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FRIDAY-SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14-15, 2025 / SHA'BAN 15-16, 1446 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 18826

16 PAGES

150 FILS

riage to 18 years old.

Opinion

Thanks King of Jordan, you told Trump what we want

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.

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 of Justice 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 mar-

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,

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,

International cyber criminals behind banks, telecom attacks

Kuwait Cybercrime Department unmasks high-tech heist

By Munif Naif and Mohammad Al-Enezi Al-Seyssah/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 communication networks and sending fraudulent messages, impersonating employees of banks and telecommunications companies to commit fraud and deception. After completing the search and investigation op-

erations, 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 authori-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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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.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwaiti, Iranian relations historic, rooted in mutual respect - Hayat

Real estate prices rise in Q4 2024, investment sector drives growth

JKB Group achieves outstanding financial results for **2024**, with **JOD** 194.3 mln net profit

Marvel's **'Brave New World' falls flat**

Newswatch

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

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)



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

The dmbassador added that during 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 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 ar-

ticle (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 ports Al-Seyassah daily.

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-

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 respectabilities, insisting that these spaces are reserved for It stressed that respecting these spaces reflects

ing parking spaces designated for people with dis-

the driver's awareness and respect for others.

both institutes.

Oca

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-

By Night: Cold and partly cloudy

with light moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-38 km/h. Station Max Exp Kuwait City Kuwait Airport Abdaly

Jahra Failaka Island Salmiyah Ahmadi Jal Aliyah Nuwaisib



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah arrives in Germany for the Munich Security Conference

'61st Munich Security Conference to address important challenges'

MUNICH, Feb 13, (KUNA): The 61st Munich Security Conference (MSC) is a vital event that would address global challenges, build a stable world, and resolve conflicts, said His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Wednesday.

This statement came during His Highness the Prime Minister and accompanying delegation's arrival to the city of Munich where the MSC conference would be held.

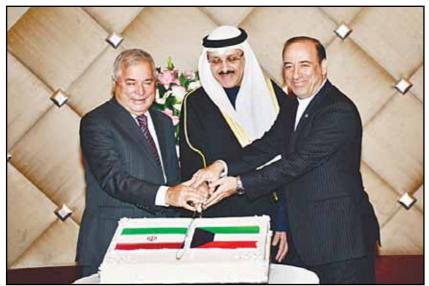
Kuwait Ambassador to Germany Reem Al-Khaled and Consul General in Frankfurt Adel Al-Ghunaimn, as well as embassy staff received His Highness the Prime Minister upon arrival.

The huge and multilayered challenges

facing the world of today required from decision-makers to implement a comprehensive road plan to boost security around the world and unify efforts for a more stable world through international cooperation, said His Highness the Prime Minister who reiterated commitment to such principles.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah indicated that Kuwait always played a balanced diplomatic role in resolving conflicts through mediation and bringing points of views closer together.

He affirmed that the State of Kuwait would continue its leading role within the humanitarian mainframe, lending a help hands to those affected by man-made or natural disasters.



Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Totonji (right), Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Sameh Hayat at the cake-cutting ceremony to mark Iran's 46th National Day.



Photos by Mohammad Morsi

Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Totonji sheds light on the Iranian carpets on display at the function.

Dialogue, diplomacy vital: Totonji

Kuwaiti, Iranian relations historic, rooted in mutual respect — Hayat

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: "We certainly welcome every positive initiative that is serious and clear with all countries," Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Sameh Hayat affirmed when reporters asked him about the exchange of visits between Kuwait and Iran on the sidelines of the Iranian Embassy's celebration of the 46th National Day.

A number of ambassadors and diplomats attended the event.

Hayat pointed out "we are here to congratulate the ambassador, leadership, government and the friendly people of Iran on the occasion of their 46th National Day. The relationship between Kuwait and Iran are long and historical. Iran is a large Muslim neighbor. Whatever is between us is based on mutual respect and appreciation."

On the other hand, Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Totonji confirmed that Iran and Kuwait are friendly countries enjoying the oldest relationship in West Asia. He said "our historical ties are based on mutual respect, while common values are used as the basis for strengthening affection and cooperation between us.

He also pointed out that "our peoples, in addition to geographical commonalities in the cultural, religious and social fields, have strong kinship and marriage relations. This rapprochement paves the way for the devel-

opment of our relations in the future." He added that the approach adopted by the Islamic Republic of Iran at various stages, especially during the era of His Excellency Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, is based on

national consensus at home by prioritizing relations with neighboring countries, as well as strengthening political and economic ties with regional and neighboring countries. He said the strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran includes dialogue, understanding, emphasizing diplomacy and mutual respect in order to reach common denominators in its relations with other countries, especially with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, "so that our relations with GCC countries enter a new phase of prosperity."

He disclosed the starting point of such moves was the meeting of the foreign ministers of the GCC countries and Iran in Doha, and the visit of Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Araghchi to Kuwait and other countries in the region.

He believes it is necessary to honor the memory of the martyrs of the resistance and point out that the ceasefire agreement in Gaza is the result of the resistance, courage, chivalry and steadfastness of the great Palestinian people; as well as the fact that Gaza is experiencing one of the largest genocide and forced displacement throughout history. He also cited the solidarity and cooperation of the people of Gaza with the valiant resistance and their steadfastness in facing forced displacement; stressing this is considered a historic victory for the Palestinian people, the Palestinian resistance, and all supporters and lovers of the resistance in the region and the world.

He stressed that Iran is one of the leading countries in the field of nanotechnology, natural technologies, knowledge and research centers. "Iranian knowledge-based companies have made giant strides in various fields, such as the production of modern medicines and advanced medical equipment.



Organizers and officials of the International Invention Fair.

KSC, KFAS to host 'Connecting Investors with Inventors' program

15th Int'l Invention Fair in Mideast to kick off on Sunday

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA): The 15th International Invention Fair in the Middle East (IIFME) will kick off in Kuwait on Sunday under the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The Kuwait Science Club (KSC) will organize the fair, during the period February 16-19 under the theme "Connecting Investors with Inventors", in collaboration with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

Speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Science Club and head of fair's organizing committee Talal Al-Kharafi referred to a remarkable increase in the number of participants.

In this year's edition 180 inventors, from 42 countries, are taking part in the fair with 230 inventions across various scientific fields, he said, noting that Ecuador and Nigeria are participating for the first time. Al-Kharafi unveiled that that the

Arab League, for the first time, is providing five financial awards in this fair.

This unprecedented level of support comes in line with the directives of Arab leaders to promote innovation, inventions, and scientific research, he argued.

Al-Kharafi stated that the fair of-

fers prizes exceeding USD 60,000 to winning inventors. He further noted that several leading international organizations spe-

cializing in inventions have been keen to participate in the exhibition since its inception in 2007. Al-Kharafi disclosed that 28 Ku-

waiti inventors are participating this

year with 17 inventions spanning various scientific realms. He stated that the organizing committee has approved online participation in the fair for the first time, allowing participants to submit their inventions via the official online platform without the need

to attend physically, thus broaden-

ing accessibility for international

Al-Kharafi emphasized that hosting such a prestigious international event in Kuwait is a source of great pride, particularly as it is organized entirely by a team of dedicated Kuwaiti volunteers who are committed

to serving their country. He boasted that the fair has been ranked the leading event of its kind Officials talking to the press.

in the Middle East, attributing this

success to the high level of profes-

sionalism in its organization.

He expressed his deep gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for their unwavering support for scientific advancement and youth innovation.

Al-Kharafi thanked the ministries of interior, foreign affairs, and social affairs for facilitating the participation of international delegates and representatives from research institutions and scientific organiza-

For his part, Chairman of the Judging Committee David Farouki said Kuwait has become a leading nation in fostering innovation and invention on a global scale. He noted that the event has wit-

nessed remarkable growth over the past 15 years, making it a focal point for many specialized international

'Kuwait keen on strategic ties boost with China in all fields'

Late Amir Sheikh Jaber cornerstone of evolving bonds: Sheikh Jarrah

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has confirmed that Kuwait is keen on developing strategic relations with China in all fields in order to realize the aspirations of the leaders and peoples of the two countries; while ensuring security, stability, prosperity and development in the region and the world.

Sheikh Jarrah made the statement at the event that Chinese Ambassador Kuwait Zhang Jianwei organized on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the historic visit of HH the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad to China in 1965.

A large number crowd of ambassadors, diplomats and citizens attended the event.

Sheikh Jarrah pointed out that the historic visit of HH the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad to China during his tenure as Minister of Finance, Commerce and Industry embodied in word and deed the famous Chinese proverb: A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step as "it



The Deputy Foreign Minister affirms Kuwait's keenness to develop strategic relations with China.

was the first step on the path of Kuwaiti-Chinese relations.'

He said this visit was the starting point for Kuwaiti-Chinese relations in 1971, when the two countries established diplomatic relations and exchanged the opening of embassies, making the State of Kuwait the first Arab Gulf State to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing and Kuwait as China's gateway to the Gulf region"

He added "this visit laid the foundation stone for joint relations and close ties that grew and developed over the decades since that auspicious visit, thanks to the tireless and strenuous efforts made by many Kuwaiti and Chinese officials and

figures. Despite the geographical distance, it has never been an obstacle to the sincere desire to advance this relationship, which has transcended diplomacy and protocols to become a friendship based on the common values that unite the two peoples; including mutual respect, fruitful cooperation, and a genuine desire to enhance development and prosperity.'

He affirmed that "Kuwaiti-Chinese relations have witnessed remarkable development in various fields over the past years. By all standards, the visit of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad to the Chinese capital, Beijing, in July 2018 was a huge success. It led to the establishment of a strategic partnership between the two countries, which raised the level of coordination between them in all fields and at all levels.

He also stressed that the historic visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China in September 2023, when he was the Crown Prince, was a qualitative and major leap towards consolidating bilateral relations between the two friendly countries. "It wrote a new chapter in the story of Kuwaiti-Chinese partnership entitled, 'A Promising and Bright Future of Cooperation'. This auspicious visit witnessed the signing of seven bilateral memoranda of understanding related to huge and vital development projects in the State of Kuwait and bilateral cooperation documents in different fields like renewable energy, infrastructure and environmental governance," he concluded.

Law to tighten noose on commercial cheats soon

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has finished preparing a draft decree-law for combating commercial violation cover-up practices with the aim of preventing any foreigner, whether an individual or a legal entity, from engaging in economic activity within Kuwait without securing the necessary licenses from the relevant authorities. in accordance with the existing laws, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to informed sources, the proposed law prohibits any individual or entity from enabling expatriates to violate this ban through cover-up practices. This includes allowing them to use trade names, licenses, official approvals, commercial registrations, or any other means that would facilitate illegal business operations.

The draft law also prohibits obstructing or hindering authorities from performing their duties by either withholding required information or providing false or misleading data.

In addition, Article 3 of Chapter 3 of the draft law grants the Minister of Commerce and Industry, or his designated representatives, the authority to assign certain employees as judicial police officers to allow them to inspect and control suspected violations of commercial activities under this law.

Article 4 of the draft law stipulates that, without prejudice to any more severe penalties stipulated in the Penal Code or other laws, violators of this law will face penalties for fraud as prescribed in the Penal Code, along with the closure of the facility and deportation of the offender. Also, final rulings issued against violators will be published on the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's website to promote transparency and deter further violations.

Kuwait joins world to mark radio role in fostering speech freedom

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA): Kuwait is joining nations worldwide, celebrating World Radio Day, an international day celebrated on 13 February each year, recognizing the role of radio in promoting freedom of speech and diversity.

The day highlights radio's role in fostering international cooperation among broadcasters, encouraging both major networks and local stations to enrich access to information and uphold freedom of speech.

Announced in 2011 by UNESCO member states and adapted as a UN international day in 2012, recognizing radio's impact in connecting societies, promoting democratic dialogue, raising public awareness of the importance of radio and encouraging decision makers to use it.

Each year, World Radio Day has a theme, 2025 is dedicated to "Radio and Climate Change" to support radio stations in their journalistic coverage of this issue.

For nearly seven decades, Kuwait has placed great emphasis on radio broadcasting, Kuwait radio -- one of the first in the Arab World - has been home to notable local and regional media figures since its beginning in 1951

Kuwait Radio Library holds several re-

cordings and interviews featuring artists, musicians, scholars, and intellectuals across the Arab World, along with rich collection of classic radio dramas, making it rare cultural treasure.

Continuing this legacy, the Ministry of Information launched several media initiatives in November 2022, including a heritage radio station dedicated to airing classic dramas, programs, and music from Kuwait Radio's vast archive.

Kuwait Radio has earned various prestigious awards over the years, notably, in February 2019 when it secured first place in program production hours at the annual Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) in Algeria.

Recently, in 2023, the ministry won three awards at the 23rd Arab Radio and Television festival in Tunisia, followed by 12 awards at the Gulf Radio and Television Festival in Manama in 2024.

Founded on February 14, 1951, with its first broadcast on May 12, Kuwait Radio has undergone continuous development to keep pace with global innovations in broadcasting, networks, and technology while maintaining a diverse range of programming and improving national radio capabilities.

diwaniya 🕈 چيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Trump moves could lead to global chaos, unrest, wars

"AFTER the world tasted the horrors of world wars and the destruction, devastation and massive slaughter that they brought upon it, claiming the lives of millions of civilians and military personnel, it was forced to calm down and make peace. International organizations were established, such as the United Nations, so that the world would resort to the language of reason, law, tranquility and peace," Doctor of Law and Lawyer Dr. Nayef Al-Adwani wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"However, the catastrophe is that the

formulation of the United Nations Law gave the right and privilege to the powerful and victorious -- great powers to veto, right to withdraw and not to recognize any agreement or international organization, whenever any country wants to according to its in-



Dr. Al-Adwani

terests, size and conditions.

"The United States is a living example of this situation. Its president decided to withdraw from the World Health Organization and the Environmental Convention, while it did not join the International Criminal Court. Last but not the least, it withdrew from the UNRWA -- a refugee organization. It started issuing political statements directed at countries in the Middle East, Latin America and Europe to implement its new policy, disregarding international law, peace agreements, the sovereignty right of states or the right of self-determination of peoples.

"The United States president considers Israel as its strategic ally. The latter is the 'usurping and occupying State', a small State that has done well and has the right to expand and spread at the expense of its Arab neighbors and the Palestinian people.

"He even asked Arab countries (Egypt and Jordan) to receive Palestinians displaced from their land, under several pretexts, such as rebuilding the destroyed Gaza, protecting Israel, and surrounding it with security belts by seizing new land that include the West Bank and Gaza.

"This is in addition to his demand to hand over the Panama Canal -- an important global waterway -- to America, and his demanding Denmark to hand over Greenland to the United States, as it constitutes a security requirement for it, in facing Russia and China

"In the same context, the US President ordered raising the tax rate on Chinese, Canadian, Russian and European products, as well as raising the contribution of European countries to financing NATO. This new approach in international relations by imposing the logic of power, hegemony, threat and intimidation will put the world to chaos again, and contribute to creating a tense environment that may lead to the return of violence, terrorism, and perhaps, a new world war.

