



Opinion



Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

WITH clear-cut words and sophisticated diplomatic language, King Abdullah II of Jordan dotted the i's and crossed the t's during his meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump.

King Abdullah II affirmed that Palestinians will not be displaced from their homeland, and that the Arab position would be unified at the upcoming Arab League summit.

Thanks King of Jordan, you told Trump what we want

A man who is deeply familiar with Western culture and the inner workings of major global powers, King Abdullah understands that clear and direct diplomacy is far more effective in challenging situations than the slogans often used by Arabs during festivals or for political purposes.

Also, King Abdullah II, who is most concerned with the Palestinian issue, realizes the extent of the costs of any misplaced step. Jordan knows what Palestinian displacement means, whether in 1948, 1967, or the crises that followed, which Jordan continues to suffer from to this day.

The night before last was no ordinary one in Washington for the Jordanian king, especially since President Trump tried to market his plan in his pres-

ence. That's why King Abdullah II spoke plainly: the Arab position is unified, and everyone's priority is to reconstruct Gaza without displacing its people.

In that public discussion before the American media, the king's tone was clear, despite the populist rhetoric that U.S. President Donald Trump has used since winning his second term.

King Abdullah II addressed the West, specifically the Americans, in a language they understand. He knows very well how to differentiate between poison and honey, which they mix together to achieve their goals. His royal language was straight to the point, supported by logic and evidence, with rational statements that appeal to open minds. The Kuwaiti proverb applies to this position - "Simplicity is the best." It is true that the American president currently sees

himself as the emperor of the world, believing he has enough power to destroy and rebuild the planet.

However, the reality is completely different. Bullying countries is not a business deal that a real estate developer would settle with contractors, nor is it something that can be promoted with a language similar to the commercial advertisements that TV presenters are accustomed to.

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HISTORIC DECISION AIMS TO REDUCE UNDERAGE UNIONS, SAFEGUARD YOUTH

Kuwait raises marriage age to 18

Statistics reveal minor divorces surpass adults by double

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Exclusive Report

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: In a crucial legislative step aimed at ensuring family stability and protection of children's rights, Minister Nasser Al-Sumait revealed that the government has completed the amendment of Article 26 of Personal Status Law No. 51/1984 and Article 15 of Jaafari Personal Status Law No. 124/2019 in order to increase the minimum age of marriage to 18 years old.

Al-Sumait told the newspaper that these amendments are in line with Kuwait's international obligations, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

He cited statistics confirming the registration of 1,145 underage marriages in 2024 -- 1,079 girls and 66 boys. It also showed that the rate of divorce among minors is double that of adults. He pointed out this confirms the importance of raising the marriage age to ensure that spouses



Nasser Al-Sumait, Minister of Justice

reach a certain level of emotional and social maturity to enable them to bear the responsibilities of married life, and contribute to building a stable and sustainable family.

He disclosed that the amendments are based on the constitutional principles on the role of the State in protecting the family and childhood. He said Article Nine of the Constitution states that "the family is the foundation of society; while its foundations are religion, morality and love of the homeland. The law preserves its entity, strengthens its bonds, and protects motherhood and childhood."

He explained: Article 10 of the Constitution emphasizes the State's role in caring for the young; as it stipulates that "the State cares for the young and protects them from exploitation, moral, physical and spiritual neglect."

He said this legislative approach is in line with the Constitution; which puts protection of the family, childhood and young people at the heart of the State's responsibilities, while underscoring the need to provide a safe and stable environment for future generations. "The amendment of the two articles reflects Kuwait's commitment to international standards that affirm the children's right to be protected from early marriage," he asserted.

He added "this decision is expected to contribute to enhancing the stability of the Kuwaiti family, reducing divorce rates and supporting social development; thus, achieving Kuwait's vision of building a cohesive society, which protects the rights of its members and guarantees a decent life for them."



Photo by Samer Shiger
Kuwait's skyline wrapped in a moody mist as vehicles navigate through a rain-drenched city, enduring three days of rainfall, and a blanket of low, drifting clouds.

Scattered rain, fog set to blanket Kuwait weekend

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (Agencies): The Meteorological Department has predicted that Kuwait will experience an extension of a surface air rise from the northwest, bringing with it a moderately hot air mass. Northwesterly to variable winds are expected, with the possibility of fog forming in certain areas until Friday morning.

Director of the department, Dirar Al-Ali, informed Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that an air depression will move in from the southwest on Saturday afternoon. This will result in the development of low and medium clouds, with scattered light rain expected in some areas.

Regarding Friday's weather, Al-Ali noted that conditions will be moderate,

with northwesterly to fluctuating winds blowing at speeds of 8 to 30 kilometers per hour. Maximum temperatures are expected to range between 21 and 23 degrees Celsius. The sea will experience light to moderate waves, ranging from 1 to 4 feet.

Friday evening will bring cooler conditions, with partly cloudy skies and light northwesterly winds at moderate speeds between 12 and 38 kilometers per hour. Minimum temperatures are forecast to be between 8 and 10 degrees Celsius, while the sea will continue to have light to moderate waves ranging from 2 to 5 feet.

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Kuwait revokes 476 citizenship over fraud and dual nationality

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA): The Supreme Committee on Kuwaiti citizenship announced on Thursday the stripping of 476 citizenship with the matter referred to the Cabinet.

This came during a meeting for the commission chaired by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

A statement by the Interior Ministry revealed that 13 individuals had their article (11) of the citizenship law stripped of due to dual citizenship, 443 people

-- through forgery, fraud, and attaining the document via affiliation -- had their article (21 bis A) citizenship stripped of, while three individuals had their article 13 citizenship taken due to conflict with the state's supreme interest.

Some 16 individuals had their citizenship, according to article 13, stripped of due to committing crimes of infamy.

One individual the article 14 citizenship stripped of due to issues with loyalty to the country.

KD 150 fine for parking in disability spaces under new law

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Ministry of Interior stated that the fine for parking in a disability parking space, if settled through reconciliation, will be KD 150, under the new amendments to the Traffic Law, which will be enforced starting April 22, re-

ports Al-Seyassah daily. However, if the violation is referred to court, the court may impose a prison sentence of up to three years, and/or a fine ranging from KD 600 to KD 1,000. The ministry affirmed the importance of respect-

ing parking spaces designated for people with disabilities, insisting that these spaces are reserved for them. It stressed that respecting these spaces reflects the driver's awareness and respect for others.

International cyber criminals behind banks, telecom attacks

Kuwait Cybercrime Department unmasks high-tech heist

By Munif Naif and Mohammad Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Cybercrime Department at the Criminal Security Sector in the Interior Ministry has clamped down on an international Chinese gang engaged in electronic information theft.

The gang perpetrated sophisticated cyber attacks on communication towers and banks to steal the victims' bank account data. The criminals and the seized devices were handed over to the concerned authorities.

The Ministry of Interior announced that as part of its efforts to enhance cyber security and combat fraud and deception crimes, the department arrested an international gang of Chinese nationality involved in carrying out extensive cyber attacks, targeting some communication towers and banks in the State of Kuwait.

In a press statement, the ministry revealed that the details of the incident include receiving reports from some communication companies and banks about their networks being exposed to cyber attacks. Immediately, the specialized security teams began the search and investigation operations.

The ministry said there was an external influence resulting from the use of advanced electronic devices, which enabled the gang to hack into communication networks and broadcast intensively fraudulent messages impersonating some bank employees with the aim of obtaining bank account data to steal money.

Through the signal tracking devices, the source of the suspicious signals was identified by the specialized team, which turned out to be coming from a vehicle in Farwaniya.

The security teams quickly moved to the specified location where the suspicious vehicle was monitored. While approaching the vehicle, the teams noticed that the mobile phone network was affected by the sounds of electronic devices being heard from inside.

The driver of the vehicle, who is of Chinese nationality, was arrested and the electronic devices were confiscated.

After obtaining permission from the Public Prosecution, the officers searched the residence of the Chinese, where they found more devices and technical tools used to analyze the hacked data.

During the investigation, the accused admitted that he and several others have been hacking communi-

cation networks and sending fraudulent messages, impersonating employees of banks and telecommunications companies to commit fraud and deception.

After completing the search and investigation operations, the identities of the remaining members of the gang were identified, leading to their arrest.

Results of the biometric fingerprint inquiry showed that their actual identities do not match the identities they used, which revealed their involvement in forgery operations in a bid to conceal their true identities and hide from the security authorities.

The accused were referred to the competent authorities to take the necessary legal measures against them.

The ministry affirmed its full commitment to confront anyone who dares to tamper with the country's security, stressing the importance of developing cyber security as an essential part of strategies to protect the homeland. It added that it continues to develop its security systems and technologies to overcome modern challenges, maintain stability and protect data from digital threats.

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Newswatch

DUBAI: A Saudi educator known for his charity work and instructing prisoners won the \$1 million Global Teacher Prize on Thursday.

Mansour al-Mansour received the award at the end of the World Governments Summit in Dubai, an annual event that draws leaders from across the globe.

Al-Mansour, a teacher at the Prince Saud bin Jalawi School in al-Ahsa, is also an author and is known for work in his community, including a program that helped ensure people had access to air conditioning maintenance during Saudi Arabia's scorching summer months. (AP)

CAIRO: Hamas said Thursday it would release three more Israeli hostages as planned, paving the way toward resolving a major dispute over the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas had threatened to delay the next release of captives, accusing Israel of failing to meet its obligations to allow in tents and shelters, among other alleged violations of the truce. Israel, with the support of U.S. President Donald Trump, had threatened to renew its offensive if hostages were not freed. (AP)



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Ambassador to India Mishal Mustafa Al-Shemali meets with Dean of Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service Raj Kumar Srivastava.

Kuwait, India fortify diplomatic ties through training initiatives

NEW DELHI, Feb 13, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to India Mishal Mustafa Al-Shemali discussed on Thursday ways to firm up mutual cooperation between Sheikh Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute and the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service in India.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after meeting Dean of Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service Raj Kumar Srivastava, Ambassador Mishal Mustafa Al-Shemali said that the discussion focused on promotion of work between the Kuwait and Indian institutions through exchanging best training methods and education in the diplomatic sector and sharing tasks and activities of both institutes.

The meeting, he focused on the participation of the Kuwaiti team in the diplomatic course at the Indian Sushma Swaraj Diplomatic Institute during this month and the arrangements for it.

An MoU has been inked between Sheikh Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute and the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service in 2013 to enhance cooperation in the field of diplomatic knowledge exchange and participate in organizing specialized programs, courses and various academic activities.

During the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kuwait in December 2014, both the sides welcomed holding a special training program for Kuwaiti diplomats at the Indian Sushma Swaraj Diplomatic Institute in Delhi.

Kuwait strengthens commitment to academic accreditation in education

Experts call for global partnerships

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Director of the National Authority for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance Dr. Jassim Al-Ali on Wednesday inaugurated the “Good Practices and Future Challenges for Education Quality” forum on behalf of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah.

