

Amir patronizes, attends 47th police academy graduation



Left: His Highness the Amir attends the graduation ceremony of the 47th batch of cadets at the Police Academy. Right: HH the Amir presented with the Academy's shield.

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: The graduation ceremony for the 47th batch of police officer cadets was held Wednesday at the Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences...

Al-Sabah -- Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. Present at the event were several high-ranking officials, including His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah...

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Don't underestimate a problem that's far from you, as its effects may reach you

Anyone who contemplates the changes in life must proceed with caution.

If you care about the consequences, I advise you not to steal food.

The cow said, "They want to hunt cows, so shall I seek asylum?"

Only the mouse truly sensed the danger, while the others remained indifferent.

The wife mistook the snake for a mouse, and that led to her downfall.

Despite receiving treatment, the poison continued to spread in her body for days.

The victims of the trap were beyond what the animals could have ever imagined.

The chicken was the first victim, followed by the sheep, and later, the cow.

The mouse's fear of the trap saved its life.

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Speed thrills, but Kuwait's new law will stop you in your tracks

Offenders face jail or KD 1,000 fine

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: The General Traffic Department has announced that it has begun implementing procedures to summon drivers caught by traffic cameras for exceeding the specified speed limits...

The department clarified that this measure is part of its efforts to enhance traffic control and reduce dangerous behaviors that endanger road users' safety.

It reaffirmed its commitment to strictly enforcing the law to protect lives and property.

It is worth mentioning that, starting April 22, 2025, those who exceed the speed limit will face a prison sentence ranging from one to three years or a fine between KD 600 and KD 1,000...



Photo shows some of the 104 rare pre-Islamic items featured in the exhibition. Inset: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's representative Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi speaking at the exhibition.

Protecting Kuwaiti antiquities safeguards heritage and identity: PM representative

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19, (KUNA): Protecting Kuwait's antiquities and artifacts safeguards national identity and heritage for future generations, said His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's representative Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Wednesday.

Speaking at the exhibition featuring Arabian arts from pre-Islamic era, organized by the American Culture Center of the Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah (DAI), Al-Mutairi, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs, commended the leadership's interest in organizing such cultural events.

The event, which coincided with Kuwait being chosen as the 2025 capital of Arab Culture and Media, adds to the importance of the exhibition, he affirmed, noting that documentation of arts from all areas was a huge undertaking and responsibility.

He expressed gratitude towards DAI's General Supervisor and Co-owner of the Al-Sabah Artifacts Collection Sheikh Hussah Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah for their efforts in organizing the exhibition.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait powers up as renewable energy projects valued at KD 1b

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Dr. Mahmoud Boushahri announced that the estimated value of renewable energy projects in Kuwait is approximately one billion dinars.

He said the implementation of each project takes between two to two and a half years.

In a press statement issued after the inauguration of the 24th meeting of the Regional Council for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, which is being held for the first time in Kuwait, Dr. Boushahri highlighted two major projects.

The second is a renewable energy project in partnership with the Public Authority for Partnership Projects, with a capacity of 2,700

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait calls out Israeli violations at UN

NEW YORK, Feb 19, (KUNA): Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Tareq Al-Banai has called for confronting the systematic violations and ongoing disregard of the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law by the Israeli occupation.

This came during a statement delivered by Ambassador Al-Banai, Tuesday, as the chair of the Arab group for February, during discussions on the Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations.

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Commander of the Land Forces and Commander of United States Army in a group photo during a tour inspection.

Kuwait, US army commanders inspect 'Desert Observer' progress

Commander of the Land Forces Brigadier Hamad Al-Suweidi and Commander of United States Army Central Command Lieutenant General Frank Patrick inspected units participating in the "Desert Observer" exercise.

They reviewed progress and implementation stages according to agreed scenarios in prepara-

tion for its conclusion, the Ministry of Defense said in a press statement on Wednesday.

The exercise aims to enhance joint military cooperation between Kuwait army and US forces, which contributes to developing combat skills and raising the level of coordination between the two sides, it added. (KUNA)

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait and Albania signed Wednesday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in diplomatic training programs.

This came following a meeting between Kuwait Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya and the visiting Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, Igli Hasani.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the close bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and the frameworks for strengthening and developing them in various fields, in addition to discussing latest regional and international developments.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Kuwaiti Diplomatic Institute, and the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, represented by the Diplomatic Academy of Albania, on cooperation in diplomatic training programs. (KUNA)

RIYADH: The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jassem Al-Budaiwi, met on Wednesday with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Mohammad Al-Hassan.

According to a statement from the GCC Secretariat, the two sides discussed the latest developments regarding the mission's efforts in supporting sustainable development in Iraq. (KUNA)



4 Kuwait to partake in Arab Summit as Saudi Arabia marks Founding Day



5 Japanese envoy hails strong Kuwait ties, encourages Expo engagement

'Death' penalty upheld in Hadiya murder case

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: The Court of Appeals has rejected the appeal filed by a Kuwaiti citizen who was convicted of killing Ahmed Al-Jalal, a fellow citizen, and upheld the death sentence previously issued by the Criminal Court.

The Criminal Court had sentenced the accused individual to death for the crime committed last August in Hadiya. He had confessed to the crime during previous court sessions.

However, his lawyer argued that the convict was unaware of his actions, which led the court to appoint a medical committee to assess his mental state.

Day by Day

WISE people say: Do not race with donkeys, because if you win, you will receive the top donkey prize, and if you come last, you will become the losing donkey.

You may engage in certain activities without knowing the outcomes, and I don't think you would feel comfortable being called the top donkey if you win or being labeled the losing donkey if you lose.

Hence we say: May God help, and may He decide what is best and most righteous.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:05	Asr	15:15
Sunrise ..	06:24	Maghrib ..	17:40
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:57

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-42 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

Weather

By Night: Cold with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	22	12

Kuwait Airport	23	11
Abdaly	24	05
Jahra	24	10
Salmiyah	20	14
Ahmadi	20	10
Jal Aliyah	23	09
Nuwaisib	21	10
Wafra	23	07



Stalls set up by foreign students.



Vintage cars on display.



A musical band by students.

KUNA photos

KUNA takes part in Kuwait University's exhibit to mark National, Liberation days

By Khaled Al-Jalis

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19, (KUNA): KUNA took part in Kuwait University's exhibition on the national celebrations on Wednesday.

held at Sabah Al-Salem University City. KUNA's booth showcased the agency's journalism work and methods of news coverage, as well as its reports that document Kuwait's history and development.

Meanwhile, KUNA's representatives presented thorough information about the KUNA News application for smartphones, Marsad KUNA, which focuses on fact-checking in news items and responding to rumors and KUNA Oasis, tasked with AI work.

'20 men, women to become diplomats'

'Graish' day marked at institute

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute Nasser Al-Subaih confirmed that the institute is keen on training those wishing to join the ministry to be part of the diplomatic staff, developing the skills of ministry employees (administrative and diplomatic staff), communicating with counterparts throughout the world, and hosting a group of newly appointed diplomats in various countries.

Al-Subaih made the statement during the 'Graish Day' celebration organized by the institute on Wednesday with a number of ambassadors and diplomats in attendance.

He disclosed that the institute has been hosting diplomats from different countries since the beginning of the year -- Netherlands, Kosovo, Arab Republic of Egypt, Mexico, Russia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, as well as the Secretariat General of the GCC.

He pointed out that "the return from such activities is very high. It is always clear to us that the idea of hosting is in place; since everyone agrees that without this visit, it would not have been possible to get to know the State of Kuwait in this manner."

He said the institute hosted Dr. Richard Haas, advisor to former US President George W. Bush Sr., this week. He revealed the discussion was about the occupation and liberation of Kuwait, the accompanying events and the decision-making mechanism of the United States of America.

He added the institute is currently supervising the preparation of the current batch of diplomats -- 20 women and men who will graduate in May, once they

Photo by Samer Shaqir
British Ambassador Belinda Lewis at one of the stalls.

pass the tests after training for a full year to join the ministry.

He went on to say that "during their training period, we were committed to arm them with everything they need in their practical and professional life -- personal skills, office skills or communicating with others.

On the Quraish occasion, he explained "this is a Kuwaiti event and part of the heritage. We celebrate it annually and as a family. It is an occasion close to the holy month of Ramadan. We were keen to revive it with a different flavor. The attendees are mostly from the diplomatic and foreign ranks and international organizations. It aims to show that such heritage is an integral part of this society and to present it in a way that shortens the foreign diplomat's many stages of getting to know the environment in which he works. It includes various types of foods and meals. This day should be part of the popular heritage of art -- Ardha, marine art and some artistic paintings.

Regarding diplomatic culture and showing the civilized face of Kuwait, he stated that diplomatic culture is the foundation of rapprochement with peoples and countries. "We cannot achieve integration between two countries unless this culture is understood. The government system is complementary. We complete each other with everything we have and with everything that is expected from the diplomatic culture to be identical, so that it clearly shows the identity of this people and there is a distinctive mark for this country."

Meanwhile, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan Dr. Zubaydullah Zubaydov affirmed that such events would enable members of the diplomatic corps to learn about Kuwaiti culture and the preparations for the month of Ramadan.

He added "culture is an important means of bringing peoples closer and it will strengthen relations between peoples around the world. Kuwait has a rich heritage."

Mexican ambassador congratulates Kuwait

On behalf of the Government and people of Mexico, I extend my warmest congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, the Government and people of the State of Kuwait on the joyous occasion of the 64th Anniversary of Kuwait Independence and 34th Anniversary of the Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait.

This day marks a celebration of Kuwait's rich heritage, remarkable achievements, and the unity of its people. Mexico values its strong and growing friendship with Kuwait, built on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared aspirations for peace and prosperity.

As we commemorate this special occasion, I reaffirm Mexico's commitment to further strengthening the bonds between our two nations across various fields of collaboration. May Kuwait continue to prosper and thrive in the years ahead.

Once again, my heartfelt congratulations to the people of Kuwait. Wishing all of you a joyous National Day filled with pride and happiness.

Eduardo Patricio Pena Haller
Mexican Ambassador to Kuwait



Eduardo Patricio Pena Haller

KISR holds Open Day, marks Kuwait National Days

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Under the patronage and in the presence of the acting Director General of the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Dr. Faisal Al-Humaidan and the Executive Director of the Marketing and Commercial Operations Sector Abdulmohsen Al-Haroun, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research organized an open day to celebrate Kuwait's 64th National Day

and 34th Liberation Day.

The event was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Information, as well as Kuwait Fire Force and other sponsoring organizations.

In his speech during the event, Dr. Al-Humaidan stated, "Our generous homeland has never hesitated to support its citizens in every way".

He highlighted the legacy of the forefathers who laid the foundations of Kuwait based on strong principles

and clear values, rooted in love for the homeland, loyalty, national unity, and cooperation.

Dr. Al-Humaidan also honored the sacrifices of "our martyrs who gave their pure souls and precious blood in defense of this nation".

Al-Humaidan stated, "At the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, we firmly believe that scientific research, development, and innovation are the main pillars for steady progress toward a bright and promising future."

Increase flow of trade exchange: Al-Juhaidly

Join efforts to spike industrial output: PAI

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19, (KUNA): Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Industry Shamlan Al-Juhaidly affirmed on Wednesday the necessity of cooperating and joining efforts to create active mechanisms to enhance industry in the GCC countries and facilitate the flow of goods and trade exchange between them.

This came in his speech in the opening of the sixth extraordinary meeting of the undersecretaries of the ministries of industry of the GCC hosted by Kuwait.

The meeting aims to review and discuss documents on mechanisms for applying the national GCC product definition standards, as it is a basic pillar for supporting industrial integration among the GCC countries, he said.

It constitutes a cornerstone for supporting GCC national industries and enhancing their competitiveness, and it also

represents one of the biggest challenges facing the completion of the GCC Customs Union and is considered one of the most prominent obstacles facing intra-regional trade between the GCC countries, he pointed out.

He expressed his appreciation to the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting for the great efforts made in the last period and for the diligent work and constructive initiatives that had a clear impact in paving the way to overcome challenges.

On his part, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Development Affairs Khaled Al-Sunaidi praised the prominent role played by Kuwait during its presidency of the current session in advancing the process of joint GCC action and enhancing economic and industrial cooperation among member states.

He also expressed his appreciation to Qatar for chairing the previous session and to the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council for preparing the agenda for this meeting.



Al-Juhaidly

Other Voices

Missing names ... rich heritage and social history

By Ahmad alsarraf

THE Sadu House website states that the house was built in 1936 by Yousef Al-Marzouq in a traditional Kuwaiti style, influenced by Indian decorative artistic elements.

The house has four open courtyards, with doors, windows, and wooden cabinets adorned with intricate artistic engravings. The house's distinctive features also include the openings of the "bakdir" (more accurately, badkir) on its various sides.

The construction of the Sadu House was supervised by the renowned Kuwaiti engineer Rashid Al-Bannai. Built from stone and reinforced with concrete, it was the first house of its kind in Kuwait, and it had sparked a lot of interest among Kuwaitis.

In 1938, the house was purchased by Yousef Behbehani, also known as Yousef Sherine. He added a new floor and installed European-style stoves (heaters) in the diwaniya and other rooms.

With urban expansion and the expropriation of real estate for public benefit, the house became part of state property in the early 1970s.

Later, the house, along with many other houses and archaeological sites, was transferred to the Ministry of Information and then to the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters.



alsarraf

In 1980, the beautiful traditional building became the home of the Sadu Project in order to preserve the heritage of traditional Bedouin weaving.

In 2006, the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters renovated the house to continue its cultural role in showcasing the construction techniques used 90 years ago while highlighting the heritage of Bedouin weaving.

This important role continues today, preserving and presenting the rich heritage and social history of Kuwait, as well as supporting efforts to maintain the national cultural identity and promote contemporary creative artistic expression.

However, the information provided above differs somewhat from reality, which is the reason behind writing this article. Two vital historical and social aspects of the Sadu House's history have either been deliberately or inadvertently overlooked.

According to the Sadu House's website, the house was built in 1936 by Yousef Al-Marzouq in the traditional Kuwaiti style, influenced by decorative artistic elements from India. The house, which overlooked the seafront, included four open courtyards. In the early 1970s, the building was acquired by the state and became affiliated with the Ministry of Information, then the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. In 1980, the traditional building hosted the Sadu project to preserve the weaving heritage and became known as the Sadu House, the House of Traditional Weaving Heritage.

This text is almost identical to the one

placed on a sign at the entrance to the Sadu House. However, both texts fail to mention an important historical fact.

When the state took possession of the house, it was owned and lived in by Yousef Behbehani and his family for nearly 30 years. Behbehani received all the sheikhs of Kuwait during that time and even years after the state acquired the property. Yet, his name is not mentioned on the entrance sign. Portions of the website overlook his significant contribution to the house's history. Yousef Behbehani did not just buy the house but he added many floors, fireplaces, engravings, and made many other improvements.

Despite playing a major role in the house's development, Behbehani's name has been omitted from the historical narrative.

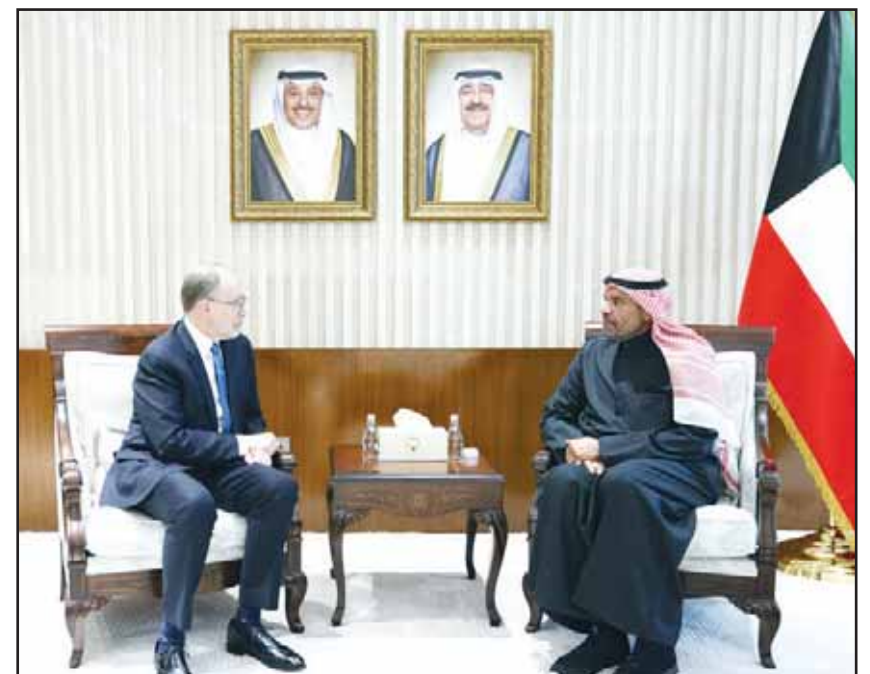
This also happened with the diwaniya (palace) of Sheikh Khazal bin Mardawa, the ruler of Muhammara.

The diwaniya is located adjacent to the gate of Dasman Palace, and the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters named it "Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Palace" as he was the last owner before the property was transferred to the state.

On this occasion, the Al-Abduljalil family condemned the omission of the name of Judge Ahmad Al-Abduljalil, the second judge in the history of Kuwait, as mentioned in a statement from the family, which was included in the documentary film aired by Kuwait TV during the inauguration of the new Palace of Justice building.



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KUNA photo
Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya and Douglas A. Silliman discuss various issues.

Kuwait FM receives AGSIW president

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19, (KUNA): Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received on Tuesday Douglas A. Silliman, president of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW) and former US ambassador to Kuwait,

who is now on a visit to Kuwait.

They discussed the AGSIW activities relating the deep-rooted Kuwait-US relations and the prospects of cooperation between the United States and the Gulf states in various areas.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Don't underestimate a problem that's far from you, as its effects may reach you

THERE are many problems that some people believe are far away from them due to which they think they will never be affected, and are safe from any consequences. However, these problems can strike unexpectedly, turning them into victims overnight. Therefore, a wise person always takes precautions to avoid potential risks and stays alert in order to be safe.

As the saying goes, "Accidents are not predetermined fate or absolute destiny, but rather the result of carelessness and negligence."

Ibn al-Jawzi once said, "Those who reflect on the consequences of life's events will act with caution. Those who are aware that the journey is long will prepare for it." This serves as a reminder not to underestimate distant problems and to always be prepared for them.

Below is a story that may be useful in this context:

Once upon a time, there was a mouse living in a farm, and one day, it noticed the farmer taking a mousetrap out of a box. Panic filled the mouse, and it ran around the farm frantically shouting, "Oh no! A mousetrap has been set!"

Hearing the commotion, the hen called out, "Why are you disturbing everyone with your shouting? The trap is for you, not us. This is your problem."

The mouse then went to the sheep and said, "Please be careful, there is a trap in the house!" The sheep smiled and said, "You coward, you are trembling. Why do you steal and destroy when you fear the consequences? You are the one the trap is meant for, not me. Stop bothering me with your cries. I advise you to stop stealing food and gnawing on ropes and wood."

Anyone who contemplates the changes in life must proceed with caution.

If you care about the consequences, I advise you not to steal food.

The cow said, "They want to hunt cows, so shall I seek asylum?"

Only the mouse truly sensed the danger, while the others remained indifferent.

The wife mistook the snake for a mouse, and that led to her downfall.

Despite receiving treatment, the poison continued to spread in her body for days.

The victims of the trap were beyond what the animals could have ever imagined.

The chicken was the first victim, followed by the sheep, and later, the cow.

The mouse's fear of the trap saved its life.

The mouse, with no one else to turn to, sought help from the cow. However, the cow responded carelessly, saying, "A trap in our house? It seems like they want to catch cows with it. Should I seek asylum at the zoo?"

Realizing that no one cared, the mouse decided to rely only on itself. It quietly ob-

served and searched until it found the location of the trap. The mouse then chose to stay away from the danger and slept soundlessly.

Suddenly, the silence of the night was broken by the sound of the trap snapping shut on its prey. The mouse rushed over to investigate and found a snake writhing in pain after being caught by the trap. The farmer's wife came by, and in the darkness, mistook the snake for a mouse. She grabbed the trap, and the snake bit her. Her husband quickly rushed her to the hospital, where she received emergency treatment.

The wife returned home with a fever. In an attempt to help, the farmer slaughtered a chicken to make soup for her. Relatives and neighbors gathered to check on her, and soon a sheep had to be slaughtered to feed them.

Sadly, the wife passed away after a prolonged battle with the poisoning, which spread throughout her body over several days. Hundreds of mourners arrived to offer their condolences, and in turn, the farmer was forced to slaughter his cow to feed them.

In the end, the only animal left alive was the mouse, who had been the initial target of the trap. It was the only one who sensed the danger. The others believed they were far from harm and they underestimated the mouse's warnings. The mouse, having instinctively and from experience understood the danger, knew that the victims of the trap could be more than anyone imagined.

In conclusion, even if a problem seems distant and irrelevant to you, do not underestimate it, as its consequences may affect you in the future.

Dear Minister of Finance, create housing banks owned by commercial banks, which would specialize in financing housing projects, while the government can cover part of the interest, as is done in other countries. This approach would allow the government to alleviate the burdens on the Kuwait Credit Bank.

People's love is not based on lineage, ancestry, or the possession of wealth and gold, but rather on their morals and good manners.

A wise man once said to his son, "If you fill your mind with trivial matters, there will be no room for the important ones. The mind is like a field; if you don't plant good seeds, harmful weeds will grow."

