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GAZA STANDS TALL

Jubilation as guns fall silent despite last-minute Zionist onslaught



GAZA: (Left) Children cheer in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on Jan 19, 2025, shortly before a ceasefire deal was implemented. (Right) Displaced Palestinians wave national flags as they return to Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Jan 19, 2025 following the ceasefire deal. — AFP photos (See Page 5)

GAZA: Palestinians burst into the streets to celebrate and return to the rubble of their bombed-out homes on Sunday after a ceasefire deal halted fighting in Gaza, and three female captives freed by Hamas were reunited with their families inside the Zionist entity. Armed Hamas fighters drove through the southern city of Khan Younis with crowds cheering and chanting. In the north of the territory, bombed into oblivion in the war's most intense fighting, people picked their way on narrow roads through a devastated landscape of rubble and twisted metal.

"I feel like at last I found some water to drink after being lost in the desert for 15 months," Aya, a displaced woman from Gaza City who has been sheltering in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip for over a year, said after the fighting stopped. "I feel alive again." In the Zionist-occupied West Bank, buses were awaiting the release of Palestinian prisoners from Zionist detention. Hamas said the first group to be freed in exchange for the hostages includes 69 women and 21 teenage boys.

Continued on Page 6



(Left) Family members and relatives of Palestinian prisoners wait for their release against the backdrop of Ofer Prison in the west of Ramallah on Jan 19, 2025. (Right) Image grab shows one of the Zionist captives exiting a vehicle surrounded by Hamas fighters to be handed over to the Red Cross in Saraya Square in Gaza City on Jan 19, 2025.

Gazans in Kuwait welcome truce, hail resilience

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Palestinian residents of Kuwait welcomed the Gaza ceasefire on Sunday, expressing relief after 15 months of devastating violence that claimed nearly 47,000 lives. While the truce has brought hope, the emotional toll and profound loss remain immense.

Mohamed Nasr, whose family is from Gaza, praised the resilience of Gazans, determined to rebuild despite widespread destruction. Nafeth Al-Qishawi, who lost 42 relatives, shared pride in Gaza's ability to rise again, viewing the conflict's aftermath as a symbolic victory. (See Page 2)

NEWS IN BRIEF

5 convicted murderers hanged

KUWAIT: Justice authorities on Sunday hanged five convicted murderers including a Kuwaiti woman who killed her female friend. Three men were saved from the gallows in the last hour after the relatives of their victims agreed to pardon them.

Amended traffic law released

KUWAIT: Kuwait's new traffic law 5/2025 was issued on Sunday, and will take effect three months after its publication in the official gazette. Penalties include up to three months in prison and fines of KD 150-300 for offenses such as driving without authorization, using damaged plates, driving without a valid license and parking in prohibited areas. The law also grants the interior minister authority to set taxi fares and vehicle limits. — KUNA

Building collapses in Shaab

KUWAIT: A building collapsed in Shaab Al-Bahri on Sunday afternoon, prompting fire teams from the Salmiya, Hawally and search and rescue centers to rush to the scene. According to a Kuwait Fire Force statement, the teams cleared the debris and conducted a thorough search to ensure no individuals were trapped under the rubble.

Amiri decree allows raising charges for public services

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: An Amiri decree was issued on Sunday allowing ministries to reprice and raise charges for public services, which have remained unchanged for the past three decades. Proposed by the government, the decree abolishes a 1995 legislation passed by the National Assembly prohibiting the government from raising charges for public services without the prior approval of lawmakers.

TikTok restores service in US, thanks Trump

WASHINGTON: TikTok said on Sunday it was restoring its service after President-elect Donald Trump said he would revive the app's access in the US when he returns to power on Monday. The statement came after US users reported being able to access the Chinese-owned service's website while the far more widely used TikTok app itself did not appear to be immediately available.

"In agreement with our service providers, TikTok is in the process of restoring service," TikTok said in a statement that thanked Trump for "providing the necessary clarity and assurance to our service pro-

The abolishing of that legislation gives a free hand to authorities to reprice charges of public services, but after obtaining the approval of the Cabinet. Public services include electricity, water, communications, health and others, which have effectively remained the same since the law was passed in 1995.

The decree states that "the competent authority in each government body will determine fees and charges of public services and utilities in accordance with the laws regulating them and after the approval of the Council of Ministers".

The explanatory note of the decree clarified that due to economic and social changes and the state's need for flexibility in the management of financial resources and providing public services in a sustainable way, it was necessary to abolish the 1995 law, which barred the state from raising charges.

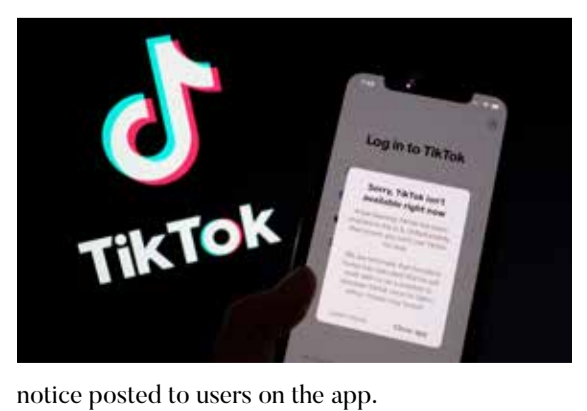
It added that the decree gives greater flexibility to government bodies to reprice public services, but without neglecting social justice or undermining the minimum standard of living. It said that after abolishing the law, government bodies will enjoy flexibility in assessing their services and reprice them in accordance with their cost and benefit. Any increase in charges must be taken only after the approval of the Cabinet.

Kuwait recently decided to impose corporate taxes on foreign and local companies with the aim to raise hundreds of millions of dinars, and is also planning to impose the so-called selective taxation to be on par with its Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) partners, who have already imposed such taxes. Disputes between national assemblies and governments had prevented authorities from raising charges for public services. The National Assembly was suspended by HH the Amir in May for four years.

viders that they will face no penalties (for) providing TikTok to over 170 million Americans and allowing over 7 million small businesses to thrive."

TikTok stopped working for its 170 million American users late on Saturday before a law shutting it down on national security grounds took effect on Sunday. US officials had warned that under Chinese parent company ByteDance, there was a risk of Americans' data being misused. Trump said he would "extend the period of time before the law's prohibitions take effect, so that we can make a deal to protect our national security."

"I would like the United States to have a 50 percent ownership position in a joint venture," he wrote on Truth Social. Trump said the executive order would specify there would be no liability for any company that helped keep TikTok from going dark before his order. Trump had earlier said he would most likely give TikTok a 90-day reprieve from the ban after he takes office, a promise TikTok cited in a



notice posted to users on the app.

"A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the US. Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now. We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office.

Continued on Page 6



Local

Resilience amid resistance: Gazans in Kuwait hail truce

Ceasefire brings hope amid the devastation of Gaza



JABALIA: A man holds up a Palestinian flag while standing atop the rubble of a collapsed building at the Jabalia camp for Palestinian refugees in the northern Gaza Strip on January 19, 2025. — AFP photos



RAFAH: Displaced Palestinians share sweets as they return to Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on January 19, 2025, hours after the ceasefire deal took effect.

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: The ceasefire in Gaza, which went into effect on Sunday, has brought a much-needed sense of relief to many Palestinians, including those in Kuwait, after enduring 15 months of unimaginable suffering. With nearly 47,000 Gazans losing their lives in the genocide, the ceasefire offers a glimmer of hope after a period of intense violence and loss. However, for those affected by the ongoing destruction, the emotional toll remains, as the trauma and grief continue to impact families in profound ways.

Mohamed Nasr, whose family hails from Gaza's Shujaiya neighborhood, spoke with unwavering faith as he reflected on Gaza's resilience. "We're resilient. Even if we have to live in tents amidst the rubble, we will never abandon our land," he said. Despite the destruction, he described how the people of Gaza are already beginning to rebuild their homes and communities, resolute in their determination to rise again.

"With the ceasefire, prices have decreased by 80 to 90 percent," Nasr added, noting the significant relief the truce has brought to the community still reeling from the effects of the war. However, he acknowledged that the emotional toll of the conflict remains heavy, and the scars left behind will take much longer to heal.

The cost of the war is undeniable. "Nothing will replace the loss. The only consolation is the promise of heaven for the martyrs," Nasr shared. He spoke of the heartbreak he felt over the loss of more than 20 relatives in Gaza, part of a family of 200. His cousin's son, now fighting for his life in a hospital, has left the family in a state of uncertainty. "We don't know if he



This picture shows the damaged and destroyed buildings in the northern Gaza Strip, on January 19, 2025.

will survive or not," he said. Reflecting on the broader political landscape, Nasr added, "What happened on October 7th brought the Palestinian cause to the forefront, thanks to God and the Palestinian resistance. No negotiations have ever changed anything. These are our enemies until the end of time."

Nasr's sense of resilience was echoed by others, including Nafeth Al-Qishawi, who lost 42 relatives during the 15-month-long Zionist attack. "Yesterday, the last hours were the hardest. (The Zionist entity) was bombing like crazy," he recounted. But he said Palestinians

are accustomed to overcoming struggles, his pride in his homeland's resilience evident.

"People rise up and rebuild with their own hands, immediately. Gaza is different from other parts of Palestine: it's a place that always finds a way to bloom and recover." Despite the hardships, he also reflected on what many in Gaza view as a victory in the war's aftermath: "Thousands of (people in the Zionist entity) fled the country, and their economy is in ruins. To us, that is a victory."

For Khaled Ahmed Khaled Al-Mansara, the cease-

fire brought a mix of joy and reflection on the personal losses his family endured. "I can't describe the joy I feel. After all the killing, the displacement, the hunger, to finally have peace — it's indescribable," he said. Al-Mansara's family in Gaza faced unimaginable hardship, with constant fear, no food and no clean water. "But now, they feel safe for the first time in a long while," he said, though he acknowledged the lingering fear that the violence could return. Despite this, he held a strong belief that Gaza would rebuild. "Palestinians never give up," he affirmed.

Maher Hassan, who is also from Gaza, voiced both relief and lingering sorrow. "Well, it's a joy, a joy. The people there suffered a lot, endured so much, and were hurt so much. And now the problem is, they don't know what they will do. We are in contact with our family there, and most of them, of course, have no homes left," he said.

Hassan's family has also been deeply affected by the war, with some relatives injured and others displaced. "My relatives, cousins, they are all there," he shared, referring to his family members still in Gaza. "Many of them are injured, including two young children, a boy and a girl," he explained. "They were injured in their legs."

Despite the immense challenges, Hassan remains hopeful about the future. "We are stronger than our enemies, and God willing, the neighbors will support us well," he said. He spoke with urgency about the need for medical assistance, especially for those with severe injuries. "Rebuilding can wait, but the most important thing right now is the people in critical condition, especially the injured," he said.

Kuwait sends 7th airlift to Syria with 40 tons of aid

KUWAIT: The seventh humanitarian aid flight from Kuwait has safely arrived in Syria, carrying 40 tons of vital supplies, including food, winter materials, and medical goods. The flight is part of Kuwait's broader effort to provide assistance to the Syrian people under the "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign, organized by the Al-Salam Charity.

The aid, which includes blankets, warm clothing, and other essential items, aims to address the urgent needs of the Syrian population, particularly in light of the harsh winter conditions. The shipment was coordinated in cooperation with Kuwaiti ministries, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Defense, represented by the Kuwait Air Force. According to Hamed Al-Aoun, the General Director of Al-Salam Charity Association, the flight contains specialized supplies such as food, medicine, and other relief materials. The aid is being delivered in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to ensure that it reaches the communities most in need.

Kuwait has consistently been a significant player in humanitarian efforts, both regionally and globally, with the country's leadership emphasizing the importance of providing immediate relief to those affected by crises. The humanitarian missions are conducted under the directives of the Kuwaiti leadership, reflecting Kuwait's ongoing commitment to supporting its Arab neighbors in times of need.

Kuwait air defense official meets with Bahrain commander

KUWAIT: Kuwait Air Defense Force Commander Major General Khaled Al-Shariaan discussed on Sunday with Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Nuaimi, Commander of Air Missile Defense of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the most important topics of common interest, especially those related to military aspects. This came in a press statement issued by the Ministry of Defense after Major General Al-Shariaan received Brigadier General Al-Nuaimi and his accompanying delegation on his visit to the country, where they discussed the most important joint topics and means of enhancing and developing them between the two sides. The meeting was attended by several senior officers from both sides. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Officials pose for a photo in front of the seventh humanitarian aid flight for Syria, carrying 40 tons of vital supplies. — KUNA photos

As the humanitarian situation in Syria continues to evolve, Kuwait remains dedicated to addressing the needs of the Syrian people, with additional flights and shipments planned as part of the long-term relief and recovery efforts.

Al-Khair Society sends 10 aid trucks to Syria
Kuwait's Al-Khair Humanitarian Society announced the dispatch of 10 aid trucks from Turkey to Syria, carrying

over 250 tons of relief and food supplies to help address the severe shortages and support the affected population in Syria. Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Jerman, Chairman of the Al-Khair Society, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Sunday that the trucks were sent with a picture of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, underscoring Kuwait's leadership in humanitarian work and its commitment to aiding the afflicted wherever they may be.



