



Amir champions digital excellence at Informatics Award ceremony

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Left: His Highness the Amir, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince, attentively listens to an explanation during the Informatics Award ceremony at Bayan Palace. Right: His Highness the Amir, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince, honors Head of the Award Board of Trustees Sheikha Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah.

Amiri Diwan photos



PM Diwan photo
His Highness the PM being received at the airport by Emirati Minister of Health.

WGS key to global progress, says PM

DUBAI, Feb 10, (KUNA): The World Governments Summit in Dubai is a global platform for exchanging expertise amongst global leaders, enabling decision-making, which shapes the world's future and its sustainable development, said His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Monday.

This statement came after His Highness the Prime Minister and the accompanying delegation's arrival to the UAE.

The WGS is held during rapid challenges facing the world, which made it paramount for governments around the globe to address and find solutions, he stressed, saying that the summit was a chance for bettering government services, cooperation as well as boosting productivity.

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Consumer goods up 2.1%

Kuwait's wholesale price index sees 0.7% increase

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The general index of wholesale prices in Kuwait increased by approximately 0.7 percent on an annual basis by the end of December 2024, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to a statement from the Central Statistical Bureau, the index reached 149.4 points at the end of the fourth quarter of 2024, compared to 148.3 points in the same quarter of 2023.

The index for imported goods rose by 0.4 percent, local goods by 1.3 percent, and the index for materials in the agriculture and fishing sector increased by 2.7 percent. This was driven by a 2.2 percent rise in prices for crop cultivation and animal production activities, a 0.3 percent increase in the prices of imported goods, and an 8.1 percent rise in local goods prices.

The index for the mining and quarrying sector fell by 0.9 percent, due to a 0.7 percent decrease in sand and crushed stone prices and a 3.2 percent drop in local goods prices, while imported goods rose by 0.8 percent.

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Day by Day

SHARIA graduates are neither lawyers nor judges, and for a long time, it has been expected that each professional should work within their field of expertise.

We should have realized long ago how these graduates became lawyers and judges -- how they studied, obtained law degrees, who intervened on their behalf and who enacted the law that allowed Sharia graduates to enter the legal profession.

Let's put things in the right perspective; we are weary of this situation.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Newswatch

RIYADH: GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi discussed cooperation means on Monday with Chinese Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Chang Hua.

The two officials discussed cooperation, the latest developments on the 2023-2027 joint action plan, updates on free trade negotiations between the two sides, and key regional and international developments, according to Saudi Press Agency. (KUNA)

Kuwait public debt stays below 60 percent of GDP

Minister Al-Fassam highlights Kuwait's fiscal progress



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior speaks at the sixth Arab Regional Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Acting PM calls for collective action in tackling regional risks

Kuwait leads disaster risk reduction at Arab forum

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah affirmed that the State of Kuwait is keen on strengthening regional cooperation, and to become a model of leadership and collective responsibility.

In his opening speech at the Sixth Arab Regional Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction that Kuwait is hosting from Feb 9-12, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef pointed out that Arab countries today live in a world characterized by the increasing frequency and diversity of natural and human risks. "This requires us to work intensively and rapidly to develop our capabilities to adapt and confront these risks," he stressed.

He added "Kuwait has many national initiatives in the field of disaster risk reduction, considering it has achieved tangible progress in strengthening governance and building national capacities in this field."

He pointed out that the challenges the countries in the region are currently facing necessitate strong regional and international cooperation; indicating the agenda of the forum consists of vital topics that aim to raise awareness, improve knowledge of risks, invest in resilience, and build a sustainable development system that is aware of risks.



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior speaks at the sixth Arab Regional Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction.

He confirmed that "Kuwait has completed a strategy that is considered a declaration for disaster risk reduction, out of its desire to develop policies and procedures to mitigate disaster risks." He called for the discussion and adoption of this strategy in order to establish a strong political framework that supports the implementation of the Sendai Framework and Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

He stressed that the 'Kuwait Declaration' is

not just a document; as it is rather an expression of the collective will to expedite work in this field, which reflects the political commitment of Arab countries.

He praised the role played by regional and international partnerships in achieving common goals, cooperation between Arab countries, and the exchange of expertise and knowledge to achieve the desired progress in the field of disaster risk reduction.

A total of 22 Arab countries and a number of international organizations attended the forum, during which they will adopt a disaster risk reduction strategy developed in the name of the State of Kuwait and will implemented in the next three years by all Arab countries.

This forum is jointly organized by the Government of the State of Kuwait and the Regional Office for Arab States of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction in partnership with the Arab League.

It highlights the continuation and follow up of what Arab countries have achieved, as well as evaluate the progress in the implementation of the Sendai Global Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2030, while identifying regional priorities for the next two years and adopting the Kuwait Declaration and an action plan for the period 2025-2027.

No evidence of hack in Sahel app: spokesperson

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The official spokesperson for the unified government application for electronic services Sahel Yousef Kazim, denied rumors circulating on social media that the application was hacked, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Insisting that such claims are baseless, Kazim explained that the application works with high efficiency and is devoid of any defects. It is continuously monitored to ensure optimal performance. All security and maintenance systems for the application are regularly updated according to the highest standards to ensure

data protection and safety. The application follows the best technical practices to provide a secure and effective service for all users.

He urged citizens and residents to verify information before sharing with others, and to rely on official sources.

DUBAI, Feb 10, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Nora Al-Fassam affirmed on Monday that Kuwait has taken serious steps in implementing its development vision (Kuwait 2035), especially achieving financial balance and economic reforms.

She told KUNA on the sidelines of the Ninth Arab Fiscal Forum; part of the World Governments Summit 2025 that will kick off Tuesday in Dubai, that participation in this prominent forum is of special importance, as it addresses key issues that concern Arab countries in particular and the world as a whole, especially amid the unstable economic conditions that the world is witnessing and discussing solutions and combining efforts to exert the maximum means of cooperation to reach sustainable financial solutions for our countries.

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5 UK Ambassador praises Kuwaiti editors for media contributions

8 Warba Bank reports KD 22.4 million net profit for 2024

10 KFH holds earnings webcast for FY-2024



12 'The Investment Conference 2025' brought together thought leaders, industry experts and investors to discuss ideas that move markets

Prayer Timings

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

Local

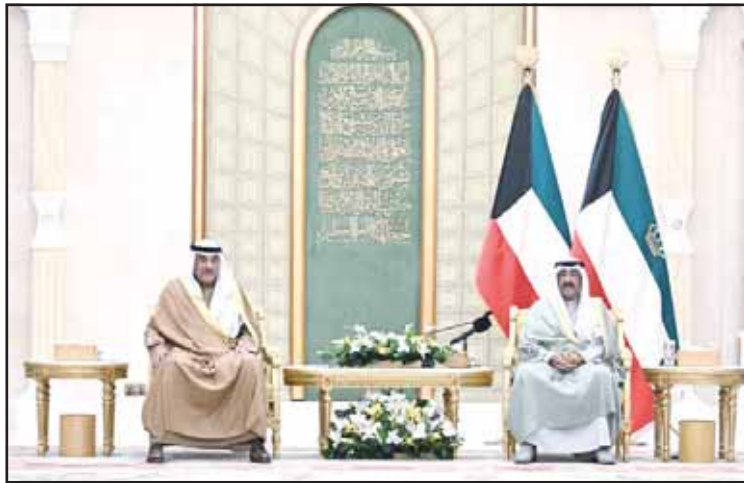
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Mild and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.
By Night: Cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light vari-

Weather

able wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	18	10
Kuwait Airport	18	04

Abdaly	19	03
Bubyan	17	05
Jahra	19	07
Failaka Island	18	09
Salmiyah	15	12
Ahmadi	17	06
Jal Aliyah	18	05
Nuwaisib	20	05



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at the ceremony.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honors the winners of Salem Al-Ali Informatics Award in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Sheikhha Ayda Salem Al-Sabah.



Amiri Diwan photos

HH Amir congratulates winners of Salem Al-Ali Informatics Awards

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gave a speech on Monday at the Salem Al-Ali Informatics Award ceremony, congratulating the winners of the prize.

His Highness the Amir evoked the memory of award founder, the late Sheikh Salem Al-Ali, and prayed for him, his children and grandchildren who have taken to run the establishment after him.

His Highness the Amir also thanked all participants who have appreciated the role of this country, wishing them further success in their endeavors.

Under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and with attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, a ceremony was held at Bayan Palace on Monday to honor Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award winners of the 24th edition of 2024.

His Highness the Amir arrived at the venue and was warmly welcomed by

Head of the Award Board of Trustees Sheikhha Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and members of the organizing committee.

Addressing the ceremony, Sheikhha Ayda Salem Al-Sabah remembered the late founder of the award, Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, saying that he had got plenty of farsightedness, deep wisdom and giving and had anticipated the significance of technologies.

She added that progress made over less than a quarter century is the fruit of Amiri directives, commending His Highness the Amir for his patronage of this award.

On his part, Dr. Taher Ameen Al-Jamal, the winner of the award, said that he was pleased to have been in Kuwait and granted the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award, which is a beacon in digital societies.

He boasted that he was so lucky to have worked with the best scientists in the field of encryption after having gained access to the cutting-edge advance-

ment in this science through working with Prof. Hellman during his doctoral study.

He added that his work at the RSA Security had also granted him the opportunity to partake in the initial stages of making encryption practical and effective, something which he said enabled him to join Netscape Communications Corporation with a deep understanding of new global digital needs.

The SSL protocol, now known as TLS, is considered a genuine turning point in the world since this technology is nowadays used to secure all digital communications.

He said that it was amazing for him to be an integral part of building this digital society as his work at Netscape has made him a key contributor to forming this cybersecurity.

His Highness the Amir then honored the winners of the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award, and was given a souvenir on this occasion.

Kuwait Amir offers condolences to Algeria and Namibia

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Monday a cable of condolences to Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on demise of former Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali.

His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty for mercy for the deceased, and for solace to his family.

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

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on demise of former Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah then sent a similar cable of condolences to Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Also, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to the President of the Republic of Namibia, Nangolo Mbumba, on the passing away of former president of the

Republic of Namibia, Sam Nujoma.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere condolences and sympathy.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable of condolences to the President of the Republic of Namibia, Nangolo Mbumba.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent, a similar cable to the President of the Republic of Namibia, Nangolo Mbumba.

AI summit crucial in shaping future of world, says official

PARIS, Feb 10, (KUNA): Partaking in the Paris Action on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Summit is a unique and important opportunity to shape the future of the world, said a Kuwaiti official on Monday.

Speaking to KUNA during his participation, head of the Kuwait Association of Artificial Intelligence of Things (AAIOT) Sheikh Mohammad Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed that AI would help shape the technology of tomorrow.

He indicated, "We seek during this global event to reinforce strategic partnership with industrial and innovative leaders, exchanging knowledge and expertise, which would contribute to streamlining digital transformation in Kuwait and the region."

Artificial Intelligence is not only essential for economic and social overall growth, noted Al-Sabah, it would be an unprecedented opportunity to push for advancement in various fields including education, healthcare, energy, and digital economy.

He affirmed that Kuwait was keen on developing comprehensive technology that would contribute to achieving the goals of the Kuwait 2035 Vision, which would put the country amongst leaders of innovation.

The State of Kuwait sees the summit as a chance for reinforcing its global status within AI development, highlighting in the same regard its AI and internet projects on the national, regional, and global levels in line with efforts to formulate future technologies and shaping policies within this domain, he said.



KUNA photo
 Representative of His Highness the Amir, Communications Affairs Minister, Omar Al-Omar and Chairman of the Kuwait Association of Artificial Intelligence and Internet of Things (AAIOT) Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah at the Paris summit.

Al-Sabah added that the summit would help Kuwaiti youth to develop their technological skills and find investment opportunities in the realm of AI projects, thus, supporting Kuwait's national economy.

The Paris AI summit began earlier today and will continue until February 11th under the patronage of President Emmanuel Macron.

'Kuwait shines in sustainable development, health sector'

Minister seeks decent life for present, future generations

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: "Kuwait is a regional and global model worthy of emulation in the field of health promotion and sustainable development, under the directives of its wise leadership that focuses on achieving health and national security by overcoming challenges and meeting the requirements of promoting community health and its sustainable development," says Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi.

In his opening speech at the Second Kuwait Conference on Healthy Cities (Healthy Cities for Community Development), Al-Awadhi pointed out "Kuwait Vision 2035 and the national development plans are considered a strategic framework that puts a major challenge on our shoulders in terms of providing high-quality healthcare for all segments of society."

He affirmed the ministry is committed to promote and protect public health, ensure the continuation of the health gains it has achieved, and provide a decent and safe life for present and future generations. He said the Healthy Cities Initiative derives its strength and sustainability from effective community participation and the involvement of various segments in achieving health develop-

ment. He pointed out that the strong cooperation between the government and private sectors, as well as academic and research institutions, enhances the comprehensiveness of this approach and makes the inclusion of health in all policies a reality.

He stressed that the ministry's aspiration to expand the healthy cities system to include all regions of the country contributes to the ongoing efforts to reach the highest level of well-being for citizens and expatriates. He expressed appreciation for all initiatives and efforts aimed at joining the healthy cities system; especially the governors who want to make their governorates, cities and institutions as healthy cities, in addition to the employees of the ministry, specifically the Healthy Cities Office, for its pioneering and effective role in implementing this initiative, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Meanwhile, Regional Director of WHO for the Eastern Mediterranean Region Dr. Hanan Al-Balkhi said: Our health is affected by the places and ways of living, and more than 60 percent of the population of Arab countries live in urban areas.

She stressed that urban health is the concern of everyone, as it enhances health and raises the quality of life by providing healthcare and sanitation services and improving hygiene standards. She said the Healthy Cities Initiative has been actively operating for more than 20 years.



Dr. Al-Awadhi

Support for Ja'afari endowments pride for country, says minister

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi said on Monday that Kuwaiti government care for Ja'afari endowments is a 'source of pride'.

The minister made the statement while delivering a keynote speech at the one-day 10th Jaafari Endowments Forum, held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and organized by the General Secretariat of Endowments.

Al-Wasmi said Kuwait has now become a role model for humanitarianism and good citizenship principles, citing examples of giving and disapproval of intolerance and sectarianism.

He added that Kuwait has secured the elements of success and imposed tools of

control and care for endowments, marking 20 years since the inception of the Jaafari Endowments Administration under the umbrella of the General Secretariat of Endowments. The minister noted that the secretariat has made huge internal and external accomplishments, marking a quantum leap in the endowment field in Kuwait, and a pioneering government step to revamp endowments in all domains.

He boasted that the secretariat has also done its utmost to promote the status of Kuwait as a world humanitarian hub through its diverse administrations, funds, projects and banks that care about contribution to societal development and relief efforts around the globe.

For his part, Director of Jaafari Endowments Administration Tareq Al-Habeeb addressed the forum by saying that his agency is mainly based on developing endowment revenues and broadening the scope of endowments, thus cementing and beeping up the role of Jaafari endowments as a sustainable institution that acts in the context of laws and regulations.

Iftar, 'suhor' meals to be provided during Ramadan

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Ministry of Islamic Affairs is preparing for the holy month of Ramadan by launching a series of initiatives aimed at equipping mosques to create a spiritual atmosphere that meets the needs of worshippers during this sacred time.

According to informed sources, the ministry is in continuous communication and coordination with the relevant authorities to ensure the smooth operation of donation collection. As in previous years, donations will be collected through bank deductions and electronic payment systems like KNet for ensuring transparency and preventing any violations.

Several initiatives have been proposed, particularly for the Grand Mosque, to enhance the experience for worshippers.

Among the plans is the provision of coolers and mobile refrigerators during the last ten days of Ramadan. This is aimed at increasing comfort for those attending prayers and night prayers. The ministry will also set up equipped tents and provide necessary supplies at the Grand Mosque. It has plans to prepare and distribute iftar and suhoro meals, and daily supplies of drinking water and juices to mosques, along with hospitality materials and resources allocated to the Support Department and the management of the Grand Mosque.

Kuwait's unwavering support for Lebanon wins huge praise

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Deputy Head of Mission at the Lebanese Embassy and Consul of Lebanon in Kuwait Mia Al-Adhem praised Kuwait and its people for their unwavering support for Lebanon.

Speaking at a celebration organized by the Maronite community in Kuwait on the occasion of Saint Maron's feast in the presence of diplomats as well as several Kuwaiti citizens and members of the Lebanese community, Al-Adhem affirmed that Kuwait and Kuwaitis have never hesitated to stand by their Lebanese brothers, particularly in times of hardship.

She described Lebanon as a nation that has resisted division, domination, and fanaticism, highlighting the strength and resilience of its people, who remain united through life's challenges, and share each other's joys and sorrows.

Expressing her deep appreciation for the warmth and hospitality extended by Kuwait, Al-Adhem highlighted the country's rich cultural diversity.

She said, "The Lebanon we envision is one of peace, freedom, and pride, far removed from wars, disputes, and conflicts."

On this special religious and national occasion, Al-Adhem reaffirmed her faith in Lebanon, despite the challenges the country faces, including the pain from recent devast-

tating aggression.

She expressed hope for the future with the recent election of General Joseph Aoun as Lebanon's new President after two years of presidential vacancy.

Al-Adhem praised the election as a step toward rebuilding trust in Lebanon's institutions, bringing about political stability, and launching reforms for a better future.

She said, "We look forward to a capable and effective government that will drive progress, restore confidence in state institutions, and ensure their regular functioning. This, in turn, will lay the foundation for political stability, which is essential to initiating economic and social reforms and restoring Lebanon to its rightful place in the region and the world."

We pray for the protection of our beloved Lebanon and its resilient people so that it remains a nation distinguished by its creative diversity, symbolizing brotherhood, openness, and a welcoming destination for all its supporters, especially our Kuwaiti brothers, who have consistently stood by Lebanon and offered their unwavering support.

We also ask Almighty Allah to protect and bless Kuwait, a country dear to our hearts, so that it remains an oasis of security and peace, and be a Kuwait of pride and honor, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled."



Members of the Maronite community at the celebration.

'Radical educational reforms must to avert total collapse'

"KUWAIT'S educational system is in dire need of urgent reforms to prevent a total collapse. Education experts and stakeholders have consistently warned that deteriorating academic outcomes indicate that the system has entered a critical danger zone," columnist **Talal Abdul Karim Al-Arab** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"We, alongside many others, have highlighted the decline in educational standards, emphasizing that nations flourish when they cultivate well-educated, committed, and mature youth, while regression in education leads to scientific stagnation, poor performance, and developmental setbacks.

"Despite massive budgets allocated to education over the years, Kuwait's educational institutions have failed to keep pace with global standards. Once ranked among the best, they now produce outcomes that are alarmingly shallow compared to other nations.

"The Ministry of Education's budget has quadrupled over the past two decades, increasing from approximately 486 million dinars in 2003 to more than 2.2 billion dinars in 2023.

"However, instead of investing in improving educational institutions and integrating advanced global technologies, 82% of this budget has been directed toward salaries and bonuses.

"This misallocation of resources has resulted in a catastrophic failure. Over the past 20 years, Kuwait has spent more than 29 billion dinars on education, yet the system remains in its worst state in history.

"Corruption has taken root, with widespread cheating, fraudulent academic achievements, and an influx of unqualified teachers holding forged certificates. The introduction of fingerprint attendance controls only further exposed the laxity in educational institutions.

"Meanwhile, substantial financial rewards were distributed under the pretext of 'excellent work,' without yielding any tangible improvements in academic performance.

"As a consequence, Kuwait ranks at the bottom of international education indices, failing to meet both global and regional benchmarks. Education specialist Dr. Rawaa Al-Jarallah recently revealed alarming statistics in an interview with the insightful Ahmed Mohammed Al-Barjas.

"She highlighted the stark contrast between Kuwait's education system and those of other nations, not only in terms of quality but also in the total time students spend in education before graduation.

"While students in developed countries typically undergo approximately 15 years of study before earning a university degree, Kuwaiti students complete their education in just six years. The root causes are evident -- excessive holidays, rampant absenteeism, and a culture of avoiding both learning and teaching.

"Perhaps most concerning is the neglect of the Arabic language, the cornerstone of our cultural identity. Kuwait ranks the worst in the Arab world in Arabic language instruction.

"While global standards demand between 350 and 380 hours of study in a native language, Kuwaiti students receive a mere 200 hours. The result? Some children reach the age of 10 without even knowing how to read or write properly.

"The Ministry of Education aspires to adopt best practices from top-performing education systems like those of Finland, Singapore, and South Korea.

"However, implementing these reforms will take years before yielding any tangible benefits. In the meantime, Kuwait continues to suffer the consequences of an education system in crisis.

"The question is no longer whether Kuwait can afford to fix its education system -- it is whether it can afford not to. Without immediate and radical reforms, we risk condemning future generations to mediocrity, stagnation, and irrelevance in an increasingly competitive world."



Talal Al-Arab

"Ironically, during this tragedy, Federal Court Chief Justice John Marshall ruled in favor of the Cherokee tribe, invalidating the Georgia government's decisions targeting Native American lands as unconstitutional, a legal victory for the tribe.

"In response to the ruling, US President Andrew Jackson famously responded with his famous phrase: 'John Marshall has made his decision, now let him carry it out!'

"He continued his decisions to forcibly deport the tribes, disregarding the law, the treaties his government had concluded with the tribes, or even the humanitarian disasters that resulted from this genocide.

"During this period, between 60,000 and 100,000 Native Americans were displaced to remote areas that are now known as the state of Oklahoma.

"This area was not chosen randomly, but because it was poor in resources and undesirable to white settlers, making it an isolated exile for the tribes that were displaced.

"Forced displacement was not simply a greed for fertile land or natural resources such as gold, but was part of a dangerous ideological doctrine known as 'Manifest Destiny.'