Dear Minister of Commerce and Industry, you have a great mission ahead, which is to stimulate trade. This sector has been neglected for the past 30 years. What is needed now is to revitalize industry and ensure food security. Work on attracting capital, and enhance investment opportunities.

According to statistics from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), 260,252 Kuwaiti citizens have one wife, 7,667 have two wives, 650 citizens have three wives, and 80 citizens have four wives, as of the end of 2024.

In just two weeks, or perhaps even less, we will welcome the holy month of Ramadan. Perhaps in this blessed month, souls will be at ease. May God offer comfort to all those in need of it.

From now until the arrival of Ramadan, we are beginning to notice increased activity in various institutions and a trend of amendments to laws, hopefully for the better.

Road maintenance needs to be completed quickly, as traffic is becoming increasingly congested. This indicates that the roads are no longer sufficient to handle the volume of traffic. Kuwait's roads were initially designed to accommodate 700,000 cars, but today we have over three million cars. Hurry up and find solutions in order to avoid spending our lives stuck in traffic.



Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army receives the Bangladesh Chief of Staff to discuss joint military issues.

Kuwait, B'desh in military discussions

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19, (KUNA): Major General Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Deputy Chief of General Staff of Kuwait Army, held discussions on Tuesday with Lieutenant General Waqar-Uz-Zaman, the Chief of General Staff of the Republic of Bangladesh, during an official visit. The two military officials engaged in cordial discus-

sions, addressing various significant military matters of shared interest. They concentrated on strategies to enhance and develop cooperation between their respective countries.

Several senior officers attended the meeting from both sides, and an official reception ceremony was held to welcome the visiting delegation.



Marine rescue teams in action.



Fire-fighters connecting a hose to the hydrant.

Marine Rescue teams, Fahaheel Fire Station in joint fire exercise

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) conducted a joint exercise Tuesday morning between the Marine Rescue teams and Fahaheel Fire Station at a commercial complex in Fahaheel.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the exercise simulated a cruiser explosion and fire, with rescue of the injured and controlling of the virtual fire as part of the scenario.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) participated 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 build-

ing, 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 another development, firefighters dealt with a fire that broke out in a vehicle on the Sixth Ring Road recently, during which traffic movement was obstructed for some time.

A security source told the daily that the Operations Unit at the Interior Ministry received a report on the fire incident from passersby. Firefighters rushed to the location where they found the vehicle on the verge of being totally burned. They extinguished the fire in record time. No casualties or injuries were reported.

'Check and balance crucial for better public sector services'

Fight against corruption top priority: 'Nazaha'

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Director Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim has stressed that "anti-corruption efforts are not limited to a specific entity; as they are part of a participatory process in which each entity plays its role as per its ethical, professional and national responsibilities, and in accordance with a vision for a just society free of corruption, where ethical practices are supported and public trust is of utmost importance."

Al-Ibrahim made the statement in the Second Aadaa Conference on the Code of Professional Conduct held Tuesday at the Nazaha Theater with Civil Service Commission (CSC) Chairman Dr. Issam Al-Rubaian and a number of State officials in attendance.

He said the conference activates the initiatives of the national strategy to enhance integrity and combat corruption. He revealed the 'Aadaa' project is based on the Code of Professional Conduct issued by the CSC as a reference for the rules of professional conduct that the program aims to develop, indicating it is an important step to improve the quality and integrity of public sector services.

He added the conference documents the conclusion of a phase of the project after 14 participating entities completed the requirements of the second phase, coinciding with the success in reaching more than 25,000 employees.

He explained that the project was designed to assess the extent of commitment to the Code of Conduct for employees and classify public sector entities into four levels of accreditation: bronze, silver, gold and diamond, according to a system characterized by gradation. He then emphasized the belief of Nazaha and its partners in the necessity of raising awareness on the risks of corruption and ways to prevent it.

On the other hand, Al-Rubaian clarified that the Code of Conduct is not just a regulatory document, as it is rather an ethical and professional charter that reflects the values of distinguished institutional performance.

He asserted that "the partnership between CSC and Nazaha is the cornerstone in building an integrated system to improve professional behavior, consolidate the principles of corporate governance, and confront everything that violates the principles of integrity and transparency. Combating corruption is not limited to control procedures, as it begins with awareness and qualification, as well as consolidating the culture of responsibility and accountability within the government work environment."

He stressed that activating the code requires serious cooperation between all government agencies and involving employees in understanding their responsibilities and rights through intensified training programs and continuous awareness.



Dr. Al-Rubaian



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KUNA photo
Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi during his reception of the Chairman of the UAE National Media Office, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Hamed.

Minister Al-Mutairi, UAE's Media chief explore media cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Information and Culture and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi discussed media cooperation with visiting head of the UAE National Media Office, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Hamed.

During the meeting, Minister Al-Mutairi touched on the pivotal role of the media in enhancing understanding between peoples and consolidating common values, stressing the need to intensify efforts to exchange expertise and successful experiences between the two countries in

this field.

The minister praised the solid fraternal relations between Kuwait and the UAE in various fields, pointing out that media cooperation is a fundamental pillar for strengthening these ties and conveying the true image of the development process in both countries.

In turn, Sheikh Abdullah lauded the strong historic ties between the UAE and Kuwait, praising the continuous support of the wise leadership of the two countries, which pays great attention to enhancing cooperation in various fields.



Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Kuwait Prince Sultan Saad with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad



Left: Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah with Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Kuwait. Right: Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Kuwait with Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya.

Al-Yahya hails Kingdom leadership

Kuwait to partake in Arab Summit as Saudi Arabia marks Founding Day

Al-Seyassah Report

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya has confirmed the participation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in the Arab Summit that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will host on Friday, praising the leadership role played by the Kingdom in Arab and international arenas.

Al-Yahya made the announcement at the event that the Embassy of Saudi Arabia organized in the garden of the ambassador's residence in Mishref to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of Saudi Arabia.

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Jarrah Al-Jaber, sheikhs, governors, citizens and heads of diplomatic missions attended the event.

In a press statement, Al-Yahya greeted the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its leadership, government and people, on the occasion of the founding day. He said the Kingdom's celebrations coincide with Kuwait's national celebrations in February, which reflects the depth of fraternal ties between the two countries.

On the other hand, Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Kuwait Prince Sultan Saad stressed that the Kingdom "has become the world's destination and the center of international decision-making, as everyone follows its positions and clear policy.

The entire world is waiting for what the Kingdom is doing. All official statements are issued through the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including all the important details. The Kingdom is not only the world's destination, but it is also the world's council, thanks to its firm positions and clear vision in dealing with international issues."

He pointed out "the founding of Saudi Arabia on Feb 22, 1727 is considered a great day in the history of the Kingdom, as it witnessed the laying of the first brick of the Saudi state by Imam Mohammad bin Saud – the path that his sons and descendants have continued to maintain up to this day. Since its inception, Saudi Arabia has been built on the principles of the true Islamic religion and has remained steadfast in its policies and positions in order to protect national interests and the interests of the Islamic nation."

He expressed his gratitude to the attendees and well-wishers. "Thanks to everyone who reached out with their greetings or by attending the event, as such a gesture indicates the status of the Kingdom and its love for the Kuwaiti people. Kuwait is not just a sisterly country for us, as it is part of our conscience. We consider its national celebrations as our holidays as well."

The event began with the Saudi Ardah, in which a number of ambassadors and officials participated in a festive atmosphere that reflected the depth of fraternal relations between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.



Photos by Rezk Tawfiq
Some photos of sheikhs, governors, citizens and heads of diplomatic missions who attended the event.

Kuwait reinforces commitment to 'road safety' at global conference

Al-Mashaan advocates for better infrastructure

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: A delegation from the Ministry of Public Works and the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), headed by Minister Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, participated in the Fourth Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety 2025 held in Morocco.

Dr. Al-Mashaan explained that Kuwait's participation affirms the importance of road safety as a major societal issue. It reflects the country's commitment to adopting the best practices in infrastructure development, improving safety standards, and implementing strategies aimed at reducing traffic accidents and minimizing human and material losses.

She stressed that road safety is a top priority in Kuwait's development plans and programs. This includes ongoing efforts to improve infrastructure through the development, expansion, and main-

tenance of roads, using high-quality materials to enhance their durability and extend their service life.

Moroccan Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch emphasized in a speech at the opening of the conference that traffic accidents pose a significant threat to public health worldwide, as they are among the leading causes of death globally. He highlighted that approximately 1.2 million people lose their lives annually, with an additional 50 million injured due to traffic-related incidents.

He added that the African continent accounts for about 19 percent of the total number of victims, underscoring the urgent need to enhance international cooperation and exchange expertise on effective strategies to mitigate this issue.

In this context, Akhannouch commended the efforts of the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) in addressing the lack of road safety and advancing global initiatives.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in a recorded speech delivered to the

conference, stressed the importance of using the platform to build visions and strategies for safer, more sustainable roads and to improve overall road safety. He expressed regret over the loss of more than one million lives annually due to traffic accidents, with young people and children constituting a significant portion of the victims.

Tedros emphasized the need to strengthen urban infrastructure, including the allocation of sidewalks for cyclists and pedestrians. He noted that most fatal accidents are preventable with the implementation of policies aimed at improving road safety, saving lives, and reducing risks. He called for concerted international efforts and coordination to achieve maximum effectiveness.

The three-day conference will address several strategic topics, including the challenges posed by traffic accidents, alongside discussions on solutions and policies to achieve the international goal of halving traffic-related fatalities by 2030.

The event will also feature parallel activities, such as the World Film Festival on Road Safety, the International Youth Competition for Road Safety, and a meeting of the Global Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations active in the field of road safety. The conference will conclude with the adoption of the "Marrakesh Declaration," which will serve as the foundation for drafting a resolution on road safety to be presented to the United Nations General Assembly.



Al-Mashaan



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Photos by Rezk Tawfiq

Businessman Ahmed Al-Hamad hosted a Sha'ban banquet at his residence, with a group of friends and social figures in attendance including Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah. The guests exchanged Ramadan greetings and appreciated the host for his hospitality. They also wished for a blessed Ramadan for everyone and continuous blessings for their country.

Continued from Page 1

Amir patronizes,

In his speech at the graduation ceremony, Director of Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences Brigadier Ali Al-Wahib highlighted the significance of the occasion and the role of the graduates in maintaining national security. He affirmed the academy's commitment to provide high-quality education and training, as well as its ongoing efforts to collaborate with local and Gulf academic and security institutions.

Al-Wahib advised the graduates to uphold national values, adhere to the Military Code of Honor, and work as a team to serve as role models in justice, commitment and integrity.

After the parade and oath-taking, His Highness the Amir presented awards and certificates to the outstanding graduates, and then received the academy's shield.

Protecting Kuwaiti

On her part, Sheikha Hussa Sabah Al-Salem said that the exhibition came to be due to the relentless efforts of researchers and antiquities collectors.

She revealed that the exhibition featured 104 rare pre-Islamic items in the region, which gave the event an important aura.

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar lauded the organizing of the exhibition, saying it was an addition to Kuwait's cultural efforts.

In regards to cooperation with DAI, he revealed that NCCAL had been collaborating with the center since 1983, saying that such cooperation continued to this day and hopefully more in the future.

On her part, NCCAL's Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Islamic Antiquities Sheikha Al-Anoud Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah indicated that arts in the Arab Peninsula was deeply-rooted and ancient, which reflected the cultural value of the region.

She revealed that DAI and the NCCAL would be collaborating on an arts initiative focusing on Kuwait's handicrafts talents and arts.

Kuwait powers

megawatts. Within the next four years, the share of renewable energy in the

total energy production will increase to around 30 percent.

Dr. Boushahri explained that the independent supplier projects could include renewable energy, particularly following the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding with private sector companies to supply energy to the ministry. These companies will generate electricity, which the ministry will then purchase from the independent suppliers.

Regarding the meeting, he said it focused on renewable energy, specifically the combination of traditional and renewable energies, aiming to account for 30 percent to 50 percent of total production.

Dr. Boushahri stressed that he will discuss the efficient use of renewable energy in various sectors, including residential, private, investment, commercial, industrial, and agricultural, which would help reduce consumption and preserve this vital resource.

He indicated that energy efficiency, combined with the use of clean energy, will contribute to carbon neutrality and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Kuwait calls

Ambassador Al-Banai emphasized the Arab Group's commitment to the work of the committee and the importance of enhancing the UN's role in upholding the principles and objectives of the Charter, and reiterated the group's stance on maintaining an international system based on the full respect of the UN Charter by all states without exception.

He highlighted the Israeli occupation's breaches of the UN Charter, and warned that these violations set dangerous precedents threatening the integrity of the UN, its agencies, and international cooperation.

Al-Banai noted that the committee convenes at a time when the credibility and effectiveness of the UN were being tested, particularly as the Israeli occupying forces continue a genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza for over a year.

The Kuwaiti envoy urged all UN members to ensure that the occupying power fully implements the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in Gaza.

Ambassador highlights tech, trade and culture

Japanese envoy hails strong Kuwait ties, encourages Expo engagement

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Mukai Kenichiro praised the depth of bilateral relations between the two countries, stressing that they are witnessing development in various fields.

He called for wide participation of Kuwaitis in the Kansai-Osaka Exhibition, scheduled to open on April 13.

He made the statement in an event he organized to celebrate the 65th birthday of Japanese Emperor Naruhito, with Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Jarrah Al-Jaber and large number of ambassadors, diplomats and citizens in attendance.

He greeted Kuwait, its leadership, government and people on the occasion of the 64th National Day and the 34th Liberation Day, wishing the country further prosperity under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He also expressed his aspiration to strengthen bilateral relations and consolidate cooperation for the benefit of both countries.

He referred to the fourth session of the policy dialogue between the two foreign ministries held in December to discuss various areas of cooperation; in addition to the fifth session of the Japan-Kuwait dialogue on electricity, water and renewable energy policy that was recently held in Kuwait, hoping to transform these dialogues into tangible cooperation projects.

Regarding his tenure in Kuwait since his arrival last November, the ambassador explained that he felt the friendship and mutual trust between the two peoples; stressing that relations between the two countries are not limited to the economy as they extend to the fields of culture and education.

On the Kansai-Osaka Exhibition, he disclosed that it will showcase a variety of items that reflect the latest technologies, culture and Japanese history. He said the Kuwait pavilion named, "Light of Insight," will embody the spirit of Kuwaiti hospitality with a blend of tradition and advanced technology.

He also expressed his hope to enhance Kuwaiti investments in Japan and develop bilateral cooperation through technology and innovation.



Photos by Samer Shaqir

Top & above: Photos from the event.

First Deputy PM praises Kuwait-UAE bilateral ties

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah lauded the fraternal relations between Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, praising the continuous development witnessed in various fields.

This came in the reception of Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef to the head of the National Media Office in the UAE, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Hamed, on the occasion of his official visit to the country, in the presence of the Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and the UAE Ambassador, Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi, said the Ministry of Interior in a press statement Wednesday.

During the meeting, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef pointed out the importance of enhancing media cooperation and coordination between the two countries, as it plays a fundamental role in supporting the joint development process and contributing to achieving more accomplishments.



KUNA photo

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah receives the Head of the National Media Office of the sisterly State of the Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Butti Al Hamed.

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Republican president asserts control at every opportunity

Trump moves swiftly on agenda in departure from first-term stumbles

WASHINGTON, Feb 19, (AP): Months into his first term as president, Donald Trump was furious with the snowballing Russia investigation and ordered White House Counsel Don McGahn to make sure that special counsel Robert Mueller got fired.

"Mueller has to go," McGahn recalled Trump saying. "Call me back when you do it."

But McGahn didn't do it, and Trump didn't even bring it up the next time they saw each other. Such incidents were common during Trump's initial experience in the White House, where officials would soften or ignore his most outrageous decisions and the president seemed unwilling to enforce his will.

It's hard to imagine the same thing happening during Trump's second term. Instead of repeating his laissez-faire attitude toward his own administration, the Republican president is asserting control at every opportunity, backed up by loyalists at all levels of government. Despite occasional disorganization and confusion, there's a headstrong determination to push through any obstacles.

Trump doesn't just want to change course from Joe Biden's presidency, his team is holding back congressionally authorized funding championed by his predecessor.

Not only did Trump officials tell the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to stop working, his team set up a tip line so people could report unauthorized actions taken by staff at the agency.

Trump wasn't satisfied with simply firing all the board members at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He made himself chairman.

This time, Trump seems to be saying, his orders will not be ignored. This time, there will be follow through.

The White House summarizes Trump's approach with the mantra "promises made, promises kept." Administration officials also dismiss concerns that the president is exercising too much control. They say Trump is entitled to impose his vision on the government that he was elected to lead. Others see something darker and more menacing for the country and its future.

"Donald Trump's instincts haven't changed," said Timothy Naftali, a Columbia University historian. "He's just angrier, meaner and more effective than he



US President Donald Trump gestures to supporters gathered for a Presidents' Day rally as he leaves the Trump International Golf Club on Feb 17, in West Palm Beach, Fla. (AP)

was in his first term."

Trump often felt like he was undermined in his first term by the "deep state," a term used by his allies to describe civil servants and career officials. Now, he's moving swiftly to cut the federal bureaucracy with the help of Elon Musk, the billionaire entrepreneur Trump has empowered to oversee the downsizing of the workforce.

"We've never had a president come into office with such a deep desire for revenge," Naftali said. "Donald Trump is trying to hollow out institutions that

he thinks embarrassed him."

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which was created to protect Americans from financial fraud, abuse and deceptive practices, has been brought to a standstill. The U.S. Agency for International Development, a leading distributor of humanitarian assistance, was shut down.

A prime target is the Department of Justice, which infuriated Trump by investigating him during his first term and after leaving office. He was indicted twice by federal authorities, although the cases were dropped after he won last year's election because sitting presidents can't be prosecuted while in office.

Now Trump has placed loyalists in leadership positions, such as Emil Bove, the acting deputy attorney general who was previously Trump's defense attorney.

Last week, Bove pushed to drop corruption charges against New York City Mayor Eric Adams, saying it was more important for Adams to help Trump enact stricter immigration policies.

"The pending prosecution has unduly restricted Mayor Adams' ability to devote full attention and resources to the illegal immigration and violent crime that escalated under the policies of the prior Administration," Bove wrote.

Several prosecutors in New York and Washington resigned in protest. Trump said that he wasn't involved in the decision to drop the case against Adams, but he's previously said that the mayor had been unfairly targeted for political reasons.

Another example of Trump's heavy-handed approach this time has been his handling of criminal charges against supporters who stormed the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Hours after taking the oath of office a month ago, the president pardoned roughly 1,500 people, including those who attacked police officers.

Then his administration decided to push even further. Thousands of FBI employees are being questioned about their role in Jan. 6 investigations, with suggestions that they could face punishment.

Bove said agents "who simply followed orders and carried out their duties in an ethical manner" were not at risk, adding that "the only individuals who should be concerned ... are those who acted with corrupt or partisan intent."



US Marines install barbed wire along the border fence on Jan 31, in San Diego. (AP)

Senate GOP pushes ahead with budget bill that funds mass deportations, border wall

WASHINGTON, Feb 19, (AP): Senate Republicans pushed ahead late Tuesday on a scaled-back budget bill, a \$340 billion package to give the Trump administration money for mass deportations and other priorities, as Democrats prepare a counter-campaign against the onslaught of actions coming from the White House.

On a party-line vote, 50-47, Republicans launched the process, skipping ahead of the House Republicans who prefer President Donald Trump's approach for a "big, beautiful bill" that includes \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts that are tops on the party agenda. Senate Republicans plan to deal with tax cuts later, in a second package.

"It's time to act," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., on social media, announcing the plan ahead as the House is on recess week. "Let's get it done."

This is the first step in unlocking Trump's campaign promises - tax cuts, energy production and border controls - and dominating the agenda in Congress. While Republicans have majority control of both the House and Senate, giving a rare sweep of Washington power, they face big hurdles trying to put the president's agenda into law over steep Democratic objections.

It's coming as the administration's Department of Government Efficiency effort is slashing costs across government departments, leaving a trail of fired federal workers and dismantling programs on which many Americans depend. Democrats, having floundered amid the initial chaos coming from the White House, emerged galvanized as they

try to warn Americans what's at stake.

"These bills that they have one purpose - and that is they're trying to give a tax break to their billionaire buddies and have you, the average American person, pay for it," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer told AP. "It is outrageous."

Schumer convened a private weekend call with Democratic senators and emerged with a strategy to challenge Republicans for prioritizing tax cuts that primarily flow to the wealthy at the expense of program and service cuts to U.S. health care, scientific research, veterans services and other programs.

As the Senate begins the cumbersome budget process this week - which entails an initial 50 hours of debate followed by an expected all-night session with dozens if not 100 or more efforts to amend the package in what's called a vote-a-rama - Democrats are preparing to drill down on those issues.

The Senate GOP package would allow \$175 billion to be spent on border security, including funding for mass deportation operations and to build the wall along the U.S.-Mexico border; a \$150 billion boost to the Pentagon for defense spending; and \$20 billion for the Coast Guard.

Republicans are determined to push ahead after Trump's border czar Tom Homan and top aide Stephen Miller told senators privately last week they are running short of cash to accomplish the president's mass deportations and other border priorities.

US top diplomat Rubio visits UAE after talks with Russia

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, Feb 19, (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met Wednesday with the leader of the United Arab Emirates, wrapping up an overseas trip that saw the highest-level outreach between the United States and Russia since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Rubio's talk with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, also the ruler of Abu Dhabi, comes as the US also tries to continue a shaky ceasefire in the Gaza Strip between Israel and the militant Hamas group.

