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## Scarcity of domestic workers looms post regulatory changes

**Opinion**

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The intensive campaigns of the tripartite committee formed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Interior, and the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) to ensure strict compliance with recent decisions specifying the fees for

recruiting domestic workers and the requirement to collect such fees through K-Net devices, indicate that the government will rely on Al-Durra Labor Recruitment Company for the recruitment of domestic workers and will be firm against the domestic labor recruitment offices.

However, despite the company's launch in 2016, it did not keep pace with the do-

mestic labor market as required due to the increasing demand, which raises additional questions about the extent of its readiness to activate its role in the required manner and the speed of recruiting workers, especially after stopping the recruitment of Filipino workers.

Official spokesman of the Ministry of

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## Weather forecast through donkey's ears

**By Ahmed Al-Jarallah**  
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

CHOOSING officials is not a complicated process as some make it out to be.

Today it does not happen through personal acquaintance or kinship ties or "connections," or through the recommendation of any influential person.

In many countries, there are relevant agencies that work on nominating those who have competence and experience, who can work under pressure, and whose skills and abilities qualify them to assume public responsibility and work to develop the state. In this case, there are no personal loyalties.

It is also known in management science that those who ask for a position and work hard to obtain it will not obtain it. This is because he has the greed for it. Here is a story in this regard.

Once upon a time, a person was assigned by the king to appoint one of his relatives as the Minister of Weather.

Even though this person did not have any experience with weather conditions, he assumed the ministerial position and was given the appropriate capabilities and tools.

Since the king loved hunting, he always sought help from his minister to know the weather conditions. The minister would then throw a dice, and read the paths of the stars, and he would accordingly respond to the king whether the weather is suitable for the latter to go out or not.

One day the king wanted to go out hunting, and he decided to take the queen and his daughter the princess so that they could see his prowess at hunting. When he inquired from his minister about the weather, he told him that the weather is amazing for hunting and is quite suitable for the trip!

The king's procession left, but as soon as it entered the forest, the weather suddenly turned. The wind blew, rain poured down, and the queen fell on the muddy ground. The king became furious.

While returning back to the palace, the king noticed at the edge of the forest a small hut with smoke coming out of its chimney.

A man came out of the hut and introduced himself as a woodcutter. The king asked him, "Why didn't you go out to collect firewood?"

He answered, "I knew the weather would be bad today."

The king was astonished and asked, "How did you know?", and the woodcutter replied, "Through this donkey of mine."

The king asked him in astonishment, "How?", and the man explained, "In the morning, I look at my donkey. If I find his ears standing still, I know that the weather is bad, and if they are fluffy and droopy, I know that the weather is suitable for going out."

The king then looked at his minister and said to him, "You are dismissed."

The king then immediately issued an order to appoint the woodcutter as the Minister of Weather.

In the Third World countries, there are many that operate according to this rule. They do not benefit from experience and competence, and do not appoint the right man in the right position.

However, many times this action is based on a reaction, like what the king did when he appointed this minister out of respect for one of his servants, and then appointed the woodcutter to a position inappropriate for his abilities.

This applies to Kuwait, which suffers from poor selection due to the lack of clear criteria for selecting officials, and the absence of a panel to nominate those with competence and experience.

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**NewsWatch**

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey carried out airstrikes targeting Kurdish militants in neighboring Iraq and Syria on Saturday, the Turkish Defense Ministry said. This comes a day after an attack on a Turkish military base in Iraq killed nine Turkish soldiers.

Turkey often launches strikes against targets in Syria and Iraq it believes to be affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, a banned Kurdish separatist group that has waged insurgency against Turkey since the 1980s. (AP)

**CAIRO:** Egypt's Ministry of Transport announced Saturday receiving the latest Chinese ship, **Wadhi Al-Arish**, specialized in building dry bulk ships, with the aim of backing the Egyptian commercial fleet.

In a news statement, Transport Minister **Kamel Al-Wazir** said the ship is the gem of the country's national commercial fleet as it has the state-of-the-art navigation equipment compatible with current and future environment standards. (KUNA)

**BEIRUT:** Syria's government is giving the United Nations permission for another six months to use a major border crossing with Turkey to bring aid into the country's rebel-held northwest.

Syria's mission to the U.N. said in a statement late Thursday that the **Bab al-Hawa** crossing should be "effectively operationalized in a way that contributes to helping people in need in northwest Syria." The statement said the period expires on July 13. (AP)

# Kuwait's oil minister responds to KGOC probe, justifies move

**By Raed Youssef**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: A total of 20 lawmakers forwarded 50 queries on 15 issues to all members of the interim government including His Highness the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf from Jan 7-13, 2024.**

MP Fahd Al-Masoud from the Second Constituency presented the highest number of questions during the abovementioned week with 13 questions.

50 queries fired at interim gov't

The Second Constituency also topped the list in terms of the number of lawmakers who raised questions with six, followed by the Third Constituency with five, Fifth Constituency with four, Fourth Constituency with three and First Constituency with two.

Following is a breakdown of the questions submitted by lawmakers per constituency: First Constituency: Seven; Second Constituency: 27; Third Constituency: Six; Fourth Constituency: Three; Fifth Constituency: Seven.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr Saad Al-Barrak has responded to the question of MP Muhallal Al-Mudhaf about the validity of referring the executive director for Projects and Engineering at Al-Khafji Joint Operations, representing Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC), to the Operational Committee for investigation for allegedly obtaining

money illegally by registering for business trips and receiving financial allocations for these trips even he did not go on such trips.

Al-Barrak confirmed that based on the decision of the acting CEO of KGOC, an investigation committee was formed to look into the official duties of the executive director for fiscal 2021/2022. The committee interrogated anyone proven to have been negligent or committed violations, and then recommended the issuance of a final written warning and recovery of the amounts disbursed illegally to the executive director, the minister added.

Asked about the justification for allowing the executive director to remain in his post despite the sensitivity of the job and the sector he supervises, Al-Barrak cited the vast experience of the executive director, knowledge of the details of the existing projects in the Khafji region, and prior understanding with the Saudi partner regarding the mechanism for managing and following up the progress of the projects. For these reasons, KGOC decided to retain the executive director in accordance with the requirements to guarantee the smooth flow of work, the minister asserted.

About the nature of the punishment for those who embezzled public funds, Al-Barrak said the administrative investigation conducted by the company did not prove the suspicion of misappropriation of public funds; it was rather proven that the executive director had been lax and negligent.

On the refund of all amounts related to the official missions under investigation, the minister disclosed that it was also proven that the executive director took corrective measures by requesting the cancellation of the official missions and refunding the financial allocations; hence, the company issued a final written warning.

Asked if KGOC conducted a research to choose someone better than the executive director, Al-Barrak highlighted the executive director's experience and full knowledge of the details of the existing projects in the joint operations area in Al-Khafji. He added KGOC regularly reviews the distribution of employees in its organizational structure in accordance with the principles of competence, merit and the smooth flow of work.

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Dr. Suhaib Alhamss, the director of the Kuwaiti Hospital in Gaza's southern town of Rafah, performs surgery on a patient during his work day Thursday, Jan. 11, 2024. Overwhelmed with the dead and wounded as Rafah's population swells with displaced people, Alhamss has struggled to save lives as his hometown and hospital have transformed over the 100 days of the Israel-Hamas war. (AP)

## Kuwait activates 'Aman' virtual room to combat financial fraud

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): The General Directorate of Criminal Investigations at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced Friday activating the virtual room (Aman), in collaboration with the Public Prosecution and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) over the 24 hours throughout the week, to confront financial fraud and money laundering.

In a news statement, the Ministry's general directorate for media security and relations said that it works on opening channels to receive complaints regarding financial fraud from all local banks and react to them immediately. It added that the director-

ate takes actions as soon as it receives any complaints and freezes immediately the money from the accounts of stealers.

Some 285 complaints have been dealt with through the "Aman" during December 7 2023 until January 9, it said.

It indicated that the value of these complaints is estimated at KD 495.973 (about USD 1.62 million), and these sums have been kept to send them back to their owners.

The Ministry called on people whose bank accounts have been deducted or transferred without their knowledge to hastily contact their bank and submit a complaint without any delay.

## Red Sea 'tensions' prompt Kuwait to advocate for maritime security

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed deep concern over the recent developments in the Red Sea and the attacks on positions in Yemen early Friday.

In a statement today, the ministry affirmed the need to safeguard security and stability in the area and protect the freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

It also underlined the importance of immediately de-escalating tension to protect the maritime navigation that most countries depend on.

Saudi Arabia is closely monitoring with great concern the military operations in the Red Sea region and the air strikes against a number of sites in Yemen, said a statement by the Foreign Ministry on Friday.

According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the Foreign Ministry emphasized the importance of

maintaining the security and stability of the Red Sea region.

It added the freedom of navigation was an international demand due to its impact on the interests of the entire world.

It called for restraint and avoid escalation in light of the events the region. The US and the UK had announced late Thursday that they had launched a military strike against Houthi militia targets in the Red Sea and other areas.

In a joint statement by the United Kingdom, and the United States-led military coalition said, "Recognizing the broad consensus as expressed by 44 countries around the world on December 19, 2023, as well as the statement by the UN Security Council on December 1, 2023, condemning Houthi attacks against merchant and commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea.

'Healing hero'... a lifeline

## Doctor at Kuwait-funded Gaza hospital resilient amid tragedy

RAFAH, Gaza Strip, Jan 13, (AP): For a few hours every day or night, Dr. Suhaib Alhamss tries to sleep on a thin mattress in an operating room. He swings in and out of half-consciousness, both too tired to open his eyes and too tense to let go. Thunderous shellfire often rattles the windows of the hospital he directs in the southern Gaza Strip.

But the worst sounds, Alhamss said, come from inside Kuwaiti Hospital: the cries of tiny children with no parents and enormous wounds. The panicked screams of patients jolted awake to the realization that they've lost a limb.

The Israel-Hamas war, which started 100 days ago Sunday, has exposed him, his staff and the people of Gaza to a scale of violence and horror unlike anything they had seen before. It has rendered his hometown unrecognizable.

"This is a disaster that's bigger than all of us," Alhamss, 35, said by phone between surgeries.

His hospital, donated and funded by Kuwait's government, is one of two in the city of Rafah. With just four intensive care beds before the war, it now receives some 1,500 wounded patients each day and at least 50 people dead on arrival - adults and children with shrapnel-shattered limbs and pulped bodies, bone-exposing wounds and tattered flesh.

Over 23,400 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed in the war, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. The count does not distinguish between civilians and militants.

Israel, which mounted its blistering air and ground campaign in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel that saw 1,200 people killed and 250 others abducted, holds the group responsible for civilian deaths by embedding militants in buildings used by non-combatants.

To make room for the daily rush of war-wounded, Alhamss has crammed a few dozen extra beds into the intensive care unit. He cleared out the pharmacy, which was largely empty anyway since

Israel's siege has deprived the hospital of IV lines and most medicines. Still, patients sprawl on the floors.

"The situation is completely out of control," he said.

A urologist by training and a father of three, Alhamss has watched aghast as his city and hospital have transformed over the course of the war.

With its low-rise concrete buildings and trash-strewn alleys teeming with unemployed men, Rafah, the strip's southernmost city, long has been a squalid place straddling the Egyptian frontier. Notorious as a smuggling capital during the Israeli-Egyptian blockade, it contains Gaza's only border crossing that doesn't lead into Israel.

Now it's the flashpoint in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Apartment towers have been blasted into flat, smoldering ruins.

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Dr. Suhaib Alhamss, the director of the Kuwaiti Hospital in Gaza's southern town of Rafah, takes a break to eat with his young daughters during their weekly visit to the hospital, Jan. 11, 2024. (AP)



## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:20 Asr ..... 14:51  
 Sunrise .. 06:44 Maghrib .. 17:10  
 Zohr ..... 11:57 Isha ..... 18:31

# Local

BIOMETRIC/FINGERPRINT APPOINTMENT: <https://meta.e.gov.kw/En/>

## Weather

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Warm and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-35 km/h with a chance for scattered rain and a chance for fog forming at night.

**By Night:** Rather cold to cold and cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind changing to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h with a chance for scattered rain and a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	23	14
Kuwait Airport	23	08
Abdaly	24	09
Jahra	24	10
Salmiyah	21	16
Nuwaisib	24	11
Wafra	23	09

## AC maintenance contracts for schools ready: Al-Mutairi

# Bill seeks reduction in rehabilitation time of honor, trust felons

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: MP Muhammad Hayef Al-Mutairi has presented a rehabilitation law in which the rehabilitation period would be reduced for those convicted of felonies or crimes against honor and trust. The law takes into account the legitimate interest on the one hand, and the general interest of society and the convicts on the other, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The proposal is as follows: After reviewing the Constitution, the Penal Code promulgated by Law No. 16 of 1966 and the laws amending it, and the Criminal Procedures and Trials Law promulgated by Law No. 17 of 1960 and the laws amending it, the National Assembly approved the following law: We have ratified it and issued it:

Article One says the minimum and maximum periods stipulated in the texts of Articles (245) and (246) of Law No. 17 of 1960 referred to, which the law requires to expire in order to be rehabilitated, shall be reduced by half.

Article Two says in order to rehabilitate anyone who has been convicted by a final judicial ruling of the crime of insulting God or the prophets, he must declare his repentance before the court orally and in writing and pledge not to commit this crime again.

According to Article Three the Prime Minister and the ministers - each within his jurisdiction - must implement this law from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.



Muhammad Hayef

Affairs Matrouq Al-Mutairi revealed that the financial sector has completed the procedures for air conditioning maintenance in all the Ministry of Education's schools of various stages in all educational zones, as well as in the ministry's main office, via two tenders, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Mutairi explained that each tender includes 14 to 28 contracts covering a period of three years. The first tender is related to installing separate air conditioning units and drinking water coolers, worth a total of approximately KD 9,453,000. The winning companies were directed to hand over financial guarantees and sign the contracts immediately.

The second tender is awaiting final approval by the State Audit Bureau after which the procedures for signing contracts with companies will be carried out. These contracts include maintenance of the air conditioning and central ventilation system at a total value of approximately KD 8,301,988.

He highlighted the keenness of the financial sector to offer these two tenders more than a year ago, indicating that their presentation was followed up with the regulatory authorities until all necessary approvals for these tenders were completed and awarded so that they would be ready and their work would begin immediately after signing these contracts in the coming period.

He explained that the procedures for maintenance, restoration and construction contracts were completed earlier. These contracts were concluded after obtaining all approvals from the regulatory authorities.

Al-Mutairi said the contracts that were assigned will cover schools in the Capital, Jahra, Farwaniya, Hawally, and Mubarak Al-Kabeer educational zones, as well as the ministry's main office, indicating that work is underway to complete the rest of the other contracts and their procedures during the coming period.

# Eye on beggars, car break-ins

Grand Mosque, Awqaf prepare for Ramadan



The US embassy delegation tours Wafra farms.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs has started preparing for the holy month of Ramadan that will most likely begin on March 10, reports Al-Qabas daily quoting a reliable source.

The source disclosed that the ministry is now coordinating with a number of concerned government agencies to prepare 1,868 mosques and 12 Ramadan centers.

The source said the ministry has started working with its Interior and Social Affairs counterparts in order to lay down a mechanism to guarantee the comfort and safety of worshippers, while regulating the collection and distribution of donations during the holy month of Ramadan. The source added that the ministry will also adopt a mechanism to prevent begging and to protect the worshippers' vehicles from theft.

The source told the daily that the ministry will soon meet with its Interior and Health counterparts, and several other concerned entities to come up with a comprehensive plan for the security of mosques and to provide all the necessary amenities for the worshippers throughout the holy month. The source revealed this meeting will focus on the arrangements and mechanisms to secure the Grand Mosque and Ramadan centers during Taraweeh and other prayers.

The source confirmed that the Mosque Sector is currently supervising the maintenance works in more than 100 mosques to ensure completion of these works before Ramadan. He said the Sector is equipping the mosques; while highlighting the need to achieve religious, scientific and social goals in terms of preaching and imparting valuable lessons throughout the Ramadan nights.

The source also unveiled the ministry's plan to issue a circular for imams and muezzins to refrain from sympathizing with beggars and violating the rules on the collection of donations, as well as prevent street vendors from selling in front of the gates of mosques and to report violations to the concerned authorities.

The source confirmed that 135 mosques have been furnished and more than 200 requests to furnish mosques have been submitted so far; including the need for more than 200,000 square meters carpet. He said the ministry is working hard to address all of these requests soon.

Meanwhile, Director of the Grand Mosque Administration Ali Shaddad revealed that meetings are underway to adopt the mechanism for dealing with crowds of worshippers during Taraweeh and other prayers throughout the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In a statement to the daily, Shaddad confirmed these meetings will tackle preparations in the mosques and completion of periodic maintenance works, indicating that the Grand Mosque will be equipped internally and externally this year and it will accommodate about 55,000 worshippers.

He added more than 15 governmental and private entities will coordinate their efforts in organizing the entry and exit of worshippers; indicating that muezzins will be assigned based on the prayer schedule and a team will be formed for the telecast of Ramadan prayers, in addition to the medical emergency and security personnel.

**'Shabat' to usher in cold:** The Al-Ajiri Scientific Center has announced the imminent conclusion of the 'Al-Murabaniyah' season, with the onset of the colder 'Shabat' season, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This season is expected to last for 26 days, starting on January 14, and is divided into two sub-seasons, namely 'Al-Na'am' and 'Al-Baladah,' each lasting 13 days.

The center stated that the first segment of the season is characterized by the star 'Na'em,' marked by increased morning cold and frost, accompanied by winds and dropping temperatures.

The 'Shabat' season is interspersed with the 'Azraq' season, lasting eight days, characterized by intense cold and alternatively known as 'Al-Batin.' As for the upcoming weekend weather, the Met Department anticipates moderate daytime temperatures and cool to cold nights.

Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, the director of the department, explained that the country is under the influence of a weakening air depression, allowing for the advancement of a high-pressure system from the northwest.



The alleged drug runners and the contraband seized.

## 23 people, involved in 17 drug cases arrested

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: In a recent operation, the General Administration for Drug Control, part of the Ministry of Interior, successfully arrested 23 individuals involved in 17 separate cases. The suspects were found in possession of a significant haul of illicit substances, totaling approximately 19.5 kilograms. The seized items included chemicals, shabu, hashish, marijuana, and cocaine, highlighting the diverse range of narcotics involved, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The operation also uncovered 5,200 psychotropic pills, unlicensed firearms, and ammunition. Additionally, substantial sums of money believed to be proceeds from drug sales were confiscated. The arrests and seizures were the result of the diligent efforts of security personnel.

The Ministry's security media released a statement on Saturday, detailing the successful operation. The arrests targeted individuals of various nationalities who were actively engaged in the trafficking and abuse of narcotics. The seized items, when confronted by the authorities, were acknowledged by the suspects as belonging to them for the purpose of illegal distribution.

The apprehended individuals, along with the confiscated items, have been referred to the appropriate legal authorities to undergo necessary legal procedures. The Ministry's commitment to combating drug-related crimes is evident in its proactive efforts to maintain public safety and curb the circulation of illicit substances. The operation serves as a significant step in the ongoing battle against drug trafficking and abuse within the country.

**'AC repair contracts ready':** The Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial



Abdulrahman Al-Ajeel and Dana Al-Jasem during the signing ceremony of the memorandum of understanding.

## stc signs MoU with KTECH to empower young people

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Kuwait Technical College (KTECH) for the year 2024. The collaboration will focus on organizing a range of activities for students including workshops, training sessions, and seminars. Additionally, stc in collaboration with KTECH will be hosting a coding competition using Python for students in Kuwaiti public schools in the Month of March 2024.

stc and KTECH officially announced the collaboration during a signing ceremony held at stc's head office attended by executives from both parties. Signing the MoU comes as an additional program organized by stc under the umbrella of its educational 'upgrade' initiative, with the core objective of empowering students through various ways and activities. The objectives defined under the MoU strongly align with the goals that stc aims to achieve for the community under its strategic CSR pillars. Through flagship programs such as the educational 'upgrade' initiative, stc envisions a future where its efforts ripple through the Kuwaiti economy, fostering innovation, driving growth, and most importantly, empowering the nation's future leaders to steer Kuwait towards unparalleled success and prosperity.

As part of its collaboration with KTECH, stc will be supporting the various initiatives launched by the college to empower and educate students. stc will also provide training programs in which students may have the opportunity to work for the telecom and digital solutions pioneer based on their performance and work ethic. The various programs under the MoU will be launched over the course of 12 months and will be tailored to students from different majors.

### Competition

Aside from the MoU, stc will be partnering with KTECH to host a coding competition starting from March 6th till March 9th 2024. The competition is aimed to enhance the participants' skills in solving challenging coding problems using the Python programming language, equipping them with valuable expertise in one of the most widely used and versatile programming languages in the technology industry today. 30 participants from different public schools will be participating in the competition for a chance to win one of the valuable prizes awarded to the winners in the top positions.

Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, commented,

"stc is thrilled to be partnering with KTECH to launch various initiatives throughout 2024 tailored to empower the youth. This partnership reflects our commitment to empowering the youth with essential skills for the digital era. Additionally, we are also excited to sponsor the coding competition, serving as a testament to our drive for innovation and excellence in technology."

### Talent

Both the MoU and the coding competition align with stc's extensive CSR strategy, emphasizing our role in nurturing talent and advancing society. Our initiatives, focusing on practical skills and career readiness, demonstrate our dedication to building a knowledgeable, dynamic workforce for the future, and strengthening our role in community empowerment through sustainable education as stc continues its ongoing efforts within the company's strategy to promote the concept of integrated sustainability."

Abdulrahman Al-Ajeel, Vice President of Kuwait Technical College added, "Partnering with a pioneer in the telecom and digital solutions space in Kuwait strongly serves the objectives behind the various programs and activities that we aim to organize for students. We are proud to partner with stc in this initiative, as well as the coding competition, which we believe will present a great and challenging learning curve for all participating students."

As a premier institution focusing on providing technical and vocational education of the highest standard, KTECH believes in the necessity of equipping students with the technical know-how to excel in the evolving digital world."

It is worth to mention that supporting the students and youth community in various ways has been a longstanding commitment under stc's extensive and sustainable corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. Considering its role as a pioneer in Kuwait's telecom market, stc leveraged its resources and expertise to launch or participate in community driven initiatives that have a far-reaching and positive impact on the community.

stc has implemented programs that aim to foster long-term growth and development in the community under the umbrella of the "Weyak" initiative, which was designed to support small and medium-sized Kuwaiti companies and startups, as well as the "upgrade" educational initiative in collaboration with governmental entities, non-profit organizations, and institutions within the private sector. Through these efforts, stc has established itself as more than just a telecom provider, but a strong contributor to the social and economic fabric of Kuwait.

## Local production, farmers lauded

### US embassy team on Wafra tour

By Abdel Nasser Al-Islami

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: A delegation from the US Embassy in Kuwait toured a number of farms in the Wafra Agricultural Area along with the Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) and the Director of the Wafra Agricultural Area Department Mohsen Al-Mutairi, and a number of PAAAFR employees.

According to the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Farmers Union Jaber Al-Azmi, the delegation was briefed on the Kuwaiti experience in reclaiming and producing farms and the methods of agriculture followed. The visiting delegation praised the quality and intensity of local plant production and the great efforts exerted by the Kuwaiti farmers.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Jassim Al-Ostad issued a decision to support the local agricultural product by allocating a site in Ardiya affiliated with PAAAFR dedicated only to hold auctions for selling the

local produce under the supervision of various state agencies represented by PAAAFR, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, and the Ministry of Social Affairs in order to support, organize, and protect Kuwaiti farmers.