Kuwait's Al-Khair Humanitarian Society dispatches 10 aid trucks from Turkey to Syria, carrying over 250 tons of relief and food supplies.

The campaign, organized under the supervision of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs, is supported by the generous contributions of Kuwaiti donors. It includes food, heating supplies, mattresses, bedding, and other essential items to alleviate the critical shortages in Syria.

Dr. Al-Jerman emphasized that this initiative is part of Al-Khair Society's ongoing emergency relief campaigns to mitigate the suffering of those affected in Syria and to meet their urgent needs. The aid delivery also reflects Kuwait's strong position in supporting Syria, particularly during the current challenging circumstances. He urged those wishing to contribute to visit the Al-Khair Society headquarters in West Abdullah Mubarak or donate via the society's online platform. The society, licensed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, is committed to charitable work in accordance with the principles of Islamic moderation, partnering with local and international entities to provide humanitarian, social, educational, cultural, and healthcare services. — KUNA

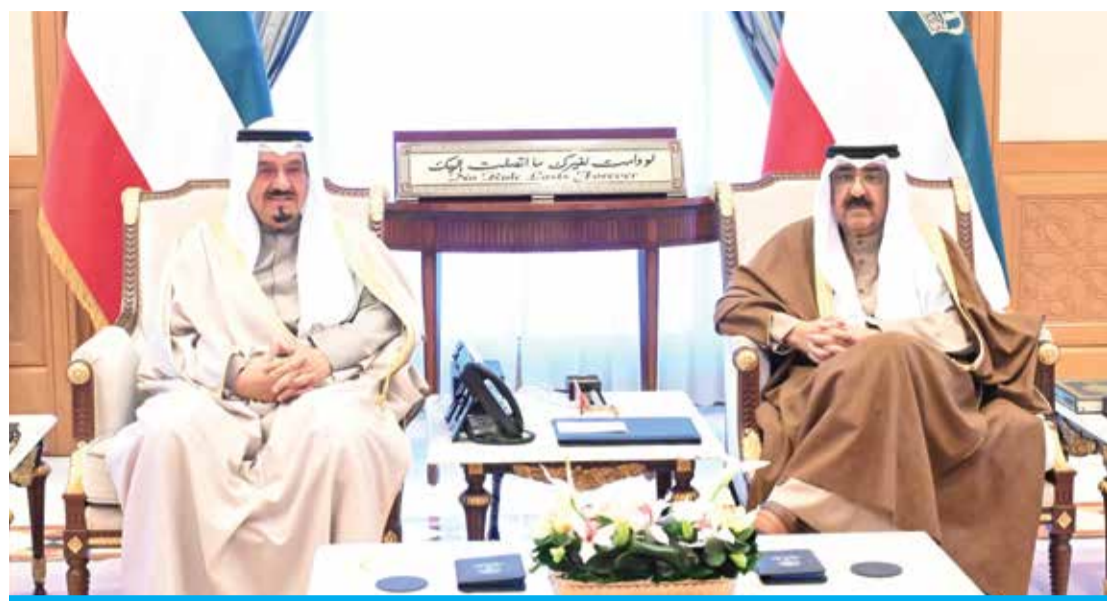


Military officials pose for a group photo.



KUWAIT: Major General Khaled Al-Shariaan meets with Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Nuaimi, Commander of Air Missile Defense of the Kingdom of Bahrain. — KUNA

Official meetings at Seif Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and later welcomed His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace on Sunday. Additionally, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, as well as First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, at Seif Palace on the same day. — KUNA

New committee aims to boost Kuwaitization in co-op societies

Potential legal amendments to hiring procedures for Kuwaitis under review

KUWAIT: A new committee has been formed to focus on facilitating the recruitment of Kuwaiti citizens for supervisory and general positions within cooperative societies. Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Family and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah announced the decision in a press statement published by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Sunday. The committee will work to address any challenges in implementing the Kuwaitization plan, including potential legal amendments to hiring procedures for Kuwaitis. The committee is chaired by the ministry's undersecretary and will coordinate with the Public Authority of Manpower and the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies.

Kuwaitization refers to the government's policy of prioritizing Kuwaiti citizens for job opportunities. This initiative is part of broader efforts to address what the government refers to as the country's demographic imbalance, namely the growing expatriate population. For nearly a decade, lawmakers and ministers have sought to reduce the number of foreign workers in the public and private sectors. Many view Kuwaitization as a means to achieve this goal, which could eventually reduce

the overall expatriate population. Additionally, expatriates have often been linked to corruption issues within the cooperative sector.

Minister Al-Huwailah noted that the committee will help streamline the recruitment process for Kuwaiti citizens and remove any obstacles that may arise in the application of the plan. She said the efforts are part of the government's strategy to provide more job opportunities for Kuwaitis outside the public sector and to attract local talent to enhance the operations of cooperative societies.

The Kuwaitization plan also aims to strengthen the role of cooperative societies in improving the economic and social level of their shareholders, ensuring the protection of their funds, and optimizing the management of available resources.

In February 2023, the ministry of social affairs initiated efforts to Kuwaitize leadership positions in cooperative societies, including roles such as general directors, department heads, and supervisors. While the Ministry has not released details on the results of these efforts, sources have indicated that concerns about job security have deterred some Kuwaitis from applying for these jobs. — Agencies



KUWAIT: A woman pushes a shopping cart at a cooperative society in this file photo. — KUNA

At a glance: Kuwaitization in the cooperative sector

KUWAIT: In an ongoing effort to strengthen the local workforce, the Kuwaiti government has launched initiatives aimed at "Kuwaitizing" supervisory jobs within the country's cooperative societies. This process involves replacing expatriate workers with Kuwaiti nationals in leadership and supervisory roles. Below are some of the key details of these efforts:

What is "Kuwaitization"?

"Kuwaitization" refers to the government's policy of prioritizing Kuwaiti citizens for job opportunities. The goal is to reduce reliance on foreign labor, enhance the skills of Kuwaiti nationals, and ensure job security for citizens.

Public Sector: In the public sector, the Kuwaitization policy aims to ensure that the workforce consists entirely of Kuwaiti citizens. This includes government departments and state-run organizations, where efforts are made to replace expatriates with qualified Kuwaitis in all roles.

Private sector: In the private sector, quotas have been introduced to encourage the employment of nationals. Companies are required to meet certain percentages of Kuwaiti employees, with penalties for non-compliance. This is designed to provide more job opportunities for Kuwaiti citizens while fostering a more balanced workforce across all industries.

How is the Kuwaitization in co-ops being implemented?

In February 2023, the Ministry of Social Affairs initiated efforts to "Kuwaitize" leadership positions in cooperative societies. Ministerial Decision No 68/2023 was issued to outline the regulations, con-



KUWAIT: Shoppers browse products on display at a co-operative society in this file photo.

ditions, and mechanisms for placing Kuwaiti citizens in supervisory positions such as cooperative society directors, their deputies and department heads. Job postings were published in July 2023, specifically for five cooperative societies: Nuzha, Qortuba, Faiha, Jabriya and Qadisiya. A four-member committee was tasked with studying the candidacy process and conducting interviews.

Although no data was made publicly available regarding the turnout for these positions, sources suggested they were lower than anticipated. They said concerns about job security — especially with frequent changes in co-op management — may have deterred potential applicants.

In July 2024, the Ministry of Social Affairs, represented by the Cooperative Sector, said it was working on developing a "new vision" for Kuwaitization of positions within cooperatives. The new vision reportedly included the Kuwaitization of general positions within cooperatives, such as legal accountants, procurement clerks, warehouse keepers, goods receipt officers, and market and store managers, among other roles.

The delegation includes four Arabic language professors from Beijing University, a professor from Zhejiang University, and 20 students from Beijing University across various academic fields. Dr Chaoqun Lian, an Associate Professor in the Department of Arabic Language at Beijing University, said the visit is part of China's broader efforts to expand cooperation with Kuwait in cultural, educational, economic, and developmental sectors, with a particular focus on Ar-



Dr. Chaoqun Lian

Salaries and benefits

When the ministerial decision to Kuwaitize labor at cooperative societies was first issued, the government released the salaries these positions would offer. This includes: General Director – KD 2,000, Deputy General Director – KD 1,500, and Head of Department – KD 1,000. In addition to these salaries, the roles come with labor and family support benefits that are typically provided to Kuwaiti citizens.

Broader impact

3,000 Kuwaiti Jobs: The government's target is to employ 3,000 Kuwaitis in leadership and supervisory roles across 69 cooperative societies, which make up the largest retail market in Kuwait. If successful, the initiative would help alleviate the employment burden in the public sector. Kuwaiti Youth Employment: In addition to adult job postings, the Ministry of Social Affairs has also introduced a program to employ high school students in cooperative societies during the summer of 2023. Eligible students were able to work part-time and earn between KD 100 to KD 200 for four hours of work per day over two months.

abic language education. He praised Kuwait's role as a global hub for Arabic language studies, thanks to strong governmental support for research and cultural exchange.

The history of Arabic language studies in China dates back to 1946 when Beijing University established its first Arabic department. Today, nearly 50 universities in China offer Arabic language courses, reflecting the growing interest. Dr Lian also noted that the number of Arab students studying in China has risen to nearly 20,000 across various academic fields. Cultural collaboration between the two nations continues to flourish, highlighted by the opening of the first Chinese Cultural Center in Kuwait in 2023. — KUNA

98 events to celebrate Kuwait's designations as capital of culture

KUWAIT: Kuwait is gearing up for a series of cultural and media events in 2025 after being selected as both the Arab Capital of Culture and the Arab Media Capital for the same year. Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi confirmed the upcoming events will highlight the country's achievements in the fields of culture, media, and the arts, reinforcing Kuwait's role as a center for cultural dialogue in the Arab world.

In a statement, Al-Mutairi explained that Kuwait's selection was based on its robust media infrastructure, ability to host large-scale events, and its significant role in promoting Arab media. Preparations for the year-long event are being organized under the Ministry of Information's strategy (2021-2026) and the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters' strategy (2023-2028).

The planned activities for 2025 will focus on various areas, including enhancing Kuwait's cultural and media status, promoting digital media, supporting investment in cultural and media industries, strengthening the Arab cultural identity, and encouraging international cultural exchange. Some of the events scheduled include the Qurain Cultural Festival, the Arab Children's Theatre Festival, the International Music Festival, Al-Arabi Magazine Festival and inaugural Kuwait Grand Media Award. Al-Mutairi also highlighted that the events will include a total of 98 activities spread across 235 days, aiming to showcase the diversity of Kuwait's cultural and media landscape.

Kuwait's designation as the Arab Capital of Culture was made by the Executive Council of the Arab Organization for Education, Culture, and Science (ALECSO), while its selection as the Arab Media Capital was made by the Council of Arab Ministers of Information. These initiatives are expected to elevate Kuwait's position as a cultural and media hub in the Arab world, fostering collaboration and dialogue among Arab nations.

The opening ceremony for Kuwait's designation as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media will take place on February 13, 2025, with the national theatrical performance "The Earth's Surrounding." A press conference will be held on January 26, 2025, to announce more details about the events.



Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi

Local

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The Kuwaiti approach to
building a family legacy

By Mohamed T Al-Dakheel

KUWAIT: Family businesses have long been a cornerstone of Kuwait's economy, interweaving tradition with long-term vision. For the Al-Mutawa family, their textile company stands as a symbol of both legacy and adaptability. Generations of hard work and shared values have turned their family business into a successful enterprise, but as with any family venture, the road has not always been smooth. Hamad Al-Mutawa, speaking on behalf of his father, Safi Al-Mutawa, shares the unique challenges and rewards of running a family business in Kuwait's competitive market. Operating a family-run business comes with distinct advantages. One of the most significant is the deep personal relationships that drive the company's operations. "When you work alongside family members, you have an intrinsic understanding of each other's strengths and values, which makes decision-making quicker and more intuitive," Hamad explains. These



KUWAIT: This archival photo shows vendors selling textiles at a market in the mid-twentieth century. The photo is used for illustrative purposes.

personal bonds help streamline the daily workings of the business, allowing family members to coordinate seamlessly. However, this closeness can also present challenges, particularly when disagreements arise. "We've had moments where different generations disagreed on the direction of the company," Hamad admits, reflecting on some of the tensions that have surfaced over the years. A notable example was the introduction of a new linen line. The younger generation was eager to innovate and bring something fresh to the market, while the older generation hesitated, worried about straying too far from the company's traditional offerings. The solution? A gradual rollout of the new line, allowing the family to introduce change without losing sight of their core identity. "This way, we listened to customer feedback, respecting tradition while embracing innovation," Hamad says.

'Trust is key'

Despite the challenges, trust remains the cornerstone of the Al-Mutawa family's success. Familial loyalty fosters an environment of mutual confidence, where decisions are made with the business's long-term interests in mind. "In a family business, trust is key," Hamad emphasizes. "We trust each other's intentions and judgment, which allows us to move quickly and confidently on important decisions." This foundation of trust has helped the family navigate complex business challenges, from expanding their product offerings to dealing with competition in the market. However, trust alone doesn't prevent every obstacle. Family dynamics can be complex, and differing visions between generations often require careful management. To address these conflicts, the Al-Mutawa family has implemented structured decision-making processes that allow them to weigh different perspectives while keeping the business's goals in mind. This collaborative approach has allowed them to strike a balance between honoring their family's legacy and adapting to the changing market. One of the most critical elements of the Al-Mutawa family's success is the generational knowledge that is passed down. "Each generation has learned the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships with customers," Hamad notes. This emphasis on customer loyalty has been a key lesson, guiding the company through economic changes and shifts in consumer preferences.