The UAE, which diplomatically recognized Israel in 2020 during President Donald Trump's first term, also has been key in mediating prisoner swaps between Russia and Ukraine.

Rubio offered his thanks in the meeting to the UAE "for the strength and enduring nature of the relationship, one marked by strong economic ties, defense cooperation and mutual interests in regional stability," State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said in a statement.

The meeting included discussions on artificial intelligence, the Gaza Strip, Syria, Lebanon and the Red Sea, which had been the site of attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels until the Gaza ceasefire, Bruce added.

There was no immediate comments from the UAE on what Rubio, Sheikh Mohammed and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's foreign minister, discussed in their roughly 30-minute meeting. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with Sheikh Mohammed on Monday.

Both the UAE and Saudi Arabia have been discussed as possible sites for peace talks to end the war in



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, (center), walks with United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan as they meet at ADNEC Centre Abu Dhabi in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates on Feb 19. (AP)

Ukraine, which marks its third anniversary on Monday. Saudi Arabia also has been mentioned as the possible venue for a meeting between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, providing a potential diplomatic boon to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler.

The leaders met Rubio at an Abu Dhabi convention center that's hosting the biennial International Defense Exhibition and Conference this week, where both Ukraine and Russia have displayed weapons - even as Moscow faces Western sanctions over the war.

Russian money continues to flood into Dubai's booming real estate mar-

ket. Daily flights between the Emirates and Moscow provide a lifeline for both those fleeing conscription and the Russian elite. Ukrainians as well have fled to the Emirates, an autocratically ruled federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula. Rubio also visited Abu Dhabi's Abraham Family House.

Russia and the US agreed Tuesday to start working toward ending the war in Ukraine and improving their diplomatic and economic ties, the two countries' top diplomats said after talks that reflected an extraordinary about-face in US foreign policy under Trump.

Rubio said 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 attended by his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, and other senior Russian and US officials - marked the beginning of a conversation, and more work needs to be done.

Lavrov echoed Rubio's remarks and told reporters that "the conversation was very useful." "We not only listened, but also heard each other," he said.

Trump's national security adviser, Michael Waltz, and special Mideast envoy Steven Witkoff joined Rubio at the table, along with Lavrov and Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov.

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.

Zelenskyy said his country would not accept any outcome from the talks since Kyiv didn't take part, and he postponed his own trip to the kingdom scheduled for Wednesday.

European allies have also expressed concerns that they are being sidelined.

Ties between Russia and the US have fallen to their lowest level in decades in recent years - a rift that has been widening ever since Russia illegally annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and only worsened after Moscow's full-scale invasion.

Trump living in a Russian-made disinformation space: Zelenskyy

KYIV, Ukraine, Feb 19, (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused US President Donald Trump on Wednesday of living in a Russian-made "disinformation space," pointed comments that risk further souring relations with Washington as the American leader pushes for an end to the war.

Zelenskyy said he "would like Trump's team to be more truthful" in his first response to a series of striking claims the US president made the previous day, including suggesting that Kyiv was to blame for the war, which enters its fourth year next week.

Russia's army crossed the border on Feb. 24, 2022, in an all-out invasion that Putin sought to justify by saying it was needed to protect civilians in eastern Ukraine and prevent the country from joining NATO. Ukraine and its allies denounced it as an unprovoked act of aggression.

The comments from Trump and Zelenskyy were a remarkable back-and-forth between leaders of two countries that have been staunch allies in recent years under Trump's predecessor, as the U.S. provided crucial military equipment to Kyiv to fend off the invasion and used its political weight to defend Ukraine and isolate Russia

on the world stage.

The Trump administration has started charting a new course, reaching out to Russia and pushing for a peace deal. Zelenskyy spoke shortly before he was expected to meet with Keith Kellogg, the U.S. special envoy for Ukraine and Russia as part of the administration's recent diplomatic blitz.

Ukraine and its European supporters have expressed concern that they weren't invited to the talks between top American and Russian diplomats in Saudi Arabia - amid larger worries that the deal taking shape could be unfavorable to Kyiv.

At a news conference Tuesday, Trump showed little patience for Ukraine's objections to being excluded from the talks. He also said, without providing the source, that Zelenskyy's approval rating stood at 4%, while telling reporters that Ukraine "should have never started" the war and "could have made a deal" to prevent it.

Zelenskyy replied in his own news conference Wednesday that "we have seen this disinformation. We understand that it is coming from Russia." He said that Trump "lives in this disinformation space."

Zelenskyy said he hoped Kellogg would walk through Kyiv and "ask (Ukrainians) if they trust their president? Do they trust Putin? Let him ask about Trump, what they think after the statements made by their president." Russian state TV and other state-controlled media reacted with glee to what they portrayed as Trump's cold shoulder to Zelenskyy.



Zelenskyy

EU envoys approve more sanctions against Russia

BRUSSELS, Feb 19, (AP): European Union envoys have approved a new raft of sanctions against Russia, with the measures set to enter into force next week on the third anniversary of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a top EU official and diplomats confirmed on Wednesday. The move comes with the Europeans sidelined from US-led talks to end the war.

The EU has slapped several rounds of sanctions on Russia since President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine in February 24, 2022. More than 2,300 officials and entities - usually government agencies, banks and organizations - have been hit. The diplomats confirmed approval of the sanctions - the 16th package of measures including travel bans, asset freezes and trade restrictions - on condition that they not be named. The measures are still not entirely finalized until EU foreign ministers endorse them on Monday, allowing them to enter force.

Among the latest sanctions are measures targeting Russia's so-called "shadow fleet" of ships that it exploits to skirt restrictions on transporting oil and gas, or to carry stolen Ukrainian grain. Some 70 vessels believed to be part of the shadow fleet will be added to more than 50 already listed.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, whose services drafted some of the measures for consideration, welcomed their prospective adoption by the 27-nation bloc's ambassadors.



Ukrainian serviceman stands on a vehicle with anti-aircraft gun after a drone attack at the former Chernobyl nuclear power plant, Ukraine on Feb 14. (AP)

Racist attacks increase in German city after deadly market violence, say migrant groups

MAGDEBURG, Germany, Feb 19, (AP): When Haben Gebregeregish first immigrated to the German city of Magdeburg seven years ago, the Eritrean immigrant was walking to the supermarket with her child when an intoxicated woman approached her on the street.

At the time, Gebregeregish did not speak German well enough to comprehend what the woman was saying. But Gebregeregish says that when the woman threw a bottle at her head, she immediately understood. It was one of her first encounters with racism, but certainly not the last. In the aftermath of a deadly attack at a Christmas market in Magdeburg late last year, Gebregeregish and other migrants who have settled in the city say they have experienced a sharp increase in racism and anti-immigration sentiments.

"We are the same as you," Gebregeregish said earlier this month. "We are not different. Just like you, we have feelings. Sometimes we are sad, sometimes we are happy, just like everyone else." The Christmas market violence was one of five high-profile attacks committed by immigrants in the past nine months that have made migration a key issue as the country heads toward an early election on Sunday. The suspect, a Saudi doctor, drove into the holiday market teeming with shoppers and left five women and a 9-year-old boy dead and 200 people injured.



An election poster of the far-right anti-immigrant party Alternative For Germany party AfD, with the slogan reading "It's time for free opinion", is displayed in a street, in Magdeburg, Germany on Feb 7. (AP)

The suspect arrived in Germany in 2006 and had received permanent residency, and authorities say the suspect does not fit the usual profile of perpetrators of extremist attacks. He is being held in custody as authorities investigate him.

Asia

Kishida attacker gets 10 yrs: A Japanese court on Wednesday convicted a man who threw a homemade pipe bomb at Japan's former prime minister Fumio Kishida at a 2023 campaign event, sentencing him to 10 years in prison, court officials said.

Ryuji Kimura, 25, was found guilty of attempted murder in the April 15, 2023 attack on Kishida at a small fishing port in the western city of Wakayama, as well as four other crimes including violations of laws on explosives and other weapons.

At stake was whether Kimura intended to commit murder.

The Wakayama District Court said in the ruling that Kimura was aware of the potential for a fatality in his attack, according to the Kyodo News agency. The ruling said the attack at an election campaign event was a serious challenge to democracy and posed a significant danger to many people, Kyodo said.

Kimura, at an opening session of the trial in early February, pleaded not guilty to attempted murder, saying he didn't intend to kill Kishida. He said he was dissatisfied with Japan's election system and that he only wanted to get public attention by targeting a famous politician. (AP)



Cook Islands unveils deal detail: The South Pacific country of Cook Islands on Tuesday unveiled the details

of a deal with China to boost cooperation on matters including mining seabed minerals, after the pact provoked a rare diplomatic clash with the nation's chief benefactor, New Zealand, and protests at home.

The public quarrel between New Zealand and Cook Islands - which share a passport, a military and constitutional ties - was a victory for Beijing's efforts to woo Pacific leaders and a blow to Western countries' efforts to counter China's sway, analysts said.

The deal does not mention joint security initiatives, unlike others China has made with small South Pacific nations. Cook Islands Prime Minister

Mark Brown signed it during a visit to Beijing this month. It also gives few details on the partnership such as promised funding from China.

Mihai Sora, director of the Pacific Islands Program at the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, said the controversy reflected "an intense geopolitical contest for influence."

Cook Islands, with a population of 15,000, a tourism economy and a large exclusive economic zone, is a self-governing country in free association with New Zealand, which gives the bulk of development funding. The arrangement promises New Zealand's help with military and foreign affairs. (AP)



Ryuji Kimura, center, is caught by police after he threw a homemade pipe bomb at Japan's former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during a campaign event at a fishing port in Wakayama, western Japan, on April 15, 2023. (AP)

Cambodia passes bill toughening penalties for denial of Khmer Rouge genocide

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, Feb 19, (AP): Cambodian lawmakers on Tuesday unanimously approved a bill that will toughen penalties for anyone denying that atrocities were carried out in the late 1970s under the rule of the communist Khmer Rouge, whose brutal policies are blamed for the deaths of 1.7 million people.

A statement issued by the National Assembly said that all 115 members voted in favor of the law, which was said to be intended to prevent the recurrence of such events and to provide justice for victims of the Khmer Rouge.

The seven-article bill makes violation of its terms punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine of between \$2,500 and \$125,000.

In 2013 Cambodia enacted a similar law against denying Khmer Rouge atrocities after then-Prime Minister Hun Sen called for the measure. He claimed that a leading opposition lawmaker suggested that some of the evidence of Khmer Rouge atrocities was fabricated by Vietnam. That law prescribed prison terms of six months to two years and fines of up to \$1,000.

Critics charged that the measure then was a veiled attempt to undermine his political opponents and allege that the latest proposed legal change has a similar motive.



The front gate of Tuol Sleng genocide museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on Nov 13, 2007. (AP)

The latest National Assembly statement said the draft law is designed to punish individuals who do not recognize, or deny or object to the recognition of crimes that were proven in legal proceedings held by a U.N.-backed tribunal to have been committed under the Khmer Rouge.

The tribunal, which held a series of trials starting in 2009, found that the Khmer Rouge government committed

genocide, crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, in addition to severe violations of Cambodian criminal law, international humanitarian law and various international conventions recognized by Cambodia. The new law's adoption comes two months ahead of the 50th anniversary of the Khmer Rouge takeover of Cambodia on April 15, 1975 after five years of civil war.

Three foreign governments plotted to harm people in Australia, says spy boss Burgess

MELBOURNE, Australia, Feb 19, (Agencies): An Australian spy agency discovered three foreign governments plotting to physically harm people living in Australia, a security boss said on Wednesday.

Mike Burgess, secretary-general of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the nation's main domestic spy agency known as ASIO, did not name the countries in his latest annual address outlining threats to the country.

One government attempted to trick a human rights advocate into traveling from Australia to a third country where plotters planned to injure or kill their target. ASIO intervened to prevent the travel.

"In a small number of cases, we held grave fears for the life of the person being targeted," Burgess said in a speech at ASIO headquarters in the national capital Canberra.

Another government planned to harm or kill one or more people in Australia as part of a broader plot to eliminate critics around the world. Working with international security agencies, ASIO disrupted the operation at an early stage.

In both cases, the plotters were offshore and beyond the reach of Australian law.

Burgess didn't detail the third country's plot.

In a wide-ranging speech, Burgess revealed ASIO had alerted US authorities to a 12-year-old boy plotting mass shootings in the United States.

ASIO online operators found a self-professed neo-Nazi on a popular social networking site. The boy talked about live streaming a school shooting and then moving

on to a church, synagogue or mosque.

The Australian spy agency also discovered a cyber unit from an unnamed foreign government that targeted critical infrastructure networks in the US. The same unit routinely tried to explore and exploit Australia's networks, mapping systems to lay down malware or maintain access in the future.

"ASIO worked closely with our American counterpart to evict the hackers and shut down their global accesses, including nodes here in Australia," Burgess said.

Foreign spy agencies targeted Australia's AUKUS partnership with the US and Britain that will deliver an Australian fleet of submarines powered by US nuclear technology.

AUKUS is an acronym for Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition to the submarine deal, AUKUS Pillar II involves cooperation on a wider range of security technologies including artificial intelligence, electronic warfare and hypersonic systems.

"ASIO has identified foreign services seeking to target AUKUS to position themselves to collect on the capabilities, how Australia intends to use them, and to undermine the confidence of our allies," Burgess said.

"AUKUS will remain a priority target for intelligence collection, including by countries we consider friendly," he said, without naming those countries.

Meanwhile, the police commissioner in Australia's second-most populous state has resigned following a vote of no confidence by officers.

Shane Patton said he would immediately stand down as the chief commissioner of Victoria Police "to allow fresh leadership in the role."

It comes after members of the police officers' union on Friday overwhelmingly passed a vote of no confidence in Patton's leadership.



Burgess



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, chairs the UN Security Council's high-level meeting on 'Practicing multilateralism, reforming and improving global governance' at the UN headquarters in New York on Feb 18. (Xinhua)

UNSC meet reaches consensus on revitalizing multilateralism: FM

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that participants at a high-level United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting agreed that the UN's role is indispensable. In the current situation, its role should be strengthened, not weakened, and its position must be maintained and cannot be replaced.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks after chairing the UN Security Council's

high-level meeting on "Practicing multilateralism, reforming and improving global governance."

While the Chinese side put forward four proposals to rejuvenate multilateralism and build a just and rational global governance system, Wang said that all participants agreed that the trend of multilateralism is irreversible, and all countries should support the multilateral system with the United Nations at its core. (Xinhua)

Pakistan steps up arrests of Afghans without papers, Kabul says it's move to expel refugees

ISLAMABAD, Feb 19, (AP): Authorities have stepped up arrests of Afghan citizens in Pakistan's capital and a nearby city in an effort that the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad described on Wednesday as a push to force the expulsion of all Afghan refugees from the country.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry promptly dismissed the allegation, saying that the authorities were only trying to facilitate conditions for the swift return of Afghans to their home country.

Pakistan has long threatened to deport Afghans living in the country illegally. Separately, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif last month approved a March 31 deadline to deport those awaiting relocation to third countries unless their cases are swiftly processed by the governments that have agreed to take them, according to a document obtained by The Associated Press.

More than 800,000 Afghans have returned home or have been expelled by force from Pakistan since 2023, according to the International Organization for Migration, a UN agency that tracks migrations.

In a strongly worded statement on Wednesday, the Afghan Embassy -



Afghan refugees hold placards during their meeting to discuss situation after President Donald Trump paused the U.S. refugee programs, in Islamabad, Pakistan on Jan 24. (AP)

which represents the Taliban-run government of Afghanistan - criticized "the short timeframe" given by the authorities in Islamabad and "the unilateral nature of Pakistan's decision."

Afghans in Islamabad and the nearby garrison city of Rawalpindi have been subjected to arrests, searches, and

orders from police to leave the two cities and relocate to other parts of Pakistan, the embassy said. It further claimed that for all Afghans, "expulsion is imminent" - something the embassy said Pakistani authorities had not communicated to Kabul "through any formal correspondence."

UN human rights chief accuses M23 rebels in east Congo of killing, recruiting children

DAKAR, Senegal, Feb 19, (AP): The UN human rights chief accused Rwanda-backed rebels who seized a second major city in eastern Congo of killing children and attacking hospitals and

warehouses storing humanitarian aid.

Volker Türk said in a statement Tuesday that his office "confirmed cases of summary execution of children by M23 after they entered the city of

Bukavu last week. We are also aware that children were in possession of weapons."

He provided no details or did not refer to specific events, but UN agencies have previously accused both Congolese government forces and the rebels of recruiting children. The United Nations Human Rights Council earlier this month launched a commission that will investigate atrocities, including rapes and killings akin to "summary executions" committed by both sides since the beginning of the year.

Rwanda-backed rebels appeared to be heading toward a third major city in eastern Congo, residents said Tuesday, as international pressure rose over the M23's expansion in a mineral-rich region that's critical for global technology.

The M23 rebels on Tuesday attacked all the main Congolese army positions on the road to Butembo, a city of 150,000 people, and the situation was rapidly deteriorating, said Auguste Kombi, a civil society leader in Kitsombo, a town along the road.



Red Cross workers gather the remains of a dead person in east Congo's second-largest city, Bukavu, one day after it was taken by M23 rebels on Feb 17. (AP)



Supporters of Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro clash with police as they storm the Planalto presidential palace, the official workplace of the president, in Brasilia, Brazil on Jan 8, 2023. (AP)

Brazil's ex-president Bolsonaro charged over alleged coup that included plan to poison Lula

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 19, (AP): Brazil's prosecutor-general on Tuesday formally charged former President Jair Bolsonaro with attempting a coup to stay in office after his 2022 election defeat, in a plot that included a plan to poison his successor and current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and kill a Supreme Court judge.

Prosecutor-General Paulo Gonet alleges that Bolsonaro and 33 others participated in a plan to remain in power. The alleged plot, he wrote, included a plan to poison Lula and shoot dead Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, a foe of the former president.

"The members of the criminal organization structured a plan at the presidential palace to attack institutions, aiming to bring down the system of the powers and the democratic order, which received the sinister name of 'Green and Yellow Dagger,'" Gonet wrote in a 272-page indictment. "The plan was conceived and taken to the knowledge of the president, and he agreed to it."

Bolsonaro is often seen in Brazil's yellow-and-green national soccer jersey and the colors have become associated

with his political movement.

Bolsonaro's defense team said it met the accusations with "dismay and indignation," adding in a statement that the former "President has never agreed to any movement aimed at deconstructing the democratic rule of law or the institutions that underpin it." Bolsonaro's son, Flávio Bolsonaro, who is a senator, said on the social platform X that the indictment was "empty" and there was no evidence of wrongdoing. He accused the Prosecutor-General's Office of serving "the nefarious interests of Lula."

In November, Brazil's Federal Police filed a 884-page report with Gonet detailing the scheme. They allege a systematic effort to sow distrust in the electoral system, drafting a decree to provide legal cover for the plot, pressuring top military brass to go along with the plan and inciting a riot in the capital.

In the indictment, Gonet described the alleged crimes as part of a chain of events articulated with an overarching objective of stopping Bolsonaro from leaving office, "contrary to the result of the popular will at the polls."

Lat/Am

Deportees held in Panama: Panama is detaining in a hotel nearly 300 people from various countries deported under US President Donald Trump, not allowing them to leave while waiting for international authorities to organize a return to their countries.

Panama's Security Minister Frank Abrego said Tuesday the migrants are receiving medical attention and food as part of a migration agreement between

Panama and the US. The Panamanian government has now agreed to serve as a "bridge" or transit country for deportees, while the US bears all the costs of the operation. The agreement was announced earlier this month after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's visit. (AP)



Abrego

Bolivia bus accident kills 31:

At least 31 people were killed and another 15 injured after a public transit bus plunged into a ravine along the highway connecting western Bolivia's departments of Potosi and Oruro, local authorities said Monday.

"There are 31 people who lost their lives in this incident. We are still recovering the bodies," Colonel Limbert Choque, spokesman for the departmental police command in Potosi, told local media. (Xinhua)

Kuwaiti oil price rises to \$78.35 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti oil price went up by 34 cents to USD 78.35 per barrel on Tuesday, compared with USD 78.01 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said

in a statement on Wednesday.

Globally, the price of Brent crude rose by 62 cents to USD 75.84 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude went up by USD 1.11 to USD 71.85 pb.

Business

Aspiring influencers gain skills in public speaking & marketing

Gulf Bank concludes sponsorship of LOYAC's The Influencer program

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: As part of its ongoing commitment to youth empowerment, Gulf Bank has successfully concluded its sponsorship of The Influencer program, organized by the LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA), a subsidiary of the non-profit organization LOYAC.

Held from January 20 to February 17, 2025, the program provided youth aged 15 to 19 with a unique opportunity to develop essential skills in public communication and leadership.

Ms. Fatemah Alhabib, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, emphasized the importance of youth empowerment, stating: "Empowering youth begins with providing them with the skills and tools to express themselves, shape their careers, and make a positive impact in their communities. We are proud of our ongoing partnership with LOYAC, which allows us to support and nurture the next generation of leaders and innovators."

She added: "Over the past weeks, participants embarked on a journey of challenges and new experiences, developing skills in effective communication, public speaking, content creation, digital marketing, photography, and video editing. More importantly, they gained confidence in their abilities, and learned to share their stories and express their ideas in a meaningful and impactful way."



Fatemah Alhabib, Rania Barghout and Fareah Al Saqqaf in a group photo with the graduates.

Ms. Alhabib emphasized that The Influencer program is more than just a training experience – it's a platform that brings together ambitious minds, opens doors to new opportunities, and equips young people with the skills to succeed in any path they choose.

