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## 2025 pivotal for Kuwait economy

Al-Fassam: Single income source not acceptable • Trump talks tough at Davos



**DAVOS:** Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam affirmed that 2025 will be a pivotal year for Kuwait as the government works to implement ambitious plans within a clear strategy to achieve the New Kuwait 2035 vision. This came in the minister's speech during a high-level dialogue session titled Long-Term Growth in the Middle East and North Africa Countries, within the activities of the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Davos from Jan 20 to 24, 2025.

The minister touched on the expectations and aspirations towards economic development prospects in light of the challenges and opportunities available, in addition to expectations of economic growth in the region, stressing that reliance on a single source of income is no longer acceptable.

She also stressed the importance of enhancing digital infrastructure with the participation of the private sector within the public-private partnership system, noting that providing legislation that attracts foreign investment is necessary to build a promising future for the upcoming generations.

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DAVOS: (Left) Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Noura Al-Fassam attends a session at the World Economic Forum. (Right) US President Donald Trump appears on a giant screen as he addresses global elites via video conference on Jan 23, 2025. — KUNA/AFP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Citizenship of 3,856 revoked

**KUWAIT:** The Supreme Commission for Nationality on Thursday said it has decided to revoke the Kuwaiti citizenship of 3,856 people. The commission, which met under the chairmanship of Interior and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, said it recommended revoking citizenship of 11 for holding dual citizenship, 82 for obtaining nationality by cheating and providing false documents and information, 38 people for "undermining loyalty to the country" and 3,725 women who obtained nationality after marrying Kuwaiti men.

#### Kuwait slams Zionist aggression

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait strongly condemned the Zionist occupation aggression on the city of Jenin in the occupied West Bank, which resulted in the death of dozens of Palestinian civilians, in addition to the widespread destruction of infrastructure and displacement of a large number of families. The ministry of foreign affairs stressed the continued Zionist occupation's flagrant violations of international and humanitarian laws and its breach of international legitimacy resolutions without accountability constitutes a threat to regional security and stability, and undermines the chances of achieving a just and comprehensive peace. — KUNA

#### Saudi vows \$600bn US investment

**RIYADH:** Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman promised on Thursday to pile \$600 billion into US trade and investments as he congratulated Donald Trump on his return to the White House. Prince Mohammed made the pledge in a phone call following Trump's inauguration on Monday. In his own call with the crown prince on Thursday, new US Secretary of State Marco Rubio discussed Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and "the threats posed by Iran and its proxies". "They also discussed the benefits of the US-Saudi economic partnership and the opportunities to grow their economies in a variety of fields including AI," a spokesperson for Rubio said. — AFP

### New traffic law goes into effect from April 22

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry said on Thursday the new traffic law, which has stiffened penalties, especially for serious offenses, was published in the official gazette Kuwait Al-Youm on Wednesday, and accordingly it will be implemented after 90 days on April 22, 2025. The ministry stressed existing penalties and fines will be applied in the coming three months before the new law is applied. The new legislation

replaces the existing 48-year-old law. The lowest fine in the new law is KD 15 for parking in prohibited areas (KD 5 currently), while the highest fine could reach as high as KD 5,000 for causing serious injury or death while driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, according to the text of the law published in the official gazette. The ministry said in a statement on X that if the offenses are not sent to court, financial settlements in the form of fines are decided by the ministry. For example, the fine for using a mobile while driving will be increased from KD 5 to KD 75, while the fine for not using a seatbelt will triple from KD 10 to KD 30. Reckless driving fines will be tripled to KD 150, while fines for running the red light and racing on roads will be raised threefold to KD 150 each. Vehicles with harmful emissions,

loud noises or leaking harmful liquids will have their fines increased from KD 10 currently to KD 75, while the fine for parking in places allocated for the handicapped will be increased 15-fold to KD 150. The fines for speeding will be raised from between KD 20 to 50 to as much as between KD 70 and KD 150, based on how much a motorist exceeds the speed limit. Those who drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be fined between KD 1,000 and KD 3,000 and jailed between one and two years. If they damage public or private property, the fine will be between KD 2,000 and KD 3,000, in addition to one to three years imprisonment. However, if these drivers cause death or injury, the fine will be at least KD 2,000 and could go up to KD 5,000, in addition to a jail term ranging between two and five years.

Under the new law, expats can own only one vehicle under their name. The interior ministry listed in its statement settlement fines for a number of offenses and their court penalties if the cases are sent to court. It said that the fine for using personal vehicles for transporting passengers is KD 150, while the fine for speeding is between KD 70 and 150 depending on the number of kilometers it exceeded the speed limit. Driving without a license or after the license is seized is punishable by a KD 75 fine. The ministry said offenders will be fined KD 50 for seating children under 10 years in the front seat or keeping them unbuckled or unattended in the back seat of the car, and also for not respecting traffic lines or signs. The fine is KD 30 for driving below the minimum speed on roads.

### Hundreds leave Jenin as Zionists press onslaught

**JENIN:** A Palestinian official said hundreds of people began leaving their homes in a flashpoint area of the occupied West Bank on Thursday as Zionist forces pressed a deadly operation. The Zionist military launched the raid in the Jenin area, a hotbed of Palestinian militancy, days into a ceasefire in the war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. "Hundreds of camp residents have begun leaving after the (Zionist) army, using loudspeakers on drones and mil-

itary vehicles, ordered them to evacuate the camp," Jenin governor Kamal Abu al-Rub told AFP. Since it began on Tuesday, the operation has killed at least 12 Palestinians and wounded 40 more, according to the Palestinian health ministry. "There are dozens of camp residents who have begun to leave," Jenin resident Salim Saadi said. "The army is in front of my house. They could enter at any moment." Zionist forces have also detained several Palestinians from the Jenin area, with an AFP photographer seeing a row of blindfolded men in white jumpsuits being transported out of the West Bank. Palestinians had already begun fleeing the Jenin area on foot on Wednesday, with AFP TV images showing a group of men, women



JENIN: People carrying their belongings use a street previously destroyed by Zionist forces as they flee the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on Jan 23, 2025. — AFP

### Explosive new fire erupts near Los Angeles

**CASTAIC, California:** An explosive new wildfire erupted north of Los Angeles on Wednesday, forcing tens of thousands of people to evacuate their homes and setting nerves jangling in an area still reeling from two deadly blazes. Ferocious flames devoured hillsides near Castaic Lake, spreading

rapidly to cover more than 9,400 acres in just a few hours. The fire was fanned by strong, dry Santa Ana winds racing through the area, pushing a vast pall of smoke and embers ahead of the firefront. Evacuations were ordered for 31,000 people around the lake, which sits 56 km north of Los Angeles, and close to the city of Santa Clarita. "I'm just praying that our house doesn't burn down," one man told broadcaster KTLA as he packed his car. The Hughes Fire came as the greater Los Angeles area was on edge after two enormous fires tore



CASTAIC: Firefighters work as the Hughes Fire burns on Jan 22, 2025. — AFP

# Kuwait to expand organ transplant programs

## Kidney transplant program sets a record of 149 successful procedures in 2024

**KUWAIT:** Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi announced that Kuwait is on the verge of launching new organ transplant programs, including liver, heart, lung and pancreas transplants. Speaking at the 4th GCC Organ Transplantation and Nephrology Congress on Thursday, Dr Al-Awadhi emphasized the ministry's commitment to advancing transplant services, highlighting the success of existing programs such as stem cell and pancreas transplants.

The ministry is currently working on introducing a lung transplant program as part of its ambitious expansion efforts. Dr Al-Awadhi also celebrated the achievements of Kuwait's National Kidney Transplant Program, which set a record in 2024 with 149 successful kidney transplants and a success rate exceeding 96 percent.

Last year marked significant milestones in Kuwait's healthcare system, including the opening of the Kuwait Center for Kidney Diseases and Transplants in Al-Sabah health zone, equipped with 80 beds and state-of-the-art technology, as well as the inauguration of the Organ Transplantation Department at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital in March.

Dr Al-Awadhi highlighted the launch of the National Kidney Exchange Program, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at increasing donor availability and improving success rates for kidney transplants. This program is designed to provide better opportunities for patients and ease their suffering.

Addressing the conference, Dr Turki Al-Otaibi, Head of the Nephrology Department at the Kuwait Center for Kidney Diseases and Transplants and President of the Kuwaiti Society for Organ Transplants, underscored the global challenges posed by



**KUWAIT:** Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi speaks at the 4th GCC Organ Transplantation & Nephrology Congress. — KUNA

kidney diseases. He noted that these conditions affect about 10 percent of the global population, with millions suffering from kidney failure annually due to limited access to treatment, particularly in developing countries where shortages of dialysis machines and high costs strain healthcare systems.

Dr Anas Al-Yousef, Head of the Kidney Unit at Jaber Hospital and President of the Kuwaiti Nephrology Association, expressed concern about the rising prevalence of chronic kidney disease. He warned that many patients remain unaware of their condition, and global statistics predict kidney diseases will become the fifth leading cause of death by 2040. Dr Al-Yousef urged the medical community to intensify efforts to mitigate these alarming trends. — KUNA

## Total aid sent to Syria from Kuwait reaches 280 tons

**DAMASCUS:** The tenth relief flight of the Kuwaiti airlift arrived Thursday at Damascus International Airport, carrying 40 tons of diverse food supplies and winter necessities for the most vulnerable groups. This operation was organized by the Al-Salam Charity Society, with cooperation from the Ministries of Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Defense, represented by the Kuwaiti Air Force. Omar Malki, Media and Communication Unit Head at the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, confirmed to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the ongoing collaboration and partnership between the Syrian Red Crescent and the Kuwaiti charity organizations participating in the "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign continues, due to the ongoing needs for basic food, medicine, health supplies, shelter materials, and more.

He also revealed plans for future collaboration with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development to support these efforts, emphasizing Kuwait's continuous humanitarian work aimed at assisting those in need. He explained

that the Syrian Red Crescent's role involves coordinating with various international humanitarian bodies, receiving the aid, and distributing it to the targeted communities in Syria.

He further clarified that the operational process begins with communication between the Syrian Red Crescent and the donor organizations to select the most essential supplies. The aid is then received at the airport and delivered either directly to the concerned authorities or via local partners. Among the Kuwaiti donations, the Syrian Red Crescent received two ambulances, which were handed over to the Syrian Ministry of Health, as well as flour, which was sent directly to automated mills for the benefit of local communities.

Malki stressed the importance of coordination with charity organizations to ensure the selection of aid that meets the real needs of families, avoiding any materials that may not be used in Syria. He emphasized that the Kuwaiti airlift's ongoing assistance is a testament to the long-standing brotherly bond and solidarity between the two countries.

To date, the total amount of Kuwaiti aid sent to Syria has reached about 280 tons, including food, medical supplies, and winter necessities aimed at helping the most vulnerable groups in Syria under the "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign, with the participation of various Kuwaiti charity organizations. — KUNA



NBK team at the event.



Creative Confidence team

## NBK discusses Bankee program with principals

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) hosted a panel discussion with some principals of public schools participating in the Bankee Program. The session provided a platform for knowledge exchange, allowing the participants to share their insights and suggestions for the program's development. The discussion also focused on assessing how school administrations have benefited from the program and its overall impact on students.

Bankee, a pioneering program in Kuwait, is offered by NBK in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha". The program aims to introduce students to fundamental economic concepts and practices, including earning, spending, saving, and managing financial obligations.

The program also strives to instill core values in students, including honesty, integrity, personal development, responsibility, cooperation, and teamwork. It aims to raise a generation of Kuwaiti youth who recognize the significance of financial stability and independence, equipping them with the financial knowledge and skills essential for contributing to the sustainable development and economic well-being of both individuals and society.

During the meeting, participating school principals exchanged experiences and ideas on how to further develop the program and maximize its benefits for both schools and students. The importance of maintaining ongoing communication between the bank and schools was also emphasized, with a focus on continuously sharing perspectives and innovative ideas throughout the year.

The school principals expressed their gratitude for NBK's commitment to supporting education and promoting positive values among younger generations. They highlighted the significant impact of the Bankee Program in enhancing students' skills, behaviors, and financial literacy.

On this occasion, Manal Al-Mattar, Deputy General Manager & Head of Group Corporate Communications at NBK stated, "This meeting reflects NBK's commitment to fostering productive collaboration with all state institutions to drive societal development and enhance human resources, which are the cornerstone of growth and prosperity. We are particularly focused on education, and the bank is dedicated to providing comprehensive support to its advancement."



Laila Al-Sayegh, Director of Shaikhhan Al-Farsi School for Boys



Hanai Al-Muqahwi, Principal of Abdullah Khalaf Al-Dahayan Elementary School for Boys



Khazna Al-Otaibi, Principal of Aisha Al-Sharif Primary School



Zainab Bahro, Principal of Sharifa Al-Qatami Primary School



Abeer Al-Gharibi, Principal of Amoria Primary School



Ghadeer Al-Muhanna, Principal of Al-Fadl Bin Al-Abbas Elementary School for Boys

"The program has achieved remarkable success over the past year, leading many schools to apply for participation. This success can be attributed to its unique program design and its positive impact on students' behaviors, equipping them with essential skills for managing their financial affairs. Furthermore, there has been a notable improvement in their financial literacy following the program's implementation in their schools," she added.

"As part of our commitment to enhancing the Bankee Program's content, we have launched dedicated accounts on various social media platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These platforms allow all participants to access valuable content, activities, and events from schools throughout the year. Additionally, the program's website has been launched in both Arabic and English to further expand its reach and impact," she emphasized.

She emphasized that the visits by the bank's executive management to schools and their follow-up on the program's implementation played a crucial role in enhancing its significance. These visits were marked by the strong presence of parents,

who expressed immense satisfaction with the positive changes they observed in their children's behavior and financial awareness.

Meanwhile, Abrar Al-Hamad, Assistant Secretary General at Nazaha, emphasized that the outstanding success of the Bankee Program reflects the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at embedding principles of integrity and transparency within educational frameworks. She underscored that cultivating awareness of ethical values and fostering societal protection aligns with Nazaha's core mission, particularly in safeguarding public funds.

Sumayah Al-Jasem, General Manager and Founder of Creative Confidence, highlighted the Bankee Program's evolution into a success story that resonates beyond Kuwait's borders. She attributed this achievement to the program's innovative approach, which integrates realistic economic simulations with practical methodologies in an interactive learning environment. As a pioneering initiative, Bankee is dedicated to advancing financial inclusion, particularly among school students, while fostering enhanced financial literacy across the broader community.

### Positive Impact

Abeer Al-Gharibi, Principal of Amoria Primary School, expressed her immense satisfaction with the meeting, which brought together a distinguished group of school principals. She noted that the gathering provided an excellent opportunity for exchanging experiences and ideas about the Bankee Program. According to Al-Gharibi, the program has exceeded expectations, leaving a clear and positive impact on students' behavior while instilling valuable values in the younger generation.

In the meantime, Zainab Bahro, Principal of Sharifa Al-Qatami Primary School, praised the Bankee program, describing it as a wonderful initiative that quickly garnered widespread admiration. She highlighted the clear and positive impact it had on the behavior of both teachers and students. Additionally, Bahro noted that the program received extensive praise from parents, who observed significant improvements in their children's behavior.

### Promoting Financial Literacy

Ghadeer Al-Muhanna, Principal of Al-Fadl Bin Al-Abbas Elementary School, expressed the value of the meeting, stating,

"This gathering proved highly beneficial, as it provided an opportunity to meet with key figures behind the project and its participants. We were able to present our suggestions on how to further develop the program and maximize its potential to enhance financial literacy among students."

Meanwhile, Laila Al-Sayegh, Director of Shaikhhan Al-Farsi School, highlighted the significance of the meeting, stating, "The enthusiasm demonstrated by the participants and those responsible for the program reflects its importance, remarkable success, and its clear impact in enhancing financial literacy among students and improving their behavior. Our goal is to prepare an economically educated generation, aligning with the ministry of education's vision for a prosperous future for Kuwait and its people."

