about the eight-point gap and next weekend's game, Alonso said his view hadn't changed.

"We're playing FC Bayern at home, top game, top atmosphere. We're focusing on ourselves, what we can achieve, our goals. We have a bit of time to prepare. We just had four busy weeks with midweek games, so we need a bit of a break," Alonso said. "No major worries, we carry on."

The draw against Wolfsburg was the eighth match from 21 rounds in which Leverkusen dropped points this season. Alonso's team was undefeated last season with just six draws in 34 rounds.

"The goal is to win," Alonso said in response to another question about the eight-point gap. "You ask me again about the table. I try not to think too much about that. We're playing Bayern at home, we'll try to win."

Alonso added that his players will be fresher next weekend than they were in Wolfsburg.

Leverkusen reached the Champions League knockout phase directly, so can enjoy a rare week off, whereas Bayern faces a visit to Celtic on Wednesday for the first leg of their Champions League playoff, with the return leg in Munich the following Tuesday.

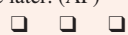
Hrádecký hasn't given up on the Bundesliga title yet.

"The gap has grown," the Finnish goalkeeper said. "If we win next week, it could still work out. We're still alive. But we need a win now."

## Best of the Rest

**Wolves into FA Cup fifth round:** Wolverhampton reached the fifth round of the FA Cup by winning 2-0 at second-tier Blackburn thanks to goals by Brazilians Joao Gomes and Matheus Cunha in the space of two minutes on Sunday.

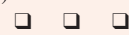
Gomes shot under the body of goalkeeper Balázs Tóth to give Wolves the lead in the 33rd at Ewood Park, before Cunha drove home a low finish into the far corner a minute later. (AP)



**Roma beats Venezia:** Paulo Dybala netted his first goal of 2025 to help a much-changed Roma team to a 1-0 win at relegation-threatened Venezia in Serie A on Sunday.

Dybala powerfully converted a second-half penalty after teammate Angelino was tripped by Venezia defender Alessandro Marcandalli.

Roma coach Claudio Ranieri had opted to rotate his team ahead of Thursday's Europa League playoff against Porto. (AP)



**England shakes up title race:** Fin Smith's match-winning conversion of the last-gasp try he

set up lifted England over Six Nations title favorite France 26-25 in a Twickenham thriller.

The score changed three times in the last 10 minutes of a frenetic match.

England led for the first time in the match in the 70th through replacement prop Fin Baxter's try. Smith converted for 19-18, taking over the goalkicking from Marcus Smith, who badly pulled his last two goalkicks.

Five minutes later, France retook the lead after Antoine Dupont and Damian Penaud counterattacked from deep to give Louis Bielle-Biarrey his second try of the match. France led 25-19. (AP)





South Korea's Minsun Kim, right, competes Japan's Rio Yamada at the women's 500m Speed Skating during the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China. (AP)

# Sports

## Strong showing by Kuwait's skiers in Harbin



Al-Obaid and Al-Wahaibi celebrate with the Kuwaiti flag after finishing the race during the Asian Winter Games in Harbin.



(From left to right): Buluier, Zhang Chenghao, Liu Jianbin, Bi Yuxin of China and Hirabayashi Ari, Endo Kenta of Japan compete during the Ski Mountaineering men's sprint final match at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Yabuli, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

### China dominates in ski mountaineering debut at Asian Winter Games

**HARBIN, China, Feb 9, (Agencies): Kuwait's Faris Al-Obaid and Abdulrahman Al-Wahaibi secured spots in the second and decisive round of the slalom skiing competition at the 9th Asian Winter Games "Harbin 2025", following an impressive performance.**

Competing in the Alpine Ski - Slalom event at Yabuli Heights, northwest of Harbin, both athletes successfully navigated the course in the first and second rounds, earning valuable points that will boost their international rankings.

Fuaid Al-Ajmi, head of the Kuwaiti delegation and president of the Kuwait Winter Games Club, commended their strong showing, emphasizing their potential for achieving higher placements in upcoming events.

