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First 'versary of Amir's leadership

Kuwait marks a year of Sheikh Meshal's reign of development and progress



HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: Kuwait marks the first anniversary of HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's leadership on Friday. Taking office on Dec 20, 2023 as Kuwait's 17th Amir, HH Sheikh Meshal pledged to prioritize national unity, sustainable development and social progress.

Over the past year, HH the Amir emphasized economic growth, infrastructure development, digitization, transparency and combating corruption. He

championed youth empowerment, women's rights and the integration of people with disabilities, while advocating social justice and equal opportunities.

In defense, HH the Amir focused on enhancing military readiness, cybersecurity and collaboration between military and civilian institutions. Regionally, he strengthened Gulf unity through official visits and hosting the GCC Summit, while advancing cooperation on Arab and international

issues, including Palestine.

HH the Amir inaugurated several key projects, including Sabah Al-Salem University City, and engaged with diverse community groups. Internationally, he fostered dialogue and partnerships, signing agreements with Turkey and hosting high-profile global leaders. HH the Amir's first year marks the beginning of a journey and development launched long ago by his predecessors. — KUNA (See Page 3)

Khaleeji Zain 26: Kuwait eyes glory on home turf

KUWAIT: Kuwait's national football team, the most successful in Gulf Cup history with 10 titles, aims to reclaim the championship they last won in 2010 at the Khaleeji Zain 26, hosted by Kuwait from December 21, 2024, to January 3, 2025. The team's dominance began in 1970, winning four consecutive titles until 1976. Kuwait has since secured victories in several editions, including the 20th Gulf Cup in 2010.

The team has a rich legacy, with players like Jassem Yaqoub, the tournament's all-time top scorer, and key contributions from coaches like Saleh Zakaria

and Luiz Felipe Scolari. The Kuwaiti team remains a symbol of excellence in Gulf football, embodying a rich legacy and the hope of rekindling its golden era, and the Gulf Cup remains a celebrated event, fostering unity and fierce competition across the Gulf region. Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi emphasized that Kuwait's hosting of Khaleeji Zain 26 reflects the brotherhood and camaraderie uniting Gulf youth in a competitive yet harmonious sporting environment.

— KUNA (See Page 16)



Our Pride and Strength

The first anniversary of His Highness the Amir
Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's
accession to power

zain

stc

رأي سديد ورؤية للتجديد

عام من العطاء على تولّي حضرة صاحب السمو أمير البلاد

الشيخ مشعل الأحمد الجابر الصباح

حفظه الله ورعاه مقاليد الحكم في دولة الكويت



Amir's first year leading Kuwait drives development and unity

Sheikh Meshal's directives set out a comprehensive roadmap for reform

KUWAIT: Kuwait is commemorating on Friday the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah assuming leadership of the country. This historic occasion marks the beginning of a new era and a shining chapter in the proud history of Kuwait's rulers.

The speech delivered by His Highness the Amir on December 20, 2023, outlined the guiding principles and vision for the future development and advancement of Kuwait. Since His Highness delivered this speech in front of the National Assembly, the country has witnessed steady progress in all fields, in line with the directives of HH the Amir, which set out a comprehensive roadmap for reform.

The speech followed His Highness the Amir's oath, taken on that day, in response to the government's request, as stipulated by Article 60 of the Constitution and Article 72 of the internal regulations of the National Assembly.

In his speech, His Highness the Amir pledged to God and the loyal people of Kuwait, as their representative, to be a dedicated citizen working for the welfare of the country and its people. He vowed to safeguard national unity, strive for the country's progress and prosperity, uphold the true religion, respect constitutional principles, and combat all forms of corruption.

His Highness the Amir added: "Our lives are defined by our deeds," emphasizing the country's continued leadership role in cooperation with both brotherly and friendly nations on various issues of mutual concern. He also affirmed Kuwait's commitment to maintaining its Gulf, regional, and international obligations. His Highness stressed the importance of "responsible follow-up, monitoring, and objective accountability within the framework of the constitution and law, to address neglect, shortcomings, and the mishandling of the country's and citizens' interests."

Sustainable development

Over the past twelve months, His Highness has issued directives across various sectors, including economic, developmental, political, diplomatic, security, social, and scientific fields. These directives are designed to strengthen the country's ability to face future challenges and achieve sustainable development, in line with the aspirations of the Kuwaiti people.

In terms of development, His Highness emphasized the need to accelerate the implementation of strategic projects, prioritize key initiatives, and address critical issues in infrastructure, healthcare, housing, and education. He also called for empowering local governorates, granting more authority to governors, and encouraging citizen involvement in future projects by soliciting their ideas and feedback.

Cabinet approves MoU with China to accelerate Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port

KUWAIT: To accelerate the construction of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, the Cabinet approved a draft decree on Wednesday related to the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Kuwait and China, outlining their cooperation to complete the project. The MoU specifies key aspects, including the identification of the responsible entities: Kuwait's Ministry of Public Works and China's Ministry of Transport.

Kuwait resumed talks with China in May to revive the ambitious port project, which had been stalled for nearly a decade. A Chinese delegation visited the construction site that month for detailed technical discussions, followed by directives from both countries' leadership to move the project forward. The revival of the project, which was about 50 percent completed before work stopped, is partly motivated by Iraq's plan for a \$17 billion road and rail network aimed at boosting regional trade—a project that involves Turkey, Qatar, and the UAE, with Kuwait initially sidelined.

The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port is one of Kuwait's largest and most ambitious development projects, designed to transform the country into a regional and global trade hub. The port will connect land and sea via multiple transportation modes, including highways and railways, positioning Kuwait as a key player in transit trade and regional logistics. The



KUWAIT: Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah salutes as he swears in before lawmakers as Kuwait's 17th Amir, at the National Assembly, on December 20, 2023 in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Additionally, His Highness stressed the importance of enhancing the role of the media in showcasing the government's achievements in executing development projects, ensuring that these projects align with the hopes and expectations of the people.

On the economic front, His Highness's directives focused on developing economic and investment sectors, enhancing Kuwait's business environment, and encouraging foreign investment. He emphasized the importance of national unity, adherence to the law, and maintaining Kuwait's identity while enhancing its international partnerships.

His Highness also stressed the need for continuous dialogue with the public, using feedback to improve services and implementing necessary reforms to ensure the efficient performance of government institutions. He directed those qualified and experienced leaders be appointed to key positions and called for greater transparency, the elimination of favoritism, and the promotion of digital transformation.

Bolstering research, security

Furthermore, His Highness called for greater attention to scientific research and the development of human resources, including efforts to empower youth, support women's rights, and integrate people with special needs into society by providing them with the necessary care, education, and em-

ployment opportunities.

His Highness also emphasized the importance of maintaining the readiness and performance of the Ministry of Defense, encouraging collaboration between military and civilian institutions to protect the nation's cybersecurity and enhance its defense capabilities. His directives to the Ministry of Interior underscored the need to prioritize the country's security, develop the skills of security personnel, and ensure outstanding services to citizens and residents. He also called for strengthening regional and international security cooperation.

On the international front, His Highness's guidance has led Kuwait to enhance its international relations, particularly within the Gulf Cooperation Council and beyond, reaffirming Kuwait's diplomatic role globally. His visits to several countries, particularly in the Gulf, have laid the foundation for a robust diplomatic framework.

His Highness also called for Kuwait to continue its active role in global humanitarian efforts, emphasizing the importance of supporting initiatives driven by pure humanitarian values. He reminded the nation of the significant responsibility it carries, particularly in the face of complex global economic challenges, urging all Kuwaitis to unite in fostering hope and optimism as they work together to achieve the country's goals. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Cabinet ministers convene for their weekly meeting on Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. — KUNA

project is also expected to stimulate local private sector investment and attract foreign companies, contributing to the growth of the maritime transport sector and strengthening Kuwait's position in global trade. Kuwait's Municipal Council approved the expansion of the project in October, increasing its area tenfold to 116 million square meters.

The Cabinet was also briefed on another joint initiative with China: The Chinese government's recommendation, through the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), to involve a Chinese state-owned company in executing Kuwait's wastewater treatment plants project. Cabinet instructed the Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of Agreements between Kuwait and China, led by Minister of Public Works Dr Noura Al-Meshaan, to proceed with the necessary steps as per relevant procedures. The NDRC is responsible for overseeing

China's overseas economic activities, ensuring they align with domestic development goals. It monitors the impact of these activities on China's macroeconomy and collaborates with other ministries to regulate major investment projects. NDRC approval is required for investments over \$300 million in natural resources, \$100 million in non-natural resources, and projects in sensitive regions, including war zones or countries under UN sanctions. It also oversees investments in critical sectors such as infrastructure, telecommunications, and energy.

In a separate matter, following a proposal from Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Family and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah, the Cabinet approved the dissolution and liquidation of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that had failed to comply with the legal requirements governing their operations. — Agencies

Chinese envoy highlights growing engineering ties

KUWAIT: Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jianwei underscored on Wednesday the growing cooperation between Kuwait and China, particularly in the engineering sector. During a press conference at the inauguration of China's new embassy headquarters in Mishref, he highlighted that Chinese companies have secured major contracts in Kuwait's oil and gas, infrastructure, and housing projects, marking a significant expansion of bilateral economic collaboration. Ambassador Zhang expressed hope that this increasing cooperation would align with Kuwait Vision 2035 and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), further enhancing the strategic partnership between the two nations.

The inauguration event was attended by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, senior government officials, and heads of international organizations and diplomatic

missions to Kuwait. Minister Al-Yahya congratulated Ambassador Zhang, reaffirming Kuwait's commitment to strengthening its relations with China, in line with the shared aspirations of both countries' leaderships.

Ambassador Zhang also reflected on the growing trust and close ties between the two nations, noting the recent high-level visits, including His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's trip to China in September 2023. This visit led to the signing of multiple agreements aimed at boosting cooperation in various sectors.

Regarding trade, the ambassador highlighted that the value of bilateral trade between Kuwait and China reached \$13.13 billion in the first ten months of 2024. He noted that China's main export to Kuwait is automobiles, while Kuwait remains a vital supplier of oil and gas to China, ranking as the ninth-largest crude oil exporter to the



KUWAIT: (From left) Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya and Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jianwei are seen at the inauguration of China's new Embassy Headquarters in Mishref. — KUNA

country. Ambassador Zhang also revealed that Chinese investments in Kuwait have reached \$720 million, making China one of the largest foreign investors in the country. He further emphasized the importance of cultural, civilizational, and people-to-people exchanges, citing the ongoing initiatives of the Chinese Cultural Center

in Kuwait, such as Chinese language programs and cultural events.

Ambassador Zhang expressed optimism that by 2025, China and Kuwait would continue to deepen their strategic partnership, aligning the BRI with Kuwait Vision 2035, and paving the way for further economic and cultural collaboration. — KUNA

In my view

India-Kuwait relations: A long history and ongoing partnership



By Dr Khaled Mahdi

In a historic move that coincides with the new era under the leadership of HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and following the meeting of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September, Modi will visit Kuwait on December 21–22. The visit marks the first by an Indian prime minister to Kuwait in 43 years, highlighting the deep-rooted historical relations between the two countries, which have witnessed significant growth in recent years at all levels.

On the economic front, the total volume of trade exchange between India and Kuwait reached \$10.479 billion in the fiscal year 2023–2024, and Indian exports to Kuwait amounted to \$2.1 billion, showing a growth of 34.78 percent annually, while Kuwait's total exports to India, especially crude oil, gas and petrochemical exports, reached \$15 billion in 2022.

However, the relationship between India and Kuwait is not limited to economic relations alone. With a vibrant Indian community of more than one million people residing in Kuwait, the highest number among non-Arab expatriates, they add significant economic value to the labor market through skilled workers and specialists in various fields such as finance and engineering.

It is worth mentioning that the relationship between India and Kuwait dates back several centuries, as India was a major destination for trade and education for Kuwaiti families and commercial elites. In the 20th century, the city of Bombay (now Mumbai) was an important commercial center for Kuwaitis, and many of them owned houses and companies there, where commercial relations included the trade of spices, horses, pearls, wood and more.

Kuwaiti researcher Hessa Awad Al-Harbi in her comprehensive illustrated encyclopedia of history (1896–1965) confirms economic and social integration between the two societies. Kuwaiti drama also highlighted this relationship in the series 'Muhammad Ali Street', the famous street in Mumbai, which is full of offices and shops of Kuwaiti merchants in India. It is also known that India was the birthplace of many prominent Kuwaiti figures.

Prime Minister Modi's visit comes at a very strategic time, as Kuwait currently chairs the Gulf Cooperation Council, which enhances its effective role in achieving regional security and peace. This visit is expected to pave the way for a new era of cooperation between India, Kuwait and the Gulf, and promote growth and mutual prosperity. There is also a golden opportunity to build advanced partnerships, especially under India's current leadership, where Prime Minister Modi has 25 years of experience in governance, first as Chief Minister of Gujarat and then as Prime Minister of India.

Known for his extensive experience and popularity, he is one of the few leaders who won a third term to lead the Indian people towards high economic growth, making India the fifth largest economy under his supervision, from the 11th place it held before. He is committed to further accelerating growth with the aim of making India the third largest economy in the next five years and an advanced economy by 2047.

In addition, he is characterized by his efforts in combating corruption on all fronts in India. Under his leadership, India was able to establish friendships with various countries and groups of countries despite their contradictions. It is also the driving force behind India's improved relations with the Gulf states.

Kuwaiti economic diplomacy has always demonstrated its positive influence and mutual benefit in consolidating international peace and security. This is achieved through high-level visits, especially with countries experiencing rapid economic growth, such as India under its current leadership.

NOTE: Dr Khaled A Mahdi is the Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development. He currently presides over the National Committee for the Implementation of Agenda 2030.



KUWAIT: Lulu Kuwait Director Muhammed Haris meets with the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Edward, and Belinda Lewis, the British Ambassador to Kuwait at the reception.

Lulu Kuwait director attends Duke of Edinburgh reception

KUWAIT: Lulu Kuwait Director Muhammed Haris attended a reception hosted by the British Embassy to commemorate the 125th anniversary of official diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and the State of Kuwait. The event was graced by the esteemed presence of the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Edward, and Belinda Lewis, the British Ambassador to Kuwait. This milestone celebration reflects the depth of the strong and enduring relations between the two nations, including in defense and military cooperation, showcasing a legacy of trust and mutual respect.

Lulu Kuwait said it was honored to have participated in the ceremony, seen as a testament to 125 years of friendship and partnership between Kuwait and the UK. The company said they proudly supports the Kuwait-UK relationship through their extensive range of imported products from their sourcing center in Birmingham, UK, bringing their customers "the finest British quality and tradition." LuLu also take immense pride in being a key and strategic partner, as initiated by the British Embassy in Kuwait, to promoting and supporting the exports of Palestinian products to the market.

Kuwait marks Arabic Language Day

Officials urge raising awareness of Arabic's importance among younger generations

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL), in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Association for Arabic Language, organized a discussion session in celebration of World Arabic Language Day, observed annually on December 18.

The session, held at the Abdulaziz Hussein Cultural Center Library, was led by certified Arabic language trainer and member of the association, Mohamed Al-Fahad. Speakers included Dr Eid Al-Dhafiri, Vice President of the Kuwaiti Association for Arabic Language, and Ahmed Al-Harbi, Board Member and Head of the Cultural Committee.

In his speech, Al-Fahad emphasized the significance of celebrating World Arabic Language Day, given its pivotal role in preserving cultural identity and global civilizational heritage. He explained that Arabic is unique compared to other languages due to its ability to derive numerous words from a single root and its grammatical structure, where the endings of words change based on their position in a sentence. This, he added, contributes to the harmony and beauty of the language.

Al-Fahad further noted that Arabic is a poetic language that leaves a profound impact on the soul, and a miraculous language where many words, especially those in the Quran, cannot be accurately translated into other languages. He highlighted Arabic's precision in expressing meanings clearly, as well as its distinction between masculine and feminine, a feature rare in many languages.

The Arabic language was recognized by the United Nations as a global official language in 1973, in recognition of its contributions to preserving human heritage, especial-

ly through Quranic texts, Arabic poetry, and speeches that have enriched the world's legacy. Al-Fahad concluded by stressing that Arabic is not merely a tool for communication, but an integral part of the nation's identity and culture, urging efforts to promote its status and raise awareness of its importance among younger generations.

In his remarks, Al-Dhafiri discussed the relationship between civilization and culture, emphasizing the significance of the Arabic language, which is mentioned in the Quran 11 times as a means of guidance. He outlined the features of Arab Islamic civilization and the main elements of the Arabic language's cultural heritage, focusing on its ethical influence and elevated impact.

Al-Dhafiri also presented the characteristics of the Arabic language, such as its morphology, syntax, Arabic calligraphy, rhetoric, eloquence, and vocabulary, which make it rich and adaptable to different eras and cultures. He highlighted contemporary challenges facing the Arabic language and its education, suggesting solutions such as the establishment of an Arabic language academy, supporting Arabic scholars, organizing major language competitions, enacting laws to protect the language, and ensuring its use in institutions.

Al-Harbi, for his part, addressed the link between cultural identity and language, emphasizing how language influences identity and how they are interwoven. He discussed the role of language in shaping cultural heritage and the interconnectedness between language and heritage.

The Kuwaiti Association for Arabic Language, established on September 18, 2022, is a non-profit organization



KUWAIT: (From left) Ahmed Al-Harbi, Mohamed Al-Fahad and Dr Eid Al-Dhafiri are seen at the discussion held to mark the World Arabic Language Day. — KUNA

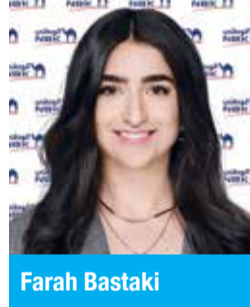
aimed at instilling pride in the Arabic language in young people, raising awareness about the importance of Arabic at both the official and societal levels, and encouraging public and private institutions to promote its use in communication, advertising, and education. The association also works to facilitate Arabic education for both native and non-native speakers, address foreign linguistic influences, and advocate for legislation to protect and promote the Arabic language in society. — KUNA

NBK educates BSK students on common fraud schemes

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its consistent efforts to promote financial and banking awareness among all sectors under the umbrella of the "Let's Be Aware" campaign introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In this context, the bank delivered a presentation on common fraud schemes and protection measures for the students of the British School of Kuwait (BSK). The session was presented to 250 students aged 12-15, specifically targeting this group as recent NBK studies show they are most prone to fraud and least aware of online dangers. The session tackled many key topics related to common fraud schemes and protection measures to keep banking and personal accounts secure, emphasizing social media safety, guiding students on identifying potential threats in a digital world that is becoming increasingly complex for young users.