### Engaging participation

Khazna Mutlaq Al-Otaibi, Principal of Aisha Al-Sharif Primary School, emphasized that the success of the Bankee Program motivated their decision to join its second season. She praised the program's profound impact on both teachers and students, especially in fostering a deeper understanding of financial literacy.

In the meantime, Hanai Al-Muqahwi, Principal of Abdullah Khalaf Al-Dahayan Elementary School for Boys, discussed the positive impact of the Bankee Program on students, stating, "The program has enabled us to achieve several objectives, including shaping students' behaviors. The interactive program system, which allows students to engage with a digital platform for conducting financial transactions, combined with a rewards and penalties system, has been effective in promoting a sense of responsibility for their actions."

At the conclusion of the meeting, the school principals expressed their optimism regarding the future of the Bankee Program. They emphasized the importance of continuing such meetings to strengthen cooperation and align efforts toward achieving the program's educational goals. They also extended their gratitude to NBK for its ongoing efforts and the pivotal role it plays in supporting Kuwait's education system, contributing to the nation's prosperity.

NBK is committed to the significance of initiatives led by the private sector in collaboration with government entities, aimed at equipping young people with the knowledge and skills essential for the well-being and prosperity of both individuals and society in Kuwait. NBK was awarded the Bronze Award by Qorus in the Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) category for Bankee Program. This recognition highlights the bank's efforts in integrating sustainability and ESG standards into its initiatives.

## Local

# Kuwait awards design of railway project to Turkish firm Proyapi

## Design phase expected to last 12 months with full project set to finish by 2030

KUWAIT: The Central Agency for Public Tenders in Kuwait has awarded the design contract for the country's railway project to Turkish engineering and consulting firm Proyapi, marking a significant step in the development of the Kuwait-Saudi Arabia railway.

In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday, the agency explained that the first phase of the project will focus on providing detailed design services and preparing tender documents. This initial phase is set to last for 12 months, after which the tender for the construction phase will be launched.

Proyapi, a company with experience in infrastructure projects in Turkey, is no stranger to Kuwait. It previously won the tender for the study, design, and supervision of the rehabilitation and construction of Kuwait's 2nd and 3rd Ring roads.

The company has also managed key railway projects, having completed the Burdur-Antalya High-Speed Railway Line (2016-2022) and the Konya-Seydischir High-Speed Railway Line (2015-2020) in Turkey, both managed by the General Directorate of State Railways of Turkey.

The Kuwait railway project, which is part of the broader Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) railway network, is expected to be completed by 2030.

The 111-kilometer rail track will connect Kuwait to Saudi Arabia, with Kuwait serving as the northern station. The passenger station will be located in the Shadadiya area, covering 2 million square meters. Once completed, the Gulf railway network will span 2,177 kilometers, linking Kuwait City in the north to Oman in the south, passing through several other Gulf countries.

In 2024, Proyapi was among five international firms selected to bid on the project. According to an anonymous source who spoke with Al-Qabas, Proyapi offered the lowest bid. Other companies bidding for the project include Systra (Turkey), China Railway (China), Sener (Spain), and JFA Engenharia (Portugal).

Kuwait's Cabinet has tasked the Public Authority for Roads and Transport with expediting the work on the railway project, aiming for completion ahead of the scheduled deadline. The authority has been directed to streamline the documentation process, accelerate the project's implementation phases, and provide semi-annual progress reports to the Cabinet. This railway project, which has been in development since at least 2014, is expected to deliver strategic and economic benefits to Kuwait as part of the GCC's unified transportation network.



This map shows the planned route of the GCC railway, with Kuwait serving as the northern station.

## Zain achieves climate action milestone with SBTi approvals

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading provider of ICT innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces its latest set of ambitious climate targets have been officially approved by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).

This approval marks a significant step in Zain's commitment to combat climate change and positions the company as the only Kuwaiti-based corporate to have its emission reduction targets verified by the SBTi.

It also follows last year's ranking whereby Zain maintained its region-leading carbon emission disclosure CDP score of A- for third straight year, positioning the company as the highest ranked and only telecom operator in the Middle East and Africa to achieve this high rating.

The approved targets include Zain's overarching goal to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across its entire value chain by 2050. Additionally, the SBTi has validated Zain's updated near-term and new long-term targets, which are aligned with limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Zain Group Chief Sustainability Officer, Jennifer Suleiman, and Chief Technology Officer,



Mohammad Al-Marshed, jointly commented, "Climate change is a key priority for Zain. We are committed to transforming our operations and value chain to significantly reduce our carbon footprint as we target halving our carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. This approval from the SBTi validates our commitment and endorses our efforts that has placed Zain at the forefront of climate action in the region."

### Zain's approved targets include:

- Near-Term: Reduce absolute Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions by 42 percent by 2030 from a 2020 base year.
- Long-Term: Reduce absolute Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions by 90 percent by 2050 from a 2020 base year.
- Long-Term: Reduce absolute Scope 3 GHG emissions by 90 percent by 2050 from a 2020 base year.

The Science Based Targets initiative provides companies with a clearly defined pathway to reduce GHG emissions, helping to prevent the worst impacts of climate change and future-proof business growth. Zain's commitment to these targets reflects its leadership in corporate sustainability



and its proactive approach to addressing the global climate crisis.

In 2022, Zain developed a comprehensive Climate Change Compliance Framework to structure its climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives, aiming to reach net-zero by 2050. During the same year, the company officially submitted its commitment to setting science-based targets to SBTi.

In order to reach its near-term and long-term targets, Zain has devised a detailed climate change mitigation strategy with Board-level oversight and governed by a company-wide climate change compliance framework. This strategy entails, but is not limited to, the deployment of various initiatives across Zain's operating entities with the aim of the abatement of emissions in line with science by reducing energy consumption, shifting to renewable power sources and implementing carbon dioxide removal solutions in the future when feasible. For more, please visit: <https://sciencebasedtargets.org/companies-taking-action#dashboard>

## Co-op Societies tapped once again to support community centers

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs is enlisting the support of cooperative societies to help maintain community development centers, an official told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday. Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Dr Khaled Al-Ajmi, explained that this initiative aims to "enhance the concept of community partnership."

The announcement followed a meeting in which Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthah Al-Huwailah instructed the ministry to assess the needs of the centers and halls, ensuring that the necessary budget is allocated either through the ministry or through partnerships with relevant entities.

During the meeting, supervisors of these centers and halls discussed the challenges they face in running the government-funded facilities. Dr Al-Huwailah emphasized the ministry's ongoing efforts to overcome these obstacles by finding sustainable solutions to improve performance. She highlighted the state's focus on strengthening partnerships with the private sector and civil society to achieve developmental goals and increase financial revenues.

The Community Development Department, which is the second largest within the ministry, employs over 1,200 staff members and plays a vital role in enhancing community work by offering affordable access to centers and wedding halls for citizens.

Dr Al-Ajmi noted that the ministry is organizing operations across all six of Kuwait's governorates. Plans are in place to allow center supervisors access to the electronic booking system (Dar Al-Munabat) to prevent scheduling conflicts. Additionally, all wedding halls will soon be available through the "Sahel" app as part of the ministry's digital transformation efforts. The ministry is also introducing new contracts for the halls, ensuring they align with regulations, and is considering operating community centers on weekends and public holidays to maximize benefits for citizens.

These issues are not new. In 2015, heads of the Community Development Centers requested the activation of cooperative society support for their activities, the allocation of a dedicated budget, and the introduction of evening programs to energize the centers. The deputy director of the ministry at the time pledged to provide full support to the development centers. News reports indicate that the official has sent a letter to cooperative societies regarding the matter, but no further updates have been provided publicly.



Dr Amthah Al-Huwailah

## KFH holds cybersecurity workshop for Baiti account customers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has organized a cybersecurity workshop for its Baiti account customers in collaboration with CODED Academy. This initiative aims to introduce kids to simplified safety and security concepts when using the Internet and technological tools.

The cybersecurity workshop was attended by supervisors and specialists in the field. It featured interactive activities aimed at introducing and training children on various technological concepts. The workshop pursued to promote safety and security among the participating kids when using the internet and creating secure passwords, ensuring the protection of personal information.

Executive Manager for Retail Banking Segmentation at KFH, Athba Al-Humaidi said that KFH offers Baiti saving account which is a distinctive program that is designed for children (newborns up to 14 years of age) and includes various benefits. KFH provides this segment with the chance to open the Al-Hassad account as well, allowing them to benefit from yearly draws, prizes, diverse offers and



Athba Al-Humaidi

year-round educational and entertaining programs. It also targets this customer segment to strengthen their saving conduct and the use of new digital tools that allow them to monitor their accounts easily.

Al-Humaidi mentioned that one of the most prominent features provided to the children's parents is the ability to manage and view their children's accounts through KFHonline, enabling them to complete banking transactions with ease.

Through such workshops, training sessions and awareness programs, KFH aims to foster the younger generations' connection with digital technology, contributing to the development of children's talents

and skills. KFH also strives to expand the knowledge horizons for the current generation, the cornerstone of the future, especially in the context of artificial intelligence applications and cutting-edge technology tools, which have become indispensable across all aspects of life.

The strategic partnership with CODED Academy, which began in 2018, is part of KFH's social responsibility and keenness to support technological advancement, creativity, and innovation initiatives. The partnership also aligns with the bank's sustainability strategy and digital transformation enhancement efforts. It contributes to creating a generation capable of leading and developing the community in the future.

In partnership with CODED, KFH seeks to develop various programs that cater to the interests of the younger generation. These programs are available to different age groups, ranging from primary school to university levels. Additionally, KFH focuses on adopting an entrepreneurial mindset by promoting a culture of innovation, digital transformation, and adopting global industrial trends through modern technology.

KFH has an extensive record of supporting and contributing to projects related to technology, programming, entrepreneurship, and various applications for Kuwaiti youth, which have achieved notable success.

## Security, military forces conduct joint exercise in Failaka

KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Major General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, emphasized that joint exercises between security and military agencies strengthen coordination among relevant authorities and help develop field capabilities to protect the nation's security.

This statement came after the conclusion of the joint "Defender of the Nation 2" exercise, which was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Kuwaiti Army on Failaka Island.

The exercise involved live ammunition, explosives, and simulation scenarios designed to address potential security challenges. Participating from the Ministry of Interior were the Special Security Forces Sector, including the General Department of Special Security Forces, the Security Armor Department, the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Department, the Special Units Department, and the Security and Control Department. The Kuwaiti Army's 94th Armored Bri-



KUWAIT: Major General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah poses for a photo with officials participating in the training on Failaka Island. — KUNA photos

gade also took part.

Sheikh Salem highlighted the importance of joint training between security and military agencies in bolstering the nation's security and stability.

The goal of the exercise was to improve coordi-

nation and cooperation between the Ministry of Interior and the Kuwaiti Army, enhancing the readiness of participating forces to respond swiftly and effectively to various threats.

The event was attended by several security and

military leaders, including Major General Abdullah Al-Mulla, Assistant Undersecretary for Special Security Affairs at the Ministry of Interior, and Colonel Baraq Al-Farhan, Commander of the 94th Armored Brigade of the Kuwaiti Army. — KUNA



Ministry of Interior and military personnel pose for a photo in front of their vehicles during the joint exercise on Failaka Island.

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# Environment authority documents spread of Arabian red fox in Kuwait

Authority is working towards preserving desert wildlife from habitat destruction

**KUWAIT:** The Environment Public Authority has documented the spread of the Arabian red fox, locally known as "Al-Husni," in both the northern and southern areas of Kuwait's desert. The Arabian red fox is the largest species of fox native to the Arabian Peninsula.

Dr Abdullah Al-Zaidan, Deputy Director General for Technical Affairs at the Authority, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday that the fox has recently been spotted in northern areas such as North Salmi and Al-Mutlaa, as well as in the southern desert regions, and within nature reserves, including Jahra and Sabah Al-Ahmad Reserves.

Al-Zaidan explained that camera traps and drones were used to monitor the spread of the animal, which is one of the most common desert mammals. It is strongly attracted to food around camps and human settlements. He added that the Arabian red fox inhabits various environments, including mountains, coasts, deserts, and open desert areas near urban centers, where food is readily available.

Al-Zaidan noted that male foxes are larger than females, and they are carnivorous. The fox thrives in harsh climatic conditions, with summer temperatures exceeding 50°C and winter temperatures approaching freezing. It can withstand desert environmental changes. He mentioned that the Arabian red fox grows to about a meter in length, with a tail length of 40 cm. Its average weight ranges from 2.7 to 4.5 kg. The fox lives in underground burrows for shelter and is mostly active at night, with reduced activity during the day.

Al-Zaidan highlighted that the Arabian red fox is native to the Arab world and is one of the most



**KUWAIT:** The Arabian red fox, the largest species of fox native to the Arabian Peninsula, is well documented by the Environment Public Authority. — KUNA photos

common wild animals in the Arabian Peninsula. It is found in Kuwait, Oman, the UAE, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.

He emphasized the collaboration between the Environment Authority and the Scientific Center—part of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences—on fox rehabilitation and reintroduction programs into Kuwait's desert ecosystems. The fox is listed under CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) to control illegal fur trade.

Al-Zaidan also mentioned that the Arabian red fox

is classified as "Least Concern" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List. The authority continues to work on preserving unique ecosystems and protecting desert wildlife from habitat destruction to ensure their sustainability for future generations. — KUNA



**Isa Al-Shayji, Fadila Al-Muaini, Adnan Al-Rashed, Jasem Kamal, Dheiran Aba Al-Khail, Rabia Al-Jumaa, Yousef Al-Shehab and Owaid Al-Suleili at the General Assembly of the Gulf Journalists Association.**



**A group photo from the General Secretariat and Standing Committee meeting of the Arab Journalists Union, with President Moaid Allami and Honorary President Dina Rashwan.**

## KJA participates in UAE Journalists Association's Silver Jubilee celebrations

**DUBAI:** The Kuwait Journalists Association, represented by its President and Board members, participated in the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the UAE Journalists Association and the 25th anniversary of its founding. The celebrations were also attended by the Arab Journalists Union, the Gulf Journalists Association, and the International Federation of Journalists, as

well as over 200 prominent media figures from four continents, including representatives from press and media outlets.

The event was held in Dubai, with the attendance of Mona Al-Merri, Deputy Chairperson and Managing Director of the Dubai Media Council, and Director General of the Media Office of the Government of Dubai. During the event, founding members, past board presidents, and prominent media figures from the Gulf and the Arab world were honored, along with the winners of the UAE Journalism Awards in three categories for the first time in the history of the UAE Journalists Association.

In her welcoming speech, Fadila Al-Muaini, Chair-

person of the UAE Journalists Association, expressed deep gratitude to the leadership of the UAE, which has always been a strong supporter of free and responsible journalism. She emphasized the UAE's belief in the role of the press as a bridge for communication and a key contributor to strengthening national identity and supporting sustainable development.

Al-Muaini also highlighted that the association has completed its strategy for the next three years, which will be implemented through a series of innovative initiatives. The association has established a modern center for media creativity and another for training aimed at enhancing media skills and developing the profession.

On a professional level, during the UAE Journalists Association's celebrations, the Board of Directors of the Gulf Journalists Association held a meeting, followed by the association's General Assembly and a consultative meeting with the leadership of the Arab Journalists Union and the International Federation of Journalists. Additionally, the Arab Journalists Union held a meeting of its General Secretariat and the Standing Committee of the Union. The celebrations also included a meeting with His Highness Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, a visit to the Mohammed bin Rashid Library, a tour of the Dubai Press Club, and various tourist and entertainment programs.



**DUBAI:** Mona Al-Merri, Fadila Al-Muaini, and Moaid Allami are seen with the honorees who contributed to the UAE Journalists Association's journey.