He highlighted the preparatory training camp in Switzerland, organized in collaboration with the Kuwait Olympic Committee and the Public Authority for Sports, as a key

factor in their performance. The specialized coaching staff played a vital role in refining their skills for the continental competition.

Looking ahead, Al-Ajmi expressed confidence in Salman Al-Kandari, who is set to compete in the freestyle skiing event tomorrow, reaffirming the Winter Games Club's commitment to supporting Kuwaiti athletes in various winter sports.

Meanwhile, Al-Wahaibi described their qualification as a major milestone for Kuwait's winter sports, especially in their first participation at this elite Asian-level slalom competition.

Chinese skiers completed a feat of five events' podium sweeps at the Asian Winter Games on Sunday, highlighted by their dominance in the ski mountaineering debut.

Set to feature at the 2026 Winter Olympics, ski mountaineering tests endurance, stamina, and power with steep climbs and rapid descents using specialized gear. In Yabuli, Cidanyuzhen from China's Xizang Autonomous Region captured the women's sprint gold in two minutes and 55.88 seconds, while her compatriots Yu Jingxuan and Suolangzhen claimed silver and bronze, respectively.

In the men's category, Buluier from China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region secured the gold in 2:22.29, and his countrymen Zhang Chenghao and Bi Yuxin took the second and third place respectively.

China's dominance was extended to three other events. In freestyle skiing men's aerials, China's 20-year-old Li Xinpeng claimed the gold with a score of 123.45 points, while Yang Longxiao seized the silver with 122.13 and veteran Qi Guangpu took the bronze with 119.47 for the host.

Beijing 2022 gold medalist Xu Mengtao bagged the women's aerials, followed by her teammate Chen Xuezheng and Kazakhstan's Ayana Zholdas.

Bayani Jialin pocketed the women's 5km free gold medal in cross-country skiing, leading China to a sweep of the top four in the event. Dinigeer Yilamujiang was just 3.6 seconds behind Bayani to take the silver, adding to her bronze from the cross-country skiing women's sprint classic on Saturday. Chi Chunxue won the bronze, while Chen Lingshuang ranked fourth.

The HIC Speed Skating Oval saw a fierce medal battle between China and South Korea.

Wu Yu secured China a gold medal in the speed skating

men's 5,000 meter, and his compatriots Liu Hanbin and Muhammad Hanahati finished second and third.

South Korean skaters Kim Min-sun and Lee Na-hyun finished one-two in the women's 500m, while China's Tian Ruining pocketed the bronze.

South Korea added another gold from the women's team sprint, finishing first in 1:28.62. China trailed by 0.23 seconds to settle in second, and Kazakhstan was third.

On the short track, China crossed the finish line first in 4:11.371 in the women's 3,000m relay final A, followed by Kazakhstan in second and Japan in third.

Kazakhstan captured gold in the men's 5,000m relay final A. The silver and bronze went to Japan and China respectively. South Korea's Jang Sung-woo and Choi Min-jeong earned gold medals from the men's and women's 1,000m respectively.

Also on Sunday, Japan bagged both alpine skiing gold medals after Takayuki Koyama won the men's slalom.

After Sunday's competitions, China leads the medal table with 15 golds, 15 silvers and 14 bronzes, followed by South Korea (11, 9, 7), Japan (3, 2, 6), Kazakhstan (1, 4, 2) and Chinese Taipei (0, 0, 1).

### Abdullah praises national team's recent achievements

## Kuwait Handball Federation outlines development plans with PAS

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: The Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports, Bashar Abdullah, welcomed a delegation from the Kuwait Handball Federation's Board of Directors at his office, where they presented him with a national team jersey. This gesture followed Kuwait's participation in the 29th World Handball Championship, held earlier this month in Croatia, Denmark, and Norway, where the national team secured 27th place with victories over Guinea, Japan, and Algeria.

The delegation included Federation President Fouad Al-Balushi, Vice President Shabib Al-Hajri, Secretary Qaid Al-Adwani, and Treasurer Khaled Talib. During the meeting, discussions focused on advancing Kuwaiti handball, strengthening national teams, and enhancing their competitiveness in regional and international tournaments, including Gulf, Arab, Asian, and global events.