'Protecting a family dream'

As the business landscape evolves, the family remains committed to retaining the traditional values that have sustained their company over the decades while embracing new opportunities for growth. Looking ahead, the Al-Mutawas are already preparing the next generation to take over. Hamad explains that younger family members are introduced to various roles early on to provide them with a comprehensive understanding of the business. This gradual immersion ensures that the next generation is ready to lead, equipped with both the knowledge and the responsibility to carry the company forward. "We're not just running a business; we're protecting a family dream," Hamad reflects, highlighting the emotional investment that drives their long-term vision. With decades of experience behind them, the Al-Mutawa name carries weight in the business community. Maintaining the family's reputation is a priority for Hamad and his relatives, motivating them to prioritize sustainable growth over short-term gains. "Our goal is to build something that will last—not just for ourselves, but for future generations," he adds, emphasizing the family's commitment to upholding their values and reputation. For the Al-Mutawa family, success is measured not just by profits but by the strength of their family ties and the legacy they continue to build. In an ever-changing world, their ability to adapt while staying rooted in tradition offers a blueprint for other family-run businesses aiming to thrive across generations.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A passenger aircraft flies over Kuwait City on a clear day. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Creative printing takes center
stage at 'Oasis' exhibition

Creative Printmaking Conference features over 150 participants from around world

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: The Creative Printmaking Conference, held for the second consecutive year, concluded on Saturday with an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, themed "Oasis." Dr Jawaher Al-Bader, the conference founder, spoke about the humble beginnings of the conference in a conversation with Kuwait Times. She said what started with a basic printer in its first year has now expanded to include lectures, discussions, and 20 workshops, featuring at least seven distinct printing techniques.

The exhibition showcased the works of over 150 participants from Kuwait and abroad. According to Al-Bader, one of the standout features of this year's event, which began on January 5, was the poster competition, a collaborative project with 25 to 27 participants.

Dr Al-Bader explained that the "Oasis" concept represents the printing studio as a meeting place—a sanctuary for creativity, collaboration, and learning. She emphasized that the printing process is multi-layered, requiring teamwork and interaction. "For



Musaed Al-Zamil

instance, you begin by preparing the board, then wetting it, painting the plate, and finally pressing it onto the paper. If I struggle with any step, I turn to the 'oasis' for support, much like how people in a desert seek water, dates, and companionship at an oasis," she said.

Describing this approach as a "holistic teaching method," Dr Al-Bader emphasized her goal of creating environments where students collaborate, share, and grow together—a model that could inspire transformative change in schools. She also reflected on the unique and historical significance of printing, calling it a vital art form with deep roots in human communication, dating back 40,000 years to the earliest cave prints. Even today, printing continues to connect us to our past.

Musaed Al-Zamil, Assistant Secretary-General

for Arts at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters, said in a speech that his department was committed to supporting the growing interest in creative printing. He expressed gratitude to the pioneers and youth whose efforts contributed to the success of the conference, enriching the artistic movement. Al-Zamil affirmed the National Council's ongoing support for cultural and artistic initiatives, highlighting the upcoming year of events, seminars, festivals, and conferences as part of Kuwait's designation as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media in 2025.

The event concluded with the awarding of competition winners, alongside lecturers Gabriel Feld, an architect, artist, and teacher; Kelli Glancey, an artist, printmaker, illustrator, and educator; Thomas Bosket, a color theory expert and Dr Fahad Dhawi, Assistant Professor of Typography and Graphic Communication Design in Kuwait.

The conference featured at least seven distinct types of printing, including satin printing, silk printing, wood printing, sunlight printing, digital printing (risograph), linoleum printing, and more.



Dr Jawaher Al-Bader presents Dr Fahad Dhawi with an award for his participation in the conference.



Thomas Bosket, a color theorist, receives an award from Dr Jawaher Al-Bader, the Creative Printmaking Conference founder.



Dr Jawaher Al-Bader presents Kelli Glancey with an award at the exhibition held as part of the Creative Printmaking Conference in Kuwait.



KUWAIT: A visitor examines the printed artwork displayed on the wall at the Oasis Exhibition held as part of the second annual Creative Printmaking Conference on Jan 19, 2025. -- Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Visitors browse the exhibition where participants from around the world showcased their creative printmaking skills. A printer was also on display to provide a glimpse into how the art work was created.

Ministry of Interior
launches official news
channel on Whatsapp

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior launched its official news channel on the WhatsApp application on Saturday. This initiative aims to enhance communication with the public by delivering important se-

curity updates and awareness messages directly to both citizens and residents.

In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Nasser Bou Saleeb, the Director General of the General Department of Security Relations and Media, explained that the launch of the WhatsApp channel aligns with the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah. The initiative is intended to improve the ministry's services and provide the public with easier access to its updates and official messages.

Bou Saleeb emphasized that the Ministry is com-

mitted to using all available communication channels to reach a broad audience. The WhatsApp channel is a key part of this strategy, aiming to strengthen the ministry's connection with media outlets, social media platforms, and the general public. The channel will focus on delivering official messages concerning security, safety, and public awareness, ensuring that the information shared is both accurate and reliable.

This new communication tool will make important updates, security alerts, and educational content more easily accessible to all community segments, further enhancing the Ministry's ability to engage and inform the public. — KUNA



Wuhan keen to shake off pandemic label five years on

Protesters storm S Korea court after president's detention extended

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GAZA: A man waves a Palestinian flag as people celebrate the ceasefire deal in Gaza City on Jan 19, 2025. — AFP photos



Scores of displaced Palestinians walk along a road in the Saftawi area of Jabalia, as they leave areas near Gaza City where they had taken refuge, toward the further northern part of the Gaza Strip.

Gazans defiant despite destruction

After celebrations, displaced Palestinians return home, vow to rebuild

GAZA: Columns of people hundreds strong were making their way home in northern Gaza on Sunday, flanked on both sides by countless buildings turned to rubble, as a ceasefire took effect in the Palestinian territory. In places, they crossed an ashen landscape, heaped with pulverized concrete and studded with the skeletons of ruined buildings.

They walked towards the northern city of Jabalia in a haze of dust raised by the movement of hundreds of feet and vehicles over sandy soil on roads stripped of their paving. In parts where the pavement remained, it was covered by layers of dust and debris. "We came here at six in the morning to find massive, unprecedented destruction," said Walid Abu Jiab, a displaced Gazan who returned to his home in Jabalia. "There is nothing left in the north worth living for," he told AFP.

On either side of the road, former apartment buildings lay collapsed after months of Zionist shelling and air strikes during a military operation focused intently on the north of the Palestinian territory. The Zionist military began an intensive campaign in northern Gaza including Jabalia in early October 2023, saying it aimed to keep Hamas fighters from regrouping there after another operation in the south.

After initially surrounding Jabalia, the military urged civilians across northern areas to evacuate. Those who stayed endured some of the war's most devastating airstrikes and a stringent aid blockade in Gaza. Rana Mohsen, who was displaced from Jabalia to Gaza City, said she didn't wait for the official start of the ceasefire. "We've been waiting for



Members of the Hamas security forces deploy in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on Jan 19, 2025, hours before the ceasefire deal.

this moment for 16 months," said the 43-year-old mother of three.

"My joy is indescribable. We are finally in our home. There is no home left, just rubble, but it's our home. We are lucky because part of the roof is still intact", she told AFP. "The extent of the destruction is unimaginable. Buildings and landmarks have completely disappeared, as if it were a ghost town or abandoned cities."

'I'm going to Rafah'

Despite the damage, Sunday gave way to scenes of joy and jubilation, despite the ceasefire being delayed by several hours. In the southern city of Khan Yunis, crowds gathered in the streets and cheered



Displaced Palestinians carry their belongings as they walk amid the devastation upon their return to central Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Jan 19, 2025.

as armed men paraded in pick-ups, Kalashnikov assault rifles held aloft, firing into the air in celebration. Hundreds of people gathered at a junction playing drums, waving Palestinian flags and chanting.

"This joy is more beautiful than the joy of Eid, and this is the most beautiful pleasure," a man told AFP from the window of his car, which was packed with his family and all his belongings. "I'm going to Rafah," he added excitedly, even as his car was forced to a complete stop by the mass of celebrating Palestinians.

In Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city, people began returning in droves before the ceasefire even went into effect, with the Zionist entity having delayed the implementation by nearly three hours, saying it had not received a list of hostages to be released by

Hamas. Ahmad Al-Balawi, a resident of Rafah, returned as soon as he could. "As soon as I returned to the city, I felt a shock", he told AFP, describing "Decomposing bodies, rubble, and destruction everywhere." "Entire areas have been completely wiped out", he said. The Zionist military campaign has killed at least 46,913 people, mostly civilians.

'We will rebuild'

"The residents have returned to the city of Rafah, even though it is no longer a city. Thousands of citizens are on their way back," said Muhammad al-Shaer, a displaced resident. Taking all their remaining belongings with them, residents moved by truck, donkey-drawn cart, bicycle and on foot towards Rafah, carrying everything from large water tanks to mattresses.

In the central city of Nuseirat, jubilant children thronged the streets, and members of Hamas's security forces patrolled armed and in uniform shortly before the ceasefire came into effect. In Gaza City, a convoy of bulldozers set to clearing the streets of rubble and rubbish accumulated during the last 15 months, in which public services were halted by the war. In the distance, celebratory gunshots echoed.

Gaza City municipality spokesman Asem Alnabih said on X that the city would facilitate the return of its residents. "We are starting today to reopen the main roads in Gaza City, preparing for the return of our displaced citizens", he wrote. Walid Abu Jalboa from Jabalia said he had begun to think of the future. "God willing, with our will, faith in God, and strength, we will rebuild and live." — AFP



Displaced Palestinians return to the war-devastated Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip.



Over 70 arrested at London pro-Palestine rally on eve of truce

LONDON: Thousands of people gathered and over 70 were arrested at a pro-Palestinian rally in central London Saturday, on the eve of the start of a ceasefire between the Zionist entity and Hamas. The majority were detained on suspicion of breaching the authorized perimeter for the protest near key government buildings in central London.

The ceasefire, which came into effect on Sunday, involves the release of Zionist captives held by Hamas and Palestinian prisoners held by the Zionist entity, Zionist withdrawal from densely populated areas of Gaza and an increase in humanitarian aid deliveries to the war-ravaged region. "We desperately want to be optimistic" about the truce, Sophie Mason told AFP. "And so we need to be out on the streets in order to make sure the ceasefire holds," said the 50-year-old, who is a regular at the pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the British capital.



LONDON: Protesters holding placards and flags gather on Whitehall in central London at a national demonstration for Palestine on Jan 18, 2025, organized by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. — AFP photos

The 70 arrests at the demonstration were the largest number since the rallies began in London in October 2023, according to the Metropolitan police. The demonstration was set to be a static rally in Whitehall, site of the main British government offices, after police rejected the route initially proposed by organizers — which the Met police said would have been in the vicinity of a synagogue.

However, police said there was a "coordinated ef-



fort" by the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (PSC) to breach the conditions, after some protesters moved away from Whitehall and towards Trafalgar Square. "This is the highest number of arrests we have seen, in response to the most significant escalation in criminality," police commander Adam Slonecki said in a statement. "Investigations are now underway and we will make every effort to bring prosecutions against those we identify." The PSC has previously called the

policing restrictions "repressive".

'Too late'

At the protest, participants held up placards bearing slogans including "Stop arming Israel" or "Gaza, stop the massacre" amid regular chants of "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free". "Obviously, we're delighted there's a ceasefire", said Linda Plant, a retiree from London, however, pointing out that Zionist strikes on Gaza have continued since the ceasefire deal was announced Wednesday. "We need to make pressure to make that ceasefire hold" and for international aid to reach Gaza, said Ben. 36, a workers union member who only shared his first name.

For Anisah Qauser, a student, the ceasefire is "too late, I think it's too little". While she hopes it will bring "temporary relief", she believes that "we're gonna need to do a lot more", citing the challenge of rebuilding Gaza. According to the Met, 65 protesters were arrested on suspicion of breaching protest conditions, while others were arrested suspected of offenses including assault, support of a proscribed group and obstructing police. A counterdemonstration with around 100 protesters waving Zionist flags also gathered nearby. — AFP

International

Protesters storm South Korea court

Demonstrators enraged after impeached president's detention extended

SEOUL: Supporters of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol stormed a Seoul court Sunday after a judge extended the impeached leader's detention over his ill-fated attempt to impose martial law. Yoon said he was "deeply shocked and saddened" by the pre-dawn attack on the court, where his supporters smashed windows and doors.

Tens of thousands of people had gathered outside the Seoul Western District Court in a show of support Saturday for the president, who became South Korea's first sitting head of state to be arrested in a dawn raid this week. AFP journalists saw hundreds of police officers charge into the court, with the force arresting dozens and denouncing an "intolerable illegal and violent incident".