In his opening remarks, Al-Ali highlighted the significant attention and directives given to higher education by His Highness the Prime Minister, under the guidance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah. He pointed out that their commitment to supporting initiatives that advance higher education and elevate its quality according to international standards reflects



Photo by Mohammad Morsi
Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Arab and Gulf Networks for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the GCC.

its crucial role as the cornerstone of national development.

He added that “achieving quality assurance in higher education is not just a goal, but a national duty as well. It requires relentless effort and the adoption of innovative strategies that foster a culture of quality and academic accreditation, while adapting to the rapid global changes in knowledge and technology. It is vital to align quality standards with the demands of the digital era.”

He underscored the need to invest in academic quality as it is an investment in the future of Kuwait and its

citizens. “By preparing generations capable of innovation and global competition, Kuwait ensures that its workforce can face future challenges with confidence and skill,” he asserted.

He continued saying that “collaboration between higher education institutions and bodies focused on quality assurance and academic accreditation forms the bedrock for building an integrated educational system. This will enable us to achieve our aspirations for leadership and excellence. We are committed to supporting all efforts that advance the culture of quality, fos-

tering initiatives that elevate higher education, and building strategic partnerships with renowned global institutions in the fields of quality and accreditation. This will strengthen our educational system, improve its output, and align with Kuwait’s development vision; ultimately leading us to achieve excellence and create a brighter future for our children.”

On the other hand, President of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education Dr. Nadia Badrawi described the forum as a valuable opportunity to strengthen partnerships, exchange knowledge, and share best practices that contribute to improving the quality of higher education. She said the goal is to develop its outcomes and achieve its noble objectives.

She added “education quality is not just a slogan, but a commitment to future generations and a guarantee for a prosperous future built on knowledge and innovation.”

She concluded by asserting that the importance of quality in higher education has never been more urgent, given the rapid transformations and challenges that educational institutions are facing. “In a world characterized by constant change, swift innovation, and intense global competition; the pursuit of educational excellence remains critical,” she added.

Kuwait to host safety conference on disaster risk

By **Mohammed Ghanem**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Chairman of the Safety and Civil Protection Conference retired Lieutenant General Yousef Al-Ansari said the second session of the conference organized by the Kuwait Society for Protection from Fire Hazards will be held on Feb 17-18.

In a press conference, Al-Ansari revealed the conference will focus on the concepts of occupational safety and health according to international and local standards, the importance of adopting the recommendations of the Sendai Framework to reduce the risks of disasters for the period 2015-2030, and how to implement them with the participation of an elite group of experts and academicians from various institutions, in order to achieve

sustainability and well-being.

Chairman of the Kuwait Society for Protection from Fire Hazards Eng Adel Al-Nassar explained that the second conference sees the light due to the success of the first conference and the contribution of its recommendations in shedding light on many vital files in the field of safety and civil protection; especially in light of the high rates of fire accidents, firefighting and rescue in recent years.

Cultural crossroads of civilizations

Kuwait Arab Culture Capital 2025 ... celebrating heritage, shaping future

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait, as the Arab Culture Capital for the year 2025 is setting out to affirm its pivotal role in the humanitarian and cultural scene that has made it a meeting point of civilizations.

The Joint Supreme Committee between the Ministry of Information and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) has taken up the responsibility of highlighting the robust cultural and media diversity in Kuwait and its rich heritage, through a series of events.

The opening ceremony, poised to take place Thursday February 13, evokes spirits of the past while venturing into a vision of the future, through a theatrical production that draws inspiration from history and tells the stories through a modern lens.

The agenda includes 98 activities extending over 235 days, including 37 activities that focus on promoting Kuwait’s position as a cultural and media center, and 20 activities aimed at encouraging investment in cultural and media projects in addition to other initiatives that support sustainable development and endorse the Arab cultural identity.

Kuwait has been enriching the intellectual and cultural scene in its Arab and Gulf surroundings through a series of publications that have become quite prominent for decades.

Kuwait Magazine, established in 1928, was the first locally and in the Gulf. As for Al-Arabi magazine, since its release in 1958, it has been one of the most important Kuwaiti cultural publications that embody a comprehensive Arab cultural project addressing Arab issues and contributing to its cultural scene.

Kuwait is working to expand the spread of its cultural publications in various parts of the world in a plan that includes NCCAL publications as well as other works.

Kuwait established the Kuwaiti Research and Studies Center in 1992 by Amiri decree with the aim of being a national source of science and knowledge of the history of Kuwait and its political, social and heritage affairs and the preparation of in-depth scientific research and its publication both locally and externally in various languages.

The center also works in restoring damaged documents of historical value and preserving cultural heritage.

Since its establishment, the center has succeeded in restoring millions of historical documents, including more than 850,000 documents specializing in Iraqi aggression on Kuwait and more than 800 Islamic manuscripts.

Kuwait University, through National Heritage Center, is exerting efforts in collecting scientific sources, documents and manuscripts, and making them accessible to researchers.

The University is keen on embracing diverse cultures and facilitating cultural exchange through hosting events, scholarship programs, and signing of joint agreements.

Kuwait National Library also takes on the role of collecting and organizing documents to preserve heritage and national intellectual productions.

The 30th edition of Al-Qurain Cultural Festival launched on February 3 with a program bursting with artistic events and intellectual seminars.

Kuwait believes in the necessity of strengthening the joint Gulf and Arab youth work in its various fields and highlighting the inspiring success stories that serve Arab youth.

Kuwait has been an active partner to the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (Alesco), and supported many of the organization’s programs for 50 years. It also joined UNESCO efforts to contribute to heritage-preserving efforts.

In the year 2022, Kuwait successfully included its educational program on traditional art of Sadu weaving on UNESCO’s register of good safeguarding practices.

The country also joined the regional memory committee of the Gulf States during the year 2012 as part of efforts to establish documentary cultural heritage.

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Information’s strategy for the years 2021-2026 aims to promote national values and enhance the cultural identity to create sustainable and pioneering media in creating purposeful content.

NCCAL’s 2023 - 2028 strategy aims to deepen the country’s culture and literature in the country in line with the new Kuwait Vision 2035.

The strategy was formulated with the contribution of 963 participants after reviewing 56 international experiences.

The state grants honorary awards annually to encourage creators in the fields of culture in its various forms as well as adopts various initiatives for children and youth in areas of reading, writing and theater in addition to supporting cultural projects and humanitarian development in the private sector.

Kuwait is home to more than 17 cultural centers, which vary between museums, and historical buildings, including Al-Qurain Museum, the National Museum of Kuwait, the Maritime Museum, and Beit Dixon Cultural Center.

Al-Shaheed Park, in the heart of Kuwait City, also provides visitors with the opportunity to participate actively in the cultural and social events.

As per the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Kuwait Municipality began new project for the Red Palace village, to increase the cultural and historical awareness of the area.

Over the decades, Kuwait succeeded in establishing its position as a cultural and civilizational center by investing in its ancient legacy and preserving its role as a meeting place for cultures as its cultural diplomacy played a vital role in enhancing its international relations and highlighting its contributions in enriching the global cultural scene.

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KUNA photo
Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Bader Al-Salem Al-Sabah inaugurates the ‘Let’s Draw Love’ exhibition with the head of the Kuwaiti Society for the Defense of Public Money.

Governor inaugurates photo contest

Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Bader Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah opened on Thursday, a photo contest organized by the Kuwaiti Association for Protecting Public Funds, in cooperation with the Ministry of In-

formation.

The competition saw participation from 300 middle and high school students from all educational areas, with 15 winners honored and their artworks showcased. (KUNA)

‘Golden Teacher’ winners honored

MoE commends educators’ dedication to improve Kuwait’s educational future

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Mansour Al-Dhafiri said the ministry is keen on supporting teachers who want to participate in competitions that would enhance the spirit of competition among the academic professionals.

Al-Dhafiri made the statement during his sponsorship and attendance of the ceremony honoring the winners of the ‘Golden Teacher’ competition, which was organized by the Teachers Association for the fourth year in a row.

He praised the desire of those honored and their perseverance in the competition that enhances innovative projects in the technological, craft, artistic and educational fields in a way that serves the educational process; while making innovation a daily practice and a work meth-

odology that is at the heart of the details of the educational system.

He also commended the efforts of the chairman and members of the Board of Directors of the Teachers Association in supporting development plans, which reflect the great role of the association in consolidating ways of cooperation between it and the ministry in order to develop the capabilities of the staff.

He reiterated that “the ministry continues to support teachers who participate in competitions that enhance the spirit of competition among educational cadres and all creative and innovative energies, and to develop the culture of creativity and innovation in the educational field through innovative projects that are applied in the educational environment due to their direct impact on the development of the educational process and the future of our educated children.”

Chairman of the Association Hamad Al-Houli pointed out that the “competition is the first in toeing the path towards supporting innovation from those in the educational field including the teachers, in order to realize the Kuwait 2035 vision and implement innovative projects in various fields – technological, craft, artists and education.”



Al-Dhafiri



Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah during an inspection visit to 26th Al-Soor Mechanized Brigade of the infantry corps in the Northern Region.

KUNA photos

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah inspects 26th Al-Soor Mechanized Brigade

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah paid an inspection tour of the 26th Al-Soor Mechanized Brigade of the infantry corps in the northern region on Thursday.

During the trip, he praised the brigade's personnel for their high com-

bat preparedness, ability to discharge the various tasks and high morale, according to a military statement.

Sheikh Abdullah urged the infantry troops to continue doing their best to protect the safety and security of the country under the wise political

leadership.

Upon his arrival at the site, the minister was welcomed by assistant commander of the infantry troops Brig. Staff Hamad Al-Sweidi and other senior officers. (KUNA)

Health Ministry launches nuclear medicine platform

Revolutionizing healthcare with QR code access and advanced imaging services

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Within the framework of digital transformation initiatives in line with the vision of the Health Ministry, Assistant Undersecretary for Allied Health Services Affairs Dr. Abdullah Al-Faras announced the launching of a digital platform for nuclear medicine examinations.

This platform aims to provide comprehensive instructions on the reasons for examinations, necessary preparations and how to conduct them; while highlighting the use of QR codes for patients to access information in an efficient and direct manner.

In his speech at the opening of the Medical Developments in Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Conference on behalf of Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi on Thursday, Al-Faras discussed the expansion of positron emission tomography services integrated with magnetic resonance imaging. He also affirmed the launching of such services in several hospitals, including Jahra Hospital; and that plans are underway to expand their availability to include Farwaniya Hospital and the Kuwait Cancer Control Center.

He explained these devices are considered a qualitative leap in the field of diagnosing and treating tumors with high accuracy; thereby, enhancing the level of healthcare provided to patients.

He said the ministry's vision is based on promoting in-



Assistant Undersecretary for Supporting Health Services Affairs Dr. Abdullah Al-Faras pose for a group photo with the conference participants.

KUNA photo

novation and development in the field of nuclear medicine, focusing on the improvement of patient safety and the quality of medical services in accordance with the latest clinical practices.