During the presentation, NBK team shared real-life fraud cases, illustrating how fraudsters operate and emphasizing the importance of awareness to avoid becoming victims. This wasn't just about raising awareness, but also about empowering students to be vigilant and proactive in protecting their assets and personal data. The session was designed to be in-



Farah Bastaki

teractive, allowing students to ask questions, discuss online scenarios, and engage directly with NBK representatives, making the information more relatable and memorable.

NBK team advised students to avoid clicking suspicious links, whether those appearing on social media or received via e-mail from scammers who impersonate well-known banks, telecom or other companies by using their logos, as these messages and communications target stealing banking or personal information.

NBK team also advised students to use strong passwords to protect different personal accounts online, create different passwords and not to use the same password for all accounts, highlighting that each account should have a unique password as when computer or smartphone is hacked, using the same password may expose all online accounts to hacking as well.

Students were advised to use long passwords that contain at least eight characters with a mix of letters, numbers, and symbols, as the longer the password, the more difficult it is to hack. They were also warned against using personal information in passwords, such as birth date, family names, and simple number sequences.

"We always strive to promote financial culture and banking awareness among the youth by organizing awareness sessions and seminars in schools and universities to educate them on the latest fraud trends and protection measures. These visits reinforce our efforts to protect all sectors from fraud, and help raise banking awareness among the public," commented Farah Bastaki, Manager, Digital Communications at National Bank of Kuwait. "Educating customers is instrumental in our strategy, as we believe proactive education on scams and preventive measures can minimize potential risks and promote financial stability," she emphasized.

"We call the students to follow the tips provided across the bank's digital platforms, as scammers tend to employ new methods using AI techniques. Therefore, we intensify the awareness content published on our social media accounts,



KUWAIT: NBK staff deliver a presentation on common fraud schemes and protection measures for the students of the British School of Kuwait (BSK).

in addition to reposting CBK's related communications," she added. "NBK employs its strong customer communication capabilities as well as all its sector-leading digital channels to maximize the reach of the "Let's Be Aware" campaign's objectives among the public," she concluded.

Introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks and Kuwait Banking Association, the "Let's Be Aware" campaign is the largest across the GCC region focusing on raising banking and financial awareness among banks' customers. The campaign covers a variety of crucial topics including: anti-fraud tips, raising awareness on high-risk investments, maximizing benefit from banking services, promoting savings and investment culture, as well as other related topics. It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different sectors. As the leading financial institution in Kuwait, the bank frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector.

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times and Kuwait News management and staff convey their deepest condolences to

Hasan Al-Kelani

on the sad demise of his aunt

Shahenaz Hasan Al-Kelani

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on her



Gisele Pelicot hailed as hero after ex-husband jailed in mass rape trial

Canada becoming the 51st US state would be 'great idea', Trump jokes

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Muslim leaders gather in Cairo

Turkey, Iran leaders at summit • Bangladesh, Pakistan leaders agree to boost ties



CAIRO: Heads of state and delegates pose for a group picture during the D-8 summit on Dec 19, 2024. — AFP

CAIRO: The leaders of Turkey and Iran were in Egypt on Thursday for a summit of eight Muslim-majority countries, meeting for the first time since the ouster of Syria's president Bashar Al-Assad. Turkey historically backed the opposition to Assad, while Iran supported his rule. The gathering of the D-8 Organisation for Economic Cooperation, also known as the Developing-8, was being held against a backdrop of regional turmoil including the conflict in Gaza, a fragile ceasefire in Lebanon and unrest in Syria.

In a speech to the summit, Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for reconciliation in Syria and the restoration of the country's "territorial integrity and unity". He also voiced hope for "the establishment of a Syria free of terrorism", where "all religious sects and ethnic groups live side by side in peace".

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian also urged action to address the crises in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria, saying it was a "religious, legal and human duty to prevent further harm" to those suffering in the conflict zones. Pezeshkian, who arrived in Cairo on Wednesday, is the first Iranian president to visit Egypt since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who visited in 2013.

Relations between Egypt and Iran have been strained for decades, but diplomatic contacts have intensified since Cairo became a mediator in the war in Gaza. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited Egypt in October, while his Egyptian counterpart Badr Abdelatty travelled to Tehran

in July to attend Pezeshkian's inauguration. Ahead of the summit, the Iranian top diplomat said he hoped it would "send a strong message to the world that the Zionist aggressions and violations in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria" would end "immediately".

At a special session on Gaza and Lebanon, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas urged the international community to adopt "a single standard of justice" and ensure the Zionist entity "is held accountable and punished for violations of international law" in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria.

On Thursday, ahead of a United Nations Security Council meeting, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the Zionist entity's strikes on Syrian military infrastructure were "violations" of the country's sovereignty and called for them to cease. Established in 1997, the D-8 aims to foster cooperation among member states, spanning regions from Southeast Asia to Africa. The organization includes Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia as member states.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus said Thursday he had "agreed to strengthen relations" with Pakistan, a move likely to further test his country's frosty relations with India. Pakistan and Bangladesh were once one nation but split in a brutal 1971 war, with Bangladesh then drawing closer to Pakistan's archrival India.

But Dhaka's ties with New Delhi have

frayed after a student-led revolution in August toppled leader Sheikh Hasina, who had the backing of India and now lives there in exile. Yunus, who met Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the sidelines of the conference in Egypt, said he wanted to resolve outstanding grievances from Dhaka's 1971 bloody separation from Islamabad.

"The issues have kept coming again and again," Yunus told Sharif, according to a statement from his office. "Let's settle those issues for us to move forward," Sharif said he had a "warm and cordial exchange" with Yunus. "Together, we reaffirmed our commitment to deepen bilateral and multilateral collaboration," he said on social media platform X.

Both men "agreed to strengthen relations between the two countries through increased trade, commerce, and exchange of sports and cultural delegations" according to a statement from Yunus' office. In November, the first cargo ship in decades to sail directly from Pakistan to Bangladesh successfully unloaded its containers in the port of Chittagong.

Yunus said he was determined to revive the moribund eight-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) — largely stalled due to arguments between Islamabad and New Delhi. "This is a top priority," Yunus told Sharif. "I want a summit of SAARC leaders even if it is only for a photo session, because that will carry a strong message". — AFP

Zionist genocide, ethnic cleansing in Gaza slammed

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity on Thursday faced accusations of acts of genocide in Gaza, while a medical charity said the devastation caused in the Palestinian territory showed signs of ethnic cleansing. They are the latest in a series of similar accusations levelled against the Zionist entity during its 14-month war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

In a new report focused specifically on water, New York-based Human Rights Watch detailed what it called deliberate efforts by Zionist authorities "of a systematic nature" to deprive Gazans of water, which had "likely caused thousands of deaths... and will likely continue to cause deaths". The Zionist retaliatory offensive has killed at least 45,129 people in Gaza, a majority of them civilians.

In a separate report released on Thursday, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) accused the Zionist entity of causing widespread devastation in Gaza and noted "signs of ethnic cleansing" in the north of the Palestinian territory. The Zionist entity in early October began a major military operation in Gaza's north, which it said aimed to prevent Hamas from regrouping there.

In a statement, MSF Secretary General Christopher Lockyear said what his medical teams have seen in Gaza "is consistent with the descriptions provided by an increasing number of legal experts and organizations concluding that genocide is taking place". Lockyear said "signs of ethnic cleansing and the ongoing devastation — including mass killings, severe physical and mental

health injuries, forced displacement, and impossible conditions of life for Palestinians under siege and bombardment — are undeniable."

The HRW report detailed what the group said was the intentional damaging of water and sanitation infrastructure, as well as the blocking of fuel for generators. The report concluded that in doing so, "(Zionist) authorities intentionally inflicted on the Palestinian population in Gaza 'conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.'" This, it said, amounted to the war crime of "extermination" and to "acts of genocide".

HRW pointed to a statement by then-defense minister Yoav Gallant as suggestive of the Zionist entity's intent. In Oct 2023, he declared a "complete siege" and said: "No electricity, no food, no water, no gas — it's all closed." The Zionist entity is facing a case brought by South Africa at the International Court of Justice last December, arguing that the war in Gaza breached the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention.

In November the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for Gallant, and also for Mohammed Deif, military chief of Hamas. The HRW report, drawn up over nearly a year, is based on interviews with dozens of Gazans, staff at water and sanitation facilities, medics and aid workers, as well as satellite imagery, photographs, videos and data analysis. The lack of water left Gazans vulnerable to water-borne diseases and complications, such as infected wounds and the inability to heal due to dehydration, HRW said. One emergency room nurse cited in the report said they were forced to decide "not to resuscitate children who were severely malnourished and dehydrated". — AFP

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times and Kuwait News management and staff convey their deepest condolences to

Zainab Dashti

on the sad demise of her grandmother

Fatma Abdulnabbi Safar

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on her

International

Canada becoming the 51st US state would be 'great idea', Trump jokes

Ottawa wracked by political turmoil

OTTAWA: US President-elect Donald Trump said Wednesday it would be "a great idea" for Canada to become the 51st US state, teasing on social media that "many Canadians" welcome the idea, as Ottawa is wracked by political turmoil. "Many Canadians want Canada to become the 51st State," Trump posted on Truth Social. "They would save massively on taxes and military protection. I think it is a great idea. 51st State!!!" he added. The post is not the first time Trump has publicly mused at the idea, a joke that some have found in bad taste, particularly following the shock resignation of Canada's deputy prime minister on Monday.

A Leger public opinion survey this week found 13 percent of Canadians support the notion of linking up with their southern neighbor. When Trump made the same comment to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at a dinner at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida in late November, howls of laughter reportedly erupted. According to Fox News, Trump suggested that merging the two nations would not only resolve his concerns about fentanyl trafficking, over which he has threatened a 25-percent tariff on Canadian goods but could also stem illegal immigration—an issue that mainly affects the US southern border.

His suggestion raised eyebrows in Ottawa with some commenting that it was "not funny," humiliating and a not-so-subtle threat on the part of the incoming US leader. Since then, Trump has repeatedly referred to Trudeau in social media posts as the governor of Canada—a title used by leaders of the 50 US states. The jabs may have become more worrying for Canadians since the resignation of Deputy Prime

Minister Chrystia Freeland this week, which spurred calls for Trudeau to quit.

'Boxer working a cut'

Former Trudeau advisor Gerald Butts reacted on social media: "Trump is like a boxer working a cut." Norman Spector, an ex-staffer to former Canadian prime minister and Trump golfing buddy Brian Mulroney, wondered if Trump seriously wanted to annex the United States' northern neighbor. "That will never happen," University of British Columbia politics professor Max Cameron told AFP.

"Nothing could be a greater impediment to Canada more closely integrating with the United States than Donald Trump in office in Washington," he added. "I suspect this is all part of a pattern of bullying that is how he approaches negotiations." Queen's University professor Stephanie Chouinard echoed that view, saying Trump "is taking advantage of the chaos in Canadian politics this week to further antagonize Trudeau." Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc has insisted that despite Trump's teasing, he and Trudeau have had "productive" discussions with the president-elect and his team.

On Tuesday, LeBlanc and Immigration Minister Marc Miller announced border security and immigration measures aimed at placating Trump, including hiring hundreds of new police and border officers, and aligning Canada's asylum system with the United States' to quickly weed out claims that do not meet requirements. Ottawa has also proposed setting up a joint Canada-US "strike force" to combat transnational crime groups, and beef up its military



PALM BEACH: A US Coast Guard crew mans a patrol boat in the intra-coastal waters off Mar-a-Lago Estate, home to President-Elect Donald Trump in Palm Beach, Florida. — AFP

spending. Trump in his post also said the United States was subsidizing Canada "to the tune of over \$1,000,000,000 a year. Makes no sense!"

It was unclear what Trump's figure was referring to. According to US data for 2022, the trade deficit with Canada was \$53.5 billion. Most economists dismiss this as insignificant when compared to the \$909

billion worth of goods and services traded by the two countries. Julien Martin, an economics professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal, explained that for Republicans under Trump, "trade deficits are a big problem for the American economy." They represent "job losses and the decline of the manufacturing sector," he said. — AFP

News in Brief

MP shot dead in parliament

MOSCOW: A lawmaker was shot dead and another wounded on Thursday in a shooting inside the parliament of the Russia-backed breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia, the territory's de facto president said. "After receiving fatal wounds, the deputy Vakhtang Gollandia has died," the president's press service said in a statement, adding that another lawmaker, Kan Kvarchia, was hurt. Russian news agencies quoted local sources as saying that another deputy had shot the two men. Abkhazia, located on the Black Sea, was shaken by rare demonstrations last month over a deal that would boost Russian investment. — AFP

Four African migrants die

MADRID: Spanish rescuers on Thursday said four sub-Saharan African migrants died attempting to reach the Canary Islands, the latest tragedy in a record year of irregular arrivals in the Atlantic archipelago. The maritime rescue service said a helicopter picked up one dead migrant and a survivor in Moroccan waters 70 nautical miles east of the island of Lanzarote on Wednesday evening. Later that evening one of its ships took on board 49 migrants from the same zone, which included three dead, four women and a minor, the service added in a statement. All survivors were transferred to the port of Arrecife on Lanzarote. The Canary Islands have seen a surge in arrivals due to their proximity to northwestern Africa and the tightening of patrols in the Mediterranean. — AFP

Contaminated seafood ring

LISBON: A European operation has spared revelers a potential food poisoning nightmare before Christmas, seizing 30 tons of molluscs illegally fished in polluted waters and arresting 62 suspects, authorities said on Thursday. Law enforcement in Portugal, France and Spain seized the molluscs and six tons of glass eels worth up to 10 million euros (\$10.4 million) on the seafood market, Europol said. The delicacies can fetch up to 25 euros per kilo (2.2 pounds), but poaching gangs exploited Asian workers by paying them just one euro per kilo of molluscs fished in contaminated Portuguese waters. This made the case the first proven crime in the European Union combining environmental offences and human trafficking for labor exploitation, Europol added in a statement. The gangs mainly fished Japanese clams, especially popular during the Christmas season on the Iberian Peninsula, and falsified the documentation to present them as fit for consumption. — AFP

Karaoke bar fire kills 11

HANOI: A fire ripped through a karaoke bar in the Vietnamese capital, killing 11 people and injuring two others in a case of suspected arson, police said Thursday. Photos from the scene showed the blackened multi-storey building in western Hanoi mostly destroyed by flames, and piles of twisted metal strewn nearby. Police said they received reports of a fire at 11:00 pm Wednesday "with many people trapped inside". Rescue workers rushed to the scene and managed to bring out seven people alive, two of whom were rushed to hospital. Eleven others were found dead, they said. "The police suspect that the cafe was (deliberately) burned down and ... have arrested the perpetrator," Hanoi police said in a statement. Witnesses said the fire was so large that no one dared to attempt to rescue those trapped inside. — AFP

Defeat of Assad stirs a mother's bitterness

TARTUS: In the villages above the Syrian port city of Tartus they once hailed the sons who died fighting in Bashar Al-Assad's service as martyrs. But mothers are now nervous to display their sons' pictures, and no longer hide their bitterness towards the ousted leader for whom they sacrificed so much. "It's true my son is dead," said Jamila Jabr, the 60-year-old mother of Humam, an army conscript who was killed in combat in 2012. "But the important thing is that Bashar Al-Assad is gone. He destroyed us and destroyed our children's futures and starved us."

A small but vigorous woman with tired eyes, Jabr lives in the hilltop village of Bait al-Marj, a poor but comfortable Alawite community nestled amid fruit and olive groves. Assad, who fled Syria for Russian exile less than two weeks ago in fear of a lighting offensive on Damascus by Sunni Islamist fighters, himself hailed from the Alawite minority. But, in the land once seen as the heartland of his support, the Alawites whose sons died fighting to protect his wealthy ruling clan hold no fond memories. They are nervous that Syria's new rulers might try to impose Sunni Islamic law on their quiet villages, but do not miss the deposed dictator.

Heartbreaking portrait

Jabr is still proud of her son, who died aged 22 when his military service was prolonged and he was pressed into combat against the now victorious rebels. But she does not display a photo of him in his uniform nor mourn him as a martyr, remembering instead the happy teenager who planned to start his own business. "I would go into the living room and chat with his picture but my heart would break," Jabr told AFP, her voice breaking.

New swap needed for Russian 'child political prisoners': Freed artist

PARIS: Anti-Kremlin artist and musician Alexandra Skochilenko, freed in a historic prisoner swap in August, has urged Western governments to work on a new exchange to release Russian child political prisoners. Skochilenko, who had been serving a seven-year prison sentence for replacing supermarket price tags with messages opposing Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, was one of 16 Russian dissidents and foreign nationals freed on August 1 in the largest East-West prisoner swap since the Cold War.

While activists say there are hundreds of political prisoners in Russia, Skochilenko said the West should help free Moscow's youngest political victims amid a clampdown by President Vladimir Putin that had only intensified after the invasion. "I would like a new exchange—if it happens—to be a swap for Russian child political prisoners," Skochilenko told Agence France-Presse in an interview in Paris. "You would stand up for the most vulnerable who may not be of any practical use to you. Such a child would arrive, he won't overthrow the Putin regime, he's not going to generate revenue, but that's what people do in the name of humanity."

"There are quite a lot of child political prisoners," said the 34-year-old who spent over two years behind bars in Saint Petersburg. She added that teenagers detained on political grounds were jailed together with teen murderers and rapists. "There was a juvenile detention center on our prison territory, and I saw them, I spoke to them, I heard them yell every night, beat each other, smash their cells. And our pro-opposition kids are being thrown together with them. This is very scary."

Over 50 minors

In June, 16-year-old schoolboy Arseny Turbin was found guilty of terror offenses and is now serving a



BAYT AL MARJ: Jamila Jabr, the 60-year-old mother of Humam, an army conscript who was killed in combat in 2012, looks at a picture of her son in her home in the village of Beit Al-Marj. — AFP

Inside her modest home, under a tree heavy with near-ripe oranges, a smiling portrait in a civilian jumper of a youthful Humam looks down. There are bare white patches on the concrete wall where other images once hung. Bait al-Marj has barely seen any of the violence that ravaged much of the country in 13 years of war. This week, after Assad's fall, Zionist jets bombed a nearby Syrian bunker, rattling the windows of Alawite, Christian and Ismaili minority homes. But otherwise, the houses remain intact. The human toll was much harsher: most households know someone lost in the fighting, many lost their sons.

