



**basketball** Page 14



## Uzbekistan president lauds Kuwait Amir's role in regional stability

### Opinion

**Ahmed Al-Jarallah**

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

## Saudi Arabia a dazzling global power today

WITH the announcement that US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin will hold their summit in Riyadh in the presence of the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, it indicates that Saudi Arabia has solidified its status as a global power. It reinforces Saudi Arabia's major role in global diplomacy, particularly in helping to resolve one of the most complicated and dangerous conflicts of recent years, a war that could have escalated into World War III.

All Gulf citizens should take pride in the fact that Riyadh has become a hub for peace. The mere hosting of such a high-level summit by Saudi Arabia holds significance comparable to the Versailles Summit that ended World War I, as well as the Yalta Summit between Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt, where the new world order was shaped after a devastating war that claimed mil-

lions of lives and saw the first use of nuclear bombs.

Undoubtedly, the outcomes of the Yalta Agreement remained influential until the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which marked the beginning of a new international phase. Therefore, for Saudi Arabia to host a summit between the leaders of the world's largest and second-largest global powers to resolve this conflict is a clear indication that the region's perception on the global stage has undergone a dramatic transformation.

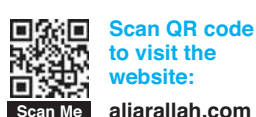
Continued on Page 5

Follow me on:

@Ahmedaljarallah

Ahmed aljarallah

ahmed@aljarallah.com



Scan QR code to visit the website: aljarallah.com



Left: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, alongside senior officials, bids farewell to President Mirziyoyev at the airport after his official visit on Tuesday. Right: President Mirziyoyev and the official delegation during a tour of Kuwait's Al-Salam Palace Museum on Monday.



Amiri Diwan photos

### Leaders set path for stronger economic, security ties

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): President of Uzbekistan Mirziyoyev on Tuesday highly praised the efforts of His Highness Amir Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East region.

This came in a joint statement issued during the official visit of the President of Uzbekistan to the State of Kuwait on February 17-18, which came at the invitation of His Highness the Amir.

During the visit, which took place in a constructive and friendly atmosphere, the leaders of the two countries agreed to expand and deepen comprehensive cooperation between their countries.

President of Uzbekistan highly praised the efforts of His Highness Amir to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East, while His Highness the Amir commended the President of Uzbekistan for his efforts in strengthening peace and security, good neighborliness, and integration processes in Central Asia, according to the statement.

The President of Uzbekistan also congratulated the State of Kuwait on assuming the presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) this year, and both sides praised the development of relations between the GCC and the counties of

Central Asia. His Highness the Amir welcomed Uzbekistan's chairmanship in the Consultative Meetings of the Heads of State and its role in advancing regional connectivity and sustainable development.

The two sides welcomed the upcoming 2nd summit of the leaders of the GCC countries with the Central Asian counties in the city of Samarkand, and the Kuwaiti side, in its capacity as the current chair of the GCC, affirmed its full support for deepening cooperation between the GCC and the Central Asian Countries, in all aspects.

The two sides thoroughly discussed the key aspects of Kuwait-Uzbekistan relations and identified the main directions for further development, said the joint statement.

Based on the scale of cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the State of Kuwait, the two sides reaffirmed the importance of strengthening political dialogue, trade and economic relations, cultural and humanitarian exchanges, and cooperation between security, defense, and law enforcement agencies.

# Kuwait restores imprisonment for evasive debtors in new law



Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

### Enforcement enhanced

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): The Council of Ministers has approved two draft decrees amending key provisions of Kuwait's Civil and Commercial Procedures Law and Bankruptcy Law.

Announced by Justice Minister Nasser Al-Sumait, these amendments aim to tackle the growing issue of non-payment by solvent debtors, which has contributed to a rise in bad debts and negatively impacted the country's economic climate.

The approved draft decrees are as follows:  
1. Amending the Civil and Commercial Procedure Law (Law No. 38/1980):

- Targets financially capable debtors who evade payments, increasing bad debts.
- Grants the Enforcement Administration authority to request financial disclosures and notify the credit bureau of defaults.
- Reinstates the arrest and imprisonment of delinquent debtors, with humanitarian exemptions (e.g., pregnant women, medically unfit individuals).
- Allows debt repayment in installments based on financial capacity.

Continued on Page 5

### KFF ensures readiness

## 23 security points set up for National Day events

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Director of Operations Department in the Public Security Sector at the Interior Ministry Brigadier Ali Al-Ustadh has confirmed the strategic establishment of 23 fixed security checkpoints in all governorates in preparation for the upcoming national celebrations.

He said these measures are in compliance with the directive of Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, who has called for heightened security vigilance.

In a television interview, Al-Ustadh revealed that three primary security checkpoints have been established -- opposite the Scientific Center along Gulf Street, in Bneid Al-Gar and Julai'ah. He affirmed that additional security personnel will be deployed in residential areas to ensure comprehensive security coverage.

He added the checkpoints are fully equipped to deal with medical emergencies, and will include personnel from Kuwait Fire Force and Kuwait Municipality.

He stated that this integrated approach aims to guarantee swift response to reports, considering the proximity of checkpoints to potential incident sites.

Meanwhile, Director of Public Relations at Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Brigadier General Mohammed Bader Al-Gharib affirmed KFF's readiness to secure the celebrations of the 64th National Day and the 34th Liberation Day of Kuwait.

According to a press release issued by KFF, Brigadier General Al-Gharib also affirmed KFF's readiness for the holy month of Ramadan to ensure the safety of mosques and Ramadan prayer halls, particularly during Taraweeh prayers, which are attended by a high number of worshippers, as well as maintain the efficiency of fire safety equipment.

Brigadier General Al-Gharib explained that KFF has finalized its plans for the celebrations, including the establishment of fixed points at the celebration and gathering sites, distribution of rapid intervention units, and alerting all fire stations to remain on standby. Necessary equipment and meals for KFF personnel have been arranged.

Continued on Page 5

## Finance ministry optimistic about advancing GCC tax cooperation

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Ministry of Finance Undersecretary Aseel Al-Munaifi has affirmed the commitment of Kuwait to continue supporting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which contributes effectively to the development of tax coordination mechanisms.

Al-Munaifi made the statement at the 14th meeting of the heads and directors of tax departments in the GCC countries, which was hosted by Kuwait.

The objectives of this meeting include strengthening cooperation between GCC countries and to address all obstacles to the exploration of new horizons for tax cooperation to support the development paths in GCC

countries.

Al-Munaifi voiced optimism over the contribution of this meeting to building a tax system that considers the social dimension and justice in distributing expenses, facilitating the business environment, and strengthening coordination between tax departments to develop their

Continued on Page 5

## CSC releases circular on Ramadan work timings

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has issued a circular regarding working hours during the holy month of Ramadan for both morning and evening shifts, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The circular states:

- Employees are required to adhere to the official working hours during the morning shift with the flexible working system. Flexible working hours for the morning period will begin between 8:30 am and 10:30 am, with a duration of four and a half hours.

Continued on Page 5

### Day by Day

SEVEN airlines have pulled out of the Kuwaiti aviation market, and the reasons behind their departure are well-known. While some of the reasons are from our end, others stem from the airlines themselves.

What is clear is that we must be aware of the risks when global carriers begin to leave Kuwait. These seven airlines closed their offices for a range of reasons, some serious, others trivial. But who is held accountable?

Though we heard about their exit, the reasons have yet to be disclosed, leaving the impression of a lack of management on our part.

In successful economies, airports and their services are marketed effectively, with incentives and attractions designed to boost business. Here in Kuwait, the doors are shut, the responsible parties lie to us, and we remain silent. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

### Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, will sponsor and attend the graduation ceremony of the 47th batch of police cadets at the Police Academy. The ceremony will take place at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a congratulatory cable to King Abdullah II of Jordan on the success of the surgery he underwent, wishing him swift recovery and more progress and prosperity for the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom under his wise leadership.

Similarly, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a congratulatory cable to King Abdullah II of Jordan on the success of the surgery he underwent, wishing him swift recovery. (KUNA)

## Fugitive in Kuwait cyber fraud case arrested in Gulf country

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: A fugitive member of the Chinese gang apprehended last week in connection with cyberattacks and attempts to seize funds from bank accounts of individuals and companies by hacking into local telecommunications towers, has been arrested in a Gulf country, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to security sources, Kuwait's security authorities coordinated and held intensive communication with security authorities in that Gulf country immediately after the suspect fled the country. This contributed to his successful arrest in that country.

Continued on Page 5

 <p><b>8</b> Kuwait Finance House Group wins 7 prestigious awards from IFN</p>	 <p><b>9</b> Burgan reports solid financial results for the year 2024</p>	 <p><b>11</b> Alghanim Industries expands Saudi Arabia's industrial export power with new Kirby facility</p>
---	--	---



## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:05 Asr ..... 15:14  
 Sunrise .. 06:25 Maghrib .. 17:39  
 Zohr ..... 12:02 Isha ..... 18:57

# Local

## Weather

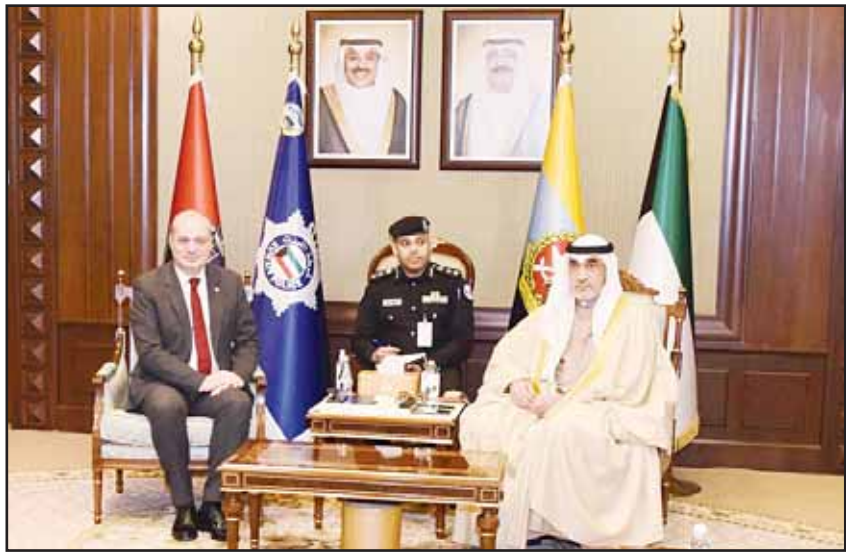
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Mild and clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate northwesterly wind to variable wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h.

## By Night:

Cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind changing to light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 08-40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	21	11
Abdaly	22	07
Jahra	22	11
Salmiyah	19	14
Jal Aliyah	21	09
Nuwaisib	21	11
Wafra	21	09



KUNA photo  
Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah receives the Albanian Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Iglj Hasani.

## Boost eyed in Kuwait, Albania ties

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah discussed issues of common interest and cooperation with Albanian Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Iglj Hasani on Monday.

According to a ministry statement, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yusuf underscored during the meeting the depth of bilateral relations

with Albania.

For his part, Hasani stressed the importance of enhancing relations between the two friendly countries, appreciating Kuwait's great effort in supporting security and peace in the world.

Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Ma'arafi attended the meeting.



KUNA photo  
Kuwait Flour Mills products on display at the exhibition.

## Kuwait participates in Dubai's food exhibition 'Gulfood 2025'

DUBAI, Feb 18, (KUNA): The annual Gulf Food Exhibition (Gulfood 2025); the region's leading food and beverage event, began Monday in Dubai, featuring over 5,000 global companies, including Kuwaiti participants.

Held at the Dubai World Trade Centre and running until February 21, the exhibition showcases over 100,000 new products, serving as a key platform for business partnerships and exploring the latest industry innovations.

Kuwait Flour Mills & Bakeries Company CEO Mutlaq Al-Zayed told KUNA that their annual participation reaffirms commitment to strengthening their presence in regional and international markets.

Gulfood, he noted, provides an ideal platform to highlight their competitive edge and support global food security.

This year, the company is prioritizing innovation in baked goods and essential food products while keeping the highest standards of quality and safety, Al-Zayed pointed out.

He added that the event offers an opportunity to exchange expertise with industry leaders and explore the sector's future with others.

Gulfood 2025 hosts a diverse range of industry players, from manufacturers and suppliers to distributors and renowned chefs, fostering trade exchange and highlighting trends in sustainability and innovation.

## Other Voices

### Why target places of worship?

By Ahmad alsarraf

Well-known organizations in Kuwait and other Gulf countries have been announcing fundraising campaigns for projects aimed at purchasing churches and synagogues and converting them into mosques.

We had previously written about the dangers of this trend and warned against it, as it could provoke an uncomfortable backlash in the future.

It is evident that the goal is not to spread religion, but to challenge the sentiments of others in their own homelands. The message being sent is that their faith is weak, as they sold their temples and churches for low prices to us for converting them into places of worship for our religion.

If the objective behind these projects were genuinely to serve the Muslim community in the region by building mosques and religious centers, then why target places of worship belonging to others, as this causes hurt to the local population, when there are many other available plots and buildings for sale?

The reason could be that those in charge of these projects are aware that announcing the construction of religious projects in other people's lands would not generate the amount of funds they intend to collect. However, when the announcement involves buying a church or a synagogue, it becomes much easier to stir religious emotions among naive individuals, and prompt them to donate more generously.

This is where those "in charge" benefit from the idea of purchasing churches and temples, as opposed to buying vacant plots or regular buildings and converting them into mosques. Moreover, the timing is now ripe for such announcements, as sentiments of hatred and animosity towards others in the region are at their

peak.

On the other hand, purchasing such projects and converting them into mosques or religious centers for millions does not mean, as often claimed, that the spending is subject to oversight by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Kuwaiti embassies worldwide.

Buying, building, or renovating such places and converting them into mosques is a complex and costly undertaking. Effective monitoring requires the presence of engineers, technicians, supervisors, and accountants in every Kuwaiti embassy of the countries where our charity organizations operate. Clearly, this capability does not exist at present, even in a country like Britain. However, what about in African countries or in places like India, Pakistan, and others where projects are carried out hundreds of miles away from the capital?

I do not blame the so-called charity associations, and I will not question their goals or the sincerity of their desire to generate funding for their causes and for those responsible for them. Rather, I place the blame on the relevant government institutions that automatically grant these charity associations approval to collect millions for projects that are nearly impossible to monitor effectively by any government agency.

In addition to the aforementioned issues, there is also the negative impact on the local residents of the areas where these projects are implemented, as it can create hostility towards Islam and Muslims, especially when churches and temples are seized with Muslims' money. It is not far fetched to imagine a time when the concerned ministry will issue a circular to ban such projects. Why not ban these controversial projects before damage is done?

What if the church or temple is purchased, and the local authorities or municipality later refuse to convert it into a mosque, which has happened more than once?

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

United GCC initiatives 'important' to build societies: Al-Mutairi

## Gov't, private sectors, civil society alliance vital to empower youth

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi affirmed on Tuesday the importance of launching a united GCC initiative for youth in the fields of education, training, innovation, scientific research, sports and culture and providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to be creative.

This came in his speech during his presidency of the 38th meeting of the GCC sports and youth ministers held in Kuwait with the attendance of Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jassem Al-Budaiwi.

Al-Mutairi noted that empowering youth was in providing them with opportunities that utilizes their creative energies and exceptional capabilities, qualifying them to provide innovative solutions that enhance the development process and enable them to translate their ideas and ambitions into projects that contribute to building their countries and the world.

He stressed that the partnership between the government sector, the private sector and civil

society has become an urgent necessity to enhance efforts to empower youth and develop their capabilities.

He pointed out that sports had become an essential element in promoting the spirit of competition and creativity among the youth, stressing that the GCC countries have proven their ability to consolidate their position in this field by hosting and organizing many major sporting events at the regional and global levels.

Al-Mutairi expressed the GCC peoples' optimistic aspiration in the future through hosting major sporting events that give youth greater opportunities for creativity and excellence and consolidate the region's position as a global sports center. He also congratulated the brothers in Saudi Arabia on winning the opportunity to host the Asian Football Cup (2027) and the FIFA World Cup Finals (2034).

On his part, Al-Budaiwi said that youth are on top of the GCC leaderships' priorities for their essential role in achieving sustainable development as they represent the force to build a

bright future for our countries.

He noted that GCC societies are considered young societies, which requires giving this group promising opportunities in building the future of their countries as he expressed pride that the GCC countries have achieved remarkable progress in the global innovation and youth development indicators.

He pointed out that the GCC countries are keen to continue this path and strengthen GCC cooperation to launch initiatives that keep pace with the aspirations of young people and support their effective contribution to building the future.

Al-Budaiwi praised the sports and youth achievements by the GCC countries in recent periods, which reflect the interest and attention of the leaders of the GCC countries in these two important sectors.



Al-Mutairi

# Radical road repairs begin on 4th Ring Road: minister

Obtain updates from GTD, motorists told

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan has confirmed the start of radical maintenance works on the Fourth Ring Road as part of the new contracts, indicating the ministry is fully committed to continue implementing road maintenance projects throughout the country; while ensuring quality and achieving international specifications for infrastructure advancement.

In a press statement on Tuesday, Al-Mashaan revealed that the concerned teams inspected the area before carrying out the

necessary maintenance and repair works; reiterating that such works started in the most affected areas under the supervision and

close monitoring of the ministry's teams.

She added: The teams are assigned in various project sites to follow up and address road network issues and deal with any problem related to the internal and public roads. We are keen on providing the best services through the ministry's sectors based on their respective specializations.

She explained that her directive to quickly complete the maintenance works is based on the recommendation of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, as the government is committed to maintain and repair the country's infrastructure.

She pointed out that the infrastructure of any country is the main pillar of its economic vision.

She stressed that the road maintenance and repair file is one of the priorities of the political leadership, expressing pride in the directives 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 who fully support the road maintenance projects that will be the pillar of advanced infrastructure within the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

Meanwhile, Deputy Supervisor of the Fourth Ring Road Maintenance Project Eng. Abdullah Al-Salem said "the ongoing maintenance work includes putting asphalt with added polymer material on the road measuring 3,300 square meters."

He urged road users to obtain updates regarding road closures from the General Traffic Department in order to avoid traffic congestion, calling on everyone to be patient and cooperate with the concerned authorities to complete the maintenance work within specified time.



Mohamed Karim Boudali



The Tunisian ambassador with guests.

Photos by Samer Shaqir

## 'Francophone Diwaniya' hosts diplomats, journalists

By Mohammad Al-Farhan

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Tunisian Embassy in Kuwait hosted the Francophone Diwaniya today, bringing together ambassadors, diplomats, academics, and journalists interested in Francophone culture. The event provided a platform to enhance dialogue and cultural exchange between French-speaking nations and Kuwait.

In his speech, Mohamed Karim Boudali, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to Kuwait,

welcomed the attendees and praised Kuwait's role in supporting cultural initiatives and promoting dialogue and openness. He also highlighted Kuwait's selection as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media for 2024, considering this recognition a testament to the country's distinguished position in the Arab and international cultural landscape.

The event coincided with Kuwait's National Day celebrations, adding a special significance that reflects the strong ties between Kuwait and

Francophone nations. A cultural corner dedicated to Tunisia was set up, showcasing information about Tunisian heritage, history, traditions, and cuisine, allowing attendees to gain deeper insight into Tunisia's cultural identity.

The Diwaniya concluded with an open discussion on the importance of Francophonie in fostering dialogue between nations. Participants emphasized the need to continue such initiatives to support cultural cooperation and strengthen international relations.

## Turkish envoy's message on National, Liberation days

We celebrate alongside the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait, as well as the Government and people of Kuwait, the founding of the modern Kuwaiti state. We also commemorate the 34th anniversary of Kuwait's liberation.

These two days symbolize pivotal moments in Kuwait's history, highlighting the sacrifices and resilience of the Kuwaiti people in defending their pride, freedom, and sovereignty.

As the Ambassador of Türkiye, I am deeply honored to witness and be part of this auspicious celebration and commemoration.

The saying, "A friend in need is a friend indeed" perfectly captures the long-standing fraternal ties between Türkiye and Kuwait. This bond has been proven time and again over more than six decades of diplomatic relations.

The anniversary of Kuwait's liberation serves as a powerful reminder that the international community stands firmly by the rule of law. This was clearly demonstrated during the liberation of Kuwait, in which Türkiye played a pivotal role in supporting Kuwait's freedom from the Iraqi occupation in 1991. Türkiye stood firmly on the side of international legitimacy, strongly endorsing United Nations resolutions that called for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces.

From the very beginning of the crisis, Ankara took

a decisive stance in support of Kuwait's sovereignty, actively participating in the imposition of international sanctions on the Iraqi regime of the time. In addition, Türkiye took a bold economic step by shutting down the Iraqi oil pipeline that passed through its territory, further pressuring the Iraqi government.

During Operation Desert Storm, Türkiye provided military facilitation to the allied forces through its bases and reinforced its troops along the Iraqi border, effectively diverting Iraqi military resources and preventing reinforcements from reaching Kuwait.

Following Kuwait's liberation, Türkiye continued its unwavering support for Kuwait across various domains, strengthening the bonds of brotherhood between the two nations. This commitment has laid the foundation for ongoing cooperation in security, stability, and development.

I am also pleased to note that these fraternal ties were elevated to the level of strategic partnership during H.H. Amir Sheikh Mishal's visit to Türkiye last year, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of our diplomatic relations.

Türkiye and Kuwait serve as anchors of stability in the region, and the growing cooperation between our countries benefits not only our respective nations but also the broader region.

As Kuwait continues its path toward prosperity and stability, Türkiye will remain a steadfast ally of Kuwait.

Long live the State of Kuwait, and may the fraternal ties between Türkiye and Kuwait continue to flourish!

Tuba Nur Sonmez

Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait

## Airport clinics operate 24/7

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi has inaugurated the new clinic at the Terminal 5 (Jazeera Airways Building) in Kuwait International Airport.

This move aims to improve medical services for travelers by ensuring the presence of a clinic in all the main passenger buildings.

Al-Awadhi inspected the Kuwait Airport Health Center and clinics in the terminals (T1, T4 and T5) to assess their readiness and the quality of health services provided.

Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs Dr. Al-Mundhir Al-Hasawi stated that the airport's clinics operate 24/7 and provide comprehensive emergency medical services, supported by qualified medical and nursing staff and health inspectors.



# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Save education, teach children meaning of right from wrong

"AT the entrance of a university in South Africa, the following message is written for one to ponder on: 'The destruction of any country does not require bombing it with nuclear bombs or long-range missiles, but by following a bad approach to education and allowing students to cheat in exams. Then, the following happens: Patients die at the hands of unskilled doctors, buildings collapse due to the poor performance of engineers, money is lost due to the poor work of economists and accountants, and justice is lost because judges do not understand their work. Thus, when the level of education collapses, nations collapse.' (end of message)." **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Al-Dawas

"Look at the reality we live in, a son beats his father, daily quarrels between young people for the most trivial reasons, increase in suicides in a country that is supposed to be prosperous, increase in stabbings with sharp objects, breaking into shops for the purpose of stealing, drug abuse, disobedience to parents, assaulting doctors in hospitals and breaking into police stations. Some of them accept bribes and buy fake certificates from unrecognized or fictitious universities. These people hold government positions they do not deserve. They have empty minds, so what will the country be like if these young people take over the administration of the State?"

"The Ministry of Education had repeatedly proposed amending the curricula to address bad and dangerous behaviors, but some members of the National Assembly at the time objected for fear of deviating from religion and openly declaring western values. If we practice religion correctly, then why is there corruption in the Ministry of Awqaf?"