He affirmed that the conference aims to strengthen Gulf cooperation in this field, which is witnessing rapid develop-

ment and advanced technical applications that contribute to supporting healthcare and achieving a more comprehensive and integrated medical vision.

He stressed that the ministry is keen on organizing this conference -- a manifestation of its strong commitment to keep pace with the latest technological developments in the

field of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging, as well as its endeavor to expand the scope of scientific cooperation between specialists regionally and globally in order to develop the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

On the other hand, Chairman of the Conference Organizing Committee Dr. Abdul Redha Ismail disclosed that the conference is being held this year with a new and ambitious vision, "reflecting our aspiration for a more advanced and prosperous future for this vital medical specialization."

He pointed out the commitment to choose precise scientific topics that contribute to unifying the future vision of nuclear medicine at the regional level, focusing on strengthening Gulf and regional cooperation and expanding the scope of scientific participation. He said this makes the conference a leading scientific platform that brings together an elite group of doctors and specialists in the field of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

He clarified that the conference does not only aim to review the latest developments and modern technologies; as it also seeks to create an interactive environment that improves the exchange of knowledge and expertise among specialists, which positively reflects on the quality of medical services.

Furthermore, Nuclear Medicine Consultant, Head of the Nuclear Medicine Department at Mubarak Hospital and Vice President of the Conference Dr. Shaima Al-Farsi stated that the conference is held in collaboration with a group of local, Gulf and international experts in this field and the accompanying specializations. She pointed out that organizing such regional gatherings with common goals boosts the principle of partnership and exchange of expertise between the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and developed countries in this field; thereby, contributing to efforts to provide the latest diagnostic and therapeutic services to patients.

Kuwaiti doctors spearhead medical relief efforts

KMS launches Balsam to aid Gaza health sector

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA): The Kuwait Medical Association (KMS) has launched the Balsam campaign to help support the health sector in the Gaza Strip by providing medical equipment and rehabilitating medical centers, clinics and departments.

KMS Chairman of the Board of Directors Dr. Ibrahim Al-Tawala said during the initiation of the campaign, the idea of Balsam flung from the committee of Palestine in order to sound the sufferings of the Health sector in the Gaza Strip.

He also mentioned the campaign is cooperated with licensed charitable organizations with experience in implementing relief project and transforming ideas into reality to restore hope to those who lost the most basic necessities of life.

Balsam campaign is an extension of Kuwait's embraced humanitarian efforts ever since its support for the people in Gaza began, as the issue is not the responsibility of an individual or entity but rather the issue of a nation in which giving is unified.

Adding, "Doctors have grave re-



Sheikha Awwad Jaber Al-Ahmad and several other campaign members.

KUNA photo

sponsibility, which is to be witnesses of truth in a time when falsehood seeks to obscure the truth and our responsibility is to unveil to the world how these hospitals turned into ruins How is there pain without medicine and the wounded without treatment

How did the Health sector breathe its last breath under the wreckage

On his part, the General Surgery consultant at Balsam, Dr. Mohammad AL-Kanderi said the team is working alongside the Palestinian Health Ministry and WHO and

other charitable organizations in Kuwait to unify the efforts and integrate roles in order to achieve the set goals.

"We are working to rehabilitate the hospitals and provide the medicine and equipment's needed and help support medical personnel in coordination with the Palestinian Health Ministry in order to set priorities and unify international efforts", said Al-Kanderi.

He also said that it is time to rebuild the Health sector in Gaza to an even better provision than it was before the Israeli aggression destroyed all its facilities.

Member of the Board at Balsam, Dr. Safiya Al-Otaibi said this campaign comes as an ethical and medical obligation to the Kuwait Medical Association, with aims to deliver aid to Gaza and reestablish its medical sector's works in addition to supporting the medical education sector.

She also stressed the importance of coordinating with relevant authorities to unify efforts and tasks in a professional manner.

Kuwait's 25th, 26th aid planes land in Syria

DAMASCUS, Feb 13, (KUNA): The 25th and 26th relief aid planes of the Kuwaiti relief humanitarian air bridge arrived in Damascus on Thursday, delivering 46 tons of foodstuff.

The arrival of the planes continues the (Kuwait By Your Side) humanitarian campaign for Syria, under the supervision of

official Kuwaiti entities and charitable organizations. It will continue beyond the upcoming Holy Month of Ramadan in coordination between the Kuwaiti air force and several ministries.

Around 657 tons of relief aid had reached Syria to support those in need especially during the winter season.



A celebration of national holidays and a review of the latest developments in this vital sector in Kuwait.

KUNA photo

Kuwait Ports Authority marks Nat'l Days

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA): Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) organized an event, themed "Ports Carnival" on Thursday at Al-Shuwaikh Seaport as part of celebrations marking the country's national days

for 2025. The event, held in collaboration with a number of marine-related government bodies, showcased the latest innovations and equipment used in ports and shipping.

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Thanks King

The world witnessed this highly cultured Arab king address the president of the largest country in his mother tongue, in such a difficult time, and in a public session, despite the latter's attempt to push his agenda, part of which was related to Jordan, with full confidence that his dreams would come true.

However, the response came firmly: "If you want to reconstruct Gaza and help its people, then go ahead, and we thank you for that. And if you want to bring peace to the Middle East, you are welcome, because we want it, but it must be according to United Nations resolutions, with a two-state solution where the people of Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace. Perhaps their relationship could even be excellent."

Therefore, King Abdullah II deserves all gratitude for clarifying the picture to President Trump so that the latter does not remain in his rush. In the end, only what is right is right.

Kuwait Cybercrime

Moreover, security sources affirmed this is one of the most dangerous gangs carrying out cyber attacks, as advanced devices were found in their possession. Sources added that the gang members hacked communication towers with the aim of weakening the networks and then send links to the victims under the pretext of restoring the weak networks and then steal from

bank accounts.

Sources disclosed that the gang rented vehicles using forged passports in order to continue their cyber attacks. A large number of mobile phones were also found in their possession, as they were sending links through the devices they possessed.

Meanwhile, Director of Kuwait Association for Information Security (KAIS) Dr. Safaa Zaman confirmed that electronic fraud methods have become more sophisticated and professional; hence, the need to intensify governmental and technical efforts to deal with them, as well as to develop information security.

Zaman explained some modern devices capable of penetrating the electromagnetic waves of communication towers; thereby, allowing the transfer, withdrawal and analysis of data with the aim of accessing sensitive information, such as banking data and commercial transactions.

She pointed out these devices can infiltrate the servers of companies and financial institutions through the communication networks and send fraudulent messages to target individuals and entities.

She called for strengthening protection measures by encrypting sensitive data and adopting advanced security protocols that prevent the collection of information through these devices.

She also stressed the importance of conducting periodic inspection of communication towers to monitor hacking attempts, in addition to installing advanced jamming devices to prevent electronic infiltration op-

erations.

She asserted that confronting these threats requires close cooperation between government agencies and the private sector by developing advanced technical solutions and raising community awareness about the risks of electronic fraud to ensure a safer digital environment.

She recommended the use of advanced methods to detect these devices by the concerned authorities; such as those at airports, customs and others.

Scattered rain,

On Saturday, the weather will remain moderate, with partly cloudy to cloudy skies. Winds will be from the northwesterly to variable direction, light to moderate in strength, at speeds ranging from 10 to 35 kilometers per hour.

There will also be a chance of scattered rain. Maximum temperatures are expected between 19 and 21 degrees Celsius, with the sea seeing light to moderate waves from 1 to 4 feet.

Saturday evening will be cold, with northwesterly to variable winds at light to moderate speeds between 6 and 28 kilometers per hour, along with some scattered clouds. The minimum temperatures will range from 7 to 9 degrees Celsius, and the sea will experience light to moderate waves between 1 and 3 feet.

Earlier, the Meteorological Department attributed the rainfall that the country experienced for three days - from early morning Tuesday

until Thursday - to the proliferation of low and medium clouds, interspersed with thunder clouds accompanied by light to medium rain in some areas.

According to the department, the highest quantity of rain during the abovementioned period reached 32 millimeters in Um Al Maradim; while the lowest was recorded in Sabriya at seven millimeters.

Director of the department Dirar Al-Ali revealed that the amounts of rain varied in different areas; indicating that the amount of rain recorded at Kuwait International Airport reached 22 millimeters, 14 millimeters in Wafra and 10 millimeters in Julai'a.

Al-Ali pointed out the gradual improvement of weather conditions in the country started Thursday afternoon, as clouds decreased and the chances of rain will gradually decline with the possibility of a foggy weather in some areas.

Meteorological Supervisor Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi revealed that the recorded amounts of the rainfall on Wednesday in Kuwait ranged between 2 mm and 10 mm in various parts of the country, with the formation of fog and reduced visibility in certain areas, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Meanwhile, informed sources revealed that the Ministry of Public Works deployed water pumps to areas prone to surface runoff. No surface runoff was recorded on highways, though some interior areas experienced minor surface runoff, which was promptly dealt with by the ministry's teams.

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INTERNATIONAL



James Prince, 4, and Olivia Averyt, 4, sled down a hill at the Capitol on Feb 12 after a snowstorm in Washington. (AP)

Californians brace for flooding as rain, snow aim for Oregon

Rain has begun falling in California where an atmospheric river is expected to bring heavy downpours, winds and flooding Thursday to areas ravaged by wildfires. Ahead of the storm's arrival, officials distributed sandbags, prepositioned rescue swimmers and told residents to have their go-

bags ready.

Meanwhile, Portland coated its streets with 2,000 gallons of liquid anti-icer while officials in Oregon and Idaho opened emergency shelters to prepare for a punishing mix of snow and ice starting Thursday.

Southern California could see as

much as 6 inches (about 15 centimeters) of rain in the mountains and 3 inches (about 7.6 centimeters) in coastal areas and valleys, according to Brent Bower, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service. Strong wind gusts could bring down trees, cause power outages and delay flights. (AP)

'Am I allowed to run again?'

Trump 3rd-term musings seem more tease than pledge

WASHINGTON, Feb 13, (AP) — President Donald Trump has just started his second term, his last one permitted under the US Constitution. But he's already started making quips about serving a third one.

"Am I allowed to run again?" Trump joked during the House Republican retreat in Florida last month. Whether teasing or taunting, it seems to be part of a pattern. Just a week after he won election last fall, Trump suggested in a meeting with House Republicans that he might want to stick around after his second term was over.

"I suspect I won't be running again unless you say, 'He's so good we got to figure something else out,'" Trump said to laughs from the lawmakers.

Over the years, Trump and his supporters have often joked about him serving more than his two constitutionally permitted terms. But his musings often spark alarm among his critics, given that he unsuccessfully tried to overturn his 2020 election loss and has since pardoned supporters who violently attacked the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

But Trump, who will be 82 when his term ends, has repeatedly said that this will be his last term. Trying for another also would flatly violate the Constitution.