"This idea, which gained wide political acceptance, was based on an ideological religious interpretation that the white man had a divine right and even duty to spread Western civilization to indigenous lands, even if it meant killing, displacing, and occupying.

"What Netanyahu is doing today in terms of crimes against international law is a reflection of the same fanatical ideology of what is known as Manifest Destiny.

"His extremist ideas, which give him a license to liquidate, kill, and displace others, he has declared indirectly through his speeches, but he has not dared to publicly declare the displacement of the Palestinian people to Arab countries, as Trump did.

"Trump was more explicit when he announced his proposals without any regard for the international resolutions that the US government had previously approved at the United Nations, nor for the rulings issued by international courts, nor even for the treaties concluded by civilized countries.

"The fundamental question that arises amidst these incidents is: Is this similarity between American policies in the nineteenth century towards indigenous citizens and what is happening today in Palestine towards indigenous citizens merely a historical similarity, or is it a behavioral approach rooted in ideological fanaticism that permits occupation and considers it a sacred right, even if the price is the annihilation of entire nations and civilizations?"

"I followed some excerpts of the prisoners' handover, especially the most recent. I saw the Palestinian youths, particularly the Hamas fighters, and the quantity of equipment and weapons they carried. I was surprised as there was a large crowd of them, the number is huge -- in thousands. This confirms that all the Israeli allegations about killing a large number of Hamas fighters and the rest of the Palestinian factions are just illusions," **Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The numbers I saw are large, which means that the Palestinian resistance, despite the pain and losses, is fine, and is in its best condition. Therefore, the allegations about the day after the resistance in Gaza are nothing but gibberish. In spite of all the difficulties they have been facing, these people have not been broken. Thus, Israel will not be able to end the issue, as it plans to do so. It should rather reconsider its calculations and accept an independent Palestinian State.



Adel Al-Kharafi

"Also, displacement attempts will not happen -- whether in Gaza or the West Bank, because people of this type cannot be broken by anyone, no matter how strong the latter. They can never be forced to be displaced, especially since they have lived through the displacement catastrophe since 1948. They were displaced in camps and suffered from the humiliation of losing security and homeland for 75 years.

"This spirit of self-sacrifice has not faded through the years. At this point, we remember David Ben-Gurion's statement: The old die and the young forget. He died without witnessing any Palestinian forgetting his land and history.

"In 1969, Golda Meir said: There is no such thing as Palestinians. She denied the right of the Palestinian people to exist. The response came through the operations carried out by the Palestinian resistance movement, which prompted Meir to say a year later: I am ready to listen if there is a glimmer of hope for an independent Arab State in Judea and Samaria (using the biblical name for the West Bank), and perhaps, in Gaza as well. If they call it Palestine, so be it, why should I care?"

"Over the past seven decades, the Israelis and the major western powers have been trying to 'liquidate' the Palestinian cause, but the response has always been the most painful. On Oct 7, 2023, a Palestinian generation that does not believe in compromises was born. Therefore, this guiding spirit makes the miracles of Palestinian history and it will bring about the independent State."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes/
Mahmoud Attiyeh



KUNA photo
First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah while receiving Jordanian Interior Minister Mazen Al-Faraya at Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad base on the occasion of his visit.

Jordanian Interior Minister visits Coast Guard Base

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10, (KUNA): Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah received Sunday Jordanian Interior Minister Mazen Al-Faraya at the Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Coast Guard base camp at Sheikh Jaber Bridge.

A statement by the General Department of

Security Relations and Media of the Interior Ministry said that Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef received Minister Al-Faraya in the presence of Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry for Border Security, Major General Mujbil bin Shawq, and the Director General of the Administration of the Coast Guard, Brigadier General Sheikh Mubarak Ali Yousef Al-Sabah.

Adding, the visit comes under the frameworks of strengthening security cooperation and the exchange of capabilities between Kuwait and Jordan, including evaluation of the preparedness of the General administration of the Coast Guard in its role of safeguarding the regional waters and maritime borders.

Customs officer, drug dealer get life-term; guns pointed at police

Massive security plan in place for festivities

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff & Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Criminal Court sentenced an inspector at the General Administration for Customs and a Bedoun drug dealer to life imprisonment for aiming their guns at officers from the Drugs Control General Department prior to their arrest in a stable in Kabad.

Meanwhile, the court sentenced a Syrian expatriate to 17 years in prison for smuggling and trafficking 27 kilograms of hashish and alcohol, using psychotropic substances, and possessing weapons and ammunition.

KTV director injured in hit-and-run accident

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Kuwait TV director Jawhar Al-Juwaihel was involved in a hit-and-run accident yesterday, which resulted in a double fracture to his knee, as well as wounds and scratches on his legs, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

In a phone conversation with the daily for an update on his health, Al-Juwaihel explained that the incident occurred when he was jogging. He was caught off guard when an American-made vehicle, driven by an Asian expatriate, veered off the road and sped towards the walkway, crashing into the area designated for exercise.

According to security sources, when the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room received a report about the incident, an ambulance was dispatched to the scene, and Al-Juwaihel was transported to Amiri Hospital for treatment.

Al-Khalidi referred for psychiatric evaluation

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Criminal Court has decided to refer Salman Al-Khalidi for a psychiatric evaluation to assess his mental health.

Last Thursday, the Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Asimi, adjourned to April 10 the decision on Al-Khalidi's objection to the sentence issued in absentia to imprison him based on a State Security case.

The case will be reviewed, and the defense will be presented during the session on April 10. Al-Khalidi has been charged with intentionally challenging the authority of the Amir through his X account and other social media accounts, but he had denied these charges.

Expat woman beaten, robbed

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The investigator at Hawally Police Station ordered the arrest of a young man that a female expatriate accused of assaulting her and forcibly stealing her mobile phone, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to a security source, the expatriate woman, born in 1985, said a young man proposed to her but she rejected him, so he beat her and stole her mobile phone that he gave her earlier. She affirmed there were witnesses to the assault that happened in Hawally.

The complainant submitted a medical report, showing that she got bruises and abrasions in several parts of her face, neck and right thigh, without any fracture.

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Massive security plan: The Ministry of Interior is preparing a comprehensive plan to secure the National Day celebrations with the distribution of 8,000 soldiers and 900 patrols from various sectors, and with the participation of policewomen, reports **Al-Rai** daily quoting informed security sources.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has issued a decision to ban the sale and circulation of water pistols from December to March every year.

They explained that a meeting will be held in the coming days with the ministry's leaders to finalize the details of the plan, which will involve several sectors of the ministry working together to develop a clear vision, assess each sector's needs, and assign specific tasks.

The plan will focus on securing a number of areas and main roads, including Khairan, Wafra, Kabad, Subiya, Jaber Bridge, Abdali Farms, and the Arabian Gulf Street. This year, parades and marches will be banned on high-

ways to prevent traffic disruptions, and activities such as spraying water or foam will be banned to avoid spoiling the joy of the national holidays. Legal action will be taken against violators, including towing and impounding vehicles and issuing citations.

Last year's experience, along with the commitment and cooperation of citizens and residents with security personnel, as well as their adherence to instructions, played a great role in maintaining security and reducing accidents and other illegal activities.

The sources encouraged everyone to enjoy the national holidays while respecting the laws, to ensure an atmosphere of joy and celebration.

□ □ □

521 citations issued: The quarterly statistics (from October to December 2024) from the Audit and Follow-up Department of Municipal Services at the Ahmadi Municipality Branch revealed that 521 citations were issued and 1,173 warnings were given following the inspection of 1,397 shops, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

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LOCAL

MoE launches job promotion teams

Al-Dhafiri moves to end delays

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: In confirmation of the reports published on January 8 and 27 regarding the discontent over the delay in forming job promotion teams in educational zones, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Chair of the Technical Committee for Studying the Formation of Work Teams and Committees Mansour Al-Dhafiri has approved the formation of technical work teams specialized in job promotions for employees in the educational zones, schools, and kindergartens for the current year.

The teams will take necessary steps to implement promotion decisions.

The decision was taken following a meeting of the Technical Committee for Studying Work Teams and Committees. During this meeting, it was agreed to form work teams in line with the decisions of the Civil Service Council, particularly Decisions No. 16/2011 and No. 40/2016 regarding the system for work teams in government agencies.

Al-Dhafiri endorsed the formation and distribution mechanism, which specifies that the ministry's headquarters will form two work teams, in addition to two work teams in each educa-

tional zone, during the dates of raising the job level in the classified job groups set for January and July 2025.

The head of each team will select its members, with a maximum of ten members, as per Article 4 of Civil Service Council's Resolution No. 6/2011. No member can be added to the team without the undersecretary's approval.

According to the decision, the head of each team is responsible for presenting the team's results, meeting minutes, and achievement rates to the technical committee tasked with studying the formation of work teams and committees in the Ministry of Education after completing the assigned tasks. The work team is not authorized to form sub-teams or additional committees.

The draft proposal to form each team must include complete details about its members, including name, civil ID number, work center, job title, and the specific assignment to the team. Priority will be given to the participation of Kuwaiti members, and the project must be submitted to the undersecretary of the ministry for approval.

Al-Dhafiri affirmed the importance of coordination and follow-up by providing representatives of the ministry's Financial Controllers Bureau with a copy of the draft decision.

He said the Administrative Affairs and Administrative Development Sector will be tasked with preparing the related draft decisions and distributing copies to the undersecretary's office, the Financial Administration/Assignees Division, and the committee's rapporteur.

According to informed educational sources, the issuance of job promotion decisions, which were originally set to be implemented in early January, has been delayed but is expected to be completed by March 31.

They indicated that this delay has disrupted the promotion schedule for educational staff, and caused a setback in improving job performance among teachers.



Al-Dhafiri

Green Wall seeks support for sustainable initiatives

Municipal Council set to address recycling proposal and waste management projects

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Environmental Affairs Committee of the Municipal Council, led by Alia Al Farsi, will hold its fourth meeting of the third term on Thursday.

The meeting's agenda includes a proposal from Municipal Council

member Sherifa Al Shalfan on recycling plastic bottles and their caps, and a request from the Green Wall of Kuwait Association for joint collaboration with the Municipal Council.

The Green Wall's request seeks a statement from the municipality regarding the Environmental Affairs Department's projects focused on en-

vironmental protection and advanced solid waste management.

Main projects include the design, supervision, operation, and maintenance of the Kabd sanitary landfill, advisory services for asbestos waste landfill sites, feasibility studies for construction waste treatment projects, and the rehabilitation of closed landfill sites in Qurain and Jleeb Al-

Shuyoukh, and on the Seventh North site.

In addition, the General Secretariat of the Municipal Council has invited the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and the Minister of State for Housing Affairs to the first workshop of the third session of the Committee for the Affairs of the Handicapped scheduled for February 17.



Farwaniya Governor leads National Day celebration at Crowne Plaza.

Governor honors Kuwaiti heritage

Farwaniya Governorate marks Nat'l Day with grand ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Farwaniya Governorate, under the patronage and in the presence of its governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Naser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah, held a national celebration in front of Al Baraka Hall at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on Sunday morning in coordination with Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn Al-Thuraya City hotels.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the ceremony included patriotic programs and activities, and a heritage exhibition, which reflected the spirit of national pride and patriotism.

Businessmen Jawad Bukhamseen, Anwar Bukhamseen, and other dignitaries were present at the celebration.

In another development, Governor Sheikh Athbi visited Dr. Saad Abdulaziz Al-Hamlan Diwaniya for the First Generation in Khaitan on the occasion of the National Day celebrations.

The governor was warmly welcomed by Assistant Undersecretary for Private Security Affairs Abdullah Safah Al-Mulla, Director General of Farwaniya Security Command Brigadier General Muhammad Mutlaq Al-Mutairi, and Dr. Saad Al-Hamlan.

During the visit, the governor expressed his gratitude for the



Farwaniya Governorate photos
Farwaniya Governor tours heritage exhibition.

invitation, and praised the role of diwaniyas in strengthening social ties and preserving Kuwaiti heritage.

He also took the opportunity to view the heritage items displayed in the diwaniya. The visit concluded with the governor and other leaders being honored in recognition of their efforts and contributions to the nation.

Al-Mashaan vows quality, swift completion

Comprehensive maintenance starts on Subiya Highway under new contracts

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan announced the commencement of comprehensive maintenance work on Subiya Highway as part of the new contracts.

She affirmed that the ministry will continue to carry out road maintenance projects in all regions, and ensure full commitment to quality and adher-



Dr. Al-Mashaan

ence to international standards to develop an advanced infrastructure.

Dr. Al-Mashaan explained that the concerned teams conducted inspections of the area before beginning the necessary repairs.

Maintenance will start with the most affected areas and gradually move to the less impacted ones, with close supervision and follow-up from the ministry's teams.

She stressed the importance of coordination in dealing with issues related to road maintenance, and urged the implementing companies to complete all work as quickly as possible, while ensuring high-quality and efficiency in line with the approved technical specifications and the agreed-upon schedule.

Reform plans in motion

Finance Minister reassures retirees on gov't commitment to improve benefits

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: As part of the government's ongoing reform agenda and in the spirit of Kuwait's national celebrations, Finance Minister and Minister of State for Investment, Noura Al-Fassam, sought to ease retirees' concerns regarding benefits aimed at enhancing their quality of life, Al-Seyassah daily reports.

She reassured them that "they are a priority for both the political leadership and the government, but resolving this issue requires time."

Following a meeting with Al-Fassam at the headquarters of the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS), Younis Naseer, a representative of the Retirees' Rights Group, relayed her message, stating, "The government is committed to offering retirees something significant, but patience is needed, especially after the recent restructuring of PIFSS's board a few months ago."

He further explained that discussions with the minister covered key concerns such as interest-free loans, buyback benefits -- described as 'a financial burden breaking our backs' -- as well as pension shares and increases for retirees who were excluded from the minimum pension law.

He noted that the meeting had a positive tone, with both sides agreeing on the importance of achieving fairness for all retirees.

Naseer also revealed that more meetings with Al-Fassam are planned, emphasizing that she pledged to keep them informed on every step the government takes in re-

solving this issue, along with other matters benefiting citizens, particularly those with limited incomes.

Meanwhile, sources told Al-Seyassah that financial reforms remain a top priority for the government, and several policy adjustments are being considered to improve citizens' overall living conditions, with a particular focus on retirees.

The reform plan reportedly revolves around increasing non-oil revenues, collecting outstanding state dues, and revising service fees. Notably, the government has already taken steps in this direction by repealing Law No. 79 of 1995, which regulated fees and financial costs for public services and facilities.

While sources reassured that low-income Kuwaiti citizens will be protected from any austerity measures aimed at reducing the budget deficit, they also disclosed that part of the upcoming reforms will involve a comprehensive review of the fees paid by expatriates and visitors to Kuwait.

The Retirees' Rights Group confirmed that Al-Fassam has committed to keeping them updated on the government's progress in resolving this matter and other issues of national interest.



Al-Fassam



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Youth Theater Days Festival opens Feb 15

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Head of the Youth Theater Days Festival Faleh Al-Anzi announced that the new edition of the festival will be launched on February 15 at the Abdul Hussein Abdul Redha Theater, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He revealed that the festival has chosen the outstanding actress Hayat Al-Fahad as its honoree, who expressed her full support for any initiative that serves youth in theater.

This announcement was made during a press conference held by Dr. Muhammad Al-Muzal in the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for the Youth Sector at the Public Authority for Youth Walid Al-Ansari,

and the official spokesperson and head of public relations at the authority Asrar Zakaria Al-Ansari.

Dr. Al-Muzal explained that this year's edition will feature several surprises, including the introduction of two new awards. The first is for theatrical writing, open to participants outside the official competition. The submitted texts will be evaluated by an external artistic committee. The second award is the Excellence Award, which will be given by the jury to a distinguished participant who did not win one of the official competition awards, in support of young talent.

A toast to press-driven diplomacy

UK Ambassador praises Kuwaiti editors for media contributions

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis hosted a luncheon at her residence to acknowledge the role of the editors-in-chief of Kuwaiti newspapers in fostering media relations and cooperation between the United Kingdom and Kuwait.

Present at the event were Editors-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah (Al-Seyassah and Arab Times), Imad Bukhamseen (An-Nahar) and Dr. Ziad Al-Alyan (Kuwait Times).

Ambassador Lewis emphasized the media's crucial role in

strengthening bilateral relations through accurate and objective reporting. She discussed media issues of mutual concern, and explored ways to strengthen cooperation between Kuwaiti newspapers and the British Embassy.

She then commended the editors-in-chief for their contributions to media communication between Kuwait and Britain. She also expressed her country's appreciation for their role in building understanding and strengthening the long-standing friendship between the two nations.



British Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Belinda Lewis during a luncheon at her residence.



Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times with H.E. Belinda Lewis, British Ambassador to Kuwait.



Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah handing a copy of his book titled: "The Pen that moves Mountains" to Ambassador Belinda Lewis.



Photo by Rezk Taufiq
Ambassador Belinda Lewis with Editors-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Imad Bukhamseen, Dr. Ziad Al-Alyan together with Yara El Sabagh, Andrew Worthington and Malik Hakeem.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait's wholesale

The manufacturing industries group index increased by 0.6 percent during the year, due to a rise in food manufacturing prices by 1.9 percent, beverage manufacturing prices by 3.2 percent, textile manufacturing prices by 4.7 percent, clothing manufacturing prices by 5.5 percent, wood, wood products, and cork by 0.4 percent, paper manufacturing prices by 0.4 percent, chemicals manufacturing prices by 1.1 percent, crystal products and stone building materials by 0.5 percent, computers, electronics, and optical products by 1.9 percent, electrical equipment manufacturing by 1.2 percent, and motor vehicles by 1.5 percent. Prices for both imported goods and local goods increased by 0.4 percent and 1.1 percent respectively.

When materials are classified by production stage, raw material prices and final material prices rose by 3.9 percent and 1.4 percent respectively, while simple materials prices decreased by 1.9 percent.

Regarding final use, prices for consumer goods and capital goods increased by 2.1 percent and 0.8 percent respectively, while prices for production goods decreased by 1.5 percent.

Kuwait public

On her participation in the forum, Al-Fassam said it includes a dialogue session on fiscal policy design options to confront increasing debt pressures with the aim to review the current economic challenges and adopt flexible and balanced financial policies.

She pointed out that the forum "will showcase Kuwait's successful experience in the process of issuing bonds and sovereign debt for the state, which achieved success in 2017 as we entered the international financial mar-

kets by issuing bonds worth USD eight billion."

In this regard, Al-Fassam said that given the high credit rating of Kuwait, this issuance received great demand and was covered at a rate of 3.6 times the total value of the issuance itself, and orders now exceeded USD 29 billion, with more than 500 foreign and international investors participating in the issuance, which reflects strong confidence in the creditworthiness of Kuwait and its economic policies.

On the public debt, she said it does not exceed 60 percent of the country's gross domestic product, which is what countries are committed to, and Kuwait has the lowest debt percentage on a regional level.

The World Governments Summit 2025 will kick off Tuesday with the participation of a high-level Kuwaiti delegation, headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and will continue until next Thursday.

WGS key

He expressed keen desire to reformulate the government apparatus to meet the demands of building a digital society, boost transparency, improve work environment, and invest in human capital, all points that were in line with the state's sustainable development plans.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah affirmed that the WGS had bolstered the UAE's global role in boosting governments future planning efforts, expressing gratitude to the Emirati leadership and people for their relentless contributions in this regard.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah was received at the airport by Emirati Minister of Health Abdulrahman Al-Owais, Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UAE Jamal Al-Ghunaim,

UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi, Kuwait General Consul to Dubai and the Northern Emirates Khaled Al-Zaabi in addition to other diplomats.

This summit, which will continue until Thursday, is considered one of the most influential international gatherings, bringing together leaders and global experts from around the world, and represents an opportunity to intensify efforts and enhance cooperation in facing global challenges.

The Prime Minister came at the invitation of UAE's Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. The Kuwaiti delegation accompanying the Prime Minister included Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, Finance Minister and State Minister for Economic and Investment Affairs Noura Al-Fassam, and Civil Service Commission Chairman Dr. Essam Al-Rubaian.

Cabinet Minister and Chairman of WGS Foundation, Mohammad Abdullah Al-Gergawi said in a statement that the summit, under the directives of UAE President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and his Vice President Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, has become a leading platform since its launch in 2013.

This year's summit attracts more than 4,000 senior leaders and government officials, more than 30 heads of state, and more than 400 ministers attending, with the participation of 27 international organizations.

In a statement to KUNA, Head of the Media and Creative Industries Department at the United Arab Emirates University, Dr. Ahmad Al-Mansoori stated that WGS provides constructive dialogue and an exchange of experiences between countries, and raises vital topics such as artificial intelligence (AI), sustainability, public health and future education that reflect the challenges and opportunities facing the world today.

Ministry honors 'Oil Innovates 3' Award winners

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Ministry of Oil will organize a ceremony in honor of the winners of the 'Oil Innovates 3' Award at the Oil Sector Complex Theater in Shuwaikh on Monday (today), under the patronage and in the presence of Oil Minister Tariq Al-Roumi with Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Nimr Al-Sabah, assistant undersecretaries, other ministry officials, and officials at Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Talent and Creativity in attendance, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, the ministry pointed out that honoring the three winning teams is a confirmation of its commitment and that of the political leadership to support and encourage innovation in the oil sector and enhance the role of the youths in finding creative solutions that contribute to sustainability and technological progress in the oil industry.

It explained that this award is considered a stimulating platform for young talents to present their innovative ideas and projects, reflecting its commitment to encourage scientific research and innovation as part of its strategy to improve the efficiency of the oil sector and raise its competitiveness.