Also:

Considering that the Council of Ministers recently approved the State budget for fiscal 2025/2026 with a deficit of more than KD6 billion -- an increase of 11.9 percent compared to the previous year and in order to understand the executive and legislative roles of the government after the dissolution of the National Assembly, we need a modest discussion of political and financial logic, away from the complexities of the secrecy of government figures and the value of waste," Dr Khaled Ahmad Al-Tarrah wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The government has been enjoying the powers of the legislative authority since the dissolution of the National Assembly in May 2024. No one is there to oppose or discuss -- logically or illogically -- the government or the council from the relevant committee or in the council in general, such that the State budget is approved despite the ambiguity of expenditures, accounts and tools for dealing with waste.

"Perhaps, it is better to send questions to HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, taking into account the need to respect his decision not to make a statement, to disclose what is in the heart and mind, and to communicate with the media since he assumed the presidency of the Council of Ministers.

"Economic language is neither easy to understand nor a language everyone can digest. Since it comes from the Council of Ministers, it is a rigid language dominated by complex puzzles and contradictions within one government!

"Since the experts have an important opinion, and an unimportant opinion, in analyzing the numbers, and non-experts have an opinion that is not worth listening to, the opinion may indicate ignorance in the hidden government back-stage, or a position that does not respect the lack of transparency!

"The government has accustomed us to accepting its numbers and sovereign investments, with extreme secrecy, and confidentiality of presentation and discussion in the Council of Ministers, and the National Assembly previously.

"Today, it expanded its powers at the executive and legislative levels . In Kuwait, majority of the general public are not partners in making financial decisions, directing sovereign investments

and solving their puzzles "Foreign entities specializing in sovereign wealth revealed the value of the Kuwaiti Generations Fund -- more than \$1 trillion, while the government hides the truth, so that Kuwait is not bombarded with requests for loans from needy and non-needy countries, not to mention the accumulation of debts and non-collection of payments, as the relationship with many countries -- poor and nonpoor - appears to be so.

"Thus, we ask without insisting on getting a response from HH the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, a reserved official spokesperson or someone who is diligent in the profession of public communication, especially with the media, which is theoretically supposed to represent the fourth State.

"Our question: Is it possible to deposit the retained profits, and immediately address the government's arguments, specifi-cally Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) and the Ministry of Finance, regarding the inability to collect them from entities with independent budgets, such as Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), whose retained profits amounted to more than KD8 billion or more than \$27 billion?

"Since the alleged arguments KPC and KIA lie in the failure to approve the final accounts of the corporation in the Budgets Committee and their suspension by the National Assembly, is it permissible to be optimistic about resolving the mysteries of the retained profits of the

corporation?
"Is it permissible to ask about the possibility of canceling the agreement to settle the retained profits between KIA and KPC, and paying in installments so that the corporation does not fall - God forbid - into the trap of bankruptcy, or its inability to pay its loans in and outside Kuwait?

"As the government has the right to make executive and legislative solutions at the same time, and we have strong confidence in the wisdom of spending and waste in the State budget, we say: For all these questions, the more than 'what' and reasons, do we have the right to gain the government's trust in involving us in what it deems appropriate in terms of numbers and financial solutions, and granting us the confidence to listen to its opinion on the retained profits without discussion, questions, brevity or journalistic 'joke'?

"Since we are not looking for a govjustification regarding the 'retained earnings', interfere in the government decision or object to the exaggeration in the secrecy of the sovereign fund's wealth that the whole world knows except the Kuwaiti people, we wish the government success in its jour-

ney of financial and economic puzzles.
"We hope that HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah will be blessed by Allah the Almighty with a generous gesture to the people to hear their voice whenever they want, or the voice of their representative. We have the right to legitimate questioning and to strive to present more than 'what', without interfering in the government's powers and decisions, and its policies of secrecy, or imposing a new logic for the State budget, and addressing the deficit. We have worked hard and the government must tolerate our efforts, our 'stupidity', and our backward understanding.

"This is an acknowledgment of journalistic responsibility on behalf of the 'fourth State' as it has been historically and scientifically referred to. This is an acknowledgment of the lack of right to question the mysteries of the budget. and the indigestion and understanding, because the government is more specialized in its work, decisions and policies of secrecy and 'contempt . The government deserves gratitude for not paying attention to the release of retained profits or listening to the delirium of writers and journalistic 'gossip'! We owe you. We apologize for the 'gossip', curiosity and interference in the jurisdiction of a government more specialized in its work."

"Belonging to the homeland is not just about slogans or songs we hear. It is a feeling that fills a person with love and drives them to be a good citizen. Such a person defends their country and does everything possible to uplift it," columnist Dr. Mohammad Khaled Al-Hajifa wrote for Al-Anba daily.

"Citizenship means being diligent in our work, avoiding laziness, and performing our pro-



fessional with precision and responsibility. It means not neglecting our tasks, but approaching them with effort and determination. In the end, we contribute to the development of our country

through the work Dr. Al-Hajifa we do, whether big or small, each according to our speciali-

zation, position, and responsibilities. "Citizenship involves preserving public facilities and ensuring we do not contribute to their destruction or disruption, and not allow troublemakers to act out their grudges. These facilities belong to everyone, and it is our joint responsibility to maintain them, including streets, bridges, and public parks. We also should avoid wasting electricity and water, and use them only as needed.

"Citizenship also means distancing ourselves from anything related to corruption, which clearly undermines the country's structure and development. This includes actions such as falsifying academic certificates to gain an undeserved position, engaging in bribery or accepting it in exchange for facilitating something, or turning a blind eye to negative practices and failing to report them

when they concern the nation's future. "Citizenship is our safety valve, the shield that protects our country from spiteful or opportunistic individuals who prioritize their personal interests and remain indifferent to the society they live in or the well-being of their homeland,

regardless of its status. "Citizenship urges us to reject rumors and refrain from spreading them on social media. Instead, we should confront these rumors and seek information from credible sources. Thankfully, the state authorities are transparent with us, providing all the information we need.'

— Compiled by Saeed Mahmoud /Mahmoud Attiyeh



A delegation from the Jordanian Armed Forces, Kuwait National Guard, visit the operations center, security system, and crisis management.



Leaders of the Kuwaiti and Jordanian delegations exchange mementos.

National Guard hosts Jordanian Armed Forces team

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Operations and Training Assistant at the National Guard Major General Dr. Faleh Shujaa Faleh received Director of the Infantry and Armored Corps at the Jordanian Armed Forces (the Arab Army) Brigadier General Nizar Al-Saoub, and his accompanying delegation, who are visiting Kuwait to participate in the eighth meeting of the Jordanian-Kuwaiti Joint Committee, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the National Guard explained that matters of mutual interest were discussed during the meeting. Major General Faleh welcomed the brotherly delegation to their second homeland Kuwait, and conveyed the greetings of the Chief of the National Guard Chairman Sheikh Mubarak Humoud Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf, and Undersecretary of the National Guard Lieutenant General Hashem Al-Rifai.

They emphasized the importance of mutual visits in strengthening military cooperation between the two sides through the exchange of expertise between their respective military institutions.

The Jordanian Armed Forces delegation visited the Operations Center, the Security System, and Crisis Management at the General Presidency, where they received a briefing on the center's functions, particularly its role in securing National Guard sites and vital facilities under its protection.

The delegation was also briefed on the center's efforts to enhance its support for state agencies during crises and emergency events, including the automated link between the National Guard Operations Center and various state ministries and institutions. In addition, the delegation learned about the center's efforts to stay up-to-date with the latest technologies in the field of cybersecurity.

Maximum penalty eyed for Kuwaiti citizen in murder of grandmother

Wife-killer sent for mental status check; Al-Fikr acquitted

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Criminal Court has decided to refer the citizen who allegedly killed his wife in the Abu Hadria desert in Saudi Arabia to a psychiatric hospital for a mental health evaluation.

The accused told the prosecution that he had left his wife in the desert but did not kill

His family revealed that he is a drug addict and suffers from psychological issues for which he is receiving treatment at a psychiatric hospital.

Maximum penalty sought: In the case filed against a Kuwaiti citizen for the alleged murder of his grandmother in Rumaithiya, the Public Prosecution, represented by Public Prosecutor Dalal Fadel Omar urged the Criminal Court to impose maximum penalty on the accused for his actions, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The Public Prosecution explained that there would

be no leniency in applying the law to anyone who dares to take a life that is forbidden. The evidence in this case formed a clear and undeniable foundation for conviction, and left no room for doubt or interpretation. The accused's unsound behavior and extreme cruelty were evident in the case.

Furthermore, this crime was not just an attack on an individual, but an assault on fundamental human values and family bonds. It was not a murder carried out by an enemy or an opponent seeking revenge, but rather by a man who killed his own grandmother. In light of these circumstances, the Public Prosecution demanded the toughest penalty as a just punishment for the accused.

Ex-MP Al-Fikr acquitted: During its session on Thursday, the Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Osaimi, acquitted former MP Anwar Al-Fikr who was accused of challenging the rights and powers of His Highness the Amir during an election symposium.

The Public Prosecution charged Al-Fikr with undermining the constitutional authorities granted to His Highness the Amir, attacking the Amiri position, and spreading false news that could harm the country's prestige and national interests.

It is worth noting that the court refused last week to release Al Fikr until the ruling against him was issued today.

Also, the Criminal Court acquitted former MP Saleh Al-Mulla in the case filed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs against him for allegedly insulting the Palestinian President.

Kuwaiti citizen escapes gallows ; Al-Saeed gets three years jail

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff & Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Dhuwaihi Al-Dhuwaihi, sentenced media figure Fajr Al-Saeed to three-year imprisonment with hard labor on Thursday in a state security case.

Al-Saeed was convicted of advocating for the normalization of ties with Israel and undermining the interests of the state.

Death ruling commuted: The Court of Cassation commuted the death sentence imposed on a citizen to life imprisonment for killing his friend due to personal disputes and buried the body along the Eighth Ring Road; while his brother, who was also sentenced to death, is now sentenced to two years in prison for burning the killer's mobile phone.

The crime happened in Umm Al-Hayman, where a 32-year-old citizen stabbed his 33-year-old friend multiple times, then transported and buried the body along the Eighth Ring Road project. The perpetrator then set his car on fire before turning himself to Umm Al-Hayman Police Station.

Jail for 'ramming' car: The Misdemeanor Court sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to one-year imprisonment with hard labor for deliberately crashing into his wife's relatives' vehicle in the Ahmadi Governorate in October 2024, reports Al-Anba daily.

The court found the accused guilty on three re-

lated charges ... intentionally damaging the victims' vehicle with the intent to harm his wife, driving recklessly and negligently, thereby endangering himself and others, and intentionally disrupting traffic.

The case was brought to court after the wife filed a complaint, claiming that she was traveling with her brother, sister, and children when her husband chased their vehicle and intentionally collided with it several times i force them to stop due to ongoing family disputes.

The defense counsel representing the victims, Lawyer Khalil Haidar, stated that the court issued its verdict after thoroughly examining the incident, reviewing the circumstances, and validating the evidence supporting the accusation . The court also took into account the accused's confession and the testimonies of witnesses.

News in Brief

Man jumps to death: A man, wanted by law, died when he jumped from the top of the Passports Roundabout tunnel in Salmiya, reports Al-Rai

A security source revealed that securitymen were chasing the man until he reached the top of the tunnel where he jumped to his death.

Paramedics rushed to the location after receiving information about the incident, but the man already succumbed to his injuries.

A case was registered and investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances leading to the man's death.

Feasting on lost card: Criminal security personnel have started the search for an unidentified person who used a bank card that the owner lost to purchase electronics, meals and food products, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source revealed that a citizen, employed in Kuwait Fire Force, filed a report at Faiha Police Station on behalf of his sister, as he lost her bank card at a cooperative society. Then, an unidentified person used the bank card to buy electronics, eat at restaurants and buy some items in various shops in Fahaheel.

He submitted a copy of the bank statement, showing these transactions.

The source affirmed that the case has been referred to the concerned authorities for investigation; indicating that using a bank card that the owner lost is considered theft. He said the person, who found the card, should have given it to the police station or the bank.

The source stated that the detectives will contact the electronics company where the suspect used the lost card to review the surveillance camera recordings or use the biometric fingerprint technology to identify the thief and arrest him.

Workers rob expat: An expatriate filed a complaint at Jahra Police Station against three expatriate photographers for stealing photography equipment (cameras and maintenance tools), in addition to two iPhones, reports Al-Anba daily.
The complainant provided police with details of

the accused who are working as photographers at a photography shop. He said the accused are his employees, but he did not clarify whether there are labor disputes between them or delays in the payment of salaries.



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 Min**ister 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, fostering 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

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 education excellence remains critical,'

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.



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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

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.

Kuwaiti 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 na-

tional 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 success-

fully 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 herit-

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

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.



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-

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 attendance of the ceremony honoring the winners of the 'Golden Teacher' competition, which was organized by the Teachers Association for the fourth year in

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 methodology 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."

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KUNA photos

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.

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

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

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

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

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-



KUNA photo

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

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 sec-

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

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.



KUNA photo A celebration of national holidays and a review of the latest developments in this

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

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

Continued from Page 1

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

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 commu-nication 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-

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

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

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.





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 vallevs, 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 vio-lently 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 Constitu-

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,



ARAB TIMES, FRIDAY-SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14-15, 2025

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 Consti-

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

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 eas-

ily 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

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 depor-

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

"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

NATO allies stressed on Thursday that from whatever Russia might do next. Ukraine and Europe must not be cut "There can be no negotiation 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

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



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)

BRUSSELS, Feb 13, (AP): Several up to Europe to protect itself and Ukraine to understand," particularly if Europe is "supposed to play a central or the main

role in the peace order. Eurpe, 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," Hegesth 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.



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 ver. di 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

Austrian far-right leader's efforts to form

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

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

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)

coalition government collapse VIENNA, Feb 13, (AP): Austrian far-right leader Herbert Kickl's ef-

forts 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

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 on 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

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

Relations between the Koreas 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

The 12-story building at the North's scenic Diamond Mountain resort, which has 206 rooms and banquet fa-

cilities for hosting meetings, had been

used for family reunions since 2009. The Koreas last held a family reunion

in 2018, after Kim initiated diplomacy

with Seoul and Washington in an ef-

fort to leverage his nuclear program for

a failed summit between Kim and US

President Donald Trump, who was

serving his first term, when the Ameri-

cans rejected North Korea's demands

for a major release of US-led economic

Negotiations derailed in 2019 after

war-divided rivals.

economic benefits.

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 improve, 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 Williamtown 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-10 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

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

Act against humanity: Seoul

'N.Korea destroys family reunion center'

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

Turkish president holds talks

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 cer-

emony, in Islamabad, Pakistan on Feb 13. (AP)

with Pakistani PM Sharif

A gas explosion at a department store in Taiwan on Thursday killed four people and injured 26, fire au-

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

ISLAMABAD, Feb 13, (AP): Tur-

key's President Recep Tayyip Er-

dogan met with Pakistan's Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thurs-

day at his office in Islamabad to

discuss the situation in Gaza and a

They will sign several agree-

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

ments for boosting trade and eco-

nomic ties between the nations,

range of bilateral issues.

officials said

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

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

with Turkish and Pakistani flags.

The crowds danced to the beat of

drums as the Turkish leader's con-

Erdogan, were welcomed by Shar-

if on their arrival at his office. A

band played the national anthems

of both countries before a ceremo-

ny that saw the leaders inspecting

Erdogan will jointly chair bilat-

eral strategic cooperation talks and

the two sides are expected to sign a number of agreements, according

to a government announcement.

a guard of honor.