The Influencer program provides aspiring youth with a unique opportunity to develop advanced communication skills through interactive workshops and hands-on training.

Covering a range of fields, including effective communication strategies, leadership development, public speaking, photography, video editing, digital marketing, and podcasting, the program equips participants with essential tools for personal and professional growth. Led by experienced trainers and industry professionals, these sessions provide participants with the knowledge and skills to create a meaningful impact in their communities.

For the third consecutive year, Gulf Bank has proudly sponsored The Influencer program, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to social sustainability by supporting civil society organizations dedicated to youth development and empowerment.

Boursa Kuwait caps off sponsorship of CFA Institute Research Challenge

CFA challenge highlights student excellence in financial analysis

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Boursa Kuwait has successfully concluded its sponsorship of the CFA Institute Research Challenge, organized by the CFA Society Kuwait, a member of the CFA Institute. The challenge provided a competitive educational platform for university students to enhance their financial analysis skills and investment decision-making capabilities. This sponsorship aligns with Boursa Kuwait's commitment to supporting initiatives that promote financial literacy and empower young talent with technical knowledge and analytical skills, thereby contributing to the development of future leaders in the financial sector and the advancement of Kuwait's capital market.

Through this partnership, Boursa Kuwait became the first official sponsor and strategic partner of the competition in Kuwait, reflecting its dedication to supporting educational initiatives that foster financial and investment knowledge. This year's challenge focused on analysing the financial performance of Kuwait Telecommunications Company (STC), as selected by CFA Society Kuwait. Student teams presented in-depth financial analyses and investment recommendations based on professional standards to a panel of judges, under the guidance of their respective universities and industry experts. Participating universities included:

- Kuwait University
- American University of the Middle East (AUM)
- Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST)
- American University of Kuwait (AUK)

A panel of distinguished financial and investment experts evaluated the students' presentations, offering valuable industry insights. The judging panel consisted of:

- Ms. Noura Al-Abdulkareem – Head of Markets Sector, Boursa Kuwait
- Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Wazzan – Chief Investment Officer, Yarwa Capital
- Mr. Ahmed Al-Falah – Managing Director, Investment Banking, Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz)
- Mr. Ankul Aggarwal – Partner and



Naser M. Al-Sanousi, Senior Director of Marketing & Corporate Communications at Boursa Kuwait.



Aminah Abotalaf, President and Chair of Advocacy Committee of CFA Society Kuwait.



Ahmed F. Al-Falah, Managing Director Investment Banking at Kuwait Financial Centre.

- A well-deserved victory for Kuwait University students, with the American University of the Middle East (AUM) securing second place
- The challenge serves as a competitive platform for university students to develop their financial analysis skills

Head of Deal Advisory, KPMG

The competition showcased a high level of academic and analytical performance, with Kuwait University's team securing first place, while the American University of the Middle East (AUM) placed second. The winning team from Kuwait University comprised:

- Khalid Al-Eisa
- Hilal Al-Mutairi
- Abdulwahab Al-Jasmi
- Shahad Al-Fahad

The team was mentored by Dr. Abdullah Al-Awadhi, Assistant Professor of Finance and Financial Institutions at Kuwait University's College of Business Administration. As the faculty advisor, Dr. Al-Awadhi oversaw student selection, served as the main liaison with CFA Society Kuwait, reviewed research and presentations, and provided feedback without influencing students' decisions or changing written materials.

In his remarks to the competition's graduates, Mr. Naser M. Al-Sanousi, Senior Director of Marketing & Corporate Communications at Boursa Kuwait, stated: "Today, we celebrate months of dedication, research, and meticulous financial analysis. We honour the achievements of ambitious young minds whose contributions will undoubtedly shape the future of Kuwait's financial sector."

Al-Sanousi added: "I extend my sincere appreciation to the CFA Society Kuwait and the CFA Institute for their continuous commitment to promoting financial literacy in the next generation of financial professionals. Boursa Kuwait values its partnership with the institute and society and remains committed to shaping the future of capital markets by equipping the community with financial knowledge, technical expertise, and the confidence needed to succeed in the financial sector."

Boursa Kuwait's strategic partnership with CFA Society Kuwait and the CFA Institute is a key component of its efforts to make a meaningful impact on the communities in which it operates. This aligns with the bourse corporate sustainability strategy, its commitment to initiatives that cultivate a knowledgeable, skilled, and future-ready generation, and its broader goal of enhancing financial awareness and expertise within Kuwaiti society. This initiative also supports United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

From her side, Ms. Aminah Abotalaf, President and Chair of Advocacy Committee of CFA Society Kuwait, commented: "This competition is more than an academic challenge; it is a real-world experience that reflects the realities of the investment sector. The students' commitment to research and analysis demonstrates an impressive level of dedication and ambition, which we strive to instil through such initiatives. We extend our gratitude to Boursa Kuwait for its valuable partnership and unwavering support in nurturing young talent in the financial sector. We look forward to seeing these students achieve remarkable milestones in their careers."

Boursa Kuwait signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CFA Society Kuwait in October 2018, aimed at providing informative and educational content on investment fundamentals through Boursa Academy Online, a digital learning platform developed by Boursa Kuwait, to enhance financial knowledge among new and experienced investors.

The agreement enables both organizations to leverage their expertise in financial services and offer accessible educational content to individuals seeking to expand their investment knowledge. This includes resources to help investors assess opportunities

and make more informed financial decisions, such as a financial glossary, definitions of financial instruments, guidance on financial planning, an introduction to investment strategies and methods, and various educational materials.

Mr. Ahmed F. Al-Falah, Managing Director – Investment Banking at Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz) and a member of the judging panel, emphasized the importance of such initiatives, stating: "At Markaz, we are committed to participating in initiatives that encourage young talent, test their academic capabilities, and allow them to explore their potential as they embark on their careers in investment. It was inspiring to see some students we have previously supported at Markaz now presenting their insights with confidence and expertise."

Boursa Kuwait's corporate sustainability strategy is designed to ensure that all initiatives align with the company's corporate social responsibility governance framework, industry best practices, and investor expectations. The strategy also emphasizes the establishment of strong and sustainable partnerships that contribute to Boursa Kuwait's success, allowing the company to leverage the expertise and strengths of other organizations and institutions across various fields. Additionally, it seeks to integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts into the company's culture, ensuring long-term sustainability and a lasting impact embedded within its daily operations.

As part of this strategy, Boursa Kuwait has launched multiple initiatives in collaboration with local and international organizations, with a particular focus on supporting NGOs and charitable programs, promoting financial literacy and capital market awareness, empowering women, and protecting the environment.

GDP expected to grow 4.5-6%

UAE economy set to hit record growth in 2025

ABU DHABI, Feb 19, (KUNA): The UAE economy is poised to hit record rates of growth and competitiveness in 2025 thanks to accumulated efforts and strategic steps and policies adopted by this Gulf country over the last years.

These efforts are primarily intended to shore up the pillars of a sustainable and diversified national economy that is based on innovation and knowledge, and keeps abreast of global transformations.

At the beginning of 2025, the UAE economy witnessed positive signs centered on a set of indications as its foreign trade unprecedentedly hit approximately three trillion dirhams in late 2024.

The Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE) predicted the country's economic growth to accelerate to 4.5 percent this year, while International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts estimated higher growth rates.

It said that the UAE's strong performance, driven by comprehensive economic partnership agreements, is expected to continue through 2025, supporting real GDP growth projections of 4.0 percent in 2024 and accelerating to 4.5 percent in 2025.

UAE Minister of Economy Abdullah Al Marri expected the UAE national economy to grow by 5-6 percent in 2025, driven by strong performance in vital sectors like technology, renewable energy, trade, financial services, and infrastructure sectors.

In statements to the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Al Marri noted that the UAE's GDP growth averaged 4.8 percent between 2021 and 2024, while non-oil GDP growth averaged 6.2 percent.

Additionally, the contribution of non-oil sectors reached 75 percent of the national economy's GDP, reinforcing progress toward achieving the goals of the "We the UAE 2031" vision, he said.

The minister highlighted that continued growth is a clear indication of the national economy's ability to sustain high and sustainable expansion compared to advanced economies.

He further stated that the UAE has a clear economic strategy that includes the circular economy, the space economy, and emerging economic sectors, in addition to exploring new economic blocs, forming partnerships, and attracting foreign investments.

Al Marri added that thanks to the leadership's vision and directives, the UAE's economy enjoys high resilience and robustness in facing global challenges while maintaining sustainable growth.

This is supported by clear strategies that strengthen the new economic model based on knowledge, innovation, and advanced technology, according to the UAE minister of economy.

Al Marri's optimistic statements aligned with relevant estimates and forecasts recently made by international institutions as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected the UAE economy to record the highest growth in the region for 2025.

In this regard, Jihad Azour, Director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), stated that the UAE's economy had demonstrated a high capacity to withstand global shocks in recent years, while the non-oil sector continued to grow.

In a statement to the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Azour noted that the non-oil sector's growth rate over the past years had ranged between 4.5 and 5.5 percent, reflecting the significant impact of

the non-oil sector on the UAE economy, with oil revenues also contributing to boosting growth levels in the country.

The comprehensive economic agreements hammered out by the UAE with several countries have beefed up its trade partnerships, thus contributing to non-oil trade growth in 2024 to hit AED 2.9 trillion (about USD 815.7 billion), making up a growth of 14.6 percent, compared with 2023.

In pursuit of the UAE's economic objectives, Abu Dhabi is strengthening international ties with countries around the world to build on its position as a global trade and logistics hub. Signing Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs) is key to this goal.

Since the CEPAs was launched in September 2021, the UAE has clinched agreements with 24 countries in five continents, including 18 deals that have been officially signed and six agreements that have entered into force and the rest to be officially signed later.

The UAE cabinet approved the country's federal general budget for fiscal year 2025. The budget, setting both revenues and expenditures at AED 71.5 billion, aims to maintain a balanced fiscal framework.

The 2025 federal budget is the largest in the nation's history, reflecting the resilience of the national economy and the sustainability of resources allocated to key developmental, economic, and social projects.

Credit ratings agency Fitch assigned the UAE an AA-(minus) rating with a stable outlook, citing moderate consolidated public debt levels, high GDP per capita, and its strong net external asset position, marking the federal government's first credit rating from Fitch.

It also received an Aa2 rating in creditworthiness, with a stable outlook for the national economy by the international rating agency, Moody's. The UAE received the highest sovereign rating in the region.

The UAE's financial, banking and insurance sector saw significant growth since its banking sector is the largest in the Middle East, with total assets amounting to AED 4.4 trillion at the end of November 2024, compared to AED 4.0 trillion in 2023.

Regarding the financial markets, AED 257 billion were added to the market value of the financial markets in 2024, buoyed by the country's positive economic performance in general.

As for the Emirati aviation and air cargo sector, it recorded a record performance during 2024, with passenger traffic having edged up by 10 percent to reach 147.8 million passengers against 134 million passengers in 2023.

In addition, air traffic recorded 1.03 million flights in 2024 in an unprecedented number in the country's history of air traffic.

Other sectors involving industry, real estate and renewable energy sectors also recorded remarkable growth rates in 2024.

Apart from its major international projects, the UAE launched a new project in January 2015, aiming at providing renewable energy around the clock and contributing to providing about "1 gigawatt per day" of the base load of renewable energy. The fresh project also embraces a photovoltaic solar energy station with a capacity of 5.2 gigawatts, in addition to battery systems for energy storage with a capacity of 19 gigawatts per day.

China and US remain Japan's top trade partners

Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan jumps 35.3% in Jan

TOKYO, Feb 19, (KUNA): Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan surged 35.3 percent from a year earlier to JPY 76.9 billion (USD 485 million) in January, up for the first time in five months fueled by robust exports, government data showed Wednesday.

Kuwait posted black ink with Japan for 17 years on a monthly basis, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report. Overall exports from Kuwait to Japan soared 44.6 percent year-on-year to JPY 101.1 billion (USD 645 million) for the first expansion in five months. Imports from Japan also jumped 85.2 percent to JPY 24.2 billion (USD 149 million), up for the second month in a row.

Middle East's trade surplus with Japan widened 4.4 percent to JPY 832.8 billion (USD 550 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region expanding 13.7 percent from a year earlier.

Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which made up 94.5 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, rose 12.8 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan also inflated 41.5 percent on demand for automobiles, machinery and steel.

Japan's global trade balance returned to deficit in January, marking the first red ink in two months at JPY 2.8 trillion (USD 18.2 billion), chiefly due to a

surge in imports and the yen's depreciation. Exports grew 7.2 percent from the year before, thanks to strong shipments of vehicles, ships and pharmaceuticals.

Imports also increased 16.7 percent on communication devices such as smartphones, and electronics as well as pharmaceutical products. Both the value of exports and imports marked record highs for January since comparable data became available in 1979 amid the weakening yen. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors.

Board proposes 10% cash dividend and 5% bonus shares

ABK reports KD 52.41 million net profit for 2024, up 16%

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) proudly announced its robust financial results for the financial year 2024, once again affirming its position as a leading financial institution.

Financial Performance

ABK reported a Net Profit of KD 52.41 million, representing a 16% increase and an increase in Earnings per Share (EPS) of 17% to 21 fils. Operating Profit increased by 11% to KD 107.41 million while Operating Income witnessed an increase of 9%, reaching KD 200.75 million, reflecting the Bank's strong profitability and shareholder value creation.

Total Assets reached KD 7.37 billion while maintaining steady growth in Loans and Advances amounting to KD 4.83 billion, with Customer Deposits at KD 4.42 billion, affirming the Group's reputation as a trusted financial partner. Moreover, the Bank's Non-performing Loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.23%, with NPL coverage at 460%, Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) at 16.94%, and Shareholders' Equity at KD 628 million, further underscoring ABK's financial stability, healthy financial position, and robust balance sheet.

The Board's proposed to distribute cash dividends of 10% equivalent to 10 fils per share, as well as bonus shares of 5% equivalent to 5 shares for every 100 shares. These recommendations are subject to the approval of the Annual General Assembly.

Added Value

On this occasion, Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, expressed his happiness with the outstanding results, stating, "The profits for 2024 reflect our ability for sustainable growth and delivering added value to shareholders. They also confirm the success of our strategic plans



ABK Logo

to develop the Group's operations and operational efficiency according to the highest standards, helping us enhance our competitive position in the banking sector across various fronts."

Behbehani added that 2024 witnessed the continued implementation of the digital transformation plan across various departments and sections of the Group, pointing out the signing of numerous agreements to leverage artificial intelligence technologies and develop banking solutions, services, and products offered to individual and corporate clients.

He emphasized that throughout 2024, ABK was keen to formulate plans to address local, regional, and global economic challenges, including changes in interest rates, inflation levels, and geopolitical tensions, to protect its interests and preserve shareholders' rights.

Developments

Behbehani explained, "Last year, the Bank was upgraded to the Premier Market on Boursa Kuwait. Additionally, 2024 marked our return to debt capital markets with our US\$300 million Additional Tier 1 (AT1) bond offering with a coupon rate of 6.5% per annum. The subscription exceeded 4.5 times the offered amount, reaffirming the Bank's financial trust and reputation among investors and its financial stability.

He noted that ABK achieved



Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK

more than 10 global awards from institutions specializing in performance evaluation across various sectors. Among these are six awards from Global Finance Magazine for digital excellence in Kuwait and the Middle East, two awards from MEED for Excellence in Customer Protection/Fraud Control in Kuwait, and Best Retail Bank in Egypt. This is in addition to five awards from International Business Magazine across Kuwait and Egypt. The Bank was also recognized as Best Investor Relationship Bank by International Finance and for Best Corporate Governance Banking by The Global Economics, among others.

Behbehani added that the Group has consistently maintained its high credit ratings, with an A by Fitch and an A2 by Moody's, underscoring the Group's robust financial position and its ability to tackle various challenges.

Integrated Operations

The Chairman stated that the Group has focused on achieving operational integration in Kuwait, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. This effort includes the introduction of new banking services, products, and solutions tailored to all customer segments.



Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at ABK

Behbehani announced the launch of the group's five-year strategy, focusing on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and sustainability. This initiative aims to foster sustainable growth and minimize the environmental impact of the Bank's operations, highlighting its role as a responsible financial institution in the market. He also highlighted the publication of the fourth annual sustainability report, which reviews significant developments across the Group's operations and activities in all the markets where it operates.

Furthermore, he noted that ABK Capital, ABK's investment arm, has been actively enhancing its products by launching several new investment portfolios and forming global partnerships. The company aims to provide exceptional benefits to clients as part of its strategy to strengthen its presence in the investment sector and stay abreast of developments in this area.

Continued Success

On his part, Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at ABK, said, "In 2024, we successfully achieved growth in our financial indicators once again. This success stems from our

consistent adaptation to both local and global market developments, engaging in carefully assessed financing operations, and innovating new services, solutions, and products that continue to attract more customers to our ever-expanding family."

He noted that over the past year, the Group participated in numerous financing deals within Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This participation reflects the strong trust companies have in the Bank to meet their needs in developing projects and enhancing operational activities.

Al Sumait also mentioned that 2024 saw the launch of a newly revamped website to stay abreast of technological advancements. This update was accompanied by the introduction of various digital solutions, meeting the growing demand from customers for secure and fast banking and financial transactions using their smart devices, available 24/7.

Achievements

Al Sumait highlighted that 2024 marks a significant milestone with the continuous growth in both individual and corporate clients. The focus has been on enhancing and simplifying the services provided to ensure customer satisfaction during financial and banking transactions. Additionally, clients were rewarded with various promotional campaigns and exclusive benefits tailored to their needs.

He also highlighted that in 2024, the WAMD service for instant money transfers in collaboration with KNET was introduced. This is alongside a RMB (Chinese Yuan) currency transfer service for businesses. Additionally, several special packages were launched catering to diverse customer segments. These include the 'Al Ta-

jerPlus' package designed to help merchants expand their operations and projects, as well as a package specifically for oil sector employees, among others.

Furthermore, Al Sumait explained that in 2024, the Group focused on enhancing employee capabilities by engaging in various training programs and recruiting new talent. Additionally, efforts were made to improve the work environment and ensure equality among employees.

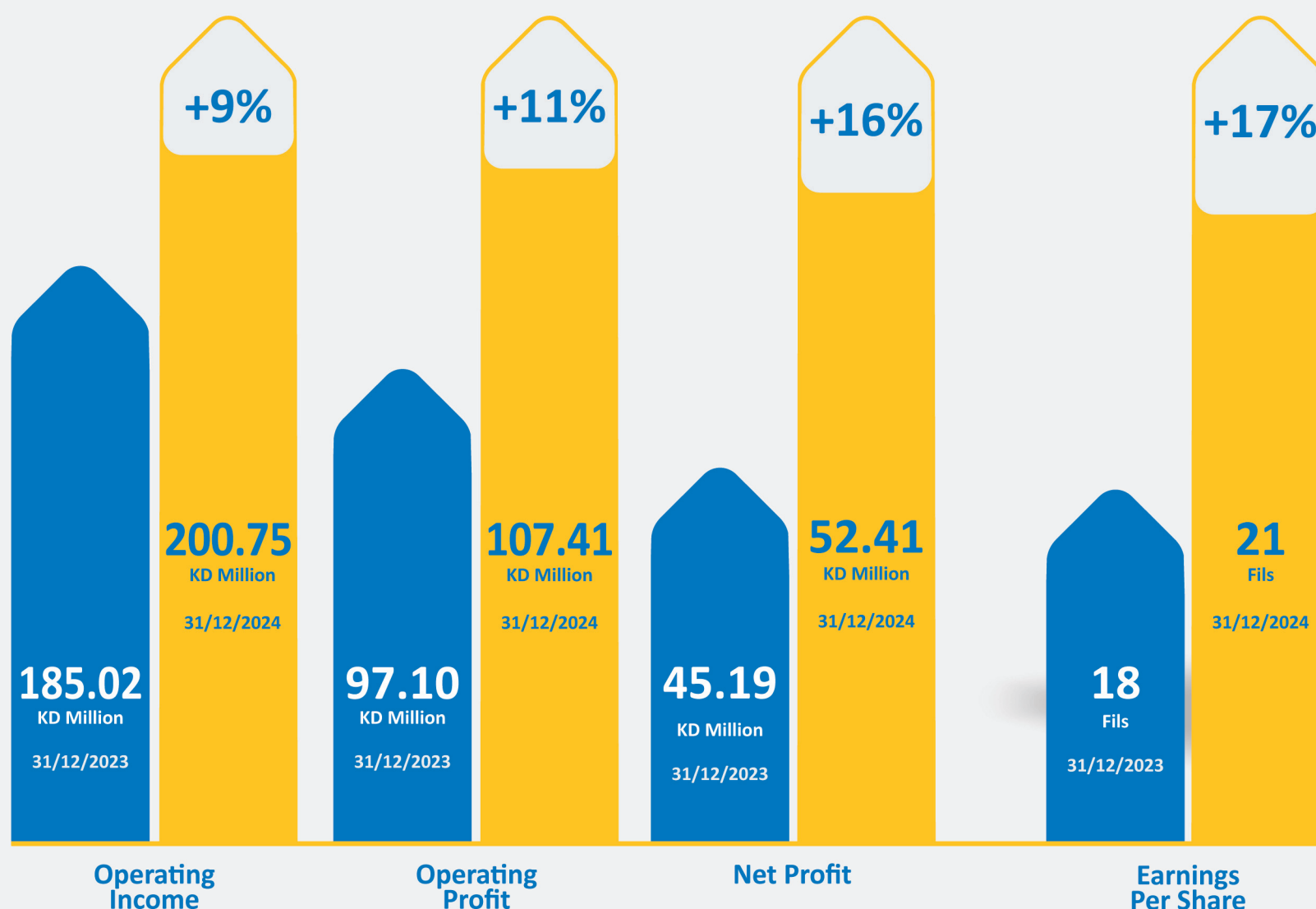
Branches and Social Responsibility

Al Sumait highlighted the ongoing plan to develop the Bank's branches in both Kuwait and Egypt. Additionally, ABK is enhancing its operations in the UAE by introducing more services, such as mortgage loans, signing a Real Estate Escrow Account agreement, and establishing a Corporate Services Desk, among other initiatives.