PAHW inks KD785m deals for major housing project

6,455 homes, infrastructure set for 2028

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has signed four contracts for the construction and maintenance of 6,455 houses and public buildings; in addition to asphalt surface layer works, low and medium voltage cable supply, installation works, and road lighting works in seven suburbs within the affordable housing project.

In a press statement on the sidelines of the signing of the contracts, acting Director General of PAHW Rashid Al-Enezi pointed out that "with these contracts, the authority has completed all contracts related to the construction and maintenance of houses and public build-

ings, asphalt surface layer works, supply and installation of low and medium pressure cables, and road lighting works in all sectors of the affordable housing project."

He also confirmed the signing of six contracts with local and international companies to implement the city works with a total value of KD 785,372,093; while the implementation period for each project is 1,095 days.

He revealed that the affordable housing project consists of 9,800 houses with public buildings and their site connection works; indicating that the implementation includes asphalt surface layer, road lighting network, and the supply and installation of low and medium pressure cables.

He said the project consists of 74 public buildings, including two kindergartens, 10 primary schools, eight intermediate schools, six secondary schools, two Islamic centers, 14 mosques, 16 houses for imams and muezzins, a fire station, a tele-

phone exchange, two community development centers, two social unit centers, two police stations, two specialized health centers, an ambulance center, two central markets, two gas branches, and a diwan-ya for the elderly.

He confirmed that the signing of these contracts is in line with the authority's commitment to achieve its strategic goal in providing integrated housing projects that contribute to improving the citizens' standard of living. He said the institution is following up the implementation of the first and second contracts; which started at the beginning of January and include the construction of 3,345 houses and a number of public buildings.

He went on to say that this is in addition to the surface layer of asphalt, supplying and installing low and medium pressure cables and road lighting works in sectors (BP-1) and (BP-3); disclosing that the target completion date is early 2028.



The Kuwaiti Danish Dairy Company (KDD) Launches Landmark Event "Fixing Food for Health & Planet" at WEF Annual Meeting at Davos 2025

Davos, Switzerland on January 22nd, 2025 – The Kuwaiti Danish Dairy Company (KDD) hosted a groundbreaking event at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, bringing together global leaders, visionaries, and changemakers to address the urgent need to transform food systems for the benefit of health, sustainability, and resilience.

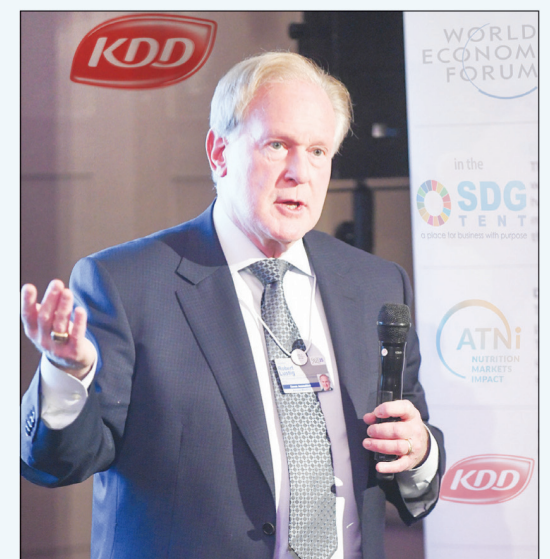
"Fixing Food for Health & Planet" was held at the SDG Tent in Davos on January 22, 2025. With the spotlight on actionable solutions, this transformative dialogue emphasized the critical role of metabolic health as the cornerstone of sustainable nutrition.

The event featured a stellar lineup of thought leaders, including:

- * Dr. Robert H. Lustig
- * Dr. Gunhild Stordalen
- * Ms. Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli

The discussion explored innovative strategies to bridge the gap between food, health, and the planet while emphasizing the importance of trust, transparency, and stakeholder collaboration in achieving measurable progress. At the heart of the event was the Metabolic Matrix, KDD's pioneering framework that integrates 39 evidence-based criteria across three core pillars: Support the Brain, Protect the Liver, and Feed the Gut.

The event's resounding success underscored the power of collective action in reimagining the future of food, health, and the planet. KDD is committed to advancing this vital agenda, bringing together diverse stakeholders to forge



innovative pathways to healthier communities and a sustainable planet.

Visit the KDD Metabolic Matrix website to learn more about how the Company is shaping the future of healthy food systems: metabolicmatrix.info.

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'US is not subsidizing Canada'

Trump serious about Canada becoming 51st state in Super Bowl interview

WASHINGTON, Feb 10, (AP): US President Donald Trump said he is serious about wanting Canada to become the 51st state in an interview that aired Sunday during the Super Bowl pre-show.

"Yeah it is," Trump told Fox News Channel's Bret Baier when asked whether his talk of annexing Canada is "a real thing" - as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently warned.

"I think Canada would be much better off being the 51st state because we lose \$200 billion a year with Canada. And I'm not going to let that happen," he said. "Why are we paying \$200 billion a year, essentially a subsidy to Canada?"

The US is not subsidizing Canada. The US buys products from the natural resource-rich nation, including commodities like oil. While the trade gap in goods has ballooned in recent years to \$72 billion in 2023, the deficit largely reflects America's imports of Canadian energy.

Trump has repeatedly suggested that Canada would be better off if it agreed to become the 51st US state - a prospect that is deeply unpopular among Canadians.

Trudeau said Friday during a closed-

door session with business and labor leaders that Trump's talk of making Canada the 51st US state was "a real thing" and tied to desire for access to the country's natural resources.

"Mr Trump has it in mind that the easiest way to do it is absorbing our country and it is a real thing. In my conversations with him on ...," Trudeau said, according to CBC, Canada's public broadcaster. "They're very aware of our resources of what we have, and they very much want to be able to benefit from those."

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One on Sunday as he traveled to the Super Bowl game in New Orleans, Trump continued to threaten a country that has long been one of the US's closest allies. He claimed that Canada is "not viable as a country" without US trade, and warned that the founding NATO member can no longer depend on the US for military protection.

"You know, they don't pay very much for military. And the reason they don't pay much is they assume that we're going to protect them," he said. "That's not an assumption they can make because - why are we protecting another country?"

In the Fox interview, which was pre-



US President Donald Trump, (from right), speaks to reporters accompanied by Interior Secretary Doug Burgum and Burgum's wife Kathryn Burgum, aboard Air Force One where Trump signed a proclamation declaring Feb. 9 Gulf of America Day, as he travels from West Palm Beach, Fla. to New Orleans on Feb 9. (AP)

also said that he has not seen enough action from Canada and Mexico to stave off the tariffs he has threatened to impose on the country's two largest trading partners once a 30-day extension is up.

"No, it's not good enough," he said. "Something has to happen. It's not sustainable. And I'm changing it."

Trump last week agreed to a 30-day pause on his plan to slap Mexico and Canada with a 25% tariff on all im-

ports except for Canadian oil, natural gas and electricity, which would be taxed at 10%, after the countries took steps to appease his concerns about border security and drug trafficking.

Aboard Air Force One, Trump said that he would on Monday announce a 25% tariff on all steel and aluminum imports into the US, including from Canada and Mexico, and unveil a plan for reciprocal tariffs later in the week.

"Very simply it's if they charge us, we charge them," he said.

Trump's participation in the Super Bowl interview marked a return to tradition. Presidents have typically granted a sit-down to the network broadcasting the game, the most-watched television event of the year. But both Trump and his predecessor, Joe Biden, were inconsistent in their participation.

Biden declined to participate last year - turning down a massive audience in an election year - and also skipped an appearance in 2023, when efforts by his team to have Biden speak via a Fox Corp. streaming service instead of the main network failed. During his first term, Trump participated three out of four years.

Trump was the first sitting president to attend the Super Bowl in person - something he told Baier he was sur-

prised to learn.

"I thought it would be a good thing for the country to have the president at the game," he said.

During his flight to New Orleans, Trump signed a proclamation declaring Feb. 9 "the first ever Gulf of America Day" as Air Force One flew over the body of water that he renamed by proclamation from the Gulf of Mexico.

Trump in the interview, also defended the work of billionaire Elon Musk, whose so-called Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, has been drawing deep concern from Democrats as he moves to shut down whole government agencies and fire large swaths of the federal workforce in the name of rooting out waste and inefficiency.

Musk, Trump said, has "been terrific" and will target the Department of Education and the military next.

"We're going to find billions, hundreds of billions of dollars of fraud and abuse," Trump predicted. "I campaigned on this."

He was also asked about his dancing, which has become a popular meme on social media.

"I don't know what it is," he said. "I try and walk off sometimes without dancing and I can't. I have to dance."

Vance and Musk question authority of courts as Trump's agenda faces legal pushback

WASHINGTON, Feb 10, (AP): Top Trump administration officials are openly questioning the judiciary's authority to serve as a check on executive power as the new president's sweeping agenda faces growing pushback from the courts.

Over the past 24 hours, officials ranging from billionaire Elon Musk to Vice President JD Vance have not only criticized a federal judge's decision early Saturday that blocks Musk's Department of Government Efficiency from accessing Treasury Department records, but have also attacked the legitimacy of judicial oversight, a fundamental pillar of American democracy, which is based on the separation of powers.

"If a judge tried to tell a general how to conduct a military operation, that would be illegal. If a judge tried to command the attorney general in how to use her discretion as a prosecutor, that's also illegal. Judges aren't allowed to control the executive's legitimate power," Vance wrote on X on

Sunday morning.

That post came hours after Musk said overnight that the judge who ruled against him should be impeached.

"A corrupt judge protecting corruption. He needs to be impeached NOW!" said Musk, who has been tasked by President Donald Trump with rooting out waste across the federal government.

Musk also shared a post from a user who had suggested that the Trump administration openly defy the court order.

"I don't like the precedent it sets when you defy a judicial ruling, but I'm just wondering what other options are these judges leaving us," the person had written, in part.

The court order against Musk barred his team temporarily from accessing a Treasury system that contains sensitive personal data, such as Social Security and bank account numbers for millions of Americans. Musk and his team say they are simply rooting through government systems to identify waste and

abuse at the direction of the Republican president.

Deputy White House chief of staff Stephen Miller called the ruling "an assault on the very idea of democracy itself."

"What we continue to see here is the idea that rogue bureaucrats who are elected by no one, who answer to no one, who have lifetime tenure jobs, who we would be told can never be fired, which, of course, is not true, that the power has been cemented and accumulated for years, whether it be with the Treasury bureaucrats or the FBI bureaucrats or the USAID bureaucrats, with this unelected shadow force that is running our government and running our country," Miller said on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures."

The pushback comes as the administration's efforts to dismantle government agencies and eliminate large swaths of the federal workforce are being held up by the courts.



Ohio Gov Mike DeWine, (left), looks on as Vice President JD Vance speaks at the East Palestine Fire Department as he visits East Palestine, Ohio on Feb 3. (AP)



People participate in a 7-hour long blockade of a highway in Belgrade, Serbia on Feb 9, 2025, to protest the Nov 1 collapse of a concrete canopy at the central train station in Novi Sad, that killed 15 people. (AP)

Serbian protesters block key bridge and roads

Striking university students in Serbia blocked a bridge in Belgrade as well as roads throughout the Balkan country on Sunday to mark 100 days since the collapse of a concrete canopy at a train station which killed 15 people.

Many residents joined the stu-

dents for a 7-hour blockade of the the Gazela, or Gazelle, bridge over the Sava River in the Serbian capital. Simultaneously, a three-hour blockade of key roads started in Novi Sad, while students in Nis blocked a highway pay toll station at the entrance of the southern

city.

The blockades are part of a campaign of protests led by striking university students who are demanding justice over the Nov. 1 disaster at a train station in Novi Sad, which critics have blamed on government corruption. (AP)



European Council President Antonio Costa, (left), greets Romania's President Klaus Werner Iohannis as he arrives for an EU summit at the Egmont Palace in Brussels on Feb 3. (AP)

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis quits

BUCHAREST, Romania, Feb 10, (AP): Romanian President Klaus Iohannis announced his resignation on Monday following mounting pressure from populist opposition groups, two months after a top court annulled a presidential election in the European Union country.

"To spare Romania from this crisis, I am resigning as president of Romania," he said in an emotional address on Monday, adding that he will leave office on Feb. 12.

Kosovo prime minister looking for allies for new Cabinet

PRISTINA, Kosovo, Feb 10, (AP): Kosovo Prime Minister **Albin Kurti's** leftwing party won most seats in the weekend parliamentary election but was left without a majority in the house, forcing it to look for an ally to form the next government, according to preliminary results released Monday.

The vote on Sunday was key in determining who will lead Kosovo as talks on normalizing ties with rival Serbia remain stalled and foreign funding for one of Europe's poorest countries is in question.

The election marked the first time since independence in 2008 that Kosovo's parliament completed a full four-year mandate. It was 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.

With 88% of the votes counted, Kurti's Self-Determination Movement Party, or Vetevendosje!, had won 41.3%, according to the Central Election Commission, the election governing body.

The Democratic Party of Kosovo, or PDK, whose main leaders are detained at a Netherlands-based international criminal tribunal in The Hague and accused of war crimes, won 21.8% of the vote.

Next, with 17.8% support is the Democratic League of Kosovo, or LDK, the oldest party in the country. The LDK lost much of its support after the death in 2006 of its leader, Ibrahim Rugova. The Alliance for Kosovo's Future of former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj garnered 7.7% of the votes.

Still, Kurti was upbeat, though his remarks gave nothing away about who he plans to ask to join his coalition government.



Kurti

UK touts clampdown on illegal working as it seeks to look tough on immigration

LONDON, Feb 10, (AP): The British government on Monday touted its success in raiding businesses that employ unauthorized workers and deporting thousands of migrants with no right to stay in the UK.

What's billed as a "blitz on illegal working" is part of a pledge by the center-left Labour government to reduce immigration -- a priority for many voters -- and stop the growing popularity of the hard-right party Reform UK.

But for migrants groups, and some Labour Party members, the images uncomfortably recall a previous Conservative government's pledge to make Britain a "hostile environment" for illegal migration. That led to thousands of long-term legal residents being denied housing, jobs or medical treatment because they could not prove their status. Dozens were detained or deported to countries they had not visited for decades.

The government said Monday that immigration enforcement teams have carried out more than 5,000 raids since Labour was elected in July on businesses including nail bars, convenience stores, vape shops, restaurants and car washes, and made almost 4,000 arrests. The figures are significantly higher than the previous year, when the Conservatives were in power.

Britain also has deported more than 16,000 people in the same period. The government plans to release video footage of migrants being deported later Monday in a PR move that has been criticized as crass and insensitive.

Home Office Minister Angela Eagle defended the government's tough ap-



People thought to be migrants who undertook the crossing from France in small boats and were picked up in the Channel, arrive to be disembarked from a small transfer boat which ferried them from a larger British border force vessel that didn't come into the port, in Dover, south east England on June 17, 2022. (AP)

proach.

"We have to have a system where the rules are respected and enforced," she told the BBC. "It's important that we show what we are doing and it's important that we send messages to people who may have been sold lies about what will await them in the UK if they get themselves smuggled in."

The government says the perception that it's easy to find work in Britain is a "dangerous draw" for migrants who try to cross the English Channel on small boats. Authorities in the UK

and France have struggled for years to stop the dangerous crossings, which brought more than 38,000 people to Britain in 2024. More than 70 people perished in the attempts.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer has said the crime gangs are a threat to global security and should be treated like terror networks. The Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, which faces a key vote in Parliament on Monday, contains new powers including the ability to seize suspected traffickers' phones before they are arrested.

US officials bound for Europe for talks on Ukraine

WASHINGTON, Feb 10, (AP): US President Donald Trump's national security adviser said Sunday that top administration officials will meet with European officials this week about how to end the war in Ukraine, nearly three years after Russia launched an all-out invasion.

Less than a day earlier, the New York Post reported that Trump had a phone call with Russian leader Vladimir Putin to discuss steps toward a negotiated solution. Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One as he flew to the Super Bowl in New Orleans, Trump declined to discuss his reported phone conversation with Putin.

"I don't want to do that. We're trying to end that war. It's a war that would have never happened if I were president, it would have never happened, but we're making progress. But I can't tell you," he said.

Asked to clarify whether his conversations with Putin took place before he took office or after, Trump said, "I've had it. Let's just say I've had it. And I expect to have many more conversations. We have to get that war ended. It's going to end."

There was no immediate confirmation of the call by the Kremlin.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy poses for a selfie with a police officer after attending a flag-raising ceremony in the city of Izium, Ukraine, on Sept 14, 2022. (AP)

In a television interview, National Security Advisor Mike Waltz said the Russian economy is not doing well and that Trump "is prepared to tax, to tariff, to sanction" Moscow to get Putin to the negotiating table. Waltz also underscored that the Trump administration

is looking to use this week's engagements to begin talks on clawing back some of the United States' assistance to Ukraine. He said European allies will also need to take a greater role in supporting Ukraine going forward.

"We need to recoup those costs and that is going to be a partnership with the Ukrainians in terms of their natural resources and their oil and gas and also buying ours," Waltz said in an appearance on NBC's Meet the Press. "Those conversations are going to happen this week. And I think an underlying principle here is that the Europeans have to own this conflict going forward. President Trump is going to end it. And then in terms of security guarantees, that is squarely going to be with the Europeans."

Vice President JD Vance will be in Paris on Monday for an artificial intelligence summit that's gathering government officials and will head later in the week to the Munich Security Conference, where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will lead the battle-weary country's delegation. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Trump's special envoy on Ukraine and Russia, Keith Kellogg, will also be in Munich.

'Ensure your emergency kit is complete'

Tropical cyclone warning issued for residents of NW Australia

SYDNEY, Feb 10, (Xinhua): Residents of northwest Australia have been told to prepare for a tropical cyclone likely to form within days.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) on Monday said that a tropical low system off the north coast of Western Australia (WA) in the Indian Ocean has a "high chance" of reaching tropical cyclone strength within 48 hours.

A tropical cyclone warning has been put in place for towns along a 650-km stretch of coast in WA's Kimberley region, including the town of Broome with a population of about 15,000.

The BoM said that damaging wind gusts of up to 100 km per hour could develop in the region on Tuesday. It warned residents to expect localized heavy rainfall and abnormally high tides.

It said the system may reach category 3 severe tropical cyclone strength by late Tuesday or Wednesday. A flood watch warning has been put in place for catchments in the northern part of the Kimberley region.

"Although there is no immediate danger you need to start preparing for dangerous weather and keep up to date," the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services said in a post on social media.

"Ensure your emergency kit is complete and check your family knows what to do. Your emergency kit should include canned food and water to last five to seven days, a first aid kit, medi-



This photo taken on Feb 4, 2025 shows the Opera House lit up in red to celebrate the Chinese New Year in Sydney, Australia. (Xinhua)

cation, cash and a battery-operated radio and spare batteries to listen to warnings," the department said.

It urged people in the area to secure vehicles, boats, gas bottles, rainwater tanks and other loose material around their homes.

Meanwhile, a man has been critically injured in a brawl involving up to 40 armed people in western Sydney.

Police in the state of New South Wales (NSW) said on Monday that officers were called to reports of a brawl "invol-

ing between 30 and 40 people armed with knives, machetes and baseball bats" at a public park 18 km west of central Sydney at about 5:40 p.m. on Sunday.

Officers arrived at the scene in the suburb of South Granville, causing the group to disperse on foot and in cars.

"Police located a 28-year-old man with serious head injuries," a NSW Police statement said.

Ambulance crews were sent to the scene and treated the man before taking him to a local hospital in a critical

condition.

Shortly after, police arrested a 29-year-old man in a nearby street. He was taken to a police station and charged with affray and carrying a knife in a public place.

In another development, Australian police have seized more than 40 kg of cocaine found in refrigerated containers imported into Sydney.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Australian Border Force (ABF) said on Monday that about 41 kg of cocaine was found in the containers that arrived at Sydney's Port Botany from Chile and Belgium in January.

They said that officers have observed a recent drug import trend where cocaine is hidden by criminal syndicates in refrigerated containers used by legitimate businesses to import goods.

Once the container has arrived in Sydney, local members of the syndicates attempt to break into the docks or other storage areas to recover the drugs.

The AFP and ABF said in a joint statement that there has been a significant increase in the use of the tactic since April 2023 and that they are now actively targeting refrigerated containers arriving in Sydney.

They said that more than one tonne of cocaine has been seized in total from the containers since 2023, as well as tracking devices used by organized crime gangs to monitor and identify the containers.

'Visit by Cook Islands PM isn't meant to antagonize others'

BEIJING, Feb 10, (AP): China insisted on Monday that a visit this week by the prime minister of the Cook Islands to Beijing is not meant to conspire against anyone in the South Pacific, despite the trip stirring up a diplomatic spat between the tiny nation and its chief benefactor, New Zealand.

The visit appears to be part of China's campaign to woo tiny island nations in the South Pacific, where Beijing has been using its economic weight and diplomatic heft in what critics say is a push to reduce the influence of the United States and its allies and give itself access to mineral resources, fisheries and global stature.

"The relationship between China and the Cook Islands is not directed against any third party and should not be subject to or disrupted by any third party," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson **Guo Jiakun** said Monday.

New Zealand's Foreign Minister Winston Peters said he had repeated

in a phone call to Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown that he should discuss with New Zealand the contents of the so-called Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and other agreements that Brown intends to sign in China.

"This lack of consultation is a matter of significant concern to the New Zealand government," Peters' office said in a statement Sunday.

The Cook Islands, a collection of 15,000 small islands with a population of 15,000 but a large exclusive economic zone, has been self-governing in free association with New Zealand, its largest source of aid. The almost 60-year-old arrangement allows Cook Islanders to hold New Zealand citizenship and passports and to work and live in New Zealand.

Brown has said that New Zealand has been advised that the deal with China does not touch on security but that New Zealand does not have to review the exact wording of any documents.