And even those Alawite conscripts who survived the fighting are bitter now. Down the hill in Tartus, a large port city on the Mediterranean that still holds a Russian naval garrison that once backed Assad, the tables have turned. Former rebel fighters with long chin beards and no moustaches sit behind a row of tables in a governorate building handing out temporary ID cards. Before them, the former soldiers, police and Baath party cadres who once controlled Syria, queue by the hundreds for their bureaucratic assistance. — AFP



PARIS: Russian artist and former political prisoner Aleksandra Skochilenko poses during a photo session in Paris on December 18, 2024. — AFP

five-year sentence in a correctional facility. Turbin, who was 15 at the time of his arrest, is recognized by rights group Memorial as Russia's only child political prisoner. However, over 50 minors have been deprived of freedom on "politically motivated" charges. Sergei Davidis, head of political prisoners support project at Memorial, told AFP. Skochilenko said many such cases are not widely known because some parents fear publicity will hurt their jailed children.

"It's a very difficult choice," she said. "These parents are afraid." Winning the release of such teens would not only draw publicity to egregious rights violations but would also be a "big blow" to the Kremlin and expose its hypocrisy, Skochilenko said. On one hand, she said, Putin's propaganda trumpets family values; on the other hand, the system is doing everything to "torment" dissenting children and their parents. Skochilenko was jailed despite a number of health conditions, including bipolar disorder, celiac disease and a congenital heart defect. The artist, with long hair and a penchant for hippie clothes, said she was bullied by some prisoners. One fellow inmate told her: "You stink terribly," making her wash her clothes. "The next day I would wear clean clothes but she would say again that I stink." At the same time she also saw a degree of sympathy, with some prison officials telling her she was wrongfully convicted. — AFP

Musk's possible meddling in UK politics stirs concern

LONDON: Concerns are growing in the UK as tech billionaire Elon Musk takes an increasingly close interest in Britain's political scene, appearing to cosy up to hard-right firebrand lawmaker Nigel Farage. With Musk named to a new position in the incoming US administration of Donald Trump, there are fears the world's richest man could seek to influence London's future ties with Washington.

On Wednesday, Farage, who leads the upstart anti-immigration Reform UK party, said he was in talks with Musk about making a donation to his party. Writing in the Telegraph newspaper, Farage said "the issue of money was discussed" when he met the X owner at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida on Monday. "There will be ongoing negotiations on that score," the arch-Euro-sceptic wrote, in comments that will likely unnerve the ruling Labor party and main Conservative opposition.

Newspaper reports have suggested that Musk is preparing to donate up to \$100 million to Reform but Farage told the BBC the pair did not discuss figures. Musk "described the Labor and Conservative parties as the uniparty, and left us in no doubt that he is right behind us", Farage added. Farage said they would have to find a way to ensure any donation from Musk was made "legally through UK companies" but the idea which emerged a few weeks ago has already sent shivers down the spines of UK lawmakers. Reform UK won five seats in the 650-seat UK parliament in July's general election, draining support from both Labor and the Tories.

'Police state'

Farage is already eyeing the next general elections, which have to be held by 2029 at the latest. Conservative party co-chairman Dominic Johnson said any such donation by Musk would be "basically buying" one of the UK's political parties. "People like Elon Musk, like Donald Trump, like Nigel Farage ... the sort of the new right, they really hate the old right" which is seen as having become too liberal, said Russell Foster, senior lecturer in British and International politics at King's College.

This old right "were not killed off by the left or center. They're killed off because a more right-wing movement comes along". So far, Musk has contented himself with taking aim at the Labor government of Prime Minister Keir Starmer, launching a series of searing comments on his social network X. "The people of Britain have had enough of a tyrannical police state," he stormed in November.

At the height of this summer's anti-immigrant riots — the UK's worst unrest in years—Musk wrote in X that "civil war is inevitable" and accused the government of dealing with the rioters too harshly. It won him support among UK social network users and influencers on the far-right. Musk also advised people in September not to visit the UK when "they're releasing convicted pedophiles in order to imprison people for social media posts". "He appears to believe that he is on some sort of a mission against the establishment," said Foster.

Some observers believe Musk is also up in arms about UK government plans to toughen legislation regulating social networks. Starmer said the riots had been fuelled by online content and later did not invite Musk to an investors' conference—something the SpaceX and Tesla CEO had taken as an insult, sources close to him said. Since the US presidential elections, Musk and Trump have become inseparable, and their "bromance" could complicate Labor's efforts to boost its ties with the Republicans.

Labor has historically been closer to the Democrats but Starmer, who met Trump in New York in September, has been seeking to open a new chapter in the party's relations with Republicans. "The prime minister looks forward to working with President Trump and his whole team, including Elon Musk," a Downing Street spokesman said last month. "Starmer is very aware that he can't alienate the incoming US president," said Foster. — AFP

International

Gisele Pelicot hailed as a hero

Ex-husband jailed 20 years in France mass rape trial

AVIGNON, France: Frenchwoman Gisele Pelicot, who survived a decade of sexual abuse by her husband and dozens of strangers, said she hoped her ordeal would help make the world a better place for “women and men alike” as her former spouse was jailed for 20 years. Her public stand against her abusers was hailed by supporters outside the courtroom and by world leaders.

Dominique Pelicot, who had confessed to the crimes, was found guilty by the court in the southern city of Avignon after a trial that lasted more than three months. Details of the offenses shocked France and the world, drawing fresh attention to male violence, and turning his former wife Gisele into a feminist hero.

Such extensive media coverage was made possible by Pelicot's decision to waive her anonymity and opt for a public trial. Dozens of other defendants — the men who visited the Pelicot family home to rape Gisele Pelicot who was unconscious after being drugged by her husband — were handed terms of between three and 15 years.

Women's rights groups and the three Pelicot children, according to a source, expressed disappointment, arguing the sentences were too lenient. But 72-year-old Gisele Pelicot, in her first comment after the judgement, said: “I respect the court and the decision of its verdict.” She

also said she “never regretted” opening the trial to the public and was now thinking of the “unrecognized victims whose stories often remain in the shadows.”

“I now have confidence in our capacity to find a better future where everyone — women and men alike — can live in harmony with respect and mutual understanding,” she said. She left the courthouse to a chorus of “bravo!” and “merci!” from supporters.

The convictions of all 51 defendants and their sentencing concluded a trial that made Gisele Pelicot a symbol of female courage in the face of male sexual violence. Presiding judge Roger Arata said Dominique Pelicot, 72, would not be eligible for parole until he had served two-thirds of his sentence. His 50 co-defendants were all convicted by the court, receiving jail terms of between three and 15 years.

But that was in all cases less than what prosecutors had sought. Two of the defendants had their jail terms suspended. Only the sentence given to Dominique Pelicot was fully in line with what prosecutors had asked for. And under the terms of the sentencing, six accused were allowed to walk free from the court.

The three Pelicot children “are disappointed by these low sentences”, said a family member, asking not to be identified. There was “no question” of any of them wanting to speak to their father after

the conviction, the relative added. “The court has proved Gisele Pelicot right: Shame can change sides,” said women's rights group the Fondation des Femmes (Women's Foundation). But it “shared the incomprehension and disappointment at some of the sentences handed down, despite the witnesses and the evidence”.

Dominique Pelicot had filmed and filed away videos of the rapes, unwittingly helping police to track down the men he had invited to rape his wife. The video evidence was shown during the trial. The tension was palpable in the courtroom at the start of Friday's hearing, where a heavy police presence was deployed. Many defendants arrived with their bags packed ready for prison. One of them was in tears as he hugged his companion before entering the courtroom.

‘Fed up with abuse’

Dominique Pelicot had admitted drugging Gisele Pelicot for almost a decade so he and strangers he recruited online could rape her. His lawyer did not rule out lodging an appeal of the verdict. “We're going to use the 10 days which we have to decide whether or not to appeal this decision,” said Beatrice Zavarro.

Gisele Pelicot has become a feminist hero at home and abroad for refusing to be ashamed, waiving her right to a closed trial and standing up to her aggressors



AVIGNON: Gisele Pelicot leaves the courthouse after hearing the verdict of the court that sentenced her ex-husband to the maximum term of 20 years jail for committing and orchestrating her mass rapes on Dec 19, 2024. — AFP

in court. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz saluted her bravery, saying she “courageously went from anonymity into the public eye and fought for justice”. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez also paid tribute. “What dignity. Thank you, Gisele Pelicot. Shame must change sides.”

The prosecution had requested 10 to 18 years in prison against the 49 defen-

dants also charged with aggravated rape. The highest sentence after that handed to Dominique Pelicot was for Romain V. 63, a pensioner who had visited the Pelicot family home six times. He was jailed for 15 years, after prosecutors had called for 18. Hassan O. 30, the sole defendant on the run, was tried in absentia and sentenced to 12 years prison. — AFP

‘Peace was born’: How tsunami changed Aceh

BANDA ACEH: Former rebel commander Mu-harram Idris once led 3,000 men to fight Indonesia's army in separatist Aceh, but now serves as a local politician after the legacy of a devastating tsunami two decades ago brought peace to the province. The giant waves that engulfed the impoverished province on the northern tip of Sumatra island on December 26, 2004, killing tens of thousands, paved the way for an end to three decades of conflict. Rebels like Mu-harram spent years waging battles against Jakarta's army for their own state until the disaster wiped out entire communities.

“The peace was born because of the tsunami. At the time, foreign countries wanted to help,” said the 49-year-old ex-commander. “They couldn't go in. They were pushing (both sides) to make peace.” When details emerged from Aceh of the scale of the disaster, it triggered a huge global relief and reconstruction effort. Pressure on all sides to help those affected brought the rebels and Jakarta closer, allowing a peace to be brokered that has endured ever since.

There remains a widely held view among Aceh's deeply religious Muslim population that God sent the tsunami as a sign to end the conflict. An August 2005 agreement enshrined that peace, with rebels handing over their weapons and Indonesia—led by a new pro-reconciliation president—withdrawing troops. “The tsunami made both sides more interested in recovery and reconstruction than in pursuing the conflict,” said Sidney Jones, senior adviser to Jakarta-based think tank the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict. “Both would have lost public support



BANDA ACEH: This picture shows an aerial view of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, where a ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami will be held in Banda Aceh. — AFP

for taking any other approach.”

Autonomy, amnesty

The rebels in the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) had to agree to renounce their independence effort and were handed special autonomy in return, while Jakarta gave amnesty to fighters and political prisoners. Afrizal, once a foot soldier for Mu-harram, now fishes for a living near a port in Lamteungoh village. His brother and sister were killed in the tsunami and their bodies were never found. He was in the mountains when the tsunami hit before his unit went down to help the rescue effort.

“It was... like a world war just happened,” said the fisherman, who goes by one name. The rebel leadership then called a unilateral ceasefire but Indonesian forces continued their attacks, former rebels said. A

commander told Afrizal and his GAM comrades several months later that they would soon make peace, and they would later obey. “We were not disappointed. It was not that we were unable to fight, (but) because we had made peace because of the disaster,” he said.

One of the Indonesian negotiators I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja said Jakarta demanded two key concessions during negotiations, which the rebels eventually accepted. “First the acknowledgement that Aceh is part of the Unitary State of Indonesia. Second, the dissolution of... the GAM's military at that time,” he said. But Mu-harram acknowledged some of his men “felt disappointed because they were doubtful about the Indonesian government.” Yet today the provincial capital Banda Aceh—transformed by the huge reconstruction effort and years of peace—teems with restaurants, coffee shops and traffic. — AFP



PHANG NGA: This aerial photograph shows a tourist on a stand-up paddle board at the Khao Lak lighthouse in southern Thailand's Phang Nga province. — AFP

Loss and redemption: Tsunami survivors and the sea

PHANG NGA: As an eight-year-old boy Pirun Kla-Talay was orphaned by the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. Now he makes his living from the waters that claimed his parents. Each morning the fisherman sets out from Bang Wa district in his red and yellow boat, selling his catch at the local market in southern Thailand. For tsunami survivors, the sea can represent both beauty and sorrow. “The sea makes me sad and happy at the same time,” said Pirun, now 28. “It reminds me of loss, but it also shaped who I am today.”

On December 26, 2004, a 9.1 magnitude earthquake—one of the strongest tremors ever recorded—unleashed a devastating tsunami that ravaged coastal communities in Thailand, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. More than 225,000 people were killed, and entire neighborhoods were wiped out. In Thailand there were more than 5,000 officially confirmed fatalities—around half of them foreign tourists—with another 3,000 left missing. Pirun was bird-watching when an eerie sound interrupted him. “As an island boy, I knew the sound of waves,” he said. “But that wasn't normal.”

Pirun ran to alert his neighbors and climbed to

higher ground, where he could only watch in horror as the monstrous wave swallowed everything in its path. “I thought I wouldn't survive,” he said. His house was near the shore and both his parents were killed. Once an enthusiast for the water, the loss left him terrified by the sea and he suffered from insomnia, being woken by the sounds of waves at night. He was taken in by his aunt and the family left their home on Phra Thong island for neighboring Bang Wa on the mainland, where he slowly began to rebuild his life.

Between 1,000 and 2,000 children lost at least one parent to the tsunami in Thailand, according to a United Nations Relief Web humanitarian information service. Watana Sittirachot, now 32, lost his uncle, who had cared for him since his parents' divorce. Playing a computer game in an internet cafe in Ban Nam Khem, he saw the floodwaters approaching his village from the distance. “Suddenly, people started running and yelling,” Watana recalled, and he was taken to the village shelter. Watana's uncle was reported missing, his body never found, leaving the 12-year-old devastated. “My uncle was a great cook,” Watana told AFP. “Every time I eat fish, I still think of him. He made the best fish dishes.”

As he battled with depression, a teacher invited him to stay at Baan Than Nam Chai Foundation, an institution two Thai social workers founded for tsunami orphans. Watana became one of its first 32 residents in 2006. Now he is the secretary-general of the foundation, which has adapted its focus to care for more than 90 children whose living parents cannot do so, including prisoners. — AFP

Storm fears overshadow Indian coast decades after tsunami

AKKARAIPETTAI, India: The deadly tsunami that swamped India's southern coast two decades ago was a one-off disaster, but storms that are growing ever more intense spark panic each time howling gales whip up waves. Maragathavel Lakshmi shudders when she hears lashing rains or winds, recalling how her daughter was swept away when the 2004 tsunami, triggered by a huge earthquake off Indonesia, crashed onshore almost without warning. “Weather alerts have made life easier, but the fear of what a heavy rain or strong wind might bring is still there,” 45-year-old Lakshmi said.

More than 220,000 people were killed as the devastating waves hit shorelines around the Indian Ocean, including 16,389 in India, according to the international disaster database EM-DAT. Fear of the weather is based on a very real threat—and the risks are increasing. Dangerous cyclones, the equivalent of hurricanes in the North Atlantic or typhoons in the northwestern Pacific, are an annual menace.

Better forecasting and more effective evacuation planning have dramatically reduced death tolls, but scientists say human-driven climate change is intensifying their power. “Summers are very harsh now and rains are heavier,” Lakshmi said, saying weather alerts sent her anxiety soaring. A warmer atmosphere holds more water, meaning rains are heavier. “Strong winds scare us,” said her husband Maragathavel, who like many in the region goes by only one name. “Every time it rains heavily, water (floods) our area,” the 49-year-old fisherman added. “It seems on those days that the sea has still not left us.”

‘Very afraid’

The December 26, 2004 disaster was not caused by climate change but by a 9.1 magnitude earthquake that struck off Indonesia's Sumatra. Hours later, Lakshmi heard a loud rumble and then saw enormous waves—rising as high as 40 meters approaching her neighborhood on the shore in Akkaraipettai, their village in Tamil Nadu state. Lakshmi showed a photograph of her daughter Yashoda, who her father had been looking after for the day next door when the waves struck. “She would have been 22 years old now,” Lakshmi said tearfully. The 45-year-old remembers people getting swept away or holding on to whatever they could. “Some people were naked or barely had any clothes left on them,” she said.

The tsunami also hit the chain of Andaman and Nicobar islands, where at least 4,000 people were killed. The victims included 109 Indian air force pilots, crew and around 40 of their relatives. At least 870,000 people were left homeless in India. Many, like Lakshmi, were moved to new settlements inland. Their neighbor, fisherman P Mohan, 46, said weather alerts still gave him shivers of fear. “If I see some warning about the weather, I do not even step out of the house,” he said. “Until the rains or cyclone—whatever is the warning—comes and goes away, I am very afraid.” Mohan had a rod put into his leg after being injured in the tsunami, which also killed his mother. Neighbors had last seen her sitting beside the sea when the waves hit. He could not identify her from the “swollen and disfigured” corpses laid out for identification in the days after the tsunami. — AFP



AKKARAIPETTAI: Fishing boats are moored along the backwaters at Akkaraipettai village in Nagapattinam, in India's Tamil Nadu state. — AFP

Accidents kill 52 in central Afghanistan

KABUL: Two bus accidents involving a fuel tanker and a truck on a highway through central Afghanistan killed at least 52 people and injured 68, a provincial official said Thursday. The accidents happened in Ghazni province on the same highway between the capital Kabul and southern Kandahar city late Wednesday, provincial head of information and culture Hamidullah Nisar said on X, without specifying how many people were killed and injured in each accident. “There is a possibility the numbers could rise,” Nisar told reporters outside a hospital in Ghazni city where victims had been sent.

He noted that some of the injured were in a “critical condition” and had been sent to Kabul for treatment. “Among the injured and dead were children, women and elderly people,” he added. One bus collided with a fuel tanker near Shahbaz village in central Ghazni while the other hit a truck in the eastern district of Andar, Nisar said. Chief government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid posted on X that the authorities had “great regret” over the accidents and that an investigation would be launched.

Teams worked to clear debris at the sites into the morning, with hunks of metal and broken glass strewn across the area in Andar along with the clothes and meals of bus passengers, an AFP journalist saw. One of the injured in the accident in Shahbaz, Khadim, said he was jolted awake by the noise of the accident but then lost consciousness. When he came to and pulled himself from the wreck he “saw there were a lot of people under the vehicle and on the ground around us, there was crying and blood everywhere”.

The two destroyed buses were transported to a lot in Ghazni city, their crushed and twisted frames and seats splattered with blood. The vehicles “were badly damaged” and the bus had been “bashed around” said Rahim, who was at the site in Shahbaz not long after the accident. “We were gathering the stuff from the site, there were human legs, I buried them there, it was a very intense accident,” he told AFP.