Here are some questions and answers related to Trump's occasional comments about a third term:

"No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice," begins the 22nd Amendment,



US President Donald Trump boards Air Force One at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in New Orleans on Feb 9. (AP)

adopted after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected four times in a row. He was last elected in 1944.

It's a fairly straightforward ban on serving more than two terms. Some Trump supporters argue the language is meant to apply only to two consecutive terms because Roosevelt's terms were consecutive, but notably that's not what the amendment says.

Others contend that because the ban is just on being "elected" more than twice, Trump could run as the next president's vice president and, if the

ticket won, could simply replace that person if he or she resigns. To put it mildly, that would be quite a complex plan to pull off, in no small part because Trump would be 82 during the next election, a year older than former President Joe Biden was during last year's campaign.

At least one Republican in Congress has been bold enough to propose a constitutional amendment that would allow Trump to seek another term. It has no chance of going anywhere, given the high bar for amending the Constitution.

Republicans seek massive savings

House GOP unveils blueprint to extend \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts, lift debt ceiling

WASHINGTON, Feb 13, (AP) — House Republicans released a budget plan Wednesday that sets the stage for advancing many of President Donald Trump's top domestic priorities, providing for up to \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts and a \$4 trillion increase in the debt limit so the US can continue financing its bills.

The budget plan also directs a variety of House committees to cut spending by at least \$1.5 trillion while stating that the goal is to reduce spending by \$2 trillion over 10 years.

The blueprint represents a first step in a lengthy legislative process that would allow Republicans to pass some of their top priorities in a simple majority vote. The House Budget Committee is expected to hold votes on the plan on Thursday. House Speaker Mike Johnson predicted it would easily advance out of committee.

"Then, we'll work with everybody

over the week to make sure they are on board," Johnson said.

Johnson has set an ambitious schedule for moving the resolution and subsequent legislation, but tensions remain within the Republican conference about the scope of the proposed tax and spending cuts. Some want more in tax cuts than what is in the blueprint while others want steeper spending cuts.

"There'll be a lot of negotiations back and forth," Johnson said. "There's a lot of moving parts to this, but our objective is to fulfill all the president's campaign promises and the full agenda, so we have time to do that."

Budget resolutions are often considered statements of priorities. But the 45-page plan is more than just a policy blueprint as it provides specific directions to House committees to rearrange the federal money flow. GOP leaders



US Sen Lindsey Graham, R-SC, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, is surrounded by reporters asking about his plans to move ahead with a spending bill, at the Capitol in Washington on Feb 11. (AP)

are eyeing cuts to social services, and particularly Medicaid, as they seek massive savings.

The Energy and Commerce Committee, which handles health care spending, is asked to cut \$880 billion over the decade, while the Education and Workforce Committee is asked to reduce spending by \$330 billion. The Agriculture Committee is asked to save \$230 billion, while the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is asked to find at least \$10 billion in cuts through 2034.

Even as some programs would be cut, money would be shifted to other Trump priorities, including a \$100 billion boost in defense spending over the next decade through the Armed Services Committee and an additional \$90 billion for the Homeland Security Department, which is carrying out Trump's massive immigration deportation.

House Democrats were harshly critical of the budget plan.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries held a joint press conference and accused Republicans of not taking action to lower costs for everyday Americans since securing the White House and both chambers of Congress.

"Why? Their primary objective is to enact massive tax cuts for their billionaire donors and wealthy corporations," Jeffries said. "That's what the Republican budget is all about."

There is also concern from Democrats that the plan could lead to cuts in the safety net. Rep. Brendan Boyle, the top Democratic on the House Budget Committee, said the tax cuts won't pay for themselves through increased economic growth so cuts to various government programs such as Medicaid will be sought.

NATO allies insist Ukraine and Europe must be in peace talks as Trump touts Putin meet

BRUSSELS, Feb 13, (AP) — Several NATO allies stressed on Thursday that Ukraine and Europe must not be cut out of any peace negotiations as U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth denied that the United States is betraying the war-ravaged country.

European governments are reeling after the Trump administration signaled that it is planning face-to-face talks with Russia on ending the Ukraine war without involving them, insisted that Kyiv should not join NATO, and said that it's

up to Europe to protect itself and Ukraine from whatever Russia might do next.

"There can be no negotiation about Ukraine without Ukraine. And Ukraine's voice must be at the heart of any talks," UK Defense Secretary John Healey told reporters at NATO headquarters, as the organization's 32 defense ministers met for talks on Ukraine.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said: "For me, it's clear ... that Europe must be involved in the negotiations - and I think that's very easy

to understand," particularly if Europe is "supposed to play a central or the main role in the peace order."

Europe, he said, "will have to live directly" with the consequences, so "it goes without saying that we must be part of the negotiations."

Hegseth denied that the US has betrayed Ukraine by launching negotiations about its future without Kyiv's full involvement. After talks with Putin and then Zelenskyy, Trump said on Wednesday he would "probably" meet in person with the Russian leader in the near term, possibly in Saudi Arabia.

"There is no betrayal there. There is a recognition that the whole world and the United States is invested and interested in peace. A negotiated peace," Hegseth told reporters.

Hegseth warned that the war in Ukraine must "be a wakeup call" for NATO's European allies to spend more on their own defense budgets.

Twenty-three of the 32 member countries were forecast to have met the organization's guideline of spending 2% of gross domestic product on their national defense budgets last year, but a third still do not.

But Hegseth's French counterpart, Sébastien Lecornu, described the wrangling over greater defense spending as "a false debate," saying that governments and parliaments across Europe are already approving more weapons purchases and bigger military budgets while helping Ukraine stave off an invasion.



United States Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, right, speaks with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, center, and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander - Europe General Christopher Cavoli during a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in defense ministers format at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Feb 13. (AP)

Emergency declared on 2nd Greek island

ATHENS, Greece, Feb 13, (AP) — Authorities declared a state of emergency on a second Greek island Wednesday as a series of earthquakes continued to rattle the south-eastern Aegean Sea region.

The emergency measure announced on the island of Amorgos follows a similar decision for nearby Santorini on Feb. 7 after thousands of unusual tremors were registered in an undersea area near the two islands, as well as the islands of Ios and Anafi - all popular tourist destinations.

Scientists had expressed hope the seismic swarm could be easing up, but a string of earthquakes around magnitude 5 has renewed concern. Seismologists have also noted that the epicenter of the earthquakes is steadily drifting northward in the direction of Amorgos.

The emergency declaration will facilitate rapid deployment of resources and emergency services. The region has already seen a significant mobilization of fire departments, police, coast guard, and armed forces mostly on Santorini where thousands of residents and seasonal workers have left the island.



A regularly scheduled ferry departs from Santorini to Athens' port of Piraeus, after a spike in seismic activity raised concerns about a potentially powerful earthquake in Santorini, southern Greece on Feb 3. (AP)



Emergency services attend the scene of an accident after a driver hit a group of people in Munich, Germany on Feb 13. (AP)

28 hurt as driver plows into demonstration in Germany

A driver drove a car into a union demonstration in central Munich on Thursday, injuring at least 28 people including children, authorities said. Authorities said it was believed to be an attack, and the suspect - an Afghan asylum-seeker - was arrested.

Participants in a demonstration

by the service workers' union were walking along a street near downtown Munich at about 10:30 a.m. when the car overtook a police vehicle following the gathering, accelerated and plowed into the back of the group.

Officers arrested the suspect after firing a shot at the car, deputy

police chief Christian Huber said. He added that at least 28 people were believed to be injured, some of them seriously. A damaged Mini could be seen at the scene, along with debris including shoes.

The suspect was a 24-year-old Afghan asylum seeker, Huber said. (AP)

Austrian far-right leader's efforts to form coalition government collapse

VIENNA, Feb 13, (AP) — Austrian far-right leader Herbert Kickl's efforts to form a coalition government with a conservative party collapsed in mutual recriminations on Wednesday, more than four months after his party won a national election.

Austria's president last month gave Kickl a mandate to try to form a new government - the first one headed by the far right since World War II - after other parties' efforts to put together a governing alliance without his Freedom Party failed.

But Kickl on Wednesday informed President Alexander Van der Bellen that he was giving up the mandate. Weeks of tense talks with the conservative Austrian People's Party appeared increasingly troubled in recent days.

Kickl's anti-immigration party, which also opposes sanctions against Russia, won Austria's parliamentary election in September. It took 28.8% of the vote and beat then-Chancellor Karl Nehammer's People's Party into second place.



Head of Austrian Peoples' Party (OeVP) Christian Stocker addresses a news conference in Vienna, Austria on Feb 12. (AP)

But in October, Van der Bellen gave Nehammer the first chance to form a new government after Neham-

mer's party said it wouldn't go into government with the Freedom Party under Kickl and others refused to work with the Freedom Party at all. Those negotiations collapsed in January and Nehammer resigned, making way for interim Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg.

Kickl pointed the finger at the People's Party for the latest collapse of talks. In a letter to the president released by his party, he said the parties failed to agree on clearing up disputed policy points or how to share the work of various ministries.

"I do not take this step without regret," he said. He added that there appeared to be no point in trying to negotiate with the center-left Social Democrats, the only other party with which the Freedom Party could reach a parliamentary majority.

"Austria has no time to waste," Kickl said. His Freedom Party is highly skeptical of the European Union, opposing EU support for Ukraine and advocating for some powers to be brought back from the bloc to Austria.

China warns Philippines of dangers of prolonged US missile system deployment

Australia accuses Chinese fighter of endangering surveillance plane over sea

MELBOURNE, Australia, Feb 13, (Agencies): Australia protested Thursday what it described as an unsafe and unprofessional interaction over the South China Sea where a Chinese fighter is accused of releasing flares that endangered an Australian military surveillance plane.

A Chinese J-16 fighter released flares on Tuesday that passed within 30 meters (100 feet) of a P-8 Poseidon surveillance jet in daylight and in international air space, Defense Minister Richard Marles said on Thursday.

The Australian plane usually carries eight or nine crew. The plane was not damaged and no crew member was injured, Marles said.

"The J-16 was so close that there's no way you could have been able to ensure that the flares did not hit the P-8," Marles told Sky News.

"Had any of those flares hit the P-8, that would have definitely had the potential for significant damage to that aircraft," he added.

China's foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun in turn accused the Australian military aircraft of "deliberately" intruding into airspace over the disputed Paracel Islands, which China claims.

"China's measures to drive away the aircraft were legitimate, lawful, professional and restrained" Guo said.

Australia has protested in its capital Canberra and in Beijing on Wednesday and Thursday, Marles said.

The protest accused the two Chinese pilots of an "unsafe and unprofessional maneuver that posed a risk to the aircraft and personnel," a statement said.

The protest highlights that while bilateral diplomatic and trade relations have improved, relations between the



In this photo provided by the Australian Defense Force, an Australian Air Force P-8 Poseidon aircraft performs a handling display during the Newcastle Williamstown Air Show on Nov 18, 2023. (AP)

two militaries remain dangerous.

The interaction is the first significant clash between Chinese and Australian forces that Australia has disclosed in nine months.