Bashar Abdullah commended the national team's strong performance in recent international appearances and reaffirmed the Authority's commitment to supporting Kuwaiti handball.

Federation President Fouad Al-Balushi expressed gratitude for the



Kuwait Handball Federation officials presented Bashar Abdullah with the national team jersey.

Sports Authority's role in promoting handball both locally and internationally and for its continuous support in overcoming challenges faced by the Federation in external

competitions.

Meanwhile, Secretary Qaid Al-Adwani praised the collaborative efforts of the Sports Authority, the Federation, and the players,

which have led to Kuwait qualifying for the 2025 World Cup finals and the junior team securing a spot in the upcoming Junior World Cup.

## Kuwait, Egypt Football Associations explore cooperation in key meeting



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef with President of the Egyptian Football Association.

CAIRO, Feb 9: Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Football Association, met with Eng. Hani Abu Rida, President of the Egyptian Football Association, in Cairo. The meeting, which was also attended by Osama Hussein, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Football Association for Technical Affairs, focused on exploring opportunities for cooperation between the two federations.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef ex-

pressed his gratitude for the warm reception and hospitality extended to him by Abu Rida and the Egyptian Federation officials.

The meeting was also attended by several key figures, including Khaled Al-Darandali, Vice President of the Egyptian Federation, along with members of the Egyptian Football Association's Board of Directors Mustafa Abu Zahra and Tarek Abu Al-Ainain, and Dr. Mustafa Azzam, Executive Director of the Egyptian Football Association.

## Al-Qadsiya suffers 3rd defeat at West Asian Clubs Championship

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MANAMA, Feb 9: Al-Qadsiya Club's volleyball team suffered its third loss in the third West Asian Clubs Championship, currently taking place at Isa bin Rashid Hall in Riffa, Bahrain, which will conclude on the 18th of this month.

Al-Qadsiya was beaten by Al-Arabi of Qatar in the third round, losing 0-3. Earlier, it lost 0-3 to Al-Rayyan of Qatar, the defending champion of the last two editions, in the first round. In the second round, it was narrowly defeated by Al-Salam of Oman, 2-3, after initially leading in the first and second sets.

With these three losses, Al-Qadsiya has been eliminated from the title race, though they still have two remaining matches: one against the host team, Al-Ahli of Bahrain, the day after tomorrow, and another against Iraq's Northern Refineries next Saturday.

The tournament follows a single-round league format, with the team accumulating the most points being crowned champions. Teams are resting today, and the fourth round is set to take place tomorrow.

Al-Qadsiya player Abdul Nasser Al-Anzi reflected on the team's loss to Al-Salam, noting that it had led in the first two sets but faltered in the third and fourth, allowing its opponent to capitalize. He praised Al-Salam's level of play and vowed that the team would continue to fight in the remaining matches, despite losing its chance for the title.



Al-Qadsiya player prepares to serve against Al-Arabi of Qatar.

## Sheikh Sabah Al-Sabah praises Kuwaiti racers success at the Bahrain Drag Race

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 9: Sheikh Sabah Dawood Salman Al-Sabah, Director of the Kuwait Automobile and Motorcycle Club team, commended the club's racers for securing top positions in the Bahrain Drag Race Championship.

The team manager highlighted the achievements in the fourth round of the championship, which took place from Wednesday to Friday. Abdulrahman Boualoua (4.5 Index category), Fahad Khaddada (7.5 Index category), and Fawaz Al-Awadhi (8.5 Index category) each secured second place in their respective categories, while Khaled Al-Abdullah claimed third place in the 10.0 Index category.



Kuwait Automobile and Motorcycle Club delegation at the Drag Race Championship in Bahrain.

Sheikh Sabah praised the dedication and performance of the team at the championship, held at the Bahrain International Circuit, expressing hope that they will continue achieving success to elevate Kuwait's name in international motorsports.

He also extended his gratitude to Bahrain for hosting the event and to the Bahrain International Circuit for its excellent organization, wishing the Kingdom continued progress and prosperity.

In the previous three rounds, the Kuwaiti team consistently achieved advanced positions in a highly competitive field of over 200 car and motorcycle racers.