"Without a doubt, this is evidence of the poor educational curriculum, which did not raise the student on good morals, but made him memorize his lessons without understanding. With the spread of bad morals, many people began to violate the law and the internal conditions have deteriorated, such that many students began to challenge the Ministry of Education and cheated in the exams in front of the supervisors, or assaulted the teachers. We did not build the good citizen, whether through the curriculum or 'endowments'.

"The Ministry of Awqaf does not attract young people to mosque lessons. Most of the preaching and religious lessons are repetitive, while preachers have no influence. We pray and do not hear any lesson on tolerance, but hatred of other religions and peoples. It would have been more appropriate for this ministry to explain the chapters of the Holy Qur'an to the students. Allah Almighty asked: Do they not then reflect on the Qur'an, or are there locks in their hearts?"

"I entered a mosque and saw the Imam or Muezzin, gathering some children around him. He asked them to memorize and repeat verses without understanding. If only they understood the chapters of the Holy Quran, their behavior would have been better.

"For example, he did not explain to them the 'Surat Yusuf', which contains virtuous behaviors like the meaning of patience in adversity. It includes the story of brothers throwing their little brother, Yusuf, into the well out of envy, because their father loved him. He was patient and some people saved him. Yusuf was characterized by honesty when he was young. He called Allah even when he was in prison, so his good morals led him to become the Minister of Finance for the King.

"Finally, he forgave his brothers even though they threw him into the well. Thus, through explanation and understanding, we plant a living conscience in the souls of the students. Patience, mercy and tolerance have beautiful meanings. If this happens, they are characterized by good behavior when they are young and old, and benefit their country. This is how to build a good citizen.

"At present, we are in dire need of instilling values and standards of right and wrong in the souls of our children, so that they do not memorize lessons without understanding them."

### Also:

"In light of the current regional circumstances and the political and security turmoil sweeping the area, national unity has become an urgent necessity that cannot be delayed or compromised. Maintaining the cohesion of Kuwait's internal front is a national responsibility that falls on every individual. It serves as the safety valve that protects the country from the consequences of surrounding regional crises", columnist **Mohsen Al-Otaibi** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"History has revealed that the strength of nations lies not only in their natural resources or military power but also in the unity and solidarity of their people in the face of challenges.

"Since we live in a region torn by conflict, it is essential to prioritize the interests of Kuwait above all else, and overcome narrow disputes and divisions that could jeopardize this unity.

"The role of the government in this regard is as important as that of the citizen. It is the government's responsibility to implement policies that promote national unity, reinforce values of tolerance and moderation, and combat divisive behaviors and conflicts. By supporting education, enhancing national

culture, and providing meaningful media platforms to raise community awareness, the government can cultivate an environment that promotes stability and strengthens social cohesion.

"The homeland is not merely a geographical space we live on ... It is an entity whose blessings we enjoy and to which we belong, both in terms of history and future. As such, the current situation demands that every citizen realize the responsibility placed upon them and understand that security and stability are the foundations of development and progress.

"Differences of opinion are a natural part of democratic practice, but these differences must stay within the boundaries of constructive dialogue that strengthens unity rather than undermining it.

"Preserving national unity goes beyond speeches and slogans; it is a daily commitment that begins with our adherence to laws and respect for state institutions, continues with spreading a culture of tolerance and acceptance of others, and culminates in active participation in community building.

"The values of cooperation and solidarity passed down by our forefathers are a precious legacy that we must preserve and pass on to future generations. Our ancestors faced challenges with resilience and unity, which allowed Kuwait to become a model of stability and cohesion. Today, the responsibility to uphold and enrich this legacy lies with all of us.

"In conclusion, the call for national unity is not a luxury but a necessary imperative in these challenging times. Let us rise to this responsibility and work together to preserve Kuwait as a sanctuary of security and stability, united by our love for the homeland and our loyalty under one banner: the banner of Kuwait, both leadership and people.

"National unity is the foundation of a community's strength and cohesion. It enhances peaceful coexistence and cooperation among all members of society, despite their ethnic, religious, or cultural differences. National unity contributes to stability and security, and drives development and progress by embedding values of citizenship, equality, and loyalty to the nation. Preserving national unity requires rejecting fanaticism and division, and working to develop dialogue and understanding among the various segments of society."



"Kuwait is experiencing a noticeable shift towards strengthening its tourism sector, driven by an ambitious economic vision aimed at diversifying income sources and capitalizing on its natural and human resources," columnist **Abdulrahman Al-Misfer** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"The new draft of the tourism law, revealed by the media at the end of last week, signals a serious effort to position Kuwait as a key player in Gulf tourism by benefiting from its strategic location, pristine islands, and expansive beaches, in addition to the large-scale development projects currently underway."



Al-Misfer

"In recent decades, Gulf countries have achieved remarkable success in the tourism sector. The UAE, led by Dubai, has transformed from a commercial hub to a global tourist destination through investments in infrastructure, visa facilitation, and the organization of major exhibitions and conferences. Abu Dhabi has solidified its position in event tourism.

"Saudi Arabia welcomed 30 million tourists in 2024 and aims to raise that number to 70 million by 2030 as part of its economic vision. Qatar, benefiting from the success of hosting the 2022 World Cup, has strengthened its status as a global tourist destination. Bahrain and Oman have carved their paths with quality tourism projects.

"In light of this competition, Kuwait is now more poised than ever to enter the tourism sector with vigor. Projects such as the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, island development plans, and other developmental projects reflect a genuine desire to create a comprehensive tourism environment.

"Kuwait's success in hosting the recent Gulf Cup serves as a clear demonstration of its ability to organize major events, which enhances its prospects for future growth in this field. However, achieving a tourism renaissance requires clear and practical steps. These should begin with simplifying tourist visa procedures, encouraging investments in hotels and recreational facilities, and developing efficient infrastructure that includes transportation, shopping centers, and modern technological services.

"Also, tourism extends beyond resorts and beaches to include the organization of conferences, cultural, artistic, and sports events, each creating sustainable economic opportunities.

"Kuwait has all the necessary components for success in this field. What it needs now is strategic planning and professional execution. If this opportunity is wisely invested in, the country could transform into a competitive tourist destination within the next few years, which will contribute to economic growth, job creation, and the strengthening of its position in both the regional and international tourism arenas."

— Compiled by **Mahmoud Attiyeh/Simi K. Kutty**



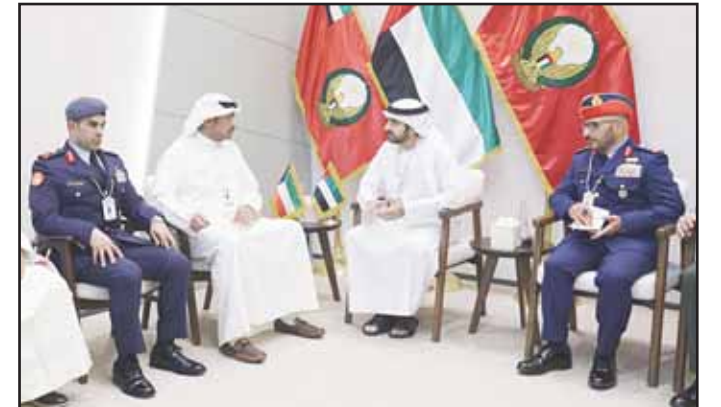
Kuwait's Minister of Defense, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah arrives for the exhibition.



Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah talking to the UAE Navy officers.



The Kuwaiti Defense Minister meets the Crown Prince of Dubai during the opening of the IDEX and NAVDEX exhibitions.



Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah in discussions with the Crown Prince of Dubai. Army Deputy Chief of the General Staff Maj. Gen. Pilot Sheikh Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah accompanied the Defense Minister.

## Kuwait Defense Minister attends Abu Dhabi's IDEX, NAVDEX

ABU DHABI, Feb 18, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Defense, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah met on Monday, with Dubai Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum.

According to a Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense statement, Sheikh Abdullah's visit came in response to an official invitation from Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad. Sheikh Abdullah arrived in Abu Dhabi, accompanied by Army Deputy Chief of the General Staff Maj. Gen. Pilot Sheikh Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with other officials from the Ministries of Defense and Interior.

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah and Sheikh Hamdan Al-Maktoum both attended the opening of the International Defense Exhibition (IDEX) 2025 and the Naval Defense and Maritime Security Exhibition (NAVDEX) 2025 in Abu Dhabi.

IDEX and NAVDEX, which kicked off Monday and will continue until February 21, showcase the latest innovations and technologies in the fields of defense and maritime security.

The 17th edition of IDEX and the 8th edition of NAVDEX bring together leading global defense companies, decision-makers, and industry experts to present advanced technological solutions aimed at enhancing international peace and security.

Sheikh Abdullah emphasized the UAE's host-

ing of specialized exhibitions in the defense and maritime sectors reflects its advanced capabilities and leadership in these fields.

He also commended the extensive efforts made to present cutting-edge defense technologies, with participation from major global companies and leading industry experts.

The minister highlighted the significance of IDEX and NAVDEX as key platforms for exchanging expertise and exploring the latest technological developments in defense and security.

He noted that these events provide valuable opportunities to enhance defense cooperation and adopt advanced technologies to boost the efficiency and readiness of Kuwait's armed forces.

# Al-Harees detention extended

### Ex-MP Ashour absolved in money-laundering case

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Court of Cassation refused to release former minister and MP Mubarak Al-Harees and decided to postpone the hearing on the case of exploiting his influence to profit from public funds until March 17.**

On Monday, the court deliberated on Al-Harees' appeal against the Ministerial Court's ruling that recently sentenced him to four years in prison with hard labor and fined

him KD 400,000 for exploiting his influence to profit from public funds.

On the other hand, the Court of Cassation rejected the appeal of media figure Halima Boland against the ruling to refrain from punishing her and cancel the two-year prison sentence issued by the First Instance Court in the case of inciting indecency and immorality and misusing a mobile phone.

**Ex-MP Ashour acquitted:** The Criminal Court acquitted former MP Saleh Ashour and a Kuwaiti citizen of money laundering charges estimated at KD 151,000 from the funds of the Al-Thaqalayn Charity Society.

The case was based on a report filed by the

Ministry of Social Affairs against Ashour and others on charges of violating donation laws.

**Appeal against acquittal:** The Court of Appeals adjourned to March 3 the Public Prosecution's appeal against the acquittal of the former head of the Kuwait Football Association, his deputy, and the Secretary-General of the association on charges of broadcasting false news and harming Kuwait's national interests.

The Criminal Court had previously acquitted the three defendants of all charges in a State Security case related to the chaos that occurred during the Kuwait-Iraq football match at Jaber Stadium as part of the Gulf 26 Cup tournament.



KUNA photo

Six fire brigade units took part in the operation to extinguish the fire.

### PAI lauds KFF quick action to put out blaze at factory

By **Marwa Al-Bahrawi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18:** The Public Authority for Industry (PAI) announced that firefighters from Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) successfully extinguished a huge fire that engulfed a sponge factory in Subhan Industrial on Monday evening, without any casualties.

It praised KFF's quick response in dealing with the fire without any serious injuries or fatalities.

In a press statement, PAI stated that firefighting teams from six fire stations rushed to the scene and began efforts to control the fire, which had spread to a neighboring plot.

PAI affirmed that it will continue to provide all necessary support to assist KFF's efforts.

PAI Director General Shamlan Al-Juhaidli, along with technical teams, were present at the site to monitor the incident and provide required assistance.

Meanwhile, KFF had explained in a press release that the presence of hazardous and highly flammable materials in the factory had aggravated the fire, and firefighters spent hours trying to extinguish the fire which had spread over a large area. Further investigations are ongoing to determine the cause of the fire.

In another development, the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) participated on Monday morning in a drill held at the Department of Islamic Studies and Quranic Sciences in Hawally Governorate by the General Directorate of Civil Defense with the cooperation of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the drill involved evacuating the building, rescuing the injured, and controlling the simulated fire included in the exercise scenario. The aim of the drill was to enhance the readiness of firefighters to respond to potential fires in such facilities. In addition, it sought to unify efforts and coordinate between relevant government agencies in dealing with fire incidents.



مغول محل  
SINCE 1985  
MUGHAL MAHAL

## Do You Know

**1600 FAMILIES HAVE USED THIS OFFER SINCE 4 WEEKS**

### OUR 2025 INITIATIVE

Elevating FAMILY & FRIENDS Bonds is Becoming

## TALK OF THE TOWN

WHAT ABOUT YOU

# AVAIL YOUR 25% OFF

Hurry, it's a limited-time offer

SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY  
WEDNESDAY



FOR MORE DETAILS ON OUR OFFERS, CONTACT US.

**1800188 / 55011985**





## LOCAL

# MoF grants budget for comprehensive facilities for students with disabilities

## Egaila complex moves forward

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18:** The Ministry of Finance has approved the KD149 million budget for the establishment of a special education complex for students with disabilities in Egaila in preparation for implementation, in coordination with the ministries of Public Works and Finance.

This is a confirmation of the report that the newspaper published

last March regarding the establishment of three special education complexes in Ahmadi, Jahra and Hawally to care of students with special needs.

This is in addition to studying the draft law on special education in order to integrate all students with disabilities with the rest of the students in government and private schools in order to provide an educational system that guarantees development and education for this category.

The special needs school complexes are designed in a way that aims to reduce the impact of the child's disability, while maximizing opportunities for participation in general education curricula or extracurricular programs.

The complexes are located in areas measuring 100,000 square meters in Ahmadi Governorate; 150,000 square meters in Jahra Governorate and 178,000 in Hawally Governorate.

These complexes consist of specialized buildings for teaching the deaf, mute, those with movement disabilities, Down syndrome and autism; in addition to a physical therapy building with swimming pools, a building for teaching and treating speech difficulties, and special institutes for boys and girls with special needs. The Ministry of Education will supervise and manage them as beneficiaries of the project.

There will be two campuses -- one for boys and the other for girls; in-

cluding a social center with the administrative tower, sports complex and residential buildings.

The design takes into account making the experience of attending school a normal and unchallenging activity, as part of the larger community and not isolated in an institution. Each private school will become a prototype with a distinct identity, and the design will enhance the student's learning experience and meet all program requirements.

Building heights will be minimized to the lowest extent possible, while student program spaces will be higher than the ordinary classroom and open green spaces will be maximized for gardens, playgrounds and student exploration.

## Kuwait's HH Amir congratulates Prez of Gambia on National Day

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA):** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a cable to the President of Gambia Adama Barrow, congratulating him on his country's national day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished him health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity to the people of Gambia.

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday, a cable to the President of Gambia Adama Barrow, congratulating him on his country's national day, wishing him further health and wellness.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday, a cable to the President of Gambia Adama Barrow, congratulating him on his country's national day.

## CAPT urged to penalize companies

By Mohammed Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18:** According to informed sources in the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, the ministry recently requested the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to enforce Article 85 of law No. 49/2016 on a number of companies for their delays, exceeding the specified grace periods, in signing contracts for the tenders awarded to them.

The ministry explained that the afore-

mentioned article is regarding the penalties imposed by CAPT on contractors, suppliers, or service providers, and it includes warnings, downgrading of their category, their removal from the register, suspension of subscriptions for a period not exceeding five years, or permanent deletion from the register. This is to be done after summoning the contractor, supplier, or service provider via registered mail and based on a decision from CAPT or a request from the relevant institution.

## Augmented reality honors Kuwaiti martyrs at Avenues

# 'Most Precious Homeland' exhibition brings Kuwait's heroic past to life



The Martyr's Office of the Amiri Diwan held an art exhibition Monday, under the title 'The Most Precious Homeland' at the Avenues Mall, using augmented reality technology to communicate between the public and the displayed paintings.

By Mohammad Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18:** The Martyr's Office on Monday opened a two-day 'Most Precious Homeland' exhibition at the Avenues Mall, in cooperation with Kuwaiti artist Fahad Al-Najjar, on the occasion of the 34th Liberation Day and the 64th National Day.

Director of the Guidance and Family Care Department Mohammed Al-Mutairi revealed that the exhibition includes pictures of Kuwaiti martyrs who sacrificed their lives for this country to remind society about their heroism.

The exhibition features 10 interactive paintings of Al-Najjar, utilizing augmented reality technology. Visitors can use their mobile phones to access videos about each painting, providing insights into Kuwait's history from February 1991. The videos will cover the Iraqi invasion, its aftermath, and Kuwait's journey to its present state in 2025.

The exhibition also honors the 1,342 martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country. Al-Mutairi also confirmed that the Martyr's Museum at the office building will be



Photo during the Martyr's Office of the Amiri Diwan's art exhibition at the Avenues Mall.

opened soon on the occasion of the national holidays.

On the other hand, Al-Najjar revealed that the exhibition features paintings that depict Kuwait's history and the

phases of construction, which significantly influenced the nation's urban and economic renaissance, as well as the growth and prosperity in a number of sectors.

**KUWAIT NATIONAL DAY**  
Room Promotion

albander hotel & resort

منورة بشوفتكم اليوم الوطني الكويتي

# 35%

DISCOUNT OFF ON ROOM RATES

◆ In-house guests can avail of a 15% discount on all food and beverage consumption.

◆ Walk-in guests can enjoy a fantastic 15% discount at the Fish Market Restaurant.

Promo period from 24th February – 28th February 2025

Terms & conditions apply\*

Tel: +973 17701201 - Ext. 351 | Email: reservation@albander.com | www.albander.com | @albanderhotelandresort

## Advancing Kuwait's global charity role

### Farwaniya Governor hosts IICO delegates

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18:** Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received at his office Monday morning the Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Islamic Charitable Organization Dr. Abdullah Mutouq Al-Mutouq, Director General of the organization Eng. Bader Saud Al-Sumait, and Deputy Director General for Corporate Communications Ibrahim Khaled Al-Badr.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Sheikh Athbi extended a warm welcome to the distinguished guests.

During the meeting, Dr. Al-Mutouq provided an overview of the organization's history, programs, and projects, and highlighted its positive impact on the beneficiaries.

He revealed that the organization is in the process of implementing a series of development projects.

Sheikh Athbi praised the vital role of the organization at local, regional, and global levels in serving humanitarian efforts and elevating Kuwait's reputation in charity forums in Islamic, Arab, and international fields.

The two sides discussed aspects of joint cooperation between the organization and the governorate in various humanitarian, charitable, and service sectors, all aimed at benefiting the community.

Dr. Al-Mutouq expressed his gratitude to Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi for the warm reception and hospitality, and wished him continued success.



Farwaniya Governor receives at his office the Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Islamic Charitable Organization.

## Municipality secures approval for Imam Abdulrahman Al-Faisal Museum tender

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18:** Kuwait Municipality affirmed that it has received prior approval from the State Audit Bureau to float the tender for the design of the Imam Abdulrahman Al-Faisal Museum, located in Al-Mubarakia, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Kuwait Municipal-

ity explained that it has received the final response from the State Audit Bureau to study, design, and supervise the implementation of the museum, at a cost of KD 139,639. It is now preparing to sign the contract with an engineering consulting office soon.



Kuwait Fire Force participated in the 2nd Safety and Civil Protection Conference.

## KFF highlights role in safety and civil protection at SCPC 2025 conference

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18:** The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) participated in the 2nd Safety and Civil Protection Conference (SCPC 2025) on Monday to highlight its role in responding to and mitigating accidents affecting individuals and facilities, as well as contributing to the protection of community security and the preservation of lives and properties.

According to a press release issued by KFF, it expressed its keenness to participate

in such conferences by presenting work papers and recommendations, strengthening efforts to maintain facility safety, promoting awareness, and enhancing community culture in all matters related to safety and civil protection. The conference was held in the presence of the Director of Ahmadi Prevention Department Brigadier Mohsen Muslim Abdullah, and Director of the Public Relations and Media Department Brigadier Muhammad Badr Al-Gharib.



Inventors praise Crown Prince's patronage and Sabah Al-Ahmad Center's support

Kuwaiti inventions shine at 15th Mideast International Exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): Kuwaiti inventors, participating in the 15th Middle East International Invention Exhibition, underscored on Tuesday the importance of this scientific event, praising the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The exhibition is held with the support of Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity - one of the centers of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

In remarks to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the inventors stated that the exhibition serves as a global platform to strengthen Kuwait's position in innovation, offering an opportunity to showcase inventions to investors and institutions involved in scientific project development, thus transforming ideas into tangible achievements that contribute to sustainable development.

The inventors also commended the role of Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity in supporting their scientific and research endeavors, describing it as a hub for Kuwaiti talent that provides a conducive environment for innovation and development by fostering inventors, providing technical and logistical support, and facilitating the realization of their creations.

Dr. Sultan Al-Shareef, Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, stated that his invention, a semi-cylindrical tube heat exchanger, represents a significant advancement in heat transfer systems,



KUNA photo

Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, during her visit to the 15th International Invention Exhibition in the Middle East.

noting that he obtained a U.S. patent in September 2024.

He highlighted that the innovation provides enhanced efficiency in thermal exchange systems and reduced operational costs, making it applicable across industries such as oil and gas, HVAC systems, and petrochemical sectors.

Dr. Khaled Al-Khalifi, Assistant Professor at the Public Authority for

Applied Education and Training, supported by the center, explained that his invention involves a rotary valve system for internal combustion engines, which enhances engine efficiency compared to conventional poppet valve systems.

He noted that the system is adaptable to various engine types, including marine, industrial, and automotive applications, contributing to improved

engine performance and operational efficiency.

Inventor Youssef Al-Arouj said that his invention, "Air Distribution Management System for Centralized Air Conditioning", provides a practical solution to the issue of uniform airflow distribution in traditional central air conditioning systems.

He explained that the system is based on a +Diffuser device, which

enables individualized temperature control and improved efficiency, adding that his invention won the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award, underscoring its importance in enhancing air conditioning systems.

Dr. Khaloud Hamad Al-Najjar, Professor at the Department of Educational Technology at the College of Basic Education, stated that her invention, a plaster cast cutting device, of-

fers a practical solution to protect the skin from injuries or burns during the removal of orthopedic casts.

She emphasized that this innovation is a valuable addition to the medical equipment field, providing enhanced patient safety and improved standards in clinics and hospitals.

Inventor Ghadeer Al-Kandari described her invention as a "scented hairdryer", which represents a new technological advancement in hair care.

The device allows users to infuse airflow with fragrances and aromatic smoke without direct exposure to the hair, ensuring a safer and enhanced drying experience.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Enezi introduced his invention, "Endodontic Bioactive Material Obturator (EBMO)", as a technological breakthrough in dentistry.

He explained that the device facilitates precise and efficient delivery of bioactive filling materials to the root canal apex, significantly reducing treatment time and enhancing the patient and practitioner experience.

Al-Enezi further noted that the device is constructed from nickel-titanium alloys and coated with polytetrafluoroethylene (Teflon) to prevent filling material adhesion and improve usability.

He highlighted that clinical trials on patients demonstrated the device's effectiveness in enhancing speed and accuracy, making it an ideal choice for dentists seeking to improve treatment quality and minimize complications.

Experts explore tech-driven assets

Kuwait sponsors symposium on digital endowments in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 18, (KUNA): Kuwait's Islamic Endowment General Secretariat organized and sponsored a symposium on digital endowments. The symposium launched Tuesday at the International Islamic University in Malaysia's capital of Kuala Lumpur.

Attending the Symposium were Kuwaiti Ambassador to Malaysia Rashed Al-Saleh and University President Dr. Osman Bakar.

The Ambassador told KUNA that digital assets are a chance to boost innovation in endowments, as it aligns with Kuwait's vision of boosting sustainable development, and are instrumental to social solidarity.

As for Dr. Bakar, he spoke of digital endowment as a new direction with a wide reach and diverse services; educational, healthcare, social development, economic empowerment, as well as boosting agricultural and industrial production.

Endowment General Secretariat official, Reham Bokhawah, reflected on Malaysia's a choice for hosting symposium due to its pioneering work in endowments and expertise in finance technology.

