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His Highness the Amir attends the graduation ceremony of the 50th batch of officer cadets at Ali Al-Sabah Military College in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince.

Amir celebrates Ali Al-Sabah Military College's graduation

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The graduation ceremony for the 50th batch of cadet officers at Ali Al-Sabah Military College was held Wednesday under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah -- the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

The graduates consist of 409 officers; including five from the Kingdom of Bahrain, four from Yemen and 25 from the National Guard.

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army Major General Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Shamil Ahmed Al-Khaled, Commander of Ali Al-Sabah Military College Brigadier General Fawaz Ayeed Al-Musailem and other officials of the college warmly welcomed HH the Amir upon his arrival.

Also present at the ceremony were His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, President of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Court of Cassation Dr. Adel Bouresli, senior State officials, family members of the graduates and other citizens.

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Nations fall when graduates are placed in unsuitable positions and the unqualified are promoted

The Soviet Minister of Civil Service was actually a spy who was tasked with sabotaging the administration.

Major responsibilities were assigned to those unqualified, and the great state fell.

Not promoting competent employees and setting unrealistic requirements to promote efficient officials results in an aging state.

After the fall of the communist regime, Washington honored its Russian agent.

The officer said, "I was supposed to monitor you, but I didn't notice your espionage."

The dog said, "Fifteen years of life is enough for me."

The donkey said, "Fifty years is too much; I only want to live for twenty."

Man took the years that animals abandoned, only to end up in misery.

The old man had nothing to do but tell funny stories to his grandchildren, who laughed.

To solve traffic congestion, the state must adopt the metro project.

NewsWatch

Mol cautions against fake traffic discounts

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Interior (MoI) cautioned the public against dealing with false messages or unknown websites, which offer discounts regarding traffic violations.

In a press release, the ministry said paying violations is only done through official channels, "Sahel", the unified governmental application.

It affirmed that it neither sends SMS from international numbers to people nor submits "discounts" for traffic violations.

DUBAI: The World Bank has projected that the economies of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries will grow by 3.4 percent and 4.1 percent in 2025 and 2026 respectively, the UAE's official news agency WAM reported Wednesday. (Xinhua)

'Repay KD 67,000' Education ministry under pay scrutiny

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The State Audit Bureau (SAB) has called for payment suspension and recovery of unjustified bonuses and supervision allowances that were paid by the Ministry of Education to some employees in a personal capacity.

The bureau has stressed the need for strict compliance with the decisions of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and preventing similar cases in the future.

According to a report prepared by the bureau, a total of KD 67,095 was spent unjustly. This amount included KD 36,376 in supervision allowances and KD 30,719 in bonuses (job level and incentive for those occupying some specialized positions).

The report states that the ministry paid supervision allowance to a number of employees who were already receiving a personal monthly bonus, which is in violation of CSC Decision No. 11/ 2012. This decision pertains to the granting of supervision allowance to Kuwaiti employees in government agencies.

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Pensions ensured

3,702 'Article 8' cases examined

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Article 8 Citizenship Affairs Office announced that it has processed a total of 3,702 forms submitted by the women whose Kuwaiti nationality has been revoked, and referred them to the relevant agencies, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The office also responded to several phone calls and inquiries regarding the status of women with revoked citizenship.

It explained that on January 19, the Civil Service Council approved a mechanism for regulating the wages and contracts of female employees covered by Article 8. The Civil Service Commission (CSC) was tasked with issuing a special form for these contracts and circulating it to relevant ministries for implementation.

Some government agencies began listing the names of the affected female employees and are reaching out to them to complete the contracting procedures according to the finalized contracts.

The Article 8 Citizenship Affairs Office also announced its collaboration with the Ministry of Health to issue birth and death certificates in accordance with law No. 36/1969 and its amendments, revealing that these certificates will be issued

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10,000 Kuwaitis study in British universities

8 Markaz reports healthy growth in GCC real estate markets



9 Zain celebrates winners of Kuwait National Robotics Competition

Gold prices go wild as KD 30 per gram looms

Market sees cautious buying trend



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

A man braves the heavy downpour while crossing the street in Kuwait on Wednesday.

Road flooding tackled with swift response

Kuwait readies emergency teams for heavy rain

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Ministry of Public Works has confirmed the readiness of emergency teams, affiliated with the ministry and the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), for the rainy conditions that the country witnessed almost the whole day on Wednesday, say sources from the ministry.

Sources confirmed that the ministry is closely following up the weather conditions through the General Administration of Meteorology; and then issues directives to maintenance teams to complete their preparations in internal and express roads, using certain ma-

chineries like water pumps and focusing on areas that witnessed water accumulations during previous rainy conditions.

Sources pointed out that on Wednesday morning, the ministry announced its readiness to receive reports through the following channels: hotline 150, WhatsApp and other social media. They affirmed that the amounts of rain recorded were within the capacity of the ministry's rain network, except at times when the volume of rain increased; so the network needed some time to accommodate the rain quantities.

Sources added the emergency teams of the ministry and PART worked together to deal with the accumulation of water on internal and express roads.

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Experts predict that the rise in global gold prices will continue, with the price of an ounce expected to increase from \$2,877 to \$3,000.

This will likely drive the price of a gram of 21-karat gold in Kuwait to KD 30 by March, after surpassing KD25 in recent sales. Experts attribute the price increase to various factors; including US President Donald Trump's controversial statements regarding taxes, his threat to the head of the US Federal Reserve, central banks increasing gold reserves as a precaution against economic instability, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Gold trader Anwar Abdul Rab noted that gold prices have risen unexpectedly this year. Larger gold shops that hold significant quantities are seeing substantial profits, while smaller shops are struggling due to market stagnation. Meanwhile, gold purchases have increased by 20 percent over the past two months despite rising prices.

Mohammed Zahid, another trader, explained that many consumers are buying gold cautiously, purchasing smaller pieces out of fear of further price hikes; while others are buying larger amounts either as an investment or for upcoming events like engagements or weddings.

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Kuwait sets pace for global collaboration at WGS 2025

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait's participation in the World Governments Summit 2025 in Dubai had reflected the country's openness to a unified global development vision and partnership.

The World Governments Summit not only focused on shared vision for tomorrow, it also touched on numerous challenges that the world need to address before heading on the quest for greater development and progress.

The speech delivered by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the WSG reflected Kuwait's own national vision for development, which is more than a national plan, it has regional and international reaches that would benefit Kuwait and other world countries.

It also displayed Kuwait's deep concern over global challenges, which required global partnerships and deep understanding of what lies ahead.

His Highness the Prime Minister stressed that conflicts within the world system had an impact on global economy, the environment and other aspects that would endanger all people and lead to grave consequences.

The Kuwaiti top official casted a light on the role of governments in meeting challenges, saying that Kuwait had launched a government evaluation performance system that met the goals of implementing affective governance and boost accountability, evaluation, and anti-corruption measures.

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Kuwait rightfully earns Arab cultural capital tag: UNESCO

PARIS, Feb 12, (KUNA): The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) affirmed Kuwait's worth of being the capital of Arab culture, especially considering the leading role it plays in promoting, preserving and advancing humanity and building fortresses of peace and prosperity.

In an interview with KUNA, UNESCO Assistant Director-General Firmin Edouard Matoko praised Kuwait's effective role in enhancing education and culture in the Arab region.

The UN official also stressed the importance of the effective role of Kuwait through its various initiatives in several wide-ranging activities, which embodies its leadership in enhancing regional and international cooperation. He pointed out Kuwait's ability to coordinate regional and international efforts to advance the various activities of the UN, especially in building the capacities of educational systems, preserving and enhancing cultural heritage, protecting the media, and freedom of expression.

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New mortgage law expected to energize real estate trade

By Marwa Al Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Real estate expert and evaluator Suleiman Al-Dulajjan says the enforcement of the mortgage or real estate financing law for private housing will have a major impact on the real estate market, particularly by activating trading in lower-priced residential areas such as Al-Firdous, Al-Dhahr, Andalous, and others.

Al-Dulajjan said, "The local market currently suffers from a lack of supply and limited financing options. Any increase in financing sources will drive

both demand and prices higher.

If sufficient financing is available, it would be better to align the loan amounts with salary categories to

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Suleiman Al-Dulajjan

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:10 Asr 15:11
 Sunrise... 06:30 Maghrib .. 17:35
 Zohr 12:02 Isha 18:53

Local

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild, visibility will improve gradually and partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h with a chance for scattered rain over southern areas.
By Night: Cold with light variable

wind changing to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	17	13

Kuwait Airport	18	13
Abdaly	18	09
Bubyan	17	12
Jahra	18	13
Failaka Island	18	14
Salmiyah	16	14
Ahmadi	17	09
Jal Aliyah	17	11



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets his Kurdish counterpart Masrouf Barzani.



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives the Hewlett-Packard (HP) CEO Enrique Lores.

PM meets Kurdish PM, HP CEO Enrique Lores

DUBAI, Feb 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received his Kurdish counterpart Masrouf Barzani Tuesday, on the sidelines of the World Governments Summit (WGS) held in Dubai, UAE.

During the meeting, they discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations, exchanging views on issues of common interest.

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya and a number of senior Kuwaiti officials attended the meeting.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also received Hewlett-Packard (HP) CEO Enrique Lores Tuesday, on the sidelines of the World Governments Summit (WGS) held in Dubai, UAE.

Investment opportunities that would align with Kuwait Vision 2035 to help promote smart economy and digital transformation of the key topics discussed during the meeting attended by Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya and other senior Kuwaiti officials.

Visit visas for Iraqis to be made easier: envoy

'Joint efforts needed to tackle climate change'

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Al-Safi has unveiled the plan to ease procedures for the issuance of entry visa for Iraqi citizens visiting Kuwait.



Al-Safi

In a press statement, Al-Safi explained that the new process will be based on the mechanism used during the Arabian Gulf Cup 26, which allowed over 17,000 Iraqi visitors and more than 1,500 cars to enter Kuwait. He affirmed the success of the previous arrangement, stating that all Iraqi visitors left without delay or significant violations, thereby, demonstrating ideal coordination between the two countries.

He also commended the positive meeting between advisor at the Amiri Diwan Mohammad Abu Al-Hassan and Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia Al-Sudani in Iraq. "They discussed issues of mutual concern and established a shared vision on future relations," he added.

In a bid to strengthen cooperation between the two countries, Iraq appointed Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Al-Ulum as personal envoy to the Iraqi Prime Minister; while Kuwait appointed Mohammed Abu Al-Hassan as personal envoy to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. These appointments reflect the commitment of both sides to elevate communication between them and reach a future roadmap.

Al-Safi also confirmed that the Arab Summit in Baghdad will be held as scheduled, that is, in May.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Minister of Environment Dr. Ha-Lu Al-Askari explained that Iraq and Kuwait, like the rest of the world, are experiencing climate change and its effects in the region, stressing the need for a mechanism and coordination between countries to deal with the repercussions of this phenomenon.

In a statement to journalists on the sidelines of his country's delegation to the Sixth Regional Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Kuwait, Al-Askari confirmed that he spoke with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf about the ways to coordinate efforts in dealing with climate challenges that the two countries are facing; such as dust storms and desertification. He also affirmed Iraq's commitment to support regional and international efforts to address these environmental challenges and natural disasters.

He expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Kuwait for hosting this forum, while pointing out the importance of strengthening Arab cooperation in light of the current challenges that the region is facing -- whether political or environmental.

He pointed out that Iraq has been greatly affected by climate change in terms of rising temperatures, desertification, earthquakes in the northern region along neighboring countries, and drought due to low levels of snow and rain.

He added the Iraqi Ministry of Environment is doing its best to mitigate the risks of disasters, in coordination with the relevant ministries in his country.



Photos by Samer Shaqir

Top and above: Pictures taken at the event.

'UK committed to supporting education'

10,000 Kuwaitis study in British universities

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Regional Director of the British Council in Kuwait Tony Skinner revealed that the number of Kuwaiti students studying at British universities ranges from 8,000 to 10,000, and this number is expected to increase.

In a speech delivered at the annual meeting organized by the British Council at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Skinner explained that every year, three million people take international exams through the British Council. Students and professionals earn qualifications that enable them to enroll in leading global academic institutions and enhance their career opportunities.

He highlighted the British Council, which was established in 1934, has

partnerships with over 200 countries and operates in more than 100 countries worldwide, adding that its strong and influential presence has helped more than 650 million people access its services globally between 2022 and 2024.

Skinner stressed that the IELTS system has set the standard for English language testing for over 30 years, and it is trusted by more than 12,000 organizations in 140 countries.

He highlighted its significance in boosting recipients' confidence, assuring them that their results will be recognized by educational institutions, employers, and government agencies that need to verify English proficiency.

Meanwhile, in a press statement issued on the sidelines of the event, the Deputy Head of the Diplomatic Mission at the British Embassy in Kuwait

Stuart Summers said the United Kingdom is known for its long-standing commitment to supporting education both regionally and globally.

He highlighted the British Embassy's dedication to strengthening cooperation and staying involved in activities and events related to the British Council, which plays a major role in promoting the IELTS brand.

In addition, Head of Business Development at the British Council in Kuwait Suchitra Sen spoke about the British Council's global impact and its reliable partnership in providing IELTS testing programs worldwide.

During the meeting, speakers from the British, American, and Australian embassies shared valuable information about educational opportunities, visa requirements, and IELTS accreditation.

Move to help in maximizing returns

'Pipeline leasing deal is not natural resources sale'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Legal Advice and Legislation Department confirmed that the pipeline leasing deal of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) will not be classified as sale of natural resources, since this is prohibited as per the Constitution, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The daily previously published a report that the KOC Board of Directors and Council of Ministers have approved the pipeline leasing project, hence, the company was given the go signal to proceed with the deal as per

the study conducted in this regard.

The daily obtained a copy of the study stating that the objectives of the deal include maximizing returns, decentralizing the financing process, managing revenues to attract more investors, and maintaining the operational performance of KOC.

The study also indicated that the Board of Directors of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) recommended the use of 'unregistered capital' or 'additional paid-up capital' in forming the capital in order to avoid increas-

ing the legal reserve; since this approach is reflected as an accounting entry, not the capital of issued shares. It explained that pipelines are medium infrastructure; not upstream resources like oil production or oil refineries.

It affirmed that the company will retain ownership and operational rights, as the deal is only on leasing the right to use the pipelines. As per the Companies Law, 10 percent of the annual profits must be allocated for the legal reserve, until it reaches 50 percent of the registered capital, the study added.

Changes eyed to current law of co-ops

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 11: Proposals are being discussed to amend the Cooperative Societies Law such that the total number of board members is reduced to seven, with three elected members and the remaining four appointed by government agencies.

According to informed sources, the government agencies nominated for representation on the board of directors of cooperative societies include the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Kuwait Municipality.

The number of government representatives may decrease based on the findings of studies before the new cooperative law is issued.

In the same context, Head of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies Ghareeb Al-Adhan confirmed in a television interview that the law submitted by Minister Al-Huwailah is based on the list system and consists of five members and two observers from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

However, he added that the proposal had been rejected by the Fatwa and Legislation Department.

Other Voices

The cancer of nepotism

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

Nepotism is a silent but corrosive disease that eats away at the integrity of institutions, societies, and economies. Like cancer, it starts in small, seemingly harmless ways -- favoring a family member for a minor job, giving a friend an unearned promotion -- but left unchecked, it spreads, weakening systems that should function based on merit, fairness, and competence.



Al-Hajeri

At its core, nepotism is the practice of granting jobs, promotions, or opportunities to relatives or close associates, regardless of their qualifications. While it is natural for people to want to help those they know and trust, the problem arises when favoritism replaces meritocracy. Instead of the most competent and deserving individuals rising to positions of power and responsibility, those with personal connections take precedence. This not only damages the credibility of institutions but also demoralizes those who strive for excellence without the benefit of nepotistic ties.

In workplaces, nepotism can lead to inefficiency and stagnation. When positions are filled based on relationships rather than ability, innovation suffers, and productivity declines.

Employees who have worked hard to earn their place become disillusioned when they see less qualified individuals promoted simply because of their

last name or personal connections. Over time, this leads to a toxic work environment where morale is low, and talented individuals leave in search of fairer opportunities.

Nepotism also creates an echo chamber within organizations. Leaders who surround themselves with family and friends may not receive honest feedback or constructive criticism.

Instead, they become insulated from reality, making poor decisions that can lead to financial losses, operational failures, or even corruption scandals.

On a societal level, nepotism deepens inequality. When public sector jobs, private contracts, or leadership positions are handed out based on favoritism rather than qualifications, marginalized individuals are often excluded from opportunities for advancement.

Politically, nepotism undermines democracy. When people perceive that opportunities are not distributed fairly, it leads to frustration and disengagement. Transparency and merit-based systems are essential to maintaining confidence in institutions and ensuring equal access to opportunities for all.

To combat nepotism, societies must prioritize transparency, meritocracy, and accountability.

Strict anti-nepotism policies, independent hiring processes, and public scrutiny can help curb this harmful practice. Education and cultural shifts toward valuing talent over connections are also essential in eradicating this deep-rooted problem.

Just as cancer requires early detection and aggressive treatment, nepotism must be confronted before it spreads beyond control. Fairer and more just societies depend on it.

MoH enforces program to deal with biological, chemical, nuke mishaps

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 11: The Ministry of Health (MoH) has implemented the national training program on dealing with biological, chemical, radiological and nuclear accidents -- a crucial step toward developing medical capabilities in this field, reports Al-Anba daily.

International experts participated in the program with Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs Dr. Al-Mundhir Al-Hasawi in attendance. Kuwait is the first country in the region that implemented the program as part of 'Project 82' -- one of the projects of the European Union Centers of Excellence Initiative.

This project aims to build national capacities for medical preparedness and response to hazardous material incidents; such as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials.

Director of the Radiation Protection Department at the ministry Dr. Nasser Al-Juwaisri said this national training program is a continuation of the first phase of the project, which focused on training trainers from each Gulf country to enable them to transfer knowledge to their medical teams locally.

He added that Kuwait has started the second phase of the program through realistic simulation scenarios for emergency cases; with the participation of various medical sectors like emergency medicine, medical emergencies and nursing management in order to improve the ability of the concerned medical staff to respond to emergencies in hospitals.

Dr. Hanan Awad Al-Dosari, the official and national coordinator for the European Union Initiative Proj-

ect 82 who also heads the Scientific and Technical Unit in the department, explained that the three-day training program include intensive sessions on understanding the nature of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear accidents and their health impact; managing accident sites and assessing health risks; using personal protective equipment and effective decontamination methods; medical classification of injuries; and proper management of hot (restricted), warm and cold areas at the accident site.

This training program is considered a qualitative leap in improving medical readiness in Kuwait; in cooperation with leading international bodies to protect society from health risks resulting from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear accidents.

Cars will be seized for 60 days

Wrong side drivers to be summoned by GTD

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The General Traffic Department (GTD) at the Interior Ministry has announced its plan to summon the drivers of vehicles captured by road surveillance cameras while turning against the direction of traffic (contraflow) in order to take legal measures against them, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, the ministry revealed that the penalties include impounding of vehicles for 60 days, among other legal measures. It stressed the need for drivers to strictly comply with the traffic rules to ensure their safety and that of others.

It called on citizens and expatriates to adhere to traffic regulations, instructions and guidelines; affirming the con-

tinuation of its campaigns to arrest violators and deter wrong behaviors to guarantee security and safety on the roads.

In a related development, Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Hu Hassan said in an interview with Kuwait TV that road surveillance cameras monitor traffic violations. He confirmed that the transactions of those proven to have committed violations are suspended, then they are summoned by the Security Control Department and their vehicles are impounded for a period not exceeding one month; after which the transaction suspension is lifted.

He emphasized that GTD is working continuously to enforce the law on everyone to stop dangerous road activities, which pose a grave threat to lives and properties.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Nations fall when graduates are placed in unsuitable positions and the unqualified are promoted

Corruption knows no religion or nationality. Self-interest and greed are the true homeland of the corrupt. When someone with a tendency to be greedy or has an inferiority complex is appointed to a leading position due to their luck, they start exploiting this newfound power to accumulate wealth at any cost, even if it means to spy on their own country.

To illustrate this, the following story highlights a real-life example of a Russian senior official and his role in the downfall of his nation:

After the dramatic collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the U.S. Intelligence Department honored its Russian agent, who had held the position of Minister of Civil Service.

Upon learning of the news, a Russian intelligence officer confronted the Civil Service Minister, saying, "I was assigned to monitor you, yet I never found any direct connection between you and the U.S. Intelligence Department. Why are you being honored when there are no records of communication or correspondence?"

The agent-spy minister replied, "My mission was simple: appoint every graduate in the wrong institution, promote the unqualified individuals through media manipulation, and block the promotion of qualified officials under the pretext that they lacked the required qualifications. I carried out my task until senior positions in the government were filled by the elderly and unqualified employees. As a result, the Soviet Union faced intellectual bankruptcy and eventually collapsed, simply because important roles were entrusted to unqualified individuals."

Man and the greedy desire for long life

Since the beginning of time, mankind has constantly sought to acquire everything. The following metaphorical story, drawn from an ancient text, highlights man's greed, even if it leads to misery:

- **The Soviet Minister of Civil Service was actually a spy who was tasked with sabotaging the administration.**
- **Major responsibilities were assigned to those unqualified, and the great state fell.**
- **Not promoting competent employees and setting unrealistic requirements to promote efficient officials results in an aging state.**
- **After the fall of the communist regime, Washington honored its Russian agent.**
- **The officer said, "I was supposed to monitor you, but I didn't notice your espionage."**
- **The dog said, "Fifteen years of life is enough for me."**
- **The donkey said, "Fifty years is too much; I only want to live for twenty."**
- **Man took the years that animals abandoned, only to end up in misery.**
- **The old man had nothing to do but tell funny stories to his grandchildren, who laughed.**
- **To solve traffic congestion, the state must adopt the metro project.**

A dog was told, "You will guard people's homes, be man's best friend, eat the leftovers they offer you, and live for 30 years". The dog replied, "30 years is too much. I only want 15 years". And so, it got what it wanted.

A monkey was told, "You will swing from branch to branch, amuse people with your tricks, and live for 20 years". The monkey responded, "20 years is too much. I only want ten years". And so, it got what it wanted.

A donkey was told, "You will work tirelessly without complaint, carrying heavy loads from sunrise to sunset. Barley will be your food, and you will never enjoy honor. You will live for 50 years". The donkey replied, "I will accept being a donkey, but 50 years is too much. I only want 20 years". And so, it got what it wanted.

As for man, he was told, "You are the most intelligent creature on earth. You will use your intelligence to dominate the rest of the creatures. You will live a fulfilling life, inhabit the earth, and live for 20 years."

The man said, "To be human and live only 20 years? That's too short! I want the 30 years the donkey didn't want, the 15 years the dog abandoned, and the 10 years the monkey declined!"

And so, he got what he wanted.

Since then, man spends the first 20 years of his life as a human, full of energy and potential, until he gets married. After that, he spends 30 years like a donkey, working tirelessly from sunrise to sunset, and carrying heavy loads on his back. When his children grow up, man spends the next 15 years like a dog, guarding the house, ensuring the doors are locked, turning off the lights, and eating the smallest portions, often leftovers from his children. Finally, in his old age when he retires, he lives for ten years like a monkey, hopping from one child's house to another, telling funny stories and performing tricks to make his grandchildren laugh.

O' train of life, where are you leading us? Take us back. We have lost things, loved ones, and hopes along the way. Take us back to the beautiful, carefree days of childhood.



Does the state want to ease traffic congestion? If so, the metro project must be implemented, similar to other countries. Last year, the Dubai Metro was used by over four hundred million passengers.



In monarchies, we see kings and leaders closely overseeing major projects, and ensuring they are developed and updated as necessary. In republics, the president is the one to launch projects and issue executive decrees.