The incident is the latest episode in South Korea's spiraling political crisis which erupted on Dec 3, when Yoon declared martial law and dispatched troops to parliament. His attempt to suspend civilian rule lasted just six hours after lawmakers defied soldiers to vote it down. They later impeached the president, suspending him from duty.

Yoon vowed Sunday to "persist, no matter how long it takes, in rectifying any injustices", despite facing a Constitutional Court ruling on his impeachment and the criminal probe that has seen him detained. In announcing investigators could hold Yoon for a further 20 days, the Seoul court told AFP there were concerns he could destroy evidence if released. The president said he would attempt to show the "purpose and legitimacy of the martial law declaration", in a statement issued Sunday through his lawyers.

His backers have claimed Yoon's decision was justified due to election fraud in legislative polls

won last year by the opposition, for which they present no evidence. They frequently wave American flags and have adopted the "stop the steal" rhetoric associated with US President-elect Donald Trump, whose supporters stormed Washington's Capitol to try to overturn his earlier election defeat. Acting police chief Lee Ho-young said the force would "thoroughly investigate right-wing YouTubers if they were involved in this violent break-in" after the attack was livestreamed.

'Anger of many citizens'

After the attack on the court, Yoon said he saw the "deep frustration and anger of many citizens". His lawyer Seok Dong-hyeon slammed the judge's decision, while also warning the president's supporters not to escalate the situation. Such violence could also "create burdens" for the president's future trials, the lawyer said in a statement.

Yoo Jung-hoon, a lawyer and political columnist, said attacking a court was "unprecedented" in South Korea and those involved would likely face jail time. The judge was expected to keep the president in prison "given the myriad evidence supporting the insurrection charges", Yoo told AFP. "The court also placed significant weight on Yoon's attempts to destroy evidence" as a head of state, he added.

With Yoon back behind bars after his court appearance on Saturday, prosecutors are due to formalize a criminal indictment for insurrection. The disgraced leader, who has said he does not accept the legality of the probe, could be jailed for life or executed if found guilty. He refused to attend questioning Sunday, said the Corruption Investigation



SEOUL: Pro-Yoon supporters wave flags as they gather on a road outside the Seoul Western District Court on Jan 18, 2025. — AFP

Office which plans to summon him again at 10:00 am (0100 GMT) Monday.

Yoon has meanwhile been absent from the parallel probe at the Constitutional Court, which is

considering whether to uphold his impeachment. If that court rules against him, Yoon will formally lose the presidency and elections will be called within 60 days. — AFP

60 killed in guerilla violence in Colombia

TIBU, Colombia: The death toll from attacks by ELN rebels in Colombia has risen to 60 in the country's restive Catatumbo region near the border with Venezuela, officials said Saturday. Rival groups have for years been fighting in the region over control of the cocaine trade. Fighting in recent days pitted rebels from the left-wing National Liberation Army (ELN) — the biggest of the armed groups still active in Colombia — against dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The state signed a peace deal with FARC in 2016, after more than 50 years of war.

The ELN had also clashed with the Clan del Golfo, a right-wing paramilitary force turned trafficking gang which is the country's largest cocaine cartel. "There is a very critical situation in this region of the country," military commander General Luis Emilio Cardozo said Saturday. The "break" of a truce between the ELN and FARC dissidents has caused "significant impact on the civilian population," he said in a video published by the military on X.

"They have taken people from their homes and murdered them in a miserable way, violating all human rights of the people. It is up to us as the national army to stabilize the territory," Cardozo said, addressing hundreds of troops deployed in the region.

Govt suspends peace talks

After he was elected in 2022, President Gustavo Petro launched negotiations with the ELN and other armed groups that still control parts of Colombia on a promise to pursue "total peace". But he paused the already-sputtering process with the ELN on Friday during the fresh wave of unrest, accusing the group of committing "war crimes".

Around 60 people have been killed across Catatumbo, Colombia's Ombudsman Office said late Saturday, while some residents were "taking refuge in the mountains" to escape the violence. "Many people, including peace signatories, social leaders



TIBU, Colombia: Displaced people from recent clashes between armed groups arrive in this municipality on Jan 18, 2025. — AFP

and their families, and even children, face a special risk of being kidnapped or killed," the office said.

Affected communities were also beginning to suffer from food shortages, the office said, calling on the armed groups to allow access to humanitarian assistance and cease all attacks against civilians. For its part, the ELN pointed the finger at the FARC dissidents. "The Catatumbo region knows well that we had warned that if the 33rd Front of the ex-FARC continued attacking the population and failing to comply with commitments, there was no other way out than armed confrontation," it said in a statement published on X.

'We are very afraid'

With a force of about 5,800 combatants, the ELN is one of the biggest armed groups still active in Colombia. While claiming to be driven by leftist and nationalist ideology, the ELN is deeply involved in the drug trade and has become one of the region's most powerful organized crime groups. Talks with the ELN

broke down for several months last year after the group launched a deadly attack on a military base.

Following the latest round of fighting, the president said the ELN "shows no willingness to make peace" in a post on X. More than 2,500 people have fled the violence to Tibu, the town's mayor Richard Claro said Saturday. Temporary shelters were opened around Tibu to house displaced people, who arrived in flat-bed trucks or crammed on motorbikes, with some carrying household belongings on their backs. "We are very afraid for the children and that we will be caught in the middle of the conflict," Carmelina Perez, 62, who had escaped with her grandchildren, told AFP.

Across the border, Venezuela announced the launch of "a special operation to assist the civilian population displaced from Colombia," according to a government statement. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil told state television that "hundreds of families" have been forced to take refuge in Venezuela. — AFP



CIUDAD JUAREZ: A National Guard agent inspects an illegal tunnel bound to El Paso in the US at the Mexico-US border on Jan 18, 2025. — AFP

Mexico to seal secret tunnel on US border

CIUDAD JUAREZ: A clandestine tunnel discovered on the US-Mexico border allowing entry from Ciudad Juarez into the Texan city of El Paso will be sealed by Mexican authorities, an army official said Saturday, adding that its construction was under investigation. Discovered on Jan 10 by US and Mexican security agencies, the tunnel measures approximately 300 m in length on the Mexican side and is equipped with lighting, ventilation and is reinforced to prevent collapses.

Hidden in a storm sewer system operating between both cities, its access is about 1.8 meters high and 1.2 meters wide (6 feet high and 4 feet wide), making for easy passage of people or contraband, said General Jose Lemus, commander of Ciudad Juarez's military garrison, which is guarding the tunnel.

The tunnel's construction "must have taken a long time... it could have been one

or two years," Lemus told reporters, declining to give details about how long it had been operating as well as its possible builders and operators. He said the Mexican Attorney General's Office was responsible for the investigation and would be in charge of determining if there was complicity by the authorities due to the fact that it was built without them noticing.

Lemus also said clues about the tunnel's existence and location were discussed by human traffickers on social media platforms like TikTok. Ahead of the US presidential inauguration of Donald Trump on Monday, both sides of the US-Mexico border have reinforced security measures, as the returning Republican has vowed a massive deportation of migrants soon after he takes office.

In the state of Chihuahua, which includes Ciudad Juarez, authorities reported a fire in a temporary camp for undocumented migrants, which led to the evacuation of 39 adults and 17 minors, according to the state police. According to the Mexican newspaper Reforma, the fire was started by some of the migrants who were camping there to resist attempts by immigration authorities to detain them and transfer them to Mexico City for later deportation. — AFP

Mount Ibu erupts more than 1,000 times in January

TERNATE, Indonesia: A volcano in eastern Indonesia has erupted at least a thousand times this month, according to an official report Sunday as efforts were underway to evacuate thousands of villagers living near the rumbling mountain. Mount Ibu, on the remote island of Halmahera in North Maluku province, sent a column of smoke up to four kilometres into the sky in an eruption on Wednesday.

Indonesian officials raised its alert status to the highest level and called for the evacuation of 3,000 people living in six nearby villages. It was one of 1,079 eruptions by the volcano recorded since January 1 by Indonesia's Geological Agency, sending columns of ash reaching between 0.3 and 4 km above its peak, according to the agency's data gathered by AFP. The latest big eruption occurred on Sunday at 1:15 am local time as it spewed a towering cloud of ash 1.5 km into the air.

"The ash was grey, with moderate to thick intensity, drifting southwest. A loud rumbling sound was heard all the way to Mount Ibu Observation Post," the agency said in a statement. It added that the volcano had erupted 17 times on Sunday alone. Despite deciding to evacuate affected villagers, local authorities had only managed to evacuate 517 residents as of Sunday, pledging to persuade those who remained to stay in safe shelters.

Many have refused to evacuate, arguing that they were used to the situation and were in harvest season. "There might be economic considerations, as many residents are in the middle of harvesting crops. However, we will continue to educate the community and encourage them to evacuate," said Aditya Yuni Nurtono, Ternate district military commander in charge of a safe shelter.



WEST HALMAHERA, Indonesia: Volcanic ash rises during the eruption of Mount Ibu, as seen from Duono Village on Jan 15, 2025. — AFP

Mount Ibu, one of Indonesia's most active volcanoes, has shown a significant increase in activity since last June. Residents living near Mount Ibu and tourists have been advised to avoid a five- to six-kilometre exclusion zone around the volcano's peak and to wear face masks in case of falling ash. As of 2022, around 700,000 people were living on Halmahera island, according to official data.

Indonesia, a vast archipelago, experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity as it lies along the Pacific Ring of Fire. Last November, Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki, a 1,703-m twin-peaked volcano on the tourist island of Flores erupted more than a dozen times in one week, killing nine people in its initial explosion. Mount Ruang in North Sulawesi province erupted more than half a dozen times last year, forcing thousands from nearby islands to evacuate. — AFP

News in Brief

Nigeria truck blast toll rises to 86

LAGOS: The death toll from the explosion of a petrol tanker truck in Nigeria that killed people rushing to gather fuel has risen to 86, emergency services said Sunday. The truck carrying 60,000 litres of gasoline exploded after flipping over on a road in the center of the country on Saturday, authorities said. "The final death toll from the tanker explosion is 86," said Ibrahim Audu Hussein, spokesman for the Niger state's emergency management agency. "It took us 14 hours to bury the bodies because we couldn't get excavators and had to get locals to dig the mass grave manually." He said 52 other people suffered "severe burns from the explosion". — AFP

Bangladesh medics arrested

DHAKA: Five Bangladeshi health workers have been arrested on murder charges after a social media post accused them of failing to provide aid to a man who died during last year's revolution, a prosecutor said Sunday. The case, which has generated widespread attention after the Facebook post resulted in criticism online of the medics, concerns the death of a rickshaw puller, Mohammed Ismail. Hospital workers say the five are innocent and that they risked their lives repeatedly to help wounded protesters. — AFP

Chagos deal will secure US base

PORT LOUIS: A prospective deal on returning the Chagos islands to Mauritius will ensure the United States maintains its strategic military base on the Indian Ocean archipelago, Mauritius' prime minister said Sunday. "There is a disinformation campaign in the United States claiming that we are close to China, that we are going to let them open bases, which is completely untrue," Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam told the Le Mauricien newspaper. "Mauritius is close to India, not China. Donald Trump must understand that by supporting this deal he is securing the base at Diego Garcia," he said, ahead of the US businessman's inauguration as president on Monday. — AFP



PORT-AU-PRINCE: A third contingent of police officers from Kenya arrives at Toussaint Louverture International Airport on Jan 18, 2025. — AFP

More Kenyan police land in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE: An additional 217 Kenyan police officers landed in Haiti on Saturday to bolster a multinational force seeking to restore order to the violence-ridden Caribbean island. Criminal gangs still control some 85 percent of the capital Port-au-Prince, the United Nations estimates, despite the deployment last June of the Kenyan-led Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS) under UN auspices. The Kenyan forces, who were greeted at the airport in Port-au-Prince by Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aime, will reinforce the first batch of 400 officers deployed to Haiti last year. — AFP

MONDAY, JANUARY 20, 2025

With cocktails and Snoop Dogg, crypto industry celebrates Trump inauguration

Gala marks stunning turnaround for crypto industry in US politics

WASHINGTON: Cryptocurrency executives swilled cocktails and danced to rap superstar Snoop Dogg on Friday night as they celebrated the approaching inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump, whose administration has promised major changes in crypto policy.

After years of butting heads with Washington policymakers, executives from crypto companies including Crypto.com, Kraken, and Exodus partied at the first-ever crypto inauguration ball held at the 90-year-old Andrew W Mellon Auditorium beneath towering 62-foot (19-metre) columns.

Clad in black tie and ball gowns, guests noshed on miniature lobster rolls and Trump's favored McDonald's burgers and fries, according to social media posts and two attendees who spoke to Reuters. In addition to Snoop Dogg, the entertainment lineup featured rappers Rick Ross and Soulja Boy, the attendees said.

One of many Washington celebrations ahead of Trump's Monday swearing-in, the crypto gala marks a stunning turnaround for an industry that has been in the Biden administration's crosshairs. Two years ago, it looked to be on the brink of extinction amid the collapse of FTX.

Trump, who did not attend the gala, courted crypto campaign cash with promises to be a "crypto president," and is expected next week to issue executive orders aimed at reducing crypto regulatory roadblocks and promoting widespread adoption of digital assets.