**Mona Al-Merri and Fadila Al-Muaini with colleagues at the Dubai Press Club.**



Tears, gasps as UK court hears horrific details of stabbing spree

## As Trump declares 'Gulf of America,' US enters name wars

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GAZA: Newly erected tents are spread out in the Shujaia neighborhood in Gaza City on Jan 22, 2025, as displaced Palestinians return to the city on the fourth day of a ceasefire deal. — AFP

# Gazans ready tent camps for families returning to north after ceasefire

## Mass return to the north expected to start on Saturday

CAIRO: Palestinians in northern Gaza prepared tent encampments for displaced families on Thursday, two days before they were expected to return to their home areas in accordance with the timeline of a ceasefire deal agreed between Zionist entity and Hamas. On open ground surrounded by blown-out buildings, a group of men began putting up rows of white tents to receive families who are planning to return north on Saturday when the Palestinian militant group Hamas is due to release a second batch of hostages in return for dozens of Palestinians jailed by Zionist entity.

Many of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians expected to head back to the northern Gaza Strip will return to homes in ruins after a 15-month Zionist military offensive that has laid waste to the enclave and killed more than 47,000 Gazans. In October, Zionist forces returned to areas of the north in a major anti-Hamas operation focused on Jabalia refugee camp near Gaza City and Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya towns, clearing the area of its inhabitants and razing most of its buildings.

"Is this the tent that we dreamed of? This will

have to fit 10 people. This tent is for my children coming from the south. Really, is this adequate space?" asked Wael Jundiya, as he prepared a tent for his children who will return from where they have been sheltering in the Mawasi coastal area of the south. "On Saturday, people will come from the south and flood Gaza (City), where will they go? This camp will fit 100, 200 people. There will be 1.5 million coming from the south," Jundiya told Reuters.

### Returning on foot

Hamas said people would be allowed to return on foot along the coastal road, meaning a walk of several miles to the official northern area from where they could try to get rides in vehicles, which would be searched at checkpoints. People returning must not carry arms, Hamas said.

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said the group was in contact with several Arab and international parties who would assist in the return and relief operation, including providing tents. He said Hamas, which governs the enclave, would start work

countries. Reeling from years of economic collapse and a devastating Zionist-Hezbollah war, Lebanese leaders have pinned hopes on wealthy Gulf states for desperately needed reconstruction funds.

Prior to his visit, Prince Faisal said Aoun's election was "extremely positive", but said the kingdom was waiting to see real change before engaging further with Beirut. Riyadh was a major investor in Lebanon but ties between the two countries have soured over the past decade or so over the growing influence of the Iran-backed Hezbollah group.

With Hezbollah weakened after a war with Zionist entity and the toppling of its ally, Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad, Prince Faisal's visit comes at a time when Lebanon is seeking a fresh start. Earlier this month, Aoun said his first official overseas trip would be to Saudi Arabia, after a call with de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who invited him to the kingdom. — AFP

immediately to repair houses not fully destroyed.

"We are going to invest all our capabilities to help our people. Municipalities have plans in place to welcome the families returning to the north, including setting up tents for them," he told Reuters. In Jabalia, the biggest of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee camps, and the focus of Zionist's campaign in the past three months, many have returned to live inside their wrecked homes, setting small fires to try to warm their children.

"They are talking about a truce, a ceasefire, and the delivery of aid. It has been three days since we came back, and we cannot find water to drink. We cannot find covers to keep our children warm. We depend on bonfires all night. We wish to have some firewood for the bonfire, we use plastic, which causes diseases," said Mohammed Badr, a father of 10. His wife, Umm Nidal, said she could not believe the total destruction. "There is nothing left, you cannot walk in the streets. Houses collapsed on top of each other. You get lost, you don't know if this is your home or not," she said. "The smell of dead bodies, and the martyrs are in the streets." — Reuters

## First Turkish Airlines plane lands in Syria in more than a decade

DAMASCUS: The first Turkish Airlines flight in 13 years landed in the Syrian capital Damascus on Thursday, an AFP correspondent reported. The plane arrived from Istanbul carrying aid and 345 passengers, including Turkish Airlines CEO Bilal Ekşi and Turkish officials, the correspondent said. "The first Turkish Airlines passenger plane landed at Damascus International Airport after a hiatus of some 13 years, with Syrian passengers on board," Syria's official news agency SANA reported.

Ekşi told reporters that Turkish Airlines would operate three flights to Syria a week. "I hope that the flights we have restarted will contribute to the relations between our countries," he said. Turkey, which has links to the Islamist-led coalition that overthrew longtime president Bashar al-Assad last month, had announced on January 15 that it would resume commercial flights to Damascus.

Qatar Airways was the first international carrier to announce it would resume Damascus services, which began on January 7. A Syrian Airlines flight to Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates the same day was the first international commercial flight from the airport since Assad's overthrow on December 8. Aid planes and foreign diplomatic delegations had already been landing in Syria, and domestic flights had also resumed. A flight from Damascus to second city Aleppo on December 18 was the first. —AFP

## Saudi FM in first visit to Lebanon in almost 15 years

BEIRUT: Saudi Arabia's top diplomat landed in Beirut on Thursday to meet the country's new leadership in the first visit by a high-ranking official from the kingdom after more than a decade of strained ties. "The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, arrived at Rafic Hariri International Airport," Lebanon's official National News Agency reported.

He is set to meet Lebanon's newly elected President Joseph Aoun—whose candidacy is widely believed to have been backed by Riyadh and Western



BEIRUT: Lebanon's Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib meets his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan upon his arrival at Rafic Hariri International Airport on Jan 23, 2025. — AFP

## ICC seeks arrest of Taliban leaders over persecution of women

HAGUE: The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor on Thursday said he was seeking arrest warrants against senior Taliban leaders in Afghanistan over the persecution of women, a crime against humanity. Karim Khan said there were reasonable grounds to suspect that Supreme Leader Haibatullah Akhundzada and chief justice Abdul Hakim Haqqani "bear criminal responsibility for the crime against humanity of persecution on gender grounds".

Khan said that Afghan women and girls, as well as the LGBTQ community, were facing "an unprecedented, unconscionable and ongoing persecution by the Taliban." "Our action signals that the status quo for women and girls in Afghanistan is not acceptable," added Khan. ICC judges will now consider Khan's application before deciding whether to issue an arrest warrant—a process that could take weeks or even months. The court, based in The Hague, was set up to rule on the world's worst crimes such as war crimes and crimes against humanity.



Haibatullah Akhundzada

Secluded in his stronghold in southern Afghanistan, the reclusive Akhundzada inherited the Taliban leadership in May 2016 -- days after a US drone strike in Pakistan killed his predecessor.

Believed to be in his 60s or 70s, Akhundzada rules by decree from the birthplace of the Taliban movement in Kandahar province and has made only a handful of public appearances since taking power. Haqqani is a close associate of Taliban founder Mullah Omar and served as a negotiator on behalf of the Taliban during discussions with US representatives in 2020. ICC prosecutor Khan noted other crimes

It has no police force of its own and relies on its 125 member states to carry out its arrest warrants—with mixed results. In theory this means that anyone subject to an ICC arrest warrant cannot travel to a member state for fear of being detained. Khan warned he would soon be seeking additional applications for other Taliban officials.

against humanity were being committed as well as persecution. "Perceived resistance or opposition to the Taliban was, and is, brutally repressed through the commission of crimes including murder, imprisonment, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, enforced disappearance, and other inhumane acts," he said.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that the prosecutor's actions should put the Taliban's exclusion of women and girls from public life back on the international community agenda. "Three years after the Taliban retook power, their systematic violations of women and girls' rights... have accelerated with complete impunity," said Liz Evenson, HRW's international justice director.

### 'Vice and virtue'

After sweeping back to power in August 2021, the Taliban authorities pledged a softer rule than their first stint in power from 1996-2001. But they quickly imposed restrictions on women and girls that the United Nations has labelled "gender apartheid". Edicts in line with their interpretation of Islamic law handed down by Akhundzada, who rules by decree from the movement's birthplace in southern Kandahar, have squeezed women and girls from public life.

The Taliban government barred girls from secondary school and women from university in the

first 18 months after they ousted the US-backed government, making Afghanistan the only country in the world to impose such bans. Authorities imposed restrictions on women working for non-governmental groups and other employment, with thousands of women losing government jobs—or being paid to stay at home. Beauty salons have been closed and women blocked from visiting public parks, gyms and baths as well as travelling long distances without a male chaperone. A "vice and virtue" law announced last summer ordered women not to sing or recite poetry in public and for their voices and bodies to be "concealed" outside the home.

The few remaining women TV presenters wear tight headscarves and face masks in line with a 2022 edict by Akhundzada that women cover up fully in public, including their faces, ideally with a traditional burqa. Most recently, women were suspended from attending health institutes offering courses in midwifery and nursing, where many had flocked after the university ban. Rights groups and the international community have condemned the restrictions, which remain a key sticking point in the Taliban authorities' pursuit of official recognition, which it has not received from any state. The Taliban authorities have consistently dismissed international criticism of their policies, saying all citizens' rights are provided for under Islamic law. —AFP

## International

# As Trump declares 'Gulf of America,' US enters name wars

Trump renames the Gulf: From 'Mexico' to 'America' in a wave of nationalist spectacle

## Hundreds of Hungary schools hit with bomb threats

**BUDAPEST:** Hundreds of schools in Hungary received bomb threats on Thursday, officials said, forcing them to briefly evacuate students. A total of 268 educational institutions nationwide—most of them schools in the capital Budapest—got the bomb threats via email, interior ministry official Bence Retvari told reporters.

Authorities so far have found "no direct risk of a bomb attack," he said. Police are in touch with their counterparts in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria, where schools received similar "Islamist" threats in the past, he added. Prime Minister Viktor Orban's chief of staff, Gergely Gulyas, said it was too early to say anything about the motive, citing ongoing investigations. Police have also contacted the EU's police agency Europol in their probe on "endangering public safety". They inspected the schools that received threats, after which evacuated students and staff could return, with tens of thousands of students affected.

In May last year, Slovak schools and institutions received more than 1,000 bomb threats. Hundreds of Czech and Slovak schools were also targeted by bomb threats in early September 2024, with Czech authorities saying they were probing "Russian influence" as one of the possibilities behind them. —AFP

## Germany knife attack on children reignites pre-vote migrant debate

**BERLIN:** A deadly knife attack on a kindergarten group in Germany, where an Afghan man was arrested at the scene, reignited a bitter immigration debate Thursday, a month before elections. Germany was stunned by the latest in a series of bloody attacks, in which a man wielding a kitchen knife on Wednesday attacked young children in a park in the Bavarian city of Aschaffenburg. He killed a two-year-old Moroccan boy and a 41-year-old German man who had tried to protect the children and wounded three others, among them a Syrian girl also aged two who sustained neck wounds.

Following the attack, the conservative frontrunner in the February 23 polls, Friedrich Merz, vowed a "fundamental" overhaul of asylum rules and permanent border controls from day one, if he forms a government. His ally, Bavarian state premier Markus Soeder, called the murder of a two-year-old boy "the most despicable and horrific crime you can imagine" and praised the heroism of a passer-by who died trying to protect the children.

The under-fire government of center-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz denied blame but agreed that the current EU rules on managing asylum requests "no longer work". Following Wednesday's attack, police arrested a 28-year-old Afghan man who officials said had suffered from mental health problems and should have been deported long ago to his first EU country of entry, Bulgaria.

Shocked and bereaved residents congregated on Thursday as city mayor Juergen Herzing laid a

**WASHINGTON:** For years, as disputes over names on the map riled up nationalist passions in several parts of the world, US policymakers have watched warily, trying to stay out or to quietly encourage peace. Suddenly, the United States has gone from a reluctant arbiter to a nomenclature belligerent, as President Donald Trump declared that the Gulf of Mexico will henceforth be called the "Gulf of America."

In an executive order signed hours after he returned to the White House, Trump called the water body an "indelible part of America" critical to US oil production and fishing and "a favorite destination for American tourism and recreation activities." The term Gulf of America was soon used by the US Coast Guard in a press release on enforcing Trump's new crackdown on migrants, as well as Florida's Republican governor, Ron DeSantis, when discussing a winter storm.

Deep-sea ecologist Andrew Thaler said Trump's declaration was "very silly" and would likely be ignored by maritime professionals. A president has the authority to rename sites within the United States—as Trump also did.

"The Gulf of Mexico, however, is a body of water that borders several countries and includes pockets of high seas," said Thaler, founder of Blackbeard Biologic Science and Environmental Advisors. "There really isn't any precedent for a US president renaming international geologic and oceanographic features. Any attempt to rename the entire Gulf of Mexico would be entirely symbolic," he said.

### Mexico hits back

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has cheekily suggested calling the United States "Mexican America," pointing to a map from well before Washington seized one-third of her country in 1848. "For us it is still the Gulf of Mexico and for the entire world it is still the Gulf of Mexico," she said Tuesday.

The International Hydrographic Organization, set up a century ago, works to survey the world's seas and oceans and is the closest to an authority on harmonizing names for international waters. The United Nations also has an expert group on geographical names, which opens its next meeting on April 28.

Martin H. Levinson, president emeritus of the Insti-

wreath in memory of the victims of the attack, which he said would be "engraved in the memory of the whole city". He condemned those spreading "messages of hate without a word of regret for the injured and dead" but voiced hope his city's "society will stick together".

### 'Mentally disturbed'

Scholz had on Wednesday condemned the "unbelievable act of terror" and convened a security meeting -- but Merz on Thursday went on the offensive over the government's record on immigration and security. "I am no longer willing to accept these conditions in Germany," said Merz, who heads the conservative CDU-CSU and has a strong poll lead.

"Under my leadership, there will be fundamental changes to immigration law, asylum law and the right of residence in Germany," he said. Merz added that, unlike Scholz, he did not see the attack as an "act of terror", but rather "as the criminal act of an obviously drug dependent and mentally disturbed perpetrator".

On his first day as chancellor, he would instruct the interior ministry to "reject without exception all attempts at illegal entry", he said. "This also explicitly applies to persons entitled to protection," he added, slamming the EU's current asylum system, known as the Dublin rules, as "recognizably dysfunctional". "Germany must therefore exercise its right to the primacy of national law," Interior Minister Nancy Faeser in a later press conference urged "more consistency in the enforcement of our laws".

She said that in the Afghan man's case, "Bulgaria was responsible for the asylum procedure under European law" but conceded that "the Dublin system no longer works". She also pointed out that Germany had in the past sent back violent criminals to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and said "we are working intensively to deport more criminals" to Kabul.

German officials have said the Afghan suspect

said he would ask Saudi Arabia and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to bring down crude prices. "If the price came down, the Russia-Ukraine war would end immediately," he said. The US leader then fielded question from the top executives of Bank of America, Blackstone investment firm, Spanish group Banco Santander and French oil and gas giant TotalEnergies.

Trump already gave Davos a taste of what is to come since his inauguration on Monday, which coincided with the WEF's first day. He has threatened tariffs on China, the European Union, Mexico and Canada, pulled the United States from the Paris climate pact and renewed his claim the Panama Canal, just to name a few.

His plans to cut taxes, reduce the size of the US federal government and deregulate industries likely found a sympathetic ear amongst many businesses, though economists warn the policies could rekindle inflation. US trade partners and rivals already had a chance to react in Davos earlier this week, as they brace for a second round of his America First policies.

Without invoking Trump's name, Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang warned: "There are no winners in a trade war." European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said Brussels was ready to negotiate with Trump. But she also underscored the European Union's diverging policy with him on climate, saying the bloc would stick by the Paris accord.

World Trade Organization chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala called on cooler heads to prevail during a WEF panel discussion on tariffs on Thursday, warning that tit-for-tat levies would be "catastrophic" for the world economy. "Please let's not hyperventilate," she quipped. "I know we are here to discuss tariffs. I've been saying to everybody: Could we chill, also?" — Agencies



WASHINGTON: Larry Ellison, Executive Chairman Oracle listens as US President Donald Trump speaks in the Roosevelt Room at the White House on January 21, 2025, in Washington, DC. — AFP

tute of General Semantics, said it was unknown how much political capital Trump would invest in seeking name recognition by other countries. "Does he really want to strong-arm them for something as minor as this?" Levinson asked.