Australia accused the pilot of a Chinese J-16 fighter of unsafe and unprofessional behavior over the Yellow Sea in May last year by dropping flares in the path of an Australian navy Seahawk helicopter.

Australia said the helicopter pilot had to take evasive action to avoid the flares.

There were no injuries or damage, although experts warned the helicopter could have been forced to ditch at sea if a flare had struck an engine.

China protested at the time that the helicopter had flown close to Chinese airspace and had attempted to carry out reconnaissance on a Chinese navy

training exercise.

Meanwhile, China on Wednesday urged the Philippines to deliver on its promise to withdraw the US Typhon missile system from its territory, warning that failing to do so would put its own security and national defense at the mercy of others, and would bring risks of geopolitical confrontation and an arms race to the region.

Guo Jiakun, spokesperson for China's foreign ministry, made the comments at a regular news briefing in response to a related question.

The US installed the Typhon missile system in the northern Philippines in April 2024 as part of joint US-Philippines military drills. The Philippines promised that the deployment would be "temporary," and that the system would be withdrawn following the conclusion of the military exercises.



This image taken from video by Taiwan's TVBS shows debris strewn across the streets in the aftermath of an explosion at the Shin Kong Mitsukoshi department store in Taichung city in Taiwan on Feb 13. (AP)

Gas explosion at Taiwan food court kills 4, injures 26

A gas explosion at a department store in Taiwan on Thursday killed four people and injured 26, fire authorities said.

The blast occurred at the food court on the 12th floor of the Shin Kong Mitsukoshi department store

in Taichung city, the Taichung Fire Bureau said. The higher floors of the upscale department store were blown out, raining debris on pedestrians below.

Among the dead were two people visiting from Macau, Macao's

Tourism Office confirmed Thursday. Local media reported that they were part of a family of seven who were there for tourism. The other five were also injured and are now being treated at local hospitals in Taichung. (AP)

Act against humanity: Seoul

'N.Korea destroys family reunion center'

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 13, (Agencies): North Korea is demolishing a South Korea-built property that had been used to host reunions of families separated during the 1950-53 Korean War, the South's government said Thursday, as it continues to eliminate symbols of engagement between the war-divided rivals.

Relations between the Koreans are at their worst in years, with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un continuing to flaunt his expanding nuclear weapons program and declaring to abandon long-standing goals of inter-Korean reconciliation, while describing the South as a permanent enemy.

The 12-story building at the North's scenic Diamond Mountain resort, which has 206 rooms and banquet facilities for hosting meetings, had been used for family reunions since 2009. The Koreans last held a family reunion in 2018, after Kim initiated diplomacy with Seoul and Washington in an effort to leverage his nuclear program for economic benefits.

Negotiations derailed in 2019 after a failed summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump, who was serving his first term, when the Americans rejected North Korea's demands for a major release of US-led economic



North Koreans arrive to meet their South Korean relatives during a separate family reunion meeting at the Diamond Mountain resort in North Korea, on Aug 21, 2018. (AP)

sanctions in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities. The North has since suspended virtually all diplomatic activity with the South and ignored US requests to resume talks while accelerating the development of nuclear weapons and missiles.

Meanwhile, six people went missing in a fishing boat fire that broke out in

waters off southwestern South Korea on Thursday, according to Yonhap news agency.

It was reported to the coast guard at around 8:39 a.m. local time (2339 GMT on Wednesday) that the 34-ton fishing vessel caught fire in waters off Buan County, about 200 km southwest of the capital Seoul.

Turkish president holds talks with Pakistani PM Sharif

ISLAMABAD, Feb 13, (AP): Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday at his office in Islamabad to discuss the situation in Gaza and a range of bilateral issues.

They will sign several agreements for boosting trade and economic ties between the nations, officials said.

Erdogan left his hotel amid tight security, and was welcomed by people in traditional Turkish and Pakistani dresses who lined a key city road that had been decorated

with Turkish and Pakistani flags. The crowds danced to the beat of drums as the Turkish leader's convoy passed through the streets.

Erdogan and his wife, Emine Erdogan, were welcomed by Sharif on their arrival at his office. A band played the national anthems of both countries before a ceremony that saw the leaders inspecting a guard of honor.

Erdogan will jointly chair bilateral strategic cooperation talks and the two sides are expected to sign a number of agreements, according to a government announcement.



In this photo released by Press Information Department, visiting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, (left), walks with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, right, during a welcome ceremony, in Islamabad, Pakistan on Feb 13. (AP)

Congolese leaders meet M23 in east

GOMA, Congo, Feb 13, (AP): Congo's largest church organizations met Wednesday with Rwanda-backed rebels in the country's east in the latest push for peace and dialogue after weekslong fighting that saw the rebels seize the region's largest city of Goma.



Nangaa

A joint delegation from the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO) and the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) - two of the largest church organizations in the country - arrived in Goma on Wednesday and met with Cornille Nangaa, who has emerged as the M23 rebels' political leader since they seized Goma in late January during a major escalation in their years-long fighting with Congolese forces.

"(The meeting) was an opportunity to ... seek an end to the war as soon as possible, because we remain convinced that the solution to this crisis is not military," Bishop Donatien Nshole, secretary-general of CENCO said after the meeting.



The Salvadoran Congress building is seen from the air in San Salvador, El Salvador on Feb 9, 2020. (AP)

El Salvador's Congress votes to eliminate public campaign financing

Lawmakers in El Salvador took advantage of a newly streamlined constitutional reform process to eliminate public financing of political campaigns Wednesday, making good on a promise of President Nayib Bukele.

The reform passed with 58 of the

Congress' 60 lawmakers voting in favor - carried largely by Bukele's allies' supermajority. The legislation now goes to Bukele for his signature.

"Political parties can finance themselves like we financed ourselves in 2019," Bukele wrote on X.

"Difficult? Yes, it was difficult. But wasn't it better that way?"

Political parties had received money from the government based on the number of votes they obtain in elections, or had to return money that was advanced if their vote totals fall short of expectations. (AP)

Opp'n figure detained in Uganda for alleged crimes against state unwell, says attorney

KAMPALA, Uganda, Feb 13, (AP): A prominent opposition figure jailed in Uganda for allegedly threatening state security is unwell and in need of urgent medical care, his attorney said Thursday.

Four-time presidential candidate Kizza Besigye, who has been in detention since his abduction from Kenya on Nov. 16, is infirm and experiences episodes of hypertension, said Erias Lukwago.

A military tribunal in Kampala has charged Besigye, 68, and an assistant with offenses related to illegal possession of a firearm and threatening national security. Besigye also faces a separate charge of treason, a crime under military law that carries the death penalty.

Lukwago on Wednesday saw Besigye at the maximum-security prison in Kampala where the opposition figure is being detained. Besigye needs specialized care that health authorities in the prison system are not equipped to provide, Lukwago said.

The military trial of Besigye has angered his supporters and drawn concern from rights groups. Amnesty International has called for Besigye's release, saying his "abduction clearly violated international human rights law and the process of extradition with its requisite fair trial protections."



Ugandan opposition leader and four-time presidential candidate Kizza Besigye, stands in the dock at the Makindye Martial Court in Kampala, Uganda on Nov 20, 2024. (AP)

Uganda's Supreme Court ruled last month that civilians can't be court-martialed, questioning the competence of untrained military officers to dispense justice. But President Yoweri Museveni, an authoritarian leader who has held power since 1986, said he disagreed

with the court's decision and that "the country is not governed by the judges."

Lukwago and other activists are trying to free Besigye on the basis of the Supreme Court's decision, but prison authorities say they have no order to release him.

Besigye's wife, UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima, had asserted that he is on a hunger strike, an account disputed by prison authorities.

Besigye has faced arrest and assault many times in his political career but has never been convicted of a crime.

Besigye's case is being watched closely by Ugandans anxious over political maneuvers ahead of presidential elections next year. Although Museveni is expected to seek re-election, some observers believe he may step aside.

Many expect an unpredictable political transition because Museveni has no obvious successor within the ranks of the ruling National Resistance Movement party.

Besigye, a qualified physician who retired from Uganda's military at the rank of colonel, is a former president of the Forum for Democratic Change party, for many years Uganda's most prominent opposition group. He is a fierce critic of Museveni, for whom he once served as military assistant and personal doctor.

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 13, (AP): A fire Wednesday at a Rio de Janeiro factory that produces costumes for the city's iconic Carnival left 10 people hospitalized, Rio's state health department said, casting a shadow over preparations for one of the world's biggest shows.

The victims were rushed away in ambulances and admitted to the hospital for burns to their airways after inhaling toxic smoke. Eight are in serious condition while two are stable, the health department said in a statement.

"There were more than 20 people in there. The fire started when we were sleeping," said Wesley da Cruz, a 27-year-old carnival worker.

Charles Ferreira, 52, lives behind the factory and said he heard people yelling for help. "We went to see what was happening. I got my motorbike, went to the firefighters and they sent a truck and an ambulance," Ferreira said.

Around 90 firefighters battled the blaze, rescuing 21 people, Rio's military fire department said in a statement. Firefighters rescued workers that were stuck on the top floor by cutting the steel windows and placing a ladder for them to descend. Associated Press video shows them descending as black smoke billowed from the building.

The state's civil defense has completely closed off the factory and the annex building as the fire has caused damage to the structure and it could collapse, Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes said on X.

The Maximus factory where the fire occurred is one of the most used by



Firefighters move a ladder after a fire destroyed a factory that produces Carnival costumes for the lower division samba schools in Rio de Janeiro on Feb 12. (AP)

samba schools in the lower divisions. Samba school Imperio Serrano is one of those affected.

"At this time, we are focused on ensuring the safety of everyone involved in this accident," the samba school said on Instagram, adding that further information regarding damages would be released later.

The weeks leading up to Rio's carnival are often tense, with workers rushing to finalize preparations that have been months in the making in time for the parades.

"The impact of this incident directly affects the planning of Carnival and the entire production chain involved in

its realization," Liga RJ, an association of samba schools, said on Instagram. It added that it would call an extraordinary general assembly to evaluate the situation.

Rio's Labor Prosecutor's Office said it has opened an inquiry into the working conditions at the factory, citing press reports of workers, including teenagers, sleeping on-site and evidence of degrading labor practices.

In 2011, a fire caused extensive damage at a complex of warehouses in central Rio where the city's top 12 schools were gearing up for Carnival, destroying months' worth of preparations.

20 customers winning cash prizes worth KD1,500 each

KFH announces the winners of Al-Rabeh draw

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the winners of the AlRabeh draw with 20 customers winning cash prizes worth KD1,500 each for the 3rd and 4th weeks of 2025. Additionally, KFH announced Khaled Al-Hajeri as the monthly winner of 1 kilo Gram of KFH Gold for the month of January 2025.