He noted that last year featured the sponsorship of events across health, education, culture, and sports sectors. "These efforts are part of an evolving social responsibility program designed to meet the diverse needs of communities in Kuwait, Egypt, and the UAE," Al Sumait added.

Al Sumait concluded, "In 2024, we continued supporting the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign to promote financial inclusion in Kuwaiti society. This was achieved by delivering exceptional and purposeful awareness content within our bank branches and digital platforms, organizing numerous events and competitions for the public, and participating in television and radio interviews. These efforts were conducted in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association."

Financial Results 2024



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Group photo of the program participants.

TechEdge program equips youth with AI, data science & cybersecurity skills

KFAS launches 'TechEdge' program to empower youth for careers in advanced technology in strategic partnership with NBK and Zain

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) has launched the "TechEdge" program, a strategic initiative developed in collaboration with National University of Singapore, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), and Zain. This program aims to equip young Kuwaiti professionals with advanced expertise in high-demand technological fields—such as artificial intelligence, data science, and cybersecurity—preparing them to excel in these rapidly evolving sectors.

The program aims to underscore the vital importance of cybersecurity and data protection amid growing digital challenges. By equipping participants with in-depth knowledge of cutting-edge technologies and tools, it empowers them to counter cyber threats and strengthen digital infrastructure. Beyond enhancing technical expertise, the initiative prepares young professionals to navigate the evolving demands of an increasingly digital world.

This initiative supports New Kuwait Vision 2035 by fostering the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) collaboration, driving economic diversification, and advancing digital transformation. By equipping the workforce with cutting-edge skills, it strengthens Kuwait's path toward a resilient, technology-driven future.

On this occasion, Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager - Head of Group Human Resources, remarked, "Our commitment lies in developing a highly skilled national workforce capable of excelling in a rapidly evolving labor market driven by technological advancements. By providing them with the necessary expertise and tools, we empower them to lead in advanced



National Bank of Kuwait team participating in the program.

technology fields. This initiative not only reinforces sustainable development but also accelerates Kuwait's digital transformation, aligning with the country's broader strategic vision."

"The 'TechEdge' program represents a significant opportunity for early-career professionals to enhance their expertise. Through high-quality educational and training initiatives delivered in partnership with the National University of Singapore—a globally recognized leader in technology—the program is poised to equip participants with the skills needed to excel in cutting-edge fields. This collaboration underscores our commitment to fostering talent and driving innovation in Kuwait's technology sector," he added.

Al-Ablani emphasized the bank's dedication to playing a pivotal role in the developmental journey of Kuwait's youth, who are brimming with potential and capabilities. "Our focus is on providing the right guidance and resources to harness their talents effectively, ensuring they contribute meaningfully to the nation's sustainable development

goals," he concluded.

Nawal Bourisli, Chief Purpose and HR Officer at Zain Kuwait, said: "This partnership embodies Zain's continuous efforts to contribute to the development of the knowledge economy, capacity building, and fostering innovation among youth, particularly in digital and tech skillsets that shape our world today. Innovation is one of the key drivers of sustainable growth, and this is precisely what we aim to achieve through our support of the TechEdge program, launched in collaboration with one of the world's leading academic institutions, the National University of Singapore."

She added: "This collaboration reflects the synergy between the public and private sectors in advancing the country's developmental goals, with a primary focus on investing in human capital to drive sustainable economic and social development. It is yet another addition to Zain's ongoing programs under our 'Innovation Nation' initiative, through which we collaborate with leading entities to achieve our strategic objectives in this field."

She continued: "Through this partnership, we seek to support innovators and entrepreneurs, share private sector expertise, foster a culture of creativity, and invest in the digital skills of youth, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, which have become a top priority in modern job markets."

Last year, NBK unveiled the NBK Tech Academy, marking a significant milestone as Kuwait's first academy dedicated to digital technology and data systems. This initiative underscores the bank's commitment to staying at the forefront of digital advancements in technology, information, and data security. The academy features a comprehensive professional training program designed to nurture young Kuwaiti talent across a range of critical areas, including FinTech, Data Analytics, Ethics in Technology, Cyber Security, Fundamentals of Digital Payments, Digital Innovation, Artificial Intelligence, Scripting and Programming, Fundamentals of Codifications, and Finance for Non-Finance Professionals.

Through its "Innovation Nation" initiative, Zain is committed to strengthening Kuwait's innovation and creativity ecosystem by offering interactive programs and activities throughout the year in collaboration with leading academic and cultural institutions from both the public and private sectors. This initiative targets youth, students, graduates, and entrepreneurs, covering a wide range of professional and personal development areas, with a particular focus on digital and technological capabilities such as robotics, data science, programming, artificial intelligence, and more, contributing to the development of the next generation of technology leaders in Kuwait.

Under the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince

KFH partakes in the 15th International Invention Fair in Middle East

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Under the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and in the presence of His Excellency the Minister of Education, Dr. Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 15th edition of the International Invention Fair in the Middle East (IIFME), organized by the Kuwait Science Club and supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

KFH's strategic partnership in the 15th IIFME, under the slogan "Where Investors Meet Investors", reflects its commitment to supporting education, innovation, and scientific initiatives. This partnership aims to develop societal capabilities and showcase the work of young innovators through a widely attended exhibition. It serves to note that KFH has been a strategic partner of IIFME for over 10 years.

The International Invention Fair in the Middle East is the second largest invention fair globally after the Geneva Fair, and the largest in the Middle East. The 15th IIFME saw a significant increase in participant numbers, with



His Excellency the Minister of Education, Dr. Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Scientific Club, Talal Jassem Al-Kharafi, visit the KFH pavilion at the exhibition.

approximately 180 inventors from 42 Arab and foreign countries showcasing 230 inventions across diverse scientific fields. 28 Kuwaiti inventors participate in the fair, showcasing 17 inventions across various scientific fields. They represent several educational and scientific institutions, including Kuwait University, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, the Sabah Al-Ah-

mad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training.

KFH is keen to participate in such exhibitions as a scientific platform through which investors and inventors meet, in addition to stakeholders, to promote scientific research for societal prosperity.

Researchers and inventors are recognized for their contributions, inspiring young people to pursue unique scientific innovations that benefit society, support development plans, and advance scientific progress.

KFH is a leader in supporting innovators, honoring Kuwaiti creators with award-winning inventions at major exhibitions and competitions. Furthermore, KFH encourages young Kuwaitis and acts as a catalyst for their achievements. It also engages young entrepreneurs, offering ongoing support to help them succeed regionally and globally.

Innovation and creativity are considered essential components of the work environment at KFH. The bank hosts an annual competition among its employees to identify the best innovations and creative ideas in the banking sector. Employee contributions are characterized by their high alignment with customer needs, competitive challenges, and compatibility with automated systems and supporting programs. This focus on innovation plays a crucial role in business development and enhances service quality, safety, security, speed, and accuracy.

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Simington warns America must rethink its economic strategy

THE United States has spent decades outsourcing its industrial strength, prioritizing short-term financial gains over long-term national security. Now, China dominates critical sectors like telecommunications, shipbuilding, and advanced manufacturing – while America struggles to keep up.

In an unfiltered discussion with Reconnaissance Research founder and CEO Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri, FCC Commissioner Nathan Simington delivers a stark assessment of how U.S. policy failures allowed this shift to happen.

He warns that without decisive action, the U.S. risks falling irreversibly behind its global rivals. Below is the full Q&A.

In your article, you highlight "unforced errors" and "economic distortions" in U.S. policy that contributed to China's trade dominance. What specific policy missteps do you believe were most damaging?

1. The most damaging policy misstep is really just the way we do accounting and corporate valuation in the United States. There is an incentive to get expensive assets off balance sheets in order to facilitate off-balance sheet financing and to create the appearance, if not the reality, of better returns relative to balance sheet size. Every public company in the United States is incentivized to play this shell game; unfortunately, China took the other side of that bet. China now holds the expensive, productive assets that American firms offloaded. And while that might not be a problem when any individual American firm does it, yet when they all do it we've created a systemic offshoring crisis, particularly in advanced manufacturing. This perhaps isn't an issue at the level of, say, 1980s Mexican maquiladora-level product manufacturing and packaging – manually filling shampoo bottles with ladders, where cost of labor predominates. But when all of your advanced electronics, including all of their rare earth inputs, come from the same few square miles of China because American firms would rather rent than buy, you've just created a crisis of national security and economic resiliency because public markets are accustomed to over indexing against productive assets.

I say "public company" because the world's richest man is an industrialist who manufactures in the United States but keeps most of his business interests privately held. Public-company finance exists as a way to invest the savings of the middle classes; to the extent that this proves an inadequate model, inherently or because of its long-standing regulatory complexity, the United States must simply consider alternatives for the social functions that public companies presently serve.

Your analysis critiques a "naïve free markets" approach to trade. How do you reconcile the need for market freedom with the necessity of safeguarding national industrial interests?

2. Markets are very good at a lot of things. Command socialism doesn't work because it subverts three norms that markets require

to operate: allocation of resources through market-based price discovery; incentives to invest; and property rights. These truly are engines of progress, innovation, and wealth without which we cannot do, and I do not intend to suggest otherwise. Having said that, naïve capitalism is the idea that free participation in an efficient, minimally-regulated but strongly-enforced market is the primary, or even sole, consideration with which a nation state should concern itself as it orders its economy. The "spherical cow" in this assumption is the idea that security is a given, which is a luxury belief that most countries can't afford; perhaps the United States can no longer afford it either. This thinking created our allergy to industrial policy, for instance. We no longer live in a unipolar world in which American capitalists enjoy the luxury of concerning exclusively ourselves with our own enterprises without regard to a larger social and security context.

Economic security is national security, but autologies can also be read backwards – and that means that national security considerations can, and should, guide national thinking in economic development. And, frankly, we need to find a way to get our heads around, and even formally model, the cost overhang of systemic threats to national security that may arise. For instance, if we have built our national communications networks using cheap and easily-compromised electronics acquired for pennies from global rivals, we may have assumed costs to security and intellectual property outstripping any possible price savings.

You write that China's industrialization was "a conscious, targeted choice." What specific lessons can the U.S. realistically adopt from China's playbook?

3. China is the world leader in advanced manufacturing not because it has the best people or processes, but because it directed the entire heft of the state toward that specific purpose. When the United States acts with national purpose toward technological enterprise, we get the space program, Bell Labs, and the internet. What do we have like that now? We have a program here, a bill there, but the nearest approximation we have of national purpose is bipartisanship – and most bipartisan 'achievements' have nothing of national purpose within them, but instead are sham-bolic grab-bags of priorities for which it is difficult or impossible to tell which way the arrow of effort should point. And even when you can discern what the goal was, the program is constructed in such a way as to functionally preclude its accomplishment – problems are not solved, but merely perpetually "addressed."

Perhaps, for some career politicians and civil servants, this is more congenial than it is for the public. At any rate: it's time to pick a technological domain, any domain, and achieve serious-minded clarity around its execution. I, personally, would like to see us land a person on Mars. I'm certain China will if we don't.



Reconnaissance Research founder/CEO Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri and FCC Commissioner Nathan Simington.

In line with its strategic vision for becoming the Islamic bank of choice in Kuwait

Kuwait International Bank joins IILM global network as its newest Primary Dealer

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced joining the International Islamic Liquidity Management Corporation (IILM) as a Primary Dealer of Short-Term Sukuk, confirming its commitment to fortifying and advancing the Sukuk market and enhancing the Bank's role as a market maker. This further aligns with KIB's vision to become the Islamic bank of choice in Kuwait as well as its strategic goals to expand its suite of innovative and high-quality offerings and contribute to the advancement of the local and regional Islamic finance industry. The signing ceremony took place at the Bank's headquarters in the presence of KIB's General Manager of the Treasury Department, Mohammed Al-Duwailah and CEO of IILM, Mohamad Safri Shahul Hamid.

In this regard, Al-Duwailah said: "It is an honor to be part of IILM's global network of esteemed Primary Dealers whose efforts and commitment continue to develop the Islamic banking sector and add to its regional and global competitiveness. As a Primary Dealer, we are delighted to offer domestic and regional banks the leading high-quality, low-risk, short-term IILM Sukuk, enhancing our role in meeting the liquidity requirements of institutions that provide Islamic financial services."

He added: "With our new role



Mohammed Al-Duwailah and Mohamad Safri Shahul Hamid during the signing ceremony.

as a Primary Dealer, KIB is presented with a valuable opportunity to not only promote Islamic financial instruments, such as the competitive IILM USD Sukuk, but also strengthen the stability and growth of the Islamic finance ecosystem. Alongside other Primary Dealers worldwide, we are excited to embark on this new chapter of regional and global exposure as we pursue shared success for KIB and IILM."

On his part, Mohamad Safri said: "We are delighted to welcome KIB to IILM's global network of esteemed Primary Dealers. Kuwait has long been a key player in the Islamic finance industry, with its

well-established banking sector and strong regulatory support for Shari'ah-compliant financial instruments. As a new Primary Dealer, KIB's participation reinforces the increasing demand for high-quality, short-term Sukuk in Kuwait and the region, underscoring the vital role that the Kuwaiti financial institutions have been playing in deepening the Islamic liquidity management solutions."

"As Kuwait's Islamic banking sector continues to grow and evolve, KIB's participation in the IILM highly rated short-term Sukuk program will open new frontiers and enhance liquidity options for the Is-



Mohammed Al-Duwailah and Mohamad Safri Shahul Hamid in a group photo with KIB and IILM's team after signing the agreement.

lamic market participants locally, regionally, and globally. We look forward to an enduring partnership with KIB in strengthening cross-border liquidity management and advancing the Islamic financial ecosystem globally," Safri added.

As per the dealership agreement, KIB is set to contribute to the program's infrastructure expansion by committing to issuing a pre-agreed minimum of all the IILM short-term Sukuk. Other roles include supporting the IILM secondary market activity by providing two-way quotes; contributing to the liquidity and price transparency in the secondary market; and broadening the IILM market

regionally and globally by promoting the short-term Sukuk to new segments of investors worldwide.

It serves to note that the IILM's short-term Sukuk issuance program is rated "A-1" by S&P and "F1" by Fitch Ratings, with total issuance amounting to more than USD 110 billion since the program inception in 2013.

In committing to its new responsibilities as an IILM Primary Dealer, KIB joins a cohort of the finest Islamic banks, including Kuwait Finance House, Boubyan Bank, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank, Affin Islamic Bank, Al Baraka Turk, CIMB Islamic Bank Berhad, Dukhan Bank,

First Abu Dhabi Bank, Maybank Islamic Berhad, Qatar Islamic Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, and Golden Global Investment Bank.

In addition to the IILM short-term Sukuk, KIB has a robust Shari'ah-compliant products and services portfolio that offers customers varying options that match their needs. These include Murabaha, Wakala, Istisna'a, Musawama and Ijara. As a 'Bank for Life', KIB is committed to deepening customer relationships by expanding its portfolio and delivering innovative solutions that align with the evolving market demands while contributing to the growth of the Islamic finance sector.

'Thank y'all for saving my life'

A\$AP returns to music, film and family after acquittal

LOS ANGELES, Feb 19, (AP): "Thank y'all for saving my life," A\$AP Rocky shouted to jurors as they left his trial.

It's no ordinary life they sent him on to when they quickly returned not guilty verdicts Tuesday on two counts of felony assault with a semiautomatic handgun.

The rapper could've left the Los Angeles courtroom in cuffs, awaiting a long prison sentence. But he instead found himself literally leaping with joy into the lap of his superstar partner Rihanna in the audience behind him.

"There was a moment when, before we heard the words from the clerk, he didn't know if he was going to be spending the next two decades in jail or going home," his attorney Joe Tacopina said.

Rocky had a banner year of fame and glamor in the works that he can now freely embrace.

In the same city as his acquittal, he is set to bask in the height of hip-hop as headliner of the Rolling Loud music festival next month. On the other coast, he'll be at the height of fashion's biggest night, the Met Gala, as a celebrity co-chair along with LeBron James and Pharrell Williams in May. And in summer, he adds major motion picture actor to his resume as the co-star - with Denzel Washington - in director Spike Lee's film "Highest 2 Lowest."



A\$AP Rocky reacts in the courtroom after he was found not guilty during his trial Tuesday, Feb 18 in Los Angeles. (AP)

The trial arguably came at the height of his fame, if not the pinnacle of a music career that began with acclaim in his

native New York and later led to a pair of No. 1 albums and three Grammy nominations.

It would have been very easy - and many would say smart - for him to have accepted a relatively generous pretrial offer: Just six months in jail, along with probation and other conditions, for a guilty plea to one count.

He declined, and said bring it on to a three-week trial and the possibility of a prison sentence of up to 24 years and spending the foreseeable future away from Rihanna and their children, 2-year-old RZA Athelston Mayers and 1-year-old Riot Rose Mayers.

"He turned down a plea for almost no jail time because he was innocent," Tacopina said. "They're gonna move on, they have a lot of great things professionally going on. Rocky's really at the height of his career. Rihanna's on top of the world. They have two beautiful children. They have a family."

Rocky and Rihanna pushed their way through a crush of photographers, reporters, YouTubers and fans to get into a waiting SUV.

"I'm thankful ... to be here right now, to be a free man talking to y'all," he said with a smile.

When the verdict was read a few minutes earlier, the court-

room full of fans exploded into screaming glee as Rocky jumped to where Rihanna sat with his mother and sister.

"Mr. Mayers, you're excused," Judge Mark Arnold said moments later, with the post-trial hearings, appeals and sentencing now nonexistent.

Rihanna had slipped into the courtroom after the rest of the audience was seated, as she did several times during the three-week trial, bringing their sons with her to closing arguments.

Rocky had been more than 30 minutes late for the reading of the verdict, and looked shaken and tense as he waited for it.

Then came the verdict, the leap, and the release. "I didn't know how athletic he was," Tacopina said. "That was raw emotion, you guys got to see."

Prosecutors and their witnesses said Rocky was beefing with a former friend, ASAP Relli, with whom he had been in a crew who called themselves the ASAP Mob since high school. They said the two men met up in Hollywood on Nov. 6, 2021, and after a scuffle that also included their high school mates ASAP Twelvyy and ASAP Illz, Rocky pulled the gun and fired twice at Relli, who said one of the shots grazed his knuckle but was not seriously hurt.

NASCAR movie

Gordon ready to join Cruise on 'Thunder'

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla., Feb 19, (AP): Help him, Tom Cruise!

NASCAR Hall of Famer Jeff Gordon wants a "Days of Thunder" sequel and said at Daytona International Speedway that he's been in touch with the Hollywood actor about making the project come to life.

"I've absolutely talked to Tom about it because I want him to do the project," Gordon said. "We want to be a part of it if it were to happen."

The Hollywood Reporter reported in November that Cruise had talked to Paramount about a follow-up to his 1990 NASCAR racing film. The original was a critically panned summer blockbuster that was largely lampooned throughout the NASCAR industry for its exaggeration and overindulgence.

Over the decades, the film has since become a cult favorite in NASCAR circles and is still quoted by race fans to this day.

"Rubbin', son, is racin'," lives on, the immortal line from crew chief Harry Hogge, played by Robert Duvall.

Riding high from his "Top Gun" fame, Cruise had an idea for a movie based on fast cars and the characters who raced them. And so began the making of "Days of Thunder."

Gordon could inspired have Cruise's Cole Trickle back in the day, though the character was loosely based on the late Tim Richmond. Gordon, now vice chairman at Hendrick Motorsports, won the Daytona 500 on Sunday with team owner Rick Hendrick and driver William Byron.

Friendly

Gordon and Cruise have remained friendly - Cruise showed up at a 2015 NASCAR banquet to honor the retiring Gordon - which could boost the prospect of Gordon and Hendrick Motorsports' involvement in a sequel.

"He seems to like to tease it, so I don't know," Gordon said Sunday night. "We'll see what happens. If that doesn't happen, I feel pretty confident there's a project out there that will get NASCAR back on the big screen, if not just a really cool docuseries or something beyond even what we're already seeing right now."

The movie ultimately introduced NASCAR to a wider audience that had very limited exposure to stock-car racing before that summer. There had been racing movies before - think "Thunder Road," "Grand Prix," "Stroker Ace," or even "Smokey and the Bandit" - but none that had depicted NASCAR in such a mainstream style.

"Hard to imagine how you pull that off today because they actually had race cars with cameras in the race, and the cameras were big," Gordon said. "Cameras have gotten a lot smaller so maybe you could pull it off, but how do you do it and make it realistic and really authentic?"

NASCAR has seen more swings and misses than checkered flags when it comes to its portrayal on the big or small screen since "Days of Thunder." For every "Talladega Nights," there are 10 more bombs such as comedian Kevin James' ill-fated Netflix comedy series, "The Crew." Gordon said he was encouraged that better days are ahead for NASCAR in the entertainment industry.

"I am seeing just a lot more momentum in projects like coming through NASCAR and coming to Hendrick Motorsports and just more interest," he said. "So that's good, right? It talks a lot about where the sport is at, where it's heading, the amazing crowd that was here all weekend, not just today, new TV partners."