Erdogan and his wife, Emine

voy passed through the streets.

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 are now being treated at local hospitals in Taichung. (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



region's largest city of Goma.

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 Corneille Nangaa, who has emerged as the M23 rebels' political leader since they seized Goma in late January during a major escalation in their yearslong fighting with Congolese

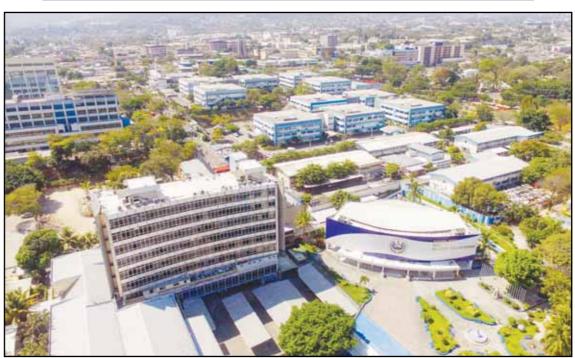
"(The meeting) was an opportunity to ... seek an end to the war as soon as possible, because we remain convinced that the solution to this crisis is not military,' Bishop Donatien Nshole, secretary-general of CENCO said after the meeting.

North Koreans arrive to meet their South Korean relatives during a separated 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.



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

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 treachery, a crime under military law that carries the death

Lukwago on Wednesday saw Besigve 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 pro-

vide, 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

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

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 ob-

servers 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 rominent opposition group. He is a fierce critic of Museveni, for whom he once served as military assistant and

Rio Carnival factory fire leaves 10 hospitalized 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

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

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

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

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 prepara-

Kuwait crude oil drops to \$79.44 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil lost 25 cents during Wednesday's trading to reach USD 79.44 per barrel compared with USD 79.69 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) said Thursday.

Brent futures dropped USD 1.82 to USD 75.18 pb and West Texas Intermediate's (WTI) futures declined USD 1.95 to USD 71.37 pb.

Business



The 115th session of the Arab League's Economic and Social Ministerial Council.

Kuwait represented by Talal Al-Nemesh

115th Arab League Economic & Social Council Meeting kicks off

CAIRO, Feb 13, (KUNA): The 115th meeting of the Arab League's Economic and Social Ministerial Council began on Thursday with desire to further expand cooperation amongst Arab countries.

The meeting will feature discussions on the Grand Arab free trade zone, developments on the unified Arab customs union and investments in the region.

Outcomes of previous economic and social meetings as well as follow-ups on the Arab strategic water security strategy and meeting challenges of sustainable development of 2030 would also be on the agenda in addition to issues pertaining to support of small-to-medium size enterprises in Palestine and the Arab unified economic report of 2025.

Other issues pertaining to infrastructural development in Yemen, climate change and agricultural production, air cargo, transport of goods and emergency plans for



Acting Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance Talal Al-Nemesh.

natural and manmade disasters are amongst other many other important issues on the agenda.

Sports events such the Saudi hosting of the FIFA World Cup 2034 and Moroccan co-hosting of the FIFA 2030 World Cup alongside Spain, and Portugal will be discussed.

Kuwait is represented at the meeting by acting assistant undersecretary for economic affairs at the Ministry of Finance Talal Al-Nemesh.

KFAED, WFP sign MoU for development cooperation

MoU focuses on food security, climate change, and technical cooperation

ROME, Feb 13, (KUNA): Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for development cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP) for technical cooperation and joint efforts.

KFAED Acting Director General and Kuwait's Deputy Governor at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Waleed Al-Bahar and WFP Executive Director Cindy McCain signed the MoU.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy, Nasser Al-Qahtani, and Kuwait's Permanent Representative to UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Yousef Al-Juhail attended the signing, which came on the sidelines of the 48th session of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Governing Counci in Rome.

The MoU focuses on financing economic and social development in developing countries where both entities operate, as well as bilateral coordination and the exchange of information and technical expertise.

The five-year MoU is renewable, with cooperation between the two sides being expected to focus on specific activities including the exchange of information and knowledge to leverage their experiences, resources, and expertise.

Additionally, they will coordinate on projects and programs eligible for joint support, particularly those addressing global food security challenges and climate change issues, given their broad impact.

Also:

ROME: The State of **Kuwait** emphasized the critical role of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in addressing global poverty and food insecurity.

This statement was made by Kuwait's Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Kuwait's Governor at IFAD, **Noora Al-Fassam**, Thursday, during her address at the 48th Session of the IFAD Governing Council, held in Rome on February 12-13, 2025.

In her speech, Al-Fassam expressed Kuwait's pride in its strong and longstanding relationship with IFAD, a specialized United Nations agency and international financial institution focused on combating hunger and poverty in rural communities. The agency's efforts are centered on investing in rural populations to enhance their food security, income, and resilience.





Photos during the World Food Programme.

Ministry of Finance Photos

During the meeting, several bilateral discussions took place with the King of **Lesotho**, the President of **Sierra Leone**, various ministers, and IFAD's Execu-

These discussions focused on strengthening cooperation, particularly in financing joint development projects and exploring new investment opportunities

between the parties.

The Kuwaiti delegation, led by Minister Al-Fassam, also included Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Nasser Al-Qahtani, Kuwait's alternate governor at IFAD Waleed Al-Bahar; and the operations monitoring officer of IFAD and member of the Fund's Executive Board Khaled Al-Khaled.

Government housing plot distributions on hold, affecting housing applications

Real estate prices rise in Q4 2024, investment sector drives growth

By National Bank of Kuwait

Real estate sales witnessed a broad-based improvement across all segments in Q4 2024, amid stronger demand in the investment and commercial segments especially. Real estate prices, meanwhile, logged their first quarterly increase in a year on rising investment and residential home prices. For 2024 as a whole, real estate sales posted their first annual gain since 2021, with the revival concentrated in the investment and commercial segments while residential sales growth continued to lag. The outlook for 2025 is positive, with expectations of improving growth in the non-oil economy, potential interest rate cuts and the prospect of legislative reforms, including a possible housing finance law, which would greatly improve liquidity and boost the fortunes of the residential sector.

Real estate activity rebounds in O4 2024

Real estate sales surged in Q4 2024 by almost 28% q/q (from a mild fall of -0.8% q/q in Q3) to reach KD1,082 million, the highest level in more than two years. (Chart 1.) Strong sales were supported by robust activity in both the investment sector, which logged double-digit quarterly growth in transactions and sales value, and the commercial sector, mainly on large deals in the Hawalli and Al-Ahmadi governorates, while the residential sector recorded a large but less marked increase. Indeed, the value of residential sales in Q4 2024, at KD456 million, was the most in two years, amid a second consecutive quarter of double-digit growth in the number of transactions. Around 38% of these were concentrated in Al-Ahmadi governorate. Demand for residential property has benefited from lower valuations in outer areas and renewed optimism about prospects for the sector this year.

Investment sales, meanwhile, rose sharply for a second straight quarter in Q4, to a 6-year high of KD433 million. Demand in this segment has been supported by reportedly higher rental yields, amid shortages of affordable housing for low-paid bluecollar workers in central areas after the government tightened regulations around apartment overcrowding following the fire in Al-Mangaf in June 2024.

Meanwhile, commercial sales rebounded from the large decline seen in Q3 2024, with sales of KD193 million, though this is still below the sector's record high from Q2 2024 (KD294 million). Only six transactions accounted for 61% of total sales during the quarter at KD118 million, concentrated in the Hawalli and Al-Ahmadi governorates.

Sales in 2024 recovered to near 2022 levels, but skewed toward the investment and commercial segments

investment and commercial segments Overall, 2024 was a year of recovery in total real estate activity

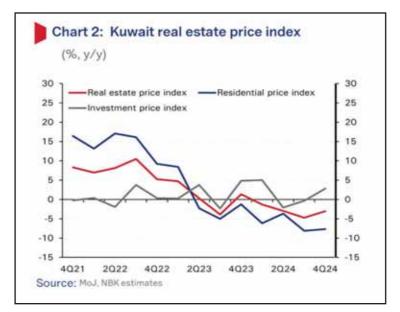


Table 1: Real estate sales Quarterly Quarterly Sales/ Transactions Change in 4Q24, % 2023 2024 4Q23 1Q24 2Q24 3Q24 4Q24 q/q y/y Sales (KD million) 709 870 771 697 853 847 1,082 27.7 40.4 Residential 29.2 357 382 353 353 337 384 456 18.8 87.6 Investment 224 301 231 232 223 317 433 36.4 127 32.3 3.3 Commercial 186 187 112 294 146 193 1,074 33.2 Number of transactions 1,515 21.2 1,210 1,137 1.065 1,009 1,250 Residential 23.7 36.7 760 875 810 784 712 895 1.107 Investment 285 302 300 259 250 327 370 13.1 23.3 Commercial 29 27 22 47 28 38 35.7 40.7 34 Average transaction Value (KD '000) 659 723 678 655 846 678 714 5.4 5.4 Residential property 471 441 436 450 473 429 -3.9 -5.5 412 20.6 52.1 Investment 788 982 769 895 893 970 1,169 Commercial 5,416 5,088 -2.5 -26.6 4,970 6,929 5,110 6,246 5,219 Source: Ministry of Justice, NBK calculations Table 2: NBK real estate price index* Weight q/q y/y (100=2019)4Q23 1Q24 2Q24 3Q24 4Q24 4Q23 1Q24 2Q24 3Q24 4Q24 RE price index 100.0 2.0 -2.1 -3.2 -1.4 3.8 1.4 -1.3 -3.0 -4.7-3.0 2.8 Investment 45.5 3.7 2.3 -7.0 1.0 7.0 4.8 5.0 -2.1 -0.3-7.7 Residential 54.5 0.7 -5.70.0 -3.31.2 -1.2 -6.1-3.6 -8.1

from relatively weak 2023 levels. This was supported especially by strong performances in the investment and commercial segments. Here, large deals (>KD10 million) played an important part, and activity was supported by the relatively lower valuations compared to the residential segment and robust growth in bank credit for real estate (+6.8% in 2024 from +1.3% in 2023), despite a still high-interest rate level. However, sales in the residential sector - historically, the largest contributor to overall market volumes - though much improved on 2023's decline of 26% y/y, rose at a much slower pace of 7.1%. This figure is still well down (-45%) on its peak, recorded in the aftermath of the pandemic in 2021. The abolishment of irrevocable real estate power of attorney may have lowered speculative activity within this sector, alongside the signposting of future 'white land' fees on undeveloped plots (effective January 2026). Together with still-high residential unit valuations, these factors may have redirected interest towards the investment and commercial segments.

Investment segment pushes real estate prices higher

Our estimated real estate price index registered its highest growth in ten quarters (+3.8% q/q) in Q4 2024. This increase came mainly on higher investment prices, recouping some of the losses seen earlier, with the residential index logging a milder quarterly gain. On a yearly basis, the overall price index logged a softer decline in Q4 (-3.0% y/y versus -4.7% in Q3) as the fall in residential prices softened slightly, while investment prices ticked up 2.8% y/y (Chart 2). For 2024 as a whole, the real estate price

index fell by 3.0%, versus a mild increase of 0.6% in 2023. This decline came after the strong post-pandemic increases seen in 2021 and 2022 by 7.0% and 7.7%, respectively. Still, residential segment prices remain above 2021 level.

Government plot distributions on hold again in Q4

Government housing plot distributions in Q4 were on hold for a second consecutive quarter, based on the Public Authority of Housing and Welfare's (PAHW) website. This is likely pending publication of the new distribution strategy and the approval of the real estate financing law. As a result, the outstanding number of housing applications increased to 98,099 by end-October 2024. According to a report by the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, slow completion and spending on PAHW projects is also linked to technical and managerial hurdles. However, PAHW awarded new infrastructure projects in Al-Mutla city and two contracts for homes and infrastructure within the affordable housing project. Meanwhile, approved Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB) loans for government plots fell on a quarterly and annual basis, to reach KD111 million, while distributed loans rose 15% q/q to KD111 million from the eight-quarter low seen

Outlook for 2025 remains positive, while various legislative changes could impact the market

The outlook for real estate activity in 2025 remains generally positive, with the pick-up in momentum recorded in Q4 expected to be carried through helped by improving prospects for the non-oil economy and potential interest rate cuts. Various legislative reforms could also affect the market, including recent amendments to the residency law, which provided owners and investors with 10-15 years residency, to the law regulating real estate ownership by non-Kuwaitis as well as a law allowing authorities to revise their service fees and regulate the living conditions of workers (housing no more than 4 persons per room). These changes could reshape market expectations by increasing demand for investment and commercial real estate, though they might also be expected to exert upward pressure on rents, especially in housing for blue-collar workers.

Moreover, the upcoming potential approval of the real estate financing law should help stimulate demand in the residential segment. Although details of the law are not yet finalized, media reports suggest various steps to expand home ownership financing. This includes increasing the magnitude of the loan provided by local banks to KD130k at an interest rate of 2% above the discount rate in addition to the KD70k government interest free loan, while extending the commercial loan maturity to 25 years instead of the current 15 and raising the maximum debt-to-income ratio to 50% of the monthly income/salary from the current 40%

In terms of downside risks, market momentum could slow if economic growth disappoints in 2025. Also, the law for combating the monopoly of vacant lands – which imposes an annual tax on undeveloped housing plots – will come into effect in January 2026, pushing landowners to sell or develop these lands and potentially slowing the recovery in prices.

'Bank's comprehensive strategy is a key driver in achieving these impressive results' says, the Chairperson

JKB Group achieves outstanding financial results for 2024, with JOD 194.3 mln net profit

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Jordan Kuwait Bank (JKB) announced its financial results for 2024, demonstrating significant growth across various financial indicators. The bank recorded a notable increase in net profits, reaching JOD 194.3 million (KD 84.4 million), reflecting a rise of 115.8 % compared to the previous year.

These strong results highlight the group's robust financial position and extensive presence through a network of more than 60 branches across the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in addition to a branch in Cyprus. The bank also holds ownership stakes in several companies within Jordan and abroad, including full ownership of Ejara Leasing Company, a 78.3% stake in United Financial Investments Company, a 53.4% shareholding in the Bank of Baghdad in Iraq.

According to the consolidated financial statements, the group achieved growth in total asset value to reach JOD 5.6 billion (KD 2.4 billion), an increase of 7.3% over the previous year, while equity rose to JOD 886.1 million (KD 385 million) by the end of the fourth quarter of 2024, marking a growth of

Deposits and cash insurance saw a growth of 7.3% to reach JOD 4.1 billion (KD 1.8 billion), while the total value of granted credit facilities amounted to JOD 2 billion (KD 870

In light of these preliminary financial results, which are subject to the approval of the Central Bank of Jordan, the board of directors of Jordan Kuwait Bank has recommended a cash dividend distribution of 12% to shareholders for the year 2024.

Commenting on these results, Sheikha Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Chairperson of the Bank's Board of Directors, expressed her deep appreciation to the



Haethum Buttikhi

bank's customers and shareholders for their continued trust. She also extended gratitude to the regulatory authorities in Jordan, Iraq, and Cyprus for their ongoing support of the bank and its subsidiaries.