Why isn't the official responsible for the departure of seven airlines from Kuwait International Airport held accountable? Why did we stay silent? Why were doors closed to advice? Now, we are knocking on doors that we had previously rejected! It is time to hold those incompetent administrators accountable.



We need to guide our people in taking up technical professions. Most of our national employees are administrators, but offices can no longer contain them. Time is wasted in endless document cycles.



Dear Your Highness the Prime Minister, please intervene before we miss this opportunity. Talking alone will not solve the problem.



KUNA photo
Kuwait Ambassador to Bangladesh, Ali Hamada, during his meeting with the Commander of the Bangladesh Army and Chief of Staff, Gen. Waqar-uz-Zaman at the Army headquarters.

Bangladesh, Kuwait eye closer cooperation in field of military

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 12, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Bangladesh Ali Hamada met with Chief of Army Staff (CAS) of Bangladesh Army General Waqar-Uz-Zaman and discussed cooperation opportunities in military field.

Hamada was accompanied in the meeting by head of Kuwait's military bureau in Dhaka Brig. Gen. Mahmoud Al-Enzi.

Hamada's visit to Bangladesh came within preparations for the expected tour of Bangladesh army chief to Kuwait where he will meet with Kuwaiti Army Deputy Chief-of-Staff Air Mar-

shal Sheikh Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Kuwait Embassy said in a statement.

Kuwait extolled Bangladesh army role, during the Iraqi invasion, in removing mines after liberating the country, Hamada affirmed.

During the meeting, the ambassador stressed Kuwait's support to Bangladesh and all steps taken to achieve stability and prosperity to its people.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh army general commended joint military collaboration between the two sides that aims to move to advanced levels of coordination and collaboration in all fields.

'Drifters gathering forbidden'

'KD 150 fine for illegal car racers'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Ministry of Interior confirmed that a fine of KD 150 will be imposed on anyone who engages in car racing on the road without a permit or in violation of the permit or organizes a gathering of motor vehicles to use them recklessly or negligently or in a way that endangers the lives of the driver or others or damages properties, that is, upon approval of the reconciliation order, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, the ministry clarified that the abovementioned fine will take effect on April 22, 2025. It added that the penalty after the violator is referred to the court is imprisonment for a period of not

less than one year, but not exceeding three years and a fine of not less than KD 600 but not more than KD1,000 or one of these two penalties.

The ministry's notification on the reckless use of vehicles or car racing is in line with the public awareness campaign carried out by the Public Relations and Security Media General Department regarding the new traffic law. The department has published several awareness brochures in several languages.

A security source said the ministry will publish all violations in the coming days, specifying the type of violation and the corresponding fine.

Man accused of having affair is woman's husband, says court

Daughter acquitted of insulting, abusing 'friend'

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Misdemeanor Court of First Instance acquitted a Kuwaiti woman who was accused of insulting and slandering her friend by claiming she was having an illicit love affair with her father.

According to the case file, the victim testified that she was at home with her husband (the defendant's father) when her friend unexpectedly arrived, and began shouting at her and demanding that her father leave the house. She was also subjected to defamation, being called an adulteress and falsely claimed her father was not her husband.

The defense counsel of the accused lawyer Inam Haider argued that the elements of the crime of defamation were absent, both in terms of material evidence and criminal intent.

She stressed that the case lacked any conclusive proof of the accused's guilt and that the accusation was fabricated and maliciously made by the victim, given that the accused's father was secretly married to her friend. She also emphasized the impossibility of the alleged incident occurring.



Asian dies in accident: An Asian died in a collision accident on Salmi Road.

According to a security source, the Ministry of Interior's Operations Unit received a report about the collision of two vehicles on Salmi Road.

Security personnel and ambulances rushed to the accident site. Upon their arrival, it was found that the accident resulted in the death of an Asian whose body was referred to the Forensic Medicine Department. A case was registered and investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances that led to the fatal accident.



Kuwaiti held with drugs: Security personnel arrested a citizen in an abnormal condition as he appeared to be under the influence of drugs and referred him to the competent authority.

A security source revealed that while patrolling Fahaheel Road, the security officers suspected a parked vehicle with a person inside it.

Upon investigating, it was found that the person, a citizen, is a drug addict. He had a bag suspected to be containing narcotics. He was immediately referred with the seized items to the Drug Control General Department.



Shuwaikh shops sealed: The Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has sealed four shops in Shuwaikh Industrial for illegally installing ready-made kitchens, doors, windows, and stairs, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to informed sources, the shops were sealed with red wax, and their owners were referred to the Commercial Affairs Prosecution for further action.

This measure was taken following multiple complaints regarding the involvement of these companies and shops in many commercial fraud violations. In response, the Reports Committee conducted inspection tours, which resulted in the closure of the shops and the referral of the violations to the Commercial Prosecution for appropriate measures.

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Al-Jassar leads delegation in promoting cultural development

Kuwait joins 13th Islamic Ministers of Culture Conference in Jeddah



A group photo at the opening of the 13th Conference of Ministers of Culture in the Islamic World in Jeddah.

JEDDAH, Feb 12, (KUNA): The 13th Conference of Ministers of Culture in the Islamic World kicked off on Wednesday, in Jeddah, held by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) in cooperation with the Saudi Ministry of Culture and with the participation of Kuwait.

In his opening speech, Saudi Minister of Culture Prince Bader bin Abdullah bin Farhan said that the Kingdom is proud to chair the 13th session of the conference, which aims to enhance joint cultural work and cooperation in empowering culture as one of the pillars supporting the achievement of social and economic development.

Prince Bader expressed his thanks to the State of Qatar for its efforts during its presidency of the previous session, and to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and ICESCO for their efforts to promote cultural affairs in the Islamic world.

He stressed Saudi Arabia's belief in the importance of culture as a fundamental pillar in building societies, strengthening national identity, and a driver of economic and social growth.

In turn, the OIC Secretary General, Hussein Taha, said that cultural in its comprehensive concept represents a tool for promoting eternal Islamic values based on science and human dignity, enhancing the Islamic cultural heritage, and encouraging the exchange of expertise



KUNA photos
The delegation of the State of Kuwait participating in the conference headed by Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar, the Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters.

and experiences in the fields of cultural, artistic, and scientific creativity and innovation.

The Director General of ICESCO, Dr. Salem Al-Malik, affirmed that the organization, in adopting the cultural project as the primary means of development, has created means to empower and achieve a creative cultural environment.

The Kuwaiti delegation is headed by the Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar, and includes in its membership the Assistant Secretary-General for the Antiquities and Museums Sector, Mohammad bin Redha.

National figure with a legacy of service

Kuwait mourns loss of Yousef Mohammed Al-Nisf

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Kuwait lost one of its most loyal figures yesterday, Yousef Mohammed Al-Nisf, who passed away at the age of over 84, after a lifetime dedicated to serving the nation and contributing to its development and modernization, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Born in 1934, Yousef Al-Nisf's career as a national businessman was marked by several milestones through which he played an instrumental role in supporting Kuwait and its people in various positions and sectors. He briefly held a ministerial role as the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, serving from March 3 to March 14, 1985. However, he resigned after just 11 days due to his strong convictions and reformative ideas that did not align with the government's approach at the time.

The late Al-Nisf was a prominent national



The late Yousef Mohammed Al-Nisf.

figure with a unique intellectual and economic path, characterized by his rejection of centralized administrative decisions and

his firm belief in the need for development and reform to drive Kuwait's progress. His life was marked by several charitable and humanitarian efforts both inside and outside Kuwait.

The late Al-Nisf was known for his honesty, patriotism, wisdom, and courage - traits that earned him respect and admiration. His many national contributions and initiatives stand as a testament to his enduring legacy.

The late Yousef Al-Nisf, affectionately known as "Abu Omar", chaired the Board of Directors of Al-Qabas daily newspaper from June 2019 to May 2024, during which the newspaper experienced success.

Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers are deeply saddened by the loss of the late Al-Nisf, and pray that God Almighty grants him mercy and a place in His Paradise.

Kuwait advocates OIC's Islamic Court activation

Call for stronger legal cooperation

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed the commitment to continue joint work towards activating the International Islamic Court of Justice -- the main judicial body of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) -- to become a platform that promotes justice and the rule of law in accordance with the Islamic Sharia and international law, as well as a body capable of adjudicating and resolving legal disputes between member states of the organization.

Sheikh Jarrah made the statement at the opening of the high-level forum on the International Islamic Court of Justice in the presence of officials and experts from various member states of OIC.

He pointed out that "achieving this goal requires fruitful dialogue and continuous efforts for our countries to overcome common challenges and to reach common understanding, so that we can build an integrated Islamic legal system in which truth, justice and equality prevail."

He recalled the words of HH the late Amir of the State of Kuwait and Chairman of the Fifth Session of the Islamic Summit Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who stated: History has proven that no Muslims can advance with all their capabilities in isolation from their brothers and from the path of global progress. The progress of Muslims is linked to their cooperation and coexistence in the shadow of tolerance and brotherhood."

He stated that Kuwait's hosting of this forum stems from its firm belief in joint Islamic action and as a continuation of its prominent role in supporting efforts aimed at establishing the International Islamic Court of Justice. He added "these



KUNA photo
Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah delivered a speech during the forum's opening session.

efforts began at the Third Islamic Summit held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in 1981, in recognition of the importance of having an international Islamic judicial body that strengthens legal cooperation between the member states of our organization; leading up to 1987, when the State of Kuwait hosted the Fifth Islamic Summit Conference, which witnessed the approval of the basic court and the agreement that Kuwait shall be the official seat of the court."

He continued "we are very confident that the activation of the court will constitute a fundamental addition to the Islamic and international legal systems. It will contribute to enhancing stability and achieving justice and equality on solid foundations of mutual understanding and respect," referring to the relevant decisions issued at the Islamic summits and successive ministerial meetings. The most recent of which was the 50th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, held in the Republic of Cameroon in July 2024. It urged member states that have not ratified the Statute of the Court to expedite the completion of the ratification procedures and to deposit the ratification documents at the Secretariat General of OIC as soon as possible in order to achieve the legal quorum necessary for the court to begin carrying out its duties.

Global experts to discuss innovations

Kuwait Engineers to organize Fourth Int'l Conference on climate solutions

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Kuwait Society of Engineers, in cooperation with the Indian Engineers Association branch in Kuwait, on Thursday will organize the Fourth International Conference 2025 entitled, "Modern Trends in Manufacturing Technology and the Role of Engineers in Reducing the Global Warming Phenomenon".

Head of the society Eng. Faisal Duwaih Al-Otal explained that this conference is a result of the memorandum of joint cooperation concluded with the Indian Engineers Association.

He pointed out that shedding light and monitoring global trends on this vital topic locally and globally is a necessity that the organizers saw fit to develop through the conference as it is a roadmap towards the enhancement of the professional-engineering role in global trends in order to reduce the global warming phenomenon.

He affirmed that they invited the founder, CEO and General Manager of the Indian aerospace company BrahMos Professor Dr. Sivatanu Pillai, to be the keynote speaker and guest of honor at the conference. He said Pillai will talk about modern manufacturing technology and the role of engineers according to the United Nations resolutions.

He also thanked the guests of honor,

owner of Dar Atma Sheikhha Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Secretary of the Indian Embassy for Consular Affairs Anchita Kethwas. He revealed the main speakers at the conference are Vice President and Head of Aviation Systems at Larsen & Toubro Eng. H. Lakshmesh who will lecture on 'Advanced Manufacturing Technology', and Regional Business Development Manager at IGS Eng. Shyam Barshikar who will talk about "Reducing the Carbon Footprint."

He said Environmental Engineer and Health, Safety and Environment Supervisor Eng. Abdulrahman Al-Sader will tackle the global environmental systems; in

addition to a lecture by General Manager of BrahMos Aerospace Dr. S. Anyan who will talk about manufacturing technology, challenges and progress in the field of aviation and space.

Vice President of Keller Company in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Eng. Ilanju Jayaprakash will deliver a lecture on "Innovative, Sustainable and Environmentally Friendly Materials in Infrastructure Works."



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LOCAL



Military parade for the graduation ceremony of the 50th batch of officer students at Ali Al-Sabah Military College. Inset: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah patronizes and attends the graduation ceremony of the 50th batch of students at Ali Al-Sabah Military College.

Ambassador Park highlights key milestones, future collaborations

Kuwait, South Korea mark 60 years of strong ties

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait Park Chong-suk praised the strength of Kuwaiti-South Korean relations, stressing that they are a model for fruitful cooperation at various levels, noting that these relations are distinctive and developed as they are based on foundations of friendship, trust and mutual respect between the two countries.

Park explained that diplomatic relations between Kuwait and South Korea were officially established in 1979, but cooperation between them began years before that, as cooperation in the construction sector dates back to 1975, while cooperation in the energy sector began in 1964. "In 2024, the two countries celebrated the 60th anniversary of cooperation in the energy sector," he added. He pointed out that the year 2025 is considered a milestone on the path of cooperation, as it coincides with the 50th anniversary of South

Korean companies winning the first construction project in Kuwait.

He added that South Korean companies played a vital role in developing the country's basic infrastructure, contributing to the construction of major projects, such as the First and Sixth Ring Roads, Highway 30 and Jaber Bridge, which have become a symbol of the close coordination between the two sides.



Park

He stressed that Kuwaiti-South Korean cooperation is expanding to include new areas with a strategic dimension, in line with Kuwait Vision 2035. "South Korean companies are participating in many future projects, including the operation of the passenger terminal (T4) at Kuwait International Airport, the development of new cities, smart farms, fiber optic cable factories, and the health-

care sector, with expectations of further expansion in these areas in the coming years," he disclosed.

Regarding the embassy's plans for this year, he revealed that the embassy intends to celebrate the 50th anniversary of cooperation in the construction sector, by organizing various events to enhance bilateral relations, including high-level exchanges and economic activities like the Smart City Forum.

He affirmed that cultural and sporting events will also be organized, including the Ambassador Taekwondo Championship, the Korean Food Festival, the Film Festival, and cultural competitions, in addition to activities dedicated to studying and tourism in South Korea, with the aim of enhancing mutual understanding between the two peoples.

He concluded his statement by emphasizing the importance of these events in strengthening the bonds of cooperation between the two countries, as well as developing cultural and economic exchange, which contribute to pushing bilateral relations toward broader horizons.

Continued from Page 1

Amir celebrates

After the national anthem and recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, Al-Musailem addressed the audience; expressing gratitude for HH the Amir's patronage of the event. He highlighted the significance of the new generation of officers; emphasizing that the college's educational and training programs go beyond military preparation, as they include instilling human values and developing leadership skills. He concluded by pledging loyalty and commitment to protect the nation.

Education ministry

These violations are in direct contravention of the decisions issued by the CSC, specifically Decision No. 11/2012, which stipulated in its Article Four that combining the supervision allowance with any allowance or bonus paid in a personal capacity is not permissible. This supports the bureau's position in demanding the suspension of the payment and recovery of the amounts spent illegally.

In its response, the ministry stated that SAB Letter No. 216/30/40 regarding the disbursement of the monthly bonus to some employees in the Minister's Office did not state that combining the bonus with the supervision allowance was inadmissible.

The ministry claims that such observation was limited to the inadmissibility of combining this bonus with the bonuses allocated to engineers, lawyers and accountants.

However, the bureau explained that the CSC issued several decisions related to specialized positions, confirming that combining the monthly bonus paid in a personal capacity with other bonuses or allowances is not permissible.

It stressed the need to take immediate measures to limit similar cases in the future and fully adhere to the CSC decisions. It called on the concerned authorities to provide a detailed statement on the measures taken to correct these violations and recover the amounts spent without justification.

New mortgage

prevent individuals from facing difficulties in repaying loans and interest, as occurred in previous years.

It is important to offer more plots with integrated services to accommodate the anticipated demand. It is recommended to consult economic experts and former housing officials to benefit from their expertise in this field."

Al-Dulajjan indicated that he had expected real estate transactions to increase by 10 percent to 15 percent in 2024, but the reality exceeded his expectations, as the growth rate reached 34 percent, and the total number of transactions rose from KD 2.7 billion to KD 3.7 billion.

However, he stressed that this increase in trading was not reflected in the private residential housing sec-

tor, while trading in the investment real estate sector saw a significant boost, adding that trading in the private residential housing sector declined by approximately 43 percent.

Al-Dulajjan stated that the shift towards trading in the investment sector was driven by the imminent implementation of housing laws issued by the previous National Assembly in agreement with the government. These laws impose fees on undeveloped plots and introduce restrictions on individuals who own more than one property, which prompted speculators in residential real estate to redirect their investments towards the investment real estate sector.

He pointed out the lack of new investment opportunities and the conclusion of the real estate trading cycle following the recent surge as reasons behind the shift.

Regarding the impact of reducing loan interest rates on the real estate market, Al-Dulajjan explained that the market in the 1980s, 1990s, and until the early 2000s was not as responsive to changes in interest rates, unlike today. This shift is due to the high borrowing costs from banks for investors.

A large percentage of traders and investors in the 1990s relied on cash transactions. However, with the current rise in real estate asset values, where the average value of a single house reaches KD 400,000 and KD 900,000 or even up to one million for an investment residential building, it has become common to rely on real estate bank financing. This is especially true as some investors manage five to six investment plots simultaneously, with the total investment amounting to large sums exceeding KD 6 million.

3,702 'Article

through the Births and Deaths Department in Maidan Hawally during official working hours.

In addition, the office is coordinating with the Public Institution for Social Security regarding retirement pensions for retirees whose Article 8 citizenship was revoked.

The institution affirmed that retirement pensions and due shares will continue to be disbursed to female retirees whose nationalities were withdrawn under Article 8, with the pensions being directly deposited into bank accounts on a monthly basis after auditing and revision.

Kuwait rightfully

"In the cultural sector, Kuwait's commitment was reflected in various initiatives and the ratification of major agreements, including the 1954 Hague Convention, the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, and the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property," said Matoko.

He pointed out that Kuwait pro-

vided "great support" to the efforts to respond to contain the repercussions of the Beirut port explosions in 2020 by funding UNESCO activities in the Lebanese capital.

The funding greatly helped in completing a project in 2021 to revive cultural life within affected communities and enhance creativity and cultural production in the context of reconstruction, he added.

Further, Kuwait has also allocated USD five million to finance UNESCO's program from 2016 to 2021, related to spreading educational opportunities for youth affected by the crisis in Syria, based on its programs in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, as well as inside Syria, which was deeply appreciated by the organization towards Kuwait.

These allocations helped UNESCO's programs to rehabilitate nearly 4,000 refugee youth and help them continue their secondary education by covering their registration fees, providing school materials and developing an activation program to encourage them to continue their education, he added.

The UN official also stressed that the partnership between UNESCO and Kuwait covers all areas of the work of the UN organization, saying, "As a member of the organization since 1960, Kuwait, represented by its permanent delegation and its national commission, plays a major role in cooperation with the organization."

Kuwait sets

His Highness the Prime Minister, during his speech, had brief the WGS on Kuwait Vision 2035, a plan that focused on economic diversity, financial stability and turning the country into an international hub for business and finance.

Within the vision, grand projects such as the Mubarak Al-Kabeer port, the new international airport, the railway project with the Saudi capital Riyadh and GCC countries, and other ambitious schemes were focused upon during the speech.

He reiterated Kuwait's openness to strategic partnership within investments, calling on global companies to seek business with Kuwait in line with the state ambitious vision. His Highness the Prime Minister's speech also touched on the leadership's guidelines to transform the country's technological sphere via taking advantage of national talents and utilizing all possible resources.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister's meetings on the sideline of the summit had displayed Kuwait's serious intention to expand cooperation with global companies and organizations.

His Highness the Prime Minister met with Hewlett-Packard (HP) CEO Enrique Lores where he touched upon all possible opportunities to expand cooperation especially when Kuwait's intention to transform the economy digitally.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah also met with Klaus Martin Schwab, head of the board of trustees and founder of the founder of the World Economic Forum (WEF),

where they discuss cooperation.

His Highness the Amir also meet with several global leaders on the sideline of the WGS, discussing cooperation and ways to enhance ties.

The UAE's Vice President, Prime Minister, and Governor of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum receives His Highness the Prime Minister on the sideline of the WGS with His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah praising the tremendous achievements of the UAE and Dubai in specific in the past years especially with the hosting of the WGS.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah left Dubai today after heading Kuwait's delegation to the 12th WGS.

Within the domain of better governance, Kuwait had launched the government performance administrative system as part of its vision to boost development.

Some 15 government entities and ministries had executed the 2024-25 plan for an integrated and more transparent government to digitally transform the country, enable more participation of the private sector as well as meeting the demands of citizens.

In this light, the Kuwaiti government implemented legislations allowing for non-Kuwaitis to own real estate and increase residency visa for a period of 15 for investors subjected to law 116/2013 on encouraging direct investment in addition to other measures including simplifying government transactions.

The 2025 World Governments Summit, which includes Thursday, had attracted 4,000 participants from world leaders, head of governments, experts and visionaries in addition to some 27 global organizations and entities.

Gold prices

Hussein Fouad, a gold shop official, emphasized the key factors driving the price rise, such as central banks, particularly China's, buying vast amounts of gold. He also pointed out that ongoing geopolitical tensions, including the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Russia-Ukraine crisis, are exacerbating the situation; making it unlikely that gold prices will return to earlier levels.

Gold jewelry expert Hamad Al-Hajri explained that the increase in gold prices began with inflation rates rising globally and the disruption of global trade during the COVID-19 pandemic. The onset of the Russia-Ukraine war, along with sanctions on Russian oil and central bank assets, further fueled the surge in prices. He anticipates that gold prices may peak by mid-year but could decline by around percent by year's end.

Currently, the Kuwaiti gold market is seeing cautious consumer activity, with many potential buyers hesitant due to high prices. Some are turning to used or broken gold to lower costs, as the workmanship on new gold pieces can add an additional KD 1 to KD 3 per gram, depending on quality.

Kuwait Declaration gains Arab backing

Priorities set to reduce risks

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): The Sixth Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, chaired by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Youssef Saud Al-Sabah, culminated in the adoption on Wednesday of Kuwait Declaration for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The four-day event, hosted by Kuwait in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the League of Arab States, gathered over 600 participants from governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, and international organizations.

Kuwait Declaration, a milestone in the region's efforts to mitigate disaster risks, reaffirms the urgent need to strengthen resilience across the Arab region in the face of increasing disaster risks.

It highlights the need of scaling up international support for the Palestinian government to lead the post-conflict reconstruction effort in Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The catastrophic events in the Arab region since 2023, including earthquakes in Syria and Morocco and floods in Libya, have collectively claimed over 20,000 lives and displaced more than 243,000 people and huge economic damages.

The incidents underscored the region's vulnerability and the urgent need for collective action and investment in disaster prevention and resilience-building, according to the UNDRR.

The declaration underscores the importance of accelerating the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), enhancing governance for risk reduction, increasing investments in disaster-resilient infrastructure, and leveraging science, technology, artificial intelligence, and early warning systems.

It also emphasizes the need to develop and update comprehensive disaster loss databases and risk assessments to support



KUNA photo
Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Youssef Saud Al-Sabah delivers the opening speech on the occasion of the launch of the Sixth Arab Regional Forum for Risk Reduction.

evidence-based policymaking.

The document calls for greater regional cooperation, particularly in supporting countries affected by crises, and highlights the need for inclusive and sustainable approaches that engage governments, civil society, and the private sector in reducing disaster risks and protecting communities.

The platform saw the adoption of the Voluntary Action Statements of Stakeholder Groups engaged in DRR.

Alongside the Kuwait Declaration, these commitments align with the Prioritized Action Plan for DRR (2025-2027) in the Arab region, which outlines concrete priorities and strategies to strengthen disaster risk management at both national and regional levels.

The platform marked the introduction of the Santiago Network in the Arab region through a dedicated session focused on enhancing efforts to avert, minimize, and address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

The Sixth Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, themed "Building Resilient Arab Communities: From Understanding to Action," was officially opened by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Youssef Saud Al-Sabah on Monday.