The decision included the formation of a committee with members from various state agencies, the Kuwait Farmers Union and the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies. This committee will be tasked with overcoming the obstacles and challenges facing the marketing and sale of the local agricultural product, establishing an electronic link system between PAAAFR and the Ministry of Social Affairs to ensure the extent of the cooperative societies' commitment to ministerial decisions regarding purchasing the local product.

The decision also stipulated that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry would supervise the organization of the auction held at the Ardiya site, set a minimum cost for the local agricultural produce in support of Kuwaiti farmers, and achieve food security by encouraging farmers to produce and meet the needs of the local market.

## Other Voices

### Returning to the cemetery

By Ahmad alsarraf

A day after the article was published, I received a message from a relative of the deceased, in which he explained that the chaos that I criticized at the moment of offering condolences seemed minor compared to what often happens in the mosque, during prayer service for the deceased.

He says in his message that he noticed, on more than one occasion, that bodies were placed in close proximity to the places designated for shoes, which is an insult to the dead.

He also complained about the imam prolonging the prayer time, and that more than one person, on that day, complained about this unjustified prolongation, especially in the case of the presence of a number of deceased people, and thousands of people waiting outside the mosque to offer their condolences, especially when the weather is cold, dusty, or hot.

He also complained bitterly about the situation immediately after the end of the prayer for the deceased. No one knows how to adhere to the system for leaving the place by vehicle, as there are no organized parking lots, exits, or entrances, but rather complete chaos, anger, and delay, and everyone wants to offer condolences all at one time. There is only one portal for everyone.

We hope that Minister Al-Shula, in his capacity as Minister of Municipality, will address this problem, as the task of educating people is a long overdue matter.

In a previous article, I had written about the situation in the cemetery during eulogy of the late colleague Naji Al-Zaid. I criticized the disorderly behavior at the cemetery at the time of offering condolences when everyone forgot about the "the etiquette of standing in queue," and behaving in an uncivilized

way, despite dozens of banners placed in every nook and corner requesting proper etiquette.

We also wrote a few days ago about the advice given by Mr. Abdullah Al-Nafisi to the presenter of the Black Box program, brother Ammar Taqi, to visit the US Library of Congress and meet Monsieur "George Attiya," and we showed, after research, that there is no Monsieur Attia working for the Library of Congress, and that it is not true.

What Al-Nafisi said is that there is an Israeli plan to occupy the Gulf states, whether in actual or logical terms. Rather, there was only a study prepared by the US Congress related to this topic.

After publishing the article, I received a kind message from the friend and reader, Mrs. Faryal Al-Fraih, in which she explained that she and her late husband, Abdullah Al-Naibari, had a good relationship with Monsieur George, who was a gentle and generous person, and that he was an expert and scholar among the librarians, and he played a role in increasing the number of Arabic books and references in the Middle East Department of the Great Library of Congress.

By searching the Internet, I found that George Attiya was born in Lebanon in 1923, and studied there, before migrating to the United States, where he obtained a doctorate in the history of philosophy from the University of Chicago in 1954.

In 1967, he headed the Near East Department at the Library of Congress, and the number of Arabic references increased in his time ranged from 15,000 to a quarter of a million references, and he died in April 2008, and for this reason, I often did not find his name in Congress during my search.

It is lucky for brother Ammar that he did not listen to Abdullah Al-Nafisi's advice to visit "Monsieur Attiya," who died 16 years ago!

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# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'Materialism seldom provides peace of mind, contentment'

"DO WE live in an era dominated by materialism, or is materialistic inclination an intrinsic aspect of human existence? Is this epoch characterized by opulence and indulgence, or does the soul find joy in the richness of experience and possessions," Sarah Saleh Al-Rashed wrote for Al-Anba daily.



Sarah Al-Rashed

"It is imperative to maintain a balance between our desires and capabilities, navigate the principles of right and wrong, and discern between the reasonable and the unreasonable. Some individuals lead spontaneous lives without meticulous planning, while others set both short and long-term goals in moderation. Conversely, there are those who tend to over-plan, often veering away from the present into fanciful visions of the future, doing everything with the sole purpose of attaining a glamorous endpoint.

"While aspiring to own property, such as a residence, is a legitimate pursuit, it demands awareness and responsibility. Acquiring knowledge, staying abreast of developments in the field, and cultivating a solid background are crucial. However, when one's focus shifts from essential considerations to formal specifications, prioritizing appearance over substance, and the criterion for ownership becomes luxury, stability is compromised. In this scenario, attention is given to the peel, not the core.

"Life, replete with its needs, conflicts, and toil, finds true facilitation in peace of mind and moral contentment -- things that material possessions cannot provide.

"The envisioned lifelong abode should not find its richness in gleaming walls, grand construction, or size alone. While these are desirable aesthetic features worthy of attention, they form part of the plan but not the essence. Majestic facades hold little importance if they fail to sow seeds of hope for a secure and dignified life, if diligent effort is absent, and if the core lacks a nurturing and close-knit family.

"Our intentions and relationships define our entire existence, from our connection with our Creator to interactions with all living beings. We sow seeds in every domain, nourish through our contributions, and witness the fruits in the impact we leave on others and our surroundings. The rest is mere embellishment, formality, and superficiality.

"The peel possesses existence, importance, and beauty, but it can never replace the substance of the fruit."

Also:

"The use of fear as a weapon is often regarded as one of the most cost-effective yet lethal tools, impacting self-decisions at both individual and state levels," columnist Mufarreh Al-Anazi wrote for Al-Anba daily.

"The ostentatious display of force and military maneuvers doesn't necessarily signify the initiation of warfare but rather signifies an entry into the enemy's psyche, aiming to dominate their thoughts and thereby control their decisions, often influenced by the will of the fear instigator. The fear monger accomplishes their goal without incurring significant costs.

"Numerous instances underscore the potency of fear, detaching individuals from reality as they realize their fear is an illusion, even disconnected from virtual reality. Fear manifests in various sizes, with tyrannical regimes and apartheid systems perpetuating state terrorism, relying on military and security forces to instill fear and reinforce authority. In countries engulfed in conflicts, the collapse of the state and the proliferation of irregular armed militias only magnify fear.

"Historically, societies, like the Incas, resorted to fear, sacrificing individuals to appease alleged gods. Children, both in ancient and modern times, were frightened with imaginary characters to induce sleep. Fear of unseen threats has evolved into a crucial political tool, arguably more influential than the arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. It's essential to recognize that "lying, then lying, then lying" is the right arm of present and future fear.

"Governments of occupying entities, as seen in the example of the entity in question, have for 70 years employed direct or indirect warnings about their invincible army and powerful military assets. However, the revelation of hidden realities on October 7 shattered the illusion created by the Zionists against the Arabs and Palestinians. International support shifted towards Gaza, exposing the fallacy, tarnishing their reputation, and emphasizing the call for their departure from occupied Palestine.

"Calls for a two-contiguous state solution, though suggested by some, do not imply harmonious coexistence. Instead, it is seen as the juxtaposition of fire and gasoline, with spilled blood in Gaza requiring the blood of the aggressor for cleansing. Revenge is seen as a continuous necessity as long as the occupying entity persists.

"The notion is emphasized that the stones and trees will speak against the Zionists, urging Muslims to recognize

the Zionist presence and act in accordance with the divine vengeance outlined in the laws of Islam."

"Byzantine Emperor Theophilos took advantage of Caliph Al-Mu'tasim's preoccupation with his war and the pursuit of the Khurramids -- followers of Babak Al-Khurrami, so he raided the Islamic borders and attacked the city of Zapatra, which was the closest Islamic port to the Byzantine State. He burned and destroyed the city, killed its men, and took its women and children captive," Imam and Preacher Mohammad Al-Fawzan wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Al-Mu'tasim got angry over this incident, especially since he was proud of the city because it was the birthplace of his mother. Ibn Al-Atheer revealed that a Hashemite woman started shouting 'O Mutasimah' when the Romans captured her. Upon hearing this, Al-Mu'tasim swore to take revenge on the Romans by destroying the city of Amorite -- the birthplace of the father of the Byzantine Emperor and the most important city in Asia Minor.

"Then, Al-Mu'tasim gathered a large army -- around 500,000 soldiers. He took it upon himself to lead this army, while the senior commanders, such as Haidar bin Kaws (Al-Afshin) and Ashnas assisted him. It is said that the name Amoriya was engraved on the shield of every soldier in the army. "Al-Mu'tasim advanced with his army until he met the army of Theophilos in 838 AD. A battle broke out between the two armies that ended with the victory of Al-Mu'tasim's army. He then headed to the city of Amorriya, stormed into it and freed the Muslim prisoners.

"On his way to Amoriya, some astrologers warned Al-Mu'tasim that he would lose the war due to the appearance of a comet as this is considered a bad omen. They said the rise of the sky and the stars indicate his loss. He ignored the astrologers' warnings as he trusted Allah and continued on his way.

"It is said that Al-Mu'tasim wanted to expand his conquest until Constantinople, but he discovered the conspiracy hatched by his nephew, Al-Abbas, with the leader Ujafy ibn Anbasa who previously eliminated the Zaf revolution. This prompted Al-Mu'tasim to end the war with the Romans. He arrested Al-Abbas and Ujafy, imprisoned them and deprived them of water until they died.

"Caliph Al-Mu'tasim was given several titles, but the most famous was the 'Octagonal Caliph', because the number '8' had been significant in his life. He was the eighth Abbasid Caliph from the Abbasids; his caliphate lasted eight years, eight months and eight days; his reign witnessed eight military conquests; he had eight sons and eight daughters; he was born in the year 108 AH in the eighth month of the year (Shaban); he assumed the Caliphate in the year 218; launched eight battles and died at 48 years old.

"Al-Mu'tasim did the medicinal bleeding on the first day of Muharram in the year 227 AH (842 AD). After that, he suffered from an illness that killed him on a Thursday in the month of Rabi Al-Awwal in the same year."

"All Kuwaitis wish to open the cooperative societies file, as cooperatives have become the closest path toward unlawful earning, except those who fear God, yet no one knows when the file will be opened correctly in order to cut the way for thieves and put cooperative work back to the right path!" columnist Talal Al-Saeed wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Kuwait has a large number of cooperatives, hence, the need for an integrated system to monitor them, not a department in the Ministry of Social Affairs that cannot control them and might not notice some transgressions.

"Recently, we noticed the dissolution of the boards of directors of some cooperatives and the referral of some of their members to the prosecution. The violations are extreme and the price disparity has no justification, up to the point that some cooperatives put the price on the item, but the price is different in the accounting records!

"The worst of the worst is the theft in bulk, as money is wasted once the thief flees from the country. Recently, KD300,000 was stolen from Kaifan Cooperative Society. The thieves fled to their country and the amount was not recovered. It became a bad debt. A recorded negotiation on the KD1,000 bribe went unnoticed. No one was held accountable.

"The expatriate director of a cooperative, who is receiving KD 3,000 salary -- although the Kuwaiti is more deserving of the job -- took money and left. In his country, he could easily obtain a death certificate and change his name, so who could bring him to Kuwait after that?

"This is just a little of a lot. What is hidden is greater. How long will the cooperatives issue be left without radical solutions that will put things back on track, instead of the current chaos? Perhaps, the first practical step is to open the employment file, impose replacement, establish an independent governmental body to monitor cooperatives and separate them from the Ministry of Social Affairs."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Shelves at co-ops devoid of eggs.

## Private shops selling eggs, but co-ops shelves empty

12 companies face legal action

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: According to well-informed sources, officials from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry have taken action against 12 egg production companies for their failure to supply cooperative societies with the customary quantities of eggs. This has resulted in a significant deficit, nearly 50% below the current demand, reports Al-Rai daily.**

These sources disclosed that the implicated companies are slated to face legal consequences as they are set to be referred to the prosecution on charges of both refusing to sell and inadequately providing cooperative societies with the required amounts of eggs.

The violation, as outlined in official documents, stems from inspection tours and complaints filed by cooperative societies. These highlight the absence of eggs for sale, despite their availability in other markets. The discrepancy in prices further underscores the violation, as the cost of a carton of 30 eggs in cooperative societies does not surpass 1.21 dinars, while it reaches 1.5 dinars in parallel markets. This evidence supports the assertion that egg companies are breaching Law 762020 by refusing to sell their products.

The companies in question defend their shortfall by citing insufficient current production levels. On the other hand, officials from cooperative societies attribute the deficit to heightened export levels. Despite Minister Muhammad Al-Aiban's decision to halt egg exports abroad for a nine-month period each year, ending in late February, the associations have not seen a compensation for the shortfall.

This decision, perceived by trade and cooperative officials, suggests that egg companies prioritize the parallel markets over cooperative societies due to their ability to command higher prices, approximately 25% more.

The cooperative officials base their in-

## Egyptian dies in Wafra accident

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: An Egyptian died after the vanette in which he was a passenger, overturned near Wafra farms, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The driver of the car, who was also of Egyptian nationality, was seriously injured.**

**Stores closed:** Major General Khaled Abdullah Fahd, Vice President of the Prevention Sector of the Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD) during a campaign at the Mubarakiya market ordered the closure of four stores and issued warnings to seven shops and popular markets, reports Al-Anba daily.

These measures were taken as a response to previous warnings that went unheeded, with the establishments failing to adhere to safety and fire prevention requirements.

Additionally, some were found to be operating without a license from the Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD), posing a threat to community safety.

The DGFD remains committed to conducting inspection campaigns across diverse sectors, including commercial and investment buildings, industrial plots, and others. The primary objective is to ensure strict compliance with fire prevention and safety systems to safeguard public wellbeing.

**Five hurt in blast:** Five expatriates were sent for treatment at Jahra Hospital following an explosion from a cooking gas leak in a restaurant in the Jahra area, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

A firefighting source said the accident was dealt with by the Jahra firemen. In the meantime an investigation is ongoing to determine the causes and circumstances of the accident.

The source described the condition of the injured as moderate to serious.

Interpretation on the ministerial decision, emphasizing the expectation that egg companies should fulfill the market's needs through cooperative societies rather than prioritizing profit in parallel markets.

## 'E-crimes common'

### Fraudsters trap 'ignorant'

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: As the concerned authorities in the country continue to warn about exposure to electronic scams and fraud when dealing with fake messages or websites of unknown origin, Kuwaiti Society for Information Security President Safaa Zaman confirmed that hacking and electronic crimes are among the obstacles to digital transformation, reports Al-Qabas daily.**

In a statement to the daily, Zaman revealed that innovative and diverse methods of financial fraud have been invented, especially in Kuwait. She pointed out that the lack of awareness and ignorance of some people about modern hacking practices made them an easy prey for fraudsters.

She disclosed that one of the most common methods is impersonating the accounts of shipping and delivery companies, followed by fraudulent methods through fake investment and trading in digital currencies, as many fraudsters impersonate people from reliable investment companies in order to phish the customer and gain his trust. She added that scammers lure their victims by impersonating a bank employee who insists on the victim disclosing his bank card data and personal information under the pretext of updating the data and ensuring the continuation of the account, with the threat of closing the account if the customer does not respond.

She warned that phishing attacks happen by using fake websites that publish tempting advertisements to lure targets into the site and convince them to enter sensitive information, before warning them that these sites are fake and not to make the same mistake in the future. She attributed the spread of fraud to several factors, including the loss of privacy, ease of accessing data, and absence of laws that criminalize the act of requesting information without legal cover.

She cited the spread of social networking applications and their misuse, which led to the spread of information, while some companies are trading in user data, especially the insurance companies whose licenses have been terminated, not to mention some employees who sell data. She also mentioned the use of weak technologies that suffer from security gaps; thereby, contributing to the ease of obtaining data, as well as the failure of some government and private agencies to update their security applications.



Dr. Zaman

## Major events in Kuwait in '23

KFAED: Continued : Last

March 21: Three Kuwait University students, Anfal Al-Enzi, Fatema Al-Kandari and Fahad Al-Sabah, were recognized as "Women and Environment Ambassadors" in a competition organized in cooperation with the EU Delegation in Kuwait.

April 7: Mohammad Al-Koh won Sheikh Saud Al-Thani award for photographic projects 2023 for his project: Failaka Island, which documented all houses and buildings in the Kuwaiti isle.

April 11: Kuwait University registered a patent at the US patent office regarding improving a medicine for asthma and allergy.

April 14: The Royal Military College, Sandhurst, honored two Kuwaiti army students for their distinguished performance, in a ceremony attended by King Charles.

May 2: The US institute of physics granted Dr. Hussain Al-Qattan the future star award for his research about youth.

May 4: GCC Secretariat honored engineers Lama Al-Uraiman and Zainab Al-Saffar, of Kuwait, for their excellence in science, as well as Dr. Fawaz Al-Ajmi and Dr. Hashem Al-Tabtabae, of Kuwait University, for their leading contributions.

May 9: Former Health Minister Dr. Mohammad Al-Haifi appointed member of board of trustees in the anti-doping laboratory in Qatar.

May 11: Kuwait University announced that Dr. Mohammad Al-Ansari won the Illuminate Challenge award from Durham University, UK. The award is usually given to people for their inventions, discovery or new application that serves humanity.

May 12: Kuwaiti engineer Jenan Al-Shehab won gold medal at the 34th edition of the International Exhibition for Invention, Innovation and Technology (ITEX) for her invention of (Electromagnetic Cells).

May 25: Kuwait University's Intisar Al-Shuhaima registered a patent at the US patent office for a device used by dentists to extract broken pieces of files used in treatment.

May 29: Dr. Laila Al-Haddan, of Kuwait University, won as part of a research team the best scientific research award for studies of cancers. The award is given by King Saud University in Saudi Arabia.

June 6: Adnan Al-Nowwa, a photographer in KRCS, won second best photo award during the meetings of the Arab organization for red crescent and cross.

July 5: The British Cranfield University awarded Kuwaiti researcher Dr. Abdullah Al-Khalidi, the Arthur Lefebvre Prize in Physics.

July 6: Kuwaiti photographer Mohammad Murad won two awards in the International Nature Photography Competition in northern Italy.

July 11: Kuwaiti Dr. Fawaz Mohammad Al-Awadhi won the Arab Professional Excellence Award (Best Arabs) 2023 in the field of law.

July 23: Referee Mohammed Al-Shatti participated for the first time in the finals of the Wimbledon World Cup.

Aug 1: The Kuwaiti Girl Guides Association won the Olave Baden-Powell Award for Charitable Work.

Aug 3: Sheikh Mishari Al-Afasy received a United Nations membership after joining the Union of Arab Creatives as an advisor and member of the Economic and Social Council.

Aug 15: Students Abdullah Al-Saffar, Yousef Ibrahim, and Ali Al-Mutairi are among 35 winners of the World Health Organization art competition.

Sept 18: Kuwaiti candidate Dr. Talal Al-Bathali won the position of Vice President of the World Petroleum Council (WPC) for the period between 2023 and 2026.

Sept 18: Armenian Yerevan State University granted the head of the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation, the poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, an honorary doctorate.

Sept 18: The Arab Union of Scouts and Guides unanimously approved Kuwaiti Nasser Abdul as Secretary-General of the Arab Union of Scouts and Guides.

Sept 20: Kuwaiti Abdullah Al-Terqi Al-Rashidi won membership in the International Shooting Federation's Players Committee in the skeet shooting category.

Sept 20: The Ministry of Oil announced that Kuwait won, for the first time, four seats in the executive committees of the International Petroleum Council for the period between 2023 and 2026.

Sept 20: Kuwait Fire Force announced that its head, Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Makrad, had received the GCC Medal for his clear mark in development and progress of fire services in the State of Kuwait.

Sept 26: The Arab Media Forum selected journalist and academic Dr. Mohammad Al-Rumaihi as media personality of the year.

Oct 1: Kuwait cooperative center for student programs won three awards during Arab programming week.

Oct 24: Kuwait University registers patents in the field of technology and refrigeration.

Nov 17: Three Kuwaiti photographers won the Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashed Al-Maktoum International Photography

Nov 20: KISR announced that researcher and director of the energy efficiency program at the institute, Dr. Fetouh Al-Raqam, had received an award from the association of energy engineering for her contributions to the field.

Nov 22: Sheikh Dr. Talal Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was awarded the Mohammad bin Rashed Al-Maktoum Award for sports creativity in the Arab sports personality category.

Nov 24: Japanese camera manufacturers, Canon, chose Kuwaiti Mohammad Murad, the first wildlife photographer from the region, as an ambassador for its initiative.

Dec 1: KPI announced that Executive Marketing VP, Fadel Al-Faraj, has been named CEO of the year in the oil and gas sector for the year 2023 on the Forbes international magazine list in its Italy branch.

Dec 12: UNHCR honored Kuwaiti Abdullah Al-Nouri Charitable Society and its Chief, Eng. Jamal Al-Nouri, for their contributions to supporting refugees and displaced persons through a bilateral partnership extending over the past three years.

# SPIN & WIN

## JANUARY REWARDS

### FOR LOYAL GUEST



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WHEN YOU DINE IN AT ANY BRANCH

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# Ahmadi Municipality in turmoil over job title disputes

Labor union urges minister for municipal affairs intervention

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13:** According to informed sources, the Ahmadi Municipality branch is witnessing a wave of sharp disputes between a group of employees and the branch director over their various job titles. These disputes have increased dramatically during the recent period.

In a statement, Head of the Kuwait Municipality Labor Union Sabah Al-Oqab, called on the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahad Al-Shoula to intervene in stopping what he described as "arbitrariness" by the director of the Ahmadi branch against a group of employees.

## Deviation

He explained that the situation happening in the Ahmadi Municipality branch is "a deviation by the director from the leadership role assigned to him" until the matter came to the settlement of accounts that the employees had nothing to do with, in addition to the branch director not taking any administrative and legal measures to show the extent of the employees' commitment to their work, as well as submitting reports to the Public Prosecution and Nazaha. This violates the course set by the Civil Service Commission in this regard, as the director did not open any investigation into the allegations against a group of employees.

These actions create an at-



A delegation from the Ministry of Information visits KUNA and is briefed on its working mechanism and news services.

KUNA photo

mosphere of hatred within work. There were previous reports from some employees against the director of the Ahmadi branch proving their role as escorts for patients abroad based on approvals from the Ministry of Health.

Some of them have official papers proving their eligibility to study full-time, and some of them have been complaining about their absence while they are at work, which exposes them to social problems.

## Sri Lankan Ambassador highlights ongoing manpower cooperation

Kuwait, Sri Lanka bolster bilateral ties across various sectors

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13:** Sri Lankan Ambassador to Kuwait Kandipan Bhalla praised the Kuwaiti-Sri Lankan relations that began 53 years ago, describing such relationship as "exceptional and historic," reports Al-Anba daily.

In a special statement to the daily, Bhalla asserted that the bilateral

relations between the two countries have developed significantly at all levels and in various areas of cooperation. He added the mutual visits between the two countries reflect the depth of bilateral relations with Kuwait, explaining that they have distinguished cooperation with Kuwait Fund for Arab

Economic Development.

He cited meeting of Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah with his Sri Lankan counterpart in New York, during which they discussed ways to support and strengthen bilateral relations.

He revealed the number of Sri Lankans in the country has reached

about 100,000; including professionals, skilled and semi-skilled workers, as well as domestic workers who constitute the largest percentage. He affirmed that his country continues to send its workers to Kuwait, indicting the two countries are fully cooperating in the field of manpower.



# January

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## Ministry's 20 project plan advances

### MEW prepares promotion lists

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13:** According to informed sources at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the Administrative Affairs Sector of the ministry has finished preparing the list of promotions by seniority, in preparation for its approval by the minister. This list includes the names of 1,800 employees from various sectors.

Meanwhile, the sources explained that the ministry concluded a contract to construct three ground tanks made of reinforced concrete for storing fresh water, each with a capacity of 115 million gallons, in the residential city of Mutlaa site No. 1. The value of the contract is KD 29.294 million, and its duration is 36 months. It is part of 20 projects that the ministry intends to implement to support the country's water network and increase its strategic reserve, including six projects in Mutlaa.