She praised the Board of Directors, Executive Management and employees for their outstanding performance, which has propelled the group to its prestigious position. She emphasized that the bank's comprehensive strategy – encompassing banking, investment, technology, and administration - was a key driver in achieving these impressive results.

Meanwhile, the Bank's CEO, Mr Haethum Buttikhi, affirmed that the exceptional achieved figures and high growth rate were accompanied by the bank's strong financial position. He highlighted that JKB maintained its solid regulatory capital adequacy, which stood at 20.7% and successfully increased all provision ratios corresponding to credit exposures, ensuring resilience against potential risks.

Mr Al Buttikhi concluded by commending the efforts of the Central Bank of Jordan, under the leadership of Governor Dr Adel Sharkas, for its continued support of the Jordanian banking sector. He credited the Central Bank's prudent policies and forward-looking vision as instrumental in the sector's progress and stability.

Additionally, he expressed appreciation to the Securities Commission, the Amman Stock Exchange, and all regulatory authorities in Jordan and Iraq for their collaboration and support. He also extended his gratitude to the bank's customers and shareholders for their trust, as well as to the bank's administrators and employees for their dedication and hard work in serving the institution.

As part of its support for the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

NBK raises awareness on phishing risks

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: As part of its ongoing commitment to enhancing financial awareness, inclusion, and literacy across all segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to support the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign. Launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with local banks and the Kuwait Banking Association, the initiative aims to educate the public on key financial concepts and promote responsible banking practices.

NBK is ramping up its efforts to disseminate financial education and awareness content across all communication platforms and digital channels. This includes video clips, text messages, and expert tips, alongside reposting the Central Bank of Kuwait's messages. Through these initiatives, the bank aims to enhance financial literacy, educate the public on various fraud tactics, and equip them with the knowledge to safeguard their financial security.

In this context, NBK has raised awareness about the risks of phishing messages circulating on social media, which are designed to steal banking and personal information. Fraudsters often create fake accounts, sending direct messages with enticing offers that prompt users to click on malicious links. They also publish fraudulent advertisements featuring discounts, promotions, and giveaways, falsely appearing to originate from trusted entities such as banks, financial institutions, or telecom companies. These deceptive tactics are intended to defraud users and compromise their financial and



Diraya logo

■ The bank will never request personal information through direct messages on social media plat-

personal data.

NBK urged users to follow essential precautions when dealing with phishing messages on social media. Key recommendations include avoiding clicking on links received via direct messages or advertisements, particularly those requesting personal or banking information. The bank also emphasized the importance of verifying the sender's identity and refraining from sharing any personal

or financial details through social media platforms. NBK also recommended enabling two-factor authentication (2FA), highlighting its role in enhancing security and providing an additional layer

of protection for banking and personal accounts before logging in.

The bank emphasized the importance of exercising caution when dealing with links in emails, urging users to verify their source before clicking. It also advised checking the authenticity of phone numbers, hovering over links to ensure they direct to legitimate websites, and rejecting authentication requests from unverified sources.

The bank reaffirmed that it will never request personal information via email, text messages, phone calls, or direct messages on social media. It also warned customers against responding to such messages, highlighting that they are fraudulent attempts to obtain banking details and compromise their financial security.

NBK leverages its extensive resources and wide-reaching digital platforms-boasting the largest following among Kuwaiti banks-to support CBK's efforts in safeguarding customers and protecting the national economy.

NBK remains a key supporter and strategic partner of all CBK's campaigns and initiatives aimed at enhancing financial literacy and promoting banking awareness across society. As a leading financial institution, NBK has spearheaded numerous initiatives to educate the public on financial and banking matters while also organizing specialized training programs for its employees to strengthen their expertise in combating fraud and financial crimes.

Powell rejects Trump's calls for lower interest rates

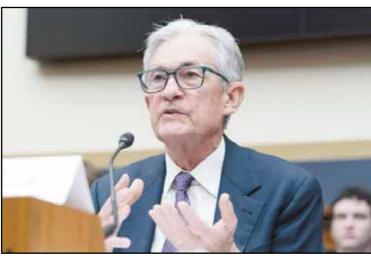
Trump links rate cuts to tariffs, Powell stays firm

WASHINGTON, Feb 13, (AP): Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Wednesday that President Donald Trump's calls for lower interest rates won't lead the central bank to change its rate decisions.

"People can be confident that we'll continue to keep our heads down, do our work, and make our decisions based on what's happening in the economy," Powell said, under questioning from members of the House Financial Services Committee. Powell spoke on the second day of his semiannual testimony to Congress.

Earlier Wednesday, Trump said on social media that "Interest Rates should be lowered, something which would go hand in hand with upcoming Tariffs!!!

Yet Powell indicated during a press conference last month that the Fed. after cutting its key rate three times late last year, would hold off on fur-



Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell testifies before the House Financial Services Committee during a hearing on the Semi-Annual Monetary Policy Report, on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025. (AP)

ther cuts as it waited for evidence that inflation is moving closer to its 2%

And many Fed officials want to

including the tariffs he has proposed and those he has put in place, affect the economy. Most economists worry that tariffs will at least temporarily wait and see how Trump's policies, push up inflation.

On Wednesday, the government reported that inflation picked up last month, with consumer prices rising 3% in January from a year earlier, up from a 3 1/2 year low of 2.4% in September. The uptick makes it even less likely the Fed will cut its key rate anytime soon. The Fed's rate inthe economy, including mortgages, auto loans, and credit cards.

Powell also said that the Fed "has made great progress" on inflation "but we're not quite there yet" to its 2%

target.
"Today's inflation print ... says the same thing," he added. As a result, the Fed wants to keep rates "restrictive for now," Powell added. At its current level, the Fed's key rate is restricting borrowing and spending by consumers and businesses, Powell has said.

The Fed cut its key rate to about 4.3% from 5.3% last year. Fed officials in December had forecast that they would implement two cuts this year, but some economists now think the Fed may be on hold all year. Wall Street investors foresee only one cut,

Core wholesale prices up 0.3%, signaling persistent inflation

US wholesale prices rise 0.4% in Jan, exceeding expectations

WASHINGTON, Feb 13, (AP): U.S. wholesale prices came in hotter than expected last month at a time when progress against inflation appears to have stalled, undercutting expectations for lower interest rates this year.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that its producer price index - which tracks inflation before it reaches consumers - rose 0.4% from December and 3.5% from January 2024. Forecasters had expected a 0.2% change month over month and 3.2% year over year.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core producer prices rose 0.3% last month from December and 3.6% from a year earlier.

Wholesale services prices rose 0.3%, pushed higher by increasing hotel costs. Goods services climbed 0.6% on higher energy prices.

The wholesale price report arrived a day after the Labor Department delivered some bad news about inflation at the consumer level. Its consumer price index rose 3% in January from a year ago, up from a 2.9% year-over-year increase in December.

Wholesale prices can offer an early look at where consumer inflation might be headed. Economists also watch it because some of its components, notably health care and financial services, flow into the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge - the personal consumption expenditures, or PCE, index. Inflation flared up in early 2021 as

the economy rebounded with unexpected strength from COVID-19 lockdowns, overwhelming factories, ports and freight yards and leading to shortages, delays and higher prices.

In response, the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate - the fed funds rate - 11 times in 2022 and 2023. Inflation began tumbling - from a four-decade high 9.1% in June 2022 to a low of 2.4% in September, tantalizingly close to the central bank's 2% target. The Fed was satisfied enough to reverse course and cut its rate three times in the last four months of 2024.

Then the improvement on inflation

stopped. Year-over-year consumer price inflation has now risen for four straight months.

And economists and financial markets are worried that President Donald Trump's policies will push inflation higher yet. His tariffs on foreign goods and plans to deport millions of undocumented workers could translate into higher prices.

In response to stubborn inflation, the Fed may hold off on further rate cuts. Back in December, it signaled that it expected to cut two more times in 2025. That seems far less likely now. Wall Street investors anticipate only rate cut this year and don't expect that one until October.

Gas prices soar

Inflation surges, challenging Trump's economic promises

WASHINGTON, Feb 13, (AP): As a candidate last year, Donald Trump suggested he could easily conquer inflation and ease voters' fears about the economy.

"I will very quickly deflate," he promised at a California rally. "We are going to take inflation, and we are going to deflate it. We are going to deflate inflation. We are going to defeat inflation. We're going to knock the hell out of inflation.'

Wednesday's consumer price index report showed that inflation is punching back - and President Trump could end up facing the same challenges that dragged down his predecessor, President Joe Biden.

The annual inflation rate has risen in the three months since the November election to 3%, with gasoline prices climbing despite Trump's claims that his return to the White House would signal increased oil production that would lower energy costs.

Trump frequently makes farreaching assertions about his power to bring about change only to find that it is no match for market forces. It's a humbling reminder that even U.S. presidents are subject to the invisible hand of supply and demand, rather than the masters of it.

Consumer sentiment measures suggest the public already sees Trump's plans to expand tariffs as increasing inflation. On Wednesday, the president called for interest rate cuts, even though rate hikes by the Federal Reserve helped lower inflation that spiked at a four-decade high in 2022.

figures have unnerved economists and the financial markets because they suggest that strong consumer spending, solid job gains and a falling unemployment rate could reignite inflation. Steady demand, particularly from wealthier consumers, makes it easier for companies to keep raising prices.

The cost of goods - including toys and auto parts - rose last month even before the imposition of tariffs. Trump has placed 10% tariffs on China, in addition to announcing the removal of exemptions on his 2018 steel and aluminum tariffs. There are also potential tariff hikes on Canada and Mexico and a potential executive order that would increase tariffs to match the import taxes charged by other countries.

All of this means that baseline inflationary pressures could be at their highest level in decades.

"Disinflation may be dead, and we may be looking at a higher rate of inflation than we observed for the 20 years prior to the pandemic," said Joseph Brusuelas, chief economist at RSM, a tax and advisory firm.

Trump's call for lower rates puts him in opposition to Fed Chairman Jerome Powell.

"If inflation goes up in general, we will use our tools, which is the interest rate, to bring it back down to 2% over time," Powell told a congressional committee on Wednesday. Powell also said that Trump's calls to lower rates wouldn't sway the Fed.

So far, the Trump White

House's main response to this challenge has been to blame Biden, an argument with a short lifespan as Trump is exerting more control over economic

policy. "The Biden administration indeed left us with a mess to deal with," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said at Wednesday's news briefing. "It's far worse than I think anybody anticipated.

But Trump allies are also starting to float new ideas for tackling inflation. Standing in the Oval Office on Tuesday, billionaire Elon Musk, the head of the president's Department of Government Efficiency, proposed \$1 trillion in spending cuts this year.

Musk, the world's richest man who continues to control Tesla, X and SpaceX among other companies, wants to eliminate \$1 out of every \$7 spent by the federal government in order to bring the inflation rate to zero. It's not clear based on lawsuits and Congress' responsibility for government funding that Musk can deliver those savings.

"If you cut the budget deficit by a trillion between now and next year, there is no inflation," Musk said. "And if the government is not borrowing as much, it means that interest costs decline. So everyone's mortgage, their car payment, their credit card bills, anything, their student debt, the monthly payments drop. That's a fantastic scenario for the average American."

Such a steep cut might bring lower prices but also the pain of

"That would be a roughly 4% of GDP cut to federal spending, all in one year," said Michael Linden, a senior policy fellow at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth. "It would be an instant recession.

For now, markets are anticipating more inflation as consumer demand stays strong and Trump has yet to show how exactly his policies would keep prices low, as he promised to

voters. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note jumped Wednesday to 4.62% in response to the inflation report, a sign that investors expect interest rates, growth and inflation to be higher in the coming months.

Consumers also say that inflation will rise. Americans' expectations of inflation over the next year have soared, according to the University of Michigan's consumer sentiment survey. The February survey said that inflation this year will be 4.3%, up sharply from 3.3% the previous month. Many respondents mentioned tariffs as a concern.

When asked Wednesday why Trump's call for lower interest rates would temper inflation, Leavitt focused on what the president "wants" instead of what he would do.

"He wants interest rates to be lower," she said. "He wants inflation to be lower. And he believes that the whole of government economic approach that this administration is taking will result in lower inflation.'

UK economy grows 0.1% in Q4, driven by strong December

LONDON, Feb 13, (AP): The British economy managed to eke out a quarterly growth of 0.1% in the final quarter of 2024 following a stronger than anticipated performance in December.

The Office for National Statistics said Thursday that the 0.4% expansion in December was a result of a broad-based expansion, with pubs doing particularly well in the run-up to Christmas. The fourth quarter figures means the economy grew by 0.9% overall

The quarterly increase followed no growth in the previous three months and may ease some of the pressure on Treasury chief Rachel Reeves, who

critics say has been partly responsible for the economic slowdown since Labour returned to power in July. Last week, the Bank of England halved its growth forecast for the British

economy for 2025 to 0.75% as it cut its main interest rate to 4.5%. If that turns out to be remotely accurate, it will be hugely disappointing news for the U.K.'s new Labour government, which has made



Reform UK leader Nigel Farage, left, and deputy leader Richard Tice attend a press conference on the economy and renewable energy, in London, Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025. (AP)

growth its top mission The party has pledged to boost living standards and generate funds for cash-starved public services. With growth proving elusive, the party's popularity has fallen sharply since its election victory in July.

In recent weeks, Reeves has set out plans to boost longer-term growth, such as backing a third runway at London's Heathrow Airport. She has also pledged to create a Silicon Valley-like technology hub between the two university towns of Oxford and Cambridge, backed the regeneration of the area around Manchester United's Old Trafford soccer stadium, as well as a "reset" of the U.K.'s post-Brexit economic relations with the European Union.

Reeves said the government will go "further and faster" to bolster growth

in the months and years ahead. "That is why we are taking on the blockers to get Britain building again, investing in our roads, rail and energy infrastructure, and removing the barriers that get in the way of businesses who want to expand," she said.

What's On

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, Khaldah 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.





City clinic representative Mr. Fawaz at the podium



Principal K.V. Faisal at the podium.

Students recite Qir'aat 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'aat, 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 WALKOT-SAV 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 actionpacked 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. Ebey 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, vicecaptain Ms. Priyada, and wicketkeeper 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 wellbeing 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 Convenor - 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 WALKOT-SAV 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



IDAK cheering.

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.





Features



FRIDAY-SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14-15, 2025

Hall unveils 14 performer nominees for this year's induction

Carey, Checker, Lauper and Phish get Rock Hall nominations

NEW YORK, Feb 13, (AP): Mariah Carey, Chubby Checker, Cyndi Lauper, OutKast and Phish are some the 2025 nominees for induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, a list that also includes two sets of musical brothers who have had public feuds and recent reunions - the Black Crowes and Oasis.

The Hall revealed the list of 14 performer nominees Wednesday, including Bad Company, Joe Cocker, Billy Idol, Joy Division/New Order, Maná, Soundgarden and the White

Eight of the 14 nominees are on the ballot for the first time: Bad Company, the Black Crowes, Chubby Checker, Joe Cocker, Billy Idol, Maná, OutKast and Phish.

Two candidates this year - Carey and Checker - have had powerful impacts on the charts and culture. Carey has 19 No. 1 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, while Checker's recording of "The Twist," and subsequent "Let's Twist Again" are considered among the most popular songs in the history of rock 'n'

Oasis was one of the dominant British acts of the 1990s, producing hits including "Wonderwall" and "Don't Look Back in Anger." Its sound was fueled by singalong rock choruses and the combustible chemistry between guitarist-songwriter Noel Gallagher and his brother Liam, the band's singer.

