



## NEW GOVERNMENT TAKES OATH, VOWS TO HONOR TRUST

# Amir sets roadmap for Kuwait's future



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with His Highness the Prime Minister Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and the ministers, gather for a group photo during the oath-taking ceremony on Wednesday, January 17.

### Opinion

## What have 470 ministers done for Kuwait?

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

FROM the year 1963 until today, a total of 10 prime ministers, 45 cabinets, and about 470 ministers have served this country.

This simple calculation has several implications in terms of not only the ministerial stability but also the imprints they left on the history of our beloved land.

Therefore, when we talk about the lack of productivity of ministers, we do not do injustice to anyone, because today's development scene indicates this, as it is not at the level of the citizens' ambition.

For example, the housing problem, which has passed through the hands of about 20 ministers, is yet to be solved. In fact, the problem is constantly worsening.

As for the roads, they are an example of the deterioration that all infrastructure has reached. A total of 29 ministers took over the ministry and left like they were never there.

We always hold the mispractice of democracy responsible, but we must stop at the questions - What has this platoon of ministers provided in the last 60 years? Why have we declined to such a level in the past three decades? Who bears responsibility?

How many prime ministers toured the Kuwaiti areas, saw their conditions, or opened his office to the people? Maybe just four or five from the time of independence until today. However, all of them were intended for show, or they were just quick visits that did not last more than a few minutes.

All of these people live in Kuwaiti areas, and none of them ever cared about piles of garbage that fill our streets. Did any prime minister or minister bothered to visit the "sewage

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### Day by Day

THE key lies in the soul's ability to navigate the twists and turns of life, to face destiny with resilience rather than succumbing to despair about what lies ahead. In this, the beauty of patience becomes paramount.

Days are impartial, alternating between those seemingly in your favor and those against you. It's crucial not to lose hope, as life encompasses both the sweet and the bitter, offering a balance that should be embraced.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

## Remittances from Filipino workers in Kuwait decline

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: During the initial 11 months of 2023, remittances from Filipino workers in Kuwait saw a decline of approximately 1.4%, amounting to \$7.9 million. The total remittances reached \$532.3 million compared to \$540.2 million during the corresponding period in 2022, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Remittances from Filipino workers across the Gulf Cooperation Council countries constituted 42.15% of their total remittances from the Asian continent in the same period.

The remittances from Gulf countries for the first 11 months of 2023 totaled about \$5.02 billion. Overall, Filipino workers' remittances from Asia were \$11.90 billion, with Gulf countries contributing 16.61% to the total remittances of \$30.21 billion from countries worldwide, based on data from the Central Bank of the Philippines.

The statistics indicated a 4.17% annual growth in remittances from Filipino workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries during the first 11 months of the previous year compared to the same period in 2022 when it reached \$4.82 billion.

Among the Gulf countries, remittances from the UAE, the leading contributor, increased by approximately 5.64%, while remittances from Kuwait decreased by 1.45%.

The largest share of remittances from the Gulf came from Saudi Arabia, amounting to \$1.81 billion, driven by the Kingdom hosting numerous international events that necessitate hiring a substantial workforce. On the other hand, remittances from Filipino workers in the Kingdom of Bahrain recorded the lowest value in the Gulf during the first 11 months of the year, totaling about \$231.48 million.

A recent World Bank report highlighted a 3.8% growth in remittances to low- and middle-income countries in 2023, signaling a slower pace compared to the previous two years. This raises concerns about potential declines in real income for migrants in 2024, given global inflation and lower growth prospects.

### Newswatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received Wednesday a phone call from Bahrain's King Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa, congratulating His Highness on assuming premiership and forming the cabinet.

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad expressed deepest appreciation for the call that reflects brotherly ties between the two countries and peoples, wishing the Bahraini monarch utmost health and wellbeing. (KUNA)

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq has submitted a complaint against Iran to the United Nations (UN) and UN Security Council (UNSC) following the aggressive missile attack on the city of Irbil that led to civilian casualties and damage to public and private properties.

The Iraqi Foreign ministry said in a statement that the country's permanent representative in New York submitted the complaint on Tuesday in two identical letters to the UN Secretary-General and the UNSC's president.

The complaint emphasized that the attack is considered a clear violation of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the security of its people, the statement added. (KUNA)

- Nation above all
- Abide by Constitution
- Apply law universally
- Bolster security
- Fight corruption
- Open door policy
- Boost foreign policy
- Diversify income
- Fortify legislative co-op



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives His Highness the Prime Minister Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Wednesday, January 17.

## US ambassador lauds role of KRCS worldwide

US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Hideko Sasahara lauded on Wednesday the strong humanitarian role played by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) throughout the world.

Speaking to KUNA after meeting KRCS's Chairman Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer, Ambassador Sasahara also commended the charitable efforts of the society supported by the leadership, government, and people of Kuwait.

She indicated that she was informed during her visit to KRCS headquarters about the humanitarian program executed currently in the region and the world, reiterating on this occasion the swift action carried out by the society in helping others to overcome catastrophe and hardships.

On his part, Dr. Al-Sayer welcomed the US envoy's visit to KRCS, stressing that the society would carry out its mission with due diligence and accuracy.

He affirmed that the KRCS would be looking forward to help more people in the region and the world, saying that such was part of the society ethos.

In regards to his meeting with Ambassador Sasahara, Dr. Al-Sayer said that the envoy was informed on KRCS missions to aid people affected by manmade or natural disasters.

He affirmed that the meeting also commended the level of cooperation between Kuwait and the US, hoping to expand such cooperation in the near future. (KUNA)



US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Hideko Sasahara during her visit to KRCS headquarters.

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17, (KUNA):** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received, at Bayan Palace Wednesday, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who took constitutional oath as Prime Minister, as well as presenting his government members.

His Highness the Prime Minister presented the Ministers who also took constitutional oath:

— Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior: Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah.

— Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil: Dr. Emad Mohammad Al-Atiqi.

— Minister of Information and Culture: Abdulrahman Badah Al-Mutairi.

— Minister of Health: Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahhab Al-Awadhi.

— Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs: Feras Saud Al-Sabah.

— Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment: Dr. Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf.

— Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Minister of State for Housing Affairs: Dr. Salem Falah Al-Hajraf.

— Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minister of State for Communications: Dawood Sulaiman Marafi.

— Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research: Dr. Adel Mohammad Al-Adwani.

— Minister of Commerce and Industry: Abdullah Hamad Al-Jo'an.

— Minister of Foreign Affairs: Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya.

— Minister of Justice and Minister of Awaqaf and Islamic Affairs: Faisal Saeed Al-Ghareeb.

— Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs: Dr. Nora Mohammad Al-Mashaan.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said Wednesday the new government should, among other matters, focus on many files like appointment of executive officials, equality in appointments, diversifying income, protecting public funds and boost Kuwait's foreign policy.

His Highness the Amir also instructed the ministers to abide by the constitution, apply the law on all, boost national security, fight corruption and nepotism as well as promote justice and equality in all ministries and institutions.

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## Prayer Timings

Fajr .....	05:20	Asr .....	14:54
Sunrise ..	06:43	Maghrib ..	17:13
Zohr .....	11:58	Isha .....	18:34

# Local

**Expected weather for next 24 hrs:**  
**By Day:** Mild and partly cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-38 km/h.  
**By Night:** Rather cold to cold

## Weather

with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speed of 10-32 km/h.	Kuwait Airport	22	10
	Abdaly	23	07
	Jahra	23	11
	Salmiyah	22	14
	Nuwaisib	23	11
	Wafra	23	11

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

## Gender 'mingling' in health clubs must be avoided: MP

# 'Men cannot work in women's salon, women cannot work in men's salon'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: During a recent parliamentary session on January 15, 2024, the Committee for Promoting Values and Addressing Negative Phenomena focused its attention on moral and public taste violations within public spaces, specifically addressing the mingling phenomenon observed in certain health clubs, reports Al-Qabas daily.

MP Muhammad Hayef, the head of the committee, shared insights with the media at the National Assembly's media center, revealing that the committee extensively examined issues related to health clubs, taking into account numerous complaints from citizens about legal and ethical breaches occurring within these establishments.



Muhammad Hayef

To address concerns and discuss the enforcement of existing laws and regulations, representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and the Municipality were invited to participate in the session. Haif emphasized that the regulations set forth by the Ministry of Municipality apply not only to general stores but also extend to places like health clubs.

Citing the decision of the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Hayef explained that the regulations explicitly prohibit stores from operating in a manner conflicting with Sharia provisions, as determined by official fatwas. Moreover, the regulations specifically forbid the employment of individuals of one gender in establishments traditionally associated with the opposite gender,

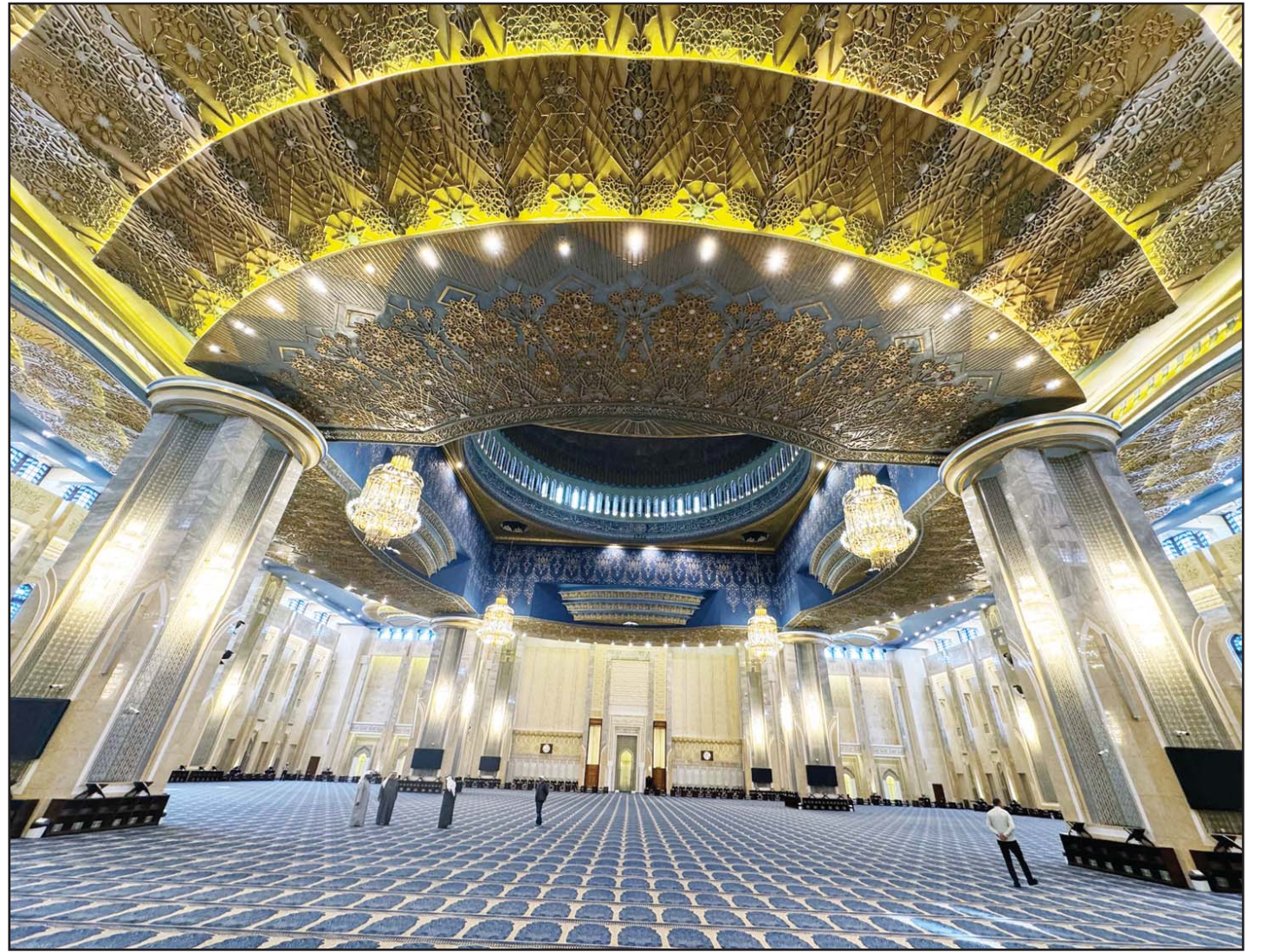
such as men in women's beauty salons or vice versa. Trade decisions further support and reinforce these prohibitions.

Hayef underscored the committee's vital role in activating and ensuring the implementation of existing laws, emphasizing its responsibility to question authorities about their enforcement of these regulations. The committee's wide-ranging responsibilities include combating unethical practices and engaging with institutions like the Anti-Corruption Commission on issues of bribery and nepotism, as well as collaborating with the Ministry of Education to tackle exam cheating.

Emphasizing the committee's dedication to addressing diverse societal issues, Hayef highlighted a recent proposal for a law on commercial fraud aimed at addressing legal loopholes prevalent in the common law across Gulf Cooperation Council countries. This proposed law aims to fill gaps in the current legal framework and is slated for presentation before the Council.

Hayef commended the efforts of ministry employees and observers in upholding existing laws and regulations. He also expressed gratitude and admiration for citizens who report unethical practices, recognizing them as crucial contributors to preventing institutions from imposing values inconsistent with the society's religious beliefs, customs, and traditions.

Under Hayef's leadership, the committee strives to set a precedent in the Council to preserve societal values and customs against negative and intrusive phenomena that pose a threat to the fabric of society. Haif urged collective efforts to address these challenges and safeguard the cultural integrity of the community.



Inside view of the Grand Mosque in Kuwait City. Authorities are preparing the mosque to receive the Muslim faithful during the holy month of Ramadan, who come in huge numbers for Taraweeh and Qiyam prayers in the last ten days of the month.

Photo by Mahmoud Jadedd

## 'No divorces recorded'

# 150 Kuwaiti men and women got married in Jan first week

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Initial data from the Ministry of Justice department for the week beginning in 2024 indicate that 150 Kuwaiti men and women entered into marriage, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Recent figures released by the "Sharia Documentation" unit at the Ministry of Justice show that, between January 1 and 7, 2024, a total of 200 individuals from various nationalities got married, with 150 Kuwaitis marrying fellow Kuwaitis.

Details revealed among the Kuwaitis, 4 married Saudi women, 2 wed Syrian women, 2 entered matrimony with Moroccan women, 2 with Asian women, and 2 with American women. Additionally, one Kuwaiti married an Iraqi woman, and another chose a Lebanese partner.

Analyzing the educational backgrounds of the newlyweds, the statistics indicated that the majority were university graduates, followed by diploma holders, high school graduates, and those with intermediate education.

The most common age groups for marriage among Kuwaitis were individuals aged 25 to 29 years and those between 20 and 24 years.

Turning to divorce cases, the statistics reported 150 divorces during the same period, involving individuals of various nationalities, with 100 Kuwaiti men and women. Most of these divorces occurred within the first year of marriage, spanning different years.

During the first week of 2024, no divorces were recorded among those who married during that period. Notably, the highest occurrence of divorces among Kuwaitis fell within the age group of 25 to 29 years. Specifically addressing divorce situations, the data indicated 12 cases at the beginning of the year, along with 18 cases before consummation or legal seclusion.

Furthermore, statistics spanning from 2007 to the date of this report revealed that 10,000 Kuwaitis had two wives, 800 had three wives each, and 90 had four wives each.

# Vital steps taken for food security

Regional situation threat to trade, supply lines

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has instituted several vital measures to protect the nation's food security, including the prohibition of egg and meat exports, and the restriction on slaughtering female livestock, reports Al-Anba daily.**

These actions come in response to escalating geopolitical tensions in the Red Sea region and the Bab al-Mandab Strait, causing disruptions in global trade movements and supply chains.

The resulting uncertainty poses a threat to potential increases in commodity prices and global inflation rates. According to a survey conducted by the daily among industry experts, these measures are considered beneficial for Kuwaiti consumers, especially given the surge in maritime shipping costs.

However, experts argue that for long-term effectiveness, these decisions must be accompanied by more comprehensive steps aimed at securing citizens' nutritional needs through an integrated legislative and decision-making framework. Experts noted that many countries in the region have proactively taken measures, such as acquiring substantial agricultural lands abroad and obtaining stakes in international food companies.

This strategic approach has transformed these nations into exporters of various food commodities to regional countries. Mansour Al-Nazhan, Director of the Commercial Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, emphasized that these decisions were carefully crafted after thorough field monitoring of the local market.

The goal behind measures like banning meat exports, preventing the slaughter of female livestock, and restricting egg exports is to uphold the country's food security, especially given the rapid political changes and events in the region affecting transportation and trade.



Muktesh Pardeshi talking to journalists from Kuwait.

## 'Tons of aid provided to Gaza'

# India provides attractive, stable climate for investment: Pardeshi

**By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

NEW DELHI, Jan 17: India fully supports humanitarian causes, including the provision of aid to Gaza, says India's Secretary of Ministry of External Affairs CPV & OIA 1, Gulf & WANA 1 G20, Muktesh Pardeshi.

According to Pardeshi, India has so far provided 39 tons of aid to Gaza - 6.5 tons of medical equipment and 32 tons of food commodities and rescue equipment; including medicines, tents, sleeping bags and water purifying tablets.

Meanwhile, Pardeshi revealed the anticipated high-level visits between the officials of India and Kuwait immediately after the formation of the new Kuwaiti government; as a number of bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding will be signed between the two countries with the aim of developing economic relations to achieve common interests of the two countries and the two friendly peoples.

He added the bilateral visits would enhance and strengthen relations, as well as present new ideas.

He affirmed there are a lot of opportunities for cooperation; especially in the field of security and defense cooperation, depending on the needs of Kuwait. He also cited the fields of pharmaceutical industries and information technology, in which India has long and accumulated experience.

He stated that relations between the peoples of the two countries are ancient and extended, starting more than two centuries ago. He confirmed that his country provides an attractive and stable investment climate to achieve good and safe returns. He revealed the volume of trade exchange between Kuwait and India

amounted to about \$13.8 billion last year. At the level of Indian-Gulf relations, Pardeshi pointed out that these relations are historic. He said the trade exchange between the two sides reached \$184 billion last year, which witnessed a 20 percent increase over the past two years. He confirmed the Gulf countries are India's largest regional trading partner, adding that "the relations between India and the Gulf countries are a success story."

He pointed out that the past period witnessed mutual efforts between the two parties to diversify the trade exchange basket; after it was previously focused on the field of energy, to include engineering equipment, rice, petroleum products, textiles and organic products. He went on to say that the partnership in the field of energy is extremely important for India, considering his country imported crude oil worth \$58 billion and gas worth \$26 billion in 2023.

## Increase

He then highlighted the remarkable increase in the volume of Gulf investments in India; explaining that there are many opportunities for Gulf investors in India, covering most sectors like infrastructure, food industries, petrochemicals, defense and information technology.

In addition, Pardeshi disclosed that about nine million skilled and semi-skilled Indian citizens are currently working in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

He said India is considered the largest and fastest center for emerging companies in the field of technology, indicating it is the fifth largest growing global economy and the largest democracy in the world and it will witness the biggest electoral process in the world in May's parliamentary elections.



KUNA photo  
 Head of the delegation of the State of Kuwait before the joint committee meeting, Minister Plenipotentiary Mahdi Al-Ajmi from the Legal Department of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## Kuwait partakes in Cairo meeting

# Fight against drugs, substances

CAIRO, Jan 17, (KUNA): The work of the joint committee meeting of experts and representatives of the Ministries of Justice and Interior and concerned authorities in Arab countries began on Wednesday to update the draft on the Model Arab Law for combating narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances with the participation of Kuwait.

Dr. Maha Bakhit, the Director of the Legal Affairs Department at the Arab League, said in her inaugural speech that this meeting, spearheaded by Yemen, came in implementation of the decisions issued by the Councils of Arab Ministers of Justice and Interior regarding studying and updating the Arab Model Law for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

Over the next two days, Dr. Bakhit explained, that experts and representatives of the Ministries of Justice and Interior, with the participation of the Ministries of Health and concerned authorities of Arab states, would discuss updating the articles of the law and introducing the tables that specify narcotic substances within the draft law.

Furthermore, that the results of the meeting will be presented to the next meeting of the Executive Office of the Council of Arab Ministers and then to the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice in its next session, added Dr. Bakhit.

Moreover, the Kuwaiti delegation in par-

## Elaborate raids

### 200 illegals nabbed

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The continuous morning and evening inspection campaigns carried out by the Residence Affairs Investigations General Department in the Interior Ministry resulted in the arrest of 200 individuals for violating the Residency and Labor laws, reports Al-Anba daily.

These campaigns are made possible through the coordinated efforts of the Research and Investigation Department, Control and Coordination Department Violators Follow-up Department and the Tripartite Committee.

The recent campaign covered Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Khaitan, Fahaeel, Hawally, Salmiya and Farwaniya where 200 individuals of different nationalities were arrested as they were proven to have violated the abovementioned laws.

ticipation of the joint committee meeting is headed by Plenipotentiary Minister Mahdi Al-Ajmi from the Legal Department of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## Kuwaiti, Syrian acquitted in leakage of exam papers

**By Jaber Al-Hamoud**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Nasr Salem Al-Heid, overturned the verdict issued by a lower court which sentenced a Kuwaiti engineer of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and a Syrian expatriate to ten-year imprisonment each and imposed a fine of KD 241,000 on each after they were convicted of leaking examination papers to high school students on social networking sites. The court instead acquitted them of all charges.

According to the case file, the Public Prosecution charged the citizen with divulging the secrets of the Ministry of Education by publishing high school exams with correct answers on social media sites in exchange for a sum of money exceeding KD 241 thousand obtained by the second accused, a Syrian who benefited from the fraud. They were also accused of laundering that money as well.

Investigations revealed that the defendants sold the tests for amounts ranging between KD 25 and KD 50 per subject. The Criminal Court ruled that the two defendants be imprisoned for ten years and fined them a sum of KD 241,000. It also ordered the deportation of the second defendant from the country after serving his sentence.

During the session at the Court of Appeals, the two defendants denied the accusations, and their lawyers demanded their acquittal and clemency.

After refusing to suspend the execution of the sentence and to release the accused, the Court of Appeals decided to reserve the case for judgment yesterday. The defendants were acquitted based on insufficient and unreasonable evidence and the inapplicability of the crime of divulging secrets and leaking tests.

The students obtained them from unknown persons after the exams were distributed in the committees and not before them, not to mention that the first accused holds an engineering degree, and has students at the university in private lessons, and the amounts seized from him were the money earned from those lessons.



# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'Knee-jerk decisions fruitless, need serious moves for better tomorrow'

"WHEN you live with a problem, and it continues to revolve around you all the time, starting from its beginning and ending, passing through the middle of events, variables, and developments, then you get stuck in your place," columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The problem remains like a stone that always stumbles in your steps, and these stumbling blocks will continue if you do not stop at your problem and try to give it the time and effort it deserves.

"Avoiding stopping at the problem and trying to solve it may be an escape from the problem itself, an apparent inability, or a failed wait for any new thing that may occur in the wheel of life, which may help solve it or remedy its consequences.

"Try to write the problem clearly, read it and think about it clearly, and devoid of all emotions and personal feelings.

"This in itself is considered a solution to half the problem, because as soon as you confront it and read it clearly, you will have begun to put your hand on the basic elements of the problem, because running away from it does not solve it, giving priority to emotions and feelings does not solve it, and waiting for changes also does not solve it, but may increase its complexity and aggravation.

"In the end, if you are not able to make a decision regarding your problem, or the problem that revolves around it, it is better not to make a decision on it, because you do not have to make a decision regarding a matter that you did not give enough time and effort to, in order to avoid any error or mis-evaluation. For the decision you may make, in the end you should not adopt this solution, because it may open up a bigger problem.

"I hope with all my heart that the country's problems that we have been suffering from in various fields, and for many years, will be solved by solutions preceded by careful consideration and precision, so that they produce results followed by solid, capable decisions that take into account today and tomorrow with all the possibilities that tomorrow brings in terms of possibilities for change or reactions from any parties concerned or included in this decision.

"We are tired of floundering around in many decisions that were merely an emotional and momentary reaction, without patience and study, which forces the concerned party to cancel or amend them a second, third time, and this causes a lot of confusion and hesitation, and most importantly of all, a lack of trust in that party."