Group photo from the event.

AU celebrates Unified Gulf Traffic Week under 'Driving Without a Phone' slogan

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: As part of the Unified GCC traffic week initiative, the Australian University (AU) hosted officials from the Ministry of Interior to promote traffic awareness on campus. This event aligns with AU's corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy reinforcing its commitment to community engagement and public awareness initiatives.

The event was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Interior, along with many university students, faculty and staff. Participants and representatives from the Ministry of Interior included Legal Brigadier Mohammad Al Ajmi, Lieutenant Colonel Youssef Al Rabah, Major Mohammad Al Rafi, Captain Mohammad Al Ghanem, Major Mousaid Al Aslawi, and Lieutenant Colonel Naif Al Ajmi.

The event featured a comprehensive lecture addressing key traffic-related topics, focusing on the legal aspects of traffic laws, driver responsibilities, and the consequences of violations. Discussions also addressed the technical aspects of traffic management, the role of advanced traffic camera sys-

tems, digital transformation in monitoring road safety, and statistical insights on traffic violations, including cases of run-over incidents and vehicle overturns. A special segment highlighted the leading causes of traffic fatalities and the importance of preventive measures.

In addition to the informative lecture, the event featured an interactive session where attendees participated in a Q&A segment, awarding winners, and had the opportunity to explore a display of traffic enforcement vehicles. The presence of Kuwaiti women police officers was a notable highlight, showcasing their vital roles and the services they provide within the Ministry of Interior.

Commenting on the event, Mr. Abdulmohsen Al Refai, Senior Manager of the Department of Health, Safety, and Security at AU, emphasized the significance of organizing awareness initiatives. He stated: "Educating students on road safety is essential, as they are among the most at-risk groups for traffic incidents. Encouraging safe driving habits is vital in reducing injuries and saving lives."

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Shocking evidence of wasteful spending found

Musk appears at WH defending DOGE's work but acknowledging mistakes

WASHINGTON, Feb 12, (AP): US President Donald Trump's most powerful adviser, Elon Musk, made a rare public appearance at the White House on Tuesday to defend the swift and extensive cuts he's pushing across the federal government while acknowledging there have been mistakes and will be more.

Musk stood next to the Resolute Desk with his young son as Trump praised Musk's work with his Department of Government Efficiency, saying they've found "shocking" evidence of wasteful spending. The Republican president signed an executive order to expand Musk's influence and continue downsizing the federal workforce.

Despite concerns that he's amassing unaccountable power with little transparency, Musk described himself as an open book as he took questions from reporters for the first time since joining the Trump administration as a special government employee. He joked that the scrutiny over his sprawling influence over federal agencies was like a "daily proctology exam."

He also claimed that DOGE's work was being shared on its website and on X, the social media platform owned by Musk. However, the DOGE website has no information, and the postings

on X often lack many details, including which programs are being cut and where the organization has access.

The White House has also been moving to limit independent oversight. The inspector general for the US Agency for International Development was fired a day after warning that it had become nearly impossible to monitor \$8.2 billion in humanitarian funds after DOGE began dismantling the agency.

Musk defended DOGE's work as "common sense" and "not draconian or radical."

"The people voted for major government reform, and that's what the people are going to get," he said. "That's what democracy is all about."

Musk acknowledged, in response to a question about false statements that the US was spending \$50 million on condoms for Gaza, that some of the claims he's made about government programs have been wrong.

"Some of the things that I say will be incorrect and should be corrected. So nobody can't be 1,000%," he said. He promised that he would act quickly to correct errors, and acknowledged that DOGE could be making errors as well.

"We are moving fast, so we will make mistakes, but we'll also fix the



US President Donald Trump speaks as he is joined by Elon Musk, and his son X Æ A-Xii, in the Oval Office at the White House on Feb 11 in Washington. (AP)

mistakes very quickly," Musk said.

He said there are some good people in the federal bureaucracy, but they need to be accountable. Musk described the workforce as an "unelected" fourth branch that had "more power than any elected representative."

The executive order signed by

Trump said a DOGE representative will need to approve almost all new hiring, a dramatic consolidation of personnel management across the federal government.

"The agency shall not fill any vacancies for career appointments that the DOGE Team Lead assesses should

not be filled, unless the Agency Head determines the positions should be filled," the order said.

In addition, the Office of Management and Budget will require that agencies "hire no more than one employee for every four employees that depart." There would be exceptions when it comes to immigration, law enforcement and public safety.

Agency leaders were also directed to plan for "large-scale reductions in force." Government functions not required by statute would be prioritized for elimination.

Trump and Musk are already pushing federal workers to resign in return for financial incentives, although their plan is currently on hold while a judge reviews its legality. The deferred resignation program, commonly described as a buyout, would allow employees to quit and still get paid until Sept. 30. Administration officials said more than 65,000 workers have taken the offer.

Hundreds of people gathered for a rally Tuesday across the street from the U.S. Capitol in support of federal workers.

Janet Connelly, a graphic designer with the Department of Energy, said she's fed up with emails from the Of-

fice of Personnel Management encouraging people to take the deferred resignation program.

She tried to use her spam settings to filter out the emails but to no avail. Connelly said she has no plans to take the offer.

"From the get-go, I didn't trust it," she said.

Connelly said she thinks of her work as trying to do an important service for the American public.

"It's too easy to vilify us," she said. Others have said fear and uncertainty have swept through the federal workforce.

"They're worried about their jobs. They're worried about their families. They're also worried about their work and the communities they serve," said Helen Bottcher, a former Environmental Protection Agency employee and current union leader in Seattle.

Bottcher participated in a press conference hosted by Sen. Patty Murray, a Democrat from Washington.

Murray said workers "deserve better than to be threatened, intimidated and pushed out the door by Elon Musk and Donald Trump." She also said that "we actually need these people to stay in their jobs or things are going to start breaking."

'We're not building a wall, folks, we're hitting a wall'

US Senate Republicans vow action to boost border funds

WASHINGTON, Feb 12, (AP): Citing warnings from President Donald Trump's border czar, Senate Republicans vowed Tuesday to move quickly on a budget plan that could pave the way for the passage of about \$340 billion in additional border security and defense spending.

Meanwhile, House Republicans are trying to keep pace, hoping to unveil their own budget effort as soon as Wednesday that would also look to extend trillions of dollars in tax cuts passed in Trump's first term.

GOP senators are anxious to make progress on key aspects of Trump's domestic agenda. They heard Tuesday from Russ Vought, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, and Tom Homan, the former acting US Immigration and Customs Enforcement director, who is playing a key advisory role in Trump's second term. Both stressed the urgent need for more border resources.

"We're not building a wall, folks. We're hitting a wall," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, the Republican chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. "They need the money and they need it now."

Graham's committee is taking up a budget plan for more border and defense spending on Wednesday and



US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La. (center), departs a news conference joined (from left) by Rep Abraham Hamadeh, R-Ariz, and House Majority Whip Tom Emmer, R-Minn, after discussing work on a spending bill, at the Capitol in Washington on Feb 11. (AP)

Thursday. The plan directs the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs to spend up to \$175 billion and the Senate Armed Services Committee to spend up to \$150 billion.

Graham said other committees will be instructed to come up with spending reductions from other government programs to pay for the border and

defense funds, but he was unwilling to discuss specifics or his preferences, saying "there are a bunch of things out there" that could be cut.

"I'm hoping the authorizing committees have thought long and hard about where they can find savings," Graham said.

The Senate plan calls for the added defense and border security spending

to take place over four years and will be paid for over that same timeframe, Graham said.

Democrats worry that Republicans will look to Medicaid, which provides health insurance coverage for the poor, for the majority of savings.

"Democrats in the Senate will go to the mat to stop any cuts to Medicaid that will increase costs and take away health care from everyday Americans," Sen Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said after Graham unveiled the budget plan.

Republicans have been debating since last year whether to enact the bulk of Trump's agenda in one or two pieces of legislation. The Senate is moving on a two-bill track, while the House is moving on a one-bill track. It's unclear which side will win out in the end.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said details of that chamber's budget plan would probably be rolled out Tuesday night, but Majority Leader Steve Scalise subsequently said he expected the unveiling to take place Wednesday with the House Budget Committee taking votes on Thursday.

That's a bit behind the ambitious schedule that Johnson had set in January even as he now insists "we are right on the schedule that we need to be on."



This handout photo from the US Geological Survey shows lava erupting from Halemaumau Crater at the summit of Kilauea volcano inside Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii, on Feb 11. (AP)

Kilauea spews lava again

Kilauea volcano began shooting lava into the air once again Tuesday on the Big Island of Hawaii.

Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes, has been erupting on and off for nearly two months since it burst to life on Dec. 23. The eruption has been taking place at the volcano's summit crater inside Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. No residential areas have been threatened by lava.

The latest release of molten rock began 10:16 a.m. with lava flowing on to the floor of Halemaumau

Crater. A half-hour later, a vent shot lava about 330 feet (100 meters) high.

This is the ninth episode of eruptive activity since Dec. 23, the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said. Earlier episodes have lasted 13 hours to eight days, with pauses in between.

People have been flocking to overlook sites inside the national park for views of the eruption.

Kilauea is about 200 miles (320 kilometers) southeast of Honolulu. (AP)

Kremlin says unidentified Russian freed in US in exchange for Moscow's release of Fogel

MOSCOW, Feb 12, (AP): The Kremlin said Wednesday that a Russian citizen was freed in the United States in exchange for Moscow's release of American Marc Fogel, but refused to identify them until they arrive in Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that the unidentified individual would return to Russia "in the coming days," and when they are on the Russian soil, their name would

be revealed - unlike during past prisoner exchanges between Moscow and Washington, when Russians and Americans were released simultaneously and their identities were revealed right away.

Fogel, an American history teacher who was deemed wrongfully detained by Russia, has been released and was returned to the US on Tuesday in what the White House described as a diplomatic thaw that could advance negotia-

tions to end the war in Ukraine. Fogel was arrested in August 2021 and was serving a 14-year prison sentence.

Steve Witkoff, a special envoy for US President Donald Trump, left Russia with Fogel and brought him to the White House, where Trump greeted him.

"I feel like the luckiest man on Earth right now," Fogel said as he stood next to Trump with an American flag draped around his shoulders.

Fogel, who is from Pennsylvania and was expected to be reunited with his family by the end of the day, said that he would forever be indebted to Trump.

The president declined to say if he spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin about Fogel, but Fogel praised the Russian leader as "very generous and statesmanlike in granting me a pardon."

Asked about the terms of the deal, Trump said: "Very fair, very, very fair, very reasonable. Not like deals you've seen over the years. They were very fair."

He didn't say what the United States provided in exchange for Fogel's release.

Michael Waltz, Trump's national security adviser, said the US and Russia "negotiated an exchange" to ensure Fogel's release.



US President Donald Trump greets Marc Fogel on the South Lawn at the White House on Feb 11 in Washington. (AP)

US defense secretary makes 1st visit to NATO

BRUSSELS, Feb 12, (AP): US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Wednesday made the first trip to NATO by a member of the new Trump administration, as the allies wait to learn how much military and financial support Washington intends to provide to Ukraine's government.

Hegseth held talks with UK Defense Secretary John Healey, before a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group at NATO headquarters in Brussels. Hegseth's predecessor, former Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, set up the forum for drumming up arms and ammunition for Ukraine in 2022.

Over nearly three years, around 50 countries have collectively provided Ukraine more than \$126 billion in weapons and military assistance. But the meeting this week was convened by another country for the first time: the United Kingdom. All previous gatherings of the forum were chaired by the United States.

No decision has been made on who might chair the next meeting, if one is



United States Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, (left), shakes hands with Britain's Defense Secretary John Healey prior to a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of a NATO defense ministers meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Feb 12. (AP)

called. Hegseth wasn't expected to make any announcement on new weapons for Ukraine.

His trip comes less than two weeks before the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Most U.S. allies fear that Russian President Vladimir Putin won't stop at Ukraine's borders if he wins, and that Europe's biggest land war in decades poses an existential threat to their security.

U.S. President Donald Trump has promised to quickly end the war. He's complained that it's costing American taxpayers too much money. He has suggested that Ukraine should pay for U.S. support with access to its rare earth minerals, energy and other resources.

Some U.S. allies worry that a hasty deal might be clinched on terms that aren't favorable to Ukraine. On top of that, Trump appears to believe that European countries should take responsibility for Ukraine's security going forward.



Lawmakers of the New Democracy's ruling party applaud after the election of former Parliament Speaker Constantine Tassoulas as Greece's new president at the Parliament, in Athens, Greece on Feb 12. (AP)

Greece's new president leading advocate of bringing home sculptures from Britain

ATHENS, Greece, Feb 12, (AP): Greek lawmakers on Wednesday elected as president a former parliamentary speaker and leading advocate for the return of the disputed Parthenon sculptures from the British Museum in London.

Constantine Tassoulas, 65, was elected with 160 votes in the 300-member parliament in the fourth round of voting for the largely ceremonial post. He takes over from Katerina Sakellariopoulou, the first woman to serve as Greece's head of state, who was not nominated for a second five-year term.

Speaking shortly after the results were formally announced, Tassoulas said his election was "a supreme honor for me, but above all a precious responsibility."

A lawyer by trade, Tassoulas is also a member of the governing center-right New Democracy party and served as culture minister a decade ago, helping reinvigorate Greece's campaign to reclaim the 2,500-year-old Parthenon sculp-

tures, also known as the Elgin Marbles.

During his tenure as culture minister, he hosted lawyer Amal Clooney in Athens, who lent her support to the Greek bid for the sculptures' return. Clooney, the wife of actor George Clooney, helped raise international awareness of the campaign.

The sculptures were removed from the Acropolis in Athens by British diplomat Lord Elgin in the early 1800s and have since been kept in the British Museum. The Greek government contends their removal was illegal and has long sought their return, seeking to reunite them with other Parthenon artifacts displayed in a museum in the Greek capital.

Greek officials believe the return of the sculptures is more likely now due to the U.K. Labour government's perceived openness to loan agreements. Ongoing discussions on a potential arrangement would likely include an offer to facilitate rotating exhibitions of ancient Greek artifacts at the British Museum.

Bolojan takes office as interim prez of Romania

BUCHAREST, Romania, Feb 12, (AP): After over a decade in office, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis stepped down on Wednesday and has been replaced by the senate president who will serve in an interim capacity until a new presidential election is held in spring.

Ilie Bolojan, a 55-year-old former mayor and leader of the center-right National Liberal Party, or PNL, will serve as acting president at Cotroceni Palace in Bucharest until a successor is elected in a presidential race scheduled for May in the European Union and NATO member country.

"I am fully prepared ... to assume this honorable position," Bolojan said



Bolojan

Tuesday evening as he vacated the PNL leadership position to assume the role of acting president. "I will do so with decency ... working to maintain the stability of our country, ensuring our international partners that Romania is a reliable nation."

Iohannis, 65, held the presidential role since 2014 and served the maximum of two five-year terms. He announced his resignation on Monday after far-right populist opposition groups - who hold about a third of seats in Parliament - sought his ouster via a motion in the legislature.

Although his presidency should have officially ended in December, Iohannis' role was extended after the Constitutional Court annulled a presidential election two days before a Dec. 8 runoff. The court's decision came after the far-right populist Calin Georgescu unexpectedly won the first round, after which allegations of Russian interference and electoral violations emerged and plunged the country into turmoil.

INTERNATIONAL

Investigators file criminal complaints against Philippine VP over assassination threats

MANILA, Philippines, Feb 12, (Agencies): Philippine government investigators filed criminal complaints, including sedition, against Vice President Sara Duterte on Wednesday over her public threat to have the president assassinated if she herself was killed in an escalating political storm.

National Bureau of Investigation Director Jaime Santiago said at a news conference that the complaints of inciting to sedition and grave threats against Duterte were filed at the Department of Justice, which would decide whether to dismiss the complaints outright or elevate them to court.

The vice president, a lawyer and daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte, reacted briefly by saying that she had expected the move by the NBI. She has accused her political rivals of taking steps to prevent her from seeking the presidency when President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s term ends in 2028.

The vice president's father himself, whose presidential term ended in 2022, is facing legal troubles. The International Criminal Court has been investigating the widespread killings under a brutal anti-drug crackdown he oversaw while in office as a possible crime against humanity. Sara Duterte ran as Marcos' vice presidential running mate in 2022. Their whirlwind political



Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte gestures as she speaks during a press conference in Manila, Philippines on Feb 7. (AP)

alliance, however, quickly frayed and deteriorated into a bitter feud in an Asian democracy that has long been hamstrung by clashing political clans.

Last week, the vice president was impeached by the House of Representatives on a range of accusations that included her threat to have Marcos, his wife and

House Speaker Martin Romualdez killed if she herself were fatally attacked in an unspecified plot that she brought up in an online news conference in November.

The impeachment complaint, which was signed by majority of the more than 300 members of the House, which is dominated by Marcos' allies, also included allegations of largescale corruption and misuse of her office's confidential funds. The 24-member Senate plans to tackle the impeachment complaint after Congress reopens in June.

The vice president has vaguely denied that what she said amounted to a threat against Marcos, his wife and Romualdez, the president's cousin, but her remarks still sparked a national security alarm at the time and investigations, including by the NBI.

The vice president said at a news conference last week that her lawyers were preparing for a legal battle in her upcoming impeachment trial, but she refused to say if resignation was an option so that she could preempt a possible conviction that would bar her from running for president in the future.

Meanwhile, an alliance of women in the Philippines, GABRIELA, on Wednesday condemned what it described as covert operations of the United States military in the Southeast Asian country.



Rescuers work at the rescue site in Junlian County in the city of Yibin, southwest China's Sichuan Province on Feb 10. (Xinhua)

Rescue, relocation operations underway after China landslide

Rescuers in southwest China's Sichuan Province pressed on for a fourth day on Tuesday in their search for survivors after a landslide struck Jinping Village in Junlian County, Yibin City, on Saturday.

Unstable terrain and ongoing rockfalls have made operations

challenging, but rescue teams are advancing with a methodical, grid-based approach.

"We have divided the site into grid-based zones, equipping each team with specialized rescue and communication tools," said Li Wanjing, head of Yibin's emergency management bureau.

So far, one person has been confirmed dead, 28 are missing, and two others have been injured and transferred to a hospital in the provincial capital Chengdu for further treatment, according to local authorities. A total of 360 people from 95 households have been evacuated to temporary shelters. (Xinhua)

Meeting was intensive and productive: Subianto

Leaders of Indonesia and Turkey hold talks on defense and economic ties

BOGOR, Indonesia, Feb 12, (Agencies): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met his Indonesian counterpart Prabowo Subianto on Wednesday for talks aimed at strengthening economic and defense ties between the two Muslim-majority nations.

Erdogan's state visit to Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country and Southeast Asia's largest economy, was his second stop in a four-day visit that also includes Malaysia and Pakistan.

Turkey and Indonesia held their first High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council summit after agreeing to create the forum at the G20 Summit in Bali in 2022.

The discussions focused on current regional and global issues, particularly the war in Gaza, the two leaders said in a joint news conference after the meeting.

Subianto said the meeting was "intensive and productive" and the two countries share a commitment to strengthen their partnership. "President Erdogan's visit is a new chapter in our strategic partnership," he added.

Indonesia has long been a strong supporter of the Palestinians and Subianto said the two countries share the same view about the importance of a cease-fire and of resolving the Palestinian problem through a two-state solution.

Erdogan said he appreciated Indonesia's firm stance on the Palestinian issue and repeated a call for Israel to pay for the reconstruction of Gaza.

He estimated the total damage caused by Israel's 15-month-long attacks is approaching \$100 billion, adding that "the principle in law is that damages should be collected from the person responsible."

Erdogan and his wife, First Lady Emine Erdogan, arrived in Jakarta late Tuesday and was welcomed by Subianto at Halim Perdanakusuma International Airport in a light rain. Erdogan rode with Subianto in a motorcade to his hotel.

Indonesia and Turkey have built an increasingly close relationship in recent years, and the two leaders previously met in Ankara last July when Subianto was still president-elect and defense minister. Subianto pledged to "elevate defense cooperation and other strategic fields for mutual benefit."

The two countries signed a defense cooperation agreement in 2010, under which Indonesia's state-run arms producer Pindad and Turkey's FNSS jointly developed a new model of medium tank. In 2023, the two countries inked a plan of action for joint military exercises and defense industry cooperation.



Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, left, walks with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as they inspect honor guard during a welcoming ceremony prior to their meeting at Bogor Presidential Palace in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia on Feb 12. (AP)

In addition to Indonesia, Turkey has HLSCC cooperation forums with 21 other countries, including Pakistan.

The two leaders on Wednesday also witnessed the signing of a dozen agreements between Turkey and Indonesia, including on trade, investment, education, energy, agriculture, health and religious services. The two leaders also signed deal on the joint development of a Baykar combat-drone factory in Indonesia, and Erdogan pledged his country would invest in the development of Indonesia's new

capital on Borneo island.

"We are trying to increase our trade by \$10 billion per year with the same balance," Erdogan said.

Meanwhile, all employees of the Nusantara Capital Authority of Indonesia's new capital will relocate to the new capital, Nusantara, in East Kalimantan province in March this year and begin working there, local media reported on Wednesday, citing an official.

Troy Pantouw, spokesperson for the authority, said that all operational activities would be fully conducted in the new capital starting in March.

"All staff of the authority will begin working in the new capital in March 2025," Pantouw said in a statement.

He added that they would occupy a building in the central government core area, which has already been completed, as their office.

The construction of Indonesia's new capital is ongoing, with new investments continuing to flow into the project.

In another development, four people have died, and three others are missing after a speedboat carrying 51 passengers capsized in Indonesia's North Kalimantan province, a senior rescuer said on Tuesday.

The speedboat, Iksa Express, was struck by large waves and overturned while passing through waters off Bulungan Regency on Monday, according to Dede Hariana, head of the operational units at the provincial search and rescue office.

"Four people lost their lives in the incident. Three others are still missing, and search efforts are ongoing. There were 51 people on board at the time of the accident," Hariana told Xinhua via phone.

He explained that the speedboat was hit by massive waves, leading to the fatal maritime incident. Rescuers evacuated 44 individuals and transported them to the local social service office, while the bodies of the four deceased were taken to Bulungan General Hospital, he said.

The search for the three missing persons resumed on Tuesday, involving a joint rescue team led by the search and rescue office, he added.

Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency has warned travelers to exercise caution during sea voyages, as extreme weather conditions may lead to high waves and strong winds.

Families bid farewell to victims of Guatemala bus crash

SANTO DOMINGO LOS OCOTES, Guatemala, Feb 12, (AP): Hours before dawn, Julio Arrivillaga and Catalina Pérez Molina boarded a bus with other residents in the center of this humble village for what should have been an hour-long ride to Guatemala's capital.

For Arrivillaga it was a daily trip to his job counting fruit in the country's largest market. For Pérez Molina, it was her occasional dash to the capital to buy produce for the tamales and roasted corn she sold.

But along the way their bus left the road and tumbled into a deep ravine, killing them and more than 50 others.

On Tuesday, families in Santo Domingo Los Ocotes, accompanied by President Bernardo Arévalo, began saying goodbye to their loved ones amid a three-day period of national mourning.

Guatemala's National Forensic Sci-

ence Institute said Tuesday that 54 people had died in the crash. A day earlier, the Public Ministry said 53 people had died at the site of the crash and two more at a hospital and had not reconciled the numbers Tuesday.

"I still don't understand what happened," Arrivillaga's wife Irma Catalán said Tuesday. "I haven't accepted it. I don't know what my life will be now."

Videos circulated online of the moments before the Monday accident show the bus apparently speeding, running stoplights and colliding with multiple vehicles before leaving the roadway and plunging into the ravine where it landed upside down beneath a bridge and semi-submerged in dark sewage-polluted waters.