Their American equivalent is the



This combination of photos show Trey Anastasio, from left, Mariah Carey, Billy Idol and Cyndi Lauper. (AP)

Black Crowes, who mix Southern boogie, stuttering stomp, blues harmonica, glam rock, and '70s harmonies starting with their debut album

"Shake Your Money Maker." For many years singer Chris Robinson and his brother, guitarist Rich Robinson, did not speak. One word

appeared on the band's Instagram account after their inclusion in the Hall's list: "Humbled.

Lauper rose to fame in the 1980s with hits such as "Time After Time" and "Girls Just Want To Have Fun" and went on to winning a Tony Award for "Kinky Boots." OutKast, made up of André 3000 and Big Boi, have six Grammys and a reputation for pushing the boundaries of hip-

hop.

The 2025 Inductees will be revealed in late April, along with inductees entering the hall under three special committee categories: Musical influence, musical excellence and the Ahmet Ertegun Non-Performer Award.

Artists must have released their

first commercial recording at least 25 years before they're eligible for induction. The induction ceremony will take place in Los Angeles this fall.

Nominees will be voted on by more than 1,200 artists, historians and music industry professionals. The selection criteria include "an artist's impact on other musicians, the scope and longevity of their career and body of work, as well as their innovation and excellence in style and technique."

Last year, Mary J. Blige, Cher, Foreigner, A Tribe Called Quest, Kool & The Gang, Ozzy Osbourne, Dave Matthews Band and singerguitarist Peter Frampton all were

inducted.

Bullet question

Rocky's trial hits climax

LOS ANGELES, Feb 13, (AP): There's one essential difference between arguments at rapper **A\$AP Rocky**'s trial: Prosecutors will say Thursday that the hiphop star fired two shots at a former friend from a handgun, while defense lawyers will say he fired blanks from a gun that wasn't real.

Jurors should begin deliberations by the afternoon on two felony counts of assault with a semiautomatic firearm for the 2021 shooting. If they convict Rocky of both, he could get up to 24 years in prison.

The Grammy-nominated music star, fashion mogul and actor is the longtime partner of singing superstar Rihanna, with whom he has two toddler sons. She may appear in court



for closing arguments after showing up sporadically most recently week. last when they left the courthouse together for the first time, walking arm-

Testimony at the trial ended Tuesday, when Rocky and his lawyers told a judge he would not take the stand.

in-arm.

The prosecution's case rests largely on the credibility of the man Rocky is alleged to have fired on. A\$AP Relli, whose legal name is Terell Ephron, became friends with Rocky, born Rakim Mayers. in high school in New York, where both were members of a crew of creative types called the A\$AP

Their friendship continued after Rocky first gained global fame with a pair of No. 1 albums in 2012 and 2013, but by Nov. 6, 2021 their bond had become a beef.

They met up outside a Hollywood hotel, and scuffled as soon as they saw each other. In a second confrontation moments later, Rocky fired the shots. Relli said his knuckles were grazed by one of them. The fights were partially captured on surveillance videos that are not clear enough for easy interpretation.

Testified

A\$AP Twelvyy, another member of the crew who was with Rocky, testified that Relli had been the aggressor, and that Rocky fired the shots as a warning to stop him from attacking another member of their crew.

Twelvyy testified that Rocky fired blanks from a starter pistol that the rapper had been carrying for security since a music video shoot months earlier, and that everyone involved in the incident knew it. Rocky's tour manager also testified that he carried the phony gun.

Neither gun was found or presented as evidence.

Police who searched the area after a report of a shooting found no physical evidence, but Relli himself went to a police department two days later with two shell casings he said he'd picked up after returning to the scene.

In closing arguments, the defense will contend that video evidence and text messages can't be trusted, nor can Relli. He also filed a civil suit in the case, and Rocky's attorneys will cast him as a jealous opportunist out for the money of a former friend who became famous. Relli vowed to do just that in text messages and in phone calls recorded by a mutual friend who gave the recordings to Rocky. Relli said in his testimony that the calls were faked.

The prosecution will argue that Relli is justly seeking money after a genuine wrong was done to him. They point out that Relli's communications around the incident tell a consistent story - and never does he mention making anything up or knowing Rocky carried a prop gun. Prosecutors are likely to argue that the whole idea of the starter pistol - which only fires blanks - is a preposterous lie coordinated by Rocky's inner circle.

Film



This image released by Disney shows Anthony Mackie in a scene from Marvel Studios' 'Captain America: Brave New World.' (AP)

Mackie's potential wasted in predictable film

Marvel's 'Brave New World' falls flat

LOS ANGELES, Feb 13, (AP): Celebrate Valentine's Day this year with "Captain America: Brave New World," a highly processed, empty calorie, regret-later candy of a movie.

We're nearing the end of Phase Five of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, with predictable and underwhelming returns. "Captain America: Brave New World" feels like it's just treading water, wasting Anthony Mackie in his first cinematic outing as his "Hamlet"-like Captain

The story by Rob Edwards, Malcolm Spellman and Dalan Musson gathers familiar Marvel characters and blends them into a White House conspiracy-meets-international violent face-off in the Indian Ocean. Only Marvel in Phase Five could make that boring.

It lifts from "The Manchurian Candidate" and "Top Gun" and even pointlessly steals its title from Aldous Huxley. It cannibalizes from other Marvel movies, like the addition of a substance called Adamantium, much like Vibranium from Wakanda. There is a Kendrick Lamar song heard at the climactic end, but it's not new; it's from

We start with Harrison Ford as Thaddeus "Thunderbolt" Ross - taking the role over from the late William Hurt - in his first days as US president. He insists he's changed from the days when he hunted down Hulk and was an allaround evil dude.

He approaches Sam Wilson, the new Captain America, and proposes a strategic union between the government and Captain America. "Work with me, Sam. We'll show the world a better way forward.

This is a dangerous idea - superheroes working for the government - and Cap is warned but still agrees. "Trust me. My eyes are wide open," he reassures Danny Ramirez as his sidekick and fledgling new Falcon. (Cap's eyes may be open but yours may be slowly closing).

There is a trio of bad guys, each more powerful and overacting as the last - a delicious Giancarlo Esposito as the villain Sidewinder, Tim Blake Nelson as Samuel Sterns (a hyper-intelligent megalomaniac with his brain literally bursting out of his skull) and Red Hulk, a massive slab of angry man-meat who makes the regular Hulk look like Timothée Chalamet.

Characters

There are also some tangential characters, like Isaiah Bradley, a Korean War veteran who was a Super Soldier but spent years in prison, and the weirdly cast Shira Haas as Ruth Bat-Seraph, a slippery national security agent with a murky

Director Julius Onah does well with the action but fumbles the quieter moments and supervises editing that's the opposite of crisp, not helped by script writers who ape military language - "Negative, the package is the priority" - and grandiose sentiment - "The country is lost."

For extra credit, spot all the product placements in the movie: Cap drives a GMC truck and uses Dell computers. The president of the United States uses a Peloton. What a wasted opportunity for Cap'n Crunch.

There does emerge a theme that unites Cap and Ross, which is that both feel the need to prove themselves. Mackie's Captain America throughout the previous 2021 TV series "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier" was ambivalent about taking on the mantle of Steve Rogers, the original Sentinel of Liberty. "You wonder if you'll ever be enough," he says.

Ross says he wants to secure peace across the world but really wants to reconnect with his estranged daughter - Liv Tyler - and prove he's changed. He wants to take a walk with her to see the cherry blossoms. We would like him to ask serious questions of his agent.

Mackie, who joined the MCU more than a decade ago in 2014's "Captain America: The Winter Soldier," has been a good servant to Marvel and deserves better. One of our great actors, he can be steely and vulnerable. But he can't outrace stilted lines like "If we can't see the good in each other, we've already lost the fight." Marvel has lost more than the fight; they've lost the thread.

"Captain America: Brave New World," a Walt Disney Pictures release that opens in theaters on Friday, is rated PG-13 for "intense sequences of violence, action and some strong language." Running time: 118 minutes. One star out of four.

is also known as one of the country's biggest landowners and for his involvement with Warner Bros. Discovery and other companies.

"Though millions of us have been touched

by the technologies and content Malone made possible, this is the first time he tells his story in

his own words," Simon & Schuster's statement

reads in part. (AP)

NEW YORK: Federal prosecutors have indicted the estranged husband of a slain New York City art dealer in a murder-for-hire plot, saying he made multiple payments to the man arrested for the killing in Brazil during a contentious divorce.

Daniel Sikkema, 54, of New York was indicted Tuesday on murder conspiracy charges, as well as passport fraud.

"The defendant allegedly hired a hitman to facilitate the international murder of his husband and attempted to conceal his involvement in this callous plan," FBI Assistant Director in Charge

"Mr. Sikkema has maintained his innocence consistently. And he is entirely confident that he'll be vindicated at trial," his attorney Richard Levitt told The Associated Press by phone on Wednesday. (AP)

Defamation

Combs sues NBC over 'Diddy' docu

NEW YORK, Feb 13, (AP): Sean 'Diddy' Combs is suing NBC Universal over a documentary that he says falsely accuses him of being a serial murderer who had sex with underage girls as he awaits trial on federal sex trafficking charges.

The lawsuit filed Wednesday in New York state court says the documentary, "Diddy: Making of a Bad Boy," included statements that NBC Universal either knew were false or published with reckless disregard for the truth in order to defame the

founder of Bad Boy Records. 'Indeed, the entire premise of the Docu-

mentary asthat sumes Mr. Combs has committed numerous heinous crimes. including se-

rial murder,



rape of minors, and sex trafficking of minors, and attempts to crudely psychologize him," the complaint reads. "It maliciously and base-lessly jumps to the conclusion that Mr. Combs is a 'monster' and 'an embodiment of Lucifer' with 'a lot of similarities' to Jeffrey Epstein.

Spokespersons for NBC Universal and the entertainment company that produced the documentary, which is also named in the suit, didn't immediately respond to emails seeking comment. The documentary premiered last month on Peacock TV, the network's streaming service.

"From his childhood to becoming a mogul, this raw look at Sean Combs' journey through exclusive footage and candid interviews explores his rise, controversies and the man behind the music," a description of the documentary on Peacock's website reads.

Damages

Combs, who is seeking no less than \$100 million in damages, has been in a Brooklyn federal jail since his September arrest on racketeering conspiracy and sex traf-

ficking charges. Federal prosecutors say he used his wealth and influence to coerce female victims and male sex workers into drug-fueled, dayslong intimate performances known as "Freak Offs."

They say Combs used blackmail and violence to intimidate and threaten his victims in a pattern of abuse that goes back to the early

Combs has pleaded not guilty. His trial is slated to start in May.

In the criminal case on Wednesday, a federal judge rejected a request by Combs' lawyers that a hearing be conducted over 19 pages of Combs' notes that were taken from his cell during a Bureau of Prisons sweep of the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, where Combs is held without bail.

Defense lawyers say the seizure violated Combs' constitutional rights, but Judge Arun Subramanian said in a written opinion that a review shows the government did not intentionally invade Combs' attorney-client privilege, that appropriate steps were taken afterward and the issue is moot because prosecutors say they will not use any of the information at trial.

In the civil lawsuit Wednesday, Erica Wolff, an attorney for Combs, said NBC and the other entities named in the suit "maliciously and recklessly broadcast outrageous lies" in order to "line their own pockets" by driving viewership to the documentary.

"In making and broadcasting these falsehoods, among others, Defendants seek only to capitalize on the public's appetite for scandal without any regard for the truth and at the expense of Mr. Combs's right to a fair trial," she said in a statement. "Mr. Combs brings this lawsuit to hold Defendants accountable for the extraordinary damage their reckless statements have caused."

Variety

NEW ORLEANS: Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen and his fiancee, actor Hailee Steinfeld, were all smiles as they posed for pictures and mingled with celebrities as they walked the red carpet before he received the league's biggest individual prize at the NFL Honors.

Allen edged two-time winner Lamar Jackson for the AP NFL MVP award in the closest race since Matt Ryan beat out Tom Brady in 2016. Allen, who led Buf-

falo to a fifth straight AFC East title, got 27 first-place votes to Jackson's 22 and finished with 378 points.

He received 21 secondplace votes and one third. Saquon Barkley, Joe Burrow and Jared Goff were the other finalists

Allen has had plenty of reasons to celebrate



this season. The couple posted a photo to their Instagram followers in November of Allen on one knee proposing marriage.

Allen and Steinfeld were first linked in the spring of 2023, when they were photographed dining together in New York City. Steinfeld has since begun attending Bills home games, and the couple hosted a Halloween party this fall.

The 27-year-old Steinfeld is from Los Angeles

and began her acting career at age 10. She earned an Oscar nomination for best supporting actress for her role as Mattie Ross in the Coen brothers' 2010 remake of "True Grit." (AP)

NEW YORK: The billionaire media pioneer known as "The Cable Cowboy" has written a memoir. John Malone's "Born to Be Wired" will be published Sept 2.

Over a lifetime of business deals, the most valuable currency has been relationships," Malone, who turns 84 next month, said in a statement Wednesday released by Simon & Schuster. "This book is about the people who changed my thinking, the hard-won lessons that nearly broke me, and strategies that helped me navigate chaos and carve my own path to success.

Malone's career ranges from his early initiatives to wire the country for cable to chairing the Liberty Media empire that at various times has included Sirius XM Radio Inc, Formula One, Live Nation, Discovery Channel and QVC. He James E. Dennehy said in a statement. Sikkema's lawyer said his client is confident he will ultimately be cleared of the charges.

'Elaboratio' to premiere at Carnegie Hall in 2026

Connick Jr. to honor mother with new composition

NEW YORK, Feb 13, (AP): Harry Connick Jr. will premiere a composi-tion for the 100th anniversary of his mother's birth for Carnegie Hall's 2025-26 season, which celebrates the Declaration of Independence with a festival titled: "United in Sound: America at 250."

Connick has tentatively titled the work "Elaboratio," wanting to musically elaborate on his mother's life. He will play piano in the performance for his Carnegie main stage debut on May 22, 2026, exactly 100 years after the birth of Anita Frances Livingston. The program is to be repeated the following night.

His manager called Carnegie Hall executive director Clive Gillinson seven years ago to reserve the date.

"I just wanted to do something that I think would have made her proud and and honor her memory by performing in a place that she always wanted me to play and to write something that'll



Harry Connick Jr. is seen before the NFL Super Bowl 59 football game between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Philadelphia Eagles, Sunday, Feb. 9, in New Orleans. (AP)

last forever in her honor," Connick said during an interview after Wednesday's news conference.

Connick's mother died in 1981, when he was 13.

He is still composing the work, which will have three movements about each of the places she lived: New York; Nouaceur, Morocco; and New Orleans.

His only Carnegie appearance has been in the smaller Zankel Hall in

Carnegie's festival runs from January to July and will include at least 35 performances. Works by Samuel Barber, Leonard Bernstein, Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Philip Glass, Wynton Marsalis and Julia Wolfe are featured as well as underrepresented composers such as Amy Beach, Florence Price and William Dawson. Jazz, rock 'n' roll, hip-hop, Broadway and bluegrass are among the genres

A March 2 concert starring J. Harrison Ghee and Betsy Wolf will feature "The Secret Life of the American Musical," based on Jack Viertel's book on the making of Broadway shows.