Iqbal Al-Ahmad

### Also:

"The technology landscape is constantly changing and evolving, bringing new opportunities and challenges to individuals, businesses and governments," columnist **Dr. Talal Abu Ghazaleh** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"As we enter 2024, here are some of the most prominent technology trends that will shape the future and are essential for building capacity and for governments to pay proper attention to as the technology landscape is constantly changing.

"Pro-Pro Generative Artificial Intelligence has proven that it will change the rules of the game in 2023 and that it will continue to develop and advance, as it will provide greater jobs and bring technology to the public as we move into 2024.

"Generative Artificial Intelligence will continue to unleash human creativity and more innovations, as well as help automate tasks and processes, as it is the basis on which future technologies will be developed, which helps push society to a new dimension of digital excellence in all fields and sectors.

"As the digital world becomes more interconnected and complex, cybersecurity has become more important and challenging, cyber threats have become more complex and frequent, and the need to make more efforts to build more capabilities and defense in this important field has become an urgent need, as data has become an invaluable wealth in our digital existence.

"The issue of climate change has become very important, and the use of green technology will emerge in 2024, including the development and use of environmentally friendly, sustainable and efficient technology, as green technology is absolutely necessary in confronting global challenges such as pollution and resource depletion, as well as to create a cleaner and greener future for humanity.

"With the exponential growth in global Internet adoption, 5G will become more common, offering faster speeds, lower latency, greater capacity, and better reliability than previous generations.

"5G is expected to enable and enhance various applications and use cases, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and smart cities, helping to provide the bandwidth needed to run technology applications in the future.

"Quantum computer science is considered a new model of computer science that takes advantage of the principles and phenomena of quantum physics to perform certain tasks and calculations that are difficult for classical computers, such as encryption, optimization, or simulation, and this has contributed to achieving new achievements in science, technology, medicine and other fields.

"Since computer power will increase dramatically to process huge amounts of data and perform several million calculations per second that cannot be

achieved using traditional computing technology, the year 2024 will witness more achievements in the world of quantum computing, which will be important steps in the development and maturity of this technology.

"Robots will witness a tremendous increase with the maturity of technology, the fifth generation, the Internet of Things and artificial intelligence and their integration to develop advanced robotic functions to perform tasks and procedures in a group of sectors in a safe and fast manner. Significant progress has previously been achieved in developing robots similar to human life and they will continue to develop and become commonly used in 2024.

"These are some of the new technology trends that will shape the global technology landscape in 2024. By preparing and staying informed we can leverage these trends to create a better and brighter future for ourselves and the entire world."

□ □ □

"Every day we become more and more impressed by the lofty Kuwaiti judiciary, which has turned into a model of efficiency, integrity and good performance in the Arab world. This happened in the hands of virtuous Kuwaiti judges, in whose hearts the Creator – Glory be to Him – placed mercy, so they are referred to as the 'fingertips,'" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Yesterday, a virtuous Kuwaiti judge looked into the case of a young Kuwaiti woman accused of drug abuse. He contented himself, may Allah give him the best reward, with reprimanding her publicly in the courtroom, advising and urging her to protect her future, her reputation and that of her family. He did not impose punishment on her, after making her sign a pledge of good conduct.

"This humanitarian judge did well. Another judge did the same in a similar case, involving a young Kuwaiti man. The judge described him as good, so he did not impose punishment on him in the hope that his situation will improve.

"Certainly, the judge knows that if he does not follow the straight path, he will return to the dock and then no one will have mercy on him, and the punishment stipulated by the law will be applied to him. The principle of giving a second chance is adopted in all courts around the world. The legislator gave this right to the judge.

"Who knows which slippery slope this young man or woman will slip, if he or she is sent to prison? One of them may come out of it more addicted to drugs, while the judge urges him to repent and makes him promise to maintain good behavior such that repentance turns him into a good citizen. Thus, society wins him over and we do not contribute to the creation of a new criminal. Management is an art and human resources management is the mother of the arts."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

## 30 expats deported for gambling

Woman among 7 arrested for brewing liquor



Woman among many bootleggers held in raids by securitymen.

Al-Anba photo

### Strict laws applied: Bu Hassan

## Intensified traffic awareness led to fall in deaths – official

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Officer at the Public Relations and Traffic Awareness Section in the General Traffic Department (GTD) in the Interior Ministry Major Abdullah Bu Hassan disclosed that GTD has conducted a comprehensive analytical study to determine the factors that led to the decrease in the number of deaths due to road accidents in 2023; indicating the number of such deaths recorded last year totaled 296 compared to 322 in 2022, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.



Al-Hassan

In a press statement, Bu Hassan disclosed that as per the study, the intensified traffic awareness campaign, which started during the Unified Gulf Traffic Week of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, is one of the factors leading to the decline in the number of deaths due to road accidents in 2023. He said the campaign included many awareness programs through radio and television, lectures and the involvement of influencers.

He explained the campaign's objectives include strict enforcement of the law on violators, preventing recklessness, reducing negative phenomena, and educating those detained in the Preventive Detention Cell at GTD for committing serious violations. He added the department

conducted 104 lectures in 2023; indicating more than 1,000 violators will be subjected to pretrial detention.

He enumerated a number of other factors like the installation of traffic control cameras, which monitor violations directly and indirectly through the cameras and the employees assigned in the control room in terms of issuing citations; introduction of a monitor application for the security personnel which eased the process of monitoring traffic violations as those who violate the traffic regulations are apprehended immediately, owing to the storage of accurate data in the computer system; the 'Sahl' and 'Rased' platforms as warnings are issued to those who committed violations through 'Sahl', and strengthening the role of parental control over children by monitoring their behavior through 'Rased'.

He pointed out that intensifying public awareness campaigns about the dangers on the roads, correct way to deal with sudden vehicle breakdowns on the roads and minor accidents, as well as organizing the movement of delivery bikes and keeping them away from dangerous roads, also contributed to reducing road accident deaths.

He said all of these were achieved through concerted efforts of various departments and ministries; in cooperation from various visual, audio and print media outlets, as well as the public, especially the drivers who bear the responsibility of protecting lives and ensuring security and safety on the roads.

## 125 tents put up illegally removed

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The supervisory teams in the Public Sanitation and Road Works departments in Jahra and Ahmadi governorates have intensified their inspection campaigns to uncover violations in the camping sites, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Chairman of the committee for studying and updating camping sites Faisal Al-Otaibi has stressed the need to follow the specified camping period. He said the competent supervisory teams do not hesitate in removing camps where violations are discovered.

Director of the Public Sanitation and Road Works Department in Jahra Governorate Mohammad Al-Jabaa disclosed that the inspection tours conducted by his team resulted in the removal of 12 illegal camps, 20 mobile groceries, 250 motorcycles and arrest of six street vendors. He said the campaign was carried out in Subiya, Kabd, Jahra and Mutla'a.

Director of the Public Sanitation and Road Works Department in Ahmadi Governorate Nawaf Al-Mutairi added his team removed 125 camps due to various violations.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: A significant crackdown on illegal gambling has resulted in the deportation of 30 expatriates in the Farwaniya and Al-Ahmadi regions. The operation, carried out by the Criminal Security Sector through the General Department of Criminal Investigation in both governorates, successfully apprehended individuals engaged in unlawful gambling activities.

The Ministry of Interior revealed that substantial amounts of money, along with mobile phones and gambling-related documents, were confiscated from the arrested individuals, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Furthermore, a security source disclosed that the detained expatriates will face administrative deportation as part of measures taken for the greater public good. This action follows the completion of legal procedures concerning the seized funds.

The source emphasized the Ministry of Interior's ongoing commitment to addressing and combating various violations, reaffirming the government's dedication to maintaining law and order.

**Woman among bootleggers:** A woman and six men found themselves facing deportation as authorities cracked down on their involvement in overseeing two local wine factories situated in the capital and Al-Ahmadi governorates, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the General Department of Criminal Investigation and the investigations units of Al-Ahmadi and Capital Governorates, orchestrated raids on two liquor establishments. The first raid resulted in the apprehension of three men and a woman, while the second raid led to the capture of three men. The focal point of the operation was the confiscation of barrels and distillation equipment, where 181 barrels containing intoxicants, 413 bottles of alcoholic beverages, 4 distillation devices, and various manufacturing tools were seized.

A security source, shedding light on the operation, suggested that the woman and six men involved in managing these illicit enterprises would be handed over to the Administrative Deportation Department. The crackdown was prompted by actionable intelligence received by criminal investigation officers, leading them to an apartment in Bneid Al-Qar and a house in Al-Ahmadi. Following due legal procedures and obtaining the necessary permissions from the prosecution, the two dens were raided, resulting in the seizure of the aforementioned items. The woman and three men were found to be at the heart of the illegal operations during the course of these interventions.



Al-Refai receives the British military attaché.

### Military ties discussed

Undersecretary of the National Guard Lieutenant General Hashim Al-Refai recently met with newly-appointed military attaché at the British Embassy in the State of Kuwait Colonel Bruce Weston within the framework of enhancing cooperation between the National Guard and the military and security authorities in the United Kingdom, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

They discussed various aspects of military and security cooperation, as well as issues of mutual concern, while affirming the strength of the relationship between the National Guard and the relevant authorities in the United Kingdom.

Al-Refai also met with French Security Attaché in the State of Qatar Colonel Jean Hérolet-Meunier who is currently on official visit in the country. They talked about cooperation between Kuwait and France in the fields of training, qualification and mutual visits.

### Targets achieved: official

## Mock evacuation drill at MEW

By Mohammad Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Services at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Aqoul Al-Aqoul says the ministry conducted a mock evacuation drill yesterday to determine the ministry's preparations and the mechanism for preserving the safety and lives of employees and visitors present in its building in South Surra.

In a press statement, Al-Aqoul confirmed that the evacuation was carried out in the required manner and at the specified time, adding, "We found awareness and cooperation from the visitors and employees, as they gathered in the points that were reserved earlier.

We have a trained team that specializes in evacuation operations with the cooperation of the Civil Defense Sector in the Ministry of Interior. The evacuation process was completed as required after which the employees returned to their offices.

The goal of the evacuation was to educate employees in the main ministry building on the method of evacuation, monitor the preparations of the maintenance team in the ministry to avoid mistakes, and take into account any observations made during the evacuation.

The maintenance team of the ministry is responsible for the fire systems and the safety of the corridors. They must ensure that

### 'Public interest'

## Al-Mutairi suspended

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Fahd Al-Shoula, the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Affairs, has issued a ministerial decision to temporarily suspend from his duties Director of Al-Ahmadi Municipality, Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi, in what he called 'the public interest' for three months, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

In the same decision, Nawaf Al-Mutairi, the Director of the Cleanliness and Road Works Department in the Ahmadi Municipality branch, has been appointed to assume the role of Al-Mutairi for the same period.

there are no obstacles in the corridors. The fire alarm and control systems and elevators in the ministry have their own contracts according to the conditions of the Ministry of Interior and the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD). We are committed to those requirements and maintenance that is carried out periodically."

Al-Aqoul expressed gratitude to the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, the undersecretary, the assistant undersecretaries, and all employees, as well as the Ministry of Interior, represented by Civil Defense Sector, for their cooperation and quick response to preserve lives and properties within the ministry.

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**Kuwaiti leaders host Qatari delegation for key diplomatic discussions**

**Kuwait Amir receives Qatar royals for condolence over late Amir**



KUNA photo  
His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah receives Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al-Thani and his sons.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Wednesday at Bayan Palace Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al-Thani and his sons Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Sheikh Mohammad bin Hamad Al-Thani, Sheikh Fahad bin Hamad Al-Thani and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

During the meeting, they offered condolences over the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, then congratulated His Highness the Amir on assuming office and wished him good health and a prosperous future for Kuwait under his wise leadership.

The meeting was also attended by top state officials. His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sa-

bah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Wednesday Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al-Thani and his sons Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani, Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani, Sheikh Fahd bin Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani, on the occasion of their visit to the country.

They expressed their sincere congratulations and blessings to His Highness the Prime Minister on the occasion of the issuance of the Amiri order appointing His Highness as Prime Minister and the formation of the new government, wishing His Highness all success in serving Kuwait.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

**Kuwait real estate contracts surge, exceeding 55 mln dinars in a week**

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: From January 7-11, 2024, the cumulative value of real estate contracts recorded with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Justice reached approximately 55.41 million dinars, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The data from the Ministry's Real Estate Registration and Authentication Department revealed that a total of 103 contracts were transacted during this period across

the six governorates.

Specifically, the week saw the registration of 82 contracts for private real estate, worth 33.77 million dinars.

Additionally, 21 investment property contracts were initialed, worth 21.63 million Kuwaiti dinars. Notably, there was no activity in the commercial, craft, or industrial real estate sectors, as well as the coastal

strip, exhibitions, or warehouses during this timeframe.

No agency contracts were registered in Kuwait during the mentioned week. In comparison, during the shorter period from January 2 to January 4, 2024 (3 days), the total value of real estate contracts registered with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Justice was approximately 31.12 million dinars.

**Senior officials of education ministries urged to attend conference on education challenges**

Broader initiative to fortify and enhance Kuwait's education sector

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Dr. Adel Al-Manea, the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, has issued directives instructing the senior officials of the Ministries of Education and Higher Education to actively participate in the upcoming conference titled "Challenges of Education in Kuwait and Ways to Advance It," reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The conference is scheduled for next Thursday and is organized by the Education, Culture, and Guidance Affairs Committee in the Council of Ministers.

The Ministries of Education and Higher Education are committed to the active involvement of their officials in such conferences as part of a broader initiative to fortify and enhance the education sector in the State of Kuwait.

This commitment aims to foster dialogue among experts and practitioners, addressing the challenges faced by the educational sector in Kuwait and exploring collaborative solutions through collective efforts.

The Ministry affirmed its unwavering dedication to collaborating with all relevant stakeholders striving to develop and elevate the standard of education in Kuwait. The conference is considered a crucial platform for cooperation and intellectual exchange, facilitating discussions between educational experts and decision-makers to achieve the goals set by the education and higher education sectors.

The conference is anticipated to draw a significant gathering of specialists and individuals invested in the education sector. It is expected to yield effective recommendations that will contribute to the enhancement and progression of the educational process in Kuwait.

The conference is anticipated to draw a significant gathering of specialists and individuals invested in the education sector. It is expected to yield effective recommendations that will contribute to the enhancement and progression of the educational process in Kuwait.

**Decision 'targets' market practices**

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban issued a ministerial decision (number 7/2024) regarding the sale of vegetables and fruits; prohibiting the repackaging of large packages and boxes into small ones in the markets in Sulabiya, Ardiya, Andalusia, other markets, cooperative societies and warehouses, reports Al-Anba daily.

**Empowering women**

MAIA launches 'Proficiency' program for young leaders

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The Family Development Department of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs launched the "Proficiency" program for the second year in a row to graduate community youth leaders, with the cooperation of the Public Authority for Youth at the Voluntary Work Academy of Shamiya Youth Center.

In this regard, Hanan Abdul Rahman Al-Muzaini, a mentor of free studies and acting director of the Family Development Department for Policy, explained that the Family Development Department, affiliated with the Cultural Affairs Sector, seeks to qualify women, families, and girls, develop their skills in various areas of life, and formulate training programs for them. It is a capable program that aims to enhance cultural Arabic and Islamic identity, and prepare girls with the necessary skills to be effective role models in society.

Many ideas and questions were discussed with the Director of the Family Development Department Hanan Al-Muzaini, the Head of the Center for Free Studies Mai Al-Obaidan, and a media representative from the Media Department of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Maryam Al-Hindi, in addition to the Director of the Voluntary Work Department at the Public Authority for Youth Dr. Walid Al-Ansari.

**Discussion**

The first day included two discussion sessions, and the first of which was titled "Anger Management". It was presented by Dana Al-Hajri to the students, explaining how to deal with anger, its causes, and how to manage and control it.

Dr. Reem Al-Habashi presented the second session on the first day of the "Proficiency" program, which was titled "Knowing the Self and Its Cognitive Distortions, and Age Stages and Their Characteristics".

The second session included several topics, including helping the participants to learn ways to deal with themselves such as understanding, organizing, and controlling, in addition to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the personality, and finally identifying cognitive distortions and their negative impact on the self.

It is noteworthy that the Proficiency Program is a free program that deals with working with young girls from the ages of 18 to 26 years. It provides a model for effective community youth leadership in the State of Kuwait by focusing on the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects through interactive dialogue sessions. The duration of the program is 4 days, 2 weeks apart. Every Monday and Wednesday, the session is presented by academics from inside and outside the administration.

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KUNA photo  
The 41st relief plane took off from the Kuwait air bridge to provide relief to Gaza, carrying 40 tons of food and medical supplies.

41st plane carrying 40 tons of aid dispatched

**Kuwait's relief support to Gaza continues**

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17, (KUNA): The 41st plane within the Kuwait Relief Air Bridge took off Wednesday heading to the Egyptian city of Al-Arish, carrying 40 tons of urgent relief aid for the people in the Gaza Strip.

Deputy Director of Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR) and supervisor of (Fazzaa for Palestine) campaign Omar Al-Thuwaini told KUNA that the relief aid was organized by KSR with the participation of 28 other governmental and charitable organizations.

He pointed out that the planeload contains seven tons of medical equipment, 13 tons of nutritional supplies, in addition to 20 tons of blankets and childcare materials.

He noted that this Kuwaiti relief bridge comes in line with the commands of the political leadership of Kuwait, in cooperation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Social Affairs and more than 24 other Kuwaiti charitable organizations.



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Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahhab Al-Awadhi, Minister of Health



Feras Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs



Dr. Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment



Dr. Salem Falah Al-Hajraf, Minister of State for Housing Affairs



Dawood Sulaiman Marafi, Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minister of State for Communications



Dr. Adel Mohammad Al-Adwani, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research



Abdullah Hamad Al-Jo'an, Minister of Commerce and Industry



Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, Minister of Foreign Affairs



Faisal Saeed Al-Ghareeb, Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs

## What have

Continued from Page 1

spew in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh" and the "garbage dunes in Khaitan," or the investment areas inhabited by expatriates and check the condition of such areas?

This is why we ask - In a small country like Kuwait, does the minister not have time to tour the country, in order to study the extent of the deterioration of infrastructure and poor services?

In recent months, several accidents have occurred on the external roads that connect us with neighboring countries due to potholes and poor maintenance, resulting in many casualties. On a daily basis, especially during the rainy days, loose gravel fly and damage cars, a problem that has become almost eternal.

All this is happening but the ministers seem to be deaf. Even if some citizens tried to donate to repair the streets of their areas with their own money, the municipality prevented them under the pretext that "the law does not allow it."

In other countries, especially Gulf ones, senior officials, the prime minister and ministers almost always stay in public places, as not a day goes by without seeing Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed walking around the areas of Abu Dhabi.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid does the same in Dubai. There are also videos being published of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman wandering around Riyadh and closely monitoring the conditions of his people.

What is happening in Kuwait? Some Gulf brothers ask, "What is happening in Kuwait? Where were you in the past and where are you at the moment?" The truth of the matter is that the answer is confusing.

Do we say that it is the despair that the two authorities are working to bring the Kuwaitis to, or the mismanagement and horrific decline in various fields, or the wrong choices of officials and the appointment of corrupt people in administrations, or the laziness that prevails among the executive officials, who are flattered by false praise from an opportunistic beneficiary?

Almighty Allah said, "... Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of people until they change what is in themselves..."

Did the prime ministers, ministers, and even parliamentarians read this noble verse? Today, with the announcement of the formation of the new Cabinet, will Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem and the new ministers act on this verse?

## Amir sets

Continued from Page 1

"There are many files that require attention and planning," he said.

The most important files, he added, were "appointment of top officials



Amiri Diwan photos of Dr. Nora Mohammad Al-Mashaan, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs

with expertise and proficiency, taking care of youth and woman, considering equality of appointment opportunities, economy, investment and diversifying income and financial sustainability, boosting private sector role, protecting public funds, accelerating execution of vital and development projects, digital transformation to achieve transparency and eradicate nepotism, and boost foreign policy and State of Kuwait's role and positions towards brotherly and friendly countries, and their common causes."

His Highness the Amir said: "you have to do your utmost best, place interest of the nation above anything else, abide by the constitution, apply the law on all and without exception, promote national security, provide security for citizens and residents, fight corruption and nepotism and boost justice and equality in all State ministries and institutions."

He told the new ministries to set their priorities and unite their efforts within an action plan with specific objectives and timetable, and to seek assistance of experts to "reach the right decisions which will have desired objectives."

His Highness the Amir urged the ministers to follow "the open door" policy, communicate with the public and be in the field, activate your media tools, address obstacles facing citizens to meet their needs in accordance with the law and regulations.

This, he added, would ultimately improve public services offered by state authorities like education, health and housing.

His Highness the Amir said the government's achievements would result in confidence of the people which will "contribute to overcoming obstacles and facing challenges, the foundation stone to achieve the objectives."

He said the government should strengthen cooperation with the legislative authority, which aimed at developing the nation and meeting citizens' aspirations while considering social justice.

"The two authorities, legislative and executive, should abide by the constitution which governs relationship between them," he said.

In his address to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Prime Minister Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah affirmed that the task given by the Kuwaiti leadership was of utter importance, vowing to honor the trust given to him during this crucial period in the history of Kuwait.

There are challenges and goals that should be addressed by the current government with all due diligence, increasing efforts to achieve the dreams and aspiration of the people of Kuwait, His Highness Dr. Sheikh Mohammad said.

He reiterated the fact that the government knew the huge national responsibility that lies ahead, saying that under the guidance of His Highness the Amir, the government would do its utmost to honor the goals of the new era, focusing on reforms, opening the economy, and improving the atmosphere of work at national institutions.

He went on to say that the government would combat corruption, protect national achievements, and reinforce the identity of the country's new economy via restructuring and reformation of government institutes at all levels.

His Highness the Prime Minister stressed that efforts would be made to expedite the wheels of development and progress, eliminating all aspects that would hinder such vision.

He affirmed that the government would work with the National Assembly, knowing the fact that Members of Parliament were partners in development and protection of national aspiration in accordance with the constitution.

His Highness the Prime Minister expressed gratitude to His Highness the Amir for his trust and affirmed that the cabinet would be working relentlessly to serve Kuwait and its people.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah Wednesday said his new government would work hard to comply with instructions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to carry out reforms towards prosperity for "our beloved nation."

In a letter to His Highness the Amir including the cabinet line-up, His Highness the Prime Minister expressed gratitude for His Highness the Amir's confidence in the new government, and prayed to Allah the Almighty to help them execute their tasks and responsibilities to serve interests of the nation and citizens.

He said he received "with utmost gratitude" His Highness the Amir's order to assign him as Prime Minister and form a government to share "this heavy responsibility of a new phase of Kuwait's history which includes challenges and aspirations, and requires further hard work and genuine accomplishment for the sake of our beloved nation, and achievement of aspirations and hopes of its citizens."

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The Kuwait Commercial Arbitration Center (KCAC), a part of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, conducted a training program titled "A Practical View of International Commercial Arbitration" from January 14 to 15, 2024, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The primary objective of this course was to enhance the participants' understanding of international commercial arbitration, covering various issues, procedures, and significant challenges. Dr. Mahmoud Hussein from the Emirates and Dr. Talal Jaber from Lebanon served as lecturers, addressing key topics during the sessions.

The first segment focused on alternative dispute resolution methods and the arbitration agreement. It clarified the concept of alternative dispute resolution, outlining its types and introducing the forms and effects of arbitration agreements.

The second segment delved into the

procedures of international arbitration cases and their notable challenges. This section highlighted the legal standing of arbitrators, the initiation of procedures for international arbitration cases, their progression before the arbitral tribunal, and the key challenges associated with international arbitration cases along with the corresponding resolution mechanisms.

The third segment centered on the foreign arbitration award, its enforcement, challenges to its validity, and the definition of the arbitral ruling. It covered statements and effects of arbitration, concluding with a practical aspect on drafting the arbitration agreement, managing the arbitration session, and composing the arbitration award.

This course is part of the Center's annual activities, aiming to equip and qualify professionals through a comprehensive scientific and training program on the concept and essence

of arbitration. It delves into the nature and types of arbitration, keeping participants abreast of the evolving legal thought in arbitration.