In Santo Domingo Los Ocotes, funerals were scheduled over two days.

Pérez Molina was among those buried Tuesday.

Subcontinent

'1,400 dead in rallies':

The UN human rights office on Wednesday estimated that up to 1,400 people may have been killed in Bangladesh over six weeks last summer in a crackdown on student-led protests against the now-ousted former prime minister.

In a new report, the Geneva-based office says security and intelligence services

"systematically engaged" in rights violations that could amount to crimes against humanity and require further investigation.

UN human rights chief Volker Türk cited signs that "extra-judicial killings, extensive arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture" were conducted with the knowledge and coordination of the political leadership and top security officials as a way to suppress the protests. (AP)

Landslides kill 2:

Two gold miners lost their lives due to the landslide in northern Afghanistan's Badakhshan province on Tuesday, provincial police spokesman Ehsanullah Kamgar said Wednesday. A group of gold miners were busy extracting the precious element in Shahr-e-Buzurg district on Tuesday afternoon when a hilltop slide killed two on the spot, the official added.

A similar incident claimed the life of another gold miner in Badakhshan province a week ago. (Xinhua)



Türk

Modi, Trump's friendly rapport may be tested as Indian prime minister visits Washington

NEW DELHI, Feb 12, (AP): India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's long-standing bonhomie with President Donald Trump could be tested as the Indian leader kicks off a visit to Washington on Wednesday, eager to avoid tariffs that have been slapped on others and threats of further taxes and imports.

India, a key strategic partner of the United States, has so far been spared any new tariffs, and the two leaders have cultivated a personal relationship. Modi - a nationalist criticized over India's democratic backsliding - has welcomed Trump's return to the White House, seeking to reset India's relationship with the West over his refusal to condemn Russia for its war on Ukraine.

But Trump has repeatedly referred to India as a "tariff king" and pressed the South Asian country on the deportation of migrants. In response, New Delhi has shown a willingness to lower its own tariffs on U.S. products, accept Indian citizens back and buy American oil.

But as tariff threats loom, the question remains how much a good rapport between two leaders matters and how far India will go to cut a deal.

Modi had established a good working relationship with Trump during his first term in office, and the two can build on the areas of convergence and "minimize areas of friction without conceding on core areas of national interest," says Meera Shankar, India's former ambassador to the U.S.



US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi embrace after giving a joint statement in New Delhi, India on Feb 25, 2020. (AP)

"Most other partners have their reciprocal lists ready from the word go, because it's a point of leverage when you negotiate," Shankar added, expressing hope that India "will find the right balance between firmness and flexibility" on the tariffs issue.

Modi - boosted by his ruling Hindu nationalist party's victory in the high-stakes state legislature election last weekend in India's federal territory, including New Delhi - said before leaving for Washington that the visit was an "opportunity to build upon" collaboration during Trump's first

term and "deepen our partnership" in areas such as technology, trade, defense and energy.

Speaking with Modi in January, Trump emphasized the importance of India buying more American-made military gear and weapons, as well as reducing the trade imbalance. Last year, the U.S. imported \$50 billion more in goods than it sold to India.

A readout from the White House at the time said Trump "emphasized the importance of India increasing its procurement of American-made security equipment and moving toward a fair bilateral trading relationship."

Amnesty International details gruesome impact of gang violence on children in Haiti

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, Feb 12, (AP): Haiti's children are increasingly caught in the crossfire of gang violence, forced to carry weapons, spy on police and rival gangs and run errands for gunmen, according to a report released Wednesday by Amnesty International.

One of 51 children interviewed by the human rights group said he was constantly pressured by a gang to fight alongside it.

"They killed people in front of me and asked me to burn their bodies. But I don't have the heart for that," the unidentified boy was quoted as saying.

An estimated 30% to 50% of gang members are now children, according to UNICEF.

Amnesty International said the children "had no choice, and that their involvement was predominantly out of hunger or fear."

Nearly two million people are on the verge of starvation in Haiti, and more



People line up to receive food at a shelter for families displaced by gang violence in the Kenscoff neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Feb 3. (AP)

than one million children are estimated to be living in gang-controlled areas,

with 85% of the capital of Port-au-Prince under their rule.

One unidentified boy, 16, said he's paid to run errands for a gang.

"(The gangs) are in control. And there is nothing you can do about it," he was quoted as saying.

If children refuse to follow a gang's orders, they or their family would be killed, according to the report, which relied on a total of 112 interviews and research done from May to October last year.

Children are not only in danger of gangs, but of vigilantes and police officers who believe they're working for them, according to Amnesty International.

Girls and young women also have been collectively raped by gang members and infected with sexually transmitted diseases, often ending up pregnant in a country where health care is extremely limited.

One teen was raped by six men, and her sister by five others.



Mourners attend the burial ceremony for victims of a bus crash at the cemetery in Santo Domingo Los Ocotes, Guatemala on Feb 11. (AP)

110,000 stranded in eastern Congo

GOMA, Congo, Feb 12, (AP): Rwanda-backed rebels controlling cities in eastern Congo have forcibly closed settlement camps, leading to the displacement of more than 110,000 people in recent days, the U.N. and locals said Tuesday.

The M23 rebels - the most prominent of more than 100 armed groups vying for control of Congo's mineral-rich east - captured Goma, the region's largest city in late January in a major escalation of the yearslong fighting with government forces. The rebels' advance into Goma has killed at least 2,000 people in and around the city, Congolese authorities have said.



People who were displaced by the fighting between M23 rebels and government soldiers prepare to leave their camp following an instruction by M23 rebels in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo on Feb 11. (AP)

Kuwaiti oil price rises to \$79.69 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by USD 1.24 to USD 79.69 per barrel on Tuesday as opposed to USD 78.45 the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Wednesday.

At the global level, the price of the Brent crude future contracts went up by USD 1.13 to USD 77 pb, the same occurred with the West Texas Intermediate future contracts, which increased by USD 1 to USD 73.32 pb.

Business

Market forecasts continued positive performance in H1 2025

Markaz reports healthy growth in GCC real estate markets

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" has released its latest real estate market reports, providing an in-depth analysis of market trends in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE for H2 2024, as well as a forward-looking assessment for H1 2025. The reports highlight a positive trajectory for the GCC real estate sector, driven by economic recovery, easing interest rates, and robust government policies.

With macroeconomic indicators pointing towards continued stability, Markaz anticipates sustained growth in the Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and UAE real estate markets through H1 2025. Lower borrowing costs, ongoing government-backed reforms, and heightened investor participation are expected to reinforce market confidence and drive expansion. The long-term outlook for the GCC real estate sector remains positive, despite short-term fluctuations, presenting compelling opportunities for investment and development.

Kuwait Real Estate Report

Kuwait's real estate sector continued to recover in 9M 2024, particularly in the investment and commercial segments. Land prices in the Isthmari (investment) segment rose by 3.3% year-on-year as of Q3 2024, reflecting positive investor sentiment, while commercial sector land prices surged by 7.6% over the same period. However, the residential segment continued to face valuation pressures, with land prices declining 3.3% year-on-year in Q3 2024. Meanwhile, rental rates for apartments saw moderate increases, while office rental values remained stable.

Looking ahead to 2025, Kuwait's real GDP is expected to grow by 3.3% year-on-year, marking a strong recovery from the -2.7% contraction estimated for 2024. This positive outlook is driven by increased project activity, and expanding credit growth, which are expected to bolster demand for commercial real estate.

With macroeconomic indicators signaling continued improvement, the Markaz Real Estate Macro Index score for Kuwait currently stands at 3.5 out of 5.0, indi-



Markaz Logo

cating sustained market confidence and growth potential. H1 2025 is expected to bring further acceleration, with rebounding land prices and rental rates, supported by ongoing government reforms and an improving economic landscape.

Saudi Arabia Real Estate Report

Saudi Arabia's real GDP growth showed signs of recovery in 2024, with quarterly GDP rebounding from -4.3% in Q4 2023 to 2.8% in Q3 2024, reflecting strong momentum in tourism, real estate, and construction. The KSA real estate price index rose by 2.9% year-on-year in Q3 2024, driven by a 1.6% increase in residential land prices and a 6.4% rise in commercial sector values. The commercial real estate segment has particularly benefited from rising demand amid strong non-oil economic growth.

Saudi Arabia's fiscal position remains under some pressure, with a projected fiscal deficit of 3.4% of GDP in 2025. The 2025 national budget anticipates a 6.8% decrease in non-tax revenue, primarily attributed to lower oil earnings, potentially resulting from an extension of OPEC+ production cuts. However, the government

continues to prioritize large-scale infrastructure and mega projects, reinforcing growth in the real estate sector. The successful bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2034 is expected to drive further expansion, particularly in hospitality, residential, and commercial developments.

In 2025, Saudi Arabia's real GDP is projected to grow by 4.6%, supported by a 4.4% expansion in the non-oil sector. Oil GDP is also expected to turn positive, aided by the expected gradual unwinding of OPEC+ production cuts. Given these factors, Saudi Arabia's real estate sector remains in an accelerating phase, with sustained momentum expected in H1 2025 as investor confidence grows and government-led initiatives continue to drive market expansion.

UAE Real Estate Report

The UAE real estate market saw record-breaking activity in 2024, with total sales transactions reaching AED 457 billion (\$124.4 billion) by mid-November 2024, marking an 11% increase from 2023 and a 72% increase from 2022. Dubai continues to attract international investors, supported by favorable policies such as the Golden Visa program. The UAE's non-oil economy is projected to grow steadily, backed by robust tourism and real estate sectors.

Dubai remains a top global destination, with competitive affordability compared to cities such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and London. Attractive rental yields—6.4% in Dubai and 5.8% in Abu Dhabi—continue to draw investors.

The UAE's real GDP is projected to grow by 5.1% in 2025, supported by strong expansion in the non-oil sector and a 6.7% rebound in oil GDP. Dubai's real estate sector remains a key driver of this growth, bolstered by the Dubai Real Estate Sector Strategy 2033, which aims to increase total real estate transactions to AED 1 trillion (\$272.2 billion) by 2033, contribute AED 73 billion to Dubai's GDP, and expand the emirate's real estate portfolio 20-fold.

Additionally, sustained demand for off-plan properties, along with continued expansion in the residential, office, and hospitality segments, is expected to fuel real estate activity through H1 2025.

Al-Khateeb showcases KNPC projects

KNPC CEO, Japanese Amb. discuss oil & gas cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): KNPC CEO Wadha Al-Khateeb and Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Kenichiro Mukai on Tuesday discussed ways of strengthening cooperation between both sides in the oil and gas fields issues.

In a statement to KUNA, KPC said that during the meeting the Japanese Ambassador was presented with a presentation about the company and its

refineries as well as future and current planned projects.

Al-Khateeb presented Mukai with a book as a memorable souvenir represented in the book Mawasin, an environmental encyclopedia issued by the company to document the most important features of the Kuwaiti environment from wild and marine organisms and plants.

Al-Khateeb honors ministry officials

KNPC & Ministry of Electricity discuss enhanced cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: A meeting was held at the headquarters of the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy in the presence of the CEO of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) Eng. Wadha Ahmed Al-Khateeb, and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Water Dr. Adel Al-Zamil to enhance cooperation and coordination between the two sides, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

From KNPC, the Deputy CEO of the Mina Al-Ahmadi Refinery Shujaa Al-Ajmi, the Director of Technical Services at the Mina Al-Ahmadi Refinery Saleh Al-Jatili, the Director of Public Relations and Media Rakan Al-Fadhala, and the Head of the Electricity Maintenance Team at Abdullah Port Refinery Badr Hassan were present at the meeting.

From the ministry, the Assistant Undersecretary for the Power Plants Sector Haitham Al-Ali, the Assistant Undersecretary for the Transmission Networks Sector Faisal Al-Sumait,

and the Assistant Undersecretary for Monitoring, Control and Supervision Centers Fatima Hayat attended the meeting, in addition to a number of officials from both sides.

The discussion during the meeting focused on several issues related to the electricity and water supplies that serve the company's refineries, given their important role in ensuring the uninterrupted continuation of oil refining operations.

The two sides agreed to hold regular meetings between the concerned teams to address joint operational and technical issues, as well as follow up on the performance of the electricity and water networks.

At the end of the meeting, Eng. Wadha Al-Khateeb honored Dr. Adel Al-Zamil and Haitham Al-Ali in recognition of their efforts in strengthening cooperation and achieving common goals, as well as for the ministry's prompt response to emergency reports.

Boursa Kuwait closes higher, general index up by 0.19 pct

Major 50 index drops 0.30% amid active trading

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Wednesday's trading session on a positive note, with its general index rising by 14.75 points (0.19%) to close at 7,974.16 points.

Market activity saw 610.7 million shares exchanged through 22,461 transactions, with a total trading value of KD 134.5 million (approximately USD 414.2 million).

The Main Market Index declined by 29.54 points (0.40%), settling at

7,388.08 points. Trading volume in the segment reached 418.2 million shares, with 12,484 transactions amounting to KD 63.7 million (around USD 196.19 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index recorded a gain of 26.65 points (0.31%), closing at 8,514.25 points. It witnessed the exchange of 192.5 million shares through 9,977 transactions, with a turnover of KD 192.5 million (about USD 217.7 million).

In contrast, the Major 50 Index fell 22.65 points (0.30%) to 7,468 points, with 339.6 million shares traded through 8,002 transactions, totaling KD 56.2 million (approximately USD 173 million).

AI for public interest and cultural role highlighted at Summit

Kuwaiti delegation emphasizes AI governance at Paris Summit

PARIS, Feb 12, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti delegation participating in the "Working for Artificial Intelligence" summit, which was held in the French capital, Paris, stressed the importance of exchanging expertise and enhancing international cooperation in the field of artificial intelligence governance.

The Kuwaiti delegation was headed by the representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Al-Omar.

In remarks to KUNA, Acting Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology Najat Ibrahim said that the summit discussed the impact of artificial intelligence on societies and ways to benefit from it and enhance work and innovation in technology to achieve the goals of sustainable development and technological progress.

She also stressed the importance of enhancing digital empowerment by adopting advanced technical solutions and spreading the culture of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity to improve government performance.

In turn, the supervisor of studies and research at the agency, Eng. Abdulkarim Al-Fawzan, noted that the sessions witnessed rich and important discussions by senior officials and heads of state on ways to open the way for innovation and encourage research and development in modern artificial intelligence technologies.

Acting Head of the Supervision Sector at the General Authority for Communications and Information Technology, Manal Al-Maziad, stressed the necessity of keeping pace with the world in activating the uses of artificial intelligence in a way that benefits the development of the nation and the interests of the citizen.

Acting Head of the Arab and International Department at the Ministry of Communications, Sheikh Fahad Nayef Al-Sabah, said that unifying international efforts to develop a comprehensive regulatory framework ensures the use of artificial intelligence in responsible and sustainable ways.

Also:

PARIS: Representative of His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Al-Omar, affirmed that Kuwait's participation in the AI for Good Summit reflects its commitment in line with human values and ethical principles.

Al-Omar told KUNA that Kuwait believes in the importance of ensuring the safe use of AI, and establish data accountability.

He pointed out that the Summit focuses on AI in service of the public interest, facilitating work and innovation, the role of culture in AI, and the importance of AI governance on a global scale.

He added that Kuwait views AI as a key pillar for sustainable economic and social development, adding that it is working to create a legislative environment supportive of digitalization, developing production infrastructure, and empowering national talent in this vital field.

The Summit concluded by stressing the need for continued international dialogue to regulate AI responsibly, balancing innovation with safety while maximizing its social benefits and minimizing risks.

Kuwait's consumer price index up 2.5% in December 2024

GCC inflation remains low in 2024, outpaces MENA region

By KAMCO Invest

Inflation in the GCC countries continued to be subdued during 2024 as compared to most other regions in the world where elevated prices and high inflation persisted despite a falling trajectory. Moreover, inflation in the wider MENA region remained higher than that of the GCC region during 2024. According to the World Bank, inflation in the GCC region came in at 2.1% in 2024, kept down by subsidies, fuel price cap, and currency pegs. However, in certain sectors such as the Housing sector, inflationary pressures remained in several of the six GCC nations.

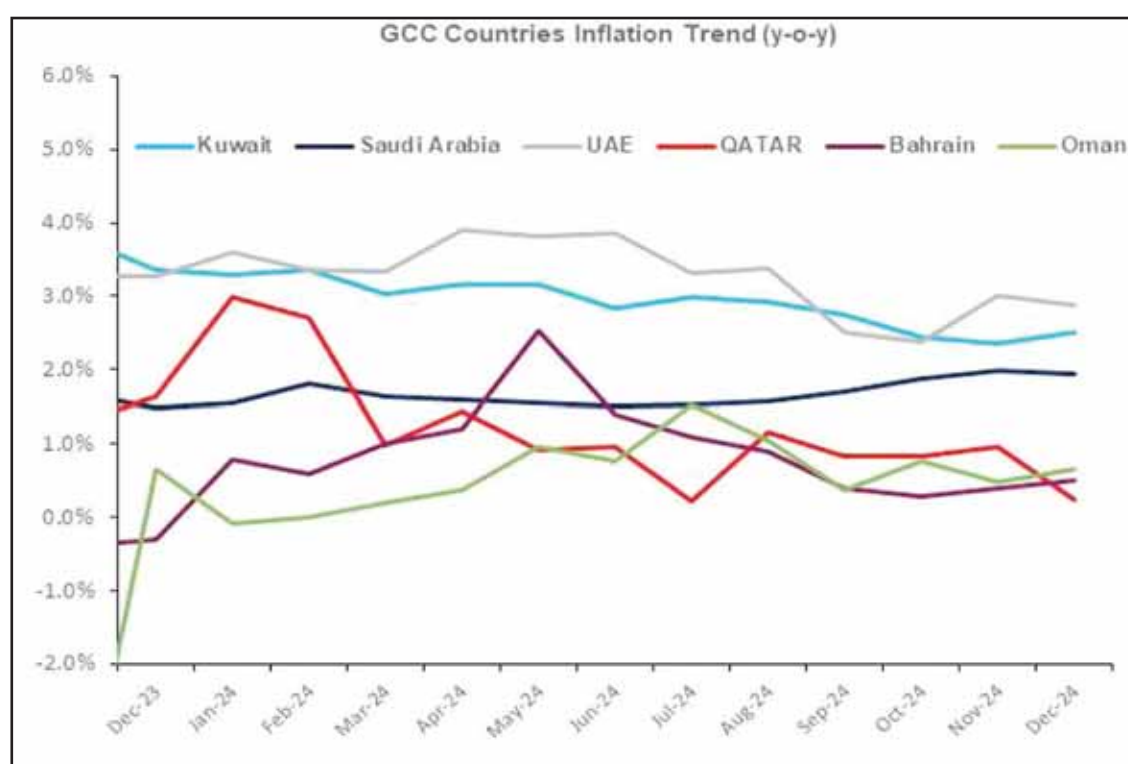
Overall, global inflation witnessed a downward trend, maintaining its declining trend from the peaks it reached in 2022. This global deceleration in the rate of inflation (disinflation) is expected to continue in 2025 mainly on the back of expected subdued energy prices coupled with stabilizing supply chains. However, there is a possibility that the tariffs implemented by the new U.S. administration could escalate into a full-scale trade war, potentially driving up prices and contributing to increased inflation in 2025. According to the IMF, global headline inflation is poised to drop to 4.2% in 2025 and to 3.5% in 2026 converging back to target earlier in advanced economies than in emerging market and developing nations. The decline in global inflation is expected to continue in 2025 maintained by the expected decline in energy prices.

US inflation witnessed a significant decline in 2024 falling to 2.9%. On an annual basis, US food climbed 2.5% in 2024 as compared to US energy prices which declined by 0.5% during the same year. However, excluding food and energy, the US CPI annual rate was 3.2% during 2024. Comparatively, annual inflation in the Euro zone fell from 2.9% in December-2023 to 2.4% in December-2024. The decline in inflation in the eurozone during 2024 was attributed to several factors, including stabilization of energy prices in the region, and the loosening up of supply chain disruptions that had previously driven prices higher.

Among the six GCC countries, Dubai reported an increase of 3.3% in its average annual inflation rate in 2024 nearly identical to its 3.3% annual average rate in 2023. On the other hand, the rest of the GCC countries reported a lower inflation rate growth than Dubai. Average annual inflation rate for Kuwait declined from 3.4% in 2023 to 2.5% in 2024. In contrast, average annual inflation rate for Saudi Arabia recorded a slight gain, up from 1.5% in 2023 to 1.9% in 2024.

Global Food Prices

Global food prices witnessed moderate growth during 2024. The FAO Food Price Index increased by 6.7% y-o-y in 2024 but remained 20.7% lower than its March-2022 peak,



according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The growth in global food prices was attributed to a 9.4% y-o-y increase in the Vegetable Oil Price Index during the year, mainly due to the tightening of global supplies. Furthermore, the FAO Vegetable Oil Price Index gain was also driven by prolonged tight supplies in leading producers, mainly in Southeast Asia. Similarly, global meat and dairy prices (the FAO Meat Price Index) registered a moderate y-o-y increase of 2.7% in 2024 compared to 2023, while the FAO Dairy Price Index recorded a y-o-y gain of 4.7% during the same period. The increase in meat prices was primarily driven by higher bovine meat prices due to strong global demand, coupled with production constraints from routine end-of-year maintenance shutdowns at processing plants in major exporting countries. On the other hand, growth in global dairy products was mainly due to an acute rise in butter prices, driven by high global demand and limited

exportable supplies resulting from irregular weather patterns that negatively impacted production.

GCC Rate Hikes and Inflation

The global inflation slowdown during the last six months has prompted central bank leaders around the world to follow a dual strategy: pausing interest rate increases and executing rate cuts. The US Federal Reserve has made three rate cuts during 2024 and lowered rate by 100 bps. The Fed reduced its basic borrowing rate by 50 basis points to a range of (5.0%-5.25%) in September 2024, followed by two more rate cuts, each of 25 basis points, in November 2024 and December 2024, which brought the rate to 4.75%-5.0% and 4.25%-4.5%, respectively. In comparison, the European Central Bank implemented a series of four interest rate cuts to address the falling inflation trend and other economic challenges in the Eurozone. The ECB implemented its first rate reduction of the year in June-2024 with a 25 basis point

cut, bringing its Deposit Facility Rate to 3.5%, followed by another 25-bps cut in September-2024, which further reduced the Deposit Facility Rate to 3.25%. Two further cuts of 25 bps in October-2024 and December-2024 further lowered the ECB's Deposit Facility Rate to 2.75%. These rate cuts were aimed at stimulating economic growth.

GCC central banks continued to match the Federal Reserve's rate adjustments throughout the year since the GCC countries have their currencies pegged to the Dollar, except for Kuwait (which has its currency pegged to a basket of currencies, including the Dollar). In the latest Fed rate adjustment in December-2024, in which the Fed implemented a rate cut of 25 basis points, the GCC central banks matched the Fed's adjustment accordingly. The UAE Central Bank cut its base rate on the overnight deposit facility by 25 bps to 4.4%. Similarly, Saudi Arabia's Central Bank (SAMA) reduced its repo rate by 25 bps, lowering the bank's repurchase (repo) rate to 5% and the reverse repo rate to 4.5%. On the other hand, the coordinated actions of GCC central banks did not include Kuwait, which maintained its discount rate and did not implement a rate reduction during December-2024.

Kuwait

The Kuwaiti Consumer Price Index's latest inflation reporting for December-2024 showed a y-o-y increase of 2.5%, according to official government data. The increase was mainly led by a 5.1% growth in the Clothing & Footwear index, followed by the Food & Beverages price index, which registered 5.0% y-o-y growth. The price increase in the Food & Beverages group was mainly attributed to rising prices of cereals and bread, meat and poultry, as well as fish and seafood. Similarly, the uptick in the Clothing & Footwear index was underpinned by an overall increase in clothing and footwear prices.