Jeff Gordon, (left), and Tom Cruise listen on stage during the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series auto racing awards, Dec. 4, 2015, in Las Vegas. (AP)

Film



This image released by Neon shows Yura Borisov in a scene from 'Anora.' (AP)

Actor embraces 'Russian Ryan Gosling' title

Borisov shines in 'Anora' as soulful henchman

LOS ANGELES, Feb 19, (AP): Yura Borisov does not have a flashy entrance in "Anora." His character Igor isn't even introduced until the movie's nearly halfway through. He's just the hired muscle, quietly observing and reacting to the quickly devolving situation around him. And yet you can't take your eyes off of this stranger.

Up until that point it's been the Mikey Madison show, a chronicle of her character Ani's whirlwind romance with the spendy, wild son of a Russian oligarch. Igor arrives at the turning point, the end of the honeymoon and the beginning of a swift descent into a chaotic, all-night manhunt. And soon he establishes himself not just as an intriguing outsider, but the soul of the film: The henchman with a heart.

It's a performance that has caught many off guard: An introduction to a fresh face with an undeniable star quality that has earned him nominations from the Oscars, the Screen Actors Guild and the BAFTAs. But Borisov, 32, is only a newcomer in some parts of the world. Already a star in Russia, Borisov broke through on the international scene in the Cannes title "Compartment No. 6" as the uncouth miner sharing a cramped room with a Finnish student on a long train ride through Russia.

That was the performance that made filmmaker Sean Baker take note and give him a call about participating in what would become "Anora." Baker has described his secret weapon, who quickly becomes the beating heart and soul of the film, as the "Russian Ryan Gosling." Borisov is flattered, but also little confused by the comparison.

"I love Ryan Gosling and very interested to work with him one day. I've seen his films. He plays very, very cool. But I don't know what he means," Borisov laughed. "Let's

ask Sean."

Baker, for his part, knew he had a ringer in Borisov but doesn't show his hand from the top. He strings the audience along, letting them feel like they're discovering something too. The 28-minute real-time home invasion scene where we meet Igor was actually Borisov's first to film. It was rehearsed and discussed in detail before the cameras started rolling. In all, it took about eight days to film and three months to edit.

"We discussed everything trying to find the balance humor and scares and drama and comedy because it's important for this scene to," Borisov said. "But for me I'm just thinking about a real person named Igor and a real person named Anora."

Poignant

He and Baker spoke a lot about Igor's past, his story, his dreams and his clothes. The white Nike sneakers as contrast to Igor's all black outfit, he thought, were particularly poignant - a symbol of Igor's soul. He liked that his director would ask him if he thought Igor might do this or that instead of just telling him to do something.

But Borisov is not the kind of actor who thinks that he has much interesting to say or explain about his performance. If he could, he said, he'd be a writer. For him, it's the work that does the talking.

"The most important is what do you feel when you see the film," he said. "It's not so important what we were discussing."

The week that Borisov spoke to the AP was the week "Anora" had emerged as the frontrunner in an awards race that had previously been wide open. The supporting actor

category however, competitive as it may be with nominees like Edward Norton, Guy Pearce and Jeremy Strong, has been considered Kieran Culkin's to lose for some time now. But it's still significant: Borisov is the first Russian actor to get an Oscar nomination since Mikhail Baryshnikov's nod in 1977 for "The Turning Point."

"I'm happy that it means something for a lot of people and that's why it means a lot for me," he said. "People could feel some hope maybe inside them, maybe proud inside them, you know?"

It's been a wild ride since Cannes and the end is now in sight. Soon he'd be leaving for Los Angeles for the Oscars. The accolades and nominations have been exciting, though the impulse to keep the conversations going with all the interesting people he's met along the way has led to more than a few late nights.

"It's kind of a crazy, crazy time," he said. "It's too early for him to talk publicly about how much the raised profile has impacted his career, but, he teased "life is changing." And if he's being completely honest, he's happiest about simply getting to spend more time with the people he made the film with.

"Maybe it looks like kind of stupid because you could say that 'man, it's awards, it's big opportunities for you, why are you talking about spend time with your friends?'" Borisov said. "Maybe it's kind of stupid, but for me, it's still important to spend this time with them together. Because without this stuff, we will go to live our life separately. And it will be one day, of course, and I'm kind of sad about this but it just will come. Now we're still together and I'm happy about this."

Critics slam toxic public scrutiny of South Korean stars

Kim Sae-ron's death at 24 sparks debate on online culture

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 19, (AP): South Korean actor **Kim Sae-ron's** death this week has triggered an outpouring of grief and calls for changes to the way the country's celebrities are treated in the public arena and on social media, which critics say can foster a culture of harassment.

The 24-year-old, who began her career as a child actor and earned acclaim for her roles in several domestic films, including the 2010 crime noir "The Man from Nowhere," was found dead by a friend at her home in the country's capital, Seoul, on Sunday.

The National Police Agency has said that officers are not suspecting foul play and that Kim left no note.

Once among the brightest stars on

South Korea's vibrant movie and television scene, Kim struggled to find work after a 2022 drunk driving incident, for which she was later fined in court.

Online posts in South Korea are notoriously harsh toward celebrities who make missteps, especially women, and Kim faced constant negative coverage from news organizations that capitalized on public sentiment.



Kim Sae-ron

Newspapers and websites criticized her whenever she was seen partying with friends, or when she complained about her lack of work and nasty

comments on social media.

She was even criticized for smiling while filming an independent movie last year.

Following Kim's death, several of the country's major newspapers on Tuesday published editorials and opinion pieces lambasting the toxic online comments about the actor.

Some invoked the 2019 deaths of K-Pop singers Seol-li and Goo Hara and the 2023 death of "Squid Games" actor Lee Sun-kyun while calling for a change in the "harsh, zero-tolerance" culture toward celebrities.

The Hankook Ilbo newspaper said the country's media outlets were part of the problem, lamenting that some outlets continued to exploit Kim for clicks even after her death, using provocative headlines

that highlighted her past struggles.

The watchdog Citizens' Coalition for Democratic Media on Tuesday criticized news organizations for blaming social media without considering their own "sensational and provocative reporting."

Born in 2000, Kim began her acting career at age 9, with the 2009 film "A Brand New Life," portraying a girl's struggles to adjust to a new life after being left at an orphanage by her father. She rose to stardom with "The Man from Nowhere," which was one of the biggest hits in the South Korean movie scene that year and won her a domestic acting award.

She starred in various movies and TV shows before the 2022 drunk driving incident.

New brand adds diverse local products

Duchess Meghan unveils new lifestyles brand As Ever

MONTECITO, Calif., Feb 19, (AP): Au revoir, American Riviera Orchard. Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, has rebranded her fledgling company to As Ever just weeks after restarting her social media life under a new handle on Instagram.

Meghan teased American Riviera Orchard last year with jars of preserves. The new company has a fresh website she unveiled Monday with a rare photo of 3-year-old Lilibet, her youngest child with Prince Harry.

Lilibet is seen frolicking on a well-manicured lawn with her mother.

In a video posted to her new Instagram account, @Meghan, she said the name American Riviera, a moniker for her home turf near Santa Barbara, California, felt limiting in its support of locally grown and made products. She said she wants to include a wider range of goods under her new umbrella.

The news comes two weeks before the debut of "With Love, Meghan," her lifestyles show on Netflix. Meghan said Netflix has come on board as a business partner as well. She called that de-

velopment "huge."

She said she chose the name As Ever in 2022. During her "Suits" years, she had a popular lifestyle blog, The Tig.

"As Ever essentially means as it's always been and if you followed me since 2014 with The Tig, you know I've always loved cooking and crafting and gardening. This is what I do and I haven't been able to share it with you in the same way for the past few years. But now I can," she said.

Meghan left Instagram when she got engaged to Prince Harry and spoke last year about the dangers of social media. Last March, a new account called American Riviera Orchard appeared on Instagram, saying it was created by Meghan. The unverified account included photos of a logo and link to a website to join a waitlist to learn more details.

Documents filed with the US Patent and Trademark Office registered the American Riviera Orchard name and sought trademark protection for a variety of goods and services. Those include

textiles, cutlery, "jellies, jams; marmalades" and assorted food spreads. It also said the brand might feature "coffee services in the nature of tableware; tea services in the nature of tableware; serving ware for serving food and drinks; decanters" and other beverage ware.

The trademark application for American Riviera Orchard is still pending. An application extension was filed in November.

It appears paperwork for the "As Ever" trademark was filed in September, for similar goods and services as American Riviera Orchard.

The new company was filed under a different LLC than American Riviera. A spokesman for the couple, Kyle Boullia, did not immediately return an email Tuesday for additional comment.

Meghan fans, and her A-list recipients of her jams, shouldn't worry.

"Of course there will be fruit preserves," she said. "I think we're all clear at this point that jam is my jam. But there are so many more products that I just love that I use in my home. And now it's time to share with you."



Meghan, The Duchess of Sussex, speaks during South by Southwest Conference in Austin, Texas, on March 8, 2024. (AP)

Art



Rand Abdul Jabbar, Crown, Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial 2024-2025.

Public Art Biennial unveils 9 new installations

Abu Dhabi transforms into art hub

ABU DHABI, UAE, Feb. 19, (AP): The inaugural Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial kicked off its highly anticipated second phase with nine new unveilings and installations at iconic locations across the emirate.

Running until 30 April, the Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial has transformed Abu Dhabi into an emirate-wide celebration of art, culture and community. The exhibition features site-specific installations by more than 70 artists from the UAE and around the world, including 40 new commissions, thoughtfully exhibited throughout the downtown areas of Abu Dhabi and Al Ain.

Following a spectacular launch in November, new unveilings by Anga Art Collective, Arquitectura Expandida, Ayesha Hadhir, Lúcia Koch, Rand Abdul Jabbar, Nnenna Okore, Sophia Balagamwala, and Tarik Kiswanson kicked off the Biennial into full gear this past weekend along with an ongoing piece by Atelier Aziz Al Qatami, which will continue to take shape at the Abu Dhabi Bus Terminal.

New installations by Hussein Sharif, Emily Jacir, Rami Kashou x Emirati Artisans, Alia Farid and Latifa Saeed will further activate the exhibition's eight routes throughout the remaining months of the Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial. A participatory performance by Mobile Akademie Berlin will round out the Biennial celebrations in April.

Installations

The installations are distributed across the Abu Dhabi Corniche Route, Abu Dhabi Public Parks Route, Abu Dhabi Bus Terminal Route, Downtown Abu Dhabi Route, Carpet Souq Route, National Theatre Route, Cultural Foundation Route and Al Ain Oasis Route. The easy-to-follow routes can be explored on foot or by car.

As part of the second phase, a public programme for visitors will activate the various Biennial sites including the Abu Dhabi Bus Station, a modern-heritage building in the city centre. Events include talks, curator-led tours, screening at the Cultural Foundation of Wael Shawky's Drama 1882 (2024) - which premiered at the Venice Biennale - and collaborative public performances with artist Christopher Joshua Benton and the community at the Carpet Souq.

Reem Fadda, Director of Culture Pro-

gramming at DCT Abu Dhabi, said: "The launch of the Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial marks a milestone in Abu Dhabi's artistic scene. The artworks we unveiled as part of the second phase of the inaugural Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial present a wide range of perspectives on the concept of 'public,' within our distinct cultural context. Together, these installations explore the complex relationships between environment, community, urbanity and indigeneity and how these elements define public spaces within Abu Dhabi and Al Ain."

Preservation

Clémence Bergal, Public Art Abu Dhabi Director at DCT Abu Dhabi, said: "The Public Art Abu Dhabi Biennial is one of the three pillars of the wider Public Art Abu Dhabi initiative. The breadth of artists and artworks on display is a testament to Abu Dhabi's long-term efforts to integrate art into the fabric of society, and ultimately to make it accessible and available to all. The event also highlights the programme's contribution to the preservation of significant architectural and urban spaces, for the wider community. With every installation, we are harnessing the power of public art to advance the creative legacy, cultural infrastructure and quality of life within Abu Dhabi through placemaking and collective memory."

The Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) drives the sustainable growth of Abu Dhabi's culture and tourism sectors and its creative industries, fuelling economic progress and helping to achieve Abu Dhabi's wider global ambitions.

By working in partnership with the organisations that define the emirate's position as a leading international destination, DCT Abu Dhabi strives to unite the ecosystem around a shared vision of the emirate's potential, coordinate effort and investment, deliver innovative solutions, and use the best tools, policies and systems to support the culture and tourism.

DCT Abu Dhabi's vision is defined by the emirate's people, heritage and landscape. We work to enhance Abu Dhabi's status as a place of authenticity, innovation, and unparalleled experiences, represented by its living traditions of hospitality, pioneering initiatives and creative thought.

Japan's beauty sector adapts to aging population

Beauty brands target the 'young at heart'

TOKYO, Feb 19, (AP): Yoshiko Abe is about to turn 89, but that hasn't stopped her from going to the gym every day and trying the free-of-charge makeup course at her housing complex.

"It was really helpful," she said, all smiles and glowing after putting on foundation and pink lipstick, something she hadn't done in years.

Japan is the fastest-aging society in the world, where more than a quarter of its population is 65 and older, at 36 million people. In about a decade, the ratio will be one in three.

No wonder the young-at-heart, like Abe, is a growing target for Japan Inc. The market for older people is estimated to grow to more than 100 trillion yen (\$650 billion) in size this year, according to a study by Mizuho Bank.

And that business isn't just about remedies for sicknesses and old folks' homes but taps into solid consumerism. The growth of artificial intelligence and robotics also offers promise for such services and gadgetry.

Akira Shimizu, professor of business at Keio University, calls them "cool grandpas and cute



Yoshiko Abe applies lipstick at a special makeup class at a community center room in Tokyo, on Feb. 14, 2025. (AP)

grannies" who remain sensitive to trends, including the latest luxury and health products.

"They think about the clothing and makeup that express their style," he said.

From luxury cruises and "oldies" rock concerts, companies are leveraging the fact that older people these days remain active, go out with friends and on dates, so they want to dress up and look good, said Shimizu.

Maintaining one's looks is good physical exercise because it takes hand ability to open cosmetics tubes and draw eyebrows nicely, and massaging the face gets one's saliva glands going, according to Miwa Hiraku, the makeover class instructor from the Japanese cosmetics company Shiseido.

Shiseido Co., which started out as a pharmacy in 1872, said that makeup is not just good for your physical well-being but also your soul. The company has been holding free makeup courses for older people across the country.

"Putting on makeup works as a switch to turn on your energy at the start of your day," said Hiraku, who vows to wear makeup even at 100.

"It's not just about looking beautiful. It's about living a long healthy life," she said.

Yoshihiko Hotta, 85, the only man in the class of about 30 people, didn't try the rouge but happily put on the hand cream and went along with all the exercise routines.

While acknowledging he felt some effects of aging like sore legs, he declared with conviction: "I don't think age is relevant."

Variety

COLUMBUS, Ohio: Lawmakers and literacy advocates in Ohio used the birthday of one of America's most frequently banned authors on Tuesday to defend difficult texts that they fear could be impacted by new pushes against diversity initiatives and the teaching of "controversial" topics.

Ohio established **Toni Morrison Day** - named for the late Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author born and raised in northeast Ohio - in a nearly unanimous bipartisan vote in 2020. Her books include *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*.

During a news conference, children's author Elisa Stone Leahy, of *Right to Read Ohio* and *Authors Against Book Bans*, said that Morrison's "powerful, incredible stories" may be difficult but they also change lives. She said they serve as an inspiration to current authors, many of whom are concerned.

"Words are powerful and that means that they're dangerous," she said. "I write for

kids and we all want what's best for kids, and we all worry that our kids will hear things that we don't agree with. But the answer isn't censorship - the answer's connection. We have to have conversations with our children."



Morrison

pushing "dangerous and radical materials" on Ohio students and it posts to its website an "indoctrination map" targeting districts. (AP)

LAS VEGAS: A Nevada judge on Tuesday

postponed the murder trial of the only suspect ever charged in the 1996 killing of rap icon Tupac Shakur for nearly a year, saying she had little choice given new developments presented by his defense attorneys and the need to ensure a fair trial.

The trial of Duane "Keffe D" Davis, previously set for next month in Las Vegas, has been rescheduled for Feb. 9, 2026. The judge ordered prosecutors and the defense to return to court over the summer for a status hearing.

"It looks like there are quite a few things that are left to be done to get this case prepared so that Mr. Davis can have effective assistance of counsel," Clark County District Court Judge Carli Kierny said during a short hearing.

When asked by the judge if he was OK with moving the trial that far out, Davis agreed.

Davis' defense team filed a motion Friday seeking more time, saying critical investigative work had to be done and witnesses needed to be interviewed to ensure he gets a fair trial. (AP)

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Singapore calls for better child safety on social media

US states push 'screen-free schools' to boost mental health

ILLINOIS, Feb 19, (Agencies): Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker is aiming to improve student achievement, social interaction and the mental health of public school students by proposing a statewide ban on cellphones in classrooms, an idea that is rapidly gaining traction nationally regardless of political persuasion.

The Democrat's top education aide, Martin Torres, said Pritzker is expected to endorse "screen-free schools" during his combined State of the State/Budget address at noon Wednesday.

Legislation introduced in both houses of the General Assembly would require school districts to set policies that ban personal wireless devices during class time, with notable exceptions, create a means for secure but accessible storage of phones and tablets, and review those guidelines at least every three years.

Eight states have policies that ban or limit schoolhouse cellphone use. Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio, Iowa, Kentucky and Michigan are among the 15 states

where bans or other restrictions have been proposed.

The Pew Research Center has found that seven in 10 high school teachers in the U.S. consider cellphone distraction a major classroom problem.

Torres, Pritzker's deputy governor for education, told The Associated Press that at least 10 Illinois school districts have adopted screen-free policies, and they have had positive results. "Students are more engaged, they're more attentive in class. There's improved participation in classroom dynamics," Torres said. "This is a proposal that's going to help teachers with instruction. It's going to reduce screen time. It's going to reduce social media exposure. And there's research that suggests that social media is linked with anxiety, depression, body dissatisfaction."

The legislation, which would require policies to be in place by the 2026-2027 school year, has enough flexibility in the plan to allow school districts to de-

velop a policy that best suits them.

Pritzker's idea is to ban wireless devices during instructional periods unless there is an emergency or a need to respond to a threat. They would also be allowed when a teacher approves their use, when a physician deems it essential for a student, for an individual special education plan or to help English learners.

This school year, Peoria schools adopted a plan in which each student is issued a neoprene pouch with a magnetized lock that only teachers or administrators can open. Midway through the school year, a survey of 8,000 students from grades 5 to 12 found they had more focus, more engagement and reduced distractions, Superintendent Sharon Desmoulin-Kherat said.

She said that in an email, a teacher reported: "I am looking into students' eyes who have never looked up from a screen before."

Illinois was way ahead of the curve

by Singapore's Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA). The report, which evaluates the effectiveness of online safety measures implemented by designated social media platforms, found that "children's accounts on X could easily access explicit adult sexual content."

Among the six platforms assessed, X received the lowest rating of 2.5 out of five, while TikTok earned the highest score of four. The assessment also covered Facebook, HardwareZone, Instagram, and YouTube, platforms deemed to have "significant reach or impact" under Singapore's Code of Practice for Online Safety.

The report highlighted concerns beyond X, noting that children's accounts on Facebook and YouTube were able to access age-inappropriate content that should have been restricted under the platforms' own community guidelines. It also pointed out that HardwareZone needs to enhance its restrictions for children or introduce

more comprehensive safety measures.

The six platforms generally performed well in "user safety measures for all end-users" and "accountability." However, some fell short in "user safety measures for children" and "user reporting and resolution."

The IMDA said that it is exploring how social media services should use age-assurance technology to better protect children and youth online.

Online safety remains a key focus for the Singaporean government. In July 2023, Singapore introduced the Code of Practice for Online Safety, mandating designated social media platforms to minimize users' exposure to harmful content and provide user-friendly reporting tools.

In January, Singapore further introduced the Code of Practice for Online Safety for App Distribution Services, requiring designated app distribution platforms to implement age assurance measures. The code will take effect on March 31.

Bronchitis complication

Pope Francis diagnosed with pneumonia

ROME, Feb 19, (AP): Pope Francis slept well, got out of bed and ate breakfast Wednesday, the Vatican said, after tests confirmed the 88-year-old pontiff had developed pneumonia in both lungs in a further complication that raised concerns about his ability to fight off the infection.

In an early update Wednesday, the Vatican said Francis spent his fifth night in Rome's Gemelli hospital peacefully. "He had a tranquil night, woke up and had breakfast," spokesman Matteo Bruni said.

The pope, who had the upper lobe of his right lung removed as a young man, was in good spirits and grateful for the prayers for his recovery, Bruni said. On Wednesday, Francis' vicar for Rome urged all the faithful to devote an hour of silent prayer for the pope before evening vespers services, and pilgrims who had planned to attend his weekly general audience came to St. Peter's Square anyway to offer a prayer after it was cancelled. "I think many people are disappointed but I think more importantly we really have to pray for his health," said Sister Charlene, a nun from Singapore who was in the piazza.

Francis was admitted to the Gemelli hospital Friday after a weeklong bout of bronchitis worsened. On Monday, medical personnel determined that he was suffering from a polymicrobial respiratory tract infection, meaning a mix of viruses, bacteria and possibly other organisms had colonized in his respiratory tract. Late Tuesday, the Vatican said a chest CT scan showed



Pope Francis starts reading his speech during his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Hall, at the Vatican, Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025. (AP)

the onset of bilateral pneumonia on top of asthmatic bronchitis, which is being treated with cortisone and antibiotics.