Traffic accidents are common in Afghanistan, due in part to poor roads after decades of conflict, dangerous driving on highways and a lack of regulation. In March, more than 20 people were killed and 38 injured when a bus collided with a fuel tanker and burst into flames in southern Helmand province. — AFP

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2024

US, Chinese and European firms seek to draw Vietnam arms deals from Russia

Defense expo features Chinese firms for the first time



HANOI: A man poses for photo next to a T-62 tank (left) during the Vietnam 2024 International Defense Expo in Hanoi on December 19, 2024. — AFP

HANOI: Major US weapons manufacturers including Boeing and Lockheed Martin, along with Europe's Airbus and Chinese firms, put their wares on show at an arms fair in Hanoi Thursday as Vietnam looks to diversify its defense supplies away from Russia. A US Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt attack aircraft and a C-130 Super Hercules transport were on the tarmac at Hanoi's Gia Lam military airfield for the event. Thousands of people attended including hundreds of uniformed Vietnamese soldiers, some of whom posed for selfies with US troops ahead of next year's 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

The defence expo featured Chinese firms for the first time, including major state-owned defense conglomerate Norinco, or China North Industries Corporation. Successive Vietnamese governments have been heavily reliant on arms supplied by Russia for decades. The country accounted for more than 80

percent of Vietnam's arms imports between 1995 and 2023, according to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

But imports from Russia have dropped off in recent years amid international sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine. "The war in Ukraine has exposed the vulnerabilities of relying too heavily on Russian arms," said Nguyen Khac Giang, a visiting fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. "Diversification isn't just a necessity, it's an opportunity for Vietnam to upgrade to more advanced systems while reducing dependence on any single partner," Giang said. "The expo is Vietnam's way of signaling it's open to new partnerships."

Boeing and Lockheed Martin were among 14 American companies at the fair, while two exhibitors were Chinese and others were from Germany, Iran, Israel and Ukraine, as well as Russia. As well as

aircraft, they put on display tanks, missiles, drones, firearms and radar systems, including by several Vietnamese firms. Speaking on the sidelines of the fair, US Ambassador to Vietnam Marc Knapper said US and Vietnamese companies could potentially work together in areas such as joint production and technology transfers.

"Our goal is to ensure that Vietnam has what it needs to defend its interests, at sea, in the air, on the ground and in cyberspace," he said. Both Washington and Hanoi share concerns about Beijing's moves to assert its presence in the contested South China Sea, where Vietnam and other Southeast Asian nations have competing claims with China. At the opening ceremony, Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh described the expo as "delivering a message of peace, cooperation, and shared development". — AFP

Sony buys 10% of 'Elden Ring' owner for \$320m

TOKYO: Japanese electronics titan Sony said Thursday it had paid more than \$300 million for a 10 percent stake in the media conglomerate behind the smash-hit game 'Elden Ring'. Kadokawa, which is known for producing anime and publishing books including manga comics, said last month that Sony had made an approach to the firm, sending the media firm's stocks soaring. On Thursday they said in a joint statement they had signed a "strategic capital and business alliance agreement".

The new deal will see Sony pay 50 billion yen (\$320 million) for 12 million new Kadokawa shares, making it the company's biggest shareholder. The transfer to Sony, which has already held a stake in Kadokawa since 2021, is due to take effect on January 7. The move will expand Sony's games and cartoons portfolio, after its 2021 purchase of Crunchyroll, a once semi-legal US-based sharing site that is now a streaming giant for Japanese anime.

Kadokawa and Sony "historically have collaborated on various projects, and through this capital and business alliance, intend to further strengthen our collaboration to maximize both companies' IP value globally", the statement said. Kadokawa also owns Tokyo-based FromSoftware, the creator of the dark fantasy role-playing adventure game "Elden Ring", which was developed with help from "Game of Thrones" author George RR Martin. Sony said last month that its net profit jumped in the second quarter thanks to stronger sales in gaming, music and imaging sensors. Its PlayStation 5 Pro console hit shelves in November, but its price tag - 799.99 euros (\$847) in Europe—has raised eyebrows among gamers. — AFP

Amazon workers embark on strike

NEW YORK: Amazon.com workers at seven US facilities walked off the job early on Thursday during the holiday shopping rush, aiming to pressure the retailer into contract talks with their union. Warehouse workers in cities including New York, Atlanta and San Francisco are taking part in the "largest" strike against Amazon, said the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which represents about 10,000 workers at 10 of the firm's facilities. The company, however, said it does not expect any effect on its operations during one of the busiest times of the year.

Unions represent only about 1 percent of the hourly workforce of Amazon, the world's second-largest private employer after Walmart, and it has multiple locations in many metro areas. The Teamsters had given Amazon a Dec 15 deadline to begin negotiations and warehouse workers had recently voted to authorize a strike. "If your package is delayed during the holidays, you can blame Amazon's insatiable greed," Teamsters' General President Sean O'Brien said late on Wednesday. "We gave Amazon a clear deadline to come to the table and do right by our members. They ignored it. This strike is on them."

The retailer's shares AMZN.O were trading 1.5 per-



WASHINGTON: Shoppers enter an Amazon grocery store in Federal Way, Washington. — AFP

cent higher in premarket hours, a sign that investors do not expect a big disruption from the strike. The Teamsters have "intentionally misled the public" and "threatened, intimidated and attempted to coerce" employees and third-party drivers to join them, an Amazon spokesperson said on Thursday. Observers said Amazon was unlikely to come to the table to bargain as that could open the door to more union actions. It employs more than 800,000 people at its US warehouses and has more than 600 fulfillment centers, delivery stations and same-day facilities in the country.

Amazon has responded to recent organization efforts with legal challenges. Amazon has filed objections with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) over a 2022 union vote in Staten Island, alleging bias among agency officials. It also challenged the constitutionality of the NLRB in a September federal lawsuit. Earlier this year, the company announced a \$2.1 billion investment to raise pay for fulfillment and transportation employees in the US, increasing base wages for employees by at least \$1.50 to around \$22 per hour, a roughly 7 percent increase. — Reuters

The last of Ethiopia's Soviet-era Lada cars

ADDIS ABABA: Leaning under the hood, Tesfahun Assefa checks the oil and the radiator. All good. But when he climbs inside and starts the engine, the Lada coughs and kicks out thick black smoke. Tesfahun, a taxi driver in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, has been driving the iconic Soviet car for nine years. The gear stick is unresponsive, the seats have holes and it struggles to exceed 40 kilometres per hour (25 miles per hour) on hills.

"This model is from 1987, I'm only three or four years older," he says with a smile, tapping the peeling bodywork. The boxy, blue cars were once omnipresent in Addis Ababa and are still often spotted along its long avenues and alleyways. Their heyday was in the 1970s and 1980s when Ethiopia was ruled by the Derg, a Marxist-inspired military regime with close ties to the Soviet Union. But the Lada's days are numbered after the Ethiopian authorities banned the import of petrol-powered vehicles this year, hoping to push drivers towards new, primarily electric, cars.



ADDIS ABABA: Pedestrians walk past old Lada cars parked and ready to carry goods in the vicinity of a busy market in Addis Ababa. — AFP photos

And the recent devaluation of the currency, the birr, has increased the cost of importing spare parts. "To repair the engine, I would have to pay between 40,000 and 50,000 birr (between \$315 and \$400)," said Tesfahun. The whole car is only worth around 65,000 birr and Tesfahun only earns about 500 birr (around \$4) a day. Nor can he afford to change cars as the authorities want. "Some of my friends who



ADDIS ABABA: Dedicated Lada mechanic Tamiru Melaku, 50, repairs the engine of a vintage 1970s Lada at his workshop in Addis Ababa.

could afford it have replaced their cars, but those like me who cannot afford it must rely on God," he said.

'Deeply sad'

In the Kechene Medhane Alem neighborhood, north of the capital, a mechanic is leaning over the dusty engine of a Lada in his overalls. There is no garage here. Repairs are done outside on the road.

"Unfortunately, Lada cars may not last another 10 years, and maybe not even a single year," said the mechanic, Tamiru Melaku, who is also president of a Lada association.

The 50-year-old, hammering away at a defective part with a mallet, says he is "deeply sad". "One of the main reasons for the disappearance of these cars is the lack of spare parts... To repair this car, we recovered components from dismantled vehicles, because new parts are simply not available," he added.

At the transport ministry, expert Yizengaw Yitayih says he doesn't have exact figures but is sure the number of Ladas in circulation has fallen fast in recent years thanks to the shift to "newer and less polluting ones". Ladas are increasingly consigned to transporting goods rather than people. Near a market in Sidist Kilo in the capital, dozens of Ladas are parked waiting for customers. Mulugesu Hibdo Biramo, a 34-year-old merchant, is loading one up with potatoes, tomatoes and citrus fruits, divided between the roof and the boot. Ladas still play this vital role since ride-hailing apps don't offer goods transport. But they are "disappearing slowly" from the streets, said Mulugesu, adding that he saw it as a necessary "transformation". — AFP

Business

UK biggest water supplier wins lifeline as customer bills hiked

Thames riddled with £16 billion-worth of debt

LONDON: Britain's largest water supplier Thames Water, which is drowning in debt, won a financial lifeline Thursday as regulators allowed it to massively hike customers' bills, though by less than the company demanded. Water regulator Ofwat said Thames Water, which supplies around 16 million homes and businesses in London and elsewhere in southern England, could increase average bills by 35 percent between now and 2030. Thames, riddled with £16 billion-worth (\$20 billion) of debt, is in desperate need of funds to update its infrastructure.

The company and its UK peers have recently been hit with heavy fines over failures to plug raw sewage discharges in rivers. Thames customers are set to see average annual water bills rise to £588 by 2030. It falls short of the 59-percent hike the company requested as it negotiates a lifeline loan from creditors to keep operating beyond March. Approval of a £3 billion debt plan could help save it falling into public hands. Responding to Ofwat's decision Thursday, Thames Water said in a statement that it "will take time to review the determination in detail".

'Right to be angry'

Ofwat on Thursday also fined the company £18.2 million over its decision to pay "unjustified" dividends to shareholders while performance suffered. "The public are right to be angry," Environmental Secretary Steve Reed said following the regulator's announcements. "This Labor government will ring fence money earmarked for investment so it can never be diverted for bonuses and shareholder payouts," he added.



DARTFORD: A photograph shows a board sign with the logo of the company at the entrance of Thames Water's Long Reach Sewage Treatment Plant, in Dartford, east of London. — AFP

His comments came as the government launched an inquiry into reforming the water sector. Environmentalists have increasingly voiced outrage at the rise in pollution across UK waterways, and have pointed the finger at privatized water companies. It's not yet clear whether Ofwat's decision to allow Thames to hike bills will help strengthen the company's performance enough for it to avoid a state bailout.

Such a rescue would be a blow to the government in the face of tight public finances. Thames Water - owned

by a consortium of shareholders including Canada's Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System and the British Universities Superannuation Scheme - has recently attracted interest from private buyers. Infrastructure investor Covalis Capital proposed an upfront buyout offer of £1 billion, with the potential to bring in French utility giant Suez. Thames Water's latest earnings revealed a loss of £190 million for the six months to the end of September. Its turnover increased 10 percent thanks to an increase in customer charges. — AFP

Georgia economy under threat as protests rage

TBILISI: Georgia's political crisis is already having an economic impact with hotels and restaurants shutting down, investments on hold and a threat of currency devaluation. Shalva Alaverdashvili showed an AFP team the empty tables at his Gallery Palace "ghost hotel" in the center of the capital Tbilisi. Three rooms out of 70 are currently occupied, said Alaverdashvili, who manages a total of six hotels in the city. One of them, the Citrus, has five out of 36 rooms occupied -- and those only by journalists who have come to cover the protests.

Citrus and Gallery Palace are located just in front of government and parliament buildings where there have

been regular clashes between pro-EU protesters and police. Georgia has seen frequent mass demonstrations ever since national elections in October in which the ruling Georgian Dream party claimed victory. The opposition accuses Georgian Dream of election fraud and of turning Georgia towards Russia and away from its long-standing bid to join the European Union. On the same street as the hotels, Luarsab Togonidze opened up his restaurant but there were no customers on a Monday night. The 39-year-old said the lack of clients was "devastating" for his business.

Hotels and restaurants in Tbilisi have suffered since the protests broke out, which further escalated in November after the government said that it would put Georgia's EU membership bid on hold until 2028. Near Freedom Square, where police water cannons are parked, Elina Ketsbaia said she had seen the number of clients "go down by around 90 percent" in the two restaurants she co-manages with a cousin, Inga Zukhbaia. — AFP



TBILISI: A view of a restaurant of Gallery Palace hotel in Tbilisi. Hotels and restaurants shut down, housing demand down, investment projects suspended and the threat of devaluation as Georgia's political crisis is already having an economic impact. — AFP

SK hynix to get \$458m funding for US chip facilities

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden's administration has finalized an award of up to \$458 million for SK hynix, officials said Thursday, furthering efforts to lock in his legacy in boosting US semiconductor production before Donald Trump takes office. The money supports a broader SK hynix investment of around \$3.9 billion in Indiana, where the South Korean semiconductor firm is building facilities including a memory packaging plant for artificial intelligence products, said the Commerce Department.

US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said "we are solidifying America's AI hardware supply chain" with the move. SK hynix is the world's second-biggest maker of memory chips. "This new facility will develop state-of-the-art advanced packaging, which is more and more important to US semiconductor leadership," said Arati Prabhakar, assistant to the US president for science and technology.

The investment is expected to create some 1,000 new facility jobs, and there will also be a research hub set up via SK hynix's partnership with Purdue University, the Commerce Department added. Besides the direct funding of up to \$458 million, the United States is also providing up to \$500 million in loans to the company, through a loan authority under the CHIPS and Science Act. The Biden administration has unveiled billions in grants through the CHIPS Act, and officials have been working to get deals across the finish line in recent weeks - before the new US administration enters the White House.

President-elect Trump has previously criticized the CHIPS Act, which the grant falls under. But a finalized award means that funds can start flowing as companies reach milestones. Of more than \$36 billion in proposed funding allocated, officials have finalized \$26 billion so far. Other companies whose agreements have also been firmed up in recent days include Taiwanese chip giant TSMC, GlobalFoundries, Intel and Micron Technology. The United States makes some 10 percent of the world's chips, with none being the most advanced, and Washington has been working to shore up the country's chipmaking capabilities. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 19 DECEMBER 2024

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| No. | Ticker | Sector | Price Movement & Performance | | | | | | | | | | Valuation Multiples * | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-------|------------|------------|--------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|------|------|-------|------|
| | | | Open Price | Close Price | Week High | Week Low | Range | Volume | WTD Change | WTD % | YTD % | Support Level | Resistance Level | P/E | P/B | Yield | Beta |
| 101 | National Bank of Kuwait | Banking | 880 | 870 | 882 | 870 | 12 | 18,657,177 | -10 | -1.14% | 2.18% | 870 | 879 | 12.9 | 1.65 | 3.9% | 1.04 |
| 102 | Gulf Bank | Banking | 330 | 330 | 334 | 320 | 14 | 29,926,416 | 0 | 0.00% | 23.31% | 329 | 338 | 21.8 | 1.52 | 3.5% | 1.27 |
| 104 | Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait | Banking | 275 | 266 | 278 | 266 | 12 | 7,429,796 | -10 | -3.62% | 19.87% | 260 | 267 | 13.0 | 0.94 | 3.2% | 1.05 |
| 106 | Kuwait International Bank | Banking | 193 | 189 | 194 | 189 | 5 | 15,039,113 | -5 | -2.58% | 29.78% | 186 | 193 | 13.1 | 0.68 | 2.5% | 1.11 |
| 107 | Burgan Bank | Banking | 188 | 183 | 189 | 182 | 7 | 16,719,277 | -5 | -2.66% | 11.72% | 176 | 185 | 18.0 | 0.65 | 3.1% | 1.37 |
| 108 | Kuwait Finance House | Banking | 743 | 744 | 744 | 735 | 9 | 43,928,974 | 3 | 0.40% | 11.70% | 740 | 745 | 20.2 | 2.13 | 2.6% | 1.08 |
| 109 | Boubyan Bank | Banking | 567 | 551 | 568 | 551 | 17 | 19,490,426 | -17 | -2.99% | -2.66% | 527 | 557 | 27.2 | 2.27 | 1.3% | 1.14 |
| 201 | Kuwait Investment | Financial Services | 174 | 171 | 176 | 169 | 7 | 5,516,577 | -4 | -2.29% | 34.65% | 168 | 178 | 7.7 | 0.77 | 5.8% | 2.05 |
| 204 | National Investments | Financial Services | 256 | 252 | 256 | 249 | 7 | 7,569,585 | -4 | -1.56% | 5.44% | 248 | 257 | 17.1 | 1.07 | 5.9% | 2.07 |
| 205 | Kuwait Projects | Financial Services | 96.4 | 93 | 96.9 | 90 | 6.9 | 64,115,120 | -3.5 | -3.65% | -11.90% | 90 | 92.5 | NM | 0.52 | 0.0% | 0.98 |
| 212 | Arzan Financial Group | Financial Services | 242 | 254 | 260 | 242 | 18 | 72,952,329 | 12 | 4.96% | 25.79% | 247 | 254 | 15.8 | 1.32 | 0.8% | 1.36 |
| 222 | Aayan Leasing and Investment | Financial Services | 152 | 159 | 160 | 148 | 12 | 45,754,858 | 6 | 3.92% | -8.62% | 158 | 160 | 9.7 | 1.03 | 4.8% | 1.79 |
| 252 | Al Imtiaz Investment | Financial Services | 65.0 | 61.5 | 67.5 | 57.5 | 10.0 | 17,457,192 | -3.5 | -5.38% | 8.85% | 60.1 | 62.0 | NM | 0.43 | 0.0% | 1.39 |
| 401 | Kuwait Real Estate | Real Estate | 245 | 254 | 256 | 245 | 11 | 76,851,486 | 8 | 3.25% | 31.34% | 246 | 256 | 19.9 | 1.45 | 1.5% | 1.16 |
| 404 | Salhia Real Estate | Real Estate | 420 | 408 | 425 | 408 | 17 | 5,924,482 | -12 | -2.86% | -0.14% | 406 | 416 | 20.4 | 1.31 | 3.5% | 0.50 |
| 413 | Mabaneer | Real Estate | 804 | 780 | 806 | 780 | 26 | 5,506,964 | -25 | -3.11% | -1.92% | 778 | 799 | 16.4 | 1.68 | 1.7% | 0.92 |
| 418 | The Commercial Real Estate | Real Estate | 157 | 155 | 160 | 154 | 6 | 10,543,732 | -4 | -2.52% | 55.00% | 150 | 156 | 14.8 | 0.93 | 2.5% | 0.71 |
| 501 | National Industries | Financial Services | 249 | 249 | 254 | 248 | 6 | 22,847,647 | 0 | 0.00% | 28.16% | 246 | 252 | 12.5 | 1.13 | 1.9% | 1.63 |
| 505 | Gulf Cable | Industrials | 1,592 | 1,629 | 1,665 | 1,592 | 73 | 1,769,364 | 13 | 0.80% | 24.35% | 1,600 | 1,661 | 17.3 | 1.32 | 4.0% | 1.18 |
| 506 | HEISCO | Industrials | 820 | 813 | 835 | 810 | 25 | 1,608,441 | -15 | -1.81% | -0.85% | 793 | 815 | 18.0 | 2.00 | 3.7% | 0.97 |
| 514 | Boubyan Petrochemical | Basic Materials | 705 | 696 | 705 | 690 | 15 | 3,753,279 | -9 | -1.28% | 18.97% | 687 | 708 | 13.1 | 1.51 | 8.6% | 1.00 |
| 603 | Agility | Industrials | 264 | 250 | 266 | 250 | 16 | 24,158,410 | -14 | -5.30% | -50.88% | 241 | 253 | 10.7 | 0.67 | 7.8% | 1.62 |
| 605 | Zain | Telecommunications | 476 | 475 | 482 | 468 | 14 | 11,358,347 | -2 | -0.42% | -6.31% | 473 | 476 | 11.3 | 1.77 | 7.5% | 0.53 |
| 623 | Human Soft Holding | Industrials | 2,530 | 2,480 | 2,535 | 2,460 | 75 | 1,256,421 | -28 | -1.12% | -23.39% | 2,470 | 2,500 | 8.3 | 3.02 | 13.3% | 0.64 |
| 642 | ALAFCO | Industrials | 535 | 558 | 559 | 535 | 24 | 71,793 | 13 | 2.39% | -67.44% | 550 | 559 | 2.9 | 0.92 | 0.0% | 1.23 |
| 654 | JAZEERA | Consumer Discretionary | 1,063 | 1,035 | 1,078 | 1,015 | 63 | 1,743,952 | -30 | -2.82% | -25.49% | 1,021 | 1,050 | 31.4 | 5.76 | 2.7% | 1.42 |
| 813 | GFH Financial Group | Financial Services | 99 | 98.7 | 100 | 97.7 | 1.8 | 17,686,872 | 0.2 | 0.20% | 29.36% | 96.5 | 99 | 10.3 | 1.18 | 5.1% | 1.38 |
| 821 | Warba Bank | Banking | 191 | 190 | 192 | 190 | 2 | 10,977,161 | -1 | -0.52% | 8.28% | 188 | 192 | 24.3 | 1.01 | 0.0% | 1.11 |
| 822 | Kuwait Telecommunications | Telecommunications | 564 | 552 | 565 | 548 | 17 | 3,054,977 | -13 | -2.30% | -1.95% | 548 | 555 | 16.6 | 2.35 | 6.4% | 0.71 |
| 823 | Mezzan Holding | Consumer Staples | 938 | 920 | 950 | 915 | 35 | 2,137,154 | 4 | 0.44% | 60.00% | 879 | 979 | 19.6 | 2.44 | 2.2% | 0.52 |
| 824 | Integrated Holding | Industrials | 509 | 508 | 510 | 493 | 17 | 3,123,338 | -4 | -0.78% | -0.39% | 505 | 510 | 23.4 | 2.05 | 4.0% | 0.70 |
| 827 | Boursa Kuwait | Financial Services | 2,240 | 2,345 | 2,345 | 2,179 | 166 | 1,589,579 | 105 | 4.69% | 36.02% | 2,287 | 2,350 | 26.0 | 7.19 | 3.2% | 1.34 |
| 830 | AL GHANIM | Consumer Discretionary | 1,041 | 1,024 | 1,050 | 1,013 | 37 | 3,445,783 | -26 | -2.48% | -3.03% | 1,010 | 1,033 | 9.6 | 3.43 | 6.9% | 0.81 |
| 831 | Beyout Investment | Financial Services | 428 | 416 | 437 | 416 | 21 | 3,479,867 | -17 | -3.93% | #VALUE! | 410 | 420 | 15.3 | 2.30 | 0.0% | 0.29 |