The university is home to elite group of specialists, she remarked, expressing hope

that the symposium would culminate in applicable outcomes and recommendations.

Deputy General Director at the International Islamic Charity Organization Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa told KUNA that this symposium was adopted and adapted from the International Forum for Developmental Organizations (IFDO) in Turkiye.

Dr. Bakar spoke of the challenges and risks linked to digital endowments including operational expenses, data security, competitiveness and relativity in market value.

He stated this requires high tech digital assets and efficient management.

Digital endowments could be a global force in supporting sustainability, he commented due to its self-sustaining ability and expansion of beneficiary pool.

Chief of (IFDO) Mamoun Al-Ashqar said that the symposium reflects the pivotal role of charitable humanitarian work of Kuwait, adding that this continuous development in the field necessitates adaptability to changes via clear roadmap.

The symposium is handling six main axes including legal and religious structure, governance, technical qualifications, as well as applications and projects.

British Week marks 64 years of Kuwait Independence with historic exhibition

HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad opens landmark event

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad inaugurated the 12th British Week in Kuwait Exhibition at Assima Mall on Monday in the presence of British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad, Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber, Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Saud, Sheikh Amir Al-Malik, and Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali.

Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad visited the exhibition, which showcases many sectors like the British industries, cars, aviation and schools, as well as world-famous brands.

Lewis said "we are proud to participate in the 12th trade exhibition entitled, "Britain in Kuwait". It celebrates the ongoing friendship and strong relations between our two countries. I urge everyone to visit the exhibition and learn about the pavilions that highlight many areas of cooperation between the United Kingdom and Kuwait, starting from trade and investment to culture and innovation. The British community is proud of its contribution to the development of Kuwait. We look forward to strengthening our partnership in the coming years."

Chairman of the organizing committee Ahmed Behbehani pointed out that "His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad's patronage of the event confirms the deep and historic Kuwaiti-British relations, in addition to his commitment to support events and activities that deepen historical ties with Britain."



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad with British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, inaugurate the 12th British Week in Kuwait Exhibition at Assima Mall.

He added "the Kuwaiti-British relations that extend for 250 years embody a distinctive model of relations built on solid foundations and based on historical friendship. It was crowned by the signing of the Kuwaiti-British Treaty of 1899 by HH the late Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. The treaty confirmed the independence of Kuwaiti decision-making and kept Kuwait away from major international conflicts."

He stated that the 12th British Week in Kuwait has special importance as it coincides with the 64th anniversary of Independence Day and 34th Liberation Day of Kuwait; making it an extraordinary occasion for all participants in this event.

He added the exhibition is considered one of the most important economic activities

this year, as it represents the historical relationship between the United Kingdom and Kuwait.

He said the success of previous sessions greatly contributed to the increasing demand for British and Kuwaiti participation in this economic event.

"We cannot forget the historical position of the United Kingdom during the brutal Iraqi invasion in 1990, the position of the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher towards Kuwait, and the mixing of British and Kuwaiti blood on the soil of Kuwait in 1991.

All these remain a testimony that the relationship between the two friendly countries has always been a unique model among countries," he concluded.



KUNA photo

A group photo of researchers, participants and attendees at the symposium on digital endowments, their legitimacy, applications and impact on sustainable development, sponsored by the General Secretariat of Endowments in the State of Kuwait.

Continued from Page 1

Saudi Arabia

In the past, great powers divided our countries among themselves, as exemplified by the 1916 Sykes-Picot Treaty between France and the United Kingdom, later ratified by the Russian Empire and Italy, to divide the region.

Today, things have changed. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, led by Saudi Arabia, have emerged as a global hub.

What does this transformation signify?

First, it strengthens the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Second, it highlights Saudi Arabia's important role as the leader of the Arab and Islamic worlds. The upcoming summit is not just about ending the Russian-Ukrainian war, but is poised to mark the beginning of a new global power-sharing arrangement in the Middle East and beyond.

Third, it indicates that solutions to regional crises may be on the horizon, particularly for countries like Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and others that have suffered from years of unrest and conflict. These challenges have reshaped the region throughout the past 15 years, especially with the recent war between Israel and Iran-backed forces. This conflict cast a long shadow over the Arab world, intensifying tensions and creating a volatile environment in which the region is caught in an "oven-like" state that burns everything in its path.

Saudi Arabia's efforts have always been present, both at the regional level and since the start of the Ukraine war,

where it played the role of a "firefighter". It has worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between Russia and Ukraine, and successfully facilitated multiple agreements for the exchange of war prisoners between the two sides.

With these efforts, Riyadh proved its possession of the soft power necessary to play an important role on the global stage.

Along with the Gulf Cooperation Council, Saudi Arabia has solidified its presence as a key player in finding solutions to some of the most complex and challenging issues today.

Today, Gulf citizens feel that their countries are no longer "objects", but active partners in global solutions, thanks to the vision set by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and his Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who have prioritized diplomacy over violence.

Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of glory and Arabism, has emerged as a global peacemaker, with its leadership at the forefront of solving difficult problems.

Endless gratitude goes to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and his remarkable Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Kuwait restores

Sets a maximum imprisonment duration and ensures debtors are held separately from criminal offenders.

2. Amending Article 5 of the Bankruptcy Law (Law No. 71/2020):  
Restores the system of arresting and

imprisoning uncooperative debtors.

The reforms also focus on improving enforcement efficiency, reducing the opportunity for debtors to conceal assets, and strengthening penalties for abuse of suspension mechanisms. This move is seen as part of Kuwait's broader effort to improve the investment climate and restore confidence in the country's financial system.

Minister Al-Sumait emphasized that these changes are essential for protecting the national economy, reducing bad debts, and ensuring a fair and transparent legal environment that balances the interests of both creditors and debtors. The amendments align with international best practices and aim to modernize Kuwaiti laws for a more equitable economic landscape.

Fugitive in

Coordination is now underway to return him to Kuwait for further legal action.

The sources affirmed that the Ministry of Interior exerted huge efforts to arrest the gang members and refer them to the Public Prosecution.

They said the Cybercrime Department is continuing its investigations to arrest all those involved and hold them accountable.

CSC releases

Employees are also required to follow the official working hours during the evening shift, in accordance with CSC's circular No.

12/2024, at a duration of four and a half hours. The evening shift's official working hours during Ramadan will not start earlier than 6:45 pm.

Finance ministry

policies in a way that serves the interests of joint Gulf work with one destiny and embodies the spirit of constructive cooperation.

She considers the meeting an opportunity to support and strengthen cooperation in order to achieve integration in the tax field, exchange experience and expertise, coordinate policies and unify efforts to achieve the desired goals.

She expressed appreciation for the heads and directors of tax departments that contributed to the advancement of joint tax work in line with the strategic goals of GCC countries.

23 security

Also, 18 strategic sites in Kuwait's six governorates have been designated for securing the national celebrations. The Prevention Sector has conducted inspection campaigns at all celebration sites to ensure proper safety and fire prevention measures are in place.

Brigadier General Al-Gharib urged both citizens and residents to allow clear access for firefighting vehicles, as reaching celebration sites may be challenging in the event of fires or emergencies.

**ARAB TIMES**  
Kuwait's No.1 English Newspaper

**For Subscriptions and Complaints**

Please Call  
**51508991**  
**51526559**





An aircraft of Delta Airlines sits upside down on the tarmac at Toronto Pearson International airport on Feb 17. (AP)

## Delta jet flips on snowy Toronto runway, all 80 aboard survive

TORONTO, Feb 18, (AP): A Delta Air Lines jet flipped on its roof while landing Monday at Toronto's Pearson Airport, but all 80 people on board survived and those hurt had relatively minor injuries, the airport's chief executive said.

Snow blown by winds gusting to 40 mph (65 kph) swirled when the flight from Minneapolis carrying 76 passengers and four crew attempted to land at around 2:15 pm. Communications between the tower and pilot were normal on approach and it's not clear what went so drastically wrong when the plane touched down.

Peter Carlson, a passenger traveling to Toronto for a paramedics conference, said the landing was "very forceful."

"All the sudden everything just kind of went sideways and then next

thing I know it's kind of a blink and I'm upside down still strapped in," he told CBC News.

Canadian authorities held two brief news conferences but provided no details on the crash. Video posted to social media showed the aftermath with the Mitsubishi CRJ-900LR overturned, the fuselage seemingly intact and firefighters dousing what was left of the fire as passengers climbed out and walked across the tarmac.

"We are very grateful there was no loss of life and relatively minor injuries," Deborah Flint, CEO of Greater Toronto Airports Authority, told reporters.

Delta CEO Ed Bastian said in a statement that "the hearts of the entire global Delta family are with those affected."

Toronto Pearson Fire Chief Todd Aitken said 18 passengers were taken

to the hospital. Earlier in the day, Ornge air ambulance said it was transporting one pediatric patient to Toronto's Sick-Kids hospital and two injured adults to other hospitals in the city.

Emergency personnel reached the plane within a few minutes and Aitken said the response "went as planned." He said "the runway was dry and there was no cross-wind conditions."

The crash was the fourth major aviation accident in North America in the past three weeks. A commercial jetliner and an Army helicopter collided near Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 29, killing 67 people. A medical transportation plane crashed in Philadelphia on Jan. 31, killing the six people on board and another person on the ground. And on Feb. 6, 10 people were killed in a plane crash in Alaska.

Ex-VP delivers speeches urging prez to stand with longstanding foreign allies

## Pence emerges as one of few Republicans willing to challenge Trump 2.0

WASHINGTON, Feb 18, (AP): His group spent nearly \$1 million on ads opposing Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Donald Trump's pick to lead the nation's health agencies. He's delivering speeches urging the president to stand with longstanding foreign allies and lobbying members of Congress while aides write letters and opinion columns.

This weekend, he posted an article he penned more than a decade ago on the limits of presidential power after Trump claimed that, "He who saves his Country does not violate any Law."

Mike Pence is emerging as one of the last Republicans in Washington willing to publicly criticize the new administration.

It's an especially jarring role for the former vice president, whose refusal to break with Trump defined their time together in office until the two had a falling out over Trump's refusal to accept the results of the 2020 election and his efforts to remain in power.

Pence and those who work with him at Advancing American Freedom, his political advocacy group, stress they are not looking to take on the "Never Trump" mantle. They intend to praise the administration when they agree with it, while raising concerns when they don't, advocating for longtime conservative principles that have fallen out of favor as Trump's "Make America Great Again" brand of populism has taken hold.

"We're calling balls and strikes here," Pence told The Associated Press.

Pence opposed Kennedy - who has since been confirmed as secretary of health and human services - due to Kennedy's past comments voicing support for abortion rights. His group is now lobbying against Lori Chavez-DeRemer, Trump's pick for labor secretary, accusing her of being pro-union, and plans to spend the coming months pushing to increase military spending, shrink the deficit, and make permanent 2017 tax cuts, as well as trying to convince Trump to stop slapping tariffs on allies.

The AP recently sat down with Pence to discuss his efforts and his relationship with Trump - including a closely watched handshake at the funeral of President Jimmy Carter and his wife's lack of reaction as the 45th and 47th president took his seat. Here is a transcript of that conversation, which has been lightly edited for space and clarity:



US President-elect Donald Trump, (right), shakes hands with former vice president Mike Pence before the state funeral for former president Jimmy Carter at Washington National Cathedral in Washington on Jan 9. (AP)

Pence: "To be an anchor to windward ... I came across that line I think in a Herman Melville book a long time ago."

"The wind blows in the direction of more government. And I think it's a role of conservatives to anchor the party so that when the wind blows, you put the anchor to windward so you stay grounded and hopefully do some small part to hold, you know, hold the ship of state on the principles that really minted my career in this movement."

"A strong defense, to American leadership of the free world, limited govern-

ment, fiscal responsibility, growth, the right to life, traditional values - those were the values that drew me to the Republican Party. And I still think that they are the timeless ideals of the party of Lincoln. And so I want to do my part, even as a former elected official, to use whatever remains of my bully pulpit to be a champion for those principles."

Pence: "Well, for me, it's always principles first. It's not personal. I went to the inauguration last month and I was very moved in the outpouring of kind words and expressions of appreciation from former colleagues, including many members of the new administration who I encountered in hallways. And I saw Secretary of State (Marco) Rubio, I gave him a hug, told him how proud I was of him. We had praised him from here when he was selected. I must have seen about or interacted with about half the incoming Cabinet."

"We went to the Carter funeral. And the president and I had a very cordial exchange. You know, he was coming down the row in front of us at the National Cathedral and he said, 'Hi, Mike.' And I was standing up, extended my hand, and I said, 'Congratulations, Mr. President.' And I could see his countenance softened. And he said, 'Thanks.' And Melania reached out and I said, 'Congratulations, Melania.' And it was, you know, the people that know me know it's not personal. I've long since forgiven the president for any differences that we had at the end of our administration. We still have those differences as the president still holds the view that, to my knowledge, that I had some authority that I did not have under the Constitution or laws of the country. But from my heart, I've prayed often for the president."

"And so, to answer your question, I think that the way we want to approach this is with integrity to principle. And I'm very encouraged. I think the Trump administration is off to a great start ... I'm very pleased about the president undoing Biden's border policies and putting back into place the policies that we had negotiated and established that secured the border. But you know, with regard to the nomination of RFK ... for me, it would begin and end with the right to life ... I saw the nomination of an abortion rights supporter to be secretary of HHS to be a dramatic departure from 50 years of strong pro-life leadership at HHS under Republican administrations. So we thought it was important to speak out. And we got a lot of quiet encouragement about that."

## Four candidates want to be Germany's next chancellor in Sunday's election

BERLIN, Feb 18, (Agencies): Four candidates are bidding to be Germany's next leader in Sunday's election. The would-be chancellors are the incumbent, the opposition leader, the current vice chancellor and - for the first time - a leader of a far-right party.

The 66-year-old has been Germany's chancellor since December 2021. The center-left Social Democrat has a wealth of government experience, having previously served as Hamburg's mayor and as German labor and finance minister. As chancellor, he quickly found himself dealing with unexpected crises. He launched an effort to modernize Germany's military after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and made Germany Ukraine's second-biggest weapons supplier. His government prevented an energy crunch and tried to counter high inflation. But his three-party coalition became notorious for infighting and collapsed in November as it argued over how to revitalize the economy - Europe's biggest, which has shrunk for the past two years.

Germany's 69-year-old opposition leader has been the front-runner in the election campaign, with his center-right Union bloc leading polls. He became the leader of his Christian Democratic Union party after longtime Chancellor Angela Merkel - a former rival - stepped down in 2021. Merz has taken his party in a more conservative direction. In the election campaign, he has made curbing irregular migration a central issue. Merz lacks experience in government. He joined the European Parliament in 1989 before becoming a lawmaker in Germany five years later.

He took a break from active politics for several years after 2009, practicing as a lawyer and heading the supervisory board of investment manager BlackRock's German branch.

The 55-year-old is the candidate of the environmentalist Greens. He's also Germany's current vice chancellor and the economy and climate minister, with responsibility for energy issues. As co-leader of the Greens from 2018 to 2022, he presided over a rise in the party's popularity, but in 2021 he stepped aside to let Annalena Baerbock - now Germany's foreign minister - make the party's first run for the chancellor's job. Habeck's record as

a minister has drawn mixed reviews, particularly a plan his ministry drew up to replace fossil-fuel heating systems with greener alternatives that deepened divisions in the government.

Meanwhile, the results of a poll revealed Tuesday a divided German public opinion on the country's participation in bringing peacekeeping troops to Ukraine. According to the poll conducted by the research institute Forsa and Stern magazine, 49 percent of respondents supported Germany's involvement in the potential mission, while 44 percent opposed any German military engagement on Ukrainian soil. Another 7 percent remained undecided.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz waves after being nominated as top candidate for the upcoming national elections during a special party convention of the Social Democratic Party, SPD, in Berlin, Germany on Jan 11. (AP)



Sun rays illuminate the volcanic islet of Nea Kameni, part of the earthquake-struck island of Santorini, Greece on Feb 4. (AP)

### Santorini quakes decreasing

The Greek government's chief seismologist says the frequency of earthquakes affecting Santorini and nearby islands has eased in recent days, but that the outlook for continued tremors in the coming weeks remains uncertain.

"Unfortunately, for now, we must wait. These seismic sequences do not end quickly. They follow their own timeline," seismologist Costas Papazachos told state-run ERT radio on Monday.

"Hopefully, this particular sequence will surprise us in a positive way and resolve itself sooner rather than later," he said.

A state of emergency has been declared on Santorini and the nearby islands of Ios, Amorgos, and Anafi after a swarm of undersea earthquakes this month - sometimes felt every few minutes - prompted thousands of residents and workers to move to the Greek mainland. (AP)

### Pro-Russian hackers attack Italian sites

MILAN, Feb 18, (AP): A pro-Russian hacker group attacked Italian government websites on Tuesday in what it said was a reaction to a speech by Italian President Sergio Mattarella that compared Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the Nazis' "wars of conquest."

The NoName57 hacker group, which announced the attacks on social media, hit the websites of the defense, interior and transport ministries, as well as law enforcement agencies. Access to the sites was spotty.

The group on Monday attacked Italian banks, ports, airports and local transport agencies, but those attacks did not cause major disruptions.

In a speech in Marseille, France on Feb. 5, Mattarella said that patterns that led to World War II were repeating, including "wars of conquest."

"This was the project of the Third Reich in Europe. Today's Russian aggression against Europe is of this nature," he said.

Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, expressed dismay about Mattarella's remarks.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, (second left), meets with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Saudi National Security Advisor Mosaad bin Mohammad Al-Aiban, US National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, (third left), US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, (left), Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, (right), and Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy advisor Yuri Ushakov, (second right), at Diriyah Palace, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Feb 18. (AP)

## Russia, US agree to work towards improving ties and ending Ukraine war

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Feb 18, (AP): Russia and the US agreed Tuesday to start working towards ending the war in Ukraine and improving their diplomatic and economic ties, America's top diplomat said after talks that reflected an extraordinary about-face in US foreign policy under President Donald Trump.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the two sides agreed broadly to pursue three goals: to restore staffing at their respective embassies in Washington and Moscow, to create a high-level team to support Ukraine peace talks, and to explore closer relations and economic cooperation. He stressed, however, that the talks - which were also attended by his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov - marked the beginning of a conversation, and more work needs to be done down the road.

No Ukrainian officials were present at the meeting, which came as the beleaguered country is slowly but steadily losing ground against more numerous Russian troops in a grinding war that began nearly three years ago. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country wouldn't accept any outcome from this week's talks if Kyiv doesn't take part. European allies have also expressed concerns they are being sidelined.

Ties between Russia and the U.S. have fallen to their low-

est level in decades during the war. Both embassies have been hit hard by expulsions of large numbers of diplomats over the course of several years, and the U.S., along with European nations, imposed a raft of sanctions on Russia. The allies have repeatedly expanded the measures to damage Moscow's economy. His comments were further evidence of the remarkable US reversal on Russia after years in which Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden, led international efforts to isolate Moscow.

Tuesday's meeting was meant to pave the way for a summit between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. After the talks wrapped, Putin's foreign affairs advisor, Yuri Ushakov, told Russia's Channel One that no date has been set yet for that summit but that it was "unlikely" to take place next week. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Lavrov said that in his view, "the conversation was very useful." He mentioned the same three goals as Rubio and said that Washington and Moscow agreed to appoint representatives to carry out "regular consultations" on Ukraine.

The meeting marked the most extensive contact between the two countries since Moscow's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion. Lavrov and then-U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken talked briefly on the sidelines of a G-20 meeting in India nearly two years ago, but tensions remained high.

### America

#### Gov weighs removing Adams:

New York Gov Kathy Hochul said Monday she is weighing removing New York City Mayor Eric Adams from office after four of his top deputies announced their resignations in the latest fallout from the Justice Department's push to end his corruption case. Hochul, a Democrat, said she will convene a meeting of key leaders Tuesday in Manhattan "for a conversation about the path forward." She said the departures of First Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer and other top officials raise "serious questions about the long-term future" of Adams' administration. Adams, also a Democrat, has been

under increasing scrutiny since the Justice Department's second-in-command ordered federal prosecutors in Manhattan last week to drop his corruption case to ensure his cooperation in Republican President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown - raising questions about the mayor's political independence and ability to lead the city.

Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove wrote that the case had "unduly restricted Mayor Adams' ability to devote full attention and re-

sources to the illegal immigration and violent crime." (AP)

#### Presidents Day protests in NY:

More than 1,000 people took to the streets in New York City on Monday to protest against policies of the current US administration.

The hours-long march and rally on Presidents Day is part of the nationwide protests organized by the 50501 movement (50 protests, 50 states, one day), a grassroots initiative that calls for protests across the United States.

Most of the participants protested against the US administration's policies on diversity, equity and inclusion, federal workers and data, immigration, as well as climate change. (Xinhua)



## INTERNATIONAL

## Chinese navy helicopter flies within 10 feet of Philippine patrol plane over shoal

OVER THE SCARBOROUGH SHOAL, South China Sea, Feb 18, (AP): A Chinese navy helicopter flew within 10 feet (3 meters) of a Philippine patrol plane on Tuesday in a disputed area of the South China Sea, prompting the Filipino pilot to warn by radio: "You are flying too close, you are very dangerous."

The Chinese helicopter was attempting to force a Cessna Caravan turboprop plane belonging to the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources out of what China claims is its airspace over the hotly disputed Scarborough Shoal off the northwestern Philippines.

An Associated Press journalist and other invited foreign media on the plane witnessed the tense 30-minute standoff as the Philippine plane pressed on with its low-altitude patrol around Scarborough with the Chinese navy helicopter hovering close above it or flying to its left in cloudy weather.

"You are flying too close, you are very dangerous and endangering the lives of our crew and passengers," the Philippine pilot told the Chinese navy helicopter by radio at one point. "Keep away and distance your aircraft from us, you are violating the safety standard set by FAA and ICAO."

The pilot was referring to the standard distance between aircraft required by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and the International Civil Aviation Organization to prevent air disasters.

There was no sign that the Philippine plane had to alter its planned path and altitude to avoid a collision.

The Philippine Coast Guard and the Bureau of Fisheries said in a statement that they remain "committed to asserting our sovereignty, sovereign rights and maritime jurisdiction in the West Philippine Sea, despite the aggressive and escalatory actions of China."

They referred to the Philippine name for the stretch of waters in the South China Sea closer to the Philippines' western coast.

Chinese officials did not immediately comment on the incident, but in past encounters they have steadfastly asserted China's sovereign rights over the Scarborough and surrounding waters and warned that its forces would protect the country's territorial interests at all costs.

Tuesday's encounter, which is expected to be protested by the Philippine government, is the latest flashpoint in a decades-long territorial standoff in one of the world's busiest trade routes, which involves China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.



A Chinese military helicopter flies close to a Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic (BFAR) aircraft above Scarborough shoal on Feb 18. (AP)



From left: Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pose for a photograph during the ceremonial reception of the Amir at the Indian presidential palace in New Delhi, India on Feb 18. (AP)

## India, Qatar elevate ties to strategic partnership

India and Qatar on Tuesday decided to elevate their relations to a strategic partnership, focusing on trade, energy, investments, innovation, technology, food security, culture, and people-to-people contacts.

The two sides have agreed to double their trade to 28 billion US dollars in the next five years.

The two countries have signed and exchanged two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) in New Delhi on the sidelines of the talks between Indian Prime

Minister Narendra Modi and visiting Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, who is on a two-day visit to India.

"Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, Qatar Investment Authority currently has about 1.5 billion US dollars Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India in sectors like retail, power, IT, education, health, affordable housing, etc.," a senior official in India's foreign ministry Arun Kumar Chatterjee said. (Xinhua)

## Seoul deploys new bunker buster missile

## N.Korea slams US, Asian rivals for pursuing plans to denuclearize North

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 18, (Agencies): North Korea on Tuesday criticized the United States and Asian neighbors for pursuing the "absurd" goal of denuclearizing the North and said it will push to expand its nuclear forces under the direction of its authoritarian leader Kim Jong Un.

The statement by Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry came after the top diplomats of the US, South Korea and Japan met at a security conference in Germany and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening military cooperation and reinforcing an international sanctions regime to counter Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions.

The North Korean ministry accused the US of trying to realize an "outdated and absurd plan" of denuclearizing the North and warned of "overwhelming and decisive counteraction" against its rivals if it perceives its security is under threat. It said the North will "consistently adhere to the new line of bolstering the nuclear force" established by Kim and "thoroughly deter the US and its vassal forces" from threats and blackmail against the North's sovereignty.

It was the latest North Korean statement accusing the US of maintaining hostile policies against

Pyongyang, though state media has so far avoided directly naming US President Donald Trump, who, during his first term, engaged in unprecedented summits with the North Korean leader.

US Secretary of State Mark Rubio held a three-way meeting with the South Korean and Japanese foreign ministers in Munich, Germany, on Saturday and reaffirmed their commitment to the North's "complete denuclearization" and maintaining an effective sanctions regime targeting the country's weapons program. The countries also agreed to bolster defense and deterrence, including by expanding three-way military exercises and strengthening Japan and South Korea's military capabilities, according to a joint statement released after the meeting.

Trump and Kim met three times in 2018 and 2019 during Trump's first term, but their diplomacy quickly collapsed over disagreements about exchanging the release of US-led sanctions for North Korean steps to wind down its nuclear and missile programs. North Korea has since suspended any meaningful talks with Washington and Seoul as Kim ramped up his testing activity and military demonstrations



A photo showing North Korea's missiles is displayed at the Unification Observation Post in Paju, South Korea, near the border with North Korea on Feb 18. (AP)

to counter what he portrayed as "gangster-like US threats."

Kim's foreign policy priority is now Russia, which he has supplied with weapons and troops to help prolong Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Seoul fears that Kim may receive economic assistance

and advanced technology to develop his arsenal in exchange for its military supporting Russia.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said a diplomatic delegation led by Kim Ik Song, director of the Bureau for Affairs with Diplomatic Corps, departed for Russia on Monday

in the latest diplomatic activity between the countries. The agency didn't specify what will be discussed during the meetings.

Trump's election win has touched off speculation about a possible resumption of summit-driven diplomacy with Kim, but analysts say a quick return to 2018 is unlikely, given the significant changes in the regional security situation and broader geopolitics since then.

North Korea's nuclear program is no longer an independent issue but connected with broader challenges created by Russia's war on Ukraine and further complicated by weakened sanctions enforcement against Pyongyang.

Kim's efforts to boost North Korea's presence in a united front against Washington could also gain strength if Trump's efforts to increase tariffs and reset global trade rekindles a trade war with China, the North's main ally and economic lifeline, according to some experts.

## Also:

**TOKYO:** South Korea has deployed a new homegrown bunker buster missile capable of striking underground enemy targets in its efforts to deter North

Korean military threats, Yonhap News Agency reported Tuesday, citing the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).

The military has deployed the Korean Tactical Surface to Surface Missile, capable of conducting simultaneous precision strikes in a short span of time against North Korea's long-range artillery firepower that threatens the greater Seoul area, in the event of a contingency, the JCS said in a release.

The JCS said the latest deployment equips the military with the "overwhelming" capacity to completely destroy the enemy in the event of a contingency. The tactical ballistic missile has been developed to strike North Korean long-range artillery pieces hidden in caves and tunnels, which have a range of 180 km.

Many of the North's long-range artillery pieces are stationed within striking distance of South Korea's wider capital area, the report said.

"Our military will closely monitor North Korea's various military activities under the robust South Korea-US combined defense posture and maintain the overwhelming capacity and posture to counter any North Korean threat in an overwhelming manner," the JCS added.

## Chinese official tours Thai-Myanmar border

BANGKOK, Feb 18, (AP): Efforts to shut down online scam centers in Myanmar appeared to gain momentum on Monday as a top Chinese security official visited both sides of the Thai-Myanmar border ahead of expected large-scale repatriations of workers in the illicit industry.

The visit by Liu Zhongyi, China's vice minister of public security and commissioner of the Criminal Investigation Bureau, was part of a stepped-up effort by the three countries to address the online scam problem. Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai told reporters.

Areas of Myanmar bordering Thailand have been serving as havens for criminal syndicates employing an estimated hundreds of thousands of people from Southeast Asia and elsewhere who help carry out online scams including false romantic ploys, bogus investment pitches and illegal gambling schemes.

Such scams have cost victims around the world tens of billions of dollars, while the people recruited to carry them out have often been tricked into taking the jobs under false pretenses and find themselves trapped in virtual slavery.



Liu

## South Korea's court holds 9th hearing of Yoon's trial

SEOUL, Feb 18, (Xinhua): South Korea's constitutional court on Tuesday held the ninth hearing of President Yoon Suk-yeol's impeachment trial.

Legal representatives of Yoon and the National Assembly summarized their respective arguments so far during the hearing, while the court examined evidence that was adopted but not yet reviewed.

Yoon, who presented himself at the courtroom for the past six hearings, visited the court to attend the ninth hearing, but he returned to the Seoul detention center in Uiwang, about 30 km south of the court, just before the start of the hearing.

Yoon's defense counsel was quoted as saying that Yoon decided to return as he had no need to express his stance directly during the hearing. The 10th hearing was scheduled for Thursday, when each side will be asked to present final statements and as many as three witnesses may testify.

Yoon declared an emergency martial law on the night of Dec 3 last year, but it was repealed by the opposition-led National Assembly hours later. The motion to impeach Yoon was passed through the National As-



Supporters of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol hold signs during a rally to oppose his impeachment near the Constitutional Court in Seoul, South Korea on Feb 18. (AP)

sembly on Dec. 14 last year and was delivered to the constitutional court to deliberate it for up to 180 days, during which Yoon's presidential power is suspended.

Yoon was apprehended in the presidential office on Jan 15, becoming the country's first sitting president to be arrested.

## Philippine VP asks Supreme Court to void impeachment and block Senate trial

MANILA, Philippines, Feb 18, (AP): Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte asked the Supreme Court on Tuesday to void her impeachment and block a Senate trial that could remove her from office.

The House of Representatives, which is dominated by the allies of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., impeached Duterte on Feb. 5 over accusations that included plotting to assassinate the president and large-scale corruption. The Senate was expected to turn itself into an impeachment court to try Duterte after Congress resumes June 2.

The vice president, through her lawyers, asked the 15-member high

court to annul her impeachment and block the trial because its initiation "was procedurally defective, constitutionally infirm and jurisdictionally void."

Lawyer Israelito Torreon told reporters the complaint was sent to the Senate too fast for some of the House signees to study it.

"This is part of a plan probably to eliminate her as a probable contender" in the 2028 presidential elections, Torreon said, saying it could not be described as anything other than political persecution.

A conviction in the Senate trial would bar her from holding public office.

The impeachment complaint focused on Duterte's statements at a Nov. 23 online news conference that she would have the president, his wife and cousin House Speaker Martin Romualdez assassinated if she herself was killed in their escalating political feud. She has denied that she meant to threaten to kill them.

She was also accused of misusing intelligence funds as vice president and as education secretary before she has resigned from that position as her alliance with the president crumbled last year. She has not publicly provided a detailed response to accusations of graft and corruption.

Duterte, the daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte, ran as Marcos' vice presidential running mate in 2022, but their alliance quickly frayed.

While campaigning for senatorial candidates in May 12 midterm elections, Marcos has been publicly denouncing the bloody anti-drugs crackdown and failure of his predecessor to denounce China's hostile actions against Philippine forces in the disputed South China Sea without naming the Dutertes.

Last week, Rodrigo Duterte said during a campaign rally that 15 senators should be killed to free up more vacancies for his allies in the midterms. Police filed criminal complaints Monday against the former president over those statements.



Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte's lawyers, (from left), Atty Martin Delgra, Atty Israelito Torreon and Davao city Councilor Luna Maria Dominique Acosta show documents they filed asking the 15-member high court to annul her impeachment and block the trial at the Supreme Court in Manila, Philippines on Feb 18. (AP)

## Argentine judge probes fraud case against Milei

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, Feb 18, (AP): A judge in Argentina was selected Monday to investigate allegations of fraud against President Javier Milei for his brief promotion of a cryptocurrency whose value collapsed within hours of its launch last week. Milei distanced himself from the scandal and said he acted in good faith.

Milei and his office denied involvement with creators of the \$LIBRA cryptocurrency, saying he initially drew attention to it Friday as an entrepreneurial project that might benefit Argentina but learned more about it later and then withdrew his support. Lawyers in Argentina filed fraud complaints against the libertarian President on Sunday. The case was assigned Monday to Judge Maria Servini, head of Federal Court No. 1 in Buenos Aires. She doesn't have a deadline to finish investigating the allegations.



Argentina's President Javier Milei addresses Congress as he presents the 2025 budget in Buenos Aires, Argentina on Sept 15, 2024. (AP)

## Sudanese government says 433 killed in attacks by paramilitary forces

KHARTOUM, Feb 18, (Xinhua): Sudan's government on Tuesday said that 433 civilians were killed in attacks by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces

(RSF) on villages in White Nile State. "After the RSF militia realized its crushing defeat and its inability to face (fight against) the armed forces, it re-

sorted to its usual method of revenge against unarmed civilians in villages and small towns," Sudan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"In the past few days, the militia carried out a horrific massacre in the villages around the al-Gitaina area in White Nile State, with the death toll currently standing at 433, including infants," the ministry added.

It called on the international community to take a firm stance against the RSF's "crimes" against civilians, noting, "This massacre reaffirms that the militia's war is against the entire Sudanese people."

While the RSF has not yet commented on the incidents, the Sudanese Emergency Lawyers, a non-governmental organization, reported multiple attacks over the past three days in three villages, including Al-Kadaris, Al-Khalwat, and Wad Bilal, all located near al-Gitaina, about 100 km south of Khartoum.



General view of Zamzam refugee camp, outside the Darfur town of al-Fasher, Darfur region, Sudan on Jan 14. (AP)



## Kuwaiti oil price drops to \$78.01 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil went down 17 cents to settle on USD 78.01 per barrel on Monday compared to USD 78.18 pb on Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said in a statement

on Tuesday.

Globally, price of Brent crude rose by 48 cents to USD 75.22 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude rose by 65 cents to USD 71.39 pb.

# Business

Including best Islamic bank in Kuwait and the UK and the most innovative Islamic bank

## Kuwait Finance House Group wins 7 prestigious awards from IFN

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Group has received 7 awards from the globally renowned Islamic Finance News (IFN) magazine.

KFH was named Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait, Best Islamic Corporate Bank in Kuwait, Best Islamic Retail Bank in Kuwait, Most Innovative Islamic Bank in Kuwait and Best Islamic Investment Bank in Kuwait.

Additionally, KFH Group secured the IFN Bahrain Deal of the Year 2024 for arranging an ESG-compliant financing facility worth \$450 million. Meanwhile, KFH-UK won the Best New Islamic Bank award.

These accolades highlight KFH's leadership and contributions to the Islamic banking industry, showcasing its innovation, financial solutions, and investment products that enhance the Sharia-compliant financial services sector in Kuwait and the world. KFH Group continuously introduces investment opportunities with the best returns and distinctive advantages, including savings instruments, investment products, and financial services through KFH Capital, its dedicated investment subsidiary.

### Tareq Al-Ajeel

During the IFN awards ceremony held in Dubai, KFH Deputy General Manager Digital Transformation and Innovation, Engineer Tareq Al-Ajeel received the Most Innovative Islamic Bank in Kuwait award during. He stated that this recognition underscores the Bank's commitment to technological innovation through advanced digital banking services offered to its customers. He noted that the digital transformation of banking services represents a significant milestone in KFH's journey, as it enables the Bank to uniquely provide high-quality innovative services backed by a state-of-the-art digital infrastructure that aligns with customer expectations and global fintech advancements, as well



Faisal Al-Suraye, Abdulaziz Alghanem, Abdullah AlHaddad, Tareq Al-Ajeel and Saleh Al-Shaya receive KFH awards.

as regulatory controls.

Al-Ajeel added that the award also highlights the quality of KFH's technical services and the effectiveness of its digital transformation strategy. "Recently, we launched innovative services for the first time in Kuwait, including Facial Biometric Features during branch visits," he remarked, "We have also rolled out the instant card printing machines that operate within minutes. KFH also introduced smart branches, and XTM devices, along with various other services. Our continuous efforts are directed towards enhancing innovation and investing in technology to deliver optimal banking solutions, thereby improving the banking experience for our customers and making it

more convenient, through fast and secure branchless process."

He reiterated KFH's continuous success in accelerating the digital transformation and innovation strategy through the adoption of cutting-edge fintech solutions, alongside an innovative approach that empowers employees and strengthens KFH's business and products development and its ability to meet diverse customer needs across all sectors.

### Abdulaziz Alghanem

KFH Executive Manager Retail Support, Abdulaziz Alghanem, commented on receiving the Best Islamic Retail Bank in Kuwait award: "We have delivered a seamless and distinguished banking experience, providing customers with the right financial

tools, products, and solutions to meet their financial needs. Additionally, we have introduced numerous innovative products and services that have solidified the standing of the Islamic finance industry. This has allowed KFH to attract diverse segments with a broader customer base granting the Bank a leading position in the local market."

He added: "We are focused on capitalizing on the increasing demand for Islamic financial services and products in Kuwait by introducing new banking and financing services that will enhance our market share, build trust, and expand opportunities for success across various sectors and face the competition. Our Retail Banking offer cutting-edge technology, inclusivity,

and accessibility, catering to all age groups and customer segments with high-quality, fast, and digital solutions that enable seamless banking anywhere, anytime."

### Saleh Al-Shaya

KFH Senior Relationship Manager Corporate Banking, Saleh Al-Shaya, received the Best Islamic Corporate Bank in Kuwait award. He said that KFH enjoys a unique advantage as the leading corporate financier in Kuwait with a substantial client base characterized by a spirit of partnership and knowledge exchange. "KFH has notably succeeded in financing major development projects while also funding small and medium-sized enterprises, which KFH considers crucial for expanding

production, boosting the national economy, and creating employment opportunities." Commented Al-Shaya. KFH is recognized as a leader in financing this important sector, with its portfolio for small project financing being the largest in the Kuwaiti market.

IFN awards are granted based on several criteria including diverse capabilities, brand quality, integrated performance, and coordination within the KFH Group. It also assesses the Group's contribution to the Islamic banking industry, focusing on merit and reliability. The awards are determined through surveys and questionnaires from Islamic and conventional financial institutions, investors, and financial professionals worldwide.

The diverse range of awards won by KFH Group reflects its strategic vision, structured operations and growth, reinforcing its ability for expansion and product innovation in Kuwait and the markets where it operates. KFH's expansion into the UK banking market through KFH-UK was a key milestone, culminating in the bank being awarded the Best New Islamic Bank in the UK after its recent conversion to an Islamic bank. This follows KFH's successful acquisition of Ahli United Bank - Bahrain.

It is worth noting that the Islamic Finance News (IFN) group recognized KFH for these awards based on recommendations from specialized committees composed of experts and analysts in Islamic banking worldwide. The evaluation was conducted according to a set of criteria and financial indicators assessing the best Islamic institutions and transactions for the year 2024.

The IFN group manages the Islamic Finance and Banking Awards. It also publishes the world's leading Islamic banking news through its magazine, established in 2004. The magazine is affiliated with Redmone, which has offices in Dubai and Kuala Lumpur.

### KA focuses on Kuwaitization policy

Kuwait Airways plans to expand fleet, details yet to be disclosed

#### By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Following the announcement that Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam made on Monday about the completion of Terminal Two at Kuwait International Airport in 2027, sources revealed that the Board of Directors of Kuwait Airways, headed by Abdul Mohsen Al-Faqan, is currently preparing to increase its air fleet, which currently consists of 33 aircraft, but refused to disclose the upcoming increase, indicating that the study on the specific number is still under discussion.

Sources revealed that the existing Kuwait Airways fleet has a variety of aircraft, including the most luxurious equipped with advanced technology.

Sources also confirmed that the incumbent Board of Directors is focusing on the implementation of the Kuwaitization policy, as it has been working hard to hire the largest number of Kuwaitis since assuming responsibility in September 2023.

Moreover, the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) recently announced that the number of Kuwaitis employed at Kuwait Airways still does not meet the desired percentage as per the Kuwaitization policy. It stated that the total number of employees in Kuwait Airways as at the end of Decem-

ber 2024 reached about 5,234 -- 1,120 of whom are Kuwaiti citizens (118 females and 1,002 males); while the total number of non-Kuwaiti workers reached 4,114 (2,787 males and 1,327 females).

Sources revealed the board has not been questioned about these figures, but Board Chairman Abdul Mohsen Al-Faqan always stresses the need to strike a balance in favor of national personnel through the continuous publication of recruitment advertisements. In order to achieve this, Kuwait Airways recently opened the registration door in the training system for Kuwaiti high school graduates who do not have experience in preparation for their appointment in the future and the course period extends to six months, sources disclosed.

Sources pointed out that Kuwait Airways does not only appoint Kuwaitis, but it also promotes those who deserve it. For this reason, it recently promoted a number of Kuwaiti staff to pilot after completing the training and meeting the conditions, sources added.

Sources clarified that non-Kuwaiti appointments may seem higher primarily due to the unwillingness of some citizens to be appointed to the position of flight attendant or air hostess due to the long travel; especially since the airline's destinations cover all continents -- Europe, Middle East, Africa, the Indian subcontinent and the Far East.

## KUFPEC aims to boost oil and gas collaboration with Egypt

CAIRO, Feb 18, (KUNA): Executive Vice President for Operations of Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) Tareq Ibrahim affirmed eagerness to enhance collaboration with Egypt in oil and gas fields, along expanding its exploration activities.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement while chairing KUFPEC delegation partaking in the EGYPT 2025, the largest and most important energy Conference and Exhibition nationwide, Ibrahim said the company works on boosting cooperation with Egypt in this field, terming participation in the exhibition as "positive and fruitful."

KUFPEC is working on expanding its work in Egypt through several projects like Minya West, Khofo - north of Al-Amriya- and others, he noted.

He extolled the exhibition, which is a key international platform in this field to discuss energy and sustainable transition strategies, along communication and sharing expertise among international and Arab companies and institutions.

KUFPEC's delegation has some officials includes Bader Al-Mutar, regional head for Asia, Europe and Africa, and head of Egypt-KUFPEC office Abdulaziz Al-Mousawi, as well as others.

# Kuwait jumps 3 spots among the world emerging markets

Boosted by stronger local logistics and business fundamentals

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Kuwait advances three spots in the annual 50-country Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index, improving its competitiveness in domestic logistics and business fundamentals at a time when it has "embraced the PPP model to deliver its Vision 2035 ambitions," the Index says.

Kuwait's improved performance in the 2025 Index comes as the Gulf region stands out as a "beacon of resilience" and "gateway to the rest of the world" for major Asian exporters and other trading nations, according to the report.

"It is clear that Kuwait is entering a new phase, the features of which are evident in the government's ability to involve the private sector in its key development projects," says Agility Vice Chairman Tarek Sultan. "The government has astutely managed difficult economic issues with an eye toward the future, improving the country's competitiveness and business climate."

The Index, a survey of logistics industry professionals and annual ranking of emerging economies, is in its 16th year. This year's Index shows the industry entering 2025 with caution. In the survey of 567 executives, more than 62% say they've overhauled their supply chains to safeguard against inflation, looming trade tariffs, the possibility of a global economic downturn and other major risks.

Nearly 55% of respondents see a global recession as likely or certain. Almost 82% say tariffs and other trade protectionism are having a significant impact on their supply chains. Seventy-two percent say risks in emerging markets have increased over the past year.

The Index ranks the world's 50 leading emerging markets for overall competitiveness based on domestic and international logistics strengths, business climates and digital readiness -- factors that make them attractive to logistics providers, freight forwarders, air and ocean carriers, distributors and investors.

The 2025 Index features an in-depth analysis of GCC economies. Individually and as a group, the six Gulf countries are positioning themselves as global trade hubs, investing heavily in infrastructure, AI, energy transition, and workforce development.

"Economic headwinds" and Red Sea shipping attacks "have done nothing to derail the (GCC) region's development strategies," the Index says.



Kuwait rises in 2025 Agility emerging markets logistics index.

Throughout the region, "market accessibility ... is improving year-by-year. Foreign ownership levels, ease of capital inflows and outflows, legal frameworks to protect investments, and clearing and settlement procedures are critical to ensuring that (these markets are) attractive to foreign investors."

Gulf countries are among the leaders in every category of the Index. In the overall rankings, all six GCC countries rank in the top 11 for best business conditions. The countries most digitally ready are China, UAE, Malaysia, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Stability at the top of the 50-country rankings was accompanied by volatility and movement further down in the Index. China, India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mexico, Qatar, Thailand and Vietnam rank 1 through 10. Colombia (No. 21) leaped up the rankings; as Nigeria (43), Bangladesh (39) and Ukraine (40) tumbled.

In international logistics opportunities, China, India, Mexico, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia rank highest. In domestic logistics, the leaders are China, In-

dia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

### 2025 Index Highlights

#### Survey

- Recession -- Nearly 55% of respondents see a global recession as likely or certain.
- Protectionism -- Almost 82% say tariffs and other trade protectionism are having a significant impact on their supply chains.
- Emerging markets -- 72% say risks in emerging markets have increased over the past year.
- China -- 54% intend to move production or sourcing out of China in the next five years with U.S.-China trade friction, labor costs and increasing domestic regulation being the biggest factors.
- Africa -- Despite seeing heightened risks in emerging markets, 35% plan to boost investment in Africa in 2025 vs. only 8% planning to cut back there.
- Net-Zero -- Nearly 65% say their companies are on track to meet net-zero goals.

#### Country rankings

- In the Middle East and North Africa, overall rankings are: UAE (3); Saudi Arabia (4); Qatar (8); Turkey (11); Oman (14); Bahrain (16); Jordan (17); Kuwait (18); Egypt (24); Morocco (26); Iran (32); Tunisia (36); Algeria (38); Lebanon (42); Libya (46).
- Rankings in Sub-Saharan Africa: South Africa (20); Kenya (22); Ghana (31); Tanzania (37); Uganda (41); Nigeria (43); Ethiopia (45); Angola (47); Mozambique (48).
- Rankings in Asia: China (1); India (2); Malaysia (5); Indonesia (6); Thailand (9); Vietnam (10); Philippines (23); Kazakhstan (25); Sri Lanka (27); Cambodia (30); Pakistan (33); Bangladesh (39); Myanmar (49).
- Rankings for Latin America: Mexico (7); Chile (11); Brazil (13); Uruguay (19); Colombia (21); Peru (28); Argentina (29); Ecuador (34); Paraguay (35); Bolivia (44); Venezuela (40).
- In Europe: Ukraine (40).

Transport Intelligence (Ti), a leading analysis and research firm for the logistics industry, has compiled the Index since it was launched in 2009.

John Manners-Bell, Chief Executive of Ti, said: "Despite global economic headwinds and disruption to shipping lanes over the last year, the Gulf economies have proved exceptionally resilient. Diversification and their focus on investment in transport, the green energy transition, and other major infrastructure projects has laid the foundations for future growth. The improving security situation across the region will only act to accelerate their development as a bridge between emerging superpowers and the West."