Conductor Marin Alsop, pianist Lang Lang, mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard and violinist Maxim Vengerov will be the artists of Carnegie's Perspectives series. Arvo Pärt, who turns 90 in September, will hold the Debs Composer's Chair but will be not travel to New York because of his age, Gillinson said.

In the first of more than 170 concerts, conductor Daniel Harding leads opening night on Oct. 7 with alumni of the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America and pianist Yuja Wang. The program includes Bernstein's selections from symphonic dances from "West Side Story," Tchaikovsky's piano concerto No. 1 and Stravinsky's "The Firebird Suite.'

Film



This combination of images shows promotional art for ten films nominated for the Oscar for best picture, (top row from left), 'Anora,' 'The Brutalist,' 'A Complete Unknown,' 'Conclave,' and 'Dune: Part Two,' (bottom row from left), 'Emilia Perez,' 'I'm Still Here,' 'The Nickel Boys,' 'The Substance,' and 'Wicked.' (AP)

Front-runners shifting in Oscar race

What's going to win best picture?

NEW YORK, Feb 13, (AP): The inner-Vatican machinations of "Conclave" have nothing on this year's Oscar race.

Just as Edward Berger's film juggles various candidates for the papacy, the race for best picture at the Academy Awards has seen one favorite replaced by

another, and then another. While some clarity has lately emerged, with a handful of big wins for Sean Baker's "Anora," it seems likely to be a nail biter until a winner is declared at the March 2 Oscars, when white smoke unfurls from the Sistine Chapel, I mean the Dolby Theatre.

As of now, "Anora" is the clear frontrunner thanks to wins with the Producers Guild and the Directors Guild - both prizes with a long history of predicting Oscar winners. Where the Screen Actors Guild and the BAFTAs fall will offer the last major clues.

But unlike years like last year, when "Oppenheimer" was way ahead wire to wire, no lead in this year's best picture race seems ironclad. So, with that in mind, here are the best picture nominees, ranked in order of least likely to win to most likely to win. It's telling that at least half of these films, with three weeks to go, still have a chance.

If this was a ranking of merit, RaMell Ross's movie would be first. Ross' film, thrillingly and thoughtfully shot largely in first person, introduced a new filmic grammar to American movies. But "Nickel Boys" was seemingly on the cusp of getting a nomination, so we should just be glad it's counted here among the best of the year.

Denis Villeneuve's first Frank Herbert adaptation garnered 10 nominations and won six. "Part Two" hasn't been the same awards force. It's up for five nominations and will probably walk home with one or two Oscars, possibly for visual effects and sound. People like "Dune: Part Two" but sequels tend to have a harder go of it at the Academy Awards. Blame it on the sandworms.

Arguably no film has risen up the Oscar ranks more than Walter Salles' portrait of political resistance under Brazil's military dictatorship. The film, a box-office sensation in its native country, was once one of the many international underdogs vying for a place at the Academy Awards. It won't win best picture, but it's a testament to the film's appeal that it

could upset "Emilia Pérez" in best international film. Coralie Fargeat's body-horror film has turned out to be much more of an Oscar contender than initially believed - certainly by Universal, which financed the film but sold it to Mubi to distribute. It's up for five awards but its best chance comes in the best actress category where Demi Moore is the favorite. Mikey Madison ("Anora") and Fernanda Torres ("I'm Still Here") could make that a close call, too, but Moore propelled by her "popcorn actress" narrative and the movie's biting showbiz satire - is the frontrunner.

Nominations

How far can a former frontrunner fall? Jacques Audiard's narco-musical leads all films with 13 nominations but the Netflix movie has been in freefall since its star, Karla Sofía Gascón, became ensnarled by a scandal over old tweets. I'm not completely counting "Emilia Pérez" out - you don't get 13 nominations for nothing. But "Emilia Pérez," a divisive movie to begin with, is now in the business of salvaging its chances in other categories, like best supporting actress, where Zoe Saldana could win.

Now we're into the top contenders. Most likely, the winner is coming from one of these next five. Jon M. Chu's Broadway adaptation might have the most moviegoers rooting for it to win, but it's missing some key ingredients for pulling out best picture. Chu missed on a nomination for best director and the "Wicked" has mostly been out-musical-ed by "Emilia Pérez" on the awards circuit. Still, "Wicked" has cornered the market on the role of Big Studio Movie contender. However it does, the film academy is going to make sure "Wicked" is front and center during the ceremony.

Here we have our Everyone Likes It contender. Berger's papal thriller, starring Ralph Fiennes as a cardinal tasked with leading a conclave, feels like the most universally respected nominee. In a year where votes are spread across a lot of films, that might be a quality that - particularly considering the academy's preferential ballot - leaves "Conclave" driving the

Oscar home in a popemobile. What's the main knock against this happening, aside from the potential difficulty of renting a popemobile? Berger was passed over on a directing nomination, and "Conclave" hasn't yet won a major award. More than any other movie, it needs a victory at the BAFTAs.

James Mangold's Bob Dylan movie is also widely liked and lacks any precursor win. But admiration for "A Complete Unknown" is widespread and it could, just as "Conclave" might, pull out an upset by rising high on a plethora of ballots. Unlike "Conclave," Mangold was nominated for best director, though, and it has the benefit of being led by Hollywood's biggest young star, Timothée Chalamet. Hollywood likes to, in picking a best picture winner, say something about its future. Chalamet's star power could be convincing enough. Plus Searchlight Pictures has previously steered quite a few best-picture winners "Nomadland," "The Shape of Water"). Mangold's movie has momentum, which, even if it doesn't lead to best picture, may propel Chalamet to best actor over Adrien Brody for "The Brutalist."

Until recently, Brady Corbet's postwar epic might have been the top pick. "The Brutalist" has been an award-winner at Venice and the Golden Globes. It's up for 10 Oscars. It's roundly been hailed as visionary, hugely ambitious cinema - all made, remarkably, with a budget under \$10 million. It's also three and a half hours long. Not every Oscar voter, I assure you, is watching it all the way through. That, though, might not be a bad thing for a movie that falls off in the second half.

Half a year ago, "Anora" was the odds-on pick to win best picture and now, after a topsy-turvy awards season, it is again. A trio of wins - at the PGA Awards, the DGA Awards and Critics Choice - has reestablished "Anora" as the movie to beat.

If it wins at the SAG Awards, too, the race is probably over. Not everything with similar credentials has won before, though; "1917" had the same wins before being defeated by "Parasite" five years ago. "Anora," however, also won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, like "Parasite" did, so it should do well among international voters - a crucial voting bloc in today's academy.

punitive measures attached to it - mark a sharp escalation in Trump's often fraught dealings with

LOS ANGELES: Thomson Reuters has won an early battle in court over the question of fair use in artificial intelligence-related copyright cases.

news organizations. (AP)

The media and technology company filed a lawsuit against Ross Intelligence - a now-defunct legal research firm - in 2020, arguing they had used materials from Thomson Reuters' own legal platform Westlaw to train an AI model without permission.

Judge Stephanos Bibas of the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals issued a decision Tuesday that affirmed Ross Intelligence was not permitted under US copyright law to use the company's content in order to build a competing platform.

Thomson Reuters and Ross Intelligence did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In his summary judgment, Bibas said that "none of Ross's possible defenses holds water" and ruled in favor of Thomson Reuters on the issue of "fair use." The "fair use" doctrine of US laws allows for limited uses of copyrighted materials such as for teaching, research or transforming the copyrighted

NEW YORK: The New York Philharmonic (NY Phil) presented its yearly concert celebrating the Spring Festival on Tuesday night, the eve of the Lantern Festival.

NY Phil continued this tradition, which was started in 2012, by introducing new faces to the audience and honoring Angela Chen, a philanthropist behind the concert celebrating the Spring

Festival over the years. The concert featured a mix of Chinese and Western classics, such as the traditional Chinese repertoire the Spring Festival Overture by Li Huanzhi, the Chinese Folk Dance Suite by Chen Yi and the classic orchestral suite, Carmen Suite

No.1, by Georges Bizet. Both Tianyi Lu, conductor, and Inmo Yang, a violinist and soloist in Chen Yi's Chinese Folk Dance Suite, made their debuts with the NY Phil.

In the Chinese Folk Dance Suite, the performers integrated Chinese percussive singing into the violin performance, highlighting the unique charm of artistic and cultural fusion. (Xinhua)

Television



This image released by HBO shows Sam Nivola, (from left), Sarah Catherine Hook, and Patrick Schwarzenegger in a scene from 'The White Lotus.' (AP)

New faces, new thrills

'White Lotus' heads to Thailand for season 3

LONDON, Feb 13, (AP): Get ready to check into "The White Lotus" in Thailand for Season 3 - this time, sadly, there's no room for Jennifer Coolidge, who went overboard in the second season.

With the absence of her fan-favorite character Tanya comes the opportunity for other characters to win over the audience, when it returns to screens on Sky and HBO this Sunday.

Vying for your love or loathing at the indulgent Thailand outpost is Michelle Monaghan's vacationing TV actor and Aimee Lou Wood's cool Brit. Natasha Rothwell is back as spa manager Belinda, herself a victim of Tanya's flighty financial ways in the first season. Blackpink's Lisa makes her acting debut as a resort employee.

As before, in Mike White's anthology series, the rich holidaymakers are unable to upgrade themselves away from the sense of menace that lurks around the landscaped hotel grounds.

The cast? They're having a much better time.

Monaghan cried when she found out she got the role of TV star Jaclyn. "It was such a big deal and it's such an exciting opportunity," she explained, adding that she opened a bottle of drink to celebrate. As the show is popular, critically acclaimed and filmed in exotic locations, Monaghan, who recently featured in Apple TV+'s "Bad Monkey," agrees that starring in White's prestige drama is "hands down, no doubt about it" the best job on television.

Rothwell agrees with her. She returns as Belinda, who worked at the Hawaii resort, home to Season 1.

"I don't know what I did in a previous life to deserve this, but I'm so grateful to be a part of this family," Rothwell says.

Viewers told Rothwell that they were mad at the affluent Tanya for not

investing in Belinda's dreams in the first season. The actor attributes this enthusiastic fandom to the show's initial release during the coronavirusrelated lockdowns

"That's what people wanted at a time when the world was at a standstill," she says. "It gave people a chance to sort of imagine and dream and watch the world of high-class vacationing and seeing the underbelly

Not all of the cast found seven months away from home easy. Wood, who previously starred in Netflix's "Sex Education," says that living and working on location got "very claustrophobic."

Experience

"Usually you wrap and you go home. But it was like, wrap ... and then I would walk five steps to my little room. And then I'd be having breakfast in the morning and be like, 'Hi,' to all the crew that walking past," she explains. Looking back on it now, she treasures the experience before she finally went home to "remember" who she was. "It's like 'The Truman

Rothwell's struggles were less existential, centering instead on the reptilian extras. Her character is half-guest and half-staff, in Thailand on a work trip to learn new rejuvenation techniques to take back to Hawaii.

"I'm very delicate when it comes to green, slimy things. So I had to tap into Belinda's approach to peace and calm and meditation when I would see those little guys," says Rothwell, who created and starred in "How to

Each season, the cast ventures to a new White Lotus resort in vacation hot spots. This time, along with the scene-stealing monkeys (and reptiles), Thailand itself gets more of a storyline than Hawaii or Sicily did in the

first two seasons. Monaghan says that the characters (and therefore the cast) got to explore on a sightseeing tour: "They really leave the actual White Lotus resort. We see them discovering local joints and they really take in everything that Thailand has to offer. And I think that's a real departure from what we've seen before. And I think it makes the scope of the show feel a lot bigger.'

"Audiences, too, will really love seeing so much of this country," agrees Rothwell. "It feels like another character."

Monaghan's Jaclyn is on a girls trip with two old school friends, played by Carrie Coon and Leslie Bibb. Like her character, Monaghan has struggled to find time to get away with her friends and finds White's portrayal of the female dynamics true to life.

'I think he tagged along on a girls trip," she says, describing him as "a real keen observer of human behavior" and "like a sponge." "So I think maybe he'd had a similar experience and so he was like, he

wanted to bring that into the show," she added.

Wood's Chelsea has all the vibes and wardrobe of a vacationing Kate Moss. She's staying with her older partner Rick (Walton Goggins), who is not much fun to be around. "She gets some really great lines, Mike has gifted me with that charac-

ter," says Wood. "She has got that like rock star girlfriend thing, but her heart is just so gentle." There are more women who play staff or vacationers. Blackpink's Thai singer Lisa, credited here as Lalisa Manoban, stars as Mook - one of the

health mentors helping to pamper the guests, alongside Sri Lankan actor Lisa managed to fit in making her acting debut around working on her

upcoming album "Alter Ego." "I'm a huge fan of 'The White Lotus," she told The Associated Press

at the Los Angeles premiere of the season Monday. "I'm just so happy to be on this.

Family

Thailand's Lek Patravadi plays a White Lotus owner - she's also the resident diva, fabulously dressed and worshipped as such. Soaking up the sun in a family suite is Parker Posey, living the lavish lifestyle of Victoria Ratliff, who is staying with her husband (Jason Isaacs), two sons and daughter Piper, portrayed by Sarah Catherine Hook. "It was literally like marinating yourself in 100% humidity," explains

Monaghan of her weekly fake tan sessions, endured to get the golden glow of her sun-worshipping character. "Every Sunday I was applying that fake tan and waiting all while my

co-stars were down at the beach, you know, enjoying the sunset, having a drink. I was like in my hotel room waiting for this spray tan to dry

Wood got a real tan for the first time in her life. Despite being, in her own words, "translucent," spending seven months in Thailand gave her a slight color. "Makes sense why I've never got one in like a two-week holibobs,"

How do they each rank as potential travel companions? Wood reckons her laid-back character would be a great person to go on holiday with.

"Chelsea honestly could sit outside like a 7-Eleven and have a beer. As long as she had someone to chat to, she just doesn't mind," she says. "Although she doesn't stop talking. But that's also like me, she is a yapper." Rothwell says Belinda's hospitality knowledge makes her an excellent

vacation buddy. "She's just a people person and I'm not in real life, like she's good with people and I'm very much an introvert and, you know, have social anxiety and get nervous tons and I feel like Belinda would get me out of

my shell," Rothwell laughs. And Monaghan's Jaclyn has a lot (of money) going for her as a plus-

Variety

NEW YORK: The White House said Wednesday that news organizations that refuse to use President **Donald Trump**'s new name for the Gulf of Mexico were telling "lies"

and insisted it would continue to bar Associated Press journalists from pres-

Trump has decreed that the international body of water - which borders Mexico, the United States and other nations - be called the Gulf of America. In its influential Stylebook, the AP said it would continue

to use Gulf of Mexico, while also noting Trump's decision, to ensure that names of geographical features are recognizable

around the world The White House's outright attempt at regulating language used by independent media - and the

Trump

work into something different. (AP)

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 the Democratic Republic of the Congo Gaza and Sudan 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

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

tion 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 PEP-FAR - 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 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 antivirals 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.

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

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, of-

ficials have instructed poultry farms, chicken shops, and egg-selling outlets in the affected regions to shut down their operations immediately until fur-Officials suspect the outbreak has

spread through migratory birds or infected poultry transported from other

Bird flu is highly contagious, affect ing 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.