He has said his state visit to Beijing, starting this weekend, would focus on renewable energy and agriculture but that it would also touch on maritime issues and shipping and seabed minerals development, areas New Zealand, Australia, the US and others have been particularly concerned about.



Guo

Choi urges security posture against Pyongyang threats

South Korea and US troops hold live-fire drills near border with North Korea

TOKYO, Feb 10, (Agencies): South Korea and US troops have been staging a large-scale combined live-fire exercise at a firing range near the inter-Korean border to enhance their joint operational capabilities, Seoul's Air Force said Monday, said Yonhap News Agency.

The three-week exercise began last Monday at a complex in Pocheon, about 30 km south of the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas, mobilizing some 2,000 troops and over 150 pieces of military hardware, according to the Army.

Troops of the allies have formed combined units to stage various drills, involving such as South Korean K1A2 tanks, US Stryker combat vehicles, Apache attack helicopters and A-10 attack aircraft, it said.

The drills are designed to strengthen the allies' combined operational capabilities and help the US military's rotational Stryker unit adjust to conditions on the Korean Peninsula after its arrival in South Korea last October, the report said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has accused the US of standing behind the world's disputes, reaffirming the country's policy to further develop its nuclear forces, the state-run Korean Central News Agency reported Sun-

day.

Kim made the remarks during his visit to the Ministry of National Defense the previous day in celebration of the 77th anniversary of the founding of its armed forces, the Korean People's Army.

Kim also claimed that US nuclear strategic assets deployed on the Korean Peninsula, the US-led nuclear war simulation exercises and the US-Japan-South Korea military cooperation are "inviting military imbalance" on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia, causing "a new conflicting structure" and posing a grave challenge to North Korea.

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



South Korean army K1A2 tanks move during a combined live fire drill with the United States at Rodriguez Live Fire Complex in Pocheon, South Korea on Feb 10. (AP)

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."

North Korea hasn't directly responded to Trump's recent overture, as it continues weapons testing activi-

ties 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.

Meanwhile, South Korea's Acting President Choi Sang-mok on Monday called for coordinated efforts from all government agencies, including the military and police, to ensure security against North Korean threats, Yonhap News Agency reported.

Choi also called for joint efforts by the public and private sectors in an annual central integrated defense council meeting, highlighting the need for unity in response to North Korean provocations.

The meeting was attended by some 150 officials, including the defense minister, acting police chief, fire chief and civilian experts.

"In these grave security conditions, we must stand together as one team to establish a comprehensive security posture that protects the daily lives and safety of our people from North Korea's various provocations," Choi was quoted as saying.

He cited recent threats, including short-range ballistic missile and cruise missile launches, balloons carrying trash, along with Pyongyang's dispatch of soldiers to support Russia's war in Ukraine.

Choi, who assumed interim leadership while serving as finance minister,

stressed that national security is directly tied to the economy.

"Strong security is the foundation for economic growth and the public livelihood," he said.

In another development, one worker was killed and the other was injured on Monday in South Korea's oil storage tank explosion, according to Yonhap news agency.

The explosion occurred at about 11:15 am local time (0215 GMT) at a factory in Ulsan, some 300 km south-east of the capital Seoul.

One of the two workers in their 30s at the scene was taken to a hospital unconscious to undergo surgery, but died later in the day.

The other suffered a serious injury that was not life-threatening.

The two victims were believed to be caught in the explosion while opening a hatch on top of the tank and checking the amount of petrochemicals inside.

The fire authorities mobilized about 230 firefighters and 44 equipment, including fire trucks, to put out the fire that broke out after the explosion.

There were four to five other tanks containing lubricants, biodiesel and others around the tank where the explosion and fire broke out.

The fire was completely extinguished some three hours later.

Federal court grants request to block detained Venezuelan immigrants from being sent to Gitmo

ALBUQUERQUE, NM, Feb 10, (AP): A federal court on Sunday blocked the Trump administration from sending three Venezuelan immigrants held in New Mexico to Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba as part of the president's immigration crackdown.

In a legal filing earlier in the day, lawyers for the men said the detainees "fit the profile of those the administration has prioritized for detention in Guantanamo, i.e. Venezuelan men detained in the El Paso area with (false) charges of connections with the Tren

de Aragua gang."

It asked a US District Court in New Mexico for a temporary restraining order blocking their transfer, adding that "the mere uncertainty the government has created surrounding the availability of legal process and counsel access is sufficient to authorize the modest injunction."

During a brief hearing, Judge Kenneth J. Gonzales granted the temporary order, which was opposed by the government, said Jessica Vosburgh, an attorney for the three men.

"It's short term. This will get revisited and further fleshed out in the weeks to come," Vosburgh told The Associated Press.

A message seeking comment was left for US Customs and Immigration Enforcement.

The filing came as part of a lawsuit on behalf of the three men filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico, and Las Americas Immigrant Advisory Center.

The Tren de Aragua gang originated in a lawless prison in the central Venezuelan state of Aragua more than a decade ago and has expanded in recent years as millions of desperate Venezuelans fled President Nicolás Maduro's rule and migrated to other parts of Latin America or the US.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said last week that flights of detainees had landed at Guantanamo. Immigrant rights groups sent a letter Friday demanding access to people who have been sent there, saying the base should not be used as a "legal black hole."

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Wednesday that more than 8,000 people have been arrested in immigration enforcement actions since Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration.

Trump has vowed to deport millions of the estimated 11.7 million people in the US illegally.



In this April 17, 2019, photo, reviewed by US military officials, the control tower is seen through the razor wire inside the Camp VI detention facility in Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba. (AP)

3 key areas to end conflict identified

South Sudan parties adjourn talks in Kenya

NAIROBI, Feb 10, (Xinhua): Talks between South Sudan's Transitional Government of National Unity and holdout opposition groups adjourned Saturday in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, after making some progress that could usher in a new dispensation in the country, Chief Mediator Lazarus Sumbeiywo has said.

The adjournment of the talks came at a time when South Sudan is confronting significant challenges, including 9 million people requiring humanitarian aid, 7.5 million experiencing food insecurity and an influx of over 1 million returnees and refugees fleeing violence in neighbouring Sudan.

There are three priority areas of critical importance necessary to ending the perpetual transition in South Sudan, Sumbeiywo said.

The unification of forces and security sector reforms, the permanent



Sudanese refugees arrive in Acre, Chad on Oct 6, 2024. (AP)

constitution-making process, and the holding of free, fair, credible and transparent elections are the three key points that could help end conflict in the country, he said.

"Given the acute human insecurity and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, the mediation believes that actions must be taken for there to be effective mechanisms of implementation," Sumbeiywo said in a communique issued in Nairobi.

Dubbed Tumaini, meaning hope in Swahili, the peace talks between South Sudan's transitional government and opposition groups have been ongoing in Nairobi since last year but have sometimes been postponed to allow for further consultations among the parties involved.

During the latest round of talks, Sumbeiywo said, the root causes of the conflict were extensively deliberated through a joint technical committee.



A soldier and voters listen to the national anthem at a voting station in Quito, Ecuador, as polls open for the presidential elections on Feb 9. (AP)

Ecuador's conservative incumbent and leftist lawyer advance to presidential runoff

GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador, Feb 10, (AP): Ecuador will choose its next president in a runoff election after conservative incumbent Daniel Noboa and leftist lawyer Luisa González garnered enough votes Sunday to beat 14 other candidates.

The contest, set for April 13, will be a repeat of the October 2023 snap election that earned Noboa a 16-month presidency.

Noboa and González are now vying for a full four-year term, promising voters to reduce the widespread criminal activity that upended their lives

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 collective losses were a determining factor in deciding whether a third president in four years could turn Ecuador around or if Noboa deserved more time in office.

Noboa, an heir to a fortune built on the banana trade, and González, the protégée of Ecuador's most influential president this century, were

the clear front-runners ahead of the election.

Figures released by Ecuador's National Electoral Council showed that with 80% of ballots tallied, Noboa received more than 3.71 million votes, or 44.43%, while González earned over 3.69 million votes, or 44.17%. The 14 other candidates in the race were far behind them.

Voting is mandatory in Ecuador. Ecuador's National Electoral Council reported that more than 83% of the roughly 13.7 million eligible voters cast ballots.

Subcontinent

CM of Manipur resigns: Chief Minister of India's Manipur state **N. Biren Singh** resigned on Sunday, almost two years after deadly ethnic violence broke out in the northeastern state.

Singh, a member of India's main ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, tendered his resignation to the governor of Manipur.

Insiders say he resigned from his post to quell dissidence within his party and to avert the possibility of a



Singh

no-confidence motion against him by the Congress-led opposition in the state assembly.

The legislative assembly session was scheduled to begin in Mani-

5 terrorists killed in Pakistan:

Five terrorists were killed during an operation in Pakistan's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the counter-terrorism department (CTD) of police said on Monday. The CTD personnel conducted an intelligence-based operation in Karak district of the province on the reported presence of terrorists in the area, CTD officials told the media.

The killed terrorist belonged to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, said the CTD, adding that the security forces have intensified their efforts against terrorism in the region, with operations continuing to ensure peace and stability. (Xinhua)

Boursa Kuwait closes higher

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Boursa Kuwait ended Monday's trading session on a positive note, with the general index rising 25.09 points, or 0.32%, to close at 7,944.18 points. The market witnessed significant trading activity, with 788.8 million shares exchanged through 25,896

transactions, amounting to a total value of KD 194.6 million (approximately USD 599.3 million).

The Premier Market Index led the gains, climbing 34.18 points, or 0.41%, to settle at 8,469.75 points.

Business

Bank recommends 6% bonus share distribution

Warba Bank announces KD 22.4 million net profit for 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Warba Bank announced today its financial results for the year ending December 31, 2024, reporting a net profit of KD 22.4 million, reflecting a 13.9% increase compared from the previous year. This translates to Earnings per share (EPS) stood at of 8.85 fils as of 31 December 2024, representing a 16.4% increase from the prior year growth year-over-year. The Board of Directors has recommended a 6% bonus share distribution to shareholders registered in the bank's records at the General Assembly. This recommendation is subject to the approval of the General Assembly and regulatory authorities.

These results underscore the success of the bank's prudent strategy and its innovative approach to delivering advanced banking services and products, which align with the aspirations of its customers and shareholders. The strong performance also highlights the bank's commitment to expanding its business and solidifying its position as a leading Islamic financial institution, despite ongoing regional and international geopolitical and economic challenges.

The bank's financial performance was driven by a 25.2% increase in net operating income, which reached KD 80.3 million, compared to the previous year. Net financing income also rose by 24.2% to KD 54.78 million, while total comprehensive income for the year increased by 10.4% to KD 270.4 million.

On the balance sheet front, total assets grew by 9.6% to KD 5.29 billion, while shareholders' equity reached KD 335.9 million, marking a 6.5% increase compared to the previous year.

Financing receivables increased by 5.5% to KD 3.64 billion, and depositors' accounts grew by 8.3% to KD 3.15 billion by the end of the fiscal year.

Results Reflect the Bank's Commitment to Leadership

Commenting on these results, Warba Bank's Chairman, Mr. Hamad Musaed Al-Sayer, stated: "Warba Bank continues to deliver exceptional financial performance, driven by its integrated strategy, which has enabled the bank to expand its operations and establish a strong foundation for sustainable growth. This success has been achieved despite ongoing geopolitical and economic challenges in the Middle East region."

Al-Sayer added: "The bank has successfully implemented its strategy, which focuses on digital transformation to diversify banking products and services, alongside a conservative investment approach that emphasizes risk-balanced policies. This strategy has strengthened the bank's ability to anticipate and meet the evolving needs of customers, earning their trust, safeguarding shareholders' rights, and ensuring financial stability. Our plans have been centered on expanding our banking operations and introducing innovative digital and financing solutions tailored to the growing demands of the local market."

Al-Sayer highlighted that Warba Bank has recently distinguished itself by launching cutting-edge digital services and products, marking the culmination of its ongoing efforts and investments in developing innovative banking solutions. These initiatives aim to enhance service efficiency and

streamline transactions for customers of all sizes and requirements.

He said: "Warba Bank's direction reflects its future vision to become the bank of choice, delivering value in every aspect of its operations. This vision is embodied in our new slogan, launched at the end of last year: 'Let's Own Tomorrow.' We aim to maintain our leadership by adopting innovative banking solutions that address the changing needs of our customers and support their future aspirations. Our focus on technology, digital transformation, and operational sustainability underscores our commitment to providing an advanced and comprehensive banking experience."

Al-Sayer concluded: "By focusing on innovation and sustainability, Warba Bank continues to achieve milestones that reinforce its position as a modern Islamic bank, combining ethical principles, rich heritage, and future aspirations. We strive to be a trusted partner in building a better tomorrow for all segments of society in Kuwait."

Significant Achievements in 2024

2024 marked a pivotal year in Warba Bank's operational journey as it continued to develop and grow, solidifying its position as a leading Kuwaiti Islamic bank with over a decade of experience. Throughout the year, the bank introduced a range of innovative banking products and services, many of which were first-to-market in Kuwait. These initiatives reflect Warba Bank's commitment to delivering advanced solutions that align with the evolving aspirations of its customers, driven by a robust strategy focused on sustainable expansion.

Despite global economic shifts and regional tensions, the bank maintained stable performance, leveraging its diversified business model and ability to provide integrated banking solutions that deliver sustainable value to customers and shareholders. This resilience has reinforced Warba Bank's leading position in the banking sector.

Commenting on these achievements, Warba Bank Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Shaheen Hamad Al-Ghanem, said: "Our earnings are the result of our strategy to achieve sustainable growth through investments in technology and innovative product offerings. We remain committed to expanding our digital footprint and enhancing the customer experience by delivering advanced solutions that align with the rapid transformations in the banking sector."

Al-Ghanem highlighted the bank's operational milestones in 2024, most notably the issuance of sustainable green sukuk, listed on the Nasdaq Dubai and London Stock Exchange. This milestone made Warba Bank the first Islamic bank in Kuwait to issue such sukuk, demonstrating its commitment to supporting global efforts to combat climate change. These sukuk are designed to finance projects that promote the green economy and sustainable development, with a focus on renewable energy and environmental resource management.

Al-Ghanem added: "This achievement reflects our dedication to the principles of Islamic Sharia, as well as our social and environmental responsibilities. By innovating financial solutions, we have positioned Kuwait among the global leaders



Warba Bank's Chairman, Mr. Hamad Musaed Al-Sayer.



Warba Bank Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Shaheen Hamad Al-Ghanem.

Al-Sayer:

- Results affirm Warba Bank's sound policies, prudent management, and solid strategy maximizing shareholder value
- Warba maintained growth momentum during the year, achieving strong results that reflect the fundamentals of its diverse business lines
- Despite regional and international geopolitical tensions, Warba continues to benefit from its diversified portfolio of products and services
- Strategy centered on expanding in banking services, products and financing solutions
- Warba succeeded in providing a banking experience that meets changing customer needs through carefully designed digital services and products

Al-Ghanem:

- Warba's strong results reflect the success of its strategy aiming for sustainable growth and delivering long-term value to shareholders and customers
- Our ability to maintain profit growth across different economic cycles demonstrates our flexible business model and prudent approach to risk management
- Warba's efforts stood out through investments in green financing, sustainable goals, and its environmental and social sustainability principles

investing in sustainable finance. Our efforts extend beyond this, as we continue to invest in Sharia-compliant banking technologies and nurture young talent, empowering future generations to drive progress in the banking sector and beyond."

Al-Ghanem also emphasized the bank's focus on delivering flexible and seamless services to enhance customer satisfaction. A standout initiative in 2024 was the launch of the "Warba Advisor," Kuwait's first AI-powered personal financial advisor. This service provides customers with personalized financial advice, leveraging data analysis and machine learning to help them make informed decisions tailored to their diverse needs.

Al-Ghanem concluded: "Warba Bank's vision is rooted in our commitment to offering services and products that align with modern trends while adhering to the principles of Islamic Sharia. We strive to

meet customer needs with flexibility and transparency, preserving our heritage and excellence. Our strategy also includes a strong focus on community engagement, supporting initiatives that equip younger generations with the skills and knowledge to compete in the future. Additionally, we prioritize community issues such as health, education, and the preservation of our local heritage."

2024 Milestones

Warba Bank announced several milestones in 2024 as part of its commitment to qualitative development and innovation. Among the most notable achievements was the launch of its premium banking service, Royal Banking, tailored to meet the unique needs of high-net-worth individuals. This service is designed to address their specialized banking requirements and investment goals, reflecting the bank's strategy to expand its offerings and deliver

exceptional, personalized experiences that align with the aspirations of each customer segment.

In a pioneering move, Warba Bank became the first bank in Kuwait to introduce an AI-powered personal banking advisor. This initiative is part of the bank's broader digital transformation strategy, aimed at automating services, enhancing operational efficiency, and maintaining a competitive edge in the financial sector. By leveraging artificial intelligence, the bank provides advanced, personalized financial consultations, improving customer engagement and satisfaction.

For its corporate clients, Warba Bank introduced the iPos smart wireless point-of-sale device, an innovative solution designed to revolutionize how merchants manage their businesses. This advanced device aligns with the bank's vision to create unique value in the banking sector and beyond, offering new opportunities for both individuals and businesses to streamline operations and enhance efficiency.

Global Recognitions

In 2024, Warba Bank received a series of prestigious awards, cementing its reputation as a leader in innovation, sustainability and digital banking. Among these accolades was the "Most Sustainable Bank in Kuwait" award from International Business Magazine, recognizing the bank's commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles. The bank was also honored with the "Best Islamic Digital Banking Services in Kuwait" award by the same publication, which evaluates institutions based on market trends, economic stability, sustainability reports, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and the adoption of innovative technologies.

Warba Bank further distinguished itself by winning two awards from International Finance Magazine: the "Most Innovative Islamic Banking Product - Sustainability Sukuk - Kuwait" and the "Most Socially Responsible Bank - Kuwait". These awards come as the bank continues to develop high-quality products and services that contribute to long-term sustainability and benefit all segments of society. They also reflect Warba Bank's unwavering commitment to its community and its role as a socially responsible institution.

Additionally, Warba Bank was honored by Network International with the "Insightful Leadership and Pioneering Card Services" award, showcasing the bank's recent introduction of innovative services, such as the issuance of instant credit and prepaid cards, which allow customers to order and receive a fully activated card within just five minutes. The bank also implemented advanced interactive communication solutions to enhance fraud prevention and streamline payment recovery processes.

Further solidifying its leadership in digital banking, Warba Bank received the "Highest Growth in Credit Card Activation on Digital Wallets" award from MasterCard for 2024 in Kuwait. This achievement reflects the bank's significant growth in digital wallet adoption and its success in building customer trust and confidence.

Community Investment

Warba Bank is deeply committed to investing in social responsibility programs

and initiatives that drive sustainable development and support diverse segments of society. The bank's social responsibility strategy is built on several key pillars, designed to promote sustainability across economic, social and environmental dimensions. Through these pillars, Warba Bank aims to implement impactful programs that align with its cultural and ethical values while addressing the needs of the community.

One of the bank's most notable initiatives is its focus on youth empowerment. Through programs like "Rowad," Warba Bank works to develop the skills of Kuwaiti youth, foster creativity and innovation, and cultivate the next generation of leaders. Additionally, the bank is dedicated to environmental preservation, partnering with organizations such as Climate Partner to reduce carbon emissions from employee travel. Warba Bank also promotes sustainable agriculture by distributing Moringa seedlings, encouraging eco-friendly practices within the community.

Warba Bank also collaborates with local institutions to raise awareness about public health. Initiatives such as the "The Healthy Office" program educate employees on physical and mental wellbeing, while the bank actively participates in national campaigns like the Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Furthermore, Warba Bank demonstrates its commitment to cultural preservation by sponsoring heritage activities and supporting events that celebrate and safeguard Kuwait's national identity.

Investing in Digital Infrastructure

Warba Bank continued to strengthen its digital infrastructure, focusing on enhancing banking applications and introducing innovative services such as "Customer Onboarding". The service streamlined the process of opening new accounts as Warba commits to delivering banking solutions that meet the highest international standards. These advancements reflect the bank's dedication to leveraging technology to improve customer experience and operational efficiency.

A Bright Year and a Promising Vision

These achievements mark another milestone in Warba Bank's journey as a modern, integrated financial institution that harmonizes Islamic values with technology.

Commenting on the bank's progress, Al-Sayer stated: "Warba Bank is the people's bank, established by an Amiri decree to serve as a pillar of the national economy. With these results, we are confident in our steady progress toward realizing our vision of a sustainable banking future that benefits generations to come."

Warba Bank is one of Kuwait's leading Islamic financial institutions, operating in full compliance with Sharia principles. The bank has solidified its position as a pioneer in offering integrated services and products, particularly in the digital space, tailored to meet the unique needs of its customers and simplify their banking experience. Alongside its focus on innovation, Warba Bank remains deeply committed to supporting community initiatives that add value and contribute to building a brighter future for all.

Bank empowers national talent with digital and IT skills program

NBK-CODED program boosts digital skills of Kuwaiti youth

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) recognizes the vital role of enhancing the digital capabilities of local talent. In alignment with this vision, the Bank has introduced the NBK-CODED Full Stack Developer Program. This initiative, in partnership with CODED Academy, seeks to empower young professionals by providing them with advanced technical skills, deepening their expertise in programming and technology, and contributing to the ongoing digital transformation within the banking sector.

The program will take place at NBK's headquarters over 14 weeks, during which participants will undergo rigorous training designed for swift progress and maximum effectiveness. It will provide young professionals with in-depth knowledge of advanced programming languages and techniques, equipping them with the skills to apply these techniques in real-world business contexts and enhance operational delivery.