The goal is to enable them to effectively resolve commercial, financial, and investment disputes through arbitration. This initiative responds to the growing need for efficient alternative methods in resolving disputes, particularly in light of the evolving economic landscape and expanding investment opportunities in the modern era.

The Center is committed to promoting the culture of arbitration and nurturing a generation of arbitrators and experts to align with Kuwait's steady economic growth and continuous expansion of investment opportunities. The Center's programs encompass a range of activities, including regular courses and workshops, to prepare and train arbitrators in the practice of international and commercial arbitration.

# Regular checkups essential for timely cancer detection

Recent research influences screening revisions

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Routine examinations play a pivotal role in the timely detection of diseases, particularly for conditions like cancer, where early intervention significantly improves treatment outcomes. Cancer screening tests increase the likelihood of identifying the disease at an early stage, facilitating prompt treatment, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Despite the importance of screenings, determining when and which tests to undergo can be challenging. Recent medical research has influenced a revision in the recommended ages for breast and colorectal cancer screenings, as an increasing number of individuals below 50 are being diagnosed with these cancers and others.

While certain cancer screening tests aim to identify risks, they may have limitations, such as producing false alarms. Consequently, the frequency and timing of these tests can vary based on family history and individual risk factors. General recommendations are tailored for those at average risk, with individuals at higher risk potentially requiring more immediate and frequent testing.

### Screening

For older individuals, early screening holds benefits in reducing the risk of succumbing to the disease. Deciding when to initiate screening, determining the appropriate frequency, and deciding when to cease screening can be nuanced, as suggested by Timothy Rebeck, a cancer epidemiologist at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. For example, the American College of Health recommends that women consult their doctors by age 25 to assess breast cancer risk before initiating screening.

The latest expert guidance on cancer screening and genetic risk testing includes:

#### Breast Cancer:

■ Women at average risk should start mammograms at age 40, as per the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

■ The frequency can be every two years, although some doctors advocate



Alfouz winner of Jan 15 draw

ABK announces Abbas Mohaiyat Motorwala as winner of Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw prize

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Abbas Mohaiyat Motorwala as the KD10,000 Alfouz weekly draw winner on Monday, 15 January 2024, whereby the draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Since its launch, the Alfouz account continues to offer an impressive weekly draw of KD10,000. The Bank has recently expanded its offering by adding a new alluring monthly draw of KD20,000, and an exceptional quarterly draw of KD100,000.

The account also retains its hallmark mega annual draw of a KD5,000 monthly salary for ten

years. Furthermore, the Bank now offers customers an increased opportunity to win for every KD10 as opposed to KD100 previously.

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account and/or increase their balances to have more chances in winning in the upcoming weekly draw winner announcement, which will take place on Monday, 22 January 2024. The higher the deposits, the higher the chances to win.

For more information about ABK, please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk\_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

annual exams. Opinions on when to stop mammograms vary among medical groups.

#### Colon and Rectum:

■ Individuals at average risk should commence colorectal cancer screening at age 45.

■ The frequency depends on the test, with options for home tests every one to three years and colonoscopy every 10 years.

■ Screening should continue until age 75, with further assessments based on the patient's health and doctor's advice.

#### Lung and Prostate:

■ Annual low-dose CT scans are recommended for lung cancer screening in adults aged 50 to 80 with a history of significant smoking.

■ Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests are advised for men aged 55 to 69 for prostate cancer detection.

#### Cervical Cancer:

■ Women should undergo Pap smears every three years from ages 21 to 65.

■ Human papillomavirus (HPV) tests can be conducted every five years.

Additionally, a revolutionary blood test known as the Gallery test detects early signs of over 50 types of cancer. While this test holds promise, it is currently under review, not yet FDA-approved, and not widely recommended. Many doctors are enthusiastic about its potential but await more data before endorsing its widespread use.

## 'Resolution' on export of live animals

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban issued Ministerial Resolution No. 8/2024 on the export of live animals, reports Al-Anba daily.

Following are the articles of the resolution:

Article One: It is prohibited to export or re-export live livestock. An exception to this prohibition is the ministry's verification of the availability of live livestock in the local market and the suitability of their prices.

Article Two: It is prohibited to slaughter live female livestock. It is required to obtain a certificate from the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAFR) for exemption provided the following conditions are met:

1. Females that are infertile or unfit for breeding,
2. Non-productive females,
3. Females with fractures or tumors,
4. Old females -- five years for sheep and goats, eight years for cows and 15 years for camels.

## CONDOLENCES

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on the sad demise

of his Mother

who passed away in India

on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024

May her soul Rest in Peace



## World News Roundup

## Europe

**Russia missiles hit Ukrainian buildings, 17 hurt:** Russia fired two missiles at Kharkiv city in northeastern Ukraine during the night, hitting apartment buildings and a medical center and injuring 17 people, officials said Wednesday, in Moscow's latest strikes on civilian areas in the almost two-year war.

The S-300 missiles landed after dark Tuesday, Kharkiv regional Gov **Oleh Syniehubov** said on Telegram.

The surface-to-air missiles have been adapted by Russia to hit land targets and are cheaper to produce than ballistic or cruise missiles. However, they are inaccurate and have a shorter range, analysts say.

Both sides are looking to replenish their weapons stockpiles as fighting along the 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line is largely bogged down by winter weather and the war's focus turns to long-range missile, drone and artillery strikes.

Russia's intense aerial attacks across Ukraine in recent weeks sharply increased civilian casualties in December, with over 100 killed and nearly 500 injured, according to the United Nations.

The night-time attack on Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, struck 20 residential buildings and a medical center, authorities said.

Deeper inside the region of the same name, areas close to the front line came under artillery fire, according to officials. (AP)



Syniehubov

**Putin meets NKorean FM:** Russian President Vladimir Putin has met North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui in Moscow, Tass News Agency reported, citing Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Putin met Choe Tuesday and was informed of the agreements reached in her talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov earlier in the day, according to the report.

Peskov said earlier that Putin would definitely take advantage of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's invitation to visit North Korea. The spokesman added that Putin's visit "could take place some time soon and its exact date would be further discussed through diplomatic channels," the report said.

Last September, Kim met Putin at the Vostochny Cosmodrome space launch center in Russia's Far East, and visited the Gagarin Aviation Plant in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, the Knevischi Airport, and the Marshal Shaposhnikov frigate.

Choe was on a three-day visit to Russia from Sunday at Lavrov's invitation. During his meeting with Choe on Tuesday, Lavrov said Moscow highly appreciates Pyongyang's support in terms of its special military operation in Ukraine. (KUNA)

**Another Navalny lawyer faces charges:** A lawyer for imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny said Tuesday that Russian authorities charged her in absentia with participating in an extremist group. The same charges were brought against three other lawyers who represented Navalny and were jailed in October in a move his allies had decried as designed to put additional pressure on the politician.

Olga Mikhailova, who defended Navalny for over a decade and has left Russia, revealed on social media that the charges were brought against her. "For 16 years, you defend a person" who was accused of embezzlement, fraud, defamation and "and recently (became) an 'extremist,' so it means you yourself are an extremist," she wrote in a Facebook post, rejecting the charges against her.

Three of her colleagues - Vadim Kobzev, Igor Sergunin and Alexei Liptser - were arrested in Russia on the same charges in October 2023. Upon court orders, they will remain behind bars until at least March 13, pending investigation.

Navalny himself was convicted on extremism charges last year and handed a 19-year prison term. His organizations in Russia - the Foundation for Fighting Corruption and a vast network of regional offices - were labeled as extremist groups in 2021 and outlawed. (AP)

**'Plan for the unexpected in Ukraine':** Ukraine is locked in an existential battle for its survival almost two years into its war with Russia and Western armies and political leaders must drastically change the way they help it fend off invading forces, a top NATO military officer said on Wednesday.

At a meeting of the 31-nation alliance's top brass, the chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, also said that behind President Vladimir Putin's rationale for the war is a fear of democracy, in a year marked by elections around the world.

Over two days of talks in Brussels, NATO's top officers are expected to detail plans for what are set to be the biggest military exercises in Europe since the Cold War later this year. The wargames are meant as a fresh show of strength from NATO and its commitment to defend all allied nations from attack.

As the war bogs down, and with US and European Union funding for Ukraine's conflict-ravaged economy held up by political infighting, Bauer appealed for a "whole of society approach" to the challenge that goes beyond military planning. (AP)

**Sunak tries to quell Conservative revolt:** UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak faces a test of his authority and his nerve on Wednesday as he tries to subdue a Conservative Party rebellion and win parliamentary approval for his stalled plan to send some asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to Rwanda.

Lawmakers are due to vote on a bill that aims to overcome a UK Supreme Court block on the Rwanda plan, a day after some 60 members of Sunak's governing Conservatives rebelled in an effort to make the legislation tougher. The dissent cost Sunak two party deputy chairmen, who quit in order to vote against the government on the amendments. A junior ministerial aide also resigned.

A similar rebellion on Wednesday would doom the Safety of Rwanda Bill, and potentially Sunak's 15-month-old government.

Sunak has made the controversial - and expensive - immigration policy central to his attempt to win an election this year. To do that he needs to unite the Conservatives, who trail far behind the Labour opposition in opinion polls. But the liberal and law-and-order wings of the Conservatives - always uneasy allies - are at loggerheads over the Rwanda plan. (AP)

**Macron shows leadership in confab:** French President Emmanuel Macron made a point of showing his leadership hasn't faded in more than two hours of answering questions at a news conference in which he promised a stronger France to face the world's challenges.

"I still have three years and a half in office," he said, describing an ambition to both change the daily life of the French and tackle global crises.

Macron's wide-ranging news conference followed the appointment last week of France's youngest-ever prime minister.

The 46-year-old centrist president promised "audacity, action, efficiency" in the hopes of strengthening his legacy through a series of reforms, starting with an economic bill meant to boost growth and tax cuts for middle-class households.

He also detailed how he would preserve France's struggling health system and accelerate changes at schools. He advocated for uniforms in public schools, learning the national anthem at a young age and expanding a two-week training period in high schools to promote French values and encourage youth to give back to the community. (AP)

**Customs seizes 116 tons of cocaine:** Customs seized 116 tons of cocaine in the port of Antwerp in 2023, setting a record for the second year in a row, Belgian authorities said on Wednesday.

Demand for cocaine is growing rapidly across the EU, and governments blame the drug trade for outbreaks of violence in major port cities like Antwerp, Rotterdam in the Netherlands, and Marseille in France.

The port of Antwerp has become the main gateway for Latin American cocaine cartels into the continent.

Another five tons of cocaine were seized last year at the port of Zeebrugge, which is part of the larger Port of Antwerp-Bruges, said Finance Minister Vincent Van Peteghem.

The announcement was made a day after 22 people, including three police officers, were arrested in a major anti-drug bust targeting individuals suspected of smuggling cocaine through Antwerp. (AP)



US Republican presidential candidate former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley speaks at a campaign event on Jan 16 in Bretton Woods, N.H. (AP)

## Politics

## Next Republican debate canceled

## NH gets its turn after Trump big win in Iowa

ATKINSON, N.H., Jan 17, (AP) - After Donald Trump's record victory in the Iowa caucuses, New Hampshire voters now get their turn to decide just how competitive the Republican nominating fight will be as the former president continues to dominate his party.

Trump was eager Tuesday to flaunt his 30-point victory in Iowa a night earlier, as he stepped up the pressure on former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley and Florida Gov Ron DeSantis to improve on their distant finishes in the opening votes of the 2024 presidential election. They have a one-week sprint ahead of next Tuesday's primary in New Hampshire, the longtime host of the nation's first Republican presidential primary.

"Our country is dying. ... And I stand before you today as the only candidate who is up to the task of saving America," Trump declared in Atkinson, where hundreds of his supporters cheered the former president's boasts about his standing in polls, attacks on President Joe Biden and sweeping promises to "make our country rich as hell again."

## Majority

DeSantis, the Florida governor, and Haley, Trump's former United Nations Ambassador and onetime South Carolina governor, were campaigning Tuesday in New Hampshire, as well. DeSantis got about 21% of the vote in Iowa, 30 percentage points behind Trump's narrow majority and 2 points ahead of Haley's third-place finish.

New Hampshire's electorate is less religiously conservative and less rural than in Iowa, factors that helped Trump in the caucuses. If DeSantis and Haley cannot capitalize on those differences, they could watch Trump sustain momentum that would render the rest of the Republican primary calendar little more than a formality.

"You must go out and vote," Trump said. "We have to show margins like never before."

Haley, who has sought to build a wide coalition that includes independents, has put great emphasis on New Hampshire, hoping it becomes a springboard to her home-state South Carolina primary next month. DeSan-

tis, who has run more as a Trumpian conservative, put more stock in Iowa, so now must regroup quickly for New Hampshire or risk squandering his second-place finish.

Severe winter weather already is altering campaign schedules and making their tasks harder. DeSantis' campaign had to cancel an afternoon event because of difficult travel conditions.

ABC News, meanwhile, canceled a Thursday debate after it became clear only DeSantis seemed sure to participate. Haley, angling to frame the primary as a battle between Trump and herself, had suggested earlier Tuesday that she would debate only if Trump joined her. Trump has skipped every GOP primary debate so far and said he would take the stage only against a Republican rival who was commensurate with him in the polls.

## Beating

"We are beating everybody," Trump bragged in Atkinson, where he also showed off an endorsement from Vivek Ramaswamy, the biotech entrepreneur who suspended his campaign after finishing with single-digit support in Iowa. Ramaswamy joined Trump on stage and pledged to help him win in November.

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who defeated Trump in the Iowa caucuses in 2016, endorsed the former president Tuesday evening, as well. "At this point, I believe this race is over so I'm proud to endorse Donald Trump," Cruz said on Fox News.

Former Arkansas Gov Asa Hutchinson, a harsh Trump critic, also suspended his bid Tuesday, leaving a three-candidate field. Hutchinson pointedly did not endorse Trump.

Trump began his day in New York, appearing at a civil defamation trial stemming from a columnist's claims he sexually attacked her, but used his legal troubles, including four pending criminal cases against him, as part of his pitch, dismissing "bullsh- indictments" as a Biden administration effort to derail his political comeback.

Certainly, Trump's troubles have given some Republicans pause and turned off plenty of independents. According to an APVoteCast survey of more than 1,500 Iowa caucusgoers,

about a quarter of caucus participants believe Trump has done something illegal when it comes to at least one of the legal cases he is facing: his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the US Capitol, his alleged attempts to interfere in the vote count in the 2020 presidential election or the discovery of classified documents at his Florida home that were supposed to be in government custody.

Kristen Mansharamani, an independent voter from Lincoln, New Hampshire, said she has never considered backing Trump in 2024 and would back Haley.

## Also:

**DES MOINES, Iowa:** ABC News on Tuesday canceled the next Republican presidential debate after **Nikki Haley** said she wouldn't participate unless former president **Donald Trump** takes part in it, leaving Gov **Ron DeSantis** as the only candidate committed to Thursday's event in **New Hampshire**.

"We've had five great debates in this campaign," Haley said in a statement, released as she campaigned in New Hampshire. "Unfortunately, Donald Trump has ducked all of them. He has nowhere left to hide. The next debate I do will either be with Donald Trump or with **Joe Biden**. I look forward to it."

Her statement was released a day after the all-important Iowa caucuses, in which Trump marked a wide margin of victory over both Haley and DeSantis. With the two locked in a heated competition for second place in Iowa, Haley tried to make her electoral argument more about Trump than DeSantis, repeatedly echoing her refrain that her candidacy marks a turnaround from the "chaos" that follows the GOP front-runner.

The move also could be a result of the last debate which featured only Haley and DeSantis, in which Haley didn't perform as well as expected, and DeSantis ultimately ended up beating her for second place in Iowa.

Haley had argued to caucusgoers that picking her gives Republicans a better chance to defeat Biden in November, pointing to survey data showing her with the largest lead among the GOP field in a theoretical general election matchup.

Twitter trolls." (AP)

**'Cocaine residue found':** Federal prosecutors urged a judge on Tuesday to reject **Hunter Biden**'s efforts to dismiss the gun charges against him, revealing that investigators last year found cocaine residue on the pouch the president's son used to hold his gun.

In pressing for the case against President Joe Biden's son to proceed, prosecutors said "the strength of the evidence against him is overwhelming" and pushed back against Hunter Biden's claims that he is being singled out for political purposes.

In addition to "incriminating statements" Hunter Biden made about his drug use in his 2021 memoir, investigators found a white powdery substance on the brown leather pouch he used to store the gun after pulling it from the state police vault last year, prosecutors wrote. An FBI chemist determined it was cocaine, they said.

"To be clear, investigators literally found drugs on the pouch where the defendant had kept his gun," prosecutors said.

Hunter Biden has pleaded not guilty to charges accusing him of lying about his drug use in October 2018 on a form to buy a gun that he kept for about 11 days. He has acknowledged struggling with an addiction to crack cocaine during that period in 2018, but his lawyers have said he didn't break the law. Hunter Biden has since said that he's stopped using drugs and has worked to turn his life around. (AP)



French President Emmanuel Macron holds his first prime-time news conference to announce his top priorities for the year as he seeks to revitalize his presidency, vowing to focus on 'results' despite not having a majority in parliament on Jan 16 at the Elysee Palace in Paris. (AP)



Grassley



Biden

## America

**Sen Grassley hospitalized:** Iowa Sen **Chuck Grassley**, the oldest member of the US Senate, has been hospitalized in the Washington area with an infection and is receiving antibiotic infusions, his office said Tuesday.

Grassley, 90, will return to work "as soon as possible following doctors' orders," his office said in a statement, and he is in good spirits. The statement did not give any additional details about his condition.

The Iowa Republican had hip surgery last year and briefly used a scooter to get around. But the eight-term senator, who was long known for his daily early morning runs, has appeared otherwise healthy in the halls of Congress even as he became the Senate's only nonagenarian in September.

Grassley, currently the top Republican on the Senate Budget Committee, was first elected to the Senate in 1980. As the senior-most Republican, he was the president pro tempore of the Senate until 2021 when Democrats assumed control. The president pro tempore presides over the chamber, opens proceedings every day and is third in the line of presidential succession. (AP)

**NY architect charged:** A New York architect charged in a string of slayings known as the Gilgo Beach killings was accused Tuesday in the death of a fourth woman, a Connecticut mother of two who vanished in 2007 and whose remains were found more than three years later along a coastal highway on Long Island.

Rex Heuermann was formally charged in the killing of Maureen Brainard-Barnes, months after having been labeled the prime suspect in her death when he was arrested in July in the deaths of three other women.

Wearing a dark suit, he remained silent in court as his lawyer entered a not guilty plea on his behalf. He will continue to be held without bail until his next court date on Feb. 6. (AP)

**Trump glowers, gestures in court:** Donald Trump shook his head in disgust Tuesday as the judge in his New York defamation trial told would-be jurors that an earlier jury had already decided the former president sexually abused columnist E. Jean Carroll in the 1990s.

Trump left court before opening state-

ments, jettisoning a New Hampshire political rally as Carroll's lawyer accused the Republican presidential front-runner of using "the world's biggest microphone" to destroy her

reputation and turn his supporters against her. Trump's lawyer contended that Carroll has never been more famous and that she is blaming him for "a few mean tweets from



In this photo provided by the Kharkiv Regional Administration, an apartment building damaged in a Russian rocket attack is seen in Kharkiv, Ukraine, in the early hours of Jan 17. Russia fired two missiles during the night, hitting apartment buildings and a medical center and injuring 17 people, officials said Wednesday, in Moscow's latest strikes on civilian areas in the almost two-year war. (AP)



## Africa

## 2 dead, 77 hurt in blast

## 'Education of youth to help end kidnappings'

ABUJA, Nigeria, Jan 17, (AP): Nigeria's leader said Tuesday that his government will embark on "massive education" of youth as one way to tackle the increasing kidnappings for ransom now threatening the capital city along with the rest of the country's conflict-hit north.

President **Bola Tinubu** won last year's election after promising to rid the West African nation of its security crisis. However, deadly attacks particularly in the north have persisted, with the capital of Abuja recording a spike in abductions along major roads and in homes in recent weeks.

Tinubu condemned the abductions as "disturbing, ungodly and sinister" and touted education as "the antidote to the troubles agitating the nation," according to a statement from presidential spokesman Ajuri Ngelale.

"There is no weapon against poverty that is as potent as learning," the statement said. "Security agencies are acting with dispatch to immediately address the current challenge (while) all required resources, policies and plans will be rolled out soon for the massive education of Nigerian youths."

Nigeria's security forces already are battling jihadi rebels in the northeast in addition to armed groups that often carry out mass killings and abductions in remote communities across the northwest and central regions.

Now residents on the outskirts of the capital are beginning to relocate amid a surge in abductions for ransom suspected of being carried out by gunmen from volatile neighboring states.

Analysts said Tinubu has not done much to address the security crisis.

"Nigeria is drifting towards a failing state (with) non-state armed groups challenging the state authority," said Oluwole Ojewale, a West and Central Africa researcher with the Africa-focused Institute for Security Studies.

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**2 killed, 77 hurt in massive blast:** Two people died and 77 others were injured after a massive blast rocked more than a dozen buildings in one of Nigeria's largest cities Tuesday night, the governor said Wednesday, as rescue workers dug through the rubble in search of those feared trapped.

Residents in the southwestern state of Oyo's densely populated Ibadan city heard a loud blast at about 7:45 p.m., causing panic as many fled their homes. By Wednesday morning, security forces cordoned off the area while medical personnel and ambulances were on standby as rescue efforts intensified.

Preliminary investigations showed the blast was caused by explosives stored for use in illegal mining operations, Oyo Gov. Seyi Makinde told reporters after visiting the site in the Bodija area of Ibadan.

Illegal mining in mineral-rich Nigeria is common and has been a major concern for authorities. However, it is mostly done in remote areas where arrests are difficult and where safety procedures are rarely followed.

It was not immediately clear who stored the explosives, and no arrest has been announced. "The investigations are ongoing (and) all those found culpable for this will be brought to book," Gov. Makinde said.

Most of the 77 injured were already discharged, the governor said, promising to cover the medical bills of others still being admitted and to provide temporary accommodation for those whose houses were affected.

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**Boat accident kills 8:** Eight passengers were confirmed dead and an estimated 100 were missing after their overloaded boat capsized in north-central Nigeria, the emergency services said Tuesday.

It is the latest in a series of deadly boat accidents that increasingly point to regulatory failures.

The passengers were being conveyed from Niger state's Borgu district to a market in the neighboring Kebbi state on Monday afternoon when the boat overturned in the Niger River, according to Niger State Emergency Management Agency spokesman Ibrahim Audu.

He said the boat's capacity is 100 passengers but it was estimated to be carrying a much higher number, in addition to bags of grain, making it difficult to control when it began to sink.

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**Rwanda kills Congolese soldier:** Rwanda's military on Tuesday said it had killed a Congolese soldier who crossed the border and allegedly fired at Rwandan army patrols, the latest incident in cross-border tensions between the neighbors.

The Rwanda Defense Force said in a statement it also arrested two Congolese soldiers who had been with the one killed. It said they crossed the border at Isangano village in Rubavu district, near the Congolese city of Goma in eastern Congo.

A local farmer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of fear of reprisals, told The Associated Press the Congolese soldiers appeared to have crossed into Rwanda unknowingly, as some border markings can be difficult to see.

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**Cult pastor, others to face charges:** Kenya's top prosecutor on Tuesday ordered that 95 people from a doomsday cult be charged with murder, cruelty, child torture and other crimes in the deaths of 429 people believed to be members of the church.

The country's director of public prosecutions, Mulele Ingonga, was responding to pressure from a magistrate in the coastal county of Kilifi who told the prosecution to charge the suspects within two weeks or the court would release them.

For months since the arrests last April, prosecutors had asked the court for permission to keep holding church leader Paul Mackenzie and 28 others while they looked into the case that shocked Kenyans with the discovery of mass graves and allegations of starvation and strangulation.

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**Mauritius lifts storm alert:** Mauritius lifted its highest weather alert and eased a nationwide curfew Tuesday after a cyclone battered the Indian Ocean island, causing heavy flooding and extensive damage in the capital city and other parts of the country.

The nearby French island of Reunion also was assessing the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Belal.

Belal ripped through the region off the east coast of Africa on Monday and early Tuesday but had now passed both islands and was heading out to the Indian Ocean, the Mauritius Meteorological Services said.