Maintaining its stable financial outlook and robust market position

# Burgan reports solid financial results for the year 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Burgan Bank ("Burgan" or "the Bank") announced its financial results for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024 (FY'24).

The Bank's good performance in FY'24 reflects a focus on executing its strategy, achieving growth, and delivering consistent profitable performance while maintaining robust asset quality and resilient capital levels. The Bank generated a net income of KD 46 million in FY'24 compared to KD 44 million reported the year before – marking a growth of 7% y-o-y. This performance was primarily driven by well-diversified and resilient revenue streams, risk-calibrated asset growth, and lower cost of credit.

The Bank reported total revenues of KD 229 million during FY'24, marking a 3% y-o-y increase. Higher revenues were driven by a net interest income of KD157 million (+17% y-o-y) – supported by higher net interest margins (NIMs) of 2.3% (+20bps y-o-y). NIMs were higher due to noticeable business growth across franchises and higher margins. The Bank's Credit Costs (net of recoveries) were significantly lower at 14bps for the year. Such low credit costs indicate the inherent strength of the Bank's credit portfolio.

Meanwhile, hyperinflation (IAS 29) related losses were significantly lower in 2024 at KD24 million, compared to KD 32 million reported the year before – reflecting an improvement of 25% y-o-y, which was largely driven by the improved inflationary situation in Turkey along with other key macro parameters.

Burgan continued on its growth trajectory with its asset base reaching KD 8.2 billion (+10% y-o-y). The Bank's loans and advances were up by 6% y-o-y to reach KD4.5 billion, mainly supported by Kuwait's loan portfolio, which was up by 7% y-o-y. Total customer deposits were up by 10% to reach KD 4.9 billion. It is worth highlighting that despite the elevated interest rates and highly competitive landscape, the Bank leveraged its strong franchise to attract new CASA deposits, increasing volumes by 5% y-o-y.

Burgan maintained its asset quality during FY'24 with a Non-Performing Loan (NPL) ratio of 1.8% (an improvement of 20bps y-o-y) and a Provision Coverage of 162%. Moreover, the Bank's capital metrics remained solid with a Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) ratio of 12.6%, and a Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of 18.6%, compared to the regulatory minimum ratios of 10.5% and 14.0% respectively. Additionally, as of Q4'24, the Group continues to maintain adequate liquidity levels with a Liquid Coverage Ratio (LCR) and a Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR) of 153% and 116% respectively, which is well above the minimum regulatory requirements of 100%.

In light of the 2024 performance, Burgan's Board of Directors recommended a cash dividend of 6 fils per share and a bonus share of 5% for the full year ending 31 December 2024, subject to shareholders' approval at the Annual General Meeting.

Commenting on the Bank's financial results, Burgan's Chairman, Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Al-Sabah, said: "On behalf of Burgan's Board of Directors and Executive Management, I am delighted to announce our collective success for another year; delivering on our promise to our shareholders, customers, employees, and the community to deliver long-term value and banking excellence. Burgan's continued growth is a testament to the soundness of the strategic goals that guide its institutional operations and the future-focused vision shaping its performance. Today, more than ever, we remain focused on cementing ourselves amongst the most modern and progressive banks in Kuwait."

The Chairman noted that Burgan's steady growth and unwavering excellence in delivering top-tier banking services are due to the intricate balance that the Bank preserves between its commitment to market expansion, digital advancement, infrastructure fortification, continuous operational upgrading, dedicated human capital development, prudent risk management, and vigilant cybersecurity.

Burgan Bank's healthy financial performance and solid credit standing were further endorsed by the evaluations of leading rating agencies. In 2024, Capital Intelligence, Fitch, Moody's, and S&P affirmed Burgan's long-term issuer default ratings at A+, A, Baa1, and BBB+ respectively with a stable outlook, reflecting last year's ratings. Additionally, Fitch Ratings upgraded Burgan Bank Turkey's Long-Term Foreign-Currency (LTFC) Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to 'BB-' from 'B' and Long-Term Local-Currency (LTLCL) IDR to 'BB-' from 'B+', with a stable outlook.

In yet another affirmation of the Bank's healthy credit profile, Burgan successfully concluded its first-ever "KD-denominated" perpetual bond issuance in the local market with an issue size of KD 150 million. The issuance was oversubscribed, confirming strong investor interest and confidence in Burgan's credit profile. This issuance was part of the wider funding strategy of the Bank, which included the issuance of KD 150 million worth of new AT1 bonds and subsequent redemption of legacy USD 500 million AT1 bonds issued in FY'19 on its first-call date.

Further attesting to the Bank's position as a trusted financial partner, Burgan was voted the Best Domestic Bank in Kuwait in the 2024 Euromoney Trade Finance Survey. Additionally, the Bank ranked 35th on The Banker magazine's list of Top 100 Arab Banks in 2024 and 89th on Forbes Middle East's Top 100 Listed Companies in 2024.

Burgan's Chairman concluded his statement by confirming that, "In adherence to our philosophy, 'Driven By You', and our unwavering commitment to the highest environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards, our achievements throughout FY'24 were guided and fueled by our ultimate goal to deliver an outstanding banking experience that responds to our customers' evolving needs whilst contributing to our valuable community's holistic development. As we review a year in achievements, we continue to build a resilient foundation for greater future success."

## Advancing Banking for Burgan Customers and Community

With customers being at the heart of every business consideration, innovative offerings, or operational upgrades, 2024 witnessed the introduction and enhancement of numerous products and services that serve customers' needs across all segments at Burgan.

"As a Bank that is 'Driven By You', Burgan's success over the past year was inspired by our customers' growing aspirations and the market's ambitious growth," said Mr. Tony Daher, Group Chief Executive Officer at Burgan Bank. "Today the market and our customer base include wider circles and more segments with diverse financial needs and growth goals. Upholding our promise to deliver an unmatched banking experience, our teams work tirelessly to understand our varying customers' evolving needs and combine them with the latest technologies and global trends."

Among the areas where Burgan Bank made notable



Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Al-Sabah, Chairman of Burgan Bank



Mr. Tony Daher, Group Chief Executive Officer at Burgan Bank

advancements is Private Banking and Wealth Management, which was reintroduced to the market with a new brand and identity, complemented by a suite of new and enhanced products and services, under a motto of "Building Trust and Growing Wealth". To guarantee that Burgan's High-Net-Worth-Individuals (HNWI) and Ultra-High-Net-Worth-Individuals (UHNWI) receive a best-in-class service, the Bank acquired a range of new investment licenses from the Capital Markets Authority (CMA), including custodian, investment advisory, portfolio management, and unregistered securities brokerage licenses, to fulfill clients' investment and wealth management ambitions in line with their individual portfolios, liquidity requirements, and capacities for risk.

Besides broadening the range of products and services, Burgan Bank expanded the network of branches that serve Private Banking and Wealth Management clients across Kuwait, which now includes Al-Adailiya and Al-Shaheed branches. In addition to the branch expansion serving this segment of clients, Burgan also inaugurated a new branch that serves corporate customers in Sabhan, as well as another branch in Da'iyia that serves retail customers.

The Bank's efforts to elevate its customers' experience also included every segment from kids to youth and adults. Burgan introduced notable enhancements to the award and Youth accounts, in addition to launching the most exclusive invitations-only Visa credit card, targeted at the Bank's UHNW clients. Under the umbrella of its fruitful partnership with Visa, Burgan Bank also relaunched its co-branded Qatar Airways credit and prepaid cards, offering cardholders exclusive benefits and rewards.

## Reimagining Banking with State-of-the-Art Digital Solutions

In adherence to the Bank's strategic goal for digitally transforming and technologically elevating its operations and offerings, as well as its active contribution to Kuwait's Vision 2035 goal for digital transformation, Burgan launched several digital banking solutions that aim to enhance all customers' banking journey. Furthermore, to support its steadfast digital transformation strategy, Burgan signed an agreement with market-leading Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) to upgrade its core banking system by implementing the TCS BaNCS™ suite of products. The deal confirmed the Bank's commitment to fortifying its digital infrastructure for a seamless transition from traditional to digital banking.

Additionally, Burgan was among Kuwait's earliest adopters of the GCC real-time cross-border payments system AFAQ. Shortly after plugging into AFAQ, the Bank announced the launch of the instant payment service WAMD, developed by KNET, which customers can conveniently utilize using the Burgan Mobile application.

Furthermore, the Bank's Turkish digital banking brand ON achieved a significant milestone in 2024 by reaching more than 1 million customers within only three years of its launch. ON, with its next-generation banking approach and renewed brand identity of "comfortable banking", delivered remarkable growth in the highly competitive Turkish banking sector across all critical metrics. According to the Remote Acquisition Market Share Report published monthly by the Banks Association of Turkey (TBB), ON's remote acquisi-

tion market share increased by 96.5% y-o-y to reach 5.7% in 2024.

## Enhancing Offerings to Attain Market Leadership

In line with its strategy of asset reallocation and building new revenue streams, Burgan Bank signed a Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) to acquire United Gulf Bank B.S.C (UGB) – a wholesale bank licensed and headquartered in Bahrain – from United Gulf Holding Company B.S.C. (UGH) for USD 190 million after receiving all regulatory approvals (in Kuwait and Bahrain). This transaction, which is expected to be completed within the first quarter of 2025, provides Burgan with an opportunity to tap into key high-growth sectors of Islamic financing and investments while creating significant cross-selling and up-selling opportunities.

The Bank also underscored its dedication to contributing to Kuwait's economic growth and development with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Korea Finance for Construction (KFINCO), making Burgan the sole representing bank in Kuwait for the South Korean co-op institution, as part of the latter's strategic expansion across the Middle East.

## Nurturing the People Who Nurture the Business

Guided by its strategic mission to be an employer of choice, Burgan Bank upheld its promise throughout 2024 to contribute actively to hiring and developing Kuwait's aspiring national talents and promising professional calibers.

"None of our achievements would be possible without our exceptional Burgan talents who nurture leading financial solutions from idea to product," said Mr. Daher. "An important pillar of our institutional success is owed to the inspiring environment of continuous learning we foster at Burgan, where learning opportunities are available to all employees at their fingertips, allowing them to develop and grow at their pace of choice and along their fields of interest."

As a certified Great Place to Work®, Burgan Bank upheld its commitment to human capital development throughout 2024, which is evident in its numerous L&D achievements. This includes the graduation of the second cohort from Burgan's flagship talent development program, Ro'ya, which aims to prepare high-potential calibers for leadership roles as middle, senior, and executive managers. The Bank also celebrated a new group of talents who were carefully selected to enroll in the third round of Ro'ya. Additionally, Burgan introduced the Ro'ya Mentorship Module for Visionary Leaders, designed specifically to prepare emerging senior leaders on the personal and professional fronts with the guidance of Burgan's senior executives.

Other talent development programs that enabled Burgan's finest talents to unlock their full potential include Entilaqah, designed to equip fresh graduates for the professional market; the Investment and Wealth Management Academy, designed in partnership with Fitch Learning to support the Bank's expanding Private Banking and Wealth Management services; and Burgan Cares, which supports employees in their pursuit of earning their Bachelor's and Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees.

In addition to the numerous programs that Burgan's dedicated teams develop to support aspiring talents' personal and professional growth, the Bank also collaborated with leading educational institutions to guar-

antee that its staff receive best-in-class L&D opportunities. Among the Bank's most notable partnerships on the talent development front is with the Kuwait Institute for Banking Studies (KIBS), which saw the graduation of many Burgan talents from its leading programs, such as the Kuwait Graduate Development Program (KGDP).

Stemming from its firm belief that learning is an expansive experience that takes on many forms, Burgan Bank developed its iconic Burgan Talks into a podcast series, which features some of the Bank's leadership figures as well as market experts who share their valuable experiences in life as well as in the industry.

Furthermore, the Bank expanded its efforts to develop national calibers to include budding talents who have recently graduated or are yet to graduate. This includes the Empower Her summer internship program, which hosted 18 aspiring young women, introducing them to the professional world of banking through some of Burgan's most inspiring female figures. It also includes Burgan Lab Academy, a forward-looking program designed to prepare young, aspiring fresh graduates for a career in tech development, which is now integral to the growth and expansion of banking services worldwide.

Beyond Burgan's expansive L&D efforts, the Bank has also exhibited its commitment to developing an inviting, comfortable, and holistically nurturing work environment through various programs that address employees' diverse needs. Among the Bank's efforts on this front is growing all staff's paid-leave credit to include their birthdays, allowing them to achieve a healthier work-life balance that accounts for their personal priorities as well as work responsibilities.

In addition, the Bank reaffirmed its commitment to supporting employees in adopting a healthier lifestyle and receiving proper, timely healthcare through hosting the month-long Rock Your Habits fitness and nutrition program and launching a dedicated on-site clinic at its head office.

On the mental wellbeing and psychological reinforcement front, Burgan Bank unveiled its Lean In Circle for Women Empowerment program, which creates a support network for female employees to express and share the unique challenges they face in their professional careers and receive expert mentorship to overcome them. Furthermore, the Bank underscored the importance of fostering an environment of acknowledgment and appreciation by launching its Burgan Beacon (Manarat Burgan) program, which centers on appreciating and rewarding all employees who go the extra mile in their areas of work.

## A Force of Positive Change

In line with its commitment to the highest ESG standards in banking, Burgan Bank remains steadfast in its mission to leave a positive print across its community through sharing knowledge and upholding its promise of developing a socially and environmentally conscious business.

A hallmark of Burgan Bank's community development success continues to be its rigorous efforts to spread valuable market knowledge and insights through the events it sponsors and hosts. Among the most notable events that Burgan took part in during 2024 was the Empower Her seminar to empower women in leadership positions across society. The event gathered a distinguished audience of around 200 participants, including prominent figures in Kuwaiti banking and various sectors, to share valuable market insights and experiences and expand the network of impactful female industry leaders.

Another event of equal importance that Burgan Bank hosted in collaboration with Kamco Invest was the "Investment Conference 2024", which adopted the theme "Global Perspectives: Uncovering Challenges and Opportunities Ahead". The conference discussed crucial topics spanning the global economy, geopolitics, and various asset classes, with the attendance of more than 600 delegates including thought leaders and industry experts, in addition to institutional and high-net-worth investors from Kuwait and the region attended the conference.

In addition to its continuous efforts to advance the market through sharing knowledge and market insights, Burgan Bank also highlighted its committed adherence to the ESG metrics for being an environmentally conscious business by minimizing its carbon footprint across many of its operations. These efforts include the Bank's adoption of the DHL GoGreen Plus initiative, which aims to reduce shipment-related carbon emissions by supporting DHL's adoption of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and choosing the DHL Express greener courier services across its value chain.

The Bank also resumed its efforts to turn its headquarters into a symbol of environmental consciousness by adopting numerous energy-saving and waste-reduction protocols and solutions. Attesting to Burgan's commitment to sustainability, the Bank was awarded the prestigious Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design- LEED v4.1 O+M: EB (Operations and Maintenance - Existing Buildings) Gold Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) for operations and maintenance at its head office building in Kuwait City.

## National Talents Making International Waves

Adding to the recognition received for its efforts in sustainability, Burgan Bank was widely celebrated for its unwavering commitment to excellence across all facets of its operations. This includes receiving the coveted 'Quality Recognition Award' for the year 2023 from J.P. Morgan Chase N.A. in recognition of its consistently high-quality performance. The award acknowledges the advanced standards maintained by the Bank across the complete range of clients' US Dollar funds transfer operations by the management and staff.

In addition, the Bank received three accolades at the Global Private Banker MEA Awards 2024: the "Best Private Bank for Credit" award, the "Best Private Bank for Fixed Income Securities" award, and the "Best Private Bank for High-Net-Worth (HNW) Clients" award – attesting to the Bank's unwavering commitment to excellence and developing competitive products and services, and to its mission to lead with innovation and deliver a differentiated customer experience.

Recognizing the Bank's unmatched commitment to developing its human capital and Kuwait's top calibers, Burgan received the prestigious Brandon Hall Group Human Capital Management (HCM) Gold Award of Excellence in the "Learning and Development" area under the "Best Use of Social/Collaborative Learning" category.

It serves to note that the consolidated financials for Burgan include the results of the Group's operations in Kuwait, as well as its share of results from its subsidiaries, namely: Burgan Bank Turkey, Gulf Bank Algeria, and Tunis International Bank. Through this regional reach, Burgan Bank has one of the largest regional branch networks across Kuwait, Turkey, Algeria, and Tunisia, in addition to a representative office in the United Arab Emirates.



Burgan Bank headquarters.



Net profit reaches SAR 596 mln, adjusted growth at 354%

# Zain KSA reports record SAR 10.4 bln revenue in 2024

RIYADH, Feb 18: Zain Group's operation in Saudi Arabia (Zain KSA) released its financial results for 2024, reporting an all-time high revenue of SAR 10.4 billion (USD 2.8bn), compared to SAR 9.9 billion (USD 2.6bn) in 2023, reflecting a 5% growth.

The company reported net profit of SAR 596 million (USD 159m) for 2024 compared to SAR 1,267 million in 2023, which included one-off gain of SAR 1.1 billion from sale of 8069 towers recognized during 2023. Adjusting this one-off gain, normalized net-profit grew 354%. EBITDA reached SAR 3.3 billion (USD 886m), a 12% growth YoY.

With the sustained upward financial and operational performance, Zain KSA's Board of Directors recommended to distribute cash dividends of SAR 0.5 per share (5%) to shareholders for 2024.

The financial results highlight

**■ Bader Al-Kharafi:** "Focus on operational efficiency, digital innovation, new business verticals and expansion of 5G services driving growth"

**■ EBITDA growth of 12%** to reach SAR 3.3 billion (USD 886m)

**■ Board recommends dividend distribution** for third consecutive year



Bader Al Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO.



Zain KSA headquarters

"Tamam Finance."

Commenting on the results, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO & Zain Saudi Arabia Vice-Chairman,

Bader Al Kharafi, said, "This impressive growth in Zain KSA's constantly improving financial results for 2024 are attributed to the team's

focus on operational efficiency, digital innovation, new business verticals and expansion of 5G services. This is supported by the provision of a great customer mobile and data experience that is instrumental in growing its enterprise and individual customer base. Furthermore, the close cooperation and support of the resources of Zain Group is a vital element in Zain KSA's forward trajectory."

Al Kharafi concluded, "The operation is playing its key role as a major contributor to Saudi Arabia's ICT sector; a position it has earned through vast investments in 5G network expansion and multiple initiatives aimed at further developing Saudi nationals. Zain KSA's productive relationship with The Communications, Space & Technology Commission, emphasize the company's dedication to supporting the targets of the Kingdom's Vision 2030."



Gulf Bank expands reusable bag Initiative with Ibrah.



Bank aims to distribute over 100,000 reusable bags

## Gulf Bank advances sustainability efforts by transforming street ads into reusable bags for the 2nd consecutive year

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: As part of its ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability, Gulf Bank is continuing its initiative to repurpose its street advertisements into reusable bags for the second consecutive year, in partnership with Ibrah apparel and textile factory.

Gulf Bank's Chief Marketing Officer, Mrs. Najla Aleisa, stated: "Last year, we successfully transformed over 2,300 square meters of our street advertisements into reusable bags. This year, we aim to increase that number to nearly 3,000 square meters, further reinforcing our long-term commitment to sustainability."

She added: "This initiative builds on the project we launched in 2023 in collaboration with several cooperative societies across Kuwait, where we distributed around 100,000 reusable bags. It reflects our dedication to protecting the environment and encouraging a cultural shift toward sustainable alternatives."

Mrs. Aleisa further emphasized Gulf Bank's commitment to supporting young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, stating: "We partnered with Ibrah for this initiative due to its strong commitment to environmental sustainability and its dedication to supporting underprivileged families

**Najla Aleisa:** "We aim to convert 3,000 square meters of our advertisements this year and remain committed to the initiative in the long run."

**Shahad AlSabeeh:** "We are proud to partner with Gulf Bank to create exceptional products that encourage the public to use them, while meeting their tastes and preferences."

— values that closely align with Gulf Bank's mission."

Reaffirming its commitment to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, Gulf Bank has introduced its 2030 Sustainability Strategy. This includes the establishment of a Sustainable Finance Framework and a Sustainability Risk Management Framework, along with an internal policy to document its sustainability commitments and define clear criteria for

evaluating eco-friendly initiatives.

Ms. Shahad AlSabeeh, CEO and Founder of Ibrah, stated: "We are proud to partner with Gulf Bank on this ambitious initiative, repurposing street advertisements into unique products that encourage both customers and the public to use them, while meeting with their tastes and preferences."

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

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

## Boursa Kuwait general index rises 0.54 percent

Major 50 index gains 1.34%

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Tuesday with its general index rising 42.92 points (0.54%) to settle at 8,063.08 points. The market witnessed a total 926.9 million shares traded through 23,750 cash transactions, amounting to KD 248.6 million (\$765.6 million).

The Main Market Index inched up 2.04 points (0.03%) to 7,418.54

points, with 733.6 million shares changing hands through 14,973 transactions, valued at KD 181 million (\$557.4 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index climbed 55.35 points (0.65%) to reach 8,622.30 points, as 193.3 million shares were traded via 8,777 transactions, totaling KD 67.5 million (\$207.9 million).

The Major 50 Index saw a notable increase of 100.20 points (1.34%), closing at 7,598.13 points. A total of 663.6 million shares were exchanged through 11,849 transactions, with a trading value of KD 174 million (\$535.9 million).

### Passenger car sales drop 13%

## Turkey's automotive production falls 3% in January year-on-year

ISTANBUL, Feb 18, (Xinhua): Türkiye's automotive industry experienced a slowdown in both production and market performance in January, compared to the same month last year, the Automotive Industry Association (OSD) reported on Monday.

According to OSD's monthly report, the total production in January fell by 3 percent year-on-year to 105,397 units. While passenger car production saw a slight increase of 1 percent, reaching 67,795 units, the production of light commercial vehicles dropped by 3 percent, and heavy commercial vehicle production suffered a significant 51 percent decline.

The market also faced a downturn, with total sales falling by 15 percent to 70,412 units.

The passenger car market declined

by 13 percent. In comparison, the commercial vehicle market dropped by 22 percent, with heavy commercial vehicle sales down by 38 percent and light commercial vehicle sales decreasing by 19 percent.

Despite the domestic downturn, total automotive exports increased by 4 percent in terms of units on an annual basis.

According to a Feb. 11 article in Forbes Türkiye, the Turkish automotive industry faces significant risks in 2025 due to a slowdown in the European market and idle production capacity. In a statement made last November, OSD President Cengiz Eroldu warned that excess vehicles from the shrinking European market could be redirected to Türkiye, potentially negatively impacting the local market and production in 2025.

### Company offers 8-year warranty, 24/7 roadside assistance for Kuwaiti drivers

## SWM cars debut in Kuwait with focus on affordability, low maintenance costs

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Alwataniya Automotive Company, the exclusive distributor of SWM in the Gulf region, has officially inaugurated its new showroom, on Thursday, marking the brand's entry into the Kuwaiti automotive market.

During the launch event, Ahmed Essa Al-Loughani, Group Chairman of Alwataniya Automotive Company, highlighted the significant advancements in Chinese automobiles in recent years, stating that they have emerged as formidable competitors in global markets, including the Gulf region.

He added that SWM's combination of modern Italian design and affordability makes it an attractive option for consumers in Kuwait, announcing the brand's official launch with new models to come by 2025.

Loughani indicated that the decision to bring SWM to the region was based on comprehensive market research, highlighting its competitive pricing, low maintenance costs, and long-term warranty, making it a compelling choice for consumers.

"Chinese cars have gained significant traction since the COVID-19 pandemic, serving as an alternative amid shortages of European and Japanese models. Since 2020, they have improved in quality and features, which led us to introduce SWM to the Kuwaiti market," he explained.