The program is structured in two phases to ensure a comprehensive and effective learning experience. The first phase serves as both a selection and foundation stage, assessing participants' technical abilities and commitment to excel in the program. The second phase delves into advanced integrated programming languages and techniques, providing trainees with the practical knowledge and skills needed to apply their expertise in real-world business scenarios.

Furthermore, the program is an innovative initiative reflecting the Bank's commitment to supporting digital transformation and addressing the market's increasing demand for technical expertise. It aims to create a dynamic learning environment that combines educational courses, workshops, and specialized training sessions led by industry experts in programming and information technology. This comprehensive approach is designed to enhance the skills and capabilities of the workforce, while empowering young national talent and fostering professional development in key technological fields.

As a frontrunner in the digital transformation journey, NBK is dedicated to supporting the country's strategic agenda by developing national talent and equipping them with essential technical skills. This commitment is particularly crucial as the reliance on digital technology continues to grow across various sectors.

Reflecting on the event, Mr. Mohammed Al-Kharafi, COO - Head of Group Operations and Information Technology at NBK stated: "We understand the critical importance of advancing the digital society by enhancing the skills of nation-



Mohammed Al-Kharafi, Emad Al-Ablani, and officials from the National Bank of Kuwait and Coded Academy with the program's trainees.

tal talent and increasing their expertise in science and technology. This initiative plays a pivotal role in fostering a dynamic digital workforce and encouraging engagement with content and events that drive continuous innovation. Moreover, we recognize that investing in the development of young talent will create a distinguished generation equipped to face future challenges, lead Kuwait's digital transformation, and stay ahead of the latest developments in digitization and information technology."

"We are committed to staying at the forefront of technological advancements and embracing innovation to shape a successful digital future. This commitment drives us to consistently launch training programs and initiatives designed to foster creativity and enhance specialized skills, including programming languages, data analysis, coding, and other critical competencies," Al-Kharafi added.

He underscored the pivotal role this program will play in boosting digital literacy, equipping participants with the latest technological insights and tools. He further emphasized that the initiative is fully aligned with the bank's forward-thinking vision, specifically tailored to meet the dynamic demands of the digital era. This program not only underscores the bank's dedication to fostering innovation, but also highlights its ongoing commitment to cultivating and empowering national talent.

In the meantime, Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager - Head of Group Human Resources commented: "NBK remains steadfast in its commitment to social responsibility toward

Al-Kharafi:

- The program underscores NBK's forward-looking vision and commitment to meeting the evolving demands of the digital age
- The initiative aims to cultivate a generation equipped to tackle future challenges and drive Kuwait's digital transformation

Kuwaiti youth, providing comprehensive support to develop their skills and empower them to enter the competitive labor market with confidence. The bank continuously introduces training initiatives, workshops, and educational programs designed to foster creativity and innovation while keeping pace with the rapid technological advancements in the banking industry."

"We are committed to developing a generation of highly skilled national talent equipped to drive economic growth in Kuwait and introduce innovative solutions within the banking industry. These programs play a vital role in preparing national professionals by equipping them with the knowledge and expertise needed to navigate and adapt to the fast-evolving technological landscape," he emphasized.

Al-Ablani further highlighted that NBK remains committed to making a

Al-Ablani:

- NBK is committed to launching training initiatives that foster creativity and innovation among young people
- Kuwaiti youth possess immense potential and capabilities that, with proper guidance, can be effectively channeled to support sustainable development

lasting social impact through its contributions to various programs and initiatives designed to cultivate highly skilled national talent. He highlighted that Kuwaiti youth possess immense potential and capabilities that, when properly guided, can be effectively harnessed to support the nation's sustainable development journey.

NBK plays a key and proactive role in shaping the future of Kuwait's youth, harnessing their energy and potential to contribute to sustainable development. The bank places great emphasis on programs and initiatives that equip young people with the essential knowledge and skills needed to foster the well-being and prosperity of both individuals and society in Kuwait. By providing the right guidance, NBK ensures that the next generation is well-prepared to make meaningful contributions to Kuwait's growth and development.

5G SA POC surpasses 1.3 gbps

Zain Kuwait and Parallel Wireless showcase future of 5G networks

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Zain, Kuwait's leading technology innovator, and Parallel Wireless®, the leading provider of Open RAN hardware-agnostic solutions, have successfully completed a groundbreaking 5G Standalone (SA) Proof of Concept (POC). The step reinforces Zain's unwavering commitment to driving technological innovation and solidifying Kuwait's standing as a global ICT leader.

Focused on Fixed Wireless Access (FWA), this POC demonstrated download speeds exceeding 1.3 Gbps - surpassing Zain's rigorous performance benchmark and establishing one of the highest achievements for Open RAN technology to date.

This POC represents a major step forward in the evolution of Open RAN technology, proving its ability to meet and exceed operator expectations for performance, reliability, and scalability. The success of this POC not only validates the maturity of Open RAN but also highlights its readiness to compete with traditional RAN solutions in delivering next-generation network performance.

Daaij Al-Oud, Zain Kuwait Chief Technology Officer, said: "We're thrilled to achieve this milestone, which reflects Zain's continuous leadership in technological innovation, contributing to strengthening Kuwait's position in the ICT sector - not only at the local and regional levels but also on the global stage."

He added: "This step embodies our proactive efforts in adopting the latest advanced solutions that drive the transformation of our technical infrastructure in preparation for the next generation of 5G networks. By reaching over 1.3 Gbps in download speeds for 5G SA, Zain achieves yet another impressive milestone that reaffirms our leadership position in the Kuwaiti market."

Al-Oud continued: "We are excited about the potential of Open RAN to transform the future of 5G networks. In addition, saving more than 35% of power consumption supports Zain's sustainability strategy and contributes towards our net-zero goal by 2050"

Bassem A. Jalil, Vice Chairman and CEO of METCO, said: "The company's expert team provided critical on-ground support, enabling the seamless execution of the trial and al-



Zain Kuwait CTO, Daaij Al-Oud.

lowing Parallel Wireless to showcase its innovative Open RAN technology. This milestone reinforces METCO's commitment to driving innovation and delivering next-generation connectivity solutions across the region."

"Committed to accelerating its drive for innovation and embracing Open RAN, Zain joins a growing community of networks striving to deliver secure connectivity and optimize TCO without compromising user experience," said Steve Papa, CEO and Founder of Parallel Wireless. "This proof of concept demonstrates our leadership in hardware-agnostic design and highlights the real-world potential of Open RAN as a platform for innovation."

Parallel Wireless showcased its GreenRAN™ hardware-agnostic technology during the trial. By leveraging AMD EPYC™ CPUs, the trial achieved more than 35% energy savings, compared to legacy benchmarks; demonstrating how open hardware platforms can deliver both high performance and improved efficiency.

The POC also demonstrated seamless operation across two Kubernetes platforms - SUSE and AWS - highlighting deployment flexibility and interoperability. Additionally, the trial validated CU-DU separation based on ORAN Split Option 2, enhancing network scalability and operational efficiency.

METCO played a pivotal role in the successful execution of this groundbreaking POC with Zain. From initiating discussions to overseeing project management, METCO ensured smooth collaboration throughout the process.

Bank recommends 5 fils cash dividend & 5% bonus shares

KIB Group achieves profit of KD 23.1 million for year 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Chairman of Kuwait International Bank (KIB), Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, announced the Bank's financial results for the year ended on 31 December 2024, highlighting that KIB achieved a net profit attributable to shareholders of KD 23.1 million, marking a 21% increase over the last year, with earnings per share (EPS) of 11.04 fils. Meanwhile, total operating income increased by 26% over 2023, reaching KD 91.4 million in 2024.

In this regard, Al-Jarrah highlighted that the financial results achieved by KIB reflect the Bank's effective strategy that is focused on continuous innovation and excellence in banking services, as well as its ability to adapt to market changes and competition. This success is further supported by its robust financial position and solid, stable capital base.

Al-Jarrah said: "At KIB, we believe success is not solely measured by numbers but by our ability to anticipate the future and sustain high performance. That's why we invest significantly in technology, digital infrastructure and human capital development, ensuring we meet our customers' needs at the highest standards in a rapidly changing market environment."

As for the financial statements for 2024, Al-Jarrah noted that the total assets witnessed a 9% growth, amounting to KD 3.92 billion, in comparison to KD 3.62 billion at the end of 2023. This growth came primarily as a result of an increase in the financing portfolio by 14%, reaching KD 2.85 billion at the end of 2024, compared to KD 2.49 billion at the end of 2023. Additionally, the financial investments portfolio which primarily concentrated on high-quality Sukuk recorded a significant growth of 42%, amounting to KD 150.7 million, bringing the total to KD 513.4 million at the end of 2024, compared to around KD 362.7 million in 2023.

Regarding dividends' distribution among the shareholders, Al-Jarrah stated that KIB's Board of Directors proposed cash dividends of 5 fils per share and 5% as bonus shares from the issued and paid-up capital, subject to the approvals of the Bank's shareholders' general assembly and competent regulatory authorities.

Al-Jarrah added: "KIB's growth in 2024 was driven by its focus on strengthening its financing portfolio and diversifying investments, which contributes to long-term financial stability. The Bank remains committed to supporting the national economy by backing initiatives and projects that promote innovation and entrepreneurship. Additionally, the Bank is dedicated to creating sustainable value for the community, customers, and shareholders, while upholding the highest standards of governance and transparency."

Al-Jarrah concluded his remarks by emphasizing that the Bank's positive results would not have been possible without the exceptional efforts of its dedicated team and the unwavering support of its valued shareholders. He reaffirmed KIB's commitment to investing specially in technology, digital infrastructure, developing human capital and implementing future plans to meet market demands, all while upholding its social responsibility to deliver sustainable value for all stakeholders.

Innovation and Sustainable Growth

On his part, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of KIB, stated: "This year's results represent a pivotal milestone in our journey, reflecting our strategic focus on innovation and sustainable growth. This approach has allowed us to strengthen our competitiveness significantly by optimizing our financing portfolio and adopting innovative digital solutions that keep pace with market trends."

Bukhamseen added: "The Bank has effectively achieved a balance between growing its investment portfolio and expanding its banking services, leading to a significant increase in operating revenues. These results highlight the Group's exceptional performance and growth in key financial indicators, showcasing the success of our strategy and our commitment to the highest standards in the banking industry."

Commenting on KIB's financial performance, Bukhamseen noted the increase in the net financing income by 29% in 2024, to reach KD 68 million, in comparison with the approximate KD 52.9 million in 2023. Fee and commission income increased to KD 17.4 million, up from KD 12.2 million, reflecting a growth rate of 43%. This contributed to a rise in total operating income, which reached KD 91.4 million compared to KD 72.6 million in 2023, marking a growth of 26%.

Discussing the Bank's financial position, Bukhamseen highlighted that depositors' accounts in KIB grew by 30%, totaling of KD 2.75 billion by the end of 2024, with the comparison with 2.12 billion in 2023. Meanwhile, shareholders' equity attributable to the shareholders grew by 4% to reach KD 348 million. He further noted that KIB maintained high levels of total capital adequacy ratio, in accordance with Basel III instructions, reaching 18.38% as at 31 December 2024.

Issuance of USD 300 million in Sukuk

Bukhamseen underscored KIB's notable achievements during the first half of 2024, including the successful issuance of a USD 300 million Additional Tier 1 Sukuk (AT1) with an annual profit rate of 6.625%.



Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, Chairman



Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, Vice Chairman and CEO

KIB Group reports 21% profit growth:

- Growth in total assets reaching to KD3.92 billion
- Growth in financing portfolio reaching to KD2.85 billion
- Growth in depositors' accounts reaching to KD2.75 billion and 30%
- Growth in net profit attributable to shareholders achieved 21% growth

The issuance saw investor demand exceeding twice the original size of the issued Sukuk, with final pricing achieving the tightest spread ever achieved on an AT1 Sukuk globally at the time of issuance, at 195 basis points above US Treasury. Furthermore, the AT1 Sukuk issued in 2019 were fully redeemed by way of exercising of the Call Option in 2024.

Establishing KIB Invest

In 2024, the Bank officially launched its investment arm, Al Dawli Invest Investment Company (KIB Invest), to engage in Islamic investment activities and provide a diversified suite of investment solutions tailored to meet clients' evolving needs, Bukhamseen noted. This was achieved through a specialized team with extensive expertise in local, regional, and global markets.

Bukhamseen also highlighted that KIB Invest served as Joint Lead Manager (JLM) in the issuance of a seven-year sovereign Sukuk for the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Sukuk raised USD1.25 billion for 7 years and attracted demand exceeding 2.8 times the targeted size. He expressed pride in KIB Invest's position as a trusted partner for major institutions and investors in GCC markets.

Expanding the Branch Network

As part of KIB's efforts to expand its branch network and be closer to its customers across various areas of Kuwait, the Bank opened a new branch in Sabah Al-Salem. The branch features a modern, innovative design and advanced technological capabilities aligned with KIB's digital infrastructure investment strategy. Additionally, the Bank inaugurated its 18th branch in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, designed with a contemporary approach and equipped with the latest banking technologies.

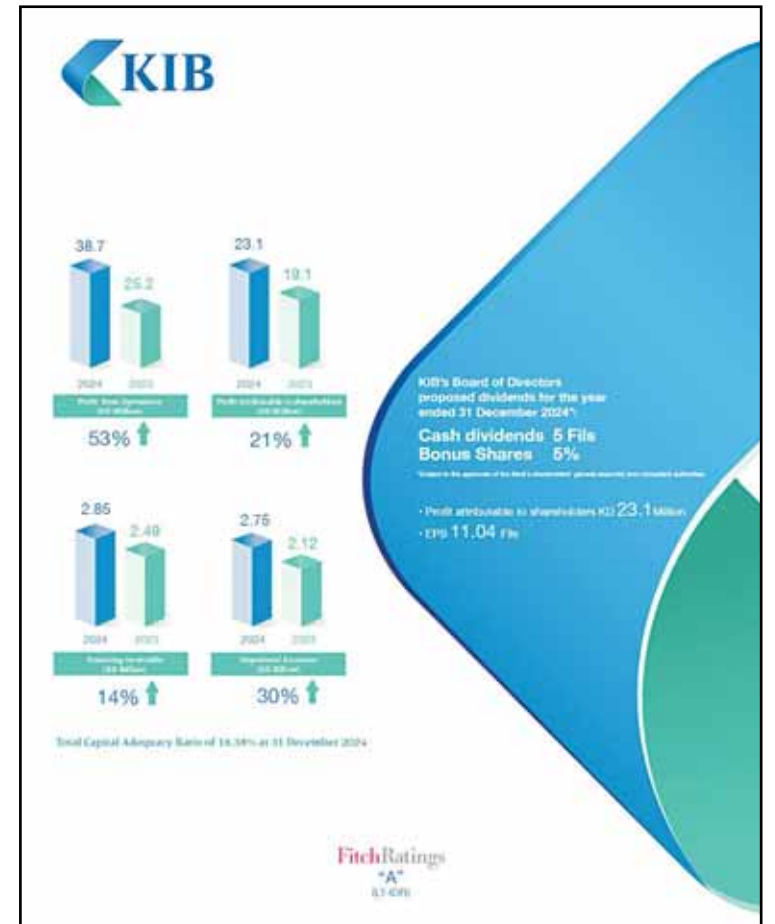
These steps demonstrate the Bank's commitment to enhancing its digital infrastructure and broadening the scope of its services, he said.

Enhancing Services and Innovating New Solutions

KIB achieved significant progress in developing banking services and digital products in 2024, while also introducing innovative financial solutions designed to continually elevate the customer experience. These efforts aim to address customers' evolving needs and empower them to manage their finances and conduct transactions securely at all times. This is based on its comprehensive strategy towards digital transformation, innovation and sustainable digital growth, keeping pace with the latest developments in the banking sector, and aligning with its main slogan, "Bank for Life".

Social Responsibility

In 2024, the Bank launched several key initiatives, solidifying its position as a leader in community development across various sectors, as part of its comprehensive social responsibility program. Leading these efforts was its continued support, for the fourth consecutive year, of the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) banking awareness campaign, initiated by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). The campaign aligns with the Bank's mission to promote financial and banking literacy across all segments of society. To maximize its impact,



KIB's financial results for the year end.

KIB strategically targeted high-traffic locations, such as major shopping centers, while also leveraging media platforms and its digital channels to disseminate awareness messages.

Prestigious Awards and Recognitions

In 2024, KIB achieved numerous prestigious accolades, reflecting its leadership in the banking sector. These included the "Best Real Estate Solutions Provider - MENA 2024" award from Capital Finance International (CFL.co) magazine and the "Best Retail Banking Product 2024" from World Finance magazine, recognizing the successful revamp of the KIB Mobile application. Additionally, KIB was honored with the "Excellence in FinTech Innovation & Digital Leadership in Kuwait 2024" by the World Union of Arab Bankers (WUAB).

Furthermore, the Arab Academy for Management, Banking and Financial Sciences (AAMBFS) announced the appointment of Al-Jarrah as Chairman of its Board of Trustees. Recognized as one of the leading educational institutions in the Arab world, the academy plays a vital role in preparing top professionals in finance, banking, and management.

In their closing remarks, Al-Jarrah and Bukhamseen praised the exemplary regulatory and supervisory role of the Central Bank of Kuwait and its steadfast support. They also expressed their gratitude to the Capital Markets Authority for its efforts in creating an attractive and competitive investment environment in Kuwait. In addition, they acknowledged the dedicated efforts of all KIB teams and their significant contribu-

tions to achieving these results. They extended their heartfelt appreciation to the Board of Directors and the Executive Management for their continued support and wise guidance in further strengthening KIB's financial position.

About KIB

Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is a bank that operates according to the Islamic Shari'ah, based in the State of Kuwait. Incorporated in 1973, and originally known as Kuwait Real Estate Bank, KIB made the transition to its current Islamic operating model in 2007. In 2018, KIB embarked on a new phase of its journey full of innovation and development. As part of its new strategic direction, the Bank focuses on offering a next-level customer experience under the slogan: "Bank for Life".

Through a network of branches spread across the State of Kuwait, KIB offers a broad range of banking products and services, as well as innovative digital banking solutions in line with international best standards. As part of its duty towards the community, the Bank also encompasses a leading social responsibility program that aims at positively impacting all members of the community through a wide range of impactful initiatives and activities.

Today, KIB has taken concrete steps in implementing its new strategic objectives. The Bank has cemented its role as a key player in the local banking industry and has continued to maintain its strong financial performance; enabling it to be globally recognized for its strong credit rating and financial position.

Wafra operations to boost production to 230,000 bpd

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: According to sources from the oil sector, the joint Wafra operations between the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company and Saudi Chevron Company aim to boost the field's production capacity to 230,000 barrels per day by 2027, up from the current 170,000 barrels per day.

Meanwhile, the management overseeing the joint Khafji field operations between Kuwait Gulf Oil Company and Saudi Aramco plans to raise the field's production capacity from 270,000 to at least 360,000 barrels per day by early 2028.

To achieve this, Khafji operations are increasing offshore drilling platforms. A contract was recently signed with a leading digital transformation company to integrate artificial intelligence into the development of Khafji field facilities.

The contract also aims to enhance cybersecurity and protect Khafji field data through artificial intelligence, and establish an advanced digital systems monitoring center to track potential threats or violations of information security laws and regulations.

In addition, Saudi Arabia is working on developing the Khafji region into an industrial logistics city, which will primarily support the interests of the Khafji field and joint Kuwaiti-Saudi oil projects planned to be established in the promising Khafji industrial region.

The sources revealed that the future merger of Kuwait Gulf Oil Company with Kuwait Oil Company will not disrupt the joint Khafji operations, citing the smooth transfer of Kuwait's share in the Khafji project to the Kuwait Arabian Oil Company and Kuwait Gulf Oil Company without issues.

Kuwait Oil and Gulf Oil are currently working on completing the transition process. However, full production from the Khafji and Wafra fields, which are managed by Kuwaiti Gulf Oil Company and Saudi Aramco, has not yet been restored to their maximum capacity of approximately 550,000 barrels per day due to an eight-year shutdown period, during which several facilities suffered a decline.



2024 Financial Results

The Best Mudaraba Deposit in Kuwait!

4.46%

KIB Long Term Deposit
(3 years)

Annual Return

Profits distributed semi-annually

You can break the deposit with full profit payout after 1.5 years

KFH holds earnings webcast for FY-2024

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) held the earnings webcast for highlighting the Group's financial performance and results during the fiscal year 2024. The meeting was attended by KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Khaled AlShamlan, Senior Deputy Group CEO – Finance, Dr. Shadi Zahran and Group Chief Strategy Officer, Mr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem.

KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Khaled AlShamlan commenced the meeting by shedding light on the Bank's financial performance for the year ended 2024. He said: "By the grace of Allah, KFH has reported historic net profit of KD 601.8 million attributable to the shareholders of the bank for the year ended 2024; an increase of 3.0% compared to 2023. Earnings per share reached 36.37 fils for the year 2024, an increase of 3.0%, compared to 2023. Net Financing income for the year ended 2024 reached KD 1,147.0 million; an increase of 18.7% compared to 2023."

He added that the Board of Directors considered the distribution of cash dividends to shareholders of 22% (including 10% in H1 2024). The Board of Directors also proposed distribution of bonus shares of 8% subject to the approval of the General Assembly and the competent authorities.

AlShamlan stated that during 2024, KFH successfully achieved a strong financial performance, reporting record annual financial results. KFH also demonstrated growth in operating income, profits and all key financial indicators. The Bank also succeeded in achieving the strategic objectives and enhancing the Group's leading standing after the completion of the largest-ever merger project in the Kuwaiti banking sector, and the successful integration of operations with the (formerly) Ahli United Bank – Kuwait (AUBK) as part of its landmark cross-border acquisition of Ahli United Bank - Bahrain, one of the largest deals in the region. This historic move paved the way for the creation of a giant financial entity, with a reach spanning 8 countries worldwide through a large international network of over 600 branches. It also paved the way for KFH's ambition of becoming one of the world's top 100 banks within the next decade.