In this photo provided by South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (left), sails with South Korean Navy's Aegis destroyer King Sejong the Great and Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force Aegis destroyer Kongou in the international waters of the southern coast of Korean peninsula

during a recent joint drill in 2024. The three countries conducted combined naval exercises involving the American aircraft carrier in their latest show of strength against nuclear-armed North Korea, South Korea's military said on Jan 17. (AP)

## Asia

## Seoul imposes sanctions on NKorea

## US, South Korea &amp; Japan conduct naval drills

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 17, (Agencies): The United States, South Korea and Japan conducted perhaps their biggest-ever combined naval exercises in a show of strength against nuclear-armed North Korea, South Korea's military said Wednesday. The three allies' senior diplomats were to meet in Seoul to discuss the worsening standoff with Pyongyang.

The training in waters off South Korea's Jeju island, which involved an American aircraft carrier, was aimed at sharpening the countries' combined deterrence and response capabilities against North Korean nuclear, missile and underwater threats, and also training for preventing illicit maritime transports of weapons of mass destruction, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. It didn't specify whether the training reflected concerns about North Korea's alleged arms transfers to Russia to help that country's war in Ukraine.

## Testing

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been on a provocative run of weapons testing and threats that raised regional tensions to their highest point in years.

On Monday at Pyongyang's rubber-stamp parliament, Kim declared that North Korea would abandon its longstanding commitment to a peaceful unification with South Korea and ordered a rewriting of North's constitution to eliminate the idea of a shared statehood between the war-divided countries. He said South Koreans were "top-class stooges" of America who were obsessed with confrontation, and repeated a threat that the North would annihilate the South with its nukes if provoked.

Kim's speech came a day after the North conducted its first ballistic test of 2024, which state media described as a new solid-fuel, intermediate-range missile tipped with a hypersonic warhead, reflecting its push to advance its lineup of weapons targeting US military bases in Guam and Japan.

In response to the North's heightened testing activity, the United States and its Asian allies have been expanding their combined military exercises. Kim condemns the demonstrations as invasion rehearsals, and the drills increasingly feature major US military assets, including aircraft carriers, long-range bombers and nuclear-capable submarines.

Kim has also been strengthening his regional footing by boosting the vis-

## Multiple deaths reported as firework factory explodes in central Thailand

BANGKOK, Jan 17, (AP): An explosion at a fireworks factory in central Thailand killed at least 23 people on Wednesday, the government's disaster relief agency said.

People were also injured in the incident, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said, but it did not say how many. Officials were working to secure the site in Suphan Buri province and help people who were impacted, it said. The cause of explosion was being investigated.

Suphan Buri is about 95 kilometers (60 miles) northwest of Bangkok, in the heart of Thailand's central rice-growing region.

The office of Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, who is in Switzerland for the World Economic Forum, distributed a video showing him being told over the phone by the regional police commander that there were 20 to 30 workers at the factory at the time of the explosion and that none of them could be found.

Kritsada Manee-in, a rescue worker with the Samerkun Suphan Buri Rescue Foundation, who earlier estimated that around 15 to 17 people had been killed, said an exact count was difficult because the bodies were in pieces.

Photos posted on social media showed a thick plume of black smoke

rising over the scene of the blast in an otherwise unoccupied rice field.

## Also:

**BANGKOK:** A court in Thailand on Wednesday acquitted more than two dozen protesters who had occupied Bangkok's two airports in 2008 of charges of rebellion and terrorism related to their demonstration, which at the time disrupted travel in and out of the country for more than a week.

The Bangkok Criminal Court declared that the members of the People's Alliance for Democracy had neither caused destruction at the airports nor hurt anyone.

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**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand's first refugee lawmaker was charged by police a day after resigning amid allegations she had shoplifted several times at local high-end boutiques.

New Zealand Police said **Golriz Ghahraman**, a former member of New Zealand's Green Party, had been charged on Wednesday with two counts of shoplifting at a store in Auckland's trendy Ponsby neighborhood.

"Today, a 43-year-old woman has been summonsed to appear in the Auckland District Court on two charges of shoplifting," a police statement said.

**North Korea,** the first of its kind in eight years, Yonhap News Agency reported.

The latest sanctions designation is part of South Korea's efforts to discourage the North's illicit procurement of resources and financing that are used to fund its nuclear and missile programs, the Foreign Ministry said.

It marks the first designation of sanctions on ships by the South Korean government since 2016, according to the ministry.

The 11 vessels are suspected of involvement in the transshipment with North Korea ships, smuggling refined oil and coal into the North and supplying, selling and transferring goods to and from the North, it added.

All the vessels have been specified in the UN Panel of Experts reports from the Security Council sanctions committee on North Korea.



Workers covered in water from a wave during a cyclone on the Caudan Waterfront in Port Louis, the capital city of Mauritius on Jan 15. Mauritius lifted its highest weather alert and eased a nationwide curfew Tuesday after a cyclone battered the Indian Ocean island, causing heavy flooding and extensive damage in the capital city and other parts of the country. (AP)



Sikkema



Philippe

## Lat/Am

**Philippe supporters protests:** Supporters of former rebel leader **Guy Philippe** have launched protests that have paralyzed some cities across Haiti as they demand the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry.

Demonstrators forced the closures of schools, government agencies and private businesses on Monday in places including the southern cities of Jeremie and Miragoane, as well as the northern city of Ouanaminthe, which borders the Dominican Republic, according to local media reports. Hundreds of protesters also were reported Tuesday in the southern city of Les Cayes, with additional demonstrations expected in coming days.

Philippe, who was repatriated to Haiti last month after serving years in prison in the US, said in a message to supporters that he is not plotting a coup but rather looking to transform Haiti, where poverty has deepened and gang violence has increased.

Philippe served nine years in a US prison following a guilty plea to a money laundering charge. He is best known for leading a 2004 rebellion against former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and masterminding attacks on police stations. (AP)

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**Police probes art dealer death:** An American art dealer who co-owned a prominent Manhattan gallery was found dead in a Rio de Janeiro apartment, and homicide investigators are handling the case, state police in Brazil said Tuesday.

The Civil Police of Rio de Janeiro State said its homicide department was investigating the death of **Brent Sikkema**, 75, who co-owned the contemporary art gallery Sikkema Jenkins & Co.

The civil police force said in a statement that forensics work has been done at the property where Sikkema's body was found. "Officers will listen to witnesses, are looking for more information and are carrying out other inquiries to shed light on the case," the statement said.

Sikkema's body was discovered Monday and he was reportedly killed with a sharp object, according to Brazilian newspaper O Globo, though details remain scant.

The US Consulate in Rio confirmed the death of a US citizen. (AP)

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**5 killed in drive-by shooting:** Five people were killed in a drive-by shooting in the US territory of Puerto Rico, forcing authorities to close a portion of a highway, police said Tuesday.

Three of the victims were found dead

inside a pickup in the eastern coastal town of Ceiba, while a fourth was found on the pavement. A fifth victim died at a hospital while being treated for his wounds, accord-

ing to a police statement.

One of the victims is a 16-year-old boy, Police Commissioner Antonio López told WKAQ radio station. He said weapons were



Former coup leader Guy Philippe, wearing a grey sweatsuit, descends from a bus at Haiti's National Police station, in Port-au-Prince, Nov. 30, 2023, after he was repatriated from the US. Supporters of Philippe launched protests on Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, that have paralyzed some cities across Haiti as they demand the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry. (AP)

found inside the bullet-riddled pickup, and that the victims had just left a cock-fighting establishment in the nearby town of Noguabo.

It wasn't immediately clear what led to the shooting that occurred late Monday, although López said authorities believe it is related to drug trafficking. (AP)

At least 28 people have been reported killed so far this year on the island of 3.2 million people, compared with 30 in the same period last year. (AP)

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**Mud volcanoes found in Trinidad:** Experts are analyzing a new set of small mud volcanoes discovered in recent days in the eastern Caribbean island of Trinidad that have prompted authorities to prepare evacuation plans.

Officials said they plan to meet with residents in the eastern part of the island this week after a small mud volcano erupted Thursday in the Cascadoux Trace area. No injuries or damage were reported, although a handful of families were evacuated.

At least five other new mud volcano craters have been discovered since last week's eruption.

Raymond Cozier, chairman of the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, told reporters Monday that the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Center is helping investigate the mud volcanoes, which are currently bubbling but not erupting. (AP)





Mohammed Taqi

### Gulf Bank introduces exclusive 15% cashback for Visa cardholders

To promote the adoption of cutting-edge payment technologies and uphold its commitment to delivering superior services, Gulf Bank is introducing an exclusive promotion for Visa credit cardholders. This enticing offer entails a 15% cashback reward for transactions made at both local and international cafes and restaurants, through Apple Pay, Google Pay, and Samsung Pay.

To enjoy the benefits of this offer, customers must spend a minimum of KD100 in restaurants and cafes, whether inside

or outside Kuwait, during the offer's period from January 14th to February 15th, 2024. The maximum cashback amount the customer can get is KD75 and it will be credited to customers' card by March 10th, 2024, and customers will be notified via SMS.

Sharing his thoughts on this occasion, Mr. Mohammed Taqi, Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking, highlighted Gulf Bank's commitment to introducing exclusive offers for its credit cardholders, as a continuation

of its ongoing efforts to recognize and meet their needs.

He emphasized the bank's dedication to delivering high-quality products and services, all geared towards ensuring an outstanding customer experience.

Taqi highlighted the numerous features of Gulf Bank's credit cards, providing customers with benefits across various sectors such as restaurants, hotels, tourism, travel, entertainment, health and beauty, car rental, and more.

### oil down

The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 16 cents to USD 79.98 per barrel on Tuesday, as opposed to USD 80.14 on the day before, said the Kuwaiti Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Wednesday.

The price of Brent crude went up by 14 cents to USD 79.29 per barrel, while the West Texas Intermediate went down by 10 cents to USD 72.40. (KUNA)

### Market Movements

17-01-2024

UAE	DFM	Change	Closing pts	JAPAN	Nikkei	Change	Closing pts
▲		+0.20	4,090.64	▼		-0.40	35,477.75
				▼		-0.27	63,572.75
				▼		-0.97	6,572.51
				▼		-0.12	12,063.00
				▼		-0.67	26,758.26

# Business

## Saudi market experienced the highest number of IPOs in region

# Gulf IPOs dip to \$10.1 bln in 2023, reflecting 55% decline

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The latest report from the Kuwait Financial Center, titled "Initial Public Offerings in the GCC countries in 2023," shows the cumulative value of initial IPOs for Gulf stocks amounted to \$10.1 billion in 2023 through 45 share offerings. This reflects a 55% decline compared to 2022 when the total value reached \$22.7 billion through 46 stock offerings, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to the report the UAE led the Gulf region in total IPOs in 2023, with seven offerings totaling \$5.5 billion, constituting 54.0% of the overall IPO value.

However, this represented a 55.0% decrease from its 2022 value. Among these, five IPOs were presented on the Abu Dhabi Securities Market, totaling \$4.9 billion, while the remaining two IPOs took place on the Dubai Financial Market, amounting to \$0.5 billion.

The Saudi market experienced the highest number of IPOs in the Gulf

Cooperation Council countries, with thirty-five offerings totaling \$3.5 billion, representing 35.0% of the total IPO value in 2023.

This also marked a 58.0% decrease from 2022. In Oman, two IPOs were conducted with a total value of \$973 million, comprising 10.0% of the Gulf IPOs for the year. The Qatar Stock Exchange witnessed an IPO worth \$193 million, contributing 2.0% to the total value of Gulf IPOs in 2023.

Despite only two IPOs in the energy sector, it accounted for approximately 36.6% of the total value of Gulf IPOs in 2023. The transportation sector recorded \$1.72 billion through 16 IPOs, making up 17.0% of the total value.

The industrial and healthcare sectors followed with \$1.1 billion through two IPOs and \$985 million through one IPO, respectively. The technology sector saw one IPO with a total value of \$496 million. Other IPOs included companies from capital goods, consumer services, financials, food

and beverage sectors, media, and others.

The report shows the top IPOs in terms of value in 2023 were led by Abu Dhabi National Gas Oil Company, reaching \$2.5 billion on March 2, constituting 25% of the total Gulf IPO value for the year.

Addis Holding Company secured the second position with an IPO value of \$1.2 billion on September 28, representing 12% of the total value. Pure Health's IPO came in third at \$985 million on December 19, ranking as the third-largest on the ADX market after Abu Dhabi National Oil and Gas Company.

ADNOC Logistics and Services Company's IPO secured the fourth spot, offering 1.41 billion shares, equivalent to 19% of the company's capital. In fifth place, OQ Gas Networks Company's IPO in Oman recorded the largest offering in the country in 2023, with a subscription value of \$728 million through two billion shares, representing 49% of the capital.

# Demand deposit dip offset by 24.3% monthly increase in local banks' Central Bank demands

Term deposits experienced an 11-month increase of 12.3%

By Ahmad Fathi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: During the first 11 months of this year, the demands of local banks on the Central Bank of Kuwait experienced growth of 0.4 percent, or approximately 26.5 million dinars.

As per Central Bank data for November, the demands saw a monthly increase of 3.6 percent, equivalent to around 250.5 million dinars, compared to the end of October when they stood at 6,922 billion dinars.

However, on an annual basis, there was a decrease of 6.5 percent, or about 504.3 million dinars, compared to November 2022, when the demands were at 7,677 billion dinars.

Local banks' demands on the Central Bank are categorized into three primary items: demand deposits, time deposits, and corresponding tawarruq, along with central bank bonds and corresponding tawarruq.

Demand deposits decreased by 3.3 percent, approximately 78 million dinars, from 2.38 billion dinars in December to 2,304 billion dinars in November. Nevertheless, there was a monthly increase of 24.3 percent, or about 450.5 million dinars, from 1,853 billion dinars at the end of October.

Term deposits and corresponding tawarruq experienced a notable 11-month increase of 12.3 percent, around 170 million dinars, rising from 1.38 billion dinars in December to 1.55 billion dinars in November.

On a monthly basis, there was a decrease of 11.4 percent, or approximately 200.2 million dinars, compared to the 1.75 billion dinars in October. However, on an annual basis, there was a substantial increase of 29.6 percent, or about 354.9 million dinars, from 1.195 billion dinars in November 2022.

Central bank bonds and corresponding tawarruq at local banks witnessed a decline of 1.9 percent, approximately 65.6 million dinars, from 3.38 billion dinars at the end of December to 3,318 billion dinars in November. On an annual basis, there was a decrease of 8.9 percent, or about 324.4 million dinars, compared to 3.64 billion dinars in November 2022.

The Central Bank utilizes bonds and instruments to regulate liquidity, withdrawing or injecting additional liquidity into the market. These tools are part of the monetary policy aimed at managing interest rates.

It is worth noting that bonds represent a debt instrument issued by



Saudi EXIM and U.S. EXIM MoU exchange during the Future Minerals Forum. – Photo: AETOSWire

## Saudi Export-Import Bank signs MoU with the Export-Import Bank of USA

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Jan 17. (Business Wire): Saudi EXIM Bank has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with U.S. EXIM, focusing on fostering comprehensive collaboration, strengthening economic ties, and advancing trade relations between the two nations. This MoU was signed on the sidelines of the 2024 Future Minerals Forum held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from January 9 to 11.

The MoU additionally seeks to foster bilateral trade and strengthen economic ties between the two countries. The MoU outlines a framework for cooperation, collaboration, and sharing of expertise and resources between both entities. Through this agreement, Saudi EXIM and U.S. EXIM seek to facilitate trade financing, support exports, and promote investment opportunities in key sectors. The MoU also promotes knowledge and information sharing, capacity building, and the exchange of best practices, ultimately enhancing the competitiveness and growth of businesses in both Saudi Arabia and the United States.

The signing of the MoU is part of the bank's initiative to establish guiding principles for enhancing co-

operation and trade relations in the U.S. market. This initiative focuses on facilitating the export and import of products and services, exchanging information and expertise, and offering support related to credit lines and facilities. These efforts aim to bolster the presence of Saudi non-oil exports in global markets, aligning with the objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 and increasing its contribution to the gross domestic product.

On the occasion, His Excellency Eng. Saad Al-Khalb, CEO of Saudi EXIM Bank, emphasized that the signing of this agreement is part of the bank's commitment to contribute to accelerating global economic growth. This involves strengthening trade relations and enhancing the efficiency of export and import activities with global markets. Al-Khalb highlighted the solid foundations of cooperation and shared interests in the bilateral relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America. He expressed the bank's commitment to ongoing collaboration to achieve common economic objectives, broaden trade and investment cooperation, and capitalize on promising

opportunities, particularly in strategic sectors outlined by the Kingdom's Vision 2030, such as mining, petrochemicals, manufacturing, renewable energy, tourism, financial services, healthcare, and more.

Chair & President of U.S. EXIM, Reta Jo Lewis Esq. commented: "We are thrilled to have successfully inked a bilateral MoU with Saudi EXIM. This milestone paves the way for a mutually beneficial collaboration between our respective banks. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. has always been strategically important and we aim to further enhance and solidify this bond."

Saudi EXIM Bank is actively engaged in establishing strategic partnerships to improve the efficiency of the export and import system, facilitating trade exchanges with both regional and global markets. The bank is dedicated to encouraging trade and investment opportunities for Saudi exporters across diverse sectors. Its primary focus lies in fostering international partnerships to boost the development and diversification of Saudi non-oil exports, enhancing their global competitiveness.

Kuwaiti dinar as a remunerative and reliable savings vehicle, aligning with interest rate increases by the Federal Reserve. The discount rate rose incrementally from 1.50% to 3.50% on December 7, 2022, up from 3.00% previously.

## Main market experiences notable activity

Mixed trading as stock market indices reflect surge in liquidity to 10-mth high

By Ahmad Fathi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Stock market indices closed yesterday's session with mixed trading, coinciding with a surge in liquidity to 91.43 million dinars, marking its highest level in 10 months.

This increase follows the peak of 111.26 million dinars on Tuesday, March 16, 2022. The premier market dominated the session's liquidity, comprising 53.9 percent at a value of 49.3 million dinars, while the main market contributed 46 percent, amounting to 42.13 million dinars.

Although leading stocks experienced selling pressure, the main market, particularly IFA Group shares, exhibited notable activity. In the main market, 12 stocks reached their maximum limit, and 7 stocks accounted for approximately 47.9 percent of the total market liquidity. These stocks include IFA, Snam, Kuwait Real Estate, Your Home, Investments, and Arzan.

The surge in purchasing liquidity stems from investor optimism about the financial results of banks and listed companies for the fiscal

year 2023. Expectations of continued profit improvement, following a strong performance in the first nine months of the previous year, fuel traders' hopes for robust dividends.

At the session's conclusion, the market value increased by 0.03 percent, reaching 14 million dinars, rising from 42.89 billion dinars in Monday's session to 42,907 billion dinars in yesterday's session.

The general index rose by 0.03 percent and 2.2 points, from 7263.5 points to 7265.8 points. The first market increased by 0.3 percent and 24.5 points, moving from 7986.9 points to 7962.4 points.

The main index saw a rise of about 1.3 percent and 77.7 points, climbing from 5876.6 points to 5954.4 points. The main 50 index jumped by 1.5 percent and 88.5 points, rising from 5794.3 points to 5882.86.

Liquidity for the session increased by 24.8 percent, surging from 73.2 million dinars in Monday's session to 91.4 million dinars. Trading volumes also saw a 32 percent increase, rising from 305.2 million shares to 402.9 million shares, while the number of deals grew from 17.1 thousand deals to 21.2 thousand deals.

## Jordan is 'generating' investment openings based on firm pedestals

AMMAN, Jan 17, (KUNA): Jordan has created promising investment opportunities in several economic sectors in a bid to rope in investors and businessmen through an attractive and enabling business and investment environment, based on partnerships between both public and private sectors.

By so doing, Jordan counts on firm foundations and potential, chiefly its wise leadership, political, monetary and financial security and stability, strategic position, free economy and easy access to world markets through multilateral trade agreements, educated and qualified manpower and cutting-edge communication network.

Jordan has recently orchestrated an investment mechanism that enables it to vie with surrounding rivals by means of capitalizing on all tools to promote its business environment.

It has already enacted pieces of modern legislation aiming at promoting the investment atmosphere, mainly an investment regulation law that gives the Ministry of Investment more power and sets general guidelines and policies for investment attraction.

It has also promulgated a law on partnerships between both public and private sectors, aiming at promoting and enabling the investment environment in a way that streamlines procedures and implements strategic and vital projects.

In this context, Jordanian Investment Minister Kholoud Saqqaf said the kingdom is interested in drawing and promoting more investments, especially Arab ones, citing relevant investment and business reforms.

Speaking to Petra news agency, she said the recently adopted investment environment law includes many investment attraction advantages inside and outside development and free zones, thus increasing investments by 34 percent to roughly 879 million Jordanian dinars over nine months of 2023 from 657 million dinars during the same period of 2023.

The law has sanctioned the kingdom's largest investment fund in view of its authorized capital of 100 million dinars, she said, boasting that it is wholly owned by Jordanian banks.

She pointed out the government's absolute support for investment funds, which have a role to play in stimulating and attracting investment corpora-

tions for various economic sectors of global priority and competitiveness.

Regarding investment opportunities launched by her ministry, Al-Saqqaf said the "invest.jo" platform was created to cope with general investment policies as one of the tools of the ministry's promotion strategy for 2023-2026.

Elaborating, she said the ministry's platform targets promising sectors and specific markets with a view to boosting investments in high-added-value sectors that contribute to achieving development and providing jobs for Jordanians.

She added that the platform includes 36 various investment opportunities involving high-added-value economic sectors and investments worth USD 1.4 billion, in addition to 17 promising economic sectors.

Furthermore, the platform gives investors information pertinent to investment in the kingdom, mainly including the legislative investment framework and prime steps for project registration and authorization, along with incentives and privileges, the minister remarked.

Among the sectors in question are, inter alia, agriculture, food safety, chemical and creative industries, education, energy, trade, transportation, logistics, information technology, health care, tourism, clothing, and film industry.

The Jordanian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources has launched an online platform to demonstrate investment opportunities in the country's mineral, oil, gas and oil shale resources, aiming to attract local and foreign investors and boost the mining sector's contribution to the national economy.

The platform, invest.memr.gov.jo, provides information on the locations, technical reports and licensing procedures of various mineral resources, such as basalt, silica, gypsum, diatomite, kaolin, dolomite and feldspar, as well as oil and oil shale projects.

For his part, Chairman of the commercial chambers of Jordan and Amman Khalil Tawfiq said Jordan is ushering in a new economic era, citing an economic development plan extending until 2033, guaranteed by King Abdullah II and drawing over USD 41 billion.

## Top Federal Reserve official says inflation fight seems nearly won

WASHINGTON, Jan 17, (AP): A top Federal Reserve official said that he is increasingly confident that inflation will continue falling this year back to the Fed's 2% target level, after two years of accelerating price spikes that hurt millions of American households.

The official, Christopher Waller, an influential member of the Fed's Board of Governors, noted that inflation is slowing even as growth and hiring remain solid - a combination that he called "almost as good as it gets."

Waller's remarks follow recent com-

ments from other senior Fed officials that suggest that the central bank remains on track to begin cutting its benchmark short-term interest rate, likely by mid-year. In December, the policymakers collectively forecast that they would cut their rate three times this year. Wall Street investors and many economists expect the first cut in March.

"The progress I have noted on inflation, combined with the data in hand on economic and financial conditions and my outlook has made me more confident than I have been since

2021 that inflation is on a path to 2%," Waller said in written remarks to the Brookings Institution. The Fed prefers for inflation to be about 2%, which it sees as having little negative effect on the economy.

Consumer inflation, according to the Fed's preferred measure, soared to about 7% in mid-2022, compared with a year earlier. In response, beginning in March 2022 the Fed hiked its key rate 11 times, to its highest level in 22 years. Year-over-year inflation fell to 2.6% in November, the Fed's measure

showed.

Yet in his remarks Tuesday, Waller cautioned that the Fed might not cut rates as urgently as many on Wall Street have envisioned. He noted that the economy is continuing to expand, with the unemployment rate at just 3.7%, not far above a half-century low, while inflation cools.

"But will it last?" he asked.

Fed officials, he added, will want to see further evidence that inflation is still on track to 2% before embarking on rate cuts.