Bronchitis can lead to pneumonia, which is a deeper and far more serious infection of the lungs' air sacs. Pneumonia can develop in part or all of one lung or in both lungs. It tends to be more serious when both lungs are affected because there isn't healthy tissue to compensate.

Treatment varies by severity but can include providing oxygen through a nasal tube or mask, intravenous fluids - and treatment of the underlying cause of the infection. To date, Francis is breathing on his own and his heart function is said to be good. He has eaten breakfast every day, gotten out of bed, read the newspapers and done some work from his hospital room.

The Vatican hasn't provided any information about how Francis is responding to any of the drugs he has been given other than to say he isn't running a fever. The Argentine pope, who has previously admitted to being a non-compliant patient, has a number of conditions that make him particularly at risk for complications: Aside from his age, he is not physically active and uses a wheelchair, limiting his ability to clear the fluids building up in his lungs.

In addition to drug therapy, physiotherapy can help, particularly if patients aren't very mobile themselves.

Dr. Meredith McCormack, director of pulmonary and critical care medicine at Johns Hopkins University, said doctors will be looking to see if Francis responds to the therapy. Severe cases of pneumonia are typically treated for about one to two weeks, but recovery in an older person could extend beyond that.

"Lack of worsening would be an encouraging sign," said McCormack, who is not involved in Francis' care.

The Vatican has given no indication of how long the pope might remain hospitalized, only saying that the treatment of such a "complex clinical picture," which has already required several changes in his drug regimen, would require an "adequate" stay.

Despite the less than positive news about Francis' condition, a rainbow appeared over the Gemelli hospital on Tuesday afternoon and Francis received get-well drawings and cards from children being treated in the hospital's oncology ward.

No new deaths reported

Uganda discharges last Ebola patient

KAMPALA, Uganda, Feb 19, (AP): Uganda discharged on Tuesday the last eight patients who recovered from Ebola, health authorities reported, and there were no other positive cases in the outbreak declared last month.

World Health Organization described the recoveries as a milestone that "reflects the power of Uganda's quick and coordinated response."

Most of the Ebola patients were treated at the main referral facility in the Ugandan capital, Kampala.

The lone Ebola victim was a male nurse who died the day before the outbreak was declared in Kampala on Jan. 30. His relatives are among those later hospitalized with Ebola.

Tracing contacts is key to stemming the spread of Ebola, which manifests as a viral hemorrhagic fever. Ugandan officials documented at least 265 contacts, and at least 90 of them have completed a period of quarantine during which they were monitored for signs of Ebola, Health Minister Jane Ruth Aceng told reporters in Kampala.

There are no approved vaccines for the Sudan strain of Ebola in Uganda's outbreak. But authorities have launched a clinical study to further test the safety and efficacy of a trial vaccine as part of measures to stop the spread of Ebola.

The last outbreak of Ebola in Uganda, which began in September 2022, killed at least 55 people by the time it was declared over four months later.

Ebola is spread by contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person or contaminated materials. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and at times internal and external bleeding.

Scientists suspect that the first person infected in an Ebola outbreak acquires the virus through contact with an infected animal or eating its raw meat. Ebola was discovered in 1976 in two simultaneous outbreaks in South Sudan and Congo, where it occurred in a village near the Ebola River, after which the disease is named.



In this photo provided by Jocelyn Flint, false killer whales are stranded, Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025, on a remote beach near Arthur River in Australia's island state of Tasmania. (AP)

Euthanasia considered

Australian experts give up hope for stranded whales

MELBOURNE, Australia, Feb 19, (AP): Marine experts have given up hope of rescuing more than 150 false killer whales that stranded on a remote beach on Australia's island state of Tasmania, officials said on Wednesday.

Experts including veterinarians were at the scene near the Arthur River on Tasmania's northwestern coast where 157 whales were discovered on an exposed surf beach on Tuesday afternoon, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment said.

Unfavorable ocean and weather conditions, which prevented the whales from being rescued on Wednesday, were forecast to persist for days, incident controller Shelley Graham said.

"We have been out in the water this morning and have relocated and attempted to refloat two whales but didn't have success as the ocean conditions weren't allowing the animals to get past the break. The animals are continuously re-stranding," Graham said in a statement.

Marine biologist Kris Carlyon said the survivors would be euthanized.

"The longer these animals are out stranded, the longer they are suffering. All alternative options have been unsuccessful," Carlyon said.

The department said there were 136 survivors on Wednesday morning but that assessment was revised down to 90 within a few hours.

The inaccessibility of the beach, ocean conditions and challenges to getting specialist equipment to the re-

mote area complicated the response.

The young whales weighed as little as 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds), while the adults weighed 3 metric tons (3.3 U.S. tons). Despite their name, false killer whales are one of the largest members of the dolphin family.

Department liaison officer Brendon Clark said the stranding was the first by false killer whales in Tasmania since 1974. That was a pod of more than 160 whales that landed on a beach near Stanley on the northwest coast. Strandings in Tasmania are usually pilot whales.

Clark declined to speculate on why the latest pod might have stranded. Carcasses of dead whales would be examined for clues, he said.

A helicopter reconnaissance on Tuesday afternoon determined that there were no other whales within 10 kilometers (6 miles) of the stranded pod, he said.

Some could have been stranded for as long as 48 hours by early Wednesday.

Arthur River resident Jocelyn Flint said her son had discovered the stranded whales around midnight while fishing for shark.

She said she had gone to the scene in the dark hours of the morning and returned after dawn but the whales were too big to be refloat.

"The water was surging right up and they were thrashing. They're just dying, they've sunk down in the sand," Flint said Wednesday morning. "I think it's too late."

Unusual strategy

Mosquito bounty to battle dengue

MANILA, Philippines, Feb 19, (AP): A village in the densely populated Philippine capital region launched a battle against dengue Wednesday by offering a token bounty to residents for captured mosquitos - dead or alive.

The unusual strategy adopted by the Addition Hills village in Mandaluyong City reflects growing concern over the nearby city of Quezon declared an outbreak of the mosquito-borne illness over the weekend. Eight more areas reported an upsurge in cases of the potentially deadly viral infection.

At least 28,234 dengue cases have been recorded in the Philippines this year up to Feb. 1, a 40% increase compared to the same period last year, according to health department statistics. Quezon City declared a dengue outbreak Saturday after deaths this year reached 10 people, mostly children, out of 1,769 residents infected.

A urban village of more than 100,000 residents living in crowded neighborhoods and residential condominium towers, Addition Hills has done clean-ups, canal de-clogging and a hygiene campaign to combat dengue. But when cases spiked to 42 this year and two young students died, village leader Carlito Cernal decided to intensify the battle.

"There was an alarm," Cernal told The Associated Press. "I found a way."

Residents will get a reward of one Philippine peso (just over 1 cent) for every five mosquitos or mosquito larva they turn in, Cernal said.

Critics warned the strategy could backfire if desperate people start breeding mosquitos for the reward. Cernal said that was unlikely because the campaign would be terminated as soon as the uptick in cases eases.

As the campaign began, about a dozen mosquito hunters showed up at the village office. Miguel Labag, a 64-year-old scavenger, handed a jug with 45 dark mosquito larvae squirming in some water and received a reward of nine pesos (15 cents).

"This is a big help," Labag said, smiling. "I can buy coffee."

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'We are not starting from zero'

Olympic organizing team unveiled for 2030 Winter Games in French Alps

LYON, France, Feb 19, (AP): Just five years before the opening ceremony, French organizers of the 2030 Winter Games put on a united front Tuesday to unveil the team given the tightest schedule of any modern Olympics.

The 2030 French Alps Olympics must tie together snow and sliding venues in the mountains with skating and curling arenas among the palm trees on the Riviera coastal city Nice.

A bid hastily pulled together in 2023 was approved by the International Olympic Committee only last July - in Paris on the eve of a hugely successful Summer Games - and even then with a special exemption to wait several months for guarantees from the national government.

The project is now led by Edgar Grosiron, a freestyle skiing gold medalist in 1992 when France last hosted the Winter Games and a late hire in recent days as president of the organizing committee.

"What's important now is that from now we organize it, we deliver it," Grosiron said at a slick launch event at the stadium of soccer club Lyon, aiming for a Winter Games that is "impeccable and irreproachable."

Grosiron spoke after a parade of national and regional political figures, including sports minister Marie Barsacq and Michel Barnier, who as prime minister last October signed off the government's support.

Layers of lawmakers' support has been vital to a project that still needs an ice arena built in Nice and a venue for speed skating, which could end up in Italy or the Netherlands.

The popular success and expertise gained at the Paris Olympics was stressed as a foundation for the Winter Games which used to be given seven years by the IOC to organize.

"We are not starting from zero," the IOC's executive

director of Olympic Games, Christophe Dubi, told The Associated Press. "We had a great shortcut and it's called Paris 2024. Many of those things we can cut and paste."

The IOC started 2023 with no clear candidate and a shrinking pool of options to host a cost-effective and sustainable Winter Games in 2030. A Swedish project centered on Stockholm seemed favored before a French bid emerged out of the IOC's strong pre-Paris relations with President Emmanuel Macron and national Olympic officials.

France's win was confirmed on the same day in Paris as the 2034 Winter Games were awarded to Salt Lake City with four extra years to prepare. Its organizing team was unveiled in Utah last week.

"We are the cradle of Olympism," said David Lappartient, leader of the French Olympic body and a candidate in the IOC presidential election next month. France already hosted three Summer Games in Paris and three previous

Winter Games: Chamonix in 1924, Grenoble in 1968 and Albertville in 1992 that Barnier helped organize.

The French Alps organizing committee has a prudent operational budget of 2 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) and speakers Tuesday stressed the need for a project that was financially sober and in moderation.

A key theme also was adapting to climate change and delivering an Olympics and subsequent Paralympic Winter Games that are sustainable.

"I would never pretend that the games want to save the world," Grosiron said, "but I think we can contribute to changing how it moves forward."

Rising to environmental challenges was stressed by the head of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region that includes Nice and Marseille. Renaud Muselier cautioned that in dealing with the reality of climate change "defeatism has the same effect as skepticism."

Carter scores 17 points as LSU jumps out early and rolls past South Carolina

BYU routs Kansas for 3rd straight victory

BATON ROUGE, La., Feb 19, (AP): Cam Carter scored 17 points and LSU rolled past South Carolina 81-67 on Tuesday night.

LSU (14-12, 3-10 Southeastern Conference), which rallied to beat Oklahoma 82-79 on Saturday, has won two straight following a seven-game skid.

Carter was 7 of 14 from the field for LSU, which shot 50% (31 of 62) from the floor. Mike Williams III scored 13 points, Vctorious Miller added 12 and Dji Bailey had 11. Carter, Williams and Miller each had three of the Tigers' 13 3-pointers.

Jamarii Thomas scored 23 points for South Carolina (10-16, 0-13). Collin Murray-Boyles added 16 points and 10 rebounds.

Carter scored nine points and Williams chipped in with eight to help LSU build a 41-27 halftime lead. South Carolina used a 7-0 surge early in the second half to cut the deficit to 43-34 and pulled within nine points again with 13:26 left. Carter answered with back-to-back 3s to help LSU pull away.

Richie Saunders scored 22 points to lead BYU to a 91-57 victory over no. 23 Kansas.

Trevin Knell added 15 points and Mawot Mag had 13 to help the Cougars (18-8, 9-6 Big 12) get their third straight win. Saunders, Knell, and Mag combined to make 11 3-pointers.

Hunter Dickinson led the Jayhawks with 12 points. Kansas (17-9, 8-7) trailed by as many as 38 points in the second half.

Efficient shooting and relentless defensive pressure powered the Cougars. Mag and Keba Keita each scored a pair of baskets to fuel a 14-2 run that gave BYU a 22-7 lead just seven minutes into the game.

Kansas had a chance to close the gap after BYU went six minutes



Houston guard Mylik Wilson drives the ball past Arizona State Basheer Jihad and BJ Freeman. (AP)

without scoring a basket. The Jayhawks cut the deficit in half, pulling to 25-17 on a 3-pointer from Rylan Griffin.

The Cougars regained a double-digit lead behind a flurry of 3-pointers. BYU made five 3s over the final 6:15 before halftime, highlighted by back-to-back outside baskets from Saunders and Knell, to extend its lead to 46-26 at the break.

Noah Reynolds scored 16 points, including the last seven for TCU as the Horned Frogs beat ninth-ranked Texas Tech 69-66.

Reynolds' turnaround jumper with 11.6 seconds left was the first field goal in more than four minutes for the Horned Frogs (15-11, 8-7 Big 12), and put them ahead 68-63 before Chance McMillian hit a long 3-pointer for the Red Raiders.

After Reynolds made the second of his two free throws with four seconds left, Texas Tech (20-6, 11-4) had a chance to tie it. But JT Toppin, the reigning Associated Press national player of the week, had his 3-pointer blocked by David Punch

and rebounded by Reynolds.

Trazarien White also had 16 points for TCU. Ernest Udeh Jr. had 11 points and 10 rebounds.

Darrion Williams had 21 points to lead the Red Raiders, who had won nine of their previous 10 games to move into the top 10 for the first time in three years. McMillian had 19 points while Toppin had 14 points and 11 rebounds for his fourth consecutive double-double.

John Tonje scored 31 points and No. 11 Wisconsin beat Illinois 95-74 to earn its fifth straight victory and end its recent run of futility in this series.

Wisconsin (21-5, 11-4 Big Ten) had lost its last nine matchups with the Fighting Illini, including an 86-80 defeat Dec. 10 at Illinois. Wisconsin had won 15 straight meetings immediately before that stretch.

Tonje's big performance came three nights after he had 32 points in a 94-84 win at No. 13 Purdue, which was ranked seventh at the time. He's the fourth player in school history to score at least 30 points in consecu-

tive games.

Wisconsin's Steven Crowl added a season-high 20 points to go along with seven rebounds and five assists. John Blackwell had 16 points.

Dra Gibbs-Lawhorn had 17 points, Ben Humrichous 13 and Will Riley 11 for Illinois (17-10, 9-8).

Illinois: The Illini didn't have second-leading rebounder Morez Johnson Jr. due to a broken wrist. Tomislav Ivisic, Illinois' top rebounder and second-leading scorer, had seven points and three rebounds while playing through an illness.

Wisconsin: The Badgers are scoring 82 points per game and are on pace for their highest average since 1970-71, when they had a school-record 86.3 points per game. This was their 15th game with at least 80 points.

Blackwell made three straight baskets to turn a 13-all tie into a 19-13 Badgers lead. Wisconsin stayed ahead the rest of the way.

L.J. Cryer scored 18 points, Emanuel Sharp added 17 and No. 5 Houston dominated Arizona State 80-65.

The Cougars (22-4, 14-1 Big 12) moved up a spot in the latest AP Top 25 after grinding out a 62-58 win over No. 19 Arizona on Saturday.

Houston had a much easier time on the second leg of its desert trip, building a 16-point halftime lead and stretching it to 23. The Cougars have won 18 of 19 and have the nation's longest active road winning streak at 12.

The Sun Devils (12-14, 3-12) had no answers for Houston at either end, even with Jayden Quaintance back after missing two games with a sprained ankle.

Alston Mason had 26 points and B.J. Freeman added 17 to lead the Sun Devils, who have lost six straight.

Houston jumped on Arizona State from the start, hitting 15 of 28 shots to lead 47-31 at halftime. Houston also held the Sun Devils to 3-for-12 shooting on 3-pointers and converted seven turnovers into 15 points.



From left, Milano Cortina 2026 Foundation President Giovanni Malago, Italian Minister of Sports Andrea Bodi, Foundation CEO Andrea Vernier, and Foundation Communications Director Luca Casassa, attend a press conference at the Foreign Press Club in Rome on the next Winter Olympic Games that will start in Italy in February 2026. (AP)

Unprecedented enthusiasm

300,000 tickets sold in 6 days for Milan-Cortina Winter Oly

ROME, Feb 19, (Xinhua): With less than one year remaining to the opening of the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics, preparations are advancing at a brisk pace, as evidenced by record-breaking ticket sales and robust volunteer recruitment.

At a press conference held at the Foreign Press Association in Rome, Andrea Varnier, Chief Executive Officer of the Milano-Cortina Foundation, announced that nearly 300,000 tickets had been sold in just six days since the public ticketing program was launched on February 6.

Varnier revealed that the ticketing platform received over 350,000 requests from around the globe, with 70 percent coming from abroad.

In parallel, the volunteer recruitment program has exceeded expectations. Initially, the organizers planned to recruit 18,000 volunteers. However, the response has been overwhelming, with 96,000 applications received to date, including a notable number of submissions from China which ranks fourth after Italy, the United States, and France. "This not only reflects the global influence of the Winter Olympics but also indicates that the preparations are progressing with unprecedented enthusiasm," Varnier added.

The 2026 Winter Olympics are scheduled to be held from February 6 to 22 across multiple venues in Northern Italy, with an expected participation of 3,500 athletes and a global audience reach of 2 billion viewers. The overall ticket sales target is set at 1.5 million. To further broaden the event's impact, the organizing committee has also planned an international roadshow. The Games' project and philosophy will be presented in key cities such as Munich, Paris, New York, and Beijing, with the Beijing tour slated to commence on May 15.

In a related development, the Olympic torch for the Milan-Cortina 2026 Games is scheduled to make its first public appearance in April 2025 at the Italy Pavilion during Expo 2025 in Osaka.

The torch will embark on a 63-day journey, traversing 60 UNESCO World Heritage sites across Italy over a distance of 12,000 kilometers, symbolically heralding the forthcoming Games.

Despite these encouraging developments, the Games has also attracted criticism over the perceived "high-end" orientation of some ticketing and hospitality packages. Critics have pointed out that while tickets for certain events such as sledding start at around 40 euros-with luge and bob tickets at 70 and 100 euros respectively-prices for marquee events can reach astronomical figures.

When addressing these concerns, Giovanni Malago, President of the Milano-Cortina Foundation and the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI), stressed at the press conference that the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics is designed as a global sporting event embodying "Olympic diversity." "Although some premium ticketing and hospitality options command higher prices, we are committed to offering a multi-tiered and diverse ticketing strategy that allows every sport enthusiast to experience the passion and charm of the Winter Games in Italy," Malago stated.

Sociedad and Betis favorites to progress in Europa League

MADRID, Feb 19, (Xinhua): Real Sociedad and Betis on look to make good their respective results away from home a week ago and book their places in the last-16 of the Europa League and the Conference League on Thursday night.

Real Sociedad won 2-1 away over Danish side Midtjylland last week and is clear favorite to qualify in the Reale Arena, although it will have to improve on its performance last weekend when it lost 3-0 away to Betis in La Liga.

The Basque side was angry at home of the refereeing in that game, which saw it end with just nine players after Igor Zubeldia and Sheraldo Becker were both sent off.

Coach Imanol Alguacil will start with Unai Marrero in goal, ahead of Alex Remiro, who is usually first choice in La Liga.

Midtjylland, joint leader of the Danish league, travels to San Sebas-

tian after the return of its domestic competition last weekend. Thomas Thomasberg's side returned to league action with a 1-0 win at home against struggling Lyngby and that extra 90 minutes football might help its search for greater fluidity on Thursday.

If Real Sociedad is clear favorite after last week's result, Betis' match at home with Genk looks to be a formality after the Spanish side won 3-0 in Belgium in the first leg.

That will give Betis coach Manuel Pellegrini the chance to rotate his first team squad, with players such as Aitor Ruibal, Cedrik Bakambu, Ezza Abde and Chimy Avila all getting a start.

Manchester United winger Antony has had an excellent start to his loan at Betis, with three goals in four appearances, but is likely to be rested ahead of Betis' difficult visit to Getafe next Sunday.



South Carolina guard Jamarii Thomas loses the ball to LSU guard Jordan Sears as Robert Miller and Mike Williams look on. (AP)

IOC president Bach issues rallying cry to youth

BEIJING, Feb 19, (Xinhua): International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach expressed his expectations for the younger generations during his visit to Beijing Sports University.

Bach Tuesday emphasized the IOC's effort to bridge esports with traditional sports, highlighting the importance of maintaining Olympic values throughout this process. He said the fact that esports has already become a phenomenon among youngsters has raised concerns, such as those over fair play and gender equality.

"From the very beginning there is a very clear red line what we would not engage with are the games which are not aligned with the

Olympic values. We need the young generation who knows how to communicate, and they must seize the opportunities and take the responsibilities." Bach also expressed his concern on advancing Olympic education and underscored the need to foster global cooperation and mutual respect to bridge cultures and promote peace worldwide. "I think solidarity is going beyond respect. It doesn't only mean I respect you, but also means I'm ready to help you and accept help from you." Asked how artificial intelligence might transform the Olympic movement, Bach noted that the IOC is working to adapt and foster the integration of AI and the Olym-

pic movement, including initiatives like the "Olympic AI Agenda." Bach stressed that AI will assist athletes in training more effectively by shaping "every fiber of your muscles," but it is crucial to maintain Olympic values amid technological advancements.

Bach reiterated solidarity, saying, "the gap between nations is already big, we have to close the gap. Every athlete can benefit from a personalized training program and wherever the coach is working can benefit from these programs. The young generation's challenge and the opportunity is to find the potential and always respect the dignity of the athlete. I wish you good luck."

Best of the Rest

Yamal certain his future lies with Barca: FC Barcelona's teenage sensation, Lamine Yamal insists he has no plans other than to spend the rest of his career with the club and he expects to have his new contract signed before the start of next season.