"I think the political benefit is to the domestic audience that he's playing to—saying we're patriotic, this is our country, we're not going to let the name be subsumed by other countries," he said. He doubted that other countries would change the name but said it was possible Google Earth—a more ready reference to laypeople—could list an alternative name, as it has in other disputes.

Among the most heated disputes, South Korea has long resented calling the body of water to its east the Sea of Japan and has advocated for it to be called the East Sea. The United States, an ally of both countries,

has kept Sea of Japan but Korean-Americans have pushed at the local level for school textbooks to say East Sea.

In the Middle East, Trump in his last term angered Iranians by publicly using the term Arabian Gulf for the oil-rich water body historically known as the Persian Gulf but which Arab nationalists have sought to rename. The United States has also advocated maintaining a 2018 deal where Greece agreed for its northern neighbor to change its name to North Macedonia from Macedonia, but Athens ultimately rejected due to historical associations with Alexander the Great.

Gerry Kearns, a professor of geography at Maynooth University in Ireland, said that Trump's move was part of the "geopolitics of spectacle" but also showed his ideological bent. — AFP



ASCHAFFENBURG: A child visits a makeshift memorial of candles, flowers and soft toys for the victims of a knife attack, on January 23, 2025 in Aschaffenburg, western Germany. — AFP

arrived in Germany in 2022, where he requested asylum. He had later agreed to leave Germany but never did. Bavarian interior minister Joachim Herrmann said the man had been referred for psychiatric treatment and investigations pointed "very strongly in the direction of... mental illness". Police who searched the suspect's room at an asylum center found psychiatric medications but no evidence "of a radical Islamist attitude", he said. Germany has been shaken by a series of deadly attacks, most recently a car-ramming through a Christmas market that killed five people and wounded over 200, with a Saudi man arrested at the scene in the eastern

city of Magdeburg.

A knife attack last August killed three people and wounded eight in the western city of Solingen. The Islamic State group claimed the stabbing spree and police arrested a Syrian suspect. An earlier knife attack last year had killed a policeman in Mannheim, where police arrested an Afghan man. Scholz on Wednesday, after the latest knife attack, demanded an explanation from officials for "why the attacker was even still in Germany". "I am sick of seeing such acts of violence occurring in our country every few weeks, by perpetrators who have actually come here to find protection." —AFP

## 2025 pivotal for Kuwait economy...

Continued from Page 1

The minister said geopolitical risks, climate change and artificial intelligence are among the most prominent global challenges for 2025, stressing that confronting these challenges requires close cooperation between the public and private sectors to employ technology.

The panel discussion highlighted the growing role of technology and innovation in reshaping the region's economic landscape, as rapid developments in the fields of artificial intelligence, smart industry and energy transformation open new horizons for economic growth, contributing to enhancing the ability of regional economies to achieve economic diversification and sustainability.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump issued a blunt warning to global elites in a video message to the World Economic Forum on Thursday: Make your product in the United States or pay tariffs. Beamed on a giant screen in the Swiss Alpine village of Davos, Trump received a loud round of applause from political and business A-listers who had eagerly awaited his appearance all week.

Speaking from the White House, Trump touted his plans to cut taxes, deregulate industries and crack down on illegal immigration. But he also had a tough message. "Come make your product in America and we will give you among the lowest taxes of any nation on earth," Trump said. "But if you don't make your product in America, which is your prerogative, then very simply you will have to pay a tariff."

In his wide-ranging speech, Trump made a link between the war in Ukraine and oil prices. Trump

## Hundreds leave Jenin as Zionists...

Continued from Page 1

and children making their way down a muddy road, the sound of drones buzzing above them clearly audible. The Zionist military said on Thursday it killed two Palestinians near Jenin during the night, accusing them of having killed three Zionists. In a statement, the military said Zionist troops found the two fighters barricaded in a house in the village of Burqin. "After an exchange of fire, they were eliminated by the forces," it said, adding one soldier was wounded in the gunfight. The Palestinian health ministry later confirmed the two deaths.

## Explosive new fire erupts near...

Continued from Page 1

through America's second largest metropolis, killing more than two dozen people and wrecking billions of dollars of devastation. As California faces a massive rebuild, President Donald Trump repeated his false claim that the state was improperly diverting water away from the site of the emergency, threatening to withhold federal funds as a result.

"I don't think we should give California anything until they let water flow down into their system" from the north of the state, Trump said in an interview on Fox News aired Wednesday evening. Los Angeles's water supplies are mainly fed via aqueducts and canals originating from entirely separate river basins further east.

Around 4,000 firefighting personnel, backed up by aircraft and bulldozers, surged to the new blaze, a

Violence has surged across the occupied West Bank since the Gaza war erupted on Oct 7, 2023, with Hamas' attack on the Zionist entity. According to the Palestinian health ministry, Zionist troops or settlers have killed at least 850 Palestinians in the West Bank since the Zionist-Hamas war began. The Jenin raid began after a truce took effect in Gaza on Sunday, halting 15 months of war.

The devastating war in Gaza has killed more than 47,200 people, the majority of them civilians. Under the terms of the truce, Gaza fighters handed over three Zionist women they had been holding since 2023, in exchange for the release of around 90 Palestinian prisoners from Zionist jails. On Saturday, the two sides are due to carry out a second swap. During first phase of the ceasefire, which is intended to last 42 days, Zionist forces are withdrawing from densely populated areas of the Gaza Strip. — AFP

massive response that Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone said was paying dividends. "The situation remains dynamic, and the fire remains a difficult fire to contain, although we are getting the upper hand," he told an evening press conference.

"We are going to be on scene all night long, gaining more perimeter control, making sure that we can put out the hot spots, and then have enough resources and staging so that if we do have a flare up, we can move those resources to the fire line." The hopeful tone came after a nervous day for the region, where many people remained glued to television coverage of the aerial firefight — scenes that became common during lengthy battles to contain the Eaton and Palisades Fires.

Helicopters dropped water and planes dumped tens of thousands of fire retardant, laying down lines of red intended to corral the flames and pinch the firefront. The fleet included two Super Scoopers — enormous amphibious planes that can carry thousands of liters of water — as well as DC-10 jets and dual rotor helicopters. — AFP

## International

# UK child stabbing spree killer gets life in custody

## Starmer vows to uncover failings, lead change after Southport murders

LONDON: A British teenager who murdered three young girls at a Taylor Swift-themed dance event was jailed for at least 52 years on Thursday, for an atrocity prosecutors said was so violent it appeared he had tried to decapitate one of the victims. On Monday, Axel Rudakubana, 18, admitted carrying out the killings last July in the northern English town of Southport, a crime which was followed by days of nationwide rioting.

Rudakubana will likely spend the rest of his life in jail for the murders of Bebe King, 6, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, who were among 26 children attending the summer vacation event. He also pleaded guilty to 10 charges of attempted murder, as well as to producing the deadly poison ricin and possessing an Al-Qaeda training manual. Two of his victims suffered "horrific injuries which ... are difficult to explain as anything other than sadistic in nature", prosecutor Deanna Heer told Liverpool Crown Court.

Judge Julian Goose described Rudakubana's actions as "evil", saying: "I am sure that Rudakubana had a settled and determined intention to carry out these offences and that, had he been able to, he would have killed each and every child, all 26 of them, as well as any adults who got in his way."

The judge sentenced Rudakubana in his absence after he refused to return to court, having twice been removed for interrupting the hearing. Goose said he was not allowed by law to impose a life sentence without the possibility of parole as Rudakubana was 17 at the time of his crimes, but

added: "It is likely that he will never be released and that he will be in custody for all his life."

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer vowed on Tuesday to "leave no stone unturned" to uncover failings in preventing the killings of the girls, saying an inquiry could lead to a change in terrorism laws. Starmer defended his government's stance to not divulge many details earlier about the teenager guilty of the killings by saying he did not want to collapse the case, but admitted there were failings.

Shortly afterwards, the government said Rudakubana had been referred to Prevent, a counter-radicalization scheme, three times, but no action had been taken. Police said no one ideology had been uncovered and the case was not treated as terrorism. On Monday, the government announced a public inquiry into the murders, which led to riots around the country after false reports on social media said the suspect was a radical Islamist migrant. Opponents have accused Starmer and the police of covering up what they knew.

The prime minister said failures would be made public and the attack could show that Britain faces a new type of terrorism threat waged by "loners, misfits, young men in their bedrooms" committing extreme violence.

### 'No stone unturned'

"I want to be crystal clear in front of the British people today. We will leave no stone unturned ... Nothing will be off the table in this inquiry. It will lead to change," Starmer told a press conference. The main opposition



LIVERPOOL: Protestors hold placards as they demonstrate in front of members of the media outside of The Queen Elizabeth II Law Courts in Liverpool, north west England ahead of sentencing Southport attacker Axel Rudakubana. — AFP

Conservative Party, which made changes to Prevent after conducting a review while in power, welcomed the inquiry but said "there are many questions that remain unanswered", adding those who failed should be named.

The leader of rightwing Reform UK party, Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage, has branded handling of the case "the most

appalling cover-up I think I've ever seen". At the swiftly arranged press conference, Starmer was keen to get ahead of any new criticism. In promising he would call out state institutions that had failed to prevent the killings, he hoped to lift the pressure on his government, which has struggled since winning power in July.

Starmer also faced criticism when he

was England's chief prosecutor over his handling of a child sexual abuse scandal. He said at the time, he had brought the men to justice and vowed, as prime minister, to act quickly after Southport. "The senseless, barbaric murders of three young girls killed in Southport is a devastating moment in our history," he said. "Southport will be a line in the sand." — Reuters

## Gabon announces presidential election to end military rule

LIBREVILLE: Gabon's transitional government said Thursday that presidential elections would be held on April 12, a key step towards re-establishing civilian rule promised by the ruling junta. Transitional President General Brice Oligui Nguema has ruled the oil-rich country since seizing power in a 2023 coup, ending decades of rule by the Bongo dynasty.

Oligui has vowed to hand the reins back to civilians with elections after a transition period but has also made no secret of his desire to win the presidential race. "Voting will start at 7:00 am and end at 6:00 pm in line with current laws," government spokesman Seraphin Akure Davain announced Thursday after a cabinet meeting.

Ali Bongo ruled Gabon for 14 years until he was overthrown in August 2023 moments after being proclaimed the winner in a presidential election the military and opposition declared fraudulent. The opposition and the military coup leaders accused Ali Bongo's regime of widespread corruption and poor governance. Ali Bongo had taken office on the death of his father Omar. The small central African state had been ruled by the same family for more than 55 out of its 63 years since independence from France in 1960.

So far, the timetable for the transition period has been respected. Gabon adopted a new constitution in a November referendum, backed by more than 90 percent of voters. It provided for a maximum of two seven-year presidential terms, no prime minister and no dynastic transfer of power.

Another article established a "liberation celebration", enshrining the junta's ending of the old regime. A further article exempted from prosecution and conviction "those involved in events" leading up to the junta coming to power. The military regime said it would review the electoral roll this month, three months earlier than planned.

On Monday, parliament adopted a new electoral code, allowing military officials to stand in elections, subject to certain conditions. The move worries critics who say it would allow Oligui to run in the presidential race and potentially remain in power. In December, the junta lifted a strict overnight curfew implemented during the Bongo dynasty and that had remained in force since the junta seized power. —AFP

## S African anti-apartheid activists sue government over lack of justice

JOHANNESBURG: Twenty-five families of victims and survivors of apartheid-era crimes are suing the South African government over a "gross failure" to investigate and prosecute perpetrators, said the rights group representing victims on Thursday. The suit filed Monday at the Pretoria High Court targets President Cyril Ramaphosa, the justice and police ministers and the heads of the public prosecutor service and national police, according to documents shared by the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR).

A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established to after apartheid ended in 1994 granted hundreds of amnesties but also recommended prosecutions in more than 300 cases, most of which were never pursued. The victims' relatives include the son

of Fort Calata, one of the so-called Cradock Four anti-apartheid activists who were abducted and murdered in June 1985.

They are "seeking constitutional damages for the government's gross failure to adequately investigate and prosecute apartheid-era political crimes", FHR said in a statement. "They also seek an order compelling the president to establish an independent and public commission of inquiry into the political interference that resulted in the suppression of several hundred serious crimes arising from South Africa's past," it said.

Lukhanyo Calata, whose father Fort was burnt and stabbed to death, said in a statement the families had been "denied our constitutional right to justice" because successive governments had "failed to implement the recommendations of the TRC's Amnesty Committee". Critics had long suspected a secret agreement to avoid prosecutions between the post-apartheid leadership of the African National Congress and former white minority government.

The deal was confirmed in a 2021 statement by the foundation of the country's final white president FW de Klerk. Housing minister Thembi Nkandimeng,



SWITZERLAND: South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa looks over as he gives an address during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos on January 21, 2025. — AFP

who was also once the justice minister, is among the applicants in the latest case. Her sister Nokuthula Simelane, killed in 1983, was believed to have been abducted and tortured by security forces. The trial for Simelane's murder, first opened in 2016, has been postponed repeatedly. —AFP

## Kremlin ready for 'mutually respectful' Trump talks

MOSCOW: The Kremlin said Thursday it saw nothing new in US President Donald Trump's calls for Russia to end its military offensive in Ukraine, and that Moscow was ready for "mutually respectful" dialogue with him. The US leader had on Wednesday threatened fresh sanctions on Moscow if Russia did not strike a deal to end its nearly three-year campaign against Ukraine.

Expectations are high that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Trump will soon hold a phone call to discuss the conflict, after the Republican pledged on the campaign trail to bring a swift end to the fighting. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia was "ready for equal, mutually respectful dialogue."

"We are waiting for signals, which we have not yet received," he added. Trump has not said publicly how he sees the contours of a potential peace deal between Kyiv and Moscow. Putin has outlined maximalist demands that include the Ukrainian withdrawal from parts of its own territory still under Kyiv's control.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin reacts during a meeting with Iranian President at the Kremlin in Moscow on January 17, 2025. — AFP

meanwhile ruled out territorial concessions, though has said he would consider trying to secure the return of land captured by Russia through "diplomatic" means. Kyiv is also demanding security guarantees from NATO and the United States along with the deployment of Western, including American, peacekeeping troops.

### Sanctions threat

In a post on Truth Social, Trump on Wednesday told Putin to make a deal "now" and threatened "high levels of Taxes, Tariffs, and Sanctions" on Moscow.

## Irish parliament backs Micheal Martin as new prime minister

DUBLIN: The Irish parliament on Thursday backed Micheal Martin to become the country's next taoiseach or prime minister, a day after a bitter row had delayed the vote. Irish parliamentarians voted 95 to 76 in support of the nomination of the Fianna Fail leader, one day after chaotic scenes disrupted the process and resulted in the suspension of the Dail.

Martin was appointed along with government ministers after overnight talks to break the deadlock over speaking rights. "It is a sad development in many parliaments in the world that they have become angrier and more divisive," Martin said in a speech to the Dail, the name for the Irish parliament.

"They have become forums dominated by the inflated rhetoric of demonstrations rather than a place

where different groups can argue in good faith and respectfully disagree," he said, without directly referencing the events of Wednesday.

Martin had been due to be nominated and elected Wednesday as taoiseach—the Irish name for the head of government—ahead of a vote in the Dail that had been seen as a mere formality. The experienced 64-year-old, whose center-right Fianna Fail won most seats at a general election in November, had steered the formation of a three-way centrist coalition.

But amid raucous exchanges in the chamber, opposition parties, led by the Dail's second largest, the leftist-nationalist Sinn Fein, forced two suspensions of parliament before it was eventually adjourned on Wednesday for the day. "What we witnessed today was the subversion of the Irish constitution," Martin, who also served as taoiseach between 2020 and 2022, told reporters late Wednesday.