These projects include a project to establish and maintain four main fresh water lines of 1,200 mm in diameter from

the Mutlaa water distribution complex to the proposed water complex in the city of South Al-Mutlaa.

There is also a project to establish a pumping station and its annexes at site No. 1 in Mutlaa, a project to construct nine fresh water towers and associated works at site No. 2, and another project to construct nine fresh water towers and ancillary works at site No. 3.

The sources affirmed the keenness of the ministry during the last period to shorten the documentary cycle for these projects in order to speed up the signing of their contracts, and then begin implementing the works and benefiting from them, especially with the start of some citizens building houses in their various plots in Mutlaa.

They highlighted that the water network implementation projects in the city are advanced and ahead of the timetables set for them. This is within the general framework for the ministry to provide its various services in various areas, especially new residential cities, in coordination with various relevant government agencies.



KRCS volunteers distributing food at a Palestinian refugee camp.

KUNA photo

## Global impact and local initiatives

### KRCS outlines major achievements in '23

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA):** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced major achievements during 2023 thanks to the support and sponsorship of the political leaderships, which contributed to delivering humanitarian aid to those in need around the world.

KRCS had many accomplishments; executing projects in many countries around the world, especially those hit by natural disasters or humanitarian crises, said Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer, KRCS's Chairman in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Wednesday.

His remarks came marking the 58th anniversary of the Society's foundation.

KRCS had become an embodiment of humanity in the midst of local and international crises, Al-Sayer noted, adding that it was evident in KRCS's continuous aid to the afflicted in Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, Ukraine, Morocco, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Somalia, Bangladesh, Yemen, and in Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip.

The aid, Al-Sayer added, included several areas, most notably healthcare, food security, livelihood, pioneering educational projects, in addition to water, energy, and transportation projects.

Al-Sayer went on to say that KRCS was keen to diversify activities to include all health aspects, including first aid, emergency medical care, health education, and providing urgent aid to victims of disasters and crises, including providing medicines and medical devices, performing surgeries, equipping hospitals, and establishing mobile clinics.

Nevertheless, when it comes to aid inside Kuwait, Al-Sayer said KRCS's assistance and initiatives to families in need, range from food, medical treatment, clothing, shelter, as well as education and women and family support programs.

KRCS is moving into a new phase in humanitarian aid, and is anticipating an era full of humanitarian challenges that will require developing plans and strategies to confront them.



## Navigating the Future: Leading Financial Institutions in an Era of Innovation and Transformation

# KIBS launches executive education for GCC finance leaders

### Weather forecast

Continued from Page 1

This is why ministers, undersecretaries, and directors failed to manage institutions. Instead of progressing, the administration retrogressed over the four decades to what can be considered a failure at the executive levels.

When nepotism and quotas prevail, and a job becomes a reward, corruption spreads, institutions become a hotbed of disguised unemployment, and an employee's daily production is less than half an hour.

Also, when the powers of members of the executive and legislative branches overlap, and the authority of the parliamentarians is greater than the authority of the Prime Minister and the ministers, these people become mere employees and nothing more. We then end up in a situation that we have been living in for decades as if it were our destiny.

That is why we ask how many woodcutters became officials, and how many ministers were expelled from their position and left black marks on their record.

The neighboring countries got out of this impasse when they sought the help of competent experts and advisors. They gave them the opportunity to lead institutions, and they worked to benefit from the experiences of others in developing their management abilities.

In a previous article, we gave the example of the British expert of Iraqi origin Elias Korkis, whose assistance China had sought to build its modern renaissance.

We therefore ask - When will we benefit from the experiences of others?

### Kuwait's oil

Continued from Page 1

He explained that as per the system followed by the partners in Al-Khafji Joint Operations, the attendance of executive directors are not recorded through the use of the magnetic card, because it is done through follow up and coordination between superiors and subordinates.

He went on to say that the road allowance is disbursed to Kuwaiti workers in Al-Khafji Operations; indicating the joint payment is carried out according to an approved mechanism, whereby the allowance is disbursed based on the attendance data received from the Operations and recorded on a monthly basis. These data may be amended due to the delay in recording absences such as forced or annual leaves, etc. In this case, the company deducts overpayments if any, he concluded.

On the other hand, the parliamentary committee tasked to investigate the Caracal and Eurofighter contracts will meet on Sunday to discuss the Eurofighter contract with members of the contract inspection and audit teams, as well as experts from the State Audit Bureau (SAB).

The Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee will deliberate on the request to lift the immunity of MP Badr Sayyar in the case of 'limiting the Jahra Prosecution Office' and the Residence Affairs Investigation felonies.

The Budgets and Final Accounts Committee will talk about the final accounts of SAB for fiscal 2022/2023.

The committee tasked to investigate topics in the grilling motion against former Minister of Public Works Amari Bougamaz will discuss the issue with the director general of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), deputy director general for Planning and Project Affairs, and deputy director general for Kuwait International Airport Affairs.

The Public Utilities Committee will discuss a set of proposals, while the Environment Committee will continue investigating the reasons behind the State of Kuwait's participation in the Doha Horticultural Expo 2023.

The Financial Affairs Committee will finalize talks on the proposal of MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri to amend the law on abolishing exceptional pensions.

The Human Rights Protection Committee will talk about the petitions it has received so far in the presence of the director general of the Residential Care Institution, director of the Distribution and Documentation Department, and deputy director general for Distribution Affairs.

The Education Affairs Committee will discuss the proposal to organize scholarships for masteral and doctoral students, and the proposal to allow masteral students on scholarship from higher education to complete

their studies to obtain a doctorate degree. The education minister or his representative, undersecretary of Higher Education, assistant undersecretary for scholarships, secretary general of the Council of Public Universities, and head of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) are expected to attend the meeting.

The Business Environment Improvement Committee will deliberate on the proposed amendment of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Care Law.

### Scarcity of

Continued from Page 1

Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Haraz reiterated that all domestic labor recruitment offices must have K-Net devices. He warned that the necessary legal measures will be taken against any office without such a device. He clarified the goal is to ensure that only the specified fees are collected as per the regulatory decisions in order to prevent these offices from increasing the fees.

He added the offices proven to have violated the regulations must modify their status, obtain K-Net devices, and adhere to the regulating ministerial decisions and Domestic Workers Law number 68/2015; urging the offices to comply with the specified fees.

He explained the decision issued by the Commerce Ministry -- number 2/2024 -- is an amendment to the decision issued in 2022, which set the fees for recruiting domestic workers. He pointed out that the campaigns launched recently aim to ensure the presence of K-Net devices in domestic labor recruitment offices; and if they are not available, the citizen must submit a complaint to the competent authorities to take the necessary measures.

Specialist in domestic labor affairs Bassam Al-Shammari affirmed that there will be a scarcity of requests for domestic workers and the difficulty of providing them in light of the recent decisions.

He told the daily that several factors could harm the domestic labor market; most notably the recent decision of the Ministry of Commerce, lack of workers, and decision of Sri Lankan domestic labor companies and many labor recruitment offices to suspend the recruitment process.

He pointed out that the local market needs around 5,000 to 6,000 female workers per month; indicating the owners of domestic labor recruitment offices will face a problem in continuing to recruit these numbers in light of the current conditions.

He added the total number of domestic workers in the country now stands at 811,000 and 420,000 of whom are female. He said the main problem with female domestic workers is that the Kuwaiti labor market needs more female domestic workers due to the opening of new residential areas and urban expansion.

He disclosed the owners of domestic labor recruitment offices are waiting for the new government formation to present their ideas and suggestions in a way that protects the labor market, owners of domestic labor recruitment offices and companies in the private sector.

### Doctor at

Continued from Page 1

Israel's evacuation orders and expanding offensive have swelled Rafah's population from 280,000 to 1.4 million, leaving hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians jammed into flimsy tents smothering the streets.

Most people spend hours each day in search of food, waiting in motionless lines outside aid distribution centers and sometimes plodding kilometers (miles) on foot to carry back canned beans and rice.

The faces he sees around the city have changed, too, as Israel presses on with its goal of destroying Hamas. Fear and strain create the features of his colleagues, Alhamss says. Blood and dust smear the faces of the incoming wounded, while waxy gray skin and eyes circled by darkening rings are marks of the dying.

"You can see the exhaustion, the nervousness, the hunger on everyone's faces," Alhamss said. "It's a strange place now. It's not the city I know."

Aid trucks have trickled through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. But it's nowhere near enough to meet the besieged enclave's surging needs, humanitarian officials say. In the absence of vital equipment, medical staff have applied their ingenuity to new ends. Alhamss dresses patients' wounds with burial shrouds.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Under the patronage of the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait and Chairman of the Board of the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS), KIBS today launched the executive education program to support the development of senior leaders in the banking and finance sector in the GCC in collaboration with Harvard Business School (HBS), under the title "Navigating the Future: Leading Financial Institutions in an Era of Innovation and Transformation" on January 13 - 18, 2024. This program is the latest in a series that has been presented for the last 14 years in different GCC countries. This year, the program's 15th session will be held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. This program is a part of the Kafa' initiative undertaken by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with Kuwaiti banks and managed

by the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS).

From the deployment of generative AI to the green transition, the competitive landscape in financial services is rapidly changing. Leaders need new tools and a broad perspective to take advantage of emerging opportunities, manage emerging risks and effectively manage high-performing, diverse teams. With that challenge in mind, the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies and Harvard Business School and are offering a one-week executive education program designed specifically to support the development of senior leaders in the banking and finance sector in the GCC countries. Each day includes a Discussion Group meeting and four highly interactive plenary sessions led by Harvard Business School faculty. The program focuses on two primary themes: Financial

markets strategy and leadership.

The Harvard Business School Program was conducted for the first time in 2010. The program continued to run on an annual basis since then, alternating in various locations across the GCC every year. In 2023, the program was conducted in Kuwait.

The outstanding success of the program was an incentive to continue presenting and improving it to suit the rapid changes in the business field. The organizations that participated in the program included several regional financial organizations and banks, in addition to the Central Bank of Kuwait and local Kuwaiti banks.

The program adheres to the Harvard Business School's high standards to ensure that the participants and their banks and organizations will be provided with quality learning experience for which the school

is known for. The new case studies have been selected by the School's faculty to be related to the banking and financial sectors in addition to other sectors. The participants will carry out several interactive activities in groups throughout the duration of the program that will enhance their analytic skills. At the end of the program, participants will receive a Harvard Business School certificate, verifying that they have completed the program.

The development of qualified talents in Kuwait and the region's banking and finance sector will remain a top strategic priority for KIBS. KIBS is also keen on the collaboration amongst GCC countries in areas of common interest such as training and development.

KIBS extends its gratitude all participants who partook in the program from Kuwait and the GCC.



Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS) executive education program group photo.

## British Council hosts forum to illuminate significance of IELTS for Kuwaiti students

Empowering lives, transforming Kuwait's education

By Enas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Tony Skinner, Director of the British Council in Kuwait, which was founded in 1934, is the oldest cultural relations organization in the world as it operates under a royal charter granted to it in 1940.

He said this in a speech he delivered Thursday at a forum organized by the British Council to shed light on International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and its importance for Kuwaiti students who wish to study abroad.

Skinner gave the speech in the presence of David Hoare, Second Political Secretary at the British Embassy in Kuwait who attended the event on behalf of the British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, the Deputy Consul General at the US Embassy in Kuwait Mark Perry, the Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani, and the Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Melissa Kelly.

Skinner revealed that the activities of the British Council extend to more than 200 countries and territories around the world, and it has branches and headquarters located in 100 countries.

### Success

He highlighted the success of the British Council in reaching 600 million people around the world in the years 2022 and 2023. He also highlighted the fruitful and distinguished partnership with universities, international student recruitment agents, immigration consultants and language training providers for implementing IELTS in Kuwait.

Skinner said the British Council focuses its work and activities directly on helping individuals gain the skills, confidence and communication ability to change their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the United Kingdom.

He stressed the importance of the role played by the British Council in building networks, exploring creative ideas, and teaching the English language to students in order for them to obtain high-quality education and internationally-recognized qualifications.

Skinner revealed that approximately three million people apply for international tests annually with the help of the British Council, which reflects positively on the qualifications obtained by students and professionals, enabling them to open doors in leading academic institutions and improving their future job opportunities.

### Standards

He explained that IELTS has been setting the standards for English language testing for more than 30 years. It is trusted and approved by over 12,000 organizations in over 140 countries. IELTS gives individuals confidence, as it will facilitate recognition by the educational institution, employer, professional body or government that needs to verify their proficiency in the English language.

Governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom trust the IELTS test result and adopt it when processing immigration applications submitted to them.

IELTS is considered a gateway for the transformation of the lives of millions of people every year due to its influential contribution in opening doors to opportunities in education, employment, and even for moving to a new country.



Photo during the forum organized by the British Council.

In this regard, the Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani affirmed that education is one of the main priorities in her work program as an ambassador.

In a statement to the daily, she explained that the Canadian Embassy's

participation in the British Council's forum is aimed at introducing and raising awareness about the advantages of studying in Canada as well as providing information about all the procedures required for students to obtain an entry visa for students, and helping

them choose the specialization that is appropriate for them.

The Canadian Embassy provides all information about studying in Canada through an accredited digital platform that covers the most prominent Canadian universities and all colleges in various scientific specializations in the fields of medicine, engineering, and applied arts, in addition to literary and professional specializations.

She said the education outcomes in Canada are ranked among the best in the world, as Canada is characterized by a high level of education and has wonderful training opportunities.

The ambassador highlighted the government's open policies and laws regarding post-study work and immigration, which creates an ideal place for international students, in addition to the unique nature of Canadian society and its excellent features such as openness, friendliness and ability to welcome many people of different races and ethnicities from various countries of the world who have immigrated to Canada, all of which gives Canada the advantage of its cultural diversity in an impressive and clear way.

## Diplomatic Institute committed to enhancing employees capabilities

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KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Saud Nasser Diplomatic Institute Affairs, Ambassador Nasser Al-Subaih, affirmed the Institute's commitment to enhancing the capabilities and skills of Ministry of Foreign Affairs employees and personnel from other government agencies, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Institute plans to provide approximately 40 training programs throughout the current year.

Al-Subaih, speaking at the conclusion of the "Emotional and Social Intelligence" course, the inaugural program for the Institute in 2024, stated that the Institute plays a crucial role within the government system in enhancing the capabilities of employees across various government agencies.

**Chevron**  
**JOINT OPERATIONS WAFRA**  
**SAUDI ARABIAN CHEVRON INC. (SAC) - KUWAIT GULF OIL COMPANY**

Joint Operations (Saudi Arabian Chevron Inc. / Kuwait Gulf Oil Company), announces the under-mentioned Public Tender for procurement of material.

Kuwaiti and Saudi Merchants, registered with either Company wishing to participate in the under-mentioned Tender are invited to collect the Tender documents from Blanket Purchasing Section, Purchasing & Logistic Division, Administration Building, Ground Floor, Joint Operations, Wafra, during the official working hours from **14 January 2024** up to **14 February 2024** for a non-refundable fee mentioned against tender.

Tender Fees to be deposited in the National bank of Kuwait (NBK) Account No. 1001132057. Saudi Suppliers can collect the tender documents from Saudi Arabian Chevron office in Al-Khobar Telephone No.: (013) 8645104 - Fax No.: (013) 8985436

The closing date for the following Tender will be on **Monday, 19 February 2024 @ 09:00 A.M.**

S.NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS	CONTRACT PERIOD	FEES ( IN KD )
1	BPT # 247 / 23	Blanket Purchases Tender for Pipes Fittings	3 YRS	50

**Notes:** Gate Passes are required for Suppliers entering JO-Wafra Administrative Offices to collect the tender document and gate pass processing time is 48 hours. Please send request for gate pass along with legible copies of Authorization letter, Civil ID, Car Registration, Supplier Registration (KGOC or SAC) to e-mail [CBMS@chevron.com](mailto:CBMS@chevron.com) or [MYDG@chevron.com](mailto:MYDG@chevron.com) at least 48 hours prior to arrival.

For additional information, you may contact:

**Telephone No.: 23983639 - Ext : 3157 - 3190**



## World News Roundup

## Europe

## Attal holds meet

## UK's premier visits Ukraine to give aid

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 13, (AP): British Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** unveiled new military funding for Ukraine on Friday during a visit to Kyiv aimed at reassuring the country that the West is still providing support nearly 23 months after Russia's invasion.

The package, worth 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.2 billion) over the next fiscal year, is the largest the UK has given to Ukraine since the war began, surpassing previous annual commitments by 200 million pounds (\$233 million), the British government said.

"I am here today with one message: The UK will ... not falter," Sunak said. "We will stand with Ukraine, in their darkest hours and in the better times to come."

The package will pay for long-range missiles, thousands of drones, air defense, artillery ammunition and maritime security, according to Sunak's office. It comes at a time when other financial aid from the U.S. and Europe is tied up by political wrangling.

"We are not walking away," Sunak said at a news conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Ukrainian officials welcomed the UK announcement, pointing to it as evidence that Western support for its fight against its bigger neighbor is not waning, as some have feared.

Sunak and Zelenskyy signed a bilateral security agreement for the next 10 years. It will remain in effect until Ukraine acquires its hoped-for NATO membership, Zelenskyy said. Details of the agreement are to be released later, officials said.

**Russian oppn activist placed in custody:** A Russian left-wing opposition activist who criticized the Kremlin but backed the war in Ukraine was ordered Friday to remain in custody pending his trial on charges linked to his online comment.

Moscow's Basmanny District Court ruled to keep Sergei Udaltsov in custody until Feb. 15 on charges of "justifying terrorism" as the probe is continuing. Udaltsov said the accusations relate to his posts in support of members of a Marxist group who were arrested for creating a "terrorist community" in the city of Ufa, about 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) east of Moscow. He could face five years in prison if convicted.

Speaking during Friday's hearing, Udaltsov rejected the charges as "ravings" before the judge closed the hearings to the public at the request of prosecutors who argued the case materials were sensitive, according to the state Tass and RIA-Novosti news agencies.

Udaltsov, the leader of the Left Front, has been critical of Russian President Vladimir Putin but supported Moscow's war in Ukraine.

**Defense industry worker arrested:** Russia's domestic security agency said on Friday that it has arrested a Russian citizen for allegedly providing information to Poland about Moscow's defense industry production.

In a statement, the Federal Security Service or FSB, said the person arrested is an employee of a "high-security enterprise" in the Penza region about 600 kilometers (370 miles) southeast of Moscow.

The suspect had provided information to Poland's special services about the company's defense orders in exchange for assistance in obtaining permanent residence abroad, according to the statement.

The FSB said a criminal case has been opened on charges that could bring up to eight years in prison if convicted.

**Journo goes on trial for covering protests:** A Belarusian journalist went on trial Friday on charges linked to his professional work covering protests, the latest move in a relentless government crackdown on dissent.

Photojournalist Alyaksandr Zhyankou faces up to six years in prison if convicted on charges of "participation in an extremist group" at Minsk City Court. Such accusations have been widely used by authorities to target opposition members, civil society activists and independent journalists.

Zhyankou has been in custody since his arrest in June, and his health has deteriorated behind bars, according to the independent Belarusian Association of Journalists.

**France PM holds 1st Cabinet meeting:** France's new prime minister, Gabriel Attal, held his first Cabinet meeting on Friday with one motto: "work, work, work," according to President Emmanuel Macron's office.

The newly appointed Attal, 34, the youngest premier in France's history, leads a relatively small team of 14 ministers who gathered at the presidential palace, the Elysee, around Macron.

The government will be reinforced within the next 10 days by additional junior ministers, Macron's office said, adding that Attal's smaller government is meant to be more efficient and "get quick results."

**Justice minister nixes priest extradition:** Italy's justice minister has ruled against the extradition of a former chaplain sought in Argentina on charges of murder and torture during the South American country's last military dictatorship, human rights advocates said Friday.

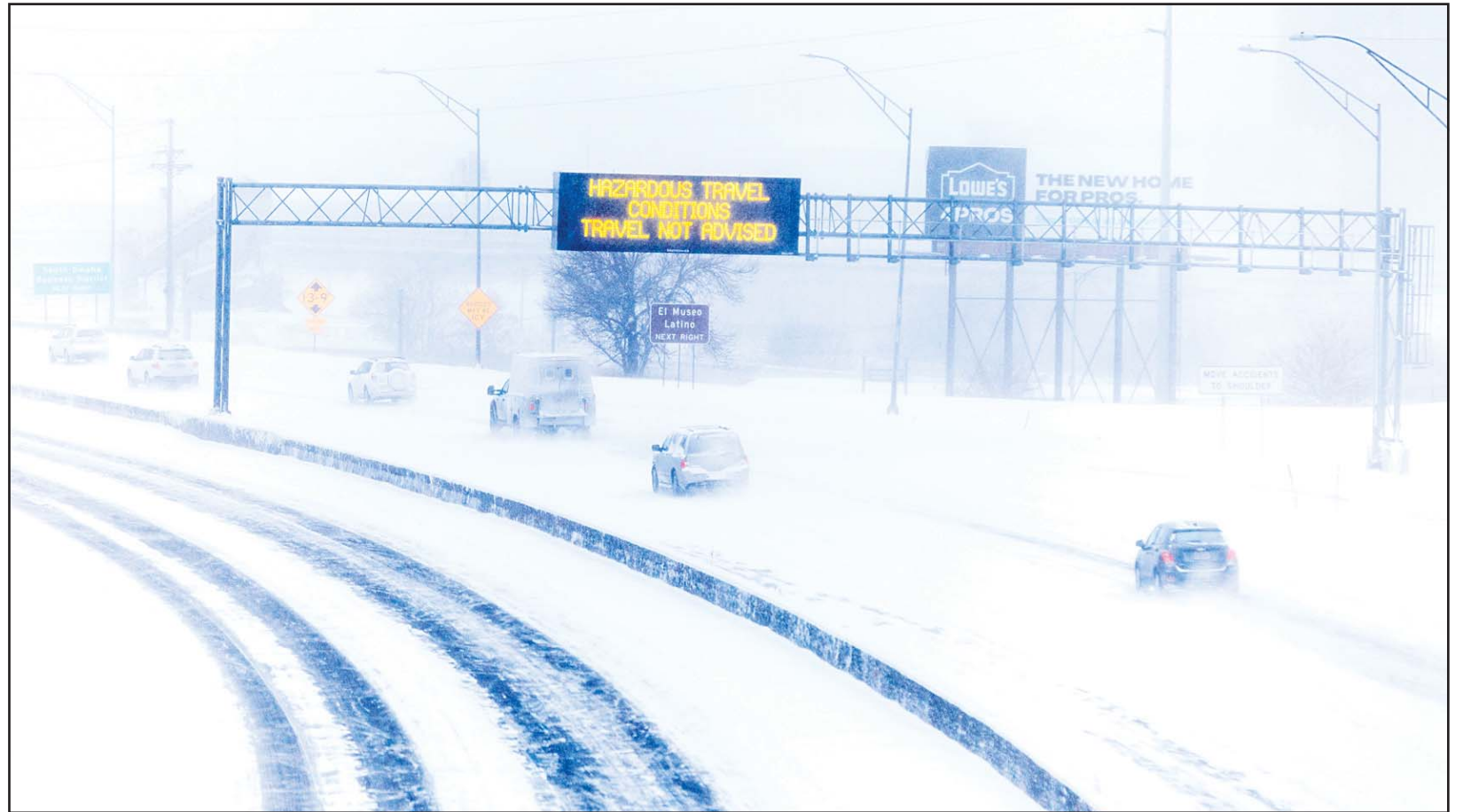
In October, Italy's top criminal court had approved extradition of the Rev. Franco Reverberi, an 86-year-old Italian priest who had served as military chaplain during Argentina's 1976-1983 military dictatorship.

But Justice Minister Carlo Nordio, in ruling against extradition, cited the priest's advanced age and poor health. A copy of the ruling was made available by rights advocates who have followed the case.