The winners of KD 1,500 are: Lilas Al-Marhoon, Yousef Al-Kafeef, Anwar Al-Kandari, Mohammad Zard, Fawziyah Al-Ahmad, Dia Al-Rashed, Abdullah Al-Hazza, Mohammad Al-Kandari, Alyia Al-Dousari, Saeed Obaid, Khalidah Al-Sulaimani, Dalal Al-Roomi, Mohammad Abdulsamad, Marian Saad, Ahmad Al-Shammari, Maram Al-Shammari, Khaled Al-Shareedah, Abdulrahman Al-Oraifan, Hussain Al-Shammari, Musaed Al-Kandari.

The AlRabeh campaign provides prizes and draws that offer customers several chances of winning "weekly, monthly and

quarterly". The campaign crowns 536 winners throughout the year.

The draw took place under the supervision of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The campaign is part of KFH's ongoing efforts to offer exceptional products and services that meet customers' aspirations, enhance the Bank's leadership in the local and global markets, as well as reflect its excellence in offering innovative banking solutions as per the highest quality standards.

The Al-Rabeh account is a salary account available to customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Customers can open Al-Rabeh account in any of KFH branches in Kuwait, or through the Bank's online channels. The account can be opened in the Kuwaiti Dinar and is targeted for customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Salary transfer is a prerequisite for customers to enter

the draw provided that the transfer of salary to Al-Rabeh account is constant.

Regarding the terms and conditions of the prizes and draws, a customer can deposit 3 salaries during the 3 months prior to the draw, and the minimum balance of the account should not be less than KD 50 at the end of each month during the 3 months prior to the draw. Ten draws take place on a weekly basis for K.D 1,500 for 10 winners each, 1 KG of KFH gold will be drawn monthly for one winner and K.D 25,000 for one winner every quarter, reaching a total number of 536 winners during the year.

KFH is keen to further meet customers' requirements and aspirations and their increasing needs as well as offer innovative and modern services, therefore achieving customer satisfaction, which is one of the fundamentals of KFH. The Bank has achieved a qualitative shift in the level of financial services by utilizing technology.



The campaign visual



City clinic representative Mr. Fawaz at the podium.



Principal K.V. Faisal at the podium.

Students recite Qir'at at health camp

English Madrasa in Khaitan hosts student medical camp

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Under the leadership of the English Madrasa for Islamic Studies, Khaitan branch, and in collaboration with City Clinic, a medical camp was organized at the madrasa for students.

A pediatrician-led medical check-up was conducted for the students, along with an eye examination. Doctors Smita Balan and Dr. Anil Kumar examined the students.

The event was presided over by Madrasa Principal K.V. Faisal, and the inauguration was carried out by KIG

Central Education Board Chairman Dr. Alif Shukoor, KIG Area President Anees Abdussalam and City Clinic representative Fawaz spoke at the event. Abdul Razaq Nadvi, Naisam, and Hafiz also participated.

Madrasa student Luqman recited the Qir'at, and Ustadh Abdul Qadir delivered the vote of thanks.

Madrasa teachers Haris, Muaz, Nayeem, Shameena, and Asmina, along with Madrasa administrator Sajid and Area Education Convener Afsal Usman, coordinated the medical camp.

Over 300 participants join KEA's environmental Walkathon

KEA Kuwait hosts successful WALKOTSAV 25 Walkathon

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Keralite Engineers Association (KEA), Kuwait under EC-27, pulled off a spectacular WALKOTSAV 25, a Walkathon event on 07th February, 2025 at Boulevard Salmiya from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM, with over 300 enthusiastic participants! The Walkotsav 25 was organized to raise environmental awareness among the community members under the theme "Conserve Today, Preserve Tomorrow". Despite the chilly weather, the event attracted an incredible turnout as participants eagerly arrived early to kick off an action-packed day filled with energy and excitement.

The day began with a high-energy Zumba session, setting the tone for a fun-filled and lively event. Shortly after, the walkathon was officially flagged off at 9:10 AM, with enthusiastic walkers from all age groups (13 to 50+) – Men, Women, Boys, and Girls – hitting the walking track in style!

The Colouring & Painting Competition at the amphitheatre captivated the creativity of over 75 talented children, showcasing their incredible artwork. The competition was judged by esteemed personalities, adding an extra layer of excitement and pride to the day.

The inaugural ceremony began with a heartfelt welcome by KEA General Secretary Mr. Renju Abraham, followed by inspiring addresses from KEA President Mr. Ebej Samuel and KEF GC Mrs. Hanan Shan. The event was further graced by the presence of distinguished keynote speakers from Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research, Dr. Yousef M. Al Abdullah and Dr. Sreekanth. Special guests



WALKOTSAV 25 Walkathon

included the Kuwait National Women's Cricket Team, represented by captain Ms. Amna, vice-captain Ms. Priyada, and wicket-keeper Suchit, along with all the Kuwait Engineers Forum Alumni Presidents. All guests were warmly felicitated in a ceremony filled with appreciation and gratitude. A highlight of the inauguration was the unveiling of a commemorative souvenir, which was proudly handed over to our Gold Sponsors – Toyota AL Sayer, Advanced Solutionz, and Mark Technologies.

Staying true to the event's theme, "Conserve Today, Preserve Tomorrow", the Tree Planting Session saw over 50 saplings planted, leaving a lasting mark on the environment.

The Clean-Up Campaign also engaged participants in preserving the beauty of our surroundings and promoting environmental stewardship.

Adding an educational touch, the Kuwait Emergency Services team delivered a live CPR demonstration, followed by a Health Awareness Session led by Mrs. Megna Mogra. Additionally, medical booths offering free check-ups were available, ensuring everyone's health and well-being were taken care of.

The excitement continued with

the distribution of prizes for all category winners, followed by a special prize give-away, where lucky participants walked away with surprise gifts, bringing even more joy and celebration to the event.

The event's Convener – Mr. Govind Balakrishnan ensured the smooth running of the event, while the Event Commissioner – Mr. Raj Felix closed the event with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks.

A huge thank you to all the participants, volunteers, sponsors, and supporters who made WALKOTSAV 25 a memorable and resounding success!

Dr. George P. Alex inaugurates cricket tournament

IDAK-KDD Cricket Championship 2025 held at Boulevard Ground

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The much-awaited IDAK-KDD Cricket Championship 2025 was successfully held on February 7, 2025, at the spectacular Boulevard Cricket Ground. Organized by the IDAK Sports Committee, the event was spearheaded by Dr. Eldho George (Chair) and Dr. Renjit George (Co-Chair), alongside committee members Dr. Abraham Thomas, Dr. Anjana Nair, Dr. Sharon Thomas, and Dr. Varsha Manmohan.

The tournament was officially inaugurated by IDAK President, Dr. George P. Alex, in presence of the title sponsor, KDD, represented by Mr. Anand Harith, Manager - Business Systems, as well as the official remittance partner, Al Mulla Exchange, represented by Mr. Paresh Patidar, Marketing Executive.

The championship witnessed the three dynamic teams, namely Red Raptors, Blue Phoenixes, and Green Dragon, battling it out in two exhilarating formats:

- T10 Men's Cricket
- T5 Women's Cricket

Both tournaments followed an exciting Round Robin format, ensuring intense and competitive matches that kept the audience on the edge of their seats.

In the T10 Men's Championship, the Green Dragons emerged victorious, while the Red Raptors finished as the Runners-Up. The Best Player Award for the T10 Series was deservedly won by Mr. Nithin, whose outstanding performance played a key role in his team's victory.

In the T5 Women's Championship, the Red Raptors clinched the title, while the Green Dragons secured the Runners-Up position. The Best Player Award in the T5 series

was earned by Dr. Ranjitha, who showcased remarkable skill and determination throughout the tournament.

The event remained vibrant and engaging, thanks to the ex-

pert compering by Dr. Thomas, Dr. George, and Mr. Anand, who kept the audience entertained and well-informed.

The match referees, Dr. George and Dr. Roy, ensured a

smooth and disciplined tournament, while umpires Mr. Shyam and Mr. Jaison upheld the spirit of fair play. Mr. Jaison also provided online live score updates, keeping players and spectators engaged throughout the matches.

Ensuring accuracy in scoring, a dedicated team comprising Dr. Aju, Dr. Sudhin, Dr. Vinod, Dr. Roshila, and Mr. Prajul meticulously handled the match statistics.

Capturing the most memorable moments of the tournament, Dr. Jijan, Dr. Shaheer, and Dr. Santosh skillfully documented the excitement and energy of the day through photography and videography.

The Membership Committee efficiently managed participant registration while F&B was taken care of by Dr. Asheel, Dr. Jijan, Dr. Roshila, and Dr. Vinod.

A special note of appreciation goes to the IDAK Council for their support, which played a crucial role in the seamless execution of the tournament.

With all matches conducted as scheduled, the IDAK-KDD Cricket Championship 2025 concluded on a highly successful note, celebrating sportsmanship, teamwork, and competitive spirit. IDAK also recognized and celebrated the victorious Throwball and Cricket teams in the recently concluded Gulf Friendship Cup in Abudhabi and Dr. Jacob Lonappan who tasted podium finish in the Kuwait Inter Ministerial Table Tennis Tournament by cutting a celebratory cake.

The IDAK Sports Committee extended its heartfelt gratitude to all captains, vice captains, participating teams, sponsors, and contributors for their unwavering support in making this event a grand success.



IDAK cheering.



Men's Cricket



Women's Cricket

Bird flu communication faces challenges after US exit

WHO outlines strategy after US cuts financial contributions

GENEVA, Feb 13, (Agencies): Director-General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus revealed WHO strategy to mitigate the impact of the US decision to suspend all financial contributions.

The Organization is taking three main actions to respond to the US funding cut, Ghebreyesus said during a press conference in Geneva on Wednesday.

"These include increasing financial resources through existing mechanisms rationalizing spending to enhance financial efficiency and maintaining a strong dialogue with the US government to seek either the restoration of funding or an extension of financial support until viable alternatives are found," he said.

He announced that the organization's Executive Board had unanimously agreed to raise member states' assessed contributions by 20 percent while expressing hope that this decision would be confirmed at the upcoming World Health Assembly.

The Director General also explained that WHO will continue to mobilize financial resources by broadening its donor

base and strengthening different financing mechanisms.

"This includes launching voluntary investment rounds for member states and expanding support for the WHO Foundation which seeks to gather resources from the private sector."

"WHO is also considering establishing a USD 50 billion 'Endowment Fund' to ensure long-term financial sustainability," he noted.

He warned about the significant consequences of the US funding suspension particularly regarding the emergency health responses WHO is conducting in regions such as Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan and indeed its impact on epidemic control programs like those for HIV/AIDS and polio.

He reported that the US decision has led to the suspension of life-saving health services. In Myanmar affecting nearly 60,000 people predominantly women and children worsening the already dire humanitarian conditions.

Ghebreyesus made an urgent call to the international community to increase efforts to ensure the continued funding of

WHO's essential health programs.

He emphasized that sustainable financing is critical not only for responding to immediate health emergencies but also for addressing long-term health challenges such as universal health coverage and the fight against pandemics.