"This is the first time, I think, in over 100 years, that the Dail has failed to elect a government to fulfil its constitutional obligation," he added. The appointment of outgoing taoiseach Simon Harris, 38, as deputy prime minister was also delayed. He leads the center-right Fine Gael that came third in the election. —AFP



DUBLIN: Ireland's centre-right Fianna Fail party leader Micheal Martin talks to members of the media outside Leinster House, the seat of the Irish Parliament, in Dublin, on January 22, 2025. — AFP

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025

# Syria's economy reborn after being freed from Bashar Al-Assad

## 'It was a strange feeling, but I was happy'

**DAMASCUS:** When Bashar Al-Assad ruled Syria, merchants like Youssef Rajab kept much of their imported stock hidden for fear of arrest for breaking the law. But after an opposition coalition toppled Assad in a lightning offensive last month, Rajab put previously banned foreign goods such as chocolate, biscuits and shampoo back on the shelf.

Such products are now openly on sale in Damascus, and foreign currency is once again traded without fear. Under Assad, Syria was mired in corruption, under heavy economic sanctions, and in seemingly endless crisis. Foreign currency was in carefully controlled supply, and engaging in its trade or in the sale of banned goods could have meant a stay in one of the country's notorious jails.

"A day after the regime fell, I brought out all the foreign merchandise I'd been hiding and put it for sale, without having to worry," Rajab told AFP. "It was a strange feeling, but I was happy," added the 23-year-old, speaking beside shelves stacked with imported products.

Previously, the few imported goods that were available were smuggled in from Lebanon by traders who risked arrest, or were acquired by bribing officials as businessmen controlled imports to a country wracked by 13 years of civil war. "It's true that now we have great freedom to engage in business, but it has also been chaotic," said Rajab.

On every street corner, makeshift money changers now tout for business from passers-by. "It's a job that was done in secret before," said Amir Halimeh, sitting at a small table on which there were wads of Syrian pounds and US dollars. "We used to refer to dollars as 'mint' or 'parsley' or something else green" to bypass surveillance, he added.

### Currency market 'freed'

Assad's government kept a firm grip on foreign currency dealings as a way to control the economy,



**DAMASCUS:** A currency trader offers Syrian liras for exchange on a street in Damascus on January 14, 2025. — AFP

and any freelance operators faced punishment of seven years in prison and a heavy fine. "The market has now been completely freed... as has the exchange rate," the moneychanger said.

The pound lost about 90 percent of its value against the US dollar in 2011, the year Syria descended into civil war after a brutal crackdown on democracy protests. Now it is being traded at between 11,000 and 12,000 to the greenback.

Before Damascus fell to the coalition led by the

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, the black market rate soared to 30,000 pounds for one dollar. "The economy in the future Syria will be free and competitive," the interim government's Economy Minister Bassel Abdel Hanan told reporters. He said the new authorities would implement "policies aimed at protecting domestic output, supporting the industrial sector and protecting agriculture".

They have yet to elaborate on their future economic plans during the three-month interim phase

that began in December. Economics professor Adnan Suleiman of Damascus University said that "the economic model that existed before the fall of the regime... was a market economy", but a "distorted" one.

### Sanctions

"Supply and demand were not free. Instead of competition there was a monopoly," he said of people close to Assad who controlled different sectors of the economy. In an effort to turn the page, the interim government has been lobbying for international sanctions to be lifted.

Earlier this month, the US Treasury Department announced it was providing additional sanctions relief on some activities for the next six months to ease access to basic services, including fuel and humanitarian aid.

Asaad Al-Shaibani, Syria's top diplomat, told the World Economic Forum in Davos on Wednesday: "Removing economic sanctions is the key for the stability of Syria." They had been imposed for the benefit of Syrians, but are now "against the Syrian people", he said. "We inherited a collapsed state from the Assad regime, there is no economic system," Shaibani said, adding that "the economy in the future will be open".

Under Assad, fuel sales were a monopoly and were severely limited. But now vendors openly sell cans of petrol and fuel oil on the streets of the capital — where new models of car have also made an appearance. Previously, the import of vehicles was tightly regulated.

Syria's war took a terrible toll not only on the people, but also on its infrastructure. Damage to power plants and pipelines has caused power cuts lasting up to 20 hours a day. "The former regime left a huge legacy," said Suleiman. "The greatest task facing future governments is to finance development and reconstruction." — AFP



**DAVOS:** Argentina's President Javier Milei (left) poses for a picture with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky prior to their meeting on the sideline of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland on January 22, 2025. — AFP

## Calls for calm, Milei on Musk: What happened at Davos Thursday

**DAVOS:** There is a buzzword at the annual meeting of the world's elites in the Swiss luxury resort of Davos: tariffs, although artificial intelligence has been another big theme. For the World Trade Organization chief, it's time cooler heads prevailed as she warned against tit-for-tat tariffs.

That might be easier said than done for the countries that could be in line for US tariffs after US President Donald Trump indicated he could deliver on his many threats. Here is what happened so far at the forum on Thursday:

### Keep calm and trade on

WTO head Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala appeared to have reached a point of exasperation amid the panic of what might happen if the United States unleashes painful duties. "Please let's not hyperventilate. I know we are here to discuss tariffs. I've been saying to everybody: could we chill, also. I just sense a lot of hyperventilation," she told a panel called "debating tariffs". "Even if a tariff is levied, please keep calm, don't wake up and without the necessary groundwork levy your own," she said. Her remarks come after expectations that if Trump slaps higher levies, countries will respond with tit-for-tat actions of their own.

### Musk's 'innocent' salute

One of this year's stars at Davos has been Argentina's libertarian President Javier Milei, who delivered another bombastic speech after his first at last year's WEF. This time, Milei defended tech billionaire Elon Musk after he caused a stir this week by making hand gestures at an inauguration event for US President Donald Trump. Milei said his "dear friend Musk" has been "unfairly vilified by wokeism in recent hours for an innocent gesture that only means... his gratitude to the people".

### Pope's AI warning

There may be a lot of hype about AI and what more it can do for businesses and people but Pope Francis had a warning: be vigilant, especially over the lies it tells. The pope is familiar with AI and its risks of deep-fakes. In 2023, an AI-generated image of Pope Francis in a puffer jacket went viral. "The results that AI can produce are almost indistinguishable from those of human beings, raising questions about its effect on the growing crisis of truth in the public forum," he said in a written address to the WEF. — AFP

## Gulf Bank sponsors Loyac's 'The Influencer' program

**KUWAIT:** As part of its ongoing commitment to empowering youth, Gulf Bank has announced its sponsorship of the Influencer Program, organized by LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA) — an affiliate of the non-profit organization LOYAC. The program is designed to provide young people aged 15 to 19 with unique training opportunities that develop their public communication and leadership skills. The training sessions will run from January 20 to February 17, 2025.

The Influencer Program offers an exceptional platform for young individuals to enhance their abilities through a series of specialized workshops and activities. These sessions focus on critical areas such as effective communication, leadership development, presentation and public speaking skills, photography and video editing, digital marketing, and podcast production. Delivered by experienced trainers and industry professionals, the program equips participants with the tools and knowledge they need to make a meaningful impact in their communities.

For the third year in a row, Gulf Bank is proud to sponsor the Influencer Program, emphasizing its dedication to fostering community sustainability. This initiative reflects Gulf Bank's commitment to supporting organizations that empower and inspire young people to reach their full potential.

## War is speeding Ukraine's green energy shift: CEO

**DAVOS:** Russia's invasion is forcing Ukraine to speed up its green energy transition as a way to secure its electricity supply and infrastructure against attacks, the head of Ukraine's biggest private electricity provider said.

"Building wind farms or solar farms is not only about decarbonization. It's about also energy security and resilience," Maxim Timchenko, chief executive of DTEK, told AFP at the World Economic Forum on Wednesday. "It's much harder to hit and switch off these power stations than thermal or hydro," he said.

Russia has repeatedly targeted Ukraine's energy system as part of its nearly three-year war waged on its neighbor. Timchenko announced at the Davos gathering what he called the biggest private investment in Ukraine since Moscow launched its invasion in 2022: A 450 million euro (\$468 million) deal to buy 64 wind turbines from Denmark's Vestas.

The turbines will expand DTEK's Tylygul'ska wind farm on the Black Sea coast. Turbines also offer the advantage of coming online rapidly and progressively as they are installed, with some of the new ones from Vestas churning out power as soon as this year.

"I hope that by, before next winter we will add already 60 megawatts of capacity with this program," with full capacity of 500 megawatts at Tylygul'ska reached by the end of 2026. That would be enough to supply around 900,000 homes, he said.



**Gulf Bank's headquarters.**

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.



**KYIV:** Soldiers of the 59th brigade of Ukrainian Armed Forces conduct a sniper training at an undisclosed location in the Donetsk region, on January 22, 2025, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

### 'More resilient'

The project underscores Ukraine's push to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels or nuclear energy to operate huge power plants for an extensive grid, which are both particularly exposed to Russian airstrikes.

The country's infrastructure has often been targeted and crippled, leading to blackouts or emergency voltage reductions -- so-called "brownouts" -- that are especially painful during the winter.

"This transition from... a highly centralized, highly vulnerable energy system to clean, decentralized, more resilient, and new in terms of technology system... this transition is accelerated by the war," Timchenko said. DTEK also announced two weeks ago a deal with a German-American group Fluence to build what Timchenko called the first industrial-scale

battery storage project in Ukraine. That project is targeted for October, and the company is in talks with potential partners for two other wind parks.

The hope is that smaller renewable energy sites spread across the country will reduce the system's vulnerability as well as emissions. And an attack would have to destroy all of a wind farm's turbines to completely shut it down. Wind and solar currently generate 10 percent of Ukraine's needs and coal or gas-fired plants produce 20 percent, with nuclear plants the main provider at 55 percent. "These investments make us more resilient. We feel much more confident that the Russians will not destroy this new power station in such extent that they can do it with thermals," Timchenko said of the Tylygul'ska expansion. — AFP





## Business

# Instagram courts TikTok stars during turbulent times

## Content creators can now earn up to \$5,000 from 'Reels'

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Meta-owned Instagram has been wooing creators from TikTok as the China-based video-snippet sharing app's future remains uncertain in the United States. After officially increasing the allowed length of videos and adding a new editing tool, Meta recently began letting TikTok creators earn as much as \$5,000 over the course of three months for posting 'Reels' to Facebook and Instagram. The "Breakthrough Bonus" program for eligible TikTok creators is intended to "help jumpstart their growth on our apps," a Meta spokesperson told AFP.

In addition, Meta is quietly offering incentives amounting to tens of thousands of dollars a month to get creators with large TikTok audiences to switch to rival platform Reels at Instagram, according to a report Wednesday in The Information.

"Meta has been trying to take advantage of the volatility around TikTok for months, and now its efforts to court TikTok creators have gone from subtle to overt," said Emarketer analyst Jasmine Enberg.

### Temporary reprieve

The campaign to get TikTok stars to switch allegiance to Reels comes as TikTok's future in the United States remains unsettled. TikTok is facing down a US law that ordered the company to divest from its Chinese owner ByteDance or be banned in the United States.

In one of his first acts in office, President Donald Trump ordered a pause on enforcing the law that should have seen TikTok effectively made illegal in the country on Sunday. The executive order directed his attorney general to delay the implementation of the law for 75 days.

The TikTok ban passed due to concerns that the Chinese government could exploit the app to spy on Americans or covertly influence US public opinion through data collection and content manipulation.

TikTok briefly shut down in the United States late Saturday as the law's sale deadline approached, leaving millions of dismayed users barred from the app. That same day, Instagram boss Adam Mosseri announced that video snippets shared on Reels could now last 3 minutes instead of 90 seconds, a limit set more than two years ago.

On Sunday, Mosseri announced a new video editing application will make its debut on iPhones in February. That comes as TikTok's flagship editing tool, CapCut, has disappeared from mobile app stores in the United States because it's owned by the same parent company, ByteDance. "There's a lot going on right now, but no matter what happens, it's our job to provide the best possible tools for creators," Mosseri said.

### Zuckerberg and Trump

Analyst Enberg believes the new features won't be enough to win over the TikTok faithful, with some likely to be irked by "blatant copycat behavior" as many are "rattled" by Meta's moves to align itself with the Trump administration.

Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg has dined with Trump since his victory, openly praised the president and appointed Trump allies to positions of influence at the tech firm. Meta also recently ended programs to prevent disinformation and vitriol on its platform, efforts long criticized by political conservatives.

While Instagram is considered the most likely alternative to TikTok, Chinese application named



**NEW YORK:** People record themselves on a smartphone for social media in Times Square in New York City on January 17, 2025. — AFP

Xiaohongshu — nicknamed "Red Note" — is a preferred option for many in the United States. Even though the app is in Mandarin, many see it as a way of thumbing their noses at Meta and US politicians.

"The potential of a cash bonus is going to be hard

for TikTok creators to resist, regardless of how they feel about Meta," said analyst Enberg. As for users, they will follow where their beloved creators lead, and there is no better way to get them to Instagram than money, Enberg reasoned. — AFP

## Meta denies forcing users to follow Trump administration accounts

**PARIS:** Social networking giant Meta has denied complaints from some users that they are being forced to follow accounts belonging to the new administration of US President Donald Trump. Accounts belonging to Trump, First Lady Melania Trump and Vice President JD Vance "are managed by the White House so with a new administration, the content on those pages changes," Meta spokesman Andy Stone posted on X on Wednesday.

"People were not made to automatically follow

any of the official Facebook or Instagram accounts" around the change in government, Stone added. The same process had happened during the last presidential transition in 2021, he said.

"It may take some time for follow and unfollow requests to go through as these accounts change hands," he added in response to some users' complaints they were unable to stop following the new administration. The complaints follow sustained efforts by Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg to stay in Trump's good graces since his November election victory.

Zuckerberg, who attended Trump's inauguration ceremony Monday, has dined with the new president, named several of his allies to key roles and ended programs targeted by conservatives, including shutting off Meta's fact-checking efforts in the US. — AFP



**WASHINGTON:** Mark Zuckerberg (C), CEO of Meta, attends the inauguration ceremony where Donald Trump will be sworn in as the 47th US President in the US Capitol Rotunda in Washington, DC, on January 20, 2025. — AFP



**DAVOS:** This photograph taken on January 19, 2025, shows a sign of US technology company Google displayed during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos. — AFP

## UK probes Apple, Google competitiveness

**LONDON:** Britain on Thursday opened investigations into the competitiveness of technology used by US giants Apple and Google in mobile devices. The Competition and Markets Authority said its "strategic market status" investigations would assess "mobile ecosystems" that include operating systems, app stores and browsers.

Apple and Google said they would work alongside the CMA, insisting that they support choice in the market. The regulator's chief executive Sarah Cardell said "more competitive mobile ecosystems could foster new innovations and new opportunities across a range of services that millions of people use".

The regulator added in a statement that it would reach decisions on its investigations by the end of October. The CMA noted that "virtually all mobile devices sold in the UK are pre-installed with either" Apple's iOS operating system or Google's Android.

In addition, their "app stores and browsers have either exclusive or leading positions on their platforms compared to alternative products and services". "This means Apple and Google are also able to exert considerable influence over much of the content, services and technological development provided on a mobile device," it said.

The CMA announcement comes after it launched last week an investigation into Google's dominant position in the search engine market and its impacts on consumers and businesses. Britain's Labour government this week appointed a former top executive at online titan Amazon to be the CMA's interim chair, hoping the appointment will help drive economic growth.

While competition watchdogs around the world are heavily focused on probing technology giants, the UK government believes too much regulation is hampering economic expansion. The appointment of Doug Gurr, former country manager of Amazon UK and president of Amazon China, to steer the CMA comes after his predecessor, Marcus Bokkerink, was reportedly ousted for not focusing enough on growth.