### Ahli United Bank congratulates the winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

Ahli United Bank (AUB) congratulated the winners of Al-Hassad Weekly Draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account, which was held on 17th January, 2024 at the bank's head office in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as a representative from Deloitte as the external auditor to oversee the draws as per the instructions of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in this regard.

The Bank Announced 10 Winners Of KD 1,000 As Follows: Wasim Kaban, Rahnah Ali Abdullah Hajji, Mona Omar Ali Al-Tar-

rah, Inam A Y Al-Obaid, Hassan Abdulmohsen Mohammad Al-Moussa, Abdullah Sarhan Ayed Al-Thaydi, Nwayer Saud Rajan Al-Azmi, Abdulredha Jassim Shaaban Al-Hussain, Mohammad Abbas Hamzah Al-Ibrahimand Owaidah Bhairan Ayedh Al-Sanea.

In its new package, Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Account presents a broader variety of rewards. Customers could now participate in the draw to win a monthly KD 100,000 prize, in addition to 10 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 each. The grand quarterly prize of KD

250,000 in cash for the winner remains the most important aspiration of customers. It is a real chance for them to realize their life dreams. In addition to this attractive package, there will be the annual expected profits on the basis of a Wakala contract that increases the attractiveness of the Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Account to customers.

Al-Hassad Account provides a suite of unique features, including the simplest and easiest savings program and a unique account-opening feature online with all ease with an instant deposit option.

**Al-Hassad**  
More draws and annual returns

Weekly: 10,000 K.D.  
Quarterly: 250,000 K.D.  
Annual: 100,000 K.D.

ahli united bank

Al-Hassad poster

### Most economists expect rate to edge lower to 3.8%

## UK inflation hits 4% in December, defying economists' predictions



Shoppers walk along Oxford Street during the Boxing Day sales in London, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023. Inflation across the United Kingdom increased unexpectedly last month as a result of sharp hike in tobacco and alcohol prices. (AP)

LONDON, Jan 17, (AP) — Inflation across the United Kingdom increased unexpectedly last month as a result of sharp hikes in tobacco and alcohol prices, according to official figures released Wednesday.

Economists said it was unlikely to prompt concern at the Bank of England, which recently ended nearly two years of interest rate increases.

The Office for National Statistics said inflation, as measured by the consumer prices index, was 4% in December, up from 3.9% the month before, the first increase in 10 months.

Most economists had expected the rate to edge lower to 3.8%.

Despite the increase, inflation re-

mains significantly lower at the end of 2023 than at the start of last year, when it stood above 10%.

The increase is unlikely to cause too much concern among rate-setters at the Bank of England as inflation is below where it expected it to be.

#### Price rises

"This serves as a reminder that bumps in the lower inflation road are inevitable, but does not change the big picture that price rises are coming in much lower than the Bank of England expected as recently as November," said Lalitha Try, economist at the Resolution Foundation.

After the Bank of England in August

left its main interest rate unchanged at a 15-year high of 5.25%, speculation mounted it could soon start cutting borrowing rates in light of recent sharp falls in inflation.

The Bank of England has managed to get inflation down from a four-decade high of more than 11%, but there's still a way to go to reach its target of 2%. But with food and energy prices trending lower, there are hopes it could meet the target this year, and start reducing interest rates.

Higher interest rates targeted a surge in inflation, first stoked by supply chain issues during the coronavirus pandemic and then Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which pushed up

food and energy costs.

While the interest rate increases have helped in the battle against inflation, the squeeze on consumer spending, primarily through higher mortgage rates, has weighed on the British economy, which is barely growing.

Whatever happens on the interest rate front in the coming months, it's very likely that relatively high borrowing rates and low economic growth will be the backdrop for the general election, which has to take place within a year. That's also a concern for the governing Conservative Party, which opinion polls say is way behind the main opposition Labour Party ahead of the vote.

## China's economy expanded 5.2% last year, gov't hits target despite uneven recovery

### Unemployment improves

HONG KONG, Jan 17, (AP) — China's economy for the October-December quarter grew at a quicker rate, allowing the Chinese government to hit its target of about 5% annual growth for 2023 even though trade data and the economic recovery remain uneven.

Official data released Wednesday showed that the Chinese economy grew 5.2% for 2023, surpassing the target of 'about 5%' that the government had set.

The growth for 2023 is likely helped by 2022's GDP of just 3% as China's economy slowed due to COVID-19 and nationwide lockdowns during the pandemic.

China is the second-biggest economy behind the U.S. and has been a key driver of global economic growth. Its economic slowdown has sparked concern of spillover effects to other economies that count China as a key trading partner, such as South Korea and Thailand.

For the fourth quarter, China's gross domestic product also grew at 5.2% compared to the same time last year. On a quarterly basis, the economy rose 1% in Q4, slowing from the expansion of 1.3% in the July-September quarter.

Officials from China's National Bureau of Statistics said that measures including "strengthened macro regulation, and redoubled efforts to expand domestic demand, optimize structure, boost confidence and prevent and defuse risks" had helped improve the momentum of recovery, supply and demand.

#### Measures

Industrial output, which measures activity in the manufacturing, mining and utilities sectors, rose 4.6% in 2023 compared to a year earlier, while retail sales of consumer goods grew 7.2%.

Fixed-asset investment - spending on factory equipment, construction and other infrastructure projects to drive growth - grew 3% year on year in 2023.

China on Wednesday also resumed releasing official data on its youth unemployment rate after a five-month suspension. Under a new methodology which excludes students from the jobless rate, unemployment for those aged between 16 and 24 stood at 14.9% for December, an improvement from the record-high youth jobless rate of 21.3% in June using the previous methodology.

Officials said that the new methodology's exclusion of current students will more accurately reflect employment of "young people entering society."

However, indicators point to a largely uneven recovery for China. Trade data for December, released earlier this month, showed a slight growth in exports for a second straight month as well as a slight increase in imports. Consumer prices however fell for a third consecutive month as deflationary pressures persisted.

Julian Evans-Pritchard from Capital Economics said China's "recovery clearly remains shaky."

"And while we still anticipate some near-term boost from policy easing, this is unlikely to prevent a renewed slowdown later this year," Evans-Pritchard wrote in a note, adding that it will be "a lot more challenging" for China to achieve the same pace of expansion in 2024.

Chinese premier Li Qiang said at the World Economic Forum on Tuesday that China had achieved its economic target without resorting to "massive stimulus."

He said that China had "good and solid fundamentals in its long-term development" and despite some setbacks, the positive trend for the economy will not change.



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, an aerial drone photo taken on Jan. 16, 2024 shows vehicles at a terminal of Dalian Port, northeast China's Liaoning Province. (AP)

### AI and climate challenges grow

## Survey says more CEOs fear their companies won't survive 10 years

LONDON, Jan 17, (AP) — More executives are feeling better about the global economy, but a growing number don't think their companies will survive the coming decade without a major overhaul because of pressure from climate change and technology like artificial intelligence, according to a new survey of CEOs by one of the world's largest consulting firms, PwC.

The survey of more than 4,700 CEOs worldwide was released Monday as business elites, political leaders and activists descended on the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, and it showed a mixed picture of the coming years.

Of the executives, 38% were optimistic about the strength of the economy, up from 18% last year, when the world was mired in high inflation, weak growth, rising interest rates and more.

The CEOs' expectation of economic decline has dropped to 45% from a record-high 73% last year, and fewer saw their company as highly exposed to the risk of geopolitical conflict, according to the PwC Global CEO Survey. That's despite wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, including disruptions to global trade from attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels on commercial ships in the Red Sea.

Even with the improved economic outlook, the challenge isn't close to over, with the World Bank saying last week that it expects the global economy would slow for a third consecutive year in 2024.

The executives, meanwhile, felt worse about the prospects for their companies' ability to weather big changes. The survey shows 45% of the respondents were worried that their businesses wouldn't be viable in a decade without reinvention, up from 39% last year.

#### Changes

The CEOs say they're trying to make changes, but they are running up against regulation, a lack of skills among workers and more.

"Whether it is accelerating the roll-out of generative AI or building their business to address the challenges and opportunities of the climate transition, this is a year of transformation," Bob Moritz, global chairman of PwC, formerly known as PricewaterhouseCoopers, said in a statement.

Artificial intelligence was seen as both a way to streamline business operations and a weakness. Nearly three-quarters of the executives said "it will significantly change the way their company creates, delivers and captures value in the next three years," PwC said.

More than half the CEOs said AI will make their products or services better, but 69% noted that their workers needed training to gain skills to use the developing technology. They also were concerned about how AI would increase cybersecurity risks and misinformation.

Organizers of the Davos gathering

warned last week that the threat posed by AI-powered misinformation, such as the creation of synthetic content, is the world's greatest short-term threat.

Another worldwide survey released around Davos, the Edelman Trust Barometer by public relations firm Edelman, says innovation is being managed badly and is increasing polarization, especially in Western democracies, where people with right-leaning beliefs are much more likely than those on the left to resist innovation.

"Innovation is only accepted if there is a sense that we're looking at the big picture of how we take care of the people whose jobs are going to change, how scientists are going to talk to the people directly so they understand it," CEO Richard Edelman told The Associated Press on Monday. "And finally, that one way in another, AI is affordable and makes it easier for people to live."

The online survey - which again showed that business is the most trusted institution among government, media, science and nongovernmental organizations - gathered responses from more than 32,000 respondents in 28 countries from Nov. 3 to Nov. 22.

Similar to AI, the PwC survey shows that the climate transition is both an opportunity and a risk. An increasing number of CEOs - nearly a third - say climate change was expected to shift how they do things over the next three years.

### Will the aid come?

## Ukraine needs US and European funds to keep economy running

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 17, (AP) — Ukraine's hard-won economic stability is under threat again as the government faces a large budget hole and its two biggest allies and sponsors - the United States and the European Union - have so far failed to decide on extending more aid.

Without pledges of support by the start of February - when EU leaders meet to decide on aid - and if no money arrives by March, that could risk the progress Ukraine has made against inflation. It has helped ordinary people keep paying rent, put food on the table and resist Russia's efforts to break their society's spirit.

The issue was on the minds of U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy when they met at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Tuesday.

"We're determined to sustain our support" for Ukraine, Blinken said, "we're working very closely with Congress in order to do that. I know our European colleagues are doing the same thing."

Here are key things to know about Ukraine's economy and why funding from allies is crucial:

The International Monetary Fund has said Ukraine's economy has shown "remarkable resilience." The first months of the war in 2022 saw the country lose a third of its economic output to occupation and destruction because Russia controls the heartland of Ukraine's heavy industry.

Inflation also soared to a whopping 26% because the central bank had to print money to cover yawning budget gaps.

#### Rebounded

However, things rebounded last year, with inflation falling to 5.7% and the economy growing 4.9% - more than some major economies like Germany. Ukraine's banking system has kept functioning, schools and health clinics are open, and pensions are being paid.

That's a lifeline for people like Nadiia Astreiko and her 93-year-old mother, who live on their combined pensions of \$170 a month.

"The war has changed everyone's life," said Astreiko, 63. "In terms of money, it's also hard because now I have to count every penny. ... It's very hard for us."

Ukraine spends almost all the money it brings in through taxes to fund the war. That leaves a huge deficit because there are other bills to keep society functioning, like old-age pensions and salaries for teachers, doctors, nurses and state employees.

At the beginning of the war, Ukraine resorted to having the central bank print new money, a dangerous stopgap because it can fuel inflation and destroy the value of the country's hryvnia currency.

As donor contributions became more regular and predictable, Ukraine was able to halt the practice, and the budget passed by parliament in November does not rely on it.

One key accomplishment was adjusting old-age pensions, which can be about the equivalent of \$100 per month, to compensate for inflation, said Hlib Vyshlinsky, executive direc-

### Tokyo governor asked to stop \$2.45 bln plan

TOKYO, Jan 17, (AP) — Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike was asked Tuesday to stop a disputed \$2.45 billion project to convert a city park district, renowned for its rows of 100-year-old ginkgo trees, into a largely commercial area anchored around three skyscrapers.

The plan for the Jingu Gaien area calls for razing a famous baseball stadium where Babe Ruth played and rebuilding it, part of a vast construction project that threatens thousands of trees in a city with limited green space.

A group of 420 outside experts including architects, urban planners, environmentalists and economists demanded in an open letter and news conference that the project be suspended and suggested Koike was ignoring public discontent and bowing to the powerful construction industry.

Officials in charge of environmental issues for the city were asked for comment but did not immediately respond.

The letter said Koike and her government did not "provide official answers to dozens of public questions." It also asked for an independent environmental assessment and said some of the ginkgo trees "are in a state of obvious decline" that could be exacerbated by construction.

"What she (Koike) is doing with this case is the simple destruction of nature when we need more trees," Kohei Saito, a political economist at Tokyo University, told The Associated Press. "We should have an open public discussion. This is not something that only politicians and private companies should decide."

tor of the Center for Economic Strategy, a policy institution in Kyiv.

Printing money again and the resulting inflation "would bring a lot of people into real poverty," he said.

To avoid that again, Ukraine needs "a decision by the start of February, and the money by the beginning of March," Vyshlinsky said.

Ukraine is significantly poorer than the rest of Europe. Millions of people are like Astreiko and her mother, with 80% of their money covering food and the rest going to buy medicines for Astreiko's mother.

The only way to afford things like clothes or shoes is to scrimp on food and medicine.

The pair eat fish twice a week, and meat once or twice a week. For vegetables, mushrooms and fruit, Astreiko grows them herself or picks them in the forest and cans or freezes them for winter.

## Shell to sell big piece of Nigeria oil business

ABUJA, Nigeria, Jan 17, (AP) — Shell has said it agreed to sell its onshore business in Nigeria's Niger Delta to a consortium of companies in a deal worth \$2.4 billion, the latest move by the energy company to limit its exposure in the West African nation amid long-running complaints of environmental pollution caused by the oil industry.

Shell called it a way to streamline its business in a country it has operated in for decades, facing pushback about oil spills that have fouled rivers and farms and exacerbated tensions in a region that has faced years of militant violence.

"This agreement marks an important milestone for Shell in Nigeria, aligning with our previously announced intent to exit onshore oil production in the Niger Delta," Zoe Yujnovich, Shell's integrated gas and upstream director, said in a statement. This will help in "simplifying our portfolio and focusing future disciplined investment in Nigeria on our deepwater and integrated gas position."

The buying consortium is Renaissance, which consists of ND Western, Aradel Energy, First E&P, Waltersmith and Petrolin, Shell said. After an initial payment of \$1.3 billion, the London-based energy giant said it would receive an additional \$1.1 billion.

The assets that Shell is selling are largely owned by the Nigerian government's national oil company NNPC, which holds a 55% stake. To finalize the agreement, the government must give its approval. Shell operates the assets and owns a 30% stake, with the remaining share held by France's TotalEnergies at 10% and Italy's Eni at 5%.

The assets include 15 onshore mining leases and three shallow-water operations, the company said.

Activists in the Niger Delta, where Shell has faced decades-long local criticism to its oil exploration, plan to ask the government to withhold its approval if the company does not address its environmental damage.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks at the Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2024. (AP)



## CONSUMERISM

## Business Plus



'Acquisition would harm competition, increase prices for air travelers'

# Judge blocks JetBlue's \$3.8bn Spirit Airlines buyout



A JetBlue airplane is shown at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, March 16, 2017. A federal judge is siding with the Biden administration and blocking JetBlue Airways from buying Spirit Airlines, saying the \$3.8 billion deal would reduce competition. (AP)

which opposes government intervention in the market. "It risks making both Spirit and JetBlue less able to compete with the big guys and ultimately leaving the airline industry less competitive, harming consumers."

But the decision was praised by critics of mergers over the past 15 years that have eliminated Continental, Northwest, US Airways, AirTran and Virgin America.

"This is an enormous victory for travelers, workers, and local communities, and another huge win for antitrust enforcers" at the Justice Department, said William McGee, an air-travel expert at the American Economic Liberties Project.

The government's victory could make it more likely that it will challenge Alaska Airlines' proposal to buy Hawaiian Airlines for \$1 billion and pick up about \$900 million in Hawaiian's debt.

"The days of relentless consolidation are over. We hope to see judges presiding over future airline mergers, like Alaska-Hawaiian, follow Judge Young's lead," McGee said.

The government hasn't said whether it will sue to stop Alaska from buying Hawaiian. The administration might have tipped its hand, however. "The Justice Department will continue to vigorously enforce the nation's antitrust laws to protect American consumers," Attorney General Merrick Garland said.

Here's a rundown of what you need to know.

It boils down to competition concerns. The Justice Department and several state attorneys general sued to block the merger last year - arguing that it would drive up fares by eliminating low-cost Spirit. U.S. District Judge William Young agreed.

Young, who was nominated for the federal bench by President Ronald Reagan, ruled that the merger would harm competition and violate antitrust law.

"There are no 'bad guys' in this case," the Boston-based judge wrote. "The two corporations are - as they are expected to - seeking to maximize shareholder value. The Department of Justice is - as the law requires - speaking for consumers who otherwise would have no voice."

With no merger in sight, the status quo for both JetBlue and Spirit remains - meaning air travelers shouldn't expect major changes anytime soon.

But JetBlue and Spirit said they disagreed with the ruling and are considering whether to appeal. JetBlue, the nation's sixth-largest airline by revenue, argued that it needs the deal to better compete with larger rivals.

The ruling could also open the door for Frontier Airlines to make another attempt to buy Florida-based Spirit. The two budget airlines announced a cash-and-stock deal back in 2022, but JetBlue made an all-cash offer and won the bidding war.

Tuesday's ruling was a victory for the Biden administration, which has moved aggressively to block mergers across several industries - including health care, video gaming and publishing - arguing that such consolidation hurts consumers.

6  
We continue to believe that our combination is the best opportunity to increase much needed competition and choice by bringing low fares and great service to more customers in more markets

DALLAS, Jan 17, (AP): A federal judge has sided with the Biden administration and blocked JetBlue Airways from buying Spirit Airlines, saying the \$3.8 billion deal would reduce competition.

The Justice Department had sued to block the merger, saying it would drive up fares by eliminating Spirit, the nation's biggest low-cost airline.

U.S. District Judge William Young, who presided over a non-jury trial last year, said Tuesday that the government had proven that the merger "would substantially lessen competition" and violated a century-old antitrust law.

In his ruling, which ran more than 100 pages, the judge gave a nod to the Justice Department's argument that Spirit is particularly important to travelers looking for an alternative to pricier airlines.

"Spirit is a small airline. But there are those who love it," he wrote. "To those dedicated customers of Spirit, this one's for you."

Young said that a JetBlue-Spirit combination "would likely place stronger competitive pressure on the larger airlines in the country. At the

same time, however, the consumers that rely on Spirit's unique, low-price model would likely be harmed."

Shares of Spirit Airlines Inc. plunged 47% after the ruling, while JetBlue shares gained 5%.

JetBlue and Spirit said they disagreed with the ruling and were considering whether to appeal.

New York-based JetBlue had argued that it needs the deal to grow in one move and better compete against bigger rivals that dominate the U.S. air-travel market.

"We continue to believe that our combination is the best opportunity to increase much needed competition and choice by bringing low fares and great service to more customers in more markets," the airlines said in a statement.

The ruling was a victory for the Biden administration, which has moved aggressively to block consolidation in several industries.

"Capitalism without competition isn't capitalism - it's exploitation," President Joe Biden said on X, formerly known as Twitter. "Today's ruling is a victory for consumers everywhere who want lower prices and

more choices. My Administration will continue to fight to protect consumers and enforce our antitrust laws."

For JetBlue, the ruling was its second major setback in federal court in less than a year. Another judge in the same Boston courthouse killed a partnership in the Northeast between JetBlue and American Airlines.

JetBlue, the nation's sixth-largest airline by revenue, now must come up with another growth plan. That will be an assignment for incoming CEO Joanna Geraghty. Next month she will replace Robin Hayes, who had engineered both of the deals that have now been blocked in court.

Tuesday's ruling could open the door for Frontier Airlines to make another attempt to buy Spirit. The two budget airlines announced a cash-and-stock deal in 2022, only to have JetBlue make an all-cash offer and win a bidding war for Florida-based Spirit.

Spirit's CEO and board initially opposed a sale to JetBlue, arguing presciently that regulators would try to block a deal that would eliminate a low-cost carrier from the U.S. landscape - JetBlue planned to repaint

Spirit's planes and remove some seats to match JetBlue's roomier interior.

To overcome that resistance, JetBlue agreed to pay Spirit a reverse breakup fee of \$70 million and pay Spirit shareholders \$400 million if the deal failed because of government opposition.

Helene Becker, an airline analyst for the financial-services firm Cowen, said Spirit will likely now search for a new buyer, but it's more likely to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy restructuring.

Both JetBlue and Spirit have struggled to recover from the pandemic while their bigger rivals have returned to healthy profitability. JetBlue has lost more than \$2 billion since the start of 2020, and Spirit - weighed down by higher costs and weaker demand - has lost more than \$1.6 billion in that time.

That generated some sympathy for a merger between them - and criticism of the judge's ruling.

"Blocking a merger of smaller competitors trying to combine resources and scale up to compete with the top four airlines makes little sense," said Jessica Melugin, an antitrust expert at the Competitive Enterprise Institute,

Move seeks to alleviate strain on paycheck-to-paycheck

# Biden administration plans \$3 overdraft fee cap

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We are proposing rules to close a longstanding loophole that allowed many large banks to transform overdraft into a massive junk fee harvesting machine

NEW YORK, Jan 17, (AP): The cost to overdraw a bank account could drop to as little as \$3 under a proposal announced by the White House, the latest move by the Biden administration to combat fees it says pose an unnecessary burden on American consumers, particularly those living paycheck to paycheck.

The change could potentially eliminate billions of dollars in fee revenue for the nation's biggest banks, which were gearing up for a battle even before Wednesday's announcement. Exactly how much revenue depends on which version of the new regulation is adopted.

Banks charge a customer an overdraft fee if their bank account balance falls below zero. Overdraft started as a courtesy offered to some customers when paper checks used to take days to clear, but proliferated thanks to the growing popularity of debit cards.

"For too long, some banks have charged exorbitant overdraft fees - sometimes \$30 or more - that often hit the most vulnerable Americans the hardest, all while banks pad their bot-

tom lines," President Joe Biden said in a statement. "Banks call it a service - I call it exploitation."

Under the proposed rule, banks could only charge customers what it would cost them to break even on providing overdraft services. This would require banks to show the CFPB the costs.

Alternatively, banks could use a benchmark fee that would apply across all affected financial institutions. Regulators proposed several fees - \$3, \$6, \$7 and \$14 - and will gather industry and public input on the most appropriate amount. The CFPB says it arrived at these figures by looking at how much it cost banks to recoup losses from accounts that went negative and were never paid back.

According to research conducted by Bankrate last August, the average overdraft fee was \$26.61. Some banks charge as much as \$39. The nation's biggest banks still take in roughly \$8 billion in overdraft fees every year, according to data from the CFPB and banks' public records.

Biden has made the elimination of

"junk fees" one of the cornerstones of his administration's economic agenda heading into the 2024 election. Overdraft fees have been at the center of that campaign, and the White House directed government regulators last year to do whatever is in their power to further curtail the practice.

"We are proposing rules to close a longstanding loophole that allowed many large banks to transform overdraft into a massive junk fee harvesting machine," said Rohit Chopra, director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in a prepared statement to reporters.

Banks could also provide small lines of credit to allow customers to overdraft, a service that would operate like a credit card. Some banks like Truist Bank currently offer that type of service.

The CFPB has signaled for months that it planned to curtail the collection of overdraft fees, with regulators making statements and the bureau putting out research that shows overdraft fees overwhelmingly impact the poor and households of color, who often

overdraft multiple times a year.

In response, banks have prepared a massive lobbying campaign to rebuff the Biden Administration's proposal. Whichever proposal is adopted is almost certain to be challenged in court.

The rules would apply only to banks with more than \$10 billion in assets, which is roughly 175 banks that make up most of the financial institutions Americans do business with. The rules spare small banks and credit unions, some of which rely disproportionately on overdraft fees. CFPB officials told reporters that it chose to focus on the largest banks since most Americans bank at these large institutions and that is where the widespread abuses have historically happened.

Decades ago, banks created a service that allowed certain customers with checking accounts to go negative in their accounts to avoid bouncing paper checks. What started as a niche service became a massive profit center for the banks after the proliferation of debit cards that caused customers to debit their bank accounts for small

and large amounts of money multiple times a day.