**'Mass killer remains dangerous':** Norway's government insisted on Friday that Anders Behring Breivik, a right-wing extremist who killed 77 people in a bomb and gun rampage in 2011, remains dangerous and should stay in solitary confinement, rejecting his claim in a suit that his human rights are being violated.

"There is a great danger of violence and that he will inspire others. That is why he has to serve his time under strict security measures," Andreas Hjetland, a government lawyer, said on the last day of a five-day hearing.

"There is simply nothing indicating that Breivik's human rights are being violated," the Norwegian news agency NTB quoted Hjetland as saying.



Signs along US Highway 75, looking south from F Street, advise against travel due to snow on Jan 12 in Omaha, Neb. (AP)

## Winter storm to bring snow, winds life-threatening chill to US, forecasters warn

Brutally cold weather could prove a deadly challenge Saturday amid a continuing wave of Arctic storms that has hammered much of the country with blinding snow, freezing rain and whipping winds.

Governors from New York to Louisiana declared states of emergency ahead of predicted snow and bone-chilling temperatures. In St. Louis, the National Weather Service bureau warned of rare and "life-threatening" cold.

The fierce weather blitzed campaign schedules in Iowa, the leadoff GOP caucus state. With a blizzard warning covering most of the state, Nikki Haley, Ron

DeSantis and former president Donald Trump all shuffled their schedules ahead of Monday's presidential vote.

Near-record cold in Kansas City will make for a frigid NFL playoff game Saturday night, when the Chiefs host Miami. Fans will be allowed to bring in blankets and first-aid stations were set up at Arrowhead Stadium. On Sunday, fans in Buffalo will contend with up to a foot (30 centimeters) of snow and fierce winds as the Bills host Pittsburgh.

The National Weather Service on Friday warned that a powerful storm would rock the Midwest to the

Great Lakes through Saturday with heavy snow, strong winds and blizzards. Dangerously frigid weather would follow across the Rockies and the Plains, while heavy rain across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic would threaten river and coastal flooding.

Some areas of the Northeast had flooding concerns. Emergency responders helped evacuate some residents from their homes in Paterson, New Jersey, early Friday as the Passaic River started overflowing its banks. The new storm, combined with one earlier in the week, created flooding worries in Maine and New Hampshire, too. (AP)

## Politics

## 'No plan to stop partial shutdown'

## Johnson insists he's sticking to budget deal

WASHINGTON, Jan 13, (AP): US House Speaker Mike Johnson insisted Friday he is sticking with the bipartisan spending deal he struck with the other congressional leaders, but offered no clear path for overcoming hard-right opposition within his own party to prevent a partial government shutdown next week.

Johnson emerged from days of testy meetings behind closed doors at the Capitol to read a terse statement. Just months on the job, the new speaker is trying to set the record straight that he will not renege on the budget deal he made earlier this week. But in his first big test as the new leader, he has yet to show how he will quell the revolt from his right flank that ousted his predecessor.

"Our top-line agreement remains," Johnson, R-La., said, referring to the budget accord reached Jan 7.

"We are getting our next steps together, and we are working toward a robust appropriations process," he said. "So stay tuned for all that."

## Revolted

It's the same intractable political dilemma that led a core group of right-flank Republicans to boot Rep Kevin McCarthy from the speaker's office last year as they revolted against the deal he struck with the other congressional leaders and that President Joe Biden signed into law.

Lawmakers during the first week of the new year are furious that, after spending much of 2023 watching hard-right Republicans fight the leaders, they are quickly careening toward another crisis with just a week to go before the Jan 19 deadline to fund parts of the government or risk a shutdown yet again.

As some Republicans from the Freedom Caucus again raise the threat of a motion to oust the speaker over the

## DeSantis 'plans' to go from Iowa to S Carolina, as he targets Haley

DES MOINES, Iowa, Jan 13, (AP): Ron DeSantis is taking his battle with Nikki Haley directly to her home state, planning to head straight to South Carolina - which holds the first GOP votes in the South - after Monday's Iowa caucuses.

His campaign said Friday that the Florida governor will leave Iowa after a caucus night party on Monday and fly to South Carolina, where he will appear at a campaign event in Greenville, in the state's largely conservative northwestern corner. That's instead of immediately going to New Hampshire, which is the next state on the GOP calendar with its Jan. 23 primary.

For months, Haley and DeSantis have been locked in a battle for second place in Iowa, which has been led by former President Donald Trump.

DeSantis' campaign says the move is intended to send a message to Haley that he's intent on performing well in her home state.

Advisors also point out that DeSantis has several times more endorsements from current and former elected officials in Haley's home state than she does.

The announcement also reflects Haley is doing better in New Hampshire than DeSantis. A CNN/UNH poll conducted in New Hampshire this week suggested that Haley, the former South Carolina governor and U.N. ambassador, could be approaching Trump's top spot in the state. About 4 in 10 likely Republican primary voters in New Hampshire choose Trump, while about one-third pick Haley.

"This campaign is built for the long haul. We intend to compete for every single available delegate in New Hampshire, Nevada, South Carolina and then into March," DeSantis spokesman Andrew Romeo told AP. "That begins on Monday's Iowa Caucus, and the next day we will kick our campaign into overdrive in both South Carolina and New Hampshire."

deal, other Republicans are furious they are starting 2024 with the same problems of governing.

In the morning before Johnson made his statement, he met with about two dozen House Republicans, more of them centrist-leaning voices, urging him not to go back on his word and stick with the deal.

The centrists assured Johnson they have his back.

"I just can't imagine the House wants to relive the madness," said Rep

French Hill, R-Ark, who had helped McCarthy negotiate the initial agreement with Biden and the other leaders.

"We're here to bolster him up," said Rep Don Bacon, R-Neb.

"This concept of trying to break a deal that was negotiated, it's a foreign concept," said Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Fla. "What you would be asking is for the speaker to basically break his word and lie. That's just something you can't ask him to do."

moved to hold him in contempt of Congress.

In a letter to the House Oversight and Judiciary Committees, Abbe Lowell, Hunter Biden's attorney, seemed to open the door for a private deposition between the presi-

dent's son and the Republican chairmen who have been investigating him and his family.

The overture could signal the start of negotiations between the two sides, which have been battling for months over deposing Hunter Biden as he faces an ongoing Justice Department investigation that has resulted in two indictments.

But, Lowell wrote that Biden's cooperation is dependent on the committee issuing a new subpoena. They maintain that the two subpoenas sent in November are not legitimate because they were issued before the full House authorized the impeachment inquiry into US President Joe Biden. (AP)

**'Stop blocking agents':** The Justice Department on Friday asked the Supreme Court to order Texas to stop blocking Border Patrol agents from a portion of the U.S.-Mexico border where large numbers of migrants have crossed in recent months, setting up another showdown between Republican Gov Greg Abbott and the Biden administration over immigration enforcement. The request comes after Texas put up fencing to take control of a nearly 50-acre (20-hectare) public park along the Rio Grande in Eagle Pass, which was a crossing point for thousands of migrants entering from Mexico last year. Although a similar power struggle played out in the same region more than a year ago, the area Texas closed off this week prevents federal agents from accessing a larger and more visible crossing spot. (AP)



New French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, (left), and chief of staff of French Prime Minister Emmanuel Moulin, leave the weekly cabinet meeting after a cabinet reshuffle, on Jan 12, 2024 at the Elysee Palace in Paris. (AP)



Moore Biden

## America

**Moore announces retirement:** The Los Angeles police chief announced his retirement from the head of one of the nation's largest law enforcement agencies Friday, concluding a tenure marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, protests over racial injustice and greater scrutiny into excessive force and police killings of civilians.

Chief **Michel Moore** is stepping down in February but will remain on as a consultant for an undetermined amount of time. He leaves as the department, like many nationwide, reconsiders its use of force in the wake of George Floyd's murder and subsequent protests in 2020. Moore's department faced staunch criticism for its handling of demonstrations.

"During my tenure, I know I've made mistakes and missteps," Moore said during a news conference with Mayor Karen Bass. "But I'm also confident that my work has seen success across a broad spectrum of topics, unmatched by any other law enforcement agency in this country."

The Board of Police Commissioners will appoint an interim chief ahead of a nationwide search. The next leader will be charged with overseeing security during the 2028 Olympics. (AP)

**Body of skier retrieved:** Authorities in Idaho on Friday located and retrieved the body of a man who was caught in an avalanche while backcountry skiing with two other men who were rescued the previous day.

The two men were located after authorities received a GPS alert of a possible fatality in an avalanche near Stevens Peak close to the Montana border shortly before 3 p.m. Thursday, the Shoshone County Sheriff's Office said in a statement posted on social media.

Authorities established communications using a GPS texting device with the two men. Following a search of the area, the pair were located and transported for medical care, the sheriff's office said. One of the men suffered a broken arm, KREM-TV reported. (AP)



The Austin Police Department investigates the crime scene after an Austin police officer died following a shooting in South Austin, Texas on Nov 11, 2023. On Jan 11, 2024, a grand jury has cleared three Texas police officers who fatally shot a man who shot and killed another officer while wounding another officer and is believed to have killed his mother and brother. (AP)



## Lat/Am

**Guatemalans hope for peaceful transition of power:**

Guatemalan President-elect **Bernardo Arévalo's** imminent inauguration and the unrelenting pursuit of him and his party by the attorney general are recurring topics over dinner tables in this country, reflecting a political awakening in a population weary of corruption and impunity.

Despite Arévalo's wide margin of victory in elections certified by Guatemalan authorities and declared fair by international observers, he has been a target of prosecutors since his surprise second-place showing in June's first round of voting. His anti-corruption stance and outsider status are threats to deep-rooted interests in the Central American country, observers say.

For many Guatemalans, Sunday's inauguration represents not only the culmination of Arévalo's victory at the polls but also their successful defense of the country's democracy.



Arévalo

Walter Cruz, a 55-year-old businessman from Guatemala City, said that at his family's Christmas dinner, they discussed what the new year would bring and expressed concern over rising crime and the economy.

"What we hoped for was that the inauguration would happen without any problems, that it would be a good administration that benefits everyone as a country," Cruz said. "I feel like the country's development has stagnated."

The election drama and protests have awakened many Guatemalans politically, said Stephanie Rodríguez, a lawyer in the capital.

That Arévalo has made it to within a day of his inauguration is largely owed to thousands of Guatemala's Indigenous peoples who took to the streets last year to protest and demand that Attorney General Consuelo Porras and her prosecutors respect the Aug. 20 vote. (AP)

**Former Suriname dictator vanishes:** Former Suriname dictator Desi Bouterse, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison last month for the 1982 killings of more than a dozen political opponents, has vanished after not turning himself in to authorities on Friday as planned.

His wife, Ingrid Bouterse-Waldring, told reporters that she did not know where he was and firmly stated, "He's not going to jail!" "I haven't seen or spoken to him for a few days," she said as she lashed out at judicial authorities for the conviction, claiming it was politically motivated.

Authorities on Wednesday had ordered Bouterse and four others convicted in the case to report to various prisons by Friday. Only three have done so. They were in frail health and shuffled slowly toward a prison's entrance as reporters followed them.

By late Friday afternoon, the 78-year-old Bouterse had not yet appeared, prompting the office of the prosecutor to issue a one-sentence statement saying they were investigating those who had not reported to jail. (AP)

**Mudslide in Colombia's west kills at least 18:** A mudslide in western Colombia killed at least 18 people Friday and left dozens injured, officials said.

The National Disaster Risk Management Unit said in a statement the avalanche covered a highway on a busy municipal road in a mountainous area connecting the cities of Quibdo and Medellín, in western Colombia. At least 35 injured people were taken to different hospitals, it said.

Authorities announced they would start a search operation for missing people potentially still buried under the debris, the statement said.

The risk management unit didn't specify what could have caused the avalanche, but the Defense Department reported it has been raining in the area, making it difficult for rescue operations.

A video posted on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, apparently showed the moment of the mudslide, when the side of a mountain slid over the highway, covering some cars. The Associated Press couldn't verify its authenticity.

President Gustavo Petro tweeted that his government would provide all support needed in what he described as a "horrible tragedy." (AP)

**Ex-legislator guilty on corruption charges:** María Milagros "Tata" Charbonier, a well-known former legislator in Puerto Rico who is popular with conservatives, was found guilty Friday of federal charges related to corruption.

Charbonier was indicted in August 2020 on charges including conspiracy, money laundering and theft, bribery and kickbacks involving federally funded programs. She also was charged with obstruction of justice, with federal authorities accusing her of destroying data on her mobile phone.

She was found guilty on all charges. "That's the way it is," she said in brief comments to reporters after the trial. "This is the democracy we live in, and we have to move forward."

The U.S. Department of Justice accused her of running a scheme from 2017 to 2020 in which she inflated her assistant's bi-weekly salary from \$800 to \$2,900 and kept some of the money. Prosecutors estimated that Charbonier took a total of \$100,000 during that period. (AP)

**Violence rattles Ecuador:** A bomb threat sent an anti-explosives unit scrambling into a bustling area of Ecuador's tense capital Thursday while authorities in a western city reported a nightclub arson killed two people as the South American country staggers under a spike of violence blamed on drug gangs.

Police in the capital, Quito, said they evacuated people from the area surrounding the Playón de la Marín bus station when they were alerted about a backpack with an alleged explosive placed in a garbage can.

The backpack turned out to not have any explosives, authorities said, but it followed five similar incidents in the capital Wednesday with actual explosives. Those bombs - in two vehicles, at a pedestrian bridge and near a prison - caused minor damage but no deaths or injuries.

Meanwhile, authorities said unknown suspects set fire to a nightclub in the Amazon city of Coca, killing at least two people and injuring nine others. The blaze, which spread to 11 nearby stores, is under investigation, officials said. (AP)

**Commission visits copper mine shut down:** Panama's government inspected a huge copper mine shut down after the country's Supreme Court ruled in November that the government's concession with a Canadian mining company was unconstitutional. The deal had triggered widespread street protests.

The administration of President Laurentino Cortizo has promised to carry out an orderly closure of First Quantum Minerals' mine.

The process will take years if carried out in a way to avoid environmental impacts, according to the company, the government and outside experts.

The mine's closure meant the loss of thousands of jobs. A small staff has remained to maintain the sprawling property. (AP)

**Nicaragua opponent wounded in shooting:** A member of the Nicaraguan opposition was shot seven times and in serious condition in Costa Rica, authorities in that country said.

Costa Rica's Judicial Investigation department said that 34-year-old Joao Maldonado was shot Wednesday by two attackers aboard a motorcycle while he was driving with his partner near Costa Rica University on the east side of the capital.

Authorities said the attack was still under investigation and declined to comment on any possible motive. They said bullet fragments recovered from the vehicle were sent for forensic analysis.

A person close to Maldonado who requested anonymity for reasons of personal safety, said that Maldonado and his partner, who is also Nicaraguan, remained hospitalized Thursday.

It was at least the second attempt on Maldonado's life. The previous one, also in Costa Rica, came in 2021, just months after his father, Tomás Maldonado, a retired military officer, died in a Nicaraguan prison. (AP)



Poll officers seal ballot boxes at the end of voting in New Taipei City, Taiwan, Jan 13, 2024. Polls closed Saturday after Taiwanese cast their votes for a new president and legislature in an election that could chart the trajectory of the self-ruled democracy's relations with China over the next four years. (AP)

## Asia

**Former New Zealand PM ties the knot****Taiwan voters choose their next president**

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Jan 13, (AP): Polls closed Saturday in Taiwan's presidential and parliamentary election that will chart the trajectory of the self-ruled democracy's relations with China over the next four years.

At stake is the peace and stability of the island, 160 kilometers (100 miles) off the coast of China, that Beijing claims as its own and to be retaken by force if necessary. Domestic issues such as the sluggish economy and expensive housing also featured prominently in the campaign.

China has called the poll a choice between war and peace. Beijing strongly opposes the front-runner in the presidential race, current Vice President Lai Ching-te, of the governing Democratic Progressive Party, or DPP.

**Offered**

Lai and incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen reject China's sovereignty claims over Taiwan, a former Japanese colony that split from the mainland amid civil war in 1949. They have, however, offered to speak with Beijing, which has repeatedly refused to hold talks and called them separatists.

Beijing is believed to favor the candidate from the more China-friendly Nationalist party, also known as Kuomintang, or KMT. Its candidate, Hou Yu-ih, has also promised to re-start talks with China while bolstering national defense. He promised not to move toward unifying the two sides of the Taiwan Strait if elected.

A third candidate in the race, Ko Wen-je of the smaller Taiwan People's Party, or TPP, has drawn the support particularly of young people wanting an alternative to the KMT and DPP, Taiwan's traditional opposing parties, which have largely taken turns governing since the 1990s. Ko has also stated he wants to speak with Beijing, and that his bottom line would be that Taiwan needs to remain democratic and free.

The United States, which is bound by its laws to provide Taiwan with the weapons needed to defend itself, has pledged support for whichever government emerges, reinforced by the Biden administration's plans to send an unofficial delegation made up of former senior officials to the island shortly after the election.

Beside the China tensions, domestic issues such as the dearth of affordable housing and stagnating wages have dominated the campaign.

For Tony Chen, a 74-year-old retiree who voted in Taipei in the hour before the polls closed, the election boiled

HANOI, Vietnam, Jan 13, (AP): Indonesia's president visited Hanoi on Friday for talks with his Vietnamese counterpart on maritime security in the disputed South China Sea, bilateral cooperation and environmental issues.

The meeting was aimed at bolstering security and economic ties between Hanoi and Jakarta amid China's growing influence in the region.

After meeting Indonesia's Joko Widodo, Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong issued a statement stressing the need for stability in the South China Sea. The two countries' delegations also signed a document on closer cooperation between their fisheries and memorandums of understanding in the fields of information technology and communications.

Vietnam is one of several countries defending its territorial interest against China in the tense region. Indonesia and China enjoy generally positive ties, but Jakarta has expressed concern about what it sees as Beijing's encroachment on its exclusive economic zone in the waters.

down to a choice between communism and democracy.

**Also:**

**BANGKOK:** Eight months ago, **Pita Limjaroenrat** shook up Thai politics by leading his progressive party to a stunning first-place finish in the 2023 general election, putting him in a good position to be named the country's next prime minister.

But he had a change of fortune. Now Pita's fighting an uphill battle just to retain his seat in Parliament, from which he has already been suspended.

He was denied the prime minister's job when he failed to get the necessary approval from the Senate, whose members were appointed by the military and given power to choose a prime minister according to the constitution that was adopted in 2017 under a military government. Pita's Move Forward party now heads the opposition. He is no longer party chief, and later in January the Constitutional Court will rule whether he violated election regulations and should be ex-

**Also:**

**TOKYO:** Japan successfully launched a rocket carrying a government intelligence-gathering satellite Friday on a mission to watch movements at military sites in North Korea and to improve responses to natural disasters.

The H2A rocket, launched by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd., lifted off from the Tanegashima Space Center in southwestern Japan, carrying the optical satellite as part of Tokyo's reconnaissance effort to rapidly build up its military capability.

The government's Cabinet Satellite Intelligence Center and MHI declared the launch a success, saying that the Optical-8 satellite was successfully separated from the rocket and entered its planned orbit.

The optical satellite can capture detailed images, though its capability is limited in severe weather. Japan began the intelligence-gathering satellite program after a North Korean missile flew over Japan in 1998.

ped by the lawmaking body.

While Pita is far from despairing over the turn of events, he acknowledged in an interview Thursday with The Associated Press that his post-election life has been like "riding a roller coaster."

**WELLINGTON, New Zealand:** After almost five years of engagement and a postponement due to the coronavirus pandemic, former New Zealand Prime Minister **Jacinda Ardern** married longtime partner **Clarke Gayford** in a private ceremony Saturday.

Details of the event were closely held by the pair, but the ceremony is reported to have been staged at a luxury vineyard in the scenic Hawke's Bay region, 325 kilometers (200 miles) from New Zealand's capital, Wellington.

It is believed only family, close friends and a few of the 43-year-old Ardern's former lawmaker colleagues were invited, including Ardern's successor and former prime minister **Chris Hipkins**.

disaster relief. (AP)

**Dozens of Kenyan lawyers protest:** Kenyan lawyers Friday demonstrated peacefully in Nairobi against what they say is judicial interference by President **William Ruto**, who has said he will disregard court orders from allegedly corrupt judges blocking his key development projects.

In recent days, Ruto has also repeatedly threatened to remove judges he accuses of teaming up with his political rivals to frustrate his attempts to address unemployment in Kenya and provide affordable housing and universal health care. But the head of state has not produced any evidence to back his claims that some judges are corrupt.

"As lawyers we will stand firm to tell the president that you are not above the law, you must respect the law," said lawyer Peter Wanyama, who was among some 200 lawyers who staged the march, blowing whistles and waving placards through the streets and ending up in the office of the president.

Ruto's projects have become unpopular partly due to the fact the government is levying more taxes to fund them at a time when Kenyans are experiencing increases in the cost of living. An increase in fuel taxes that Ruto says is necessary for the country not to default on paying public debt has been particularly painful. (AP)



In this image supplied by Dame Jacinda Ardern and Clarke Gayford, former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern embraces her husband Clarke Gayford at their wedding in Havelock North, New Zealand on Jan 13. (AP)



Ruto



Ramaphosa

## Africa

**ANC marks 112th 'ersary:** South Africa's ruling African National Congress party was to celebrate Saturday the 112th anniversary of its establishment ahead of national elections, expected to be the toughest since it came to power in 1994.

Thousands of party members and supporters are expected to convene in Mbombela Stadium in the Mpumalanga province where President **Cyril Ramaphosa**, also the head of ANC, will deliver his annual address and outline the party's program for the year.

The ANC is the party of South Africa's first democratically-elected president and anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela. It was at the forefront of the country's liberation struggle against racial segregation and the white minority government.

Ramaphosa is seeking a second term in this year's elections after coming to power in 2019, succeeding Jacob Zuma.

The ANC has been facing widespread criticism for failing to deliver basic services to millions of the country's poor Black majority amid deteriorating economic conditions. With an unemployment rate of around 32% - of which 60% are young people - the party is set to face a disillusioned electorate that is running out of patience with unfulfilled promises of a better life.

Some election polls suggested the party may struggle to gain more than 50% of the electoral vote, needed to clinch the win, for the first time in its 30-year reign. (AP)

**People in urgent need of assistance:** Widespread floods in the Republic of Congo have pushed hundreds of thousands of people to be in urgent need of assistance, said the United Nations Friday.

Unusually heavy rainfall has caused nine of the country's 12 departments to be affected with floods damaging health facilities and schools and submerging farmland, said the World Health Organization in a statement. More than 330,000 people have been impacted.

"WHO is committed to supporting the government to ramp up emergency response to save lives and ensure access to critical basic services," said Lucien Manga, a representative in the Republic of Congo for the organization.

The rainfall is twice the average of what was recorded between 2022 and 2023 and the floods have destroyed or damaged 34 health facilities, 120 schools and more than 64,000 houses, it said.

The flooding occurred along Congo's riverbanks around the Ubangi River with the United Nations warning it could lead to the outbreak of water-borne diseases such as cholera and impede access to healthcare.

River levels are at an all time high and it's likely the waters will not recede in the immediate future, said government spokesman Thierry Mougalla. Since flooding began some two weeks ago it has killed at least 17 people, he said.

While flooding is not rare in Congo, resi-

dents in the capital, Brazzaville said they haven't seen anything like this in decades. "Not even the floods of 1961 were on the scale we're seeing in Brazzaville today,"

said Antoine Okandza. The 78-year-old said his house was washed away by the water.

The government said it was giving more than \$3 million to an emergency fund for



Human rights activists and members of the Law Society of Kenya hold a peaceful protest in which hundreds took part in Nairobi, Kenya on Jan 12. In recent weeks, Kenyan President William Ruto has threatened to disobey court orders, alleging that some judges are working with opposition politicians to block his administration's projects. (AP)



## Kuwait oil down

The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 66 cents to USD 79.43 per barrel on Thursday as opposed to USD 80.09 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Friday.