* As of end of week closing

Business

Ivory Coast wants bigger share of its mining boom

Huge deposits of natural resources push economy in new direction



AGBAOU: Employees work at a gold mine located approximately 200km northwest of the port city of Abidjan. A major cocoa producer, Ivory Coast in recent years has tapped into its rich underground potential, leaning into oil and gas production and investing in a booming mining industry. — AFP photos



ABIDJAN: Ivory Coast's mining industry is booming, driven by foreign investment and the discovery of new deposits, but the country now wants a bigger slice of the pie for its own businesses. Huge deposits of natural resources - including oil, gas and gold - have pushed the economy of the world's biggest cocoa producer in a new direction. Three discoveries of oil and gas have been made since 2021 and gold production last year was four times higher than a decade earlier.

The West African country's bedrock also contains iron, diamonds, nickel, manganese, bauxite, copper and newly discovered reserves of coltan - a precious ore used to make electronic devices. Ivory Coast has offered attractive conditions to bring in foreign investors. Now, a revision of the mining code due in the coming weeks will target homegrown investment. Current laws introduced in 2014 "facilitated the arrival of many investors" by extending permits and creating a land register for greater transparency, director general of mines Seydou Coulibaly said.

Few details about what will be in the revised mining code are known. But it is expected to focus on local businesses and communities, Coulibaly added, in order to boost the national economy. Mining Minister Mamadou Sangafowa Coulibaly has urged experts drawing up the text to include measures to "ensure fairness in the distribution of the wealth, once the discovery has been made".

Ten-year boom

"The new code will be more attractive and the means are being put in place to ensure that oper-

ations also benefit Ivorians, particularly by involving national banks, without discouraging international investors," said specialist Cedric Sehe, who heads mining promotion firm CAMP2E. It comes at a time when the military juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are taking steps to reclaim mining resources from foreign companies operating in the Sahelian countries. In Ivory Coast over the last 10 years, discoveries of hydrocarbons and minerals have multiplied, production has grown and resources have diversified.

The number of mining permits has roughly tripled to 29, while exploration permits have increased from 140 to 189. Gold production shot up from 13 to 51 tons between 2012 and 2023. The mining sector now accounts for four percent of Ivory Coast's gross domestic product, compared to just 1.5 percent a decade ago, according to the Professional Association of Miners of Ivory Coast (GPMCI). Likewise, tax revenue from mining has ballooned to 250 billion CFA francs (\$399,500, 381 million euros) - a 20-fold increase over the same period. Total investment in Ivorian mines was estimated to be more than 500 billion CFA francs last year.

Prioritizing Ivorians

Ivorian authorities already sought to "promote and develop" local extractive companies under a 2022 law. However, it only applied to oil and gas activities. Under the legislation, Ivorian firms should already get priority in public tenders and certain activities must be carried out only by them. They include "slickline" operations, where a cable is used to

at state-run businesses and close to Putin. The Kremlin leader said Russia had grown faster than the euro-zone over the last two years.

Russian oil refinery hit

Meanwhile, a massive Ukrainian drone and missile attack sparked a fire at an oil refinery in southern Russia overnight, both Russian and Ukrainian officials said Thursday. Kyiv has struck several Russian energy facilities throughout the nearly three-year conflict, claiming the hits were fair retaliation for Moscow's large-scale attacks on its own electricity grid. Ukraine's General Staff said it had hit the Novoshakhtinsk oil refinery in Russia's southern Rostov region in an overnight attack.

The site is "used to meet the needs of the Russian armed forces," it said, adding: "A fire has been confirmed in the area of the facility." The Russian governor of the Rostov region, Yuri Slyusar, had earlier reported a fire at the site after a "massive attack by the enemy, who used more than three dozen drones and three missiles." The fire at the refinery - which is 10 kilometers from the international border with Ukraine, but 200 kilometers from the nearest Ukrainian positions - lasted for more than six hours, according to posts on his Telegram channel.

Images shared on Russian social media showed a large bright fire raging at what was reported to be the facility, with thick grey smoke billowing into the air. AFP could not verify the images. A source in Ukraine's SBU security services told AFP that the combined missile and drone attack had caused "significant damage." "SBU drones first overload-

ed the Russian air defenses protecting the plant. By doing so, they created a window of opportunity for Ukrainian missiles, which the SBU and the Navy jointly used in the next stage," the source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said.

Russia's defense ministry said Ukraine fired a total of 84 drones towards its territory overnight. It said 36 were destroyed over the Rostov region, which borders Ukraine and is the military headquarters for Moscow's offensive. Others were destroyed over the Bryansk, Belgorod, Voronezh, Kursk, Tambov and Krasnodar regions, the defense ministry said. Russia's border regions are frequent targets by Ukrainian aerial attacks, and both sides have escalated their bombardments over the last few months. — AFP

although the latest Fed rate-reduction had been priced in by markets, "when you include the forward guidance components, it was a hawkish cut". "Stronger expected growth married with higher anticipated inflation—it's no wonder the Fed reduced the number of expected rate cuts in 2025." — AFP

lower tools into oil wells, said Erus Djimo from Ivorian company Hydrodrill, which operates two oil and gas sites. Speaking at the International Extractive and Energy Resources Exhibition in the main city, Abidjan, last month, he said the technique required technology "within the reach of local companies". The exhibition organized by the government was a first, and brought together local businesses and foreign heavyweights such as Italian giant Eni and Canada's Endeavour Mining.

Lack of finance

The 2022 law encouraged oil and gas industry companies "to recruit and employ Ivorian nationals as a matter of priority" and train local workers. Sangafowa Coulibaly, the mining minister, in May also announced the creation of a digital platform dedicated to the local sector to ease administrative procedures including licence applications and renewals and provide access for hydrocarbons tenders.

Local business manager Faustin N'Dri N'Guessan welcomed the shift towards helping Ivorian companies reap bigger profits. The new policy is an "opportunity to grow", said N'Guessan, from the infrastructure manufacturing and maintenance company Kuyo Pipeline. But "we do not really have financial backing", he complained, adding that the state needed to "understand that funds must be created" as investment currently comes from abroad or private initiatives. In a step towards addressing that need, the GPMCI professional miners' association announced last month that it would set up an investment fund to support local businesses and training. — AFP



MOSCOW: In this photograph, Russian President Vladimir Putin holds his annual end-of-year press conference in Moscow on December 19, 2024. — AFP

ed the Russian air defenses protecting the plant. By doing so, they created a window of opportunity for Ukrainian missiles, which the SBU and the Navy jointly used in the next stage," the source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said.

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LONDON: The Bank of England, Britain's central bank, is pictured in London on December 19, 2024. The Bank of England on Thursday said its nine-strong monetary policy committee voted 6-3 to keep rates on hold at 4.75%. — AFP

although the latest Fed rate-reduction had been priced in by markets, "when you include the forward guidance components, it was a hawkish cut". "Stronger expected growth married with higher anticipated inflation—it's no wonder the Fed reduced the number of expected rate cuts in 2025." — AFP

TikTok's rise from fun app to the US security concern

SAN FRANCISCO: As the US Supreme Court considers whether to uphold a law that could get TikTok banned in the United States, here is a look at the rise of the video-snippet social app.

Genesis

In 2016, Beijing-based ByteDance launched Douyin, a short video sharing app, making it available only in China. ByteDance released TikTok for the international market the following year, shortly before buying song "lip-synching" app Musical.ly and merging it into TikTok. The social network became a hit with its algorithm serving up endless collections of short, looping, typically playful videos posted by users.

Pandemic boom

TikTok's popularity soared during the COVID-19 pandemic declared in 2020, as people enduring lockdowns relied on the internet for diversion and entertainment. As a result, authorities began eyeing TikTok's influence and addictive appeal. TikTok became one of the most downloaded apps in the world as officials grew increasingly wary of the potential for the Chinese government to influence ByteDance or access user data. India banned TikTok in July of 2020 due to tensions with China.

Targeted by Trump

While Donald Trump was US president in 2020, he signed executive orders to ban TikTok in the country. Trump accused TikTok, without proof, of siphoning off American users' data to benefit Beijing and of censoring posts to please Chinese officials. Trump's decision came against a backdrop of political tension between Washington and Beijing. During a failed bid for re-election, the Republican campaigned on an anti-China message. Between legal challenges and Trump's loss to Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election, the executive orders did not take effect.

Billion mark

In September 2021, TikTok announced it had 1 billion monthly users worldwide. But concerns grew about TikTok users facing risks of addiction, propaganda, and spying. In 2022, BuzzFeed reported that ByteDance employees based in China had accessed non-public information from TikTok users. ByteDance tried to cool privacy concerns by hosting user data on servers managed in the United States by Oracle. The move did not ease concerns in the United States, where TikTok was banned from devices used by the military. An array of other government agencies and academic institutes followed suit, forbidding members from using TikTok. TikTok's Singaporean chief executive Shou Zi Chew was grilled by members of the US Congress during a 6-hour hearing in March of 2023.

Sell or go

TikTok was back in the hot seat in the United States in 2024, when President Joe Biden authorized a law requiring TikTok to be banned if ByteDance does not sell the app to a company not associated with a national security adversary. Washington's stated aim is to cut the risk of Beijing spying on or manipulating TikTok users, particularly the 170 million US users of the app. TikTok remains adamant that it has never shared user data with the Chinese government or done its bidding at the social network.

ByteDance sued the US government, arguing the law violates free speech rights. A final decision in that case is to be made by the US Supreme Court, which agreed on Tuesday to examine whether the pending ban violates the Constitution. The Supreme Court has scheduled a hearing on the matter for January 10. President-elect Donald Trump, who returns to office on January 20, has signaled he might intervene on TikTok's behalf. Trump recently spoke of having a "soft spot" for TikTok, and this year his campaign used the app to win support from young voters. — AFP

Russian inflation 'worrying': Putin

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday acknowledged concerns over high inflation, but insisted the economy was "stable" in the face of external threats. Russia's central bank is set to hike interest rates on Friday in its latest attempt to deal with the pace of price rises amid the military offensive on Ukraine. "With the economy as a whole, the situation in Russia is stable, despite external threats," Putin said at a televised end-of-year press conference. However, he added: "Inflation is a worrying signal." "The thing that is unpleasant and bad is the rise in prices. But I hope that if macroeconomic indicators are maintained, we will be able to cope with it."

Russia officially targets inflation of 4.0 percent, though prices have risen significantly faster since February 2022, when Moscow ordered troops into Ukraine. The central bank has raised rates to a two-decade high of 21 percent in a bid to cool inflation. It is set to raise them yet again at its final meeting of the year on Friday. Russia has massively ramped up spending on the military offensive, while hundreds of thousands of men have been drafted into the army, hired by arms producers or fled the country. That has triggered deep labor shortages, while the high borrowing costs have frustrated business leaders, including those

Stock markets decline as US Fed eyes fewer rate cuts

LONDON: European and Asian stock markets slid Thursday following sharp losses on Wall Street as the Federal Reserve signaled fewer cuts to US interest rates next year. In a busy week for rate decisions, the Fed on Wednesday trimmed borrowing costs by a quarter point but halved the number of similar cuts it expects to carry out in 2025. The dollar initially rallied on the outlook, while the yen was pressured Thursday also after the Bank of Japan kept borrowing costs unchanged.

The Bank of England as widely expected held its key interest rate steady due to UK inflation rising again, and it did not commit to when or by how much it will cut rates in 2025. While that decision was widely expected, more BoE policymakers voted for a cut, which sent the pound trimming its gains against the dollar and falling against the euro.

The split suggests "members may be more ner-



Weekender

FAN GUIDE TO KHALEEJI ZAIN 26



خليجي زين
KHALEEJI ZAIN
الكويت • 2024 • KUWAIT

The Khaleeji Zain 26 is one of the world's foremost regional football competitions held every two years featuring eight nation members of the Arabian Gulf region

Why is it called the Khaleeji Zain 26?

Formerly known as the Arabian Gulf Cup, the tournament will carry the Khaleeji Zain name for the second time following an agreement signed between the tournament and the leading technology and digital lifestyle company, Zain, prior to the 25th edition held in Basra two years ago.

Where is it being held?

The tournament will be held in Kuwait.

When is it being held?

The opening ceremony and first match will take place on Dec 21, and the tournament will run through until Jan 3 when the final will be played.

Who is competing?

The Khaleeji Zain 26 will feature the eight national teams of Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

What stadiums are being used?

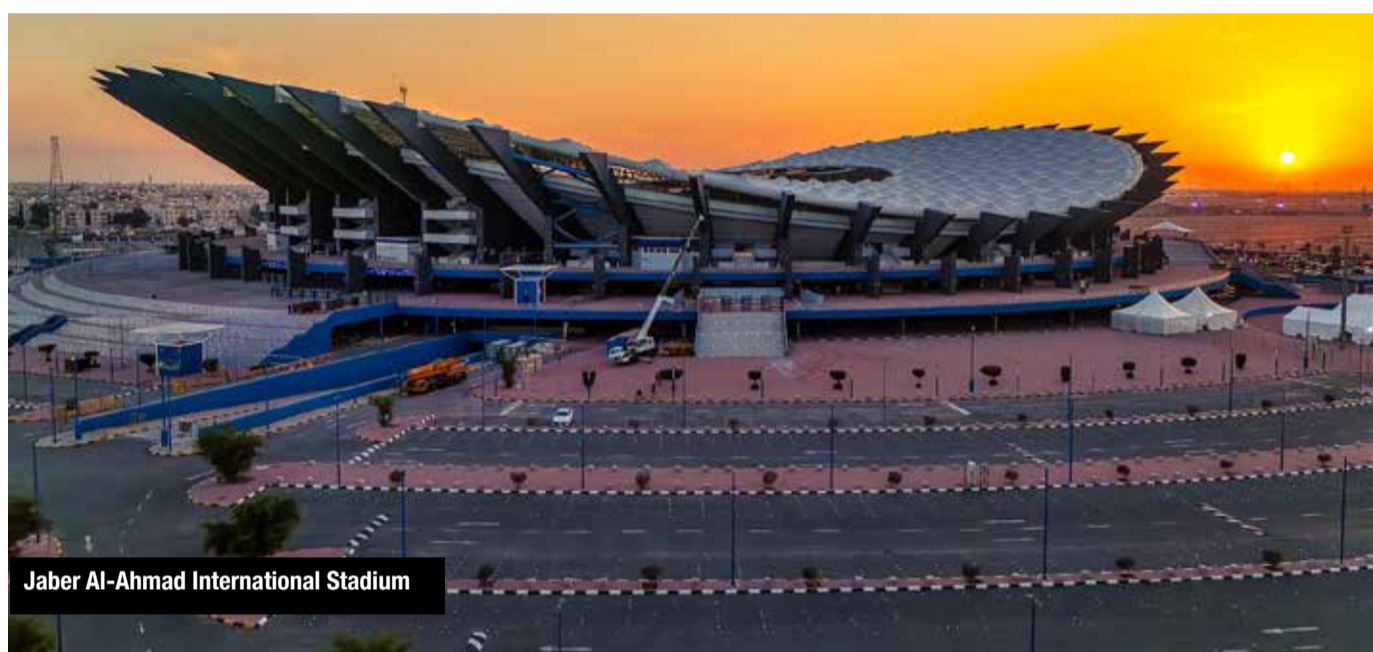
Matches will be played in Kuwait City at two stadiums – the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium (57,000 seats) and the Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Stadium (15,000 seats).