"There were a lot of dark years," said Les Borsari, co-founder of the crypto investment adviser Wave Digital Assets, who flew in from Los Angeles. "If this signifies what the future looks like ... I think that's the optimism we've been waiting for."

Swag included "Make Bitcoin Great Again" red baseball caps, and American flag pins with the sym-



WASHINGTON: The white clubhouse is lit up in red, white and blue as US President-elect Donald Trump and his wife Melania Trump watch fireworks during a reception in his honor at Trump National Golf Club Washington DC in Sterling, Virginia, on January 18, 2025. — AFP

bol for Gemini, an event sponsor and crypto exchange founded by Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, who backed Trump's campaign.

Sold Out

Tickets sold out at \$2,500 each for general admission, the ball's website said, but for a cool \$100,000, VIP packages provided face time with tech entrepreneur David Sacks, Trump's incoming crypto czar

and the gala's emcee, according to attendees and crypto media outlets. About 1,500 people attended.

Several other officials from Trump's incoming administration were also present, the attendees said. Other sponsors included the digital asset division of Robinhood, MicroStrategy and Crypto.com, according to the event website. Sponsors had cocktails named in their honor. "Last night was truly a testament to how mainstream crypto has be-

come," said JP Richardson, CEO of Exodus, which co-hosted the ball.

While the industry was reveling, Trump on Friday night expanded his cryptocurrency interests, which already include World Liberty Financial, by launching a digital token branded with an image from his attempted assassination in July. The price of that "meme coin" was around \$27 by Saturday afternoon, giving it a market capitalization of about \$5.5 billion, according to CoinMarketCap.

Worried about fraud and money laundering, President Joe Biden's regulators cracked down on crypto companies, suing exchanges Coinbase, Binance, Kraken and dozens more in federal court. Trump's crypto policy team is taking shape, with his crypto-friendly Securities and Exchange Commission chair pick Paul Atkins expected to forge major crypto policy changes.

"The crypto voter showed up in the election and this event signifies a turning point for crypto policy in the United States," Jonathan Jachym, global head of policy at Kraken, said in a statement. Bitcoin, the world's largest cryptocurrency, hit new records above \$107,000 in December on excitement over Trump's policy changes.

"We are proud to support the Crypto Ball ... and look forward to supporting the new administration to advance innovation in digital assets," said a spokesperson for Crypto.com, adding the company's president of North America, Matt David, attended.

Representatives for the Trump administration, Robinhood, MicroStrategy, Gemini and the event's other two hosts, BTC Inc. and Stand With Crypto, did not immediately comment. Sacks did not immediately return an emailed request for comment. Representatives for Snoop Dogg, Rick Ross and Soulja Boy could not immediately be reached on Saturday. — Reuters

Kamco Invest, Burgan Bank to host their 2nd Investment Conference

KUWAIT: Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank are set to co-host the second edition of their exclusive Investment Conference at St Regis Kuwait on Monday, February 10th, 2025. Building on the strong foundation of its highly-successful inaugural edition, the event will convene an elite gathering of thought leaders, industry experts, and institutional investors for insightful discussions on critical topics shaping the global economy, geopolitics, and diverse asset classes.

Under the theme "Exploring Trends: Ideas That Move Markets", the conference seeks to delve into the intricacies of the global economy, uncover the forces shaping geopolitics, and examine emerging challenges and opportunities across a spectrum of asset classes. In a rapidly changing world with ever-evolving market dynamics, this event serves as a guiding compass to change makers, delivering actionable insights and strategic foresight to empower participants in navigating the complexities of the financial landscape.

The distinguished lineup of speakers and panelists, including executives from Kamco Invest, prominent figures, and respected guests from renowned regional and international asset management firms, will contribute to a robust exchange of ideas and insights. This collaborative effort is designed to foster a collective understanding of how to thrive amidst uncertainties, leveraging the combined expertise of industry leaders.



Meshari Shehab



Sana Al-Hadlaq

The event will commence with a thought-provoking presentation by Oxford Economics, providing a comprehensive analysis of the macroeconomic and geopolitical environment, exploring key factors shaping the global and regional landscapes and their impact. Following this, four engaging panel discussions will unfold, focusing on the GCC economies, regional equity markets, investment opportunities in a high-interest rate environment, in addition to success stories in private equity and venture capital.

Highlighting the collaboration between Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank, Sana Al-Hadlaq, Senior Executive Director of Wealth Management at Kamco Invest stated, "This conference highlights the continued success of our ongoing collaboration with Burgan Bank, which was exemplified by the outstanding impact of last year's event. Together, we are committed to providing unmatched insights into the financial landscape, tackling challenges, and uncovering opportunities to empower our clients and guide them toward confident and successful investment decisions."

Meshari Shehab, General Manager of Private



Banking and Wealth Management at Burgan Bank added, "We are excited to co-host this impact-driven event for the second consecutive year, reinforcing our commitment to delivering not only exceptional financial services but also playing an active role in driving the conversations shaping our industries today. By leveraging the combined strengths and expertise of both our institutions, we are poised to offer innovative solutions, actionable insights, and forward-thinking strategies that will enhance our clients' understanding of the financial landscape."

The panels will feature esteemed guest speakers from Kamco Invest and renowned regional and international institutions and asset management firms, including the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, MSCI, SNB Capital, Flexam Invest, European Green Logistics Space (EGLS), Impact46, Yiswa App, and ARK Invest. This distinguished lineup of speakers will enrich the discussions and provide valuable insights into the evolving landscape of global investments.

Trump launches his own meme coin, value soars

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump has launched his own cryptocurrency, appropriately called \$TRUMP, sparking feverish buying that sent its market capitalization soaring on Saturday to several billion dollars.

In a message posted on his Truth Social platform and X, Trump unveiled the so-called meme coin, which is designed to capitalize on the popularity of a certain personality, movement or viral internet trend.

Meme coins have no economic or transactional value, and are often seen as a means of speculative trading. "This Trump Meme celebrates a leader who doesn't back down, no matter the odds," says the coin's official site, which makes reference to the assassination attempt against the Republican in July 2024.

In the hours following the overnight launch, the crypto community posed questions about the legitimacy of the \$TRUMP coin, and its actual link to the president-elect, with some fearing a scam.

But the fact that the announcements came on Trump's official social media channels seemed to reassure the market, as did the fact that Trump has used one of the companies behind the project, CIC Digital LLC, in the past to sell non-fungible tokens (NFTs).

By mid-morning on Saturday, the market capitalization for \$TRUMP stood at nearly \$6 billion. Neither Trump nor the company managing the launch, Fight Fight Fight LLC, offered details about how much he made from the initial batch of meme coins released. —AFP

ABK receives 'Best Investor Relationship Bank' award from International Finance

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is proud to announce that it has been awarded the title of Best Investor Relationship Bank – Kuwait by International Finance. This recognition highlights the Bank's commitment to excellence and its strong reputation within the financial community.

Abdulla Al-Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, and Abdulaziz Jawad, Chief Strategy Officer, proudly accepted the award during a distinguished ceremony held in Dubai, attended by numerous esteemed entities and institutions.

Expressing his gratitude for this recognition, Al-Sumait stated, "This award reflects our distinguished record in developing investor relations and our ongoing efforts to adopt transparency in disclosing the Bank's operational results and developments." He emphasized that continuous engagement with the investment community, both locally and globally, has been crucial in building and reinforcing robust relationships with investors. This is achieved through consistent communication with the Investor Relations Unit and active participation in various events and conferences.

Al-Sumait also highlighted ABK's significant achievement in successfully issuing \$300 million ATI bonds in 2024. This marked the Bank's return to capital markets for the first time since 2018, with a remarkable coverage ratio exceeding 4.5 times the offered amount, showcasing strong trust and confidence from investors in the Bank's stability.

Al-Sumait concluded by thanking International



Abdulla Al-Sumait



Abdulaziz Jawad

Finance for its recognition which reflected the great confidence and leading position that the Bank enjoys in the banking sector. He added that ABK will continue to work on enhancing investors' confidence in the upcoming period, which is considered as one of the Bank's top priorities.

On his part, Jawad added that this award is a testament to the many advancements ABK has experienced in 2024, such as its upgrade to the Premier Market on the Kuwait Stock Exchange. This upgrade was made possible due to the Bank's adherence to the regulatory requirements set forth by the Capital Markets Authority and Boursa Kuwait. He reiterated the Bank's commitment to meeting investor needs through comprehensive disclosures regarding operations impacting financial indicators and ensuring value for traders and clients alike.



Abdulla Al-Sumait and Abdulaziz Jawad receive the award.

He noted, "ABK actively participates in various events and conferences to connect with investment groups, collaborating closely with Boursa Kuwait and other entities." He reiterated that the Bank is dedicated to employing best practices in investor relations, which has proven effective in establishing trust and credibility with analysts and shareholders.

Further addressing transparency, Jawad stated that the Bank follows a policy of complete openness in external communications, adhering to the highest

international standards. The Bank has instituted quarterly online analysts' conferences on financial results to facilitate dialogue and responsiveness to inquiries.

In conclusion, Jawad emphasized that ABK will continue to develop strategic plans aimed at providing superior services and improving operational efficiency while enhancing communication with investors, financial analysts, and portfolio managers. This approach underscores the Bank's commitment to transparency and disclosure of its business results.

Business



KUWAIT: The moment the grand prize winner is announced.



The padel tournament first place winners.

NBK announces Al-Jawhara millionaire amid extraordinary event

With significant media and public attendance at Dar Sheikha Farm in Wafra



The padel tournament second place winners.



KUWAIT: In a vibrant setting with an outstanding media and public turnout, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) hosted a special 8-hour event last Friday at Dar Sheikha Farm in Wafra. The occasion marked the announcement of the winners of the grand prize draw for both Al-Jawhara and Al-Jawhara Junior draws.



Mohammed Al-Othman

The event saw the attendance of senior leaders and officials from National Bank of Kuwait and featured a diverse array of entertainment shows, activities, competitions and raffles. These activities garnered enthusiastic participation and engagement from the attendees.

The draw, held under the supervision of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and a Deloitte representative, resulted in Al-Jawhara account customer Bibi Hussain Ali Akbar winning the grand prize of KD 1 million. Simultaneously, Al-Jawhara Junior draw winner Rouh Hussain Ali Al-Enezi secured the grand prize of KD 10,000.

NBK set up several booths at the celebration site to highlight its premier services and products, catering specifically to its private and privilege banking customers.

On this occasion, Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO, Consumer and Digital Banking Group at NBK, remarked: "We remain committed to rewarding our cus-



tomers across all segments with an exceptional range of draws, prizes, and offers throughout the year. Our goal is to consistently deliver a superior banking experience that reinforces NBK's leadership and competitive edge in the Kuwaiti banking sector."

"Today, we celebrate the announcement of the millionaire of the Al-Jawhara Grand Prize Draw, alongside the winner of Al-Jawhara Junior Grand Prize Draw, in a vibrant and exceptional setting befitting this occasion. This reinforces NBK's commitment to remaining closely connected to its customers at all times," Al-Othman added.

He emphasized that Al-Jawhara account is a fundamental pillar of the bank's strategy, designed to offer

customers the chance to win extraordinary prizes that enhance their banking experience. It also serves as a vital tool for profit, saving, and future planning for all family members, while supporting NBK's efforts to foster a culture of savings and promote financial inclusion.

Al-Othman highlighted that NBK has increased the total prize value of Al-Jawhara Account to reach KD 5 million annually since the start of 2024. He also mentioned the recent introduction of Al-Jawhara Saver Account, which offers customers guaranteed interest rate of up to 1.5 percent for the first year, along with the chance to enter monthly draws and the grand prize draw, provided the balance reaches KD 5,000 or more.

He emphasized that all of NBK's services, rewards, and payment solutions are developed based on thorough studies, analytical tools, and customer surveys to better understand their needs and aspirations. These insights are then used to set clear, irreplaceable goals, with the bank relying on a distinguished team of professionals and the latest global analysis tools and programs.

Since the beginning of 2023, NBK increased total prize pool for Al-Jawhara account draws, establishing it as the largest draw program in Kuwait. The draws include a weekly prize of KD 20,000, a monthly prize of KD 125,000, and a grand prize of KD 1 million, awarded three times annually.



MONDAY, JANUARY 20, 2025



Serena Null is reunited with her cat Domino, who was burned in the Eaton Fire, at Pasadena Humane, an animal shelter in Pasadena, California. — AFP photos



Erick Rico (right) and Jaylene Rosalez, who recognized their Chihuahua mix Bombon from a social media post of the Pasadena Humane, are reunited with him.



Dogs rescued after the Eaton fire are housed at Pasadena Humane, an animal shelter in Pasadena, California.