"KFH demonstrated its ability to promote the future of Islamic finance worldwide. This is evident in the successful and record-breaking conversion of Ahli United Bank in Bahrain, the UK, and Egypt to Islamic banking, achieved with high efficiency" he noted.

Additionally, KFH completed the successful issuance of a 5-year Senior Unsecured Sukuk of \$1 bn, the second issue under KFH \$4 bn Sukuk Program. The aim of the Sukuk issuance is to enhance KFH's long-term funding sources, in addition to financing its overall operations. Additionally, KFH increased its investment in green Sukuk to \$653.2 million in 2024, a 162.3% increase compared to last year's investment of \$249 million in 2023.

AlShamlan further said: "KFH continued its endeavors in building a sustainable banking model within the (ESG) framework, noting the inclusion of KFH in the FTSE4Good Index Series. KFH was also awarded "A" rating by MSCI ESG Index. Furthermore, KFH's participated in the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Bank also signed the first-of-its-kind Global Takaful Alliance agreement with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and released the first-of-its-kind Carbon Footprint report in Kuwait's banking sector. KFH continues to issue its sustainability reports, reflecting its commitment to environmental leadership and responsible banking."

He went on to say that KFH played a prominent role in supporting the local economy and contributed to the development of the infrastructure by financing large scale projects across various sectors. KFH also strengthened its role as a strategic partner for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the Kuwaiti banking sector. Many of these SMEs begin their success story by securing financing from KFH.

KFH continued its innovative streak, developing digital financial solutions tailored to the needs and aspirations of its customers. The Bank also implemented numerous projects related to services, products, and financial solutions. It developed its technological infrastructure, enhanced cybersecurity defenses, and embraced AI technology.

Speaking about KFH's social role, AlShamlan said: "KFH succeeded in launching value-added community initiatives that catered to various segments of society. These initiatives encompassed supporting community capabilities, caring for individuals with special needs, launching awareness campaigns, safeguarding the environment, supporting sustainable practices, empowering the youth, in addition to supporting innovation and various health and sport initiatives. The commencement of the reconstruction project for the damaged area in Al Mubarakiya has started with an estimated cost of approximately KD 8 million. The contract, signed with the project's contractor and Kuwait Municipality, involves reconstructing approximately 17 buildings and developing some neighboring structures. KFH's efforts also encompassed various strategic initiatives in social responsibility".

In appreciation of its exceptional efforts, KFH received 43 awards and 4 rankings at the Group level from different global and regional entities. Most notable of these awards are: "World's Best Islamic Financial Institution" Award from Global Finance magazine, "Kuwait's Best Bank" and "Kuwait's Best Bank for ESG" from Euromoney. In addition, KFH was named "Bank of the Year – Kuwait" by The Banker and was awarded with the



Mr. Khaled AlShamlan, KFH Group Chief Executive Officer

AlShamlan: Strong financial performance, record annual profits and growth in all key financial indicators



Dr. Shadi Zahran, Senior Deputy Group CEO – Finance

Dr. Zahran: Increase in the operating income, financing income and the solvency driven by a comprehensive performance



Mr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, Group Chief Strategy Officer

Al-Mukhaizeem: KFH ranked first among the largest listed companies on Boursa Kuwait in terms of a market capitalization approximately KD 12.4 billion.

"Corporate Social Responsibility – Middle East" award from EMEA Finance Magazine.

KFH Senior Deputy Group CEO, Finance – Dr. Shadi Zahran

Meanwhile, Senior Deputy Group CEO, Dr. Shadi Zahran, talked about the Group's financial performance for the financial year ended 31 December 2024.

Zahran said: "The Group has achieved Net Profit After Tax attributable to Shareholders for the year ended 31st December 2024 of KD 601.8mn higher by KD 17.3mn or 3.0% compared to 2023 of KD 584.5mn. The higher profits are mainly from an in-

crease in total operating income. Partly offset by higher net monetary loss that resulted from the application of IAS-29 "Financial reporting in Hyperinflationary Economies" on the financial statements of the group subsidiary in Türkiye Kuwait Turk Participation Bank (KTPB) and the increase in operating expenses."

He added: "Financing income has increased by KD 692.3mn or 31.6% compared to the last year mainly due to increase in the gross yield. **Net financing income at KD 1,147mn** increased by **KD 181mn** or 18.7% compared to last year mainly due to an increase in financing income by **KD 692.3mn** offset by increase in finance cost and distribution to depositors by **KD 511.2mn**.

Speaking about the operating income profile, contribution of net financing income to operating income increased from 66% in 2023 to 70% in 2024 due to increase in net financing income and decline in investment income.

Group NFM for 2024 at 3.12% is higher by **44bps** compared to 2023. **Average yield improved by 227bps** while average **COF** also increased by **183bps**. This was the result of full year impact of rate changes and repricing of assets and liabilities during the year.

Zahran indicated that by looking at **provisions and impairments**, group total impairment charge increased by **KD 14.1mn** compared to 2023.

"KFH cautious approach towards provisioning have contributed to financing provision balance exceeding ECL required as per CBK IFRS 9 by KD 539mn as of 31 December 2024" commented Zahran.

As for the Net Monetary Loss, application of IAS-29 on the financial statements of KTPB resulted in recognition of net monetary loss of **KD 155.3mn** in the current year with an increase of **KD 82.5mn** compared to last year due to the continued inflation and significant maturity of CPI linked sukuk during last quarter of 2023.

Speaking about the financial position, Zahran said that the **Total Assets at KD 36.7bn** decreased by (3.4)% in 2024. **Net financing receivables at KD 19.1bn** decreased by (1.8)% mainly due to sale of KFH Bahrain in addition to foreign currency volatility during the year. Excluding these impacts, group net financing receivable would be higher in 2024 by **5.5%**.

Investments in debt securities at KD 6.9bn as at the end of year 2024.

Deposits as of 2024 are **KD 19.2bn**. The contribution from CASA deposits to total group customer deposits as at the end of 2024 is **44.4%**. **Contribution of customer deposits to total funding is 66.5%** compared to 71.4% in 2023.

KFH Group Chief Strategy Officer - Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem

KFH Group Chief Strategy Officer, Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem highlighted the Kuwait operating environment with an overview on KFH. He also talked about KFH's strategy, as well as Full Year-2024 results.

Al-Mukhaizeem said: "In light of the evolving monetary policy landscape, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has implemented a measured and balanced strategy to align with local economic conditions, uphold macroeconomic stability, and promote sustainable growth. Consequently, during 2024, CBK has reduced the discount rate by 25 basis points, bringing it down to 4.00%, effective September 19, 2024."

At the macroeconomic level, Kuwait's GDP is forecasted to reach KD 39.4 billion in 2024 according to the most recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) report released in October 2024. Additionally, the average inflation rate reached declined to 2.9% during the year 2024 according to the latest issued data Central Statistical Bearu. Kuwait's crude oil price reached USD 74.2 per barrel as of the end of December 2024, down by 6.7% from the same period of the previous year.

Al-Mukhaizeem mentioned that in 2024, Kuwait's economic development is marked by a strategic focus on diversification and resilience in the face of global economic challenges. The government is actively implementing initiatives aimed at reducing reliance on oil revenues by promoting sectors such as finance, technology, and tourism. Investments in infrastructure development are also a priority, with significant projects underway to enhance transportation and connectivity. Additionally, the Central Bank of Kuwait's monetary policies, including adjustments to the discount rate, are designed to foster a stable economic environment conducive to growth.

As a result, Kuwait is positioning itself to achieve sustainable development and attract foreign investment, ultimately aiming for a more balanced and robust economy. In terms of credit ratings, Kuwait maintains a robust profile with an A+ rating and a stable outlook from Standard & Poor's, an A1 rating from Moody's, and an AA- rating from Fitch, all with stable outlooks.

He added: "KFH's long term credit rating stands at A by Fitch with Stable Outlook, and at A2 by Moody's with Stable outlook. Furthermore, KFH continued its efforts to achieve financial solidity and sustainable growth, capitalizing on the flexible business model, strong asset quality, abundant liquidity, continuous diversification of financing and wide geographical spread in different markets worldwide, most prominently Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkey, Egypt, UK and Germany."

Additionally, KFH ranked first among the largest listed companies on Boursa Kuwait in terms of a market capitalization approximately KD 12.4 billion as of the end of December 2024 according to Boursa Kuwait.

Bank proposes 10 fils cash dividend per share and 5% bonus share distribution

Gulf Bank reports KD 60.2 million net profit for 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. ("Bank") announced its financial results for the full year ending 31 December 2024. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 60.2 million, reflecting a decline of KD 11.0 million or 15.5% compared to a net profit of KD 71.2 million for the same period in 2023.

Earnings per share for the year were 16 fils, and the Board of Directors is recommending a cash dividend distribution of 10 fils per share, representing a 63% cash payout ratio. In addition, a 5% bonus share distribution is proposed, subject to shareholder approval at the Annual General Meeting scheduled for March 2025.

Furthermore, Gulf Bank recorded an operating income of KD 199.3 million for the full year 2024, marking an increase of 4.8% compared to the previous year. Operating profit also saw a rise, reaching KD 106.7 million, reflecting a growth of 3.2% compared to 2023.

The decline in net profit for the full year of 2024 is primarily attributed to an increase in total provisions and impairments, which increased by KD 14.9 million for the full year compared to the same period last year. Nevertheless, in the fourth quarter the total provision cost has significantly decreased compared to both the previous quarters of 2024 and the same period last year.

Now looking at the financial performance of the fourth quarter of 2024, the Bank reported a net profit of KD 20.0 million, an increase of 14.8% over the fourth quarter of 2023. Operating income for the mentioned period was KD 53.3 million, an increase of 6.3% compared to the same period of last year.

The Bank's prudent risk management approach has effectively mitigated risks and maintained the quality of its loan portfolio. As of 31 December 2024, the Bank's non-performing loans (NPL) ratio stood at 1.3%, compared to 1.2% at the end of the previous year. Additionally, the Bank continues to maintain a robust NPL coverage ratio of 340%, including total provisions and collateral.

As of 31 December 2024, total credit provisions reached KD 270 million, whereas IFRS 9 accounting requirements (i.e., ECL or expected credit losses) were KD 177 million. This results in a substantial excess provision level of KD 94 million, over and above what is mandated by IFRS 9 accounting requirements.

In comparison to 31 December 2023, Gulf Bank's total assets increased by 4.3% to reach KD 7.5 billion, with net loans and advances rising by 5.2% to KD 5.5 billion. Additionally, total deposits grew by 4.3% to reach KD 5.6 billion, while shareholders' equity increased by 2.1% to reach KD 834 million for the year ended 2024.

The Bank's capital position remains robust, supported by strong internal capital generation. As of 31 December 2024, the Bank's regulatory Tier 1 capital ratio stood at 15.2%, exceeding the regulatory minimum of 12% by 3.2%. Additionally, the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 17.3%, surpassing the regulatory minimum of 14% by 3.3%.

Robust Results

Commenting on the financial results, Gulf Bank Chairman Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar stated: "2024 was a year of notable progress for Gulf Bank, defined by our ability to deliver on our strategic objectives while navigating a complex economic landscape. Despite global uncertainties and local challenges, our prudent risk management, operational excellence, and commitment to innovation have solidified our position as a trusted financial partner and a pillar of Kuwait's financial ecosystem."



Gulf Bank Chairman, Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar.



Gulf Bank Acting Chief Executive Officer, Waleed Khaled Mandani.

Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar:

- 2024 was a year of notable progress for Gulf Bank, defined by our ability to deliver on our strategic objectives.
- Our prudent risk management and operational excellence have solidified our position as a trusted financial partner and a pillar of Kuwait's financial ecosystem.
- We have resolved several legacy-loan challenges, substantially improving our asset quality.
- We will continue to pursue with our intention to explore the feasibility of transforming Gulf Bank into a Sharia-compliant Bank, aiming to achieve sustainable growth to our stakeholders.

He added: "I am pleased with our performance for the year 2024. We have addressed and resolved several legacy-loan challenges, which has substantially improved our asset quality allowing capacity for sustainable growth and increased stakeholder value."

Operational Achievements

Gulf Bank's operational advancements in 2024 were significant. The completion of Phase II of its core banking system upgrade has positioned the Bank to offer more agile, customer-focused services, setting a benchmark in operational efficiency. This system implementation has improved internal processes and elevated the customer experience by enabling faster and more reliable service delivery.

The launch of Gulf Bank's enhanced mobile banking application is another highlight of the year. With a state-of-the-art interface and expanded features, the app empowers customers to manage their finances securely and conveniently, reflecting the Bank's dedication to innovation and customer satisfaction.

In private banking, Gulf Bank introduced a refined identity rooted in three core principles: long-term wealth growth, asset protection, and seamless wealth transfer. This initiative redefines the private banking experience, ensuring that clients receive personalized,

comprehensive financial solutions aligned with their aspirations.

Gulf Bank also reinforced its commitment to SMEs by enhancing its exclusive digital portal, which offers a wide array of services, including credit facilities, salary transfers, and payment gateways. Through a partnership with Omnifintec, the Bank further expanded its suite of financial solutions tailored to the unique needs of SMEs, reinforcing its role as a key enabler of Kuwait's economic development.

Commenting on the operational performance of Gulf Bank, Acting Chief Executive Officer Mr. Waleed Khaled Mandani said: "Reflecting on 2024, we are proud of the significant progress we've made in enhancing our operational capabilities and delivering seamless customer experiences. This year, Gulf Bank achieved several key milestones, marked by the completion of Phase II of our core banking system upgrade and the commencement of operations at Invest GB, our fully owned investment arm, with a capital of KD 10 million. Additionally, we have achieved a meaningful success in reducing costs and optimizing efficiencies which has contributed to streamlining processes and delivering sustainable results. By Embracing a mindset of continuous optimization, we are dedicated to making this principle a lasting part of our organizational culture. Furthermore, the Bank continues to implement

its ambitious plan to transform its branch network across various parts of Kuwait into environmentally friendly branches with a new identity. Last year, the new branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City was opened, and six branches were renovated and reopened. These branches are equipped with energy-saving technologies and sustainable materials, reflecting our commitment to environmental responsibility. By prioritizing innovation and customer convenience, the new branch design enhances the client experience while contributing to a greener future."

Credit Ratings and Recognitions

In 2024, Gulf Bank's financial strength and operational resilience were affirmed by leading credit rating agencies. Fitch Ratings assigned a Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) of 'A' with a Stable Outlook, while Moody's rated long-term deposits at 'A3' with a Positive Outlook. Capital Intelligence affirmed a Long-Term Foreign Currency rating of 'A+' with a Stable Outlook, further highlighting the Bank's stability and sound risk management practices.

Gulf Bank's achievements were also celebrated on the global stage, with the Bank receiving 13 regional and international awards. Notably, it was recognized among the "Top 100 Listed Companies in the Region" by Forbes and as one of the "Best 100 Arab Banks" by The Banker.

Commitment to Sustainability

Throughout the year 2024, Gulf Bank made significant strides in reducing its environmental footprint, promoting diversity and inclusion, and enhancing social responsibility.

Additionally, Gulf Bank has revealed its ambitious environmental, social, and governance (ESG) strategy for the period 2024-2030, outlining a clear roadmap and key performance indicators for the next six years. The strategy focuses on implementing sustainability standards and enhancing corporate governance practices that reflect the bank's core values and guide every aspect of its banking operations.

Appreciation

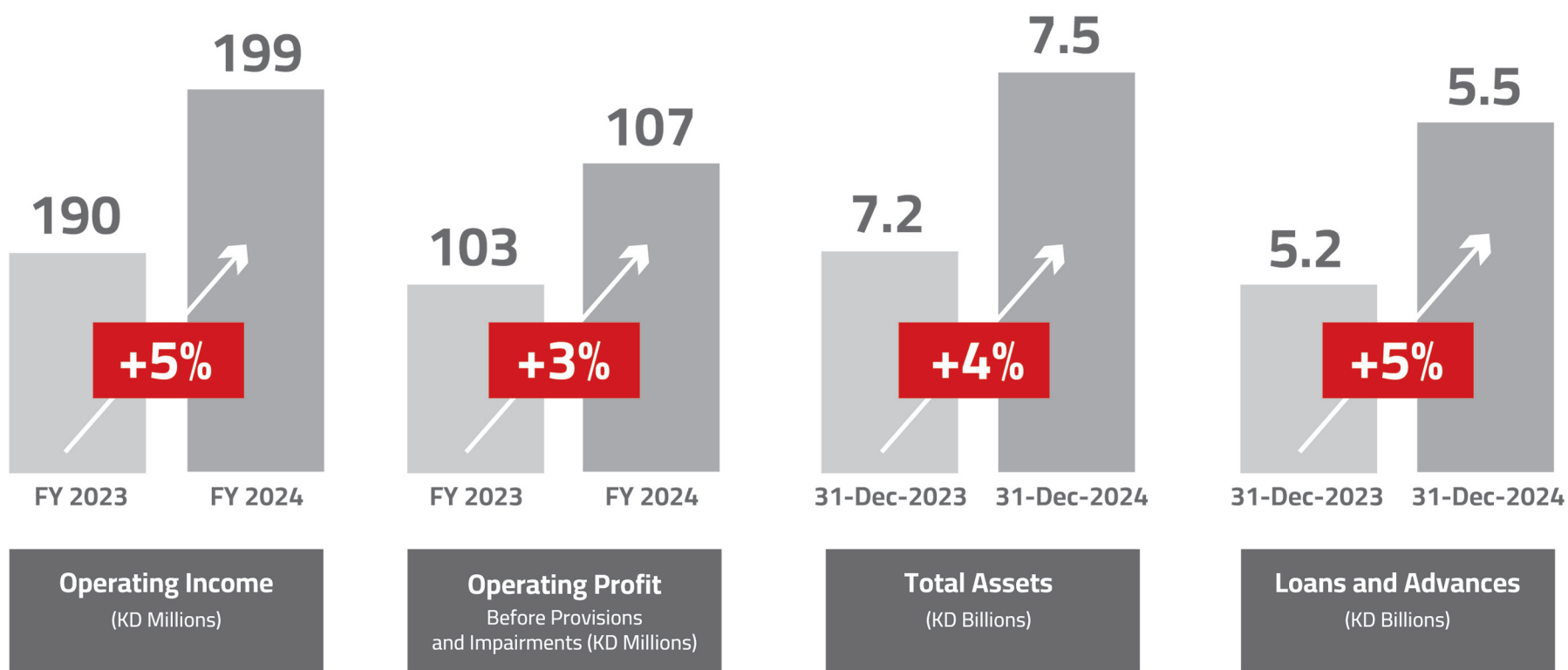
Mr. Al-Bahar concluded his remarks by saying: "As we embark on 2025, our strategic initiatives, coupled with our commitment to governance, operational excellence, and innovation, position Gulf Bank for a prosperous future. We will continue to pursue with our intention to explore the feasibility of transforming Gulf Bank into a Sharia-compliant Bank, aiming to achieve sustainable growth to our stakeholders. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our shareholders for their ongoing trust, and our employees for their commitment and dedication. I would also like to thank the Regulatory Authorities for their continuous support. Finally, I want to thank our customers for their loyalty and reiterate our commitment to offering them the best banking experience."

Key Financial indicators for the year 2024:

- 2024 net profit of KD 60.2 million.
- 2024 operating income of KD 199.3 million, an increase of 4.8% compared to the year 2023.
- Operating profit reached KD 106.7 million, an increase of 3.2% compared to the year 2023.
- Net loans and advances grew by 5.2% year-to-date to reach KD 5.5 billion.
- Non-performing loan ratio as of 31 December 2024 is 1.3%, with a strong non-performance loan coverage ratio of 340%.
- Capital ratios as of 31 December 2024, Tier 1 ratio was 15.2% and Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 17.3%.

60.2

Million KD Net Profit for Full Year 2024



Cash Dividends Per Share⁽¹⁾ **10 Fils** | Bonus Shares⁽¹⁾ **5%** | Capital Adequacy Ratio **17.3%** | NPL Ratio **1.3%**

A3 Moody's Positive | **A** Fitch Ratings Stable | **A+** Capital Intelligence Stable



(1) 2024 proposed cash dividends per share and bonus shares distribution are subject to shareholder approval at the Annual General Meeting scheduled for March 2025.
Note: As of or for the full year ending 31st December 2024.

Hosted by Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank

'The Investment Conference 2025' brought together thought leaders, industry experts and investors to discuss ideas that move markets

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank successfully hosted the second edition of their investment conference under the theme "Exploring Trends: Ideas That Move Markets". The conference, attended by thought leaders and industry experts, in addition to institutional and high-net-worth investors from Kuwait and the region, discussed crucial topics spanning the global economy, geopolitics, and various asset classes. The conference actively supports the vision to transform Kuwait into a regional financial and trade hub.

Sarkhou: The collaboration between Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank brings together two established institutions with independent track records and deep-rooted expertise, creating a more integrated financial ecosystem.

In his capacity as the Chief Executive Officer of Kamco Invest and the Vice Chairman of Burgan Bank, Faisal Sarkhou inaugurated the conference during a welcome speech addressed to the audience and participants. He stressed the importance of the conference, which reflects the commitment to analyzing the key forces shaping global and regional economies, from geopolitical and regulatory shifts to technological advancements and sector-specific opportunities.

Sarkhou also highlighted the strategic partnership between Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank, following Burgan Bank's majority acquisition of Kamco Invest. This collaboration brings together two established institutions with independent track records and deep-rooted expertise, creating a more integrated financial ecosystem. By leveraging their combined strengths, they are enhancing investment solutions and expanding opportunities for clients in a rapidly changing financial landscape.