Overdraft fees have been a financial bonanza for the banking industry, with the CFPB estimating that banks collected \$280 billion in overdraft fees in the last 20 years. These fees became so popular that one bank CEO named his boat the "Overdraft."

Caving to popular and political pressure, most of the biggest banks have added safeguards to customers' accounts to allow them to bring the balance back into positive territory before they incur a fee. Bank of America, once considered by industry critics to be the biggest abuser of overdraft fees, cut its fee from \$35 to \$10 two years ago and says revenue from overdraft fees is now less than 10% of what it had been.

While overdraft fees have fallen in recent years, a Bankrate survey found that 91% of bank accounts still can charge overdraft fees.

If the rule is adopted and survives political and legal challenges, the new regulations would go into effect in the autumn of 2025.

editor's choice





# Dire Straits' live box set unveils decades of sonic mastery

LOS ANGELES, Jan 17, (AP) — Dire Straits may be best known for their No. 1 song "Money for Nothing" (think Sting singing "I want my MTV!") that came from their chart-topping 1985 album "Brothers in Arms."

But as their new "Dire Straits Live 1978-1992" box set shows, the band was much more than any one song or album. Out Friday, the release proves they were also a force live with a deep catalogue that goes far beyond the radio-friendly fare that put "Brothers in Arms" at No. 1 for nine weeks in the U.S.

The eight CD or 12 album box set is a showcase for a wide range of Dire Straits songs: the storytelling of "Romeo and Juliet," the sonic explorations of "Telegraph Road" and "Private Investigations" and more accessible material like "Walk of Life."

However, only 29 tracks are previously unreleased. And the bulk of those come from "Dire Straits Live from the Rainbow Theatre," a 1979 show available for the first time.

Spread over three vinyl records, the show captures the band after the success of "Sultans of Swing," but before "Brothers in Arms" sent its global popularity through the stratosphere.

"Live at the BBC," which had been first released in 1995, shows the band even earlier - in 1978 just as they were starting. It's fun to hear them working for it with an audience that doesn't greet the opening riffs of familiar songs with applause.

There's also an expanded version of "Alchemy," the band's 1984 live

album, presenting the band just before the release of "Brothers in Arms."

There's no document of that 1985 tour in this box set and that's a failure. Instead, the box set jumps ahead to its final 1992 world tour with "On the Night" and "Encores."

"Dire Straits Live 1978-1992" serves as a fine live snapshot of the band's evolution. The music is exceptional and presented in beautiful sonic clarity. However, the set could have dug even deeper to offer even more rarities and previously unreleased tracks for the diehard fans who already have the original releases.

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On her fourth studio album, the largely Spanish-language "Orquídeas" ("Orchids" in English), Colombian American singer **Kali Uchis**' ability to create lush sonic worlds reaches new heights.

Across her discography, Uchis' power has always been her fluidity: of culture, of genre, and of language, moving from Spanish to English in her sultry sounds about love, loss, and divination. On "Orquídeas," that spirit continues - these are self-possessed songs across a spectrum of heritages, made cohesive through her unique filter.

The first single, "Muñekita" ("Little Doll"), is restrained reggaeton - speedy with her syrupy voice, hitting the listener like a strobe light interrupting a haze of smoke in a crowded club, further ornamented by the features from Dominican rapper **Ei Alfa** (the King of Dembow) and City Girls' JT.

The second is "Te Mata," ("It Kills You") a sexy bolero with Uchis' rasp reaching moments of deep, mournful elation. ("A mí me gusta que vean lo feliz que soy sin ellos," she intros the track about reclaiming autonomy after an unhealthy relationship. In English: "I like it when they see how happy I am without them.") In song, Uchis stretches her ability to modernize the most classic sounds, offering a ballad that is both fiercely contemporary and timeless.

These are vastly different works - exemplars of Uchis' range, the smoothness in which she approaches her chosen genres, a quality she learned after years of shaping her particular approach to alt-R&B.

Those singles aren't the only surprises: "Igual Que Un Ángel" ("Just Like An Angel"), which features corridos tumbados star **Peso Pluma**, is synth-pop; "Labios Mordidos" ("Bitten Lips"), which features Colombian superstar **Karol G**, is sapphic pleasure. "Dame Beso // Muévete" ("Give Me A Kiss // Move It") is vintage merengue.

In a press release for "Orquídeas," Uchis said she found inspiration in the "timeless, eerie, mystic, striking, graceful and sensual allure of the orchid," a fascination she's held since childhood. "I always felt distinctly intrigued and magnetized by the flower," she wrote, adding she wanted to "re-define the way we look at Latinas in music."

Across "Orquídeas," Uchis offers a new framework in which to consider her multitude of identities - by experimenting with a range of sounds and centering her femininity in both introspective songs and party-ready bangers.

MUSIC

## Variety



This image released by Sundance Institute shows Kieran Culkin (left), and Jesse Eisenberg in 'A Real Pain' by Jesse Eisenberg, an official selection of the US Dramatic Competition at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival. (AP)

## Film

Festival to feature 83 feature films, 31 debuts

# At 40, Sundance marks its past, future

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 17, (AP) — Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck remember the feeling of being the new kids at the Sundance Film Festival. In 2004, they'd come to Park City, Utah, armed with a short film "Gowanus, Brooklyn," some homemade promotional postcards and dreams of breaking through. Their short not only won a prize that year but also enough support to make the feature version, "Half Nelson," which would later earn Ryan Gosling his first Oscar nomination.

"I remember being like, oh my God, this festival has been around 20 years, it's such an old festival," Boden said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "Now it's 20 years later and we're the old people."

Of course, "old" is relative when it comes to a discovery festival like Sundance, where directors fresh out of film school can get a shot at a breakthrough. Remember, Kevin Smith was just 23 when he brought "Clerks" to Park City. Like many of their contemporaries that started at Sundance - including Steven Soderbergh, who is also coming with a new film, "Presence" - Boden and Fleck have gone on to bigger projects, including "Captain Marvel."

But the Sundance romance hasn't dulled. Their new film debuts Thursday, opening night of the 40th edition of the festival, at the storied Eccles Theater. "Freaky Tales" is a love letter to Fleck's hometown, Oakland, in the 1980s - its sports, music, history and the movies of the time - featuring Pedro Pascal, Jay Ellis, Dominique Thorne and Ben Mendelsohn.

"It's a movie lover's movie," Boden teased. "It has one foot in reality and then one foot just launches off into fantasy."

The first day also boasts the world premieres of several high-profile documentaries, including Jesse Moss and Amanda McBaine's "Girls State," Yance Ford's "Power" and "Frida," directed by Emmy-nominated editor Carla Gutiérrez, and playing in the US documentary competition.

As an immigrant and a former art student, Gutiérrez has long admired Frida Kahlo. In "Frida," she uses Kahlo's words from her diary, letters and essays to let the artist tell her own story.

"Uncovering her own words and her own voice, I think what we're presenting is a new way of getting into her world and in her mind and her heart and really understanding the art in a more intimate, raw way," Gutiérrez said.

Other anticipated documentaries playing across various sections include "Daughters," about four young girls reuniting with their incarcerated fathers at a dance, "Gaucho Gaucho," from "The Truffle Hunters" filmmakers, "Sue Bird: In the Clutch," "DEVO," "Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story," "Seeking Mavis Beacon," and "The Greatest Night in Pop," featuring never-before-seen footage about the making of "We Are the World." The programmers are also predicting that "Will & Harper," about a road trip Will Ferrell takes with his friend of 30 years who has come out as a trans woman, will be a big crowd pleaser.

As always, an army of celebrities are expected to descend on Park City, including Kristen Stewart, with two buzzy films ("Love Me" and "Love Lies Bleeding"), Saoirse Ronan, Kieran Culkin, Sebastian Stan, Glen Powell, Woody Harrelson, Steven Yeun, Lucy Liu, Danielle Deadwyler, Aubrey Plaza, Melissa Barrera and Laura Linney.

### Independent

Chiwetel Ejiofor is also bringing his sophomore feature, "Rob Peace," a biographical drama about the tragically short life of a brilliant kid from East Orange, New Jersey, which he wrote, directed and co-stars in alongside Jay Will, Mary J. Blige and Camila Cabello.

"I've been fortunate to be there many times as an actor and a director as well," Ejiofor said. "It's a dream to take this film there as well. It's an American story, it's an independent film and it wants to sit in that world."

Sundance programmers culled through 17,435 submissions to arrive at the 83 feature films playing across the 10 days, featuring a diverse mix of behind-the-camera talent. There are new episodic projects from Debra Granik and Richard Linklater, as well as 31 feature debuts.

Gutiérrez is one of those first-time directors, as is Titus Kaphar, an acclaimed contemporary artist and MacArthur Fellow who is making his narrative debut with the competition title "Exhibiting Forgiveness." Featuring André Holland and Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor, Kaphar uses his own paintings to tell this very personal story of an artist who is visited by his estranged father (John Earl Jelks). He wanted to find a way to talk to his children about his life experience and examine generational trauma in a new medium, and he's honored to have the festival's support.

"My favorite films are Sundance films," Kaphar said. "To be allowed into this new community of artists, a community of directors and filmmakers ... it's pretty extraordinary."

The excitement isn't lost on Sundance mainstays like Jesse Eisenberg, who has been going to the festival since "The Squid and the Whale." This year, he's bringing a film that he's been wanting to make for almost as long. In "A Real Pain," which he wrote and directed, he plays an American who travels to Poland with his cousin (Culkin) to see where their late grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, was from.

"It's about how we kind of view modern pain versus historical pain, but not in a didactic way. I didn't want the movie to feel like homework," Eisenberg said. "I wanted it to feel funny and light and only contemplative like that in retrospect."

And everyone has different ways of experiencing their films at Sundance. Boden and Fleck are especially looking forward to a "raucous" crowd at the Eccles. Eisenberg will probably step out when the lights go down - he knows from experience that it makes him too anxious.

"My nerves are a little redirected towards hoping people like it in a kind of holistic way, rather than just my acting," said Eisenberg. He also appears in another highly anticipated film: "Sasquatch Sunset," from David and Nathan Zellner, in which he and Riley Keough are unrecognizable as a family of, yes, sasquatches.

The Robert Redford-founded festival is, mostly, forward thinking - but they are taking some time to appreciate the art that has come out of Sundance over four decades. Just take a look at the "all-time top 10" released Tuesday, voted on by more than 500 filmmakers, critics, and industry members. The list of classics includes: Joel and Ethan Coen's "Blood Simple" (10th), Soderbergh's "sex, lies and videotape" (sixth), Jordan Peele's "Get Out" (third) and Damien Chazelle's "Whiplash" (first).

The question now is what will pop from the 2024 festival. Will audiences see the next "Before Sunrise," "Memento," "Y tu mamá también," "Little Miss Sunshine," or "Reservoir Dogs," and other films that have transcended their humble indie roots to become all-time classics? Will there be another Oscar nominee, or winner?

Festival director Eugene Hernandez noted a vibrancy in the lineup that reminded him of his earliest days going to the festival, in the 1990s.

# Features

ARABO TIMES

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2024

LOS ANGELES: The Emmy Awards telecast on Fox reached a record low audience of 4.3 million viewers, as the long-term trend of diminishing ratings for the show continues.

The Nielsen company said Tuesday that the Monday night show hosted by **Anthony Anderson** with "Succession" and "The Bear" raking in most of the top awards was down from the previous record low of 5.9 million for NBC's telecast in 2022, the last time the event was held.

This year's Emmys had a lot working against them. They were delayed four months from its usual September spot by Hollywood's writers and actors strikes, and had to compete with both an NFL playoff game and coverage of the Iowa caucuses in the presidential campaign.

The audience was less than half of what the CBS telecast of the Golden Globes got eight days earlier. That show, which honored both TV and movies and had bigger stars in attendance including **Taylor Swift**, had 9.4 million viewers.

The Emmys and Anderson got generally positive reviews for a show that spent much of its time honoring past television, with reunions and set recreations from shows including "Cheers," "Martin" and "Grey's Anatomy." Variety called it "delightful" while The Hollywood Reporter praised its "polish, proficiency and emotion." (AP)

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LOS ANGELES: Rapper and entrepreneur **Sean "Diddy" Combs** has withdrawn his lawsuit against **Diageo** as part of a settlement with the London-based spirits giant.

Combs and Diageo "have now agreed to resolve all disputes between them," the two parties said in a statement released Tuesday.

Diageo is now the sole owner of Ciroc vodka and DeLeon tequila, two brands Combs had promoted in the past, and has no business relationship with Combs going forward.

No further details of the settlement were released.

Combs sued Diageo last May, saying the company didn't make promised investments in Ciroc and DeLeon and treated them as inferior "urban" products.

Combs, who signed a deal to promote Ciroc in 2007 and purchased DeLeon with Diageo in 2013, said the neglect worsened after Diageo bought two competing tequila brands: Don Julio in 2014 and Casamigos in 2017. Diageo owns

more than 200 brands, including Guinness beer and Tanqueray gin.

Combs, who is Black, also accused Diageo of racism. In court filings, Combs said Diageo leadership told him race was one of the reasons it limited distribution to "urban" neighborhoods. Combs was also told some Diageo leaders resented him for making too much



Williams



Combs

money. (AP)

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PARIS: It was Wild West meets melting pot **America** at the Louis Vuitton Fall-Winter 2024 men's show Tuesday, where musician-turned-designer **Pharrell Williams** unveiled his highly-anticipated sophomore collection.

The show, set against the dramatic silhouette of the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris, masterfully channeled Americana, with Native American designs mixing with modern luxury and showcasing Williams' unique vision for the powerhouse.

Celebrity guests including **Bradley Cooper**, **Omar Sy** and

**Carey Mulligan** gathered to witness a boulder-laden landscape that evoked the rugged terrain of an idealized America. The collection itself was a vibrant celebration of the American spirit, dripping in the famed confidence of Williams - a lauded music star who is a newcomer to fashion design at this level. (AP)



## People &amp; Places

## Music

## From chat to chart

## Justin Tranter crafts chart hits by talking

NEW YORK, Jan 17, (AP): Sit down and talk to Justin Tranter for just a while and likely a hit song will emerge.

The Grammy-nominated songwriter credited with some of the biggest bangers of the past decade - "Sorry" by Justin Bieber and "Believer" by Imagine Dragons, among them - usually begins a writing session with a friendly chat.

"I just start having a conversation with the artist," Tranter says. "When they say something that I think is either already the song title or is at least the song topic, then it becomes a secret or not-so-secret interview. And I just keep going in on that topic."



Tranter

It is a process that has yielded smashes for such artists as Selena Gomez, Lady Gaga, Dua Lipa, Halsey, Miley Cyrus, Britney Spears, DNCE, Gwen Stefani and Fall Out Boy, triggering 50 million single sales and 50 billion streams.

"I want the artist to leave feeling like this is exactly what I needed - maybe not always wanted to say - what I needed to say today. And that can be really fun," Tranter says.

Tranter is up for a songwriting Grammy this year for an astonishing range of songs, testament to an ability to talk to everyone: There's Italian heavy metal, a rap banger, crystalline pop, introspective rock and a soaring Broadway number.

The songs are: Miley Cyrus' "River," Baby Tate's "Jersey," Måneskin's "Honey (Are U Coming?)," Talk's "A Little Bit Happy," "I Want More" from the TV series "Grease: Rise of the Pink Ladies" and René Rapp's "Gemini Moon" and "Pretty Girls."

None seem to have any connection to the others except Tranter, who fronted the glam-punk band Semi Precious Weapons and vowed to make the songwriting business humane after experiencing homophobia and bad record deals.

## Passion

"The through-line is my passion for helping other people tell their stories. This has nothing to do with me. I'm not singing these songs. These are not about me."

Tranter, who uses the pronoun they, wanted 2023 to be more than a list of hit songs. They chased different projects to push themselves as a writer and lyricist.

"I am very grateful for my hits. My hits have changed my life. I've been able to have my parents retire early. I am so grateful for the hits. But I really wanted to take this year to find projects where I could not be proud of the money the songs are generating, I could be proud of my skill and my craft."

Tranter, 43, spent just one session with Rapp, Gen Z's new high priestess, as she charted a course away from TV and musical theater and into confessional pop, making her debut album, "Snow Angel."

"She just came in and was talking about her relationship. And I started writing what she was saying and just put exact quotes into the song and then surround those quotes with poetry," Tranter says.

Out of that came "Gemini Moon" and "Pretty Girls," which captured both artists' frustration about straight people flirting with bi-curious flings: "You say that I'm your favorite/With your hand between my thighs/Tell me if you were gonna/That I would be the one you tried."

"If you just listen to 'Pretty Girls' passively, you think, 'Oh, fun song.' But actually there's layers on top of layers," says Tranter. "It was just a really great year for me as a songwriter to help artists tell stories that I haven't helped anyone tell before."

The song from "Grease: Rise of the Pink Ladies," a spinoff from the original John Travolta and Olivia Newton John movie musical - speaks deeply about Tranter, a self-described theater kid whose love of musicals triggered their music career.

Tranter wrote 30 new songs for the TV series and "I Want More" - sung by Marisa Davila - was the last one written for season one, a power ballad sung by a young woman who has learned that high school waters are treacherous.

"I do not know what it's like to be a woman in 1950, but I do know what it's like to be a queer person when I was a teenager in 1994 and '95 and how dare I want more than what people decided I should want," Tranter says.

Tranter's personable and empathetic approach to making music proved crucial in 2023 for helping Broadway and TV star Billy Porter pivot to dance with the album, "Black Mona Lisa."

"It's not easy to find a voice that resonates with huge portions of the public and is authentic at the same time to who you are," says Porter. "Justin is a master of that."

Porter even showed his appreciation by putting Tranter in his lyrics: "Rubbing elbows with the superstars like Big Bird," he sings on "Funk Is On the One," adding: "Making records out in Hollywood with Tranter."

To win the songwriter of the year Grammy in the non-classical category, Tranter on Feb. 4, must beat Edgar Barrera, Jessie Jo Dillon, Shane McAnally and Theron Thomas - rivals Tranter calls "literal geniuses."

Whatever happens, Tranter will keep going - one good meeting at a time.

## Also:

**LOS ANGELES:** Music festival obsessives, the wait is over. The 2024 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival lineup is here.

**Lana Del Rey, Doja Cat and Tyler, the Creator** will headline this year's festivities, joined by an unexpected No Doubt reunion. (Remember No Doubt? The Orange County ska-punk band that gave the world **Gwen Stefani**?) The band's last album, "Push and Shove," was released 12 years ago - during the band's first reunion. This marks their second.)

Also on the lineup: regional Mexican music superstar **Peso Pluma**, **Ice Spice**, **Bizarrap**, **Young Miko**, **Lil Uzi Vert**, **Sabrina Carpenter**, **Deftones**, **Carin León**, **Ateez**, **Le Sserafim**, **Sublime**, **Blur**, **J Balvin**, **Lil Yachty**, **Renée Rapp**, **Bleachers**, **Grimes** and many more.



This combination of photos shows Kelsea Ballerini during CMA Fest 2022 in Nashville, Tenn., on June 10, 2022, (left), Kelly Clarkson performing on NBC's 'Today' show in New York on Sept. 22, 2023, (center), and Miley Cyrus performing at the 61st annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on Feb. 10, 2019. Cyrus' 'Endless Summer Vacation' is up for album of the year and best pop vocal album. The single 'Flowers' is nominated for three Grammy awards. Kelly Clarkson's 'Chemistry' is up for best pop vocal album and Kelsea Ballerini's 'Rolling Up the Welcome Mat' is up for best country album. (AP)

## Music

## Female artists strike a chord at 2024 Grammys

## Divorce albums breaking new ground?

LOS ANGELES, Jan 17, (AP): When the 2024 Grammy nominations were announced, one thing was immediately apparent: Women outpaced men in the major categories.

The leading artists - superstars like SZA, Taylor Swift, and Olivia Rodrigo - reflect an incredible diversity of skill with acclaimed albums that mine all corners of the human experience.

One such corner: divorce.

An influx of new releases from Kelly Clarkson, Miley Cyrus and Kelsea Ballerini reimagine the divorce album in all its complexity. While the music industry has long been youth-obsessed, there may be something to the fact that these musicians are all women in their 30s and 40s and consequently possess a kind of self-assuredness and rich, emotional maturity. In a culture where relatability is currency, relationship stories with the weight and wisdom of age register as fresh. If all popstars are teenagers, where does that leave the rest of us? Perhaps the depth of a breakup ballad is felt more acutely when a public split plays out in tabloid headlines - and there's a lot more to lose.

Cyrus' malleable pop "Flowers," one of AP's picks for best songs of 2023, is a pep talk-turned-empowerment banger - the sound of a woman learning about herself again after a decade-long relationship ended in divorce. She's raked in five nominations, including album of the year for "Endless Summer Vacation."

Then there's Clarkson's "Chemistry" - a big-belter release she's described as a "relationship album" that's up for best pop vocal album.

And in the world of country, which has a long tradition of women performing songs about divorce and domesticity, Ballerini's "Rolling Up the Welcome Mat" is up for the genre's best album.

These records vary greatly but share a similar emotional core: They were written while grappling with marriages falling apart.

In 2020, Cyrus split from actor Liam Hemsworth and Kelly Clarkson ended her marriage to Brandon Blackstock. Two years later, Ballerini and her husband Morgan Evans divorced.

Musically, those endings opened up new realities. Clarkson pursued courageous ballads that stretched her elastic vocal range, Ballerini experimented with pop production and Cyrus wielded her weather-worn voice like a weapon. Their albums came out of painful periods in which each performer was redefining herself.

Ballerini is part of a long lineage of women in country making music about divorce and heartbreak - running the gamut in tone from vengeful to celebratory. Marissa R. Moss, author of "Her Country: How the Women of Country Music Became the Success They Were Never Supposed to Be," points to Loretta Lynn's groundbreaking 1973 hit "Rated X" as setting the precedent for future musicians.

What's interesting, now, is the modern ways in which divorce is articulated on these records.

## Power

Ballerini's album - particularly the song "Penthouse" - challenges stereotypical domestic roles and "demonstrates financial power," Moss said.

"I bought the house with the fence, enough room for some kids," Ballerini sings. Later, her home becomes claustrophobic, an allegory for her marriage: "And I thought that would make it all better, and maybe forever wouldn't feel like the walls closing in."

The record gets at the idea that even when women attain financial autonomy and remake traditional marriage roles, they're still not necessarily able to find freedom within its confines.

"I don't think a quote-unquote divorce album is the first time that I have felt like it's different being a woman in country music, that's for sure," Ballerini told The Associated Press, about gender expectations in the genre.

Men, too, have long written about

marriages ended, but in the current moment, women lead the charge. Other artists writing in and around divorce include Adele.

Kacey Musgraves, and Carly Pearce, another 2024 Grammy nominee.

Ballerini, for her part, understands why people relate deeply to the songs on her album that deal with divorce.

"It's something that was taboo to talk about, especially from a woman's perspective, for a really long time," she said. It goes "back to like giving a voice to myself and validating my own feelings and my own life and my own journey and hoping that other women feel that too and feel validated."

People often expect divorce records to contain exclusively sad songs. While Ballerini, Clarkson and Cyrus exorcise grief on their albums, they express gratitude as well. These records are sad and empowering, often both at once.

"The feeling people seem to have is that sad music is expressing their own sadness, not the sadness of the artist - but you feel like the artist is trying to express your sadness," Joshua Knobe, a Yale professor and researcher, said. He led a team of academics whose 2023 study found that listeners are drawn to melancholic music for similar reasons as they're repelled by sad conversations - because they are seeking connection.

Or, as Ballerini said, listeners want to feel validated.

"People like success. They like talking with people who succeed," Knobe continued. "But that's not the thing that makes people feel a profound connection to another human being."

If negative emotions register as more complex than positive ones, perhaps that makes for more opportunities to connect. Divorce records often traverse a spectrum of feelings, with Cyrus, Ballerini and Clarkson's songs allowing the listener to experience the full breadth of the artists' love and pain. That is no doubt noteworthy.

Or perhaps award-worthy.