17-year-old Yamal has a junior contract with Barca that expires in June 2026, which means he could become an attractive target for nearly every major club in the world if he doesn't sign a new deal, but speaking in the El Mundo Deportivo newspaper, the winger said he was only thinking about Barcelona.

"It's the only club I've been at apart from La Torreta, which was the team I started at. I owe everything to Barca: it's where I grew up. I was at La Masia (Barca's residence for young players) from the age of twelve and playing for Barca from the age of seven," he said. (Xinhua)

"I don't think anyone doubts what I am like as a Barca player, and how much I love the club. I think it (new contract) will be resolved in the end." "If both parties want something to happen, it will happen," said Yamal, who insisted he was unaware of offers from other clubs.

"They don't reach me, but if they reached someone in my environment, they wouldn't tell me. First, and above all, because I had a contract and then because I think it is unfeasible for me to go to another club," said the youngster, who put a date on when his future would be secured. (Xinhua)

SPORTS

Kazma eyes top six

Zain Premier League reaches turning point

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: The Zain Premier League reaches a decisive "turning point" as the sixteenth round kicked off today with two key matches. Fahaheel will face Al-Tadamon at 4:50 pm at Al-Shabab Stadium, while Khaitan takes on Kazma at 7:05 pm at Nasser Al-Osaimi Stadium.

The action continues tomorrow with two more encounters. Al-Yarmouk will face Al-Arabi at 4:50 pm at Abdullah Al-Khalifa Stadium, while Kuwait Club will face Al-Salmiya at 7:05 pm at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium in the round's highlight match. The round will conclude on Sunday with Al-Qadisiya meeting Al-Nasr at 4:50 pm at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium.

In the opening match, fifth-placed Al-Fahaheel (22 points) is determined to cement its position among the league's "big six." A victory will guarantee this goal, whereas a loss will force the team to wait another round for confirmation—a scenario it wants to avoid at all costs.

Meanwhile, Al-Tadamon, currently in sixth place with 15 points, finds itself in a precarious position, closely monitored by multiple challengers. Kazma and Al-Nasr are eager to overtake Al-Tadamon and claim its spot in the standings.

The "Blue of Farwaniya" aims to recover from a heavy 0-3 defeat to Al-Qadisiya in the previous round. A win today would help Al-Tadamon consolidate its standing among the top six, at least temporarily.

Seventh-placed Kazma (15 points) approaches its

match with an aggressive mindset, knowing that an Al-Tadamon defeat would open the door for a climb into the top six. The team is keen to avoid last season's disappointment, where it had to fight in the relegation avoidance league.

On the other hand, Khaitan, currently ninth with 8 points, aims to restore pride against Kazma, which had defeated it 2-0 in their previous encounter. Though Khaitan is already set to participate in the relegation avoidance league, it is determined to gather points and compete for survival.

Clubs placed seventh to tenth will battle in the relegation avoidance league, a single-round competition where two teams will be relegated to the first division, while the other two will retain their spots among the "big six" for the next season.



Players fighting for the ball during Zain Premier League match.

Feyenoord knocks Milan out of Champions League

Bayern advances on late Davies goal

MILAN, Feb 19, (AP): Seldom has a player's sending off had such an influence on a game.

AC Milan was to left rue Theo Hernandez's second yellow card - for diving - as Feyenoord advanced to the Champions League last 16 at the former European champion's expense with a 1-1 draw in the second leg of their playoff, giving the Dutch team a 2-1 win on aggregate.

Bayern Munich, Club Brugge and Benfica also won their playoffs, eliminating Celtic, Europa League winner Atalanta, and French team Monaco, respectively.

"In soccer everything changes in a second," said Milan forward Santiago Giménez, who scored one of the competition's fastest goals against his former team, Feyenoord, in the first minute.

Hernandez was sent off for a dive in the 51st when Milan was dominating after Giménez's opener had leveled the tie. Feyenoord had won the first leg of the playoff 1-0 last week.

But Milan's defense looked anything but assured after referee Szymon Marciniak showed Hernandez another yellow card for his dive. The France defender had earned his first before the break for lashing out at a Feyenoord player after a foul on teammate João Félix.

Hugo Bueno crossed for Julián Carranza to head Feyenoord level on the night in the 73rd, enough to put the Dutch team into the next phase.

"We're very disappointed. We



Bayern's Kingsley Coman, right, challenges for the ball with Celtic's Alistair Johnston during the Champions League playoff second leg soccer match between FC Bayern Munich and Celtic Glasgow at the Allianz Arena in Munich, Germany. (AP)

started well and scored straight away. It seemed like Feyenoord

couldn't hurt us," Giménez said of the game's pivotal moment.

"Today it happened to Theo but it can happen to anyone, this is soc-

cer. We have the utmost respect for Theo. We will give him all our

support." Feyenoord's Givairo Read was shown a red card following another melee after the final whistle.

Feyenoord will play either Inter Milan or Arsenal in the round of 16.

Alphonso Davies scored in the fourth minute of stoppage time for Bayern to reach the last 16 with a 1-1 draw against Celtic.

Davies, a substitute, bundled the ball over the line after Leon Goretzka's effort was kept out, saving Bayern the ordeal of extra time after German player Nicolas Kühn had scored against his former club to draw Celtic level on aggregate.

Davies' goal gave Bayern a 3-2 win over two legs.

Club Brugge eliminated Atalanta with a 3-1 win in Bergamo for a 5-2 win on aggregate. The 19-year-old forward Chemsidine Talbi scored twice as the visitors gave Gian Piero Gasperini's team a lesson in efficiency.

Atalanta had 29 efforts at goal, compared to seven from the visitors, and tried 89 attacks compared to 16 from Brugge.

Halftime substitute Ademola Lookman scored seconds after the restart to unleash hopes of a miracle - Atalanta just needed three more goals to level the tie - but Simon Mignolet saved Lookman's penalty in the 61st as those hopes gradually faded.

Benfica reached the last 16 with a 3-3 draw against Monaco in Lisbon, giving the Portuguese team a 4-3 win on aggregate.

The last 16 draw takes place on Friday.

Munuera denounces 'false accusation' by local media

Spanish referee who sent off Bellingham now under scrutiny for business activities

BARCELONA, Spain, Feb 19, (AP): The referee who sent off Real Madrid star Jude Bellingham for cursing at him has denounced what he calls a false accusation by local media that has led to him being temporarily sidelined by the Spanish soccer federation.

The federation said Tuesday that José Luis Munuera would not be named to referee games until it concludes its analysis of a report by online newspaper El Español that alleged Munuera had business relations with "officials" in the Spanish league.

The focus of the report is Talentus Sports Speakers, a company which Munuera participates in that offers motivation talks by sports figures.

Munuera responded to the media report with a statement saying that Talentus Sports Speakers "has never invoiced any quantity from any sporting institution, whether it be a club, a federation or a company linked to sports."

He added that he would take legal action against media outlets that have "intentionally or due to negligence spread false or incorrect information" about him or the refereeing profession.

La Liga president Javier Tebas

backed the decision by the federation while saying that his league has no business dealings with Munuera or Talentus Sports Speakers. Tebas told reporters that the league had received services in the past from a different company which is co-owned by a former league employee who also

participates in Talentus Sports Speakers.

In an interview with Spanish radio Cope, Munuera insisted that he would demonstrate to the federation that he never been paid by a sports body. He added that had been giving talks on sports for years before helping create the company

last year.

The attention paid to Munuera's business activities came just days after he became the main talking point for Spanish soccer media and Real Madrid fans following his sending off of Bellingham for having used an English expletive while protesting his refereeing in a 1-1 draw at Osasuna in La Liga.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti and Bellingham said after Saturday's game in Pamplona that Munuera had erred in his decision to red card the England midfielder. The fresh complaints by Madrid came two weeks after the club had issued a scathing attack of Spain's referees which it claimed were systematically favoring opponents of the record 36-time champion.

Before he had come under scrutiny, the federation issued a statement on Monday denouncing the "attacks and threats" that Munuera had received on social media after sending Bellingham off.

The federation's disciplinary committee said Wednesday that Bellingham will be suspended for two games for his "disrespectful" behavior toward Munuera.

That means he will be unavailable for league games against Girona and Real Betis.



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham, centre, protests to the referee after being shown a red card during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Osasuna and Real Madrid at El Sardar stadium in Pamplona, Spain. (AP)

Kuwait falls to Saudi Arabia in the second friendly match

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: The Kuwait national basketball team suffered an 86-75 loss to Saudi Arabia in the second friendly match at the Basketball Federation Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. This match was part of the teams' preparations for upcoming tournaments.

The Saudi team arrived in Kuwait last week to participate in two friendly games, organized through cooperation between the Kuwaiti and Saudi basketball federations to prepare both teams for future competitions and ensure their players remain in optimal condition.

In the first match, Kuwait triumphed over Saudi Arabia with a 79-75.



Kuwaiti player drives past an opponent during the friendly match between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Man United reveals the cost of delayed decision to fire Erik ten

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 19, (AP): The decision to fire Erik ten Hag and the departure of Dan Ashworth as sporting director cost Manchester United more than \$18 million, the club said Wednesday when revealing its latest financial results.

Ten Hag lost his job on Oct. 28, just three months after the Dutch coach was handed a one-year contract extension at United following months of uncertainty over his future.

United was in 14th place in the Premier League at the time, having lost four of its opening nine league games. The team, now managed by Ruben Amorim, is currently in 15th place with a total of 12 losses in its 25 league games in what is shaping up to be United's worst ever Premier League campaign.

Barely a month after Ten Hag departed, Dan Ashworth - hired during the offseason as United's sporting director - left the club less than six months after taking up his role, which had followed tough negotiations to take him away from Newcastle.

As part of its second quarter financial results, United said "exceptional items" of 14.5 million pounds (\$18.2 million) "relates to costs associated with the departure of former men's first team manager Erik ten Hag and various members of football staff."

Ten Hag only held on to his job following an unexpected victory over fierce rival Manchester City in the FA Cup final in May and an extensive end-of-year review by United, overseen by Jim Ratcliffe - the British billionaire who has taken over control of United's soccer operations. Ten Hag was then handed an extension to his contract, to 2026.

Since taking charge in November, Amorim might be doing even worse than Ten Hag. He said last month it could be the worst Man United team in the club's history.

United spent 11 million pounds (then \$12 million) to trigger Amorim's release from Sporting Lisbon.

Best of the Rest

Favorites advance at Qatar Open: Four of the top-seeded players of the Qatar Open advanced on Wednesday to the quarterfinals of the tournament. Alex de Minaur, Andrey Rublev, Daniil Medvedev, and Jack Draper won their matches in straight sets.

Top-seeded player Carlos Alcaraz can join them among the last eight later if he beats Italy's Luca Nardi.

Second-seeded De Minaur beat Botić van de Zandschulp by a double 6-4. Rublev, the No. 5 seed, will be Australian's rival in the next stage. He topped Nuno Borges 6-3, 6-4.

Medvedev overcame Zizou Bergs 6-2, 6-1. His next challenger will be Félix Auger-Aliassime, who advanced without having to play Hamad Mededovic.

Draper eliminated Christopher O'Connell 6-2, 6-1. His rival will be either Matteo Berrettini, who knocked out Novak Djokovic, or Tallon Griekspoor. (AP)

Lin, Sun get comfortable wins: As the world's top-ranked paddlers, Lin Shidong and Sun Yingsha of China both secured comfortable victories in their opening matches at the 34th ITTF-ATTU Asian Cup, which kicked off here on Wednesday.

In the men's singles, Lin defeated Wong Chun Ting of Hong Kong, China 11-7, 11-4, 11-3, while Sun eased past Chien Tung-chuan of Chinese Taipei 11-2, 11-8, 11-6.

"This is my maiden appearance at the Asian Cup, but Shenzhen is a city I am very familiar with, as I have played in the China Table Tennis Super League here for many years," said Sun. "I felt the support of the fans today. I hope to continue playing well in the following matches." Elsewhere, the women's singles defending champion Wang Yidi of China, edged out Kim Nayeong of South Korea 11-6, 11-8, 6-11, 11-7. While the men's singles defending champion, Tomokazu Harimoto of Japan, suffered a 3-1 defeat at the hands of the 19-year-old Huang Youzheng of China.

Women's second-seeded Wang Manyu of China smashed Lee Eunhye of South Korea 11-6,

11-3, 11-5. While her compatriot and man's second-seeded Wang Chuqin, secured a narrow victory against Iran's world 53rd-ranked Noshad Alamiyan with a score of 14-12, 9-11, 6-11, 12-10, 11-7. (Xinhua)

China's Ningbo to host finals: The International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) announced that east China's Ningbo will host the 2025 Volleyball Nations League (VNL) Men's Finals this summer.

Ningbo Beilun Sports and Arts Center will stage the event from July 30 to August 3, while the women's finals will be held in Lodz, Poland, from July 23 to 27.

Hong Kong and Macao each hosted rounds of the women's VNL in 2024, attracting 268 million viewers and drawing 168 hours of live broadcast on China Central Television, according to the FIVB.

The FIVB also said the VNL was the second-highest sports broadcast in China for 2024, with peak viewership reaching 23.6 million. The VNL also witnessed a 13 percent growth in attendance globally in 2024, the FIVB announced. (Xinhua)



Benfica's Andreas Schjelderup, center, duels for the ball with Monaco's Krepin Diatta, front left, and Monaco's Wilfried Singo during a Champions League playoff second leg soccer match between SL Benfica and AS Monaco at the Luz stadium in Lisbon. Benfica won 4-3 on aggregate. (AP) — See Page 15

Sports

Al-Qadsiya's Gulf Champions League dream continues

Al-Babtain rewards players as Al-Nasr looms in semifinals

DAMMAM, Feb 19: Al-Qadsiya has secured a spot in the semi-finals of the Gulf Champions League, where it will face Al-Nasr of the UAE. The first leg is scheduled for March 4, followed by the return match on March 11. Meanwhile, Al-Ettifaq of Saudi Arabia will take on Iraq's Duhok in the other semi-final. The final will be played over two legs on April 8 and 15.

The Kuwaiti club advanced after drawing 1-1 with Al-Ettifaq in Dammam. With this result, Al-Qadsiya finished second in the group with nine points, trailing Al-Ettifaq, who topped the standings with 13 points. The team edged out Bahrain's Al-Riffa by just one point to secure their place in the



Mohammed Al-Babtain

next round.

Montenegrin coach Zeljko Petrovic expressed his delight after qualification, commending his players for their performance. "We were fortunate that Al-Arabi managed to hold Al-Riffa to a draw, which helped us reach our goal," Petrovic stated.

Reflecting on the group stage,

he added, "We played six matches, lost only one, but luck wasn't always on our side in securing more wins."

Despite missing key players – Eid Al-Rashidi due to injury and Moroccan professional Ismail Khafi, who left for his home country after the passing of his mother – Petrovic praised his squad for stepping up and securing the crucial point against Al-Ettifaq.

In recognition of their efforts, Al-Qadsiya's General Assembly member, Mohammed Al-Babtain, rewarded the players with 500 Kuwaiti dinars each. He also extended bonuses to the technical, administrative, and medical staff, encouraging the team to give their all in the semifinals.

With a potential final showdown against Al-Ettifaq on the horizon, Al-Qadsiya will now focus on their upcoming challenge against Al-Nasr, aiming to continue their strong campaign in the tournament.



Al Qadsiya players celebrate after their qualification.

Gulf Cup for Veterans holds special significance: Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef Al-Sabah

'Kuwait ready to host major tournaments'



Saudi team arrives for the championship.



Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef Al-Sabah

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Kuwait Football Association, expressed his appreciation for the efforts of all relevant authorities in preparing to host the Gulf Cup for Veterans, set to take place in Kuwait from February 22 to 26.

In a press statement, he emphasized that state agencies are working diligently to ensure the tournament's success by addressing any challenges faced by the organizing committees. He stressed that Kuwait aims to deliver an event that meets the highest standards both organizationally and technically, reinforcing the country's reputation as a premier host for major sports competitions.

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef highlighted Kuwait's strong infrastructure, financial resources, and skilled workforce, which position the nation as a capable host for international tournaments. He noted that the Gulf Cup for Veterans holds special significance, as it is being staged in a competitive format for the first time, offering a unique opportunity to reunite legendary players and passionate fans from across the region on Kuwaiti soil.

He also pointed out that the tournament's organization follows the same model as the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup, which Kuwait successfully hosted from December 21 to January 4. The event garnered widespread praise across the Gulf and Arab world, with media outlets commending its seamless execution and high-level competition.

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef concluded by welcoming all participating delegations and fans to Kuwait, wishing the teams 'success in the tournament.'

As of today, Thursday, the delegations from the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman have arrived, completing the lineup of participating teams. The Yemeni team was the first to land in Kuwait last Sunday, followed by Saudi Arabia on Tuesday and Iraq on Wednesday.

All teams are currently training at the subsidiary fields of Jaber Stadium, with the tournament kicking off Saturday with four exciting matches:

Iraq vs. Yemen
Saudi Arabia vs. Bahrain
Qatar vs. UAE
Kuwait vs. Oman

Kuwait Club aims for glory in Gulf Handball Championship

MUSCAT, Feb 19: Kuwait Club's Sameh Al-Hajri, expressed his aspirations for the team to achieve results that honor Kuwaiti sports and secure the championship title at the Gulf Handball Championship, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman.

Speaking to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the sidelines of the 41st Gulf Handball Championship for Cup Champions Clubs, Al-Hajri highlighted the significance of the tournament, which features seven Gulf clubs, including Kuwait Club, and runs until February 24.

As the head of the Kuwaiti delegation, Al-Hajri emphasized the importance of this prestigious event in fostering unity and strengthening bonds among Gulf nations through sports. He described the champi-



Sameh Al-Hajri

onship as a valuable platform for players to showcase their skills and gain invaluable experience.

He predicted a highly competitive tournament, given that it brings together the top clubs from GCC countries, all of which have excelled in their domestic competitions. This, he noted, underscores the growth and advancement of handball in the region.

Al-Hajri affirmed that Kuwait Club has thoroughly prepared for this challenge, aiming to deliver a performance that meets expectations and delights the club's passionate supporters. He also praised the players for their dedication and determination, expressing confidence in their ability to achieve positive results and contend for the championship title.

Kuwaiti ice hockey icon Ahmed Al-Ajmi retires

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Ice hockey fans will gather this evening at 6:00 pm at the Winter Games Club Hall to celebrate the career of Kuwaiti national team star Ahmed Al-Ajmi, who is set to retire after more than 32 years in the sport. The event, held under the patronage of former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmed Al-Shahoumi, will feature a friendly match between Kuwait and the Gulf Stars in honor of Al-Ajmi's remarkable contributions to Kuwaiti ice hockey.

While Al-Ajmi bids farewell to the rink today, his legacy will continue to inspire future generations of Kuwaiti players. Reflecting on his career, he expressed deep gratitude to everyone who supported him, acknowledging that while retiring was a difficult decision due to his love for the game, it was ultimately inevitable.

Al-Ajmi also praised his teammates for sharing in his achievements and extended his appreciation to the Chairman and members of the Winter Games Club for their continued sup-



Ahmed Al-Ajmi

port. He specifically thanked Ahmed Al-Shahoumi for sponsoring the retirement festival, noting that his dedication to Kuwaiti athletes has always been unwavering.

Al-Maqseed confirms readiness for Kuwait Sports Day festivities

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 19: Faisal Al-Maqseed, Chairman of the Kuwait School Sports Federation and Higher Education, confirmed the full readiness of all Federation committees to participate in the upcoming Kuwait Sports Day celebrations on February 22. The event will feature the Promising Festival, bringing together approximately 150 talented athletes from the Federation's gifted academies, along with 50 coaches, supervisors, and administrators.

The Promising Festival, set to take place at the subsidiary stadium of Jaber International Stadium, will consist of eight activity stations, with the participation of parents. Al-Maqseed emphasized that the festival's organizing committee has completed all necessary rehearsals, ensuring a smooth and successful event in line with the directives of Kuwait's political leadership.

Highlighting the significance of the occasion, Al-Maqseed stated that Kuwait Sports Day aims to engage people of all ages and social groups in a collective sporting activity, reinforcing efforts by various state sectors to promote sports culture and encourage an active lifestyle.

He also extended his deep appreciation to Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, for his continuous support of the School

Sports Federation. Since the launch of the Federation's "Our Talents in Our Schools" strategy in 2021, the Minister has provided extensive backing, ensuring the initiative's success. Al-Maqseed reaffirmed that the School Sports Federation remains committed to implementing the Minister's vision, as school sports serve as the foundation for Kuwait's sporting future, with the ultimate goal of restoring Kuwaiti sports to their former glory.



Faisal Al-Maqseed, Chairman of the Kuwait School Sports Federation and Higher Education.

Saudi Arabia, Iraq reach quarterfinal

SHENZHEN, China, Feb 19, (Xinhua): Saudi Arabia secured a spot in the AFC U20 Asian Cup quarterfinals after coming from behind to beat DPR Korea 2-1 in its final Group B match here on Wednesday.

Han Jae Yong's goal gifted DPR Korea a lead in the 28th minute. Saudi Arabia staged a second-half show as Saad Haqawi grabbed the equalizer in the 51st minute before substitute Thamer Al Khaibri hit the winner in the 85th minute.

Saudi Arabia advanced to the final eight as group winner while Iraq, who finished a goalless draw with Jordan secured the second place. Saudi Arabia will meet host China in the quarterfinal while Iraq will play Australia. In Group C, Iran edged Uzbekistan 2-1 while Indonesia was held by Yemen to a 0-0 draw.