Inflation in the Furnishing, Equipment & Household Maintenance group, the third-largest weighted group, witnessed a y-o-y increase of 3.5% in 2024, while Kuwait's Education group prices remained stable, recording only a marginal uptick of 0.7% y-o-y during 2024. Comparatively, prices in the Transport Index, which has a weight of 7.5%, registered a 1.5% y-o-y decline due to the drop in prices for vehicle purchases and the operation of personal transport equipment during 2024.

In terms of m-o-m performance, Kuwait's CPI recorded a marginal 0.45% m-o-m growth during December-2024 due to overall price stability across major index groups during the month. Prices in the Food & Beverages group increased by 0.4%, while prices in the Housing Services group, the largest weighted index, also rose by 0.4% in December-2024 compared to November-2024.



Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi honors Nawaf Al-Gharabally for Zain's support.



Al-Mutairi and Al-Gharabally with one of the winning teams.

Company successfully concluded strategic partnership with competition's second edition

Zain celebrates winners of Kuwait National Robotics Competition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Zain participated in honoring the winners of the Kuwait National Robotics Competition (KNRC), marking the second consecutive year of its strategic partnership with the event. Organized by the Computer Science Department at the College of Science, Kuwait University, in collaboration with the Public Authority for Youth and the Ministry of Education, this year's competition saw the participation of over 800 passionate students. Four teams secured qualification for the VEX Robotics World Championship to be held in the United States.

The awards ceremony was held at the Kuwait University Conference Center in Al-Shadadiya, under the patronage and presence of H.E. Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Minister of Information, Culture, and State Minister for Youth Affairs, along with Nawaf Al-Gharabally, CEO of Zain Kuwait; Prof. Dr. Dina Al-Mailam, President of Kuwait University; Mubarak Al-Sayer, CEO of Al-Sayer Group; as well as representatives from both the public and private sectors, participating students, and their families.

In his speech during the event, Nawaf Al-Gharabally stated: "As it concludes its second edition, the Kuwait National Robotics Competition has once again solidified its position as one of the most distinguished and professional educational initiatives in Kuwait."

He continued: "The competition has played a vital role in fostering students' passion for technology, sparking their creativity and innovation. These are the very objectives we have sought to achieve at Zain through our strategic partnership with the competition since its inception last year."

Al-Gharabally further remarked: "Over the past months, we have witnessed remarkable ideas from young participants who have excelled in the field of robotics. We have great confidence that Kuwait's digital future will be bright with their contributions. We firmly believe that our young men and women are fully capable of leading the next era of challenges amid the rapid technological transformations shaping our world."

He concluded by expressing gratitude: "We extend our sincere apprecia-



Al-Gharabally speaking at the event.

Nawaf Al-Gharabally:

■ We are confident that Kuwait's youth can lead the next phase of challenges in light of the rapid technological advancements shaping our modern world

tion to our colleagues at the Computer Science Department, Kuwait University, the Public Authority for Youth, and all partners for their tremen-

dous efforts in making this competition a success. At Zain, we are proud of this partnership, which exemplifies the effective collaboration between the public and private sectors in advancing Kuwait's progress and nurturing its talented youth under the guidance of our wise leadership."

During the ceremony, Zain honored the winners across all competition categories and presented its Innovation Nation Award to the team from Kuwait Technical College (Ktech). Additionally, four teams from the Kuwait National Robotics Competition have secured their spots in the VEX Robotics World Championship to be held soon in the United States.

The teams who have qualified are Superheroes from Al-Adailiya School (Elementary level), ABS Team A from American Baccalaureate School (Middle school level), Robotech from Salah Al-Din School (High school level), and Autovortex from Bucharest University of Economic Studies (University level).

This year, Zain returned as a strategic partner for the second season of the Kuwait National Robotics Competition, collaborating with the Computer Science Department, the Public Authority for Youth, and the Ministry of Education.

The company witnessed outstanding success in this edition, which attracted over 800 students across different educational levels, forming 170 teams that competed in four main categories: marine robotics, drones, innovation challenge, and the flagship VEX Robotics competition.

The competition played a key role in cultivating students' passion for technology, enhancing their creative thinking skills, and guiding them toward future career paths in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

This strategic partnership falls under the umbrella of Innovation Nation, an initiative that encompasses all of Zain's efforts to support innovation, develop technical skills, and empower entrepreneurship within the community. The initiative specifically targets young students and entrepreneurs through year-round programs in collaboration with several strategic partners.

Trump plans reciprocal US tariffs to match tax rates of other countries

EU, Mexico, Canada prepare retaliatory measures against tariffs

WASHINGTON, Feb 12, (AP): President Donald Trump is taking additional action to upset the world trade system, with plans to sign an order as soon as Wednesday that would require that U.S. tariffs on imports match the tax rates charged by other countries.

"It's time to be reciprocal," Trump told reporters earlier this week. "You'll be hearing that word a lot. Reciprocal. If they charge us, we charge them."

The president had suggested that the order would come on Tuesday or Wednesday. But when Tuesday passed without the tariffs being officially announced, Trump was asked if he would sign the order on Wednesday and Trump answered: "We'll see what happens."

As Trump has unleashed a series of tariffs after being in power for less than a month, he has fully taken ownership of the path of the U.S. economy. It's a bet that his economic ideas can eventually deliver meaningful results for voters, even if by Trump's own admission the import taxes could involve some financial pain in the form of inflation and economic disruptions. For all of Trump's talk, the impact will likely depend on the details of the tariffs and how other nations respond.

A reciprocal tariffs order could amount to a substantial tax hike to be shouldered largely by U.S. consumers and businesses as the Census Bureau reported that the country had total imports of \$4.1 trillion last year. The tariffs could set off retaliatory measures by trading partners that could roil growth around the globe and reset where



U.S. President Donald Trump, right, chats with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Nov. 9, 2017. (AP)

the United States stands with allies and rivals alike.

By signing the order, Trump would fulfill his long-standing pledge to raise taxes on most imported goods, a clear break with his recent White House predecessors who saw tariffs as either targeted tools to use strategically or barriers worth lowering. Trump has broken with that precedent by saying he wants to return the United States to the 1890s when taxes on imports were the government's dominant source of revenues.

But should job gains never materialize and should inflation stay high, it's an easy line of attack for Democratic lawmakers and candidates that Trump helped the ultrawealthy at the expense of the middle class.

"No matter which way you slice it, costs are going to climb for consumers," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said earlier this month. "I will work with my colleagues to undo this mess,

get costs down and get these billionaires out of the way."

Trump put 10% tariffs on China over its contributions to the production of the illicit drug fentanyl, and China has taken retaliatory measures. He said he is ready if necessary on March 1 - after a 30-day suspension - to put tariffs on Mexico and Canada over his belief they should do more to fight illegal immigration and drug smuggling.

On Monday, he closed the exemptions to his 2018 tariffs on steel and aluminum, in addition to raising the tariff rates on aluminum. He has also talked about additional taxes on imported autos, computer chips and pharmaceutical drugs.

Many of America's dominant trading partners are preparing for an economic rupture in reaction to Trump's possible actions.

In response to the steel and aluminum tariffs, European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen said Tuesday: "Unjustified tariffs on the

EU will not go unanswered - they will trigger firm and proportionate countermeasures." That means motorcycles, jeans, bourbon and peanut butter from the United States could face new taxes abroad. Mexico and Canada - America's two largest trading partners - have also prepared countermeasures.

Multiple Trump aides have privately said that Trump's long-standing goal with tariffs has been reciprocity. But Trump has also portrayed tariffs as a diplomatic tool to try to force Canada and Mexico to spend more resources on stopping illegal immigration and drug trafficking into the United States. He also suggested repeatedly that tariffs would be a source of revenues that could offset his planned income tax cuts.

But even before Trump formally signed the order, analysts at Goldman Sachs on Tuesday concluded it was unlikely to be the final word on tariffs.

"Of course, even if President Trump views reciprocal tariffs as an alternative to more sweeping measures at the moment, we are entering only the fourth week of a four-year presidential term and it seems likely there will be many further tariff announcements," the investment bank's analysts wrote.

Michael Zezas, a strategist at Morgan Stanley, wrote in a Sunday note that the "tariff trajectory" would shape what happens with growth, inflation, interest rates and Federal Reserve policies this year.

"It's a major shift from the era of globalization, when companies shrank expenses by pursuing lower-cost labor and materials offshore," Zezas said. "This transition is likely to take many years, creating challenges for some and substantial opportunities for others."



An empty shelf of free range eggs is seen at a Safeway, Monday, Jan. 27, 2025, in Seattle. (AP)

Fed likely to delay rate cuts

US inflation rises to 3% in Jan

WASHINGTON, Feb 12, (AP): U.S. inflation accelerated last month as the cost of groceries, gas, and used cars rose, a trend that will likely underscore the Federal Reserve's resolve to delay any further interest rate cuts.

The consumer price index increased 3% in January from a year ago, Wednesday's report from the Labor Department showed, up from 2.9% the previous month. It has increased from a 3 1/2 year low of 2.4% in September.

The figures show that after inflation steadily declined in 2023 and for much of last year, it has remained stubbornly above the Fed's 2% target for roughly the past six months. Elevated prices created a major political problem for former President Joe Biden. President Donald Trump pledged to reduce prices in last year's campaign, though most economists worry that his many proposed tariffs could at least temporarily increase costs.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core consumer prices rose 3.3% in January compared with a year ago, up from 3.2% in December. Economists closely watch core prices because they can provide a better read of inflation's future path.

Inflation also worsened on a monthly basis, with prices jumping 0.5% in January from December, the largest increase since August 2023. Core prices climbed 0.4% last month, the most since March 2024.

Inflation often jumps in January as many companies raise their prices at

the beginning of the year, though the government's seasonal adjustment process is supposed to filter out those effects.

Later Wednesday, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell will testify before the House Financial Services Committee, where he will likely be asked about inflation and the Fed's response to it. The Fed raised its benchmark rate in 2022 and 2023 to a two-decade high of 5.3% to combat inflation. With inflation down significantly from its 9.1% peak in June 2022, it cut its rate to about 4.3% in its final three meetings last year.

Early Wednesday, Trump said on social media that interest rates should be lowered, "something which would go hand in hand with upcoming Tariffs!!!" Yet the tick up in consumer prices makes it less likely the Fed will cut rates anytime soon.

Fed officials are mostly confident that inflation over time will head lower, but they want to see further evidence that it is declining before cutting their key rate any further. The Fed's rate typically influences other borrowing costs for things like mortgages, auto loans, and credit cards.

Inflation's recent uptick is a major reason the Federal Reserve has paused its interest rate cuts, after implementing three of them last year. On Tuesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said "we do not need to be in a hurry" to implement further reductions in testimony to the Senate Banking Committee.

Steel exports to US valued at \$2 billion in 2024

Japan requests exemption from US steel and aluminum tariffs

TOKYO, Feb 12, (AP): Japan's government said Wednesday it asked the U.S. to exclude it from 25% steel and aluminum tariffs, a change from duty-free quotas that Tokyo was given previously.

Japan made the request through its embassy in Washington after U.S. President Donald Trump removed the exceptions and exemptions from his 2018

tariffs on steel imports to a minimum of 25%, while hiking aluminum tariffs to 25% from 10%.

"Japan will firmly take necessary steps as we fully examine details of the new measures and their possible impact on the Japanese economy," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters, suggesting that his country will lobby for an exemption in the coming weeks

before the measures are due to take effect.

The measures announced by Trump are part of his aggressive push to reset global trade in the belief that tax hikes on foreign-made products will strengthen domestic manufacturing.

Japan was given an annual duty-free quota of up to 1.25 million tons of steel under the former President

Joe Biden's administration. Japan's exported 1.18 million tons of steel to the U.S. in 2024, according to the American Iron and Steel Institute.

Japanese steel exports to the U.S. totaled 302.7 billion yen (\$2 billion) in 2024, accounting for 1.4% of the total exports to America. Aluminum exports were much less, government data show.

KD 2 million prize – World's largest bank-linked cash reward

Gulf Bank hosts AlDanah Millionaire grand prize draw at Al Khiran Mall

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Gulf Bank is excited to host the annual AlDanah Millionaire grand prize draw Thursday, February 13, 2025, at Al Khiran Mall. This highly anticipated event will award KD 2 million, the world's largest cash prize linked to a bank account, to one lucky winner. The draw will be conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young.

The celebration will run from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM, with the grand draw taking place between 7:00 PM and 8:00 PM. Attendees can look forward to a dynamic entertainment lineup, including performances by Kuwait Television's band, showcasing traditional, patriotic, and maritime songs for audiences of all ages. Additionally, the renowned Backstage Group, led by the esteemed artist Mohammed Al-Hamli, will present an engaging performance featuring traditional music and dance.

Gulf Bank is enhancing the event experience with a variety of sports activities for attendees, along with interactive appearances by Neo, the mascot of the Bank's children's savings account. Guests can also enjoy exciting competitions and the chance to win valuable prizes.

The draw will be broadcast live on 360 FM and Gulf Bank's official social media platforms, bringing the excitement to audiences across Ku-



The largest prize in the world according to the Guinness Book of Records.



Adel Al-Mutairi before announcing the winner of the previous draw.

- Announcing the lucky winner of KD 2 Million from the AlDanah Millionaire account, under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Ernst & Young.
- Entertainment and exciting activities for all ages featuring Kuwait Television band and Backstage group.

deposits to improve their odds in the monthly, quarterly, and annual draws.

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

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

wait in real-time.

While the deadline for deposits to qualify for this year's grand prize draw ended on November 30, 2024, Gulf Bank continues to offer exciting opportunities for customers to win throughout the year.

The 2025 AlDanah Millionaire account draw schedule includes multiple chances to win substantial prizes, including the grand

prize draw of KD 2 million, a semi-annual draw awarding KD 1 million, and two quarterly draws, each granting KD 100,000 to 100 winners (KD 1,000 per winner). Additionally, monthly draws will reward 10 customers with KD 1,000 each, ensuring continuous opportunities to win.

A total of 282 winners will be rewarded throughout the year, further

reinforcing the AlDanah account as one of Kuwait's leading savings accounts.

Gulf Bank has increased the grand prize from KD 1.5 million to KD 2 million, setting a Guinness World Record once again for the largest cash prize linked to a bank account. The quarterly prize structure has also been adjusted, now distributing KD 100,000 among 100 winners in-

stead of a single recipient, ensuring greater customer engagement and wider reward distribution.

AlDanah is the only account in Kuwait that carries over entry chances from the previous year, giving loyal customers even more opportunities to win. To maximize their chances, customers must maintain a minimum balance of KD 200 and can increase their

Mousa Saleh Abdulgaffar wins KD 100,000

KFH announces Al-Hassad winner of KD 100,000

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced Mousa Saleh Abdulgaffar as the Monthly winner of Al-Hassad draw, winning KD 100,000 for the month of January 2025.

Al-Hassad account is based on the Wakala investment principle. The Bank invests the entire account balance at an expected profit rate agreed upon in advance with the customer.

Al-Hassad offers weekly, monthly, and quarterly draws, a total of more than 400 prizes. The draws offer KD 1000 weekly, for 10 winners, KD 100,000 monthly and KD 250,000 quarterly in addition to prizes between 100 to 250 thousand Kuwaiti Dinars worth of value, as well as the year-end profits distribution. The account meets the aspirations of a wide segment of customers who wish to



KFH's Al-Hassad draw

invest their funds through a multi-featured banking account.

To facilitate customer access and provide opportunities to a wider segment of clientele, Al-Hassad account can be opened in KFH branches, KFHonline, and ATMs.

Customers must hold the balance for a period of 15 days for an opportunity to enter the draws. The customer will have one chance for every KD 50. If the balance is held for 90 days before the draw date, the customer will get two chances for every KD 50, and three chances for every KD 50 if the balance is held for a period of 180 days prior to the draw date. The customer will have a maximum of 30 thousand chances in one draw. Accordingly, KFH will deposit the value of prizes in the winning customers' accounts.

Al-Hassad represents an excellent addition to KFH's comprehensive suite of financial products, offering a unique opportunity for customers in which the deposited amounts are invested in Al-Hassad based on the Wakala principle.



Burgan Bank's Youth Account car draw.

Sami AlSaleh wins Ford Bronco

Burgan Bank announces winner of 2024 Youth Account car draw

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: In line with its dedicated strategy for maximizing customer satisfaction and adding value to the everyday banking experience, Burgan Bank announced Sami Marwan AlSaleh as the winner of its 2024 annual Youth Account car draw who walked away with an all-new Ford Bronco. The winner's name was revealed across the Bank's official communication channels and through the Burgan booth at Avenues Mall amid a range of engaging activations and valuable prizes for participants.

"On behalf of Burgan Management, I extend my warmest congratulations to Sami Marwan AlSaleh on being the lucky winner of the Youth account 2024 annual car draw," said Mr. Hamad Haji, Executive Manager – Products and Segments at Burgan Bank. "As tomorrow's adults, leaders, and primary purchasing power, youth are among Burgan's most important customer segments, which is why we strive to attract more youth to open the account we have tailored to their needs and lifestyle, ultimately enhanc-

ing young adults' financial literacy in preparation for a future of success and fulfillment."

Mr. Haji noted that the annual car draw is one of yearlong exclusive promotions and offers that Youth customers can benefit from. Among the special benefits that Youth account holders can enjoy are a KD 100 cash gift transferred upon transferring their first student allowance to the account, a referral-based cash rewards program, and a prepaid VIP Mastercard that's free of charge for the first year. Furthermore, the Youth account only mandates that applicants, ages 15-25, transfer their student allowances to the account, which instantly starts to yield interest.

It serves to note that Burgan Bank consistently strives to develop innovative banking products and services that address the evolving market demands and the increasing aspirations of its diverse customer segments. Among the Bank's offerings are the Al Rateb salary account, the flagship draw Kanz account, and the awal children savings account.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is excited to announce Anwar Mouner Adres as the winner of the Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw on Monday, 10 February 2025. The draw took place in the presence of a Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative, ensuring transparency.

From the highly coveted mega annual draw of a KD 5,000 monthly salary for 10 years to its KD 10,000 weekly prize, the account has attracted significant attention in the Kuwaiti market. Based on the account's great success, ABK decided to go above and beyond to reward customer loyalty.

With a KD 100,000 quarterly draw, in addition to an exciting KD 20,000 monthly draw, the Alfouz account continues to surpass



ABK's Alfouz account winner.

expectations and deliver even more customer satisfaction.

To top it off, ABK has simplified the ability to open the ac-

count and win! Customers can enter the draws and get extra entry chances for every KD 10 deposited. The more you save, the higher your chance to be the next Alfouz winner!

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account or increase their balance to participate in the upcoming draw, which is scheduled to take place on Monday, 17 February, 2025.

Open an Alfouz account today and enjoy increased opportunities to win the lifestyle you've been waiting for!

To learn more about the Alfouz account and its range of exciting draws and prizes, please follow ABK's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Sheikha Hanouf Al-Bader highlights Kuwait's unity and progress during National Day speech

International Women's Group celebrates national holidays with traditional Kuwaiti spirit

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The International Women's Group celebrated the national holidays in a traditional atmosphere that reflected the Kuwaiti identity at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, with its members and a number of guests in attendance, reports Al-Seyssah daily.

In a speech on the occasion, Honorary Chairperson of the Kuwaiti Women's Committee Sheikha Hanouf Al-Bader affirmed that the National Day and Liberation Day are symbols of Kuwait's steadfastness, unity and unwavering spirit.

She added "we remember the sacrifices of those who came before us. We reaffirm our commitment

to work towards progress, peace and prosperity.

Kuwait has always been a beacon of diplomacy and cooperation, seeking to strengthen its relations with friendly and sisterly countries. On this occasion, we express our sincere appreciation to those who stood by us and shared our vision for a future based on mutual respect and shared prosperity."

Paulina Dlamini, President of the group and wife of Eswatini Ambas-



Sheikha Hanouf

sador to Kuwait Nkululeko Dlamini, delivered a speech in which she expressed her pride in Kuwait and its long history. She praised its pioneering role in development and prosperity, asserting that Kuwait remains a model of strength and determination.

She also greeted His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on this national occasion.

The ceremony consisted of seg-

ments that highlighted Kuwaiti heritage. Maryam Al-Kandari from the Kuwait Travelers Association talked about various aspects of traditional fashion and arts, such as Al-Samri and Al-Ardha, which embody the authenticity of Kuwaiti culture, in addition to the Kuwaiti wedding segment (Al-Yalwa).

Shouq Al-Shirazi also presented a show about tourist and heritage sites in the country, pointing out the development of Kuwait throughout history -- from a maritime trading center to a modern State that combines progress with preserving its ancient heritage.



Photos during the event.

Music



Paul McCartney performs at the Glastonbury Festival in Worthy Farm, Somerset, England, on June 25, 2022. (AP)

Beatlemania echo

Paul McCartney rocks surprise NYC concert

NEW YORK, Feb. 12, (AP) — Paul McCartney's previous New York-area performance took place three years ago at MetLife Stadium, capacity 82,500. His surprise show Tuesday night at the Bowery Ballroom fit, at most, 575.

It was probably less than that since McCartney's sound board and gear - too much to fit backstage - occupied a portion of the floor space at the venerable downtown theater. The whole thing felt like, and was, a lark. McCartney announced the show just hours before taking the stage.

Like an echo of Beatlemania, the news swept through Manhattan and beyond earlier in the day, sending New Yorkers sprinting down Delancey Street for a chance to snag one of the few tickets at the Bowery. Most in attendance, including McCartney, himself, could hardly believe it was happening.

"So, here we are," McCartney said, grinning. "Some little gig. New York. Why not?"

Later, he added before launching into "Let Me Roll It": "I can't quite believe we're here, doing this. But we are here, doing this."

It was not McCartney's first impromptu concert. The Beatles, of course, famously performed atop the roof of their Apple Corps headquarters at 3 Savile Row in London in 1969. Since then he's made something of a habit of it on trips to New York.

In 2009, McCartney returned to the Ed Sullivan Theater, site of the Beatles' famous U.S. debut, and performed above the marquee. In 2018, he popped up in Grand Central Terminal to promote the release of his "Egyptian Station."

With temperatures in the low 30s on Tuesday, McCartney, 82, this time opted for an intimate, indoor show. Tickets were sold only physically at the venue, one per person. All were snapped up within about 30 minutes.

For those quick enough, it was like hitting the lottery.

Announcement

Amy Jaffe, 69, was at home about 30 blocks north when she saw the announcement on Instagram. "I thought: I can do this," Jaffe said before the show. "I put on jeans, grabbed a coat, called a Lyft."

Jaffe has seen McCartney many times before, including with the Beatles in 1964 in Forrest Hills, Queens. But she was still incredulous, smiling and shaking her head: "I don't actually believe it."

Phil Sokoloff, 31, was on his way to work nearby when he saw the news. He ran in and told his co-worker, Mat Fuller, and they rushed over to the Bowery Ballroom.

"We just got lucky," Sokoloff said. "I'm always learning about these things the day after."

McCartney took the stage roughly on time at 6:30 p.m. with his regular band, along with a three-member horn section. They had only rehearsed once, the day before, McCartney said. Someone shouted: "You don't need to rehearse!"

If the location was stripped down, the former Beatle didn't come with a minimized show, packing in a blistering tour through his entire catalog, from Beatles classics to Wings hits. He began with "A Hard Day's Night" and also performed "Got To Get You Into My Life," "Maybe I'm Amazed," "Lady Madonna," "Jet," "Get Back," "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da," "Let it Be" and "Hey Jude."

"Blackbird" was a solo number on acoustic guitar, and afterward McCartney reflected on how he wrote it for the Civil Rights Movement, a memory that brought back his first trips to the United States.

"We were just kids," McCartney said. "I've got grandchildren older than that now."

In the early days, he said, he and John Lennon were always writing for the audience, and the songs were all about reaching out: "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "From Me to You." "It had everything to do with the fans, really," McCartney said.