The price of the Brent crude went up by 61 cents to USD 77.41 per barrel, the same occurred with the West Texas Intermediate, which went up by 65 cents to USD 72.02 pb. (KUNA)

## from housing to food, US inflation picks up

Higher energy and housing prices boosted overall U.S. inflation in December, a sign that the Federal Reserve's drive to slow inflation to its 2% target will likely remain a bumpy one.

Thursday's report from the Labor Department showed that overall prices rose 0.3% from November and 3.4% from 12 months earlier. Those gains exceeded the previous 0.1% monthly rise and the 3.1% annual inflation in November and were slightly above economists' forecasts. More than half the increase in prices from

November to December reflected higher housing costs. Energy costs, along with food prices, also contributed to inflation.

Excluding volatile food and energy costs, though, so-called core prices rose just 0.3% month over month, unchanged from November's increase. Core prices were up 3.9% from a year earlier - the mildest such pace since May 2021. Economists pay particular attention to core prices because, by excluding costs that typically jump around from month to month, they're seen as a better guide to the likely path of inflation. (AP)



Shoppers browse computer tablets at a Best Buy store, Nov. 24, 2023, in Charlotte, N.C. The government is expected to report, Jan. 11, 2024, that underlying inflationary pressures eased further in December. (AP)

## Market Movements 13-01-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+1.50	35,577.11	UAE	- DFM	-0.34	4,104.11
PHILIPPINES	- PSEi	+0.45	6,643.18	PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	-0.05	64,638.55
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+0.21	25,519.25	SAUDI	- Tadawul	-0.17	12,116.09

# Business

## Renewal reflecting commitment to global standards and best practices

# Zain successfully renews 6 ISO certifications

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: Reflecting its unwavering commitment to operational excellence and market leadership, Zain announces the successful renewal of six ISO certifications, attesting to the company's adherence to the highest standards and its compliance with the best global practices. This step reinforces Zain's leadership position in the Kuwaiti market, through which it serves the nation's biggest family of subscribers.

Zain successfully renewed the following certifications: Quality Management System (ISO 9001:2015), Environmental Management System (ISO 14001:2015), Information Security Management System (ISO/IEC 27001:2022), Business Continuity (ISO 22301:2012), IT Service Management (ISO/IEC 20000-1:2018), and Occupational Health and Safety Management (ISO 45001:2018).

The certifications were successfully renewed after a thorough audit process was completed by an independent certifying body. Teams from Zain's various departments and divisions were visited to assess compliance with the required practices and standards. The company's systems and infrastructure were also evaluated.

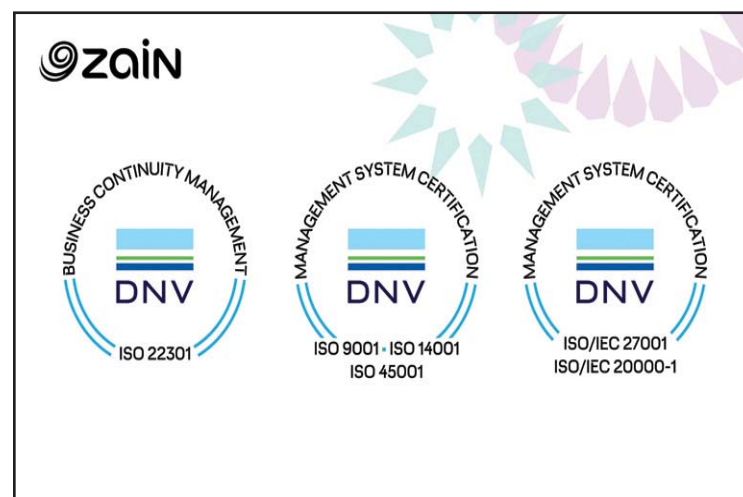
The Quality Management System certification attests Zain's commitment to delivering reliable, efficient, and satisfactory products and services that meet customer requirements and comply with applicable regulations. The Environmental Management System certification affirms the company's compliance with applicable legal and regulatory requirements, pollution prevention, and continual improvement of environmental performance.

The Information Security Management System certification shows Zain's commitment to managing sensitive company information, ensuring its confidentiality, integrity, and availability. It also ensures that Zain regularly conducts risk assessments to identify threats, vulnerabilities, and potential impacts on information security, while also implementing risk treatment plans to mitigate or manage these risks effectively. This ensures the protection of customer data, network security, regulatory compliance, maintaining service continuity, adapting to technological advancements, and preserving reputation and trust.

The Business Continuity certification attests Zain's commitment to establish, implement, maintain, and continually improve processes to enhance its resilience and ensure continuity of operations in the face of disruptive incidents or disasters. The IT Service Management certification assures the company's commitment to the best practices for effective management and delivery of IT services. Lastly, the Occupational Health and Safety Management certification shows that Zain is committed to a safe and healthy work environment for its employees and other stakeholders.

Zain is proud to be one of the Kuwaiti private sector's first companies to prioritize quality management and operational excellence, including obtaining ISO certifications throughout the past three decades to ensure its commitment to international standards.

In the beginning of its journey, Zain Kuwait obtained its first ISO certification for its Quality Management System (QMS), marking the company's pledge to maintaining high-quality standards.



Zain ISO Certifications 2024

# Kuwaiti economists predict 'balanced' trading in 1st qtr

By Mohammad Kamal

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13, (KUNA): Several Kuwaiti economists predicted that the first quarter of 2024 would witness balanced trading backed up by leading shares of the banking, financial, and logistic sectors.

Speaking to KUNA in various interviews, the economists also indicated that technical factors as well as the price levels for numerous shares within Boursa Kuwait, the stock market, would contribute to the forecast unless other geopolitical factors interfered.

Naif Al-Enezi, an economic expert, told KUNA that Boursa Kuwait usually saw a positive leap in the early portion of the year due to the involvement of heavy-hitting shares such as those belonging to the banking sector, which in turn heat up operations at the stock market.

Shares for financial services and real estate also played a part in the hubbub earlier in the year in addition to shares of logistic companies, he said, noting that such shares attracted foreign investors due to their adequate prices and high profitability throughout the year.

However, as in the case of other markets in the region, Boursa Kuwait is not immune to happenings in the region and the world, which might affect operations.

He indicated that the investment sector still could bring in local and foreign investors, noting that the real estate sector would witness disparity, while services might be more stable. On his part, financial analyst Maitham Al-Shakhs indicated that all eyes would be on the US Federal Reserve in the first quarter of 2024 when it would announce interest rates, which if reduced, would be beneficial for the capital markets.

The regional central banks, including the Central Bank of Kuwait

## Real estate sector will witness disparity

## Boursa Kuwait sustains positive momentum, propels its market value to 42.6 billion dinars

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Boursa Kuwait has sustained its positive momentum, achieving record levels and gains in the initial nine sessions of the current year, reports Al-Anba daily.

The robust Boursa Kuwait performance in 2024 has propelled the market value to 42.6 billion dinars at the conclusion of the latest trading session.

During the past nine sessions, the market value witnessed an addition of approximately 2.3 billion dinars in gains, representing an increase from 40.26 billion dinars at the close of the previous year. There has been a notable surge in liquidity rates entering the market, with the daily average reaching 57 million dinars, compared to 43 million dinars in 2023. The total value of market trading for this period

reached 514 million dinars, comprising 155 million dinars in the first week and 359 million dinars in the subsequent week.

Trading volumes have experienced an upswing, with a total of 2.2 billion shares traded since the beginning of the year. Significantly, trading activity has been concentrated in banking stocks, such as KFH and Watani, as well as various sectors including Arzan, Kuwait Real Estate, IFA, and Sanam.

The continuous upward trend in the stock market is fueled by optimism among traders. Several positive factors contribute to the market's activity, including:

- Anticipation of favorable year-end results, with expectations of continued profit growth in the last quarter, similar to the achievements of the first nine months of 2023.

- Positive outlook for global financial markets, supported by expectations of interest rate cuts by the US -- Federal Reserve and central banks worldwide.

- Seizing opportunities after the decline in many stocks, especially blue-chip stocks, making them more attractive to investors.

- Increased foreign interest in primary market shares, evidenced by a significant rise in ownership value, reaching 5.2 billion dinars by January 10.

Investment circles are eagerly anticipating the unveiling of the annual results of the market division following the upcoming Sunday trading session. This annual review, conducted by the stock exchange, adheres to established rules and regulations to determine the stocks listed in each of the three markets.

Kuwait.

He revealed that Kuwait -- along with GCC countries, and OPEC allies -- were eager to seek prices of oil between USD 80 - 90 per barrel.

Also providing his input, head of the traders union Mohammad Al-Tarrah said that operations in the first quarter of 2024 at Boursa Kuwait would see shares of significant sectors such as banking and vital companies be very active, forecasting the annual liquidity between KD 40 to 50 million (around USD 122 and 153 million).

Al-Tarrah hoped that Boursa Kuwait would react positively to local news on a number of economic decisions, affirming that the market was awaiting news in regards to decreased interest rates globally in addition to urgent settlements of a number of geopolitical happenings in the world.



Economic expert Naif Al-Enezi



Financial analyst Maitham Al-Shakhs

(CBK) would put out similar statements on interest rates after the Federal Reserve announcement, he indicated.

Al-Shakhs predicted that the

market would witness exceptional activities once companies put out their annual reports, indicating that the price of oil should be taken into consideration at trades in Boursa

# Delta posts a \$2b quarterly profit, but shares dip

WASHINGTON, Jan 13, (AP): Delta Air Lines earned \$2 billion in the fourth quarter, posted record full-year revenue, and says it is buying more planes to boost its international flying.

The airline's shares fell 9% Friday, however, as the company pulled back on its profit forecast for 2024.

Delta said full-year earnings will be \$6 to \$7 a share - down from an earlier prediction of more than \$7 a share. Analysts had already trimmed their expectations to \$6.50 a year, but the update from Delta was enough to spook investors.

Delta is the first U.S. airline to post fourth-quarter results, and its report sent shares of American, United,

Southwest, Alaska and JetBlue down between 4% and 11%.

Delta said Friday that it will buy 20 Airbus A350s and take options to buy 20 more of the long-range jetliners. Delta expects to get the first ones in 2026.

The A350s will have more premium seating than the planes they replace, which will play into Delta's strategy of pursuing high-end travelers who are more insulated from ups and downs in the economy.

Airlines were helped in 2023 by strong demand for travel from people who had spent most of the pandemic cooped up at home. Delta passengers flew 19% more miles last year than they did in 2022.

CEO Ed Bastian said he expects that trend to continue.

"We actually saw the highest cash sales day in our history on Tuesday," Bastian said in an interview. "So our consumer is healthy (financially), our consumer wants to travel. That tells us it's going to be a very good year, 2024."

Bastian said, however, he was concerned about higher maintenance costs, which he blamed on supply-chain disruptions, and an inability to receive new planes on schedule because of disruptions at engine and aircraft makers.

Delta posted fourth-quarter net income of \$2.04 billion, more than doubling the profit of \$828 million in the

same period the year before.

Excluding special items, its adjusted earnings were \$1.28 per share. That beat analysts' average forecast of \$1.16 per share, according to a survey by FactSet.

Revenue rose 6% to \$14.22 billion. Passenger revenue increased 12%, and spending on premium services - like sitting in business class instead of the main cabin - surged 15%.

However, Delta's refinery in Pennsylvania brought in \$579 million less revenue than a year earlier, a 51% drop.

On the cost side, spending for labor soared 23% - a reflection of higher wages, especially from a contract that union pilots ratified in March of last year.

## Other Voices

### Oil jumps to \$80 per barrel!

By Kamel Al-Harami  
Independent Oil Analyst

The barrel price surged to \$80 but subsequently declined to \$78 last Friday, reflecting an oil market saturated with ample supply.

This can be attributed primarily to OPEC-plus' steadfast commitment to maintaining a crude oil reduction exceeding two million barrels per day. Simultaneously, a continuous influx of oil from non-OPEC+ markets, notably the USA, Canada, and the emerging global producer Brazil, openly intensifies competition with other OPEC members.

Certainly, Brazil is clearly setting its sights on Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait. The country has openly declared its objective and is eagerly anticipating an invitation from OPEC in the near future.

The ongoing incidents in the Red Sea, including attacks on ships and tankers, as well as the seizure of oil tankers in the Arabian Gulf, are confrontations that pose a potential threat to the stable oil market that the world has been experiencing for some time.

Crude oil will continue its journey, taking the longer route around the cape, but it is not expected to disrupt the steady oil market, especially in terms of pricing, which has rebounded to \$77 per barrel. Another reassuring indicator is the confidence in the abundant supply, highlighted by OPEC+'s spare capacity of over three million barrels per day, ready to be deployed whenever necessary.

On the other hand, OPEC+ is actively promoting and providing enhanced discounts on their selling prices, aiming to stimulate the market, increase revenue, generate additional US dollars for their treasuries, and, above all, avert deficits in the current year's budget at all costs.

The demand for oil remains subdued due to the lack of China's influential demand, as its economic strength has yet to fully awaken. Consequently, oil-exporting nations are compelled to offer increased discounts to entice buyers and engage in direct competition with other producers. In contrast, Iran may have misjudged its decision to reduce discounts to China, as the buyer is steadfastly rejecting the proposed terms.

Now is not the opportune moment to reduce discounts, given the saturated market with numerous suppliers eager to seize any opportunity to fill gaps, secure new outlets, volumes, and buyers. The quantity of oil is currently less significant, as any volume is poised to find buyers, and prices are subject to negotiation. The primary objective is to facilitate the movement of oil.

Certainly, commodity speculators are anticipating an increase in tensions in the Red Sea, which could potentially escalate and spread to the Arabian Gulf region. None of the Gulf countries are prepared for such a scenario.

The demand for oil continues to be lackluster. While there was a brief surge in oil prices following the Red Sea attack, the market quickly stabilized, and oil prices reverted to the upper \$70s, falling below the significant threshold of \$80 per barrel. This outcome has thwarted the achievement of the targeted balanced budget equilibrium.

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## Economy continues to be resilient

# Banks upbeat on US consumer despite declines in bank profit

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP): The biggest banks in the country posted strong profits last year, helped by higher interest rates and a strong economy, despite having to deal with the lingering industry costs of last year's banking crisis that caused the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank.

All the banks had one-time charges in their quarterly results, many of them specifically related to their own businesses, making this quarter particularly messy.

But setting aside the turbulence of the banking panic and the charges, the banks had a mostly strong 2023. They benefitted from a resilient job market, U.S. consumers who, despite inflation, continued to spend and not fall behind on their debts, and higher interest rates that have boosted revenue across the industry.

JPMorgan Chase said Friday that its profits dropped 15% in the fourth quarter, despite the bank reporting record quarterly revenue.

JPMorgan's profits fell because

it was required to pay \$2.9 billion to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. as part of an industrywide, one-time special assessment by the regulator to cover the \$16.7 billion in costs to cover the uninsured depositors caught up in the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank. Other banks like Citi and BofA are paying this assessment as well.

With that aside, JPMorgan brought in an eye-popping \$50 billion in profits last year, up from \$37.6 billion in profits in 2022. Revenue at the largest bank in the country was nearly \$160 billion. On a per-share basis, JPMorgan posted a profit of \$3.04 a share, which was less than what analysts expected, but forecasts this quarter were thrown off by these one-time charges.

"The U.S. economy continues to be resilient, with consumers still spending, and markets currently expect a soft landing," said Jamie Dimon, JPMorgan's CEO and chairman, in a statement. A soft landing refers to the Fed's plan bring down inflation without causing a recession.



### Microsoft lets cloud users keep personal data within Europe to ease privacy fears

Microsoft has said that it is upgrading its cloud computing service to let customers store all personal data within the European Union instead of having it flow to the U.S. where national privacy laws don't exist.

The changes apply to services including Azure, Microsoft 365, Power Platform, and Dynamics 365, the Seattle-based tech company said.

Cloud computing companies have been moving to localize data storage and processing amid tightening requirements in the 27-nation European Union, which has strict data privacy laws.

Brussels and Washington have spent years wrangling over the safety of EU citizens' data that tech companies store in the U.S. following revelations by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden that the American government eavesdropped on people's online data and communications.

Microsoft said its "EU Data Boundary solution goes beyond European compliance requirements." The company has previously pledged that customers wouldn't have their data moved outside the EU.

Last year, it started storing and processing

some data inside Europe. Now it's expanding that to all personal data, including pseudonymized data found in automated system logs, which are generated automatically when online services run.

Later this year, Microsoft will start making sure technical support data is kept within Europe. It also plans a paid option for initial tech support response from within the EU.

Amazon last year rolled out independent cloud infrastructure for the EU as it looked to address strict regulations that companies and public sector organizations face. (AP)



The Microsoft logo is seen in Issy-les-Moulineaux, outside Paris, France, Tuesday April 12, 2016. Microsoft said Thursday, Jan. 11, 2024, that it is upgrading its cloud computing service to let customers store all personal data within the European Union. (AP)

### 'Self-preferencing amounts to an independent form of abuse'

## EU court adviser urges multi-billion fine for Google in antitrust shopping case

LONDON, Jan 13, (AP) - A legal adviser to the European Union's top court has said that Google should pay a whopping fine in a long-running antitrust case in which regulators found the company gave its own shopping recommendations an illegal advantage over rivals in search results.

The European Court of Justice's advocate general, Juliane Kokott, recommended rejecting the U.S. search giant's appeal of the 2017 penalty. In a legal opinion, Kokott also proposed upholding the 2.4 billion euro (\$2.6 billion) fine that the European Commission, the 27-nation bloc's top competition watchdog, slapped on Google.

#### Detriments

The commission had accused the company of unfairly directing visitors to its own Google Shopping service to the detriment of competitors. It was one of three multibillion-euro fines that the commission imposed on Google in the previous decade as Brussels started ramping up its crackdown on the tech industry.

Google appealed to the top EU tribunal after the lower General Court rejected its challenge. Opinions by the Court of Justice's advocate general aren't legally binding but are often followed by its judges. Their final decision is expected within months.

"Google, as found by the Commission and confirmed by the General Court, was leveraging its dominant position on the market for general search services to favor its own comparison shopping service by favoring the display of its result," the Court of Justice said in a press summary of the opinion.

This "self-preferencing" amounts to "an independent form of abuse" by Google, it said.

Google made changes in 2017 to comply with the Eu-



The Google sign is shown over an entrance to the company's new building in New York on Sept. 6, 2023. A legal adviser to the European Union's top court said Thursday that Google should still pay a whopping fine in a long-running antitrust case in which regulators found the company gave its own shopping recommendations an illegal advantage over rivals in search results. (AP)

ropean Commission's decision requiring it to treat competitors equally. The company started holding auctions for shopping search listings that it would bid for alongside other comparison shopping services.

"We will review the opinion of the Advocate General and await the final decision of the court," Google said in a statement. "Irrespective of the appeal, we continue to invest in our remedy, which has been working success-

## Malaysia, Singapore ink zone development deal

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 13, (KUNA) - Malaysia and Singapore signed on Thursday a MoU to develop a special economic zone in the state of Johor, bordering Singapore.

The MoU, witnessed by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong, would pave the way for a full agreement, as well as explore ways of establishing an integrated commercial and investment center to manage permits, said a joint statement by Malaysian Ministry of Economy and the Singaporean Ministry of Trade and Industry.

The statement added that both governments would look into digitizing cargo clearances, and organizing a forum for investors to give feedback on the Johor-Singapore SEZ, as well as providing training for the talent pool.

Malaysia's Johor attracted USD 15.2 billion in foreign investments, with Singapore being the second biggest investor, contributing 70 percent to the state's total direct foreign investments.

fully for several years, and will continue to work constructively with the European Commission."

The commission declined to comment.

The opinion was another setback this week for Google, which also said it laid off hundreds of employees on its hardware, voice assistance and engineering teams as part of cost-cutting measures.

### Finance efforts to combat crime gangs

## Ecuador gov't seeks to raise VAT to fund anti-crime effort

WASHINGTON, Jan 13, (KUNA) - The administration of Ecuadorean President Daniel Noboa has asked lawmakers to weigh an increase in value added tax (VAT) to finance efforts to combat crime gangs, as the armed forces increased operations in violent areas on Friday.

A dramatic spike in violence this week - including the on-air storming of a TV station, the hostage-taking of 178 prison staff by inmates and the kidnapping of police officers - appears to be a response by gangs to Noboa's plans to tackle a dire security situation.

Noboa, who took office in November, has declared a state of emergency and named 22 gangs as terrorist organizations.

#### Hostages

Three hostages have been freed, prisons agency SNAI said late yesterday, with help from the Catholic Church and the Red Cross. Another 21 being held in the prison in Cuenca were attended to by the Red Cross, it added.

The government has said that operations are ongoing to free the hostages being held in at least seven prisons, but there has been scant information about their status, leading to criticism by their families and union.

Security has worsened in tandem with serious economic troubles, as the country grapples with domestic liquidity problems, limited options for foreign financing and tens of billions in external debt.

Noboa's tax proposal, sent to the national assembly last night, would



Soldiers patrol a residential area on the south side of Quito, Ecuador, Friday, Jan. 12, 2024, in the wake of the apparent escape of a powerful gang leader from prison. President Daniel Noboa decreed Monday a national state of emergency, a measure that lets authorities suspend people's rights and mobilize the military in places like the prisons. (AP)

raise VAT by three points to 15 percent, according to ABC News.

The bill is classed as urgent and must be approved within 30 days.

Lawmakers - in a rare show of unity - have already approved two urgent proposals from Noboa's government, another tax bill meant to increase youth employment and a law designed to attract investment in the electricity sector.

"The current security crisis in Ecuador underlines the urgency to increase potential tax collection for the state," Noboa said in a document shared with the assembly.

# Renewable growth in 2023 falls short of climate goals

IEA emphasizes speed

BENGALURU, India, Jan 13, (AP) - The world's renewable energy grew at its fastest rate in the past 25 years in 2023, the International Energy Agency reported Thursday in its first assessment since nations agreed in December on ambitious new targets to slow dangerous climate change.

The Paris-based agency said rapid growth of solar in China was the main driver as the world added nearly 510 gigawatts - enough to power nearly 51 million homes for a year - with Europe, the United States and Brazil also seeing record growth.

IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said renewable energy is on course to increase by 2 1/2 times by 2030. That would fall short of the tripling that nations agreed on at last month's annual United Nations climate talks in Dubai, but Birol said the goal is reachable. Increasing funds for clean energy



Employees work at the Adani New Industries Limited, one of India's largest solar panels and wafers manufacturing facility in the port town of Mundra in Western India's Gujarat state, India, Sept. 20, 2023. The world's renewable energy grew at its fastest rate in the past 25 years in 2023, the International Energy Agency reported Jan. 11, 2024. (AP)

in developing countries is the biggest challenge to getting to 11,000 gigawatts from the nearly 3,400

gigawatts of 2022, he said.

"Success in meeting the tripling goal will hinge on this," he said.

Countries set a goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) at the 2015 Paris climate talks to avert the worst consequences of climate change. Earth is just below that limit, with scientists this week reporting 2023 was the hottest year on record and projecting that January will be so warm that a 12-month period will exceed the 1.5-degree threshold for the first time.

For the first time in nearly three decades of such talks, the final agreement in Dubai mentioned fossil fuels - coal, oil and natural gas - as the cause of climate change and said the world needs to be "transitioning away" from them. But it didn't set any concrete requirements to do so.

#### Forecasts

The report forecasts that solar power and onshore wind energy deployment through 2028 is expected to more than double in the United States, the European Union, India and Brazil, compared with the last five years. The IEA expects 3,700 gigawatts of clean energy capacity to be added by 2028 across 130 countries, with solar and wind energy accounting for almost all of it.