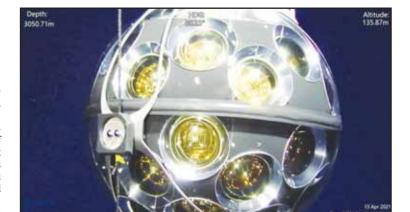
Cambodian Minister of Health Chheang Ra presented the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Monisaraphon, the equivalent of a knighthood, to four representatives of Operation Smile Cambodia, Future Smile Charitable Foundation, and Pundarika Charity for their outstanding contributions to the healthcare sector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

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

Glaucoma screening

Foreign Body removal

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening



A sphere used to detect neutrinos is shown submerged in the Mediterra-

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 mindbogglingly 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 Гесhnology (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 twowheeled 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.

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

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,

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







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'I believe in building consensus'

Prince Feisal envisions innovative, sustainable, inclusive Olympic future

HARBIN, Feb 13, (Xinhua): International Olympic Committee (IOC) presidential candidate Prince Feisal al Hussein of Jordan has outlined his vision for an Olympic future characterized by innovation, sustainability and

inclusivity Feisal's manifesto emphasizes three key strategic imperatives: Inspire Imagination, Ensure Integrity, and Develop Inclusion.

"These are the key pillars of what we need in the Olympic movement to unlock the potential of sports," Feisal told Xinhua during his visit to Harbin for the ongoing Asian Winter Games.

Feisal, born in 1963, has been an IOC member since 2010, and says sport can

be a powerful catalyst for positive change.

"I envision a world where sport is seen as a universal necessity, vital for unity, health and healing, empowering everyone, everywhere," he said in his manifesto. As a member of the IOC Executive Board and a key figure in Middle Eastern sports, Feisal stressed that his leadership would be guided by principles of unity, collaboration, and consensus.

"I believe in building consensus," he explained. "I value diverse perspectives and, through collective discussion, we can develop clear and actionable plans for the future." The prince added that athletes' participation in the Olympic Games should be properly valued for their fundamental role.

"Traditionally, the Olympics operate under the IOC model and I agree with it. We reward good-performing athletes, not just Olympic ones, as they raise national pride," he said.

"We need to explore more. Working with athletes' groups, we can find ways to add value for athletes, like helping with reporting and finding sponsors. We should seek other potential avenues that uphold Olympic values and benefit athletes. The athletes' group understands challenges better, so we must listen to them and think outside the box to build new relationships and benefits." Regarding transgender athletes, Feisal said two key issues that must be addressed.

Murray scores career-high 55 points as Nuggets continue winning streak



Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray, right, collects a loose ball as Portland Trail Blazers guard Anfernee Simons defends in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Denver. (AP)

Jazz top Lakers to end three-game slide

DENVER, Feb 13, (AP): Jamal Murray scored a career-high 55 points, Nikola Jokic had his 25th tripledouble of the season and Denver beat Portland 132-121for their eighth straight

Murray was 20 of 36 from the floor, including seven 3-pointers. It's the third-most points in the franchise's NBA history, trailing only David Thompson's 73-point game on April 9, 1978, and Jokic's 56-point effort Dec. 7. In the ABA, Spencer Haywood had a 59-point game for the then-Rockets on April 15, 1970.

Jokic had with 26 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists on a night when the team celebrated Serbian Heritage Night and handed out his bobblehead.

Jazz 131, Lakers 119 In Salt Lake City, Lauri Markkanen

scored 32 points and had a season-high three steals to lead Utah to a victory over Los Angeles.

Jordan Clarkson had 21 points, nine rebounds and seven assists to help Utah end a three-game slide. Keyonte George added 20 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds off the bench.

LeBron James finished with 18 points, seven assists and six rebounds for Los Angeles. Rui Hachimura scored a team-high 19 points and Luka Doncic added 16. Austin Reaves added 15 points and 11 assists.

Mavericks 111, Warriors 107

In Dallas, Kyrie Irving scored 42 points and took a charge in the closing seconds, Klay Thompson added 17 against his former team, and undersized Dallas beat Golden State.

Naji Marshall hit a 6-foot floater in the lane to give Dallas a 109-107 lead with 25.6 seconds left after Steph Curry, the NBA's leading free-throw shooter at 93.1%, missed the second of two to leave the score tied.

Celtics 116, Spurs 103 In Boston, Jayson Tatum had 32

coming in the last three contests. Cavaliers 131, Raptors 108 In Toronto, Donovan Mitchell points and 14 rebounds and the Boston scored 21 points and East-leading

Utah Jazz guard Jordan Clarkson

(00) shoots over Los Angeles Lakers forward Rui Hachimura (28)

during the second half of an NBA

basketball game in Salt Lake City.

Celtics beat the San Antonio Spurs for

their third straight victory and seventh

for Boston and Derrick White had 19

points, nine assists and seven rebounds

in the final game for both teams before

Rockets 119, Suns 111

18 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds

for his fourth career triple-double and

Houston used a big run late to get a win

It was the second triple-double this

month after the second-year player

Clippers 128, Grizzlies 114

scored 25 points, James Harden and

Norman Powell each had 18 and Los

Leonard played a season-high 34 min-

utes, with all of his 30-minute games

In Inglewood, Kawhi Leonard

In Houston, Amen Thompson had

Kristaps Porzingis added 29 points

in eight games.

the All-Star break.

over Phoenix.

also had one on Feb. 3.

Angeles beat Memphis.

Cleveland beat Toronto for their fourth straight victory and eighth in the last

Tempers flared at the final buzzer after Cleveland's Tristan Thompson lunked with four seconds left. Toronto's Scottie Barnes confronted Thompson near center court for an exchange

Bucks 103, Timberwolves 101

In Minneapolis, Kyle Kuzma had 19 points and 13 rebounds and Milwaukee won without All-Stars Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard, beating Minnesota.

Anthony Edwards' jumper in the final seconds was off for Minnesota and Kuzma - playing his fourth game for Milwaukee after being acquired from Washington - came down with the re-

Kings 119, Pelicans 111

In New Orleans, Keon Ellis hit seven 3-pointers during a 27-point performance, Zach LaVine scored 20 of his 23 points in the second half, and Sacramento beat New Orleans.

DeMar DeRozan scored 24 points and Malik Monk added 17 for the Kings, who broke open a close game in the last five minutes with an 11-2 run that began with LaVine's 3 and ended with DeRozan's 16-foot turnaround.

Domantas Sabonis had 16 points and 15 rebounds - his 48th double-double in 51 games this season - for Sacramento, which has won three straight.

Thunder 115, Heat 101

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 32 points and nine assists, and Oklahoma City rallied from a 21-point deficit to defeat Miami.

Jalen Williams scored 18 points and Lu Dort added 17 for the Thunder, who won their seventh straight and improved to a league-best 44-9.

Oklahoma Čity never led until a 24-0 run to start the fourth quarter that put the team ahead for good. The Thunder outscored the Heat 32-8 in the final period led by Gilgeous-Alexander who scored 14 points in the fourth.

Knicks 149, Hawks 148, OT

In New York, Jalen Brunson made the go-ahead jumper with 11.1 seconds left in overtime, Karl-Anthony Towns scored 44 points and New York outlasted Atlanta in a thrilling final game before the All-Star break for both

Towns reached 40 points in consecutive games for the first time in his career and became the fifth Knicks player to do so. Brunson - who was the last Knicks player to do it - added 36 points and eight assists.

Nets 100, 76ers 96

In New York, D'Angelo Russell had 22 points, five rebounds and four assists, and Brooklyn beat Philadelphia in the teams' last game before the All-Star break.

Nic Claxton had 13 points, 11 rebounds and five blocks, and Cam Johnson added 16 points and six rebounds. Trendon Watford scored 18 points off the bench for Brooklyn, which won its third straight.

Pistons 128, Bulls 110

In Chicago, Cade Cunningham scored 29 points and Detroit beat Chicago after dominating them the previ-

Tobias Harris and Ausar Thompson scored 19, and Jalen Duren added 16 points and 14 rebounds.

The Pistons rolled into the All-Star break with their fourth straight win after blowing out the Bulls 132-92 in the same arena on Tuesday. Detroit built a franchise-record, 42-point halftime lead Tuesday on the way to its most lopsided win of the season. Chicago, meanwhile, set a club mark by missing its first 20 3-point attempts.

Magic 102, Hornets 86

In Orlando, Paolo Banchero had 24 points and eight rebounds and Orlando shook off a cold-shooting first half to beat Charlotte.

Franz Wagner added 16 points and seven rebounds and Anthony Black came off the bench to score 18 points.

Pacers 134, Wizards 130, OT

In Washington, Obi Toppin had season highs of 31 points and 10 rebounds, and Indiana rallied from a 19-point deficit to beat NBA-worst Washington in overtime.

Bennedict Mathurin scored 28 points and Tyrese Haliburton added 20 for the Pacers, who enter the All-Star break at 30-23 and in fourth place in the Eastern Conference.

Platform to share Saudi culture with world

Saudi Arabia aims to become a global esports hub by 2030

RIYADH, Feb 12, (Xinhua): Saudi Arabia is positioning itself as a global leader in gaming and esports as part of its national esports strategy, with a major milestone set for 2027: the launch of the first Olympic Esports Games.

Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Sultan Al Saud, Chairman of the Saudi Esports Federation, announced the news during a panel discussion at the LEAP 2025 Tech Conference in Riyadh on Tuesday. The panel, titled "Gaming Beyond Entertainment: Reimagining Society and Shaping the Future of Saudi Arabia," outlined the country's ambitions to solidify its role in the global gaming ecosystem.

"It was announced today that the Olympic Esports Games will start in 2027 in Saudi Arabia as its first edition," Prince Faisal said. "And I think we will have multiple editions over the next 12 years as part of our agreement with the IOC in Saudi Arabia." The country's national esports strategy, launched in 2022, aims to contribute approximately 50 billion Saudi riyals to the economy and create over 39,000 jobs by 2030.

"The core component of the strategy is that we will become a global hub for gaming and esports by 2030," Prince Faisal emphasized. "When you think about gaming and esports, certain places come to mind-Japan, South Korea, the United States, and parts of Europe. We want Saudi to be a natural part of that conversation." He also highlighted Saudi Arabia's commitment to investing in the next generation, establishing esports as a viable professional career path, and using gaming as a platform to share Saudi culture with the world.

Tang Danni, Co-founder and CEO of China's Hero Esports, praised the initia-

tive in an interview after the panel.

"As the largest esports company in Asia, we have always looked forward to esports becoming an official Olympic event. Today's announcement is truly exciting news for the entire industry," she said. "Esports is not only part of sports-it is the future of sports." Hero Esports has collaborated with Saudi Arabia on major gaming events, including co-hosting the first Esports World Cup in Riyadh in 2024.

We look forward to continuing our cooperation with Saudi Arabia in the esports field," Tang added. "As the host country of the first Olympic Esports Games, Saudi Arabia will be a key partner for us. The Kingdom has accumulated deep knowledge of esports, and we will fully support its efforts to deliver an exceptional experience for esports fans worldwide." Saudi Arabia's growing presence in the global gaming industry reflects its broader push to diversify its economy and position itself as a hub for digital innovation.



nis photo taken on Feb. 1 ing Beyond Entertainment: Reimagining Society and Shaping the Future of Saudi Arabia' at the LEAP 2025 Tech Conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Afridi among 3 Pakistan players fined for conduct breaches in win over SA

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Feb 13, (AP): Fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi was among three Pakistan cricketers fined for breaching the ICC code of conduct during the record run chase against South Africa in Karachi.

Afridi was fined 25% of his match fee by the ICC for deliberately obstructing batter Matthew Breetzke when he ran a single in the 28th over, resulting in physical contact and a heated exchange between them in the

tri-nations match on Wednesday. Saud Shakeel and substitute fielder Kamran Ghulam were fined 10% of their match fees after they celebrated too closely to South Africa captain Temba Bavuma after he was run out in the 29th over.

In addition, all three players received one demerit point each on their disciplinary records, and accepted the sanctions, the ICC said.

Pakistan recorded its highest ever successful one-day international run chase of 355-4 and will play New Zealand on Friday in the final, a warmup for the Champions Trophy.

English cricket has generated more than 520 million pounds (\$650 million) from the sale of stakes in franchises in its recently created covmpetition The Hundred to big-business investors from India and the United States.

Auctions held over the past two weeks drew bids that value the eight teams in The Hundred at more than \$1.2 billion, the England and Wvales Cricket Board said on Thursday.

The investors who secured deals range from Silicon Valley tech giants, to a consortium containing NFL great Tom Brady, to another involving Chelsea co-owner Todd Boehly, to four Indian conglomerates already owning franchises in the widely popular Indian Premier League.

The ECB said the deals, once finalized after an exclusivity period, will underpin "long-term financial sustainability" in the domestic game in England after years of economic struggles.

ECB chairman Richard Thompson called it a "seminal moment for cricket in England and Wales.

"Our three overarching principles as we look at what we want this investment to deliver should be strategic, ambitious and leaving a legacy,' Thompson said in an open letter. "We least a generation, and cannot afford to

Thompson spoke of the money heading to "three core investment areas": Building reserves, revenue generation or debt reduction.

waste this golden opportunity.

"Each of these partners shares a passion for the competition's success and cricket itself," Thompson said. "They are global leaders in sport, technology, investment, and commerce, aligned in our ambition to continue building The Hundred as a truly world-class sporting spectacle."

The Hundred - a competition similar to T20 but where teams receive 100 balls in an innings - was launched in 2021 in the face of criticism for disrupting the domestic calendar, affecting the longer formats of the game, chiefly test cricket, and leaving at a disadvantage those among the 18 firstclass counties who were not affiliated to a franchise.

Those 18 counties will now be getting a share of the money raised from the auction, as well as Marylebone Cricket Club - which owns the storied Lord's ground in northwest London and is regarded as the guardian of the laws of the game - and the grassroots game, which the ECB said was in line to receive around 50 million pounds (\$62 million).



Pakistan and South Africa, in Kara-chi, Pakistan. (AP)

Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi, left, bowls as South Africa's Tony de Zorzi watches during the triseries ODI cricket match between

and Big 12 foes, but the first since they played in the first round of the 2021 NCAA Tournament. may not get this chance again for at

Ivisic leads surging Arkansas past LSU

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark., Feb 13, (AP): Zvonimir Ivisic scored 25 points shooting 10 for 13 and Johnell Davis scored 11 points and Arkansas beat LSU 70-58.

D.J. Wagner scored 10 point for Arkansas, which shot 51.9% (28 for 54). After losing its first five games to start SEC play, Arkansas (15-9, 4-7) has won four of its last six games.

Reserve Robert Miller III scored 16 points and Cam Carter 13 for LSU (12-12, 1-10). The Tigers are currently in a free fall and have lost seven straight.

The Tigers were game early and went to the break up 35-34. Ivisic made a 3-pointer with 16:29 remaining to put the Razorbacks up 41-39 before Miller followed with a jump shot to knot it again.

But Arkansas proceeded to outscore the Tigers 12-4 over the next four minutes and led 53-45 on a layup by Billy Richmond III with 12:30 remaining.