SEPARATED BY LA WILDFIRES, A HAPPY REUNION FOR SOME PETS, OWNERS

When Serena Null saw the flames roaring toward her family home in the Los Angeles suburb of Altadena, she ran to find her pet Domino, but the cat eluded her grasp. "We could see the fire from the front door, and so we just didn't have enough time, and we had to leave him," the 27-year-old Null said. The fe-

told AFP outside the NGO Pasadena Humane, where Domino -- suffering singed paws, a burnt nose and a high level of stress -- had been taken after being rescued. Domino is one of several hundred pets brought to the center as the Eaton fire roared through Altadena, forcing thousands of people to flee their homes in such

Search and rescue

Many animals were delivered by their owners, who had lost their homes and had to find temporary housing for pets while they themselves stayed in hotels or shelters. But others were brought by rescue workers and volunteers. The center says on its website that when it receives a report of a pet left behind, it sends "search and rescue teams as quickly as possible in areas that are safe to enter." The center opened up as much space as it could to accommodate the influx, even placing some pets in offices. And it was not just dogs and cats, McManus said. There were species rarely seen in an animal shelter -- like a pony, which spent a night in the center.

More than 10 days after the fires began raging through Los Angeles, the center still houses some 400 animals, including rabbits, turtles, lizards and birds, including a huge green, red and blue macaw. Many of the pets' owners, still without permanent housing, come to the center to visit their animal friends -- people like Winston Ekpo, who came to see his three German shepherds, Salt, Pepper and Sugar. As firefighters in the area make progress, many animal owners are able to come and recover their pets, tears of sadness turning to tears of joy.

Back home

The center's website posts photos of recovered animals, including informa-



A cat rescued after the Eaton fire is housed in an office as all cages are full with other rescues, at Pasadena Humane, an animal shelter in Pasadena, California.

tion on the time and place where they were rescued. McManus said some 250 pets have so far been returned to their owners. One of them, curiously, was Bombon, who had actually been lost long before the fires. The Chihuahua mix went missing from its Altadena home in November, said 23-year-old Erick Rico. He had begun to resign himself to never seeing Bombon again. Then one day a friend told him he had seen a picture on the Pasadena Humane website that caught his attention.

When Rico saw it, he was so excited he couldn't sleep that night -- "it looked exactly like him," he said -- and he arrived at the center early the following morning. When he saw his owners, Bombon "started crying a lot, wagging his tail and everything. He was very, very happy." After the painful days of uncertainty, Rico too finally felt relief. "Now I'm just happy that he's back home." — AFP



Rabbits rescued after the Eaton fire are housed at Pasadena Humane, an animal shelter in Pasadena, California.



A parrot rescued after the Eaton fire is housed at Pasadena Humane, an animal shelter in Pasadena, California.

rocious blaze reduced her mother-in-law's house to ashes, and a search of the blackened rubble the following day proved fruitless. Null feared she would never see her green-eyed friend again. But on Friday, to her amazement, she and Domino were reunited.

"I just was so relieved and just so happy that he was here," a tearful Null

a rush that many left with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Pasadena Humane was accustomed to dealing with crises, but the sudden explosion in demand was without precedent. "We've never had to take 350 at once in one day before," said the center's Kevin McManus. "It's been really overwhelming."

Dogs prove invaluable in massive search for Los Angeles fire victims

In the ashes of what was once a luxury home on Malibu's Pacific coast, an energetic dog runs from spot to spot, searching for victims of one of the huge wildfires that ravaged Los Angeles. Tulla, a sandy-colored Labrador retriever, stops next to a crusted gas canister that was once perhaps part of a barbecue, and begins to bark furiously. To the human eye, there is nothing there, but Tulla's powerful sense of smell says otherwise. Moments later, handlers bring in another dog, which also homes in on the same spot, offering a strong indication that the body of one of the dozens still missing from the massive blazes may finally be found.

Marco Rodriguez, of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, says the dogs are "critical" to the search effort. "We have thousands of homes here in this area that have burned and approximately 15 people that have been reported missing. "We're doing our best, and the dogs are an integral part of that," he told AFP. For thousands of firefighters doing 12- or even 24-hour shifts, the last ten days have been back-breaking; hard physical work made even more difficult for those who have seen swaths of their city burned to the ground.

But for the dogs, it is something of a game, says Joshua Davis, who has deployed with Bosco -- a black Labrador -- from his base in San Francisco. "They're used to crawling on rubble. They enjoy it," he said. While there's no emotional toll on the animals, there are physical dangers that require special protective boots to safeguard their paws. "There's a lot of sharp glass and a lot of nails and debris out there that can injure the dogs," said Davis.

'Like every other firefighter'

The dogs in the search and rescue



Search and rescue dog Tulla leads the way in an effort to find eventual human remains from fire-ravaged beachfront properties along the Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, California over a week after the devastating Palisades Fire. — AFP photos

unit have routines similar to the humans they work alongside, said Davis. "Every day we go to work, he gets fed, just like every other firefighter," he said. "He gets training on various things and we do daily exercises with him, so he knows how to run on a treadmill and he can climb ladders." When he's not on operations, Bosco keeps his skills up with a weekly session in a dummied-up practice disaster area, where trainers hide scents for him to find.

Bosco was originally trained to be a guide dog but "failed miserably" because he had too much energy, said Davis. But that energy makes him perfect for searching -- where the dog has learned to associate the discovery of a scent with the chance to play with his favorite toy. In Bosco's case, that's a piece of fire hose.

"When they find the scent, they'll bark at it. I'll get to the victim and/or

the source where they're barking at, and then I'll reward Bosco," said Davis. The dogs are not infallible and there are false alarms, but on the whole they drastically reduce the amount of work that humans have to do. "A lot of the dogs here today can cover a building that has been collapsed in five minutes or less," said Davis. "It can take four to five firefighters 10 to 20 minutes to cover a location." For Bosco, who has worked alongside Davis for three years searching countless properties, it's not all serious labor. In his downtime, he has a successful Instagram feed, where followers can see what he has been up to. This week, one of his stories showed Bosco sitting in a car, looking enthusiastically through the window with an apt caption: "Ready to work, boss!" — AFP



Rescue dog Tulla arrives for a search and rescue operation at fire-ravaged beachfront properties in Malibu, California.



San Francisco firefighter Joshua Davis from the National Search and Rescue Response System and his dog Bosco take a break in the search of rubbles of houses destroyed by the Pacific Fire.



Search and rescue dog Tulla leads the way in an effort to find eventual human remains.

THE 47TH MONTE-CARLO INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS FESTIVAL: A CELEBRATION OF CIRCUS MASTERY



"Trio Balkanski " performs during the opening.

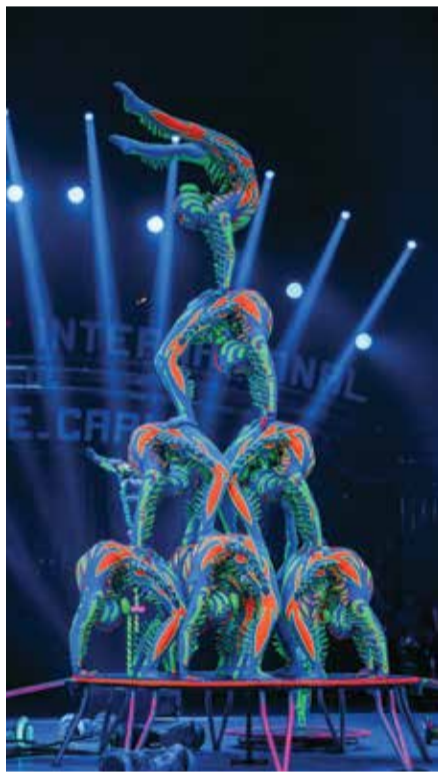


"Circus Theatre Bingo" performs during the opening. — AFP photos

The 47th Monte-Carlo International Circus Festival is set to captivate audiences from January 17 to 26, 2025, at the iconic Chapiteau de Fontvieille in Monaco. This prestigious event, originally founded in 1974 by Prince Rainier III, continues to be a beacon for the finest talents in the world of circus arts. Each year, the festival brings together a dazzling array of performers from across the globe, all vying for the highly coveted Golden Clown award. This honor represents the pinnacle of achievement in circus performance, recognizing acts that blend technical prowess, creativity, and showmanship.

A Cultural extravaganza

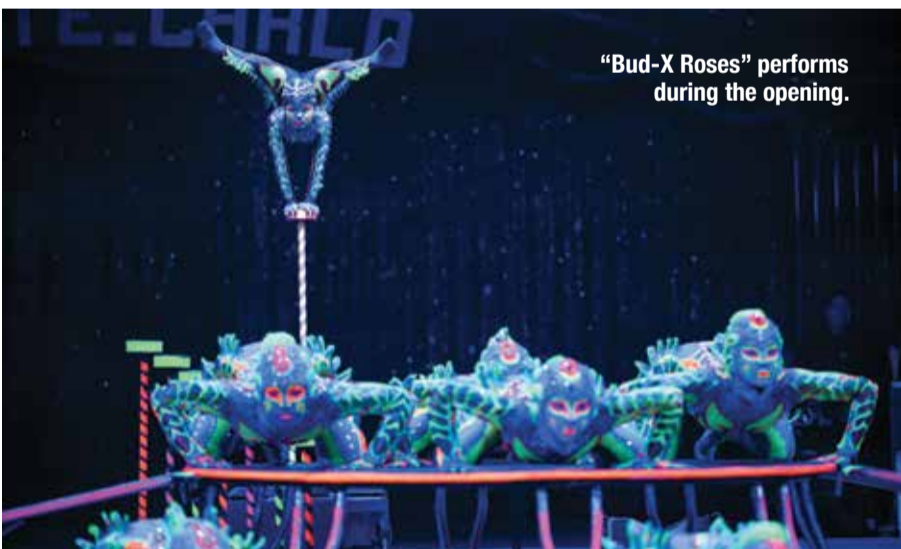
The Monte-Carlo International Circus Festival is more than just a series of performances; it is a cultural phenomenon that celebrates the artistry, dedication, and tradition of the circus. This festival serves as a testament to Monaco's rich cultural heritage and its ongoing support for the performing arts. As the festival approaches, excitement builds for what promises to be an unforgettable celebration of circus mastery.



"Bud-X Roses" performs during the opening.



"Bud-X Roses" performs during the opening.



"Bud-X Roses" performs during the opening.



"Bud-X Roses" performs during the opening.



Ringmaster "Petit Gougou" speaks during the opening of the 47th Monte-Carlo International Circus Festival in Monaco.



"Bud-X Roses" performs during the opening.



"China National Acrobatic Troupe" performs during the opening.



"China National Acrobatic Troupe" performs.



"China National Acrobatic Troupe" performs.



Clowns attend the opening of the 47th Monte-Carlo International Circus Festival.

WHAT'S ON
IN KUWAIT



International Friends Club celebrates New Year

Members of the International Friends Club celebrated the new year at the Art Cafe. The celebration was attended by the club's honorary president Sheikhha Hanaa Al-Bader Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, and the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Lesotho, as well as a group of women diplomats, wives of ambassadors accredited to the State of Kuwait and fellow club members.

The celebration was led by the club's advisor Narjes Al-Shatti who began with welcoming the guests, followed by a feature folk dance presentation from Indonesia. The event also

featured a few cultural contests for the members and a draw for a variety of special prizes. The event concluded with a beautiful new year's cake cutting ceremony provided generously by Art Cafe in which Sheikhha Hanaa and the Basotho Ambassador took part.

The attendees exchanged new year's greetings and joined together in wishing that 2025 will be a better year for humanity and of continued prosperity for Kuwait. The attendees also expressed their gratitude to the event organizers for their hard work and creativity in putting this event together.



KALA Kuwait Micro Film Festival: A big festival of small films

Kerala Art Lovers Association (KALA) Kuwait's Film Society held a micro film festival which was inaugurated by renowned Malayalam film actor Irshad Ali. "Tears of Desert" directed by Ratheesh C V Ammas won the Best Film award at the 7th Micro Film Festival, which showcased 75 short films. 'Alien' directed by Rajeev Devanandan won the second Best Film award. Ratheesh C V Ammas was selected as the best director for the film 'Tears of Desert' and Rajeev Devanandan, who wrote the script for the film 'Alien' was selected as the best script writer. Ratheesh won the best cinematography award also for the film while Jinto won the best editor award for the film 'Job'.

Devanandan won the best art director award for the film 'Tears of Desert'. Suresh Kattakkada, who gave his best performance in the film 'Witness' won the best actor award,



while Ramya Ratheesh, who acted in the film 'Astiv' and Jijuna Menon, who acted in the film 'Kanal', shared the best actress award. Mazha Jitesh, who acted in the films 'Smartha Vicharam' and 'Kanal', won the best child artist award. Ridhika Srikanth and Ruhani Ratheesh, who

directed the 'Love and Care' bagged the special jury award.

Renowned film critic GP Ramachandran announced the winners. The awards ceremony for the winners of the festival and the Dubs Mash & One Minute Short Film winners organized by Kala Kuwait Film

Society were held at the venue by micro film festival guests Irshad Ali, GP Ramachandran and KALA Kuwait office-bearers. The program was presided over by Kala Kuwait President Anup Mangat at Indian Central School Abbasiya KALA Art Wing Secretary Nishant George presented a condolence motion expressing condolences on the demise of renowned playback singer P Jayachandran. Loka Kerala Sabha member R Naganathan spoke on the occasion and offered his greetings. KALA Kuwait General Secretary Saji Thomas Mathew welcomed the gathering and Micro Film Festival General Convener Ajith Pattama expressed his gratitude. Film critic GP Ramachandran, KALA Kuwait Vice President Richie K George, Joint Secretary Bijoy, Kala Kuwait Film Society Convener Sajeev Manthanam were also present on the occasion.