Last month President Donald Trump signed an executive order to withdraw the US from the Organization and halt all financial contributions.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Tuesday that communication with the United States regarding the ongoing bird flu outbreak has become increasingly difficult as a result of the country's withdrawal from the UN health agency.

Christian Lindmeier, a WHO spokesperson, addressed the issue at a press briefing in Geneva, explaining, "Communication is a challenge indeed. The traditional ways of contact have been cut." He declined to elaborate.

Since the outbreak of H5N1 bird flu in the United States in April 2024, nearly 70 people, primarily farm workers have

been infected. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that while there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission and the public health risk remains low, individuals with prolonged exposure to birds, poultry, or livestock are at higher risks of infection.

Concerns have been raised about the impact of the US withdrawal from the WHO, particularly regarding the sharing of critical information. On his inauguration day on Jan. 20, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to pull the United States out of the organization.

According to US media reports, some countries have privately expressed concerns over the possibility that the United States might cease sharing information on emerging viruses, which could play a critical role in preventing the next pandemic.

The situation has become more concerning following the recent discovery of a second strain of bird flu in dairy cattle in the US state of Nevada, prompting fears for the broader scope of the outbreak.

Aid freeze could leave 3.4 mln children orphaned

Global HIV fight faces setback as US aid cuts threaten lifesaving progress

NEW YORK, Feb 13, (AP): A generation has passed since the world saw the peak in AIDS-related deaths. Those deaths - agonizing, from diseases the body might otherwise fight off - sent loved ones into the streets, pressuring governments to act. The United States eventually did, creating PEPFAR, arguably the most successful foreign aid program in history. HIV, which causes AIDS, is now manageable, though there is still no cure.

Now the Trump administration has put the brakes on foreign aid while alleging it's wasteful, causing chaos in the system that for over 20 years has kept millions of people alive. Confusion over a temporary waiver for PEPFAR - and the difficulty of restarting its work, with US workers, contractors and payments in upheaval - means the clock is ticking for many who are suddenly unable to obtain medications to keep AIDS at bay.

The US-led global response to HIV has been so effective that AIDS wards of people wasting away are a vision of the past. Now health experts, patients and others fear those days could return if the Trump administration doesn't reverse course or no other global power steps into the void, and fast.

"In the next five years, we could have 6.3 million AIDS-related deaths," the UN AIDS agency told The Associated Press. That's a shock at a time of rising complacency around HIV, declining condom use among some young people and the rise of a medication that some believe could end AIDS for good.

The agency has begun publicly tracking new HIV infections since the aid freeze.

Here's a look at what happens to the body when HIV drugs are stopped:

HIV is spread by bodily fluids such as blood, breast milk or semen. It gradually weakens the body's immune system and makes it vulnerable to disease, including ones rarely seen in otherwise healthy people. The surprising emergence of such



American doctor Mark Ottenweller, (right), examines AIDS patient Yacouba Guengane in his clinic in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Nov. 18, 1991. (AP)

cases in the 1980s is what tipped off health experts to what became known as the AIDS epidemic.

Years of intense advocacy and shocking sights of children, young adults and others dying of pneumonia and other infections led to the response that created PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Twenty million people around the world died before the program was founded. Now millions of people take drugs known as antiretrovirals that keep HIV from spreading in the body.

Stopping those drugs lets the virus start multiplying in the body again, and it could become drug-resistant. HIV can rebound to detectable levels in people's blood in just a few weeks, putting sexual partners at risk. Babies born to mothers with HIV can escape infection only if the woman was properly treated during pregnancy or the infant is treated immediately after birth.

If the drugs are not taken, a body is heading toward AIDS, the final stage of infection.

"Without HIV treatment, people with AIDS typically survive about

three years," the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

For a long time, there may be no noticeable symptoms. But a person can easily spread HIV to others, and the immune system becomes vulnerable to what are called opportunistic diseases.

The National Institutes of Health says opportunistic diseases include fungal infections, pneumonia, salmonella and tuberculosis. For a country like South Africa, with the world's highest number of HIV cases and one of the largest numbers of TB cases, the toll could be immense.

Unchecked by HIV treatment, the damage continues. The immune system is increasingly unable to fight off diseases. Every action, from eating to travel, must consider the potential exposure to germs.

Meanwhile, the head of the UN AIDS agency, Winnie Byanyima, told the AP that more resistant strains of the disease could emerge.

And an additional 3.4 million children could be made orphans - another echo of the time when the world raced to confront AIDS with few tools at hand.

Macular degeneration leading cause

30 pct of US seniors suffer vision impairment

NEW YORK, Feb. 13, (Xinhua): Reduced vision, also known as vision impairment, is so common that research showed nearly 30 percent of US adults 71 and older have it, according to the latest official figures.

While many factors can contribute to it occurring, the leading cause of vision loss in older adults is age-related macular degeneration, said the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Macular degeneration is an incurable eye disease that damages the middle part of the retina that's known as the macula, "which is responsible for our central, detailed vi-

sion," USA Today on Wednesday quoted Laura Di Meglio, an assistant professor of ophthalmology at the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, as saying.

When this area of the eye is damaged, it leads to a gradual loss of sharp central vision, seeing dark spots, distorted or wavy vision and difficulty seeing colors.

In these ways, it "can severely impact quality of life by making it harder to see fine details even though it doesn't cause total blindness," said Inna Lazar, a Connecticut-based optometrist and founder of Greenwich Eye Care.

500K birds die

India issues bird flu alert

NEW DELHI, Feb. 13, (Xinhua): Authorities in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh have issued an alert and a series of containment measures following the outbreak of bird flu (Avian Influenza H5N1), officials said Thursday.

The outbreak has been reported in Eluru, West Godavari, East Godavari, Krishna and NTR districts of the state, where over half a million poultry birds had died over the last three days.

Officials from the state's animal husbandry department have collected samples and sent them for testing.

"The officials from the department collected samples from the perished birds and sent them to the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases in Bhopal for analysis. Laboratory tests confirmed the presence of the avian influenza virus," a senior animal husbandry official in Andhra Pradesh, T Damodar Naidu, said in a statement released to local media.

The animal husbandry department has formed 721 rapid response teams to monitor and control the spread of bird flu in the state. The officials are trying to implement strict control measures to prevent further escalation of the outbreak.

The rapid response teams are also enforcing strict biosecurity measures and disinfection protocols.

Authorities have also deployed teams from the police, revenue and forest departments to assist the animal husbandry officials.

Reports said the affected areas in these districts house around 350 poultry farms, producing approximately 24 million eggs a day.

As a precautionary measure, officials have instructed poultry farms, chicken shops, and egg-selling outlets in the affected regions to shut down their operations immediately until further orders.

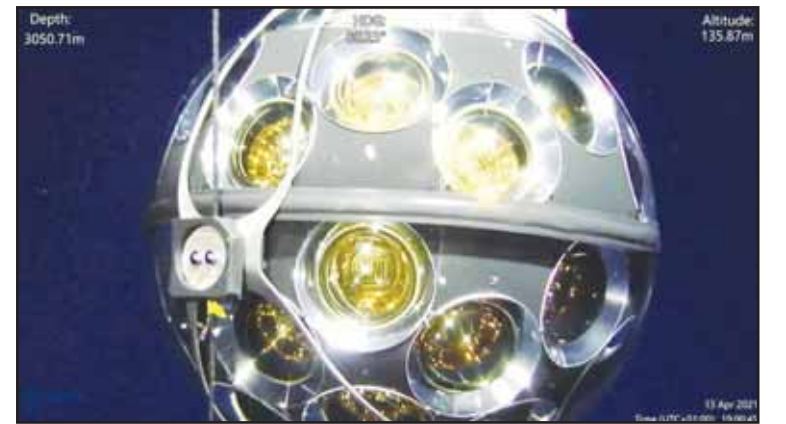
Officials suspect the outbreak has spread through migratory birds or infected poultry transported from other regions.

Bird flu is highly contagious, affecting various animals, with rare cases of human infection.

Healthcare: Chinese-backed charitable organizations have contributed to improving the healthcare sector and people's well-being in Cambodia, health officials said on Thursday.

Cambodian Minister of Health Chheang Ra presented the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Monisaraphon, the equivalent of a knighthood, to four representatives of Operation Smile Cambodia, Future Smile Charitable Foundation, and Pundarika Charity for their outstanding contributions to the healthcare sector in Cambodia.

The medal awarding ceremony was held at the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Hospital in the capital Phnom Penh.



A sphere used to detect neutrinos is shown submerged in the Mediterranean Sea. (AP)

China unveils Mars robot

Deep-sea telescope detects most energetic ghost particle

NEW YORK, Feb 13, (AP): A neutrino detector submerged in the Mediterranean Sea has sniffed out the most energetic ghost particle yet, scientists reported Wednesday.

The newly detected neutrino is around 30 times more active than the previous recordholder. Scientists think it came from outside the Milky Way galaxy but its exact source remains a mystery.

Neutrinos spew from stars like the sun and trillions stream through our bodies every second. They're known as ghost particles because their mind-bogglingly small mass makes them difficult to spot.

Scientists aren't able to detect neutrinos zipping around on their own. Instead, they measure what happens when the particles bump into other bits of matter.

Two years ago, a neutrino collided with matter and produced a tiny particle called a muon that pinged through the underwater detector, producing flashes of blue light. The researchers worked backward to estimate the energy of the neutrino and published their findings Wednesday in the journal Nature.

"This is part of trying to understand the highest-energy processes in the universe," said study co-author Aart Heijboer from the National Institute for Subatomic Physics Nikhef in the Netherlands.

The detector that made the discovery is part of a deep-sea neutrino observatory that's still under construction. Neutrino detectors are often located underwater, beneath ice or deep underground to protect against radiation at the Earth's surface.

Finding this energetic neutrino so early could mean there are more out there than scientists initially thought.

"It's a sign that we're on the right track, and it's also a hint that maybe there might be a surprise," said physicist Denver Whittington from Syracuse University who was not involved with the new research.

Chinese scientists have developed a prototype for a new class of aerialterrestrial cross-domain robot, designed for missions such as Mars exploration.

Weighing just around 300 grams -- about the same as an apple -- the robot can roll on the ground and take flight to pass over obstacles. It was created by a research team at the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT).

The team has developed multiple versions of the aerialterrestrial robot, achieving an endurance time six times longer than similar-sized unmanned aerial vehicles. These robots can be used to perform tasks such as monitoring, probing, and maintenance. They come in various forms, such as two-wheeled or spherical designs. They can be adapted to different terrains, and they can also be equipped with manipulators to perform screwing or pressing actions.

Zhang Lixian, a professor at HIT, said: "The prototype design is now completed. Compared with existing Mars flight vehicles, the robot of aerialterrestrial cross-domain capability will achieve better performance in terms of functionality and endurance."

Meanwhile, Beijing has officially unveiled a satellite internet industrial park and granted licenses to eight key laboratories in commercial space industry.