Before playing the Wings song "Mrs. Vanderbilt," McCartney spoke of playing it in front of 350,000 people in Kyiv, when Ukraine was exuberant with a newfound freedom. "Let's hope it gets back to that soon," he said.

Conversation

Conversation, mixed with shouts from the audience, peppered the set. After one particularly shrill scream, McCartney responded. "That was a Beatles scream." Then he asked for more, saying, "OK, let's get it out of the way. Girls, give me a Beatles scream." All in attendance obliged.

McCartney also performed the so-called last Beatles song, "Now and Then," a ballad penned by Lennon in the late '70s but only released in 2023 with the help of the some of the technology used in Peter Jackson's 2021 documentary, "The Beatles: Get Back." The song made McCartney wistful for his songwriting partner, whom he noted loved New York.

"Let's hear it for John," he said.

McCartney, who was spotted Sunday at the Super Bowl in New Orleans chatting with Adam Sandler, was in New York for the upcoming "Saturday Night Live" 50th anniversary festivities. He's to be a guest on the star-studded television special Sunday.

It was unclear if McCartney was playing a single show or preparing for something more. He wrapped the Got Back Tour in December and has said he's hoping to finish a new album this year.

For now, though, it was a one-night-only event. One crowd member asked McCartney if it could go all night. "Some of us need to get some sleep, you know," he replied.

Alumni, hosts and music stars to shine in epic show

'SNL' plans a massive 50th anniversary special

NEW YORK, Feb. 12, (AP) — The 50th anniversary celebration of "Saturday Night Live" is so big, it's not even on Saturday.

Airing Sunday and spanning three hours, the, yes, live "SNL50: The Anniversary Celebration" will assemble a dream team of stars who have helped the show become an enduring pop culture force, including alumni like Tina Fey and Eddie Murphy, notable hosts like Dave Chappelle and Steve Martin and at least four of the surviving original cast members: Chevy Chase, Garrett Morris, Jane Curtin and Laraine Newman.

The show will also pack in musical guests, with Paul McCartney, Sabrina Carpenter, Bad Bunny and Miley Cyrus among those scheduled to appear, as well. The special is double the usual 90 minutes of each "SNL" episode.

With so much television and comedy history to cover, here are some key things to know about the "SNL50" show.

NBC will air "SNL50: The Anniversary Celebration" on Sunday beginning at 8 p.m. Eastern and 5 p.m. Pacific.

The anniversary show will also stream on Peacock.

Oh, so many. NBC says in addition to Murphy, Fey and some of the original Not Ready for Prime Time Players, you can expect: Adam Sandler, Amy Poehler, Andy Samberg, Chris Rock, Fred Armisen, Jason Sudeikis, Jimmy Fallon, Kate McKinnon, Kristen Wiig, Maya Rudolph, Molly Shannon, Pete Davidson, Seth Meyers, Tracy Morgan, Will Ferrell and Will Forte. Current cast member Kenan Thompson's

appearance was also touted.

Martin, who has left an indelible comedic mark on "SNL" over the years, will be among the many successful hosts returning for the show's 50th celebration.

Other prolific and returning hosts range from actors like Tom Hanks, Martin Short, and Scarlett Johansson (who is married to current "SNL" cast member Colin Hanks) to athletes like Peyton Manning. Former "SNL" writer John Mulaney will appear, as will Adam Driver, Ayo Edebiri, Kim Kardashian, Paul Simon, Pedro Pascal, Quinta Brunson, Robert De Niro and Woody Harrelson.

Hosted

No, the show is on a break this week. Timothée Chalamet hosted the most recent "Saturday Night Live" broadcast, on Jan. 25. He did double duty, performing Bob Dylan songs - Chalamet plays Dylan in the Oscar-nominated film "A Complete Unknown" - and spent years preparing for the role.

But fans tuning in Saturday night during the regular time slot can see the show's very first episode, from October 1975 and hosted by George Carlin, beginning at 11:30 p.m. Eastern and 8:30 p.m. Pacific.

Music is a huge part of "SNL" and a mix of global artists are scheduled to make an appearance on "SNL50: The Anniversary Celebration." It's important to note that NBC hasn't specifically said artists like McCartney, Cyrus, Bad Bunny and others will perform.

Lovers of music on "SNL" have other chances to celebrate. NBC has scheduled "SNL50: The Homecoming Concert" for Friday night. It'll stream live on Peacock, beginning at 8 p.m. Eastern and 5 p.m. Pacific.

The Backstreet Boys, Lady Gaga, Post Malone, Bad Bunny, Jack White, Cyrus, Robyn, Bonnie Raitt are some of the planned performances.

The musical legacy of "SNL" is also explored in the documentary "Ladies and Gentlemen ... 50 Years of SNL Music," from Oscar-winner Questlove. It's currently streaming on Peacock.

"Watching 'SNL' those first seasons gave me a musical vocabulary that I don't think would have happened on its own," he told The Associated Press last month before the special aired.

The first "Saturday Night Live" cast was known as the Not Ready for Prime Time Players and consisted of Chevy Chase, Gilda Radner, John Belushi, Laraine Newman, Dan Aykroyd, Garrett Morris and Jane Curtin.

Radner and Belushi have since died. Aykroyd's absence from the list of returning cast members was unclear, though he posted enthusiastically about the 50th anniversary on social media last week. Aykroyd's publicist did not return the AP's request for comment.

As part of its anniversary celebration, Peacock is streaming a four-part documentary series, "SNL50: Beyond Saturday Night," about the show.

Film



Lucy Boynton attends the premiere of 'A Cruel Love: The Ruth Ellis Story' at the Crosby Street Hotel on Tuesday, Feb. 11, in New York. (AP)

A Norwegian thriller that keeps you on edge

A mother's search for answers in 'Armand'

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 12, (AP) — A mother is called to her child's school for an urgent meeting with his teachers in the Norwegian film "Armand," a riff on a claustrophobic courtroom thriller set in a primary school classroom.

The film, which won the best first feature prize at Cannes last year, dolls out bits and pieces of information slowly and purposefully, building not a solid set of answers but a web of complications and ambiguities. It is a strange and fascinating experience that may be a bit frustratingly inconclusive but is never not compelling.

Even the inciting incident is withheld from the audience for a time. We're thrown into a conversation between a junior teacher, Sunna (Thea Lambrechts Vaulen), an administrator type Asja (Vera Veljovic) and the school's principal, Jarle (Øysten Røger). Asja and Jarle are entrusting Sunna to lead this conversation (though they'll have to join eventually). None of them are even quite sure what exactly happened, whether it was innocent or malicious, or what to do if they can get to the bottom of it. Jarle advises Sunna to treat it soberly, whatever that's supposed to mean.

Not even Armand's mother Elisabeth ("The Worst Person in the World's" Renate Reinsve) gets a hint as to what the meeting is about. She's a famous actress whose career has come to a halt and who has been tabloid fodder recently. Elisabeth arrives at the classroom first and wants answers, understandably. Sunna must awkwardly delay providing any information until the other parents arrive to Elisabeth's increasing frustration. Sunna even stammers something reassuring that it's not too bad. She is, of course, lying because the accusation is serious and beyond any of their depths. Armand's classmate Jon has apparently told his parents, Sarah (Ellen Dorrit Petersen) and Anders (Endre Hellestve) that



This image released by IFC Films shows Renate Reinsve in a scene from 'Armand.' (AP)

Armand has sexually abused and threatened him. They're both 6-year-olds.

These aren't just schoolmates either but cousins and that's only the tip of the iceberg of trauma and shared history in this room, haunted by characters who aren't even present: Armand and his dead father, Thomas. Neither of the kids is shown through the duration, and there's much debate over whether 6-year-olds would use the language that the adults allege.

"Armand" is the directorial debut of writer-director Halfdan Ullmann Tondel, who has the daunting pressure of being a descendant of cinema royalty. As if making a movie isn't hard enough on its own, Tondel's grandparents are Liv

Ullmann and Ingmar Bergman. And perhaps because of that "Armand" pushes away from the conventions of a straightforward, talky character study and plays with our perception of reality. Twice Elisabeth breaks into choreographed dance — both expressions of her emotional state and one of which takes a particularly sinister turn.

One might expect that two unexpected dance sequences would be the standouts in a film, but "Armand" has another. It's also a release, in a way. After a while of back and forth, debates, reveals and non-starters, Elisabeth breaks out into uncontrollable laughter. This stretches on for several agonizing, astonishingly impressive minutes of mad exertion. It's really quite an acting marvel from Reinsve — and everyone else in the scene watching it all play out. A broken fire alarm that goes off sporadically helps keep the atmosphere nice and tense, as does Asja's random nose bleeds that always seem to derail pivotal decision-making moments.

"Armand" engages in some stylish wheel spinning, broken up by some revelations and cathartic moments. And yet every time you feel like you have a grasp on the situation, something else arises that seems to undermine it. Ambiguity and inconclusiveness can be satisfying in cinematic storytelling, but this feels a little too underbaked either way. Ideas are introduced and abandoned, or not fleshed out well. Why, exactly, has she stopped working, for instance. And what's the story behind Anders' and Elisabeth's relationship? It's a promising debut from Tondel, nonetheless — a film that will keep you engaged if not entirely satisfied.

"Armand," an IFC Films release in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "sexual material and some language." Running time: 116 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Variety

SAN DIEGO: Actress and producer **Issa Rae** has joined the ownership group of Major League Soccer expansion club San Diego FC.

San Diego kicks off its inaugural season on Feb. 23 at the defending MLS champion LA Galaxy. The club's primary owners are billionaire Mohamed Mansour and the Sycuan Tribe, the first Native American tribe to have an ownership stake in a professional soccer team.

Rae joins a group of club partners including San Diego Padres' third baseman Manny Machado and former Manchester United and Spanish national team player Juan Mata. Rae's investment was announced on Tuesday.

"Soccer is a universal language that has the power to bring people to-



Rae

gether, and I look forward to contributing to San Diego FC's journey as we make history in MLS," she said in a statement.

Rae joins San Diego FC in partnership with Pave Investments, a private African firm that led a group that invested in NBA Africa. Pave Chairman Tunde Folawiyo and Founding Director Kwamena Afful are also joining the team ownership group. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: ASAP Rocky will not take the stand at his trial over two felony counts of assault with a semiautomatic firearm and the defense rested its case Tuesday without calling him to testify.

The 36-year-old hip-hop star said "Absolutely, your honor" when asked by Superior Court Judge Mark Arnold if he had discussed the issue with his lawyers, and said he would invoke his Fifth Amendment right to silence.

"I want my right to not testify," Rocky said. He left the courthouse a few hours later, after jurors received instructions from the judge. Closing arguments at the three-week trial will be Thursday morning, and jurors could begin deliberating by that afternoon.

Rocky's attorney Joe Tacopina had said late Monday that either his client would take the stand Tuesday or the defense would rest its case, and an attorney for the prosecution said his team would prepare for Rocky's possible testimony. (AP)

SHANGHAI: US entertainment company Warner Bros is set to launch a Making of Harry Potter studio tour in Shanghai in 2027, which analysts believe is a significant move underscoring US companies' confidence in China's vibrant consumer market.

The Jin Jiang International Holdings Co., Ltd., China's major travel and hospitality conglomerate, on Wednesday confirmed the inking of a joint venture framework agreement with Warner Bros to develop a Harry Potter attraction in Shanghai Jinjiang Action Park.

The project, known as the Making of Harry Potter studio tour, will be the first of its kind in a Chinese city and the third globally. The project is still in the regulatory approval stage, according to the company. In line with the agreement, the project is expected to cover an area of approximately 53,000 square meters, with indoor and outdoor areas. (Xinhua)

54% of 2024 top films featured female leads

Female protagonists reach parity with men in top films

NEW YORK, Feb 12, (AP): For the first time in recent history, the percentage of top-grossing films featuring female protagonists equaled the percentage of films with male protagonists, according to a pair of annual studies released Tuesday.

Movies like "Wicked," "Inside Out 2" and "The Substance" lifted Hollywood's theatrical releases to gender parity in leading roles in 2024. Of the 100 top domestic grossing films in 2024, 42% had female protagonists, and 42% had male protagonists, according to a report issued by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University.

The USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, which also released its annual study Tuesday, found that 54% of the top 100 films at the box office in 2024 featured girls and women as protagonists. That's a massive jump from just the year prior, when 30% of films featured women in lead



This image released by Mubi shows Demi Moore in a scene from 'The Substance.' (AP)

roles. In 2007, when the USC annual study began, that figure was just 20%.

"This is the first time we can say that gender equality has been reached in top-grossing films," Stacy

L. Smith, founder of the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, said in a statement.

"In 2024, three of the top five films had a girl or woman in a leading role, as did five of the top 10 films - including the number one film of the year, Disney's 'Inside Out 2,'" added Smith. "We have always known that female-identified leads would make money. This is not the result of an economic awakening but is due to a number of different constituencies and efforts - at advocacy groups, at studios, through DEI initiatives - to assert the need for equality on screen."

Other metrics suggested the gains in leading roles masked still-endemic disparity throughout Hollywood. The percentage of female characters in speaking roles increased from 35% to 37% in 2024, according to the San Diego State study. Major female characters rose from 38% in 2023 to 39% in 2024.

"Films such as 'The Substance' pushed back hard against a culture that considers women disposable," Martha Lauzen, director of the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, stated. "While the number of films with female protagonists rose to a historic high in 2024 after a dimly lean 2023, the percentages of women in the more stable categories of major and speaking roles reflected only minor gains."

Universal Studios, which is led by Donna Langley, was the studio with the best record for female representation. In 2024, 66.7% of Universal releases centered on girls and women, according to the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.

Neither study captures the large number of films released directly on streaming platforms or films that fall outside the top 100 movies in theaters. But for decades, those top box-office films have offered a snapshot of a film industry that has long failed

to come close to reflecting the demographics of American society.

That remains the case for underrepresented racial or ethnic groups, who account for roughly 42% of the US population.

In the top 2024 films in 2024, 25% included an underrepresented lead or co-lead, according to Annenberg. In those 25 movies, the lead or co-leads were 38% Black, 15.4% Asian or Asian American and 3.9% Hispanic.

That was a substantial decrease from 2023, when 37 leads or co-leads were people of color.

"The progress we saw for female-identified leads was not matched by the findings for underrepresented leads," said Smith. "This downturn signifies a lack of investment in storytelling that reflects the audience as a whole. The reality is that audiences want to see stories about women and people of color - studios and filmmakers do not have to choose between the two."

Fashion

Michael Kors takes it easy with new collection

Browne weaves origami magic in 'bird show'



NEW YORK, Feb 12, (AP): Thom Browne loves building fantastical worlds for his fashion shows, and his fall/winter 2025 collection was no exception. The designer filled a darkened Manhattan theater space with 2,000 graceful white origami birds, many suspended in the air, as he closed out New York Fashion Week on Tuesday.

To a soundtrack of bird sounds, poetry like Emily Dickinson's "Hope is the Thing with Feathers," and music evoking ornithological themes, Browne filled his runway with fanciful and inventive versions of his finely tailored suits, coats and jackets, some of them adorned with birds in brilliant colors, creeping across a jacket or coat.

Oscar nominee Adrien Brody sat next to Vogue editor Anna Wintour. Married actors Morgan Spector and Rebecca Hall sat together in the front row. Other guests included Cara Delevingne, musician St. Vincent and actors Cristin Milioti, Alessandro Nivola and Cole Escola.

Browne takes his time with his runway shows. They can last two or three times a usual runway show and tell a full story. In this case, the story centered on two caged lovebirds, in a white birdcage, longing to be free. "How marvelous would it be," they wonder, according to production notes, "to be exactly who we wish to be?"

The runway show began with two "ornithologists," with briefcases and in gray Thom Browne "uniforms." They sat at a desk, near the caged lovebirds, and began watching the flock of fashions.

Models followed, made up with colored, feathery eyelashes and dressed in checks, tweeds, plaids, argyle knits or flannels. Browne's deconstructed or exaggerated shapes were, as usual, examples of highly inventive tailoring and silhouette work. There were 64 looks in all.

There were fanciful dresses, petticoats and a huge ball skirt. The most whimsical notes of all were the colorful bird motifs, in satin stitch or gold bullion embroidery, finding their way across garments.

There was also a nod to collegiate style, with a brown varsity-style jacket emblazoned with "65," a reference to Browne's birth year.

As always there were a few eye-popping handbags, including Browne's favorite Hector bag, inspired by his own canine companion.

Whenever he shows in New York in February, Browne comes out at the end and presents a Valentine's Day gift to his partner, Andrew Bolton, curator at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This time, in keeping with the monochrome origami theme, Browne ran out with a bouquet of white flowers.

Michael Kors

Michael Kors created a runway that evoked his own living room to set the tone for his new Fall/Winter collection for New York Fashion Week, which focused on comfort and movement.

"It's about the idea of ease, which we Americans invented. The world dresses this way, but what I like is that it has glamour," Kors told The Associated Press backstage before the show.

The designer says he looked at old photos of icons like Lauren Hutton back in the 70s, and Zoe Kravitz on the street today to find the essence of the collection. "There's this relaxed ease to how they look that I think is modern," Kors said.

"It's also about layering things in a very cool way. So it could be... a silk dress, but grab your husband's coat or his jacket and throw it on. It's about stride. I like when clothes move when you walk. That's what's sexy, not being naked."

Models let the clothes do the talking with very minimal makeup and loose, natural hair as they marched down an extended two-aisled run-



Models walk the runway during the Michael Kors Fall/Winter 2025 fashion show as part of New York Fashion Week on Tuesday, Feb. 11, at Terminal Warehouse in New York. (AP)

way. The show opened with softly tailored menswear jackets paired with long flowing skirts or slouchy suit pants.

For a modern twist on layering for the fall, the show featured bikini bra tops under oversized blazers - either alone or with long blouses layering in between.

"Delicious oversized, cardigan blazers and coats with these very sort of filmy, soft dresses. This show is anti-corset, anti-Spanx, anti-bustier. It's that comfort and ease," Kors said.

Kors also heightened the show with touches of glamour in elegant dresses and jackets with swaths of sparkling sequins.

Black was a dominant color, with some grey, grey tweed and a few neutral colors including chocolate, green and deep purple. One standout material was long haired shearling-- in surprising colors like dusty mauve

and celadon-- shown on a peacoat, a vest, several purses and even a pair of flat shoes.

Kors has always said every woman needs a great coat and he had plenty of options from leather trench coats belted tightly at the waist, to leather hipster jackets in several shapes, to one traditional trench-style, covered in liquid sequins which glistened in the light. There were cozy looks too, like long thick turtleneck sweaters - part of Kors' "neo-classic knitwear."

Extending the casual, comfortable style to the setting, Kors and his team transformed a giant, high-ceilinged space at New York's Terminal Warehouse to look like his home, with exposed brick and wood accents, and even art and houseware pieces punctuating the end of each runway bench. Japanese paper lanterns hung from the vaulted ceilings adding to what Kors called his "warm modernism."

Celebrities flock to Kors shows and despite frigid New York temperatures, stars including Uma Thurman, Kerry Washington, Suki Waterhouse, Rose Byrne, Lea Michele, Cristin Milioti, and Rachel Zegler huddled together in the front row. Actor and reality star Lisa Rinna brought her daughter, Delilah Belle Hamlin, to watch her other daughter, Amelia Gray Hamlin, walk the runway.

"I can't stop singing my praises about it," gushed actor-singer Suki Waterhouse, who called the show "absolutely stunning." "Those drama-crazy hats, scarves that look like blankets. It was everything it needed to be."

Byrne said the clothes were "gorgeous" and so wearable. "(I'm) obsessed with the oversized suits already. The classic big coats, the beautiful chic dresses. Classic Michael Kors, he always delivers."

Variety

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Opera dropped a contemplated world premiere for the second straight season in a cost-cutting move, and Missy Mazzoli's "Lincoln in the Bardo" will instead open at New York's Metropolitan Opera.

Adapted from George Saunders' 2017 novel and with a libretto by Royce Vavrek, "Lincoln" was to debut in Los Angeles in February 2026, Saunders said last October. But it was not included when the LA Opera announced its 2025-26 season on Tuesday.

"With rising expenses, it's harder for us to manage the manifestation of all of our potential dreams," LA Opera president Christopher Koelsch said. "It's a wonderful project and I think it will be very impactful when it gets to the Met. What Missy and Royce have done in adapting something that is essentially unadaptable is really miraculous, a very beautiful and very moving piece."

Saunders' novel, about the death of President Abraham Lincoln's son William Wallace Lincoln, takes place between life and rebirth. (AP)

MAYVILLE, N.Y.: Author Salman Rushdie testified Tuesday in the trial of a man accused of attacking him with a knife just after he took his seat for a panel discussion at the Chautauqua Institution in western New York.

The noted author was on the witness stand for just about an hour, during which he described the 2022 assault in front of a shocked audience in precise detail. He also told some jokes with the comfort of someone experienced at public speaking.

The man accused in the attack, Hadi Matar, was grabbed by bystanders and arrested. He has pleaded not guilty.

"Before we were able to start having the conversation we were going to have, I was aware of this person rushing at me from my right hand side," Rushdie said. "I only saw him at the last minute. I was aware of someone wearing black clothes, or dark clothes and a black face mask." (AP)

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico: Police in Jamaica have arrested a dancehall artist accused of recording and playing a song they say promotes criminal activity.

Marlon Plunkett, best known as "KipRich," turned in himself on Monday. Authorities said he paid tribute to Othneil "Thickman" Lobban, one of Jamaica's top gang leaders who was recently killed by police. His death unleashed a violent backlash near the capital of Kingston, prompting authorities to raise the threat level to police officers to extreme at the time.

Plunkett denied the accusations in an interview with local newspaper The Star and was quoted as saying that his lyrics were not about inciting a riot against authorities.

Plunkett is scheduled to appear in court later this month. (AP)

LAS VEGAS: The only suspect ever charged in the killing of Tupac Shakur did not appear in court Tuesday for a hearing on whether his defense team is prepared to go to trial.

Duane "Keffe D" Davis also did not attend a scheduled hearing in another case, in which he is accused of fighting with another man at the Clark County Detention Center in late December.

A spokesperson for Davis' attorney declined to say why he did not attend either hearing. The Associated Press left messages with the detention center seeking more information.

Davis, who pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder in the 1996 death of the rap icon in Las Vegas, has been jailed since his September 2023 arrest. (AP)



Models walk the runway during the Thom Browne Fall/Winter 2025 fashion show as part of New York Fashion Week on Tuesday, Feb. 11, at The Shed in New York. (AP)

Air pollution tied to 7 mln premature deaths every year

Nearly everyone breathes bad air ... what you can do

HANOI, Vietnam, Feb 12, (AP): Everyone loves a breath of fresh air. Unfortunately, too often our air is anything but fresh.

While air quality varies dramatically from place to place and day to day, nearly the entire world - about 99% of the global population - is exposed to air at some point that doesn't meet the strict standards set by the World Health Organization. Polluted air, laden with noxious gasses or tiny, invisible particles that burrow into human bodies, kills 7 million people prematurely every year, the UN health agency estimates.

And for the millions living in some of the world's smoggiest cities - many of them in Asia like New Delhi; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Bangkok; and Jakarta, Indonesia - bad air might seem inescapable.

But there are things that people can do, starting with understanding that the air isn't only polluted when it looks smoggy, said Tanushree Ganguly of the Energy Policy Institute of Chicago in India.

"Blue skies can't guarantee you clean air," she said.



A man covers his face to protect from the dust as he waits at a crossroad in Ahmedabad, India, Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2025. (AP)

Air pollutants often come from people burning things: Fuels such as coal, natural gas, diesel and gasoline for electricity and transportation; crops or trees for agricultural purposes; or as a result of wildfires.