### 'Work constructively'

Google said it would "work constructively" with the CMA over its latest investigation. The company will also "pursue outcomes that avoid stifling choice and opportunity for consumers and businesses, and avoid exposing users to new security and privacy risks", said Oliver Bethell, senior Google director for competition. "In doing so, we will underline our commitment to a pro-innovation, evidence-based regulatory regime that enables continued investment and UK growth," he said.

Apple said it "believes in thriving and dynamic markets where innovation can flourish". It added in a statement Thursday that "In the UK alone, the iOS app economy supports hundreds of thousands of jobs and makes it possible for developers big and small to reach users on a trusted platform. We will continue to engage constructively with the CMA as their work on this matter progresses." — AFP

## 'Call of Duty' tops US 2024 games charts

**PARIS:** The latest instalment in the "Call of Duty" first-person-shooter series topped American video game sales in 2024, figures released Thursday showed, with the overall market slightly smaller year-on-year.

Video games raked in a total of \$58.7 billion last year, the research firm Circana said, down 1.1 percent on the previous year. "Call of Duty: Black Ops 6" from Microsoft-owned Activision plunges players into a guns-blazing alternate timeline for the aftermath of the Cold War. The US top seller in 2023 had been "Hogwarts Legacy", an adventure game set in the universe of "Harry Potter".

Circana's figures did not include

gamers who accessed titles through Microsoft's Xbox Game Pass subscription service. "Black Ops 6" was available through Game Pass from the day of its release, in a first for the "Call of Duty" series.

Second-placed American football title "College Football 25" from Electronic Arts moved enough copies to become the top-selling sports game of all time in the United States. Sales of games and online content grew two percent over the year, but there was a 25 percent slump in hardware sales, with several years since any major new console releases. The only notable arrival in 2024 was the upgraded "Pro" version of Sony's flagship Playstation 5.

The PS5 remained the top-selling console in the US, followed by Nintendo's Switch. Japan-based Nintendo announced last week that its follow-up, the hotly anticipated Switch 2, would arrive sometime this year. Spending on mobile games totaled al-



**PARIS:** Visitors wait in line to play the "Call of Duty: Black Ops 6" first-person shooter game co-developed by "Treyarch and Raven Software" and published by "Activision" during the Paris Games Week fair in Paris, on October 23, 2024. — AFP

most \$25.5 billion on the US market in 2024, up nine percent year-on-year, according to a report from analysis firm Sensor Tower. — AFP

## Musk bashes Trump-backed AI mega project

**WASHINGTON:** Tech titan Elon Musk cast doubt Wednesday on a \$500 billion AI project announced by US President Donald Trump, saying the money promised for the investment actually wasn't there.

The comments marked a rare instance of a split between the world's richest man and Trump, with Musk playing a key role in the newly installed administration after spending \$270 million on the election campaign.

In his first full day in the White House, Trump on Tuesday announced a major investment to build infrastructure for artificial intelligence led by Japanese giant SoftBank and ChatGPT-maker OpenAI. Trump said the venture, called Stargate, "will invest \$500 billion, at least, in AI infrastructure in the United States." But in a post on his social media platform X, Musk said the main investors "don't actually have the money." "SoftBank has well under \$10B secured. I have that on good authority," Musk added in a subsequent post.

### 'Wrong'

Musk's swipe could be particularly targeted at OpenAI, the world's leading AI startup that Musk helped found before leaving in 2018. The Tesla boss and OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman, who was present at the White House on Tuesday, have been mired in a serious feud with Musk opening repeated lawsuits against the company behind ChatGPT.

"Wrong, as you surely know. Want to come visit



**WASHINGTON:** Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk attends the inauguration ceremony where Donald Trump will be sworn in as the 47th US President in the US Capitol Rotunda in Washington, DC, on January 20, 2025. — AFP

the first site already under way?" Altman replied to Musk on X. "This is great for the country. I realize what is great for the country isn't always what's optimal for your companies, but in your new role I hope you'll mostly put (country) first," he added.

OpenAI is one of the world's highest valued startups but loses money on the high costs of turning out its expensive technology. According to the Wall Street Journal, cloud giant Oracle, which is also involved, has about \$11 billion in cash and securities. SoftBank has roughly \$30 billion of cash on hand.

"The American people should take President Trump and those CEOs words for it. These investments are coming to our great country and American jobs are coming along with them," Trump's spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told Fox News.

The Stargate project is committed to invest an initial \$100 billion in the project, and up to \$500 billion over the next four years. Abu Dhabi's AI-fo-

cused state fund MGX and Oracle are also providing funding for the project, while SoftBank-owned Arm, Microsoft and Nvidia will be technology partners.

According to the companies, the project is initially building a data center operation in Texas, where construction is already underway. Ahead of taking office, Trump this month unveiled a \$20 billion Emirati investment in US data centers, as well as a previous investment pledge from SoftBank.

### 'Immediately'

SoftBank, headed by flamboyant Japanese tycoon Masayoshi Son - who announced Stargate on Tuesday with Trump, Altman and Oracle boss Larry Ellison - declined to comment. In its statement on Tuesday the Japanese investment group said it would "begin deploying \$100 billion immediately" for the project.

The firm's shares were up around six percent on Thursday, having added more than 10 percent on Wednesday. Technology news outlet Information said that SoftBank and OpenAI each plan to commit \$19 billion of capital to Stargate, Bloomberg News reported.

The two companies would then both own 40 percent of it, the Information said, citing comments by Altman to colleagues. It added that Oracle and MGX would contribute about \$7 billion apiece, with the rest of the money coming from limited partners and debt financing. Son, 67, founded SoftBank in his 20s. He made spectacularly successful early bets on Yahoo! and Alibaba but also some disastrous investments such as in WeWork.

In Trump's first term the rags-to-riches investor promised SoftBank would invest \$50 billion in the United States and create 50,000 jobs. Appearing alongside the then US president-elect in December, Son said he would now "double down" with \$100 billion and generate employment for 100,000 Americans. — AFP



FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025

# Weekender



## Blending whimsy and heritage

Kuwaiti artist **Mohammed Al-Mohanna's** unique artistic style celebrates tradition while embracing modern creativity



By Sahar Moussa

**A**t 37, Mohammed Al-Mohanna embodies a unique blend of artistic passion and professional expertise, bridging tradition and modernity. His creative journey began with a focus on set design at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts. Although theater didn't become his primary pursuit, it laid a strong foundation for his artistic expression. Instead, Mohammed thrived in marketing communication, transitioning from the private sector to government roles. Today, his art merges whimsical imagination, cultural heritage and identity, making him a standout in Kuwait's art scene.



**Kuwait Times:** How did your early fascination with certain themes or subjects evolve into the style you have today? Did you have any favorite artists or art styles as a child that inspired your current work?



Mohammed Al-Mohanna

**Al-Mohanna:** Growing up in a conservative household, I was captivated by cartoons, especially Disney animations — I was obsessed! My current style blends whimsical and eerie elements, inspired by the vast "cartoon treasury" in my mind and the Islamic designs I often see in random prayer corners or obscure brochures and books. I've always admired E H Shepard, the original illustrator of Winnie the Pooh, and the simplicity of mascots like Hello Kitty and Miffy. These influences led me to create my signature mascot — a humanoid child with a horn — that frequently appears in my work.

**KT:** How have Kuwaiti plays influenced your art? Are there particular plays or scenes that resonate with you?

**Al-Mohanna:** Kuwaiti plays haven't directly shaped my art style, but they've definitely left an impression. I recently created a series of illustrations inspired by children's plays from

my childhood. A standout example is Al-Wawi W Banat Al-Shawi.

**KT:** How would you describe your artistic style and the themes you explore in your work? What emotions or messages do you aim to convey?

**Al-Mohanna:** I'd describe my style as whimsical with a touch of eeriness. It merges fantasy and pop culture, drawing heavily from Islamic aesthetics and the diverse cultures I've encountered. My goal is to highlight Kuwait's unique subcultures, evoke emotions and celebrate identity through my illustrations.

**KT:** How has your religious upbringing influenced your artistic journey and the narratives in your work?

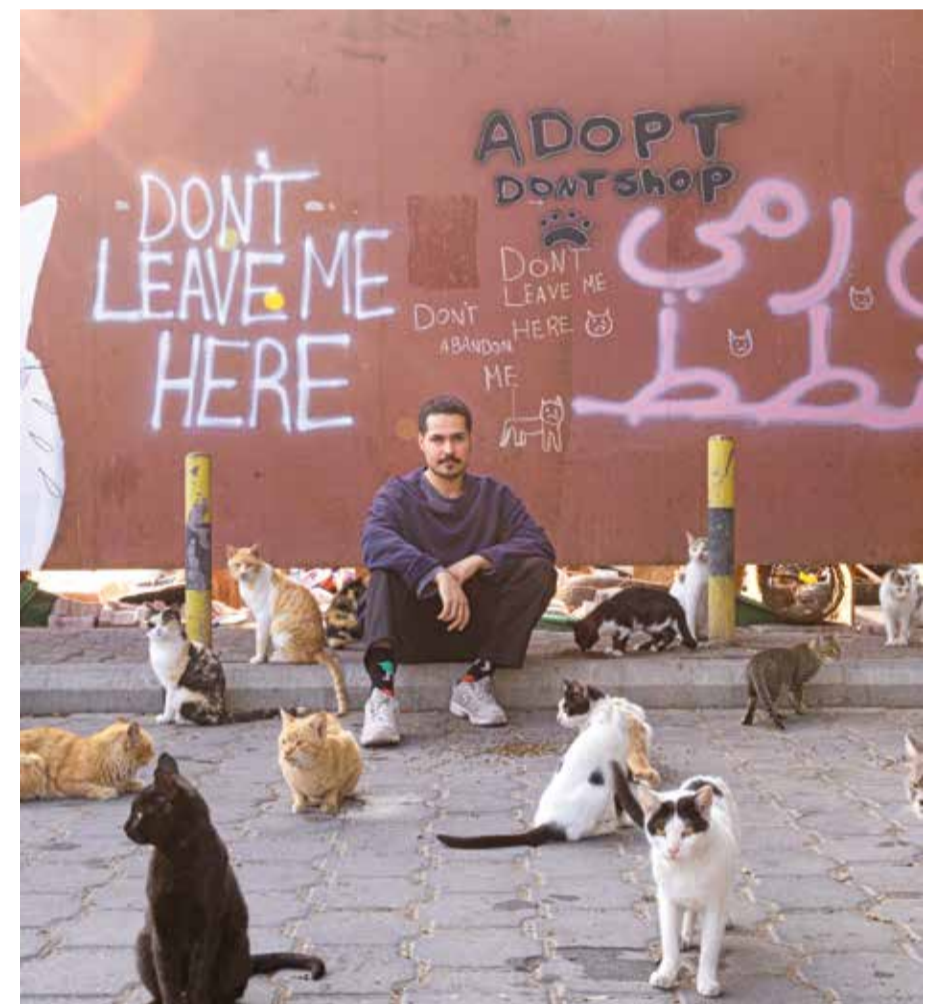
**Al-Mohanna:** Growing up in a deeply religious household shaped my worldview profoundly. Satellite TV and music videos were banned, so my childhood revolved around Quran readings, prayers, cartoons and VHS tapes of children's plays my father bought. My mother's dedication to religion left a vivid impression — she would lecture us and even build large 3D models of Heaven and Hell to help us visualize the afterlife. While these experiences might seem overwhelming, they became a powerful source of imagination and continue to influence the narratives in my art today.

**KT:** You've ventured into creating merchandise based on your art. What inspired you to take this step?

**Al-Mohanna:** I wanted my art to be more than something people frame or hang — I wanted it to become a meaningful part of their lives. This led me to expand into merchandise and develop my brand, We Collect Dreams. I aspire to grow it even further in the future.

**KT:** You've created illustrations about Palestine. Can you share the inspiration behind this work and its message?

**Al-Mohanna:** I usually avoid political art because I don't want to create just for attention. However, during last



year's blackout in Palestine, I was deeply moved by the loss of children. I created an illustration of young martyrs holding hands — a visual expression of grief I couldn't contain. More recently, I depicted freezing children in Gaza's refugee camps, warmed by oversized cats. It reflects my helplessness in seeing the world fail to protect them.

**KT:** Japanese culture is known for its rich artistic traditions. Has it influenced your work, and what elements resonate with you most?

**Al-Mohanna:** Absolutely! I'm captivated by Japanese art's diversity and imaginative depth, as well as its harmonious use of color. Artists like Yoshitomo Nara, with his focus on children and introspective themes, and Toshio Saeki, who blends traditional

Shunga and Yokai styles with eerie brutality, inspire me deeply. While I'm not a big anime fan, I admire horror manga artist Junji Ito for his gripping storytelling.

**KT:** How do you see your art contributing to preserving and promoting Kuwaiti culture?

**Al-Mohanna:** Much of my recent work incorporates hidden Kuwaiti elements — monuments, signage, typography and even cats from familiar neighborhoods. Documenting these details gives my art a strong sense of identity and belonging. With Kuwaiti cultural identity diminishing in contemporary art, I believe it's essential to celebrate and share our roots with the world.





## Kuwait through

# a cinematic lens

Filmmaker **Mohamed Elroz** shares his journey, creative vision and passion for capturing Kuwait's beauty



By Faten Omar

**B**orn in Nigeria to Lebanese and Moroccan parents, 26-year-old Mohamed Elroz has transformed his multicultural background into a unique artistic vision. His passion for photography and filmmaking allows him to capture cinematic images that portray Kuwait as though it were the cover of a movie.

**Kuwait Times:** When did you start, and what inspired your cinematic style?

**Elroz:** I officially began in 2021 when I bought my first Sony camera, but my journey started as a hobby at 16. Back then, I shot short films with my friends using an old iPhone 6 just for fun. The emotions I felt while watching movies — whether the adrenaline rush from action films or the deep emotional connections from films like *Interstellar* — truly shaped my journey. These moments made me fall in love with storytelling through cinema. I wanted to create work that could evoke similar emotions in others.

**KT:** How did you learn to capture cinematic photos and videos?

**Elroz:** My learning process was diverse, involving countless hours of watching movies, studying YouTube tutorials and drawing inspiration from creators on social media. My surroundings, friends and the cultures I grew up in also played a big role in shaping my approach.

**KT:** How did your multicultural background and life in Kuwait influence your artistic vision?

**Elroz:** Growing up in diverse environments, including Nigeria and Kuwait, while staying connected to



MOHAMED ELROZ



my Lebanese and Moroccan roots, gave me a broader perspective. It allowed me to see the beauty in contrasts and inspired me to tell stories that are both authentic and universal.

**KT:** How did you improve your photography skills?

**Elroz:** Practice was key. I started with street photography, which gave me the chance to shoot, edit and experiment with new techniques constantly.

**KT:** What steps are needed to transform Kuwait into a hub for Hollywood-style productions?

**Elroz:** Building state-of-the-art infrastructure and weaving rich, diverse cultural narratives are crucial. It's not just about the facilities but also about fostering creativity, collaboration and

innovation. We need to create an environment where local and international talent can thrive. Personally, I aim to showcase Kuwait's unique landscapes, culture and energy in a way that the world hasn't seen before.

**KT:** What's your process for creating a cinematic photograph?

**Elroz:** I start by thinking about the emotion I want to convey and consider how the scene's elements — lighting, composition, framing, and the subject's interaction with the environment — can bring that emotion to life. Sometimes it's about capturing the perfect moment; other times, it involves hours of adjusting elements within the shot. I love exploring both urban and natural landscapes to set the mood I'm after.

**KT:** What challenges have you faced as a photographer in Kuwait?

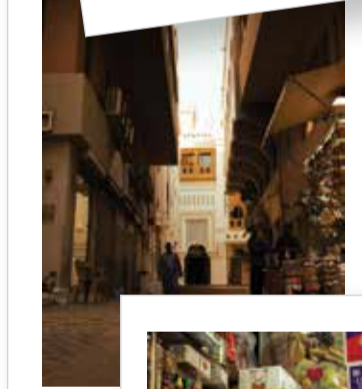
**Elroz:** The biggest challenges include limited locations and resources. Weather and lighting conditions can also be tricky. However, these limitations push me to get creative and make the most of what's available.