These happened at the Beijing Commercial Space High-quality Development Conference, which was held in the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, also known as Beijing E-Town, and concluded on Wednesday. The conference mainly focuses on implementing major projects and accelerating the high-quality growth of China's commercial space industry.

The satellite internet industrial park will leverage Beijing E-Town's advantages in aerospace industry and strengths of new-type industries to develop satellite internet projects, building a complete industrial chain of satellite internet research and intelligent manufacturing.

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Everton's Beto, left, challenges for the ball with Liverpool's Ibrahima Konate during the English Premier League soccer match between Everton and Liverpool, Liverpool, England. The match ended 2-2. (AP) - See Page 15

Sports

Kuwait celebrates best performance in Games history



A Kuwaiti in action during curling game at the Asian Winter Games in Harbin.



A Kuwaiti in action during curling game at the Asian Winter Games in Harbin.

South Korea bags figure skating singles golds at Winter Asiad

HARBIN, Feb 13: The director of the Kuwaiti delegation at the ninth Asian Winter Games "Harbin 2025," Fahid Al-Ajmi, praised the strong performance of Kuwaiti athletes in this edition, highlighting their ability to compete at the continental level. He noted that their achievements in Harbin mark Kuwait's best results in the country's participation in the Games since 1999.

In a statement to the Kuwaiti media delegation accompanying the mission, Al-Ajmi reflected on Kuwait's participation as the tournament concluded to-

day. He emphasized the remarkable performance of the national ice hockey team, which secured three victories and suffered only one narrow defeat against Kyrgyzstan.

He added that these victories represent Kuwait's most successful showing in this major continental event. Al-Ajmi commended the dedication of the players, as well as the efforts of the technical and administrative staff, whose hard work in training translated into impressive performances on the ice.

He also highlighted the achievements of the Kuwaiti curling team, particularly Saud Al-Kandari and Fatima Abdul Latif, who delivered a standout performance in the mixed doubles competition. They made history by defeating Mon-

golia when they competed in Kuwait's first-ever international curling event.

Additionally, Al-Ajmi praised the efforts of Kuwaiti ice skaters Fares Al-Obaid, Abdulrahman Al-Wahaibi, and Salman Al-Kandari, who showcased commendable skill and determination in their events.

South Korea's Cha Jun-hwan and Kim Chae-yeon took gold in the men's and women's singles events, respectively, at the Asian Winter Games here on Thursday.

Despite leading by nearly 10 points in the short program, Japan's Yuma Kagiyama slipped three times on Thursday, handing the gold medal to Cha, South Korea's national champion, who posted an impressive score of 281.69 points. Kazakhstan's Mikhail Shaidorov claimed the bronze.

Amid cheers from the home crowd, China's Dai Dawei

landed two quadruple jumps to finish fourth with 238.83 points, while his compatriot Chen Yudong ranked seventh with 203.32 points.

"I performed better than I expected. It's a comfort to have skated a relatively clean program today," said Dai. Although he missed the podium by just one spot, he expressed no regrets. "Certainly, every athlete wants to stand on the podium, but I know I still need to improve my skills." In the women's free skating, 2024 World Figure Skating Championships bronze medalist Kim delivered a near-flawless performance to score 147.56 points. With a total of 219.44 points, she edged out Beijing Winter Olympics bronze medalist Kaori Sakamoto by 7.54 points, after Sakamoto slipped on a triple jump. Hana Yoshida of Japan took home the bronze medal.

Kuwait Club to face Al-Arabi in 41st Gulf Clubs Championship opener

BAWSHAR, Oman, Feb 13: The Kuwait Club handball team will kick off its campaign in the preliminary round of Group Two in the 41st Gulf Clubs Championship on Saturday, at 4:00 pm, facing Qatar's Al-Arabi. This will be followed by a 6:30 pm match between Oman's Oman Club and Dibba Al-Hisn of the UAE within the same group.

Group One features Al-Rayyan of Qatar, Al-Noor of Saudi Arabia, Al-Najma of Bahrain, and Al-Seeb of Oman. Their matches will commence the day after tomorrow, with all games being played at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bousher.

The Kuwait team prepared for this Gulf Championship through a training



Kuwait Club intensifies training for the opening match against Al-Arabi.

camp in Doha, Qatar, where it played two friendly matches against Al-Duhail and Qatar Club. The team has also strengthened its lineup with Egyptian Zamalek player Shadi Khalil, joining the "Whites" alongside fellow professionals Frankis Marzo from Qatar and Angel Hernandez from the UAE.

Sameh Al-Hajri, Director of Handball at Kuwait Club, commended the players' commitment and discipline throughout the Doha camp, emphasizing their dedication to the technical and administrative staff's instructions. He expressed confidence, stating, "We are entering this Gulf event with the goal of competing for the title."

Hajri also extended his gratitude to Kuwait Club Chairman Khaled Al-Ghanem and the Board of Directors for their ongoing support, which has allowed the team to overcome previous challenges and enter the tournament fully prepared.

Kuwait Club's handball team has seen significant success in recent years, winning the Asian Clubs Championship in July 2022, their first international title, followed by the Gulf Clubs Championship in March 2023 and the Arab Championship in August 2023. They retained their Arab Championship title in September 2024, securing their second consecutive victory in the competition.

Al-Qadisiya looks to end West Asian Volleyball Championship on a high

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

RIFFA, Bahrain, Feb 13: Al-Qadisiya Club's volleyball team will play its final match in the Third West Asian Clubs Volleyball Championship today at Isa bin Rashid Hall in Riffa, Bahrain. The team will face Iraq's North Refineries at 4:30 pm, with the tournament's curtain closing shortly after, followed by the match between Al-Ahly of Bahrain and Al-Arabi of Qatar at 7:00 pm.



Al Ahly defends as Al-Qadisiya player goes for a spike.

Al-Rayyan of Qatar, the title holder of the first two editions, leads the standings with 11 points, followed by Al-Ahly of Bahrain with 9 points, Al-Arabi of Qatar with 7 points, Al-Salam of Oman with 5 points, Al-Qadisiya with 1 point, and Al-Masaf of the North with 0 points.

The tournament is organized in a single-round league system, where all teams compete in direct confrontations. The team accumulating the most points will be crowned the champion.

Unfortunately, Qadisiya has faced defeat in all its previous matches against Al-Rayyan, Al-Salam, Al-Arabi, and Al-Ahly.

Al-Qadisiya's Coach, Redha Ali, cited multiple reasons for the team's struggle in the tournament, including the injury of Dutch professional player Horst, who broke his finger, prompting a mid-tournament substitution with Bulgarian player Zhdanov—who was then injured during the first match. Coach Ali also noted the demanding schedule, where the team had to play tough matches in a short period, including the opening game against Al-Rayyan, the defending champion, followed by games against Al-Salam and Al-Arabi. He emphasized that the tournament's tight schedule did not work in favor of Al-Qadisiya, leading to a dip in performance.

Qadisiya aims to continue its dominance over Al-Tadamon

Kuwait Club, Al-Arabi set for top-of-the-table duel

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Soccer fans across Kuwait eagerly await the highly anticipated clash between Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi, set to take place at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium at 8:00 pm. This top-of-the-table showdown headlines the 15th round of the Zain Premier League.

Before the main event, Al-Salmiya will face Khaitan at 6:05 pm at Thamer Stadium. Meanwhile, today's fixtures feature Al-Qadisiya vs. Al-Tadamon at 6:00 pm at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium and Kazma hosting Al-Fahaheel at 8:15 pm. The Mansouriyah district will witness a true "leadership battle" as league leaders Kuwait Club (39 points) takes on second-placed Al-Arabi (37 points) in a match that could shape the championship race.

Kuwait Club won the first-leg encounter 2-0 and has been dominant throughout the season, dropping only three points (losing 2-1 to Al-Qa-

disiya). Al-Arabi, on the other hand, has lost five points a 2-0 defeat to Kuwait Club and a goalless draw with Khaitan.

A win for Kuwait Club would widen the gap to five points, significantly boosting its quest for a fourth consecutive league title and a record-extending 20th championship. The team has been in superb form, scoring 12 goals in its last two matches, thrashing Al-Nasr and Al-Yarmouk.

Al-Arabi enters the match with multiple motivations—it seeks revenge for its first-leg defeat, redemption after a disappointing draw against Khaitan, and most importantly, a chance to reclaim the top spot.

Third-placed Al-Qadisiya (26 points) will take on Al-Tadamon (17 points, sixth place) in a crucial encounter. Al-Qadisiya aims to continue its dominance over Al-Tadamon after a 3-1 first-leg victory while also fine-tuning its squad ahead of its decisive Gulf Clubs Championship match against Saudi Arabia's Al-Ettifaq next Tuesday. For Al-Tadamon, a win would push it closer to

the top-six zone, reducing the risk of being drawn into the relegation battle.

Two other matches will see teams aiming to recover from dropped points in the previous round:

Kazma (7th, 14 points) vs. Al-Fahaheel (5th, 17 points)

Al-Salmiya (4th, 24 points) vs. Khaitan (8th, 8 points)

Kazma, still reeling from its 2-3 defeat to Al-Qadisiya, cannot afford another loss as it fights to stay out of the relegation battle. Meanwhile, Al-Fahaheel knows that defeat could see it slip into the danger zone.

Khaitan, currently in last place, must win to keep its survival hopes alive. Meanwhile, Al-Salmiya looks to strengthen its claim for third place after a hard-fought 2-2 draw against Al-Fahaheel in the previous round.

With crucial points at stake, this round of the Zain Premier League promises drama, intensity, and high-stakes football as teams battle for the title, top-six security, and survival.



In this file photo Kuwait Club player attempts to control the ball as Al-Arabi player defends.

Jackson injury leaves Chelsea short of firepower

LONDON, Feb 13, (Agencies): Chelsea will be without striker Nicolas Jackson until after the next international break, leaving the club without a recognized "number 9" until the start of April.

The Senegalese forward, who has nine goals in the Premier League this season, tore his hamstring against West Ham a fortnight ago and although the club had hoped the injury was not serious, the BBC reports that scans have now shown Jackson could be sidelined for almost two months.

Chelsea also lost 19-year-old former Barce-

lona forward Marc Guiu in the same game after he suffered a groin strain after coming on to replace Jackson. Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca has admitted Guiu will be out of action for "weeks or months." The confirmation of Jackson's injury leaves Cole Palmer as Chelsea's main attacking threat, with Christopher Nkunku giving support, although despite Palmer's 14 league goals, he is not a central striker, operating in a slightly deeper role, while Nkunku has only two league goals and is happier operating as a second striker or an at-

tacking midfielder.

Chelsea's next game is away to Brighton on Friday night, as they return to play the side who last weekend knocked them out of the fourth round of the FA Cup. Enditem Arsenal's Premier League title challenge has been dealt a blow after forward Kai Havertz was injured during a training camp in Dubai.

The Germany international tore his hamstring and was set for a lengthy layoff, British media reported on Thursday said. Arsenal has not confirmed the injury.