China, already the global leader in renewable energy, will likely account for 60% of the new clean energy capacity that will become operational by 2028.

IEA researchers found that pric-

es for solar components in 2023 declined by almost 50% year-on-year. They predict that cost reductions and fast deployment will continue in 2024 as manufacturing exceeds demand.

But IEA found that wind energy is facing more challenges, especially outside China, which has the world's largest wind energy capacity. The agency cited issues including supply chain disruptions, higher costs and red tape preventing faster installations.

The report finds that the key challenges to clean energy growth in developed countries are policy uncertainties, fragile economic environments and insufficient investment in electricity transmission grids to accommodate greater shares of renewables.

The key challenges in developing countries are access to finance for installing renewable energy and the lack of strong governance and regulatory frameworks that would reduce risks and attract investments in clean energy.

Tripling by 2030 will also depend on countries speeding up permitting and building out transmission and storage infrastructure, said Sean Rai-Roche, a policy advisor at climate think tank E3G who has long tracked developments in clean energy.

"Governments and businesses need to act now to protect the planet for future generations," Rai-Roche said. "We cannot afford to wait - action later is too late."

### Red Sea attacks disrupt supply chains

## Tesla puts German factory production on hold



A view of the Tesla Gigafactory Berlin-Brandenburg plant in Grunheide, Germany, Friday, Jan. 12, 2024. Tesla largely suspended production in Germany, due to the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea: ships carrying the necessary parts are taking a detour around Africa, creating a gap in the supply chain. (AP)

BERLIN, Jan 13, (AP) - Tesla says it's temporarily halting most production at its German factory because of attacks in the Red Sea, a vital global shipping corridor.

The electric vehicle maker said in a statement Thursday night that its factory near Berlin, which makes Model Y vehicles and batteries, will pause from Jan. 29 to Feb. 11.

It's a fresh sign of how the hostilities in the Mideast are disrupting global manufacturing supply chains, with shipping companies reporting that they're being forced to reroute vessels carrying goods and components on the longer route around the southern tip of Africa. Analysts say the detour adds 10 days or more to the journey.

"The armed conflicts in the Red Sea and the associated shifts in transport routes between Europe and Asia via the Cape of Good Hope are also affecting production in Grünheide," Tesla said. "The significantly longer transport times create a gap in the supply chains."

The U.S. led airstrikes on Thursday against Yemen's Houthi rebels in response to their attacks on Red Sea shipping.

Tesla said normal operations are expected to resume on Feb. 12. The factory in Grünheide, southeast of Berlin, is Tesla's first in Europe. It opened in 2022 and employs 11,000 workers.



## SUSTAINABILITY

## Business Plus



FAA mulls use of an independent third party to oversee inspections

## US says to intensify oversight of Boeing



A door plug area of an Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 Max 9 aircraft awaiting inspection is pictured with paneling removed at the airline's facilities at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in SeaTac, Wash. The Federal Aviation Administration says it will audit Boeing's aircraft production and increase oversight of the troubled company after a panel blew off a jetliner in midflight last week. (AP)

committee that investigated the Max crashes, said Friday that the FAA's actions are needed to rein in quality and safety problems at Boeing.

"This an extraordinary step by the administrator of the FAA, one that is long overdue," he said. "The possibility that Boeing will lose the (deputization of its employees) and be subject to independent third party oversight - and I would expect that will have to be paid for by Boeing - that would be a massive, unprecedented step to force the unwilling executives at Boeing to shape up the company."

DeFazio said that in the aftermath of the crashes, Congress changed the law so the inspectors would report to the FAA rather than Boeing supervisors, and that all future inspectors be approved by the agency. But given the Alaska Airlines case, it's clear that failed as well, he said.

"So I think we're looking at a whole new way of doing this with a totally independent entity - not people who work for Boeing - and handing Boeing the bill because of their malfeasance, would be warranted," he said.

After the panel blew off the plane, the FAA grounded all Max 9s equipped with the door plugs, forcing Alaska and United to cut flights. The aircraft remain grounded while the NTSB and the FAA continue their investigation.

Since then, the FAA was told of other problems on the Max 9. Alaska and United reported finding loose bolts on door plugs that they inspected in some of their other Max 9 jets.

NTSB investigators said this week they have not been able to find four bolts that are used to help secure the 63-pound door plug. They are not sure whether the bolts were there before the plane took off.

On Thursday, the FAA asked Boeing to respond within 10 business days and tell the agency "the root cause" of the problem with the door plug and steps the company is taking to prevent a recurrence.

The door plugs are installed by Spirit, but investigators have not said which company's employees last worked on the plug on the Alaska plane that suffered the blowout.

The day after the blowout, the FAA grounded all 65 Max 9s operated by Alaska and 79 used by United Airlines, until Boeing develops inspection guidelines and planes can be examined. Alaska canceled all flights by Max 9s through Saturday.

The incident on the Alaska plane is the latest in a string of mishaps for Boeing that began in 2018, with the first of two crashes of Max 8 planes in Indonesia and Ethiopia - and more than four months apart - that killed a total of 346 people.

Max 8 and Max 9 planes were grounded worldwide for nearly two years after the second crash. Since then, various manufacturing flaws have at times held up deliveries of Max jets and a larger Boeing plane, the 787. Last month, the company asked airlines to inspect their Max jets for a loose bolt in the rudder-control system.

WASHINGTON, Jan 13, (AP): The Federal Aviation Administration says it will increase oversight of Boeing and audit production of the 737 Max 9 jetliner after a panel blew off an Alaska Airlines plane in midflight last week, the latest in a string of mishaps at the troubled aircraft maker.

The FAA said Friday that it would judge whether Boeing and its parts suppliers followed approved quality procedures.

Amid reports of continued manufacturing problems, the FAA also said it's reconsidering a longstanding practice of relying on employees at aircraft manufacturers to perform some safety analysis of planes. Members of Congress criticized the practice of deputizing Boeing employees as inspectors after two deadly crashes involving Boeing 737 Max 8 planes in 2018 and 2019.

"It is time to re-examine the delegation of authority and assess any associated safety risks," said new FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker. "The FAA is exploring the use of an independent third party to oversee

Boeing's inspections and its quality system."

Whitaker suggested that the FAA might find "a technical, nonprofit organization" to help oversee Boeing's work. The agency also said it will increase monitoring of problems reported on Max 9 flights.

He told CNBC Friday that the FAA will also step up its oversight of Spirit AeroSystems, which supplies Boeing with fuselages for the 737 Max.

"We know there are problems with manufacturing, there have been problems in the past, but these are continuing," Whitaker said. "This is a brand-new aircraft, it has just come off the line and it had significant problems, and we believe there are other manufacturing problems."

In a statement, Arlington, Virginia-based Boeing said it will cooperate with the FAA. "We support all actions that strengthen quality and safety, and we are taking actions across our production system," the company said.

Spirit also said it's supporting the FAA actions. "Spirit's top priorities are quality, product integrity and com-

pliance," a company statement said.

The FAA's intensifying focus on safety at Boeing comes just a day after the agency announced an investigation into whether the manufacturer failed to make sure a fuselage panel that blew off was safe and manufactured to meet the design that regulators approved.

The National Transportation Safety Board is focusing its investigation on plugs used to fill spots for extra doors when those exits are not required for safety reasons on Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliners.

One of two door plugs on an Alaska Max 9 blew out shortly after the plane took off from Portland, Oregon, a week ago, leaving a hole in the plane. The cabin lost pressure and the plane was forced to descend rapidly and return to Portland for an emergency landing. No serious injuries were reported.

Whitaker said the FAA in the past used to do a lot more aircraft-manufacturing inspections, but legislation moved those to the private sector. Sometimes that works, but at times

it doesn't. The third party, he said, is just an option. "It may not be the right option, but I think we need to have that debate."

Legislators criticized the designated inspector program after the Max crashes overseas, contending the inspectors were still paid by Boeing and beholden to the company, not the FAA.

But in 2019, then-acting FAA administrator Dan Elwell said replacing the use of company workers for safety-certification work would require the agency to add 10,000 employees at a cost of \$1.8 billion a year. That all but ended consideration of FAA doing the work.

Criticism of the inspector program resumed Friday after the FAA's actions were announced. "It should not have taken a near catastrophe for the FAA to review its use of the (designated inspector) program, which effectively lets the fox guard the hen house," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut.

Former congressman Peter DeFazio, who chaired the House

Bid to 'incentivize industry innovation' and spur action to reduce pollution

## EPA sets out rules for proposed 'methane fee'

WASHINGTON, Jan 13, (AP): Oil and natural gas companies for the first time would have to pay a fee for methane emissions that exceed certain levels under a rule proposed by the Biden administration.

The proposed Environmental Protection Agency rule follows through on a directive from Congress included in the 2022 climate law. The new fee is intended to encourage industry to adopt best practices that reduce emissions of methane and thereby avoid paying.

Methane is a climate "super pollutant" that is more potent in the short term than carbon dioxide and is responsible for about one-third of greenhouse gas emissions. The oil and natural gas sector is the largest industrial source of methane emissions in the United States, and advocates say reduction of methane emissions is an important way to slow climate change.

Excess methane produced this year would result in a fee of \$900 per ton, with fees rising to \$1,500 per ton by 2026.

EPA Administrator Michael Regan said the proposed fee would work in

tandem with a final rule on methane emissions EPA announced last month. The fee, formally known as the Methane Emissions Reduction Program, will encourage early deployment of available technologies to reduce methane emissions and other harmful air pollutants before the new standards take effect, he said.

The rule announced in December includes a two-year phase-in period for companies to eliminate routine flaring of natural gas from new oil wells.

"EPA is delivering on a comprehensive strategy to reduce wasteful methane emissions that endanger communities and fuel the climate crisis," Regan said in a statement. When finalized later this year, the proposed methane fee will set technology standards that will "incentivize industry innovation" and spur action to reduce pollution, he said.

Leading oil and gas companies already meet or exceed performance levels set by Congress under the climate law, meaning they will not have to pay the proposed fee, Regan and other officials said.

Sen. Tom Carper, chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said he was pleased the administration was moving forward with the methane fee as directed by Congress.

"We know methane is over 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in our atmosphere in the short term," said Carper, D-Del. He said the program "will incentivize producers to cut wasteful and excessive methane emissions during oil and gas production."

New Jersey Rep. Frank Pallone, the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, said oil and gas companies have long calculated that it's cheaper to waste methane through flaring and other techniques than to make necessary upgrades to prevent leaks.

"Wasted methane never makes its way to consumers, but they are nevertheless stuck with the bill," Pallone said. The proposed methane fee "will ensure consumers no longer pay for wasted energy or the harm its emissions can cause."

Republicans call the methane fee a

tax that could raise the price of natural gas. "This proposal means increased costs for employers and higher energy bills for millions of Americans," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-West Virginia.

The American Petroleum Institute, the oil and gas industry's largest lobbying group, slammed the proposal Friday and called for Congress to repeal it.

"As the world looks to U.S. energy producers to provide stability in an increasingly unstable world, this punitive tax increase is a serious misstep that undermines America's energy advantage," said Dustin Meyer, API's senior vice president of policy, economics and regulatory affairs.

While the group supports "smart" federal methane regulation, the EPA proposal "creates an incoherent, confusing regulatory regime that will only stifle innovation and undermine our ability to meet rising energy demand," Meyer said. "We look forward to working with Congress to repeal the IRA's misguided new tax on American energy." Fred Krupp, president of the Environmen-

tal Defense Fund, called the proposed fee "common sense," adding that oil and gas companies should be held accountable for methane pollution, a primary source of global warming.

In a related development, EPA said it is working with industry and others to improve how methane emissions are reported, citing numerous studies showing that oil and gas companies have significantly underreported their methane emissions to the EPA under the agency's Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program.

The climate law, formally known as the Inflation Reduction Act, established a waste-emissions charge for methane from oil and gas facilities that report emissions of more than 25,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year to the EPA. The proposal announced Friday sets out details of how the fee will be implemented, including how exemptions will be applied.

The agency said it expects that over time, fewer oil and gas sites will be charged as they reduce their emissions in compliance with the rule.

6  
It is time to re-examine the delegation of authority and assess any associated safety risks

6  
EPA is delivering on a comprehensive strategy to reduce wasteful methane emissions that endanger communities and fuel the climate crisis

editor's choice





### Iconic advocate against deportation

# Leon Wildes, architect of Lennon's legal victory, dies at 90

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP) — **Leon Wildes**, a prominent immigration lawyer best known for his landmark, yearslong fight in the 1970s to prevent John Lennon from being deported and enable the former Beatle to receive permanent residency in the US, has died at age 90.

Wildes died Monday at Lenox Hill Hospital in Manhattan. His son — immigration attorney and Englewood, New Jersey Mayor Michael Wildes — said that he had been in failing health after a series of strokes. “Dad felt he effectively lived the American Dream for a kid from Olyphant PA and spent his life facilitating the same experience for scores more,” said Michael Wildes, who is also the managing partner for the firm his father helped start, Wildes & Weinberg. “He was beloved by his family, was extraordinarily humble, and beloved by our Bar.”

Leon Wildes was a graduate of the New York University School of Law who co-founded Wildes & Weinberg in 1960 and, by the end of the decade, had gained enough stature to serve as president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. His name would become part of musical and political history after an old law school classmate, Alan Kahn, called in 1972 and told him that Lennon and Yoko Ono needed his help getting their visas extended.

Wildes agreed to meet with the couple at the Manhattan offices of Apple Records, the label founded by the Beatles in the late 1960s. But he did have one embarrassing confession about Lennon and his artist wife.

What Wildes initially thought would be a formality turned into one of the most dramatic legal struggles of the era. Lennon and Ono had moved from England to New York City, trying to track down Ono's daughter from a previous marriage, Kyoko Chan Cox, whom her ex-

husband had abducted.

John and Yoko also were active in the New Left politics of the time, opposing the Vietnam War and backing efforts to defeat President Richard Nixon in his bid for re-election. With the minimum voting age lowered from 21 to 18, Lennon's plans included a 1972 tour of the US that would potentially attract millions of young people.



Wildes

As government files later revealed, some Nixon supporters feared that Lennon could damage Nixon politically. In a February 1972 memo sent to Sen. Strom Thurmond, a South Carolina Republican and a member of a Senate subcommittee on internal security, aides recommended a “strategic countermeasure,” terminating Lennon's visa.

### Immigration

Thurmond forwarded the memo to Nixon's attorney general, John Mitchell, whose deputy, Richard Kleindienst, contacted the Immigration and Naturalization Service. In March, the INS informed the British rock star that his visa would not be extended. Officials cited a drug bust in London in 1968, when Lennon pleaded guilty to possession of “cannabis resin.” Under US law at the time, non-residents faced deportation if “convicted of any law or regulation relating to the illicit possession” of narcotic drugs or marijuana.

Over the next two years, Lennon and Ono endured ongoing government harassment, with FBI director J. Edgar Hoover at times person-

ally involved. Their phone was tapped and their whereabouts closely followed. Lennon would say the pressure helped lead to the temporary breakup of his marriage. The musician left for Los Angeles in 1973 and embarked on what he called his “long weekend” of drinking and drugs, ending with the couple reconciling in 1975.

Meanwhile, musicians and writers and other public figures urged the government to let him stay. Letters of support were signed by everyone from Fred Astaire and Dick Cavett to Saul Bellow and Stevie Wonder. Bob Dylan composed a hand-written note praising John and Yoko as enemies of “this mild dull taste of commercialism” forced on the culture by the “overpowering mass media.”

The Lennons didn't always help their case. When the couple held their first press conference to discuss the deportation order, the two pulled tissues out of their pockets and declared the birth of a new country, “Ntopia,” a paradise with “no land, no boundaries, no passports, only people.” As representatives of Ntopia, John and Yoko granted themselves diplomatic immunity.

Yoko later apologized, Wildes would recall. “Leon, you have to understand. We are artists. We have a message,” she told him.

Thanks to Wildes' ingenuity and the shocking twists of politics in the 1970s, Lennon's deportation was delayed and ultimately revoked. Wildes found a loophole in the immigration drug law after Lennon told his lawyer that he had been found guilty of possessing hashish, not marijuana. Wildes also highlighted an obscure, unacknowledged government policy of “prosecutorial discretion,” under which officials used varying standards in deciding immigrant cases to pursue.

### Variety



This image released by Amazon MGM Studios shows Jason Statham in a scene from 'The Beekeeper.' (AP)

### Film

Statham's unconventional role creates a buzz

## A swarm of action in 'The Beekeeper'

By Jake Coyle

Secret agents and murderous assassins seem to lurk in increasingly mundane places.

Remember “The Accountant” with Ben Affleck? Or “The Tax Collector” with Shia LaBeouf? Or more recently, how about “The Bricklayer” with Adam Eckhardt? You probably don't — none of these films were exactly Oscar winners. But there's probably a notary public somewhere wondering when he's going to get his Liam Neeson treatment.

“The Beekeeper,” the new Jason Statham revenge thriller, may have them all beaten — or at least bee-ten. The film, directed by David Ayer (who also did “The Tax Collector”) has found probably the widest disparity yet between innocuous occupation and savage killer. As bodies accrue, so do the double takes from those confused by the source of all the mayhem. Again and again they utter in disbelief: “A beekeeper?”

Believe it, honey. “The Beekeeper” carries that ludicrous premise as far as it can, and then well beyond. If you've been searching for a movie where Jason Statham gravely vows to “protect the hive” an implausible number of times, you have found it.

The bee metaphors — there is even, rather impressively, a “To bee or not to bee” reference — come fast and furious in “The Beekeeper,” a movie that flirts with off. It can be divertingly bonkers, but ends up a rather grim and slipshod “John Wick” ripoff.

The film, scripted by Kurt Wimmer, begins the action with one of the more absurd inciting incidents in recent memory. Statham is a humble beekeeper for Eloise Parker (Phylicia Rashad) on a New England farm. She soon falls victim to a phishing scam that robs her of all her money, including the \$2 million charity fund she manages. Eloise calls a number that pops up on her screen and is talked into sharing her passwords by a smarmy scammer (David Witts) who's simultaneously using the call as a lesson to a room full of hackers who cheer him on like the predatory stock brokers of “The Wolf of Wall Street.”

Eloise doesn't press CTRL-ALT-DELETE or even call the fraud department of her bank. She kills herself. And guess who's mad? The beekeeper.

Eloise's daughter, Verona (a good Emmy Raver-Lampman), is an FBI agent who throws herself into the case. But meanwhile Statham's beekeeper, after a well-placed call, gets the location of the call center. He turns up with a few tanks of gasoline and some terse words about, you know, the hive, and burns down the place, killing a few people along the way.

That brings the attention of higher-ups. Only the guy in charge is a 28-year-old twerp named Derek Danforth (Josh Hutcherson, enjoying himself) who brashly underestimates his new enemy at every step of the way. His entitlement is owed to his rather good connections. He's protected by the former head of the CIA, Wallace Westwyld (Jeremy Irons) and happens to be the son of the US president (Jemma Redgrave).

### Personality

Fingers get cut off and bodies accumulate as our man — his name turns out to be Adam Clay — tears through the criminal apparatus with ruthless blunt force. Statham, who has both the look and personality of a bullet, dispatches anyone in his path with the kind efficiency I dream of bringing to opening a pickle jar. A few twists of the wrist and he's done.

Clay, brace yourselves, isn't just an actual beekeeper. He's a retired Beekeeper, an elite, clandestine secret service that operates well off the government books and that adopts a surprising amount of its mission statements from the natural way of bees. They have a whole secret order and stuff, bringing “The Beekeeper” into plainly “Wick”-ian — and less fun — territory.

Yes, this silly beekeeper thriller goes all the way to the top. As the movie's renegade protagonist makes his way closer and closer to the White House, with blood and chaos in his wake, “The Beekeeper” begins to feel like an uncomfortable B-movie crosspollination of today's conspiracy theory-marred political landscape, with a violent, self-appointed guardian of America slashing his way toward the president. Most of the dead bodies are secret service.

Disquieting thoughts, maybe, for a beekeeper movie. Ayer's movie is mostly just having some cynical world-building fun, even if its hero feels like a part more suited

to Mr. Bean. And, besides, while John Wick was first propelled into action by the death of his dog, Clay doesn't bat an eye when his honeycombs get blown to smithereens. This guy doesn't even really care about bees.

“The Beekeeper” an MGM release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for strong violence throughout, pervasive language, some sexual references and drug use. Running time: 105 minutes. Two stars out of four.

### Also:

**BEVERLY HILLS, Calif.:** Laughs and hugs were shared between Hollywood's best — including Margot Robbie, Meryl Streep and Leonardo DiCaprio — during a celebratory ceremony where everyone ended up walking away a winner at the American Film Institute Awards on Friday.

The annual invite-only luncheon honored 10 films and 10 television shows with well-spoken words about each celebrated project followed by a brief clip of a scene.

“Welcome to the annual AFI group hug,” institute President Bob Gazzale said as many in the audience chuckled. “For those who are new to this humble affair, the answer is ‘No. ... No.’ You are not going to lose. Losing doesn't happen here.”

Most appeared in a jovial mood with smiles and lengthy conversations in the ballroom in Beverly Hills.

Robbie chatted for a while with “Oppenheimer” director Christopher Nolan, who eventually pivoted to shake hands with Robbie's “Barbie” costmate America Ferrera. “Maestro” stars Bradley Cooper and Carey Mulligan enjoyed their time together on the red carpet while “Beef” star Ali Wong caught up with Ted Sarandos, co-CEO of Netflix.

“American Fiction” stars Jeffrey Wright and Sterling K. Brown huddled up with “Jury Duty” star James Marsden and former BET CEO Debra L. Lee. Director Steven Spielberg took photos with “Barbie” director Greta Gerwig.

Films honored include “American Fiction,” “Barbie,” “The Holdovers,” “Killers of the Flower Moon,” “Maestro,” “May December,” “Oppenheimer,” “Past Lives,” “Poor Things” and “Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse.” (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** “Oppenheimer” and “Barbie” will face off at yet another awards ceremony this season, this time at the Producers Guild Awards where they are among the 10 films nominated for the top prize.

The Producers Guild of America announced its nominations for the coveted Darryl F. Zanuck Award, its equivalent of the best picture trophy. Nominees overlapped with the five Directors Guild choices announced earlier this week, including “Killers of the Flower Moon,” “The Holdovers” and “Poor Things.” The five additional films were “American Fiction,” “Anatomy of a Fall,” “Maestro,” “Past Lives” and “The Zone of Interest.”

It's the first time that two international productions, in this case “The Zone of Interest” and “Anatomy of a Fall,” have been nominated in a single year.

The award has proven to be perhaps the best indicator for what will win the top honor at the Oscars. In the past five years, four PGA winners have gone on to collect best picture at the Academy Awards, with the exception of 2020 in which the PGA honored “1917” and the Oscar went to “Parasite.” Last year “Everything Everywhere All At Once” got the award. (AP)

**BALTIMORE:** Reggie Wells, who spent more than 30 years as Oprah Winfrey's personal makeup artist and worked with former first lady Michelle Obama, Beyoncé, Halle Berry and numerous other celebrities, has died. He was 76.

The Emmy winner and Baltimore County native died there Monday of natural causes, his niece Kristina Conner told The Associated Press on Thursday.

“He was always so full of life,” Conner said. “Very energetic. He loved to make you laugh. And he always saw the best in people. He saw so much potential in so many people.”

Wells had returned to Baltimore later in life to be closer to his aging father, The Baltimore Banner reported. In addition to his glamorous life as a celebrity makeup artist, Wells spent time making over women in a retirement community in the Park Heights neighborhood and had them professionally photographed.

Wells received five Daytime Emmy nominations for his work on “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” winning a statuette in 1995. He

frequently traveled the globe with Winfrey, including trips to South Africa, where she opened a school.