Unlike the common practice of launching vehicles first and then establishing service centers, Alwataniya Automotive took a reverse approach by setting up a fully equipped maintenance center, hiring skilled staff, and stocking spare parts before the arrival of the vehicles.

He pointed out "We launched our service center before the cars even arrived, ensuring our technical teams were trained on similar models in preparation for SWM's debut. This guarantees high-quality service from day one."

Alwataniya Automotive's vision extends beyond Kuwait, as Loughani affirmed that his company holds exclusive distribution rights across the



Alwataniya Automotive launches SWM showroom in Kuwait.

Gulf and is set to expand into other GCC markets in 2025, noting "We will be present in at least one or two Gulf

countries before 2025." Regarding SWM's advantages over competitors, he highlighted the brand's

affordable pricing, low maintenance costs, and an extended warranty of 8 years or 200,000 km, along with 24/7

roadside assistance.

The first batch of SWM vehicles has arrived in Kuwait, with strong initial

demand. The company expects increasing interest as new shipments will arrive monthly throughout 2025.

Loughani also revealed attractive financing options in partnership with Kuwait Finance House, offering monthly installments starting from KD 85 with no down payment.

Addressing concerns about the car's performance in Kuwait's extreme heat, Loughani assured that SWM vehicles were tested during the summer and proved their reliability, adding that his company conducted customer trials and gathered feedback to enhance the overall experience.

On the brand's history, he indicated that SWM was originally founded in 1971 as a motorcycle manufacturer. The brand was revived in 2014 by the Chinese company Shineray Group, shifting its focus to automobiles. Since then, SWM has specialized in producing affordable SUVs and passenger vehicles, blending Italian design with Chinese engineering.

Concluding his statement, he said "We are all geared up to achieve the desired sales results in 2025 and the following years. We are confident that SWM will establish itself as a trusted and competitive choice in the Kuwaiti automotive market. Also, the next batch will include commercial vehicles like mini vans and family vans in addition to a new batch of sedan cars is set to arrive in early 2026."

For his part, Iqbal, Chief Executive Officer and Board Member of Al Wataniya Automotive, highlighted the GO1-F (Hero car) as a standout vehicle, stating that at Al Wataniya Automotive, they are proud to offer a car that brings innovation and convenience to their customers.

He explained "The GO1-F is built for drivers who want both power and comfort. With its turbo engine, smooth 7-speed transmission, and advanced safety features, it offers a thrilling yet secure driving experience."

Iqbal Added that the car also comes packed with smart technology, from wireless charging to a panoramic camera, making every journey easier and more enjoyable.





Kutayba Y. Alghanim, Executive Chairman of Alghanim Industries



Abdullateef Al Sharikh, VP at Alghanim Industries welcoming His Excellency Bandar Alkhorayef, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources.

# Alghanim Industries expands Saudi Arabia's industrial export power with new Kirby facility

RIYADH, Feb 18: Alghanim Industries, one of the MENA region's largest privately owned companies, has broken ground on a new Kirby Building Systems pre-engineered building (PEB) and structural steel manufacturing facility in Saudi Arabia. This strategic investment is set to transform the Kingdom into a global hub for high-quality steel structure exports, reinforcing Saudi Arabia's position as a major industrial player on the world stage.

### Driving Saudi Arabia's Global Steel Exports

The new facility in Sudair Industrial City, spanning 256,000 sqm, is designed to bolster Saudi Arabia's export capabilities, with a planned annual production capacity of 100,000 metric tons of structural steel and 100,000 metric tons of PEB.

This expansion directly supports the Kingdom's ambition to become a leading exporter of advanced industrial solutions, supplying high-quality steel structures to international markets across the GCC, Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, and Southeast Asia.

Speaking at the groundbreaking event, His Excellency Bandar Alkhorayef, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, emphasized the facility's role in advancing Saudi Arabia's export economy, aligning with Vision 2030's industrial diversification goals. The ceremony also saw the presence of His Excellency Majid Al-Arqoubi, CEO of MODON, alongside top executives from Alghanim Industries and Kirby Building Systems.

### Strengthening Saudi Arabia's Manufacturing Leadership

With this expansion, Kirby Building Systems solidifies its position as the largest PEB manufacturer outside North America. The new plant will not only serve domestic infra-



Mahmoud Samara, CEO of Alghanim Industries, His Excellency Bandar Alkhorayef, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, and His Excellency Majid Al-Arqoubi, CEO of MODON.

structure projects but will also be a key supplier to regional and global markets, ensuring that Saudi-made steel structures meet growing international demand.

Mahmoud Samara, CEO of Alghanim Industries, underscored the importance of exports, stating: "This new facility is a game-changer for Saudi

Arabia's industrial sector. By significantly increasing our manufacturing capacity, we are positioning the Kingdom as a leading exporter of world-class steel structures. This aligns with our long-term strategy to enhance Saudi Arabia's role in the global supply chain while creating local employment and expertise in advanced steel fab-

rication."

### A Global Reach from the Heart of Saudi Arabia

Kirby Building Systems operates a network of manufacturing facilities across Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, India, and Vietnam, with an overall production capacity exceeding 585,000

metric tons per year. With this latest expansion, Saudi Arabia will play a central role in exporting engineered steel solutions for warehouses, industrial complexes, fulfillment centers, oil & gas infrastructure, and large-scale construction projects worldwide.

"The demand for high-quality, scalable steel structures is rising

globally, and Saudi Arabia is well-positioned to meet this need," said Kutayba Y. Alghanim, Executive Chairman of Alghanim Industries. "By increasing our exports from the Kingdom, we are not just expanding our footprint – we are contributing to Saudi Arabia's industrial transformation and reinforcing its reputation as a global steel manufacturing hub."

### Supporting Vision 2030 and Saudi Industrial Growth

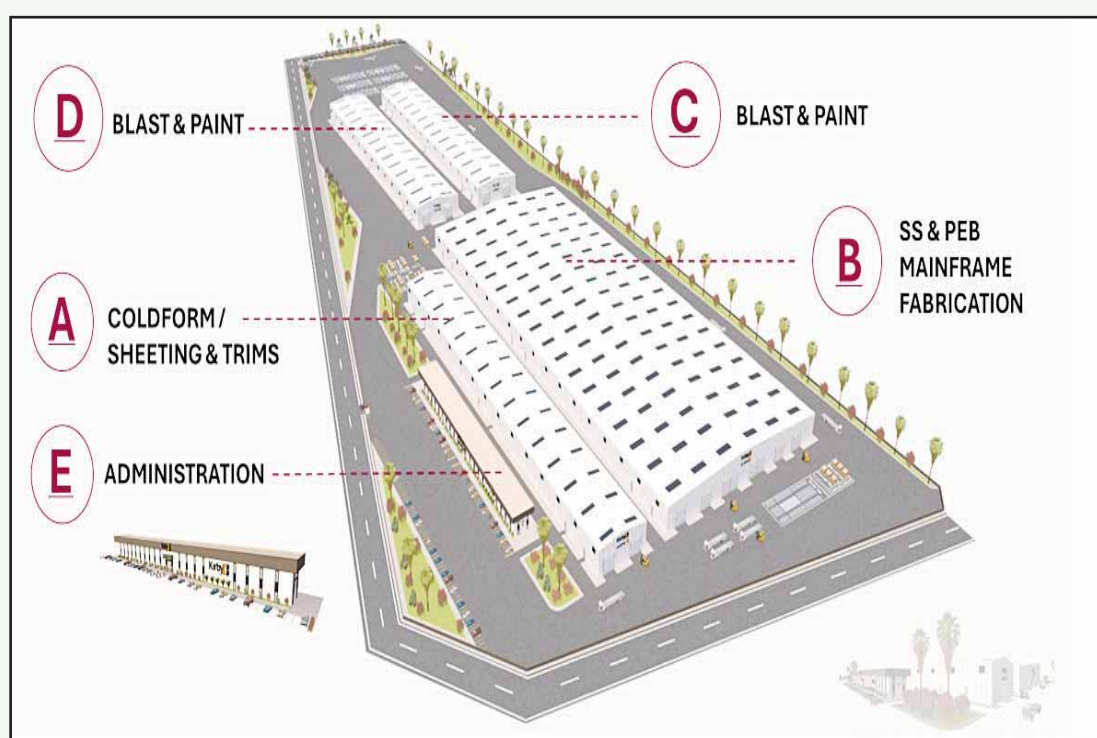
Kirby's investment in Saudi Arabia's industrial ecosystem will directly support the Kingdom's Vision 2030 objectives, fostering job creation, skill development, and economic diversification. The facility will provide employment opportunities for Saudi engineers and manufacturing professionals, contributing to the nation's growing expertise in steel construction and fabrication.

By leveraging state-of-the-art technology, including CNC laser cutting, plasma cutting, and laser-guided welding, the new plant will ensure precision, durability, and efficiency – all critical factors in delivering world-class steel structures to international clients.

### Elevating Saudi Arabia's Global Industrial Influence

As demand for high-performance construction solutions surges worldwide, Kirby Building Systems' new Saudi facility will be at the forefront of delivering export-ready, innovative, and sustainable steel structures. The Kingdom is set to emerge as a powerhouse for industrial exports, proving that Saudi-made engineering solutions can compete on the world stage.

With this expansion, Alghanim Industries reaffirms its commitment to positioning Saudi Arabia as a leader in global steel manufacturing and export excellence, ensuring that the Kingdom's industrial sector continues to thrive and expand into new markets.



Kirby Sudair render.



Distinguished guests in attendance of the MODON event.





Photos from the event.

## Bank promotes health, financial education with Bankee program

# NBK sponsors Sheikhan Al-Farsi School's walkathon

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Demonstrating its commitment to supporting initiatives that promote awareness of physical activity and healthy values within the community, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) took part in the walkathon organized by Sheikhan Al-Farsi School.

Through its participation in this walkathon, NBK aims to support schools involved in the Bankee program across various domains, including sports, education, and other impactful areas. The initiative underscores the significance of the Bankee program and its crucial role in promoting financial literacy among students, while introducing them to fundamental economic concepts and practices.

As part of fostering essential financial practices such as earning, spending, responsibility, and financial obligations, the students used Bankee's virtual currency, Bankoz, to purchase tickets for their parents. This initiative enabled parents to take part in the walkathon, further enhancing the practical application of financial skills in everyday life.

The walkathon featured a variety of recreational and cultural events, attracting a large number of students and parents. Participants emphasized the significance of such initiatives in raising awareness about the importance of public health and physical activity. The event not only encouraged students to adopt a healthy lifestyle but also fostered the spirit of cooperation and reinforced positive values within the community.

NBK supports events like this that reflect its commitment to social responsibility across all segments of society. We continuously strive to strengthen our role as an active partner in initiatives that contribute to the development of various sectors, including education, health, and sports.

NBK remains committed to fostering productive cooperation with all state institutions to drive social development and enhance human resources, which are the cornerstone of growth and prosperity. This is particularly true in the field of education, where the bank is dedicated to providing comprehensive support for its advancement.

Participating parents expressed their gratitude for the crucial role played by NBK in supporting education and instilling positive values in the younger generations. They highlighted how the Bankee program has significantly enhanced their children's skills and behaviors, particularly in managing financial matters. They also noted the remarkable improvement in their children's financial literacy following the program's implementation in their schools.

NBK is committed to the importance of initiatives led by the private sector in collaboration with government entities, aiming to equip young people with the essential knowledge and skills. These initiatives are vital for the well-being and prosperity of both Kuwaiti individuals and society as a whole.

The Bank was awarded the Bronze Award by Qorus in the Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) category for Bankee Program. This recognition highlights NBK's commitment to incorporating sustainability and ESG standards into its operations and initiatives.



## 20 winners with KD 1,000 each

# Warba announces winners of weekly Al Sunbula draw

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Warba Bank, recognized as the leading banking in corporate and investment banking in Kuwait, announced the winners in the weekly Al Sunbula draw as part of the account's 2025 campaign which offers exceptional rewards, giving twenty customers a chance to win KD1,000 each week and a grand prize of KD 250,000 for a winner in each of the six grand draws held throughout the year. This campaign comes as part of the bank's ongoing efforts to provide innovative, Sharia-compliant banking solutions that align with the aspirations of the local market.

### Winners of the weekly Al Sunbula draw

The latest weekly draw was conducted in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Warba Bank employees. The 20 winners, each receiving KD 1,000, are: Mr. Meshaan Barghash Sultan Al-Enezi, Mr. Musaed Abdullah Ali Al-Halabi, Mr. Khaled Mubarak Hasher Bin Kattal, Mr. Faleh Jumaan Faleh Al-Azmi, Mr. Hamed Abdul Hussein Mohammed Saeed, Mr. Ahmed Fahad Rashid Al-Duwailah, Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Homoud Al-Sabah, Mr. Abdulhakim Saad Mansour Saad Al-Bannaq, Mr. Saad Mufrej Hamdan Al-Adwani, Ms. Mona Zahem Abdulaziz Al-Zahem, Ms. Wajna Masri Saad Al-Ajmi, Mr. Mohammed Fahad Fahad Al-Malhuf Al-Azmi, Ms. Noura Abdulhadi Ali Al-Marri, Ms. Mona Faleh Mijbil Al-Azmi, Mr. Daham Matar Hamdan Al-Saadi, Mr. Walid Mahmoud Taher Abu Saa, Mr. Mohammed Ragheed Sameer Naasan, Mr. Mohammed Zayed Mutlaq Al-Enezi, Mr. Fawaz Ahmad Hamdan Al-Mutairi, and Mr. Mishaal Nasser Majran Al-Rumi.

Commenting on this year's Al Sunbula campaign, Mr. Abdulaziz Saud Al-Bakhait, Area Manager of the Retail Banking Group at Warba Bank, stated: "Al Sunbula's 2025 campaign reaffirms Warba Bank's commitment to enriching our customers' banking experience. Given the remarkable success of last year's campaign, we have further elevated the benefits that this account offers, expanding the number of winners and increasing the total value of prizes. In addition to these rewards, AlSunbula offers exceptional features, including a seamless savings experience through advanced digital services that simplify daily transactions."

Al-Bakhait further emphasized that Warba Bank has consistently introduced innovative financial solutions over the years, reflecting its strategic vision for expansion and growth, while placing customers at

the core of its priorities. He highlighted that this vision is embodied in the bank's slogan, 'We Hear You, Let's Own Tomorrow,' which emphasizes proactively understanding and fulfilling customers' evolving needs through innovative and integrated solutions.

Speaking of Al Sunbula's 2025 Campaign, Al-Bakhait stated: "This year's campaign offers customers the unique advantage of saving while having the opportunity to win, effectively doubling the benefits they receive. The campaign is designed to offer a seamless digital experience through the Warba app, where customers can efficiently manage their accounts, track their savings, and participate in draws effortlessly. The account also provides an ATM card and additional rewards that enhance the value of savings. To qualify for the weekly draws, customers must maintain a minimum balance of KD 500 for one month, and for the grand draws, a balance of KD 500 must be maintained for two consecutive months."

### Banking through the Warba App

Warba Bank's mobile app allows customers to manage their savings and participate in Al Sunbula draws with ease and flexibility. New customers can also open an Al Sunbula account electronically through the Customer Onboarding service in just five minutes, without the need to visit a branch. This is made possible by Warba Bank's advanced automated system, a unique feature in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

### Leading in digital solutions

Warba Bank's strategy is focused on expanding digital banking services and developing innovative products that deliver an integrated and advanced banking experience to its customers. The bank's digital transformation is not limited to Al Sunbula account, as it continues to introduce pioneering services, including the "Afaq" unified Gulf transfer service, which facilitates faster, easier, and more secure payments and transfers across the GCC.

A firm commitment to the community

Warba Bank is one of Kuwait's leading Islamic banks, having achieved remarkable success in a short period by focusing on providing cutting-edge digital banking services for individuals and businesses. Additionally, it is one of the local banks with the largest number of shareholders, making it deeply connected to all segments of society. This success underscores Warba Bank's ongoing commitment to shaping a financial future that aligns with customers' aspirations, preserving heritage with a forward-looking vision.

## World-class performers present fascinating musical stories

# KMA's 'Viola Bouquet' concert enchants Kuwait

By Cezary Owerkowicz  
Special to the Arab Times

For centuries people have been looking for stars on the heavenly horizons. Lately, they seem to be looking for stars more often on screens. But sometimes, the stars can be found quite close, almost within reach.

**Music from and for friends**  
An extraordinary Chamber Concert was held at the Kuwait Music Academy (KMA) in the evening on a Friday, Feb 7, 2025.

A set of the timeless musical pieces of four renowned composers were masterfully presented by three pedagogues at the academy: Dmitrii Krasnikov on viola, Kinga Masternak on piano and Viktor Shramko on clarinet. Chamber music is sometimes described as 'the music of friends', because it is composed for a small group of musicians playing together. It is also referred to as 'music for friends', because it is 'room, home music'.

The great German poet, J.W. Goethe, referred to it a 'rational people conversing', thinking of the sort of intimate dialogue between musicians and a circle of friends gathered around.

### Loving 'Viola Bouquet'

'Viola Bouquet' was the title of the event, while the viola in the hands of Mr. Dmitrii was the highlight. It is a 'bigger violin' with deep, warm and juicy sound. Its name is derived from the Italian word 'vitula' that means 'joy'. One of the ancestors called it, 'viola d'amore' (loving). Some samples were done by legendary masters like Stradivari or Amati. It was also evident on viola played by N. Paganini. He even ordered for himself the Viola Concerto from G. Bizet, author of the opera 'Carmen'.

'The Bouquet' turned out to be five very romantic musical stories presented by our 'stars'. The first two were the works of German romanticist Max Bruch (1838-1920) - 'Lovely Romance' and 'Double Concerto' by Mr. Dmitrii on viola, clarinet by Mr. Viktor and piano by Mrs. Kinga.

It was a very rare set in the concert repertoire, stemming from the secret that Bruch's son, Max, was a clarinet player. Bruch's music blends lush melodies with emotional depth and his own distinct expressiveness.

Another creation was 'Ballade' by the legendary Belgian violinist, Eugene Ysaye (1858-1931). He wrote about this piece: "I have let my imagination wander at will". Next in the pro-



Dmitrii Krasnikov (viola), Kinga Masternak (piano), and Viktor Shramko (clarinet) after their successful concert performance.

gram were 'Freres' (Brothers in Latin) by contemporary Estonian composer, Arvo Part, who was born in 1935 - 90 years ago. He was known for his unique, bell-like style of composition. A piece from 1977, 'combining frantic activities and sublime stillness' and 'the instant and eternity are struggling within us', describes the author.

The selection for the event was 'Le Grand Tango' by great Argentinean, Astor Piazzola (1921-1992). Since childhood, he had played on bandoneon (Argentinean accordion). He studied and grew up in Paris and New York. He became the essence of sound of Argentina and creator of 'Nueva Tango'. I remember the great spectacle on Broadway without a word; only lights, dance, band led by bandoneones, playing Piazzola's Tangos, showcasing a fascinating story about love, hate, life and death. Years later, with my wife, we hurriedly went back, because they were on tour in Warsaw.

### World class mastery on Kuwaiti stage

At the 'Viola Bouquet' concert, the artist presented to the audience fascinating musical stories. A perfect technique of performing music is not like acrobatic fireworks, but real virtuosity. The subtlety of (although not meticulous), combined with the contracture of musical form was visible, or rather audible. The mastery and emotional intensity of Mr. Dmitrii and Mrs. Kinga, as an excellent pianist (even more known for vocal performances), were supported in Bruch's Double Concerto by the mas-

tery of their colleague, Mr. Viktor. Sometimes, somebody spells the notes only, but somebody plays senses and stories. The excellent narration totally caught the listeners' attention.

### They were guided throughout the beautiful music fables.

I was lucky to travel to play as well. I have attended so many concerts at prestigious venues, but, in my opinion, such a concert could take place and be successful everywhere on the world stages. The enchanted audience applauded the 'stars' from our Kuwaiti musical horizon, along with a long standing ovation.

P.S. May be such success will encourage KMA to continue its Chamber Concerts with pleasure and for the benefit of Kuwaiti music lovers.

## Leading account in Kuwait for high returns, winning chances

# KIB announces Al Dirwaza's weekly draw winners

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the winners of the weekly draw held under the Al Dirwaza account's 2025 campaign, which is distinguished by the highest expected annual return and winning chances. The third weekly draw in February, based on customers' January deposits, recently took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. The KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Mohammad Abdullah Alhussain Zaid, Hajar Khaled Motlaq Almutairi, Yaser Mohammad Abdullah Jarkhi, Fuad Ibrahim Ahmad Rudhwan, Barak Abdulmohsen Mohammad Alhussaini, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Abdullah Hussain Fadhel Faras, Maysoon Saleh Ghuffran Abdulrahman, Eman Ahmad Khulaif Al-Rasheed, Huda Waleed Ali Hashem, Fares Abdullah Saleh Alshammari, Toubah Abdulrazeq Abdulrahman, Sami Abdullah Abdulrahman Alnaseebi, Anwar Khuder Almkhaizeem, Munthasar Theriath Majeed.

It is worth noting that the Al Dirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, which was launched by KIB as part of its suite of banking products intended for individuals. The account is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the customer gets an expected profit of 2% for the first three months from the account opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer's account within the first day of the beginning of each month.

In addition to being a savings account, eligibility for the Al Dirwaza draws requires a minimum balance of KD 100, which must remain in the account for a full month before the weekly and monthly draws, with chances calculated based on the lowest balance of the previous month. As for the quarterly and annual draws, the amount must be maintained for two full months, with chances based



on the lowest balance of the two preceding months. A key feature of the 2025 campaign is the doubling of winning chances to encourage customers to increase their deposits in the Al Dirwaza account. Customers will receive one chance per KD 1 if their lowest monthly balance is less than KD 2,000, two chances per KD 1 for balances between KD 2,000 and less than KD 5,000, three chances per KD

1 for balances between KD 5,000 and less than KD 10,000, and four chances per KD 1 for balances of KD 10,000 or more. Terms and conditions apply.

The Al Dirwaza account is in compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia and approved by KIB's Sharia Supervisory Board. Furthermore, the account comes with a wide range of benefits, including the ease of opening the account, which does not require a salary transfer. Customers can conveniently open the account remotely via KIB Online on the Bank's website, the KIB Mobile application, or through the KIB Digital Onboarding service, without having to visit a branch.

Additionally, the Al Dirwaza account automatically grants customers instant issuance of an ATM card, with a KD 2,000 ATM daily withdrawal limit, as well as the ability to issue credit cards against the cash collateral in the account. To open the account and participate in its draws, a minimum of KD 100 is required and can only be withdrawn upon account closure.



## Autism diagnoses among adults soar by 452% over last decade

## Growing number of adults considering autism diagnosis

ATLANTA, Feb. 18. (AP): Natasha Nelson, a 35-year old entrepreneur in Stone Mountain, Georgia, didn't have an innate sense of social norms. She didn't know why people meeting for the first time would choose to engage in small talk instead of deep conversations, or why people like to make their beds.

Then, a few years ago, she was diagnosed with autism, just after her youngest daughter received the same.

"If your life has always felt like it was in chaos and you don't feel comfortable and you don't feel like you thrive and you just feel like you're constantly surviving and going from one thing to the next, what you got to lose?" Nelson said, encouraging people to seek a diagnosis.

Common signs of autism include trouble with social communication and a fixation on certain routines or topics - Nelson says "people have become my special interest now" - and may go unnoticed during someone's childhood. But it can be costly and difficult



Natasha Nelson, who was diagnosed with autism in August 2023, just after her youngest daughter was also diagnosed, sits in a sensory room she uses to calm her children in her Stone Mountain, Ga. home on Friday, Feb. 14, 2025. (AP)

to obtain an autism diagnosis later in life due to a shortage of medical professionals trained to work specifically with adults. Here's more information

on what you should know about adult autism diagnoses.