The current – and sixth - version was again presented by Qatar. This design is also in the form of an incense burner that carries a pearl, with the ghutra and the Gulf shemagh wrapping from the bottom to top, indicating unity despite what may be happening politically in the region. The Cup was made by the famous Bertone company in Italy, the same factory that made the current FIFA World Cup, and it is made of pure gold with a height of 47cm.

What/Who is the tournament mascot?

The Khaleeji Zain 26 mascot was unveiled at the official draw in November. It is called Haydo the Camel, who symbolizes the Gulf's environment and rich culture. The mascot will serve as a dynamic focal point for engaging with fans, especially families, and youngsters.

Haydo has been popular with fans of the Kuwaiti national team since the early 1980s when, following derogatory remarks made by New Zealand fans and media and about The Blues and their desert origins around a FIFA World Cup qualifying match, four camels were paraded around the pitch prior



Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium

For all matches at Jaber Al-Mubarak International Stadium:

| | |
|--------------------|------|
| Category One | KD 6 |
| Category Two | KD 4 |

Where you can buy tickets?

Download the 'Hayakom' application where there will be a clearly marked 'ticket' link to take you through to the special page set up in both English and Arabic. Tickets are also available to buy from ticket box offices located in the 360 Mall and the Avenues Mall.

What is the situation regarding volunteers?

We can expect up to 5,000 volunteers to be working on the event in a variety of roles both at the stadiums as well as elsewhere at official venues being used by the event, such as hotels and in ticketing and transport operations. The volunteers have been recruited through a variety of resources, as well as members of the public answering the call to get involved. Every volunteer is put through a generic training program, with sessions in English and Arabic, before taking on job-specific training at their venues.

A history of the tournament

Often referred to as The Gulf Cup, the Arabian Gulf Cup, and now the Khaleeji Zain 26, has been the region's premium football competition since its inaugural tournament was held in 1970 in Bahrain. That first tournament saw the participation of four teams – Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the eventual champions Kuwait.

The event is organized every two years and, over the decades, four more teams were added with the United Arab Emirates in 1972, Oman in 1974, Iraq in 1976, and finally Yemen in 2003, so that the 2024/25 edition in Basra will feature eight nations.

The tournament was originally organized in a league system, but has evolved into the current format of eight teams divided into two groups of four. The top two teams from each

group will proceed to the semi-finals with the winners going through to the final at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium on Jan 3.

The host country (Kuwait) always joins Group A, and the reigning champions (Iraq) go into Group B. Kuwait is the most successful nation in the Cup's history, winning it an impressive 10 times, with Saudi Arabia and Qatar winning it three times and 2023 winners, Iraq, winning it on four occasions each.

Oman and UAE have won it twice, while Bahrain won their only title in 2019. Yemen will be looking to make it out of the group stage for the first time in their history since joining the competition.

This will be the fifth time that Kuwait have hosted the Cup, but they have only won it once before on home soil

lowed by Saudi Arabia's Majed Abdullah and Iraq's Hussein Saeed who have scored 17 goals each. Saeed scored an incredible 10 goals at the 1979 tournament, the most by a Golden Boot winner.

What is the transport/parking situation at the stadiums?

There is parking for 12,000 cars available at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. And there is ample parking at the smaller Jaber Al-Mubarak International Stadium.

How easy will it be for fans to access the stadium?

Each ticket has a unique QR code that can only be scanned once at the stadium to avoid fake or duplicated tickets. The first check will take place at the



Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah International Stadium

What is the format?

The eight nations are split into two groups of four. The winners of each group will play the runners-up of the other group in the semi-finals, with the two victors going through to the final.

Who has been the most successful team in the tournament's history?

Kuwait have recorded the most tournament victories with 10, starting with the inaugural event back in 1970. Their last win came in 2010.

What is the story behind the actual trophy?

The original Arabian Gulf Cup trophy was first designed in the Bahraini capital, Manama, and manufactured in Lebanon from pure silver. It was hexagonal and consisted of two olive branches along both sides.

In the fourth edition of the Cup in 1976, Qatar presented a new design, made of pure gold.

But the trophy changed again in 1988 when Saudi Arabia revealed a new tree trunk-like trophy with a map of the Arabian Gulf states on top that was made in France.

It changed again in 1992 at the 11th edition of the tournament when Qatar unveiled a magnificent design by local artist Suleiman Al-Malik. The Cup was in the form of an incense burner carried by two falcons on each side. The flags of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries were engraved and it was manufactured in Italy.

Saudi Arabia presented a fifth trophy for their Riyadh tournament in 2002, designed in the form of an incense burner carrying a soccer ball, with the colors of the Gulf nations along its sides.

to the return leg in Kuwait. Kuwait had the last laugh by qualifying for the 1982 FIFA World Cup and a song written specially has echoed around the stadiums since. The 'Haydo' song's lyrics were written by poet, Abdul Latif Al-Bannai, composed by Youssef Al-Mahna and originally sang by Abdul Karim Abdul Qader, Abdul Mohsen Al-Mahna and Ghraid Al-Shate.

How much are tickets?

For the opening ceremony and match (Kuwait v Oman) on Dec 21 and the final on January 3 at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium:

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Gold | KD 30 |
| Silver | KD 20 |
| Category One | KD 10 |
| Category Two | KD 8 |
| Category Three | KD 6 |
| Category Four | KD 4 |

For all other matches at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium:

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Gold | KD 20 |
| Silver | KD 15 |
| Category One | KD 8 |
| Category Two | KD 6 |
| Category Three | KD 4 |
| Category Four | KD 2 |



Volunteer training

back in 1990. The tournament is organized by the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) in co-ordination with the local football association and will be delivered in 2024/25 from Dec 21-Jan 3. Only Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar have featured at every edition of the tournament since its inception, with the trio set to make their 26th appearances in Iraq.

Who is the tournament's all-time top scorer?

The all-time top goal scorer for the Gulf Cup is Kuwait's Jassem Yaqoub, who has scored 18 goals, closely fol-

lowed by Saudi Arabia's Majed Abdullah and Iraq's Hussein Saeed who have scored 17 goals each. Saeed scored an incredible 10 goals at the 1979 tournament, the most by a Golden Boot winner.

Once the ticket is scanned and cleared, fans will then proceed towards a second check before they can advance into the stadium bowl itself. At Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, 50 double full-height turnstiles with 100 QR code readers are installed, while this second tier of checks at Jaber Al-Mubarak International Stadium will consist of 58 readers on 36 'tripod' turnstiles.

The spectator-management system will allow for a steady flow of fans into the stadium and avoid overcrowding at the gates. It is a similar system used at major football tournaments such as the FIFA World Cup.

Will there be entertainment at the grounds on match day?

Fans attending games for the Khaleeji Zain 26 can expect a World Cup-style experience on match days at both stadiums. Fan zones and activities are being created and music and in-stadium interactive entertainment will be happening up to three hours before kick-offs when the turnstiles open to encourage supporters to arrive early and enjoy their Khaleeji Zain 26 experience.



Ticket box office



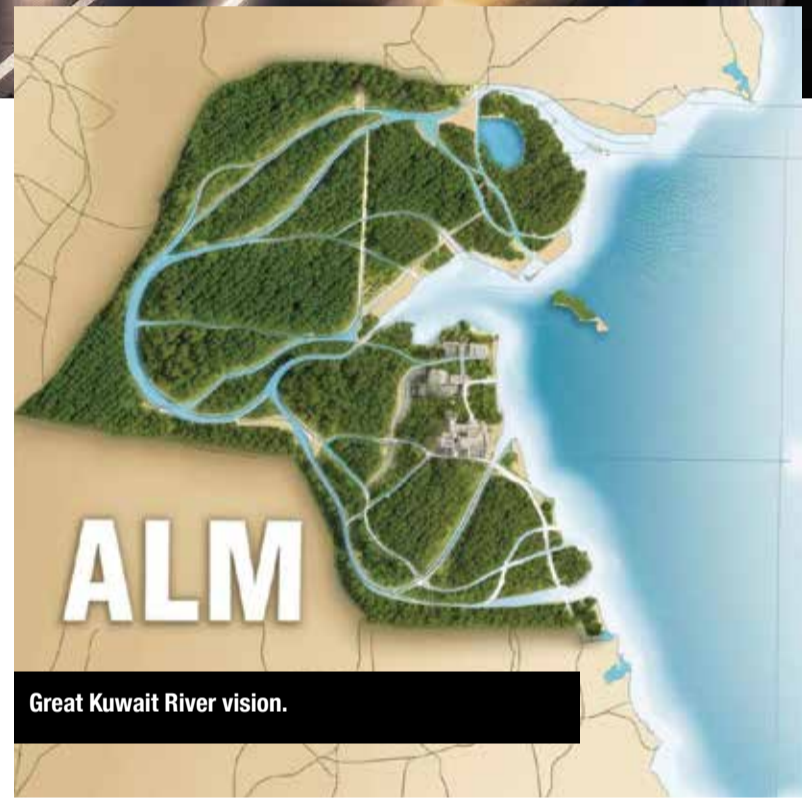
A design of a bridge with the sea stretching on both sides.

Vision for a sustainable Kuwait



By Faten Omar

Every citizen dreams of seeing their country thrive, but Adnan Al-Mowail decided to take action, aligning his plans with the New Kuwait 2035 vision. Using his expertise as a designer, Al-Mowail launched "The Future of Kuwait" project, aimed at transforming Kuwait into a sustainable, diversified country with a high standard of living. He spoke to Kuwait Times about this project.



Great Kuwait River vision.

Kuwait Times: Tell us more about 'The Future of Kuwait' project, particularly the 'Great Kuwait River'. How do modern countries utilize artificial river water sources?

Al-Mowail: The idea for the 'Great Kuwait River' began as a concept sketch I shared on my personal social media on March 22, 2022. As an interior designer passionate about nature and aesthetics, I envisioned this project to revive Kuwait's natural beauty and improve the mental well-being of its residents.

KT: How do you see future designs, like the suspended bridge and metro system, impacting quality of life in Kuwait?

Al-Mowail: As Kuwait prepares to welcome more tourists under the New Kuwait 2035 vision, diverse transportation systems will be crucial to ease movement, especially during peak hours. The Kuwait Metro project, now in its final stages of study, will greatly improve mobility and enhance daily life for both residents and visitors.

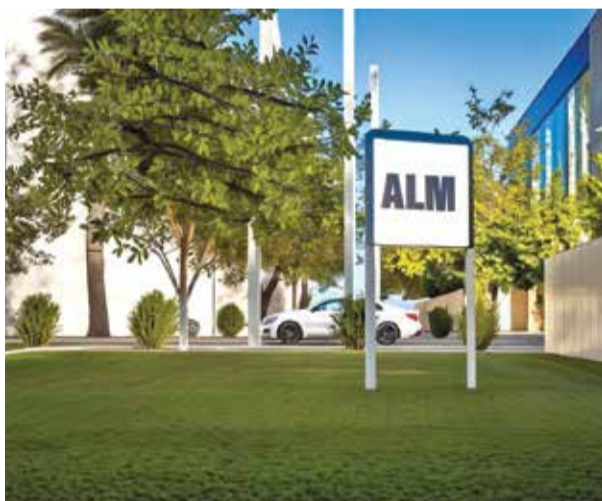
my garden due to afforestation, as supported by scientific studies. Green spaces not only lower temperatures and purify the air, but also reduce stress and promote mental well-being. These benefits make afforestation a priority in urban planning.

KT: What is a design you aspire to implement in reality?

Al-Mowail: I hope to design and oversee the construction of a model district based on

the area. A dedicated metro system would ease transportation, while each cluster would include a security center, clinic, mosque and state-of-the-art school. Aesthetically, artificial rivers inspired by Venice but infused with a Kuwaiti identity would flow between homes. Abundant greenery would create a visually stunning and eco-friendly environment.

KT: What are your plans for implementing these designs? Have you col-



KT: What inspires your innovative ideas, like planting mangrove trees?

Al-Mowail: I've been inspired by the UAE, a leader in cultivating coastal mangrove trees. Mangroves are among the most effective natural air purifiers, offering immense ecological benefits. These trees grow independently after being planted as seedlings, creating lush coastal ecosystems. They also serve as tourist attractions due to their unique and striking appearance.

KT: What tools or technologies do you use in your design process?

Al-Mowail: I use tools like AutoCAD and SketchUp to bring my designs to life. Behind the concepts I share on social media are detailed technical plans, including pedestrian lane measurements, street lighting designs and traffic lane configurations. All adhere to international standards to ensure practicality and efficiency.

KT: How do you view the role of afforestation and green spaces in reducing temperatures and improving air quality in Kuwait?

Al-Mowail: My designs reflect my deep love for greenery. I've personally observed up to an 8-degree temperature reduction in



A modern street scene featuring a treelined avenue.

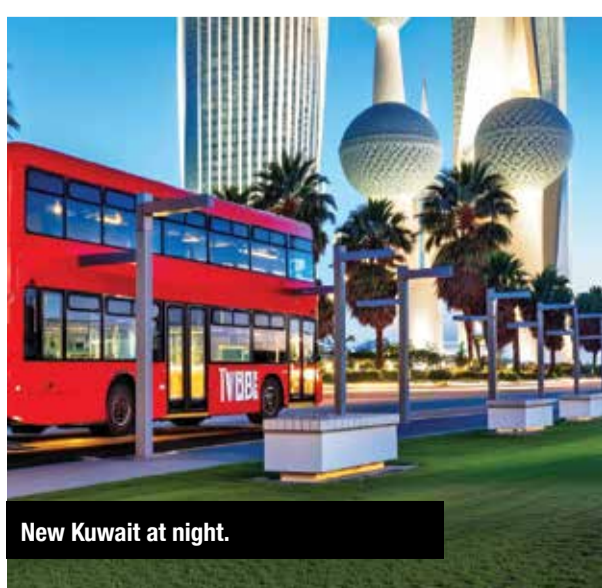
advanced residential community principles. This district would seamlessly combine modern amenities, visual harmony and all necessities for a high-quality living experience.

KT: What would your envisioned model district look like?

Al-Mowail: The model district would feature large residential clusters with all essential services, including a government services complex to minimize residents' need to leave

laborated with the government or private sectors?

Al-Mowail: I have not yet established any official collaborations with the government or private sector. However, I am eager to bring my ideas to life and use my education and experience to serve my beloved country, Kuwait.



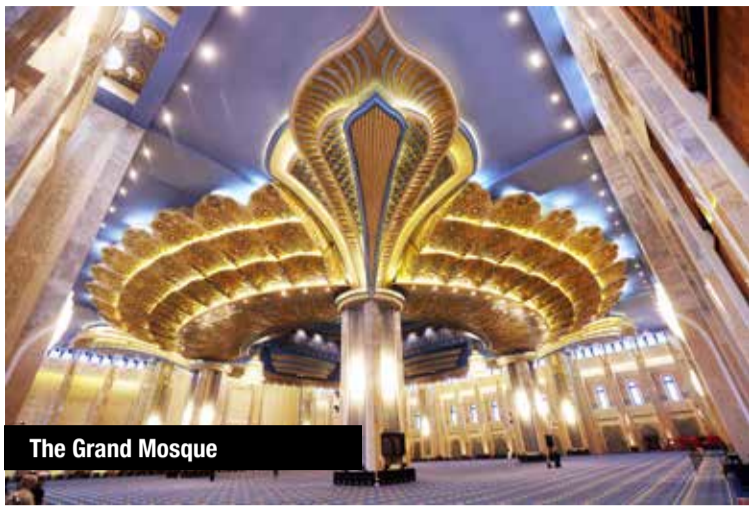
New Kuwait at night.



Night view of a suspension bridge with a metro train traversing the center, symbolizing modern connectivity and urban sophistication.



ALM



The Grand Mosque



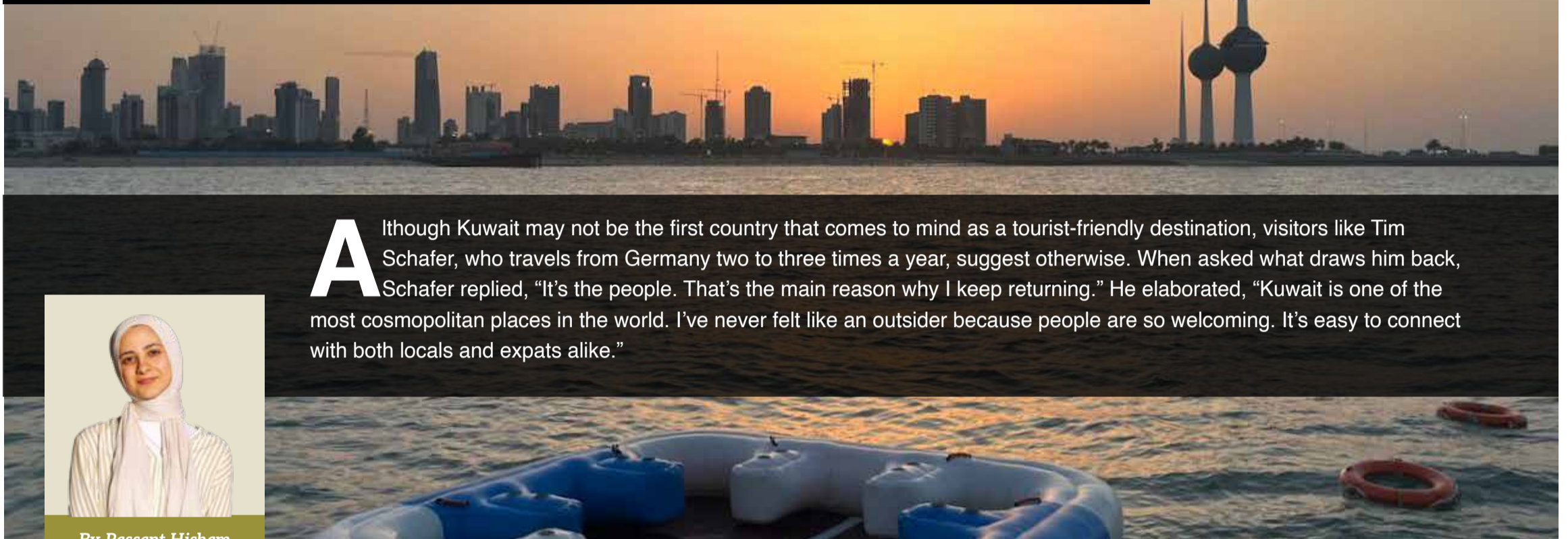
Al-Shaheed Park



Jaber Causeway
— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait's hidden appeal

Tourists highlight warm hospitality and unique experiences



Although Kuwait may not be the first country that comes to mind as a tourist-friendly destination, visitors like Tim Schafer, who travels from Germany two to three times a year, suggest otherwise. When asked what draws him back, Schafer replied, "It's the people. That's the main reason why I keep returning." He elaborated, "Kuwait is one of the most cosmopolitan places in the world. I've never felt like an outsider because people are so welcoming. It's easy to connect with both locals and expats alike."