**KT:** Are you working on any current projects?

**Elroz:** Yes, I'm working on a short film inspired by an animated series. It explores themes of inner conflict and personal growth, using visual and emotional storytelling techniques I admire in the series. This project allows me to experiment with style, mood and narrative, aligning with my dream of becoming a movie director.

**KT:** What advice would you give to young creatives pursuing cinematic photography?

**Elroz:** Embrace experimentation — don't be afraid to try new techniques, break rules, and make mistakes. Push yourself out of your comfort zone and never stop learning. Stay inspired by your surroundings, refine your craft, and most importantly, stay true to your vision. Tell stories that matter to you!



# Dishdasha

## A timeless symbol of Gulf identity

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi



The dishdasha, also known as thawb or kandura, is a traditional garment that reflects the rich cultural diversity and history of the Arab world. Worn by men across the GCC, the dishdasha embodies regional identities, social distinctions and adaptations to the climate. White or lighter-colored dishdashas are commonly worn in summer, while darker shades are preferred during winter.



The dishdasha has deep historical roots, tracing back to the ancient garments of Middle Eastern peoples, including Arab tribes, Mesopotamians and ancient Egyptians. These early garments prioritized practicality and comfort, establishing the foundation for a staple of Arab attire. As fashion historian Dr Abeer Al-Shater explains, "The dishdasha has evolved over centuries, adapting to cultural influences and climatic conditions while retaining its essence as a symbol of identity."

Kuwaiti dishdashas are characterized by a more relaxed fit and hold cultural significance beyond fashion, serving as a symbol of national identity. They are worn in everyday life and for special occasions, especially in formal settings. Similarly, Bahraini thawbs are closely related to Kuwaiti designs, though slight variations often reflect personal preferences.

In Saudi Arabia, the thawb typically features a straight cut and high collar. Most commonly worn in white, it symbolizes purity and is often cuffed in various styles. More than just clothing, the Saudi thawb is a cultural hallmark, signifying national pride. According to a study published in the Journal of Arabian Studies, "The Saudi dishdasha serves as a vital component of male identity in public and private spheres." It is also commonly worn in schools across the kingdom.

The Qatari thawb closely resembles the Saudi version but is distinguished by intricate embroidery, especially around the collar and cuffs. While white remains the most common color, variations exist for special occasions. According to The Peninsula Qatar, "The dishdasha is a vital aspect of Qatari culture, embodying tradition while allowing for personal expression."

In the UAE, the kandura often features lighter fabrics and a more tailored fit. White is the standard color for formal occasions, but pastel shades or patterned fabrics are also popular, particularly during celebrations. The kandura is sometimes collarless and may include a knitted tie design. As noted in Arabian Business, "The dishdasha has adapted to modern fashion trends, reflecting

the UAE's unique blend of tradition and cosmopolitanism."

In Oman, the dishdasha often includes a distinct front opening and is sometimes paired with decorative belts and a traditional dagger known as the khanjar. These garments are typically longer and come in darker shades compared to those in neighboring countries. The cultural importance of the dishdasha in

region. The ghutra or shemagh is commonly worn in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar, and occasionally in the UAE. The umama or massar is more commonly seen in the UAE and Oman, while Omanis often substitute the umama with the kuma, an embroidered cap.

The younger generation has shown a renewed interest in traditional clothing, with the dishdasha

## Diverse headdresses complement iconic traditional garment



Oman is highlighted in Oman Daily Observer, which emphasizes that "wearing the dishdasha is a way to express one's social status and tribal affiliation."

In recent decades, the dishdasha has undergone significant transformations due to the influence of global fashion and media. While traditional designs remain popular, contemporary adaptations have emerged, incorporating modern fabrics and styles.

Headwear in the GCC varies by

increasingly seen as a statement of cultural pride and identity. Dr Fatima Al-Mansouri, a cultural anthropologist, remarks, "The resurgence of the dishdasha among youth signifies a growing awareness and appreciation for cultural identity in a globalized age."

The dishdasha is a complex garment that reflects the richness of the Arab world's cultural heritage. Its variations across countries highlight the diversity within Arab culture while demonstrating how traditions can evolve and retain their significance. As it continues to adapt to modern influences, the dishdasha remains a powerful symbol of identity and pride for many in the region.

## Sweet sensation!

Dubai, a city renowned for its luxury and innovation, has yet again taken the world by storm with its latest confectionery marvel — the FIX Dessert Chocolatier's chocolate bar. This unique creation melds traditional Middle Eastern flavors with modern culinary techniques, resulting in a chocolate bar that's as intriguing as it is delicious.

The "Can't Get Knafeh of It" chocolate bar features a rich, gooey pistachio cream center, elegantly encased in crispy kataifi (knafeh) shreds and coated in decadent milk chocolate. This fusion of textures and flavors has captured the imagination of chocolate lovers and food enthusiasts worldwide.

The buzz began in early 2024 when a TikTok video showcasing the chocolate bar's creation went viral. Millions of viewers were captivated by the meticulous craftsmanship and innovative flavor profile. Soon, food bloggers, influencers and dessert aficionados were flocking to Dubai to experience this one-of-a-kind treat firsthand. The chocolate bar quickly became a social media sensation, inspiring countless recreations, adaptations and even spin-off products.

Ready to give it a try? Here's how you can make it at home:

### Ingredients

- 1 cup cocoa butter (or coconut oil)
- ¾ cup powdered sugar
- ½ cup cocoa powder
- 1 cup milk powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup pistachio paste (store-bought or homemade)
- 1 cup kataifi (knafeh) shreds
- 1 cup milk chocolate chips

### Instructions

1. Melt the cocoa butter in a double boiler over medium heat until smooth.
2. Sift in the powdered sugar and cocoa powder, mixing until fully combined.
3. Add the milk powder and vanilla extract, stirring until the mixture is smooth and creamy.
4. Fold in the pistachio paste until evenly distributed.
5. Spread a layer of the pistachio cream mixture onto a parchment-lined baking sheet.
6. Sprinkle kataifi shreds over the pistachio cream layer.
7. Melt the milk chocolate chips in a separate bowl and pour over the kataifi layer.
8. Let the chocolate set in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour before cutting into bars.



With this recipe, you can bring a taste of Dubai's viral chocolate trend to your own kitchen. Enjoy the delightful combination of creamy pistachio, crunchy kataifi and smooth chocolate — truly a treat for the senses!

## WHAT'S ON IN KUWAIT

Event: Mirzaamiyat Ramadan  
Location: Arena - 360 mall  
Date: January 22 to 25, 2025



Event: Car Expo  
Location: Kuwait International Fairground Hall 5-6  
Date: January 22 to 25, 2025

Event: Farmers and Craftsmen Market  
Location: Sabah Al Salem Foundation  
Date: January 23-24, 2025  
Time: 10 am to 10 pm



Event: Dream Expo for Ramadan  
Location: 360 Mall  
Date: January 23 to 28, 2025  
Time: 10 am to 11 pm

Event: Green Market  
Location: Scientific Center  
Date: January 23 to 25, 2025



Event: 'Children of the Time Machine' Play  
Location: Yarmouk Cultural Center  
Date: January 24-25, 2025  
Time: 7 pm

Event: Salhiya Nights  
Location: Salhiya Complex  
Date: January 23 to 25, 2025



Event: Family Fun with IKEA  
Location: Boulevard, Salmiya  
Date: January 23 to 25, 2025

Event: 965 Outlet Expo  
Location: Kuwait International Fairground Hall 8  
Date: January 23 to 27, 2025

Event: AAW Run for Kids  
Location: Kaifan track  
Date: January 25, 2025  
Time: 10 am

## Sports

# Sharma, bowlers help India thrash England in T20 opener

## T20 series, followed by three ODIs serve as a warm-up for the 50-over Champions Trophy next month

**KOLKATA:** Inspired bowling and a 34-ball 79 by opener Abhishek Sharma helped India to a crushing seven-wicket win over England in the first T20 international on Wednesday. Spinner Varun Chakravarthy and fast bowler Arshdeep Singh shared five wickets between them as India bowled out England for 132 after the hosts elected to field first in Kolkata.

Left-hander Sharma then came out firing and despite losing two of his partners smashed a 20-ball fifty and ended with eight sixes and five fours to steer the team to victory in 12.5 overs and a 1-0 lead in the five-match series. The T20 series, followed by three ODIs, between the two teams serve as a warm-up for the 50-over Champions Trophy next month.

England skipper Jos Buttler smashed 68 off 44 balls but the rest of the line-up failed to get going. "The energy, the way we started, that set the benchmark," India skipper Suryakumar Yadav said. "All the bowlers had their own plans and executed." England opener Phil Salt fell for a duck on the third ball of the match, with a leading edge off his bat sending the ball high and into the gloves of wicket-keeper Sanju Samson.

Arshdeep dismissed Ben Duckett for four in the third over, with Rinku Singh taking a stunning backward running catch from the covers. Buttler hit back with four boundaries off Hardik Pandya as he attempted to rebuild in a 48-run third-wicket partnership with his new deputy Harry Brook, who scored 17.

Chakravarthy bowled Brook with a googly and sent back Liam Livingstone for a duck as the ball darted into the stumps once again. Buttler reached his fifty in 34 balls but wickets kept tumbling and in an attempt to push the scoring the skipper finally fell to Chakravarthy, who returned figures of 3-23, the ball after hitting the bowler for six.

Arshdeep, Axar Patel and Pandya took two wickets each and a run out from the last ball saw England all out in 20 overs. India raced to 41 in 4.1 overs before fast bowler Jofra Archer took down Sanju Samson, for 26, and Suryakumar, for a duck, in the space of four deliveries.

"He (Archer) always looks good, he's a superstar," said Buttler. "To see him and (Mark) Wood operate in tandem is exciting. Venue to venue, you got to assess the conditions quickly and play well." Sharma kept up the batting blitz to take the sting out of the England bowling.

The 24-year-old Sharma finally fell to Adil Rashid but not after a show that entertained the raucous home crowd. It was a disappointing start for England's new white-ball coach Brendon McCullum, who was previously only in charge of the Test side.

India surprisingly left out Mohammed Shami after the fast bowler returned to the squad following a heel injury that kept him away from competitive cricket for over a year. The second T20 is on Saturday in Chennai. — AFP



**KOLKATA:** England's Harry Brook (L) falls while playing a shot as India's wicketkeeper Sanju Samson watches during the first Twenty20 international cricket match between India and England at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on January 22, 2025. — AFP

## Sasaki vows to 'give best' to fire-torn LA

**LOS ANGELES:** Japanese baseball prodigy Roki Sasaki issued a pledge of solidarity on Wednesday as he was formally unveiled by the Los Angeles Dodgers after signing with the World Series champions.

The 23-year-old pitching sensation, who saw his father and paternal grandparents killed in Japan's deadly 2011 tsunami, said he was determined to be a success in Los Angeles, which is reeling from the most destructive wildfires in the city's history.

"As I've also lived through a difficult time due to a natural disaster, I've also made sure to never lose sight of my goals and keep looking forward," Sasaki said in a statement through an interpreter. "Los Angeles is facing challenging and difficult times right now and as a member of the Dodgers starting today, I am dedicated to give my best and strive forward together with the people of this city."

Sasaki had been pursued by multiple Major League Baseball clubs before eventually signing for the Dodgers in a deal confirmed last week. The pitching star said he had been drawn to the Dodgers by the stability of the team's management. "Putting on this Dodgers uniform today, I am reminded that my journey is just about to begin, and it makes me feel more focused than ever," Sasaki said at Dodger Stadium.

Although the presence of compatriots Shohei Ohtani and Yoshinobu Yamamoto at the Dodgers was presumed to have influenced his decision, Sasaki said it had not been the key factor. "It wasn't a priority if there were Japanese players on the team, but I did want to check to make sure that I thought a Japanese player would be embraced in the team and the city," he told reporters. "I am looking forward to playing with Ohtani and Yamamoto, both exceptional players."

"I had the opportunity to speak to a lot of teams, and they had a lot of appealing features. But overall when I looked at the general consensus, I thought that the Dodgers were at the top. The number one thing that stood out was the stability of the front office."

Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman said Sasaki was "one of the most electrifying and promising talents in the game," adding that the team planned to unleash him on opponents immediately. — AFP



**MOGADISHU:** Shukri Osman Muse, Mogadishu's first female equestrian, inspects and cleans her horse at her home in Mogadishu on January 17, 2025. — AFP

## Somalia's first woman equestrian turns heads

**MOGADISHU:** A strange sight appears on the streets of Mogadishu: a figure dressed all in black, including a cowboy hat, riding a horse through the beeping traffic of tuk-tuks and motorbikes. Stranger still in conservative Somalia, the rider is a woman.

Shukri Osman Muse said she is "delighted to be the first female equestrian in the country—it was a dream of mine for many years". The 25-year-old spoke to AFP after galloping on her chestnut horse through Somalia's capital wearing a black cowboy hat with matching full-length abaya robe that covered all but her pink sunglasses.

She only rode a horse for the first time last year, but now aspires to join Somalia's equestrian federation to represent her country in front of the world. Muse said she "persevered and overcame" many obstacles to achieve her dream.

At first, "I didn't even know where to find horses," she said. But after several months of intensive training, Muse said she is "now very pleased to have become a skilled equestrian". She even has her own "lovely" horse, she added.

Also standing in her path were societal and gender barriers in the predominantly Muslim country. Muse said she "wanted to show everyone that it is entirely normal for women to ride horses, and that it is permissible according to our religion".

Muse's trainer, Yahye Moallim Isse, said that "her achievement is an inspiration to all Somali people". Her sister Nadifo Osman said the family business, a beauty salon where Muse also works, had even received a boost because customers "love taking photos" with the horse. We are incredibly proud," Nadifo Osman Muse said.

### "Testament to newfound peace"

For some locals who watched Muse ride confidently through the streets, the sight represented peace finally settling in Mogadishu, once dubbed the world's most dangerous city. Somalia is struggling to emerge from decades of civil war and entrenched poverty, while enduring a bloody insurgency by Al-Shabaab jihadists and frequent climate disasters.

Resident Abdifatah Abdi Haji Nur told AFP he recently returned to Mogadishu from abroad "because the city is safe again". "Seeing a woman riding a horse in the capital is a testament to this newfound peace," he said. Mohamed Adam Hassan was one of several locals who followed Muse as she rode through a long stretch of downtown Mogadishu. "I am inspired to learn horse riding myself and perhaps leave behind the tuk-tuk vehicles," he said. — AFP

## Aberg leads by two at Torrey Pines

**LOS ANGELES:** Sweden's Ludvig Aberg fired a superb nine-under-par 63 to take two-shot after the first round of the PGA Tour's Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines in California on Wednesday.

Aberg reeled off eight birdies and an eagle with one solitary bogey to card the lowest-scoring opening round of his career, taking advantage of perfect conditions on Torrey Pines' North Course. "Super happy with the way we kind of came out of the gates today and played some good golf," the 25-year-old said afterwards.

"Any golf course when it looks like this, when you have the views—Torrey Pines is a really, really cool place." Teeing off on the back nine, Aberg was in the groove quickly reeling off three straight birdies followed by a birdie on his fifth hole of the day and an eagle to reach the turn at six under.

Four more birdies down the stretch and a lone bogey on his 11th hole completed a stellar round. Aberg is two shots clear of Americans Danny Walker and Hayden Springer, who finished the first round in joint second after shooting seven-under-par 65s.

Walker's round came on the more challenging South Course at Torrey Pines, with the 29-year-old from Florida carding seven birdies in a bogey-free round. "Was really just trying to hit the middle of the green a lot of times and then rolled in some putts and that's how I shot a good score," Walker said.