IBPC Kuwait delegation meets Indian FM

The Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) delegation from Kuwait to Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was honored to meet Dr S Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs. The in-

teraction was represented by IBPC Chairman Kaizar T Shakir, Secretary Suresh K P, Joint Secretary Sunil Arora and Sahel Chopra.



Pak Donors successfully conducts 26th blood donation drive

Pak Donors, a leading non-profit organization dedicated to promoting blood donation awareness and facilitating donations, has successfully conducted its 26th Blood Donation Drive. The event received an overwhelming response, with approximately 250 individuals registering to donate blood, demonstrating a collective commitment to this vital cause.

The event was honored by the presence of Mr. Hamza Tauqir, the Community Welfare Attaché (CWA) of the Pakistan Embassy. During his visit, Mr. Tauqir praised Pak Donors

for their relentless efforts and dedication to humanity. He highlighted the significance of such initiatives in fostering unity and compassion, commending the organization for its exceptional community service and event management.

Pak Donors expressed its gratitude to Mr. Muddasar Hussain, CEO of Falcon General Trading & Contracting Co., whose generous support was instrumental in the event's success. This partnership underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in advancing humanitarian causes.

The Pak Donors team, including Camp Leader Abdul Waheed Jaber, Inam Morganite, and Hakeem Tariq, warmly welcomed all guests, including notable Pakistani dignitaries and other nationals. Their participation reinforced a shared commitment to saving lives through voluntary blood donation.

Pak Donors extends heartfelt thanks to all donors, the Embassy of Pakistan in Kuwait, supporters, media partners, and volunteers whose contributions made the event possible. The organization also acknowledges

the invaluable support of the Central Blood Bank Jabriya, Kuwait, which has been a cornerstone of their successful events. The presence of female donors was notably supported by the dedicated female wing volunteers, who ensured a professional and caring environment.

Pak Donors remains steadfast in its mission to raise awareness about the critical need for blood donation and to provide life-saving support to those in need.



Upcoming

EVENTS

Sri Lankan Embassy to celebrate Thai Pongal 2025 on Jan 25

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Sri Lankan community in Kuwait is pleased to announce the celebration of Thai Pongal 2025. This event, a significant highlight in the Embassy's annual calendar, will take place on January 25, 2025 at the Chancery Premises.

The character of the Prophet ﷺ
The Quran
IMA Kuwait Presents
QURAN CAMPAIGN
26 Dec 2024 to 24 Jan 2025
Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait is pleased to inform that it is going to launch a full month Quran Campaign in Kuwait starting from 26th Dec 2024 to 24 Jan 2025 under its central theme "كان خلقه القرآن" The Character of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the Quran".

- Dars e Quran
- Friday Sermons
- Quiz & Competitions
- Public Events

QURAN CONFERENCE
On Friday, 24 Jan 2025 at Masjid Al Kabir.

www.imakuwait.org | imakuwait | imakuwaittv | imakuwait

KALA Kuwait to hold 46th annual conference on Jan 24

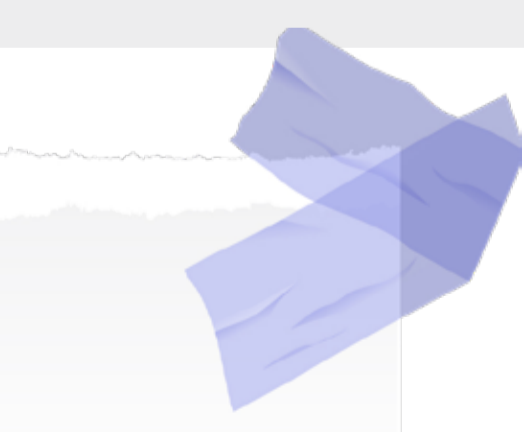
The 46th annual conference of the Kerala Art Lovers Association (KALA) Kuwait will be held on Friday, January 24 at Sitaram Yechury Nagar (Central School Abbasiya). A reception committee has been formed for the successful conduct of the conference. In a meeting held at United Indian School, Abbasiya under the chairmanship of KALA Kuwait President Anup Mangat, Kala Kuwait General Secretary Saji Thomas Mathew gave an overview of the agenda of the upcoming conference.

Following the suggestions of the members, the meeting elected Sunny Sailesh as the chairman of the reception committee of the conference while Saji Thomas Mathew has been elected as the general convener. Various sub committees also have been formed to facilitate the smooth conduct of the conference.

Saradhi Kuwait to hold Rubik's cube and quiz competition

Saradhi Kuwait has announced a Rubik's cube and quiz competition as part of the tech fest Futurologia 2025, taking place on January 31, 2025. This event is open to all students in Kuwait. Rubik's cube competition: Students from Class 1 to 12 can participate and showcase their problem-solving skills and speed.

Science-IT Quiz Competition: Students from Class 5 to 9 are invited to test their knowledge in a fun quiz focused on technology and science.



Share your community news!

We love hearing from you! If you have community news, events or happenings to share, please send the details to whatson@kuwaittimes.com. Your story could be featured in our weekly What's On section on Mondays.

Sports

Pakistan's Sajid and Abrar demolish WI in first Test win

The spinners were clinical and Abrar along with Noman and Sajid was great: Masood

MULTAN: Spinner Sajid Khan took five wickets and Abrar Ahmed another four to guide Pakistan to a 127-run win on the third day of the first Test against West Indies in Multan on Sunday. Sajid took 5-50 for match figures of 9-115, while leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed snared 4-27 as West Indies were dismissed for 123, falling well short of their victory target of 251.

Pakistan's spinners took all the wickets in West Indies' second innings, with Noman Ali chipping in with 1-42, as the home side took an early advantage in the two-Test series. Left-handed batter Alick Athanaze hit 55, the only half-century of the match for the tourists, and added 41 runs for the sixth wicket with Tevin Imlach.

Sajid removed the dangerous Athanaze, while Abrar's haul included the final wicket of Jomel Warrican. Left-arm Warrican had led the spin attack for the tourists with a career-best 7-32 as Pakistan were bowled out for 157 in their second innings.

They were the best figures by a West Indian bowler in Pakistan, topping fast bowler Malcolm Marshall's 5-33 at Lahore in 1986. Pakistan captain Shan Masood praised his spinners but said he wanted to see an improvement in the side's batting.

"The spinners were clinical and Abrar along with Noman and Sajid was great," Masood said. "Batting was tough on this pitch but we still need to add more runs with the last few wickets and there are

improvements to be made."

His beaten counterpart Kraigg Brathwaite wanted West Indies' batters to believe in their abilities. "The batters didn't play as well as they should have," Brathwaite said. "We saw how Alick played so we just have to be brave. We have got one more Test and we have to believe in ourselves."

The Test lasted fewer than eight sessions, with the start delayed on the first day by poor visibility. The Multan pitch provided sharp turn, with Sajid taking the wickets of Brathwaite (12), Keacy Carty (six), Kaveem Hodge (0) and Mikyle Louis (13).

Noman then trapped Justin Greaves leg before wicket for nine in the last over before lunch, leaving the tourists tottering on 54-5. Noman took 5-39 in the first innings. He and Sajid took 39 of the 40 wickets in the last two Tests against England in Pakistan's 2-1 series win last year.

Pakistan had resumed earlier on 109-3 but managed to add just 48 runs. Warrican's nagging line and length earned him match figures of 10-101, his first 10-wicket match haul. He dismissed overnight batter Saud Shakeel for two with the first ball of the day and then had Mohammad Rizwan for the same score in his next over. Warrican continued the demolition with the wickets of Kamran Ghulam (27), Noman (nine) and Sajid (five). The second match starts on January 25, also in Multan. — AFP



MULTAN: Pakistan's Sajid Khan (R) celebrates after taking the wicket of West Indies' Mikyle Louis during the third day of the first Test cricket match between Pakistan and West Indies at the Multan Cricket Stadium in Multan on January 19, 2025. — AFP

Sumo to stage event in Paris as part of global push

TOKYO: Sumo will stage a tournament in Paris for the first time in over three decades next year in a push to expand the ancient sport beyond Japan, organizers said Sunday. Accor Arena, which hosted basketball and gymnastics events at last year's Paris Olympics, will stage a two-day competition featuring top wrestlers in the French capital in June 2026.

Japan Sumo Association (JSA) officials announced last month that they will also stage a tournament later this year at London's Royal Albert Hall—the first overseas sumo competition in 20 years. "It's important for us to show our sport to the world," JSA chairman Hakkaku told reporters at Tokyo's Kokugikan, where the New Year Grand Sumo Tournament is currently taking place.

"And for the wrestlers, they're the best in the world, they should be proud of that and see that they're admired all over the world." Paris hosted sumo tournaments in 1986 and 1995 at the invitation of former French president Jacques Chirac, who was known to be a huge fan of the centuries-old sport.

Hakkaku, who competed at the 1986 Paris event, said he was "grateful for the long and deep relations between sumo and France". "We feel renewed joy and great responsibility as we prepare for our third performance in Paris in 2026," he said. "We are committed to fully sharing the charm of sumo... with the French people."

French organizers said they would pull out all the stops to recreate the atmosphere of a sumo



TOKYO: People gather at the entrance of Ryogoku Kokugikan for the arrival of sumo wrestlers during the Grand Sumo Tournament in Tokyo on January 19, 2025. — AFP

tournament in Japan. David Rothschild, promoter and executive producer for events organizers AEG, said the Paris tournament would be part of a "festival" celebrating Japanese culture.

"When you say the word sumo, everyone in France knows it represents traditional Japanese culture," he said. "There was a time when it was shown on TV and there are people in France who are very knowledgeable about it," Rothschild added. "But time flies and we want to introduce the beauty of sumo to a new generation."

Sumo has staged events in several countries around the world, including the Soviet Union, Mexico and the United States. The last overseas tournament organized by the JSA was in Las Vegas in 2005. Hakkaku, the JSA chairman, said the association's efforts to bring sumo to audiences abroad were meant to "introduce people to the traditional culture of Japan".

"We thought a lot about how to develop our sport after Covid and I think this was the best idea, but it was already in our plans before that," he said. — AFP

Straka takes 4-shot lead in PGA Tour's American Express

LOS ANGELES: Sepp Straka rode a hot start to an eight-under-par 64 on Saturday to seize a four-shot lead over a trio of players heading into the final round of the US PGA Tour American Express tournament in La Quinta, California.

Austria's Straka, chasing a third US tour title, had a 23-under-par total of 193, with Australia's former world number one Jason Day, US veteran Charley Hoffman and Justin Lower his nearest rivals on 197. Straka teed off on 10 on the La Quinta course, one of three in use over the first three rounds, and piled up six birdies in his first nine holes.

He drilled a long birdie putt at the 18th to make the turn with a three-shot lead and after missing birdie attempts from inside six feet at both the third and fourth he birdied the fifth and sixth—both short par-fives—to push his lead to four.

Straka has yet to make a bogey this week in the California desert near Palm Springs, saving par at his final hole Saturday after pulling his tee shot left. "It's one of those great holes out here at LaQuinta where it kind of pinches in, and the further up you try to push it, the tighter it gets," Straka said. "I tried to hit a three-wood down there and just pulled it a hair, and, yeah, didn't really have anything from there."

"Hit a pretty good shot just to get it 10 yards short of the green, hit a really nice wedge shot in there, so that was nice to see to finish the day." Day, overnight co-leader Hoffman and Lower all played the tougher Stadium Course, which will host the final round on Sunday. Day climbed the leaderboard with a five-under par 67, Hoffman posted a 69 and Lower—who had claimed solo second before a bogey at his penultimate hole—carded a 68. "It's a very fun leaderboard to look at," Straka said as he looked ahead to the final round.

Day, 37, has 13 PGA Tour titles, including the 2015 PGA Championship title. Hoffman, 48, won the first of his four titles at this event back in 2007 and Lower is seeking his first tour crown. Day said recent work has seen "dramatic improvement" in his swing that he hopes will pay dividends this season as he pursues a first title since the 2023 Byron Nelson championship. World number 12 Patrick Cantlay carded an impressive six-under-par 66 on the Stadium Course to share fifth place on 198 with Mark Hubbard, who posted a 69 at La Quinta. Despite his cushion, Straka said Sunday could still turn into a shootout. — AFP



ADELAIDE: Oatly rider Noemi Ruegg from Switzerland celebrates with her trophy after being crowned overall winner of the Tour Down Under cycling race in Adelaide on January 19, 2025. — AFP

Ruegg wins opening UCI World Tour event in Australia

ADELAIDE: Switzerland's Noemi Ruegg protected her lead to win Australia's Tour Down Under as American Olympic team pursuit champion Chloe Dygert surged to victory in the final stage on Sunday.

Ruegg (EF Education-Eotasy) kept pace with the leaders heading into the final sprint in hot conditions to cross the finish line in third place behind Dygert but enough to claim the opening race of the UCI World Tour season. She became only the second non-Australian winner in eight editions of the women's Tour Down Under.