By Passant Hisham

Mina Takla, a Kuwait resident who enjoys hosting travelers and guiding them on their trips, echoed this sentiment. "I often hear visitors say that people in Kuwait are very generous and always ready to lend a hand," he said, recounting stories shared by international friends. Many noted how they received free rides or found a place to stay when they needed help.

Schafer also praised Kuwait's authentic events, noting their originality compared to other destinations that feel "artificial, staged, and business-oriented".

He highlighted camel racing as an example of an event that is not just a tourist attraction but a genuine part of Kuwaiti culture. "It's about people simply living their lives, and I'm grateful for their openness in allowing others to be a part of it," he said.

Winter brings an array of outdoor activities for visitors, with traditions like kashta — outdoor trips to the desert — providing an ideal setting for socializing and fostering a sense of community, according to Takla and Schafer.

Among Kuwait's landmarks,

the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway stands out as the fourth-largest sea bridge in the world. While some tourists may initially feel indifferent toward malls, Takla noted that The Avenues often surprises visitors with its breathtaking architectural design. "It feels like an indoor city," he said. Al-Shaheed Park, with its dancing fountains and scenic views, also captivates guests.

Takla frequently takes tourists on mosque tours, with the Grand Mosque being a must-see. Schafer added his

enjoyment of visiting the Mamluki Lantcet Mosque, describing it as one of Kuwait's stunning architectural landmarks.

Food also leaves a lasting impression on visitors. Takla praised the high quality of Kuwait's cuisine and cleanliness, with many tourists expressing their love for local dishes like machboos diyay, seafood and biryani.

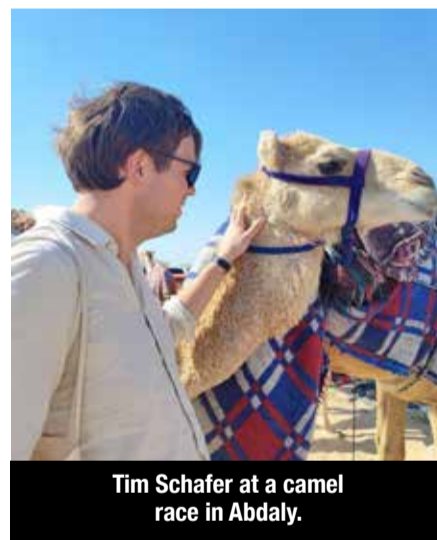
However, accommodation costs remain a challenge for tourists. Both Takla and Schafer suggested using the Couchsurfing app, which connects

travelers with hosts offering free stays. The platform also facilitates cultural exchange, enabling visitors to connect with locals and expats.

Schafer encouraged travelers to overcome any misconceptions about Kuwait by visiting and experiencing it firsthand. He emphasized respecting Kuwait's traditions and conservative nature, advising tourists to dress modestly and follow local rules, including the prohibition of alcohol.



A multicultural kashta gathering.



Tim Schafer at a camel race in Abdaly.



Mina Takla with visitors in a Kuwaiti restaurant.

WHAT'S ON IN KUWAIT

Event: Baytak Exhibition
Location: Kuwait Int'l Fairground- Halls 5,6
Date: December 19- 24, 2024

Event: Joke After Joke Open Mic
Location: Andalus Mall
Date: December 20, 2024
Time: 6: 30 pm



Event: Jahra Season
Location: Red Palace
Date: December 20- 21, 2024
Time: 6 pm to 8 pm

Event: AUK Guinness World Record Event
Location: American University of Kuwait
Date: December 20- 21, 2024
Time: 2 pm



Event: Women Dance Evening
Location: Harmony Academy
Date: December 21, 2024
Time: 8 pm

Event: Mirror House Art Festival
Location: Mirror House
Date: December 21, 2024
Time: 10 am to 6 pm

Event: Kids Club - Jolly Clay Gnomes
Location: Art N Dine
Date: December 20- 21, 2024

Event: Plein Air Watercolors Workshop
Location: Al-Shaheed Park
Date: December 21, 2024
Time: 10:30 am



Event: Indonesian Winter Market
Location: Embassy of Indonesia
Date: December 21, 2024
Time: 9 am 5 pm

Event: Open Day for Rabbit Lovers
Location: Art Studio
Date: December 21, 2024

Event: Madang Kashta
Location: Desert Oasis (Hateen)
Date: December 21, 2024
Time: 3 pm - 6 pm



Sports

Scent of success? Samaranch bids to emulate father in IOC presidency race

'Our moral compass is the Olympic Charter'

PARIS: Juan Antonio Samaranch Junior says his previous career as a perfume salesman taught him how to sell, a valuable lesson he could use if he emulates his father in becoming president of the International Olympic Committee.

Samaranch Junior cheerfully admitted in an interview with AFP he "could not distinguish a lavender from a lemon"—but the 65-year-old Spaniard says the job taught him commercial nous. Decades later he could see that hard-learned lesson bear fruit if he beats six rivals to succeed Thomas Bach as the most powerful person in global sport at next March's election.

If successful Samaranch Junior would make history—his father of the same name was IOC president from 1980-2001 and transformed the organization into a commercial powerhouse. Samaranch Junior was elected an IOC member in the year his father stepped down but says "he never hoped his family name would be any help in developing his Olympic career" nor indeed "be held against" him. The urbane Spaniard has forged a successful career in the IOC. He was elected vice-president in 2012 and has occupied other high-profile roles. So after over two decades within the IOC, what can he promise the 100-plus members and the outside world he would bring to the presidency?

"Experience, perspective, judgement and collaboration," he said. "It will require a lot of experience," he said. "It will require a lot of perspective to understand which fights to take and which fights not to take. You cannot win them all, so you better select them well."

"Bear in mind the president of the IOC needs to be there on the same footing with giants like the United States, China, the European Union and India and so you will need good judgement to be at that table."

"Lastly, you will not be able to do it alone, so collaboration is great." The father of four, who enjoyed a successful career in banking after his dalliance with perfume, will need all four of those qualities with the challenges that lie ahead.

Return of Russia

Russia remains a burning issue—it dogged Bach's tenure first with the doping scandal at the 2014 Sochi Winter Games and then with Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 which broke the Olympic truce as it began in between the Beijing Winter Games and the Winter Paralympics.

Samaranch says he understands emotions run high outside the IOC in querying why Russia should be welcomed back into the sporting fold—Ukraine's Sports Minister Matviy Bidnyi told AFP this

week Bach's successor should give Russia the cold shoulder.

However, Samaranch said once the Russians fulfil their obligations under the Olympic Charter—which is not the case at the moment—"we will have to try and bring the Russian Olympic Committee back into the game."

"The universe, the world is very complex, and there are very many different ways of looking at things," he explained. "So we need a moral compass. We cannot just take one decision to the right and then decide to go to the left, depending on our personal feelings or anything else."

"Our moral compass is the Olympic Charter." Referring to Russia, Samaranch said the IOC's priority was "defending the youth and athletes from the problems that might be arising from the attitudes or the actions of their governments." He said the spark that lit the fuse for him to run was the "magic" of this year's Paris Games.

One of the few controversies though was in the women's boxing where gold medalists Algerian Imane Khelif and Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting were embroiled in a gender row. Although both had been thrown out of last year's world championships—which were run by the Russian-led International Boxing Association (IBA) -- they were cleared by the IOC to compete in Paris.



BUDAPEST: (Files) Spanish sports executive and financial analyst, the vice president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Juan Antonio Samaranch Junior gives an interview to AFP in Budapest. — AFP

Samaranch sticks by that decision and lambasts the "horrendous harassment they suffered through social media" and added: "I'm proud that we stand at their side and still do." However, he says the issue of transgender athletes is a "different thing", and adds: "We have to protect 100 percent the safety and the level field of play in women's competitions."

He points to the statistic that in the 100 years since the previous Paris Games the level of participation by women had risen from 4 percent to 50 percent. "It is a remarkable achievement not for us, but for society," he said. "I'm not ready if I become president to accept and allow that we take one step backwards in that great achievement." — AFP

Messila hosts second round of Equestrian League

KUWAIT: At 8:00 am Friday, the second round of the fourth edition of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation League Championship will kick off at Messila Equestrian Club in Sabhan with the participation of riders from all local clubs, and the total financial prizes offered in this round for the winners of the first places amount to KD 10,000.

The first day's competitions will start Friday at heights of 90, 105, 115, 125 and 135 centimeters, while the competitions will continue on Saturday, with 4 rounds at heights of 110, 120, 130 and the Grand Prix at a height of 140 centimeters.

Secretary of Kuwait Equestrian Federation, Ghazi Faisal Al-Jariwi, said that the coming period will witness the organization of many international championships in the two-star and three-star categories, under the supervision of the International Federation, and everyone in the Equestrian Federation aims to continue to develop Kuwaiti equestrianism.

The current board of directors of the federation, headed by Masoud Jawhar Hayat, won by acclamation to lead Kuwaiti equestrianism in the electoral cycle 2024-2018, and Ghazi Al-Jariwi assumed the position of secretary, behind Kuwaiti international judge Nabila Al-Ali.

International judge Nadhar Al-Mustafa heads the judging committee, which includes riders Raghad Al-Dabous and Ibtisam Al-Arouri, and the course designer Michel Esmalon, assisted by Mohammed Al-Saeed, and Dr Yahya Al-Hadban and Badr Al-Heifi are the arena judges.

It is noteworthy that Kuwait Equestrian Club rider Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi has won the title of all three local league championships that have been held since the establishment of the first local federation in the history of Kuwaiti equestrianism.

Al-Kharafi did not participate in the first round of the league as he was in Saudi Arabia to participate in the international championship.



Ghazi Al-Jariwi and Nabeela Al-Ali

Jasprit Bumrah: India sling king who's reveling in Australia

NEW DELHI: With his "slingshot" delivery and ability to unsettle the world's best batsmen, India's Jasprit Bumrah is widely regarded as one of cricket's greatest fast bowlers. The 31-year-old has defied career-threatening back problems and on Wednesday overtook Kapil Dev to become India's leading Test wicket-taker in Australia.

Bumrah, India's player of the series so far, took nine wickets in the third Test at Brisbane to move to 53 in Australia and past Dev's previous mark of 51.

He was player of the match in India's 295-run victory in Perth in the opening Test, before the hosts levelled the series in Adelaide.

He is the leading bowler on either side with 21 wickets in the series so far at a scarcely believable average of 10.90. The next best are Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins with 14 dismissals each. "I think he is definitely



First place winners of NBK Run 2024 10km for women.

Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa partakes at NBK Run 30th edition

KUWAIT: Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW) announced its strategic sponsorship of the NBK Run held on December 14th at Kuwait Towers, through three of its brands: INTERSPORT, Joe & The Juice, and Mustela. The event witnessed significant public participation, with the attendance of officials from NBK management, including NBK Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer Isam Jaseem Al-Sager, Deputy Group CEO Shaikha Al-Bahar, as well as the Capital Governor His Highness Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Sabah, AAW Deputy CEO Khalid Faisal Al Mutawa, and the CEOs

and Deputy CEOs of other sponsors.

AAW Deputy CEO, Khalid Faisal Al Mutawa, said: "We extend our appreciation to NBK for organizing the 30th edition of the Run. This exceptional achievement reflects the bank's unwavering commitment to supporting health, fitness, and enhancing community engagement in Kuwait. The NBK Run has become a symbol of a healthy community, bringing people together and raising awareness about the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle."

Khalid Al Mutawa participated in the award ceremony, crowning the top male and female runners in both the 10km and 5km races. He also presented INTERSPORT prizes to raffle winners, underscoring AAW's commitment to corporate social responsibility.

The company's strategic sponsorship at the NBK Run included an INTERSPORT booth that featured interactive activities and offered exclusive giveaways, vouchers, and exciting raffle draws. Joe & The Juice fueled runners with refreshing juices

Artistic gymnastics team bags 5 bronze

TUNIS: The Kuwaiti youth artistic gymnastics team achieved five bronze medals, on Wednesday, at the conclusion of its participation in the Mediterranean Championship, which was held in Tunisia.

President of the Kuwait and Arab Gymnastics Federations Fahd Al-Soula said that player Mousa Al-Sahaf succeeded in achieving four bronze medals after winning third place in four devices: Floor movements, vault, parallel and pommel horse, while his teammate Saud Al-Rudaini achieved third place and a bronze medal in the hurdle competition.

Al-Soula congratulated Al-Sahaf and Al-Rudaini on this achievement, which came after strong competition and double effort from the players, adding

that the federation will spare no effort to support the players and provide all the elements of success in front of them in preparation for the upcoming competitions, praising in this aspect the great role of the Public Authority for Sport and the Kuwait Olympic Committee in supporting the national teams of artistic and rhythmic gymnastics.

The Kuwaiti team's tally at the Mediterranean Championship rose to 7 medals (one silver and 6 bronze), as Al-Sahaf had achieved last Monday the bronze of the general individual in the team consisting of players Mousa Al-Sahaf, Saud Al-Rudaini, Ali Abdulhadi and Khalid Al-Daham won the second place with silver medal in the team competition.

The Kuwaiti team's participation in the Mediterranean Championship, which kicked off on December 9, came after a request from the Arab Gymnastics Federation to allow Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar to join this edition of the championship.

India's greatest fast bowler," former Australia captain Ricky Ponting said of Bumrah.

"In T20 cricket, one-day cricket and Test match cricket, he's clearly the best right now." Travis Head, who has excelled with the bat for Australia in the five-match series scoring two centuries and a fifty, went even further. "Jasprit is probably going to go down as one of the greatest fast bowlers to play the game," said Head.

Bumrah, captaining in the first Test in the absence of Rohit Sharma, made life hell for the Australian batsmen on a bouncing Perth pitch. He took 5-30 from 18 overs as the hosts were shot out for 104 and followed up with 3-42 in the second innings as India won by 295 runs.

India to play Champions Trophy on neutral ground

KARACHI: India will play next year's Champions Trophy matches on neutral ground after refusing to visit tournament host and arch-rival Pakistan, the International Cricket Council said Thursday following weeks of wrangling.

The announcement ended a month-long standoff after India told the ICC it would not send its team to Pakistan because of security fears and political tensions. Under the agreement, Pakistan will also play in upcoming ICC tournaments hosted by India in other countries, yet to be decided.

"India and Pakistan matches hosted by either country at ICC Events during the 2024-2027 rights cycle will be played at a neutral venue, the ICC Board confirmed," said a statement released by the council. "This will apply to the upcoming ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 (hosted by Pakistan)." Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had earlier refused to play the Champions trophy on a so-called



Joe the Juice booth.

created especially for the event and provided enthusiastic support along the race route, and Mustela provided skincare giveaways. AAW employees from different divisions participated in the run, showcasing the company's commitment to an active lifestyle.

AAW's support extended beyond the main event to include the Practice Day, organized to assist para-athletes. During this event, AAW employees volunteered to partner with para-athletes across different disability categories, including wheelchair users, visually impaired individuals, and those using prosthetics. Employees trained alongside the athletes and provided giveaways from INTERSPORT.

AAW has an ongoing commitment to CSR, contributing yearly to supporting local sports initiatives and NGOs. The company actively seeks opportunities to encourage a healthier, more active lifestyle, empower youth, and contribute to charitable initiatives, fostering sustainable development within Kuwaiti society.



TUNIS: Al-Sahaf imposed his presence in all artistic gymnastics' apparatus

hybrid model but backed down after settling on neutral venues for both sides. The agreement will extend to the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 hosted by India, and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 hosted by India and Sri Lanka, the statement added.

The Champions Trophy will also feature Australia, England, New Zealand, South Africa, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. India's latest defiance is a progression of New Delhi's refusal to play bilateral cricket with Pakistan initiated after the 2008 attacks on Mumbai, which India blamed on militants based across the border.

Pakistan was also forced to host last year's Asia Cup on a hybrid model with India's matches and the final hosted in Sri Lanka. Pakistan did, however, play in India during the 2023 ICC World Cup hosted there.

The arch-rivals only meet in ICC multi-national events like ODI and T20 World Cups, with the last bilateral series held when Pakistan toured India in 2012-13. India last toured Pakistan to feature in the 2008 Asia Cup and have not played a bilateral series across the border for 18 years.

In the last few years, Pakistan has hosted the world's top teams after improving security, emerging from cricketing isolation that began after a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in 2009 in Lahore. — AFP

Sports

Holders Liverpool reach League Cup semis, Arsenal advance

Jesus 'back at his best' with Arsenal treble in League Cup

LONDON: Liverpool moved into the League Cup semi-finals as the holders won 2-1 against managerless Southampton, while Gabriel Jesus ended his goal drought with a hat-trick in Arsenal's 3-2 victory over Crystal Palace on Wednesday.

Rare goals from Darwin Nunez and Harvey Elliott at St Mary's sent the 10-time League Cup winners into the last four for a record 20th time. Held to a surprise 2-2 draw against Fulham in the Premier League last weekend, Liverpool got back on track with a 20th win from 24 games in all competitions under Arne Slot, who has lost just once since arriving from Feyenoord to replace Jurgen Klopp.

Slot, who watched the quarter-final from the stands while he served a touchline suspension, opted to rest Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk as the Premier League leaders made eight changes. Liverpool's understudies were too strong for Southampton and Nunez ended his poor recent form with a clinical finish after Jan Bednarek made a hash of clearing Trent Alexander-Arnold's pass in the 24th minute.

It was only Nunez's fourth goal in all competitions in a difficult season for the Uruguay striker, who had gone six games without scoring. Elliott doubled Liverpool's lead in the 32nd minute, drilling low past Alex McCarthy from 12 yards for his first goal this season.

Cameron Archer reduced the deficit

in the 59th minute with a superb curling strike from just inside the area. Southampton were furious when a late Jarell Quansah challenge on Mateus Fernandes didn't result in a penalty.