Autism spectrum disorder is a range of intellectual, language and social difficulties, like rigidly following routines, having fixed or obsessive interests and struggling to hold eye contact or understand nonverbal communication. Autism is typically diagnosed during childhood, and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends all children be screened as early as 18 months.

More adults have sought insight on their own neurodiversity in the last decade - often after their children are diagnosed or after seeing social media posts. A study published last year in JAMA Network Open showed a 452% increase in autism diagnoses among adults age 26 to 34 from 2011 to 2022.

Some traits of autism can go unnoticed until adulthood, when there are new social demands. Others may have learned how to hide certain behaviors, known as masking.

"Adults have learned to compensate over time," said Whitney Ence, a psychologist at the University of California San Francisco who works with autistic adults. "They may have learned like 'I can't display that in public, and so I do that in private.'"

There's also an overlap of symptoms between various disorders like ADHD and OCD that can complicate an autism diagnosis due to difficulties with nonverbal social cues or executive functions like attention span, working memory and problem-solving.

Symptoms present differently for everyone, and many of the traits are common for people without autism, like enjoying routines or enjoying going down rabbit holes of information.

But to meet the diagnostic definition of autism, the symptoms must cause significant impairment, said Dr. Arthur Westover, a psychiatrist who specializes in autism at the University of Texas at Southwestern Medical Center.

"We're human beings in general. We like routines ... just having a bit of pleasure and feeling better with routines does not mean you're autistic," Westover said. "It goes a little bit deeper than that."

Russell Lehmann, 34, has lived with his autism diagnosis for more than 20 years. The motivational speaker has routines that he describes as both comfortable and stressful. Eating the same food and buying the same groceries, he said, brings him comfort. But if he skips going to the gym for an hour and a half every day, he becomes overwhelmed with feelings of depression and failure.

"It's like no gym, no day," he said. "... My routine is an incredibly existential burden, because every night I go to bed knowing I have to do a routine I do not like simply to function."

While there are various online screening tools, autism is a complex diagnosis, so experts recommend talking to your primary care physician for a psychiatry referral.

That psychiatrist might want to interview people who were present in your early childhood, like family and friends, who can attest to symptoms being present at that time.

Some psychiatrists may refer you to a psychologist, who can give you a standardized diagnostic autism test or will use their own clinical judgement. There is no brain scan or blood test for autism.

Getting an autism diagnosis as an adult can be costly and take some time. Westover said there's a major shortage of specialists who work with autistic adults. Nelson's diagnosis took three years and she paid more than \$3,000 out-of-pocket.

Ence also suggests that you ask yourself a few questions when considering getting a professional diagnosis, and to know that you may run into a waitlist: "What is leading me down this pathway to think that I need a professional diagnosis? Do I need access to services? Are there services I don't have available to me?"

## Speech key to human survival

## New study links gene to the spoken language evolution

NEW YORK, Feb. 18. (AP): Why did humans start speaking? Scientists suggest genetics played a big role - and they say the evolution of this singular ability was key to our survival.

A new study links a particular gene to the ancient origins of spoken language, proposing that a protein variant found only in humans may have helped us communicate in a novel way. Speech allowed us to share information, coordinate activities and pass down knowledge, giving us an edge over extinct cousins like Neanderthals and Denisovans.

The new study is "a good first step to start looking at the specific genes" that may affect speech and language development, said Liza Finestack at the University of Minnesota, who was not involved with the research.

What scientists learn may someday even help people with speech problems.

The genetic variant researchers were looking at was one of a variety of genes "that contributed to the emergence of Homo sapiens as the dominant species, which we are today" said Dr. Robert Darnell, an author of the study published Tuesday in the journal Nature Communications.

Darnell has been studying the protein - called NOVA1 and known to be crucial to brain development - since the early 1990s. For the latest research, scientists in his lab at New York's Rockefeller University used CRISPR gene editing to replace the NOVA1 protein found in mice with the exclusively human type to test the real-life effects of the genetic variant. To their surprise, it changed the way the animals vocalized when they called out to each other.

Baby mice with the human variant squeaked differently than normal littermates when their mom came around. Adult male mice with the variant chirped differently than their normal counterparts when they saw a female in heat.

Both are settings where mice are motivated to speak, Darnell said, "and they spoke differently" with the human variant, illustrating its role in speech.

This isn't the first time a gene has been linked to speech. In 2001, British scientists said they had discovered the first gene tied to a language and speech disorder.

## 'Stay vigilant'

## Guillain-Barre Syndrome kills 2 in India's Andhra Pradesh

NEW DELHI, Feb. 18. (Xinhua): Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) has claimed two lives in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, officials said Monday.

According to health officials, a 45-year-old woman from Prakasam district who was admitted at the Guntur Government General Hospital succumbed to the rare autoimmune condition on Sunday.

Last week, a 10-year-old boy died of a similar disease at a private hospital in the state's Srikakulam district.

Andhra Pradesh local health minister Satya Kumar Yadav said the number of GBS cases in the state was 17.

"This is a non-communicable disease with an incidence rate of up to two per 100,000 population. This is not a sudden spurt of cases, this is normal," Yadav was quoted in local media as

having said.

Yadav further said most of the cases can be handled with regular treatment while some serious cases would require immunoglobulin injections and admission in intensive care units of the hospitals.

Officials said the Andhra Pradesh Medical Services and Infrastructure Development Corporation has taken steps to ensure the availability of immunoglobulin at central drug stores across the state.

The public has been urged not to panic and advised to stay vigilant for symptoms of GBS.

Doctors say bacterial and viral infections generally lead to GBS as they weaken the immunity of patients. Although it is prevalent in both small children and young people, it will not lead to an epidemic or pandemic, they caution.



Pope Francis waves as he arrives for his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Hall, at the Vatican, Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025. (AP)

## Condition 'stationary'

## Pope remains hospitalized for complex respiratory infection

ROME, Feb. 18. (AP): Pope Francis' respiratory infection is presenting a "complex clinical picture" that will require further hospitalization, the Vatican said Monday, as concerns grew about the increasingly frail health of the 88-year-old pontiff.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said the results of tests conducted in recent days and Monday indicate the pope is suffering from a polymicrobial respiratory tract infection that has necessitated a second change in his drug therapy since being hospitalized Friday. Scientists say polymicrobial diseases are caused by a mix of viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites.

There was no timeframe given for his hospitalization, which at Day 4 has already sidelined Francis for longer than a 2023 hospitalization for pneumonia. Bruni said the complexity of his symptoms "will require an appropriate hospital stay."

In a late update Monday, Bruni said Francis' condition was "stationary," and that he had resumed some work activities and reading.

Francis had part of one lung removed after a pulmonary infection as a young man and is prone to bouts of bronchitis in winter. He was admitted to Rome's Gemelli hospital in a "fair" condition on Friday after a weeklong bout of bronchitis worsened. Doctors confirmed a respiratory tract infection and prescribed "absolute rest" alongside unspecified drug therapies. Subsequent updates said his slight fever had gone away and that he was in "stationary" condition.

Bruni said Francis ate breakfast, read the newspapers and received the Eucharist on Monday after a third peaceful night. And in a sign Francis was still keeping up with some of the essentials of his routine, the parish priest of the Catholic Church in Gaza, the Rev. Gabriel Romanelli, reported that Francis had maintained his daily video call to the church on Friday and Saturday night. He sent a text message on Sunday.

"We heard his voice. It's true, it was more tired," Romanelli told Vatican News. "But we heard his voice clearly and he listened to us," said the Argentine priest, whom Francis has phoned every day of the Gaza war.

Bronchitis, or an inflammation of the airways, can be relatively mild in a healthy person but can become much more severe in someone who is older or has existing lung problems, especially when they are unable to cough up and expel the accumulating mucus. Bacteria and other organisms can colonize, leading to further infection that may be harder to treat.

Dr. Maor Sauler, who specializes in adult pulmonary medicine and critical care at Yale School of Medicine, said it's not uncommon for people suffering from bronchitis to develop an infection with more than one organism in their lungs. The concern, however, is that antibiotics and other drug therapies don't work in isolation and require the body to respond, which given Francis' other problems may make recovery more challenging.

## Lab achieves first success

## Kuwait launches advanced cardiac lab at Jahra Hospital

KUWAIT CITY, Feb. 18: As part of its national strategy and health development plan, the Ministry of Health has launched the Interventional Cardiac Electrophysiology Laboratory in the Cardiology Unit of Jahra Hospital, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The laboratory is a qualitative addition to the healthcare sector through the provision of advanced diagnostic and therapeutic services for patients with heart rhythm disorders based on the highest standards of quality and easy access to care.

It achieved its first medical success by saving the life of a Kuwaiti patient in her seventies who was suffering from a heart block.

Under the supervision of Consultant Cardiologist and Electrophysiologist Dr. Fawzia Al-Kandari and Head of the Cardiology Unit at Jahra Hospital Dr. Muhammad Al-Shammari, along with the support of the medical, technical, and nursing teams, the latest wireless pacemaker called Leadless Pacemaker was successfully installed.

## Hope for melanoma patients

## Groundbreaking 'trial' cures deadly advanced skin cancer

SYDNEY, Feb. 18. (Xinhua): A groundbreaking Australian clinical trial has shown that a majority of melanoma patients whose cancer has spread to the brain can be cured with combination immunotherapy.

The Melanoma Institute Australia (MIA) on Tuesday released seven-year follow-up results from a clinical trial that was conducted between 2014 and 2017 showing that long-term survival is achievable for advanced skin cancer patients.

Participants in the initial trial with stage four melanoma that had spread -- or metastasized -- to the brain were treated with either combination immunotherapy using the drugs nivolumab and ipilimumab or with single-agent immunotherapy using nivolumab alone.

The long-term data revealed a survival rate of 51 percent among participants who were given the combination immunotherapy as a first-line treatment.

Among all participants given the combined immunotherapy, the seven-year survival rate was 48 percent.

Patients with advanced melanoma that had spread to the brain were previously expected to survive for only 16 weeks.

"This proves we have achieved long-term disease control in this group of advanced melanoma patients," Georgina Long, medical director of the MIA and lead author of the study, said. "We are now confident these pa-

tients are cured, a term not used lightly in cancer. This combination immunotherapy should now become standard of care for melanoma patients with brain metastasis," she said.

The initial findings from the trial released in 2018 showed a 46 percent response rate for participants given combination immunotherapy compared to 20 percent for those on single-agent immunotherapy.

Grant McArthur, co-senior author on the study from Melbourne's Peter MacCallum Cancer Center, said the results are "fundamentally changing" how researchers think about melanoma that has spread to the brain.

**Food waste:** Australian businesses have reduced their food waste by 13 percent since 2022, a report has found.

According to the report, which was published on Tuesday by the government-funded organization End Food Waste Australia, the country's largest supermarkets, caterers and food manufacturers produced 100,000 combined tons of food waste in 2024.

It marks a reduction of 13.7 percent from 116,000 tons in 2022.

At the same time, the amount of food not sold that was repurposed increased from 309,000 tons in 2022 to 315,000 tons in 2024. The report said that 76 percent of food that was not sold in 2024 was repurposed -- up from 73 percent in 2022.

MEDICAL CLASSIFIEDS

Take care of your health



To advertise in this page please call: 69994428 or E-mail: advt@arabtimesonline.com

For your ads on this page

Call: 69994428

E-mail: advt@arabtimesonline.com

DEPARTMENT OF OPHTHALMOLOGY

مركز شفاء الجزيرة الطبي

SHIFA AL JAZEERA MEDICAL CENTRE

الفاحيل FAHAHEEL

Dr. Sabitha Venkitesh MBBS, DNB (Ophthal)

Dr. Vivek P.S MBBS, DO, DNB (Ophthal)

Dr. Reshma Ravindra MBBS, MS (Ophthal)

Special package for family available for eye check up

HOTLINE: 65 95 95 34

Comprehensive Eye screening  
Paediatric visual assessment  
Glaucoma screening  
Diabetic Retinopathy Screening  
Foreign Body removal

Mecca Street, Near Roundabout, Life Tower  
Fahaheel.  
Tel: +965 2391 9020  
www.shifaaljaazeera.com.kw



'I propose to stage the Olympic Games on five continents at the same time'

# Watanabe proposes radical changes to Olympic Movement

BEIJING, Feb 18, (Xinhua): International Olympic Committee (IOC) presidential candidate Morinari Watanabe has unveiled bold ideas aimed at transforming the Olympic Movement.

Watanabe's most striking proposal is to stage the Olympic Games simultaneously on five continents.

"I propose to stage the Olympic Games on five continents at the same time. I would allow the IOC to offer the best possible conditions for each sport, and of course for the athletes, to reduce the financial burden on the host country," he stated in a recent interview.

This concept, a key point in his election campaign manifesto, seeks to address the growing challenges associated with hosting the Olympics in a single city. The financial strain on the hosts has been a major concern in recent years, and Watanabe said that spreading the Games across five continents could alleviate this issue while providing better conditions for athletes and sports.

According to Watanabe, the Paris 2024 Olympics were a remarkable success; however, many participating teams faced significant challenges, including economic hardships and strained relationships with their respective governments.

His proposal aims to enhance the global presence of sports and promote Olympism more effectively. By holding the Games on five continents, time-zone differences would ensure the event could be streamed 24 hours a day, maximizing global viewership and engagement. This approach would not only offer more cities, including smaller ones, the chance to host the Games but also provide greater opportunities for sports to have a broader social im-

fact.

In addition to expanding the Games, Watanabe has grand plans for the IOC's future.

"I also envision upgrading the IOC into a world sports organization, like the World Health Organization, and expand its activities. It would remain independent of politics and uphold the values of democracy, transparency and gender equality," he said.

Watanabe, who is also president of the International Gymnastics Federation, says the IOC has the potential to be a global leader in sports - not just in organizing the Olympics but also in promoting sports-related activities worldwide. By expanding its scope, he argues, the IOC could have a greater impact on everything from grassroots development to international competitions.

Beyond the geographic expansion of the Games, Watanabe's manifesto includes plans to enhance IOC governance by introducing a bicameral system. The House would consist of the member Olympic Committee presidents and International Federation Presidents, while the Senate would include current IOC members.

Additionally, he sees great potential in integrating sports and technology, from using artificial intelligence to make scoring and judging fairer to enabling remote coaching. Watanabe also believes e-sports will play an increasingly important role in the future of sports.

IOC members will elect a successor to incumbent president Thomas Bach at the IOC Session in Greece on March 18-21.



Morinari Watanabe speaks at a press conference. (Xinhua)

Final report to the govt on March 8

## Organizers to reveal stadium plan for Brisbane 2032 Games

SYDNEY, Feb 18, (Xinhua): The location of the main stadium for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be announced in March, the government of the Australian state of Queensland said on Tuesday.

Jarrod Bleijie, the deputy premier of Queensland, told the state's parliament that "all will be revealed" when the government announces the stadium plan on March 25 following years of debate.

An ongoing independent review of infrastructure for the Games is set to hand its final report to the government on March 8.

The report will make a recommendation on whether to build a new stadium and where athletics will be held for the Games. The state government will liaise with partners including the federal government and International Olympic Committee before signing off on the plan.

Bleijie said the plan would "get the Games back on track" after three years of delays. "Queenslanders no longer want to be embarrassed on the world stage," he said. "We will deliver a 2032 Olympic and Paralympic

Games our state can be proud of and showcase what makes us a great state on the world stage." Premier of Queensland David Crisafulli established the independent 100-day review shortly after his Liberal National Party won power in the 2024 state election.

The initial plan for the 2032 Games, which were awarded to Brisbane in 2021, was to rebuild the 37,000-seat Brisbane Cricket Ground in the city's inner southern suburbs as a 50,000-seat venue.

Former Premier Steven Miles in March 2024 announced that the reconstruction plan had been scrapped after the estimated cost of the project increased from one billion Australian dollars (635.1 million U.S. dollars) to 2.7 billion AUD (1.7 billion USD).

Instead, he said that the Queensland Sports and Athletics Center located 10 kilometers south of central Brisbane and Lang Park - a rectangular 52,500-seat stadium in the city's inner suburbs - would be refurbished.

Crisafulli promised in the lead-up to the 2024 election that there would be no new stadiums for the Games under a government led by him.

'It was amazing'

## Cambodian participants praise China for the 'magnificent' AWG

PHNOM PENH, Feb 18, (Xinhua): Cambodian participants on Tuesday lauded the "magnificent" Asian Winter Games in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang province, saying that the event signified peace, unity, solidarity, and friendship in Asia.

The Games started on Feb. 7 and ended on Feb. 14. Cambodia, a tropical and hot country, sent a team of athletes to take part in the games for the first time in the kingdom's history.

Speaking to Xinhua after returning from the games, slopestyle snowboarder Phin Meng Choing, 16, said he was proud to be the first athlete of the country to contest in the Asian Winter Games.

"It was amazing for us because we had never participated in such a big event before," he told Xinhua. "I had exchanged experience with other athletes and gained insight into Chinese culture." Meng Choing said China had organized the games well, providing participants with accommodation, food, and other services perfectly.

"I contested in the sport of snowboard slopestyle. Although my result is not good, I am happy to accept it as it gives me new experience and knowledge," he said.

Another slopestyle snowboarder Pisey Panhasith, 15, said the games had not only provided him new experience and good memories, but also created friendship among athletes from other teams.

He said beyond the games, he had visited a museum and gained insight into culture and daily life of people in Harbin.

"For my next goal, I want a scholarship to get trained abroad because I want to be a strong athlete," he said.

Snowboard slopestyle coach Kosal Pisey said the games had created unity, solidarity, friendship and cooperation among Asian teams.

He said a total of four Cambodian athletes took part in the games, contesting in the sport of snowboard slopestyle.

Pisey praised China for organizing the ninth edition of the Asian Winter Games amazingly, attracting a lot of athletes from Asian countries and regions.

"The games was organized in a high-level standard, as techniques, terrain parks, scoring methods, and pre-contest rehearsals had been perfectly organized," he said.

"We were excited because we had never expected that we had a chance to participate in such a continental-level event that required athletes with quality," he added.

Pisey said the National Olympic Committee of Cambodia has expressed high pride for Cambodia's first historic participation in the games, saying that it marked the starting point of Cambodia's winter games.

The coach said the Southeast Asian country was satisfied with the athletes' results though they haven't earned a single medal.

Under the theme "Dream of Winter, Love among Asia," the games featured over 1,200 athletes from 34 countries and regions competing in 64 events across 11 disciplines, making it the largest edition of the Asian Winter Games in history.



Sun Long (left) of China competes during the men's 500m final A at the ISU Short Track World Tour 2024/2025 in Milan, Italy. (Xinhua)

# Arizona snaps 2-game skid



Duke guard Kon Knueppel defends the ball from Virginia forward Jacob Cofie during the second half of an NCAA basketball game.

Flagg has 17 points and 14 rebounds as Duke cruises past Virginia

WACO, Texas, Feb 18, (AP): Tobe Awaka had 14 points and 12 rebounds as No. 19 Arizona moved into second place alone in the Big 12 Conference with a 74-67 win at Baylor on Monday night.

Caleb Love and Henri Veesaar each had 13 points for the Wildcats (18-8, 12-3), whose back-to-back losses last week to Kansas State and No. 5 Houston dropped them six spots in the latest AP Top 25 poll earlier Monday.

VJ Edgecombe scored 24 points for the Bears (16-10, 8-7). Norchad Omier had his 82nd career double-double - and 14th this season - with 15 points and 13 rebounds. Jayden Nunn added 10 points.

Arizona never trailed after a big run to take a 41-33 halftime lead.

Baylor was within three points twice in the final minute, but Arizona made seven consecutive free throws in the final 49 seconds - and went 9 of 12 in the final 1:21.

Arizona, in its inaugural Big 12 season, completed a regular-season sweep of Baylor. The Wildcats are just behind league-leading Houston (21-4, 13-1), and a half-game ahead of No. 9 Texas Tech (20-5, 11-3).

Freshman star Cooper Flagg had 17 points and 14 rebounds, notching his seventh double-double of the season before halftime, as No. 3 Duke cruised past Virginia 80-62.

The Blue Devils (23-3, 15-1 ACC), who also got 17 points from Kon Knueppel, have won three straight since their lone conference loss Feb. 8 at No. 18 Clemson.

Andrew Rohde had 15 points, five rebounds and five assists for the Cavaliers (13-13, 6-9).

Duke forward Maliq Brown, who grew up in Virginia about an hour from Charlottesville, sustained an apparent left shoulder injury with 1:21 left in the first half. He immediately headed to the locker room and did not return.

Duke: In a business-like win, the Blue Devils shot 9 for 23 from 3-point range and outrebounded the Cavaliers 41-21 to make sure they never threatened. Duke opened the second half with an 8-0 run to help put this one away.

Virginia: The Cavaliers had won three straight and four of five, pointing toward a late-season surge. But they didn't have the athletes on defense to match up with Duke, which shot 53%. Dai Dai Ames scored 15 points, reaching double figures for the fifth consecutive game.

Michael Jacobs had 20 points to lead Southern to a 66-57 victory over Texas Southern on Monday night.

Jacobs shot 6 of 6 from the field and 7 for 10 from the free-throw line for the Jaguars (17-9, 12-1 Southwestern Athletic Conference). Jordan Johnson added 11 points.

Kolby Granger led the Tigers (11-15, 8-5) with 16 points, seven rebounds, four assists and six steals. Kavion McClain added 12 points and eight assists.

Ezra Ausar had 21 points and Lawson Lovering posted a double-double to help Utah hold on for a 74-69 victory over Kansas State.



Arizona forward Henri Veesaar (13) drives to the basket against Baylor guard Langston Love during the second half of an NCAA college basketball game in Waco, Texas. (AP)

Ausar made 7 of 14 shots and all seven of his free throws, adding eight rebounds for the Utes (15-11, 7-8 Big 12 Conference). Lovering totaled 15 points and 10 rebounds for his first double-double this season. Gabe Madsen added 13 points.

Brendan Hausen scored 17 to lead the Wildcats (13-13, 7-8), who have lost two straight following a six-game win streak. Max Jones and Dug McDaniel both scored 13 with McDaniel adding 13 points.

Lovring had nine points for Utah and Jones scored 10 for Kansas State in a first half that ended in a 32-32 tie.

Utah scored the first seven points of the second half to grab the lead. A Lovring dunk upped the Utes' advantage to 46-37 with 14:36 left to play. Madsen hit a 3-pointer to give Utah a 57-50 lead with 5:22 left, but Hausen hit a 3-pointer and two free throws as the Wildcats scored the next seven points to tie it with 3:25 remaining.

It was 59-all when Miro Little scored in the paint for Utah and Madsen followed with a 3-pointer. Jones had a layup with 15 seconds left to get the Wildcats within two, but the Utes made 3 of 4 foul shots in the final 12 seconds

to wrap up the win.

Jordan Roberts had 16 points to lead Texas A&M-Corpus Christi to a 68-62 victory over Houston Christian.

Roberts shot 5 for 7 (2 for 3 from 3-point range) and 4 of 4 from the free-throw line for the Islanders (17-11, 10-6 Southland Conference). Garry Clark added 14 points and nine rebounds. Kam Parker scored 10.

Elijah Brooks finished with 16 points to lead the Huskies (11-16, 8-8). Bryson Dawkins totaled 15 points and eight rebounds. Julian Mackey had 10 points.

Dylan Hayman scored 19 points to help Incarnate Word defeat UT Rio Grande Valley 66-60 on Monday night.

Hayman also grabbed nine rebounds for the Cardinals (13-14, 6-10 Southland Conference). Jalin Anderson added 17 points and five assists. Jordan Pyke shot 5 of 11 from the field and 6 of 6 from the free-throw line to finish with 16 points.