Oxford Economics: Strong fiscal positions and continued progress on diversification agendas position the GCC region as a standout performer in the global economy.

Scott Livermore, Chief Middle East Economist at Oxford Economics, provided insights into the macroeconomic and geopolitical landscape, emphasizing the expectations of Oxford Economics for another year of steady but unspectacular global growth. However, this masks three very different stories: US exceptionalism, structural downturn in China and European malaise.

Globally, interest rates are expected to decline gradually, except in Europe, where monetary easing remains constrained. Meanwhile, fiscal policy will play a crucial role in shaping economic prospects. In the GCC, strong fiscal positions and continued progress on diversification agendas position the region as a standout performer in the global economy.

Trade policy uncertainty remains the primary risk to the baseline forecast. While the GCC is not currently a direct target of potential trade actions by President Trump, any disruption to global trade would have negative repercussions for the region. Additionally, ongoing geopolitical tensions in various parts of the world pose further risks to global economic stability.

Investing in human capital, fostering private-sector participation, and strengthening regional cooperation will be critical in mitigating external shocks and securing a prosperous, diversified future for the GCC.

Dr. Merza Hasan, Senior Advisor at the Arab Fund for Economic & Social Development (AFESD) and Dr. Nasser Saidi, President of Nasser Saidi & Associates explored in a panel discussion the dynamic transformation of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies amidst global and regional challenges. The session was moderated by Abdullah AlSharekh, Managing Director of Markets and Investment Banking at Kamco Invest & Board Member at Burgan Bank.

Dr. Hasan and Dr. Saidi underscored the need for GCC countries to move beyond reliance on cyclical oil revenues. They highlighted that while the region has enjoyed robust cyclical growth, the emerging challenges—softening oil prices and an increasing fiscal dependence on hydrocarbons—demand a decisive shift towards structural reforms and economic diversification. Both panelists agreed that long-term resilience will hinge on effectively transitioning to a model that prioritizes productivity-led growth.

The discussion also delved into the delicate balance between fiscal discipline and strategic government spending. Panelists noted that while significant public investments remain crucial for fostering innovation and building competitive sectors, these must be managed within a framework that safeguards fiscal sustainability. They explored various approaches,



Top and above: Photos during the investment conference under the theme 'Exploring Trends: Ideas That Move Markets'.

including more prudent debt issuance and enhanced use of sovereign wealth funds, as a means to finance the necessary reforms without compromising long-term fiscal health.

Finally, the panel addressed the impacts of global uncertainty, from fluctuating interest rates to trade tensions, on the regional economy. Dr. Hasan and Dr. Saidi stressed the importance of agile monetary policies and the role of central banks in ensuring a smooth transition in changing global financial conditions. They also emphasized that investing in human capital, fostering private-sector participation, and strengthening regional cooperation will be critical in mitigating external shocks and securing a prosperous, diversified future for the GCC.

While the global macroeconomics shifts and economic diversification accelerate, thematic investing for active managers will be key to capturing long-term megatrends in the region's evolving public markets

The panel on GCC Public Markets explored key macroeconomic and structural shifts shaping the investment landscape as we enter 2025. The panelists included Raman Subramanian, Managing Director & Global Head of Solutions Research at MSCI, Iyad Ghulam, Head of Equity Research at SNB Capital, Thomas Mathew, Vice President - Equity & Fixed Income at Kamco Invest, and moderated by Sarah Dashti, Vice President - Equity & Fixed Income at Kamco Invest.

Global challenges such as high inflation, rising interest rates, geopolitical tensions, and the ongoing trade war continue to influence market dynamics. Meanwhile, the GCC remains focused on economic diversification and energy transition, with large-scale projects such as Saudi Vision 2030 and Kuwait's new initiatives creating investment opportunities.

The discussion explored the growing importance of thematic investing, with a focus on mega projects and major events as key themes, particularly in infrastructure, construction, and tourism. These themes are expected

to create opportunities across various sectors, including industrials, utilities, real estate development, and banking, as they shape the market landscape. The GCC's weight in MSCI Emerging Markets indices remains underweight by 4%, signaling potential for increased foreign investment. A key development could be Saudi Arabia raising its Foreign Ownership Limit (FOL) to 100%, which could potentially unlock USD 9-10 billion in inflows. Furthermore, recent changes in foreign investment rules for Makkah and Madinah are projected to contribute an additional USD 600 million to Saudi weight this May from MSCI EM trackers alone, this is if we assume all other companies' weights remains as is.

Raman Subramanian from MSCI highlighted that the combined weight of GCC countries in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index has risen significantly, increasing from just over 1% in June 2014—when Qatar and the UAE were first included—to over 7% today. This expansion, driven by an annualized outperformance of more than 2% over the MSCI Emerging Markets Index and a fourfold increase in the region's broader opportunity set over the past decade, underscores the GCC's rapid rise in global equity markets.

With structural shifts shaping market dynamics, investors in GCC equities must strategically position themselves to capitalize on emerging trends. While the global macroeconomics shifts and economic diversification accelerate, thematic investing for active managers will be key to capturing long-term megatrends in the region's evolving public markets.

Asset-backed finance remains a strong performer in high-yield environments, leveraging lease rate increases and inflation protection

The third panel explored investment opportunities in a high-interest rate environment and the discussion covered both debt and equity opportunities. It also examines how elevated rates are reshaping real estate strategies. The panelist included Ian Worboys, Co-founder & CEO of European Green Logistics

Space (EGLS), Fabrice Fraikin, Managing Partner & Co-founder of Flexam Invest, Mohammad Al Othman, Senior Executive Director of Alternative Investments at Kamco Invest, and moderated by Hassan Farran, Chief Executive Officer of Kamco Invest - London.

The discussion underscored how higher borrowing costs have reshaped the investment landscape, prompting a renewed focus on fundamentals, risk management, and diversification. With traditional market tailwinds no longer a given, investors are emphasizing downside protection and strategic asset selection to navigate evolving market conditions effectively.

Within real estate, the panel highlighted the shifting behavior of occupiers and the growing importance of selective market positioning. While broad market movements may not guarantee returns, careful analysis of local dynamics, tenant behavior, and diversification strategies can mitigate risks and enhance resilience. The conversation also touched on the interplay between interest rates, asset pricing, and development trends.

On the debt side, private credit continues to offer attractive opportunities, particularly in asset-backed finance, which benefits from lease rate increases and natural inflation protection. With rising default risks in certain highly leveraged sectors, effective downside risk management remains paramount. A disciplined approach to asset selection, collateral-backed structures, and strong origination strategies has proven essential in sustaining high-yield investments.

Ultimately, the panel reinforced that in a high-interest rate environment, investors must adopt a proactive and fundamentals-driven approach. Whether in real estate or private credit, identifying structurally resilient assets and managing risk exposure are as important as ever to achieving sustainable returns.

When founders successfully exit their startups, they gain valuable experience, financial capital, and credibility

The fourth panel explored the dy-

amic venture capital landscape in the GCC, emphasizing the pivotal role of exits in strengthening the MENA VC ecosystem. The discussion delved into how founders and investors navigate exit strategies, the key drivers of success, the role of governments in fostering growth, and the evolving influence of private capital in the region. The panel featured distinguished speakers including Abdulaziz Alomran, Co-founder & CEO of Impact46, Suleiman Al Anjeri, Co-founder & CEO of Yiswa App and Co-founder & Former COO of Dabdoob, and Elie Habib, Co-founder & CEO of Anghami. The session was moderated by Dalal Al Shaye, Senior Vice President at Kamco Invest.

The conversation underscored the significance of exits in fueling the MENA venture capital ecosystem, as they pave the way for second-time founders, attract seasoned investors, and inject fresh capital into the market. Whether through IPOs or M&As, successful exits provide liquidity, encourage reinvestment, and drive innovation. By understanding the factors that contribute to successful exits and addressing regional challenges, both entrepreneurs and investors can better navigate this evolving landscape, fostering a cycle of entrepreneurship and reinvestment. When founders successfully exit, they gain invaluable experience, financial capital, and credibility. Many of these entrepreneurs go on to launch new ventures, leveraging their insights to scale faster and more efficiently.

The discussion also highlighted the region's growing talent and creativity in shaping a more robust digital market ecosystem. While the venture capital landscape continues to expand, the pathway from startup to exit remains a work in progress across multiple markets. Once this process becomes more structured, innovation will accelerate naturally, driven by the financial incentives of a well-defined system. Unlike developed markets, where exit strategies are more established, the MENA region is still navigating its own challenges. Key to unlocking this

potential is a regulatory environment that allows agility and rapid decision-making, as well as seamless access to customers across borders.

Panelists highlighted the recent momentum in the IPO market, citing notable listings such as Rasan, Talabat, and Nice One. These IPOs offer valuable insights into the region's evolving public market dynamics. However, challenges such as market fragmentation, late-stage funding gaps, and scalability constraints continue to hinder startups seeking viable exit opportunities.

By addressing these challenges and strategically leveraging capital market opportunities, the region can unlock its full entrepreneurial potential, paving the way for a thriving and sustainable venture ecosystem.

By 2030, the portion of market value tied to disruptive innovation could expand from 16% to 60%, reflecting AI's growing influence across industries

The last session was a live interview conducted by Faisal Al Othman, Director - Equity & Fixed Income at Kamco Invest, with Cathie Wood, Chief Executive Officer & Chief Investment Officer of ARK Invest who believes that disruptive innovation drives long-term growth by transforming industries through simplicity, accessibility, and cost reduction. The firm focuses exclusively on disruptive technologies, identifying leaders, enablers, and beneficiaries to capture long-term capital appreciation.

AlOthman noted that Kamco Invest has been investing in artificial intelligence, automation, and technology through a diverse range of exposures, recognizing the transformative potential of these themes in global economic evolution. By actively seeking opportunities across the tech value chain, Kamco Invest is positioning itself to capitalize on the growth and innovation emerging globally.

Traditional investors often underestimate the scale and impact of disruptive innovations, which is why ARK differentiates itself through active management of high-conviction portfolios. Cathie mentioned that the convergence of artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, multiomic sequencing, energy storage, and robotics is set to reshape global economic activity. This transformation could accelerate real economic growth from 3% to over 7% within the next seven years.

Breakthroughs in AI, in particular, could significantly impact the global equity market. By 2030, the portion of market value tied to disruptive innovation could expand from 16% to 60%, reflecting AI's growing influence across industries.

AI's ability to solve complex problems and automate knowledge work will revolutionize every sector, reshaping business models and accelerating innovation. Robotics, powered by AI, will redefine manufacturing, transportation, and supply chain resilience.

Advancements in energy storage, particularly in battery technologies, will enable autonomous mobility systems and drive the transition to decentralized energy generation.

Public blockchains will play a crucial role in redefining the financial ecosystem by facilitating decentralized money and contracts, increasing transparency, and reducing costs. Meanwhile, multiomic sequencing will transform healthcare by unlocking new possibilities in digital biological data, precision medicine, and gene editing.

The rise of open-source AI models is reshaping the competitive landscape, with new models continuously altering industry dynamics. As AI technology advances at an exponential pace, akin to compounding interest, platforms like DeepSeek will be critical in capturing future market opportunities.

In China, government investment in AI and related technologies presents both opportunities and challenges. Overcoming regional barriers will be key to driving adoption and ensuring competitiveness. As AI technology continues to evolve, improvements in application development and training efficiency will enable platforms like DeepSeek to expand their reach and compete effectively in both Western markets and China.

Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank thanked all those who participated in and attended the conference, which led to a highly successful turnout. The companies mentioned in a joint statement that The Investment Conference 2025 is the second edition of the annual conference to be hosted to support Kuwait's Vision of becoming a globally recognized financial hub. Additionally, the conferences will serve as a platform to share market insights, geopolitical views, and valuable information regarding the investment world across different asset classes.



Top and above: Photos during the investment conference under the theme 'Exploring Trends: Ideas That Move Markets'.

Medical group marks Kuwait's National Days with free consultations on Feb 25-27

Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group to host Excellence Awards 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group, Kuwait, is to host the Shifa Excellence Awards 2025 alongside the Kuwait National Day celebrations 2025.

The prestigious Shifa Excellence Awards 2025 will recognize outstanding contributions in the field of media. This year's recipients include Najeeb C.K., Country Head (Kuwait), Business Solutions, Gulf Madhyamam, who will be honoured with the Media Relations Impact Award, and Nixon George, CEO, Connexions Media, Asianet-Kuwait, who will receive the Outstanding Media Leadership Award. Their contributions in strengthening media-public relations and elevating Kuwait's global presence, particularly among the Indian expatriate community, have been commendable.

While K T Rabeullah, Founder



Azeem Sait Sulaiman, Head of Operations; Mona Hassan, Head of Marketing & Business Development; Abdul Rasheed, Head of Accounts & Finance; Dr Abdul Nazar, Medical Director; Zubair Musliyarakath - Administrative Manager, Farwaniya Branch; Gunaseelan Pillai - Administrative Manager, Fahaheel Branch; Vigith V Nair - Administrative Manager, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Branch (Al Nahil Clinic).

and Chairman of Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group has previously honoured media professionals in Kuwait, the UAE, and India on

multiple occasions, these awards were not promoted under a unified brand format. For the first time, similar recognitions will be pre-

sented under the Shifa Excellence Awards banner.

Additionally, the event will recognize employees of Shifa Al Jazeera

Medical Group in Kuwait who have completed 10 and 15 years of service, celebrating their dedication and commitment to the organization's journey of excellence. The event will be further enlivened by an enthralling musical performance by the Urumi Musical Band.

As part of Kuwait National Day celebrations 2025, Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group's three branches — Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Centre, Farwaniya; Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Centre, Fahaheel; and Al Nahil Clinic, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh — will offer free consultations with any doctor on February 25, 26, and 27, 2025, along with discounts of up to 30% on laboratory, ultrasound, x-ray, injections, and procedures. Affordable lab check-up packages will also be available across all branches.

Committed to the principle that

quality healthcare should be accessible to all, Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group remains steadfast in its mission to provide affordable healthcare services to the people of Kuwait. The organization expresses its deep gratitude to the great and mighty country Kuwait, its esteemed and noble rulers, dignified ministry officials, and the citizen and expat communities for their continued support and trust.

Shifa Excellence Awards 2025 Ceremony will take place on the evening of February 20, 2025.

Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group is set to expand its healthcare network by establishing additional facilities, including daycare hospitals and multi-specialty medical centres across Kuwait. The upcoming facilities in Salimiya and Jahra are top priorities and are scheduled for completion within this year.

There is 'panic, fear and confusion'

HIV infections could increase six times if US cuts support: UNAIDS

LONDON, Feb 10, (AP): The head of the UN AIDS agency said Monday the number of new HIV infections could jump more than six times by 2029 if American support of the biggest AIDS program is dropped, warning that millions of people could die and more resistant strains of the disease could emerge.

In an interview with The Associated Press, UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima said HIV infections have been falling in recent years, with just 1.3 million new cases recorded in 2023, a 60% decline since the virus peaked in 1995.

But since President Donald Trump's announcement the US would freeze all foreign assistance for 90 days, Byanyima said officials estimate that by 2029, there could be 8.7 million people newly infected with HIV, a tenfold jump in AIDS-related deaths - to 6.3 million - and an additional 3.4 million children made orphans.

"We will see a surge in this disease," Byanyima said, speaking from Uganda. "This will cost lives if the American government doesn't change its mind and maintain its leadership," she said, adding that it was not her place to criticize any government's policy.

Byanyima pleaded with the Trump administration not to abruptly cut off funding, which she said has resulted in "panic, fear and confusion" in many of the African countries hardest hit by AIDS.

In one Kenyan county, she said 550 HIV workers were immediately laid off, while thousands of others in Ethiopia were terminated, leaving health officials unable to track the epidemic.

She noted that the loss of US funding to HIV programs in some countries was catastrophic, with external funding, mostly from the US, accounting for about 90% of their programs. Nearly \$400 million goes to countries like Uganda, Mozambique and Tanzania, she said.

"We can work with (the Americans) on how to decrease their contribution if they wish to decrease it," she

said. Byanyima described the American withdrawal from global HIV efforts as the second biggest crisis the field has ever faced - after the years-long delay it took for poor countries to get the lifesaving antiretrovirals long available in rich countries.

Byanyima also said the loss of American support in efforts to combat HIV was coming at another critical time, with the arrival of what she called "a magical prevention tool" known as lenacapavir, a twice-yearly shot that was shown to offer complete protection against HIV in women, and which worked nearly as well as for men.

Widespread use of that shot, in addition to other interventions to stop HIV, could help end the disease as a public health problem in the next five years, Byanyima said.

She also noted that lenacapavir, sold as Sunlenca, was developed by the American company Gilead.

International aid, Byanyima said, "helped an American company to innovate, to come up with something that will pay them millions and millions, but at the same time prevent new infections in the rest of the world." The freeze in American funding, she said, didn't make economic sense.

"We appeal to the US government to review this, to understand that this is mutually beneficial," she said, noting that foreign assistance makes up less than 1% of the overall US budget. "Why would you need to be so disruptive for that 1%?"

Byanyima said that so far, no other countries or donors have stepped up to fill the void that will be left by the loss of American aid, but that she plans to visit numerous European capitals to speak with global leaders.

"People are going to die because lifesaving tools have been taken away from them," she said. "I have not yet heard of any European country committing to step in, but I know they are listening and trying to see where they can come in because they care about rights, about humanity."

Cancer responsible for 1 in 5 deaths in Mongolia

Pakistan commits to global cancer battle

ISLAMABAD, Feb 10, (Xinhua): Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed the country's commitment to global efforts in the fight against cancer as Pakistan marked World Cancer Day recently.

The president said that the day serves as a reminder of the immense challenges posed by the disease and an opportunity to inspire hope through collective action, innovation, and resilience, the President's Office said in a statement.

"By raising awareness and strengthening our healthcare response, we can collectively combat cancer and reduce its impact on our communities," the president said.

Meanwhile, the prime minister highlighted the government's focus on

enhancing cancer care infrastructure, investing in research, and ensuring access to affordable and high-quality treatment for all citizens, the Prime Minister's office said in a statement.

He added that Pakistan continues to work in partnership with healthcare professionals, researchers, and international organizations to enhance its capacity for cancer prevention and treatment.

World Cancer Day is observed annually to raise awareness and encourage action in the global fight against cancer.

Meanwhile, cancer remains one of the leading causes of mortality in Mongolia, accounting for one in every five deaths, according to the country's National Cancer Center (NCC) on Tuesday.

"A total of 4,755 people died from cancer in Mongolia in 2024, account-

ing for one in five deaths in the country," the NCC said in a statement on the occasion of the World Cancer Day, which falls on Feb. 4 each year.

Additionally, the Asian country, with a population of 3.5 million, recorded 8,169 new cases of cancer in 2024, marking an increase of nearly 13 percent compared to the previous year. The NCC attributed this rise in part to improved early detection efforts.

While 80 percent of cancer patients in Mongolia were previously diagnosed at a late stage, the situation has improved, with the figure dropping to 65 percent, the center noted.

The most common types of cancer among Mongolians include liver, stomach, lung, cervical, and colorectal cancer, reflecting long-standing public health challenges.



A number of global experts and trainee doctors participated in the pediatric dental care training.



A photo from the training course.

KUNA photos

Kuwait equips trainee doctors

Specialized course focuses on treating kids' dental injuries

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Kuwait Board Program for Pediatric Dentistry organized a specialized training course on treating children's dental injuries and fractures, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Held at the Farwaniya Specialized Dental Center, this course is part of the ministry's visiting doctors program, which aims to attract advanced international expertise in various medical fields.

Pediatric dentistry consultant and director of the Kuwait Board Program for Pediatric Dentistry Dr. Anfal Faridoun explained that this course is the first of its kind in Kuwait. It was specifically designed to equip trainee doctors

with the latest knowledge and practical skills in treating children's dental injuries and fractures. Hosting globally renowned experts in this field offers Kuwaiti doctors the opportunity to learn directly from pioneers and apply the latest treatment protocols.

Dr. Faridoun highlighted that the Kuwait Board Program for Pediatric Dentistry seeks to improve the quality of medical training in Kuwait.

She affirmed the ministry's commitment to aligning academic education with practical training to ensure the preparation of competent doctors capable of providing distinguished medical services based on the highest international standards.

Health issues

Phones 'banned' in Brazil schools

SAO PAULO, Feb 10, (AP): Brazilian students returned to class last week with a new task: staying away from their smartphones as a new law restricting their use in schools takes effect.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva signed a bill in January limiting smartphone access at schools, in line with a trend seen in the US and Europe. It applies to public and private schools, and applies to classrooms and the halls.

Phones are still allowed for educational purposes, with the teacher's permission, and when needed for the student's accessibility and health. Schools have the autonomy to set their own guidelines, such as whether students can keep phones in backpacks or store them in lockers or designated baskets.

Before the federal law, most of Brazil's 26 states - including Rio de Janeiro, Maranhao and Goias - had already passed measures applying some restrictions to phone use in schools. As of 2023, nearly two-thirds of Brazilian schools had some limitations, with 28% banning them entirely, according to a survey last year by the Brazilian Internet Steering Committee.

But rules varied between states and between schools, and authorities and administrators struggled with enforcement.

That may have contributed to support for federal legislation from across the political spectrum - both allies of leftist Lula and the far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro. A survey released in October by Brazilian pollster Datafolha said that almost two-thirds of respondents wanted to ban smartphone use by children and teenagers at schools. More than three-quarters said those devices do more harm than good to their children.

Porto Seguro, a nearly 150-year-old private school in Sao Paulo, prohibited smartphones in classrooms last year and encouraged students to disconnect completely once a week. This year, it expanded its ban to include hallways, requiring students to keep their phones in lockers for the entire school day, including breaks.