British actor Henry Cavill waves as he arrives to promote his latest movie Argyle at the Gimpo Airport in Seoul, South Korea, Wednesday, Jan. 17. The film is to be released in the country on Feb. 7. (AP)



Agustín



Khairianwar

## Variety

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The director and producer of a banned Malaysian film that explores the afterlife were charged Wednesday with offending the religious feelings of others in a rare criminal prosecution of filmmakers, slammed by critics as an attack on freedom of expression.

**Mohamad Khairianwar Jailani**, the director and co-scriptwriter of "Mentega Terbang," and producer **Tan Meng Kheng** pleaded not guilty to having a "deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of others" through the independent, low-budget film. If found guilty, they could face up to a year in jail, a fine or both.

Defense lawyer **N. Surendran** said the two believe the charge is "unreasonable and unconstitutional" because it violates their right to freedom of expression. "As far as we are concerned, these are groundless charges and we will challenge those charges in court," he said.

The film, which debuted at a regional film festival in 2021, revolves around a young Muslim girl who explores other religions to figure out where her ailing mother would go when she dies. Scenes that angered Muslims included ones showing the girl desiring to eat pork, which is forbidden in Islam, and pretending to drink holy water, and her father supporting her wish to leave Islam. It also sparked death threats against Khairianwar.

The film was briefly shown on a **Hong Kong** streaming platform last year before it was removed. The Home Ministry banned the film last September without giving any reason. The two filmmakers filed a suit challenging the government's decision before they were charged.

Race and religion are sensitive issues in **Malaysia**. Ethnic Malays account for two-thirds of the country's 33 million people and must be Muslims, with apostasy considered a sin. There are large ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities that are Buddhist, Hindu and Christian.

Critics say religious conservatism has been on the rise in Malaysia, after an influential Malay-Islam alliance won strong gains in the November 2022 general election.

Human Rights Watch accused Prime Minister **Anwar Ibrahim**'s government of prosecuting the two filmmakers to win political support from Malays.

"This sort of crude political pandering at the expense of human rights is precisely the sort of thing that Anwar accused previous governments of doing when he was in the opposition -- but now he's hypocritically changed his tune after assuming power, and

using the same censorship and persecution," said the group's deputy Asia director, **Phil Robertson**. (AP)

**MEXICO CITY:** Mexican writer **José Agustín**, who chronicled rock and roll and social change in **Mexico** in the 1960s and 70s, has died, Mexico's Culture Department announced on Tuesday. He was 79.

The department did not list a cause of death, but Agustín had been ill for years. The writer's family confirmed the death, but also did not give a cause.

Agustín was considered part of the 1960s cultural movement in Mexico known as "La Onda," or "The Wave." It was the first time that the rebellious youth of Mexico, who struggled with both poverty

and repression, found themselves reflected in formal literature.

Agustín later went on to write a biting analysis of Mexican politics and society between 1940 and 1994, "The Mexican Tragicomedy." (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** A woman has alleged that New York Knicks owner **James Dolan** sexually assaulted her a decade ago and then set her up to be molested by now-imprisoned film producer **Harvey Weinstein**, according to a federal lawsuit filed Tuesday in Los Angeles.

In 2013, plaintiff **Kellye Croft** was a 27-year-old licensed massage therapist working on a tour for The Eagles. Dolan's band, JD & The Straight Shot, opened for the rock band. Dolan, then 58, allegedly used his power and influence on the tour to repeatedly manipulate and pressure Croft "to submit to sex with him," the lawsuit states.

The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they were sexually assaulted unless they come forward publicly or consent to being identified, as Croft has done.

When the tour traveled to Los Angeles, Dolan flew Croft there even though almost no tour members signed up for message appointments, the lawsuit states. Dolan then continued to "sexually exploit" her and orchestrated a seemingly random meeting between Croft and Weinstein, a friend of his, in a hotel elevator in early 2014, the suit alleges.

Weinstein offered her opportunities to work on film sets, according to the lawsuit, and changed into a loosely tied bathrobe in his suite and asked Croft to give him a massage. (AP)



Austrian maestro Franz Welser-Möst conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra during the traditional New Year's concert at the Golden Hall of the Musikverein in Vienna, Austria, Jan. 1, 2013. In a statement Thursday, Jan. 11, Welser-Möst said he will retire as music director of the Cleveland Orchestra in June 2027, ending a 25-season tenure that will be the longest in the ensemble's history. (AP)



## The Conversation

## Gut's natural mechanisms work like popular obesity drugs

## Your body already has a built-in weight loss system

By Christopher Damman  
University of Washington

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

Wegovy, Ozempic and Mounjaro are weight loss and diabetes drugs that have made quite a splash in health news. They target regulatory pathways involved in both obesity and diabetes and are widely considered breakthroughs for weight loss and blood sugar control.

But do these drugs point toward a root cause of metabolic disease? What inspired their development in the first place?

It turns out your body produces natural versions of these drugs - also known as incretin hormones - in your gut. It may not be surprising that nutrients in food help regulate these hormones. But it may intrigue you to know that the trillions of microbes in your gut are key for orchestrating this process.

I am a gastroenterologist at the University of Washington who studies how food and your gut microbiome affect health and disease. Here's an inside-out perspective on the role natural gut hormones and healthy food play in metabolism and weight loss.

Specialized bacteria in your lower gut take the components of food you can't digest like fiber and polyphenols - the elements of plants that are removed in many processed foods - and transforms them into molecules that stimulate hormones to control your appetite and metabolism. These include GLP-1, a natural version of Wegovy and Ozempic.

GLP-1 and other hormones like PYY help regulate blood sugar through the pancreas. They also tell your brain that you've had enough to eat and your stomach and intestines to slow the movement of food along the digestive tract to allow for digestion. This system even has a name: the colonic brake.

## Hormones

Prior to modern processed foods, metabolic regulatory pathways were under the direction of a diverse healthy gut microbiome that used these hormones to naturally regulate your metabolism and appetite. However, food processing, aimed at improving shelf stability and enhancing taste, removes the bioactive molecules like fiber and polyphenols that help regulate this system.

Removal of these key food components and the resulting decrease in gut microbiome diversity may be an important factor contributing to the rise in obesity and diabetes.

Wegovy and Ozempic reinvigorate the colonic brake downstream of food and microbes with molecules similar to GLP-1. Researchers have demonstrated their effectiveness at weight loss and blood sugar control.

Mounjaro has gone a step further and combined GLP-1 with a second hormone analogue derived from the upper gut called GIP, and studies are showing this combination therapy to be even more effective at promoting weight loss than GLP-1-only therapies like Wegovy and Ozempic.

These drugs complement other measures like gastric bypass surgery that are used in the most extreme cases of metabolic disease. These surgeries may in part work much like Wegovy and Ozempic by bypassing digestion in segments of the gastrointestinal tract and bathing your gut microbes in less digested food. This awakens the microbes to stimulate your gut cells to produce GLP-1 and PYY, effectively regulating appetite and metabolism.

Many patients have seen significant improvements to not only their weight and blood glucose but also reductions in important cardiovascular outcomes like strokes and heart attacks. Medical guidelines support the use of new incretin-based medications like Wegovy, Ozempic and Mounjaro to manage the interrelated metabolic conditions of diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Considering the effects incretin-based medications have on the brain and cravings, medical researchers are also evaluating their potential to treat nonmetabolic conditions like alcohol abuse, drug addiction and depression.

Despite the success and prospect of these drugs to help populations that may benefit most from them, current prescribing practices have raised some questions. Should people who are only a little overweight use these drugs? What are the risks of prescribing these drugs to children and adolescents for lifelong weight management?

## Symptoms

While incretin-based therapies seem close to magic bullets, they are not without gastrointestinal side effects like nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and constipation. These symptoms are related to how the drugs work to slow the gastrointestinal tract. Other more severe, but rare, side effects include pancreatitis and irreversible gastroparesis, or inflammation of the pancreas and stomach paralysis.

These drugs can also lead to a loss of healthy lean muscle mass in addition to fat, particularly in the absence of exercise. Significant weight gain after stopping the drugs raises further questions about long-term effects and whether it's possible to transition back to using only lifestyle measures to manage weight.

Despite our greatest aspirations for quick fixes, it's very possible that a healthy lifestyle remains the most important way to manage metabolic disease and overall health. This includes regular exercise, stress management, sleep, getting outdoors and a balanced diet.

For the majority of the population who don't yet have obesity or diabetes, restarting the gut's built-in appetite and metabolism control by reintroducing whole foods and awaking the gut microbiome may be the best approach to promote healthy metabolism.

Adding minimally processed foods back to your diet, and specifically those replete in fiber and polyphenols like flavonoids and carotenoids, can play an important and complementary role to help address the epidemic of obesity and metabolic disease at one of its deepest roots. (AP)

## Breakthrough in cardiac assessment

## AI-driven CPS promises early detection and effective therapy guidance for heart failure

LOS ANGELES, Jan 17, (Agencies): Non-invasive cardiac assessment company Sensydia has announced that it has completed its 50-subject development study at the University of Minnesota (UMN). This study was conducted at UMN to collect data for its innovative AI-powered, non-invasive Cardiac Performance System (CPS) that uses heart sound analysis to enable earlier detection and more effective therapy guidance for patients suffering from heart failure and pulmonary hypertension.

Sensydia is developing the CPS platform, which uses ultra-sensitive biosensors to provide clinicians with rapid, non-invasive measurement of ejection fraction, cardiac output, pulmonary artery pressure, and pulmonary capillary wedge pressure in a handheld device.

Knowledge of these parameters is critical when caring for individuals with heart failure and pulmonary hypertension. To obtain these measurements today, patients must undergo echocardiography and invasive right heart catheterization, which are resource intensive, restricted to medical facilities, and only provide snapshot data. In contrast, CPS measurements are fast, safe, and can be repeated as frequently as indicated, and can be performed essentially anywhere with minimal training.

"This is Sensydia's fifth successful study, and we will continue to collect data across leading cardiac care institutions to improve the performance and utility of the artificial intelligence algorithms that power our breakthrough CPS platform," said Anthony Arnold, President and CEO of Sensydia. "We're working to overcome today's barriers in acquiring vital hemodynamic measures for monitoring and managing cardiac patients, and we appreciate the participation of cardiologists and staff at University of Minnesota in working toward this goal."

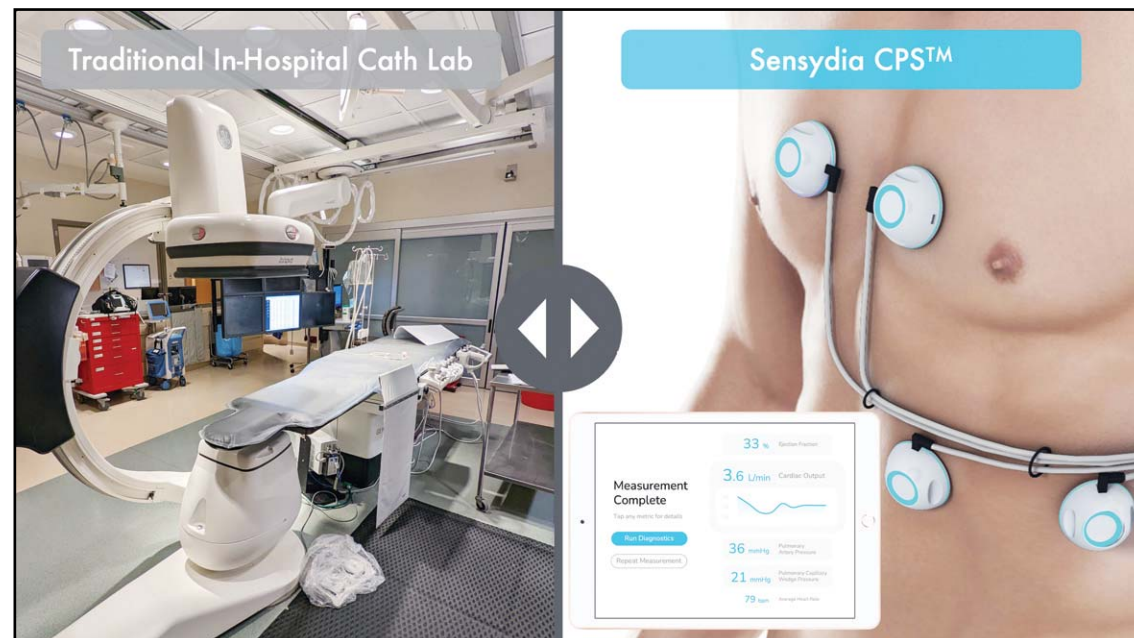
"The CPS platform shows promise as a non-invasive alternative to routine echocardiography and right-heart catheterization. It has the potential to positively impact the way patients with heart failure are monitored, managed, and ultimately to improve clinical outcomes," said Tamas Alexy, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine and Principal Investigator, UMN Medical School.

**Hypertension**  
"These measurements are essential in the diagnosis and ongoing management of patients with heart failure as well as pulmonary hypertension. We are pleased to help evaluate Sensydia's platform utilizing acoustic sensing technology and advanced AI algorithms, reducing the need for repeat echocardiograms and invasive hemodynamic assessments."

Sensydia previously conducted a study at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center which contributed to the FDA clearance for its ejection fraction algorithm, a study at the OHSU Knight Cardiovascular Institute for its cardiac output algorithm, and two studies at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center for its pulmonary pressure algorithm and general clinical utility.

In January 2022, Sensydia announced that CPS was granted Breakthrough Device Designation by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Sensydia plans to use data from this 50-subject study to develop the CPS pulmonary pressure algorithms.

The achievement of this 50-subject milestone comes at a time when Sensydia is actively executing Phase I of its new NIH award. With its CPS device, Sensydia aims to make non-invasive, fast, and safe cardiac assessment broadly available to improve the life of those living with heart failure and pulmonary hypertension.



New Cardiac Performance System (CPS) is designed for fast, safe, and non-invasive cardiac performance assessment that can be performed almost anywhere, avoiding the need to visit a catheterization lab. (AP)

## Real-time MRI imaging

## Tech boosts tumor treatment accuracy

DRESDEN, Germany, Jan. 17, (Agencies): ASG Superconductors' (ASG) MgB2 superconducting technology - already in use for energy and medical applications such as the world's only truly open MROpenEVO magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) system - is at the heart of the worldwide innovation presented recently in Dresden in the field of proton therapy and cancer treatment using real-time MRI imaging.

In fact, MRI offers the advantage over conventional imaging modalities of being able to visualise tumours with unsurpassed soft tissue image contrast. This makes it possible to better delineate the tumour from the surrounding healthy tissue and to more precisely define the volume to be irradiated.

In addition, MRI guidance is able to map changes in the shape and size of the volume to be irradiated that occurs between successive treatment sessions, allowing the application of radiation to be adjusted individually and immediately. One of the key points of this scientific and technological breakthrough, which will have an impact on cancer treatment, is precisely the real-time MRI, which makes it possible to visualise the movement of the tumour during an irradiation session and to synchronise

it with the application of radiation.

With the prototype presented today in Germany at Oncoray - the National Centre for Radiation Research in Oncology, it will in fact be possible, for the first time in the world, to study the extent to which the accuracy of proton therapy can be improved with the guidance of real-time MRI for the whole body. Head of the research group 'Experimental MR-integrated Proton Therapy' Prof. Aswin Hoffmann, with whom ASG engineers have been collaborating on the development of the new system over the years, said:

## Prototype

"With this new prototype of integrated whole-body MRI, it is possible to visualise moving tumours with high-contrast images in real time.

The goal of our work is to develop a technique to irradiate moving tumours only when they are in the right position to be hit by the proton beam. The MRI device, which can be rotated around the patient, offers the possibility of using innovative types of positioning of the patient to be treated with proton therapy in both recumbent and upright positions".

The prototype, based on the ASG technology already used for the MROpenEVO system, the only MRI in the world with a completely open design

and MgB2 cryogen-free superconducting technology, will be used to demonstrate through scientific studies the added value of this new treatment modality for tumours in the chest, abdomen and pelvis. The development and installation as well as commissioning were made possible thanks to the close collaboration with international technological and industrial partners such as ASG Superconductors, which, besides being the manufacturer of the MRI device used as a base, holds historical expertise in the development, design and manufacture of superconducting MRI magnets from 0.5T up to Ultra High Field 11.7T, while the company Magnetix Oncology Solutions, Edmonton/Canada, designed the rotating technology part.

Marco Nassi, CEO - ASG Superconductors declared "It is very challenging to contribute to such an innovative technical and scientific project in the proton therapy sector in close collaboration with highly prestigious hospitals, partners, and universities. We are, even more so, very proud that our technologies and skills in terms of MgB2 superconducting material, magnets and MRI systems can provide a substantial contribution in making tumour treatments more effective in the near future".

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# George's 38 pts lead Clippers past Thunder



Denver Nuggets' Nikola Jokic (center), goes up for a shot against Philadelphia 76ers' Nicolas Batum (left), and Joel Embiid during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Jan 16, 2024, in Philadelphia. (AP)

## Trio in Copa del Rey quarters

# Sevilla, Athletic Bilbao and Mallorca advance

MADRID, Jan 17, (AP) — Sevilla left behind its Spanish league struggles on Tuesday, defeating Getafe 3-1 to reach the quarterfinals of the Copa del Rey.

Athletic Bilbao also advanced, beating Alaves 2-0 to make it to the last-eight for the fifth straight season.

Sergio Ramos scored once and Isaac Romero twice to give Sevilla the

## SOCCER

road victory and put the southern Spanish club in the quarterfinals for the second consecutive year. Sevilla will try to make it



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior (left), passes through Barcelona's goalkeeper Inaki Pena during the Spanish Super Cup final soccer match between Real Madrid and Barcelona at Al-Awwal Park Stadium in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

to last-four for the first time since 2021.

Sevilla won its last four Copa matches but has only

one victory in its last 14 league games. The team

coached by Quique Sánchez Flores has 16 points from 20 league matches and sits only one point outside the relegation zone.

Ramos opened the scoring with a header in the eighth minute, but he failed to fully clear a cross that led to Jaime Mata's equalizer from inside the area in the 23rd. Romero put Sevilla ahead again in the 48th and sealed the victory in the 55th.

Sevilla was eliminated by eventual runner-up Osasuna in extra time in last year's quarterfinals. It lost to Barcelona in the semifinals in 2021.

Getafe, which is 10th in the Spanish league, was trying to reach the Copa quarterfinals for the first time since 2019. It hadn't advanced past the third round since that season.

Sevilla's next match is at Spanish league leader Girona on Sunday, while Getafe visits Osasuna.

Athletic defeated Alaves at home with striker Asier Villalibre scoring goals in the 28th and 60th minutes.

Athletic, sitting third in the Spanish league standings, reached the Copa semifinals the last two seasons, and was runner-up both in 2020 and 2021.

Alaves, 13th in the league, was trying to make it to the Copa's last-eight for the first time since 2018.

Also Tuesday, Mallorca defeated second-division club Tenerife 1-0 in extra time with a goal by Canada striker Cyle Larin in the 120th minute, reaching the quarterfinals for the second time in three seasons. Tenerife was playing in the round of 16 for the first time since 2020.

In matches between first-division clubs on Wednesday, Girona will host Rayo Vallecano, Real Sociedad will visit Osasuna and Valencia will welcome Celta Vigo.

Defending champion Real Madrid will visit rival Atletico Madrid on Thursday, while Barcelona will visit third-division club Unionistas.

## Suns end with 23-4 run, beat Kings

LOS ANGELES, Jan 17, (AP) — Paul George scored 18 of his season-high 38 points in the fourth quarter and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 128-117 on Tuesday night for their ninth win in 11 games.

Kawhi Leonard and James Harden added 16 points apiece to complete a big day for the franchise. Earlier, Commissioner Adam Silver announced the 2026 All-Star Game will be held at the Clippers' under-construction arena in Inglewood, where they begin play next season.

Jalen Williams scored 25 points and Lu Dort and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander each added 19 points for the Thunder, the West's No. 2 team that has dropped two in a row after winning nine of 12 coming into Los Angeles.

"We gave ourselves every chance to win that game and they outplayed us in the final 3 1/2 minutes," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "That's how you learn about ourselves. It's exciting to know that we're drawing teams' best punches out of them."

After trailing by 13 points in the third, the Thunder stormed back to lead 115-114 on a 3-pointer by Williams.

That's when George took over.

He scored 11 of the Clippers' final 14 points for an emphatic end to what started out as a back-and-forth game early in the fourth. He hit two 3-pointers and ended the surge with a steal and one-handed dunk.

## BASKETBALL

"Once I see the ball going in, I feel confident and ultra-aggressive," George said. "Throughout my career, it takes a couple (shots) to kind of ease into the game."

George hit six 3-pointers, grabbed seven rebounds and had five assists to go with three steals and no turnovers.

"Him taking over that fourth and just putting his will on the game gets us over that hump," Leonard said. "He made shots and he made defensive plays as well."

The Thunder closed to 79-77 in the third on a 9-0 run that began and ended with 3-pointers by Isaiah Joe.

The Clippers answered with a 20-12 run capped by consecutive 3-pointers by Daniel Theis and Norman Powell to lead 99-89 going into fourth.

"We responded well," Clippers coach Tyrone Lue said. "To hold onto the lead and make our own run says a lot about our team."

Clippers center Ivica Zubac missed his second straight game with a right calf strain and will be re-evaluated in a month. Mason Plumlee had 14 points in his first start of the season in Zubac's place.

## Suns 119, Kings 117

In Phoenix, Kevin Durant made two free throws with 1.8 seconds remaining and the Phoenix Suns staged a furious comeback to beat the Sacramento Kings 119-117 on Tuesday night.

Grayson Allen tied a franchise record with nine 3-pointers and scored 29 points for the Suns, who trailed 113-96 before closing the game with a 23-4 run. Durant finished with 27 points, then tried to explain how the Suns rallied.

"I have no clue," Durant said. "I usually know how the game is flowing, but I felt like this was a blur. Everything happened so fast. I guess we were all in a zone and locked in."

"They are a team that likes to play a free-flowing movement offense, so when you can disrupt that they turn into a different team. We pressured (Domantas) Sabonis a little bit more. We switched so many screens and made them play 1-on-1."

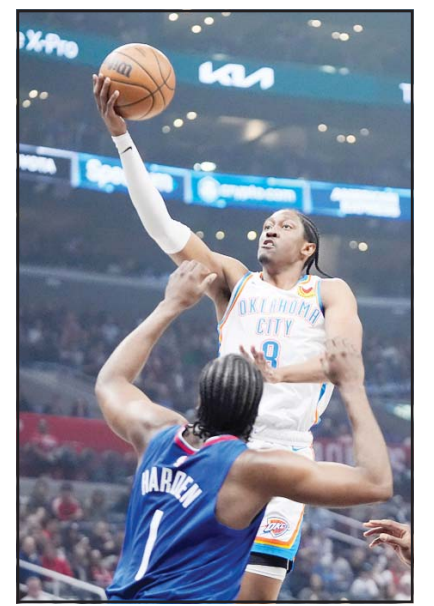
Devin Booker had 16 points and 11 assists, Bradley Beal scored 13 points and Jusuf Nurkic had 10 points and 15 rebounds for Phoenix.

The Kings led by 22 points with 8:22 to play, but Durant sparked a comeback with a pair of 3-pointers in the fourth quarter. Eric Gordon later made consecutive 3-pointers to tie it at 115. He scored 13 points off the bench.

"We stayed in it. We stayed in the fight mentally," Suns coach Frank Vogel said. "There were a lot of moments where our guys were struggling and frustrated, and we were getting our butts kicked."

"We have seen firsthand that in the modern NBA teams are never out of a game. We looked at the small lineup. We were going five 3-point shooters. We finally got Eric in there and he hit some big 3s. All of those guys really stepped up."

Durant's free throws with 30 seconds left gave the Suns a 117-115 lead, their first since it was 3-2. De'Aaron Fox, who led all



Oklahoma City Thunder forward Jalen Williams (top), shoots as Los Angeles Clippers guard James Harden defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Jan 16, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

scorers with 33 points, tied it with a jumper with 19 seconds to go. But he then fouled Durant, who was attempting a long jumper. After his free throws, a last-second shot by the Kings was long.

Sabonis recorded his 11th triple-double of the season with 21 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists. It was his 23rd consecutive game with double figures in at least two of the columns and his league-high 36th double-double of the season.