Ruegg, 23, set up her overall victory with a powerful win in Saturday's second stage to hold a 15-second buffer over Dutch rider Silke Smulders (Liv Jayco AlUla) heading into the decisive 105.9km

final stage in the Adelaide Hills.

The Swiss rider claimed the overall ochre leader's jersey by 13 seconds in 8hr 49min from Smulders with Norway's Mie Bjornstad Ottestad (Uno-X Mobility) third, 37 seconds behind the winner. "It was quite a challenge today, they didn't make it easy for us, they tried a lot of moves, especially in the last two laps," Ruegg said.

"I was super nervous the whole day, I really wanted to bring it home, my team were amazing, I could save all my energy early and focus on the last two laps of the stage." Dygert (Canyon-SRAM), who was part of the American gold medal-winning pursuit team at the Paris Olympics last year, swept to the front and held on to her advantage to win the final stage by one second from Smulders and Ruegg.

"We came here trying to get the GC (general classification) and a stage win, we worked really hard today to get that win," Dygert said. Alyssa Polites (ARA Australian Cycling Team) took the Queen of the Mountain title from Poland's Dominika Wlodarczyk (UAE Team ADQ). The six-stage men's Tour Down Under, in its 25th year, gets underway in Adelaide on Tuesday. — AFP

Thompson opens season with convincing win

MIAMI: Jamaica's Olympic 100m silver medalist Kishane Thompson made a convincing return to the track on Saturday, clocking 6.48sec to win the 60m at a meeting in Spanish Town. Thompson posted a personal best despite a headwind of 2.1m/sec at the second tier event outside of Kingston.

The 23-year-old hadn't raced competitively since the Paris Olympics, when he took silver in the 100m behind American Noah Lyles by just five thousandths of a second—the closest Olympic 100m finish in modern history.

Both were given the rounded-up time of 9.79sec but the American's name carried the all-important (.784) to Thompson's (.789). Thompson is scheduled to compete in the first indoor competition of his career on January 25 in Astana, Kazakhstan, the first World Athletics Tour Gold meeting of the season. The indoor season will conclude at the World Championships in Nanjing (China) from March 21 to 23. — AFP

Vonn crashes as Brignone wins Cortina World Cup super-G

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: Federica Brignone continued her superb season by winning Sunday's super-G at Cortina d'Ampezzo to extend her World Cup lead, as comeback queen Lindsey Vonn crashed out. Veteran Brignone, already the oldest woman to win a World Cup race at the age of 34, claimed the honors with a time of one minute and 21.64 seconds, 0.58sec ahead of reigning overall and discipline champion Lara Gut-Behrami.

Brignone made sure that Italy claimed a Cortina double this weekend after Sofia Goggia won Saturday's downhill with her fourth victory of the season. Her win was also her first ever on the Olimpia delle Tofane piste which will host women's alpine events at the Winter Olympics next year.

"I like this more spring-like snow because I can slide down the piste more and every mistake gets punished," said Brignone. "All I can do is keep skiing like I have been doing, with a clear head. I just want to put in my best performances and today I managed to do that."

Vonn has posted some impressive results since coming out of a near six-year retirement aged 40 after a partial right knee replacement in April, but had a poor weekend on one of her favorite courses.

'Good learning experience'

The 2010 Olympic downhill champion, who has 20 podium finishes including 12 wins in Cortina, slid off course after finishing 20th in the downhill on Saturday. "I think this weekend was a good learning experience for me, I haven't really trained downhill or super-G with this kind of speed yet, so I need a little bit more time," said Vonn.

"I really need to train more, understand that I've only had a few months, and a few days of training, and I can't expect always to have a perfect day," Vonn added that she plans to next ski in the downhill and super-G at Garmisch next weekend, with a giant slalom being held in Kronplatz on Tuesday as the athletes prepare for next month's World Championships in Saalbach-Hinterglemm.

Goggia finished seventh, 1.25sec behind her compatriot and rival Brignone who is bidding for a second overall World Cup title and is 106 points ahead of Camille Rast who did not compete on Sunday. "I didn't ski with the same flow as I did yesterday, I was imperfect everywhere," said Goggia to Rai. "I wasn't able to get into the rhythm of the piste, but I lost the podium coming out of the gate... I could tell straight away that I'd lost it there. I could have got a podium place but I started far too badly." — AFP

Brighton rock woeful Man Utd after Law tributes

Man Utd crumbles to a sixth defeat in 11 league games since Amorim arrived



MANCHESTER: Brighton's English striker #18 Danny Welbeck shoots the ball past Manchester United's Portuguese defender #20 Diogo Dalot during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Brighton and Hove Albion at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on January 19, 2025. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Manchester United crashed to a dismal 3-1 defeat against Brighton as Ruben Amorim's problems mounted on the day Old Trafford paid a sombre tribute to legendary striker Denis Law. Amorim's side were hoping to mark Law's death aged 84 by producing the kind of entertaining display that was the hallmark of the United star's teams. Instead they crumbled to a sixth defeat in 11 league games since Amorim arrived from Sporting Lisbon to replace the sacked Erik ten Hag. United are languishing in 13th place and although they are 10 points above the relegation zone, they are far from certain to avoid being dragged into the survival fight on the evidence of this wretched display. Yankuba Minteh set the tone for United's moribund performance with an early opener for Brighton. Bruno Fernandes equalized with a penalty before half-time, but second half goals from Kaoru Mitoma and Georginio Rutter left United in turmoil. After a gritty draw at Liverpool, an FA Cup third round

win with 10 men at Arsenal and a 3-1 win over lowly Southampton, United looked as if they might have turned a corner. But, in truth, they were luck to beat Southampton and all their flaws were laid bare against a dynamic Brighton team who have won six of their last seven league meetings with United. Amorim's side have failed to keep a clean-sheet in 12 matches in all competitions, with both their leaky defence and error-prone keeper Andre Onana exposed by Brighton. It was a depressing result on an emotional day for United after Law passed away on Friday. Law, diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia in 2021, is the third top scorer in United's history, with 237 goals in 404 appearances. Law was a member of United's European Cup-winning squad under Matt Busby in 1968, when they became the first English club to lift the trophy, though he was injured for the final. Dubbed Scot-

land's greatest ever player by Ferguson, Law is the only player from his country to win the prestigious Ballon d'Or.

United in disarray

United fans left red scarves and flowers at the base of the 'Holy Trinity' statue outside Old Trafford that depicts Law alongside team-mates Bobby Charlton and George Best. A piper played 'Flower of Scotland' as the teams walked out, with United legends Alex Ferguson, Brian Kidd, Paddy Crerand and Alex Stepney on the pitch as a eulogy to Law was read out over the tannoy. There was a minute's applause and both teams wore black armbands throughout the match. The sombre mood seemed to affect United and Brighton took the lead after just five minutes. Carlos Baleba's long pass sent Mitoma racing clear behind the flat-footed United defence and the Japan winger

squared to give Minteh with a tap-in. United drew level in the 23rd minute when Baleba's tug on Joshua Zirkzee conceded a penalty that Fernandes converted for his eighth goal this season. Former Manchester United forward Danny Welbeck threatened for Brighton with another goal-bound effort that was deflected to safety by Diogo Dalot. But Brighton had to wait just a few moments to go back in front thanks to Mitoma's 60th minute strike. With United's defence in disarray, Minteh crossed to the far post and Mitoma stretched to poke in from close-range. Mitoma's fifth goal this season made him the all-time leading Japanese scorer in the Premier League with 15, one ahead of former Leicester forward Shinji Okazaki. United keeper Andre Onana's frailties came back to haunt Amorim's men again in the 76th minute. The error-prone Onana dropped a routine cross at Rutter's feet and the French forward gleefully slotted home as furious United fans headed for the exits. — AFP

Hatton holds nerve to clinch Dubai title from Hillier

DUBAI: England's Tyrrell Hatton said it was "a dream come true" after the LIV Golf player continued his remarkable form on the European Tour on Sunday claiming the Dubai Desert Classic as Rory McIlroy's gallant effort to secure the title three years in a row came up short. At the Majlis course of Emirates Golf Club, the 33-year-old Englishman holed a nerve-racking five-footer par putt on the 18th to stay one ahead of overnight leader New Zealand's Daniel Hillier (71), who had closed the gap to one shot with a birdie of his own on the par-5 finishing hole. Despite starting the day with a bogey, Hatton closed with a solid three-under-par 69 for a 15-under-par total. His fifth Rolex Series win ties him with his LIV Golf captain Jon Rahm for the most wins in the DP World-backed European Tour's version of elevated events.

England's Laurie Canter (68) was in sole third place at 13-under. McIlroy shot a 66, with five birdies on the back nine, to get up to tied fourth place alongside Danish sensation Niklas Norgaard (66). Hatton, who is playing on the DP World Tour because he has appealed against his fines (for playing on LIV Golf) and has not resigned from his membership, is expected to rise from 17 to eighth in the world golf rankings when it is updated on Monday. "I'm not going to lie, I was pretty nervous on the back nine, to be honest. I guess I just maybe wanted it a bit too much. I knew the position I was in, and a little bit scruffy down the last. But to see that putt go in, felt amazing," said Hatton. "I said earlier in the week, this is one of the events that you would like to have on your CV. It's such an iconic event for the DP World Tour. To add my name to the list of the amazing champions that have been before me, it's a dream come true." McIlroy said he was delighted with the way he played over the weekend in his first start of the year. "I probably just left myself a bit too much to do after three days. I had chances, and I was burning the edges," said McIlroy. "Felt like I putted pretty well without anything going in and then today, didn't really feel like I



DUBAI: England's Tyrrell Hatton poses with the trophy after winning the Dubai Desert Classic 2025 golf tournament at the Emirates Golf Club in Dubai on January 19, 2025. — AFP

played that differently the way I played the last few days. "I just holed a couple of putts and made a couple of good ups-and-down when I had to. I feel like I got progressively better as the week went on, which bodes well for obviously the next few weeks." —AFP

Djokovic sets up Alcaraz clash, Sabalenka surges

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic surged into an Australian Open quarter-final clash against Carlos Alcaraz with a dominant straight-sets victory on Sunday while women's world number one Aryna Sabalenka was a ruthless winner. Double defending champion Sabalenka is on a collision course with in-form world number three Coco Gauff in the semi-finals in Melbourne if both win in the last eight. On the hottest day of the tournament so far with

temperatures hitting 34 degrees Celsius (93 Fahrenheit), Alcaraz went through when Britain's Jack Draper retired injured. The 37-year-old Djokovic then kept up his end of the bargain with a 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) win over Czech 24th seed Jiri Lehecka in the prime-time match on Rod Laver Arena. Djokovic appears to be growing into the tournament in an ominous sign for his rivals, as he pursues a record-extending 11th Melbourne crown and historic 25th Grand Slam title. He dropped a set in each of his opening two matches but has won the previous two in straight sets. Djokovic and Alcaraz have played each other seven times with the Serb leading 4-3, including victory in their last clash in the Paris Olympics final. But they have never played at Melbourne Park, where Djokovic has achieved his greatest success. "When we are seeing him playing, he seems like he's

young again... it's unbelievable. He's in a really good shape," said Alcaraz, who has vowed to get a kangaroo tattoo if he wins the Australian Open for the first time. The 21-year-old Spaniard, who has never gone beyond the quarter-finals in Melbourne, was leading 7-5, 6-1 when Draper pulled the plug. Draper had come through all three of his previous matches in five sets, and all from 2-1 down, and it appeared to have taken its toll. "It's not the way I wanted to win, but obviously I'm happy to play another quarter-final here in Australia," said Alcaraz. The 23-year-old Draper, whose rise has been held back by issues with his body, said his hip injury had been a "ticking time bomb" and he had "multiple areas really in pain". American 12th seed Tommy Paul destroyed Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina for the loss of just three

games as he bids to match or better his semi-final appearance from 2023. Paul will meet German second seed Alexander Zverev, who survived a mid-match wobble to oust France's Ugo Humbert. Zverev, who is zeroing in on a maiden Grand Slam title, won 6-1, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2. Sabalenka blew away Russian 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva 6-1, 6-2 in a chilling warning to sweep into the quarter-finals. The Belarusian was out on a roasting centre court for only 62 minutes before registering an 18th consecutive win at Melbourne Park. "I'm super happy to get through this difficult match in straight sets," said Sabalenka, who faces Russian 27th seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova next. Sabalenka struggled with her serve in colder conditions during the first week, but was untouchable as the mercury soared. — AFP

Kuwait lose to Qatar in IHF Handball WCup

KUWAIT: Kuwait failed on Saturday to qualify to the main round of the IHF World Handball Cup after suffering their third defeat in row the group stage against Qatar 22-25. The Kuwaiti team did their best and they were neck-to-neck with Qatar, the 2024 Asian Champions. Despite a determined effort by Kuwaiti players, Qatari peers ended the first half with 11-8 lead and maintained their advance in the second half to seal the deal in the Asian derby 25-22. Kuwait, which came back to the competition after a 16-year hiatus, will once again play in the Presidents' Cup. Qatar are going to the main round as the third-placed team for the second time in a row and are joining France and Austria in Varazdin. Kuwait had previously lost its two matches against Austria and France with score of (26-37) and (19-43) respectively. The tournament started on January 14 and will run until February 2 in Croatia, Denmark, and Norway. — KUNA