Howard Fleming Jr. led the Vaqueros (14-13, 6-10) with 15 points. Trey Miller had 14 points and Dekedran Thorn pitched in with 13 points and three steals.

Kameron Hobbs scored 24 points to help Morgan State defeat North Carolina Central 92-78 on Monday night.

Hobbs added seven rebounds and eight assists for the Bears (11-14, 5-4 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference). Will Thomas scored 23 points while shooting 8 for 14 (3 for 4 from 3-point range) and 4 of 4 from the free-throw line. Daniel Akitoby pitched in with 14 points, 11 rebounds and three blocks.

Perry Smith Jr. led the Eagles (11-15, 4-5) with 19 points and 12 rebounds. Floyd Rideau added 15 points and Po'Boigh King scored 13.

Davion Everett scored 23 points to lead South Carolina State to an 87-57 romp over Coppin State.

Everett added six rebounds for the Bulldogs (13-12, 6-3 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference). Drayton Jones totaled 19 points and five rebounds. Jayden Johnson had 13 points.

Jonathan Dunn led the way for the Eagles (4-20, 2-7) with 19 points. Julius Ellerbe added 15 points and six rebounds. Khali Horton added 10 points.

## Ferguson to miss Champs Trophy with a foot injury

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Feb 18, (AP): New Zealand has had another setback ahead of the International Cricket Council's Champions Trophy in Pakistan, losing fast bowler Lockie Ferguson to a foot injury.

Ferguson was injured in a warm-up match against Afghanistan on Sunday. He will return home immediately and his place in the New Zealand squad will be taken by Kyle Jamieson, who played his most-recent one-day international in September, 2023.

The injury to Ferguson follows the loss of another fast bowler, Ben Sears, to a hamstring injury.

"We're really disappointed for Lockie," New Zealand coach Gary Stead said. "Lockie is a key part of the bowling group and brings a lot of major tournament experience and we know how much he was looking forward to representing New Zealand at another major event."

"We wish him well for his recovery and hope he is back firing soon."

Stead said Jamieson has a skill set which makes him an effective replacement for Ferguson.

"Kyle brings plenty of pace and extra bounce which will suit the conditions here in Pakistan," Stead said. "He's shown since returning in the (New Zealand domestic cricket) how effective he can be in the shorter forms of the game and he's bowled with real pace and energy, which is what you're looking for."

New Zealand plays its first match in the Champions Trophy against host Pakistan on Wednesday.



## Murtajih leads pack at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor's Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The horse Murtajih from Al-Jaidiya Stable, trained by Salem Al-Jaidiya and ridden by jockey Igor, secured victory in the Sheikh Sabah Bader Al-Sabah Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor's Cup for mixed horses. The race, part of the fifth round of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Club competitions, covered a distance of 1,600 meters, with Murtajih clocking a time of 1:40.57 minutes during the 16th meeting of the current sports season.

The Chairman of the Supreme Authority for Horse Racing and Secretary General of the Hunting and Equestrian Club, Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser, alongside Sheikh Sabah Bader Al-

Sabah, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor, presented a commemorative shield to Sheikh Fajr Bader Al-Sabah.

In the sixth round, Perfect Sight from Al-Huwailah Stable, trained by Mohammed Mishal Al-Huwailah and also ridden by jockey Igor, claimed the late Naif Hamad Al-Dubos Cup for Thanaya horses. The horse completed the 1,600-meter race in 1:41.78 minutes.

Meanwhile, Al-Fahd, Lajmrah, Mabrouk, Muzaffar, and Ionin triumphed in their respective races. The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Club competitions continue to take place at the Hunting and Equestrian Club.



Sheikh Sabah Al-Nasser presents a commemorative shield to Sheikh Fajr Bader Al-Sabah.

## Al-Ahli advances to Champions League round of 16



Al-Ahli players celebrate their victory.

Without Ronaldo, Al-Nassr draws 0-0 at Persepolis

**JEDDAH, Feb 18: Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahli secured a 4-2 victory against Qatar's Al-Gharafa in the eighth and final round of the Western Region League stage in the 2024-2025 AFC Champions League for the Elite.**

Al-Gharafa took the lead early in the match at Al-Inma Stadium in King Abdullah Sports City with a penalty goal from Spanish striker Joselu. However, Al-Ahly responded swiftly, scoring three goals in the first half through English forward Ivan Toney, Brazilian winger Galeno, and Roberto Firmino.

In the second half, Riyad Mahrez extended Al-Ahli's lead with a well-executed penalty in the 59th minute, while Yacine Brahimi pulled one back for Al-Gharafa with another penalty in the 80th minute.

With this win, Al-Ahli temporarily tops the Western

Region League stage standings with 22 points, securing a place in the round of 16 alongside the top eight teams.

After leaving Cristiano Ronaldo at home, Al-Nassr drew 0-0 away against Iranian club Persepolis on Monday in the last round of the AFC Champions League Elite group stage.

The Saudi Arabian team had already secured a place in the round of 16 of the continental competition and coach Stefano Pioli took a weakened team to Tehran.

Al-Nassr finished third in the West group behind fellow Saudi Arabian clubs Al-Ahli and Al-Hilal. The top eight advance from each of the two 12-team groups, divided into eastern and western geographic zones.

In other matches, Iraq's Al-Shorta defeated UAE's Al-Ain 2-0, Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor edged past Qatar's Al-Sadd 2-1.

### Man City seeks midfield balance

## Real favorite to reach Champions League last 16

MADRID, Feb 18, (Xinhua): Real Madrid entertains Manchester City in the second leg of its Champions League play-off for a place in the last 16 at the Santiago Bernabeu on Wednesday night, after the defending champion won away in the first leg.

Madrid has a 3-2 lead in the first leg after two late goals a week ago saw it take advantage of some chaotic defending from its rival, who had twice led thanks to goals from Erling Haaland.

Manchester City appeared to return to form at the weekend with a 4-0 win at home to Newcastle United, with recent signings Nico Gonzalez and Omar Marmoush giving some new life to Pep Guardiola's side.

Marmoush scored a first-half hat-trick, while Gonzalez helped bring the balance to the City's midfield that has been missing since Rodri suffered his cruciate knee ligament injury.

Guardiola was keen to stop any over-enthusiasm after the match, saying his team had just a "one percent" chance to overturn last weekend's defeat, and he will be without injured Manuel Akanji for the game, while Jack Grealish and Nathan Ake are also doubts after being forced out of last week's defeat due to injury.

Real Madrid goes into the game after a 1-1 draw against Osasuna which has seen the club yet again complain about refereeing decisions going against it, after Jude Bellingham was sent off for allegedly swearing at the referee.

The good news for Carlo Ancelotti is that his injury crisis in defense looks to be easing, with Antonio Rudiger and



Manchester City's Erling Haaland, left, and Phil Foden attend a training session at the City Football Academy, Manchester, England ahead of the Champions League playoff second leg soccer match between Real Madrid and Manchester City. (AP)

David Alaba both in with a chance of taking part on Wednesday.

Aurelien Tchouameni and Raul Asencio have both performed well in defense in recent games and could continue, while in attack, Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius Jr and Rodrygo will be ready to pounce on any errors from the City midfield and attack at pace.

Last week both sides showed they

are able to score goals, but in the end Manchester City's leaky defense was the decisive factor, if Nico Gonzalez can give City more stability in midfield, the visitors have a slight chance of overturning Madrid's lead, but Real Madrid is clear favorite to reach the last 16. Enditem Tension hangs over Borussia Dortmund's training headquarters in the northern suburb of Brackel.

Ahead of Wednesday's UEFA Champions League playoff second leg against Sporting, an uneasy atmosphere surrounds last season's Champions League finalist.

As Dortmund's struggles in the Bundesliga continue to worsen, the team has shown two vastly different faces in domestic and European competition. A 2-0 defeat to underdog Bochum followed a dominant 3-0 first-leg victory in Lisbon, highlighting the club's ongoing inconsistency. Despite a strong Champions League campaign, turmoil persists.

Guinean international Serhou Guirassy exemplifies the team's dual nature. After scoring 28 league goals for Stuttgart in the 2023-24 season, the 28-year-old has managed just nine in 19 Bundesliga appearances since joining Dortmund last summer. Yet in the Champions League, he has thrived.

Leading the tournament's scoring chart ahead of stars like Robert Lewandowski and Erling Haaland, Guirassy has tallied 10 goals and five assists. He has been directly involved in all of Dortmund's goals in the competition, making him their most vital offensive asset this season.

20-time champion is languishing in bottom half of EPL

## Ratcliffe's first year at United has not gone to plan

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 18, (AP): It's been a year since one of Britain's richest men bought into its most famous soccer team and vowed to bring the good times back.

So far, it hasn't gone to plan for Manchester United or Jim Ratcliffe.

The record 20-time English champion is languishing in the bottom half of the Premier League, losing vast sums of money every year and facing fan unrest.

Even head coach Ruben Amorim said recently that this might be the worst year in the club's storied history.

That's not all on Ratcliffe, the billionaire owner of petrochemicals giant INEOS, but it has been a rocky start since he paid \$1.3 billion for an initial 25% stake in United and assumed control of its soccer operations.

There have been high profile hirings and firings, brutal cost cutting, a hike in ticket prices and new lows on the field for a team that had been in decline for more than a decade before he became minority owner.

While there was triumph in the FA Cup last year, that success has been overshadowed by supporter protests, job losses, unconvincing transfers and humbling defeats.

Ratcliffe said his investment was "just the beginning of our journey to take Manchester United back to the top of English, European and world football."

Those ambitions feel further away now than they have in decades, with United 15th in the standings and closer to the relegation zone than the top six after a woeful campaign. Sunday's 1-0 loss to Tottenham was the 12th in the league this season and an eighth under Amorim, who only took charge in November.

Amorim said: "I have a lot of problems, my job is so hard, but I am here to continue my job to the next week with my beliefs."

He was one of a number of key hires made as part of Ratcliffe's overhaul of United's soccer operations.

Omar Berrada was lured away from Manchester City to become CEO and Dan Ashworth left Newcastle to take up the role of sporting director. Jason Wilcox, formerly director of City's academy, became technical director.

Key figures at Ratcliffe's Ineos Sport, Dave Brailsford and Jean-Claude Blanc, were appointed to the board and Amorim became the final piece of a new leadership team after former manager Erik ten Hag was fired in October.

But that restructuring has been far from a smooth process.

Ten Hag was fired three months after being handed a one-year contract extension with United having lost four of its opening nine league games.

Ashworth left the club less than six months after taking up his role, and after months of negotiations to take him away from Newcastle.

They were expensive missteps.

In total it cost United 10.4 million pounds (\$13.09 million) to pay off Ten Hag and his staff and another 11 million pounds (\$13.85 million) to trigger Amorim's release from Sporting Lisbon.

It was reported it cost between 2 and 3 million pounds (\$2.5-3.78 million) to hire Ashworth, who spent five months on gardening leave during negotiations with Newcastle.

Those numbers make uncomfortable reading at a time when United has implemented cost-saving initiatives that it said included staff redundancies of



New Zealand's Tom Latham plays a shot during the tri-series ODI cricket final match between Pakistan and New Zealand, in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)

### Two former winners Sri Lanka, West Indies fail to qualify

## A three-decade wait is about to end for Pakistan's passionate cricket fans

ISLAMABAD, Feb 18, (AP): A three-decade wait finally ends for Pakistan on Wednesday when it stages its first major International Cricket Council tournament since co-hosting the 1996 World Cup with Sri Lanka and India.

A 2009 terror attack on the Sri Lanka playing squad at Lahore resulted in international teams avoiding tours to Pakistan for almost a decade because of security concerns. The Sri Lankan test team returned in 2019 as international cricket made slow inroads back.

Since then, there's been progress on bringing bigger, multinational events to Pakistan, where cricket - by a long margin - is the most popular sport.

But it doesn't come without complications. Long-standing geo-political tensions mean India won't send a team to Pakistan. So instead, India, which just about bankrolls the sport globally, will play its matches in the United Arab Emirates.

India's top team hasn't played in Pakistan since 2008, and the two countries have tended to only compete against each other in major tournaments, including World Cups.

Pakistan traveled to India for the 50-over World Cup in 2023. But India's reluctance to return the favor put this Champions Trophy tournament in doubt before the sport's international governing body and both countries agreed on a solution. It's similar to when Pakistan hosted the 2023 Asian Cup but India played its tournament games in Sri Lanka.

Pakistan was subsequently awarded the 2028 Women's T20 World Cup and the International Cricket Council agreed in principle that Pakistan will also play its games at a neutral venue when India hosts ICC tournaments until 2027.

When the archrivals do meet each other in ICC tournaments, it tends to catch the attention of more than a billion cricket-mad fans.

The group game on Feb. 23 in Dubai will certainly fit into that category. Pakistan will host 10 games, including one semifinal. The final will be played at Lahore on March 9 if India doesn't

qualify. Dubai is scheduled to host all three of India's group matches and a semifinal.

The eight-nation, limited-overs tournament hasn't been contested since 2017, when Pakistan beat India in the final in England.

The Champions Trophy was launched in 1998 and initially held every two years but later moved to a four-year cycle in between World Cups - the pinnacle in cricket's one-day format. International cricket has three main formats: test matches, which can last up to five days; one-dayers (or ODIs), where both teams are allocated 50 overs to bat and matches take up to 8 hours; and Twenty20s (or T20s), where both innings comprise 20 overs and games last just a few hours.

Pakistan was awarded the 2008 Champions Trophy, but due to security concerns the tournament was shifted to South Africa in 2009.

India was due to host the Champions Trophy in 2021, but it was replaced with the T20 World Cup and was played in the UAE.

The eight participating teams this time were based on rankings after the 2023 World Cup in India, with Pakistan qualifying automatically as host. India, New Zealand and Bangladesh



Pakistan's Haris Rauf attends a practice session ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy, in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)

are in Group A with host Pakistan, England, South Africa, Australia and Afghanistan are in Group B.

Two former Champions Trophy winners - Sri Lanka and the West Indies - didn't qualify for the ninth edition, which include 15 games across 19 days.

Politicians in England and South Africa urged their cricket authorities to boycott Champions Trophy group games against Afghanistan because of the Taliban's ban on women's sport and general erosion of women's rights.

South Africa's Sports Minister Gayton McKenzie last month said if the ultimate decision was his, then a South Africa vs. Afghanistan match "certainly would not happen." In a similar move, more than 160 politicians in Britain urged the England and Wales Cricket Board to take a stand and boycott the Feb. 26 game against Afghanistan at Lahore.

However, despite describing the "appalling oppression" of women in Afghanistan as "gender apartheid," English cricket administrators confirmed that the game will go ahead.

Australia will be without its World Cup-winning pace trio with Mitchell Starc joining injured Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood on the sidelines. With Marcus Stoinis' surprisingly retired from ODI cricket late last month and allrounder Mitchell Marsh out injured, Australia will look to its bench strength to win the only missing ICC trophy from its cabinet.

Jasprit Bumrah, the key cog in India's bowling armory, was ruled out of the tournament because of a back problem he sustained during the test series against Australia in January.

Also sidelined with injuries are England's Jacob Bethell and Afghanistan spinner AM Ghazanfar. New Zealand is still swatting on the fitness of fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, who picked up hamstring injury during a recent T20 league series.

With work around the clock over the last four months and millions of dollars invested, Pakistan organizers finished upgrading the three stadiums at Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi.





Pakistan's skipper Mohammad Rizwan speaks during a press conference regarding the ICC Champions Trophy, in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)  
— See Page 15

# Sports



Al-Farwaniya team crowned with the cup.

## Farwaniya crowned champion of Kuwait School soccer tournament

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Farwaniya Secondary School for Boys team claimed victory in the General Excellence Football Championship for secondary schools, organized by the Kuwait School Sports Federation and Higher Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the General Technical Guidance for Physical Education for Boys.

Held under the patronage of Engineer Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, Minister of Education, and attended by Maryam Al-Enezi, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities, representing the ceremony's sponsor, the team secured a well-deserved 3-0 win over the Ahmadi Educational Zone team at the Gulf University for Science and Technology stadium.

The Ahmadi Zone team finished in second place, while the Hawalli Zone

team secured third place.

Faisal Al-Maqseed, Chairman of the Kuwait School Sports Federation and Education, expressed his gratitude to the Minister of Education and the Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities for their significant contributions to the success of the tournament, which saw intense competition among all participating teams.

### Media Committee ready for first Gulf Cup for Veterans in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Director of the Media Department at the Kuwait Football Association (KFA) and Head of the Media Committee for the First Gulf Cup for Veterans, Sattam Al-Sahli, confirmed the committee's readiness to support media professionals covering the tournament, which will be hosted in Kuwait from February 22 to 26.

Al-Sahli stated: "Preparations are in full swing to eliminate any challenges for media personnel and ensure that journalists and photographers have everything they need to cover the event smoothly."

The media committee has started processing accreditation requests for journalists and photographers through the KFA's official website.

Dedicated media coordinators have been assigned to each match to facilitate coverage.

A special link will be provided for publishing match photos on the KFA's official page on X (formerly Twitter).

Official statements and tournament updates will also be shared via KFA's social media channels, with notifications sent to all registered media outlets.

Al-Sahli announced that a press conference will be held on Friday, featuring the coaches of the participating teams, where they will discuss team preparations and expectations for the competition.

He emphasized that the Kuwait Football Association is working diligently to ensure the tournament's organizational, technical, and public success, following the initiative of the Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. This effort builds on Kuwait's successful hosting of the 26th Gulf Championship.



Head of the Media Committee for the First Gulf Cup for Veterans, Sattam Al-Sahli.

The Saudi delegation arrived on Tuesday.

The Yemeni team arrived earlier on Sunday.

The Iraqi delegation is expected to land in Kuwait today (Wednesday).

The First Gulf Cup for Veterans promises to be a well-organized and exciting event, with strong media coverage ensuring extensive regional and international visibility.

## Barcelona moves top of La Liga after controversial Rayo victory

Valladolid sacks coach Cocca

MADRID, Feb 18, (Xinhua) — FC Barcelona returned to the top of La Liga on goal difference with a 1-0 win at home over Rayo Vallecano, in a game that had more than its share of controversy, with Barca scoring the only goal from the penalty spot, while Rayo had a very good penalty appeal rejected and a goal ruled out after a questionable offside decision.

Barca had chances to score more goals, but Rayo showed why it traveled to Barcelona after a nine-game unbeaten run, producing a brave display of attacking football that was close to getting a reward.

Robert Lewandowski sent a header just wide, and Raphinha also sent a shot just the wrong side of the post, before Barca took the lead through Robert Lewandowski's penalty in the 27th minute.

Pedri sent over a corner and Pathe Ciss was penalized for holding back Inigo Martinez, although Rayo goalkeeper Augusto Batalla easily caught the ball.

The foul was committed, but Rayo players were angry because referee Melero Lopez had earlier not blown for a clear shirt-pull by Barca defender



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal, left, challenges for the ball with Rayo's Pep Chavarria during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Barcelona and Rayo Vallecano at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

Hector Fort on Abdul Mumin in the other penalty area.

Raphinha fired wide again shortly after the goal, but the half ended with more controversy after Jorge de Frutos finished off a Rayo break, only for his effort to be ruled out for offside from Randy Nketa, even though the Angolan apparently played no part in the goal.

Rayo showed in the first half that it was not afraid to go toe-to-toe with Barcelona and kept things going after

the break, after Lewandowski sent an effort just wide.

Wojciech Szczesny made one fine save to deny Nketa in the first half and then denied Jorge de Frutos in the second in an entertaining game that saw Barca substitute Dani Olmo denied by Batalla's boot-tip, before he topped Raphinha's follow-up over the bar.

De Frutos was close to an equalizer in injury time, but couldn't keep his header down as he stretched to reach a cross from Adrian Embarba.

La Liga's bottom club Real Valladolid on Monday announced the sacking of head coach Diego Cocca, replacing him with B-team coach and former player Alvaro Rubio.

The news comes 24 hours after Valladolid was thumped 4-0 at home by Sevilla in La Liga, with the result leaving the club bottom of the table with 15 points from 24 games.

"I apologize: I feel embarrassed by what we say today on the pitch. We try to give the team order and a plan, but there are no excuses with a 4-0 defeat. I am standing up to be counted and I feel embarrassed," commented the coach after Sunday's defeat.

The Argentinian, who had never coached in Europe, replaced Paulo Pezzolano, who was sacked on December 1, but his time in charge has lasted just eight games, with seven of those in La Liga bringing just three points from a possible 21, while Valladolid was knocked out of the Copa del Rey away to third-tier Ourense.

Cocca's only win as Valladolid coach was at home to Real Betis on January 11.

"The club wants to thank Cocca and his technical staff for their efforts and we wish them the best in their new personal and professional lives," commented Valladolid in a communique.

Rubio had previously taken temporary charge of Valladolid for three games between Pezzolano's sacking and Cocca's arrival, guiding them to two wins and a defeat.

### Spain's refs react after online hate campaign against official

MADRID, Feb 18, (Xinhua) — Spain's professional referees have been forced to issue a communique after Jose Luis Munuera Montero suffered death threats to himself and his family in the wake of his decisions in Real Madrid's 1-1 draw away to Osasuna on Saturday.

Munuera sent off Real Madrid midfielder, Jude Bellingham in the first half for allegedly swearing at him, and in the second half gave Osasuna a clear penalty after Eduardo Camavinga's late challenge on Ante Budimir, which allowed the latter to level the game from the penalty spot.

Munuera has subsequently been forced to close his social media accounts after receiving thousands of messages, including one which said "you should be scared for your children," and another that read "if we see you in the street, we'll leave you

crippled." In response to these insults, the Referee's Technical Committee (CTA) published a communique reading "the professional referees, wish to make clear our absolute rejection of the attacks and threats to our companion, Jose Luis Munuera Montero is receiving on social media and which are affecting him both personally and in his family environment." The CTA added that the threats Munuera has received are "added to the hatred and verbal violence with which we have to carry out our professional work every weekend and which, in the lower categories, turns, even more regrettably, into physical violence." The CTA has previously criticized Real Madrid's club TV network, RMTV, which habitually published videos criticizing referees' decisions against them and implying there is a conspiracy against the club.

## Kuwait Club's qualification hopes on the line

MUSCAT, Feb 18: The 41st Gulf Handball Championship for Cup Champions Clubs continues at the Sultan Qaboos Complex Hall in Muscat, Oman, with two crucial fifth-round matches in Group 2 set to take place today.

At 3:00 PM, Dibba Al-Hisn (UAE) will take on Al-Arabi (Qatar), while at 5:00 pm; Kuwait Club will face off against Oman, the tournament hosts, in a pivotal encounter.

The championship follows a single-round league system, with the top two teams from each group advancing to the semi-finals ("Golden Square"), scheduled for next Saturday.

Kuwait Club lost its opening match to Al-Arabi (33-34) but bounced back with a 34-22 victory over Dibba Al-Hisn. Meanwhile, Oman defeated Dibba

Al-Hisn (29-26) in the first round but fell to Al-Arabi (20-30) in its most recent match.

Both Kuwait Club and Oman currently share the same two-point tally, but Kuwait Club holds a superior goal difference (+11) compared to Oman (-7). This means that Kuwait Club only needs a win or a draw in today's match to secure a semi-final spot, joining group leader Al-Arabi (4 points) in the next stage.

Kuwait Club prepared for the tournament with an external training camp in Doha, Qatar, where it played two friendly matches against Al-Duhail and Qatar SC. Additionally, the team strengthened its roster by signing Shadi Khalil from Zamalek (Egypt) to boost its campaign in the Gulf Championship.



Kuwait Club players defend as an opponent prepares to shoot the ball.