Fine, inhalable particles, known

as particulate matter, are among the most dangerous. The tiniest of these - known as PM 2.5 because they are less than 2.5 microns in diameter - can get deep into human lungs and are mostly created by burning fuels. Coarser particles, known as PM 10, are linked to

agriculture, roadways, mining or the wind blowing eroded dust, according to the WHO.

Other dangerous pollutants include gases like nitrogen dioxide or sulfur dioxide, which are also produced from burning fuels, said Anumita Roychowdhury, an air pollution expert at the Center for Science and Environment in New Delhi.

The sources and intensity of air pollution varies in different cities and seasons. For instance, old motorbikes and industrial boilers are major contributors to bad air in Indonesian capital Jakarta while burning of agricultural waste is a major reason for air pollution spikes in cities in Thailand and India. Brick kilns that burn coal add to pollution in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital. And seasonal forest fires cause problems in Brazil and North America.

Air pollution is the second-largest risk factor for early death globally, behind high blood pressure, according to a recent report by the Health Effects Institute.

Short-term exposure can trigger asthma attacks and increase the risk of heart attacks and stroke, especially

in the elderly or people with medical problems. Long-term exposure can cause serious heart and lung problems that can lead to death, including heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung infections.

A recent analysis by the UN children's agency found that more than 500 million children in East Asia and Pacific countries breathe unhealthy air and the pollution is linked to the deaths of 100 children under 5 every day. June Kunugi, UNICEF Regional Director for East Asia, said the polluted air compromises growth, harms lungs and impacts cognitive abilities. "Every breath matters, but for too many children every breath can bring harm," she said.

Over 6,000 cities in 117 countries now monitor air quality, and many weather mobile apps include air quality information. But trying to gauge how bad the air is by looking at these numbers can be confusing.

To help people understand air quality levels more easily, many countries have adopted an air quality index or AQI - a numerical scale where larger numbers mean worse air. They are also often assigned different colors to show

whether the air is clean or not.

But different countries have different air quality standards. For instance, India's daily PM 2.5 limit is more than 1.5 times higher than that of Thailand and 4 times higher than WHO standards.

This means that countries calculate AQIs differently and the numbers aren't comparable. This is also why sometimes AQI scores by private companies using stricter standards may be different from those calculated by national regulators.

The goal, of course, is to limit exposure when air quality is bad, by staying inside or wearing a mask.

Staying inside however, isn't always possible, especially for people who must live or work outside, noted Danny Djarum, an air quality researcher at the World Resources Institute, an environmental advocacy group. "They can't really afford not going out," he said.

Pakaphol Asavakomolnant, an office worker in Bangkok, said that he wears a mask every day and avoids riding to work on a motorbike. "I get a sore throat when I come to work in the morning and I forget to wear a mask," he said.

The impact of genetics vs. exposomics

Your environment affects how well your medications work – research

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

By Gary W. Miller

Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health

Your genes play a major role in determining your height, hair and eye color, and skin tone, but they don't tell the entire story of who you are. Your environment is incredibly important in shaping your personality, your likes and dislikes, and your health. In fact, your diet, social interactions, exposure to pollution, physical activity and education often exceed the influence of genetics on many of the features that define you.

Figuring out how your genes and environment increase your likelihood of developing asthma, heart disease, cancer, dementia and other conditions can have life-changing consequences. The field of genomics has made it relatively straightforward to test both in the hospital and at home for a wide range of genetic variations linked to disease risk.

And in recent years, science has been making progress on tracking down the environmental culprits that drive risk for several diseases - and on identifying ways to optimize treatments based on your personal environmental exposures.

My work as a pharmacologist and toxicologist has led me to the emerging science of exposomics - the study of all of the physical, chemical, biological and social factors that affect your biology. While your genome comprises all of the genes that encode your biology, your exposome is a concept that comprises all your environmental exposures. Like how researchers use DNA sequencers to study genomics, scientists in exposomics use chemistry and high-tech sensors to measure the effects of thousands of environmental factors on health.

For many people, standard drug therapies to treat certain conditions simply don't work. Controlling blood pressure often requires months of trial and error. It can take months or even years to identify an adequate treatment plan for depression.

Adverse events caused by medications account for more than 1 million visits to emergency departments each year in the U.S. What drives these differences in drug effects between patients? Is it their genes? Are they not taking their medication as prescribed due to side effects? Or something else?

As it turns out, your environment can have a major effect on how well specific treatments work for you. Think about the warning labels advising you not to drink grapefruit juice while taking a specific drug, for example. This is because a natural chemical in grapefruit inhibits the enzymes that break down those medications. Some common statins used to control high cholesterol can build up to toxic levels because the chemical in grapefruit juice blocks its normal processing.

Grapefruit isn't the only environmental factor affecting how you respond to your medications. Over 8,600 chemicals are used in commerce in the U.S., and you are exposed to thousands of these chemicals on a daily basis. It is more likely than not that many of these chemicals can interact with the drugs you take.

Chemicals

Some of the chemicals we use to keep fleas and ticks off pets can actually increase the levels of the same enzyme blocked by grapefruit juice, meaning a statin may be broken down so fast that it doesn't control elevated cholesterol.

Byproducts from the combustion of organic matter, such as engine exhaust and burning wood, can also interfere with drug-metabolizing enzymes. Some of these chemicals, called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, can inactivate medications used to treat asthma. The environmental factor triggering your asthma could prevent the drugs used to treat it from working.

Advances in chemistry are helping researchers figure out what chemicals are getting in the way of treatment.

Your hospital laboratory can already measure dozens of molecules in your blood. Measuring your salt levels can tell doctors how your kidneys are working, cholesterol levels indicate your risk of heart disease, and specific enzymes reveal your liver's health. These common tests are routine and useful for nearly every patient.

There are many additional tests that can help determine how a specific condition is progressing or responding to therapy. Hemoglobin A1c levels help determine how well glucose levels are being controlled in those with pre-diabetes or diabetes. And thousands of other human diseases have their own corresponding biomarkers.

In research laboratories, scientists can detect the presence of thousands of molecules at once using instruments called mass spectrometers. Each chemical in a sample has a unique mass, and these devices measure these masses for scientists to categorize. Thus, scientists can identify all of the pesticides, plasticizers, plastics, pollution and other chemicals present in a given sample. They can also measure your own internal biology, such as the compounds involved in processing the food you eat and the hormones influencing how you behave.

Moreover, mass spectrometers can measure drug metabolites. When you take a drug, it is typically broken down or metabolized to several different compounds. Some of these compounds contribute to the drug's effects, while others are inactive. Analyzing what metabolites are present in your body provides information about how you process drugs and whether the drugs you're taking will interact with each other.

Taking all these factors together, scientists can study how your environment may be interfering with the effectiveness of your medications.

Together with dozens of scientists across many institutions, my colleagues and I are developing methods to measure all of the chemicals in your body. The project, dubbed IndiPHARM - short for individualized pharmacology - is designing tools to measure a wide range of drugs, drug metabolites and environmental chemicals at the same time.

By combining environmental data with genetic information, we hope to improve how drugs work in people by figuring out whether chemicals in their environment or diet are altering how they process a given drug. This includes whether the administered drugs are at therapeutic levels, how the drugs and chemicals are interacting with each other, and determining whether other variables are affecting intended drug effects. (AP)



This image made from a NASA live stream shows NASA astronauts Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore during a press conference from the International Space Station, Sept 13, 2024. (AP)

SpaceX's new plan

NASA's 2 stuck astronauts may return to Earth early

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Feb 12, (AP): NASA's two stuck astronauts may end up back on Earth a little sooner than planned.

The space agency announced Tuesday that SpaceX will switch capsules for upcoming astronaut flights in order to bring Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams home in mid-March instead of late March or April.

That will shave at least a couple weeks off their prolonged stay at the International Space Station, which hit the eight-month mark last week.

"Human spaceflight is full of unexpected challenges," NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich said in a statement.

The test pilots should have returned in June on Boeing's Starliner capsule after what should have been a weeklong flight demo.

But the capsule had so much trouble getting to the space station that NASA decided to bring it back empty and reassigned the pair to SpaceX.

Then SpaceX delayed the launch of their replacements on a brand new capsule that needed more prepping, which added

more time to Wilmore and Williams' mission.

With even more work still anticipated for the new capsule, NASA opted for its next crew to fly up on an older capsule, with liftoff now targeted for March 12. This older capsule had already been assigned to a private crew awaiting launch this spring.

The private flight arranged by the Houston company Axiom Space, featuring astronauts from Poland, Hungary and India, was bumped and will launch later to the space station, possibly still this spring.

NASA prefers having a new crew arrive before sending the old one back, in this case Wilmore, Williams and two others up there since September.

The new crew going up includes two NASA astronauts, as well as one from Japan and one from Russia.

NASA's latest change in plans comes two weeks after the space agency said it was working "expeditiously" to bring back Wilmore and Williams as soon as possible. Just a day earlier, President Donald Trump and SpaceX's Elon Musk had vowed to accelerate the astronauts' return.

New treatment

Hope for deadly childhood cancers

SYDNEY, Feb 12, (Xinhua): Australian researchers have developed a new treatment for deadly childhood cancer using engineered immune cells.

In a research published on Wednesday, researchers led by a team from the University of Queensland (UQ) developed a new therapeutic strategy for paediatric sarcomas.

Sarcomas are cancers that develop in the bones and soft tissues, including muscles, fat and blood vessels. In children, the tumors tend to grow aggressively and spread throughout the body, making treatment difficult.

According to the new study, sarcomas account for 5-10 percent of all childhood cancers but are responsible for more deaths than brain cancer, skin cancer, leukaemia and lymphoma.

The new treatment uses engineered immune cells - immune cells also known as "killer cells" that have been modified to recognize and respond to disease - to target and destroy sarcoma tumors.

Wayne Nicholls, a co-author of the study from UQ's Ian Frazer Centre for Children's Immunotherapy Research, said that sarcoma is the biggest killer of people aged 10-30 and that there has been no improvement in survival rates for 40 years.

"At the moment, there are really no novel therapies available for paediatric solid tumors. This is a significant step forward towards a novel therapy that could be used for patients," he said in a media release.

The leader of the research, Fernando Guimaraes, said that the breakthrough has the potential to be lifesaving for many patients.

Researchers from the Queensland Children's Hospital, the University of New South Wales and The University of Otago in New Zealand also contributed to the study.

Sleep: Almost half of Australian children have a problem with their sleeping pattern, a survey has found.

According to the survey, which was conducted by researchers from Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital, 42 percent of Australian children aged 5-17 have a problem with their sleeping pattern such as difficulty getting to sleep and waking overnight.

Among children aged 5-12, 45 percent have a problem with their sleeping pattern compared to 37 percent of those aged 13-17.

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The all-new electric G-Class: legendary design language meets unique drive technology

The Geländewagen. Electrified: All-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ Technology possesses uncompromising off-road capabilities

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Al Mulla Automobiles Co., a member of the Al Mulla Group and the sole authorized distributor of Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait, has recently announced that the all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ Technology has arrived to Kuwait. The all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ Technology is fully in keeping with the tradition of the model series established in 1979 it is based on a ladder-frame concept, a selectable low range off-road gear reduction system, independent front suspension and a rigid axle at the rear. The all-new electric G-Class brings the off-road qualities of the G-Class into the era of electric mobility. In some aspects, the electric version even surpasses the conventionally powered models. The all new Mercedes-Benz G 580 is showcased in the Mercedes-Benz Flagship showroom in Al Rai and the Mercedes-Benz boutique in Avenues for guests and is available for on the spot test drives.

With the all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ Technology the brand with the three-pointed star presents the first fully electric variant of its off-road icon. It symbolizes the fusion of tradition and progress like no other. The all-new electric G-Class remains true to the model's character, retaining its angular silhouette including all iconic elements. Like the conventionally powered variants, its body is built on a ladder frame. The development team has modified and reinforced this to integrate the electric drive. Also retained is the combination of independent front suspension with double wishbones and newly developed rigid rear axle. The high-voltage lithium-ion battery integrated into the ladder frame ensures a low centre of gravity. With its usable capacity of 116 kWh, it provides sufficient energy for ranges of up to 473 kilometers according to WLTP. Throughout its more than 45-year history, the G-Class has always used the most modern drive technology available. So, it's entirely fitting that



The all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580

the innovative drive concept with four individually controlled electric motors once again raises the legendary performance of our off-road icon to a new level. It even retains that familiar angular silhouette and is true to the character of the beloved "Geländewagen".

The all-new electric G-Class sets off-road standards

The four individually controlled electric motors located near the wheels develop a maximum total output of 432 kW. Together with the selectable LOW RANGE off-road gear reduction, they enable unique driving characteristics and exclusive functions. This allows G-TURN to turn the vehicle almost on the spot on loose or unpaved surfaces. The G-STEERING function can deliver a significantly smaller turning circle when driving off-road. The three-speed intelligent off-road crawl function is like cruise control for off-roading – maintaining optimum propulsion while the driver focuses on navigating the terrain.

Like the tried-and-tested variants, the all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ Technology has a gradeability of up to 100% on suitable surfaces. The vehicle remains stable on sideways slopes of up to 35 degrees. With a maximum fording depth of 850

millimeters, the electric G-Class outperforms its conventionally powered counterparts by 150 millimeters. G-ROAR brings a unique sound experience to the all-new electric G-Class. In addition to a characteristic, G-Class-specific driving sound, it includes one "aura" sound and a variety of "event" sounds.

The all-new G 580 with EQ Technology follows in the tradition of the design icon

The all-new electric G-Class is immediately recognizable as a member of the enduring family line. The exterior gets a striking electric look with an optional black-panel radiator grille. A number of distinguishing features set the all-electric variant apart from the conventionally powered models. These include a slightly raised bonnet and so-called air curtains in the rear wheel-arch flares as well as the design box on the rear. In combination with new A-pillar cladding and a spoiler lip on the roof, they contribute to optimized aerodynamics.

Extensive standard equipment, additional features and a digital off-road experience

The all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ Technology is equipped with the MBUX infotainment system



Interior of the all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580.

(Mercedes-Benz User Experience), a multifunction steering wheel in nappa leather and ambient lighting as standard. Optional extras include KEYLESS-GO, temperature-controlled cup holders, the Burmester® 3D surround sound system and the "transparent bonnet". The redesigned off-road control unit and the new OFFROAD COCKPIT are available as options to enhance the off-road experience with additional digital functions. The EDITION ONE, a limited-edition model with an expanded palette of standard features and exclusive design elements, is available at launch.

The electric drive

With four individually controlled electric motors close to the wheels, the all-new electric G-Class offers unique driving characteristics both on and off road. It is the first mass-produced vehicle from the Mercedes-Benz Group with individual-wheel drive. The four motors are integrated in the ladder frame – two in each housing at the front and rear axles. They are driven via short half-shafts, meaning the rear electric motors can also be bolted to the chassis. Each of the electric motors develops a peak output of 108 kW, which adds up to a maximum total output of 432 kW. The maximum total

torque is 1,164 Nm. In co-operation with ESP® and the central powertrain control (CPC), the torque is always delivered exactly where the all-new electric G-Class needs traction.

With its innovative drive concept, the all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ Technology accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in 4.7 seconds. The top speed is electronically limited to 180 km/h. As the electric motors can provide their maximum torque from a standstill, the all-electric off-roader excels with enormous pulling power and exceptional controllability. This proves advantageous both on steep inclines and loose surfaces.

Virtual instead of mechanical: the differential locks

The all-new electric G-Class uses torque vectoring to generate virtual differential locks. This technology makes it possible to precisely meter torque to each individual wheel. As the torque builds up exactly where needed within fractions of a second, the all-new electric G-Class holds a clean, confident line up and downhill, even on the toughest terrain.

The virtual differential locks enable fully variable distribution of the drive torque among the individual wheels. The result is maximum traction with

maximum flexibility without distortion when cornering. The all-new electric G-Class thus remains agile and maneuverable at all times, including when the virtual differential lock is active. There is no need to manually engage the differential locks via switches in the off-road control unit. Control is fully automatic. This makes it even easier to use and increases driving safety, even in difficult conditions.

The battery

It is the heart of every electric vehicle – the high-voltage battery. In the all-new electric G-Class, a two-tiered lithium-ion battery with 216 cells is installed in twelve cell modules between three cooling levels. The battery is integrated into the ladder frame made from steel up to four millimeters thick. This ensures a low centre of gravity and makes the entire vehicle significantly more rigid. To protect it from water and dirt intrusion, the battery is housed in a torsion-resistant casing. This means that the all-new electric G-Class is also ideally equipped for ambitious off-road missions. The usable capacity of the battery is 116 kWh. That gives the all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ Technology sufficient energy for a range of up to 473 kilometers according to WLTP.

Exclusively for the all-new electric G-Class: G-TURN, G-STEERING and intelligent off-road crawl function

With the G-TURN, drivers can turn the all-new electric G-Class almost on the spot. The vehicle performs up to two complete vehicle turns in the desired direction on unpaved or loose surfaces. This not only looks spectacular but can also be helpful when driving off-road – for example, if an obstacle ahead makes it impossible to continue forward. The four independently driven wheels can rotate the vehicle to the left or right as required. To do this, the wheels on the right and left sides of the vehicle turn in opposite directions.

Pistons make history with 42-pt halftime lead in rout of Chicago



New York Knicks guard Cameron Payne (1) drives on Indiana Pacers guard T.J. McConnell (9) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis. (AP)

CHICAGO, Feb 12, (AP): Malik Beasley made seven 3-pointers and finished with 24 points, and the Detroit Pistons built a franchise-record, 42-point halftime lead on the way to a 132-92 romp over the Chicago Bulls on Tuesday night.

Detroit outscored the Bulls 71-29 in the first half, eclipsing the previous mark of 34 points against Chicago on March 23, 1969.

Beasley set a Detroit record for 3-pointers in a season with 212 after making 7 of 10. The previous mark was 211 by Saddiq Bey in 2021-22. Cade Cunningham added 20 points, seven assists and six rebounds as the Pistons came away with their most lopsided win of the season.

Tobias Harris scored 18 and Ausr Thompson finished with 16 points as the Pistons rolled to their third win in a row.

The Bulls set a team record by missing their first 20 3-pointers before Ayo Dosunmu hit one near the end of the second quarter. They were 10 of 47 from beyond the arc and shot 35% overall in the game.

Things were so comical for Chicago that Nikola Vucevic threw his arms up in mock celebration after making a hook shot late in the first half that trimmed the deficit to 43. And the crowd cheered, too.

Chicago had just two players score in double figures - Matas Buzelis (12 points) and Josh Giddey (11).

Coby White scored a season-low five, making just 2 of 13 shots and

missing all eight 3-point attempts.

Grizzlies hold on late to beat Suns

In Phoenix, Ja Morant scored 26 points, Desmond Bane had 20 and the Memphis Grizzlies held on to beat the Phoenix Suns.

Kevin Durant became the eighth player in NBA history to reach 30,000 points when he sank two free throws with 1:11 left in the third quarter. Durant finished with 34 points but Phoe-

nix lost for the fifth time in its last six games.

Knicks 128, Pacers 115

In Indianapolis, Karl-Anthony Towns had 40 points and 12 rebounds, Josh Hart added 30 points and 10 rebounds and the New York Knicks beat the Indiana Pacers.

New York won in Indianapolis for the first time since April 2023. The Knicks lost all three road games in last season's seven-game Eastern Conference semifinal series against the Pacers.

Towns scored 24 points in the first half, making 9 of 12 from the field. He was 14 of 23 from the field, while Hart did most of his damage in the second half and wound up 12 of 16 from the field.

Raptors 106, 76ers 103

In Philadelphia, Scottie Barnes scored 33 points, Immanuel Quickley added 23 and the Toronto Raptors snapped a four-game losing streak with victory over the Philadelphia 76ers.

Grady Dick added 17 points, including a clutch late 3-pointer. Barnes fed Ochai Agbaji for a layup with 1:32 left to put the Raptors up for good.

Joel Embiid had 27 points and 12 rebounds, but the 76ers (20-33) fell a season-worst 13 games under .500. Jared Butler had 15 points off the bench, and Paul George added 12.



Toronto Raptors' Scottie Barnes, right, reaches for a pass against Philadelphia 76ers' Quentin Grimes during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

Izzo on brink of breaking record

Alabama blows past Texas to set up SEC showdown with Auburn

AUSTIN, Texas, Feb. 12, (AP) — Jarin Stevenson scored 22 points and No. 2 Alabama used a hot-shooting first half and a barrage of 3-pointers to cruise to a 103-80 win over Texas on Tuesday night.

The victory sets up Saturday's showdown with rival No. 1 Auburn, which beat Vanderbilt Tuesday night, with the winner claiming sole possession of first place in the Southeastern Conference.

Alabama shot 65% in the first half to seize control, then buried timely 3-pointers in the second to snuff out any hopes of a comeback. Alabama (21-3, 10-1) made 17 3-pointers.

Freshman Tre Johnson scored 24 points to lead Texas (15-10, 4-8), which has lost four of its last five and is struggling to build an NCAA Tournament resume in the program's first season in the SEC. Three of Texas' four home losses in the SEC have been to opponents ranked No. 1 or No. 2.

Denver Jones scored 21 points as No. 1 Auburn held off Vanderbilt 80-68 on Tuesday night to avoid the Tigers' first losing skid of the season.

Now Auburn (22-2, 10-1) goes into Saturday's big showdown for the top of the Southeastern Conference standings, supremacy in the state of Alabama and the top of the AP Top 25. The Tigers came into Tuesday night tied with No. 2 Alabama in league play.

Chaney Johnson finished with 20 points for Auburn, and Johni Broome had 17.

The Tigers scored the first 15 points

as they snapped back from their home loss to Florida last weekend. Vanderbilt rallied and finally hit its first 3 on the Commodores' ninth try seconds before halftime to pull to 34-32.

Michigan State coach Tom Izzo has been trying to downplay being on the brink of breaking Bob Knight's record for Big Ten basketball wins.

Perhaps he knew what was coming Tuesday night.

Indiana beat the 11th-ranked Spartans 71-67, leaving Izzo with 353 conference victories to stay tied with Knight a little longer.

Izzo will get his next shot Saturday night at Illinois.

Former NFL coach Steve Mariucci surprised Izzo by showing up at the Breslin Center, sitting on the Spartans' bench with his back facing Izzo as he walked to the sideline for warmups before Michigan State hosted the Hoosiers.

Denzel Aberdeen had a game-high 20 points and Walter Clayton Jr. added 19 points to lead No. 3 Florida to an 81-68 victory over No. 22 Mississippi State. Thomas Haugh scored 16 points for Florida (21-3, 8-3 Southeastern Conference) and Will Richard and Rueben Chinyelu each added 10.

Josh Hubbard led Mississippi State (17-7, 5-6) with 19 points while Ke-Shawn Murphy had 18 points and 13 rebounds.

Trailing by one at halftime, Florida exploded on a 17-0 run to open the second half and were never threatened the rest of the way.

Financial strain grows

Rummenigge calls for salary cap

BERLIN, Feb 12, (Xinhua) — Former Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has called for the introduction of a salary cap in response to rising player and agent demands.

"The only direction I see is higher, faster, further," the 69-year-old said ahead of Bayern's UEFA Champions League playoff first leg against Celtic.

The Bayern board member warned that football is speeding toward a financial wall, with "no one wanting to hit the brakes." In an interview, the 1975 and 1976 Champions League winner said clubs are being forced to explore new competitions to generate revenue, pointing to the expanded FIFA Club World Cup, set to take place in the U.S. from June 14 to July 13, 2025. "If things continue as they are, football will be the only business not making a profit but suffering losses," he said.

Rummenigge defended the revamped Club World Cup, calling it a necessary and exciting addition for fans. He criticized the previous format as "boring," arguing that the Champions League winner faced little real competition.

Both the new Club World Cup and the expanded Champions League format are adding to players' workloads, drawing complaints from players and coaches about the increasing number of matches.