But there was no escaping yet another defeat for Southampton in caretaker boss Simon Rusk's first game after Russell Martin was sacked following Sunday's 5-0 thrashing by Tottenham. "It was a very good and important win. We saw a lot of players that maybe don't start," Slot said. "We handled it really well and only conceded one or two chances. We have to defend the trophy because the club won it last season."

Jesus hat-trick

At the Emirates Stadium, Brazilian striker Jesus finally found the back of the net on home turf for the first time in 2024. Jesus' only previous goal in 20 appearances in all competitions this season had come against second-tier Preston in the League Cup. The 27-year-old's first goals in nine games were well-timed after Arsenal were booed off following Saturday's 0-0 draw against Everton in the Premier League. The Gunners, who last won the League Cup in 1993, are six points behind Liverpool and Mikel Arteta made eight changes as he prioritized Arsenal's rematch with Palace in the top flight on Saturday.

Arteta's gamble paid off after an early



SOUTHAMPTON: Southampton's Japanese defender #16 Yukinari Sugawara heads the ball during the English League Cup quarter-final football match between Southampton and Liverpool at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton. — AFP

shock when Jean-Philippe Mateta punished weak defending from Jakob Kiwior to put Palace ahead in the fourth minute. But Jesus equalized with a composed chipped finish in the 54th minute before lashing Arsenal in front after narrowly beating the offside trap in the 73rd minute.

Jesus sealed his treble with another clinical effort in the 81st minute and former Arsenal striker Eddie Nketiah's header four minutes later came too late to

save Palace. "Sometimes I have this problem with a lack of goals," Jesus said. "I'm working a lot in training, finishing more, putting myself in a good position. I think my hard work has paid off."

Sandro Tonali scored twice as Newcastle beat Brentford 3-1 at St James' Park. Magpies boss Eddie Howe named a full-strength side and was rewarded with a comprehensive victory that moved his club a step closer to emulating their run

to the 2023 final. Newcastle, who have not won a major trophy since the 1969 Inter-Cities Fairs Cup, took the lead through Tonali's fine finish from the edge of the area in the ninth minute. The Italian midfielder netted again two minutes before half-time and Fabian Schar tapped in after 69 minutes. Yoane Wissa's stoppage-time strike was little consolation for Brentford. The last quarter-final sees Tottenham host Manchester United on Thursday. — AFP

Barca beat Man City to top Women's Champions League group

BARCELONA: Holders Barcelona overcame Manchester City 3-0 in the Women's Champions League on Wednesday to pip their opponents to top spot in their group. In Group C, Arsenal pulled off a sensational comeback to beat Bayern Munich 3-2 and top their pool thanks to a late Mariona Caldentey penalty. In Catalonia, Claudia Pina opened the scoring for the dominant three-time champions late in the first half, before double Ballon d'Or winners Aitana Bonmati and Alexia Putellas assured Barcelona of first place in Group D. "We had lots of goal chances. The result could've been far more clear-cut," Bonmati told UEFA's website.

"But we have to be content with the fact we've done our job and now won the group." Both sides had already qualified for the quarter-finals but the question of who would claim the kinder draw in the knockouts was still to be decided when the teams met in Barcelona. The hosts dominated from the get-go with Salma Paralluelo, Ewa Pajor and Esmee Brugts going close.

Goalkeeper Khiara Keating was on fine form and kept City level with a couple of fine saves around the half-hour. Pina finally made the breakthrough with a clinical finish one minute before the break. Even at 1-0 down, the English side were still set to go



BARCELONA: Manchester City's Dutch defender #18 Kerstin Casparij fights for the ball with Barcelona's Spanish forward #09 Claudia Pina during the UEFA Women's Champions League preliminary round group D football match between FC Barcelona and Manchester City FC. — AFP

through as group winners thanks to their 2-0 victory in the reverse fixture at the start of October.

"We had a thorn in our side from the first game against City," said Bonmati. "We came into this game absolutely determined to show who we are and to put that right." A day after claiming her second FIFA

Best award, Bonmati showed her class in the 57th minute as she netted to send Barcelona top on goal difference. Substitute Putellas made the victory safe with a deflected strike on 69 minutes. In Vienna, Hammarby of Sweden beat Austrians St Poelten 2-1 to finish third in the pool. — AFP

PSG win thriller in Monaco but lose Donnarumma to injury

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain came from behind to extend their unbeaten start to the Ligue 1 season with a 4-2 win away to Monaco on Wednesday but lost goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma to a gruesome facial injury.

The bloodied Italy international was left requiring 10 staples after suffering lacerations to the right side of his face when he was caught by the studs of Monaco defender Wilfried Singo. "I don't know if the referee was badly positioned but VAR needed to intervene, you have to protect the players," said PSG captain Marquinhos.

"To not give a red in a situation like that, it's a big call." Singo avoided any punishment for his clumsy but unintentional collision as Donnarumma was replaced by Matvey Safonov before Desire Doue gave PSG the lead with his first league goal for the

reigning champions. That came after Achraf Hakimi rattled the post with an intended cross, but Monaco hit back with two goals in seven second-half minutes. Eliesse Ben Seghir converted a penalty awarded for a handball by Marquinhos to level.

Maghnes Aklouché then crossed for Breel Embolo to poke Monaco in front on the hour and put PSG's record 31-game unbeaten Ligue 1 away run in jeopardy. Ousmane Dembele soon equalized and Goncalo Ramos headed in a corner shortly after coming on to swing the match back in PSG's favor.

Lee Kang-in's long-range effort was tipped onto the post by Monaco goalkeeper Philipp Koehn before home coach Adi Huetter was sent off for his reaction to a penalty appeal being turned down following a challenge on Embolo.



MONACO: Paris Saint-Germain's Portuguese forward #09 Goncalo Ramos (2nd L) heads the ball to score his team's third goal during the French L1 football match between AS Monaco and Paris Saint-Germain at the Louis II Stadium (Stade Louis II) in the Principality of Monaco. — AFP

Dembele struck again deep into stoppage time to seal victory and signal his return to form after reports of tension with PSG coach Luis Enrique in recent weeks. The result opens up a

10-point gap between PSG and their closest challengers Marseille and Monaco, the last team to beat the capital club away from the Parc des Princes in March 2023. — AFP

US-based Friedkin Group complete Everton takeover

LONDON: The US-based Friedkin Group have completed the takeover of Everton, the Premier League club announced Thursday. Everton said the club had been acquired by Roundhouse Capital Holdings Limited, an entity within the Friedkin Group. The Premier League said the Friedkin Group had purchased a 98.8 percent stake in Everton, which becomes the 10th English top-flight club under majority American ownership—a list that includes Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United.

Thursday's announcement came after Everton said in September the Friedkin Group had agreed to buy Farhad Moshiri's majority stake in the struggling side subject to regulatory approval—which has now been granted by the Premier League, Women's Professional Leagues Limited, the Football Association and the Financial Conduct Authority.

The BBC reported the Friedkin Group's deal to buy Everton was worth in excess of £400 million (\$506 million). The Texas-based group is led by chairman Dan Friedkin and also owns Italian Serie A club Roma. Friedkin has a net worth of £6.16 billion, according to Forbes.

Everton have twice been sanctioned under the Premier League's profitability and sustainability rules (PSR) in the last 13 months, and had eight points in total deducted last season. American investment firm 777 Partners were unable to complete a deal earlier this year.

John Textor, who has a 45 percent share in Crystal Palace, had appeared to be in the frame before Everton confirmed they were entering into an agreement with the Friedkin Group. Everton are putting the finishing touches to a new stadium and are preparing to leave Goodison Park, which has been the club's home since 1892. They are currently 16th in the Premier League table, just three points above the relegation zone.

Everton have remained in the English top flight for the last 70 years but have survived several battles to avoid relegation in recent seasons. The Liverpool-based club posted losses of just under £400 million (\$534 million) for the four years between 2019 and 2023. British-Iranian businessman Moshiri first bought a 49.9 percent stake in Everton in 2016, before increasing his holding to 94.1 percent in 2022.

Despite their recent struggles, Everton are one of England's most historic clubs. Only Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal and Manchester City have won more top-flight titles than their total of nine. Friedkin, in an open letter, said: "I take immense pride in welcoming one of England's most historic football clubs to our global family, the Friedkin Group. Everton represents a proud legacy, and we are honored to become custodians of this great institution." — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center
Rawda
Adaliya
Khaldiya
Kaifan
Shamiya
Shuwaikh
Abdullah Salem

25716707
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24848075
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24848913
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Nuzha
Industrial Shuwaikh
Qadsiya
Dasmah
Bneid Al-Gar
Shaab
Qibla
Ayoun Al-Qibla
Mirqab
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Salmiya

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Hospitals

Sabah Hospital
Amiri Hospital
Maternity Hospital
Mubarak Al-Kabir
Chest Hospital
Farwaniya Hospital
Adan Hospital
Ibn Sina Hospital

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25312700
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24840300

Change of Name

I, **MUSTAFA**, holder of Indian Passport No. P0359918 having permanent address: 11, Bohra Bakhal Ward No.12, Rajgarh Dist. Dhar 454116 Madhya Pradesh, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **MUSTAFA** and (surname) **BOHRA**.
#6612-20/12/2024

Khaleeji Zain 26: A celebration of Gulf unity and sporting excellence

Kuwait to submit bid to host 2031 AFC Asian Cup: Information minister



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi seen cutting the cake with reporters at the media center.



Kuwait national soccer team.

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi emphasized that Kuwait's hosting of Khaleeji Zain 26 reflects the brotherhood and camaraderie uniting Gulf youth in a competitive yet harmonious sporting environment. Speaking to reporters after inaugurating the main media center at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Al-Mutairi, who chairs the Supreme Organizing Committee, highlighted the tournament's rich history since its inception in 1970, calling it a beacon of youth sports in the Gulf region.

He expressed deep appreciation for the support of HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, noting their pivotal role in ensuring a world-class tournament.

Al-Mutairi underlined the committee's efforts in equipping the media center with advanced resources to support local and international journalists in covering the event, emphasizing the

importance of showcasing the tournament globally. He praised the organizing committee and youth volunteers for their dedication to preparing a memorable opening ceremony and ensuring the tournament's success.

The minister highlighted the Gulf Cup's role in fostering regional cooperation and advancing sports ambitions, citing examples like Qatar's hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup and Saudi Arabia's upcoming 2034 FIFA World Cup and 2027 Asian Cup. He announced Kuwait's plans to bid for the 2031 Asian Cup in collaboration with the Kuwait Football Federation, showcasing the country's capabilities and talented workforce.

A dedicated quality committee was also formed to create a procedural guide and institutional memory to improve the organization of future events. Al-Mutairi welcomed fans and visitors to attend matches at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium and Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium and encouraged them to explore Kuwait using the tournament's official app, Hayakom, which highlights key tourist attractions.

Blue stars ready

National team goalkeeper Sulaiman Abdul Ghafoor emphasized the significance of every match in Khaleeji Zain 26, especially the opening game against Oman. "The opening match is crucial as we aim to redeem ourselves after the 2026 World Cup qualifiers. A strong start can positively influence the rest of the tournament," he said.

Abdul Ghafoor acknowledged both the positive and negative pressures on the team, noting the strong backing from loyal Blue fans. He highlighted coach Juan Pizzi's encouragement to enjoy the game while focusing on making fans happy, which helps alleviate pressure on the players.

Midfielder Fawaz Ayed Al-Otaibi praised the uniqueness of Gulf tournaments, which bring together Gulf nations in a spirit of unity. He noted that the competition in the first group, featuring Oman, Qatar and the UAE, would be tough but expressed confidence in the team's ability to qualify for the semifinals with continued fan support.

Goalkeeper Abdulrahman Al-Fadhli echoed these sentiments, emphasizing

the distinctive nature of Gulf Cup tournaments, which foster friendly competition among players and fans alike. While he downplayed the importance of the opening match alone, he reiterated the team's readiness to deliver strong performances throughout the tournament.

Team prepared for opening match

First team manager Abdulrahman Al-Mousa expressed his confidence in the players' mental and physical readiness for the tournament, dismissing concerns about pressure from large crowds. "The fans are our number one player, and their support motivates the team," he said. Al-Mousa noted the importance of the opening match against Oman, emphasizing that the team would not dwell on past results, whether positive or negative. Winning the first game, he added, helps build momentum and boosts morale.

Dr Abdulmajeed Al-Bannai, the team's doctor, confirmed that all injured players have recovered and are ready for the opening match. He commended the medical team for preparing players within a short timeframe, ensuring the squad is in top form for the tournament.

Kuwait to deploy 50 ambulances, 400 medics for Khaleeji Zain 26



Ambulances and medics are to be stationed at the stadiums.

KUWAIT: Kuwait is making proper medical arrangements and preparations for the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup, better known as Khaleeji Zain 26, by means of deploying nearly 50 advanced ambulances and 400 staffers for the historic sports event, said a health official.

The ambulances and medics are to be stationed at the stadiums that will host the fixtures of the most significant Gulf football championship, Chief of the Health Ministry's Medical Emergency Department Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti told KUNA. Ambulance workers have been properly trained in handling soccer injuries, the health official boasted, reassuring that ambulance lanes would be secured in order to get easy access to nearby hospitals. Furthermore, medical teams are to be deployed at all hotels where the participating Gulf sports teams would stay, Al-Shatti underlined, noting that evacuation plans have been set out to ensure immediate response to any looming emergency.

Kuwait is gearing up for a historic soccer event by playing host to the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup titled Khaleeji Zain 26 from December 21, 2024, to January 3, 2025, making it fifth time the championship is held in Kuwait. The Arabian Gulf Cup, which began in 1970, has solidified its place as one of the most prominent sporting events in the region, obviously reflecting unity, deep-rooted relations, and shared heritage of Gulf nations. This marks the second time the tournament will carry the Khaleeji Zain 26 name, following the previous edition, Khaleeji Zain 25 held in Basra, Iraq, in 2022-23. The Arabian Gulf Cup is held every two years, rotating among the member states of the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation, which comprises Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Yemen. The matches of this Kuwait-hosted tournament will be played at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium and Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium. — KUNA

Kuwait soccer team maintain FIFA's rankings

KUWAIT: Kuwait's football team maintained its 134th position in the December world ranking issued by the International Federation of Football (FIFA) on Thursday with 1,108.72 points. The Federation said on Thursday on its official website that Argentina, the 2022 World Cup champions, topped the rankings with 1867.25 points, followed by France in second place with 1859.78 points, Spain in third place by a slight margin with 1853.27 points, England with 1813.81 points in fourth place, and Brazil in fifth place with 1775.85 points.

On the African continent, Morocco maintained its 14th place in the world as the best Arab-African team with 1688.18 points, followed by Egypt, which maintained its 33rd place in the world and second in the Arab world with 1513.48 points, then Algeria, which came in 37th place in the world and third in the Arab world with 1495.85 points. In Asia, Japan maintained the top teams in the continent after ranking 15th in the world with 1652.79 points, followed by Iran in 18th place with 1635.31 points, then South Korea in 23rd place with 1585.45 points. — KUNA

Khaleeji Zain 26: Kuwait eyes glory on home turf

KUWAIT: The Kuwait national football team enters the Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 26) with a track record that made it the dominant record holder in the tournament's history, with 10 titles. The tournament, hosted by Kuwait from December 21, 2024, to January 3, 2025, presents an opportunity for the Kuwaiti team to reclaim the championship they last won during the 20th Gulf Cup in Yemen in 2010, where they won against Saudi Arabia 1-0 in the final.

Kuwait's dominance of the tournament began with the inaugural Gulf Cup in Bahrain in 1970, where they emerged victorious, securing four consecutive titles by 1976 - a record unmatched by any other Gulf nation. Kuwait won the 6th, 8th, 10th, 13th, 14th, and 20th editions of the tournament, and Kuwaiti football legend Jassem Yaqoub remains the Gulf Cup's all-time top scorer with 18 goals. The Gulf Cup, held once every two years, initially featured only four nations - Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, and was expanded to include Oman, UAE and Iraq, and Yemen, now eight competing teams.

The first edition of the tournament was held in Bahrain 1970 with the participation of Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and its first title was won by Kuwait. In 1972, the second edition was held in Saudi Arabia with the participation of five teams after the UAE joined, and Kuwait won the championship title on goal difference, Kuwait has scored 12 goals compared to 8 for Saudi Arabia.

The number of teams reached six after Oman joined the third edition in 1974, which was hosted by Kuwait for the first time, in which Kuwait won the championship for the third time in a row. In the next edition, the Iraqi national team joined, bringing the number of participating teams to seven teams, and Kuwait won their fourth consecutive trophy in the 1976 edition in Qatar. Kuwait won the title after a playoff match for the first time in the tournament with Iraq, which ended with a victory (4-2), after drawing (2-2) in their first match and equalizing them with ten points each.



Kuwait national team seen during a training session.

Kuwait also won the tournament for the fifth time in the sixth edition held in the UAE in 1982, during which they succeeded in defeating Bahrain (2-0), the UAE (2-0), Saudi Arabia (1-0) and Oman (2-0) and lost against Qatar (1-2). Kuwait's Saleh Zakaria was the first Gulf coach to lead his country to the title in the eighth edition hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain in 1986, and the Kuwaiti team won the podium for the sixth time after achieving five wins and a single draw with Bahrain (1-1). In Kuwaiti for the second time, under Brazilian coach Luiz Felipe Scolari in the 10th edition in 1990 and with the participation of the seven countries, the Kuwaiti team won the title for the seventh time without receiving any loss. In the 13th edition in Oman in 1996 with the participation of six teams, the Kuwaiti team won the title for the eighth time after defeating Bahrain (1-0), Oman (2-1), Saudi Arabia (1-0) and Qatar (2-1) and suffered a single loss to the UAE (1-2).

The Kuwait national team won the title for the

ninth time in its history in the 14th edition in the Bahrain in 1998 under the leadership of Czech coach Milan Machala and striker Jassim Al-Huwaidi was crowned as the top scorer for this edition with nine goals. In 2010, in the 20th edition hosted by Yemen, it was the last time that Kuwait won the tournament after winning against Saudi Arabia in the final match with a clean goal scored by Waleed Juma.

In the 10th edition of the tournament, the Kuwaiti national team also dominated many awards, including Bader Al-Mutawa winning the title of top scorer of the tournament with three goals, Fahad Al-Enezi as the best player and Nawaf Al-Khalidi as the best goalkeeper. The Kuwaiti team remains a symbol of excellence in Gulf football, embodying a rich legacy and the hope of rekindling its golden era, and the Gulf Cup remains a celebrated event, fostering unity and fierce competition across the Gulf region. — KUNA