LSU never got within eight points the rest of the way. Arkansas' 62-52 lead on a Wagner layup with 5:12 left marked the Razorbacks' first double-digit lead against a conference opponent at home this season.

LSU travels to Oklaĥoma on Saturday. Arkansas faces eighth-ranked Texas A&M on the road on Sat-Mark Mitchell scored 19 points in the first half and

finished with a career-high 25 to help No. 21 Missouri rout Oklahoma 82-58. Caleb Grill had 15 points and Tony Perkins added 12 for the Tigers (18-6, 7-4 Southeastern Conference), who snapped a two-game skid. Mitchell shot 6 of 12 from the field, 13 for 18 at the

free-throw line and grabbed a team-best seven rebounds. Duke Miles scored 18 points and Jalon Moore added 10 points and seven rebounds for Oklahoma (16-8, 3-8), which lost its third straight. Missouri never trailed in the first half and pulled

that cut Oklahoma's deficit to 13-11 with 13:50 remaining in the first half. It was the 213th meeting between the former Big 8

away on a 10-0 run after Moore hit two free throws

Bayern Munich holds 'strong' in Champions League playoffs

Milan, Atalanta and Monaco all lose

GLASGOW, Feb 13, (AP): Bayern Munich looks set to survive the new Champions League playoffs round. AC Milan joined Atalanta and Monaco losing their firstleg games.

Bayern got high-class strikes from Michael Olise and Harry Kane either side of halftime in a 2-1 win at Scottish champion Celtic. The return game is Tuesday in Munich.

"The (Celtic) fans haven't seen many losses here, especially in Europe, so we appreciate the importance of the game and the victory," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany

Bayern had joined Real Madrid and Manchester City as Champions League title winners in the past five years who surprisingly found themselves in the playoffs because they finished outside the top eight in the new 36-team single standings format. Madrid won 3-2 in Manchester on Tuesday.

Feyenoord's goal in a rainsoaked 1-0 win over Milan came in the third minute and relied in France goalkeeper Mike Maignan spilling Igor Paixão's shot into the net. Feyenoord's Brazilian winger gave Milan new signing Kyle Walker a tough first game in the competition for the seven-time European champion.

It also was a quick winning start for Feyenoord's interim coach Pascal Bosschaart in his first game after the firing Monday of Brian

Benfica won 1-0 at Monaco with another goal from Vangélis Pavlídis, a delicate chip shot in the 48th. Monaco had Al Musrati sent off four minutes later.

puted penalty kick in stoppage time to beat Atalanta 2-1. That was a meeting of teams that finished 24th and ninth, respectively, in the

Club Brugge scored with a dis-

36-team standings two weeks ago. The top eight teams in those



Bayern's Serge Gnabry, left, and Celtic's Jeffrey Schlupp challenge for the ball during the Champions League play off first leg soccer match between Celtic Glasgow and Bayern Munich at the Celtic Park Stadium in Glasgow, Scotland. (AP)

standings advanced direct to the round of 16 in March, leaving Nos. 9 to 24 to compete this month for eight more entries in playoffs over back-to-back midweeks.

Harry Kane loves scoring against Kasper Schmeichel, his longtime rival in Tottenham vs Leicester and England vs Denmark games.

Bayern star Kane's sharp volley in the 49th, when left unmarked at the back post at a corner, was his 19th career goal past Schmeichel, more than any other goalkeeper he has faced.

It was a second impressive goal conceded by Schmeichel, who was helpless against Michael Olise's

rising left-footed shot in the 45th. On a tough evening for Celtic's all-American central defense of Cameron Carter-Vickers and Auston Trusty, the Scottish champion has more hope next Tuesday thanks to Japan forward Daizen Maeda cutting the deficit late on. "At 2-1, Bayern are hanging on,"

Celtic coach Brendan Rodgers said. "Let's go and have no regrets and see where it takes us. We've shown we can play football and be a threat." Benfica's Greece forward might be the most in-form striker in the Champions League. It is now six goals in the competition and five in the past three games including a hat trick against Barcelona.

The 26-year-old Pavlidis latched onto a pass from the halfway line and shrugged off defender Mohammed Salisu before neatly clipping the ball over goalkeeper Radoslaw Majecki in the 48th minute.

Benfica's win was soured by another injury for veteran winger Angel Di Maria. The 2022 World Cup winner with Argentina lasted 20 minutes as a substitute before sustaining a left hamstring injury. He pulled up near the penalty area and immediately lay on the ground. It was Benfica's second win in Monaco, adding to a 3-2 victory in November in the league phase.

A late light-touch clash between two Sweden teammates was decisive in Club Brugge's 2-1 win over Atalanta.

Entering stoppage time, Atalanta defender Isak Hien was judged to have raised a hand into the face of Brugge forward Gustaf Nilsson as they chased a loose ball.

Turkish referee Umut Meler awarded a penalty and showed yellow cards to three Atalanta players, including Hien, for protesting before Nilsson won the game. He sent goalkeeper Rui Patricio the wrong way with his spot kick.

Brugge had led on former Barcelona forward Ferran Jutglà's shot in the 15th minute and Atalanta leveled in the 41st on Mario Pašalić's header.

Defending champ Shiffrin skips race

Brignone wins GS at worlds

SAALBACH-HINTERGLEMM, Austria, Feb 13, (AP): Federica Brignone dominated both runs to win the women's giant slalom at the Alpine skiing world championships on Thursday while defending champion Mikaela Shiffrin sat out.

Brignone beat Alice Robinson by 0.90 seconds for her second medal from these worlds after earning silver in super-G a week ago. Brignone also leads the overall World Cup standings in arguably the best season of her career.

Robinson's silver was New Zealand's first medal in worlds

Paula Moltzan of the United States was 2.62 seconds behind and took bronze for her first individual world championship medal. She edged fourth-placed Thea Louise Stjernesund of Norway by onehundredth of a second.

Shiffrin skipped the event because she said she was not ready yet to race giant slalom again following a crash in November.

"I have been dreaming of this moment for many, many years. I was always second," said Brignone, who won GS silver in 2011 and 2023. "This is just one of the best days of my life."

She's the first Italian winner of the event since Deborah Compagnoni won back-toback titles in 1996-97.

Brignone covered her face with both hands when she saw she won. Then Robinson and Moltzan embraced her in the finish area.

The American said she was "just happy, joyful" for her bronze. She was fourth in Tuesday's team combined with downhiller Lauren Macuga, and in the mixed team parallel event last week.

"It's been kind of a rollercoaster of a season, with results and with emotions," said Moltzan, whose parents were among the 11,000 spectators.

"For it all to kind of play out on the really big stage is amazing. I can't believe I was on the right side of the hundredth

Shiffrin planned to start in Saturday's slalom. She paired with downhiller Breezy Johnson and skied the slalom portion to win the team combined



Italy's Federica Brignone, center, gold medal in a women's giant slalom, celebrates on the podium with silver medalist New Zealand's Alice Robinson, left, and bronze medalist United States' Paula Moltzan, at the Alpine Ski World Championships, in Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Austria. (AP)

Shiffrin won the giant slalom world title in 2023 and has been on the podium in GS at every worlds since 2017.

"What I have been struggling with this past couple of weeks with GS is, when we bring in normal or, like, real conditions, a little bit harder snow, I don't even know that I'm scared," Shiffrin said. "I just can't do the movements that you need to do to make a fast GS turn.'

The American holder of a record 99 World Cup wins suffered a deep puncture wound when she fell in a GS on Nov. 30 in Killington, Vermont, causing severe trauma to her oblique muscles, and underwent surgery in December.

At 34 years, 7 months, Brignone became the oldest female medalist at the worlds. She overtook Lindsey Vonn, who was four months younger when she won downhill bronze

Vonn, who came out of retirement after nearly six years at age 40 this season with a new titanium knee, doesn't race in giant slalom anymore.

The next event at the worlds is the men's giant slalom on Friday.

Four goals, four red cards

Everton holds Liverpool in the last



Thamer Al-Shanfa, Secretary of the Kuwait Basketball Federation.

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia set for friendly

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Kuwait's national basketball team will play two friendly matches against Saudi Arabia on February 16 and 18 at the Basketball Federation Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, as part of its preparations for upcoming competitions.

Thamer Al-Shanfa, Secretary of the Basketball Federation and Head of the Training and Teams Committee, confirmed that Saudi Arabia's national team (the Green Falcons) will hold a one-week training camp in Kuwait, during which it will face the Blues in two friendly encounters.

Al-Shanfa also announced that Serbian head coach Oliver Kostic has selected 14 players for the two matches, including:

Kuwait Club: Alexander Al-Ghais, Turki Al-Shammari, Imran Jawhar, Hamad Adnan, Musaed Al-Otaibi, Yousef Al-Hamdan

Kazma: Abdulrahman Al-Sahou, Ahmed Al-Balushi Al-Qurain: Mustafa Al-Rifai,

Adel Al-Saeed Al-Qadsiya: Saleh Yousef, Abdulaziz Al-Humaidi, Abdul-mohsen Al-Moussawi

Al-Sulaibikhat: Basil Al-Muza-

He further explained that the national team's preparation program, approved by the Training Committee, focuses on friendly matches during international breaks and extended training camps in the summer ahead of the Asian Cup

Al-Shanfa expressed his satisfaction with the steady progress of the training plan, emphasizing that it will enhance the team's readiness for upcoming tournaments.

It is worth noting that the team resumed training at the Basketball Federation Hall.

Merseyside derby at Goodison Park LIVERPOOL, Feb 13, (AP): Four

goals, four red cards and a lastgasp equalizer that will go down in English soccer lore.

It was quite the wild ride in the 120th and final Merseyside derby at Goodison Park

Everton captain James Tarkowski smashed a shot into the roof of the net in the eighth minute of stoppage time to secure a dramatic 2-2 draw with Liverpool in the Premier League.

It was virtually the last kick of the game, sparking wild celebrations inside one of English soccer's most venerable and atmospheric stadiums, which will be demolished at the end of this season.

"Amazing to score and what an amazing night," said Tarkowski, whose rare goal will be remembered as one of the great moments in Goodison Park's long history.

The "Grand Old Lady" - as the stadium is fondly called by the locals - has been Everton's home since 1892. The club is moving to a new 52,888-capacity venue at Bramley-Moore Dock on Liverpool's waterfront.

Tarkowski's strike denied Liverpool a victory that would have lifted the leaders nine points clear atop the league. Instead, Liverpool's advantage over Arsenal is seven points after 24 games.

Beto put Everton ahead in the 11th minute - the striker celebrated by hitting LeBron James' "Silencer" move - before Alexis Mac



Liverpool's Luis Diaz, left, challenges for the ball with Everton's Jake O'Brien during the English Premier League soccer match between Everton and Liverpool, Liverpool, England. (AP)

Allister equalized in the 16th by heading home a right-wing cross from Mohamed Salah, who put Liverpool in front in the 73rd with his league-leading 22nd goal of the campaign.

Then came Tarkowski's amazing - and, to some, fitting - intervention, with his goal only awarded after a long, agonizing video review for a potential offside in the buildup.

"I just saw the ball going wide and thought, 'Last minute, why not?' Tarkowski said. "It managed to fall to me and I let it rip." The action didn't stop there.

After the final whistle, Everton midfielder Abdoulaye Doucoure appeared to celebrate in front of Liverpool's fans and was confronted by Liverpool substitute Curtis Jones, leading to a melee involving more players, officials, stewards and even police officers.

Doucoure and Jones both were shown second yellow cards, while Liverpool manager Arne Slot and his assistant, Sipke Hulshoff, got straight red cards. Slot might have been sent off for shaking the hand of referee Michael Oliver aggres-

The home fans created a typically feverish atmosphere - blue smoke filled the air around the ground before kickoff and Everton's players were given a rapturous welcome as they arrived for the game - and they witnessed the most amazing of finishes.

"The place was boiling hot all night, emotional," Everton manager David Moyes said. "It was an incredible atmosphere inside the

Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk acknowledged it was "intense" and had his own opinion on the post-match melee.

"I think Abdoulaye Doucoure wanted to provoke our fans," Van Dijk said. "I think that is what I saw and Curtis Jones didn't think it was the right thing to do. And then you know what happens if there is a little tussle."

As for Slot's thoughts on the game, the occasion and perhaps his own red card, they will have to wait. He wasn't allowed to give post-match interviews after getting sent off, under Premier League rules.

The stats will show the teams met 120 times in all competitions at Goodison Park, starting with the first meeting in 1894, and each won 41 times.

It was a rearranged league game, with the original meeting - scheduled for Dec. 7 - postponed because of stormy weather.

English soccer to debut semi-automated offside technology in FA Cup

LONDON, Feb 13, (AP): English soccer will use semi-automated offside technology for the first time in the fifth round of the FA Cup at the start of March.

The AI-based player tracking technology was supposed to be introduced by the Premier League after one of the international breaks in the early months of the season but was delayed because of issues in the testing process.

After progress in recent weeks, Premier League chief executive Tony Scholes said last week, the technology will first be used in the FA Cup, which has finally reached the last-16

However, it will be employed only in seven of the eight matches over March 1-2, the Football Association said on Thursday.

"Semi-automated offside technology will pro-

vide more efficient placement of the virtual offside line, based on optical player tracking, and produce virtual graphics to ensure an enhanced in-stadium and broadcast experience for supporters," the FA said.

It added the technology "does not change the accuracy of the decision making but enhances the speed and efficiency of the process."

Premier League officials have said they

hope the technology will reduce the time it takes to check for offside by an average of 31

The FA says the Premier League will look to implement the system later this season after seeing it in operation in the FA Cup.

Semi-automated offside technology was used at a World Cup for the first time in the men's tournament in Qatar in 2022.

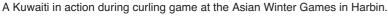


Everton's Beto, left, challenges for the ball with Liverpool's Ibrahima Konate during the English Premier League soccer match between Everton and Liverpool, Liverpool, England. The match ended 2-2. (AP) **– See Page 15**

Sports

Kuwait celebrates best performance in Games history







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

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

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

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 Mongolia 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 medallist 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 medallist 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



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

Qadsiya 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 topof-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-Qadsiya vs. Al-Tadamon at 6:00 pm at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium and Kazma hosting Al-Fahaheel at 8:15 pm.

The Mansouriya 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 champion-

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-Qadisiya). 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 recordextending 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 re-

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

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

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

Kazma, still reeling from its 2-3 defeat to Al-Qadsiya, 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.

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

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

RIFFA, Bahrain, Feb 13: Al-Qadsiya 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-Qadsiya 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-Qadsiya 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, Qadsiya has faced defeat in all its previous matches against Al-Rayy-

an, Al-Salam, Al-Arabi, and Al-Ahly. Al-Qadsiya'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-Qadsiya, leading to a dip in

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 rule, while Nkunku has only two league goals and is happier operating as a second striker or an attacking 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 in-

ARAB (* TIMES

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY IN FREE KUWAIT

Published by: Arab Times Publishing House

Editor-in-Chief **AHMED AL JARALLAH**

Editorial Office: Tel: 24813566 - Airport Road, Shuwaikh P.O. Box: 2270, 13023 Safat, Kuwait E-mail: arabtimes@arabtimesonline.com Advertising:

Tel: **99659717 - 50232062**

Annual Subscriptions: Individuals KD 30

Companies and Official Departments KD 45 E-mail: advt@arabtimesonline.com Airmail charges extra for overseas