"I think I hit every green, which is rare, especially on a course that challenging." Four players—Lanto Griffin, Zac Blair, Zach Johnson and South Africa's Aldrich Potgieter—are a further shot back on six under after starting on the North Course. — AFP



**LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA:** Ludvig Aberg of Sweden hits out of a greenside bunker on the 10th hole during the first round of the Farmers Insurance Open 2025 at Torrey Pines North Course on January 22, 2025 in La Jolla, California. — AFP

## Career-high 54 for Gilgeous-Alexander as Thunder roll Pacers

**LOS ANGELES:** Shai Gilgeous-Alexander erupted for a career-high 54 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder overpowered the Utah Jazz 123-114 on Wednesday.

Gilgeous-Alexander bagged the first 50-point game of his career with a dazzling all-round performance that included eight rebounds, five assists, three steals and two blocks. The virtuoso display from a player that many consider as the front-runner for this season's Most Valuable Player award proved decisive in a contest that saw 16 lead changes.

The win leaves Oklahoma City on top of the Western Conference with a 36-7 record. Gilgeous-Alexander sought to play down his strong night following the win. "I just tried to be aggressive, tried to make the right basketball play and then from there just trust the work—it was no different from any other night," Gilgeous-Alexander said.

"I had a few more points tonight, but it was nothing special." Gilgeous-Alexander received offensive support from Jalen Williams, who chipped in with 25 points, while Cason Wallace added 13 off the bench. John Collins led the Utah scoring with 22 points.



**DALLAS:** Dallas Mavericks slam dunks against the Minnesota Timberwolves in the first half at American Airlines Center on January 22, 2025 in Dallas, Texas. — AFP

Utah slipped to 10-32 with the loss and remain rooted to the foot of the Western Conference standings.

Elsewhere on Wednesday, a thrilling finish in Houston saw Eastern Conference pace-setters Cleveland stumble to a 108-109 defeat to the Rockets. The Cavaliers looked to have taken a grip on the

game in the fourth quarter, rattling off 19 unanswered points before taking a six-point lead with less than four minutes remaining.

Houston fought back however and knotted the score at 107-107 with five seconds remaining. Two free throws from Turkish international Alperen Sen-

gun then put Houston ahead.

But there was still time for one final twist as Tari Eason lunged in for a rash challenge as Darius Garland attempted a game-winning three-pointer.

That sent Garland to the free throw line with a chance to win the game with only three seconds remaining, but Garland missed his first two free throws and Houston escaped. The Rockets are now 29-14 and second in the Western Conference standings.

"I don't know what happened—a sloppy game," said Rockets guard Fred VanVleet, who led his team's scoring with 26 points, including 7-of-12 from three-point range. "It was how not to close a game out. But I thought we deserved that. We fought hard. Sometimes good things go your way, and sometimes they don't. Tonight they did at the end and we were able to close it out."

But while Houston celebrated, Texas rivals the Dallas Mavericks were left reflecting on a 115-114 defeat to the Minnesota Timberwolves. With Luka Doncic still out injured, the Mavs relied on 36 points from Kyrie Irving and 30 points from P.J. Washington to keep them in the hunt. Minnesota's balanced offense however—with all five starters making double figures—was enough to get the Wolves over the line. Jaden McDaniels led the Minnesota scoring with 27 points while Anthony Edwards had 21. In other games, Desmond Banes's 24 points helped the Memphis Grizzlies roll to a fourth straight win with a 132-120 defeat of the Charlotte Hornets. — AFP

Sports

# PSG finally click and fire warning shot to Euro rivals

## PSG's brilliant fightback to beat Manchester City 4-2

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain had been let down by their inability to score goals in this season's Champions League but everything clicked on Wednesday, when they produced a brilliant fightback to beat Manchester City 4-2 and finally kickstart their campaign.

Semi-finalists last season, PSG came into their penultimate game of the league phase in real danger of an early exit, sitting one point and two places outside the qualifying spots for next month's play-off round. Their plight worsened when, after a good first-half showing, they fell 2-0 behind within eight minutes of the second half starting.

PSG had scored only three goals in their first five matches in this season's Champions League — one of which was an own goal — as they made a habit of dominating games but squandering chances. They suffered defeats against Arsenal, Atletico Madrid and Bayern Munich before being boosted by a 3-0 win away at Red Bull Salzburg in their last European outing in December.

Doing the same against City appeared a far greater challenge, however. Nevertheless, they were rapidly back on level terms thanks to goals by Ousmane Dembele and Bradley Barcola, before Joao Neves put them ahead on 78 minutes and Goncalo Ramos wrapped up a remarkable win at the death.

"I thought it was a complete performance, even when we were 2-0 down," said coach Luis Enrique after getting one over Pep Guardiola, his close friend and former Barcelona teammate. "This game will strengthen my team. We are a young side, but we showed that we are ready to compete and that they will not give up ever." The energy with which PSG played was breathless, their pressing suffocating the

English champions, with diminutive Portuguese playmaker Neves outstanding in midfield.

### Kvaratskhelia to come

"Magic at last," was the headline on the front of French sports daily L'Equipe on Thursday, a reference to an adjective PSG fans like to use to describe their team but which has not often been appropriate in Europe this season. A team that has struggled, understandably, to replace the gaping hole left in attack by the departure of Kylian Mbappe to Real Madrid came good with four goals in less than 40 second-half minutes.

Barcola had not previously managed to translate his impressive scoring record in the French top flight to the Champions League stage, but he sparked the comeback by setting up substitute Dembele's goal and then getting the equalizer. The 22-year-old French international's current form suggests he is up for the fight for his place in the team following the signing last week of Napoli's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.

The Georgian star, who was in the crowd on Wednesday, plays in the same position on the left wing, although Luis Enrique is expected to find a way to fit both into his line-up, as well as Dembele. Kvaratskhelia will not, however, be eligible for PSG's final game in the league phase of the Champions League, away to VfB Stuttgart next Wednesday.

Paris, who have made it to the knockout phase in each of the last 12 seasons, are not yet guaranteed to be in the next round as they sit 22nd in the 36-team standings. However, a draw in Germany will secure their progress and keep alive their hopes of winning the Champions League for the first time.

"We should absolutely have five points more



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Italian goalkeeper #01 Gianluigi Donnarumma (C) boxes the ball during the UEFA Champions League, league phase football match between Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris. — AFP

than we have," Luis Enrique said with a nod to the chances wasted by his team in previous games. "This is an obvious relief. The Champions League has been difficult for us but we have been

working hard to turn things around. "We will be a very difficult opponent for whoever we come up against. I think we can still improve and that is the objective." — AFP

## Man City step up rebuild with signing of Marmoush for £59m

LONDON: Manchester City on Thursday announced the signing of Eintracht Frankfurt forward Omar Marmoush, with Kyle Walker joining AC Milan on loan, as the club step up their rebuild during a disappointing season.

Egypt forward Marmoush has signed a four-and-a-half-year contract with the Premier League champions for an initial fee of £59 million (\$72.6 million) with add-ons worth a potential £4 million.

He is City's third signing of the January transfer window following the arrivals of defenders Abdou Diallo and Vitor Reis as manager Pep Guardiola reshapes his squad.

The 25-year-old, who scored 37 goals in 67 games for Bundesliga side Frankfurt, said signing for City was "an amazing feeling".

"With Pep, his technical staff and the world-class facilities here, players have everything they need to improve," he said. "That was really enticing for me when I had the chance to come here."

"And I cannot deny I also want to win trophies. City have been the most successful club in England for many, many years, so I know I am joining a winning environment and winning culture."

Director of football Txiki Begiristain said Marmoush, who has 35 international caps, was an "accomplished and exciting forward". "He's had an out-



Omar Marmoush

standing season, and every time we have watched him, he has influenced matches," he said.

"He has all the attributes a top-class attacker requires. He has outstanding pace and awareness, and he is exceptional in front of goal. He can also play a number of different positions, which is a really valuable asset." Marmoush's arrival at the Etihad comes during a frustrating season for City by their sky-high standards.

The club, Premier League champions for the past four seasons, are currently fifth in the table, 12 points behind leaders Liverpool and realistically out of the title race. Defeat at Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday means Guardiola's side are in danger of missing out on the Champions League knockout stages for the first time since the 2012/13 season. The 2023 European champions must beat Club Brugge next week to qualify for the play-off round after letting a two-goal lead slip in their 4-2 defeat in Paris.

Victory left Los Blancos 16th, a point behind Bayer Leverkusen in eighth, which is the final spot for direct qualification to the last 16.

Brazilian winger Rodrygo struck twice in the first half to help Madrid take control, with Mbappe netting soon after the break and Vinicius grabbing a brace of his own to bring up a century of goals for the club. "I'm very happy after reaching 100 goals with this shirt," Vinicius told Movistar, noting he was close to Brazilian compatriot Ronaldo Nazario's tally of 104.

"I hope to be able to continue like this and score a lot of goals, and mark an era in this team — that's my dream." Defeats by Liverpool, AC Milan and Lille put Madrid under pressure ahead of their final two group matches and their Austrian visitors started with vim, pinning back Los Blancos. Madrid created little of note until Rodrygo's opener after 23 minutes changed the dynamic of the game. The winger, in sensational form in recent weeks with eight goals in

### City struggles

City started the current campaign strongly but hit the buffers in late October, winning just one in 13 matches in all competitions. Guardiola admitted earlier this month that he may have made a mistake by turning down the option of strengthening his squad in the summer transfer window.

Marmoush, who has scored 20 goals for Frankfurt this season, fills the void left by the sale of Julian Alvarez to Atletico Madrid in August, significantly boosting Guardiola's attacking options.

City have been hit by a spate of injuries this season, particularly in defence.

Earlier this week they announced the signing of teenage defender Vitor Reis from Brazilian club Palmeiras for a reported fee of around £30 million.

It followed the arrival of Uzbekistan defender Abdou Diallo from Ligue 1 side Lens for about £34 million. But Walker is ending his long association with the club, set to join AC Milan on loan for the remainder of the season.

The England right-back, 34, has endured a difficult campaign at City and has not started a game since their derby loss to Manchester United on December 15. Last week City announced that forward Erling Haaland had signed a blockbuster new deal keeping the prolific forward at the Etihad until 2034. The club are splashing the cash even as they wait to learn the outcome of a major disciplinary case.

City faced an independent commission hearing last year to examine more than 100 charges from the Premier League concerning alleged breaches of its financial rules, charges the club have always strenuously denied. — AFP

his last nine games across all competitions, finished neatly after Jude Bellingham nudged a cross into his path at the back post.

His second goal was even better, set up by Bellingham with a brilliant backheel, which Rodrygo finished first time with a crisp curling strike. "It's so easy to play with Jude, he makes everything easy, the movements he makes, his second assist was very nice and I love playing with him," said Rodrygo.

Mbappe notched the third early in the second half, pinching the ball from Salzburg goalkeeper Janis Blaswich and tapping home to continue his own recent run of fine form after a shaky start to life at Madrid.

Veteran midfielder Luka Modric sent Vinicius down the left with a fine pass for Madrid's fourth, and the Brazilian finished with a powerful drive across Blaswich. Vinicius netted again after Fede Valverde burst down the middle and put him through after a slick team breakaway, with the forward stroking home with ease after losing his marker. — AFP

## Neymar in talks to leave Saudi team Al-Hilal

RIYADH: Brazilian star Neymar is in discussions about leaving his Saudi club Al-Hilal but his financial demands are holding up an agreement, a club source told AFP on Wednesday. The 32-year-old former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain forward has had an injury-plagued stay in Saudi Arabia, playing just seven times despite a reported salary of around \$104 million a year.

The source, who spoke on condition that he was not identified, said: "Neymar is discussing his departure with Al-Hilal but his high financial demands remain a major obstacle." Neymar is under contract with the Saudi Pro League club until June.

Reports in Brazil say Santos, the club where Neymar made his name in his now fading career, are in talks for him to return to his homeland but Al-Hilal would prefer a transfer while Neymar wants a loan deal. Neymar, the subject of what is still the biggest transfer in football history when he joined PSG from Barcelona in 2017 for a fee of 220 million euros (\$230 million), joined Al-Hilal in August 2023. He followed fellow superstars Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema to the lucrative Saudi league. — AFP



MADRID: Real Madrid's French forward #09 Kylian Mbappe (R) controls the ball challenged by Salzburg's German defender #04 Hendry Blank during the UEFA Champions League, league phase football match between Real Madrid CF and FC Salzburg at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752

Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

### Change of Name

**I, Bongisetty Narasimhulu** (old name), holder of Indian Passport No. P1094505 having permanent address: R/o Battavandlapalli, Nuthana Kalva (village) K.V Palli (Mandal), Chittoor dist. AP, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that my name changed as **Bommisetty Narasimhulu** (new name). **#6625 (23/01/2025)**

**I, Shaik Masood Ameen**, father of Abdulaziz (Minor), aged 6 years, residing at 6/158 Burhanuddin Street, Mochampet, Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh, have changed my son's name from Abdulaziz to (given name) Abdulaziz and (surname) Shaik. He holds Passport No. T8765704, DOB 30/10/2018. **#6626 (23/01/2025)**

**I, Shaik Masood Ameen**, father of Mohammed Masood (Minor), aged 8 years, residing at 6/158 Burhanuddin Street, Mochampet, Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh, have changed my son's name from Mohammed Masood to (given name) Mohammed Masood and (surname) Shaik. He holds Passport No. T8765258, DOB 17/05/2016. **#6626 (23/01/2025)**

## The Stadium International Show Jumping Championship begins at Marina Beach

Top riders deliver stellar performances • Kuwait's equestrian achievements hailed



KUWAIT: First Deputy Premier Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah (5th from left) and Bashar Abdullah (3rd from right) in a group picture with other officials and the winning riders.



Johar Hayat (left), Sheikh Dhari Al-Fahad (second left), First Deputy Premier, Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef (2nd right).

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The competitions of The Stadium International Show Jumping Championship began Wednesday at Marina Beach, sponsored by KIB. The event was inaugurated in the presence of First Deputy Premier, Defense and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Director General of the Public Authority for Sport (PAS) Bashar Abdullah, Olympic Committee member and Secretary-General of the Kuwait Equestrian Federa-

tion (KEF) Ghazi Faisal Al-Jraiwi, KEF President Masoud Jowhar Hayat, KEF Vice President Sheikh Yousuf Meshal Al-Sabah, President of the Hunting and Equestrian Club Sheikh Dhari Al-Fahad, as well as officials from KIB and the organizing committee.

The first day of competitions featured exceptional performances by riders Fawaz Al-Subaie, British rider Nick Channing, Mohammad Al-Shimmari, Abdullah Al-Roudhan, Aous Al-Tannak and Khalid Al-Khubaizi during the first and second rounds at heights of 125 and 135 cm.

The championship continues Friday with four rounds at heights of 100-105 cm, 110-115 cm and a mini prix at 130 cm. The highlight of the day will be the grand prix at 140 cm, where the overall champion will be crowned. The championship concludes Saturday with two rounds at heights of 110 and 120 cm.

### Hayat praises attendance and support

KEF President Hayat expressed gratitude for the attendance of First Deputy Premier Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, whose

presence to officially open the championship delighted officials, technicians and riders alike. Hayat also acknowledged the participation of Sheikh Dhari and representatives from KIB and the organizing committee.

He thanked all sponsors for their support of equestrianism in Kuwait and commended the fans for their enthusiasm. This is the second consecutive season the championship is being held at Marina Beach.

Sheikh Dhari also extended his appreciation to Sheikh Fahad for his at-

tendance and ongoing support. He highlighted Kuwait's longstanding achievements in equestrian sports, dating back over 40 years, mentioning Sheikha Bariah Al-Sabah, Jamila Al-Mutawaa and Nadia Al-Mutawaa, who earned Kuwait's first equestrian medals during the 1982 Asian Games.

He emphasized that today's activities and the sustained efforts of KEF reflect the collective commitment to advancing Kuwait's equestrian legacy, stating, "We are all in the same boat, united in our support for Kuwait equestrianism."

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