"Students were having trouble concentrating," school principal Meire Nocito said in an interview Thursday. "There was also the issue of social isolation. Many students who used technology excessively would isolate themselves during breaks, interacting only through social media."

"Banning cellphone use has helped create a space for social interaction, fostering relationships and teaching students to navigate conflicts, which are a natural part of human interactions. It has been very positive," she added.

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'China and Kuwait share a strong connection'

Middle East skiers showcase growth at Harbin Winter Asiad

HARBIN, Feb 10, (Xinhua): Finishing 19th in the women's slalom during her debut at the ongoing Harbin Asian Winter Games on Saturday, alpine skier Joud Farhoud of Saudi Arabia expressed disappointment with her result.

"I didn't achieve the result I was hoping for, but I am very happy to have been part of this experience, and it will definitely boost my confidence moving forward," said Farhoud.

At the Harbin Games, several Alpine skiers from the Middle East told Xinhua that winter sports are flourishing in their countries.

Faris Alobaid, 37, marked Kuwait's Asian Winter Games debut in alpine skiing on Sunday. An investor by profession, he set aside his busy schedule to focus on preparing for the event.

"Sport is the best way to bring people together, fostering friendship and showcasing different talents," said Alobaid.

"This is an excellent opportunity to showcase our country to the world, demonstrating our friendliness and openness for business," the Kuwaiti added.

Kuwait has recently established several ice hockey clubs and constructed a high-level rink for hosting international ice hockey events.

Since 2023, skiing has been actively promoted in the country. Alobaid, who learned to ski at the age of eight in the French Alps, has become a pioneering figure in his country's skiing scene. Six months ago, he hired a coach for the newly-established Kuwait national team. "We understand the theory of turning and not missing gates, we also have our equipment ready," said Alobaid.

Though he ranked last out of 35 finishers in the men's slalom event, the 37-year-old was pleased that his expectations were met. "China and Kuwait share a strong connection. We really appreciate the partnership we have with China and we look forward to building more collaborations in winter sports." In Lebanon, two main ski resorts have been established - one in the country's north, and the other in the



Faris Alobaid of Kuwait competes in the alpine skiing men's slalom at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Yabuli, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

center.

"On average, we can now train in our country around 60 days a year, with around 50 skiers spread across Lebanon," skier Anthony Mrad explained.

In addition to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, other Middle Eastern nations such as Jordan and Iran have seen their alpine skiers compete at Harbin, all expressing their ambition to improve.



Anthony Mrad of Lebanon competes during the men's slalom of alpine skiing event at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Yabuli, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

Saudi Arabia is set to host the 10th Asian Winter Games in 2029, and Farhoud expressed her excitement, stating, "I was fortunate to learn this sport as a child, and our country is remarkable for hosting the Asian Winter Games in the Middle East." "The organization of this event has been incredible, and there's always something to learn as we take our next steps in hosting the Asian Winter Games," she added.

Yamashita claims cross-country 10km free gold at Winter Asiad

China seals six out of seven golds on offer

HARBIN, Feb 10, (Xinhua): Haruki Yamashita claimed Japan's first cross-country skiing gold medal at the Harbin Asian Winter Games after winning the men's 10km free event on Monday.

A total of 46 skiers competed in the race, with each competitor starting 30 seconds apart.

Despite Chinese veteran Wang Qiang holding the fastest pace across the first 6km, Yamashita surged in the latter stages of the race. The 25-year-old Japanese finished in 21 minutes and 6.5 seconds to take gold.

Japan's Takatsugu Uda was 10 seconds behind Yamashita to earn the silver, while Kazakhstan's Olzhas Klimin secured the bronze in 21 minutes and 20.3 seconds.

China's Bao Lin and Wang finished fourth and fifth respectively.

The cross-country skiing competition will conclude on Wednesday with the women's 4x5km relay and the men's 4x7.5km relay events.

China sealed six out of seven golds on offer at the Harbin 2025 Asian Winter Games on Monday, with Japan bagging the rest in the cross-country men's 10km free.

Speed skater Gao Tingyu, one of the six OCA flagbearers during the Harbin 2025 opening ceremony, pocketed his second gold at the Games in the men's 500-meter, following his triumph in the men's 100m race last Saturday. Wataru Morishige



Yamashita Haruki of Japan competes during the Cross-Country Skiing men's 10km free match at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Yabuli, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

of Japan and South Korean Kim Jun-ho finished second and third, respectively.

Yang Binyu led a podium sweep for China in the speed skating women's 3,000m, with Han Mei and 18-year-old Tai Zhien securing silver and bronze.

The Chinese skaters then kept the strong momentum, clocking one minute and 19.22 seconds to win the men's team sprint. South Korea trailed 1.26 seconds to take the silver, while Japan settled for the bronze.

With four finals scheduled on Tuesday to conclude the speed

skating event, China with seven golds now has already secured the sport's medal table title.

China added three golds in snow events in Yabuli.

Chinese snowboarder Xiong Shirui's stable first two runs secured the gold medal in the women's big air final with a score of 164.00 points. Xiong's teammate Zhang Xiaonan added a silver, while Suzuka Ishimoto of Japan took the bronze.

China's Yang Wenlong dominantly won the men's big air with 193.25 points, his compatriot Jiang Xinjie claimed the silver and South Korean Kang

Dong-hun finished third.

Led by Beijing Winter Olympics gold medalists Qi Guangpu and Xu Mengtao, China won the freestyle skiing mixed team aerials gold at ease, with young talent Li Xinpeng scoring the highest among the three Chinese skiers in the final. Kazakhstan and Japan took the silver and bronze, respectively.

After Monday's competitions, China leads the medal tally with 21 golds, 18 silver and 15 bronze, followed by South Korea on 11-10-9 and Japan on 4-4-9.

Kuwait Club tops Al-Duhail in Championship warm-up

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, Feb 10: Kuwait Club defeated Al-Duhail of Qatar 36-27 in a friendly match as part of the ongoing training camp in Doha. This match served as preparation for the 41st Gulf Clubs Handball Championship, which will take place in Oman from the 15th to the 24th of this month. It will face Qatar in its second friendly tomorrow. Afterward, the team will head directly to Muscat on Thursday for the upcoming competition.

On the sidelines of the Al-Duhail match, Kuwait Club's Handball Director, Sameh Al-Hajri, honored the administrator of Al-Duhail, Mansour Al-Sharshani.

Kuwait Club has also strengthened its squad with the signing of Egyptian handball star Shadi Khalil from Zamalek. Khalil joins the team as the third professional player alongside Qatari players Frankis Marzo and the Orange Angel Hernandez. The team is placed in Group 2 for the Gulf Championship, alongside Al-Arabi of Qatar, Oman of Oman, and Dibba Al-Hisn of the UAE.

Sameh Al-Hajri, Kuwait Club's Handball Director, praised the progress of the Doha camp and highlighted the players' commitment to the instructions of the coaching and administrative staff. He also noted the team's readiness for the Gulf Champion-



Al-Hajri honors Al-Duhail administrator Mansour Al-Sharshani.

ship, although winger Saleh Al-Moussawi, who was injured during the World Cup in Croatia, remains out. Al-Hajri reassured that the medical team is working on his rehabilitation to prepare him for the Gulf Championship.

Al-Hajri extended his gratitude to the Kuwait Club Board of Directors, led by President Khaled Al-Ghanim, for their unwavering support and efforts in overcoming challenges to ensure the team is fully prepared to represent Kuwaiti handball and compete for the title in the Gulf tournament.

Al-Shabab eyes fourth straight win



Player controls the ball during Zain First Division League match.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The seventh round of the Zain First Division League gets underway with two key matchups. Al-Shabab faces Al-Sahel at the latter's stadium at 8:15 pm, following an earlier clash between Al-Sulaibikhat and Burqan at 6:00 pm at Al-Shabab Stadium. Al-Jahra sits out this round.

Al-Sulaibikhat and Al-Sahel are tied at 4 points, with the latter sitting at the bottom due to goal difference.

Al-Shabab enters the match in top form, aiming for its fourth consecutive victory as it pushes for promotion to the Zain Premier League. Meanwhile, Al-Sahel is desperate to end its three-match losing streak and secure its first win of the season against the league leaders. Their previous encounter ended in a 1-1 draw.

Burgan looks to build on its recent winning form and climb further up the standings, while Al-Sulaibikhat is eager to avenge its 2-0 defeat to Burgan earlier in the competition and claim a second consecutive victory.

'Barcelona is playing with a lot of confidence'

Barca routs Sevilla to inch closer to Madrid rivals

MADRID, Feb 10, (AP): Barcelona is making sure there will be a three-way fight for the Spanish league title.

The Catalan club moved closer to rivals Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid at the top of the standings by routing Sevilla 4-1.

Robert Lewandowski, Ferrn Lopez, Raphinha and Eric Garcia scored a goal each as Barcelona took advantage of the 1-1 draw between Madrid and Atletico in the capital derby on Saturday.

Third-placed Barcelona is now two points behind leader Madrid and one point behind Atletico.

Barcelona had a comfortable away win despite playing with 10 men from the 62nd when Lopez was sent off for a hard foul. The red card was shown after a video review.

It was the third straight league win for Barcelona, and its ninth victory in 11 matches across all competitions.

Sevilla, in 13th place, has won only one of its last five league games.

Lewandowski put Barcelona ahead in the seventh minute with his eighth goal in his last nine games in all competitions. Ruben Vargas equalized a minute later for the hosts before Lopez put Barcelona back in front in the 46th. Raphinha added to the lead in the 55th and Garcia sealed the win in the 89th.

"We needed to win to stay in

contention and put some pressure on our rivals," Barcelona defender Inigo Martinez said. "The team is playing with a lot of confidence right now and we know that we can still improve. We need to stay on this track."

Defender Jules Kounde made his 124th appearance for Barcelona, equaling the mark of Ludovic Giuly in fifth place for the

most appearances for Barcelona by a French player. Eric Abidal tops that list with 193 appearances.

Barcelona defender Ronald Araujo had to be substituted about 20 minutes into the match with a right ankle injury.

Brais Mendez scored an 84th-minute winner as seventh-placed Real Sociedad beat relegation-

threatened Espanyol 2-1 at home.

Defenders Cristian Mosquera and Mouctar Diakhaby scored first-half goals as Valencia moved to 18th with a 2-0 home win over 17th-placed Leganes.

Mauro Arambarri converted a 44th-minute penalty to give 14th-placed Getafe a 1-0 road win over 19th-placed Alaves.



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal controls the ball between Sevilla's Ruben Vargas and Adria Pedrosa, right, during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Sevilla and FC Barcelona at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in Seville, Spain. (AP)

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Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts, left, holds the Vince Lombardi Trophy next to head coach Nick Sirianni after defeating the Kansas City Chiefs in the NFL Super Bowl 59 football game in New Orleans. (AP)

Sports

Eagles deny Chiefs a Super Bowl three-peat

Hurts throws for two touchdowns to earn MVP honors

NEW ORLEANS, Feb 10, (AP): Yo Philly: Jalen Hurts and Nick Sirianni are world champions.

A ferocious Philadelphia Eagles defense tormented and frustrated Patrick Mahomes while Hurts made all the plays the offense needed.

So much for the Kansas City Chiefs' quest for a Super Bowl three-peat.

It wasn't even close.

Cooper DeJean got a pick-6 on his 22nd birthday. Josh Sweat pressured Mahomes all night and the Eagles routed the Chiefs 40-22 on Sunday to secure the franchise's second Super Bowl championship.

Hurts threw for two touchdowns and ran for a score on a tush push to earn Super Bowl MVP honors, and Vic Fangio's defense was so dominant that the Eagles didn't need much from Saquon Barkley. The game-changing running back finished with 57 yards, breaking Terrell Davis' record for yards rushing in a season, playoffs included. Hurts threw for 221 yards.

"This is the ultimate team game. You can't be great without the greatness of others. Great performance by everybody - offense, defense, special teams," Sirianni said. "We didn't really ever care what anyone thought about how we won, or their opinions. All we want to do is win."

Hurts has been doubted since he started for Alabama in a national



Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver DeVonta Smith, right, catches a touchdown pass as Kansas City Chiefs cornerback Jaylen Watson (35) defends during the second half of the NFL Super Bowl 59 football game in New Orleans. (AP)

championship game and was benched for Tua Tagovailoa at halftime. Finishing second to Mahomes in MVP voting two years ago didn't quite silence all the detractors. Now, he's hoisted the Vince Lombardi trophy.

Sirianni, who mocked fans chanting "Fire Nick!" during a victory over Cleveland in October and was called a "clown" on national television, also quieted critics by adding a championship ring to a coaching resume that in-

cludes the fifth-best winning percentage in league history.

"Things come right on time. The last time around, it wasn't our time, it wasn't my time and sometimes you have to accept that you have to wait

your turn," said Hurts, who nearly led the Eagles to victory against the Chiefs two years ago in Arizona.

With Donald Trump becoming the first president in office to attend a Super Bowl, the Eagles outplayed Kansas

City in every facet, delighting a raucous pro-Philly crowd that celebrated each score with a familiar rendition of "Fly! Eagles! Fly!"

Even Taylor Swift's presence couldn't help the Chiefs. They lost for the first time in 10 games this season with the pop superstar in a suite watching boyfriend Travis Kelce, who didn't catch a pass until late in the third quarter.

Not in Kansas City's worst nightmares could its fans have imagined such a lackluster performance. The Chiefs had won three of the previous five Super Bowls, losing 31-9 to Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers four years ago.

Mahomes was 8-0 against Fangio's defenses before the longtime coordinator and former Broncos head coach outcoached Andy Reid, capping his first season with his hometown team. Reid fell to 3-3 in Super Bowls, including a loss with the Eagles.

The Eagles sacked Mahomes six times, the most of his career, including 2 1/2 by Sweat and two by Milton Williams. And they did it without Fangio calling a single blitz.

"Defense wins championships," Hurts said. "We saw how they played today. We saw the difference they made in the game. They gave us opportunities, gave us short fields. And we're able to do what we do."

Barkley, the 2024 AP NFL Offensive Player of the Year, only had 31 yards rushing in the first half when Philly built a 24-0 lead.

Kuwaiti Embassy in China pledges full support for Kuwait teams at 9th Asian Winter Games



KUNA photo

Advisor of the Kuwaiti Embassy in China Faisal Al-Mawed with the players of the Kuwaiti ice hockey team and the administrative delegation.

HARBIN, Feb 10, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Embassy in China affirmed its full commitment to supporting the Kuwaiti teams participating in the 9th Asian Winter Games (Harbin 2025).

This statement was made by Faisal Al-Mawed, the embassy's counselor, on behalf of Kuwaiti Ambassador to China, Jassem Al-Najem, during a meeting with the Kuwaiti media delegation attending the ice hockey competitions of the Kuwaiti

team at the tournament.

Al-Mawed expressed hope for the Kuwaiti mission's distinguished participation in the games, which he believes will reflect the reputation of Kuwaiti winter sports and enhance the standing of Kuwait on the international stage.

He emphasized that the inclusion of Kuwaiti athletes among the continent's elite competitors is already an achievement to be proud of, as they represent

Kuwaiti sports through their athletic prowess, strong values, and exemplary sportsmanship, becoming role models that showcase the principles of Kuwait.

He also praised the efforts of Fahid Al-Ajmi, the director of the Kuwaiti mission, for his exceptional work in managing the team, ensuring that all necessary conditions are in place for the athletes to perform their best. Al-Mawed further commended China for its excellent organization of the event.

Al-Arabi drops points ahead of 'showdown' with Kuwait Club

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Al-Arabi coach Nasser Al-Shatti admitted that his team dropped two valuable points in the Zain Premier League title race after a goalless draw against Khaitan in the 14th round. However, he emphasized that the competition is still long and remains open.

Al-Shatti acknowledged that Al-Arabi did not meet expectations, despite the team's awareness that some opponents would adopt defensive tactics against them. He also pointed out that "luck was not on our side."

Expressing his dissatisfaction with the limited actual playtime in the match, particularly in the second half, he estimated that effective play did not exceed 20 minutes. However, he conceded that "it is a legitimate strategy for any team." Al-Shatti urged referees to address this issue in future matches by using disciplinary measures. "We support the referees in their efforts to improve the league," he added.

Looking ahead to Al-Arabi's upcoming clash against Kuwait Club on Saturday in the 15th round, Al-Shatti described it as an important match requiring full concentration but stopped short of calling it decisive.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Club's Montenegrin coach Nebojsa Jovic emphasized the significance of his team's victory over Yarmouk, especially given recent injury struggles. He stressed the importance of player recovery ahead of his challenging encounter against Al-Arabi, stating, "Our goal is to stay on course for the title."

Jovic made it clear that Kuwait Club will approach the remaining nine matches as if it was finals, aiming for



Al-Arabi coach Nasser Al-Shatti.

victory in each one.

Adel Aqla, described the upcoming match against Al-Arabi as "summit clash," irrespective of the teams' current standings. He praised Al-Arabi's strong performances and rich football history.

Aqla expressed confidence in Kuwait Club's squad depth, ensuring that the team will field fully prepared players for the fixture. He highlighted the team's dominant 6-0 win over Yarmouk in the fourth round as proof of its intent to avoid past struggles, referencing the narrow 2-1 victory over the same opponent earlier in the season.

On fan support, Aqla appreciated the growing attendance at Kuwait Club matches. "Even if just one fan shows up, we will fight to make him happy," he remarked. He acknowledged that Kuwait Club has the third-largest fan base in the country after Al-Qadisiya and Al-Arabi, urging full attendance to support the team's title push.

Kuwait squash team gears up for Asian Junior Championship

HONG KONG, Feb 10: The technical committee for the Asian Junior Squash Championship, set to begin tomorrow in Hong Kong with Kuwait's participation, will hold a meeting this morning to finalize the match timings, provide instructions, and address any inquiries.

It's worth noting that Kuwait's national squash team has been placed in the first group, alongside teams from Korea and Sri Lanka. Kuwait's squad includes Abdulrahman Al-Maghrabi, Jassim Al-Gharib, Khaled Al-Fawzan, and Abdulrahman Al-Sanea, with coaches Ahmed Abdel-Aal and Falah Fayed leading the technical staff.

In other news, Kuwait's Consul General in Hong Kong and Macau, Nasser Al-Ghanim, hosted a luncheon the day before yesterday to honor the Kuwaiti Squash team delegation participating in the Asian Junior Championship. The event was attended by Deputy Consul General, Counselor Abdulaziz Al-Zaid.

Adel Al-Gharib, head of the Kuwaiti squash delegation, presented a commemorative shield to Al-Ghanim on behalf of the Federation, expressing gratitude for his warm reception and generous hospitality.

Ambassador Al-Ghanim welcomed the delegation and encouraged the players to perform admirably, reflecting the progress of squash in Kuwait. He wished the team success and hopes they achieve positive results in their matches against Asian teams and advance to the later rounds.



Al-Gharib presents a commemorative shield to Al-Ghanim.

Breetzke's record-breaking ODI ton goes in vain

New Zealand reaches tri-nation series final

LAHORE, Pakistan, Feb 10, (AP): Kane Williamson trumped South African opener Matthew Breetzke's record-breaking debut ODI hundred and led New Zealand to the tri-nation series final with a six-wicket win on Monday.

Williamson followed his Saturday's half century against Pakistan with an unbeaten 133 off 113 balls -- his first ODI century since 2019 World Cup -- and cruised New Zealand to 308-4 for its second successive win.

The tournament is being served as build up for the Champions Trophy later this month and Williamson has tuned up perfectly for the mega event with two meaningful knocks.

Breetzke had earlier become the first cricketer to score 150 in his maiden ODI appearance and guided an understrength South Africa to 304-6 after New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner won his second successive toss and elected to field.

Williamson and Devon Conway setup the run-chase with a solid second-wicket partnership of 187 runs against a weakened South African pace bowling attack. Fast bowlers Marco Jansen and Kagiso Rabada are among seven players scheduled to join the South Africa team for Champions Trophy over the weekend after the tri-nation series final on Friday.

Williamson used his feet well against inexperienced bowlers and even experienced wrist-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi also couldn't separate the pair on a flat wicket.

Williamson completed his second fastest century in ODIs off 72 balls with a single, but Conway missed out on his hundred when he fell for 97 while attempting the landmark with a square cut.

Conway made it to the playing XI after Rachin Ravindra got a blow on his forehead in the field during New Zealand's thumping 78-run win in the first match at the newly renovated Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday.

The left-hander fully capitalized on a missed stumping chance when he was on 36 and hit nine fours and a six before he was brilliantly caught at point by Senuran Muthusamy - one of the four debutants for South Africa.

New Zealand middle-order stuttered briefly when left-arm spinner Muthusamy got the wickets of Daryl Mitchell (10) and Tom Latham of successive balls with the latter falling for his second successive duck in the tournament.

Glenn Phillips (28 not out), whose maiden ODI century had romped New Zealand to a big win on Saturday against Pakistan, and Williamson then shared an unbroken 57-run stand to seal the match.

Williamson raised the victory with eight balls to spare with his 13th boundary when he smashed Muthusamy through mid-off.

Debutant opening batter Breetzke, who isn't part of South African squad for this month's Champions Trophy, smashed 150 off 148 balls and broke West Indies batter Desmond Haynes' record of 148 against Australia in 1978.

South Africa rode on Breetzke's blitz to score 304-6.

After losing captain Temba Bavuma (20) inside the power play, the 26-year-old Breetzke shared 93-run stand with Jason Smith (41) - another batter overlooked for the Champions Trophy. He pushed the scoring rate with some exhilarating hitting - especially on the off side of the wicket - and added further 131 runs with Wiaan Mulder, who made 64 off 60 balls.