"It's a tough way to lose. Give them credit," Kings coach Mike Brown said. "We played a good 42 minutes. The last six minutes, we took some tough shots at the rim. We couldn't score at the rim instead of just continuing to move the ball and move bodies, everything was really stagnant, we turned the ball over."

"We had no pace in the halfcourt, we were holding the ball a lot. We have to figure it out. Hopefully it's something we can learn from."

Keegan Murray scored 18 points, Sasha Vezenkov had 14 and Malik Monk finished with 13 points and eight assists for Sacramento, which has lost three in a row.

## 76ers 126, Nuggets 121

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid palmed Nikola Jokic's head and whispered into his ear with the highest of praise one MVP could tell another in the aftermath of an epic showdown.

Embiid told Jokic that his counterpart was "the best player in the league."

With good reason: Jokic does have an NBA Finals MVP and a championship ring. Embiid is doing his best to chase him down.

Embiid had 41 points and 10 assists to lead the Philadelphia 76ers past Jokic and the Denver Nuggets 126-121 on Tuesday night in a battle of the last two NBA MVPs.

Jokic held up his end of a heavyweight showdown with 25 points and 19 rebounds, including 11 offensive boards.

"It's funny, because Twitter, we have a war going on between Philly fans and Denver fans," Embiid said. "It's funny because both of us are just like, who cares? We want to play basketball and win some games. But he deserves (the praise). Until you knock him down, that's the best in the league. He's the finals MVP. Until you take that away, he can claim that."

"But then again, I also believe in myself." Tyrese Maxey scored 25 points and Tobias Harris had 24 for the Sixers.

Embiid got the better of Jokic late, buoyed by a three-point play that stretched the Sixers' lead. Embiid was fouled on a bucket and crotch-chopped in celebration toward the fans. He made the free throw for a 118-113 lead. Embiid followed with a 3-pointer for an eight-point lead and showed the Sixers are as good as any team when he's healthy -- even against the NBA champs.

Embiid gave the Sixers a scare when he fouled Michael Porter Jr. on a 3-point attempt with 26.6 seconds left. Porter hit the three free throws that pulled the Nuggets within four. Time simply ran out on a comeback.

Anyone care for a rematch in June? "I'm not playing against him, I'm playing against Philadelphia," Jokic said. "It was a good matchup."

Jokic won two straight NBA MVP awards and was beat out last season by Embiid for the honor. Embiid, a two-time defending scoring champ, again leads the league in scoring. Jokic averaged 25.5 points and had Denver rolling with one of the best records in the NBA.

Embiid had his 18th straight 30-point game, tying Hall of Famer Elgin Baylor for the sixth-longest streak in NBA history.

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**01 February 2024 - 04.00 PM Kuwait Time**



## SPORTS

## Djokovic edges Popyrin; Jabeur, Wozniacki out



The Kuwaiti fencers pose with their coaches.

KUNA photo

Saeed undergoes a successful surgery

## Al-Qadisiya team leader Al-Mutawa joins Bahrain camp

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: Badr Al-Mutawa, the team leader of Al-Qadisiya, has joined the "Yellow" delegation at its training camp in Bahrain. Al-Mutawa initially missed the start of the camp due to professional commitments with his employer.

## SOCCER

Dr. Muhammad Al-Mishaan, the coach of Al-Qadisiya, disclosed that the team is currently facing deficiencies in certain positions, necessitating reinforcement during this period. Speaking from the sidelines of the team's camp in Bahrain, Al-Mishaan stated, "We are evaluating potential additions to strengthen our ranks. To be competitive, certain positions in the team need reinforcement."

Highlighting the impact of imbalances on overall performance, Al-Mishaan emphasized the need for improvement in the attacking midfield position. He expressed the team's proactive approach to addressing these



Al-Mashaan speaks to the players (unseen) before training begins.

deficiencies by seeking suitable additions.

Al-Mishaan accepted the coaching role at Al-Qadisiya due to his confidence in the team's elements and trust in the administrative staff. He expressed hope for success in his mission with "Al-Asfar," aiming to lead the team to achieve optimal results.

Al-Qadisiya team manager Abdullah Al-Haqqaan praised the players' commitment to daily training and

adherence to the instructions of the technical and administrative staff. He highlighted that the camp's program includes three friendly matches, anticipating the attainment of desired benefits.

In a related development, Al-Qadisiya player Dhari Saeed underwent a successful "cartilage cleaning" surgery on his knee in a private hospital. Dhari, who has been sidelined since the beginning of the current season due to injury, is on the path to recovery.

## Al-Mustafa heads the referees' committee

## Atyab Al-Marshoud Show Jumping Championship kicks off

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The tenth edition of the "Atyab Al-Marshoud" Show Jumping Championship, an annual event organized by Walid Al-Marshoud, is set to kick off today at three o'clock in the afternoon at the Kuwait Equestrian Center in the Subhan area. The competition will run until Saturday, offering a platform for international riders in this two-star category tournament.

Comprising a total of 9 rounds, the championship includes qualifying rounds leading up to the final of the seventh group. Kuwaiti International Wisdom Nadar Al-Mustafa heads the referees' committee, which also includes Abdulaziz Al-Mushaiti, Nada Al-Awadi, and Walid Al-Jassem. Sharon Al-Qaoud leads the referees for the Kuwaiti International Arena, with Bahraini referees Muhammad Dadullah and Dr. Yahya Al-Hadban, Ibtisam Al-Aroui, Italian Andrea Colombo, the course designer, and Lebanese international referee Karim Badaro, representing the International Equestrian Federation.

## EQUESTRIAN

Walid Sulaiman Al-Marshoud, Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee and Director of the Tournament, expressed that the championship is an annual endeavor aimed at providing a distinguished competitive atmosphere for both male and female riders.

Today's events will feature runs at heights of 120, 130, and 140 cm, concluding tomorrow at two o'clock in the afternoon with runs of 120, 135, and 140 cm. The spotlight will be on Saturday, commencing at one o'clock in the afternoon, with runs at heights of 125 and 135 cm, culminating in the grand prize event at a height of 145 cm.

Al-Hikma International Kuwaiti Nadar Al-Mustafa, the head of the tournament's arbitration committee, emphasized the tournament's consistent success over the years and anticipates strong competition in the current edition for the coveted title. She extended her gratitude to the Al-Marshoud family for their unwavering support, which has evolved from organizing local tournaments to now hosting international events with a solid reputation in the region.



Saud Al Marshoud gear up for the show jumping championship.

## Kuwait 'conclude' training in Cairo ahead of friendly match vs Uganda

CAIRO, Jan 17: The Kuwait is set to conclude its training session this evening at the Air Defense Stadium in Cairo, marking the culmination of its ongoing camp in Egypt.

Kuwait is gearing up to face Uganda in a friendly match scheduled for tomorrow at Cairo International Stadium. The team previously played against the Libyan national team last Friday, experiencing a 1-3 loss.

Under the guidance of Portuguese

coach Rui Pinto, the technical staff of the Kuwait is focused on elevating the level of preparedness and fostering cohesion among all players. These efforts are in preparation for the upcoming challenges, particularly the two matches against Qatar in March. These matches are crucial as part of the joint Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup finals in the United States of America, Mexico, and Canada, as well as the 2027 Asia Cup in Saudi Arabia.



The Kuwaiti coach issues instructions to the players.

## Kuwait 'clinch' six medals in fencing

MANAMA, Jan 16, (KUNA): The fencing squad from Kuwait clinched six medals at the Arab Fencing tournament, which commenced on Tuesday and will run until February 25th.

## FENCING

Securing two gold medals, the team triumphed in both the fluorescent weapon and Epee weapon divisions. Additionally, they earned two silver medals in the fluorescent weapon category and secured a bronze medal in the Sabre weapon category.

## Best of the Rest

**Romero wins second stage:** Isaac del Toro Romero of Mexico claimed his first professional win Wednesday when he took out the second stage of the Tour Down Under and with it first place on general classification.

The 20-year-old del Toro last year won the Tour dell'Avenir, the amateur version of the Tour de France. He is competing in his first World Tour event for UAE Team Emirates.

Del Toro made an audacious lone break with just over a kilometer to go, coming from well back in the bunch, sweeping past the leaders and showing power to build a lead a more than 100 meters.

He held on comfortably to win the 141.6 kilometer (88 mile) stage from Norwood to Lobethal from New Zealand's Corbin Strong and Briton Stephen Williams, both from Israel Premier Tech.

"It's crazy," del Toro said. "Last year was pretty crazy but this one has started very well."

After two of six stages, Del Toro leads the overall classification by two seconds from Strong with Biniam Girmay of Eritrea and Williams a further five seconds back. (AP)

**Juventus beat Sassuolo:** Dušan Vlahović scored twice and Juventus beat Sassuolo 3-0 on Tuesday to move back within two points of Serie A leader Inter Milan.

With Inter preparing to play the Italian Super Cup in Saudi Arabia, Juventus is poised to surge into the lead with two more matches before the Nerazzurri play in the league again.

Vlahović's first goal was a curving shot into the top corner from beyond the area. His second was even more impressive, as the Serbia center forward curled a long free kick in off the underside of the crossbar.

Substitute Federico Chiesa added another in the 89th. (AP)

**Marseille sign Garcia:** Marseille has signed defender Ulisses Garcia from Swiss team Young Boys after the left-back completed his medical, the French club said Tuesday.

Marseille has had limited left-back options all season and is short-handed after seven of its players were called up for the Africa Cup of Nations.

The 28-year-old Garcia is the second player recruited by the nine-time French champions since the opening of the transfer window, following the arrival of defensive midfielder Jean Onana on loan from Turkish team Besiktas.

Marseille hoped to challenge for a Champions League spot this season but is struggling and lags 15 points behind leader Paris Saint-Germain.

Financial details of Garcia's transfer were not disclosed. (AP)

## Gauff into Australian Open 3rd round

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 17 (AP): Defending champion Novak Djokovic challenged a heckler to "say that to my face" during the fourth set of a testy second-round win Wednesday over Alexei Popyrin at the Australian Open.

Before the start of the fifth game of the fourth set, Djokovic walked back behind the baseline and engaged with a spectator, gesturing to him to come down and "say that to my face."

That match had been going for almost three hours by then, and Djokovic had dropped the second set and had to save set points in the third.

After the outburst, he won three straight games to take the match away from the Aussie player en route to a 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (4) 6-3 victory.

After clinching the match on a Popyrin error, he turned around to the crowd again and yelled, pumping his fist to celebrate.

## TENNIS

Djokovic has been dealing with a sore wrist and said after his opening match - a four-hour, four-set win over 18-year-old qualifier Dino Prizmic - that he hasn't been feeling well.

He credited Popyrin with bringing out a gameplan to unsettle him.

"I haven't been playing my best, but still trying to find form," the 36-year-old Djokovic said. "Particularly in the early rounds, you play players that have nothing to lose. They come out on center court to play their best tennis."

"Hopefully I'll be able to build this as the tournament progresses."

Stefanos Tsitsipas, who lost the final here last year to Djokovic, also had a tough time against an Aussie on an adjacent court in the night session.

Tsitsipas had match points in the fourth set and then had to save four set points to force a tiebreaker, which he clinched in a 4-6, 7-6 (6), 6-2, 7-6 (4).

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and U.S. Open winner Coco Gauff avoided the early Day 4 upsets in the women's draw to advance to the third round, along with 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva.

Three-time major finalist Ons Jabeur lost 6-0, 6-2 in 54 minutes to Andreeva in Wednesday's opening match on Rod Laver Arena and then 2018 champion Caroline Wozniacki also lost to a young Russian on the No. 3 show court.

Two other 16-year-old players lost their center court matches to highly-ranked players: No. 10 Beatriz Haddad Maia accounted for Alina Korneeva 6-1, 6-2 and Sabalenka overpowered Brenda Fruhvirtova 6-3, 6-2 to open the night session.

Gauff extended her winning streak to nine matches at Grand Slams with a 7-6 (2), 6-2 win over fellow American Caroline Dolehide.

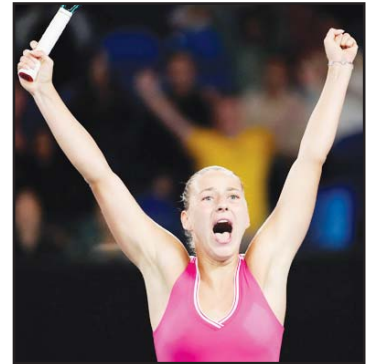
Dolehide served for the opening set at 6-5 before U.S. Open champion Gauff took control in the tiebreaker.

"It was really hard," Gauff said. "If you give her something short, she's going to punish you for it, so if I could go back and do something I'd change that."

Gauff will next play another American, Alycia Parks, who reached the third round of a Grand Slam singles tournament for the first time with a 7-5, 6-4 win over 32nd-ranked Leylah



Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic plays a backhand return to Frances Tiafoe of the U.S. during their second round match at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia. (AP)



Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine celebrates after defeating Elise Mertens of Belgium in their second round match at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Fernandez.

Jabeur, the runner-up at Wimbledon in each of the past two years, made 24 unforced errors against Andreeva.

"I was really nervous before the match because I'm really inspired by Ons and the way she plays," said Andreeva, who lost in the final of the junior event here last year. "Before I started on the WTA Tour, I always watched her matches and was always so inspired. Now I had the chance to play against her."

It is the second successive year that Jabeur has lost in the second round in Melbourne.

Wozniacki led by a set and a break before losing 1-6, 6-4, 6-1 to 20-year-old Maria Timofeeva, who is making her main draw Grand Slam singles debut.

Wozniacki, who had two children before returning to the WTA Tour last year after 3 1/2 years away, started out on top before Timofeeva turned the match around with some devastating hitting, including 40 winners.

"I'm really a bit speechless now," Timofeeva said. "It was an honor to play here against Caroline. I was going into the match without any expectations. I enjoyed every second of it."

Wozniacki said the match "slid out of my hands . . . it's definitely disappointing."

Jabeur and Wozniacki played their matches under the roof, on Rod Laver Arena and John Cain Arena, respectively, with rain causing the start of matches on the outside courts to be delayed for three hours. It cleared up and the backlog of matches was limited.

Amanda Anisimova continued her comeback from a seven-month mental health break with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Nadia Podoroska. She'll next play Paula Badosa, a 6-2, 6-3 winner over Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.



Salmiya new coach Ante Misha shakes hands with the players before training.

## Misha pledges best efforts to 'propel' Al-Salmiya to victory

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17: The newly appointed Croatian coach of Al-Salmiya, Ante Misha, expressed his commitment to giving his best efforts to lead "Al-Samaya to optimal results. Misha, who recently assumed the coaching role, succeeding Mohammed Al-Mashaan, arrived in Kuwait two days ago and conducted his first training session with the team. He emphasized his familiarity with the squad and the Kuwaiti football scene, particularly the three prominent teams: Al-Kuwait, Al-Arabi, and Al-Qadisiya.

During a media statement, Misha conveyed his happiness at returning to work in Kuwait, emphasizing his dedication to collaborating with the Salmiya players to achieve positive

outcomes, starting with the upcoming Amir Cup matches. Al-Salmiya is scheduled to face Khaitan in the preliminary round on January 28.

## SOCCER

While refraining from making grand promises at this early stage, Misha expressed his hopes for success in both league and Amir Cup matches. He acknowledged the team's recent exit from the Crown Prince Cup and emphasized his focus on securing victories moving forward.

Regarding speculations about negotiations with Al-Qadisiya or any other team, Misha declined to comment, clarifying that his presence in Kuwait is solely in his capacity as the coach of Al-Salmiya.





A Kuwaiti player makes a goal attempt during Kuwait and Qatar group match.

# Sports

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## Kuwait continue strong start at Asian Shooting Championship

Sheikh Salman hails success



Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah with other dignitaries pose with winners after the awarding ceremony.

KUNA photos

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 17:** The Kuwaiti shooting team has continued its medal-winning streak in the ongoing Asian Shooting Championship at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Olympic Fields Complex, featuring the participation of 26 countries.

The competition, set to conclude on January 22nd, witnessed the team securing a bronze medal in the mixed doubles shooting competition (trap) with shooters Nasser Al-Muqallid and Shahad Al-Hawal, adding to their tally of three medals.

The gold medal in the competition went to the Kazakhstan team represented by Alashkir Alyaspeev and Maria Dimitrenko, while the Iranian duo of Muhammad Peryanvand and Marzieh Brosh clinched the silver.

### SHOOTING

The President of the Asian Shooting Confederation, Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, highlighted the success of the tournament, noting the unprecedented participation of 26 Asian countries. He praised the elevated standards in trap shooting competitions, signaling the growing interest of Asian nations in the sport. Anticipation is high for equally intense skeet competitions.

Sheikh Salman commended the professional organization led by Engineer Duajj Al-Otaibi and the national cadres of the Kuwait Shooting Federation. He credited the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Shooting Ranges Complex, with its international specifications, for contributing significantly to the tournament's success and wide continental viewership.

Acknowledging Kuwait's political leadership's unwavering support, Sheikh Salman thanked His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for his patronage and backing of archery, emphasizing the country's ma-



China's Xu Xin (right), and Lebanon's Hasan Spour vie for the ball during the Asian Cup Group A soccer match between China and Lebanon at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

Lebanon and China progress in the balance after draw

## Saudi Arabia edge Oman with stoppage-time winner

DOHA, Qatar, Jan 17. (AP): Roberto Mancini is no stranger to a dramatic finish.

He was, after all, manager of Manchester City when Sergio Aguero scored his famous stoppage-time winner to seal the Premier League title in 2012. So as Ali Al Bulayhi scored in the sixth minute of added time and Saudi Arabia came back to beat Oman 2-1 in the Asian Cup, it was straight out of Mancini's playbook.

"It is different. It is a different tournament, different team, different players," the Saudi Arabia coach said afterward.

Maybe so, but the celebrations it sparked inside the Khalifa International Stadium underlined what it meant to his players and the fans - even if it was only his team's opening game in Group F.

"We have to improve, but we did very well."

### SOCCER

Al Bulayhi's header sparked confusion and chaos as it was first ruled out for offside and then given after a VAR review.

To add to the drama, Oman initially thought the offside call had been upheld and tried to restart the game with a free kick. Then when referee Shaun Evans pointed to the center spot, it sparked jubilation among the Saudi players and substitutes in front of fans as it appeared they believed the full-time whistle had blown, causing an extended delay before the match could resume.

Mancini might have played it cool afterward, but he looked increasingly heated as his team failed to find an equalizer to Salaah Al Yahyaici's 14th-minute penalty.

Oman withstood sustained pressure from three-time champion Saudi Arabia until Abdulrahman Ghareeb scored three minutes after coming on as a second-half substitute.

His brilliant individual goal in the 78th minute looked to have salvaged a point.

After back-to-back draws at the start of the Asian Cup, China likely needs at least a point against host and defending champion Qatar to have a chance of advancing to the knockout stage.

A 0-0 draw with Lebanon on left both nations' hopes of reaching the round of 16 in the balance.

While China is second in Group A on two points, it has the daunting task of facing Qatar in its final game, knowing defeat could see it overtaken by Lebanon or Tajikistan.

"We know that we depend on ourselves and that is something that every team would like to be in that position before the last game," China coach Aleksandar Jankovic said. "So we



Players challenge for the ball during Al-Shabab and Zamalek friendly match.

## Zamalek dominate Al-Shabab

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

CAIRO, Jan 17: In a recent friendly match held at Zamalek Stadium, Zamalek defeated Al-Shabab of Kuwait with an impressive four-goal lead. The match took place as part of a training camp organized by Al-Shabab in Cairo, aiming to prepare for the upcoming sports season.

During the friendly encounter, Zamalek's goals were netted by Mahmoud Abdel Razek "Shikabala," Mohamed El-Sayed, Mustafa Shalaby, and Sayed Abdullah. Sayed Abdullah sealed the victory for Al-Shabab with the fourth goal in the 76th minute, delivering a shot from inside the penalty area. The match concluded with Zamalek emerging victorious, securing a 4-0 win with no response from Al-Shabab.

Al-Shabab is utilizing the training camp to gear up for the resumption of the sports season. Their upcoming chal-

enge is against Al-Fahaheel on January 27 in the preliminary round of the Amir Cup Championship. Additionally, Al-Shabab aims to strengthen its standing in the Zain Premier League Championship, currently holding the eighth position with 14 points, and is keen to avoid relegation.

Motamed Gamal, the technical director, shared insights on the friendly match on Zamalek's official website, stating,

### SOCCER

"The friendly experience against the Kuwaiti team has proven to be technically beneficial. The technical staff is reassured about the players' levels, particularly those returning from injury."

As part of their preparations, Al-Shabab is set to engage in more friendly matches during the remaining days of the training camp before returning to their home country next Wednesday.

of halftime.

Wu Lei thought he'd broken the deadlock for China in the 65th minute, but his close-range range shot was hooked off the line.

China, a quarterfinalist in each of the last two Asian Cups, went into this game knowing its chances of advancing were in jeopardy after a 0-0 draw with Tajikistan in its opening match.

It likely needs at least a point against Qatar to have a chance of advancing as runner-up or one of the best third-placed teams.

China came close to scoring in the first half when Lebanon goalkeeper Mostafa Matar twice denied Zhang Yuning in one threatening attack.

Substitute Lin Liangming should have been more clinical late in the match, but headed wide when unmarked right in front of goal.

Saudi Arabia take on New Zealand

## Kuwait and Bahrain renew rivalry at Asian Handball Championship

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MANAMA, Jan 17: Kuwait handball team is gearing up for a formi-

dable match against Bahrain in the second group of the "main" second round of the 21st Asian Championship - the "2025 World Cup Qualifiers" currently underway in Manama at 7:00 pm. The tournament is set to conclude on the 25th of this month.

In the same round, the UAE faces off against Qatar, Japan competes with Iran, and Iraq takes on Korea. Simultaneously, as part of the consolation rounds, India clashes with China, Saudi Arabia engages with New Zealand, Kazakhstan contends with Oman, and Hong Kong meets Chinese Taipei.

Having secured a spot in the main round by claiming second place in the preliminary round's first group, Kuwait accumulated four points from a victory over Oman and China Taipei, despite a loss to Qatar, which topped the group and advanced alongside Kuwait.

Confrontations between Kuwait and Bahrain are renowned for their intensity in the Arabian Gulf and Asia. Both teams possess the potential for victory, with Bahrain holding recent dominance in direct encounters.

### HANDBALL

Kuwait aims to turn the tide against Bahrain and achieve a positive result before their upcoming match against Korea. The goal is to secure a spot in the semi-finals and obtain one of the four qualification cards for the 2025 World Cup.

In a related note, Shabib Al-Hajri, Vice President of the Handball Federation, commended the level exhibited by Kuwait in the tournament so far. He stated, "We have players who exhibit confidence and responsibility, despite the challenging nature of the task and the relative inexperience of most players in international and Asian tournaments."

Regarding today's match, Al-Hajri emphasized the strength of the group, comprising the best teams in the yellow continent. He pointed out the significant technical capabilities of South Korea, Bahrain, and Iraq, creating a fierce competition where predicting the group's champion becomes a challenging task.

## Hammers, Brentford 'ousted' from FA Cup

LONDON, Jan 17. (AP): Premier League teams West Ham and Brentford exited the FA Cup as fifth-tier Eastleigh's dream of hosting the mighty Manchester United in the fourth round was extinguished.

West Ham lost 1-0 at second-tier Bristol City in one of five third-round replays, with the only goal coming in the third minute following a defensive mistake from Konstantinos Mavropanos. The visitors also had Said Benrahma sent off early in the second half for kicking out at an opponent.

Brentford was beaten 3-2 after extra time by Wolverhampton in an all-Premier League matchup at Molineux. Brazil striker Matheus Cunha scored the clinching goal from the penalty spot in first-half stoppage time in extra time, with the match finishing 2-2 in regulation.

### SOCCER

Wolves will play local rival West Bromwich Albion next.

Luton was the other top-flight team in action and had to come from behind to win 2-1 at third-tier Bolton. Tahith Chong and Chiedozie Ogbene scored for Luton.

Eastleigh, which is in 11th place in the National League, was looking to set up a lucrative meeting with Man United and one of the most mismatched games in the recent history of the competition.

However, a 3-1 home loss to Newport County means it will be the fourth-tier club from Wales taking on Erik ten Hag's team on Jan. 28. Newport, which is in 17th place in League Two, lost to Tottenham in the fourth round in 2018 and Manchester City in the fifth round in 2019.