“Reggie Wells was an artist who used his palette of talent to create beauty no matter the canvas,” Winfrey said in a statement emailed to the AP. “He called me and everyone he considered a friend ‘Mary.’ He always made me feel beautiful. Ooh



Winfrey



Lee

my, how we'd laugh and laugh during the process.” (AP)

**SEOUL:** Oscar-winning “Parasite” director Bong Joon-ho and other artists in South Korea have called for a thorough investigation into the death of popular actor Lee Sun-kyun, who played the head of

a wealthy family in the class satire movie.

Lee, 48, was found dead in his car on Dec. 27 in what is widely seen as a suicide following an intense weeks-long police investigation into his alleged drug use.

In a nationally televised news conference on Friday, Bong and other artists, writers, performers and

producers questioned why police repeatedly summoned Lee in the presence of TV cameras and whether they had inappropriately leaked information about the investigation to media. They also questioned whether media outlets had overly sensationalized reports about Lee's private life that were unrelated to the drug investigation. (AP)



People & Places

MILAN  
a guy thing



Billionaire



Gucci



Dsquared2



Gucci



Gucci



Dsquared2

Above and below: Models wear creations as part of the men's Dsquared2, Gucci, Billionaire and Stone Island Fall-Winter 2024-2025 collections, presented in Milan, Italy, Friday, Jan. 12. (AP)

Gucci's classics

Dsquared2 wows with grunge-to-glam switch

MILAN, Jan 13, (AP): Milan Fashion Week took a peek into the next cold weather season with transforming twins at Dsquared2, the introduction of womenswear at Billionaire and the runway debut of luxury streetwear brand Stone Island.

The four days of preview shows include 22 runway shows and 39 presentations.

Some scenes from Milan Fashion Week mostly menswear preview shows for Fall-Winter 2024-25 on Friday.

Dsquared2

It was a grunge-to-glam twin switcheroo at Dsquared2, the Milan brand founded by Canadian twins Dean and Dan Caten.

Models traversed a gleaming white runway straight from a sci-fi set, one grimy, grungy jean-knit-and-flannel-clad backwoods twin at a time, only to be zapped into a spiffed-up version while passing through a "magic" capsule on the "fashion science laboratory."

"It's a transformation from day to night: the day version of twins and the night version of twins," Dan Caten said backstage.

In pops a grimy twin with a tattered T-shirt and snow-splattered jeans under a furry parka, out pops a glammed-up twin in a peek-a-boo ribbon dress and heels. In goes a tussled twin in an open-V teddy bear coat with a cow print, out comes a groomed version in an unbuttoned sheer black blouson with shiny pants.

Twin shows have been done on the Milan runway before - memorably Alessandro Michele's "Twinsburg" show, his last as Gucci creative director.

But the Catens said they brought their own perspective as identical twins. "This is our point, being two different individuals, with the same face," Dean Caten said.

For the finale, Dan Caten, dressed for the evening in a sheer black top and trousers, zapped into Dean Caten, who emerged after some short-circuiting in drag, to the delight of the fashion crowd.

German designer Philipp Plein unveiled his latest collection for his luxury Billionaire menswear line with a twist: he added women's looks for the first time.

Gucci

Hot off Taylor Swift's Golden Globe red-carpet triumph for Gucci in glittering green, the Italian brand's creative director plunged into his menswear debut on the first day of Milan Fashion Week on Friday with somewhat shimmering, slightly subversive classics.

Sabato De Sarno's second runway collection since being named creative director a year ago continued to shift and clarify Gucci codes, with several looks purposefully mirroring his September womenswear debut: a deep, blood red leather jacket over bare legs exuded passion, while a zipped navy jacket with jeans or a sheer ribbed sweater in camel spoke to the brand's urban cool. The collection was titled "Ancora," Italian for still, or again.

De Sarno tended toward low-key with the silhouette and the logo: double-breasted jackets were stripped of visible closures, trenches were long and streaming, plain pea coats returned to the brand's utilitarian heritage. The logo was sparing: Gucci was emblazoned in subtle raised letters on leather bags, the double-G logo appeared as repeating patterns on slim suits and the Gucci stripe inside coat slits. For the masses in search of a cult item: the double-G belt abides.

Style



Billionaire



Stone Island



Gucci



Billionaire

Fashion

blamed murky practices in the blue-chip art world for leaving him damaged financially.

"Because when the largest company in this industry with such a profound reputation does these actions, it makes it incredibly difficult for clients like me that have experience in business to know what's going on," he said, supporting his lawyers' arguments that Sotheby's either knew - or should have known that Rybolovlev was getting cheated and notified him.

When asked by his lawyer why he sued Sotheby's, Rybolovlev said: "So it's not an issue of money. Well, not only of money. It's important for the art market to be more transparent. Because ... when the largest company in this industry is involved in actions



Rybolovlev



DeGeneres

of this sort, you know, clients don't stand a chance."

In an opening statement earlier in the week, Sotheby's attorney Sara Shudofsky said Rybolovlev was "trying to make an innocent party pay for what somebody else did to him."

Rybolovlev's lawyer, Daniel Kornstein, said in his opening that Sotheby's joined an elaborate fraud. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: The moon landing, the Beatles' first appearance on American TV and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech are among the 75 Most Impactful Television Moments as ranked by the Television Academy before Monday's 75th edition of the Emmy Awards.

Academy members from the television industry collaborated with academics to cull eight decades of TV history and vote on the list that was revealed Friday. Atop it they put Apollo 11's 1969 first landing on the moon, and Neil Armstrong's declaration of a "giant leap for mankind." In second they put coverage of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, and in third the Beatles' 1964 appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

While the top of the list is dominated by news events, plenty of fictional moments from classic TV dramas, comedies and specials appear too, including Hawkeye bidding farewell to best buddy B.J., and Korea, in the 1983 final episode of "M.A.S.H." (No. 8), Linus reciting the nativity story in 1965's "A Charlie Brown Christmas" (No. 14), and, from 2007, the much-debated, cut-to-black final moment of "The Sopranos" (No. 36).

The rankings include one scene from a show nominated this year - the last moments of Nick Offerman and Murray Bartlett on HBO's "The Last of Us" (No. 56). Offerman already won an Emmy for the special episode last week and "The Last of Us" is among the top nominees, along with "Succession," "The White Lotus" and "Ted Lasso," at Monday's Emmys.

Also making the list are the episode of "Ellen" where Ellen DeGeneres reveals she's gay (No. 13), the infamous "Soup Nazi" episode of "Seinfeld" (No. 27), the debut of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video (No. 48), Whitney Houston's Super Bowl "Star Spangled Banner" performance (No. 65) and several moments from "Sesame Street" and "Mister Roger's Neighborhood." (AP)

Variety

NEW YORK: A Russian billionaire who accused Sotheby's of teaming up with a Swiss art dealer to cheat him out of tens of millions of dollars became tearful Friday while testifying about discovering he'd been part of a con game too common in an "art market

that needs to be more transparent." The emotional moment came as fertilizer magnate Dmitry Rybolovlev, speaking through an interpreter, completed two days of testimony in Manhattan federal court to support his lawsuit against Sotheby's.

Once worth at least \$7 billion, Rybolovlev said he trusted his dealer, Yves Bouvier.

"So when you trust people, and I'm not a person who trusts easily, but when

a person is like a member of your family," Rybolovlev said as he dropped his head briefly before wiping tears from his eyes and continuing on: "There is a point in time and that you start to completely and utterly trust a person."

Rybolovlev is trying to hold Sotheby's responsible for what his lawyers said was the loss of over \$160 million. His legal team said Bouvier pocketed the sum by buying famous artworks from Sotheby's before selling them

to Rybolovlev at marked up prices. In all, Rybolovlev spent about \$2 billion on art from 2002 to 2014 as he built a world-class art collection.

On cross examination, a Sotheby's lawyer got Rybolovlev to admit that he trusted his advisers and didn't insist on seeing documents that might have shown exactly where his money was going, even when he bought art sometimes worth tens of millions of dollars. In his testimony, Rybolovlev



## The Conversation

## Unveiling nature's sweet secret

## Fruit bats' diabetes resistance offers clues for human treatments

By **Wei Gordon**, Menlo College and **Nadav Ahituv**, University of California, San Francisco

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



People around the world eat too much sugar. When the body is unable to process sugar effectively, leading to excess glucose in the blood, this can result in diabetes. According to the World Health Organization, diabetes became the ninth leading cause of death in 2019.

Humans are not the only mammals that love sugar. Fruit bats do, too, eating up to twice their body weight in sugary fruit a day. However, unlike humans, fruit bats thrive on a sugar-rich diet. They can lower their blood sugar faster than bats that rely on insects as their main food source.

We are a team of biologists and bioengineers. Determining how fruit bats evolved to specialize on a high-sugar diet sent us on a quest to approach diabetes therapy from an unusual angle - one that sent us all the way to Lamanai, Belize, for the Belize Bat-a-thon, an annual gathering where researchers collect and study bats.

In our newly published research in Nature Communications, we and colleagues Seungbyn Baek and Martin Hemberg used a technology that analyzes the DNA of individual cells to compare the unique metabolic instructions encoded in the genome of the Jamaican fruit bat, *Artibeus jamaicensis*, with those in the genome of the insect-eating big brown bat, *Eptesicus fuscus*.

Approximately 2% of DNA is composed of genes, which are segments of DNA that contain the instructions cells use to create certain traits, such as a longer tongue in fruit bats. The other 98% are segments of DNA that regulate genes and determine the presence and absence of the traits they encode.

To understand how fruit bats evolved to consume so much sugar, we wanted to identify the genetic and cellular differences between bats that eat fruit and bats that eat insects. Specifically, we looked at the genes, regulatory DNA and cell types in two significant organs involved in metabolic disease: the pancreas and the kidney.

## Appetite

The pancreas regulates blood sugar and appetite by secreting hormones like insulin, which lowers your blood sugar, and glucagon, which raises your blood sugar. We found Jamaican fruit bats have more insulin-producing and glucagon-producing cells than big brown bats, along with regulatory DNA that primes fruit bat pancreatic cells to initiate production of insulin and glucagon. Together these two hormones work to keep blood sugar levels balanced even when the fruit bats are eating large amounts of sugar.

The kidney filters metabolic waste from the blood, maintains water and salt balance and regulates blood pressure. Fruit bat kidneys need to be equipped to remove from their bloodstreams the large amounts of water that come from fruit while retaining the low amounts of salt in fruit. We found Jamaican fruit bats have adjusted the compositions of their kidney cells in accordance with their diet, reducing the number of urine-concentrating cells so their urine is more diluted with water compared with big brown bats.

Diabetes is one of the most expensive chronic conditions in the world. The U.S. spent US\$412.9 billion in 2022 on direct medical costs and indirect costs related to diabetes.

Most approaches to developing new treatments for diabetes are based on traditional laboratory animals such as mice because they are easy to reproduce and study in a lab. But outside the lab, there exist mammals like fruit bats that have actually evolved to withstand high sugar loads. Figuring out how these mammals deal with high sugar loads can help researchers identify new approaches to treat diabetes.

By applying new cell characterization technologies on these nonmodel organisms, or organisms researchers don't usually use for research in the lab, we and a growing body of researchers show that nature could be leveraged to develop novel treatment approaches for disease.

## Metabolism

While our study revealed many potential therapeutic targets for diabetes, more research needs to be done to demonstrate whether our fruit bat DNA sequences can help understand, manage or cure diabetes in humans.

Some of our fruit bat findings may be unrelated to metabolism or are specific only to Jamaican fruit bats. There are close to 200 species of fruit bats. Studying more bats will help researchers clarify which fruit bat DNA sequences are relevant for diabetes treatment.

Our study also focused only on bat pancreases and kidneys. Analyzing other organs involved in metabolism, such as the liver and small intestine, will help researchers more comprehensively understand fruit bat metabolism and design appropriate treatments.

Our team is now testing the regulatory DNA sequences that allow fruit bats to eat so much sugar and checking whether we can use them to better regulate how people respond to glucose.

We are doing this by swapping the regulatory DNA sequences in mice with those of fruit bats and testing their effects on how well these mice manage their glucose levels.

The Research Brief is a short take about interesting academic work. (AP)

## ADHD treatment surged during pandemic

## Popular diabetes and obesity drugs show no link with suicide, FDA says



The injectable drug Ozempic is shown Saturday, July 1, 2023, in Houston. A preliminary review of side effects from popular drugs used to treat diabetes and obesity shows no link with suicidal thoughts or actions, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said Thursday, Jan. 11, 2024. But the agency also said officials cannot definitively rule out that 'a small risk may exist' and that they'll continue to look into reports regarding more than a dozen drugs, including Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro. (AP)

## Boil water alert over E. coli

## Quaker Oats widens recall to include 24 more items over 'salmonella' risk

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP) - The Quaker Oats Company has added two dozen additional types of granola bars, cereals and snack foods to a December recall over possible salmonella contamination.

The company, which is owned by PepsiCo., announced the additional recall in the US and Canada on Thursday.

The expanded recall includes Quaker Chewy Granola Bars and Cereals, Cap'n Crunch Bars and select cereals, Gamesa Marias Cereal, Gatorade Peanut Butter Chocolate Protein Bars, Munchies Munch Mix and snack boxes that contain those products.

The US Food and Drug Administration has received at least 24 reports of adverse events related to the products initially recalled, but no illnesses have been confirmed to be linked to the foods, an agency spokesperson said Friday. Adverse events can include medical problems, but also complaints about off taste or color of a product, defective packaging or other non-medical issues, the official said. FDA will continue to investigate the reports.

Salmonella infections can cause fever, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and stomach pain. In rare cases, the bacterial infections can be fatal.

Consumers should check their pantries for any of the products listed and throw them away. The company's recall website has additional information and details on reimbursement.



Mississippi health officials told residents in the state's capital to boil their tap water Thursday after

traces of E. coli bacteria were found in the city's supply - a result the manager of Jackson's long-troubled water system disputed while calling it a devastating setback for rebuilding public trust.

## Precaution

The boil water notice, which officials also imposed in the Jackson suburb of Flowood, was issued just days before the expected arrival of a blast of cold weather that could further disrupt the local water infrastructure. The bacteria's presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal waste, the state health department said.

Residents of the two Mississippi cities were advised to boil their water for one minute before using it. The precaution will last at least two full days as officials collect new samples for testing.

Ted Henifin, Jackson's interim water manager, said at a news conference that state officials refused to validate the lab results before issuing the boil water notice, and suggested there may have been false positive tests. He also said it was unlikely that samples from Jackson and Flowood would be contaminated at the same time since the cities' water systems are not connected.

"This is tragic," Henifin said. "This is setting us back maybe a year. It's taken everything we can do to get a few more people in this city to drink tap water and have trust in it."

Officials at the state health department's lab don't believe there was any contamination of the samples, and the results are not false positives, the health department said in a news release after Henifin's news conference.

NEW YORK, Jan 13, (AP) - A preliminary review of side effects from popular drugs used to treat diabetes and obesity shows no link with suicidal thoughts or actions, the US Food and Drug Administration said Thursday.

But the agency also said officials cannot definitively rule out that "a small risk may exist" and that they'll continue to look into reports regarding more than a dozen drugs, including Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro. Patients taking the drugs should report any concerns to health care providers, the FDA said.

The review follows a recent federally funded study that showed that people taking semaglutide, the medication in Ozempic and Wegovy, had a lower risk of suicidal thoughts than those taking other drugs to treat obesity and diabetes. The review came after European regulators said they were investigating anecdotal reports that people taking semaglutide had thoughts of self-harm.

"Our preliminary evaluation has not found evidence that use of these medicines causes suicidal thoughts or actions," the FDA report said.

The agency is analyzing reports related to more than a dozen drugs approved since 2005 that are known as GLP-1 receptor agonists. The medications help control blood sugar levels and reduce the risk of heart disease in people with type 2 diabetes. Some of the drugs are also used to help people with obesity or who are overweight shed pounds.



Prescriptions for ADHD treatments surged among adults during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to fuel lingering shortages that frustrate parents and doctors.

## Stimulants

New prescriptions for stimulants used to treat the condition jumped for young adults and women during a two-year window after the pandemic hit in March 2020, according to a study published Wednesday in JAMA Psychiatry.

Prescriptions also soared for nonstimulant treatments for adults of all ages, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration researchers found.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder is one of the most common developmental disorders in children, particularly boys. The use of drugs like Adderall to treat it climbed in general during the pandemic.

Telemedicine made it easier to get help, and regulators started allowing doctors to prescribe the drug without first seeing a patient in person.

But Dr. Ann Childress says more adults also started coming to her for help after COVID-19 hit. The Las Vegas psychiatrist sees several re-

asons behind the shift.

Working from home made some people realize how easily they get distracted. Childress says she diagnosed a lot of parents, especially moms, who saw it in their children and realized they may have it as well.

Plus, social media made people more aware of adult ADHD.

"People are more open to talking about mental health issues now," said Childress, who was not involved in the study.

Rising use of ADHD treatments compounded with manufacturing problems triggered an Adderall shortage that started more than a year ago. Doctors and patients say supply problems for several treatments haven't let up.

"Each week there about 10 things that are in shortage," Childress said.

Wendy Terry called nearly 20 pharmacies last month looking for the drug Focalin for her third-grade son, who has ADHD. Some were a 45-minute drive from her home in Diboll, Texas, a town about 100 miles northeast of Houston.

## Medication

"They all told me the same thing: We can't get it from the manufacturer. We don't know when we're going to get it or if we're going to get it," said the 42-year-old insurance agent.

Desperate, she briefly switched her son to another ADHD medication. But that went so badly that he had to miss school.

Terry eventually found a drugstore, thanks to a tip from a friend who works at another pharmacy. She says she dreads going through the ordeal again for a refill, but her son needs the help.

"When he's not medicated, he literally can't sit down at school," Terry said. "He can't quit moving. He is constantly moving. His mind is all over the place."

Federal regulators limit the production of some ADHD treatments because they are controlled substances. Regulators and drugmakers try to anticipate how much of a drug will be needed based in part on how it has been used in the past, said Mike Ganio, who studies drug shortages at the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists.

But he noted that predicting demand is difficult, and spikes in use can contribute to shortages.

"It's a business. Nobody wants to produce more, or hold on their shelves more, inventory than will be needed," he said.

Overall, the society counted more than 300 drug shortages in the US as of last fall. Aside from ADHD drugs, shortages of cancer treatments like chemotherapies also have persisted.

Ganio noted that the latest shortage total is close to a 10-year high of 320 set in late 2014.

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## Navarro bags Hobart title for 1st championship

# Lehecka, Ostapenko win Adelaide titles

ADELAIDE, Australia, Jan 13, (AP): Australia in January suits Jiri Lehecka. Last year, he reached the quarterfinals of the Australian Open.

On Saturday, the seventh-seeded Czech beat unseeded Briton Jack Draper 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in Adelaide International final to win his first ATP Tour title.

Sixth-seeded Jelena Ostapenko had a more comfortable push for victory as she secured her seventh WTA tour title with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Daria Kasatkina in a night match.

The 22-year-old Lehecka beat third-seeded Sebastian Korda 6-3, 6-2 in the semifinals to reach his second tour final. Draper also was playing in his second final and his second in succession after losing to Adrian Panatta in the final of the Sofia Open in November.

Saturday's final was a contest of big hitters in which Lehecka served eight aces, Draper seven. That was indicative of a close match, which lasted 2 hours, 8 minutes.

"It's hard for me to say something because it is so emotional for me to win my first title here in Adelaide," Lehecka said. "I'm super excited."

Lehecka is the first Czech to win an ATP title since Jiri Vesely in Pune in 2020. Saturday's win will boost his ranking by nine places to 23.

Lehecka will play Bernabe Zapata Miralles of Spain in the first round of the Australian Open while Draper will play Marcos Giron of the United States.

Former French Open champion Ostapenko tuned up for the Australian Open with an impressive straight-set victory in 74 minutes against last year's finalist Kasatkina.

Her first title on hardcourts since Dubai in 2002 marked her return to the top 10 for the first time in five years in what has been a perfect lead up week to the Australia Open starting Sunday.

The Latvian player powered 32 winners to Kasatkina's 12 and made decisive breaks in each set which kept Kasatkina constantly on the back foot.

Kasatkina had advanced to the final after second-seeded Jessica Pegula withdrew with a gastrointestinal illness. It was the second consecutive walkover for Kasatkina, after Laura Siegemund withdrew ahead of their quarterfinal due to a left leg injury.

The 26-year-old Ostapenko is seeded No. 11 for the Australian Open in Melbourne and will play wild-card Kimberley Birrell in the first round. Ostapenko reached the quarterfinals at Melbourne Park last year.

Kasatkina is the 14th seeded player

and will play No. 48 Peyton Stearns of the United States in the first round at the major.

Second-seeded American Emma Navarro claimed her first WTA Tour title in her first final Saturday when she beat two-time champion, top-seeded Elise Mertens 6-1, 4-6, 7-5 to win the Hobart International.

The 22-year-old Navarro outlasted Mertens of Belgium over 2 hours, 48 minutes to continue her extraordinary



Alejandro Tabilo of Chile poses with his trophies after defeating Taro Daniel of Japan in the final of the ASB Classic tennis tournament in Auckland, New Zealand, Saturday, Jan. 13, 2024. (AP)

rise over the past 12 months.

She is the second-straight American champion after Lauren Davis in 2023.

Navarro was ranked No. 149 this time last year but the New Yorker now has risen to No. 31. She also made the semifinals in Auckland last week in an impressive start to 2024. She currently is 8-1 for the season.

## TENNIS

"I don't know if I could put words to the emotions but it's been a lot of years in the making," Navarro said. "My coach and I have been together for eight years, I think. From where we started to now, it's really crazy to think about."

"Probably six, seven years ago, I was hoping to be a decent college player and that was going to be good enough for me. So to be here now, it's really crazy and I guess just a testament to the work we've both put in."

Navarro is the 27th seeded player at next week's major and will play Wang Xiyu of China in the first round in her Australian Open debut.

The 28-year-old Mertens will be seeded No. 25 in Melbourne and will play Egypt's Mayar Sherif in the first

round. She reached the semifinals in Melbourne in 2018 after winning the Hobart title for the second time.

In Auckland, New Zealand, Alejandro Tabilo capped the most extraordinary week of his career Saturday when he emerged from qualifying to beat Taro Daniel 6-3, 7-5 in the final of ATP Auckland Classic, claiming the first title of his career.

Tabilo came through two rounds of qualifying and three rounds of the main draw. He avoided second-seeded Cameron Norrie in the quarterfinals when Norrie withdrew with a wrist injury and beat sixth seeded Arthur Fils in the semifinals to reach his second ATP Tour final.

The 26-year-old then dominated the final, serving 10 aces and keeping Daniel constantly on the defensive with his powerful left-hand forehands. "It honestly feels surreal," Tabilo said. "I feel happy and very emotional."

"Even my coach (Guillermo Gomez) didn't have a visa and we applied in the quarterfinals and we got it yesterday and he came from Melbourne because he was waiting for me in Australia. So crazy, crazy."

Japanese-American Daniel also had an outstanding week as he made his way to a final between unseeded players.

Daniel had only bad memories of the Auckland tournament after being beaten last year in the final round of qualifying in a tournament plagued by rain. His reluctant decision to return this year paid off when he beat top-seeded Ben Shelton in the semifinals to reach his second career final after Istanbul in 2018.

But on Saturday he came up against a player on a roll, hardened by his many matches in Auckland. He fought hard to keep in the match but Tabilo always was on top, breaking Daniel's serve in the sixth and eighth games of the first set and the 12th game of the second.

It ended a tough run for the 82nd-ranked Tabilo.

"Last year was tough, even two years ago we made the finals of Cordoba and from there we were going up," he said. "Then we had a little stress fracture in my arm and we had to stop that year and I had to work back up."

"There were a lot of injuries last year also and now with the whole team, with the recovery, with the food, with my family and my girlfriend also supporting me...it's been a crazy ride."

Both players now move on to the Australian Open where Daniel will play Chris Eubanks in the first round and Tabilo will play American qualifier Aleksandar Kovacevic.

# 76ers subdue Kings to end 3-game slide



Toronto Raptors forward Pascal Siakam (43) goes to the basket as Utah Jazz's Kelly Olynyk (left) and Walker Kessler (24) watch during the second half of an NBA basketball game Friday, Jan 12, 2024, in Salt Lake City. (AP)

## Timberwolves dispose of Blazers

PHILADELPHIA, Jan 13, (AP): Tobias Harris had 37 points, Tyrese Maxey added 21 and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Sacramento Kings 112-93 on Friday night end a three-game losing streak.

Reigning NBA MVP Joel Embiid missed his third straight game for Philadelphia because of soreness in his left knee.

Harris scored 14 points in the first period, his most in any quarter this season, and never slowed down. It was the most points he's scored in a regular-season game in six seasons with Philadelphia, and his most since a career high with 39 for the Los Angeles Clippers in December 2018 against Portland.

De'Aaron Fox had 21 points for Sacramento.

### Timberwolves 116, Trail Blazers 93

In Minneapolis, Rudy Gobert had 24 points and 17 rebounds, Karl-Anthony Towns scored 23 points and Minnesota beat Portland.

Gobert and Towns dominated an undermanned and young Portland squad that was on the second game of a back-to-back after losing 139-77 in Oklahoma City a night earlier, matching the fifth-biggest loss in NBA history.

Gobert and Towns combined to shoot 16 of 19 from the field and Towns was 3 of 3 from 3-point territory. Minnesota shot 55%, while holding the Trail Blazers to 39%.

Duop Reath had 14 points for Portland. It was 1-6 on a seven-game trip.

### Clippers 128, Grizzlies 119

In Memphis, Paul George scored a season-high 37 points, Kawhi Leonard added 22 and Los Angeles edged Memphis.

George made 12 of 18 shots, going 7 for 10 from 3-point range, in his sixth game this season with at least 30 points. Leonard, who signed a three-year contract extension Wednesday, was 10 of 16 from the field.

Jaren Jackson Jr. led Memphis with 21 points.

## BASKETBALL

### Pacers 126, Hawks 108

In Atlanta, Buddy Hield and Obi Toppin each scored 18 points and Indiana overcame star Tyrese Haliburton's absence with balanced scoring to beat Atlanta for its ninth victory in 10 games.

Haliburton, the NBA assists leader, missed his second straight game because of a strained left hamstring. Indiana scored at least 150 points while winning each of its first two games of the season against Atlanta, including a 150-116 rout on Jan. 5 at Indianapolis. On Friday, the Pacers had eight players in double figures and shot a season-high 67.1%.

Dejounte Murray led Atlanta with 29 points.

### Warriors 140, Bulls 131

In Chicago, Klay Thompson scored 30 points, Stephen Curry had 15 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter and Golden State beat Chicago.

Thompson and Curry started slow, missing a combined 10 of their first 11 shots from the field. But the tide turned at halftime, with Thompson making five 3-pointers and scoring 17 points as the Warriors carved out a 16-point lead entering the fourth.

Curry finished 8 of 24 from the field, but had nine assists as the Warriors needed just over five minutes in the third quarter to erase a 13-point halftime deficit. DeMar DeRozan scored 39 points to lead the Bulls. They shot 58.1% from the field.

### Spurs 135, Hornets 99

In San Antonio, Victor Wembanyama had 26 points and 11 rebounds and San Antonio routed Charlotte, spoiling Hornets star LaMelo Ball's return from a 20-game absence.

Wembanyama was 9 for 14 from the field, hitting 2 of 3 3-pointers, and had two blocks in 20 minutes.

Ball had 28 points, five assists and five steals in his first game since spraining his right ankle Nov. 26 at Orlando.

### Rockets 112, Pistons 110

In Detroit, Fred VanVleet scored 17 of his 20 points in the second half and Houston handed Detroit its seventh straight loss.

Detroit is 1-35 after a 2-1 start, including an NBA-record matching 28-game losing streak. The current streak started with a 136-113 loss to Houston. Jaden Ivey had an open look at a 3-pointer with three sec-



New Orleans Pelicans forward Zion Williamson (right) drives to the basket as Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, Jan. 12, 2024, in Denver. (AP)

onds left, but it went in and out.

Alperen Sengun scored 29 points and Jalen Green added 28 for Houston. VanVleet also had 12 assists. Alec Burks and Kevin Knox II had 19 points for Detroit.

### Heat 99, Magic 96

In Miami, Duncan Robinson scored 23 points, Bam Adebayo hit the go-ahead jumper with 18.5 seconds left and Miami beat Orlando.

Adebayo finished with 21 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists for the Heat, and Jaime Jaquez Jr. had 19 points.

Paolo Banchero had 25 points, eight rebounds and six assists for Orlando.

### Jazz 145, Raptors 113

In Salt Lake City, Lauri Markkanen had 22 points and nine rebounds and Utah beat Toronto for its 10th victory in 12 games.

Jordan Clarkson scored 21 points and Collin Sexton added 20 for the Jazz.

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Dalal Al-Obaid stands in the middle of the heroes.

### Sahara Resort Equestrian Championship

## Al Shatti secures victory in a thrilling sixth round

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Sahara Resort Equestrian Championship competitions concluded the day before yesterday at the Sahara Resort in the Subhan area. Local club riders showcased their skills at the equestrian track, with Amer Al Shatti clinching first place in the sixth round at a height of 120 cm. Al Shatti completed the course in 71.69 seconds

#### EQUESTRIAN

without incurring any penalty points, surpassing competitors such as Nick Channing, Stephen Dinellis, Armando Lovris, Saad Al-Sulaiman, and Fajr Al-Sabah.

In the fifth heat at 110 cm, Italian jockey Antonio Moroso secured the top position with a time of 33.62 seconds.

The female jockey Fi Khulood claimed the first spot at a height of 100 cm, while Othman Al-Mutawa led in the third heat at a height of 90 cm.

Reflecting on the event, Sahara Resort's Equestrianism General Manager, Dalal Al-Obaid, expressed gratitude, stating, the tournament witnessed strong competition in all rounds, and the public attendance was substantial in Sahara. Everyone engaged enthusiastically with the tournament's activities."

Al-Obaid also highlighted Sahara Resort's annual calendar, featuring both local and international tournaments held alternately with other equestrian clubs in Kuwait. These events cater to a diverse community of male and female horse enthusiasts, fostering a family-friendly sports atmosphere that benefits participants and spectators alike.

### Ghana and Nigeria aim for strong start

## Egypt take on Mozambique in African Cup of Nations opener

ABIDJAN, Jan 13: The African Cup of Nations begins with Egypt facing Mozambique in Abidjan, a team considered a "good omen" by the Egyptians, having won the title three times in previous encounters. Ghana and Nigeria also start their campaigns against Cape Verde and Equatorial Guinea, respectively.

The "Pharaohs," seven-time African champions, led by coach Rui Vitoria, seek three points at the Felix Houphouët-Boigny Stadium to ease calculations before their upcoming clash with Ghana. The squad includes stars like Mohamed Salah, Mustafa Mohamed, Omar Marmoush, and Mohamed Elneny.

Vitoria acknowledges the tough competition but expresses confidence in his team's ability. Salah aims to lead Egypt to its eighth title and compensate for losses in the 2017 and 2022 finals.

Mozambique, attending for the fifth time, relies on Portuguese league players, hoping to secure its

first win.

In the same group, Ghana, four-time champions, faces Cape Verde, aiming for a victory. Ghana, under coach Chris Hughton, features stars like Mohamed Qudus, Sales Abdel Samad, and Inaki Williams. Arsenal's Thomas Partey is ruled out due to injury.

#### SOCCER

In Group A, Nigeria, three-time champions, faces Equatorial Guinea, aiming to avoid surprises before clashing with host Ivory Coast. The "Super Eagles" boast an offensive lineup with Victor Osimhen, Samuel Chukwueze, and Kelechi Iheanacho.

Nigeria, with a rich history in the tournament, seeks to add to their three titles. The African Cup of Nations promises intense competition and showcases the continent's football prowess.



In this file photo, Egypt's Mohamed Salah (left), and Morocco's Nayer Aguerd challenge for the ball during the African Cup of Nations 2022 quarter-final soccer match between Egypt and Morocco at the Ahmadou Ahidjo stadium in Yaounde, Cameroon. (AP)



Hassan Hamdan helped off the field by the medical team.

## Kuwait 'turn' focus to Chinese Taipei after narrow opening win over Oman

A tough challenge

MANAMA, Jan 13: The primary goal of our national handball team is to secure a qualification ticket to the second "main" round, further advancing in the 21st Asian Handball Championship and aiming for success in the 2025 World Cup Qualifiers.

The championship is taking place at the Khalifa Sports Hall in Manama, Bahrain, concluding on the 25th of this month. In the third round of the preliminary stage, the team will face the Chinese Taipei national team at 1:00 pm in Group A, alongside Qatar and Oman. Group B features Korea against New Zealand and Iran against China.

#### HANDBALL

In the previous match, Kuwait achieved a hard-fought victory against Oman, with star player Mohammed Al-Hendal scoring the winning goal in the last 3 seconds, securing a 27-26 victory. Goalkeeper Hassan Safar was named the best player in the match. Kuwait and Qatar currently lead the group with two points, while Oman and Taipei are yet to score.

The team's performance fell short of expectations in the challenging match against Oman, with control and lead exchanging during the second half until Al-Hindal's decisive goal. Kuwait coach Saeed Hegazy strategically withheld some key players, including recent team additions Saad Al-Haidari and Fawaz Abdel-Hadi, allowing experienced players to rest.

The upcoming match against Chinese Taipei promises to be a tough challenge, considering Chinese Taipei's strong performance against Qatar, a title contender, where they lost by only 7 goals. Hegazy aims to secure an early settlement, build a comfortable lead, and address defensive shortcomings from the previous match.

In other results from the previous matches, Qatar defeated Chinese Taipei 33-26, Iran dominated New Zealand with a score of 40-13, and Korea secured a narrow victory against China with a score of 32-30.

As per the tournament format, the top two teams from each of the four groups will advance to the quarter-finals. The eight teams will be divided into two groups for further competition, with the top two from each group qualifying for the semi-finals. All four teams will secure qualification for the 2025 World Cup, scheduled to be held in Croatia, Denmark, and Norway from January 14 to February 2 of next year.



Mohammed Hindal makes a goal attempt against Oman.

### Al-Arabi eye replacements for Bouchard and Thiam

## Ibrahim appointed as Al-Qadisiya technical advisor

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Board of Directors of Al-Qadisiya has made significant coaching changes, appointing national coach Muhammad Ibrahim as the technical advisor to the first team. This decision follows the acceptance of Ibrahim's resignation from his role as the team's coach. In his place, Coach Dr. Muhammad Al-Mashaan has been appointed. Al-Qadisiya expressed gratitude to Ibrahim for his recent efforts and acknowledged his commitment despite health challenges.

#### SOCCER

Meanwhile, Al-Qadisiya has kicked off its training in Bahrain for a 10-day camp in preparation for the upcoming Amir Cup competition. The team is set to face Yarmouk on January 27 in the preliminary round. During the camp, Al-Qadisiya is scheduled to play two matches against Bahraini clubs.

In other news, Al-Arabi Club is considering various professional candidates as potential replacements for Algerian Sofiane Bouchard and Senegalese Mamadou Thiam. Bouchard, currently



Muhammad Ibrahim Qadisiya technical advisor.

on loan to an Algerian club, is expected to return next summer to fulfill the remaining term of his two-season contract with Al-Arabi. Secretary Fouad Al-Mazidi disclosed that negotiations have been initiated with Al-Qadisiya player Eid Al-Rashidi. Additionally, Al-Arabi plans to launch investment initiatives at the beginning of the next season.

## Bayern Munich win, Bundesliga returns

MUNICH, Jan 13, (AP): Bayern Munich paid tribute to soccer great Franz Beckenbauer ahead of its 3-0 win over Hoffenheim in the Bundesliga on Friday as Jamal Musiala scored twice and Harry Kane started 2024 with a goal.

From the towering "Thank you, Franz" in lights on the outside of the stadium to the same message on the front of Bayern players' jerseys, the game was all about Beckenbauer, who died Sunday at the age of 78.

After Bayern's players all warmed up wearing Beckenbauer's No. 5 on their kit, it was one of the team's younger stars who lit up the game with two goals. Musiala scored the opening goal in the 18th minute, ending a slickly played corner routine with a low shot in off the post from a very tight angle.

Hoffenheim briefly threatened to turn the game into more of a contest when Andrej Kramaric burst in behind the Bayern defense, only to be stopped by Manuel Neuer's save. Another chance a minute later ended with Hoffenheim's Maximilian Beier hitting the crossbar.

Musiala doubled Bayern's lead in the 70th with another show of skill as he danced past Florian Grillitsch on the edge of the penalty area, played a one-two with Leroy Sané and knocked the ball past goalkeeper Oliver Baumann. A red card soon after for Grisca Prömel's second booking all but ended Hoffenheim's chances of a comeback.

## India include four spinners in squad

MUMBAI, Jan 13, (AP): India has included four spinners in its squad for the first two tests against England but experienced seamer Mohammed Shami is not yet fit to take part.

Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav did not travel to South Africa for the recent drawn test series against the Proteas but come back into contention on home pitches that are expected to take plenty of turn.

They join Ravichandran Ashwin and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja in a 16-man party that will contest the opening games of the five-match series in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam.

Ashwin needs just 10 more wickets to become the ninth bowler to take 500 career wickets in tests. The 95-test off-spinner currently sits in second place in wickets taken for India behind Anil Kumble (619).

When England last toured India in 2021 when it crumbled in the face of extreme turn as Ashwin and Patel combined to take 60 wickets.

#### CRICKET

Uncapped wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel was one of three glovemen named Friday by the Board of Control for Cricket in India, joining KL Rahul and KS Bharat, with Ishan Kishan still out after missing the recent South Africa tour for personal reasons.

Shami is currently recovering from an ankle problem and hopes to feature later in the five-match series, which begins in Hyderabad on Jan. 25, while fellow pace bowler Prasad Krishna (quad) is also out.

Rohit Sharma continues to lead the side, assisted by vice captain Jasprit Bumrah.

**India squad:** Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, KS Bharat, Dhruv Jurel, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah, Avesh Khan.

#### SOCCER

## Injury blow for Kuwait, defender Hamdan sprains ankle

CAIRO, Jan 13: Kuwait suffered 1-3 defeat against the Libya in a friendly match at Cairo International Stadium, part of Kuwait's training camp in Egypt.

In the upcoming schedule, Kuwait is set to engage in another friendly match against the Uganda on January 22.

Prior to the match, the training session witnessed an unfortunate incident as national team defender Hassan Hamdan sustained a severe sprain in his ankle joint.

Providing an update, Dr. Abdul Majeed Al-Bannai,

the head of the Medical Committee of the Football Association, confirmed that X-rays ruled out any fractures in Hamdan's ankle. The clinical examination revealed a

tear in the external ligament of the foot, leading to the placement of his foot in a cast. Al-Bannai noted that such injuries typically necessitate a recovery period ranging from 3 to 6 weeks.





The Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani (centre), waves from the tribune during the opening ceremony ahead of the Asian Cup Group A soccer match between Qatar and Lebanon at the Lusail Stadium in Lusail, Qatar. (AP)

# Sports

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## Kuwaiti swimmers make waves in Doha

Al-Ghaith clinches bronze

DOHA, Jan 13, (KUNA): Hamad Al-Ghaith, representing the Kuwaiti national team, secured the bronze medal in the 400-meter freestyle race for the 13-14 age category during the fourth day of the Second Arab Aquatics Age Group Championships in Doha, Qatar. This achievement contributed to the team's total medal count, which now stands at an impressive 10.

Faisal Abu Al-Hassan, head of the delegation and board member of Kuwait Swimming Association



Silver medalist Mohammad Al-Zubaid.

tion, expressed his joy at the swimmers' outstanding performances. He commended both the players and coaching staff for highlighting Kuwaiti swimming talents and achieving remarkable success with several podium finishes.

Al-Ghaith had previously won the silver medal in the 200-meter backstroke race for the 13-14 age category on Friday. Another Kuwaiti swimmer, Mohammad Zubaid, also claimed a silver medal in the 50-meter freestyle race in the 15-16 age group.

### SWIMMING

The Kuwaiti swimming team had a triumphant Thursday, securing three medals, including a gold and two silvers. Notable victories included Zubaid's gold in the 50-meter backstroke race for the 15-16 age category and silver in the 100-meter freestyle race for the same category.

In the 4x100-meter freestyle relay event, the Kuwaiti team in the 13-14 age group, consisting of Al-Ghaith, Hasan Al-Suaileek, Saud Al-Enezi, and Hassan Rajab, clinched the silver medal.

During the championship's first day, Kuwait had an impressive start, winning four medals, including gold in the 50-meter butterfly by Al-Suaileek, silver in the 200-meter freestyle by Al-Ghaith, and two bronzes in the 50-meter butterfly and 4x200-meter freestyle relay by Al-Enezi.

The Second Arab Aquatics Age Group Championships, which commenced last Wednesday, is set to continue making waves until January 15th.



Kuwaiti swimmer Hamad Al-Ghaith (right) displays his bronze medal in the 400-meter freestyle at Qatar's Arab Championship.

KUNA photos

Perfect start for Qatar

## Historic moment at Asian Cup: Female ref takes charge as Australia edge India

AL RAYYAN, Qatar, Jan 13, (AP): Australia is up and running at the Asian Cup after second-half goals from Jackson Irvine and Jordan Bos broke India's resistance and secured a 2-0 win on Saturday. The match was the first in the history of the Asian Cup to be officiated by a female referee, with Japan's Yoshimi Yamashita in charge.

The 2015 champions are out to reclaim the title in Qatar and were given an early test against a stubborn opponent and a raucous crowd at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.

Australia dominated the Group B match, but struggled to find a way through India's determined defense.

That was until goalkeeper Gurpreet

Singh Sandhu failed to claim a high cross from Martin Boyle five minutes after the break and Irvine pounced to fire home from close range.

Bos, a substitute, had only been on the field for a minute when he converted Riley McGree's low cross at the far post to double the lead in the 73rd.

### SOCCER

While Australia dominated on the field, it was India's fans who made the majority of the noise among the crowd of 36,253.

High-pitched cheers rang around the stadium to greet India's increas-



Australia's Key Rowles (left), heads the ball as India's Nikhil Chandrashekar Poojary (center), and Sunil Chhetri jump to stop him during the Asian Cup Group B soccer match between Australia and India at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

ing number of defensive clearances as the pressure mounted. And that was amplified by India's rare attacks on goal, such as a flying header from Sunil Chhetri in the first half that went wide.

Sandhu could have been punished for a mis-kick in the first half but recovered to stop Connor Metcalfe's effort on goal. Irvine made no mistake from the keeper's error in the 50th, though, setting Australia on course for victory.

"I think there were still two players on the line. That's the way India defended today," Irvine said. "I had tried to squeeze it through that gap and fortunately it went in."

Qatar began its defense of the Asian Cup in perfect style with a 3-0 win against Lebanon at Lusail Stadium.

As host of the 2022 World Cup, Qatar suffered three straight defeats and exited its own tournament at the earliest possible stage.

But hosting the Asian Cup for the third time, Qatar got off to an impressive start after two goals from Akram Afif and another from Almoez Ali secured victory in front of 82,490 fans.

An injury to Ali in the second half was the only concern for Qatar coach Bartolome Marquez, but Afif proved how important he will be to his team's hopes of retaining the Asian Cup.

The forward opened the scoring in the 45th and rounded off the win in stoppage time at the end of the Group A match.

Ali struck in the 56th, but looked in discomfort as he limped off the field in the 77th minute, holding the back of his leg.

## Palmer's penalty extends Chelsea's winning streak

LONDON, Jan 13, (AP): Cole Palmer made up for his misses in midweek by scoring a penalty to give Chelsea a 1-0 win over Fulham on Saturday for a third straight Premier League victory.

Palmer sent Fulham goalkeeper Bernd Leno the wrong way from the spot in first-half stoppage time after Raheem Sterling had been tripped in the area.

It was the 21-year-old Palmer's ninth league goal of the season and fifth from the penalty spot, as the former Manchester City player has emerged as the most successful of Chelsea's many expensive offseason signings.

And it came after Palmer was guilty of a number of wasted chances on Tuesday - including a glaring miss from close range - when Chelsea lost 1-0 to second-tier Middlesbrough in the first leg of the League Cup semifinals.

Chelsea has won three straight league games for the first time under manager Mauricio Pochettino and extended its league winning streak at

home to four matches - its best run at Stamford Bridge in 3 1/2 years. This latest win lifted the Blues provisionally



Chelsea's Cole Palmer (right), challenges for the ball with Fulham's Sasa Lukic during the English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and Fulham at Stamford Bridge stadium in London. (AP)

above Manchester United and Newcastle into eighth place.

Another positive for Chelsea was seeing defender Ben Chilwell back for the first time since September following a lengthy injury layoff.

However, Chelsea may have been fortunate to not go a man down when Malo Gusto escaped with just a yellow card for a studs-up challenge on Wilian in the first half.

### SOCCER

Fulham was coming off a 2-1 home win over Arsenal in its last league game but has struggled on the road all season. The visitors had few quality chances at Stamford Bridge but Chelsea needed goalkeeper Djordje Petrovic to deny striker Raul Jimenez from scoring an equalizer in the 73rd.

Carlton Morris scored a controversial late goal to give Luton a 1-1 draw at Burnley.

Championship recognized for organizational excellence

## Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud leads Asian Shooting Federation meeting in Kuwait



Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud, President of the Asian Shooting Federation with Luciano Rossi, President of the International Federation of Shooting.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 13: The Kuwait Asian Shooting Championship is currently underway at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Olympic ranges complex, featuring the participation of 26 countries. Today's schedule includes men's, women's, and junior qualifiers for 75 plates at 3:00 pm.

Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi, the President of the Arab and International Shooting Federations, inaugurated the technical meeting of the championship. The meeting saw the presence of Luciano Rossi, President of the Italian International Shooting Federation, Salman Al-Hamoud, President of the Asian Shooting Federation, Abdullah Al-Hammadi, the technical delegate for the championship, members of the Asian Shooting Federation, and heads of delegations. Discussions centered on the tournament system and the rules of the International Federation for Managing Competitions.

Additionally, the Asian Shooting Federation convened yesterday, led by Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud. The meeting, attended by members of the Executive Office and heads of working committees, involved a review of committee reports. Obaid Manahi Al-Osaimi, the Secretary-General

of the Kuwaiti and Arab Shooting Federations and tournament director, emphasized that the Continental Fed-

### SHOOTING

eration has devised plans to enhance shooting on the continent by intensifying efforts.

Al-Osaimi revealed that the Kuwaiti Asian Shooting Championship



One of the officials who attended the meeting.

offers a chance to compete for eight spots in the 2024 Paris Olympics. He extended his best wishes for success to all participants, expressing hope for achieving the desired results in the tournament hosted by Kuwait.

In conclusion, Al-Osaimi commended the efforts of the Supreme Organizing Committee and the tournament's working committees, acknowledging the dedication of Kuwaiti volunteers to ensure the success of the event. The gathering of participating teams was attended by Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud, President of the Asian Shooting Federation, Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi, President of the Kuwaiti and Arab Shooting Federations, and Luciano Rossi, President of the International Federation of Shooting, as they assessed the teams' final preparations for the championship.

On another note, Khaled Ibrahim, head of the Jordanian delegation, stated that Jordan is actively participating in the Asian Championship with its national team, featuring six shooters in both dirt and skeet competitions. He praised Kuwait's organizing capabilities, emphasizing the success achieved in hosting major tournaments with a diverse international participation.