Reports suggest Bayern could earn

over €50 million from the new Club World Cup, which will feature 32 teams. "That FIFA has prioritized a club competition over a potential national team event is another surprise," Rummenigge added.

While he admitted a salary cap is "unlikely" due to legal constraints, he dismissed the idea of a European Super League replacing the Champions League, calling it a non-starter.

Football has reached its financial ceiling, he argued, noting that while the German league secured a slight increase in TV revenue for the 2025-2029 cycle, it was "a miracle." The German Football League recently announced a new broadcast deal worth €4.84 billion, but Rummenigge said the TV market is saturated.

In recent days, both Rummenigge and former Bayern president Uli Hoenes have called for a more cautious salary policy. Hoenes stressed that even a financially stable club like Bayern "is no cash cow." Rummenigge also urged players and agents to "stop complaining." Additionally, he voiced support for the German Football Association's approval of Saudi Arabia's 2034 FIFA World Cup bid.

"Even if there are concerns, it's better to address them through dialogue rather than outright rejection," he said, adding that he personally called German FA president Bernd Neundorff to endorse the decision.

Ogier, Landais, deliver a masterful performance

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing kicks-off season with one-two Rally Monte-Carlo win

MONTE CARLO, Feb 12: TOYOTA GAZOO Racing World Rally Team (TGR-WRT) opened the 2025 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) season in spectacular fashion with a dominant one-two finish at Rallye Monte-Carlo, one of the oldest and most prestigious events in motorsports.

Sébastien Ogier, alongside co-driver Vincent Landais, delivered a masterful performance in the No. 17 GR Yaris Rally1, securing his record-extending 10th Monte-Carlo victory and his third with TGR-WRT. This triumph also marks Toyota's sixth overall win at the iconic rally. Adding to the team's success, Elfyn Evans and Scott Martin claimed second place in the No. 33 GR Yaris Rally1, cementing TGR-WRT's early lead in the Drivers' Championship, as well as Toyota's in the Manufacturers' Championship.

Akio Toyoda, TGR-WRT Chairman, commented: "We were able to kick off the 2025 season with Seb's memorable 10th victory in Monte Carlo. Up until 2019, Seb had a streak

of six consecutive wins in Monte Carlo with various teams. Since joining Toyota in 2020, he has alternated between 2nd and 1st place every other year. Given this pattern, I was certain that he would win this year."

Toyoda added: "This year, I want to make it a season that we can enjoy from the bottom of our hearts also as team members. And I want to experience that feeling again at Rally Japan! I believe Jari-Matti, Juha, all the drivers, all the co-drivers, and everyone in the team will make it happen! And just so you know, this year's Rally Japan is not the final event..."

The rally presented highly variable conditions, with dry asphalt in the French Alps often interrupted by ice, mud, and gravel. It was a tough first event for teams adapting to the 2025 technical updates, including a regulation change that phased out plug-in hybrid units in Rally1 vehicles and the debut of Hankook tires.

The battle for victory remained close, culminating in a dramatic final stage on the iconic Col de Turini. Ogier held a 20.3-second lead over Evans heading into a cold, wet final day that made tire choices crucial. Both opted for four studded winter tires and two supersoft slicks, excelling in the icy pre-dawn stage.

The rally-ending Power Stage featured mixed conditions, with dry ascents, icy sections, and slick descents. Ogier edged Evans by 0.215 seconds, despite Evans running wide and brushing a bank on the descent.

Ogier's win is also his 15th for TGR-WRT, drawing him level with team-mate Kalle Rovanperä and their fellow two-time champion Carlos Sainz as the drivers who have achieved the most WRC victories for Toyota. Evans and co-driver Scott Martin start their season strongly, also topping the Super Sunday classification to earn five extra bonus points.

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms



Sébastien Ogier, alongside co-driver Vincent Landais.



TOYOTA GAZOO Racing World Rally Team celebrates with the trophy.

of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nürburgring 24 Hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established TGR. To consolidate all of its motorsport activities under one in-house brand. Represent-

ing Toyota's belief that 'the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,' TGR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to making 'ever-better' cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, TGR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the

freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone.

Rally Sweden, taking place from 13-16 February, is the only full winter event of the season held on snow and ice. Metal studs inserted into the tyre-sites into the surface to provide grip and allow for some of the highest speeds of the year.

Race Notes:

■ No. 17 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1 (Sébastien Ogier and Vincent Landais)
 ■ Position: 1st
 ■ Time: 3 hours, 19 minutes, and 6.1 seconds
 ■ No. 33 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1 (Elfyn Evans and Scott Martin)
 ■ Position: 2nd
 ■ Time: 3 hours, 19 minutes, and 24.6 seconds

Japan wins ice dance gold as Uzbekistan tops pair skating at Asian Winter Games

China claims first figure skating medal at Asian Winter Games

HARBIN, Feb 12, (Xinhua): Ren Junfei and Xing Jianing secured China's first figure skating medal in the ice dance event at the Harbin Asian Winter Games, while Cidanyuzhen and Buluer led Chinese skiers to a podium sweep in the ski mountaineering mixed relay on Wednesday.

As the fifth pair to step on the rink in Wednesday's free dance, Ren and Xing delivered a near-flawless performance, clinching 61.80 points on the technical element score and 45.16 points on the program component score. However, based on the total score of the rhythm dance and free dance, the Chinese pair was unable to defeat the Japanese duo, Utana Yoshida and Masaya Morita, settling for silver.

Yoshida and Morita won the ice dance gold with 173.31 points, and their teammates Azusa Tanaka and Shingo Nishiyama bagged the bronze.

Even though claiming a big-time victory, the pair addressed their shortcomings right after the competition. "Winning gold at an international event has boosted our confidence, but there's still room for improvement. Our step sequence today wasn't perfect. We were supposed to move more dynamically, but we didn't execute well, leading to noticeable mistakes. We'll keep training hard and aim for a better performance at the World Championships," said Morita.

Meanwhile, the Japanese figure skaters planned to give themselves a break by enjoying the city of Harbin. "Despite the cold weather, I felt the warmth and hospitality of the locals. Before leaving, I'd like to visit Harbin's Ice and Snow World," Morita added.



Gold medalists Ekaterina Geynish/Dmitriy Chigirev (center) of Uzbekistan, silver medalists Ryom Tae Ok/Han Kum Chol (left) of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and bronze medalists Nagaoka Yuna/Moriguchi Sumitada of Japan attend the awarding ceremony for the mixed pair skating free skating of figure skating event at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

Despite finishing just 2.06 points behind the champions, Ren and Xing remained upbeat. "We've already shown our best level, and I believe that we'll skate better in the future," Ren noted.

Their coach, Zheng Xun, praised their performance, noting their rapid progress since teaming up just 10 months ago. "They've improved a lot and performed at about 90 percent of their training level." In pair skating, Geynish and Chigirev of Uzbekistan claimed the gold with 176.43 points. Ryom Tae-ok and Han Kum-chol of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea edged out the Japanese pair of Yuna Nagaoka and Sumitada Moriguchi to claim the silver medal.

In Yabuli, China achieved a podium sweep in the ski mountaineering mixed relay. Young talents Cidanyuzhen and Buluer claimed the gold with a commanding final performance, crossing the finish line in 27 minutes and 48.67 seconds. China's other two pairs, Yu Jingxuan/Bi Yuxin and Suolangquzhen/Liu Jianbin, secured silver and bronze respectively.

Due to weather conditions, after discussions at a team leaders' meeting and with agreement from jury members, it was decided to adjust the competition date and time for Freeski Big Air, originally scheduled for Thursday at Yabuli Ski Resort, to Wednesday.

China was not affected by the schedule change, as freestyle skier Liu

Mengting claimed victory in the women's Freeski Big Air, with her teammates Han Linshan and Yang Ruiyi securing silver and bronze respectively.

Rai Kasamura of Japan won the men's Freeski Big Air gold, while Yoon Jong-hyun and Shin Yeong-seop, both from South Korea, took silver and bronze.

Also on Wednesday, China clinched two team events in cross-country skiing to wrap up the sport at the Games. In the women's 4x5km relay, China clocked 53:59.3 to win the title, with Kazakhstan and Japan taking the silver and bronze respectively. The host later finished the men's 4x7.5km relay in 1:12:09.6, outperforming silver medalists Japan and third-place Kazakhstan.

Three Swiss teams on the podium

Franjo becomes double champ

SAALBACH-HINTERGLEMM, Austria, Feb 12, (AP) — Franjo von Allmen became a double world champion and Loic Meillard claimed his fourth career world championship medal when the Swiss pair won gold in the new team combined event on Wednesday.

They led a Swiss sweep of the podium at the worlds, 0.27 seconds ahead of silver medalists Alexis Monney and Tanguy Nef.

Stefan Rogentin and Marc Rochat were 0.43 behind and took bronze. "Totally crazy, three Swiss teams on the podium is amazing," said Meillard, who has a silver and two bronzes from previous worlds. "I think everyone on the team is going crazy."

It's the third gold medal for the Swiss team at these worlds after Marco Odermatt won the super-G and Von Allmen the downhill. Switzerland won silver in the mixed-team parallel event last week.

"Incredibly cool," said Von Allmen, adding his recent results were a surprise for himself.

"I am still satisfied with any top-10 result, that is still good for me in my second World Cup season," he said. "What is happening here, I can't put it into words." The American team of Ryan Cochran-Siegle and Benjamin Ritchie finished fourth and missed a medal by 0.26 seconds, a day after Mikaela Shiffrin and Breezy Johnson won gold in the women's event.

The team combined entails one racer competing in a downhill run and another in a slalom, with their two times added up to determine the final results.

The team combined will make its debut at next year's Milan-Cortina Olympics. Earlier Wednesday, Monney posted the fastest time in the downhill portion, giving his teammate Nef a slim advantage of 0.02 seconds over Meillard to start the slalom.

However, Meillard completed his slalom run nearly three-tenths of a second faster than Nef.

After waiting for Nef to come down, Monney leaped over barriers and ran into the finish area to embrace his teammate as the six-man Swiss party got started.

It is the first Swiss sweep of a men's podium at the worlds since Peter Mueller, Pirmin Zurbriggen and Karl Alpiguer won gold, silver and bronze in downhill at their home 1987 worlds in Crans Montana.

Italy 1, with downhiller Dominik Paris and slalom racer Alex Vinatzer, was 0.46 seconds behind in third after the downhill portion, but Vinatzer straddled a gate and became one of the nine slalom skiers that failed to finish their run.

After early rain, the downhill portion was delayed for about 15 minutes twice as low clouds moved over the upper part of the course and reduced visibility for the racers.

"I pretty like bad light, maybe weird, but I like it," Monney said.

Von Allmen struggled early in his run when he came off the race line and skied into the soft snow outside the blue lines. He just managed to make the next gate and then made up almost all of the time he lost there.

"That can happen, I tried to make the best out of it," said Von Allmen, adding



Switzerland's Loic Meillard, third from left, and teammate Franjo von Allmen, third from right, celebrate on the podium after winning the gold medal in a men's team combined event, with silver medalists Switzerland's Alexis Monney, left, and teammate Nef Tanguy, and bronze medalists Switzerland's Marc Rochat, second from right, and teammate Stefan Rogentin, at the Alpine Ski World Championships, in Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Austria. (AP)

Captain Asalanka hits career-best 127 in Sri Lanka's 49-run win over Australia

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, Feb 12, (AP) — Charith Asalanka scored a career-best 127 to help Sri Lanka beat Australia by 49 runs in the opener of a two-match one-day international cricket series on Wednesday.

Sri Lanka was bowled out for 214 in 46 overs after Asalanka won the toss and elected to bat first at Colombo's R. Premadasa Stadium. Asalanka played a captain's innings and carried his team with his fourth ODI hundred in his 72nd game.

In reply, Australia was bowled out for 165 runs in 33.5 overs.

Fast bowler Spencer Johnson (2-44) quickly provided Australia with its first breakthrough, having opener Pathum Nissanka caught behind in the first over of the match. Opening partner Avishka Fernando fell in the next over when he was caught by Australian captain Steve Smith off fast bowler Aaron Hardie, who took 2-13 in six overs.

Kusal Mendis (19), Kamindu Men-

dis (5) and Janith Liyanage (11) fell in quick succession to leave the hosts precariously placed on 55 runs for five



Sri Lanka's Captain Charith Asalanka plays a shot during the first ODI cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP)

wickets. But Asalanka and Dunith Wellalage's 67-run partnership off 68 deliveries

for the sixth wicket provided Sri Lanka with a base for a competitive total.

Wellalage made a useful 30 off 34, including a six and two boundaries, before being caught by Smith off spinner Matthew Short.

Sri Lanka looked in trouble again at 135-8 after losing two more quick wickets, but No. 10 batter Eshan Malunga came to Asalanka's assistance by keeping his captain company in a 79-run ninth wicket stand in which he contributed just one run.

Asalanka hit 127 off 126 deliveries, including five sixes and 14 fours.

Fast medium Sean Abbott took 3-61.

Asalanka said the innings was probably his best, taking into account the match situation and playing conditions.

"It wasn't easy batting out there," Asalanka said. "The ball was seaming around until about the 15th over which is unusual at this wicket."

Host China edges Qatar Cup opener

SHENZHEN, Feb 12, (Xinhua): Kuai Jiwen and Liu Chengyu scored in the first half as host China edged Qatar 2-1 in the AFC U20 Asian Cup opening match here on Wednesday.

In the 16-team tournament, China has been drawn into Group A alongside Australia, Qatar and Kyrgyzstan. The home team aims at entering the top four to qualify for the 2025 FIFA U20 World Cup, ending a 20-year absence from the global stage.

The home team started the match strongly with over 60 percent ball possession in the first half and broke the deadlock in the 17th minute when Kuai fired a low strike into the far corner thanks to an assist from Mao Weijie.

Four minutes later, Chen Zeshi delivered a direct pass through the Qatari defense line and assisted Liu to dribble over the goalkeeper in a one-on-one opportunity, doubling the lead for the home side.

The Qatari team pulled one goal back in the 55th minute as Mahomada Faragalla netted an open goal after Tahsin Jamshid crossed the ball into the penalty area.

Both sides had few chances in the last 30 minutes of the match and China sealed the 2-1 victory.

In the other Group A match on Wednesday, Australia crushed Kyrgyzstan 5-1. China will play its second group match against Kyrgyzstan on Saturday.



Dortmund's Pascal Gross scores his side's second goal during the Champions League playoff first leg soccer match between Sporting CP and Borussia Dortmund at the Alvalade stadium in Lisbon, Portugal. (AP)

Sports

City collapses late as Real takes first-leg lead

PSG, Dortmund on course to next round

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 12, (AP): Real Madrid's Galacticos don't know when they are beaten. Manchester City just keeps on making the same mistakes.

Jude Bellingham's stoppage-time goal sealed a stunning comeback for Madrid and a 3-2 lead in its Champions League playoff against City.

In six frantic minutes at the end of a breathless first leg, the Spanish giant scored twice to take a precious advantage into next week's match at the Bernabeu.

City led 2-1 after 80 minutes at the Etihad Stadium thanks to goals in each half from Erling Haaland. But Brahim Diaz and then Bellingham silenced the home crowd and extended a sorry record for City, which has conceded seven goals in the last 15 minutes of Champions League games this season.

Bellingham slid in to convert Vinicius Junior's lobbed pass in the second minute of added time to bring back memories of Madrid's dramatic comeback against City in the semifinal in 2022. Then it was Rodrygo who scored twice from the 90th and Madrid eventually sent Pep Guardiola's team crashing out in extra time.

At least City has a chance to salvage the tie in the second leg, but the sense of deflation was clear after such a late collapse.

It was another thrilling, white-knuckle knuckle-ride of a game between these two giants of European soccer, and a one-goal advantage for Madrid means there is still all to play for.

Defeat ended City's 35-game unbeaten run at home in the Champions League, dating back to 2018.

City led through Haaland's goal in the 19th.

By that stage, Madrid had seen a penalty overturned for offside and a Ferland Mendy goalbound effort blocked by Manuel Akanji.

Vinicius Junior then hit the bar with a curling shot and Akanji also clipped the frame of the goal with a header.

Haaland hit the bar again less than a minute into the second half.

Madrid's equalized on the hour through a freakish goal from Mbappe when his miskicked volley wrongfooted Ederson and looped softly over the line.

Mbappe hit the post with another chance before Ceballos brought Phil Foden down just inside the box and Haaland's penalty restored City's lead.

On came former City academy player Diaz, who left City for Madrid in 2019 and he leveled the game again before Bellingham's winner.

Paris Saint-Germain took a big step toward the round of 16 by beating Brest 3-0 and Juventus won 2-1 against PSV Eindhoven. Borussia Dortmund also looks on course for the next round after a 3-0 win at Sporting Lisbon.

Ousmane Dembélé struck twice for PSG to extend his scoring streak to 10 games in a row.

His outstanding form has seen him score 18 goals during that run.

It was his shot that led to PSG taking the lead through a 21st-minute penalty after Pierre Lees-Melou handled in the area. Vitinha converted the spot kick.

Dembélé scored his first in the 45th when he broke free down the right and curled a shot inside the post. His second came in the 66th when he pounced on a loose ball and burst into the penalty area to score his 23rd goal of the season.

Having made hard work of the new-look league phase of the tournament, it would take a major upset in the second leg in Paris to deny PSG a place in



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe scores his side's first goal during the Champions League playoff first leg soccer match between Manchester City and Real Madrid at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

the next round.

Substitute Samuel Mbangula grabbed a late winner for Juventus and in doing so claimed his first Champions League goal.

The 21-year-old Belgian forward reacted quickly when goalkeeper Walter Benitez spilled a low cross from the right by Francisco Conceição in the 82nd.

Juventus took the lead late in the first half from Weston McKennie's powerful strike into the top corner from just inside the penalty area.

Veteran midfielder Ivan Perisic calmed the home fans with a fine finish in the 56th.

Serhou Guirassy scored his 10th Champions League goal of the season as last year's runner-up Borussia Dortmund beat Sporting Lisbon 3-0.

Guirassy scored one goal and set up another for Pascal Gross as Dortmund scored twice in the space of eight minutes, both goals coming from crosses.

Karim Adeyemi finished off a rapid counterattack to score Dortmund's third in the 82nd as Sporting tried to get back into the game and left space at the back.

Sporting hasn't won in five Champions League games since coach Ruben Amorim left for Manchester United in November. It was the first Champions League game for new Dortmund coach Niko Kovac.

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak's legacy lives on through sponsorship of annual horse racing

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Sheikh Abdullah Khaled Al-Fahad reaffirmed the commitment of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak's family to supporting equestrian sports through their annual sponsorship of horse racing. This tradition traces back to the 1950s, when His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, emerged as a key advocate and patron of equestrian events, dedicated to preserving the heritage of past generations.

Sheikh Al-Fahad made these remarks while representing the family of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah at the ceremony announcing the winners of the 2024-2025 horse racing season, an event held in honor of the late Sheikh



Sheikh Abdullah Khaled Al-Fahad ready for the race.

Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

He also commended the relentless efforts of the Chairman and members of the Board of Directors of the Hunting and Equestrian Club in promoting and advancing horse racing. He highlighted the sport's significance as a cherished part of local heritage and a reflection of Arab and Islamic traditions, inspiring new generations to uphold the enduring values upon which the nation was built.

The horse racing season commenced on November 4 and culminated in the prestigious Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Race—an annual event upheld by his heirs for many years in tribute to his legacy.

Al-Ahly and Al-Nassr set for high-stakes classico



Ronaldo preparing for the Saudi classico.

Yarmouk, Al-Nasr go head-to-head as relegation battle heats up

Al-Shabab strengthens grip on First Division League lead

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Yarmouk and Al-Nasr will go head-to-head today at 6:00 PM at Abdullah Al-Khalifa Stadium in the opening match of the 15th round of the Zain Premier League.

The round continues tomorrow with two key matchups – Al-Qadisiya taking on Al-Tadamon, followed by Kazma facing Al-Fahaheel. The action concludes with Al-Salmiya meeting Khaitan, while Al-Arabi squares off against Kuwait Club in the round's marquee clash.

With Al-Nasr sitting ninth with six points and Yarmouk at the bottom in tenth with five points, today's match is pivotal in their battle to avoid relegation to the First Division.

Both teams enter the fixture with similar struggles, having suffered heavy 6-0 defeat to Kuwait Club in its last two rounds. Yarmouk has yet to secure a single victory this season, while Al-Nasr has only one win, a narrow 1-0 triumph over Kazma. Notably, Yarmouk's coach, Dhaher Al-Adwani, previously led Al-Nasr before parting ways due to past administrative issues.

A draw would not serve either team well, as their first meeting this season ended in a 2-2 stalemate. With just four rounds left before the league splits into the title race

(top six teams) and the relegation battle (bottom four), every point is crucial.

In the Zain First Division League, Al-Shabab solidified its position at the top after a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Al-Sahel

in the seventh round. Meanwhile, Burgan clinched a narrow 1-0 win in a tense encounter at Al-Shabab's stadium.

Al-Shabab now leads the standings with 11 points, three ahead of second-placed Al-Jahra, which

has played one game fewer. Al-Sahel remains in third place with seven points, level with Burgan in fourth. Al-Sulaibikhat, meanwhile, dropped to the bottom of the table with five points following its latest defeat.



Players in an aerial battle during the Zain First Division League match.

RIYADH, Feb 12: Al-Ahly is gearing up to host Al-Nasr in a highly anticipated classico that will ignite the 20th round of the Roshn Professional League today at Al-Inma Stadium in King Abdullah Sports City, Jeddah.

Currently, Al-Ahly sits in fifth place with 38 points, trailing behind third-place Al-Nasr and fourth-place Al-Qadisiyah, both tied at 41 points. Their first-leg encounter ended in a 1-1 draw, setting the stage for a fierce rematch.

Al-Ahly aims for a crucial victory to close the gap on the league leaders, while Al-Nasr is determined to keep pace with title contenders Al-Hilal (47 points) and Al-Ittihad (49 points). A win for Al-Nasr would strengthen its push to break into the championship race and avenge its first-round draw with Al-Ahly at First Park Stadium.

However, Al-Nasr faces a chal-

lenging hurdle—its inability to extend a winning streak beyond four consecutive league matches this season. Under Italian coach Stefano Pioli, the team has repeatedly failed to secure a fifth straight victory, with momentum stalling after four wins in a row.

So far, Al-Nasr has won 12 of its 19 league matches, but each time it reaches a four-game winning streak, it falters in the next match. This time, Al-Ahly stands in the way, and Al-Nasr is eager to break the cycle.

Pioli's first winning streak began after taking over from Portuguese coach Luis Castro, leading Al-Nasr to victories over Al-Ettifaq, Al-Wahda, Al-Arabiya, and Al-Shabab before being held to a dramatic 3-3 draw against Al-Khulud. The question now is whether Al-Nasr can finally overcome its streak-ending jinx and claim a vital win against Al-Ahly.

Bumrah ruled out of Champions Trophy

MUMBAI, India, Feb 12, (AP): Star pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah has been ruled out of the Champions Trophy because of a lower back injury in a major setback for India's chances at the prestigious tournament.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India announced late Tuesday that the 31-year-old Bumrah has been replaced by Harshit Rana. Pakistan will host the eight-nation Champions Trophy starting Feb. 19, though India will play its games in Dubai.

Bumrah sustained the injury during the fifth test in Sydney against Australia in India's Border-Gavaskar Trophy series loss last month. He picked up 32 wickets across five tests, but was advised complete rest from bowling. He was selected in India's squad

for the third ODI against England at Ahmedabad on Wednesday, in a bid to ascertain his match fitness, but instead flew to Bengaluru for more tests before being ruled out of the upcoming tournament.

As well as the inclusion of Rana, who made his ODI debut against England in this series, India also drafted spinner Varun Chakravarthy into its 15-man roster for the Champions Trophy and cut Yashasvi Jaiswal from the squad.

India squad: Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakravarthy.